

Looking back and noting all the changes that have occurred since I was a youngster, I too recall, as did Isaac Gordon, the old Franklin wood stove that served to heat the little one – room school house at Cutchogue, where I first attended school. I still have my little felt bound slate and wonder what the children of today would say, if they had to use a similar one. Imagine the teacher going around looking over the slates, correcting them, and erasing with a little wet sponge. I well remember my teacher, George Terry of Peconic. Sometimes, when he heard one of us whispering or saw us fooling, he would walk up behind us and snap the guilty one over the head with a piece of whalebone. Boy, how it did hurt! How we would look forward to hog – killing time in the Fall, when the men folks got out the big black iron pot to heat the water to the scalding point and saw to it that the sousing barrel was tight. You could hear the squeal of many a fat porker in the frosty air early of mornings as Harry, (Red Hot) Hallock, or Gene Miller or Martin L. Baker handled the sticking knife. The only kind of footballs we kids had in those days were made of pigs bladders. The woman folks were not so joyful on these occasions, for after the killing came their part of the work. Sausages to grind and put into large muslin bags, lard to try out and head cheese to make. Sometimes, for a joke, we would carry a pigs tail to school and slip it into the coat pocket of one of the girls just to see how loud she could yell when she put her hand into the pocket. Another event in the Fall was, when the four or five cords of oak wood were brought down from Coram. After the men sawed it up with the aid of the old two –horse treadmill they would hand me a sharp axe and say “Go to it, Sonny”. And we had to go to it too, before and after school and on Saturdays too, until the whole stack of sawed wood had been split and ready for the kitchen stove. Gee, I’d like to smell one of these green wood fires burning under griddles covered with pancakes and sausages! Of course, the oil and later gas stoves save housewives lots of work, but they took the romance out of the kitchen.

Every time I enter a modern grocery store, I recall the ones of forty years ago. No packages or cartons then, everything came in bulk. When my father first came to Patchogue in 1892, he brought along a baker’s wagon from Greenport. In the evening my father, brothers and myself would weigh up $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ pound packages of tea and grind up pounds and pounds of coffee. Boy, my arm just aches from thinking of that old coffee mill. I had to stand on a box to turn it and used to dream of the day when an engine would be invented to work it. Soda crackers, ginger snaps, etc. all came in barrels and were put up by hand. Early in the morning we would load up the baker’s wagon with a stock of everything from yeast cakes (Warner’s Safe Yeast was popular then) to sacks of flour and start out for Waverly Avenue. Our first stop was the home of Mrs. Frank Michcowitz, corner of West Main and Waverly Avenue, who, by the way, recently celebrated her 60th birthday. Then on north to Holtsville, at that time called Waverly Station and east to Selden, Coram and Middle Island. Our coming was looked forward to by the housewives, as they had no automobiles to drive around and seldom visited the “big city” of Patchogue oftener than once a month. Our wagon had a big rack on the back it and we could fill it with butter, eggs and other farm produce we took in exchange for groceries. We would return by the way of Yaphank late in the evening, and after I reached there I had another job awaiting me in the cellar, candling eggs. A little box with a black cloth front that had a small hole in it and a lighted candle and I would sit for hours and candle, sort, grade and pack eggs in crates for shipment to city commission merchants. It was a good thing we looked over the eggs that we took in trade for many a farmers wife would find a stolen hen’s nest and put a dozen or more eggs enclosing embryo chickens in with fresh ones. Along about Easter we used to pay only 10 or 12 cents a dozen for eggs on the farms. Archie Geldersleeve used to run a wagon similar to ours under the name of “The Manhattan Tea and Coffee Company” and drove out east as far as Brookhaven and west to Oakdale. Autos have changed all that, and grocery wagons such as ours would be curiosities.