

"Here comes Sammy the Peddler," was the shout of children in the 1930s. That plus the yapping of dogs greeted the pack peddler as he trudged his way into the isolated homes of housewives to display his packs of variety goods and materials he carried from Knieser's in Olean, N.Y.

"Sammy the Peddler" usually walked the roads of McKean County from Olean, unless he were fortunate enough to catch a ride from his niece, Julia Knieser Farris, in her Durant car to be dropped off at John and Christine Rossi's in Crosby, Pa.

The peddler covered the small towns of McKean and Allegany (N.Y.) counties, visiting the large families of wood cutters, chemical plant workers, coal or laborers of clay products in Clermont.

Sam avoided towns that carried signs which stated, "No peddlers allowed." However his month-long journey from Olean took him through Eldred, Farmers Valley, Crosby, Colegrove, Betula, Rasselas, Mount Jewett, Hazel Hurst, Marvindale, and on to Bolivar and Richburg, N.Y., and most farms and homes in between.

Sam never accepted a ride unless he knew the driver and heard, "Want a ride, Sammy?" Then he felt the driver knew him.

Another precaution the peddler took was to stop at post offices along the way in Clermont, Betula, Crosby or Mount Jewett to send a money order back to his Olean address. Thus he felt if he were to be robbed on the road, he would have very little money on him.

What a joy it was during the Depression years to see the peddler's packs dropped heavily upon the linoleum floor and burst open the tightly buckled, black straps and see a mixture of brightly colored cotton clothes burst before a youngster's eyes.

The peddler's pack contained all the items that a youngster imagined: jack knives, shoe strings for high tops and oxfords, fine combs and big combs, packs of needles and spools of thread, cotton pillow cases, handkerchiefs and tablecloths, cotton underwear, rayon stockings, and socks.

"Sammy the Peddler" was the area's newspaper, for with him came the latest happenings of the neighbors. Housewives were anxious to hear what was happening throughout the peddler's route.

Slowly and carefully as

Sammy's prices were met sometimes by bartering, rather than an exchange of money.

Sammy unsnapped the brass buckles of his cases he began to relate the news of Clermont, whether there was work or layoff at the tile plant, whether the chemical plants in the area were in operation or whether the men were out cutting wood or building roads.

He told who was to be married, and who were the latest children born, or to be born. Some of today's senior citizens might have had their birth announcement made into the area by "Sammy the Peddler."

Sammy's prices were met sometimes by bartering, rather than an exchange of money. Money was scarce during the Depression, and the peddler accepted a night's lodging on the couch or chair in a front room or a bowl of soup or a sandwich for a packet of needles or a spool of thread. Sometimes in a rare expansive moment, he would throw in a pair of rayon or cotton woman's underclothes or needed shoe strings.

Now for the rest of the story.

Who was "Sammy the Peddler?"

"Sammy" was a nickname for Massaud Nahara Riskalla, born in Wisec, a suburb of Beirut, Lebanon.

Massaud Nahara was married to Susset, who never came to America, but remained in Lebanon, where she raised two sons, Fared and Saed.

Sam Nahara had ~~two~~ ³ sisters in America, Frieda Thomas and Adla Nageeb. He had two brothers in Lebanon, Nageeb and Rasheed.

Frieda Thomas became a pack peddler like her brother Sammy. Frieda traveled by Greyhound bus or horse and buggy with her suitcases of fine linen and laces of homes in Bradford, Salamanca, and as far as Bemus Point.

In Olean, "Sammy the Peddler" lived alone at 661 E. State St. He has several nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and -nephews in Buffalo, Cuba and Olean. He is buried in St. Bonaventure Cemetery, Allegany, N.Y.

Gone is the voice of some 50 odd years ago, which always bid a farewell with, "Goodbye, Missus, see you is a couple of months. And thanks."



SAMMY'S SISTER — There are no photos of "Sammy, the Peddler," a pack peddler who walked the roads of McKean County, Pa., and Allegany County, N.Y., in the 1930s. His sister, Frieda Thomas, shown here with her sons Willie and Charlie, also became a pack peddler, traveling by bus, horse and buggy to homes in Bradford, Salamanca, and other communities.

'Sammy the Peddler' common sight in '30s

- 3 sisters

Bradford, PA paper