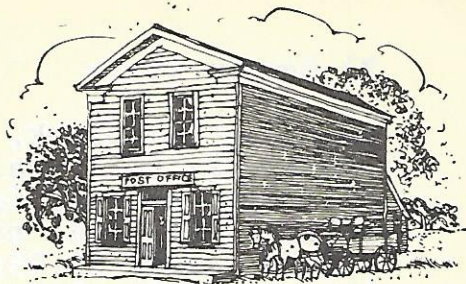


The Oswego Store / 1843-1853



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Kosciusko County (IN) Historical Society

The village of Oswego, Indiana, on the banks of the Tippecanoe River, was laid out in 1837 by Barbee, Willard and French. The three town fathers also opened a store, and in 1840 a postoffice was established, with Ezekiel French as postmaster. The existing building of the Oswego general store and postoffice was built in 1838, so we can assume that it is the same one established by these three men. By 1843 the village also boasted a tannery, a grist mill and a blacksmith shop.

We are fortunate in having ledger sheets for the Oswego store, which have come to us from the estate of Harold and Flossa Pound. Mr Pound's family operated the Oswego store for many years, and he and Mrs Pound deeded the building to the Kosciusko County Historical Society for use as a museum. The sheets, which date between 1843 and 1853, with a few entries for the years 1844 and 1846, enable one to re-create a catalog of nearly everything that must have been available for purchase during these years, together with the price for each item. Also, assuming that little currency was in circulation in a newly settled area, one can pretty well establish a roster of the inhabitants from the names of those who bought the necessities of life on credit or for barter.

When we consider the great distances between Oswego and ports of entry or places of manufacture for things such as coffee, ginger, tea, rice, mirrors, umbrellas, matches and glassware, and know that northern Indiana was largely a dense forest with few and badly surfaced roads, one might ask how these things were delivered. Since we know that these same years, between 1843 and 1853, were the busiest in the operation of the Wabash-Erie Canal, it is logical to assume that much of the store's merchandise came from the east by that route, being unloaded from the canal's freight boats at Fort Wayne or Huntington.

Below are samplings of the merchandise and the price of each thing. Following these lists are the names of all the people who made purchases on credit, during 1843 and 1853.

1843

Comb, 19¢; Boy's cap, 25¢; Lb. pepper, 12¢; ½lb. sulphur, 16¢; Skein of silk, 19¢; 2lbs. sugar, 24¢; 2lbs. nails, 18¢; Box hooks & eyes, 6¢; 7lbs. coffee, \$1; 12yds. pongee, \$3.96; 25lbs. butter, \$2.75; 1lb. spice, 12¢; Buffalo coat, \$12; Muskrat cap, \$2; Bottle paregoric, 12¢; 3yds. lace, 37¢; Pint brandy, 38¢; Shawl, \$1.50; All these prices were for December, 1843.

1853

8lbs. coffee, \$1; 4lbs. sugar, 44¢; 2 pr. shoes, \$1.75; 18yds. calico, \$2.25; Bottle Moffatt's Bitters, \$1; Looking glass, \$1.12; 5lbs. tobacco, 62¢; 2 gals. whiskey, 62¢; Grain cradle, \$3.75;

2) Oswego Store

Paper of lampblack, 12¢; Basket, 20¢; 4½lbs. rice, 30¢; 400 ft. of lumber, \$1.60; 2qts. molasses, 28¢; 1000 matches, 12¢; 3doz. eggs, 19¢; ½lb. starch, 6¢; 100lbs. flour, \$2; 4bshls. bran, 25¢; 2 plugs tobacco, 10¢; yd. muslin, 10¢; Corn hoe, 63¢; Coffee mill, 87¢; 11½lbs. lard, \$1.05; 5 sheets paper, 5¢; 3bshls. potatoes, 75¢; ½lb. tea, 38¢; 2 Mackerel, 16¢; Peck beans, 25¢; Dozen pearl buttons, 20¢; 6oz. quinine, 9¢; 3½yds, ribbon, 93¢; Pair gum shoes, \$1.12; Silk handkerchief, 69¢; Glass tumbler, 10¢; Hat, 31¢; Fish hooks & lines, 19¢; Bottle ink, 6¢; Dinner bell, \$1.50; ½doz. nutmegs, 12¢; Razor, 88¢; lb. Raisins, 10¢; Gal. vinegar, 25¢; Bed cord, 38¢; Pair boots, \$3.25; Umbrella, \$1.25; Ginger, 6¢; Doz. shirt buttons, 12¢; Pair cotton pants, \$1.50; Paper needles, 10¢; Broom, 25¢.

Oswego Store Customers: 1843-44.

An asterisk (*) indicates names also appearing in 1853

Alteson, Henry	Hively, Peter	Shell, C.D.
(or Atleson)	Huffman, Elkanah	Shell, E.*
Beesly, Isaac*	Hutchens, Johnson	Taylor, George
Bissell, H.W.	Hutchinson, John	Thompson, John
Blair, Samuel	Jackson, David	Wade, George*
Cowan, John	Kerr, John	Wayde, W.B.
Cowan & Mahaffery	Kirkpatrick, Thos.*	White, L.B.
Crawford, Samuel	Maxwell, James	Willard, Dr. Rowland*
Dunham, John	Muirhead, E.	
Gowthrip, R.	Muirhead, George	
Henderson, James	Rhodes, Levi	
	Rhodes, Margaret	

1853

Addison, Alexander	Hewitt, Mrs	McGrew, John
Beatty, Ross	Horn, William	McKeekan
Berst, Hiram	Horton, E.	McSherry, Wm.
Black, Levi	James, Joseph	McSherry & Shell
Blake, James	Jaques, J.M.	Mock, Isaac
Brown, John	Jennings, Isaac	Morse, Elikim
Cowan, David	Johnson, Oliver	Night (see Light)
Curry, Mrs	Johnson, William	Orvin, Charles
Davis, Joseph	Jones, Mr	Patterson, John
Dazy, Moses	Kirkpatrick, Wm.	Paugh, William
(Daisey)	Lampson, Lorenzo	Pepper, A.S. (Lepper)
Delker, Lewis	Latson, James	Shell & Smith
Denham, Gehen	Laughlan, William	Shroyer, George
Edgar, Margaret	Lepper, A.S.	Shroyer, John
Elder, Samuel	Light, Joseph	Smith, C.
Eslick, A.	Light, Chas. (Night)	Stanton, William
(Eslake)	Long, Edmund	Stinson, Jacob
French, Jacob	Long, Elman	Thompson, Charles
Gillam, J.P.	Maiby, Lott (Maybee)	Thompson, Jesse
Graham, Hezikiah	Maybee, Peter	Weaver, Phillip
Gray, John	McClone, Joseph	Woods, William
Gunter, James	McCoy	
Hanson, Charles		
Hear, William		

Anyone seeking a name here should read the entire list, since elaborate handwriting and spellings by different hands lead to confusion. As examples: Dazy, Daisey; Lepper, Pepper; Light, Night.