

# An Outline of the Early History of THE BASKET STORES

In our early history, the BASKET STORE was called the cash grocery when we had one store at 121 North 14th St., in that little shack now called 2-1-4 which has not even today grown to be a whole store, just a part of one.

Our original notion was that if we would give a low price, that the Laboring People and those who needed the money would be our early customers. But much to my surprise I found that the first customers to come into our store were those who had been in the habit of saving, and were well fixed financially. I found it was very slow in building up trade. It took a great deal of advertising expense to prove that my prices were low. But later the business kept growing, and we decided to put out another store.

When the business started to be rather prosperous and began growing fast, our troubles began to increase. We had some of the advertised brands of flour and were selling them lower than the other grocers. Some of the other grocers began to call the flour mills and notified them unless they would quit selling us that brand of flour that they would have to discontinue the sale of this brand and buy another brand. And so we were

## Boycotted Because We Refused to Rob the People

the people. Therefore we received instructions that unless we raised our prices immediately they would refuse to sell us any more of this brand of flour. We begged for one wagon load, but were refused. The mills all offered to sell us the same flour, but it would have to be under some other name than their well known advertised brands. So we were forced to buy our own brands of flour. Even today when we handle flour by the carload, we find that we can not buy any well known advertised brands of flour, unless we keep the price up.

One of the lovely letters which we received in the little store on North Fourteenth street, is the one which we have photographed below, just as we received it. The black hand letter as you might call it was published by us as the time. But since our store had no reputation some people thought it was an advertised scheme that we had gotten out ourselves. But now when we have shown to the people that our prices are really exceptionally low they are beginning to see the cause which made our small-minded brother competitor write the letter.

In order to help you read it more carefully it is translated below. "Burley—you had better cut out your price cutting, or you are a dead man. We wont stand for it. If you cut our throats we will kill you. We are an organized gang, and mean what we say. You sell goods the same as others or off goes your head. We will get you when you least expect it. We mean business. So cut it out, and that damn quick."

This is an exact photograph of the letter as we received it. Some of our friends thought it was an organized gang that wrote this letter, but we did not. We believed it was some flat-headed grocer, who would not have nerve enough to tell his own wife about it. We know a great many of the grocery men in Lincoln, and we believe they are just as nice a bunch of men as you might find in any city.

The time has proven that the writer of this letter was a hot air merchant as they say. And we will wager a brick watch against a \$4.00 dog, that he is a failure in business or else has been too stingy to get married.

## BOYCOTTED ON COFFEE

We received the following letter, a copy of which we can show you in full, if you call at the office.

"J. R. Burleigh,  
Lincoln, Nebr.

Dear Sir: We thank you for your order of the 18th inst. We regret however, that it will not be possible for us to ship these goods for the following reasons: It has come to our attention that our brand of coffee has been sold by you for less than the regular price, which is 35c per lb. In justice to our other dealers in Lincoln, you can see it is impossible for us to sell you these goods to be sold at a cut price. If however, you wish to handle this brand of coffee and sell it at the same price others are getting for it, we will be pleased to fill your order.

We will be glad to hear from you regarding your order, stating that you will maintain the price, thus allowing us to ship the goods.

Yours very truly,

We were selling this 35c coffee for 29c and making about 17 per cent on the investment and still they told us that we must raise our price or quit. Well, we simply quit. We never answered their letter. When we put their coffee in on the start, we told them frankly we were going to sell it for 29c and this was satisfactory to them at that time. The agent lives here in town, and solicits the business in person, and made all the contracts. He probably felt ashamed to call upon us, and so probably had the company write us a letter. But what surprises me about the whole deal is that there is one man by the name of Abraham Lincoln, who is one of the officers and big guns of the company. The real Abraham Lincoln was a trusted friend of the people. While it seems this Abraham must be against giving the people a show.

"Cash Grocery,  
Lincoln, Nebr.

Gentlemen: We received a mail order to ship you ----- etc. Will state that we would be pleased to enter the order and ship the goods promptly, but are advised that here-to-fore you have been cutting the price on ----- and before shipping this order we will have to have some assurance as to whether the price of this purchase will be maintained, as we do not care to have the goods sold at a cut price, and will kindly ask you to read over the enclosed contract letter, which you will kindly sign, if it is your intention to maintain the price, and if not, suggest that you do not sign the letter but return it to us. We trust that you will see your way clear to sign this letter, as the goods give perfect satisfaction, and please the trade. We solicit your favorable consideration in this matter.

Thanking you for past favors, we remain  
Yours very truly,

## Boycotted on Another Article

"We are advised that you are, and have been for sometime cutting ----- at a very low price. We have had considerable correspondence with you in reference to this matter. We have been very lenient because we desired to have your good will and patronage. But it has now come to such a state that the cutting of the price must be discontinued. We are forced to take this position, and we trust you will appreciate that you can sell as much as here-to-fore of our goods, by maintaining the prices, and further more make a great deal more money."

We answered this letter and told them that our system was so inexpensive that it would be an injustice to us to ask us to raise our price, and that if they insisted on this that we would be forced to cut out the sale of this article. We told them that we would not annoy the other grocers by advertising the price of the article, and now to show you that this company wanted to be more reasonable, we received the following letter from them. I will show you the substance of the letter which I received from them later on.

"We are in receipt of yours of the 21st, and appreciate that you are a good business man and that you have a large business. That is the reason that we are anxious to come to an understanding; but you cannot blame us for wanting to protect our own interest, and prevent this constant complaining of the other merchants." Later it was adjusted satisfactorily to them.

A great deal of evidence could be shown you to prove that the manufacturers, The Retail Grocer's Association, all work to try to keep the price up on many articles. Here is part of a letter which will show you the situation.

To give you a little more evidence along this line, will say that Mr. Duke C. Bowers, a personal friend of the Basket Stores living at Memphis Tenn., who has thirty two stores, printed a pamphlet, and sent it to the law makers at Washington, to stop this trouble on the part of the Manufacturers, Wholesale Grocers, and Retail Grocers when they try to fix the retail price, by law.

In his letter to the law makers he says "did you know that lots and lots of manufactured articles used by both rich and poor could be sold at a profit by some dealers at much less than they are now being retailed for? Did you know that there are numbers of dealers who would sell some things considerably cheaper were it not for the fact that the manufacturers binds him to sell at the price dictated by them."

If by the use of a more economical system one retailer is enabled to furnish the consumer, on a smaller margin of profit than can his competitor, don't you believe he ought to be allowed the privilege?

Why is it that some of the manufacturers dictate at what price their products shall be sold for, after they have passed out of their hands?

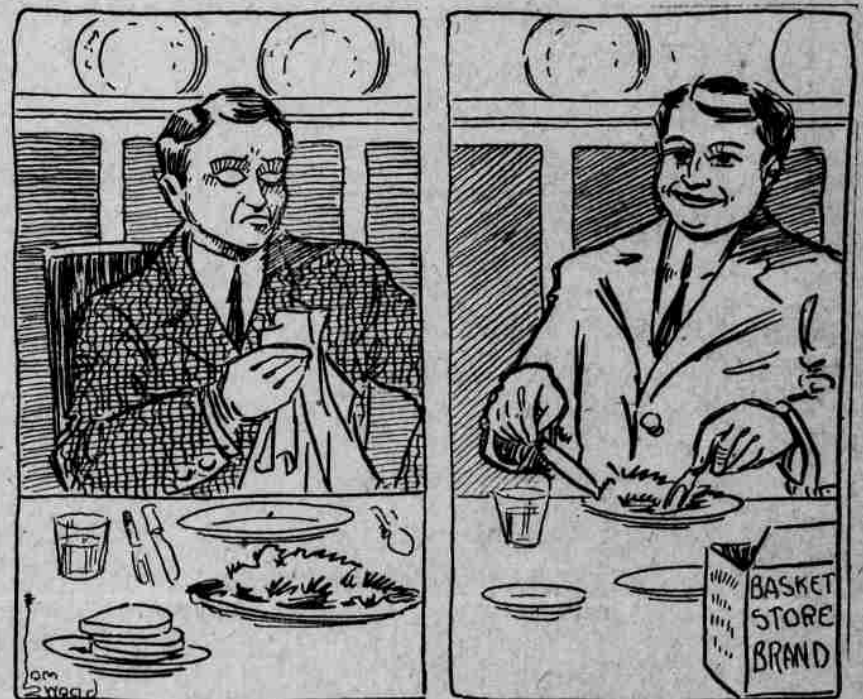
Gentlemen, I say that when a merchant knows how to conduct a business calculated to give the consumer the greatest possible value for their money, and at the same time make what he considers a fair margin of profit, that he should not be allowed to be hampered, unless he was making reductions for the sole purpose of injury to some individual or firm."

The above may seem strange to some of you, probably many of my own customers wonder why it is I do not sell, and cannot consistently sell an advertised flour, like Gold Medal Flour, for example. The Basket Stores could probably buy a flying machine and sail around Lincoln, but we could not sell Gold Medal Flour, unless we obeyed orders and kept the price up.

An investigation into the causes why food prices were high by the grand jury of Lorain County, Ohio, disclosed that certain manufacturers were limiting the selling price of



Teach your children early to handle money. Let them do your marketing. They soon learn "That from the dimes saved, dollars grow." THE SIX BASKET STORES hope they are worthy of the confidence of these little folks.



Quit eating common stuff. By our system you can afford better health. When goods are high you are inclined to buy the cheap stuff. When goods are low you can afford to buy the best goods. See our Nectar Line of canned goods from Onieda, N. Y. We realize that "the best grade brings the best trade."

their products by threatening to cut out all those who cut the price. The Grand Jury condemned this. Here is one of the letters.

"Akron, Ohio, Jan. 17, 1910.  
Messrs. Koepf Brothers,  
Elyria, Ohio.

Gentlemen: We note from the Elyria Chronicle of January 14th that you are advertising Gold Medal flour in 1-4 barrel sacks at \$1.65. The prevailing retail price of Gold Medal flour set by the majority of the dealers in Elyria is \$1.50.

As it is our wish that handlers of Gold Medal flour make a legitimate profit on these goods, we ask you kindly to refrain from cutting prices on Gold Medal. We cannot, of course, control your action regarding the supply of Gold Medal that you have on hand, but beg to advise that in the future we will not be able to furnish you with Gold Medal unless you will be guided by the spirit of the other Gold Medal buyers in Elyria and charge the same retail price for Gold Medal that they do.

We believe that you will see this matter in the same light that we do and will understand our calling your attention to this act.

Gold Medal flour has too great a selling power behind it to have any dealer satisfied, to get other than his legitimate profit from handling the goods. It will be to your advantage to maintain the price of your competitors as Gold Medal flour is a commodity that women will have regardless of the price. Thanking you for past favors, we are

Washburn-Crosby Co.  
By E. P. Sanford.

THE BASKET STORES have been fighting the Retail Grocers, Jobbing Grocers, Manufacturer Grocers, who have been trying to force them to put price up or you could say, raise, on certain lines. And I think we are going to win.

The people know of our little stores. They know our prices are below the prevailing rate in Lincoln. We will have trouble in the future probably, but if the people stay with us, we will stay with the people. We are very thankful to the people who have given us the volume and the strength so that our buying power is made

greater, and so in turn we have been giving lower prices as we go along. For example we used to sell pepper at 35c, then 30c, then 25c, and now 15c per lb; also 25c W. H. Bakers' Choc. for 20c, 19c, 18, then 16c now; Scouring Soap, 10c bar for 7c, now we have one for 4c, 3 for 10c. Lowest price of Baking Powder was 17c, 1 lb. can, now we sell one for 10c a lb. can, guaranteed to be the best or your money back.

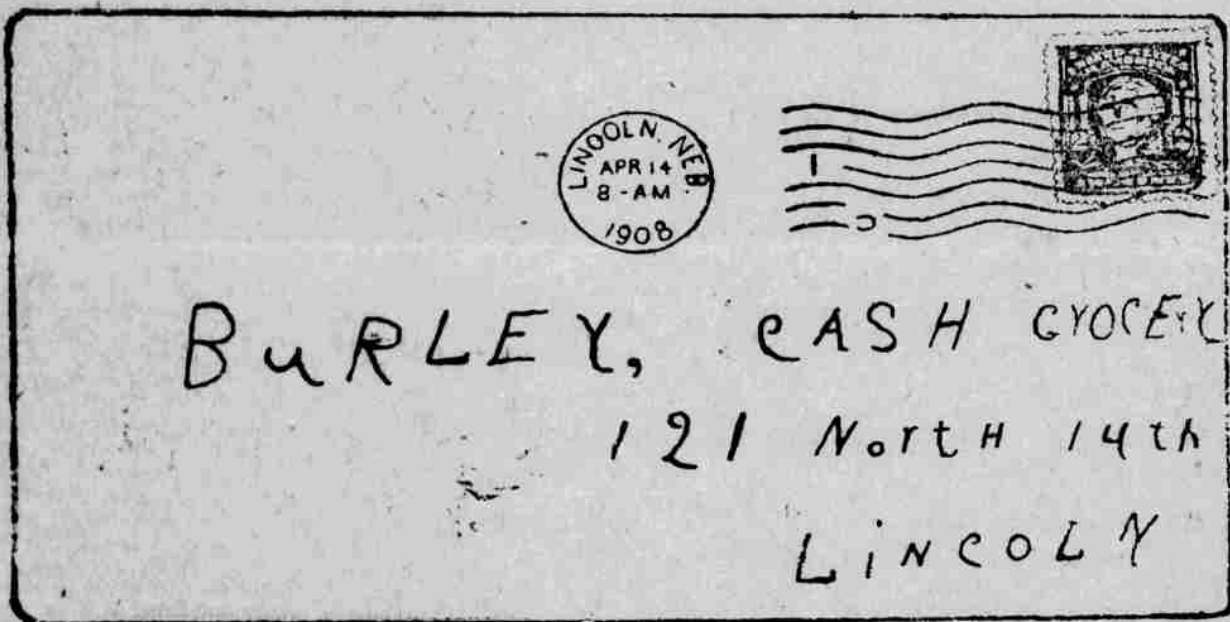
## Boycotted on Crackers

One day a friend of ours told us that we were going to be cut out on more articles. That when some of these salesmen started down the street there would be a line of complaints offered him all along the street by different stores which he entered until he was scared and cut us out. This could easily have been done by one store phoning another ahead of his route. Well sure enough one morning a salesman came into the Basket Store out of wind and says "I cannot stand it any longer. They have threatened to cut me out altogether unless I make you raise your prices." When I told him that we would not change our prices, he says, "well, I may be able to let you have a wagon load to load you up, but that will have to be our last." This may explain why we do not sell Loose Wiles crackers.

After reading this don't you believe that you ought to investigate the Basket Stores more closely, especially when you think of buying crackers.

There have been many small grocers who would sell things lower if it were not for the fact that they dislike very much to go into this fight. But fight is fun for the Basket Stores, especially when it helps our fellow men.

See the  
Other Side



Lincoln  
BURLEY  
You-Had-Better-cut  
out-Your-Price-cut  
ting-or-you-are-a  
DEAD-MAN-WE-WONT  
STAND-FOR-IT IF YOU  
CUT OUR THROATS-WE  
WILL KILL YOU WE DYE  
AKORQOMIZED GONG  
AND-MEAN-WHAT WE  
SAY YOU SELL GOODS  
THE SAME AS OTHER  
PEOPLE OR-DEF COMER  
YOUR HEAD WE WILL  
GIVE YOU-WHEN YOU LEAST  
EXPECT WE MEAN BUS-  
INESS SO CUT IT OUT  
AND THAT DAM QUICK