

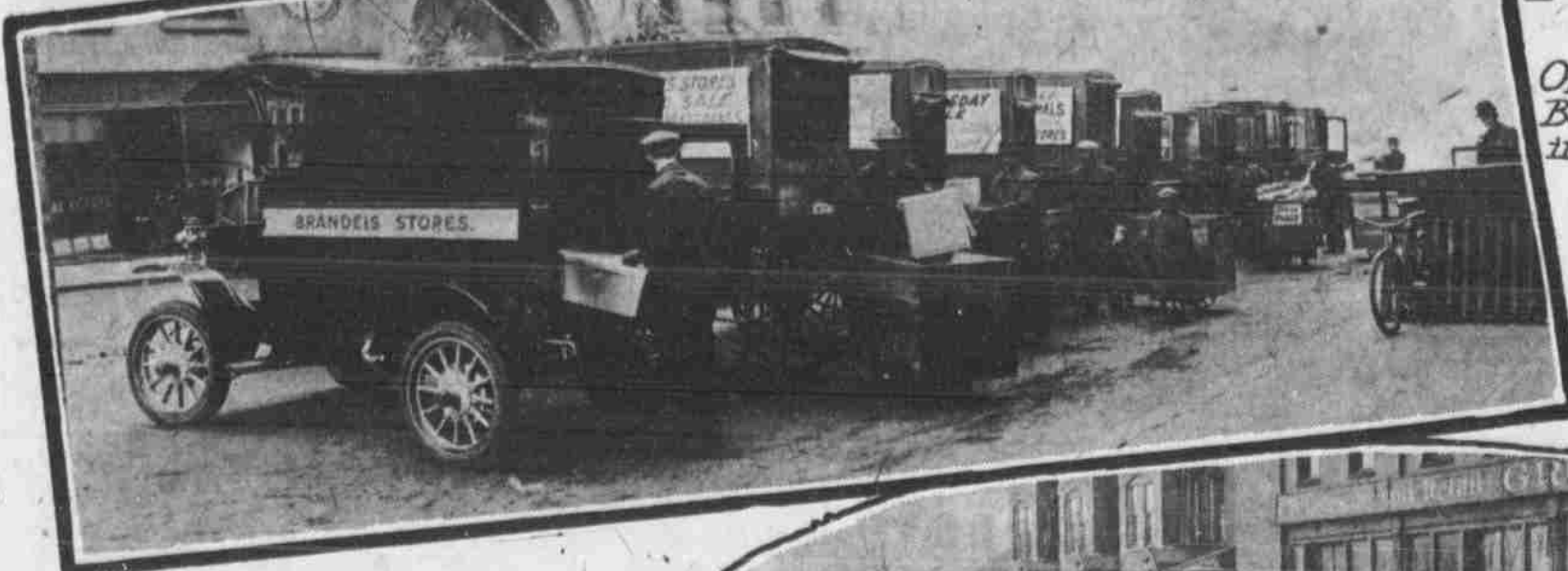
# Handling Retail Orders of Omaha Housewives a Big Chore



The Bennett Delivery Wagons



Waiting for Loads at Brandeis



Order Boxes Being Unloaded into Wagons



Part of Courtney's Wagons



Powell



Typical Delivery Man

**C**URLY, the Crackerbox Kid, as his associates "on the line" called him, was in a good humor as he sorted the packages out of a big truck into the back of his wagon. He was singing, he thought, and his strain ran thus:

"Oh, the butcher boy is the boy for me,  
He stole away my liberties;  
He stole it away with a right good will,  
But the butcher boy, I love him still."

Curly's singing had peculiar accents, of the ancient fashion, long drawn and lingering, and at certain points his face seemed to be hurting him.

"Soy, Curly, ef yu don't let up on dat growlin' I'll soak yu wid dis turnip," ejaculated a brawny driver who was fussing with a load of heavy vegetables.

"Soak yourself, you mut," said Curly, with a truculent mien. "You t'row anythin' at me an' you'll fall, see?"

As Curly weighs about 101 pounds and the "mut" breaks the scale with a blow of his fist, something had to give. It was the tension on the big man's mind, for he let off a large smile, threw his arm up as if to ward off a blow, and retorted, "Aw, take someone your size, an' don't try to scare me to death all the time."

"Well, tend to your own business, den. I'm goin' to sing as much as I want to."

"Sure, sing all you want to, but don't put the flat wheel on de music so much," retorted the big fellow. "W'en a boy has a nice job like you got, callin' on th' best people, wit' cards already writ and everything packed shipshape, he oughter feel like singin' if he has a trained voice like yours."

"It's as good as your old voice, anyway," said Curly, as he jumped onto the seat and took the lines, "an' don't forget, I kin put a stick in yu're wheel of I want. You're not the white man's hope, yet."

As Curly drove away, grinning disdainfully, the big trucker turned to the man wrestling with the spotted mules, backing in alongside. "Look at that now. Dere's a kid I've helped ev'ry way I could, an' he gives me lip like dat wenever I open me head to 'im."

"Aw, Curly's all right, all right," said the mule-tamer. "He's a good kid, on'y his tongue's a little loose. He's got a goyl now, too, an' he's dreamy."

### Taking Out the City's Supplies.

Then the conversation gave way to hustling work, as the drivers began to gather their consignments of orders and load them in the wagons. It was the early morning loading hour at one of the big retail stores, and two or three dozen double and single delivery wagons were lined up, stretching almost the full length of the block. The sidewalk was littered with boxes, barrels, packages, rolls and bags, ticketed with names and numbers of houses, representing customers from the Sarpy county line almost to Blair.

The delivery boys—a goodly proportion being husky men, by the way—were chaffing and joking, as they made ready to pick up their loads. A small number of wagons were drawn by one horse, but most of them were taking on piles of merchandise that would require a long day's work to place in the homes from which the orders came.

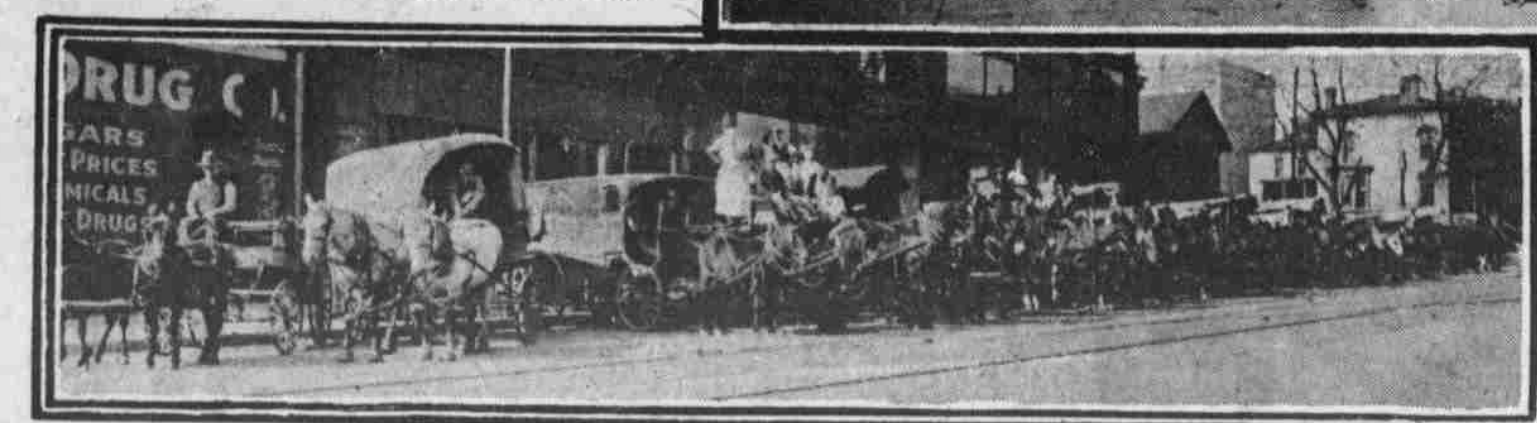
At first glance, it would appear a hopeless task to sort out and direct to their exact destination the vast numbers of bundles and parcels of varying kinds that the shipping clerk had sent to the sidewalk. But before one had been viewing the scene very long he was made to realize that in the midst of the apparent confusion, system, that savior of modern business, reigned. Not only was every driver's special load placed handy to his wagon, but every package was put into the wagon in approximately the order in which it would come out. Those to be delivered first were the last to go onto the load or into the covered wagon.

### Assembling the Orders After Sale.

But let us begin with the sale, in one of the department stores. Jinks buys a bedtick or a piece of furniture, then he buys a dollar's worth of sugar, and maybe a package of gent's furnishings. His neighbor,

at the same time, may be buying potatoes or meat, or a piano, mayhap a Persian rug. Each department has attached a busy individual known as an order clerk. He knows when the wagons leave for any particular section of the city or surrounding territory, among other scraps of knowledge. So he aims to get the various packages down to the shipping room in time to catch the earliest delivery possible after the sale.

This shipping room is down in the basement, as a rule, and is capable of holding almost a storeful of goods. "Good shipping clerks are generally born that way," says Superintendent Quinlan of Hayden's, when asked about that part of the establishment. "I believe the shipping clerks of the big stores in this city



Ready to Load at Haydens

Morning Line-up at Haydens

are as good as can be found anywhere, because they are a hustling example of the survival of the fit, in that particular line of work. They have to be responsible men, naturally, but the most ponderous sense of responsibility wouldn't be worth much in a shipping room unless it is coupled with a keen sense of order and quickness of mind that cannot be easily rattled."

### Shippers' Room Has System of Its Own.

Going into the shipping room of any of the large stores, the point of Mr. Quinlan's remarks becomes quickly apparent. The order clerks are continually carrying or wheeling in small and large packages of goods, and when they deliver them to the shipping clerk he signs a book, to prove he got the goods. Ranged along the walls are capacious bins or boxes, numbered consecutively. Every driver of a wagon has his own bin, and as fast as the goods are received Mr. Shipping Clerk and his assistants distribute them into the bins. As each driver's route is carefully marked out for him, the address on any package indicates who is to deliver it. Like the mail clerk, the shipping clerk must know his boxes without stopping too long to figure out which one takes any package.

At each bin hangs a tab of paper and a pencil. As each piece is placed therein it is entered on the tab, whether it be a pound of sugar or a roll of carpet. Under the top sheet is a carbon, and when the driver signs for what he took from the bin he leaves with the shipping clerk a duplicate list of the stuff he took out. Hence, he must deliver every package or bundle; or, if a complaint comes in of non-delivery and the driver cannot account for the goods he took out, he is under the necessity of paying for the same. Hence also, every driver sees to it pretty carefully that he gets everything his list calls for.

These bins containing the made up orders are all on wheels, so that they can be shoved onto an elevator and taken to the loading place. Then it is up to the driver to sort them out and place them on his wagon in the handiest way for quick delivery as he passes over his route; and he must pile and secure his load in a manner to prevent losses as he travels along.

### Routes Are Carefully Laid Out.

Some of the wagons leaving the Omaha department stores are scheduled for only one trip a day, while some others are continually going and coming. There are two-trip routes, four-trip routes, and the quick order wagons. Every one of the larger concerns has a rig which makes daily trips to Council Bluffs, and none of them make less than fifty stops a day in the town across the river. Which would indicate that the housewives of Council Bluffs know a good prospect, even at some distance.

Benson, Florence, South Omaha, Albright, Avery, Ralston, and every other group of residences, large or small, within a wide radius have special wagons assigned to carry to them the goods bought in Omaha. They get almost as quick a service as do the outlying portions of Omaha. And the country homes scattered all over the hills and dales on every side of Omaha's twenty-four square miles of territory get the benefit of the highly organized system of delivery of the local stores.

"We go almost to Blair sometimes," said one driver, "and as far in other directions. It's all right in nice sunny weather, with good roads, but when a wet spell comes, or a sleet storm or a blizzard—say, mister, then I'd rather be beside the warm stove at home."

This man and others intimated that trouble once

and a while creeps into their day's work. "Lots of places are hard to get at," said one, "and some people don't seem to have any notion of how a delivery man has to hustle. Most folks treat us right, though, and get to be real friendly, and I often wonder what the kickers think they gain by telling their troubles to the driver, when they ought to hand them over to headquarters."

### Late Deliveries Not Popular.

About every driver talked to had one pet kick. They felt that when patrons of the stores did not know just what they were talking about they ought to keep still. For instance, while the routes are laid out with the idea that the men can cover them between 8:30 in the morning and 6 o'clock at night, yet accidents happen, and circumstances sometimes arise which make it impossible for all the deliveries to be made within that time. The drivers, of course, want to finish their work as soon as possible, but they are under strict instructions to finish their deliveries before "turning in."

"Some people act as if they thought we like to be out late, and do it on purpose," said a driver who has been with one house for years. "If they had the right hunch they would sympathize a little, maybe, with the delayed driver. He runs against snags on his way just the same as anybody else, and there might be a dozen reasons why he don't get around on the exact time he should. Bad roads, breakdowns, some little accident to horse or wagon, all these things are liable to happen, and then we are delayed in spite of all we can do. People should keep in mind that the deliveryman is human and subject to all the chances that others are. We aim to do our work as rapidly and as well as we can, and customers ought to keep

in mind that we want to finish the route in as short a time as we can."

Another word that can be said for the drivers of the delivery wagons of Omaha is that they are, as a class, reliable men. Every day the most valuable classes of goods are entrusted to their care in large quantities, and the record shows few or no breaches of trust. The careless, irresponsible man on a delivery wagon is the very rare exception, and throughout the ranks of the delivermen there prevails a spirit of faithfulness that can well be praised. In the handling of the various classes of merchandise, too, the men have to and do exercise care. They will, as a rule, stand up for their "house" against all comers, and evidence an interest in their work that is more than perfunctory.

In the shipping rooms of each of the department stores an average of 1,500 orders a day packed and handled would be a very moderate estimate. The goods range from the lightest to the very heaviest, and the amount handled throughout the city stores every twenty-four hours would reach a very large aggregate in tonnage and have a value running far into the thousands. That so little of the merchandise bought and ordered sent by delivery wagon is lost—an almost infinitesimal per cent—certainly goes to indicate that the Omaha stores have got that end of their business most excellently organized.

Delivery by motorcycle and by bicycle messengers is now an established custom with many of the retail concerns of Omaha. Some of the firms keep several boys on the go continually, while others, in various lines, call boys from the messenger companies to take out their goods. This is quick delivery with a vengeance, for some of the motorcycle messengers travel at a gait calculated to make pedestrians watch the corners with some care. Here, too, the trust reposed in the messengers, and the faithfulness with which it is kept, has a tendency to make the pessimist lose his temper. The boys do their work rapidly and well.

## Central City Business Men and Merrick County Farmers in Good Roads Work



Loading Gumbo from Elevating Grader



Farmers Hauling Material for New Road