

# A Trip Back In Time — Milk Peddlers Reminisce

**GAIL STROCK**

**Mifflin Co. Correspondent**

*It began with an article suggestion from loyal Lancaster Farming readers, J. Loren and Wanda Yoder of Belleville. Why not interview some of those who used to peddle milk in wagons. They even gave me names — Nelda Peachey of Allensville and Lester Zook (Wanda's dad) of Belleville. I knew it would be an interesting trip back through time, but it turned out to be a trip further back than I'd expected because Nelda said there was someone else I should talk to — Sadie Byler at Valley View Haven.*

**Sadie Byler**

**Delivering Milk Somewhere Around 1916**

Sadie Byler's quick mind and friendly talkativeness belie her 95 years of age. Born in 1899, Sadie delivered milk house to house as a teen during the teens after the turn of the century.

"We had a big square carriage with lines along the side (to steer the horse as they walked along side), side doors and windows. The horse came down Mechanic Street and we'd ring the bell. At the foot of the hill that horse (she told me his name was Frank) knew to turn around and back up and turn some more and back up. Then coming back up the hill, he went back and forth across the street (to different houses). He knew where to stop. People would come out with kettles, pitchers, what have you."

Sadie's milk wagon carried two 50-quart milk cans. They kept a pie plate and quart measure beside each can. "We kept nice, white cloths to keep the cans from sweating. If you dropped one on the floor, you used the other one," Sadie remembers.

Sadie said they offered whole milk, skim milk, and cream to their customers every day and Saturday evenings, but never on Sundays. The seat of their wagon lifted and there they stored extra quarts in case they needed them. She also said customers could pay

cash or use tickets.

"The tickets were for \$1.20, \$.60, and \$.30. They had circles on them and we punched holes to keep track. We charged 6 cents for a quart of milk, 3 cents for a quart of skim milk, and 24 cents for a quart of cream."

"Belleville was half what it is now," Sadie continued. "We went down Mechanic Street, Main Street, Trella Street, I'm not sure where else, and back. We finished up on Jenkins Street."

Sadie said she was 15, 16, or 17 when they sold out. When the men were busy, she delivered the milk by herself. Sometimes she took a little one along, but, she adds matter-of-factly, "It went just as good when I went by myself!"

There is one March 3rd Sadie remembers well. She's not sure of the year but there had been a terrible snow storm. Her father took the wheels off the wagon and attached sleigh runners. He traveled the back roads and, Sadie said, "There came a blast and blew everything over. Dad broke his arm. He went to the doctor the next day."

Sadie Byler married David J. Byler in December of 1918. They have 11 children, 36 grandchildren, 68 great grandchildren, and 6 great-great grandchildren.

**Lester Zook**

**Delivering Milk During The '20s, '30s, and '40s**

Lester Zook delivered milk for almost 30 years, beginning in the late '20s and early '30s for his dad. He and his brother pulled a large wagon through town selling quarts of Cloverleaf Dairy milk for 9 cents and pints for 5 cents. By the time he sold his business to Nelda Peachey around 1947, a quart of milk was selling for 19 cents.

"The wagon had four big wheels, about 3 feet high. The bed of the wagon was about eight feet long. We delivered every day but Sundays. The customers picked one bottle of milk out and put the empty one in. We sold whole milk and chocolate milk. Had a special formula from raw cocoa and made



During the 30-year span that Lester Zook delivered milk, he went from pulling a wagon to peddle the milk to delivering by car.

our own syrup."

Lester wishes he had a picture of how they used to cool their milk before bottling it.

"The top container had holes in it. It set on top of a cone shaped one (small end up). The cone was filled with ice and water. The milk ran out the holes in the top container and down over the cone with ice in it. It ran into a large container with a spigot. Then we filled the bottles."

Lester said they'd buy extra milk from a neighbor if they hadn't enough for their couple dozen Allensville customers. He said they also sold milk to Mrs. Laura Kennedy who made homemade ice cream. "She had a good ice cream business in Allensville," Lester remembers.

"We liked it (delivering milk)," Lester says. "Now semi-trailer trucks come in with it at the store. What a difference!"

Lester stopped delivering milk in the late '40s and went on to, at different times, own a general store in Allentown, type-set for the Belleville Times, and work at the Valley View Nursing Home.

"I guess I had too many jobs," Lester replies with a grin. "But I read stories of my grandparents and great-grandparents, and I can see how I got it honestly!"

He speaks fondly of his wife Amanda who passed away four years ago.

"I want to give recognition to my Lord, my beloved wife Amanda of 56 years, and out four children, for the ability to serve the church and the community for many years. Amanda and I worked together all our lives. When I was at the nursing home, she was the receptionist there. Those were the best years of my life."

Lester has four children, 11 grandchildren, and seven (soon to be eight) great-grandchildren.

**Nelda Peachey**  
**Delivering Milk During The '40s**

— Nelda Peachey's small, quiet house in Allensville contrasts with what I imagine his life was like when he delivered milk to his 100 customers. He lived (where this writer likes now) with his father, step-mother, and eight children — himself, three siblings and four step-children.

Nelda cooled and bottled milk in the old milk house that he says has a 100-foot well. He had a container that held 12 quarts of milk. They would fill one bottle at a time with a machine that would shut off automatically.



Ninety-five year old Sadie Byler delivered milk somewhere around 1916 to Belleville residents, offering whole milk, skim milk, and cream.

"Then we got one that would fill three bottles at a time. That was a great thing at that time," Nelda laughs. "We delivered once a day, never on Sundays. When the war came, delivery was Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays."

Nelda said that during the Depression, some people came to the farm to work off their milk bill while some just couldn't pay and the bills were forgotten.

Nelda delivered milk in a Plymouth station wagon that looked much like a van does today. "We delivered in all kinds of weather. We hauled milk in the manure spreader because of the snow. Wouldn't dare do that now. We had rougher winters then, worse than now. Snow would be up near the telephone wires. We traveled

through the fields. We got out somehow. I don't ever remember missing a day."

Nelda asked me if we were able to keep our drifting driveway open this winter. I said between us shoveling and our kind neighbors plowing us out, we managed. He laughed and said of our driveway, "If you can get up there, you can get most anyplace." After this past winter, I knew what he meant.

Nelda showed me his only remaining bottle from his Meadowbrook Dairy.

"We took them out by the truck loads (to get rid of). Never dreamt they'd be going the way they are now. We gave \$8 for a gross (144), bought new. Now they

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## Homestead Notes



Nelda Peachey of Allensville delivered milk during the 1940's and saw the coming of pasteurized milk.