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# Henry McElwee, Medina grocer

BY C. W. LATTIN

Our photo is that of Henry McElwee, taken in April 1951 when he was about to retire after being in the grocery business for 63 years.

For 43 of those years, his grocery store was located at 511 Main St. in Medina. Before that, he worked as a clerk down the street in the old Cooper grocery store. When Mr. McElwee sold out, his store front was taken over by Craig Ross for a used furniture and book store.

Henry McElwee was born in 1872 in Medina and died shortly after retiring in June 1951.

This was an era of many independent grocery stores, way before the now-commonplace supermarket.

Upon his retirement, The Journal-Register interviewed him for reminiscences of his 63



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years in business. He got his start in the trade before cans, boxes or bags were within reach of the grocery clerk. He said

"Everything came in barrels, and we had to measure such things as sugar, flour and coffee on scales and wrap it in flat

He also remembered when home baked bread was so much the custom that he had trouble selling six loaves of baker's bread a day.

Important along his observations was the fact that "... People had more time years ago ... They used to come in a visit quite a bit ... maybe pick up a bunch of crackers and cheese for lunch since restaurants weren't so prevalent then."

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sheets of paper. Molasses came in barrels too, a hoghead or a hogsit." Chuckling, he remembered the day they were unloading a barrel of molasses at the Cooper store when all of a sudden its lead came out of it. He said, "They pretty much swam in it that-day."

Over the years, he made many observations. He recalled seeing quarrymen with wheelbarrows come to buy a barrel of sugar or flour, a box of cheese or even a barrel of salt pork, enough for their winter's eating.