

The Pedler's Cart

THE model shown on the cover is eight and a half inches high, sixteen inches long, and six inches wide. Every part is accurately to scale and built just as in life size, including all parts of the wagon. Much of the perfectly made tinware is smaller than a ten-cent piece. The kerosene lantern stands less than three-quarters of an inch high. The wooden clothespins in the basket are one-quarter inch long. The wooden wheels of the wagon are neatly fitted with steel tires, and the drawers pull out to display tiny rolls of lace, ribbon, and spools of thread.

Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, and author of *Travels in New England and New York* (1796-1808), in commenting on the origin of pedlars, tells how the manufacture of tinware was started in Connecticut about the year 1740, and says, "The manner in which this ware is disposed of, puts to flight all calculation. A young man is furnished by the proprietor with a horse, and a cart covered with a box containing as many tin vessels, as the horse can conveniently draw. This vehicle within a few years has indeed been exchanged for a wagon; and then the load is doubled. Thus prepared, he sets out on an expedition for the winter. . . . At the commencement of summer they return to New York; and thence to New Haven by water; after selling their vehicles and their horses. . . .

. . . Every inhabited part of the United States is visited by these men. I have seen them on the peninsula of Cape Cod, and in the neighborhood of Lake Irie; distant more than six hundred miles. They make their way to Detroit, four hundred miles

farther; to Canada, to Kentucky; and, if I mistake not, to New Orleans and St Louis." (Vol. 2, Letter I.)

(*Publisher's note, appended to Letter I, Vol. 2, Travels in New England and New York, by Timothy Dwight.*)

"The business of selling tin ware, has within a few years undergone a considerable change. Formerly the pedlar's load was composed exclusively of this manufacture: now he has an assortment of merchandize to offer his customers. He carries pins, needles, scissors, combs, coat and vest buttons, with many other trifling articles of hardware; and children's books, and cotton stuffs made in New England. A number set out with large waggons loaded with dry goods, hats and shoes; together with tin ware, and the smaller articles already mentioned. These loads will frequently cost the proprietor from one to two thousand dollars; and are intended exclusively for the Southern and Western States.

"It is frequently the fact, that from twenty to thirty persons are employed by a single house, in the manufacturing and selling of tin ware and other articles. The workmen, furnished with a sufficient quantity of the raw materials to employ them for six months, are sent on by water, in the autumn, to Virginia, North and South Carolina, or Georgia. They station themselves at some town in the interior, where the employer, or his agent, has a store, well furnished with such articles as the peddlars require. As the stock of each peddler is exhausted, he repairs to the store for a supply. In this way, a large amount of goods are vended



MR. HERBERT B. SWETT, TINSMITH, OF ELKINS, NEW HAMPSHIRE, WITH HIS PEDLER'S CART, STILL IN OPERATION, SUMMER, 1927

during the six or eight months they are absent.

"Some idea may be formed of the extent to which this business is sometimes carried, from the fact, that immediately after the late war with Great Britain, which terminated in 1815, ten thousand

boxes of tinned plates were manufactured into culinary vessels in the town of Berlin, (Connecticut,) in one year. Since that time, however, the quantity demanded for this market, has greatly diminished.—Pub."