

JAMES W. BUNKER STORE
SOUTH GOULDSBORO, MAINE

Kenneth Hamilton and Earle Tracy, Sr. helped the editor construct this store, it's appearance, it's contents, and told something about the folks who worked there.

The store was one of the first, probably the first, in South Gouldsboro and it stood a very few feet from the present Winter Harbor Agency (1954). The driveway which leads into Earle Tracy's (Sr) garage was on the North side of the store, the store extended southward close to the road for 60 feet. Kenneth Hamilton remembers there were four steps up to a platform, 8-10 feet wide, which ran the length of the building. The store was 50 feet deep and had on back a shed 25 feet deep under a roof which slanted to meet the hillside.

There were two large windows on the front of the store, one on each side of the door, where overhead was a sign "JAMES W. BUNKER" with "GENERAL STORE" underneath. Kenneth remembers painting this sign every spring. The store was painted white, had clapboards on the front and shingles on the sides. It was one of two stores belonging to "Uncle Jim and Aunt Lenora" (daughter of William Tracy). The 60 foot building was always called "The Store" and the smaller building south of it, with only a driveway between which curled around the store, was called the Furniture Store. South of these two buildings, where Earl's Tracy's home is located, was a field with apple trees.

Dates, as always, are hard to find, but it is known that Aunt Lenora died last year at the age of 96, which takes her birth date back to 1856. It is also known that she married Jim Bunker when she was 19. We learned that she "came there" to live at the time she was married-1877, and it is known that her father helped Jim Bunker, a lobster fisherman, build his home, the present Earl Tracy, Sr's residence. The main house was built first, then the shed, now the Tracy's kitchen, the barn, now the office of the Winter Harbor Agency (1956). When the store was, is not known, however, it is safe to assume that it would be soon after he finished his home or about 1880.

"Drummers" were salesmen who came by road, driving one or a pair of horses to show their samples to James and Lenora Bunker. When Aunt Leonora likes the salesman, she put him up over night and cared for his horse overnight in the Bunker stable. The story has been handed down in the family, that one drummer was there the night of Nov 26, 1898 when the steamer "Portland" sank.

Drummers came by land, but the goods ordered came by water, by EXPRESS. The merchandise arrived in Bar Harbor on the J. T. MORSE, a side wheeler, from Rockland, then by Maine Central boats from Hancock, Waukeag Ferry. Then the goods were transferred to the MARJORIE and later the SCHOODIC and landed in South Gouldsboro 1000 feet south of Colwell & Ford wharf, at a spot to be identified by a brick house out some distance in the water which was once part of the sardine factory.

Aunt Lenora's chair beside the big south window on the front of the store, allowed her to see most everything going on. It was her responsibility too see that the women and children could find anything they asked for. All kinds of clothing for both adults and child, yard goods, needles and thread, filled the shelves.

Knowing that "Uncle Jim's" chair was by his desk at the south-east corner, one can picture how they could talk back and forth when business was quiet, along the narrow channel, behind the counter. Aunt Lenora's province extended to the two large tables, which about filled the center of the floor, where men's shirts and wearing apparel were arranged in neat piles. It is understood that she had a small counter, not far from her chair, where she kept cards, tablets, pencils and school supplies.

Store hours were from 7 in the morning to 9 at night, and Saturdays until 10.

Uncle Jim and Kenneth used the two Bunker horses, Kit and Prince for a delivery service. Uncle Jim went as far as Winter Harbor, taking orders morning and delivering afternoons, every day or every other day, depending on needs and weather. Kenneth confined his deliveries to South Gouldsboro, going only as far as the Edwin Boyd house, 'up the hill to Willie Hammonds and back, never going north of the James Bunker residence, and the present home of Earle Tracy Sr. Afternoons when the two men were away Aunt Lenora ran the store.

Kenneth got around quite a bit more when buying eggs. He paid 8 cents a dozen and got them at the different peninsul farms, especially at Eddie Bunkers, West Gouldsboro. Uncle Jim, Aunt Lenora and Kenneth sateyed up into the wee small hours, occassionally all night, candling eggs which were sold at the store and shipped out in case lots to James brother, George, in Brighton, Mas.

Mr. Tracy had some old ledgers from the store and found that eggs were bought for 8 cents a dozen, sold for 20 cents for two dozen. In 1913 oil skins sold for 3.00, similar garments now sell for 13.50 (1956). In 1918 a pair of rubbers were .80, a half cord of wood for 2.62 in 1917, overalls for .50, two cans of salmon for .40.

The Furniture Store was a two story building 50 x 30 ft. Actually it was used for both furniture and grain with a few barrels of flour stored there in reserve. One can picture that from time to time, as Aunt Lenora sat by her big front window, that she would look down the hill leading to the shore, turn to Uncle Jim and say, "Here comes Kenneth with a load of furniture". It was a hard pull up the hill for Kit, but he was a very knowing horse. When we had a heavy load said Kenneth, Kit knew how to go past the door, turn off to the right the proper distance and judging it just right, back down grade and right up to the door. Kenneth carried the light furniture up stairs. They kept tables, chairs, beds, mattresses, comodes, stands and screen doors. However, a third of the whole store was given over to grain.

When James Bunker's health began to fail and before he died in 1929, he rented his store to Percy Walker of Eddington. He only ran the store about two years and when he decided to give

it up, he sold out all the stock he could and took the rest home.

For a period of several years when the store was empty, Aunt Lenora was so accustomed to going to the store, she often went down to polish the cases. In the memory of the ladies of South Gouldsboro now, there were times when she invited the ladies of the Circle of the Bunker's Memorial Church, to meet there. On those days she brought down large clam chowders, which she served at the all day meetings.

Next, Arnold Hinckley of Steuben rented the store. He put in an enormous ice box which he stocked with meat. He did not have time to put in other stock, for within a few months, in 1938, the store burned. A charred light pole still stands nearby, an easy to miss monument to a once thriving business. Although the General Store burned flat, the furniture store was only slightly scorched on the north side. Capt. Arthur Holt bought the building, took it apart, and from the good lumber, built himself a home. The house was purchased in 1948 by Louis Bennett for his home. The house will remain the lasting evidence of the biggest store that South Gouldsboro ever had, "THE JAMES BUNKER GENERAL STORE."