

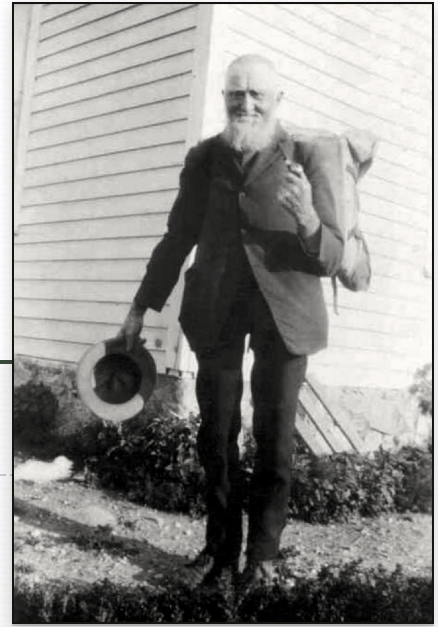
# Long Grove History

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## The Peddler

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society

Before there was Amazon.com, before there were malls, before there was a Sears catalog, rural America enjoyed peddlers as a shopping experience. Long Grove's Gwen Berg relates her memory of a specific peddler:



GWEN BERG ·  
CHILDHOOD MEMORY

*I was probably four or five years old when I was introduced to my first peddler. He was a tall elderly gentleman, very slender and badly stooped. His name was Jorgen Juhl. Out of his pack came lace, fabric, sewing needs, books – pretty things not generally seen on the prairies. He bought news from other communities he had visited on his travels.*

*The ladies would invite Jorgen to stay for supper which he politely accepted much to the children's delight because Jorgen had a particular way of inhaling his soup, which the children thought was great sport. He declined both a bed and a hayloft for his night's lodging and slept sitting up on two chairs pushed together.*

JORGEN JUHL

Danish-born peddler who walked a circuit from Illinois into Canada and as far west as California.



Out of curiosity, I decided to look in to Mr. Juhl, and see if anything more was known of him. Jorgen arrived in Chicago from his native Denmark in 1880. The following spring he worked at farms in Gardner and Dwight, Illinois. While in Dwight, he got the idea to travel the countryside distributing books to immigrants. Knowing he had to make a living, he added lace, handkerchiefs, needles, and other notions. His “circuit” spanned from Illinois into Canada, and as far west as California.

While his travels understandably gave him a somewhat unkempt appearance, he was known as someone who cared about health and cleanliness. Purportedly when he found himself with lice, he sought out a baker, and exclaimed:

“I’ve got company!”

“So?”

“Yes, little black ones. Ah, won’t you help me get rid of them?”

Then he took off all his clothes and put them in the baker’s oven. Stark naked, Jorgen hopped around clapping his hands.

“That’s – that’s the way to treat ‘em, the little black pests!”

In 1929, at age 78, near King City, California, as he was attempting to hail a passing car, Jorgen stepped too far into the roadway and was struck by the car. He passed away the next day.

Gwen passed away in 2009, but left us with this and many other interesting stories which the Historical Society recently put together in book form, “In Retrospect – Stories of Early Long Grove and Lake County, Illinois”.