

The Harvey Store

By Josephine Harvey Swinnerton

This story was written by Josephine as she looked back on her life as a young girl in the 1860s, visiting her father's mercantile or store that sold many different items.

Our store was a nice place to play. There were shelves and a counter along one end and shelves along one side. All around everywhere were racks with shovels of every kind, racks with picks and racks with axes of all sizes.



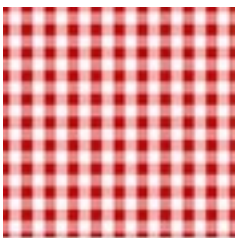
Shovels, picks and axes were tools used by miners when looking for gold.





The shelves behind the counter had a few bolts of calico, gingham, muslin, and woolen cloth for the women; and boxes of pretty ribbons and thread and buttons. Some buttons were of pearl and some of white china.

Others were colored, spotted, checked, or had little flowers on them. If I was very careful, I could have the box on the counter and play with the buttons.



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*Gingham (left), Calico (right) and muslim were all cloth used to make dresses, skirt, shirts and other clothing. It came on a **bolt** or roll.*

There were piles of men's shirts, wool trousers, and heavy socks. Stiff white shirts and fine blue flannel shirts that were worn over them were kept in boxes. The nice black doeskin trousers the men wore with these shirts were



also kept in boxes. The men would tuck them inside nice boots with a red square on top. The two shirts, doeskin pants and red topped boots were their dressiest suits.



There were wooden boxes of boots under the shelves and, out in front of the counter, were boxes of coarse common boots and heavy shoes, called brogans and stogies. I always wanted a pair.

They squeaked so loudly and clumped, clumped as one walked, and it wasn't any

use to say "walk lightly, because you couldn't



On one end of the counter was a desk where Father and my brother, Bennie wrote letters and kept records. On the other end was something queer look-

ing and nasty smelling – a square chunk at first – about 10 inches square. A man would say “Give me a dollar’s worth”, and the clerk would take something that looked like a cheese cutter and press the handle and the blade would go down and cut off a big slice. No matter what else the men bought, they always had to have “some of that”.



Right across from it was the dried fruit in gunny sacks, right under the fish. Sometimes the fruit came pressed down hard in little kegs. On the shelves on the side were boxes of tea, cans of lard, tin ware and knives and forks. In front of them were sacks of flour, sugar, salt, coffee, common beans and

potatoes. There were many sacks of pink beans as they were the miner's chief food.



When the man had bought all he wanted for that time he would say “Now, Harvey, how much is it?” Father would take a low narrow book and write everything down and make figures to show how much it all cost. Then he would pull out a little box with a brass upright rod on it. This rod had another rod resting on its top. Each end of this rod had a little brass pan fastened to it by little chains. The box had a drawer in it that had little pieces of metal and disks of different sizes.

Father would put a disk or two or three pieces of metal into one pan. That showed how much the things cost. The man would take a leather sack about three inches wide and eight or ten inches long from his pocket and he would pour gold dust into the other pan until the pans swung even. If he put too much in, he would take a little brass spoon and put some gold back into his bag. When the pans balanced, the things



were paid for and Father put the gold dust into a bag he took from the safe.

Sometimes, before they began to weigh the gold, I was lifted up to the counter, “as a referee”, the men would say. Sometimes Father put me up and

sometimes the man, according to which side of the counter I was on. When everything was settled, the man would often say, “Oh, I have forgotten something.” Then he would take out another little sack and pour some specimens (of gold) into his hand and find one and give it to me.

Then I would shut my hand very tightly around it and run home as fast as I could and put it in my sack. I must have spent them sometime, but I can't remember doing it and I didn't have them when I grew up.

