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What A Racket!

(The Old Racket Store)

By Pat Kourt

During the early years of this century, citizens of growing communities depended on stores to supply needs that couldn't be grown, raised, or made at home. One of the most intriguing stores to all ages was the general merchandise store that made eyes twinkle, mouths drool, and hearts ache with longing. In many Oklahoma towns, this hub of activity was called the **racket store**.

The origin of the term **racket** is somewhat hazy, but according to slang of the time, **racket** referred to any legitimate business or occupation. In the nineties, however, racket conjures up the idea of a business that is illegal and undermines the consumer.

Thinking back to the legitimate meaning of **racket**,

George Donley of Elk City remembers that some of his happiest childhood afternoons were spent in Turner's Racket Store in Clinton. George, along with Harry

Turner (the owner's son), loved to eye the candy that could be bought for twenty cents a pound. Their favorite purchase, though, was a nickel's worth of caps to keep their silver cap guns smoking as they acted out their desperado games.

Located in the Mississippi Building on Frisco Street, the store became a focus for unplanned social gatherings. Of course, Saturday was the most special time to visit the racket store. Chores had been done; eggs and cream had been sold; the horse and buggy had been left at the nearby wagon yard. Families mingled and exchanged news of the past week. Women bought yard goods and notions for sewing while children planned their birthday and Christmas lists in the fascinating maze of variety. What a fun racket it was!

THE OLD RACKET STORE

Miscellany. A tempting medley of confections...

Rubbery licorice sticks hard, tart lemon drops cool red and white peppermints sugary, gooey gum drops

A dazzling emporium of gifts... lace-edged handkerchiefs; delicate gold brooches; hand-carved pipes; warm, wool argyles;

A jumbled conglomeration of necessities... creamy Palmolive soap; beeswax bootblack polish; smooth, starched gingham; soft skeins of colored yarn;

A guarded collection of toys... coarse

pages of paperdolls, fragile sets of miniature china, competitive jingles of jacks and ball, mesh bags of cat's-eye marbles.

Variety... the spice of life! ✱



Turner's Racket Store

(PAT KOURT of Thomas makes another of many WESTVIEW appearances. Having been reared in the Sentinel community, she came to SOSU and earned a B. A. in English Education; afterwards, she moved on to Thomas to teach.)