

Guide to the Peterson Grocery Store Records, 1881-1920

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Summary Information

Title: Peterson Grocery Store Records

Inclusive Dates: 1881-1920

Creator: Peterson Grocery Store (Eau Claire, Wis.)

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss W

Quantity: 15.2 c.f. (38 archives boxes)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Records of a Wisconsin grocery store and its predecessor firms, consisting mainly of financial records including invoices of wholesale purchases and daily customer orders. Also included is a small amount of business and personal correspondence, 1888-1920, in Danish and English; wholesaler's price lists and advertisements, 1879-1920; and "poor orders" listing the grocery orders filled for the city's poor, 1897-1909.

Language: English, Danish

Biography/History

In 1881, Hans Mason and his brother-in-law, Hans Peterson, formed a partnership to operate the Mason and Company Grocery Store at the corner of Seventh and Water Streets (642 Water Street) in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The store later was known as Mason and Peterson's Grocery, and, when Peterson bought out his partner after a few years, as the Peterson Grocery Store. Peterson continued to operate the business until his death of a heart ailment on September 2, 1920.

Born near Copenhagen, Denmark, August 29, 1843, Peterson married Kirsten Peterson in 1866. In 1868, the couple immigrated to Eau Claire where during his first thirteen years in America, Peterson worked at the Steven Marston Saw Mill and later at the Empire Lumber Company before going into the grocery business.

Peterson was an alderman representing Eau Claire's Seventh Ward, and, at one time, President of the Common Council of that city.

There is no information at hand on the disposition of the store after Peterson's death in 1920.

Scope and Content Note

The records extant of the Peterson Grocery Store, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1881-1920, consist mainly of financial records, e.g. orders, invoices, receipts, account books, and day books. There is also one folder of general correspondence written both in Danish and English, and a general file of miscellaneous business records. These files are often incomplete.

This collection is representative of a retail grocery store operation, 1880-1920, in a small community (17,800) in west central Wisconsin, consequently the records have been retained in their entirety, except for duplicates and obvious ephemera. However, considerable selection was apparently practiced in preservation of the records by Hans Peterson, his heirs, or consignees before their donation to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

The CORRESPONDENCE, 1888-1920, is general and scanty, both personal and business, some written in Danish (not translated). There is one letter, dated February 20, 1905, from Wisconsin Assemblyman Chris N. Saugen of Cleghorn, Eau Claire County, referring to the "Dells dam question." The Correspondence is in chronological sequence.

The GENERAL FILE consists of Advertisements and Price Lists of miscellaneous wholesalers, 1879-1920; blank forms used in the operation of the store; a few papers relating to the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association - Mortuary Calls, 1890-1892; "Poor Orders," 1897-1909; and miscellaneous business papers, cards, and customer orders.

The "Poor Orders" list, by name, those of the city's "poor" for whom Peterson was grocer, and the amount of each order. There is also a tabulation for the year 1909, by month.

Filed under Miscellaneous Business Papers, 1890, 1896, 1908-1909, is a "Claim For Rebate Under the Act of December 15, 1890, of Taxes Paid on Tobacco and Snuff;" two printed items on the Sugar Tariff, 1908; and a list of tares compiled by the Wisconsin Wholesale Grocers' Association for the "retail trade."

The Miscellaneous Business Cards are for accounts, orders, receipts for shipment, and salesmen's appointments. Miscellaneous Customer Orders are loose single sheets and two small order pads, which do not fit readily with the Day Books, in which most of the customer orders are recorded.

Folders of manuscripts included in the General File are in alphabetical order by type of material. The Advertisements and Price Lists are separated into two periods, 1879-1892 and 1900-1920, and arranged alphabetically by advertiser within each time period. The Blank Business Forms are in alphabetical sequence. The other categories of the General File have a chronological arrangement.

The bulk of the collection are the FINANCIAL RECORDS consisting of Invoices and Receipts, 1885-1920; Railroad Freight Bills, 1897, 1910, and 1919; Account Books, 1881-1917; a Cash Book, 1893-1910; a Journal, 1893; a Ledger, 1887-1894; and Day Books, 1884-1919.

There are only scattered invoices and receipts for the years 1885, 1887-1892, 1894, 1897, 1908-

1912, and 1914 through June 1917. From 1893 to 1910 invoices have been preserved in account with Girnau and Dohrman, an Eau Claire “wagon and carriage works,” with itemized listings of parts and repair costs. For the years of United States involvement in World War I, 1917-1918, and the following year, 1919, probably the majority of invoices sent to the Peterson Grocery Store have survived. For 1920 there are only three statements, January to April, of Peterson's account with Franklin MacVeah and Company of Chicago.

Peterson recorded customer accounts in two account books, 1881-1883 and 1883-1889. Thereafter, for the period 1889-1917, these records are kept in individual customer account books. He also kept a cash book, 1893-1910; a journal, 1892; and a ledger, 1887-1894. The mainstay of Peterson's records was the daybook, in which individual customer's purchase orders, with prices, were recorded daily. There are some gaps in these records and some duplication of concurrent day books, especially for the latter half of the period documented in these records, 1884-1919.

The order of arrangement of the Financial Records has been determined by the original progression of usage from invoices on wholesale purchase and freight bills to the account books, cash book, journal, and ledger. However, the thirty-three archives boxes of day books have been placed at the end of the collection, because of the large number of volumes in this classification. Within the individual categories of this series the arrangement is chronological.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information

Presented by Thomas Barland, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, June 26, 1963 and August 16, 1963. Accession Number: M63-133, M63-133-1

Processing Information

Processed by Joanne Hohler, September 8, 1972.

Search Terms/Subject Terms

- Grocery trade—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- Poor—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- Eau Claire (Wis.)—Commerce
- Mason and Company Grocery Store (Eau Claire, Wis.)
- Mason and Peterson's Grocery (Eau Claire, Wis.)

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