



**Beeshy's Shop at Ridgeway** as old-timers will remember it in the nineties.



THIS illustration, made from an un-retouched photograph taken early in the nineties, supplies an interesting bit of "atmosphere" of the days when Beeshy's was just another typical cross-roads country store.

This was the Shop as it looked when the earliest campers from Buffalo stopped in to stock up their modest larders before going on to their summer camps at Crystal Beach.

Here they could obtain a kerosene lamp or a tallow candle, a hunk of country cheese, or a slab of farm-cured bacon. Here the venerable Zechariah, village gunsmith, and former owner of the Shop when it was only one-half the size here shown, was usually on hand to greet old friends, to show off his flock of piebald chickens, to expatiate on the merits of some intriguing old flint-lock, or to offer ready counsel on almost any subject which the caller cared to mention.

This old gentleman had lived in Ridgeway at the time of the "Fenian Raid" in 1866. It was a matter of great chagrin to him that some of the local gossips insisted that the Fenians on that occasion had compelled him to chop down a telegraph pole, to facilitate their cutting of the wires, so that news of the invasion could not be carried inland. Zechariah stoutly maintained to his dying day that he had "never cut down no telegraph pole for nobody," but contemporary evidence was reluctant to agree.

The old store was typical of hundreds of its kind throughout Ontario in the nineties. On a rough wooden platform, raised a few inches above the rickety wooden sidewalk that adorned both sides of Main Street, you will discern the good old cider jug, cheek by jowl with the big stone kraut-jar. Lending an air of domesticity, a scrub-pail and a wash-board repose nearby.

One of the three old-fashioned windows exhibits the inevitable Toilet Set, cracker jar, teapot, and other accessories of fashionable entertaining in those days.

The centre window houses a conglomerate assortment of baking power, corn starch, and miscellaneous canned goods, with a hefty bunch of bananas imposingly suspended above a wooden chest of tea.

Those bananas had been transported pick-a-back, in a huge basket, on the padded shoulder of a stalwart Italian peddler, who had trod the uneven railway ties from Buffalo to Ridgeway, and had wheedled a scanty profit out of one or two skeptical store-keepers before resuming the weary journey home.

The third window presents a varied assortment of clocks. Back of this clock department was the telegrapher's cubby-hole, (Jacob Albert Beeshy was the village telegrapher) with the little home-made window through which the fateful yellow slips were passed which regretfully advised the distant kin of the untimely demise of Grandpa Jonas or of faithful Uncle Isaac, or joyfully announced to whom it might concern that ten-pound William Henry had made his initial bow on this terrestrial stage, with mother and William Henry doing as well as could be expected within the limits of a ten-word message.

Jacob Albert would not recognize today, in "Canada's Most Famous Village Shop," the little cross-roads store that he took over more than sixty years ago, but we think it would make him proud and happy to know that it has since progressed beyond his fondest dreams, that it still remains a family institution, and that it is still as sincerely dedicated to honest and straightforward business dealing as it was in his own time.



## BEESHY'S, The China Shop

RIDGEWAY, ONTARIO

*"Canada's Most Famous Village Shop"*