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Dime Stores May Be on Way Back

ANNOUNCEMENT that Oklahoma City-based TG&Y stores are going back into the dime store business is good news for those of us who are somewhat intimidated by the awesome size and stocks of merchandise in today's big general stores.

When F.W. Woolworth brought forth his idea that people liked to buy good merchandise at lower possible prices he advertised "Nothing over 15 cents." Socks, for example, sold for 15 cents apiece; not 30 cents a pair. Dishes were priced by the cup or plate; not by the set.

Low-priced merchandise still was in demand when R.A. Young, Les Gosselin and R.L. Tomlinson founded TG&Y stores in 1936. If the price was too high they didn't stock the merchandise. In a recent newspaper interview R.A. Young said: "My philosophy has always been to have what the people want to buy at the price they want to pay." That helped the original TG&Y stores succeed.

Dime stores also were called variety stores because they carried an assortment of items people needed

in everyday living. Customers could go to their neighborhood store and walk straight to the hardware counter, or cosmetics, or whatever. There was no forced zigzagging through other departments or switching counter areas. People knew where to find things.

As bigger stores with greatly expanded lines of merchandise became the fashion, emphasis was switched to big "discounts" on "big tickets" items, such as appliances, jewelry, and clothing. It took dollars to buy what dimes used to buy.

Dime stores became general stores. So did drug stores, grocery stores, hardware stores, and auto supply stores, with many overlapping lines. They may have what you are looking for, if you can find it.

General stores have always been here. In early Oklahoma many communities had only one or two stores and settlers depended upon them to carry in stock whatever they needed.

It didn't take half an hour to buy a pair of shoe laces, a few screws, or a

sack of flour. Customers didn't have to stand in long lines while others fumbled for check identification and cashiers phones to verify credit cards.

An estimated 54,000 convenience stores have sprouted on the nation's landscape. Customers patronize them hoping to get what they need more quickly than they could in superstores. Most of them stock some miscellaneous items besides bread, eggs and beer, but they're not "dime stores."

Ordering from catalogs by mail takes time, while "postage and handling" may amount to more than the items used to cost.

Pitchmen for records, tools, and diet plans, etc., offered on TV urge viewers to "call in right now" to place orders. Then they add "Please allow 4 to 8 weeks for delivery."

What this country needs is a new string of old-fashioned "nickle and dime" stores, not too big but conveniently located everywhere, so that folks can pick up a few items in a few minutes. Maybe they're on the way.