

The Runaway Baby

By G. Britt Roscoe & Spurgeon G. "Spud" Roscoe

Dick Roscoe, Calgary, Alberta, is my brother and he gave me this story our grandfather Britt Roscoe had written on the back of a Lucky Dollars Store flyer. This flyer came from the store in Canning, Nova Scotia. He wrote this on May 28th, 1969. Two dozen California Oranges for 79 cents, three one-pound packages of Fluffo Shortening for 99 cents, and so on. It was a different world for sure. Grandfather celebrated his 75th birthday a few days after writing this and died eight months later on January 20th, 1970.

This is the first I had heard of this story and found it rather interesting. It gives one a good description of life over one hundred years ago if nothing else. It took place one month before Marconi was able to cross the Atlantic with his wireless. It would be another two years before the Wright brothers would manage to fly their wire and fabric contraption a few feet. That contraption is now the forefather of everything man made that flies. There were no electric lights, radio, paved roads and many other things we take for granted today.

Grandfather was the Britt Roscoe who operated the Blacksmith Shop at the corner in Sheffield Mills, Nova Scotia. He was a character and a half and Brother Dick is an exact copy. It is amazing what those two managed to pull off and get away with. Life was not boring.

Grandfather went to work at least one morning to find a live porcupine tied to his anvil with a note stating it needed new shoes by noon.

My favourite grandfather caper was the time the traveling salesman stopped and asked him for directions to Bob Irving's General Store. If one looks at a map you will note that Sheffield Mills is at the north east corner of a square. Grandfather went into great detail with this salesman and gave him a long list of instructions complete with a map scratched into the sand in front of his shop. He probably fired up a fresh bowel of Old Chum pipe tobacco in the process and finally sent the salesman on his way.

Sheffield Mills is at the corner of a T with Grandfather's Blacksmith Shop on the west corner, Bob Rogers store across the road from the shop, and where that road ends in the T was Bob Irving's store. In other words the store was three or four hundred feet from that salesman's right elbow while grandfather was telling him in great detail how to get there. Grandfather sent him around the square. I can see him in the shop door watching this salesman enter Bob's store and actually hear him laugh. He no doubt had a beer ready for the salesman if he wanted one. This made grandfather a master story teller or a master of something and many people have had a good laugh over it over the years.



This is the old Roscoe home and Blacksmith Shop four or five years after the shop was closed. This photo was taken a few months before the place was sold. World War II was on and there was no way to get material to build anyone anything if they wanted it. My father had joined the navy three years prior to this photo and retired twenty years later as the navy's Chief Blacksmith. Bob Irving's store was to the right and Bob Rogers was to the left. Both stores are just out of the photograph. Grandfather sent the salesman to the left and waited for him to come out on the right.



This is the old Roscoe home on October 5th, 2008.

The Blacksmith Shop had been turned into an Automobile Body Shop after the war and caught fire and burned in 1958.

My blonde haired blue eyed six year old granddaughter gets off the plane in Halifax in a blue denim dress, pink cowgirl hat and I've been to the Calgary Stampede written all over

her. She runs up and said “Grampie, you must have forgot to give me the twenty dollars Uncle Dick gave you to give me.” Who needs an enemy with a brother like that? What could one do with a six year old sitting on a plane for five hours trying to decide how to spend a twenty? Everyone has had a good laugh at my expense.

Sixteen year old Teresa Simpson married 32 year old Spurgeon Roscoe on December 24th, 1891. Spurgeon was born and lived all of his life on the family farm at Halls Harbour, Nova Scotia. This union produced three children; Grandfather George Britt Roscoe born June 4th, 1894 the oldest, his brother Ernest Andrew born December 22nd, 1896, and their sister Laura Gertrude born on October 12th, 1898. Spurgeon died in 1900 when 41 years old leaving Teresa a widow with three small children. Grandfather was only five years old when his father died.

In 1901 Teresa was living alone on the farm with the three children. She was 26 years old and grandfather was 7 years old. So let’s sit back and enjoy grandfather’s description.

The runaway Baby:

“It was Nov 1901 the wind was from the westward and would just about take the hair off of a dogs back. The muddy roads were froze hard. Ma Roscoe was in the barn milking the cows. The three Roscoe children were in front of the Silver Acorn Kitchen stove where it was nice and warm getting their clothes on. The rolled oat porridge was cooking on the back of the stove and life seemed good very good then of a sudden the outside door burst open and then the porch door into the kitchen opened and a screeching child was in our midst. A 4 year old neighbour boy and all he had on was a little shirt that didn’t half cover his belly. His skin was a bright red. He was screeching “is my mommy here?” We said no your mother is not here. He turned and ran out which was a long quarter of a mile up the road.

Then our mother came in from the barn with the milk and when we told her the story she became very angry and threatened to give us all a good thrashing me especially because I was the oldest and had ought to have known better than let that baby out doors again. So while I was getting what was coming to me on this subject, there was a noise outside and our baby was back again. Mother met him at the door grabbed him up put him in the big rocker in front of the oven door with a homer spun blanket around him and then gave him a hot cup of milk. His feet were cut and bleeding and he was about all in.

It was about then that his mother landed in with a stick in her hand and making straight for the chair and “I will teach you something my boy”. But mother grabbed her and set her quite firmly down in a chair with advice to stay there.

Then mother got us all some breakfast. Got us boys off to school doctored the little boys feet and sent Mrs. Bell home to chop her wood for that is what started the whole thing. Mrs. Bell had got up that morning and there was no wood cut so she had gone to another neighbour to borrow an axe to chop wood leaving the boy in bed. After she had gone he woke up and came to our place looking for her.”

