

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

SILAS BERRY, born 1832, died 1897 of an acute bronchial disorder. The writer enlarges only on the character of the man because of him it could not be said, "The good was (oft) interred with his bones."

Six feet tall, commanding in appearance, logger and lumberman, he was a familiar figure on the Sissiboo Road with horses or oxen going to and from the village of Bear River where sailing ships on year round schedules accepted his "cut," be it lumber, logs, cord wood or hemlock bark. The hemlock bark going to the great leather tanning industry in Massachussets.

Of English extraction, his forbears came to Nova Scotia after the many wars with France established it as a Crown Colony. In 1854 he married Elizabeth Burrell of like ancestry, who bore him seven sons and six daughters. Such was the evenness of his manner and disposition that time alone prevented him (no doubt) from correcting this disparity in the sexes.

While proud of his family, Silas Berry loved animals. They had to be the best and great pains were taken to match up young steers to produce the "yoke" of oxen that would satisfy his ego. A good horse was more or less easy to come by, but a well matched pair of oxen was something else. He was called an "ox proud man" and Mr. Minard Chute recalls an incident that bears this out. The Alcorns were like minded and, no doubt, a bit of rivalry existed. One day passing Frank Alcorn's farm, he was called in and shown a huge boulder that had just been pulled from a deep hole. "Could your team have pulled that stone out?" Mr. Berry walked around it, looked down in the excavation, and turned to Mr. Alcorn saying, "No, but mine would take a better picture!"

The Berry family, average for those years, was nevertheless a big family. They had strong family ties which was in evidence down through the years. What concerned one concerned them all.

This spirit of cooperation was engendered in childhood. When the men folk returned at night tired and hungry, the team (either horse or oxen or both) would be taken by someone (more often Eliza) unharnessed or unyoked, fed, and bedded. Bertha and some of the younger ones would be helping Mother Berry prepare the evening meal.

Rearing a large family was a full time job and idle days had to be avoided. But keen sportsmen have always seemed to find a way to indulge in their favorite sport. In Mr. Berry's case, this was moose hunting. He knew the habits and instincts of the "Monarch of the Forest" and to him it was a battle of wits getting a big fellow manoeuvred downwind for the kill. The "Call" on the birch bark horn that attracted the big antlered bull in the first place was all a part of the know how of successful hunting.

On one such trip Mr. Chute further recalls that the story was told about Mr. Berry falling on ice lightly covered with snow. Down in a heap, packs, gun, and all. Hitting his head and elbows Mr. Berry's companions realized he suffered some pain; and although they knew him well, perhaps they would not have been shocked to have heard a choice word or two. However, he pulled himself up slowly and with some emphasis said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the rest of my life."

A Christian he was in word and deed. Some people on sensing a beggar approaching go through moments of indecision. How can I avoid this? How little can I get by with? Others welcome the opportunity; it gives them a sense of having done something noble and if witnessed much greater the glow of self-satisfaction. Silas Berry did not react these ways. With him it was always "Never let your left hand know what your right doeth."

On that note I leave him to you, his progeny, with the reasonable knowledge that "Goodness and Mercy followed him the rest of his life and he dwells in the House of the Lord forever."

Pandy, this sketch of Silas Berry, my grandfather, was sent to me by my cousin, Larry Snell, of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Silas Berry was the father of my mother, Bertha Berry Shepard

Grandma Thelen

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