



FOCUS

Portland-on-the-Rideau

FALL 1965

Thinking Back Over The Last 75 Years.

It's not always easy to say you were wrong,
Or admit you made a mistake.
Experience shows and everyone knows
It's simpler to "Give than to take"
It's easy enough with a crowd at your back
To laugh down the other chaps view,
But when someone lets fly at the mote in
your eye
That's a horse of a different hue . . .
So when you discover the error you've made
And you end second best in the fight . . .
You don't have to bawl or snivel or crawl,
Just walk up and say "You were right" . . .
There's many who'll tell you your just "eat-
ing crow"
And doubtless you feel like a fish . . .
And take it from me when you're hungry
you'll see
That "Crow" makes a wonderful dish.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Sim Scovil

Portland-on-the-Rideau

SPRING CARD

1849 - - - - 1949

ONE - HUNDRED - YEARS

My Grandpa said, "When he was reared
Of packaged goods he'd never heered",
And on his good old face appeared
A smile of sweet content.

But everything is different now,
For tins and boxes hold our chow,
And colored labels tell us how
To cook for any gent.

No reaching in the barrel for pork,
Just open up a tin of Spork.
No soup-beans soaking overnight
But Campbell's tins with labels bright
Seem Heaven sent.

Now, bottles tall and labels bright,
Make on the shelves a lovely sight,
So easy now to cook things right.
For tea, to reach down in a bin
Would seem a sin.

What, in the future, shall we eat
When at the board we take our seat,
Bright colored pills may be our fare—
The 'All Food Concentrate' be there,
Beware.

One Hundred Years since Grandpa's day,
Just twenty-five has been my stay,
How many more can we arrange
To wrap up goods and make the change,
I cannot say.

—S. S. SCOVIL.

Portland-on-the-Rideau

SPRING 1950

I wonder what you're doing, as I write this
little rhyme,
I wonder if you're dreaming, wide awake,
I'll bet you often stop your work and take a
little time
To let your memory wander to the lake.

"I wonder if the cottage roof has stood the
winter's snow?
Or if perhaps the windows are all sound?
I wonder if the engine in the motor-boat will
go?
Or if the flowers are peeping through the
ground?"

Did I leave the keys at Scovil's? or bring
them back to town?
I wonder if that Eaton order came?
I'll have to write and ask him if the new
electric stove
Is safe inside or standing in the rain? . . ."

So . . . As your mind is turning to the cottage,
there in town,
I'm thinking too about the summer time.
The intervening months will soon roll round,
Then you'll rest up, while I'll be wearing
down . . . I hope.

Sim Scovil

In 1924 S. S. Scovil, better known as Sim, reopened the store that his grandfather had purchased in 1849 and operated until his death in 1880. Money was scarce in those days and as the depression arrived and deepened Sim had to work desperately hard to build up the business. The bulk of his income, if anything that small could be called bulk, came from the cottagers on the Big Rideau Lake. Without hydro and the conveniences that it brings to cottages, the season began on May 24 and ended on Labour Day and during that time Sim did everything in his power to make his customers comfortable. He kept keys, arranged the opening and closing of cottages and had orders ready and waiting for the first trip across the lake. He picked up the mail daily, relayed telephone messages, picked fresh vegetables from his garden as requested and delivered groceries and ice around the lake. He cheered births and marriages, sympathized with loss of loved ones and in bad weather took stranded travellers into his home. He was in the store from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day including Sunday, boats were moored at his dock and cars parked all over it, at no charge. Accounts were carried all summer, no interest. Those were the days!

But over and above all this he sent greeting cards, a thank you and Christmas card in late Fall and another each Spring to say that the store was spruced up and ready for another summer. After a few years these cards became less formal and he took to verse, some of it plagiarized and much of it his own, they were funny and became almost a cult, there are still collections of them in parts of Canada and the U.S.A. Recipients awaited their arrival with pleasure and often answered in verse.

Sim continued to deliver his style of wit and wisdom until ill health forced him to close the store in his 78th year. A few of the cards are reproduced here to remind readers of a happier, bygone time.

Portland-on-the-Rideau

Spring 1946



Since you left here last fall. I have become a grandfather twice. Hence the following:—

GRANDFATHER'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Where my hair is getting thin
Sketch a little wavelet in.
Where my chin has waves receding
Make it square, and I'll be needing
Something done to eyes and nose;
Do your best for where it shows.
If my mouth appears too wide
Let your conscience be your guide.
Trim my stomach in to fit,
Do not show too much of it.
Surely it can't be a sin
To make sure my kith and kin,
When they take the Album out,
Will repeat without a doubt;
"Too bad Grand Pop had to die,
He sure was a Fin-Up Guy."

SIM SCOVIL

Portland-on-the-Rideau

SPRING 1959



I smile when good friends tell me
How sorry they all get
To think while they're in Florida,
Likely I'm cold and wet. . . .
They're very sure that I endure
A chilly snowy season,
Quite miserable and shivering,
And freezing beyond reason.

How wrong they are, though I admit
It's snowy, icy, chilly. . . .
I sit and doze in my big chair.
To work now would be silly. . . .
Someone comes in, don't make a sound,
He walks about and looks around,
He thinks I've gone up to the house. . . .
Be quiet Sim, still as a mouse,
He cannot find me, off he goes
So I lean back again and doze.

So summer comes and with it you,
The sitting, dozing time is through,
I'm all refreshed and on my toes
From starting time to evening's close
I'm working hard . . . But listen, you,
The good old cash till's working too,
I'll just keep working when it's hot,
And loaf and doze when it is not.

Sim Scovil

Portland-on-the-Rideau

FALL 1964

Now when I quit this country store,
And wander 'round this shop no more,
Don't weep, don't sigh, don't grieve, don't sob,
I may have struck a better job.

Don't go and buy a big bouquet,
For which you'll find it hard to pay,
Don't hang around here looking blue
I may be better off than you.

Don't tell folks that I was a saint,
Or anything you know I ain't
If you have stuff like that to spread
Please hand it out before I'm dead.

If you have roses Bless your soul
Just stick one in my button hole
But do it while I'm at my best
Don't wait until I'm laid to rest.

Thanks and best Christmas Wishes.

Sim Scovil