

THE BLACKSMITH AND HIS FORGE by Charles R. Mabey from his book *Our Father's House*

No town or village in America was without its blacksmith before the advent of the automobile.

In Bountiful, the genius who presided over the forge was Henry Rampton, assisted by his son of the same name and later by Charles, Arthur, Walter and Fred. The first son graduated and began his own business in Centerville. He was followed by Charles, who later left to engage in other affairs; by Walter, who eventually set up his sign in Farmington and lastly by Fred.

Uncle Henry Rampton looked and acted like a blacksmith. Strong of arm, with bulging biceps, deep-set black eyes as piercing as the live coals of his forge, he greeted all comers with a jovial smile and a sympathetic voice that instantly won confidence and esteem.

It is a picture never to be forgotten to recall his stalwart figure, left arm leaning upon the bellows' handle and gently working it up and down while the right deftly adjusted the fire around the metal that was to be tempered or beaten into the shape desired. Still more exciting was to behold the white hot iron taken quickly from its miniature volcanic bed and placed upon the ringing anvil to be hammered and bent and hammered again, until one wondered, as a child will, whether that blacksmith knew just what he wished to make. Hammer and tongs, smoking forge, din and clamor, the smell of burning hooves and pungent horse manure, the small crowd of young men playing at horse shoes in front of the shop on a warm winter day, the raw jokes of the noisy men, the quick search in the refuse of the shop for calks that had been rejected or lost that these might be used in playing Jacks—all surge up above the plane of consciousness as vividly as if they were part of yesterday's events.

The cost of shoeing a horse in those days was \$1.25, the shoes and nails being furnished by the customer, and happy was that boy on the Mabey farm who was selected to take the team up to the settlement and have this chore done. Happier still was he if the smith had a waiting list, for thus several hours might be whiled away in delicious idleness.

Occasionally in the summertime a tire was worn out or became loose because of the dry weather. If the felloes were so far gone that soaking in the stream that ran by our place failed to tighten the tire, then the wheel or perhaps the whole wagon was taken to the (Rampton's) shop to be re-set or to have a new tire shrunk on. All these jobs were done in a workmanlike manner by the Ramptons, but we were happy when Charles or Fred was on hand to do the horseshoeing, because they did a better job. The Ramptons did the blacksmithing for more than half the towns in Davis County, when Henry's son George established his shop at Syracuse.

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"Walking into Salt Lake City from Bountiful seems to have been a rather commonplace thing. Frances Dinwoodey Rampton used to tell of returning from the metropolis with a baby in her arms. When she reached White's Hill, about five miles out, a man then prominent in the settlement came along with his team and wagon. She asked him for a ride and was refused. Ever after she had a dislike for this person, a state of mind which even a Christian would not blame her for.... The point is that these pioneers knew how to walk and they *walked*."