

**ABRAM WALTER ELKINS
(1890-1977)**



Pictured above are Abram and Mary Jane (nee Roberts) Elkins and their son, Robert Clarence Elkins. This photograph was taken in Corner Brook in the 1920s, shortly after the family moved there from Safe Harbour.

Abram Walter Elkins was born in Safe Harbour in June of 1890, the fifth child of Robert and Rebecca Elkins. His grandfather, William Elkins, had come to Bonavista North from Salisbury, England, and married Rebecca Granter in Greenspond in 1849. Abram's father, Robert William, was born on Pool's Island around 1857, and married Rebecca Parsons, the daughter of William and Leonora Parsons of Pinchard's Island, in 1880. Robert and Rebecca's first son, Frederick Parsons Elkins, was likely born on Pool's Island. He died in Safe Harbour in 1900 at the age of 18 years.

By 1883, Uncle Bob and Aunt Becky (as they were now known) had settled in Safe Harbour, and eight of their children were born there between 1883 and 1902. In 1886 Robert Elkins and Robert Attwood obtained a joint Crown Land Grant in Safe Harbour for the sum of three dollars. According to this grant, they acquired about 10 acres of land in what was referred to in the document as "Little Safe Harbour" and this was where the rest of their children were born:

Lenora who married Allan Carter
Annie Barbara who married Benjamin White
William Garfield who died as a child
Abram Walter who married Mary Jane Roberts

Edith Melvina (never married)
Irene who married William Vincent
Rosanna Pelly who married Herbert Sturge
Frederick Garfield who married Bride Skinner

As a young man, Abe's best friends in Safe Harbour were Steve Stratton and Bob Hounsell. Abe fished in the summer and worked as a cook in the woods camps in Millertown in the winter. Since he had to walk the long distance from Safe Harbour to Gambo in order to catch the train to Millertown in the fall, he would usually overnight at his Uncle Jerry Elkins' house in Hare Bay. It was during one of these stays that he met his Aunt Lizzy's niece, Mary Jane Roberts, who would later become his wife.

In the summer of 1913, Abe fished on the Labrador with Skipper Bill Attwood. When they came home in the fall of the year, he sailed to Hare Bay in Skipper Bill's schooner, the *Mohawk*, to ask Jane to be his wife. Wilfred Osmond remembered seeing the *Mohawk* sail back into Safe Harbour "lined off with flags" and when he asked someone what was going on, they replied: "Abe Elkins is bringing his bride down from Hare Bay". That December, Rev. Ezra Broughton performed the marriage ceremony for Abe and Jane in the Methodist Church. John Gill Davis and his wife, Emma (Attwood), were their witnesses.

Abe and Jane lived in Safe Harbour for about another ten years. Emma, their first daughter, died when she was only two years old. She is buried in Safe Harbour. Two more children, Robert Clarence and a second Emma were also born in Safe Harbour. In the early 1920's when construction of the International Pulp and Paper Company's Mill on the west coast began, Abe secured a job as cook in the Staff House there and was the first of his family to move from Safe Harbour to Corner Brook. Shortly thereafter, other members of the family, including his parents, moved there as well. Abe and Jane had eight more children after they moved to the Corner Brook.

On Sundays, when my father was young, their house was often filled with friends and relatives from Safe Harbour, no doubt sharing news and stories about Bonavista North. As a child, I never really knew where Safe Harbour was, but I sure knew it existed, as my grandfather talked about it almost every time I visited him on my way home from school. He was a wonderful cook, and used to make the best pies! He often baked a mini pie on a china plate for me to enjoy when I stopped by for a visit. I guess my most vivid memory of my grandparents as they grew older, is seeing them sitting at the kitchen table, enjoying a nip of Five Star Whiskey, and playing a game of cards. It had become part of their daily routine.

Abe worked in the Corner Brook mill as cook, then as a painter, and later he became a machinist. He retired in June of 1955. Abe and Jane spent sixty-three years of married life together until Abe's death in 1977. Jane died three years later. They, as well as their parents, are all buried in Corner Brook.

**Tom Cahill, Newfoundland Playwright, boarded with Abe and Jane for many years. He wrote these comments about them: "... They were the nicest people one could meet, inseparable and totally devoted to each other...
... All in all, a couple of nature's jewels, and the salt of the earth. "**

**Written by their grand daughter, Linda Elkins-Schmitt
Germany, January 2004**