

## FAMILY LINK WITH GOLD RUSH ERA

### Is Hamilton Smith, 95 Today, Oldest Native-Born Victorian?

By **NORMAN CRIBBENS**  
Is Hamilton Smith the oldest surviving native son of Victoria?

He was born here Feb. 22, 1867, which makes him 95 today. His brother, Garrett Smith died here at the age of 90 in June, 1960.

The brothers were born to Mr. and Mrs. Moses R. Smith, prominent early-day residents of Victoria who came here in the big gold rush year of 1858.

Whether he is Victoria's oldest native son or not, Mr. Hamilton Smith is justly proud of his family's long association with the city — and he is particularly proud of his

late sister, Miss Selina, who was a famous Victoria musician before her death in 1938.

Still spry and energetic — a lean good-humored little man — Mr. Smith lives and looks after himself in a little old brown house at 16 Montreal Street on the old Newcomb estate. He cooks his own meals, chops his own wood and walks up town most days.

At home he treasures cupboard-loads of the music — classic and popular — which Miss Selina used at her recitals and in the teaching of hundreds of Victoria youngsters.

Miss Selina studied in Toronto and in Germany, and on her return here, opened a studio on Fort Street where she draped her pianos with fancy silks after the fashion of the period.

#### TALENTED SISTER

To that studio, twice a year, came the cream of Victoria society to hear their daughters perform, and these student recitals were regarded as social events.

"She was the talented member of the family," Mr. Smith said, "the rest of us were too busy making biscuits to work at the arts."

And that, of course, is another story.

On his return from the Cariboo gold rush, Mr. Moses Smith invested his savings in a modest bakery business on Johnson Street, near Waddington Alley, and it prospered beyond his wildest dreams.

He took his sons, Hamilton and Garrett, into partnership when they left school and the boys started by sweeping out the factory on Saturday mornings. Then they worked their way through the successive stages of biscuit making.

#### LIFE WAS GOOD

"We worked long hours in those days," Mr. Hamilton Smith recalls, "and there wasn't much time left for hobbies; but all in all, it was a pretty good life."

For years the Smith firm had large contracts to supply bread and hardtack to the British Royal Navy, then based at Esquimalt. The business moved to the north side of Yates Street to a site near where the St. Francis Hotel now stands. The gold rush was at its height and business boomed.

Mr. Hamilton Smith still has a copy of a double-page advertisement in the Victoria Daily Times of 1908 announcing in big black letters that the firm was celebrating its 50th anniversary.

#### SEAVIEW HOME

Years before, in the early 1890s, Mr. Moses Smith bought property at 1890 Dallas Road at the corner of Niagara and here he built the fine residence known as "Seaview."

There were barns and stables and his daughter and two sons rode on the beach and into the country on weekends.

"Selina showed an early aptitude for music," Mr. Hamilton Smith said, "and around 1891 or 1892 she went east to study in Toronto. This was considered unusual then as most young ladies who wanted to study music went to Britain or the Continent.

"But she did go to Leipzig to study in 1899 and this added considerably to her reputation in Victoria."

Meantime, Hamilton and Garrett Smith continued run-



HAMILTON SMITH  
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Meantime, Hamilton and Garrett Smith continued running the business their father had, founded until September 1909 when it was burned to the ground at a loss of \$50,000.

"We never built another factory in Victoria," Mr. Smith said, "but we had one in Vancouver for a time."

The old Smith home on Dallas Road is now an apartment block.