

## Leaders in their Communities

Shiren Van Cooten

Moses Rowe Smith moved to Victoria from London, Ontario during the Fraser River Gold Rush in 1858. He and his family rose to prominence in their new home as the official suppliers of bread and other baked goods and confectionary items. The company, the M.R. Smith and Company Biscuit Manufacturers, received many awards and became the official supplier for various navy ships and other clients. They were called upon as the official purveyor of the British royal family when Princess Louise made trips to the colony. The company was a leading employer in the region and had one of the largest factories. It employed more than 40 people, many of them women.

Moses Rowe Smith had two sons, Hamilton and Garrett. Hamilton was born February 22, 1867, just months before Canada became a nation. After the death of Moses Smith, his two sons took over the business. Meanwhile, a year after his death, his daughter Selina Frances was making waves as a musician, just heading off to Leipzig, Germany to complete her music studies as a pianist. When she returned, her business had astounding success, with numerous students and recitals with standing room only. Selina was praised for her teaching methods in both theory and practice, and many of her students went on to be recognized for their playing and the methods they learned under her tutelage. Selina was celebrated by Lady Aberdeen, who founded the Victorian Order of Nurses in 1897.

On April 25, 1895, *The Daily Colonist* reported: “An afternoon piano recital was given by the pupils of Miss S.F. Smith at her studio, 59 Fort Street, yesterday afternoon. The following pupils took part: Masters Albert Chudley and Walter Keating; Misses Keating, Vera Keating, Beth Hall, Winnie Johnston, Edith Lombard, Genevieve Grant, Mable Fair, Meyer, Gertrude Meyer, Couves, Blanch Couves, Hornsby, Leach and Smith.”

Sometimes, the awards for pupils at Selina Smith’s recitals were presented by BC’s fifth Lieutenant Governor, The Honourable Edgar Dewdney, PC.



Pianist Selina Smith and her students. BCA J-08159

Another important individual for BC was John Freemont Smith (sometimes spelled Fremont), who has recently been rediscovered for his work in Kamloops. Although he plied various trades from owning a shoe store and prospecting to becoming the first postmaster in Louis Creek, BC, John Freemont Smith is most known and remembered for his work in government in Kamloops. He became a secretary of the Board of Trade in 1902 and was elected a city councillor on the Kamloops City Council in the same year. He held this post until 1907. In 1908, he took on the post of City Assessor, and then, as the first non-white Indian Agent from 1912 to 1923. He was one of the first fifty settlers in the Kamloops area, with only 35 to 40 settlers already there when he arrived. He initiated and led the construction of the Freemont Block in 1911 on Victoria Street in Kamloops, which remains to this day. He was born in the Danish West Indies (now the US Virgin Islands).

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