

HIRAM F. SMITH

PRINTER, PUBLISHER, POLITICIAN, BUILDER, EXPRESSMAN, MERCHANT,
LEGISLATOR, FARMER, MINER AND FRUIT RAISER

How few will remember the name, but say: "Okanogan Smith," and all oldtimers will remember one of the most noted characters of pioneer days in this section of the Northwest in the middle of the last century.

He was a printer by trade, and it was his boast that he had worked on the same press and paper with Horace Greely. "Okanogan Smith" was born in Kennebec County, Maine, in 1829, and was educated by the blaze of "pineknots" in the wilderness. When he was eight years old the family moved to Iowa; in 1841 to Illinois, and in 1845 to Michigan. He learned the printer's trade in the office of the old *Detroit Free Press*. He went to New York in 1848 as foreman of printers in the composing-room of the *Tribune*. Horace Greely and Charles A. Dana were then on the paper. "Old Horace used to send up the worst copy you ever saw," said Smith, "and I know what I am talking about, as I have set columns of it." He left New York when the gold excitement of 1849 caused a big emigration to the land of gold. Landing at Sacramento in the fall of 1850, he engaged in several newspaper ventures. He also took a hand in the politics of the State, remained in California until some time after the Broderick and Terry duel (at which he was present) and was well acquainted with both the principals in that lamentable affair and with the causes that led up to it. I have often heard him say concerning the duel that Broderick was not accustomed to hair-triggers, and that when the pistol went off, plowing up the ground in front of his adversary, it was evidently accidental, and if Judge Terry had fired in the air, instead of killing Broderick, that he would have been the biggest man in California, for Broderick was well liked and had a host of friends. Hearing of good "diggin'" in Rock Creek, he shook the soil of California from his feet, and started for the new Eldorado.

The excitement over the new gold diggings up the Fraser River began in 1858, and Smith led a party of pioneers, who came to Whatcom, and thence up to the diggings in British Columbia. In 1860 he crossed the Cascades into Washington Territory, and settled at Osoo-

yoos Lake. He reached Osooyoos Lake in the summer of 1860, and concluded to make that his home. He built a log cabin and started a trading store. Well educated, intelligent and a forcible character, coupled with his honesty, he soon developed into a leading man in the community. He married the daughter of a chief of the Okanogan tribe of Indians, and by his honesty in dealing with the Indians, as well as the whites, he gained their confidence to that extent that his word was law with them. He had one of the finest ranches in the country. He planted a large orchard of assorted fruits, and for miles around people would go to Smith's ranch for fruit, and it made no difference whether they had money or not, they were welcome to the fruit. Generous and hospitable, it was his boast that none left his ranch hungry, and he was never happier than when every chair at his table was filled. (His table seated twenty-four.)

Major R. G. Gwydir of Spokane, a personal friend of Hiram F. Smith, is authority for the following:

"He was an entertaining host, and had an inexhaustible fund of interesting stories, the telling of which made evenings pass pleasantly. One story that he delighted in telling will bear repeating. A chechaco (newcomer) was wondering how people could exist with the little amusement that they had in early days. 'Why,' said Smith, 'we had plenty of amusement. For instance, we had our select parties, and dances, at which you would find the first families represented, and that was a ten-gallon party. Then we had the ordinary party, where everyone could go that wanted to. That was a five-gallon party. These terms meant ten gallons of Hudson Bay rum was a select party, while five gallons of rum was a go-if-you-please party. Why, man! we thought nothing of hitching up to our sleighs and driving to Colville, 125 miles, to attend a first-class party, where all the first families would be in attendance.

"'I remember,' continued Smith, 'one party we gave at Fort Colville. A young Irishman was sent to invite the Fort laundress to the party, and this is the way he did it: "Shure, I say, Mrs. Murphey, will yese be coming to the party tonight? Shure, it's a selict party, mum; a tin-gallon party, mum. Shure, 181 will be there avick iv it's selict, and shure you will be there? There will be Okanogan Smith and his squaw, Charley Montgomery and his squaw, Buckskin Johnston and his squaw, Fred Sherwood and his squaw, and a few more selict squaws from the Valley [Colville], mum." 'And they were all there,' said Smith, 'and more, too, and the dance kept up for three

nights. Talk of not having lots of fun? We had plenty, and to spare.'

"Smith was appointed United States Commissioner, and some of his decisions, if not exactly conforming with the statute, were to the point, law or no law. Antone, a subchief of the Okanogan Indians, was brought before Commissioner Smith charged with some offense. Smith said to him: 'Antoine, you can take your choice—being tried by the Indian court or by the United States court; and, what's more, if you are tried by me I will send you to the penitentiary.' Antoine concluded to be tried by the tribal court, so Smith sent for Chief Tonasket to come and conduct the trial, which he did, the entire tribe attending. Antoine was found guilty, and was sentenced to be publicly whipped. The sentence was carried out immediately. A bearskin was laid on the ground. Antoine was made to strip and lay down on it. Chief Tonasket took a quirt (Indian whip), and laid on Antoine's bare back until the blood came freely. Antoine, though guilty, was game, and never uttered a groan. After the punishment he put on his clothes, mounted his pony and rode away without speaking a word.

WILLIAM S. LEWIS.