

Benton T Smith

B. T. SMITH. The general merchandise business of B. T. Smith at Rainier constitutes one of the commercial props of the town, and bears evidence to the sagacity and managerial ability of this popular and successful purveyor. Mr. Smith was born near Woodburn, Marion county, this state, February 18, 1863, a son of Joseph and Sarah A. (Hall) Smith.

The family of which Mr. Smith is a member is deserving of special mention among the many bearers of the name who have come from all parts of the country and settled in the state of Oregon. Joseph Smith was one of the very early pioneers who indelibly impressed his worth upon the available opportunities here existing, and built himself an enviable reputation in saw milling and general milling circles. He was born in Ohio in 1827, and died at the end of an exceedingly successful career in 1897. An humble shoemaker by trade in Ohio, he had a very receptive intelligence, and while pegging shoes for his townsmen listened attentively to accounts of better prospects in the remote west. Accord-

ingly, he crossed the plains in 1847, lived for a time in Salem, Marion county, and thereafter settled on a farm near Woodburn, the same county. Soon after coming here Mr. Smith married Sarah A. Hall, who had crossed the plains in 1846, and was therefore here when he arrived. They lived for many years in Marion county, and then located at Buena Vista, where Mr. Smith engaged in saw milling for about six years. He seemed to have a particular aptitude for this occupation, and recognized it as one of the leading industries of his adopted state. From Buena Vista he went into Tillamook, Tillamook county, and started the first steam sawmill in the place, and started in the first shipping in the county. He became very prominent in the town and was an active factor in the general upbuilding of that section. After six years of success in Tillamook he sold out to the Truckee Lumber Company of San Francisco, and then moved into Oregon City. After a year's visit to his home in the east he returned to Oregon and settled in Rainier. Here he again engaged in saw milling, built a mill of one hundred thousand capacity, the largest in this vicinity, and conducted the same with increasing success for ten years, or for the remainder of his life. He was a man possessing strength of character, force and determination, and just such have always been needed in growing and comparatively crude communities. Of the eleven children born to himself and wife, B. T. is the seventh oldest, the other children being: G. W., of Astoria; W. P. A., of San Francisco; Clementine, of Oregon City; Ida, who is deceased; R. B., of Portland; Martha H., of East Oregon; Celia, of Tillamook; Homer, who is deceased; Milton, of Rainier; and Andrew, who is deceased.

After the death of the elder Smith, B. T. and his brother conducted the saw milling business in Rainier for some time, but later disposed of the business, which is now known as the Reed Mill. Mr. Smith remained at home until about 1897, and even while attending the public schools began to learn all about saw milling when quite a small boy. In time the business came to be known as the Joseph Smith & Sons enterprise, and the boys took an active interest in promoting the lumbering interests. Mr. Smith inaugurated his general merchandise business in Rainier in 1901, and though comparatively new at the business has built up a large and lucrative trade. Also he is engaged in buying and selling shingles, cord wood and piling. As proof of his lasting interest in Rainier he has invested heavily of his savings in town and country property, and owns half a block in the village. He is prominent in promoting all worthy and helpful enterprises, and is regarded as one of the public spirited and progressive citizens of the common-

wealth. He is a Republican in political affiliation, and fraternally is associated with the Woodmen of the World and the Modern Woodmen of America, in which latter organization he is a member of the Venerable Council. Through his marriage with Ida J. Crosley, a native of Illinois, one child has been born to them, Georgie Jaunita.

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