



James Parker Smith Ballantyne
1879-10-11 to 1960-10-24

Son of Stewart Nelson Ballantyne and Margaret Ann Smith.

Husband of Mable Louise Ripley (M. 1911 in Ottawa)

Husband of Edith Emily Bolton (M. March 1, 1947 in Brampton, Ont.)

Father of: Charles James Ripley Ballantyne, Ella Lovering England, Stew Ballantyne, James Parker Smith Ballantyne, Johanna Margaret Ballantyne, Albert Edward Ballantyne and Thomas Henry Ballantyne.

Created on February 5th, 2017 by Jim Ballantyne

Compiled from newspapers, Nellis England's genealogy research and family stories.

1891 census shows Smith as 11 years old.

James Parker Smith Ballantyne was born November 10th, 1879 at Cape George, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia, on a farm that had been first settled in 1816 by his great-great-grandfather, a British army corporal. He was one of a family of five boys and three girls. As a boy of 12, he was apprenticed to a blacksmith but, after working for \$1 a week for three years, decided there was an easier way to earn a living than shoeing horses.

In the fall of 1900, he went to Butte, Montana where he worked in a copper mine for two years. Returning to Nova Scotia, he was 6 foot 3 ½ inches and weighed 220 pounds. He tried his hand at fishing and realized there was no more money fishing than there was shoeing horses. In 1904 he was hired onto a survey crew pushing the transcontinental railway through Northern Ontario, working as a packer where his job was to carry 300 pound packs of food and supplies to crews working ahead of the rail line.

During one of the periods of relaxation the crews were in a bar and got to talking of exploits of strength. One of the men got to betting for \$100 he would go get a man who could carry 500 lbs. for 100 yards. The individual brought in Smith who proceeded to carry the load. Rip asked how he did it and 300 lbs. was placed on a tramp line and a bag under each arm.

Records show Smith was the first settler in Hearst, Ontario where he started farming near what is now the Hearst Train Station in 1907.

In 1908 he developed typhoid fever and was treated in an Ottawa hospital where he met Mabel Louise Ripley, a nurse whom he married in 1911. At one point Mabel came into his room to find him crying like a baby. He asked what was wrong and Smith told her he had overheard two doctors saying he was going to die. Mabel proceeded to read him the riot act telling him there was no way this was happening on her watch. This seemed to set the tone for their marriage as family stories tell of Mabel ruling with an iron hand. Which was surely needed with 5 rambunctious boys and one sister who held her own with her brothers.

When he asked Mabel to marry him she agreed with one stipulation, she wanted a proper fireplace built from river rock before she would move to Hearst. Considering Hearst is on the edge of the clay belt this was not as simple a request as it would first appear.

For several years, he worked in freighting (with numerous teams of horses), bridge and road building.

Arrived in Kapuskasing in 1951 as superintendent of the experimental farm. Supervised the clearing of Land by political prisoners and eventually German prisoners of war, P.O.W. 's WW1 in Kapuskasing.

Smith was subbed the Paul Bunyon of the north. He had a pony at the farm kept to pull buggies and he used to get under it and lift it for exercise.

He once carried a cast iron cook stove on his back from the store in Kapuskasing to the farm, a distance of about 2 miles. Only stopping on the bridge over the Kap River to shift the load.

Smith was from the old-school camps where at meal time you sat down to eat and you didn't talk. In a house, full of five boys it was inevitable there was some chatter. Tom being the youngest, tested the waters once too often. After being warned to eat and not talk Smith hit him with the back of his hand in the chest. This picked Tom up and threw him into the wall. Tom sat for a minute trying to decide whether to laugh or cry and decided tears were the safest way to go. This is Tom's version of events.

In the basement, there was an apple barrel. When the kids were punished, they would be sent to the basement. As Rip tells it, there were many an hour spent contemplating life while sitting on the apple barrel.

When Smith was to be married, he was working on the railway. He left the Mattice area in Northern Ontario at 6 am. The right of way was cleared but no bridges were built. He had to travel upstream a mile or 2 on the rivers, build a raft then drift downstream while poling to the other side, landing a mile or 2 downstream. He arrived in Cochrane at the Railhead at 9pm that

night. When the station master found out where he had travelled from he said Smith was either crazy or in love. Smith replied "probably both I'm going to get married".

Rip tells of going to university in Toronto and the new students introducing themselves. After telling where he was from another student approached him and asked if he knew Smith Ballantyne. Rip's response "yes, he is my father". The other student responded that he must be a powerful man. Rip questioned his response and the student related a tale he had been told by a friend who witnessed the act that Smith had carried 724 lbs. across a portage. Rip was more than a little skeptical about this and on returning home questioned his father on this. Smith stated matter of factly that he had in the form of a 700 lb. hogs head of salt port on a trump line and a bag of beans. Why the bag of beans? That was to protect my neck.

Rip stated that when you lived with a man who was truly powerful you took it for granted and often did not realize how strong the person was. He said that when they had a Model A and it slid off the road, Smith would put it back on the road by lifting first the front end, then the back.

In 1956, after being retired by the federal government he became Commissioner of Agriculture Development for Northern Ontario. Made his office in Cochrane and travelled south to North Bay, east to the Quebec border and west to the Manitoba border.

The following is a copy of a newspaper article regarding Mr. Ballantyne.

The great clay belt of Northern Ontario may never have its Paul Bunyon but until some similar giant comes along the people around Cochrane and Kapuskasing are willing to settle for James Parker Smith Ballantyne - in the flesh.

Now in his 70's, he is commissioner for agricultural development in Northern Ontario. It was when he was opening the area around Matheson for the old National Transcontinental Railway more than 30 years ago that Smith Ballantyne staged some incredible feats of strength and endurance.

In Toronto, the other day renewing acquaintances with members of the legislature's conservative committee, he was drawn into reminiscing about his experiences of 40 years ago.

He dismissed with only a casual reference the time he carried 8-- pounds of flour, with the aid of a trump line, on his back and shoulders for a quarter of a mile through the bush.

On the occasion, when on a bet with an Indian, he crossed a 1.200-foot portage packing two 300-pound barrels of salt pork with a 100-pound sack of sugar across his neck.

"The Indian had done it and I was bound that a white man could do it, "he recalled with a slow smile. "The bulge in the barrels dug into my back so hard I thought I would be cut in two. Neither the Indian nor I did it again, "he added wryly.

His job as a mail carrier from MacDougall Chutes, near Matheson, to Lassard, Quebec, was one theme that Smith Ballantyne talked about with relish. This is a 134-mile round trip three times a month; by canoe in the summer and by dog team and on snowshoes in the winter.

"Many a time I used my snowshoes to scoop out a bed in the snow," he related. "When I got down to ice, I would cover it with a balsam brush, cover myself with blankets and go to sleep in 50-below-zero weather. There was no habitation anywhere."

"In the morning I would have to use my axe to hack off slices of bacon and to chop the bread so I could fry it in the bacon grease. Black tea was my only beverage."

From Nellis England's genealogy notes:

Smith Ballantyne remarried in 1947 - Edith Bolton, a nurse from Toronto Western Hospital who for a period of time had been at Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing. This was a happy union and Smith Ballantyne built a lovely retirement home in Brampton, Ontario, where he died in 1960 with a pulmonary ailment which in retrospect, I would judge to be multiple pulmonary emboli. He is buried in Dixon's Union Cemetery, Brampton. Edith Ballantyne is a fine person and we still have close communication with her.

His only bout with illness came in 1908 when, on a visit to Ottawa, he got typhoid fever. He was in hospital for over three months and his weight dropped to 151 pounds. Right after his discharge, he broke a trail for 43 miles from Cochrane to Abitibi Lake, arriving there with a new fever. However, he got a shot in the arm from a doctor, went to bed and the next day walked back to Cochrane.

His life from then on was more prosaic. In 1910, with three teams of horses, he cleaned up \$20,000 freighting the bridge building. In 1914, he owned 20 teams of horses and employed 200 men and had \$40,000 in cash.

Later he got into the pulp wood business and undertook to ship 25,000 cords to a mill at Escanaba, Michigan. However, an embargo went into imports to the United States and when he got through paying demurrage bills of thousands of dollars, he was broke.

"I lost \$50,000 and was cleaned right out. I also owed \$14,000 to produce wholesalers at the Soo," he remarked.

Starting anew, he took charge of building bridges and colonization roads for The Ontario Government in the summer of 1915. In 1916, he became the director of the Dominion Experimental Farm at Kapuskasing where hundreds of German prisoners of war were interned. He cleared more than 800 acres during the years he held the position.

Twice married - his first wife died - he fathered seven children, five boys and two girls. All but one of the girls are living and all have been university educated.

Looking back over the years, Smith Ballantyne has only one regret:

“I only wish that I had more education,” he said. “I realized the lack of it and that is why I gave my family the chance to go to university.”