

## *The Open Range Era*

Lycenius Logan Smith  
1856 - 1937

Margaret Hulda Page  
1871 - 1940

Lycenius Logan Smith was something of a footloose man. As a single man it had always been difficult for him to put down roots and stay anywhere for any length of time, and this was not a habit he would break even after his marriage at the age of 32 and the birth of his children. Certainly he lived during a time that saw great immigration from the settled eastern states to the American west, but Logan Smith's movements were even unusual for this period in American history.

Logan began life in the familiar confines of Washington County, Virginia, where his family had lived for a number of generations. His birth on December 18, 1856 was not unusual, he was the third child born to William "Buck" Smyth and Elizabeth "Eliza" Logan,<sup>1</sup> a family engaged in both farming and tanning leather. One account has the family moving briefly to a farm near Limestone, Tennessee following Logan's birth, but this has not been substantiated through any known records. Census records from Virginia tend to paint a different picture, indicating William and Eliza were already living in Tennessee when their first child, Mary, was born;<sup>2</sup> and had returned to Virginia prior to the birth of their next two children.<sup>3</sup> Washington County, Virginia shares a border with Tennessee, so if this move did occur, it would not have been far.

What is known is that a short six months following his birth Logan's mother died, leaving his father a widower with three small children. It seems clear now, looking back over Logan's life, that his mother's death had a profound effect upon his life and likely contributed to his inability to settle in any one location for any length of time.

Following Eliza Smyth's death in 1857<sup>4</sup> not much is known of the small family over the next few years. An account written by one of Logan's daughters many years later said that following his wife's death William Smyth brought his children back to Washington

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<sup>1</sup> Aleta Taylor, Compiler; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia; ca. 1976. p. 92. [This Smyth family compilation notes that Lycenuis Logan Smyth was the third child born to William "Buck" Smyth and Eliza Logan. At what point Lycenius changed the spelling of his last name to "Smith" is not known.]

<sup>2</sup> Census Records; 1870 Washington County, Virginia, Glade Spring Township, p. 66 (stamped), dwelling 337, family 180. [This record was the family of J.A. Clark, a maternal uncle of Mary Smith whom she was living with in 1870. Data from these records indicate that she was 16 years old and had been born in Tennessee. This is strong confirmation that the family was residing in Tennessee when she was born in 1853. Census records supplied by Diana Powell.]

<sup>3</sup> Census Records; 1860 Washington County, Virginia, Western District, p. 436, dwelling 502, family 490. [This record was Caleb and Mary Logan, the parents of Eliza Logan Smyth. Listed as living with them was the second child born to William and Eliza Smyth, a son named James W. Smyth. He is listed as 4 years of age and having been born in Virginia. This indicates that William and Eliza Smyth were back in Virginia by his birth in 1854. Census records supplied by Diana Powell.]

<sup>4</sup> Aleta Taylor, Compiler; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia; ca. 1976. p. 92. [This family book gives a date of death as May 11, 1857 for Eliza Logan Smyth. Since her grave cannot be located among either Smyth or Logan family burial sites, it is suspected that she may have died while the family was briefly in Tennessee and was buried there.]

County, Virginia (from Tennessee), left the children with his in-laws, and joined the Confederate Army.<sup>5</sup> But what of the four years between Eliza's death and the start of the Civil War? It seems more plausible that the three young children were taken in almost immediately by family members following Eliza's death, as William would have been in no position to care for the children alone while trying to make a living farming. If this is true, then Logan would have been raised primarily by his extended family during the formative years of his life.

Logan's father, William, did indeed join the Confederate Army, signing on in May of 1861 with the Washington Mounted Rifles in the First Virginia Cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. The First Virginia Cavalry was one of the legendary units of the Confederate Army, participating in many of the battles of the Shenandoah Valley under the illustrious Jeb Stuart. William Smyth fought in a number of the battles of northern Virginia prior to his discharge from service in February of 1864.<sup>6</sup>

Returning home to Washington County following the war, William Smyth, now forty-three years of age, began life anew. Within a few months he had married Elizabeth McClelland Hutton, a young 21 year old widow who had lost her husband at the Battle of Seven Pines.<sup>7</sup> He also attended Emory and Henry College (studying medicine), determined to make a new start.

For Logan and his siblings, this was a probably a difficult time. The countryside had suffered the ravages of war, they had lost family members to battle and disease, and although their father had returned home, he quickly remarried and began a new profession as well. It is unlikely they had known him very well anyway, given their mother's early death, their placement with other family members, and his long service in the war.

According to family tradition, both Logan and his brother James Wallace left home when they were young and neither ever returned.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately there is no record of their leaving and there is no paper trail indicating where they went. In fact, Wallace was never heard from again, while Logan eventually ended up in west Texas.

As Logan Smith was spending his last years in the familiar confines of western Virginia, his future wife, Margaret "Maggie" Hulda Page, was experiencing life in frontier Kansas. Margaret was born near Lindsborg in McPherson County, Kansas on December 11, 1871, the third of eleven children born to Daniel Hussey Page and

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<sup>5</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of Smith Family History; Belfry, Montana; 1976. [Author in possession of a typed account of the recollections of Ida Smith Obert, the youngest daughter of Lycenius Logan Smith. However, census records indicate that the family had likely returned to Virginia before her death.]

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Driver, Jr.; *1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry*, Second Edition; The Virginia Regimental Histories Series; Publisher and Date unknown. [Author in possession of a page from Driver's book that gives a brief outline of the Civil War record of William Smyth. This record notes he enlisted at Abington, Virginia on May 14, 1861 with Company D and served through February of 1864.]

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Tuttle; *Smidt/Smith/Smyth Family*; Private Printing; Murray, Utah; 1991 (updated 20000). P. 25. [Tuttle notes in her exhaustive book on the Smyth family that William Smyth and Elizabeth McClelland were married on August 9, 1864. Tuttle notes her source as the Washington County Virginia Marriage Register I, page 431.]

<sup>8</sup> Diana Powell email to Sherman Weimer. May 7, 2011. [Diana Powell was able to locate James W. Smith on the 1860 census for Washington County, but not for 1870. Whether he had left Virginia by this point (he would have been only 15), or was simply elsewhere is not known. Powell found Logan Smith on the 1870 census for Washington County, Virginia, living with his father's brother, Jonas Smith. Logan was 13 at the time.]

Margaret Jane Combs. Maggie's father had been one of the earliest settlers to that part of Kansas, and later served as County Attorney and in the Kansas state legislature in 1876.<sup>9</sup> However, by 1886 Daniel Page had grown restless and set out for Texas. He homesteaded near Higgins in the Texas Panhandle, building a stone house to mark his claim before returning to Lindsborg for his family in 1887.<sup>10</sup> Higgins at the time was a brand new town, laid out in anticipation of the coming of the Santa Fe Railroad which was expanding westward from Wichita.<sup>11</sup> Maggie would have been sixteen years old at the time of the family's move to west Texas.

There is no record of Logan Smith's whereabouts for a number of years following his decision to leave Virginia, which is believed to have occurred in about 1873.<sup>12</sup> It seems likely that he drifted west from Virginia into Texas almost immediately, as in the years following the Civil War, Texas was the destination for many young men looking for a new start. The Texas Panhandle, in particular, was experiencing change, with the establishment of a number of large ranches that were taking advantage of the open grasslands in the Panhandle region and the neighboring Indian Territory (Oklahoma).

At some point Logan slightly changed the spelling of his last name, exchanging the "y" for an "i", which according to a daughter, occurred during a cattle drive in Texas. Her account is as follows, "While he was a cowboy on a cattle drive some outlaws stole all of the men's horses and they got the sheriff and a posse and went after them. The sheriff told all the men if they caught up with the outlaws to shoot to kill, which they all did in those days. My father shot one of them and the law was behind the men. The sheriff told my father to change the spelling of his last name and the law would back him up and it might keep the outlaws from following and killing him. As you know this was many years ago."<sup>13</sup>

One ranch that Logan rode for was the Box T, which began grazing cattle in 1879 on Camp Creek, a tributary of Wolf Creek in southeast Lipscomb County. The initial owners of this ranch were James and Tony Day, who also owned grazing land in the nearby disputed Indian Territory of Oklahoma. In 1882 the Day brothers sold their Wolf Creek holdings to the Dominion Cattle Company, which maintained the Box T brand.<sup>14</sup> Higgins, where the Page family had settled, became the Box T's railhead and supply

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<sup>9</sup> Aleta Taylor; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia, ca. 1976. p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Jaderborg; *Why Lindsborg?*; The Lindsborg News-Record, Publisher; Lindsborg, Kansas; 1976. p. 18. [This bi-centennial account of the history of Lindsborg, Kansas contains a chapter on Daniel Hussey Page, considered the earliest settler in the county. Included is a 1876 photo of the family, the year they left for Texas.]

<sup>11</sup> H. Allen Anderson; *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles)> [This article states that settlement at Higgins, "began in 1886, when the Santa Fe Railroad made preliminary surveys of the vicinity for extending its Panhandle branch line, then known as the Southern Kansas, from Wichita.]

<sup>12</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of Family History; 1976. [Ida Obert says that she believes her father left home when he was about seventeen and that he went to the Texas Panhandle where he worked as a cowboy for the Box T ranch.]

<sup>13</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of Smith Family History; Belfry, Montana; 1976.

<sup>14</sup> "Box T. Ranch", *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles)> [This article notes that the, "operation that later evolved into the Box T Ranch began in 1879 when James Monroe Day arrived from Austin and began grazing cattle on Camp Creek". This article further notes that the Day brothers owned grazing land in the disputed Greer County, Oklahoma, and that Higgins became the ranch's home base.]

center;<sup>15</sup> probably leading directly to the meeting and courtship of Logan Smith and Maggie Page.

Logan Smith and Maggie Page were married in Higgins, Texas on December 1, 1889, and they began life homesteading north of the Page ranch.<sup>16</sup> Four of their six children were born there prior to the family selling out in about 1897 to the Dominion Cattle Company (Box T).<sup>17</sup> There is some speculation that Logan homesteaded with that purpose in mind, since it was a common practice for ranches to have their cowboys homestead land so the ranch could later acquire legal deed to the property.

After selling out to the Box T the Smith family did not move far, settling at Lipscomb, Texas, some 10 miles northeast of Higgins. Like Higgins, Lipscomb had been founded in 1886 in anticipation of the development of the Santa Fe Railroad into the valley, and was considered to be a “cattleman’s paradise.”<sup>18</sup> Lipscomb, which was still Box T range at the time, was led in its development by a man with close ties to the ranch. Frank Biggers, who was for a period of time the foreman of the Box T Ranch, organized the town company, which sold land for \$3 an acre.<sup>19</sup> Whether Biggers did so on behalf of the ranch or himself is not known, but his ties to the Box T and the ranching industry are without question. It is also not known what occupation Logan Smith engaged in at Lipscomb, but most likely he worked as a cowboy, perhaps even for the Box T. Logan and Maggie’s final two children (twins) were born in Lipscomb in February of 1902.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Box T Ranch, *The Handbook of Texas Online*. <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles)>.

<sup>16</sup> Aleta Taylor; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia, 1976. p .27.

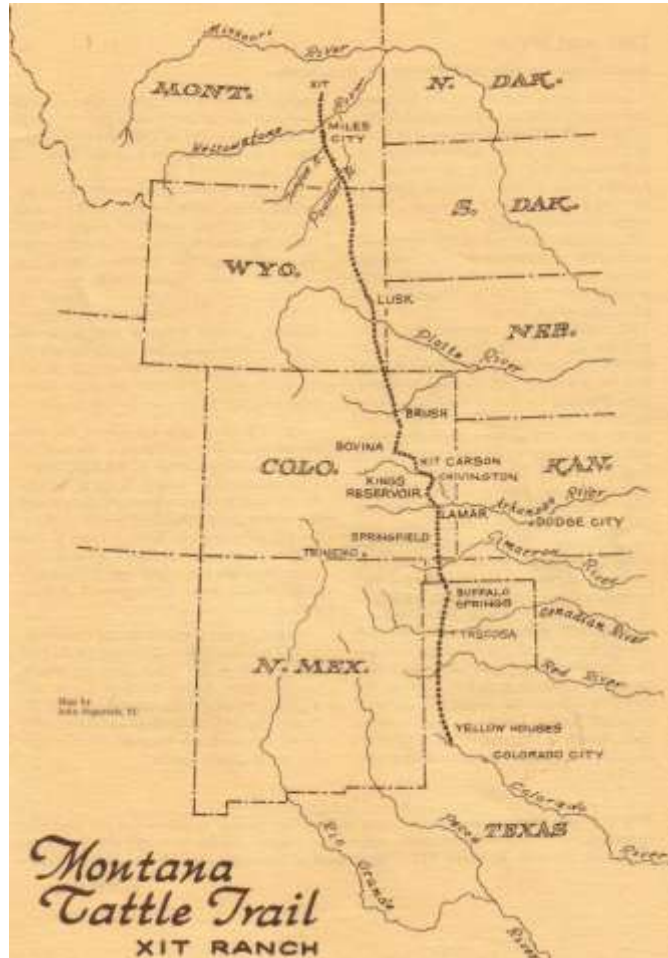
<sup>17</sup> Aleta Taylor; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia. 1976. p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> “Lipscomb, Texas”, *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online)> [This brief history of Lipscomb, Texas notes that a post office and store was developed at the site in 1886 in anticipation of the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad.]

<sup>19</sup> “Lipscomb, Texas”, *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online)>

<sup>20</sup> Dorothy G. Tuttle; *Smidt/Smith/Smyth Family*; Private Printing; Murray, Utah; 1991. p. 25.

Family history notes that at some point during Logan's nearly 30 years in Texas he also worked for the massive XIT Ranch,<sup>21</sup> which owned ten counties in the Texas Panhandle area and by the 1890's was driving thousands of cattle each year to its 3 million acre ranch in eastern Montana. The XIT Ranch's beginnings were somewhat unusual – its owners received the massive land grant in exchange for financing Texas a new state capitol building in the early 1880's.<sup>22</sup> During this period the Panhandle was largely un-surveyed and unsettled and the Texas legislature was very willing to part with a large portion of the region in exchange for hard cash. The ranch's development began in about 1885 and progressed quickly, with 781 miles of fence strung and over 100,000 head of longhorns purchased by late 1886.<sup>23</sup> Within several years the XIT began driving herds of two year old steers into South Dakota, and then eventually into southeastern Montana near Miles City. The purpose of these drives was to access northern grasslands to fatten the cattle for markets in Chicago.



It is not known when Logan rode for the XIT, and there is no known record of him participating in any of their cattle drives into Montana. He was married with children when the ranch began accessing range land in eastern Montana, and it seems unlikely he would have left his family for such extended periods of time. A daughter did write in her recollections that her father had participated in several cattle drives into Mexico,<sup>24</sup> but it is unclear if this occurred when he worked for the XIT, the Box T, or perhaps even a different ranch. One historical account of the XIT Ranch notes that it began contracting for longhorn cattle in southern Texas in 1885,<sup>25</sup> so perhaps Logan was part of a

<sup>21</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of Smith Family History; Belfry, Montana; 1976.

<sup>22</sup> "XIT, Ten In Texas"; *Hoofprints* (from the Yellowstone Corral of the Westerners), Vol. 18, No. 1; Billings, Montana; Spring-Summer 1988. p.5. [This booklet on the famed XIT Ranch gives a nice history of the ranch, especially its Montana's operations. In addition to information on the ranch's beginnings, it notes on page 5 that it wasn't until 1890 that the ranch drove herds all the way into Montana.]

<sup>23</sup> "XIT Ranch", *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online)>

<sup>24</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of Smith Family History; Belfry, Montana; 1976.

<sup>25</sup> "XIT Ranch", *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online)> [This brief history of the XIT Ranch notes that Buffalo Springs was designated as the first ranch headquarters, and that

contingent of cowboys who headed south into Mexico to bring herds back to stock the new ranch. It may have also been during his tenure with the XIT that Logan was involved in the shooting that resulted in his name change, as an account notes that, “the XIT men, along with certain hired guns, often formed vigilante posses that struck back at known rustler abodes.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1901 Logan, Maggie, and their six children left the Panhandle region of Texas and headed north for Montana (This date conflicts with the birth of the twins in Lipscomb in early 1902; however the picture below shows them in Montana in 1901 on the Crow Indian Reservation). The reason for this decision to leave the familiar confines of northwest Texas has not been recorded in history, but there are several possibilities. It is certainly possible that Logan had heard stories of Montana from fellow XIT cowboys who had returned from the cattle drives that were occurring into southeastern Montana in



1902. A number of eastern Montana families have ancestral ties to the famed

XIT Ranch, and Logan would certainly not have been unique in making the decision to move from Texas to Montana.

The other possible reason for the family’s move was Logan’s past ties to the Box T Ranch. A daughter recalled later in life that the family first settled in south central Montana at Crow Agency on the Crow Indian Reservation; and while this was near the southern end of the XIT operations in Montana, it was also near a Texas rancher by the name of Biggers who ranched at Wolf Mountain. If this was the same Biggers who was the Box T foreman and developer of Lipscomb, Texas, then he could have easily been the connection that brought the Logan Smith family to Montana.<sup>27</sup>

Whatever the case, after the family’s arrival at Crow Agency Logan initially rented a pool/dance hall and Maggie had a bakery and took in a few boarders.<sup>28</sup> Apparently it was here that Logan developed a friendship with the chief of the Crow Indians, Plenty Coups.<sup>29</sup> The family remained at the agency for about a year before they moved into the Wolf Mountains to work for Biggers. A year later they were in the Clarks Fork Valley north of Edgar, Montana, putting up hay for the Crow Indian agent who owned land

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a B.H. Campbell contracted for longhorn cattle in central and southern Texas. The first herd arrived at Buffalo Springs in July of 1885.]

<sup>26</sup> “XIT Ranch”, *The Handbook of Texas Online*; <[www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online)> [Quote taken directly from the article.]

<sup>27</sup> Brief History and Partial Diary of Lenis Smith Sinnock (as told by her daughters); Red Lodge, Montana; ca. 1970’s. [This narrative notes that, “when school was out they went to Wolf Mountains and Grandpa took care of cattle for a Mr. And Mrs. Biggers, who were Texas cattlemen who had convinced Grandpa to leave Texas and come north to work for them.”]

<sup>28</sup> Brief History and Partial Diary of Lenis Smith Sinnock (as told to her daughters); Red Lodge, Montana; ca. 1970’s.

<sup>29</sup> Aleta Taylor; *Smyth*; Private Printing; Virginia, 1976. p. 28. [This narrative does not cite its source for the statement that Logan Smith was a friend of Chief Plenty Coups. Certainly this is a possibility given the dates that the family was at Crow Agency.]

there; and by 1905 they moved farther south to Belfry, Montana, a new railroad settlement in the Clarks Fork Valley.<sup>30</sup>

In Belfry the family operated a hotel and Maggie cooked for some 60 men who were working on the railroad being built into the area. It is also possible that Logan operated another butcher shop as well, since early records from Belfry note that one was operated by a man named Smith. Later the family moved onto three different farms south of Belfry on the Clarks Fork River.<sup>31</sup> It was here in the Clarks Fork Valley that two of Logan and Maggie's daughters came of age and met their future husbands. Grace Smith married French Brown in October of 1909, and Lenis Smith married Charles Sinnock in April of 1912.<sup>32</sup>

Logan however, true to form, could not settle down. His youngest daughter, Ida, who was nine years old at the time, relates the family's next difficult move, "In 1911 we left Belfry, Montana on November 11, with three covered wagons and two saddle horses. A very rough trip. When we got to Great Falls, Montana the horses got sick and we had to ship the stock and wagons to

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. My father went with the horses and wagons and the rest of us went by passenger train. We arrived in Edmonton on December 17 and stayed in the immigration hall, which was for settlers up there, as the country was very scarcely settled. Papa got there with the wagons and stock on December 22, 1911. When the weather got better we loaded up and went to Lac St. Ann, Alberta. My father and two brothers went to work



at a logging camp for a man by the name of Adam McDonald who was a white man married to a Stoney Indian woman. My mother and sister Lenis did the cooking."<sup>33</sup>

The sister Lenis mentioned in the narrative kept a daily diary of the trip to Canada and was even more descriptive of the hardships. She noted it was twenty below zero when they left Belfry and that it took four days to reach Billings, Montana. By November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1911 they were near Basin and had to contend with horse thieves who fired shots at them. They reached the Judith River by the 25<sup>th</sup>, with the weather and temperature continuing to impede their travel; and when they finally reached Great Falls, Montana on December 4<sup>th</sup> they had been on the road for slightly over 3 weeks. They set up camp a short ways from town on the banks of the Missouri River, where they remained for some ten days before leaving for Canada on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of the Smith Family; Belfry, Montana; 1976. [Logan's daughter notes the family's movement after arrival in Montana.]

<sup>31</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of The Smith Family; Belfry, Montana; 1976.

<sup>32</sup> Dorothy G. Tuttle; *Smidt/Smith/Smyth*; Private Printing; Murray, Utah; 1991 (updated 2000). p.25.

<sup>33</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollections of the Smith Family; Belfry, Montana; 1976.

<sup>34</sup> Brief History and Partial Diary of Lenis Smith Sinnock (as told to her daughters); Red Lodge, Montana; ca. 1970's. [Author in possession of a copy of part of Lenis Smith's diary of their journey to Canada in 1911.]

While Logan and his two sons took up work in the logging camps, this was only temporary, and by the spring of that year Logan homesteaded between Lac Isle and Lac St. Ann, and they began clearing land. Using timber from the property they built an eight room log house and put up some wild hay to help sustain the livestock through the winter. Logan and Maggie remained here for the next five years when, ever restless once



again, they left the homestead to a married daughter and returned to Carbon County, Montana.<sup>35</sup>

Once back in Montana they settled on a small ranch on Elbow Creek near Roberts, Montana, where they remained until 1921 when they

returned again to Canada. This was to be their final move, with Logan Smith dying on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937 and Maggie some two years later in early 1940. Both are buried in Stanger Cemetery near Edmonton in Alberta, Canada.<sup>36</sup> Somewhat fittingly, three of their six children settled in Carbon County, Montana, with the other three becoming Canadian citizens and beginning the Smith family line in Canada. Logan and Maggie's six children, in order of birth, were Grace Josephine Smith Brown (1890-1920), Lenis Margaret Smith Sinnock (1892-1977), Chester Page Smith (1894-1938), Lorena Lillian Smith Skogstad (1897 – unkn.), Charles Ray Smith (1902-1978), and Ida May Smith Obert (1902 -1983).<sup>37</sup>

Logan Smith's life was anything but easy. From the death of his mother as an infant to surviving the Civil War in war-torn Virginia, he made his way into the open range era of west Texas. There he spent nearly thirty years as a cowboy, riding for some of the epic ranches of the period, battling rustlers, and homesteading on the wind-swept prairie of the Panhandle. From there he made his way into Clarks Fork Valley of southern Montana shortly after the region had been



<sup>35</sup> Ida Smith Obert Recollectio

<sup>36</sup> Dorothy G. Tuttle; *Smidi/S*

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy G. Tuttle; *Smidi/S*

[Most dates supplied by Tuttl



annexed from the Crow Indian Reservation, only to move on farther north into Alberta, Canada where he worked the lumber camps at nearly sixty years of age and homesteaded once again. From the familiar confines of Virginia the adventurous Logan Smith had made his mark on the frontiers of Texas, Montana, and Canada.

**Line of Descent**

Lycenius Logan Smyth, 1856-1937 & Margaret H. Page, 1871-1940

Lenis Margaret Smith, 1891-1977

Ruby Marie Sinnock, 1918-1980

Sherman S. Weimer, 1953