



# NEWS AND NOTES

from

## *The Fauquier Historical Society*

Vol. 9, No. 1

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Winter 1987

### *Profile: Governor William "Extra Billy" Smith*

(Continued from Vol. 8, No. 4)

#### **Managing the War Effort**

At the time of Governor William Smith's inauguration for his second term of office on January 1, 1864, the Union forces held half of the territory of the state, with its capital, Richmond, as its objective. The United States Navy blockaded the Confederate ports and Confederate commissaries monopolized the limited rail service; public credit was gone, and the supply of food and clothing in Richmond diminished each day.

The governor, in his fourteen months in office, did everything possible to rekindle the spirit of the people and reanimate the courage of the soldiers. He advanced a program of vigorous proposals to deal with the emergencies at hand.

These included legislation to control the exemption of state officials from service in the army, to confiscate the property of voluntary exiles, a military bill authorizing the governor to create a force for state defense, a bill to regulate prices, a plan to arm the slaves, and a method to restore the value of Confederate currency.

To combat the ever growing food shortages, Smith urged the 1864 General Assembly to appropriate funds for the purchase of foodstuffs from other Confederate states.

Rebuffed by the Assembly which also rejected his appeal for mandatory price controls, the governor went ahead on his own. Withdrawing \$80,000 from contingency accounts and borrowing \$30,000 from a Richmond bank, Smith sent a special train south which returned with hundreds of tons of rice, corn and other commodities.

Although these supplies were



University of Virginia Library

Virginia State Capitol, Richmond, May 1865

sold to the public at twenty to twenty-five percent of prevailing market prices, all expenses were recouped and there was a good profit to show for the transactions.

Foreign trade offered another opportunity to alleviate shortages. Still acting without the Assembly's cooperation, Smith employed an agent to run the blockade and provided him with cotton to trade for goods needed in Virginia.

The governor soon decided that the state should be more directly involved in blockade running. He purchased controlling interest in several

steamships. This effort paid handsome returns until the ever-tightening blockade drastically curtailed traffic in the first months of 1865.

The General Assembly became more cooperative in efforts to increase clothing supplies, and at the governor's recommendation it voted \$500,000 to buy reasonably priced cotton and woolen goods for the people in March 1864.

Meanwhile, there were the desperate manpower demands. Like Governor Letcher before him, Smith

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## Gov. William Smith

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antagonized planters by requisitioning slaves for military construction work. Confederate conscription policies were even more controversial; as governor, Smith could exempt state and local officials from the draft. But with his first-hand knowledge of troop needs, he was reluctant to grant such exemptions and certified only those deferments he thought genuinely necessary.

Particularly difficult was the additional problem of maintaining an adequate local defense militia. While the Confederate draft drained away potential volunteers, the General Assembly rejected Smith's demands for compulsory mobilization of all white males over age sixteen.

However, by September 1864, he had recruited a reserve force of 13,000 men composed of resident aliens, veterans discharged because of age or infirmity, and individuals otherwise exempt.

### Blacks to Serve?

The governor also was involved in another, more controversial effort: to authorize the recruitment of black troops for the Confederacy. This revolutionary proposal began to gain momentum after General Patrick Cleburne, of the Army of Tennessee, en-

dorsed it in 1864. President Davis regarded the idea as dangerous, but Smith urged the recruitment of black soldiers, slave and free, even if it meant granting emancipation to those slaves who served.

A conference of Southern governors at Augusta, Georgia, in October 1864, agreed, and two months later Smith urged the General Assembly to concur. President Davis' antagonism delayed congressional approval until March 1865, too late to affect the outcome of the war.

### The End Approaches

The War would be over soon. On April 2, the governor was at St. Paul's Church, Richmond, when a messenger brought word to President Davis that General Robert E. Lee was evacuating the city.

The President immediately left the church but the governor, at the request of the Rector, stayed until the end of the service.

President Davis sent word to Smith that he had a train ready to leave Richmond and invited him to join him. The governor declined, saying that he would remain. However, later that afternoon he decided to remove the state government to Lynchburg. He ordered certain archives packed and assigned the Second Auditor, Henry W. Thomas, to remain in charge of the Capitol and other state buildings.

It is reported that his wife said to him, "Smith, I may feel like a woman but I can act like a man. Attend to your public matters, and I'll make my own arrangements to evacuate the governor's mansion."

At one o'clock on the morning of April 3, the governor with officials of his government, the State Guard and V.M.I. cadets departed for Lynchburg by way of the towpath of the James River and the Kanawha Canal.

From Lynchburg the governor moved his government to Danville when he learned that President Davis had made it the new Confederate capital.

News of Lee's surrender reached him there and, early in May, Governor Smith traveled as far north as Staunton to speak at a meeting at which resolutions were adopted, calling for a state convention and advising for a "policy of peace."

Satisfied that the people had no desire to continue the war and that the Confederate government had lost the power to do so, the governor decided to return to Richmond to surrender to the Union authorities.

Enroute, he met General John Echols and others who warned him that General H. W. Halleck had offered a reward of \$25,000 for his arrest and delivery for trial as the "rebel" governor of Virginia.

When they urged him to go into hiding, he travelled to a secluded section of Hanover County to the home of his friend, Colonel Charles William Dabny. Both the governor's presence in the area and the reward money were common knowledge among the people who were, for the most part, quite poor, but no one betrayed him.

### Gov. Smith Paroled

Finally, Governor Smith sent his son and aide, Lieutenant Colonel P. Bell Smith, to General M. R. Patrick with a note requesting a safe conduct. General Patrick granted it but valid for ten days only. The governor set out for Richmond at once.

He rejoined his family there and was paroled from day-to-day until mid-June, when he was allowed to return to his home in Warrenton. In July, he swore loyalty to the United States and was pardoned by President Johnson in 1866.

Smith committed his last act as chief executive of the state on June 13, 1865. He transferred the property of the state to Francis H. Pierpont,



who had been Governor of Virginia since 1861, in the areas of the state loyal to the Union. This area included the counties which formed the new state of West Virginia and those parts controlled by the Union forces.

The Smith family returned to their home in Fauquier County, traveling through devastated countryside. There were few fences left in the area from the Rapidan River to Bull Run. Fields which had yielded good crops were laid waste. Lone chimneys were all that remained of many homes, with the nearby quarters often in ruins. Along the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, where formerly there had been "majestic forest of oak, hickory, chestnut and pine, now lonely rude huts and cabins, built by the armies of Lee and Meade" remained.

In place of "whortleberries, chinquepins and chestnuts. . .canteens, worn-out knapsacks, odd shoes, bread-boxes, and bayonet scabbards" were scattered everywhere. Marks of ten-pound Parrott shells and the hollow-base *little Minis* were all about.

At Warrenton, Extra Billy found his home unenclosed, but not wantonly damaged by the war years. It was greatly dilapidated from time and neglect, and in need of a thorough renovation.

From a relative in California, he was able to salvage enough of his property there to pay his debts and furnish him an income for the rest of his life.

As called for by the terms of his parole, he remained in the background politically. His parole was extended month by month; these extensions allowed him to travel within the limits of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York.

Until 1868, after President Johnson's proclamation of general amnesty, he attended no political meetings. Under the Constitution of 1864, drawn by the Pierpont government, he was denied the right to vote.

### Post-War Politics

On March 2, 1867, Congress passed a supplemental act, providing for the election of members to a convention to prepare a new constitution for the state. In elections held that fall, the Radical Republicans gained control of the convention and created the Underwood Constitution of 1868.

The results of the elections of Oc-



Courtesy Fauquier County Library

*Monte Rosa*, ca. 1908, Warrenton residence of Governor Smith. Built in 1845, it is now known as *Neptune Lodge*.

tober 1867 convinced the Whigs and Democrats of the need for cooperative action. They still hated one another cordially, but they had fought together during the war and they now united to present their views.

Virginia had met the qualifications for the restoration of rights in the Union. She had repealed the ordinance of secession, repudiated the Confederate debt, and emancipated the slaves.

But the Underwood Constitution would present new difficulties. It contained two provisions which would disbar from holding office and from jury duty anyone who had served under the Confederacy.

We next hear of Extra Billy's activities in politics at the state convention of 1871. Its purpose was to nominate delegates to the national Democratic convention in Baltimore to select a presidential nominee. On this occasion, Smith served as temporary chairman and stunned the convention by advocating the nomination of Horace Greeley as the only possible means of defeating the Grant administration.

In 1872, the United States Congress passed the General Amnesty Act which restored the right to vote to most of those who had served the Confederacy.

### Old Suit Brought

In the 1870s an episode from his last days as governor came to haunt him. He was involved in a suit to re-

cover gold distributed to officials by the Chief Auditor, Jonathan Bennett, on April 2, 1865. One of the most pressing difficulties at the time of evacuation was the lack of available currency to defray the salaries and expenses of the government, for the evacuation would render Confederate currency worthless.

Bennett told the governor that he had at his disposal \$21,000 in specie in the Exchange Bank in Richmond. The governor then issued an order in favor of Bennett. Of the \$21,000 drawn, Bennett distributed only \$14,333.50. The Pierpont government later disposed of the rest.

The judiciary committee of the Virginia House of Delegates had decided in December 1865 that the Commonwealth had no claim to the money Bennett had disbursed. But L. L. Lewis, United States attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, reopened the suit in 1877, in the name of the United States against William Smith, for recovery of \$5,000 in gold which he had received from Bennett.

The case was hopelessly enmeshed in politics. It came up a number of times in the U.S. Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. As a result of juries failing to agree and lawyers moving for continuance, it was finally dismissed.

Smith's fellow citizens in Fauquier County rendered their judgment by electing him that year to

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## Gov. William Smith

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the House of Delegates. He was then in his eightieth year.

### Family Honor Defended

Another episode which took place at that time was the last duel fought in Virginia. W. C. Elam, editor of *The Richmond Whig*, wrote an editorial entitled *Political Pirates* which reflected on the former governor and other leaders of the state for the past twenty years.

Colonel Thomas Smith resented the allusions to his father and wrote to Elam about it. When he failed to receive a satisfactory answer, he challenged the editor to a duel. They met on the bank of a creek near Oakwood Cemetery on June 2, 1880, at six o'clock in the morning. Elam was wounded. Warrants were issued for both, but Thomas Smith left the state before it could be served.

Later, it was discovered that the dueling pistols had been incorrectly charged. Had the two measures of powder prescribed by the gunsmith to discharge the ball been used, Elam would have been killed.

### Gov. Smith Remembered

Returning to Warrenton at the close of his term in the legislature, Smith enjoyed a quiet retirement until his death on May 18, 1887. Mrs. Smith had died in 1879, and Mary



Courtesy, Black Horse Chapter, UDC

MARY AMELIA SMITH

Amelia, his only remaining daughter, cared for her father in his last years at the family home *Monte Rosa*.

Of his children, two daughters and two sons had died as infants. Only Thomas survived Mary Amelia.

William Smith's oldest son, William Henry, had been lost at sea in 1858; the second son, James Caleb, died of fever in New Granada, California, in 1855. A younger son, P. Bell, died in 1864 as the result of wounds received when a pistol exploded as it slipped from his hand, and the youngest son, Frederick Waugh, moved to the Arizona Territory after the war and the date of his death is not known.

After the service in Warrenton, William Smith's body was brought to Richmond. Governor Fitzhugh Lee, members of the General Assembly, and a large gathering of citizens met the funeral cortege upon its arrival at 3:30 p.m. on May 20. The procession went at once to the Capitol, where the body lay in state in the Rotunda, at the base of Washington's statue between the doors of the Senate and the House of Delegates, until 6 p.m.

At that time, the military companies of the city, with furled banners and muffled drums, preceded the funeral cortege to Hollywood Cemetery for interment.

The memory of William Smith's two terms as governor lives on in Virginia. A skilled politician, it was said that he had no enemies, only opponents. A courageous man who bravely supported what he thought was right, he did not hesitate to enter military service in his mid-sixties.

In the various vicissitudes of his business life, he was able, energetic, optimistic and always ready to risk new ventures. A devoted family man, although absent from his wife and children for long periods, he was always assured of their love and support.

Throughout his life he abstained from the use of alcohol and tobacco. While governor he never served anything stronger than lemonade at the mansion. Cherishing the moral teachings of Christianity, he was a gentleman in every sense of the word, honorable, loyal and ever ready to support whatever cause he espoused.

A portrait of Governor Smith hangs in the Old Fauquier County Courthouse.

—Anne Brooke Smith



ANNE BROOKE SMITH

Staff historian Anne Brooke Smith was born in Garden City, New York on April 23, 1915. After her father's death, when she was ten months of age she moved with her mother to live with an uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. George C. Lawrence at *Suffield Farm* near Warrenton.

She went to live with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George M. Ball, in Philadelphia in 1920 to attend school, spending her summers in Virginia.

After graduating from Swarthmore College, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history in 1937, she married Albert E. Smith in 1940, great-great grandson of Colonel William Rowley Smith who was Governor Smith's uncle. She has three children, John Kyte, Hunter Brooke and Elizabeth Hepburn.

Mrs. Smith taught in the Fauquier County schools from 1957 to 1969.

She is a member of St. James' Episcopal Church and has taught Sunday School there for many years. She completed a four-year course in Theological Education administered by the School of Theology of the University of the South in 1985, and is currently editor of *The Piedmont Papers*, bi-monthly newsletter for Region 13 of the Diocese of Virginia.

Active in community service in Warrenton, Mrs. Smith is historian for the Fauquier County Red Cross and St. James' Church, as well as a popular writer for *News and Notes*.





Courtesy Fauquier County Library

**COLONEL THOMAS SMITH**

Colonel Thomas Smith, a son of Governor William Smith and his wife Elizabeth, was born August 25, 1836.

After his early education in Warrenton he graduated from the College of William and Mary in 1856. He then studied law at the University of Virginia, graduating two years later.

He established a practice in Charleston, West Virginia which, at the time, was still a part of Virginia, until the outbreak of the Civil War.

He promptly joined the Kanawha Riflemen, soon rising from Private to the rank of Adjutant General of the Kanawha Valley forces. He was then promoted to the rank of Major of the 36th Virginia and went with General Floyd to Fort Donaldson.

It was here he rivaled the bravery of his distinguished father by charging the Federals at the head of his regiment and capturing their battery. After this incident he refused a promotion which would be given him at the expense of his superior officers.

He was severely wounded at Cloyd's Farm, where his regiment is said to have lost a greater number of men for the number engaged than any other in the Confederate service. After he returned to active duty he participated in all the engagements of the Confederate forces in the Valley campaign.

Smith was promoted to Colonel and to the rank of Brigadier General. After the fall of Richmond he refused parole until August 1865, when all hope of the continuance of the Confederacy had vanished. When he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the federal government he was indicted for treason.

Not wanting to return to West Virginia, now under the federal government, he settled in Warrenton and practiced law until 1884. During this period he served on the County bench for four years. It was also during this period, on June 6, 1880, that he defended his father's honor in the duel against W. C. Elam.

He also served in the Legislature and was a Cleveland and Hendricks elector. He was appointed, by Cleveland, as U.S. District Attorney for New Mexico — though he had not sought the office.

After this term expired he returned to Virginia and supported the movement against repudiation of the State debt. It was partially through his efforts that the debt was adjusted on honorable terms.

Appointed Chief Justice of New Mexico by President Cleveland, he is credited for the annihilation of a band of the most dangerous outlaws in the history of western America during his second term.

Again returning to Warrenton, he married Elizabeth Fairfax Gaines, eldest daughter of Judge William H. Gaines on October 10, 1896 and, as a private citizen, devoted his time to the development of public works and highway construction.

Colonel Smith died in June 1918 and is interred at Hollywood Cemetery in the Smith family plot. His portrait can be seen at the Old Fauquier County Courthouse in Warrenton.

—Isabelle S. Palmer

*Museum Notes:*

- The Board of Directors voted, unanimously, to return to the original use of the name "Old Jail Museum" rather than "Old Gaol Museum" at their March meeting. The sign over the entrance will be changed as soon as possible.
- The museum will be open for Garden Week: **April 22** from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., **April 23** from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., **April 24 and 25** from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- We will officially open on Wednesday, **April 29** for the 1987 season and will close November 1. The regular schedule will be: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Members are invited to volunteer some of their free time to the museum. We need docents, aides, security personnel, jack-of-all-trades and numerous other helpers. During museum hours a minimum of three persons will be required—one of which must be a man.
- There will be two shifts each day: 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. You may work one shift each month or as many as your time permits.
- Nancy Baird will set up a schedule of work hours. To volunteer call her at Delaplane 364-2052. Some male docents have already signed up!
- Lucy Jones, docent chairman, held a docent-training session for volunteers at the museum on April 13. Another session will be held at a later date for additional workers. Call Lucy at Warrenton 347-5980 for further information.

There will be a coffee hour before and after. The fireplaces will be burning! Come and enjoy! The Old Jail Museum needs you!

**Annual Meeting**  
**Airlie, June 16, 1987**  
**Speaker:**  
**Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico**  
**Supreme Court of Virginia**

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How would you be willing to help the Society this year?

## Charles M. Harris

Charles M. Harris, 79, a former Society vice-president, died unexpectedly at his home in Warrenton on February 9.

A native of Warrenton, Charles was the son of Charles and Aileen Kerr Harris. He lived in Washington and Baltimore before returning to Warrenton in 1974.

He graduated from Kent School in Kent, Conn., in 1916 and attended the Evening College of John Hopkins University. He was vice-president of the Joseph M. Zanoski Company in Baltimore and served as president of the Baltimore Association of Credit Executives from 1952 to 1954.

He served in the Army during World War II and was retired as a captain in the field artillery.

He was a member of the Society of Cincinnati whose members are descendants of George Washington's officers.

After the death of his wife Esther Dalton he married Henrietta Marriott in 1978. He is survived by his daughter Mary H. Brown of Baltimore, two sisters, Laurie H. Dorset of Largo, Fla., and Aileen H. Rutherford of Peoria, Ill., and two grandchildren, Alexander P. Brown, IV of Washington, D.C., and Julia M. Brown of Baltimore.

A talented woodworker and cabinet maker, he maintained a shop in Warrenton, and was an enthusiastic collector of old woodworking tools.

Charles, a Society member since 1974, served on the board of directors and as vice-president from 1980 to 1984. He was dedicated to the work of the Society and personally concerned with the restoration of the Old Jail Museum. Active in community service, he served on the Architectural Review Board for the Warrenton Historic District from April 1981 through December 1983.

A gentle man, he was a kind friend to many in the community. At the service at St. James' Episcopal Church the Reverend Mr. Prentice Kinser said, "I can imagine Charlie moving through those heavenly mansions...already making new friends and greeting old ones who preceded him there. I think he stopped by here briefly yesterday for our mid-week Holy Eucharist, which he frequently attended.

"He was late as usual, but for a moment I felt the warmth of his smile.



Photo by Isabelle Palmer

Charles M. Harris talks about his collection of old tools at exhibit in 1981.

"He loved to work with wood...but primarily he loved to be with and help people. He was always out visiting folks in the hospital, or shut-ins in their homes or nursing homes, or as a volunteer driving people to appointments and to get food.

"A perfect example of how Charlie was always thinking of others is seen in something that happened just a short while ago.

"Charlie had lost some weight, and many of us, in different ways had been trying to get him to eat more. When Ninie Laing suggested that he consider *Meals on Wheels* at least once a week, he responded in all seriousness, 'Why sure, I guess I can take food to people once a week.'"

## Sale!

The Society will hold a garage-yard-white elephant sale on May 16 during Old Town Warrenton Day.

Now is the time to clean out your attic, basement, garage and closets! We can use any unwanted, but useful items which will sell readily, such as glassware, china, bric-a-brac, pictures, small tools and implements.

For the present time, bring to Chilton McDonald's house at 97 Culpeper Street, Warrenton. If no one is home leave under the front porch.

Beginning April 22, items may be left at the museum on Wednesdays, Fridays or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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## The Fauquier Historical Society

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