



LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc. BULLETIN

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Benjamin Smith: The Early Years of A North Carolina Governor

Alan D. Watson

*Dr. Alan D. Watson, Colonial North Carolina specialist, is well known to **Bulletin** readers. This is the first of a two part essay on Governor Smith.*

Benjamin Smith, scion of a distinguished South Carolina family, Revolutionary patriot, wealthy Brunswick County planter, Grand Master of the North Carolina Masons, longtime state legislator, and governor of North Carolina, clearly was a man of prominence and power in the Lower Cape Fear in the thirty years that spanned the turn of the nineteenth century.¹ Born in South Carolina in 1756 or 1757,² the son of Thomas and Sarah Moore Smith, Benjamin descended from several of South Carolina's earliest and most eminent families. Among his paternal ancestors was the First Landgrave Thomas Smith. Thomas Smith (1720-1790), Benjamin's father and a wealthy merchant, investor, and Indian trader, held manifold offices in parish, county, Charleston, and provincial government in South Carolina. He was also active in civic organizations, including the London-based Society for Encouraging Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce to which he was elected as an American member in 1760. Through his mother, a daughter of "King" Roger Moore (pioneer of the permanent settlement of the Lower Cape Fear and builder of Orton), Benjamin Smith claimed descent from South Carolina governors, Sir John Yeamans and James Moore.³

With his genteel lineage and immense wealth Benjamin Smith represented the gentleman planter class in post-Revolutionary America. In areas that ranged from agriculture to education he evidenced a progressive mentality. Yet, at the same time he never lost sight of the main chance, taking advantage of opportunities to advance politically and enhance his fortune. And there were other recurrent themes that characterized Smith's life: his infatuation with South Carolina, his preoccupation with the military, and his boundless egotism. While he enjoyed a successful career, at least as measured by most standards, it was marred by an unhappy denouement, for Smith died in penury, the shell of a once proud, even imperious man who had fallen from the pinnacle of wealth and influence.

The American Revolution launched Benjamin Smith's career of public service. It was an inauspicious beginning. According to most accounts he was an aide-de-camp to General George Washington during the disastrous American defeat at Long Island in August 1776. More

propitious was Smith's participation in the Battle of Beaufort or Port Royal in South Carolina, where American soldiers under William Moultrie repelled a small British invasion in February 1779. It was only a temporary setback for the British, however, for they eventually invaded South Carolina, captured Charleston, and overran most of the state. Nonetheless, the victory at Beaufort temporarily boosted patriot morale and allowed Smith to claim participation in a victorious engagement with the enemy.⁴

Although Beaufort apparently marked the end of Smith's active wartime service, the South Carolinian was not idle on the homefront. During the Revolution he established the foundations for his future in North Carolina when, in the late 1770s, he married a cousin, Sarah Dry, the daughter of William and Mary Jane Dry of Brunswick County. Immediately the South Carolina connection was evident. William Dry and his family had moved from that colony to the Cape Fear in 1736. Ten years later Dry married Mary Jane Rhett, maternal granddaughter of Nicholas Trott and paternal granddaughter of William Rhett, men whose names were synonymous with the early history of South Carolina.⁵

To entice the Smith's from their Charleston home to North Carolina, the Dry's in December 1778, gave the newly-married couple Blue Banks Plantation, a 3,840 acre tract in Brunswick County on the Cape Fear River, and 960 acres of land in Bladen County. Sarah also received 57 slaves from her father. Upon Dry's death in 1781, additional property devolved upon the Smith's, including somewhat coincidentally, the Cape or Bald Head Island that Dry had purchased from the heirs of Landgrave Thomas Smith. Moreover, Benjamin Smith became Dry's principal executor, a time-consuming task but probably a lucrative one considering the magnitude of the estate.⁶

Smith ably utilized his inheritance from Dry, including the privilege of keeping ferries to and from Eagles Island, which lay in the Cape Fear River opposite Wilmington. He availed himself of other opportunities to enlarge his already substantial estate. In 1783 he purchased from James Hogg the 640 acre tract known as the Ferry Plantation on Eagles Island with its accompanying brick house. Smith also added

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BULLETIN

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Latimer House, Headquarters of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, 126 S. Third, Wilmington, North Carolina 28401—Telephone: 762-0492. Latimer House is open. The Archives Room is open 10 AM-Noon on Thursdays.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Date: Sunday, February 14, 1982

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Thalian Hall

Speaker: Dr. Robert N. Fales will narrate a slide presentation entitled "Wilmington Yesteryear—As I Saw It or Heard It"

Business: The business portion of the meeting will include selection of a nominating committee chairman and recommended By-Laws changes will be submitted for member approval.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Candlelight Tour, now in its seventh year, enjoyed another great success with over 1200 participants. Mr. Robert Warren's dedication to the momentous task of organization, planning, promotion, and attention to detail is noted with appreciation and admiration. The Society is indebted to him and to the people who opened their homes for the Tour. It is because of the revenue generated from this venture, the Wassail Bowl, and generous gifts from friends of the Society that the organization's financial picture is the brightest it has been since the March 1981 fire which necessitated the major restoration of Latimer House. However, funds are still needed for exterior painting, the ongoing program of the Society, as well as future improvements to our headquarters house so that your continued interest and support are still solicited.

Although it is not noted in the St. Thomas Celebration of the Arts brochure, you will be pleased to know that the Society will participate in the Festival in a special way. Mr. Michael Lorimer, classical guitarist, will perform in concert at Latimer House on Sunday, February 28, 1982 at 8 P.M. Tickets of \$10 per person may be purchased at the Latimer House or the St. Thomas Festival box office. All proceeds will benefit the Society. Black tie is optional. A reception will follow the concert to honor Mr. Lorimer and his wife. Due to space limitations there will only be a small number of tickets, so early purchase is recommended.

Congratulations are in order for Mr. James Robert Warren and Mrs. E. M. McEachern, who were both recipients of special awards during History and Culture Week in Raleigh. Mr. Warren was awarded the Ruth Coltrane Cannon Cup by the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina. He joins a select group of Wilmingtonians who have won the state's highest preservation award. Mrs. McEachern was presented a Certificate of Merit and was asked to accept a special award given to Duplin County.

On behalf of the Society I thank you for your interest and support and I shall look forward to seeing you at the meeting featuring Dr. Fales, Sunday, February 21.

Betty H. Boney, President
(Mrs. Charles H. Boney)

In Memoriam

Mr. Kauno Lehto

Mr. John Kalmar

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. acknowledges with grateful appreciation the generous gifts from the Hargrove Bellamy Foundation, Mrs. Albert Perry, the Lucille Murchison Marvin Foundation, Mrs. Patrick H. Welder of Victoria, Texas, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Wright, Jr.

BENJAMIN SMITH

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to his holdings in the 1780s by acquisitions from other individuals and from the state of North Carolina.⁷

As the Revolution ended and Smith moved to North Carolina, the thirteen states united under the Articles of Confederation, a constitution that evidenced the democratic spirit of American politics. Most importantly, the states created only the shell of a national government. Fearful of centralized power after a century and a half of British colonial rule, they gravely limited the national authority, even depriving the Confederation government of the power to lay taxes and regulate commerce. The Articles of Confederation aptly reflected the times in which it was written but to many it failed to provide a governmental apparatus capable of sustaining independence and directing the nationalist movement of political and economic self-sufficiency.

Before 1788 Smith rarely had the opportunity to air his political sentiments except in local affairs. He won election in 1784 for a single term in the state senate from Brunswick County, and on May 11, 1784, the North Carolina legislature elected him among others to represent the state in the national congress at Philadelphia. There is no record of his attendance in the latter body, perhaps because Smith felt that the inept Congress failed to merit his attention.⁸ Whatever the reasons for his absence, it was another instance of North Carolina's sad neglect of the national congress except for the distinguished presence of such individuals as William Hooper, Cornelius Harnett, Thomas Burke, and Hugh Williamson.

Although he harbored political ambitions and unsuccessfully attempted reelection to the senate later in the decade, Smith did not reemerge on the state scene until 1788, when he was chosen one of five representatives from Brunswick County to the Hillsborough Convention.⁹ After the federal Constitution had been drafted in 1787, it was submitted to the individual states for consideration in constitutional conventions. Those gatherings, held from November 1787, through August 1788, ultimately determined the fate of the new plan of government.

The supporters of the federal Constitution, styling themselves Federalists, organized quickly, and with the help of the friendly newspapers ample campaign funds, prestigious leaders including Washington, and momentum, they carried nine states by mid-1788. Their opponents, called Antifederalists or Antis, proved particularly powerful in Virginia and New York, but those crucial states finally accepted the new constitution in June and July, 1788, respectively. By the time that North Carolina's first constitutional convention met at Hillsborough in August 1788, eleven states, more than the requisite nine needed to place the new government in operation, had ratified the federal constitution. Thus, North Carolina faced a choice of joining the United States or remaining outside the Union in a vulnerable, discriminatory status.

At Hillsborough the Antifederalists dominated the proceedings, for North Carolina generally was a provincial, isolated state that remain unaffected greatly by events that transpired beyond its borders. Even the Lower Cape Fear received the Constitution coolly, though throughout the nation the Federalists usually fared well in urban areas, their surrounding countrysides, and commercial farming regions. In an area characterized by wealth, dependence upon commercial agriculture, and the export of wood products,

the inhabitants of Brunswick presumably would have preferred a stronger national government, capable of promoting trade and protecting American interests abroad. Yet, Smith was the only member of the Brunswick delegation at Hillsborough who favored the constitution. At Hillsborough, the Antifederalists listened impatiently to the Federalist arguments. Then they defeated ratification of the Constitution by an overwhelming vote of 184 to 83.¹⁰

Before the convention adjourned it also wrestled with the problem of a capital for North Carolina. In calling for the meeting in Hillsborough, the legislature had mandated consideration of a permanent capital for the state. During and after the war the legislature was a peripatetic body, meeting at such diverse places as Hillsborough, Halifax, Fayetteville, Tarboro, and New Bern. The lack of suitable accommodations, the hazards to public record keeping, and the general inconvenience rendered the floating capital highly undesirable.

Smith recognized the advantages accruing to a permanent capital, though the issue was certain to be highly controversial. He seconded a motion that narrowly carried to have the convention ballot for a fixed seat of government. After considering several proposals, the delegates fixed upon Isaac Hunter's plantation in Wake County as an appropriate site. Nonetheless, a substantial minority of the convention, totalling 119 and including Smith, unsuccessfully objected to the Wake County site. Led by William Barry Grove of Cumberland County, they supported Fayetteville as the permanent capital.¹¹

While Smith and the Fayetteville forces lost on the issue of the state capital, with Smith somewhat ironically spending many years in the future city of Raleigh in various legislative and executive capacities, the Brunswick representative helped to reverse the decision to reject the federal Constitution. After the Hillsborough Convention the Federalists in North Carolina launched a massive educational campaign, stressing the beneficent presidency of George Washington, the drafting of a federal Bill of Rights, the need for protection against the Indians in the West, and the economic pressures of isolation that derived from remaining outside the United States. Realizing the change in popular sentiment, the state legislature called a second convention to meet in Fayetteville in November 1788, to reconsider the Constitution.¹²

Although Smith reported in September 1789, that "they are all Federal[ists] in [my] County, the antis have been rejected," at least one opponent of the Constitution joined Smith in the Brunswick County delegation to Fayetteville. Still, the Federalists controlled the county and the proceedings at Fayetteville. Smith had the honor of seconding William R. Davie's motion that North Carolina ratify the Constitution and join the United States, already an ongoing nation. After some delaying tactics by the Antifederalists, the convention voted 195 to 77 to approve the Constitution.¹³

As North Carolina entered the United States, Smith stood on the threshold of a promising political future. In the midst of the emerging two-party political system that appeared in the 1790s, he expectedly supported the Federalists, advocates of a strong central government, a diversified economy, commercial agriculture, and elitist leadership. The opposition, the Jeffersonian Republicans, championed state supremacy in the federal structure, traditional agrarianism, and greater popular participation in government. The Jeffersonians soon gained the upper hand in North Carolina

politics. Although the Federalists briefly controlled the state in 1798 as a result of the undeclared naval war with France and showed a resurgence of popularity during the years of the War of 1812, those were anomalous circumstances in a state overwhelmingly dominated by the Jeffersonians.

Nonetheless, Smith, a Federalist, retained a strong following in Brunswick. He won election from the county to the house of commons from 1789 to 1792 after which he moved to the state senate, serving consecutive terms from 1793 to 1800. In the senate he was chosen speaker of that body for the five terms from 1795 through 1799. Although the Jeffersonian Republicans controlled the legislature, they occasionally condescended to elect members of the opposite party to positions of prominence, knowing that the sheer numbers of Republicans would be able to prevent any mischief.¹⁴

While a member of the legislature Smith became involved in the controversial creation of a town that bore his name—Smithville, later Southport. Joshua Potts and Charles Gause instigated a movement in 1790 to establish a town in the vicinity of Fort Johnston, a scenic and healthful location where a pilot's house and fishermen's huts dotted the landscape. Although a bill was introduced in the assembly to incorporate a town, its passage was apparently blocked by Smith who reportedly either objected to pilots living on public lands or resented the failure to consult him, a Brunswick County legislator, on the matter.¹⁵

Smith, however, was subject to political pressure, and his successful attempt in 1792 to move from the house of commons to the senate may well have been predicated on his support for the proposed town. When he won election, Smith dutifully submitted a bill for the incorporation of the town. The necessary legislation was passed in December 1792, and Smith was appointed one of five commissioners to administer the town until 1801, when the townspeople received the privilege of electing their commissioners.¹⁶

The sponsors of the original incorporation bill had sought to honor Francis Nash, the Revolutionary hero who fell at the Battle of Germantown in 1777, by naming the town "Nashton." Yet, in 1792, the town emerged as Smithville, perhaps in response to Smith's insistence on personal recognition. According to the General, however, the legislature, "as if by way of derision," had insisted upon that name because so many towns had been recently incorporated and so few had succeeded. In light of its probable failure, Smith would then bear the stigma of the demise of the town. Happily for Smith, the town grew, though slowly. By 1816 Smithville boasted a permanent population of 300 residents supplemented by an additional 200 to 300 persons who enjoyed the coast during the debilitating and unhealthy summer and fall months.¹⁷

Smith's service in the legislature also allowed him to lobby for further recognition. More on the basis of his influence, family, and wealth than service, the legislature appointed him colonel of the militia in the Wilmington District in 1789. Four years later, in 1793, it promoted him to brigadier general, and in 1807, to major general. After his promotion to general in 1793, at least until his election as governor of the state in 1810, Smith was usually referred to as "General."¹⁸

Commendably, lineage and riches also promoted a spirit of noblesse oblige and civic spirit on the part of the General. In 1789 Smith began to evidence his life-long interest in education by donating 20,000 acres of land in Obion County in northwestern Tennessee, a military bounty resulting from his service in the Revolution, to the newly-created

University of North Carolina. He derived maximum publicity from his gift, for the state legislature issued a resolution of appreciation to him and ordered that the resolution be published in all the newspapers of the state. Moreover, the bequest may have influenced the legislature's decision to place Smith on the board of trustees. It was a position that he retained from 1789 to 1824, and one that he shared with such luminaries as Samuel Johnston, William R. Davie, James Iredell, Archibald D. Murphey, and Willie Mangum.¹⁹

Always holding education in high esteem the General informed a correspondent in 1797 that he was "truly glad to hear such satisfactory accounts from the University. It is an institution that I have much at heart. . . ." Even when Smith encountered criticism and embarrassment in 1801 by failing to transfer promptly some funds to the trustees, he remained loyal to the University. He contended that the debt was well secured. Nonetheless, a suit was in the offing. Although Smith complained about the mismanagement of the University and the "little Consideration & Indulgence" shown to him, he declared that such irritations "shall never lessen My most ardent wishes for the Prosperity of the Institution which I believe essential to the Happiness & Honour of the State. . . ."²⁰

At the same time that Smith exhibited his support for higher education in the state he helped to promote commerce along the Cape Fear River. Engaged in the production and export of naval stores, wood products, and rice, Smith was vitally concerned with improving the navigation of the river. To that end he was instrumental in the erection of North Carolina's first lighthouse, built on Bald Head Island in the 1790s. In 1784, state legislation provided for the accumulation of funds to underwrite the project and appointed commissioners to collect the money, arrange for a site, and supervise construction. Two years later, in August 1786, some of the commissioners, General Robert Howe, who lived along the Cape Fear River at Kendal Plantation, and Smith met on Bald Head to fix a site for the lighthouse. Work on the structure was expected to begin shortly thereafter.²¹

Only in 1789, however, did the Assembly of which Smith was a member enact legislation to authorize the construction of a lighthouse on Bald Head Island. It was premised on Smith's agreement to deed to the state ten acres of land on the island for that purpose. It was accordingly done in 1790, though Smith encouraged the speedy erection of the structure by making his grant contingent upon completion of the lighthouse within ten years. Again, Smith combined public spirit and self-interest, for the legislature added him to the board of Commissioners for Regulating the Pilotage and Navigation of the Cape Fear River.²²

Smith could well afford his generosity. According to the first federal census of 1790, he owned 221 slaves in Brunswick County, the largest single reported slave-holding in the state. During the ensuing decade and a half he added to that total and also augmented his already enormous holdings by continued purchases from the state and private individuals.²³ And the deeds once more suggest the self-esteem of Smith. On occasion in the mid to late 1790s, his ego rose to the fore, so that he referred to himself in these transactions as "Brigadier General of the District of Wilmington" and "Speaker of the Senate of the General Assembly."²⁴

The General also enjoyed several private residences in the Lower Cape Fear. In addition to Blue Banks, he and his wife had inherited William Dry's home plantation, Belvedere, on

the Brunswick River opposite Eagles Island. Sea Castle provided a refuge on Bald Head Island, and in 1796 Smith purchased Orton plantation. Sea Castle served not only Smith but also young people who picnicked on Bald Head, using the house for shelter and even for dancing when musicians were available. Orton, containing some 4,975 acres on the Cape Fear River between Wilmington and Brunswick, had been the seat of Roger Moore, Smith's grandfather. Between 1735 and 1748, Moore built a brick home in a beautifully scenic setting on the plantation.²⁵

Rounding out his domiciles were town houses in Wilmington and Smithville. Upon the founding of Smithville, now Southport, Smith obtained ten lots. On the corner of Bay and Potts streets he built what Dr. Walter G. Curtis termed, "A large and perhaps at that time a palatial residence which might have been called the Governor's palace. . . ." According to the doctor, as one entered from the front of the house and looked toward the back, his

eyes would have rested upon a spacious and highly ornamental stair case which led to the upper rooms. On the lower floor, there were drawing rooms on one side of the grand entrance hall and a large dining hall thirty or forty feet long on the other side. This summer house of Gov. Smith's was his favorite resort as its situation was healthy and overlooked the beautiful bay and Atlantic Ocean. . . . This mansion was a home where lavish generosity and hospitality prevailed. Many distinguished visitors from both the Carolinas were entertained in this delightful home.²⁶

Meanwhile Smith paid careful attention to promoting his personal financial interests. He pressed the state legislature in 1789 for the opportunity to drain public swamp land in Brunswick County in return for the purchase of part of it. He claimed that the effort would enhance the value of the property for the state, improve the healthfulness of the area, and stimulate the agriculture and commerce of the Lower Cape Fear.²⁷ The General also engaged in land speculation with his brother, William, a noted South Carolina politician, and several North Carolinians, including John Gray Blount, a Washington, North Carolina merchant.²⁸ Additionally, by his inheritance from Dry, Smith maintained title to Transylvania lands in Kentucky, and visited the area as late as 1818.²⁹

Agricultural experimentation concerned the General as well. In 1800, he wrote to H. W. Harrington of Richmond County, North Carolina, that he was tempted to try the cultivation of cotton, even in the tidewater area, because the crop had been grown successfully in lowland South Carolina. The following year Smith advertised a "cotton mill" at Orton, warranted to clean at least a "thousand weight" from the seed each day and available for the "customary Toll." Smith's correspondence with Harrington also revealed his interest in Smyrna wheat, vetch, winter oats, spelts, and timothy beans. Clearly the General was in the vanguard of those in North Carolina who were responsible for inaugurating agricultural advances in the state in the nineteenth century.³⁰

At the same time Smith intended to open a shipyard in Smithville to construct vessels for the coastal and West Indian trade. As the General wrote John Gray Blount in 1802, "I have Irons enough in the Fire and Ship building is a new business altogether to me but I think by engaging in it I may assist others, benefit our little town at the mouth of River and employ my Resources of Timber plank Jobbing Carpenters and Blacksmiths to advantage." In addition to his

altruism, Smith hoped to export his own rice, tar, grain, and wood products without shouldering excessive shipping expenses.³¹

To facilitate shipping the General also proposed to build a cargo wharf in Smithville. Always evidencing his close association with South Carolina, Smith journeyed to Charleston to determine from that city's many quays the best means of constructing the wharf. At the same time he also sought to employ millwright. Declaring that Belvedere was a "Capital Situation for Saw Mills," Smith already had one mill in operation and had built dams for three more. The General succeeded, at least in part, in his plans, because in 1810 he advertised for sale a "Jersey Wagon, A Boat just finished that will carry from 60 to 70,000 Shingles, built of the best materials and to draw but little water."³²

FOOTNOTES

1. For brief biographical sketches of Smith, see Samuel A. Ashe (ed.), *Biographical History of North Carolina* (Greensboro, N.C., 8 vols., 1905-1917), II, 401-405, hereinafter cited as Ashe, *Biographical History of North Carolina*; Beth G. Crabtree, *North Carolina Governors, 1585-1968* (Raleigh, 1968), 63-64; Collier Cobb, "Life and Services of Benjamin Smith," in *The North Carolina Review*, July 1912, A Monthly Supplement Devoted to Literature and History, *News and Observer* (Raleigh), hereinafter cited as Cobb, "Life and Services of Benjamin Smith." The author is indebted to Mrs. Susan B. Carson for a typescript copy of the article by Cobb. Louis T. Moore collected some information about Smith which now remains principally in the form of newspaper clippings in the Louis T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, N.C., hereinafter cited as the Louis T. Moore Collection.
2. Smith's date of birth is subject to disagreement. Most sources list 1756, though the *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, Vol. II, *The Commons House of Assembly, 1692-1775*, ed. by Walter B. Edgar (Columbia, 1977), 643, hereinafter cited as Edgar, *South Carolina Directory*, gives the date as 1757, and some assert that 1750 is appropriate. The monument erected in honor of Smith in St. Philip's churchyard in Brunswick Town shows his date of birth as January 10, 1756.
3. For Smith's paternal ancestry see Edgar, *South Carolina Directory*, 637-643; Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina Under the Proprietary Government, 1670-1719* (New York, 1897), 718-720. For Smith's maternal ancestry see Ashe, *Biographical History of North Carolina*, II, 401-402; VIII, 380-381; Lawrence Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days* (Chapel Hill, 1965), 91-106, 188.
4. Marshall Smelser, *The Winning of Independence* (Chicago, 1972), 156; Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, ed. by John Alden (New York, 2 vols., 1952), II, 229-230, 682; Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780* (New York, 1902), 339-340.
5. For Dry see Alan D. Watson, "William Dry: Passive Patriot," *Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Bulletin*, XVII (October 1973).
6. New Hanover County Deed Book, H, Part I, 48-49, Office of the Register of Deeds, New Hanover County Courthouse, Wilmington, N.C., hereinafter cited as New Hanover County Deed Book; Brunswick County Deed Book, B, 142, 162-165, Office of the Register of Deeds, Brunswick County Courthouse, Bolivia, N.C., hereinafter cited as Brunswick County Deed Book.
7. Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh, 16 vols., numbered XI-XXVI, 1895-1907), XXIV, 636-637, hereinafter cited as Clark, *State Records*. Brunswick County Deed Book B, 273-275, 361-362; C, 47-48, 55-56. As late as 1811, when selling property on Eagles Island, Smith carefully preserved his ferry rights. New Hanover County Deed Book, O, 291-292.
8. John L. Cheyney, Jr. (ed.), *North Carolina Government, 1584-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History* (Raleigh, 1975), 212, 659, 739 n. 23, hereinafter cited as Cheyney, *North Carolina Government*; Clark, *State Records*, XVII, 79; David T. Morgan and William J. Schmidt, *North Carolinians in the Continental Congress* (Winston-Salem, N.C., 1976).
9. Griffith McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell* (New York, 2 vols., 1857-1858), II, 79, 273, 276, hereinafter cited as McRee, *Iredell*; Cheyney, *North Carolina Government*, 765.

10. William C. Pool, "An Economic Interpretation of the Ratification of the Federal Constitution in North Carolina, parts I-II," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XXVII (1950), 128, 291, hereinafter cited as Pool, "Economic Interpretation"; Clark, *State Records*, XXII, 29-31; Louise I. Trenholme, *The Ratification of the Federal Constitution in North Carolina* (New York, 1932), chapter IV.
11. Clark, *State Records*, XXIII, 26, 29, 33-35.
12. Albert Ray Newsome, "North Carolina Ratification of the Federal Constitution," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XVII (1950), 287-301.
13. Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 565-566; XXI, 48; Pool, "Economic Interpretation, III," 457; Trenholme, *Ratification of the Federal Constitution*, Chapter VI.
14. Cheyney, *North Carolina Government*, 223, 224, 226, 227, 229, 230, 232, 234, 237, 239, 240. See James H. Broussard, "The North Carolina Federalists, 1800-1816," *NCHR*, LV (1978), 21-27.
15. Lawrence Lee, *The History of Brunswick County, North Carolina* (Southport, N.C., 1980), 90 hereinafter cited as Lee, *Brunswick County*; Joshua Potts, "The Location of Smithville," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* No. 4., ed. by Kemp Battle (Chapel Hill, 1904), 88-89, hereinafter cited as Potts, "Location of Smithville."
16. Lee, *Brunswick County*, 90-91; Potts, "Location of Smithville," 89. Smith was also responsible for introducing legislation that resulted in the removal of the Brunswick County seat from Lockwood Folly to Smithville. There was opposition, however, despite the claim by Smith that the majority of the people in the county favored the change. Soon after the passage of the law in 1808 that effected the transferral of the county seat, residents west of the Waccamaw River successfully petitioned the General Assembly to erect that area into a new county, Columbus County. Lee, *Brunswick County*, 91-92.
17. Lee, *Brunswick County*, 91; Potts, "Location of Smithville," 89.
18. Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 358; *Wilmington Gazette*, Apr. 19, 1799; *Edenton Gazette*, Dec. 23, 1807.
19. Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 417-418; XXV, 21-22; Kemp P. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina* (Raleigh, 2 vols., 1907, 1912), I, 118-119, 821, hereinafter cited as Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*.
20. Smith to ?, Mar. 20, 1797; Smith to ?, May 23, June 18, 1801, Benjamin Smith Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C., hereinafter cited as Benjamin Smith Papers. Realization of the benefits from Smith's largesse and recognition of his support of the University occurred later in the nineteenth century. Although the value of the Tennessee land reputedly was diminished by an earthquake in 1810 that left a large portion of the land covered with lakelets, it was finally sold in 1835, bringing \$14,000. In 1854, a newly erected building was named Smith Hall to honor the General. Described as "a structure of impeccable proportions," and "quite an ornament to the College grounds," Smith Hall served as the library, but doubled on occasion as a ballroom and housed a chemistry laboratory in its basement. In 1924 the University trustees turned the building over to the Carolina Playmakers for use as their theater. Archibald Henderson, *The Campus of the First State University* (Chapel Hill, 1949), 142-148, 173, 180, quotations on 133-134, 145; Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, I, 328, 402.
21. David Stick, *North Carolina Lighthouses* (Raleigh, 1980), 11-12; McRee, *Iredell*, II, 139.
22. Clark, *State Records*, XXV, 6-7, 65; New Hanover County Deed Book, I, 325-326.
23. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790* (Baltimore, 1966), 190; New Hanover County Deed Book, K, 88-94; L, 19-20, 20-24; L2, 424-426, 428-431, 484; N, 331-332; Brunswick County Deed Book, A, 34-36, 49, 204, 230, 291, 331-332; B, 451-452; C, 166; D, 59, 198; F, 145-146.
24. New Hanover County Deed Book, L2, 430-431; Brunswick County Deed Book, D, 83-85.
25. Brunswick County Deed Book, F, 149-151. Smith also purchased Russellborough and the virtually deserted town of Brunswick that lay below Orton. James Laurence Sprunt, *The Story of Orton Plantation* (Wilmington, N.C., rev. ed., 1980); 10; Smith to ? (Sea Castle), Oct. 31, 1797, Benjamin Smith Papers.
26. No one was allowed more than three lots drawn "by Ballot in a fair & open Manor." Smith drew numbers 14, 20, and 23. He purchased seven more lots, including three that had been drawn by his mother-in-law, Mary Jane Dry. Brunswick County Deed Book, C, 352-355. Quotation in Lee, *Brunswick County*, 134-135. The stately mansion served as a landmark by which sailors could take their bearings as they crossed the north bar of the inlet at Smithville. *Wilmington Gazette*, Jan. 13, 1816.
27. Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 693-694.
28. David Allison to [John Gray Blount], Mar. 3, 1796; Benjamin Smith to John Davis, July 17, 1796, *John Gray Blount Papers*, ed. by Alice Keith and William H. Masterson (Raleigh, 4 vols. to date, 1952-), III, 26-27, 79-80, hereinafter cited as Masterson, *John Gray Blount Papers*.
29. William Greaves to James Hogg, [1799], Benjamin Smith Papers; "Extracts from the Diary of General Joseph G. Swift," ed. by Kemp P. Battle, *James Sprunt Historical Monographs*, Number 4 (Chapel Hill, 1903), 115, hereinafter cited as Battle, "Diary of General Joseph G. Swift."
30. Smith to H. W. Harrington, Dec. 20, 1800, "The Harrington Letters," ed. by H. M. Wagstaff, *James Sprunt Historical Publications*, XIII (Chapel Hill, 1914), 20, hereinafter cited as "Harrington Letters"; *Wilmington Gazette*, Dec. 10, 1801. See Cornelius O. Cathey, *Agricultural Development in North Carolina, 1783-1860* (Chapel Hill, 1956), 30-47, for the origins of the agricultural revolution in early nineteenth century North Carolina.
31. Smith to John Gray Blount, July 10, Sept. 8, 1802, Masterson, *John Gray Blount Papers*, III, 520-521, quotation on 520. Rice probably supplied the bulk of Smith's plantation income. See Smith to ? Mar. 20, 1797; Description of Belvedere, n.d., Benjamin Smith Papers; Advertisement for sale of Orton, *Cape Fear Recorder* (Wilmington), Oct. 16, 1824.
32. Benjamin Smith to John Gray Blount, Sept. 8, 1802, Masterson, *John Gray Blount Papers*, III, 338-339; Description of Belvedere, n.d., Benjamin Smith Papers; *Wilmington Gazette*, July 24, 1810.

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