

## **Smith, Samuel** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by Vernon O. Stumpf, 1994

**3 Dec. 1729–6 Oct. 1800**

Samuel Smith, Revolutionary <sup>[2]</sup> officer, legislator, and local official, was born in South Farnham Parish, Essex County, Va., a younger son of Samuel (d. 1739) and Ann Amiss Smith (d. 1753). He was reared in the Anglican faith by a strong-willed mother, who assumed control of the family after the death of the father. The Smiths were descendants of Alexander Smith, who had emigrated from Scotland to Middlesex County, Va., during the Cromwellian period.

In May 1761 Samuel Smith married Mary Webb. Described as a local belle of the same parish as he, she was born in 1740 and died in Granville County <sup>[3]</sup>, N.C., in 1827. After their wedding they went to live on Cock Quarter, a 357-acre tract that Smith had purchased from John Armistead in February 1760. Before leaving for North Carolina, they had been attracted to the persuasive ministry of Samuel Davies, a Presbyterian <sup>[4]</sup> clergyman, and under his guidance embraced Presbyterianism. The Smiths, consisting of two adults and three infants, moved to their new North Carolina home sometime in 1766. Samuel bought a small tract of land in northern Granville County on Grassy Creek but soon added other tracts adjacent to his farm. He named his home Abram's Plains for the site of the English victory over the French at Quebec in 1759. His major crop was tobacco <sup>[5]</sup>.

Active in local politics, Smith was commissioned a justice of the peace <sup>[6]</sup> by Governor William Tryon <sup>[7]</sup>. With the approach of the American Revolution, Thomas Person nominated him for a place on the Committee of Safety <sup>[8]</sup> for the Hillsborough District. Early in 1778 Smith took the loyal census for his home district. Although there were men in his district who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new state, there were no reprisals against them.

In 1775 Smith was made first major in the Granville Regiment of the Hillsborough Brigade of the militia <sup>[9]</sup>, and by May 1778 he had risen to the rank of colonel. On 30 June 1779 he was reported as commanding 16 companies consisting of 16 captains, 10 lieutenants, 10 ensigns, and 854 rank and file. Smith's letter of resignation to Governor Thomas Burke <sup>[10]</sup> on 1 Oct. 1779 contains hints of a strong difference of opinion between the two men. In the same year Smith took advantage of a recent provision by the General Assembly permitting easy acquisition of land. He sold his holdings in Virginia and bought land in North Carolina. By 1783 he held 3,703 acres in Granville County. After the war, with land speculation rampant, he acquired still more as well as two lots in the new town of Williamsboro. He also became a trustee of the academy in the town. For many years he was a justice of the county, he was the census taker, and was once elected sheriff.

He died at his home and was buried in the Smith-Davis cemetery in Sassafras Fork Township, Granville County. He and his wife were the parents of six sons (Samuel, James Webb, John, William, Maurice, and Alexander) and four daughters (Mary, Elizabeth, Jenny Murphey, and Anne). A miniature portrait of him was painted about 1760–61, and both he and his wife posed for silhouettes in their old age.

### **References:**

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S. S. Downey Collection (Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham).<sup>[12]</sup>

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William Smith Collection (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

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### **Origin - location:**

Granville County <sup>[19]</sup>

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