

William Farrar Smith (1824-1903)
Papers, 1849-1903
MS Box 112-115, MSA 272

Introduction

The papers of William Farrar Smith, Civil War general from St. Albans, Vermont, were acquired in 1965. The bulk of the papers were donated by Walter Q. Wilgus, a Smith family friend; the remaining papers were donated by Mrs. Stuart Farrar Smith, the daughter-in-law of General Smith. The papers are housed in five flip top boxes and occupy 2.25 linear feet of shelf space. There are also oversize documents stored as MS Size A.

A portion of this collection was published as the *Autobiography of Major General William F. Smith, 1861-1864*, ed. by Herbert M. Schiller (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc., 1990) (B Sm86c). The original typescript of the autobiography is also available on microfilm at the Vermont Historical Society (reel VHS-231).

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Biographical Sketch

William Farrar Smith, also known as Baldy Smith, was born in St. Albans, Vermont, February 17, 1824, the son of Ashbel and Sarah Butler Smith. He was educated locally until appointed to the Military Academy at West Point in 1841. He graduated in 1845 and was commissioned as brevet second lieutenant in the Corps of Topographical Engineers. He served in the Corps making surveys of the Great Lakes, Texas, Arizona, Mexico, and Florida. While in Florida he became severely ill with malaria, and although he recovered, it affected his health for the remainder of his life. In 1856 he became involved in the light-house service, headquartered in Detroit, and eventually became Engineer Secretary of the Light-House Board. During his early career, Smith also taught mathematics at West Point, which allowed him the opportunity to learn more about military history and warfare than his otherwise scientific career provided him.

Because of his knowledge of the south, acquired through surveying and through his work protecting southern light houses, in 1861, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Smith was sent to Fortress Monroe as an engineer officer to do reconnaissance work around Yorktown and Big Bethel, but had to leave that position because of his health. He was then commissioned as Colonel of the Third Regiment of Vermont Volunteer Infantry, and was instrumental in arranging to have the Vermont regiments trained together as one brigade, rather than joined with regiments from other states. He was named Brigadier General in August of 1861 and almost immediately was given charge of the Second Division of the IV Corps, Army of the Potomac. In June 1862 he was brevetted lieutenant colonel in the regular army and a month later became major-general,

and commanded the Second Division, VI Corps, at Antietam, and was brevetted colonel. After Fredericksburg he and William Buel Franklin wrote to Lincoln complaining of the leadership in the military and objecting to the plan of war and offering an alternative. Because of that he was transferred and was not given the commission of major-general but reverted to brigadier general. In October of 1863 Smith went to Chattanooga as chief engineer and by March 1864 was re-appointed major general. He was then assigned to the XVIII Corps under Benjamin Franklin Butler but because of tension between Butler and Smith, he was relieved of his command. In March of 1865 Smith was brevetted brigadier-general and major general for distinguished services at Chattanooga and in the Virginia Campaign of 1864.

He resigned from the volunteers in 1865 and from the regular army in 1867. Smith applied his engineering expertise in the private sector as president of the International Ocean Telegraph Company until 1873. After spending a couple of years in Europe he went to New York City and became president of the Board of Police Commissioners until his resignation in 1881. He spent the rest of his life working on various engineering projects for the government (in 1889 he was restored to the military as major), and writing about his service in the Civil War. His publications include: *Military Operations Around Chattanooga* (1886); articles for *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (four volumes, 1887-1888); *The Relief of the Army of the Cumberland, and the Opening of the Short Line of Communication between Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Bridgeport, Alabama, in October 1863*, Wilmington, Delaware: C.F. Thomas and Co., 1891 (973.741 Cs); *From Chattanooga to Petersburg Under Generals Grant and Butler; a Contribution to the History of the War, and a Personal Vindication*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1893 (973.741 J23s); and *The Re-opening of the Tennessee River Near Chattanooga, October 1863 as Related by Major General George H. Thomas and the Official Record*, compiled and annotated by Bv't Major General W. F. Smith, Wilmington, Delaware: Press of Mercantile Printing Co., 1895 (973.735 Sm68r).

William Farrar Smith married Sarah Ward Lyon of New York City, in April 1861. They had five children, only two of whom survived their parents: Clara and Stuart Farrar.

Smith died in Philadelphia in 1903.

For more biographical information about W. F. Smith see: *Major General William Farrar Smith: Critic of Defeat and Engineer of Victory*, a dissertation by Stephen N. Siciliano at William and Mary College, 1984 (XB Sm68s); and *Heroes of the Great Conflict: Life and Services of William Farrar Smith, Major General, United States Volunteers in the Civil War*, by James Harrison Wilson, 1904 (B Sm68w).

Scope and Content

The William Farrar “Baldy” Smith (1824-1903) papers are from Smith’s military career, particularly his service during the Civil War. There is military correspondence and official reports of troop activities. The bulk of the collection is made up of papers collected as the result of the writing of *From Chattanooga to Petersburg Under Generals Grant and Butler: A Contribution to the History of the War, and a Personal Vindication* (Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893). He wrote the book to clarify what he believed were inaccurate reports about his role in Civil War battles in late May and June 1864. Benjamin F. Butler had written a book that described the events, and a review of that book by Smith shows his displeasure with it. As part of Smith’s research he solicited recollections from fellow soldiers about the battles thirty years after the war, and these are included in Smith’s correspondence. Also included in his research is the diary of M. S. Lamprey for February to June, 1864, and a few pages of Nicholas Bowen’s journal, June 1 to July 3, 1864. Both men were involved with Smith in the controversial battles.

In 1883 Smith wrote an autobiography for his daughter which describes his Civil War experiences; it is included in this collection along with an appendix written in 1887. There is also biographical information about comrades, probably written by Smith, for various tributes and memorials, and there are notes about William Scott, the “sleeping sentinel.”

Organization

The collection is organized into the following series: I. Correspondence; II. Biographical and autobiographical papers; III. Research on events of Civil War; IV. Writings by Smith.

Related Collections

Related primary source material in the Vermont Historical Society Library includes:

A series of letters addressed to Vermont congressman Justin Morrill in April and May 1862, concerning Morrill’s resolution of inquiry into General Smith’s alleged drunkenness at Lee’s Mills, and newspapers clippings about the incident. MSS 25-#45-47, also on microfilm reel #239. (There are more letters to Morrill on this subject in the Justin Morrill Papers, MSS 23-#44.)

Typed letter by W. F. Smith to editor of *Century Magazine* defending himself from the attacks by Gen. Horace Porter in a *Century Magazine* article “Campaigning with Grant,” May 26, 1897. Also letters by Joseph DeBoer, T. S. Peck, and Smith, concerning the placement of the letter at the Vermont Historical Society. MS XB Sm68p.

Clipping from *Harper's Magazine*, November 20, 1914, "Was McClellan a Traitor?" with a letter from Walter H. Crockett, November 23, 1914, to Mrs. W. B. Fonda of St. Albans asking about her father's (Gov. J. Gregory Smith) part in the episode; reply December 7, 1914. Misc File 1278.

Typed record of the court-martial of sentry William Scott for sleeping while on guard August 31, 1861, and his sentence of death. Accompanied by a photocopy of a petition to Brig. Gen. W. F. Smith asking that Scott's life be spared, newspaper account of the death warrant. Misc. File Add.

The Ancestral Chart of Nemo Smith, grandson of General William F. Smith, and genealogical notes. MSA-30.

Photograph of W. F. Smith filed at FB-4, and Civil War photos collected by Smith filed in the VHS Picture File at F-HIS-Civil War and under the same heading in the flat files, sizes B, C, and D.

Military maps of the Civil War collected by General William F. Smith. Maps B 973.799 Sm68 (Dr. 2).

There are also a few items in the museum collection including a silver pitcher given to W. F. Smith by "the Ladies" of Carlisle, Pennsylvania (49.18), and two silver medals, a chain, and a wallet that belonged to Smith (52.11a-d).

Inventory

I. Correspondence

MS Box 112:1	Correspondence, n.d.
2	_____, 1849
3	_____, 1861
4	_____, 1862
5	_____, 1863 January-May
6	_____, 1863 June-December
7	_____, 1864 January-April
8	_____, 1864 May-June
9	_____, 1864 July
10	_____, 1864 August-December
11	_____, 1865
12	_____, 1866
13	_____, 1867-1869
14	_____, 1870-1879
15	_____, 1880-1889
16	_____, 1890-1899
17	_____, 1900-1903
MS Box 113:1	_____, from Smith, ca. 1864 (copies, fragments)
2	_____, typed copies, ca. 1892-1895

II. Biographical and autobiographical papers

- 3 Autobiography, manuscript
 MSA272:1 _____, typescript (on microfilm, VHS-231)
 2 _____, _____
 3 _____, _____
 MS Box 113:4 _____, typescript, edited by Herbert M. Schiller
 5 _____, _____
 6 _____, _____
 7 _____, _____
 8 _____, _____
 9 _____, manuscript
 10 _____, _____
 11 _____, _____, begins with "My Visits to Spain"
 12 Diary, 1843-1845
 13 Violation report of William Smith's at West Point, 1844
 14 Smith's military record and military history
 15 Smith's retirement, 1888
 MS size A Smith's commission, 1889
 16 Smith's memorial tablet and resolutions government and
 private military groups, 1902
 17 Biographical sketch
 18 Travels in France and Greece, 1834-1835

III. Research on events of Civil War

- MS Box 114:1 Papers re: Antietam
 2 Papers re: Sleeping Sentry
 3 Papers re: Brown's Ferry
 4 Papers re: Brown's Ferry
 5 Newspaper clippings Brown's Ferry
 6 Papers re: Williamsburg
 7 Papers re: Petersburg
 8 Papers re: Petersburg, memo of events by Nicholas Bowen
 9 Papers re: Fredericksburg
 10 Lamprey, M. S., Diary, 2/1/1864-6/29/1864
 11 Lamprey, M. S., Letters of authenticity for diary
 12 Lamprey, M. S., Diary [copies]
 13 Military reports, orders, rosters, 1861-1865
 14 Military maps
 MS Size A *Map of Chattanooga and Vicinity*, compiled from survey and
 information under the direction of Capt. P.C.F. West,
 U.S.C.S. Chattanooga, 1863.
*Map of the Country Covered by the Army of the James from
 May 5, 1864 to June 15, 1864*, copied from surveys made
 by command of General A. A. Humphreys. 1867.
 "Map of the Approaches to Petersburg and their Defenses,
 1863." [Page from *Atlas to Accompany the Official
 Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.*]

Map Showing Lines of Communications Recaptured at Brown's Ferry, Tennessee, October 27, 1863. 2 copies. Battlefield of Chattanooga with Operations of the National Forces and the Command of Major General U. S. Grant during the battles of November 23, 24, and 25, 1863.

IV. Writings by Smith

- MS Box 115:1 Newspapers clippings, August 1868, Letter about Grant signed "Volunteer"
- 2 Letter to editor of *Century Magazine*, concerning General Horace Porter's article on General Grant, 1897
 - 3 Writing on Burnside and Knoxville campaign, n.d.
 - 4 Writing on Grant, n.d.
 - 5 Writing on Grant's report, n.d.
 - 6 Smith, Charles F., biographical
 - 7 Johnston, Gen. Joseph E., biographical
 - 8 Biographical info: Hancock, Winfield; Couch, Darius Nash (1822-1897); Buell, Don Carlos (d. 1898)
 - 9 Speeches at memorial events, ca. 1894
 - 10 Franklin's "Left Grand Division" by W. F. Smith [in *The Century*]
 - 11 "The Genius of Battle," by William Smith for the *North American Review*
 - 12 Review of B.F. Butler's book
 - 13 Manuscript excerpts from unidentified works by Smith
 - 14 *From Chattanooga to Petersburg*, memo re: ranks of officers mentioned in book
 - 15 _____, scrapbook of criticisms published in newspapers
 - 16 _____, correspondence with Shattuck
 - 17 Carlisle, Pennsylvania. *Civil War Times in Carlisle*, by Merkel Landis, 1931; *Boyhood Memories of the Civil War, 1861-1865: Invasion of Carlisle*, by James W. Sullivan, 1933
 - 18 Newspapers clippings
 - 19 Miscellaneous

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MAPS collected by General W. F. Smith

Located at

MAPS

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973.799

SM 68

DR. 2

Outlines of Appalachian History, by Bailey Willis, November 9, 1892.

Chattanooga Atlas Sheet. Descriptive Text, by C. Willard Hayes, assistant geologist, December, 1892.

[Map of Mississippi and Alabama showing Railroad lines], U.S. Coast Survey Office, A.D. Bach, Supt. 1863.

[Tracing on linen showing Rappanhannock River], n.d.

[Map showing Tennessee], n.d.

Lloyd's Official Map of the State of Virginia from Actual Surveys by order of the Executive, 1828-1859, corrected and revised by J. T. Lloyd to 1862, from surveys made by Capt. W. Angelo Powell, of the U. S. Topographical Engineers of the Gen. Rosencrans' staff.

General Buell's Map of the Battle-field of Shiloh. Accompanied article "Shiloh Reviewed," in the Century for March 1886.

Battlefield of Chattanooga with the operations of the National Forces under the Command of Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant during the battles of November 23, 24, and 25, 1863.

Map of a part of Eastern Virginia including portions of Spottsylvania Co. and adjoining Counties, compiled under the direction of Co. J. N. Macomb, A.D.C. Maj. Top'l Eng's, by Capt. W. H. Paine, A.D.C. November 1862.

Map showing Deep Bottom Campaign of September 29, 1864 [tracing on linen].

Plan and Section of Batteries Nos. 6, 7, and 8 on the Main Line of Enemy's Works in front of Petersburg, and Sketch of the Main Line of the Enemy's Works in front of Petersburg upon the Advance of the United States Forces, June 1864.

Map of the Country Covered by the Army of the James from May 5, 1864 to June 15, 1864, copied from surveys made by command of Gen'l A. A. Humphreys, 1867.

Plan of the Portion of Mission Ridge Stormed by Turchins Brigade, Baird's Division, 14 A.C. November 25, 1863.

Map showing lines of communications recaptured at Brown's Ferry, Tenn., Oct. 27, 1863.

Map of the Chattanooga and Vicinity, compiled from the latest information, under direction of W. E. Merrill, Capt. Engs., Chief Engineer, Army of the Cumberland, "Rec'd Sept. 28, 1863 without letter of transmittal, J.C.W."

Map of that Portion of the Battle-field of Chickamauga Where Gen'l Thomas Opened the Battle, September 19, 1863. Also Map of country from Mission Mills to Alexander's Bridge, by D. McCook.

Sketch showing the action of the "Reserve" commanded by Maj. Gen'l W. H. T. Walker at the Battle of Chickamauga, Sept., 18, 19, & 20, 1863.

Topographical Sketch of the Battle Field near Chickamauga on Sept. 19 & 20, 1863.

The Cumberland Valley, from a model by Edward B. Harden assisted by J. H. Harden, January 1885. (Photograph of model.)

Map of the Vicinity of Petersburg, Virginia. 1862.

Map of the Vicinity of Petersburg, Va.: copy of map furnished General Gilmore with a sketch of the line of fortifications and an indication of his and General Hink's position and General Kautz's attack, June 9, 1864.

Plan and Section of Battery No. 5 on the Main Line of the Enemy's Works in front of Petersburg, Head Quarters Army of the Potomac Engineer Department, October 20, 1864.

Sketch of 2nd Manassas, Aug. 29, 1862 and Sketch of 2nd Manassas, Aug. 30, 1862.

Military Maps illustrating the Operations of the Armies of the Potomac and James, May 4, 1864 to April 9, 1865, including battlefields of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Northanna, Totopotomoy, Cold Harbor, the Siege of Petersburg and Richmond, battlefields of Five Forks, Jetersville, Sailor's Creek, Highbridge, Farmville and Appomattox Court-House. "Presented to Army and Navy Clubs with good wishes of Gen' W. F. Smith.

Harper's Ferry, prepared by Bvt. Brig. General N. Michler. 1867.

Chancellorville, prepared by Bvt. Brig. General N. Michler. 1867.

Fredericksburg, prepared by Bvt. Brig. General N. Michler. 1867.

Antietam, prepared by Bvt. Brig. General N. Michler. 1867. 2 copies.

Map of the Region Between Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and Appomattox Court House, Virginia, Exhibiting the Connection Between the Campaign and Battlefield Maps, prepared by the authority of the Hon. Secretary of War. Compiled and drawn by Major John E. Weyss. C. Thompson, and J. De la Camp. 2 sheets.

Map of the Battlefield of Chickamauga, September 19th and 20th, 1863, compiled under the directions of Co. W. E. Merrill, chief Eng'r Dept. of the Cumberland, by Edward Ruger, Supt. Topl. Engineer Office, D.C. Redrawn by Louis Boedicker, Topl. Draughtsman, 1867-1868, corrected and positions of troops located by Captain S. C. Kellogg, 5th Cavalry, 1889. 10 sheets.

The Middle Tennessee Campaign of June and July 1863, enlarged from a map compiled in 1865, by C. S. Megell, under the directions of Col. W. E. Merrill, 1st U.S.V.V. Eng'rs, and published by the Chief of Engineers of the Army in 1874. In folder labeled "The Middle Tennessee and Chattanooga Campaigns." 7 sheets (+ 5 duplicates).