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OF

REPRESENTATIVE MEN

OF

MARYLAND

AND

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

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SMITH, MAJOR-GENERAL, SAMUEL, was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, July 27, 1752. He was of Irish extraction. His grandfather, Samuel Smith, emigrated from Ireland in 1728, and settled in Pennsylvania. He was then in his thirty-fifth year. On his decease, his son John disposed of the patrimonial estate, and engaged in merchandising in Carlisle, where Samuel, the subject of this sketch, was born. In 1760 John Smith removed to Baltimore and resumed the mercantile business. He was a man of much ability and influence, and took a lively interest in all the political movements against the aggressions of the English crown. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland in 1776, and afterwards a representative of the State in the General Assembly, in which he was Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, to the close of the war.

His son Samuel received his first rudiments of learning in Carlisle, continued his studies for a time in Baltimore, and was then placed in an academy at Elkton, Maryland. At the end of two years he entered his father's counting-room, where he remained in active duty until he was nineteen years of age. In May, 1772, he was sent as supercargo in one of his father's vessels to Havre, and, after attending to the business with which he was charged, made a tour of Europe, for the purpose of establishing commercial relations and visiting celebrated localities. The accomplished, but unfortunate Major André, was a passenger in the ship in which young Smith returned home, and a warm friendship sprung up between them. On his return home he engaged in commerce with his father. In the meantime the disputes with the mother country had reached their height, and, being of an ardent and generous temper, he took an active part in the measures adopted to resist the British government in its attempt to maintain by force the authority it claimed to exercise over the American colonies. He joined one of the volunteer companies of the day, and in January, 1776, was appointed a Captain in Smallwood's regiment. April 14, he was ordered by the Baltimore Committee of Correspondence to seize the person and papers of Governor Eden, but owing to a conflict of authority between that committee and the Council of Safety at Annapolis, the arrest was not made. He participated in the battle of Long Island, where the regiment did eminent service, and suffered a loss of more than one-third of its men. He distinguished himself at Harlem and White Plains, where he received his first wound. After the fall of Forts Washington and Lee, he was with the Commander-in-chief in the harassing retreat through New Jersey, where he covered the rear of the army, and at this time attracted the attention of Washington. December 10, 1776, he was commissioned Major in Gist's Battalion, and in 1777 was made Lieutenant-Colonel in the Fourth Maryland Regiment, commanded by Colonel Josias C. Hall. He was at the attack on Staten Island, and participated in the battle of Brandywine. Immediately after he was detached by Washington to the defence of Fort Mifflin, on Mud Island, in the Delaware. We give his letter of instructions, which is not only a testimonial of the great confidence reposed in Colonel Smith, but an evidence of the prudence and caution of the Commander-in-chief. Had his prudential instructions been carried out at Long Island, the fortunes of the day would have been entirely different. Perhaps no letter written by Washington expresses so forcibly the great lineaments of his character, prudence, judgment, caution, and promptness, as this letter to Colonel Smith:

"HEADQUARTERS, CAMP POTTSGROVE, Sept. 23, 1777.

"SIR: You will proceed with the detachment under your command to Dunk's Ferry on the Delaware, if you find in your progress the way clear and safe. When arrived there, you will take the safest and most expeditious method of conducting the detachment to Fort Mifflin; by water would be easiest and least fatiguing to your men, and, if practicable and safe, will certainly be most eligible; otherwise, you will cross the Delaware, and march then on the Jersey side to Fort Mifflin. In the whole march you will make all possible dispatch. Keep your men in the most exact order; suffer no one to straggle; make each officer take a list of his platoon or division, and, at the beginning of every march, see that every man be present. You will also take every necessary precaution to prevent the enemy's surprising you on your march, by keeping out small van, flank, and rear guards and sentinels, when you halt. The keeping of the fort is of very great importance, and I rely strongly on your prudence, spirit, and bravery, for a vigorous and persevering defence. The Baron D'Arendt will be appointed to the chief command, and, when he arrives, you will give him every aid in your power. A commissary must be appointed, if there be not one already, to supply the garrison with provisions. And it may be highly expedient to lay in a stock of salted meat, if to be had, and a quantity of bread, flour, and wood, for at least one month. Immediately on your arrival, make inquiry of the state of ammunition for musketry, as well as artillery, and if either be wanting, lose not a moment's time in getting a supply.

"Wishing you all desirable success,

"I remain your friend and servant,

"GEO. WASHINGTON.

"TO LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH."

It was necessary for the British, now in possession of Philadelphia, to have communication with their fleet in the Delaware, that they might receive supplies for their army. To render the navigation of the Delaware impracticable, works and batteries had been erected on Mud Island, and a fort constructed at Red Bank, on the Jersey shore opposite, covered with heavy artillery, under the brave Colonel Green, and some defences further down the river. In the channel between Mud Island and Red Bank, and under cover of their batteries, were sunk in the river

ranges of chevaux-de-frise, composed of transverse beams firmly united and strongly headed with iron, so as to be destructive to any ship that would strike against them. These works were further supported by several galleys mounting heavy cannon, two floating batteries, some armed vessels and fireships, under Commodore Hazlewood. Impressed with the importance of his position Colonel Smith made every effort to strengthen his defences against the attack of the enemy, which began three days after he took command of Fort Mifflin, and continued without intermission. Simultaneously with the attack on Red Bank by Count Donop, several ships of the British fleet, having passed the lower barrier, furiously assailed Fort Mifflin, which returned their fire with good effect; the Augusta 64 blew up, killing several of her officers and men, and the Merlin, having grounded, was fired by the enemy themselves. Undaunted by their reverses at Fort Mifflin and Red Bank, the British erected batteries on Province Island, a morass like Mud Island, and near to it, and bringing up the Isis and Somerset men-of-war, enfiladed with a destructive fire the works of Fort Mifflin. The defence was most gallant, the garrison laboring day and night to strengthen the defences, and repair the breaches that were made, but this could not last long; the ramparts crumbled under the continual fire, the guns were dismounted, and the enemy's ships approached so near the fort that hand grenades were thrown within the fort and wounded the men. When further resistance was in vain, the torch was applied to everything combustible and the garrison retired. Colonel Smith received a severe contusion from bricks knocked down by the cannonade, and was carried to the mainland. For this gallant defence he was honored with a vote of thanks by Congress and the presentation of an elegant sword. Baron D'Arendt had not assumed the command of the fort, as was expected. Before Colonel Smith was entirely recovered, he joined the army, and participated in the hardships and privations of Valley Forge, and afterwards took an active part in the battle of Monmouth. Reduced from affluence to poverty by a neglect of his personal interests, after a service of three years, Colonel Smith resigned his commission in the regular army, but continued to do duty as a colonel of militia to the end of the war. When the government was organized under its newly-adopted Constitution, he was instrumental in removing the prejudices of its opponents against it, and in reconciling different parties in Baltimore. He was a member of the Legislature of Maryland for a year, where he took a leading part in the questions of the day; and a member of the National Legislature for forty years, from 1793 to 1833. He was in the House of Representatives sixteen years, and in the United States Senate twenty-four years, and served on many of the most important committees. In the House he was Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, and in the Senate of the Committee of Finance. In the discharge of his legislative duties he was distinguished for his indefatigable business habits, energy of character, and close reasoning in debate. When Mr. Jefferson became President he offered General Smith the office of Secretary of the Navy, which he declined, but consented to perform the duties of the office till some suitable person could be selected. For the six months of service which he rendered he refused any compensation. As a Brigadier-General of the militia General Smith commanded the Maryland quota of troops, in the Whiskey Insurrection, under General Lee. During the war of 1812 he held the rank of Major-General of militia, and was appointed to the chief command of the forces for the defence of Baltimore. His energy, prudence, and bravery were signally manifested on the occasion of the attack, made by the British, September 12, 1814, where both their army and fleet were discomfited. The gallant defence of Fort McHenry on that occasion was immortalized by Francis S. Key, in his stirring lyric, "The Star-Spangled Banner." In the summer of 1835, during a popular commotion in Baltimore, consequent on the failure of a banking institution, supposed to be fraudulent, his military services were called into requisition for the last time. The laws were trampled upon by an enraged mob, the public authorities contemned, and the property of the Mayor and other citizens wantonly destroyed. After other efforts had failed to suppress the outbreak, a committee waited on General Smith, then in his eighty-third year, to attempt the pacification of the city. The veteran hero of two wars made his appearance in the streets, carrying the United States flag, rallied the overawed inhabitants, charged the rioters, and restored tranquillity. In October of that year General Smith was chosen Mayor of the city, almost by acclamation, and held the office till near the time of his decease, which took place April 22, 1839, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. The manner of his death was remarkable. He had returned from a morning ride, and threw himself upon a sofa for repose, where, soon after, he was found dead by the servant that entered his apartment. Thus full of years and honors he passed peacefully away. Every respect was paid to the memory of the deceased by the resolutions of the City Councils, and different military and civic bodies, and by the adjournment of the courts, and in the public arrangements for his funeral. Cavalry in front, followed by the infantry and artillery, preceded the funeral car, which was drawn by four white horses, and flanked on either side by mounted dragoons. A long line of carriages followed in procession, in which, besides the friends of the deceased, were the President of the United States and heads of Departments, the Governor of Maryland, the Mayor and members of the Councils, and officers of the corporation of Baltimore, the Society of the Cincinnati, Judges of the different courts, officers of the army and navy, members of Congress and the Legislature, Consuls, and others.