

Small, Edward Featherston ^[1]

Small, Edward Featherston

by Stephen E. Massengill, 1994; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, January 2023

26 Jan. 1844–6 June 1924

Edward Featherston Small, Confederate soldier, photographer, and salesman, was born near Washington, Beaufort County ^[2], the son of Henry H. and Margaret Hill Small. He was a cousin of Congressman John H. Small. His boyhood was spent on his father's farm three miles west of Washington near the Pamlico River ^[3]. In 1853 the family moved to Trinity ^[4], Randolph County ^[5], where the father worked on the construction of a substantial brick building for Trinity College ^[6] and operated a carriage to transport students from the railroad at High Point to the college. In 1859 another move took the Smalls a few miles west of Thomasville ^[7] to a small farm operated by enslaved laborers. Edward, however, remained at Trinity and attended college until he enlisted in Confederate service in September 1861.

Mustered in as a corporal, he was discharged on January 1, 1862 following an injury during artillery drill. He reenlisted in August and saw action in eastern North Carolina as well as at Seven Pines and the Wilderness in Virginia. He also participated in the battles of New Bern ^[8], Kinston ^[9], Fort Fisher ^[10], and Bentonville ^[11]. Stationed at Fort Fisher when it fell in January 1865, he happened to be on detail to escort artillery and officers' horses a few miles north of the bastion to safety. Small then made his way to Wilmington ^[12] and later to Goldsboro ^[13], where he became an aide to General Joseph E. Johnston, whom he served until honorably discharged on May 5th.

During the course of the war his mother had died, his only brother had succumbed to battle wounds, and the family farm had been devastated. Small found employment as a salesman for a Thomasville shoe manufacturer and was so successful that he was employed by a Durham ^[14] snuff company. Here he sold more products than the company could supply and was placed on temporary "vacation" until the backlog of orders could be filled.

About 1868 Small began a second career as an itinerant photographer. He may have learned the art from photographer David Clark of High Point ^[15]. From the late 1860s to the mid-1870s Small traveled as a commercial photographer through the eastern and Piedmont sections of the state and operated temporary studios in High Point, Greensboro ^[16], Winston ^[17], Durham, Goldsboro, Clinton ^[18], and Kenansville ^[19]. As he gained experience he became a talented artist. Early in 1876 he opened in Durham what he intended to be a permanent gallery and soon was described as "the busiest man in town."

In the early 1880s Small and his family resided in Lexington, where he practiced his profession, but in March 1882 his fourteen-year career in photography virtually ended when W. Duke, Sons, and Company of Durham hired him as a tobacco salesman on commission. He first came in contact with the Dukes when he was hired to take a picture of their factory in Durham for use on their business letterhead. The firm was then an emerging giant in the field of tobacco manufacturing, and Small's initial territory consisted of the two Carolinas. There was little demand for cigarettes there, but Small soon was able to extend his region to include Georgia, Tennessee, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

His selling talent, coupled with unique advertising gimmicks, significantly increased the trade of Duke products, and he became one of the firm's most successful drummers. He captured the market in Atlanta beginning in March 1884 with the cooperation of one Madame Rhea, a popular French actress who was performing there. Small asked her permission to have a life-size lithograph of herself mounted on canvas with a package of Duke cigarettes in her hand and "Atlanta's Favorites" printed below. When the picture turned up in stores around the city as well as in advertisements in the *Atlanta Constitution*, sales of the cigarettes greatly increased.

As Small moved on to other states, the home office in Durham supplied him with additional advertising devices such as playing cards, picture cards, posters, and photographs. In St. Louis he employed a charming saleslady to sell Duke cigarettes, and he acquired a roller-skating team known as the Cross Cut Polo Club of Durham, N.C. Roller skating was very popular at the time, and Small arranged matches between his club and home squads in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. Contests were widely promoted as battles between the North and the South. Male spectators at the arenas were given free samples of "Cross Cut" cigarettes, while female onlookers received small photograph cards.

Small remained with the Duke firm until 1888. The maverick and sometimes insubordinate salesman was not always on the best of terms with James B. Duke. He sometimes irritated company officials by entering markets without their permission, and he made numerous visits to his family in Atlanta at company expense. Duke wanted to transfer Small to Cincinnati, but he refused to go and as a result resigned in anger. Almost immediately Small was hired by a Duke rival, but in 1890 Duke acquired that firm and Small left.

During the 1890s Small worked for different firms in Atlanta and finally managed an apple orchard of several thousand acres. This gave him an opportunity to enjoy two of his avocations—horses and astronomy. In 1907 *Collier's Weekly* magazine published his article, "True Story of the Creation of the Trust."

On December 22, 1870, in [Smithfield](#) ^[20], N.C., Small married Julia Johnson Telfair, the daughter of Dr. Alexander F. and Julia Boone Telfair, whom he had met while passing through the area after the Battle of Bentonville. They became the parents of eight children: Robert Telfair, Alexander Telfair, Ida Marie, Margaret Hill, Everard Hall, Lillian Gertrude, Oscar D., and Bessie Duke.

In September 1922 Small became a resident of the Confederate Soldiers Home in Atlanta. While attending a reunion of Confederate veterans in Memphis, he died as a result of injuries sustained from a fall on the pavement; he was buried in Marietta, Ga. One photograph of him as a young man survives in the Manuscript Department of [Duke University](#) ^[21].

References:

[Atlanta City Directory](#) (1891 ^[22]–^[23]93, 1923–24).

Census of the United States and of North Carolina, 1850–80 (microfilm copies, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh), Census of Georgia, 1900 (microfilm copy, Georgia State Archives, Atlanta).

Confederate Soldiers Home Records, Register of Inmates (microfilm copy, Georgia State Archives, Atlanta).

Davidson County Estates and Tax Records, Johnston County Marriage Register (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Robert F. Durden, [The Dukes of Durham](#) ^[24] (1975).

Franklin M. Garrett, ed., [Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events. Family and Personal History](#) ^[25], vol. 2 ^[25] (1954).

Louis H. Manarin, comp., [North Carolina Troops, 1861–1865: A Roster](#), vol. 1 ^[26] (1966).

Stephen E. Massengill, ["Washington Duke and Sons: Builders of a Tobacco-Manufacturing Dynasty in Durham, North Carolina, 1865–1890"](#) ^[27] (master's thesis, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, 1976).

[Edward Featherston Small Papers](#) ^[28] (Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham).

John K. Winkler, [Tobacco Tycoon: The Story of James Buchanan Duke](#) ^[29] (1942).

Additional Resources:

Durden, Robert Franklin. 1975. *The Dukes of Durham, 1865-1919*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000134474> ^[24] (accessed July 28, 2014).

Gifford, James F. 1972. *The evolution of medical center: a history of medicine at Duke University to 1941*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000039682> ^[30] (accessed July 28, 2014).

Search results for 'John Small' in North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=B-65> ^[31] (accessed July 29, 2014).

Vernon, Steven K. 2001. *The spinning reels of Edward F. Small*. Alpharetta, GA: O.R.C.A. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/spinning-reels-of-edward-f-small/oclc/501334067> ^[32] (accessed July 28, 2014).

Subjects:

[Artists](#) ^[33]

[Biographies](#) ^[34]

[Military personnel](#) ^[35]

Authors:

[Massengill, Stephen E.](#) ^[36]

Origin - location:

[Beaufort County](#) ^[37]

[Washington](#) ^[38]

[Craven County](#) ^[39]

[New Bern](#) ^[40]

[Duplin County](#) ^[41]

[Kenansville](#) ^[42]

[Johnston County](#) ^[43]

[Bentonville](#) ^[44]

[Smithfield](#) ^[45]

[Lenoir County](#) ^[46]

[Kinston](#) ^[47]

[New Hanover County](#) ^[48]

[Wilmington](#) ^[49]

[Pamlico County](#) ^[50]

[Sampson County](#) ^[51]

Clinton ^[52]
Wayne County ^[53]
Goldsboro ^[54]
Davidson County ^[55]
Thomasville ^[56]
Durham County ^[57]
Durham ^[58]
Duke University ^[59]
Forsyth County ^[60]
Winston-Salem ^[61]
Guilford County ^[62]
Greensboro ^[63]
High Point ^[64]
Randolph County ^[65]
Trinity ^[66]

From:

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.^[67]

1 January 1994 | Massengill, Stephen E.

Source URL:<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/small-edward-featherston>

Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/small-edward-featherston> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/beaufort> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Pamlico%20River> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Trinity> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/randolph> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/trinity-college> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Thomasville> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/new-bern-battle> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/kinston-battle> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/fort-fisher-battle> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/bentonville-battle> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/wilmington> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Goldsboro> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/durham> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/high-point-0> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/greensboro-0> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Winston> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Clinton> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Kenansville> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/gazetteer/search/Smithfield> [21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/duke-university> [22] <https://archive.org/details/atlantacitydirec1891polk> [23] <https://archive.org/details/atlantacitydirec1892saun> [24] <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000134474> [25] <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb2669454> [26] <https://www.worldcat.org/title/north-carolina-troops-1861-1865-a-roster/oclc/320426> [27] <http://catalog.lib.ncsu.edu/record/NCSU392949> [28] <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000879207> [29] <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000957934> [30] <http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE000039682> [31] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=B-65> [32] <https://www.worldcat.org/title/spinning-reels-of-edward-f-small/oclc/501334067> [33] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/artist> [34] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [35] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/soldiers> [36] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/massengill-stephen> [37] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-22> [38] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/washington> [39] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-16> [40] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-41> [41] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-9> [42] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location-5> [43] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-11> [44] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location-14> [45] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/smithfield> [46] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-13> [47] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-42> [48] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-7> [49] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-39> [50] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-23> [51] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-8> [52] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/clinton> [53] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-12> [54] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-45> [55] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-11> [56] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location-2> [57] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont/d> [58] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-8> [59] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-34> [60] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-3> [61] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-20> [62] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-4> [63] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-21> [64] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-23> [65] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-10> [66] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/trinity> [67] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>