

Smith, Richard Henry ^[1]

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Smith, Richard Henry

by [Claiborne T. Smith, Jr.](#) ^[2], 1994

10 May 1812–2 Mar. 1893

Richard Henry Smith, planter and legislator, was born in Scotland Neck, the son of [William Ruffin](#) ^[3] and Sarah Walton Norfleet Smith. His great-grandfather, Nicholas Smith, was one of the early settlers of the region, having come from Surry County, Va., in 1723. Smith's education was begun at the local [Vine Hill Academy](#) ^[4], and in 1824 he was sent to Hyde Park in western [Halifax County](#) ^[5] for three years. Following a session at Oxford Academy in [Granville County](#) ^[6], he entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[7] and was graduated in 1832. The next year in Warrenton to read law, he met and married Sally Hall, the daughter of Judge [John Hall](#) ^[8]. Abandoning the study of law, he returned home to Woodstock, several miles north of Scotland Neck, and became a planter. By the [Civil War](#) ^[9] he had accumulated a large fortune and 10,000 acres of land.

In 1848 Smith was elected to the [General Assembly](#) ^[10] as a [Whig](#) ^[11] but was defeated in 1850 because of having voted for the [North Carolina Railroad](#) ^[12] to which rural eastern counties were opposed. Elected again in 1852, he served a single term. In 1861 he was a delegate from Halifax County to the [secession convention](#) ^[13] that met in Raleigh on 20 May. He was also a delegate to the constitutional convention that met in four sessions in 1861–62. For many years he was a member of the [Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions](#) ^[14] for the county, and at the close of the Civil War he was chairman of the court. He was removed from the latter position in 1865 by General E. R. S. Canby, the commanding officer of the Federal forces of occupation in the district.

Always interested in whatever advanced the farming interests of the state, Smith was one of the founders of the [North Carolina Agricultural Society](#) ^[15] and served as an officer. For many years he also was a director of the [asylum for the insane at Raleigh](#) ^[16] and at one time served as chairman of the directors. One of the founders of Trinity Episcopal Parish in Scotland Neck in 1833, he was senior warden for forty years. He was a delegate to the diocesan convention of the church for fifty-nine years and a lay delegate to the General Convention of the national church for twenty-five years. Smith was present at the 1865 convention in Philadelphia, which succeeded in reconciling the divisions in the church caused by the Civil War. In 1882 he published a pamphlet, *The Organization of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States, A.D. 1861, and Its Reunion with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., A.D. 1865*, recording the events.

Hall and his wife were the parents of eight children who reached maturity: Mary Weldon, Norfleet Saunders, Richard Henry, Jr., Alexander Hall, Ann Eliza, Weldon Hall, Isaac Hall, and Sally. [Jacques Busbee](#) ^[17] of Raleigh painted a portrait of Smith late in life. He was buried in the family plot in Trinity Cemetery.

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