

Smith, William Cunningham ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

19 Apr. 1871–17 Dec. 1943

William Cunningham Smith, educator and author, was born in [Greensboro](#) ^[2], the son of Samuel Cunningham and Margaret Ella Cunningham Smith. As an undergraduate at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] he was assistant librarian (1894–96) and was graduated in 1896; he did summer graduate study at Harvard and the University of Wisconsin. At The University of North Carolina he was an instructor in history (1896–97) and English (1897–1900). In 1900 he joined the faculty of the [North Carolina College for Women](#) ^[4] in Greensboro, where he was professor of history (1900–1903) and English (1903–38) and head of the English Department from 1904 until his retirement in 1938. He also served as dean of the College of Liberal Arts for eighteen years (1920–38). In 1920 The University of North Carolina granted him the honorary Litt.D. degree.

As chairman of chapel, he conducted devotional services when chapel attendance was a daily requirement. He also was an extension lecturer and spoke to student groups across the state on Robert Browning and on Bible literature. He taught a large men's Bible class at the First Presbyterian Church and was the author of *Bible Study* (1915). Smith spoke frequently before Bible classes, institutes, Christian associations, and other religious organizations. He wrote a number of biographical sketches for [Samuel A. Ashe](#) ^[5]'s *Biographical History of North Carolina* and was the author of historical articles published by the [North Carolina Historical Commission](#) ^[6]. His *Charles Duncan McIver* ^[7] appeared in 1907 and *Studies in American Authors* was published in 1913. He also contributed to the *Library of Southern Literature*.

Smith married Gertrude Allen of Greensboro on 12 Aug. 1897, and they became the parents of four daughters and a son. He was a Democrat, a member of the [Presbyterian church](#) ^[8], the Rotary Club, and other organizations.

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[Daniel L. Grant, *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina* \(1924\).](#) ^[9]

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Authors:

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Origin - location:

[Guilford County](#) ^[15]

[Greensboro](#) ^[16]

[University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) ^[17]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[18]

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