

A Guide to the Governor George William Smith Executive Papers, 1811-1812

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1811-1812

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There are no restrictions.

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Bibliography

Flournoy, H. W., CALENDAR OF VIRGINIA STATE PAPERS, January 1, 1808-December 31, 1835, VOL. X, Richmond: James E. Goode, Printer, 1892.

Biographical Information

George William Smith was born in 1762 at Bathurst, Essex County, to Meriwether Smith and Alice Lee, Meriwether's first wife and the widow of Thomas Clarke. Meriwether Smith was a prominent politician having served in the Continental Congress and as a representative of Essex County in the House of Burgesses, Committee of Safety, Virginia Conventions, and House of Delegates. George William, a lawyer, followed his father into politics representing Essex County in the House of Delegates from 1790 to 1793 and Richmond City from 1801 to 1802. Smith was also elected to represent Richmond City at the 1807-1808 session, but his election was successfully contested by John H. Foushee.

On 15 December 1807, Smith became a member of the Council of State, elected as president of that body on 20 March 1809 to replace Alexander Stuart. Smith was reelected as president of the Council on 1 January 1810 and again on 2 January 1811. During this time, Smith was twice called on to assume the duties as lieutenant governor and acting governor. His first stint as acting governor occurred as a result of the resignation of Governor John Tyler on 15 January 1811 to become a judge of the United States District Court for Virginia. Shortly thereafter, James Monroe was elected governor on 19 January 1811 leaving Smith with his duties in the Council of State. Monroe too resigned on 3 April 1811 in order to accept his appointment by President James Madison as Secretary of State. In the absence of the General Assembly, Smith again became acting governor for eight months until the legislature reconvened and elected him governor on 5 December 1811. Smith's tenure as governor, however, was cut short upon his death in the Richmond Theater fire on 26 December 1811. Peyton Randolph, a member of the Council of State, succeeded Smith as acting governor until the election of James Barbour on 4 January 1812.

George William Smith married Sarah Adams, daughter of Col. Richard Adams of Richmond, on 7 February 1793. The couple had eight children. Sarah died on 30 September 1806, and George William later remarried to Jane Read Jones, widow of Meriwether Jones. Smith is buried in Monumental Church in Richmond, Virginia, which was built on the site of the Richmond Theater.

Scope and Content

George William Smith's Executive papers primarily consist of incoming correspondence during his term as lieutenant governor acting as governor as a result of the resignation of James Monroe from 3 April 1811 until 6 December. There is a small amount of papers during his brief term as governor from 6 December until his death in the Richmond Theater fire on 26 December. In addition, there are a few papers while Peyton Randolph served until James Barbour's appointment as governor on 4 January 1812. These papers are arranged chronologically with pardons arranged to the rear. The correspondence in this collection relates to a variety of topics including appointments & recommendations for state positions; prisoners & the Virginia Penitentiary; arms & the Virginia Manufactory of Arms; the Public Guard; the militia; a public tobacco warehouse on the canal of the Upper Appomattox Company; repairs to the Capitol; housing for the Governor; public improvements; the Erie Canal; resignations; state expenses & revenue; and others. In addition to correspondence, there are resolutions from the Virginia Senate & House of Delegates; accounts; oaths; muster rolls; pardons; proposals; receipts; election returns & architectural drawings; certificates; qualifications; petitions; reports; appointments; resignations; bonds; commissions; orders; proceedings;

applications; and other sundry items.

The Governor received correspondence from three main sources: the Federal government, Virginia State government, and Governors from other states. Federal government correspondents include James Monroe, Secretary of State, and William Eustis, Secretary of War. On 3 April 1811, James Monroe writes Lieutenant Governor Smith regarding his acceptance of an appointment by the president as Secretary of State. Monroe also writes regarding a land bounty warrant improperly issued to William Goodman (1811 May 1). Monroe transmits a copy of the Third Census of the United States on 26 November 1811. Lastly, Monroe transmits an act for the appointment of Representatives among the several states according to the third enumeration (1811 Dec. 27). As Secretary of War, William Eustis requests a duplicate copy of the list of officers & soldiers of the Virginia Line on Continental Establishment which was destroyed in a fire at the War Office (1811 May 17). On 13 Dec. 1811, William Burns encloses a letter from Eustis to Alexander Quarrier regarding transporting military stores belonging to the United States to Norfolk.

The majority of correspondence in George W. Smith's Executive Papers originates from Virginia State government. Significant correspondents from Virginia State government include John Staples, Superintendent of the Virginia Manufactory of Arms; Peter Crutchfield, Commandant of the Public Guard; Abraham Douglas, Keeper of the Penitentiary; Philip N. Nicholas, Attorney General; William Munford, Clerk of the House of Delegates; and Samuel Shepard, Auditor of Public Accounts.

John Staples, as Superintendent of the Virginia Manufactory of Arms, corresponded frequently with the Governor regarding arms and the Manufactory in Richmond, Virginia. Staples encloses monthly statements of the operations of the Manufactory from April to December 1811. Most of these statements were prepared by William Banks. Staples also writes regarding the claim of Thomas Hume for inspecting arms repaired by Robert Stewart (1811 May 18); a list of arms distributed from 1 Dec. 1810 to 31 Oct. 1811 (1811 Oct. 31); and Alexander Quarrier's account with the Commonwealth for gun carriages (1811 Nov. 9). In his letter of 6 June 1811, Staples requests a visit to Harper's Ferry in order to introduce the manufacture of musket locks to the Virginia Manufactory of Arms. Staples also encloses a letter from John McLean, New York, regarding cannon. In Staples' absence, George Williamson encloses a statement of arms on hand and ready for delivery (1811 June 19). In addition, Staples served on a committee consisting of Christopher Tompkins, Anderson Barret, & George Winston to determine the necessary repairs to the Capitol. The committee writes the governor on 30 May 1811 detailing problems with the Capitol Building.

Peter Crutchfield, Commandant of the Public Guard, provides monthly returns of arms & accoutrements belonging to the Public Guard, monthly reports of the daily duties performed by the Public Guard, and monthly muster rolls from April to December 1811. These monthly reports are filed at the end of each month. Note that the monthly reports for October are missing.

Abraham Douglas, Keeper of the Penitentiary, communicates with Governor Smith concerning articles for sale on hand at the Penitentiary (1811 April 24); the conduct of George Hoffman (1811 April 29); a statement of powder remaining in the Public Magazine (1811 May 15); nails & cloth on hand at the Penitentiary (1811 June 3); the discharge of Claiborne Nunnally from the Penitentiary (1811 June 20); the pardons of George Miller & Benjamin Foster (1811 July 18); nails (1811 Aug. 22); and a statement of ammunition belonging to the Commonwealth (1811 Dec. 27). Additionally, William Anderson, Agent to the Penitentiary, writes regarding his claim on 15 August 1811. Anderson encloses Auditor's accounts, Treasurer's accounts, and an inventory of articles on hand by Douglas.

Philip Norborne Nicholas, Attorney General, writes regarding the manner in which bonds & recognizance are taken (1811 April 21); a deed to John Chandler & a bond from his securities for land purchased by him from the Commonwealth (1811 May 25); letters patent relative to the Swift Run Gap Turnpike Company (1811 June 14); the bond of Adam Dickerson (1811 June 19); and the detention of Spencer Speed (1811 June 26). The Attorney General also provides opinions on the demand of a fugitive in North Carolina (1811 April 4); commissions & obtaining arms from militia companies no longer in existence (1811 Aug. 27); and the appointment of sheriffs (1811 Oct. 9).

William Munford, as Clerk of the House of Delegates, often submits legislation to the Governor. Noteworthy, is a resolution to wear black crape in memory of Governor Smith and the other citizens who died in the Richmond Theater fire (1811 Dec. 28). Additionally, Munford transmits extracts from the House Journal regarding the election of John Coalter as judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals to supply the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of St. George Tucker (1811 Dec. 6).

Samuel Shepard, Auditor of Public Accounts, corresponds with Governor Smith regarding various financial matters. Shepard regularly encloses accounts of expenses for forwarding notices, executions, etc. (1811 May 4, 1811 July 8, & 1811 Oct. 11). In addition, Shepard writes concerning a list of counties where there have been no collectors of the revenue (1811 April 5); executions against John Currence & Samuel Bermfield for the militia fines of 1808 (1811 April 5), the account between Robert Stewart & the Commonwealth for repairing arms (1811 April 23); the collector of taxes in Norfolk Borough (1811 May 11); disbursements for postage of public letters (1811 May 15 & 1811 Sept. 4); a request for a leave of absence (1811 June 26); the claim of Mr. Tinsley as provost martial (1811 Sept. 17); warrants drawn on the Contingent Fund from 1 Jan. to present (1811 Sept. 25); the accounts with Alexander Quarrier as quartermaster to the detachment of

militia in Dec. 1808 under Col. John Mayo and as Keeper of the Arsenal (1811 Oct. 11); additional warrants drawn on the Contingent Fund (1811 Nov. 15); a motion against Joseph Sequine as Sheriff of Norfolk County (1811 Nov. 26); and the account of the tax of 1810 for the Borough of Norfolk (1811 Nov. 29).

Governors from other states comprise a significant amount of correspondence received by the Governor. This correspondence mostly relates to the exchange of laws and the extradition of criminals. Included are letters from the following governors and secretaries of state: David B. Mitchell, Georgia; Edward Lloyd, Maryland; Samuel Sparhawk, New Hampshire; Benjamin Smith, North Carolina; Joseph Bloomfield, New Jersey; William Blount, Tennessee; Joseph Haslet, Delaware; and Henry Dangerfield, Mississippi Territory.

Governor David B. Mitchell, Georgia, writes regarding the demand of Northcutt detained in Georgia on a charge of felony (1811 April 12). Governor Edward Lloyd, Maryland, transmits a copy of the laws of Maryland (1811 June 15 & July 6). Secretary Samuel Sparhawk, New Hampshire, transmits a resolution to forward three sets of the new edition of the statutes to each state (1811 Aug. 20). Governor Benjamin Smith, North Carolina, writes regarding the compelling of persons in his state to give testimony in Virginia (1811 Sept. 28). Governor Joseph Bloomfield, New Jersey, transmits resolutions of the state to furnish copies of laws and a map of New Jersey (1811 Nov. 1). Governor William Blount, Tennessee, encloses a resolution disapproving the amendments proposed by Massachusetts, Virginia, & Pennsylvania, and approving the amendment regarding titles of nobility (1811 Nov. 27). Governor Joseph Haslet, Delaware, writes regarding the extradition of John Moss (1811 Dec.). Lastly, Secretary Henry Dangerfield, Mississippi Territory, writes regarding the demand for Jacob Daniel, a fugitive from justice (1811 Dec. 28).

Additional significant correspondence includes the following: James Allen refusing his appointment as judge of the General Court to replace Hugh Nelson (1811 April 4); Daniel Smith accepting an appointment as judge of the General Court (1811 April 15); Presley N. O'Bannon re. the sword to be presented him for his services on the Barbary Coast (1811 April 20); Robert Greenhow, one of the Commissioners to Dispose of Certain Public Property, re. renting a house for the Governor (1811 May 6); Richard Corbin re. the election return of John Roane to Congress for the district of King & Queen, King William, Essex, & Caroline (1811 May 12); Edward Cunningham re. his proposal to take Mr. Moncure's house now under lease to the Governor (1811 May 15); John Coalter accepting his commission as judge of the Court of Appeals (1811 June 1); James Allen accepting his appointment as judge of the General Court (1811 July 2); Presley N. O'Bannon re. a visit to Richmond and the presentation of the sword & belt by the state of Virginia (1811 July 4); George Nicolson re. the enclosure of the Public Magazine and the amount of powder therein (1811 July 5); Gouverneur Morris, DeWitt Clinton, & others, New York, requesting pecuniary appropriations or influence in Congress to provide for the whole expense of the canal from the Great Lakes to the Hudson River (1811 Oct. 8); Brig. Gen. Thomas Mathews forwarding a letter from Lt. Col. Magnier, 7th Regt., re. intelligence of an intended slave insurrection (1811 Oct. 3); Edward Banks re. his acting as Keeper of the Keys of the Capitol in the absence of Col. Alexander Quarrier (1811 Oct. 12); James Jones resigning as a member of the Council of State (1811 Nov. 4); John L. Morton, Secretary of the Canal Commission, transmitting an act to provide for the improvement of the internal navigation of the New York (1811 Nov. 8); W. Croghan, Kentucky, re. a statement of unsatisfied claims to land belonging to officers & soldiers of the Virginia State Line & Navy (1811 Nov. 7); Paul Carrington, Jr., re. the acts respecting county jails (1811 Nov. 13); Robert Binchett & John Osborne enclosing a plan, bill of materials, & articles of agreement between John Thweat & the commissioners appointed by the Executive to contract for building a public warehouse on the canal of the Upper Appomattox Company (1811 Nov. 20); and Richard N. Venable, Robert Binchett, & John Osborne enclosing a deed & plat of one acre purchased from the Upper Appomattox Company near its basin (1811 Dec. 10).

Other noteworthy items include: the appointment of Robert Nelson as judge of the General Court to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of James Semple (1811 April 27); a proclamation by Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the apprehension of Joseph Steel (1811 May 11); proceedings of the monthly meeting of the visitors of the Penitentiary (1811 May 18 & 1811 Oct. 30); a proclamation by Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the discovery of the person who murdered a child in Richmond and placed the body in the James River (1811 July 27); a proclamation by Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the apprehension of William Roberts (1811 Aug. 8); a proclamation of Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the capture of Peter Rose (1811 Aug. 19); a proclamation of Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the capture of William Hooper (1811 Sept. 2); a proclamation of Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for the capture of John Johnson (1811 Oct. 7); proceedings of the Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Visitors of the Penitentiary (1811 July 13 & 1811 Oct. 30); a proclamation of Lt. Gov. Smith offering a reward for information on the perpetrator who robbed the Treasury (1811 Oct. 24); the bond of Samuel Pleasants as Public Printer (1811 Dec. 7); and a proclamation of Gov. Smith offering a reward for the capture of Robert B. Gibson (1811 Dec. 16).

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by date of document with pardons and undated items arranged to the rear.

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