

HITORICAL MARKER APPLICATION

2022

GEORGE EDWARD SMITH

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

BROWNWOOD, TEXAS

By

Alexia Bieniek

Marker chair

Brown County Historical Commission

Previously submitted as an Untold Marker

November, 2021

GEORGE EDWARD SMITH

1845-1913

SLAVE, CONTRABAND, BUFFALO SOLDIER, CIVIC LEADER, and FOUNDER OF CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS-George Edward Smith was all of these.

George Edward Smith was born into a family of slaves owned by Colonel Jackson around 1845 in Richmond, Stafford C.H, Virginia. Colonel was a common title given to large land owners in the South not a military rank. Smith's grandmother helped him escape from Colonel Jackson in 1861. His freedom was short lived when he was captured by the Union forces and labeled contraband. As Union contraband he was forced to dig ditches around Washington D.C. to protect the city from attack. When Smith was released at the end of the Civil War he returned to his home Virginia.¹

Smith enlisted in the U. S. Army in 1869. Congress had mandated that four new regiments be added to the Army in 1866, "two of which shall be composed of colored men." ² These two units were the 9th and 10th Cavalry. These two units were charged with the protection of stage coach and mail routes from San Antonio to El Paso. These units became known as the "Buffalo soldiers". The Native Americans were in awe at the first sight of black men. They thought some higher power for some reason had turned buffalo into men.³

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



OATH OF ENLISTMENT AND ALLEGIANCE.

State of District of Columbia }
 Town of Washington } ss:

I, George Smith, born in Stafford Co. Va. in the State of Virginia, and by occupation a Soldier

DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have voluntarily enlisted this twentieth day of December, 1876, as a **Soldier** in the Army of the United States of America, for the period of FIVE YEARS, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: And do also agree to accept from the United States such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing as are or may be established by law. And I do solemnly swear, that I am Twenty nine years and _____ months of age, and know of no impediment to my serving honestly and faithfully as a Soldier for five years under this enlistment contract with the United States. And I, George Smith do also solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the **United States of America**, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Residence Washington D.C.

Subscribed and duly sworn to before me, this 20th day of December, A. D. 1876. George Smith (SEAL)

W. S. Hammond
 Capt. 4th Artillery
 Recruiting Officer.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have carefully examined the above-named recruit, agreeably to the General Regulations of the Army, and that, in my opinion, he is free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity which would, in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

A. A. Sargent
 A. A. Sargent U.S.A.
 Examining Officer.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have minutely inspected the above-named recruit, George Smith, previously to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that, to the best of my judgment and belief, he is of lawful age; and that I have accepted and enlisted him into the service of the United States under this contract of enlistment as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier, and, in doing so, have strictly observed the Regulations which govern the Recruiting Service. This soldier has Black eyes, Black hair, Black complexion, is 5 feet 9 inches high.

W. S. Hammond (SEAL)
 Capt. 4th Artillery
 Recruiting Officer, United States Army.

NOTE.—Scars and marks found upon the person of a recruit will be noted on the enlistment paper.

Assigned to the Ninth Regiment of Cavalry U. S. Army.
Sumner
Major (Cavalry) Fort Big Lee, D.C.
Superintendent.

District
STATE OF



City
TOWN OF

Columbia

Washington

I, George Smith, born in Stafford Co. D.
in the State of Virginia, aged twenty two years,
and by occupation a Labourer, DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have
voluntarily enlisted this seventeenth day of September,
1869, as a Soldier in the Army of the United States of America, for the
period of ~~THREE~~ four YEARS, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: Do also
agree to accept such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing, as are, or may be, estab-
lished by law. And I, George Smith do solemnly swear,
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America,
and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or
opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President
of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according
to the Rules and Articles of War.

Sworn and subscribed to, at Washington, D.C.
this seventeenth day of September, 18 69 } George Smith
BEFORE Charles H. Pyne }
Capt. of Infantry

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have carefully examined the above-named Recruit, agreeably to
the General Regulations of the Army, and that in my opinion he is free from all bodily defects and mental
infirmary, which would, in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier

J. M. Barnes
A. A. Surgeon
EXAMINING SURGEON.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have minutely inspected the Recruit, George Smith
previously to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that to the best of my
judgment and belief, he is of lawful age; and that, in accepting him as duly qualified to perform the duties
of an able-bodied soldier, I have strictly observed the Regulations which govern the recruiting service.
This soldier has black eyes, black hair, black complexion, is five feet eight inches
high.

Charles H. Pyne
Capt. of Infantry
RECRUITING OFFICER.

Smith was assigned to Company C, 9th Cavalry and stationed at Ft Davis in Alpine, Texas. Company C was involved in skirmishes in the Guadalupe Mountains and Crow Springs during the time that Smith was assigned to Fort Davis. ⁴ Smith mustered out in 1874 as a Sergeant at Fort Ringgold.⁵ He returned to Virginia only to re-enlist in 1879.⁶ This time he was assigned to Company D, 10th Cavalry serving at Ft. Concho in San Angelo. During his tour of duty the 10th Cavalry were in a continual battle with Chief Victorio's Mescalero Apaches. Victorio would raid settlers then lead his band across the Rio Grande. ⁷ Smith's tour of duty ended in 1881 and was discharged from Fort Concho. This time he left the army with the rank of Corporal and remained in San Angelo.⁸

While stationed at Ft Concho, Smith became active in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) He was ordained Deacon in 1883. Since its beginning, the A.M.E has promoted education for blacks.⁹ During his last months of service at Fort Concho, he was appointed school trustee for "Colored District # 1" of Tom Green County.¹⁰

After discharge he was ordained Deacon in the Greater St. Matthew A.M.E Church in San Angelo and was soon appointed an Elder in 1883. A.M.E Bishop Richard H. Cain, assigned to the district that included Louisiana and Texas was selecting men of excellent character to organize A.M.E churches in "unoccupied territory"¹¹. Forts Davis and Concho were being phased out by the Army; the Army was discharging the "Buffalo soldiers". Through their training, discipline, and frontier experiences, the "Buffalo Soldiers" were a good source for such men. Brownwood

was one of those unoccupied territories. Reverend George Smith was chosen to go to Brownwood in 1885 to found an A.M.E Church. ¹²

Upon his arrival in Brownwood Rev. Smith was surprised there were no schools for black children. He approached the Brownwood school board to learn how to open a new school. He had to go to Austin to take the teacher's exam to become a qualified Texas teacher. Returning to Brownwood, he set about organizing a school and teaching the children the basics- wherever a vacant room could be found including his own home.¹³

1888 was an important year for Smith; he established Lee Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church and married Virginia Love. The rigors of caring for a budding family and a growing church Rev. Smith needed a qualified person to assume educational responsibilities of the fledgling school. A member of Lee Chapel A.M.E., Rufus Hardin answered the call.

Rufus Hardin, a native Texan graduated from Prairie View Normal School now Prairie View University, with a B.A.¹⁴ Normals were the teacher training schools that were eventually absorbed by colleges and universities to become the education departments¹⁵. Hardin took the reins of the school in 1890 and over the years developed strong educational programs in the neighborhood. When he died, Brownwood Colored High School was renamed Rufus Hardin High School in his honor when he had a stroke in 1934.¹⁶

Along with no school for black children, there were only a few houses when Smith arrived and many of those were little more than shacks. Smith and his partner Walter Crutchfield bought land in the community started to build the needed housing. Hardin had already built a few rent houses using the funding system he devised; making it possible for the residents to buy and raise their families in quality homes. Rev. Smith built one of the first stores in the “Flats” as it was and still is called by the residents. Businesses such as barber shops, grocery stores, and cafes began to thrive in the “Flats” mostly due to the foundations laid by Rev. Smith.¹⁶ The city of Brownwood recognized the area as the “Bailey Addition”.

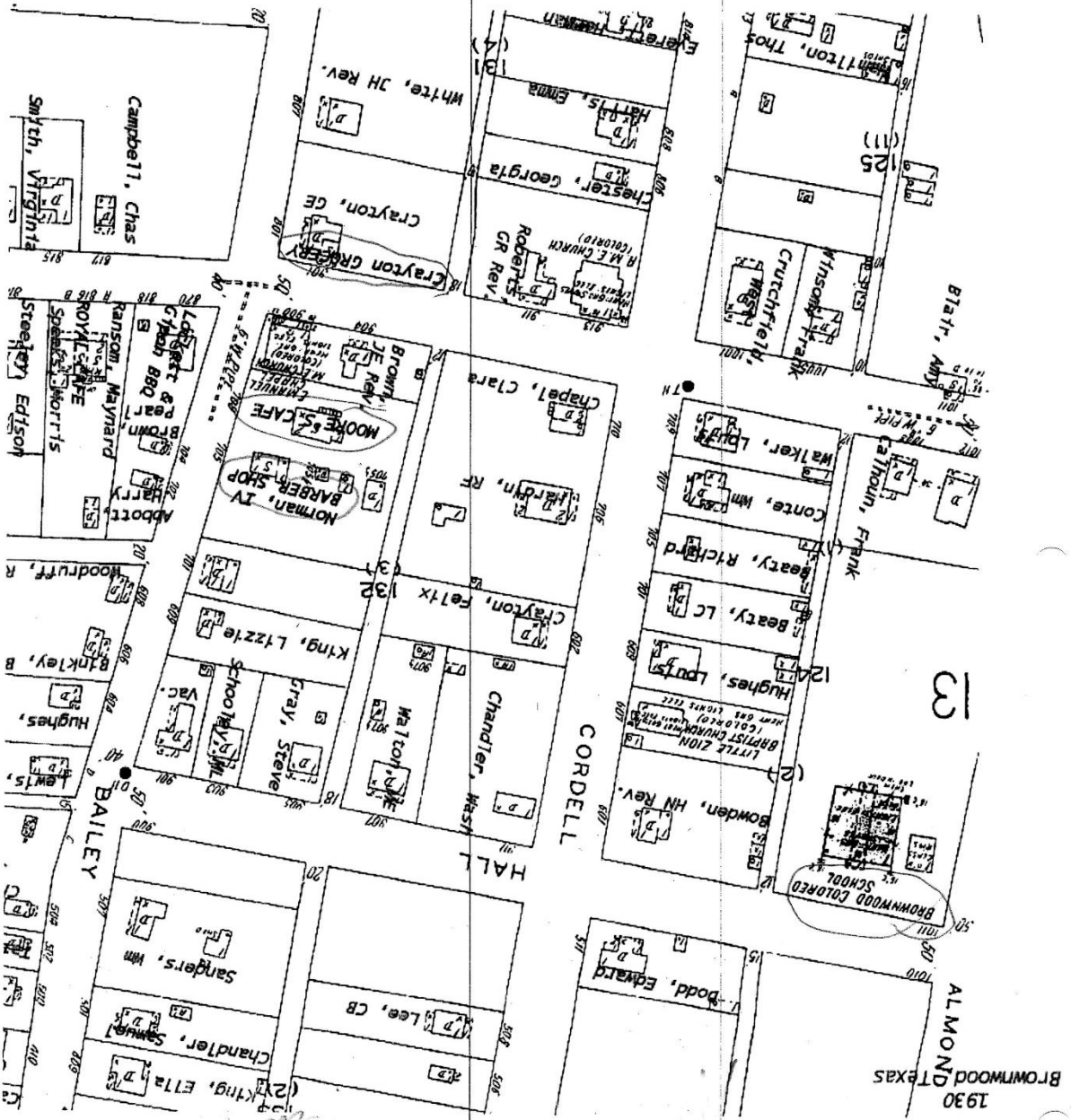
The city of Brownwood annexed the “Bailey Addition” in 1890.¹⁷ Just as he had gone to the school board in order to properly develop a school; Rev. Smith now approached the various departments of city of Brownwood with requests for improvements to “the Flats”. However, Rev. Smith was no longer alone in his work. His accomplishments had shown and inspired younger people to continue to improve their community. His last civic project was to bring running water to the “Bailey Addition”. Rev. George E Smith died August 9, 1913, the same day the city of Brownwood turned the tap allowing pure clean water to flow into the “Flats”¹⁸

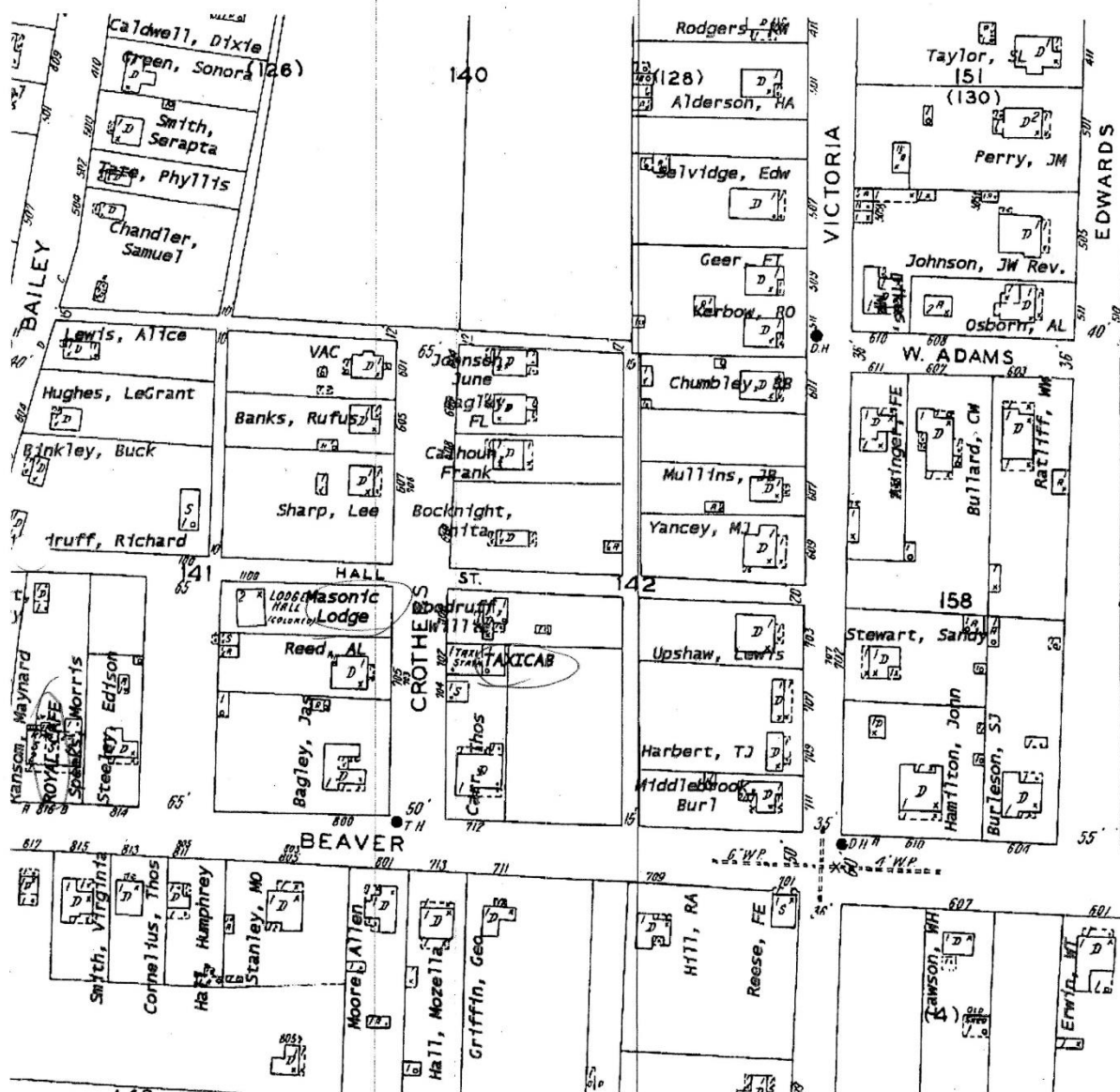
Smith’s civic work was recognized in 1951 when the Federal Housing Authority opened the George Smith Housing Project.¹⁹ When the Federal Housing Authority morphed into

Housing and Urban Development the name was changed to George Smith Apartments.



After Rev. Smith passed away, the “Bailey Addition” or the “Flats” grew into a solid law abiding community as seen in the following maps. These maps come from the 1930 Sanborn Fire Maps. They were enhanced by Frank Hilton of the Pecan Valley Genealogical Society





BAILEY

VICTORIA

EDWARDS

CROTHAM ST.

BEAVER

Caldwell, Dixie
Green, Sonora (26)

Smith, Serapta

Perry, Phyllis

Chandler, Samuel

Lewis, Alice

Hughes, LeGrant

Binkley, Buck

Truff, Richard

VAC

Banks, Rufus

Sharp, Lee

Johnson, June

Bagley, Frank

Cashour, Frank

Bocknight, Frank

Rodgers, Edw

(28) Alderson, RA

Balvidge, Edw

Geer

Kerbow, RO

Chumbley, D

Mullins

Yancey, M

Taylor, SL

(130) Perry, JM

Johnson, JW Rev.

Osborn, AL

W. ADAMS

Bullard, CW

Ratliff, W

158

Stewart, Sandy

Hamilton, John

Bullison, SJ

Upshaw, Lewis

Harbert, TJ

Middlebrook, Burl

Masonic Lodge

Reed, Al

Bagley, J

Steele, Edson

ROYAL OAK

Spears, Morris

Kanson, Maynard

Smith, Virginia

Cornelius, Thos

Humphrey

Stanley, MO

Moore, Allen

Hall, Mozell

Griffin, Geo

Hyl, RA

Reese, FE

Rawson

Erwin

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