

General Charles H. Smith, Medal of Honor, <sup>Hugh French's</sup> copy  
1st Maine Cavalry

There is a small amount of information regarding some of the early principals of the Boynton school. The most noted of all of the schools head masters was Charles H. Smith. Who became a general during the Civil War and was a recipient of the Medal of the Honor.

The following principals are not in chronological order. Principal George Sennott was short, stout with a ruddy complexion and was said to have a drinking problem. Mr. Sennott moved to Boston and became a lawyer. It was said he was a man with many abilities with a bright mind but had a temper which caused many fights with the older boys. On one of these disagreements the older boy pinned Mr. Sennott against the blackboard with a broom handle. Another principal was Mr. Ray who was tall, dignified and somewhat distant. He was a great believer in corporal punishment and used the "ferrule" a green leather covered cane when he thought it was needed. (8)

There was Dr. Lyon who was a quiet man. Even though he was a gentleman he had a firmness to his nature that even the older boys in the classroom could not defeat. What he said was law and he enforced it without using the cane except with the most difficult boy. Then Mr. [James H.] Hanson who was considered a good teacher and had the ability to make learning interesting by using articulation for spelling and putting geography to musical tunes. Then there was [Noel B.] Nutt, later editor of the Eastport Sentinel, he was a dignified and efficient teacher. He was fair in his punishment of students but there were times it was thought he was too hard on the offending pupil. (9)

In the early years of the school there was no grade levels or "systematic arrangements and grading of its studies." In 1861 this was discussed at the school committee meeting and it was pointed out that students now come into the school and "stay in it for an indifferent period and never regularly graduate from it." The principal, at that time, presented to the committee a system when a student entered the school they would attend for a period of four years and then would graduate from the Boynton school. (10)

During the Civil War about 120 former students of the Boynton school participated in the Rebellion, 114 in the Army and 6 in the Navy. Two former principal's served in the Army during the war Charles H. Smith and Sabine Emery. Of the two Smith became the most acclaimed for his fighting ability in leading the 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Cavalry Regiment. (11)

Sabine Emery was appointed a Captain in the Ninth Maine Regiment of Infantry and later promoted to Colonel. He was wounded at Fort Wagner on July 18, 1863 and resigned from the service on May 25, 1864. (12)

Charles Henry Smith was born on Nov. 1, 1827 at Hollis, Maine. He graduated Waterville College, later renamed Colby, in 1856 and came to Eastport in early 1857. Smith was highly recommended for the position of principal at the Boynton school. He replaced James H. Hanson who resigned in late February 1857 after teaching at the school for the last three years. The former principal left Eastport on March 13, 1857 for a teaching job in Portland. (13)

Charles  
H.  
Smith

Smith was of a generous spirit and developed a good rapport with his students and their parents. He was popular and had the respect of the community as a whole and was a member the local Masonic Lodge Eastern No. 7. His upper floor vaulted classroom, the first department or the "High School", with his capable assistant Miss. Charlotte Boyd was always decorated and the walls lined with pictures and mottoes. On special school days his classroom was adorned with evergreens and both boys and girls competed for prizes that Mr. Smith bought with his own money. At this time Noel B. Nutt was in charge, principal, of the second department on the first floor along with his assistant Miss. Maria E. Odell later Hattie M. Boyd. (14)

Principal Smith enjoyed his position at the Boynton school but the salary of a teacher in those days was meager. Smith was interested in becoming a lawyer and he gave his resignation effective at the end of the summer term of school. The position of principal was filled by the capable Sabine Emery at the start of the September term. Sometime in late August or early September of 1860 Smith began his study of law in the Eastport office of the Honorable Aaron Hayden. (15)

In the spring of 1861 the Civil War begun and that following September Sabine Emery resigned his position as principal at the Boynton school. He became to a Captain in the Ninth Maine Infantry regiment. Smith also wanted to join the fight and the ever popular former principal agreed to take the place of the departing Emery. Within a month Smith was appointed Captain of Co. D on Oct. 19, 1861 in the newly formed 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Cavalry. (16) The following month, November, George B. Vose who taught the lower (second) Department on the first floor was made principal of the of the first department "or the High School" on the second floor. Jones Lincoln of Perry was made the teacher of the lower Department "made vacant by the promotion of Mr. Vose." (17)

After recruiting for his command and some training Capt. Smith and his unit was assigned to the Army of the Potomac. In early 1862 Smith and his men took part in a number of engagements with Confederate forces. Smith was a good leader and inspired his troops, he was cool under fire and was always at the front of his men leading the charge. Through the early part of 1863 he rose swiftly through the ranks; Major, Lieut. Colonel then full Colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Me. Cavalry. Smith served under cavalry General Phil Sheridan and became one of his best fighting commanders. (18)

Smith and his unit took part in the largest cavalry battle of the Civil War, Brandy Station. During the fight General Kilpatrick witnessed the daring cavalry charge against rebel cannons that was led by the popular Smith and said [it] "was one of the best charges ever made" to which he added "that they all owed their thanks to the 1<sup>st</sup> Me. for saving ... the whole division." At the Battle of Gettysburg Smith and his cavalry drove off a Confederate cavalry column that was trying to make its way in back of the Union army. At the battle of Upperville Smith and his troopers again showed their determination and drove the enemy before them. Again General Kilpatrick was nearby, watched the charge, and stated to his officers that "those Maine boys would charge straight into hell if so ordered." (19)

At St. Mary's Church, Virginia Smith had two horses shot from under him. In the early afternoon of June 24, 1864 Smith was seriously wounded and in great pain, by being shot through the thigh, he refused to give up his command and continued to fight along with his men until early evening. For his actions at this battle Smith was brevetted Brigadier General and received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Battle of St. Mary's  
Church, Virginia  
Smith received  
the Medal of  
Honor

Within a few months his wounds healed Smith returned to active duty. A short time later he had a reunion with his old friend Colonel Joshua Chamberlain of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. After the war Chamberlain writes his book "The Passing of the Armies" and tells of this meeting "it was with a joy deeper than merriment that I came in touch with our splendid old First Maine Cavalry ... with Smith at their head straight and solid and luminous as a lighthouse." (20)

At Appomattox, Smith and his unit played a critical role in stopping the Confederate Army. During the night the Union cavalry surrounded the retreating rebel army. Smith and his men placed themselves upon a hill directly in the path of Lee's troops. This caused confusion among the Confederate's as to the number of Union soldiers that blocked their escape.

Smith and  
1st Me  
prevented  
Gen. Lee from  
escaping  
causing him  
to surrender  
at Appomattox

Chamberlain credits Smith with stopping the rebels and writes in his book "our cavalry had been doing splendid work all night, and in fact was now holding at bay Lee's whole remaining army. I was proud to learn that Smith's brigade, our First Maine Cavalry in the van[guard], had waged the most critical part of the glorious fight." After the surrender of the Confederate Army, Smith had the honor to escort General Grant from the ceremonies at Appomattox. Shortly after the war Smith was awarded the rank of brevet Major General. This popular, highly regarded decorated officer, but modest man, fought in 63 battles and was wounded three times in the service of his country. (21)

After being discharged from the Army, Smith in 1866 returned to Maine and set up his law office in Machias and became a state senator. Smith was restless and missed the Army. On July 28, 1866, Smith rejoined the Army and became Colonel of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He served throughout various Army posts in the west until his retirement from the service in 1891. Smith and his wife Mary Richards Livermore to whom he married in Eastport on July 28, 1864 settled in the nations capitol. After his retirement Smith rarely missed a 1<sup>st</sup> Me. Cavalry reunion or a summer in Eastport. Even though he lived elsewhere Smith always considered Eastport his home. General Smith died in July 1902 and buried in Arlington National Cemetery next to his wife who passed away in 1897. (22)

General Smith received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his action in the Civil War.

Two examples of former Boynton High school students are Edwin F. Gardner who became a Colonel and doctor in the Army Medical Corps and Benjamin L. Whelpley a noted musician of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Edwin Gardner, future medical doctor, was born in Charlotte, Maine in August 1848 the son of Benjamin Gardner and his first wife Rebecca Fisher. Not long after his birth his parents moved to Eastport where his father taught at the Up Island school in the winter of 1850. He later was principal of the boys department of the Brooks School, located on Boynton street, until 1885. (23)

Toward the end of the Civil War Gardner attended the Boynton High school until he enlisted in the army on March 29, 1865 as a private in Co. A in the Maine Infantry 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. He was discharged the following year and returned home. (24) In 1869 he began his studies to become a doctor at the Harvard Medical School and studied under Dr. Jonah of Eastport. He was unable to complete his studies due to lack of money. For the next few years he worked in Maine and Massachusetts in different jobs such as a woolen and paper mill, farm laborer, taught school, and deck hand on a sailing vessel to South America. Within a few years he returned to school to finish his studies and graduated from the Harvard Medical School, at the top of his class, in June 1875. (25)

The Class of 1854 boys and girls. THE EASTPORT STANDARD, Dec. 4, 1885 ?

Boys admitted: William D. Bradbury, Hiram F. Swett, William Corbet, Stephen Hurlburt, John Capen, Frederick Thompson, Cyrus Staples, Edward Byram, James Richardson, Charles W. McGregor, Leslie B. Gardner, William Higgins, Daniel Rose, Walter F. Bradish, Simeon Norwood, Amaziah G. Bugbee, James Eldridge, Lorenzo Bailey, William H. Clark, George M. Jeffrey, James Thompson, Jethro B. Nutt, George W. Stickney. Total 23.

Girls admitted: Mary A. Short, Ellen Mooney, Harriet Robinson, Sarah E. Shackford, Mary C. Parker, Georgiana McGurk, Amelia J. Robbins, Rachel Bucknam, Mary S. Pearce, Ann A. Capen, Rebecca J. Lawrence, Ella Sanborn, Anna Hinkley, Hannah Smith, Sarah Stevens, Caroline Stevens, Margaret J. Cary, Sybil Davis, Salome I. Wood, Sarah Bent, Seraphina Norwood, Ruth Edgett. Total 22.

5.) William Henry Kilby, EASTPORT AND PASSAMAQUODDY, [reprinted 1982 from the original 1888, Border Historical Society, Eastport, Me]:302; THE EASTPORT STANDARD, Friday August 21, 1885 ?

6.) THE EASTPORT STANDARD, August 28, 1885, Correspondence: "Boynton School Reminiscences" August 26, 1885.

7.) IBID

8.) THE EASTPORT STANDARD, December 4, 1885 ?, Correspondence: "Boynton School Reminiscences" November 30, 1885.

9.) IBID

10.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, April 17, 1861 "Annual Eastport School Report.

11.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, June 9, 1897, The Boynton in the War by W. F. Bradish.

12.) William H. Kilby, EASTPORT AND PASSAMAQUODDY, [reprinted 1982 from the original 1888, Border Historical Society, Eastport, Me.]:374.

13.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, March 4, April 8, 1857; Obituary of Charles H. Smith, EASTPORT SENTINEL, July 23, 1902; editor Dumas Malone, DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, [Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y.]:vol. ix:249-50.

14.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, March 30, April 13, 1859, April 4, May 2, September 19, 1860.

15.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, July 4, September 19, 1860.

16.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, Oct. 16, 1861; William H. Kilby, EASTPORT AND PASSAMAQUODDY [reprinted 1982 from the original 1888, Border Historical Society, Eastport, Me.]:357-58; editor Dumas Malone, DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, [Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y.]:vol. ix:249-50; Obituary of Charles H. Smith, EASTPORT SENTINEL, July 23, 1902.

17.) EASTPORT SENTINEL, November 6, 1861.

18.) "General from Eastport trapped rebels at Appomattox," article by John L. Raye, The QUODDY TIDES newspaper August 13, 1999; Dumas Malone, DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, [Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y.]:vol. ix:249-50; William H. Kilby, EASTPORT AND PASSAMAQUODDY, [reprint 1982 from the original 1888, Border Historical Society Eastport, Me.]:358; Obituary of Charles H. Smith, EASTPORT SENTINEL, July 23, 1902.

19.) IBID

20.) IBID

21.) IBID