
An English Shoemaker in Indiana: The Story of Samuel Fowler Smith

*Edited, with introduction, by William E. Van Vugt**

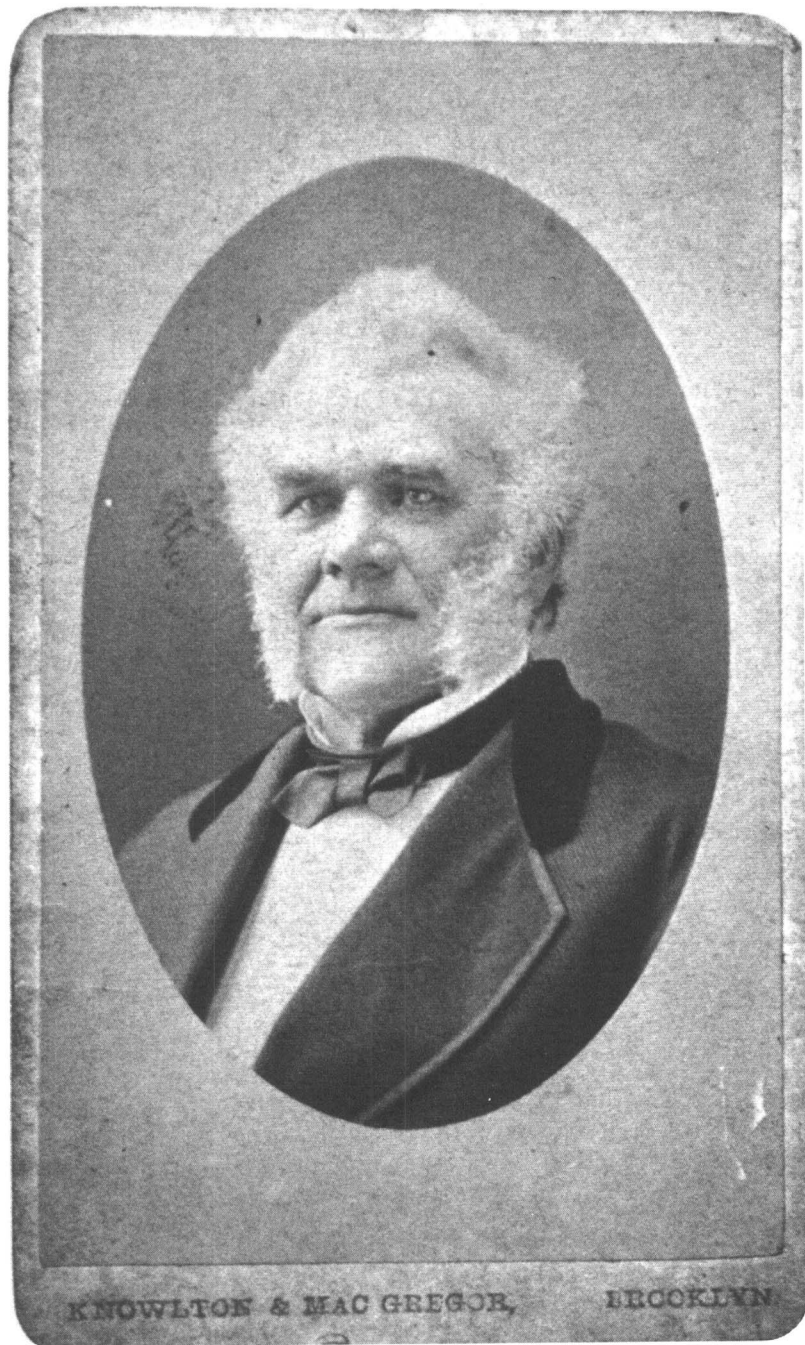
In 1835 a twenty-seven-year-old English shoemaker named Samuel Fowler Smith left his native Yorkshire village of Walton and settled in Indiana, first as a shoemaker in Madison and then as a highly successful and innovative wheel manufacturer in Indianapolis. Thousands of other English immigrants also came to the Hoosier state during the nineteenth century, but Smith is especially worthy of attention because he played an important role in Indiana's industrial history and because he seems to have been, in many ways, a "typical" English immigrant, thus a good "representative case" for close study. What makes his story possible to tell in detail is his unpublished autobiography, which is rich with an Englishman's descriptions of his new home as well as of his homeland.¹ Through this personal account and additional sources in England and Indiana, readers have a rare opportunity to experience the life of an English immigrant and thus to gain a clearer understanding of the significant stream of English migrants who entered the Hoosier state during the early years of the nineteenth century.²

The English were by no means the largest immigrant group to enter Indiana in the nineteenth century. By the Civil War there were over six Germans and nearly three Irish for every English-born person. The greatest number of English in Indiana, as record-

* William E. Van Vugt is professor of history, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. This study was made possible by a Clio Grant from the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, and the kind assistance of Gerry T. Appleyard of Walton, England. The author is also indebted to Dr. Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Thomas A. Mason of the Indiana Historical Society for their encouragement and advice. Photographs were provided by the author. Jane Haney assisted with typing.

¹ Samuel Fowler Smith autobiography, SC 1372 (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis). Smith wrote his life story in 1874 at age sixty-six, shortly after his retirement from business life and five years before his death.

² Other studies of individual English immigrants that have contributed to a better understanding of English migration generally include Jacob Van der Zee, *The British in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1922); Rebecca and Edward Burland, *A True Picture of Emigration*, ed. Milo M. Quaife (Chicago, 1936); Edward Ffolkes, *Letters from a Young Emigrant in Manitoba*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1981); Brian P. Birch, "From Southwest England to Southwest Wisconsin: Devonshire Hollow, Lafayette County," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, LXIX (Winter, 1985-1986), 129-49.



THE ONLY KNOWN SURVIVING PORTRAIT OF SAMUEL FOWLER SMITH, TAKEN TOWARD THE END OF HIS LIFE

Courtesy Samuel Fowler Smith relatives,
Walton, England.

ed in the census, was a little over 11,000 in 1890, yet it is clear that the English impact on the Hoosier state was far greater than these comparatively modest numbers would suggest. Long before Indiana's statehood the English were among the first white people in the region, and they were prominently represented among Indiana's pioneers and early religious and political leaders. Many were known for introducing advanced agricultural methods, for being expert miners, or for bringing important industrial technology and skills from England, the first industrial nation. Because they shared a common language and political and cultural heritage with most Americans, the English were also quicker than other immigrant groups to assimilate and interact with American-born Hoosiers in civic and social affairs.³

Considering the importance of English immigrants to Indiana, it is surprising that historians have paid such scant attention to them, either as individuals or as a group. John E. Iglehart's lengthy account of an early English colony in Vanderburgh County and John Poucher's brief account of an English colony in Floyd County, both published in early issues of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, are notable exceptions.⁴ Because these studies are based on the memories of the immigrants themselves and of their children, they have a depth and intimacy that reveal much about the world of early English colonies in the Hoosier state. However, only a small percentage of English immigrants in Indiana formed such "colonies," and these two studies also have the serious limitation of paying virtually no attention to the immigrants' background in England, which is half of their story. As Frank Thistlethwaite pointed out in a now famous article published in 1960, immigrants can be understood only by viewing them before and after their migration, by treating "the process of migration as a complete sequence of experiences whereby the individual moves from one social identity to another."⁵ Samuel Smith's history invites the kind of analysis that Thistlethwaite called for. Smith's social, economic, and cultural circumstances in his native village; his growing awareness of an alternative life in the New World; his thoughts, painful adjustments, victories, and setbacks as he gradually became a

³ This information is based on the author's larger study on the English and Welsh in Indiana to be published as part of the Indiana Historical Society's Ethnic History Project.

⁴ John E. Iglehart, "The Coming of the English to Indiana in 1817 and Their Hoosier Neighbors," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XV (June, 1919), 89-178; John Poucher, "An English Colony in Floyd County," *ibid.*, XI (September, 1915), 211-15. See also Joan Truitt, ed., "The Letters of William W. Steevens, 1844-1847: 'Engaged in the employment of teaching . . .,'" *Old Fort News* (Spring, 1971), 12-17.

⁵ Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (Comite International des Sciences Historiques *Rapports*; Stockholm, Sweden, 1960), Part V, 37.

Hoosier—all are laid out in the autobiography with honesty, elegance, and thoughtful reflection.

One cannot assume, of course, that Smith accurately represents all or even most of the English immigrants of his generation. The English in Indiana came from a variety of places within England and had disparate levels of skills and means. Surely not many became as successful as Smith did. In many ways, however, Smith was as typical as any other English immigrant in Indiana at this time. He came from Yorkshire, the most common county of origin of English immigrants in the Hoosier state. Like most of his fellow English immigrants he had very limited means and had a skill in addition to some farming experience. Also, he based his decision to emigrate on the rather bleak future he saw for himself in England and the better life he knew awaited him in Indiana as was related to him by one brother who was already in Kentucky and another who was in Fort Wayne. As was true of many of the other immigrants of the nineteenth century, Smith was in effect a link in the "chain migration," reliant upon valuable help and advice from people he could trust. Finally, Smith was typical for having a deep religious faith. A devout Methodist in Yorkshire and in Indiana before becoming a leading member of the Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, Smith was very active in his church and took the Bible and Sunday preaching very seriously.⁶ Smith himself turned down a chance to remain in England and become a preacher, and as he looked back on a life that succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, he drew the startling conclusion, "I made a mistake in the course I took . . . I missed my way and made a wrong choice." As a businessman he suffered some consequences for his faith-centered life when he rather naïvely chose his business partners not for their abilities and working habits but for their faithful church attendance and personal piety. Barring this last trait, however, many of Smith's experiences and general characteristics were common among the English immigrants of the pre-Civil War era.

To understand Smith and his decision to migrate to Indiana one must consider his background in Walton, a typically quaint Yorkshire village about ten miles southwest of the great cathedral city of York. Walton has a very long and rich history—even by English standards. Its name comes from "Wale-tun," or "village of the Welsh," a reference to its traditional origin as a place where the ancient Britons had maintained a settlement despite the successful Roman invasions of the first century and the establishment of their

⁶ The deep religiosity of English immigrants in Indiana, especially among the Methodists, is also a central theme in Poucher's study of the English in Floyd County, as well as in many of the brief biographies of English immigrants that are found in Indiana's county histories.

huge military city of Eboracum (now York) in A.D. 71.⁷ Walton is mentioned in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book (1085), and during the medieval period it had ecclesiastical ties with York. St. Peter's Church, which sits majestically across the street from where Smith was born and raised and in which he was baptized in January of 1809, dates from the twelfth century. A few miles to the east lies Marston Moor, where Sir Thomas Fairfax (whose grand house still stands in Walton) teamed up with Oliver Cromwell in 1644 to defeat King Charles I's troops in the greatest battle of the English Civil War. Smith's appreciation for his local history is evident in his autobiography, as is his deep love for Walton. He would recognize much of Walton if he could visit it today. Though modern changes have of course occurred, the church and many of the houses and cottages remain in a pleasant pastoral setting, and Smith might again have said, "The old village . . . seemed the most lovely spot upon earth, and it was like tearing heart strings to leave it."

Smith's social and economic background helps explain his emigration. His father, also Samuel, was "well read" and one of the leading citizens of the village. In addition to being the village schoolmaster, as he was described in the 1841 census manuscripts,⁸ he was also the village shopkeeper and a tenant farmer of about fifty acres. The elder Smith also had a busy life as parish clerk for St. Peter's Church and, apparently without any sense of conflict, leader for the local Methodists, who met in his house directly opposite St. Peter's. This busy and religious environment helps explain the younger Samuel Smith's drive to achieve economic success as well as his sense of calling to the ministry—two very different paths in life. Despite their local prominence, however, the Smith family suffered economic hardship from time to time. Disease plagued their livestock and crops, their small shop was sometimes a drain on their meager resources, and at times they were unable to pay the rent on their house.

Smith recounts these various early hardships and other life-forming trials (including the time when his cousin nearly seduced him). During his seven years as a shoemaker's apprentice in nearby Tadcaster, he faced tradition-bound limitations, including a prejudice against booklearning for apprentices, which frustrated his ambitions and cultivated an early interest in emigration to America. The Smiths could hardly have escaped hearing about the New World because many of the people in this corner of Yorkshire were opting to emigrate to the United States. In fact, the detailed notes

⁷ The village's official name is Walton-in-Ainsty—"Ainsty" being an area bounded by the rivers Nidd, Ouse, and Warfe—to distinguish it from other Waltons in England. See Edmund Bogg, *Lower Warfedale: The Old City of York and the Ainsty, the Region of Historic Memories* (York, England, 1904).

⁸ Census of Great Britain, 1841, census schedules for the District of Tadcaster, parish of Walton. Microfilms of these census manuscripts are located in the North Yorkshire County Library, York, England.



WALTON VILLAGE AS IT APPEARED IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
THE TOWER OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH IS VISIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND.



ST. PETER'S CHURCH, WHICH CROWNS THE HILL OVERLOOKING THE VILLAGE OF WALTON, ENGLAND

in the British census ascribe the fall in population in some local parishes during the 1830s to emigration.⁹ It is clear that Smith and his brothers were following many other local persons in the long and perilous journey to America.

Walton apparently did not hold enough economic opportunity for someone as ambitious and capable as Samuel Smith. The village's population was quite stagnant and actually fell from 247 in 1821 to 237 in 1831. In 1851 it numbered only 245. Furthermore, the Walton area had gone through a long period of relative agricultural depression, an adverse circumstance for young skilled artisans like Smith who needed a prosperous agricultural population for their own survival, especially when they had to compete with one another for business.¹⁰ As it turned out, Smith found work in

⁹ *Census of Great Britain, 1851*, Population Tables I, vol. II, div. ix, p. 47.

¹⁰ For the economic problems of the area see Robert Unwin, *Wetherby: The History of a Yorkshire Market Town* (Wetherby, England, 1986). The census reveals that by 1841 Walton already had four shoemakers to serve such a small population. See note 8 above; see also *Census of Great Britain, 1851*, Population Tables I, vol. II, div. ix, p. 48.

nearby towns, so his emigration was not simply an escape from hardship and distress but apparently more a determination to fulfill ambitions and make the most of his life. As he recalled, "while working in the shoe shop I felt that I was capable of something better; and yet I could see nothing better before me there." These statements were echoed by so many of the other English immigrants who entered America during the pre-Civil War era.

Smith certainly was "capable of something better," as were most of the other Yorkshire people who left for Indiana and other states during the nineteenth century. He had capabilities and sensibilities that distinguished him from most of the folk who stayed behind in Britain. For example, he was, by his own account, a "voracious reader," a lover of poetry and nature, and he had a drive and intelligence that did not characterize all of the Yorkshiremen of his class. Smith is a good example of the fact that English emigrants were often those with skills and some education as well as considerable ambition and drive—enough to endure the physical and psychological rigors of uprooting themselves and taking a long and arduous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The frequent complaints in Britain's Parliament that the "best" of England were leaving for America did have some justification, and Indiana could only have benefited from receiving such people.¹¹

Having made the decision to emigrate, Smith had to find the means to go, as well as a way to overcome the guilt he felt about leaving his aging parents. The first problem was rather easily solved: after working near Leeds for a couple of years, he accepted an offer to go back to Tadcaster and manage the shop of his old master, Thomas Lockwood, and thus was able to accumulate about one hundred pounds by the time of his emigration. The second was far harder. His parting became a "terrible ordeal," the likes of which were all too familiar to so many emigrants of this period. Smith's vivid retelling of the agony of his departure from his family serves as a good reminder of how emotionally painful emigration could be.

If Smith's English world of the 1830s was in many ways static, unchanging, and economically stagnant, the one he entered in Indiana was changing and developing at a bewildering pace. Indiana's population jumped from a third of a million in 1830 to over two-thirds of a million just ten years later. By 1850 the population stood at just under one million.¹² A market economy was developing in

¹¹ For studies indicating that migrants were often more ambitious and educated than nonmigrants, see J. D. Marshall, "Some Aspects of the Social History of 19th Century Cumbria: Migration and Literacy," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archeological Society*, LXIX (1969), 294; Barbara Kerr, "The Dorset Agricultural Labourer, 1750–1850," *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archeological Society*, LXXXIV (1962), 174.

¹² The more exact figures are 343,031; 685,866; and 988,416 in 1830, 1840, and 1850 respectively. U.S., *Seventh Census, 1850*; Vol. I, *Population*, 781.

the wake of a rapidly moving westward frontier, and early industries were sprouting up in many places while good farmland still sold at bargain prices. Clearly, in terms of economic and social advancement and options for life, Indiana offered a great deal more to Smith than did his native Yorkshire, although there was a psychological and emotional price to pay. These comparative advantages in Indiana, together with Smith's ambition, energy, sense of adventure, and determination to seek his destiny, all influenced his decision to emigrate.

Smith's description of his migration from Yorkshire to Indiana is a "classic" immigrant tale of adventure, hardship, and ultimately success. After falling victim to the infamous swindlers, or "runners," at Liverpool, Smith took second cabin accommodations aboard the *Elisha Dennison*, an American "temperance" sailing ship, and endured a typical month-long voyage, complete with storms so severe that he had to lash himself to the deck while he fully expected to die. Smith landed in New York on November 3, 1835. The *Elisha Dennison*'s passenger list indicates that it was a small ship of only 359 tons and that Smith had only seventy-two fellow passengers—eighteen Irish, one Scot, the rest English. The majority were traveling in family groups, but Smith appears on the list as a single individual. Among the emigrants aboard the *Elisha Dennison*, farmers outnumbered all others although roughly half were either tailors, mechanics, clerks, or miners. There was also a laborer and a doctor. Interestingly, Smith is described as a farmer.¹³ It is possible that he so described himself because of his experience on his father's fifty acres in Walton and because he no longer considered himself a shoemaker at this stage in his life. Unfortunately, Smith spends surprisingly little time recounting the voyage, but no doubt he experienced the combination of sickness, terror, boredom, and anxiety that seem to have been practically universal for Atlantic voyages at the time.¹⁴ More important to Smith were his memories of his first taste of America, his trip via the Erie Canal and Great Lakes to the wild Indiana frontier, his meeting with Lyman Beecher, and his emotional reunion with the brother he had not seen for fourteen years. Smith's descriptions of Logansport (which still had tree stumps in the streets) is interesting, as is his observation of the removal of the Potawatomi and Miami Indians by the "greedy land speculators." Smith, like many other English

¹³ Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, National Archives Microfilm series 237, roll 28, ship number 826. Smith appears in a cluster of three farmers, and his occupation is designated by ditto marks, a common and problematic feature for historians using the passenger lists.

¹⁴ Graphic firsthand accounts of English immigrants' voyages to America during the sailing ship era can be found in Terry Coleman, *Passage to America: A History of Emigration from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1972).

immigrants, was apparently more sympathetic toward the Native Americans than the average native-born Hoosier, in part because he was not raised on the frontier where prejudice against them was likely to fester and grow.¹⁵

During his early days in America Smith had experiences that were common to many English immigrants entering the Old Northwest during the antebellum era. For example, although he had not intended to resume his trade in shoemaking, he was soon compelled to do so for his survival. Also, he virtually had to re-learn his craft when he was forced to use wooden pegs instead of the shoe nails that were more readily available in England. And he was initially so struck by homesickness that he became determined to return to England the first chance he got. However, after spending some time with his brother in Fort Wayne—a “small village” at the time—and surviving fevers and other difficulties in Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, he finally saw an opportunity to settle down in Madison, Indiana, and set up his own shoe business. His success there, his involvement in church life, and above all his marriage to Vermont-born Belvidere Roberts allowed him to become rooted in American life and begin the process of assimilation. The 1850 manuscript census for Madison lists Smith as a “merchant” with a stated real estate value of \$3,000 and with two children.¹⁶

The most dramatic event in this period of Smith's life was his return visit to Walton in 1853. This time he made the crossing in only fourteen days aboard the new steamship *City of Glasgow*. Having spent eighteen years in America, he found that he had become, in his words, “thoroughly Americanized,” while his old village had remained the same. His reunion with his blind eighty-three-year-old father was very touching and well timed: within a few days the father died, and Smith erected the tombstone that still stands in St. Peter's churchyard.

Interestingly, Smith had changed so much by 1853 that in his native village he was struck by the “oddity of the Yorkshire dialect,”

¹⁵ Interestingly, another English immigrant, the artist George Winter, was also observing the displacement of the Potawatomi and Miami during the late 1830s and early 1840s. In 1838 the Potawatomi were forced across the Mississippi River along the infamous “Trail of Death.” An estimated eight hundred Potawatomi left Indiana for the Kansas area; approximately 650 arrived there. Irving McKee, ed., *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. XIV, No. 1; Indianapolis, 1941), 106. Winter's sketches, paintings, and journals have survived as an important record of these Native Americans and their struggles and have recently been presented in *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, comp. Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramadhyani; essays by Christian F. Feest and R. David Edmunds (Indianapolis, 1993). For more details see James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), 124-25; and R. David Edmunds, “‘Designing Men, Seeking a Fortune’: Indian Traders and the Potawatomi Claims Payment of 1836,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXVII (June, 1981), 109-22.

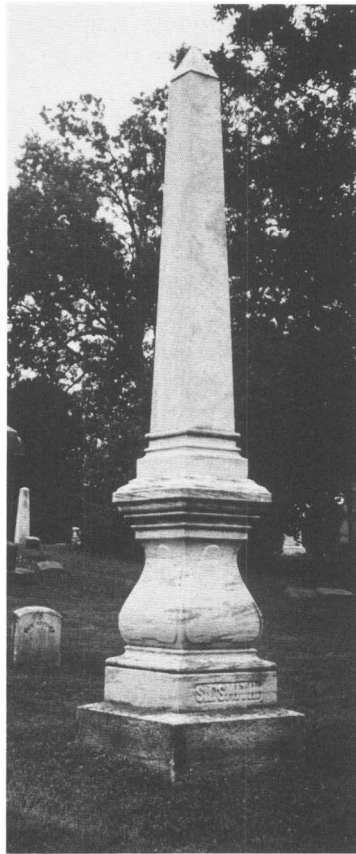
¹⁶ U.S., Seventh Census, 1850, Population Schedules for Jefferson County, Indiana, microfilm series 432, reel 154, p. 119.

with which he himself had had some difficulty during his early years in Indiana. After a pleasant tour of England Smith returned to his shoe business in Madison. Within two years, however, the town experienced a serious economic slump, which Smith ascribed to "several new railroads cutting off its best trade." In response Smith began "to cast about for a new locality," and in the spring of 1855 he left his shoe business in Madison and moved to Indianapolis to enter a partnership with Judson R. Osgood to make lasts and pegs for the growing shoemaking industry. Osgood was by 1850 the largest manufacturer in Indiana's boot and shoe industry. His steam-powered last and peg factory employed fifteen men and produced \$8,000 worth of goods during that year.¹⁷ Through Osgood there also came a short-term but crucial relationship with Lyman M. Bugby, who made wooden hubs for carriage wheels. Here were the origins of Osgood, Smith & Company, which grew into the enormously successful Woodburn Sarven Wheel Company, incorporated in 1870, with Smith and Osgood at the helm.

The decision to team up with Osgood was made as much by Smith's wife, Belvidere, as it was by Smith himself, and it was actually Osgood's sterling "religious character" that convinced the Smiths to form the partnership with him. Smith recounts with agony his later realization that Osgood's business ability, habits, and ethics, not to mention his credit, were hardly the stuff of which successful businesses were made. Smith does not hesitate to claim that it was only his own hard work and ability that allowed the business to survive and grow. "For many years," he claims, "I did the work of both partners." Osgood might not have seen it that way, but Smith sounds sincere and convincing.¹⁸ The other partner, Bugby, was even more hopeless than Osgood. In Smith's eyes "he was as ignorant as a dolt and yet would not acknowledge it" and worse still was "a deception and fraud." Smith and Osgood soon bought Bugby out of the business and, at Smith's urging, began to focus on producing wheels, which clearly had a more promising future than manufacturing lasts and pegs. Smith and Osgood proceeded to forge a close and productive relationship, although Smith did clearly retain some bitterness over his disappointments with

¹⁷ James H. Madison, "Businessmen and the Business Community in Indianapolis, 1820-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1972), 123.

¹⁸ Judson R. Osgood's religious character was apparently genuine. The son of a missionary to Burma, he was remembered as a "leading spirit" in the First Baptist Church of Indianapolis and as a man "thoroughly identified with the progress of Christianity." Osgood was superintendent of the Sunday School for over twenty years, was an active member of the Benevolent Society of Indianapolis, and was appointed by Governor Conrad Baker to the Board of Control of the State Home for Juvenile Offenders. *Indianapolis Sentinel*, May 25, 1871; *Indianapolis Journal*, May 25, 1871. Smith records, however, that Osgood often cheated customers and did not apply his Christian ideals to his business.



SAMUEL FOWLER SMITH'S GRAVE
MARKER IN CROWN HILL CEME-
TERY, INDIANAPOLIS (LOT 9, SEC-
TION 1)

his partner. The two men share adjacent lots in Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis and lie underneath nearly identical soaring obelisks.

In spite of the strained relations at the top of management and a devastating fire in 1864 that involved a loss of \$20,000, Osgood, Smith & Company steadily prospered during the 1860s to become one of the world's pioneers in the production of modern, mass-produced carriage wheels. The manufacturing census for Indianapolis in 1860 shows that Osgood and Smith were already concentrating on wheel production with \$55,000 of capital investment. They used one steam engine to drive their machinery and employed an average of forty-six men at an average monthly cost of \$960 to produce over \$40,000 worth of spokes, hubs, lasts, and other items per year.¹⁹ And whatever faults Smith saw in his partner, they were not apparent to outside observers. The Dun & Bradstreet Credit Ledgers from 1859 through 1870 contain nothing but the highest

¹⁹ U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Industry (Manufacturing) Schedules for Marion County, Indiana, roll 3777.

praise for the two men and their business. "First Rate Firm," "Thriving business and trade," "both active and religious businessmen," and "first rate characters, honest and reliable" are the typical assessments.²⁰

By February, 1862, Osgood, Smith & Company were filling military contracts for lasts and pegs for the Civil War, and in 1865 the company took a major step when it bought out the Woodburn & Scott Company (a competing wheel manufacturer in St. Louis that had the patent rights to the "Sarven wheel") and subsequently became the largest wheel manufacturer in the country.²¹ The St. Louis house took the name Woodburn, Smith & Company and bought a controlling interest in a factory in Illinois that made carriage materials to supply the St. Louis house. In 1869 Osgood, Smith & Company acquired timber land in Orange County and erected their own sawmill to supply the growing Indianapolis factory with lumber. By 1870, when it had changed to the joint-stock company, Woodburn Sarven Wheel Company, it had \$350,000 worth of capital invested, employed an average work force of 380 men with an annual labor cost of \$90,000, and produced \$250,000 worth of products per year. It used a one-hundred-horsepower steam engine to drive twenty-seven lathes, eighteen polishing machines, and forty other similar devices, and the factory was described as "one of the most extensive of the kind in the country . . . employing more than \$1,000,000."²²

Thus by the postbellum period Smith's company was widely referred to as one of Indianapolis's "oldest and best firms"; and in October of 1870, shortly after its incorporation and before Smith's retirement—and Osgood's sudden death from typhoid in 1871—it was "doing a prosperous business and making money fast, very reliable, prompt and safe."²³ In 1870 Smith declared his real estate value at \$11,000 and his personal estate value at \$46,000. He also

²⁰ Dun & Bradstreet Credit Ledgers, I-79 (February, 1859, January, 1861, May, 1865), I-200 (November, 1868).

²¹ The Sarven wheel, as described at the time, was "the only wheel manufactured having a mortised wood hub and turned spokes, supported by flanges which are connected by rivets The hubs and spokes are mortised and tenoned like the common wheel, but in addition to this the spokes are mitered so as to form a solid arch outside of the hub. The face of the spoke is dressed with the most perfect accuracy by machinery; then two flanges made of choice malleable iron are fitted to the hubs and spokes and riveted through. This sustains and supports the arch formed by the spokes and yet leaves the same elasticity of wood in the hub and spokes that is in the common wheel." *Manufacturing and Mercantile Resources of Indianapolis, Indiana* . . . (Indianapolis, 1883), 414.

²² U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, Industry (Manufacturing) Schedules for Marion County, Indiana, roll 3775; William R. Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* . . . (Indianapolis, 1870), 363.

²³ Dun & Bradstreet Credit Ledgers, I-200 (October, 1870). The ledgers record for May, 1865, that the company was worth \$40,000, and for November, 1868, from \$60,000 to \$70,000, "a good part of it . . . unencumbered."

had three domestic servants living with him and his second wife and five children.²⁴

The magnitude of Smith's success, measured in terms of the size of his business and its importance to Indiana's industrial history, was impressive and was in large part the result of his own hard efforts and capital. The company's ideal location was also an important factor. With easy access to high-grade walnut, oak, hickory, and other hardwoods, the company could tap the growing wheel market that served not only the westward movement but also the growing cities in the eastern states and Old Northwest.

This thriving enterprise also owed much to the skilled workers who were attracted to the company by its fairly generous wages. Among them the most important and famous was surely John Muir. After emigrating from Scotland to Wisconsin with his family in 1849 at age eleven, Muir used his extraordinary mechanical skills to gain a position at Osgood, Smith & Company in 1866. Put in charge of the circular saws for an impressive \$18 per week, he was soon paid \$25 per week after he had designed the device that automatically produced the spokes, hubs, and exterior rims of the Sarven wheel. Muir then brought greater efficiency to the company by redesigning the belt system and tightening the factory's organization. Osgood and Smith were so impressed with Muir's many abilities that they were ready to follow his advice on extending the factory and perhaps offer him a partnership. However, after a serious eye injury while at work in March of 1867, Muir decided to change the course of his life and leave Indianapolis. The company's loss was the nation's gain as Muir then moved west to pursue his interests as a naturalist, eventually writing his books on the natural beauty of the West and founding in 1892 the Sierra Club, of which he was president until his death in 1914.²⁵

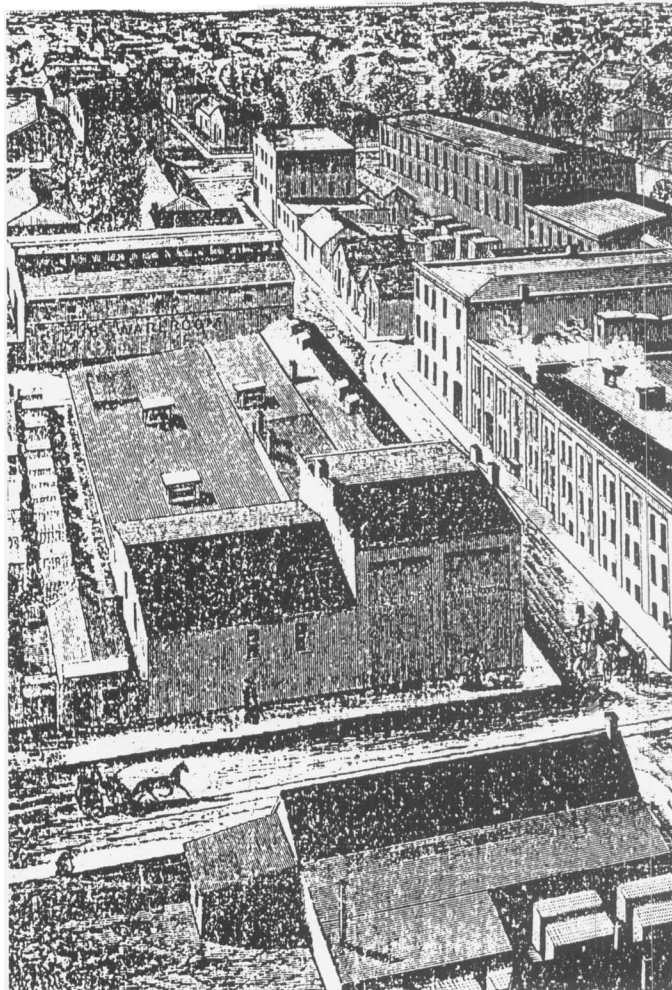
By the time Smith died in 1879 (and in spite of another devastating fire in 1873, which took the life of Indianapolis's chief fire engineer and after which Smith retired) the Woodburn Sarven Wheel Company was said to be the "most extensive [establishment] of its kind in the world."²⁶ Its buildings on Illinois Street covered seven acres, it employed over five hundred skilled men to whom was paid \$200,000 per year in wages, it produced wheels worth \$700,000 per year, and it had over \$1,000,000 of capital investment. By 1887 its operations extended "throughout the entire United States, Canada, England and Australia," including a branch house

²⁴ U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, Population Schedules for Indianapolis, Indiana, roll 340, p. 52.

²⁵ Catherine Forrest Weber, "A Genius in the Best Sense: John Muir, Earth, and Indianapolis," *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, V (Winter, 1993), 36-47.

²⁶ *Manufacturing and Mercantile Resources of Indianapolis*, 414.

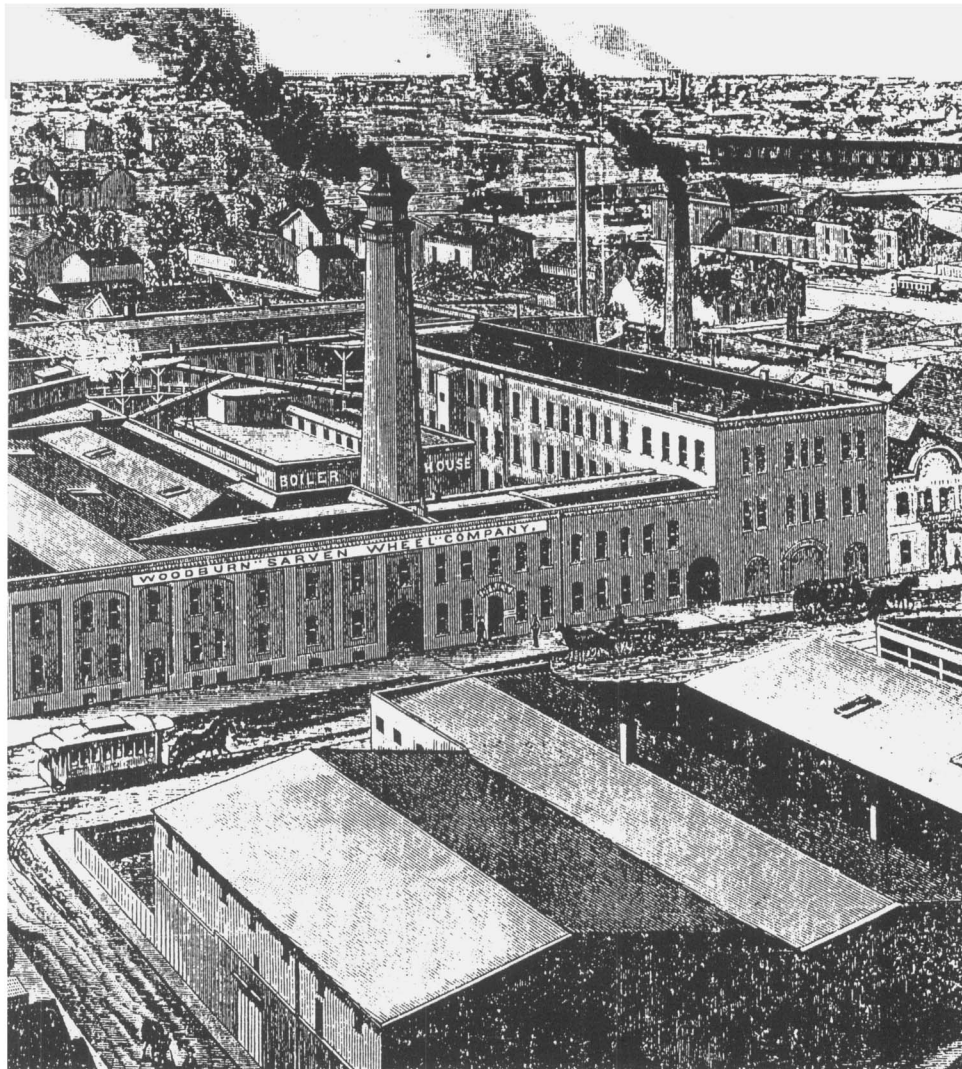
THE WOODBURN
 “SARVEN WHEEL”
 COMPANY WORKS,
 230 SOUTH ILLINOIS
 STREET, INDIANAPOLIS,
 AS IT APPEARED IN
 AN ENGRAVING IN 1884



Reproduced from Berry R. Sulgrove,
*History of Indianapolis and
 Marion County, Indiana*
 (Philadelphia, 1884), 460.

in Boston and a factory at St. Catherines, Ontario. By that time Smith's son-in-law, Julius F. Pratt, was vice-president and treasurer, the same positions filled by Smith. Pratt, however, began to diversify his interests and soon became treasurer of the Consumers' Gas Trust Company, a major stockholder in the Jenny Electric Motor Company, and also vice-president and treasurer of the Atlas Engine Works, all of Indianapolis.²⁷ Thus the wealth and business that Smith had helped create in Indianapolis filtered into other

²⁷ *Commerce, Manufactures and Resources of Indianapolis, Indiana: A Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive Review* (Indianapolis, 1887), 55-57; Max R. Hyman, ed., *Hyman's Hand Book of Indianapolis: An Outline History . . .* (Indianapolis, 1897), 374, 377; Berry R. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia, 1884), 459-60.



important industries of the city as the Woodburn Sarven Wheel Company met its natural demise in the declining wooden carriage wheel industry near the turn of the century.

At the end of his story, as he reflects much on his spiritual and personal life, Smith seems unimpressed with his economic success. The English shoemaker, now a retired businessman, had never lost his perspective that one's life is not to be measured in terms of mere material gain.

Indianapolis, June 15, 1874¹

Being at present out of active business, and being in possession of what I never had before, a little spare time, I have determined for my own pleasure and satisfaction . . . to take a retrospect of my life . . . I was born in the village of Walton, December 22, 1808. Walton, and the land around it is, with a few exceptions, the property of the Fox family, whose residence is at Bramham Park, about four miles distant. This is part of the estate of the celebrated Fairfax family. Part of them, among which is a Lord Fairfax, are buried in the old Church. Among my earliest recollections is the dread with which I looked upon the effigy of an old warrior, in complete armor, lying in state, with his faithful dog at his feet, and being told that every night at 12 o'clock the dog brought his master a drink of water from a neighboring spring.² The Fairfax family lost their property on account of the part they took in the Revolution under Cromwell . . .

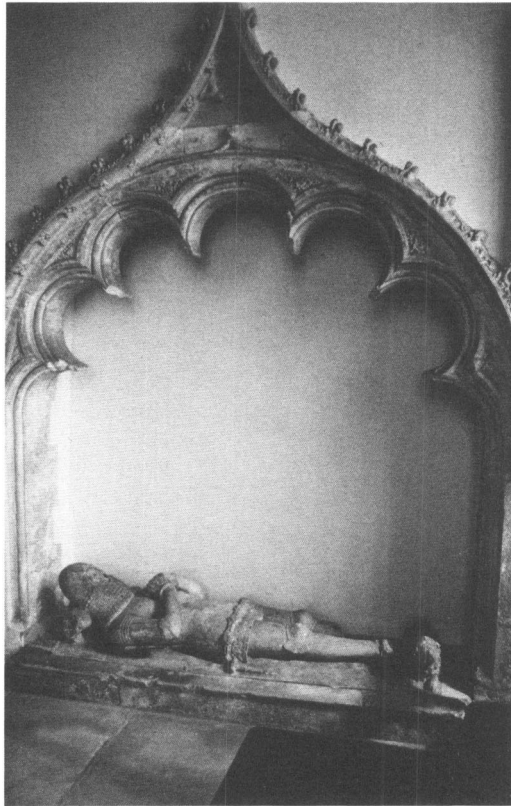
My father was one of the tenants of the Walton estate. . . . Our family have lived in the same house for over two centuries. My father died in the house where he was born, as did his father before him, and both were very old men. My youngest brother, Thomas, lives in the same old stone house, and one of his boys will no doubt follow him.³ Walton is a village of about 300 inhabitants. Being an agricultural village and off the routes of travel, and depending entirely upon the cultivation of the land belonging to it for its support, it changes very little from year to year, either in its character, size, or population. . . . The old stone church stands on an eminence right opposite our house, in the midst of the church yard, surrounded by the graves and monuments of the inhabitants for five hundred years. . . .

My father, whose name was Samuel Smith, was in many respects a remarkable man. . . . He was a man well read, and unusually intelligent for the opportunity he had. He had strong convictions, and had the nerve to carry them out. He was a natural

¹ Samuel Fowler Smith's autobiography survives in the form of a typescript of 104 pages (page 86 is missing) copied from the original manuscript by Smith's relatives. The transcription below follows this typed copy as closely as possible. Misspellings and idiosyncrasies in punctuation and grammar, whether those of the typist or of Smith himself, have been retained. Ellipses indicate the omission of phrases, sentences, or sometimes paragraphs deemed tangential to the major thrust of Smith's narrative. In a number of instances a bracketed editor's note summarizes deleted material. Brief identifications of people or places have occasionally been added in brackets.

² The effigy still lies in the church as Smith had seen it and is thought to be that of Sir Nicholas Fairfax, who fought against the Turks as one of the Knights of Malta on the island of Rhodes during the early sixteenth century. (Actually, the "dog" is a lion, representing bravery.)

³ See photograph of the Smith house, page 36. The Smiths lived in the right half of the house, which was pulled down in the late nineteenth century and replaced by a similar building that still stands today.



THE EFFIGY AND TOMB
THAT FRIGHTENED
YOUNG SAMUEL SMITH
IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH

mechanic, and in his youth invented several machines. . . . For a considerable part of his life he farmed about fifty acres of land, and kept the only shop, or store, in the village. He was for nearly fifty years Parish Clerk, and part of that time, with the assistance of his daughter, taught the village school. For half a century he was the representative of religion in the village, and in this respect occupied a rather odd position. While he was Parish Clerk, performing his duties every Sabbath, in reading from his desk under the pulpit, leading the singing, superintending the Sabbath School of the Parish Church, and managing all the Parish business, as the Rector was a non-resident, yet at the same time (contradictory as it may seem) the Methodists used the larger family room of our house as their place for preaching, and other meetings, for 60 years, and my father was the Class Leader. . . .

[**Editor's note:** Here Smith describes the great piety of Walton's Methodists and records the fact that, as a Methodist, his father "suffered a considerable amount of persecution" in his early life.]

My dear mother's character was as marked as my father's, but of an entirely different mould. She was a woman of great energy and activity, ambitious and industrious, but she was of a highly



THE HOUSE IN WHICH SAMUEL SMITH WAS BORN AND RAISED

nervous temper[a]ment, and very excitable. For many years before her death she was a constant invalid, suffering dreadfully from Asthma, and other diseases. Yet during all these years of suffering she was the same loving wife and mother, constantly caring and planning for her husband and children. It is wonderful how they seemed fitted for each other. . . . Many times, when misfortune seemed to gather around them, at one time especially when the good Lord seemed trying them like Job, their cattle died, crops failed, money was lost in the store, they were unable to pay the rent and seemed in danger of losing the home of their fathers; yet in all these gloomy days, dark as they were, while mother saw nothing but the workhouse before them, father's trust was unshaken, and his peace undisturbed. . . .

My first schooling was at Molly Farrers, where I was sent, like many other children, to keep us out of mischief. . . . I then attended school and learnt to write, with a cripple named Weatherby, who was a tyrant and abused all boys that he was not afraid of—either them or their parents. . . . I was at this time between nine and ten years old, and had begun to be a voracious reader. My father had the *Spectator*, and a few more old English books,—[Edward] Young's *Night Thoughts*, Milton, etc. Of these I read all that I could understand. During this time my father and mother very carefully instilled into my mind religious instruction; taught me to *dread theft, lying, profanity, Sabbath breaking*, and other sins; taught me the simple truths of the gospel, penitence for sin. . . .

When I was about thirteen years of age I had learnt to read, write, and cypher a little, my parents thought it time that I should

learn a trade. On looking around, my mother's sister, Aunt Coulson, living near Tadcaster, a market town four miles distant from our village, was the patron of a shoemaker named Thos. Lockwood, and as a great favor to her he agreed to take me as an apprentice for seven years upon the condition that my father pay a premium of two pounds and provide for my clothing and tools during my apprenticeship, the master agreeing to provide me with *aprons*. . . . The papers were all signed and I was *alone in the world*. Soon as I could find a place I had a good cry, and felt better. Then I began a new life. The boy above me, Tom Hazelwood, was from a low family, could neither read nor write, and seeming to think me an aristocrat that he had to bring down, commenced a course of petty persecution that made my life miserable. He was not a bad fellow, but he seemed to think that I needed the hazing process. . . . I went home every Sunday morning and returned at night. These walks across the meadows are crowded with associations and recollections. On passing the valley through which the river Wharfe runs there is an eminence near Tadcaster from which our village could be seen. On my solitary return in the summer evenings I used to sit down, and on looking at the village church, and my father's house, tinged by the setting sun, suffer from the heart yearning, home sickness, that cannot be described. The old village, and my father's house, seemed the most lovely spot upon earth, and it was like tearing heart strings to leave it.

. . . During these years I was reading every thing I could get hold of. I had read all father's books, and now got [Oliver] Goldsmith's works, which I read with wonderful relish. When I was sixteen years old I had a good, round voice, and was invited to sing with the choir in the Methodist chapel. I now began to pick up music. By working over hours I got a little money and bought a blank music book, and tried to copy tunes. Printed music books were so costly that few were sold. I bought a common flute and tried to learn to play. In all this Mrs. Lockwood was constantly in my way, she never reading any thing herself, honestly believing that no boy could properly learn his trade who had so many crotchets in his head. And this was made apparent by my shopmate, Tom, who worked well at his trade, but could do nothing else. She accordingly tried to make Lockwood, who had more sense but who was a good easy man, to forbid my reading books, playing or writing music, etc. . . . One very great trouble of this part of my life was my unfortunate impediment of speech. I *stuttered awfully*. . . . This almost made my life a burden. I would then have given any thing that I had in the world to *talk like other people*. . . . It is rather curious that this misfortune of my youth, that no doubt changed the whole course of my life and largely affected my future destiny, should have almost entirely disappeared in my old age, so that now it is almost a thing of the past. . . .

Developing considerable talent for music, I was appointed to lead the choir in the Methodist Chapel, which I continued to do for several years. It was during this time that my brothers, Benjamin and John, concluded that they could improve their fortune by emigrating to America. Benjamin, after learning his trade, had worked in Leeds, London, and other large cities and towns. John had for some time been working for Billy Walker, of Walton. This was a great affliction to my parents. Benjamin wrote long letters home, giving glowing accounts of the new country. I then first had the desire to follow him. After my apprenticeship expired I worked with my master as journeyman nearly a year, and went home for one winter. I found out that I had *outgrown the old nest*, and that the old home that I had thought so lovely was rather a poky place. However, I had a violincello made, and sawed on that all I wanted, and did considerable shoemaking for the village. In the spring I found work at Knarsboro. . . . Here I *narrowly escaped ruin*. I had a cousin, considerably older than myself, who was housekeeper for a rich old man. Having the charge of a large house it was very pleasant to visit her, which I did very frequently. Though she had suffered very much by having an illegitimate child, her amorous inclinations were strong as ever. I was twenty one; she was thirty. She laid snares for me which, if I had fallen into them, would have clouded all my life. She was not a bad woman, but could not control her desires. . . .

Having now an offer of a good permanent seat of work at Chapeltown I went to live there. This is a suburb of the great town of Leeds. John Banke, the man I worked for, was a Methodist local preacher. I remained there nearly three years. I established a choir and built a gallery in the church, was appointed Society Steward and Secretary to the Sabbath School. . . .

After living in Leeds over two years, my old friend and master, Lockwood, made me a tempting offer to go back to Tadcaster and take charge of his shop. As I had then determined on coming to America, and only needed the means to do so, I accepted his offer. I now occupied a different position than I had ever done before, and the year I remained there was perhaps the most important year of my life. It seemed to be a crisis, a *pivotal point* of my life, upon which the future turned. And I have often thought of what the future might have been if a different *direction* had been given to my life. My religious experience, and life, at this time was *honest* and *sincere*. If I knew my own heart I wanted to know the *will of God* concerning me, and I think was willing to do it. And to this end I earnestly sought divine aid and direction to enable me to decide aright as to my future course. And yet, on looking back over the way, I cannot help thinking that I made a *mistake* in the *course I took*.

On my return to Tadcaster I took an active part in church matters. . . . And being among my old warm friends, and near home

where I could often run over and see my parents, and being a good deal flattered by my superiors, it may be inferred that I was satisfied, *but it was not so*. While working in the shoe shop I felt that I was *capable of something better*; and yet I could see nothing better before me there. If I was to marry I could see nothing but the conditions of thousands of as good shoemakers as myself, supporting a wife and family in poverty, by hard work. My brothers told me of the superior advantages in the new world; that nothing could prevent any man of ordinary talents and industry attaining success and prosperity. My mother up to this time would never give her consent to my taking this step, and I had promised her that I should never go without it, and I never intended to do so. She, however, saw that I was unsettled, and seeing little prospect of any thing else, thought it her duty to make the sacrifice which, hard as it was, she nobly did. . . .

During this time some things occurred that seemed to indicate future *possibilities*. I found few of the young men of my associates to be as well read as myself. In order to promote a spirit of inquiry and emulation in them and myself I got up a Theological Society for the purpose of discussion and mental improvement. In order that we might have perfect freedom it was made a secret society. I was elected President. It was *a perfect success*. Here I made a discovery, both to myself and friends: I found that in these meetings I had a power of speech, an ability to impress an audience, that was unknown either to me or my friends before. . . . the Rev'd Samuel Dunn, a very noted and eloquent preacher, thought that notwithstanding the impediment in my speech I had the natural talents to make an effective public speaker, and that as I had given evidence of honest and sincere piety I ought to *become a minister* and preach the gospel. Mr. Dunn called me out of the shop one day and told me that he and all my friends believed that God had called and intended me *for a preacher*. Thinking this a natural impossibility, I had never given it a thought, and had now made all my arrangements for leaving the country.

This was undoubtedly the *turning point* of my life, and though I thought myself sincere and most earnestly asked God to direct me in making choice of the two paths before me; one to stay where I was, try my ability as a local preacher, then if I succeeded, go to the Seminary and after getting an education become a traveling preacher, with no prospect of marrying or settling in life for several years,—or, taking the course that I did. After events always left the impression on my mind that notwithstanding my sincerity I *missed my way* and made a *wrong* choice. In after years I found myself capable of producing striking effects upon almost any congregation, and of possessing powers that would have made me a popular and effective speaker. But this is all past; the unknown possibilities have faded away . . .

. . . After weighing every thing carefully and sincerely praying for divine direction, I determined upon seeking my home in the new world. My oldest brother, Benjamin, was then settled in business in Alexandria, a small town in Kentucky, fourteen miles from Cincinnati. John was living at Fort Wayne, where he continued to reside until his death in 1874. Though not making much money, their *prospects* were very much better than mine. Thinking that on account of the impediment in my speech I should never be able to make a public speaker, and consequently that there was nothing for me but the shoe bench, and its stigma and social degradation, without very much prospect of anything else . . . I concluded to emigrate. This was in the summer of 1835. I found that by September I should have about a hundred pounds. This, by economy, would get me to my brother Benjamin, in Kentucky. So I arranged to bid farewell to all my friends, and the loved home of my childhood, perhaps forever. I thought it best to keep my project secret until a short time before I was ready to start. I was afraid of my friends and my resolutions. . . .

I now told my friends of my intention of going away, perhaps forever. I well recollect the little room in which I told my old master, Lockwood. He asked me if I was in earnest; I told him that I was. I can see how his lip quivered and his eyes filled with tears. The terrible ordeal now came of parting forever with my parents, and my sisters and brother. It seemed to me that I loved my mother and my sister Mary Ann dearer than my own soul, and I dreaded the hour of parting. They had been for some time getting my things ready, and I went over home to spend a little time before I started. The last moment came. We had all tried to keep up our spirits, though sadness was in our hearts. Mother, father and sisters were all sitting by the fireside. I walked backward and forward across the room, when, watching my opportunity I said, "I'm off" and shot out of the back door and almost ran down the yard towards the orchard, and the gate that opens into the road. My mother and sisters gave one suppressed scream. The time occupied by that walk was the *bitterest moment* of my life. Truly the concentration of misery. I stopped and thought that I *must go back*; but I walked on to the land, and then my pent up agony found relief in tears, and my breaking heart found relief in a good cry. . . . I bid goodbye to my numerous friends that night, and long before daylight next morning took the coach for Leeds, and Manchester, and there took the railroad, the first ever built and the only one then running to Liverpool.⁴ Here I met several parties from our part of the county, going to America. We soon found that we had fallen into the hands of sharks who had plundered us unmercifully. But we found an Amer-

⁴ Here Smith is referring to the Rocket, the first successful railway train, built by the self-made Northumberland engineer George Stephenson in 1830.

ican vessel, a sailing brig, in which about twenty-six of us took Second Cabin, and the rest, with a motley crowd, most Irish, took the Steerage. We had hardly got out of the river Mercy before it begun to blow heavily, and we had a gale that drove us towards the dangerous Irish coast. Our vessel, the Elisha Dennison, being a temperance ship, not a drop of liquor was allowed among the stores; the consequences was, that the whole crew had been on a drunk the day and night before coming on board when the storm struck us, every thing was in confusion, with a large crowd of passengers that had never seen the sea before. The experience, and scenes, of that night I shall never forget. I lashed myself to the upper deck with a rope, and expected never to see the morning. When the storm abated we found that we were in a leaky vessel, with the wide Atlantic before us. During that night of confusion and dread, with death, as I thought, just before me, I was calm and my mind was at peace. With varying weather, and many incidents, one long month passed over, when one morning we heard the joyful cry of "Land" from the masthead. What to our straining eyes seemed a cloud on the horizon soon showed itself to be *terra firma*, and we entered the bay of Sandy Hook, New York. How freshly all these scenes come to my mind; the strange sights and the amusing blunders we made when we got on shore. Everything was new and everything was strange. I spent several days in New York. I had made the acquaintance of a wealthy New York merchant, who was one of our passengers. He was very kind to me, inviting me to his house, etc. Several families that came over with us wanting to go West wished me to go with them and do their business. So we all started up the North [Hudson] river for Albany. We then made a contract for the whole company upon an emigrant boat on the Erie Canal. We were nearly two weeks in reaching Buffalo. When passing through the numerous locks we sometimes made excursions into the country to buy provisions, get fruit, etc. This was during October and November; the weather was fine. On reaching Buffalo we took steamer for Cleveland and had a very rough passage; we then took canal for Portsmouth. This though long, was a very pleasant part of the journey.⁵ Here I met my friend Childlaw, who had charge of a company of Welsh emigrants. We took steamboat at Portsmouth for Cincinnati, which we reached in four weeks from New York, arriving early on Sunday morning. Not having been in a church for eight weeks I was anxious to go. Being an utter stranger I went out and thought that I would follow the first stream of people I met, as they would probably lead me to a church. I found such a stream, and was shown into the first house of worship I attended in my new home. I

⁵ The Ohio and Erie Canal, begun in 1825 and completed in 1832, linked Cleveland and Portsmouth, Ohio. In its 308 miles from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, the canal "climbed up and down a total of 1,206 feet, through 149 lift locks and 7 guard locks." Jack Gieck, *A Photo Album of Ohio's Canal Era, 1825-1913* (Kent, Ohio, 1988), 53-54.

saw many new things. The people came in without silent prayer; a man without any clerical dress, or appearance bustled up the aisle and went into the pulpit without any of that pulpit decorum that I had been used to. He then went through the services in a very odd manner, pulling his glasses from his forehead and shoving them back many times. I soon found, with all his oddities, that he was a great man, and on asking his name found it was the great Dr. Lyman Beecher. On Monday morning I started out on foot for my brother Benjamin's residence, Alexandria, about fourteen miles from Cincinnati, in Kentucky. Not having seen my brother since I was a boy, and hearing of him only by his own letters, I was a little anxious to learn what kind of a man he had developed into, and what was his character in his new home. I found the country very wild, the roads bad, and though so near Cincinnati, very thinly settled. While plodding through the woods I met a man on horseback. After he had passed he turned around and asked me if my name was not Smith. This question in this new country in this wild wood startled me. How could anyone know my name? I asked why? He said that he knew my brother, who was expecting me, and then went on to say that I had a brother of which I might be proud; that he was one of the best men in Campbell county, and he could be elected to any office he might select, etc. etc. This being the first word I had of him, except from himself, for fourteen years, I was very much gratified. I found afterwards that this was Senator De Courcy [William DeCoursey?]. While staying with my brother a few days to decide upon what I should do, I found every thing new and strange. I recollect when the first loaf or pone of cornbread, baked in the vessel in the hot ashes, came on the table, it looked like rich sponge cake, exceedingly tempting to an hungry man, as I then was. But on taking a good bit I found it more like the apples of Sodom, fair to the eye but not good to the taste. And though I found all my brother's family to be fond of and eat it with great relish (indeed they could get little of any thing else) yet though I have been trying nearly forty years to conquer the aversion, I have not succeeded.

Before leaving England I had built many airy castles in the air as to what I should *do* in the new country, though I had brought my shoemaker kit with me, I never expected to use it again. I had chafed many times under the *stigma* that attaches to the name of *shoemaker*, and thought that I should now forever throw it off, but I soon found that there were too many men who thought as I did, and that all light employments, as clerkships, etc. were crowded, as they always have been; and I had no money the only thing I could do was to go to work at the hotel shoemaking and thus learn the usages of the trade and make some money. I found that they sewed shoes together with *wooden pegs*, and many other strange things that I had never seen before; so I got work in Cincinnati, brought

out my old kit, and again mounted the shoe bench. Finding that I had even my own trade to learn over, and that instead of hosts of friends and a good position in society, I was now a poor shoemaker in a large city. My bubbles all melted into thin air; and that most dreadful feeling, homesickness, came on me with crushing effect. It seemed that I would give every thing that I had in the world if I was only back in the place that I had left. And I fully determined, however humiliating it might be, to return as soon as I could earn the money. I soon, however, made friends and found, as I have done before, that my musical abilities were of very great benefit to me, enabling me to get into society to which my shopmates could not reach. I found that my Yorkshire brogue was against me. I well recollect asking a gentleman at a musical party if his tuning fork was a hay fork, meaning was it "A" or "G". He, to make the bull more pointed, asked me what I said. I could not conceive what they were laughing at, when I, in all simplicity, repeated the question. I soon, however, found where to put the "H", and to do many other things. I stayed and worked during that winter and spring in Cincinnati, and then . . . made arrangements with my cousin, Benjamin Smith, to go and visit Brother John, who had then a contract on the Wabash Canal. I accordingly worked at my trade in Rising Sun that summer. Having each a good horse we started for the wilds of Indiana. This was an entirely new life to me. We went through Ohio to St. Mary's (they were just then making that canal). Then we struck the woods and crossed the Black Swamp.⁶ We put up usually at the last cabin we came to just before dark, and with one exception always found hospitality, plenty cornbread, bacon, and whiskey. But the woods, when there was any, to my English eyes, were what before I had no conception of. After various adventures we reached Fort Wayne, then a small village. Here we found my brother, not in as good a condition as Benjamin, but a good man. This was in the height of the land fever. The Pottowatomie tribe of Indians had just sold their land to the Government and were about to be moved to their reservation in the West.⁷ This brought a greedy horde of land speculators to the Land Office at Fort Wayne. Indeed, my companions were on that errand. Hearing of a section of land beyond Eel

⁶ Rising Sun was a small village located on the Ohio River in what was then Dearborn County, Indiana. The Miami and Erie Canal, upon which Smith traveled, was a composite of three separately authorized canals: the Miami, completed in 1828, from Cincinnati to Dayton; the Miami Extension begun in 1833, from Dayton to Junction, Ohio; and the Wabash and Erie from Toledo to Fort Wayne, Indiana. When completed in 1845, the Miami Extension passed through St. Mary's, Ohio, where it was joined by a major hydraulic feeder. Gieck, *A Photo Album of Ohio's Canal Era*, 124-26. The Black Swamp, located in northwestern Ohio between Sandusky and the Maumee River, measured over one hundred miles long and forty miles wide. The difficulties in traversing the area are described in R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Bloomington, Ind., 1950), I, 460-61.

⁷ See note 15 of introduction, p. 27 above.

River, now in what is Marshall County, that had water power on it, after staying a few days with John we, taking a pocket compass with us, started out to find it. We passed a fine company of Indian braves of the Miami tribe, who still held a fine tract of country comprising several counties this side of the Wabash River.⁸ We slept in the woods one night, where, for the first time, I heard the "wolf's long howl." In crossing Eel River my companion suffered a bad accident. After he had crossed, in ascending the bank he struck the limb of a tree and knocked himself and horse backwards down the bank into the river. I got him out of the water and on his horse again, and finding a house a few miles off in the woods, we asked their hospitality. We stayed with that excellent family for two weeks before he was able to travel. This family was from New York, had bought a section of land, just built a large cabin in which the family consisting of father, mother, two grown daughters, two grown sons, one with his wife and some younger children, and yet they made room for two strangers. Seeing the beds close together I wondered how the men and women were ever going to get to bed. When it came bed time I saw the ladies for some cause disappear. When in a few minutes the men were all in bed and the lights put out, and no doubt the women followed. Being very tired I slept sound and awaked next morning to find the women cooking breakfast close by on the stove. I could not see how one could possibly get up with that crowd of women in the room. Whispering this to my cousin, he at once got up and dressed. He had been living in such a house for many years. Not having his experience I anxiously looked for my clothes and had considerable difficulty in finding the way into my pants. I soon, however, settled into their habits and found them most excellent people. We found the land, but it was not what my cousin wanted. We returned to the Wabash River; stayed at Segro [Lagro?]⁹ where my companion died. I then went down to Logansport. The last payment to the Indians was to be made in a short time, which I was very anxious to see, as I wanted to see a tribe together. Logansport was then just laid out, the stumps of the trees being in the streets. Being between the two tribes it was full of Indians every day.¹⁰ Here I saw what rascalities were practiced

⁸ The New Purchase of 1818 opened most of central Indiana south of the Wabash River for white settlement. Excepted were the large Miami Reserve, comprising several thousand acres with what is now Kokomo near the center, and several smaller reservations. The Miami held tenaciously to this land until their final cession in 1840. John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), I, 205.

⁹ This bracketed insertion appeared in the typescript from which this transcription was made. Undoubtedly Smith did refer to Lagro, a small village on the Wabash River in Wabash County.

¹⁰ Logansport, on the Wabash River at the mouth of the Eel, lay approximately between the lands of the Potawatomis and Miamis and had become the site of the federal Indian Agency in 1828. Here the tribes came annually to trade and to receive their annuities from the government. The Potawatomis forced westward to the Kansas area moved through Logansport on their journey.

upon these people. I had only been there a few days when I was taken with bilious fever, and was laid on my back several weeks. I had never been sick before. I found it a hard experience. In my delirium I would suppose that I was at home surrounded by my friends and wake to find myself alone, a *stranger* in a strange land. After several adventures I left there for Lafayette. On fording the river I got very wet, and soon after my arrival I was taken with the real old fashioned chill and fever. I intended starting for Chicago, then a small village, but with good prospects, but a man coming in from there frozen to death upon his horse while crossing the Grand Prairie, changed my plans.¹¹ I went to work at my trade and so paid my expenses. Here again I found the advantage of my musical abilities of benefit. I soon got into good society and made many friends. Here I found an opening for business, and believing that I could get a little money from my friends I made arrangements to buy out a shop, which I was to take in the spring. In order to carry out this arrangement, I started for Cincinnati. This took me a week to accomplish. I then for the first and last time saw a prairie on fire. I staid all night at Indianapolis, then a small town of a few thousand inhabitants. While passing through the dense forests I was one night belated and came upon a cabin in a lonely spot. It was my only chance, and I asked for lodging. The man told me to come in. Murdering travelers for their money was then a common occurrence, and I was afraid that I had fallen in just such a trap. We sat down to a plain supper, but when the man said it was their custom to ask a blessing before eating, it was like a sudden blaze of sunshine flooding the rough cabin and its rough inmates with light, and dispersing all my fears in a moment. Dishonest men never ask a blessing. I got into Cincinnati on Christmas day. I now had the dumb chills again and was very much out of health; but I got work and intended to remain until time to return in the spring. That winter was a critical turn of my life. My health was poor; my religious associations all broken up; my business plans disappointed—all produced great mental depression. I was then strongly tempted to use *brandy as an antidote*, as many a poor fellow has done before. But I saw the gulf, and God in his mercy preserved me. Had I *once began* I had *been lost*. The dreadful panic of 1837 came on in the spring, and not getting any letters from Lafayette I worked on in Cincinnati for a year, when a shoemaker strike drove me to . . . Kentucky. Here I staid some months. . . . That fall I returned to Cincinnati, got a fair seat of work and worked very hard. I saw that if I ever had any thing it must be through *hard work*. I worked from 12 to 15 hours a day, except the evenings devoted to music. . . . I had long given up all thoughts of returning to England and was lending

¹¹ The Grand Prairie encompassed the large area of flat, wet lands in north-western Indiana and in adjacent Illinois.

all my energies to earning a small sum to start a little shop of my own in some small town. Having scraped together about \$700.00 I heard of Madison, Indiana as a thriving town. I accordingly took the mail boat and went down to see it. I found it about the size and general appearance that I wanted,¹² and thinking that I saw an opening for my business I rented a small room. I then laid in a stock of tools and materials and taking three of my shopmates, good workmen, with me, started for my new home. I found very keen competition from men of heavy capital. But here again my voice, and the ability to use it, were of great service to me. One of the leading men of Wesley Chapel had heard of me in Cincinnati, and wanted me to get them up a choir. . . . In order to do this they wanted me to teach a singing school to the whole church. I had never done any thing of this kind; but the flattering offer of \$150.00 decided me to make the attempt. This I did, with much trembling, but succeeded far better than I expected. The Second Presbyterian Church now offered me a salary to lead their choir, but as the Wesley Chapel friends had first taken me up I would not leave them. The Second Presbyterian Church holding their services morning and afternoon, they proposed to pay me for rehearsing with their choir during the week, and singing with them on Sunday afternoons. Thus for some time I led the choirs of two churches at the same time. These connections I found very beneficial to my business, which I followed as closely and economically as possible. . . . After a while I took a large room and increased my stock. Though during this time, through my choir and singing school, I mingled a good deal with female society, and was getting into circumstances that I could support a wife, I did not meet with any person that possessed what I thought the necessary qualifications for making a good wife; so I appeared to settle into a confirmed old bachelor. I worked hard and paid close attention to my business. During this time I paid close attention to music. I was leader in two church choirs, president of a musical society composed of all the best singers in the city, and at the same time helped to get up and form a brass band, and was elected Captain of it, which position I held as long as it remained in existence. Instead of letting these musical engagements interfere and injure my business, I made them contribute to its prosperity. This it did by giving me publicity and making me friends. So though I had not much capital, and had to meet keen competition, yet by close attention to my business, and a willingness to oblige, I made many friends and prospered.

[**Editor's note:** In the text that is deleted here, Smith recounts his experiences with his church choirs and his courtship and marriage in 1844 to Vermont-born Belvidere Roberts, who was twenty-four years old, the sister-in-law of Smith's pastor, and a

¹² In 1840 Madison's population was 3,798. U.S., *Sixth Census, 1840*; Vol. I, *Population*, 355.

member of his choir. Smith writes, "Though she could not be called handsome . . . her dress and appearance was always neat and appropriate. . . . [She was] a girl of *good sense*, no flippery, finery, or foolishness about her. . . . I was very much pleased, not only with her good sense, but also with her sprightliness and wit, and the overflowing geniality of her disposition. I found on inquiry that she was not only well educated but that she was notable as a housekeeper, and skilled in all domestic matters." Smith then recounts the birth of his first three children—two of whom died in infancy, one from an Asiatic cholera epidemic that swept through Madison in 1849. As Smith says, "Those were days of gloom and great distress." Also during this period Smith transferred his church membership from the Methodist to the Second Presbyterian Church, where his new brother-in-law was pastor. The narrative resumes where Smith makes his dramatic return trip to England.]

Though during this time my expenses were heavy, yet I had a steady business and besides supporting my family cleared from \$500.00 to \$1000.00 a year. . . . This spring I carried out a project that had been on my mind for many years,—a visit to my old home. The day that I left home I promised my parents that if circumstances ever permitted me to do so that I would return and visit them before they died. This promise, with the heart longing desire I had, to see my old home, and my father, who was then in his 83rd year, determined me to make the attempt. My excellent little wife, seeing me restless and anxious to make the trip, urged me to do it; so putting my business in order (I then had an excellent and trusty foreman, S. O. Charlesworth) in company with my friend Arthur Orr, who wanted to return to Ireland, I started for home. Having to buy some goods in Cincinnati I stopped one day as I went East. I remember when lying in bed that night at the hotel, and looking at the home I had left, and at the journey before me, my courage almost forsook me, and my heart so yearned for my own fireside and the loved ones around it, that if it had not been for the fear of being laughed at, I would have been tempted to have turned back. But I hurried on to Philadelphia, there met my friend Orr, we engaged passage on the iron steamship "City of Glascoe," and after a pleasant passage of twelve days landed in England. Some particulars of this ship may be named: She was owned in Scotland; her officers were Scotchmen; her captain, Wylie, was so popular with the passengers that a valuable piece of silver plate, with a vote of thanks, was presented to him. I was appointed, with another gentleman, to purchase and present it to him. After we landed in Liverpool another striking fact was that this ship, as fine a sea boat as ever rode the top of a wave, was lost with every soul on board, a few months after she had taken us so safely and pleasantly across. Not a vestige or spar was ever seen of her after she left Philadelphia, nor a soul left to tell the tale of her destruction. I was providentially saved from the calamity.

It was now eighteen years since I had left the fast anchored Isle, at the time of life when the mind is usually formed, moulded, and hardened for life. My experience had been a varied one, I had

begun at the bottom. My illusory dreams and bright visions of this land of promise having all vanished, and through disappointment, poverty and sickness, by steady perseverance, had worked my way upward so that now I had a good house and home of my own, a dear good wife and four children; had a prosperous business, was a citizen of no mean city, had voted for several Presidents of the Republic. I had thus become thoroughly Americanized in taste, thought and feeling, so that when I landed in Liverpool every thing seemed almost as strange as they did when I landed in New York . . . I had just this mingling of feeling,-strangeness and familiarity. Landing on Sunday morning I heard the first sweet chimes of bells that I had heard since leaving that port eighteen years ago. How sweetly they sounded in my ears; what blessed recollections they brought to my mind. They seemed to welcome me home; and yet, how strange seemed the narrow streets, and the heavy, unsightly buildings; how heavy and clumsy were all the vehicles from the dray to the carriage; how slow and steady the pace of the fat, elephantine horses; how different the Yankee quickness, lightness, elegance and snap that I had been so long used to and that I so much *admired*. . . . After much delighting our little Scotch Captain with our gift of silver plate I turned my steps toward home.

I now soon found that in this old, steady, slow country, Time had made some rapid and wonderful changes while I had been away. I had come to Manchester by the old, slow stage coach, a tedious, cold and wet ride. It seemed natural for me to look for the same experience; and yet I had hardly got comfortably settled in the railway carriage before first one town and then another that used to be a great distance apart, were called. It seemed hard to realize that the hitherto insurmountable *distance* that had kept these large and busy centers apart from each other had been annihilated, and that the genius and pluck of the collier, George Stephenson, had wrought this miracle.¹³ While flying over the country in this amazed state of mind Tadcaster was called. Could this be the place where I had lived ten years? Where I had suffered so many heartaches, and where as a boy had shed so many tears . . . ? Where the grand possibilities of public life first dawned upon me like a rift in the clouds, opening a bright perspective in the distant future and then closing forever. Rapidly as thoughts flash through the mind, I had hardly a moment to think before *Walton* was called, and I was landed at the station about half a mile from the village. I walked down the lane, every turn and gate of which I knew. I was fortunately alone. I went into the wicket orchard gate, through which I had passed with a bursting, aching heart eighteen years before. How the concentrated, inexpressible bitterness of the moment came over my mind. I lingered in the orchard, noted the

¹³ See note 4, p. 40 above.

growth of every tree. I missed many of the old patriarchs, pear, apple and plum; I could not tell their names, but could point to the exact spot where they grew. . . . How strange, though now so near my father, brother and sister, and longing to grasp their hands and hold them to my heart, I yet dreaded the meeting. My brother's wife, whom I had never seen, observing a stranger in the orchard, came down to see who it was, and finding a rather outlandish looking fellow concluded that it must be her American brother-in-law. I found my father, whom I had left a hale, hearty man, now infirm and entirely blind. Like the old patriarch Jacob when Joseph was found, "he wept a long while" at the return of his son. He had almost given up the hope of ever meeting me again in this world. My dear sister and myself could only express our joy by having a good hearty cry in each other's arms. I found the village very little changed. Only one new house had been built. For some time I seemed a "boy again," and fairly reveled in enjoyment. I strolled through the green lanes where I had tended the cows; I laid down upon the rich carpet of green grass and flowers and listened to the skylark singing out of sight up in the clear blue sky. I went to the banks under the hedges where I knew the violets and primroses used to grow in my father's fields, and there I found them fresh and blooming, and fragrant as they were when I was a boy. I went to a place where I knew a blackbird used to build her nest and found that the descendants of the birds that I had known had not like me left the old favored locality. While rambling alone over the scenes of my boyhood and youth, the time that I had been away seemed like a dream of the night. I could hardly realize that I had a large business, a home, wife, family and friends in a foreign land. The villagers and my own folds [*sic*] could not understand all this, and no doubt thought that I had become a curious genius. After the excitement of my return had passed my father seemed, like old Semion [Simeon?]¹⁴ to say - "Now let thy servant depart in peace." And in a few weeks I closed his eyes and saw him laid in the old church yard by the side of my dear mother, and the bones of his forefathers, to sleep until the morning of the resurrection. I erected a monument to their memory, and was truly thankful that I had fulfilled my promise and yielded to the impression so strongly made upon my mind to visit my father before he died. My father died, as he had lived, at peace with God and all mankind. . . .

Though familiar to my boyhood and youth many things now appeared odd and strange. The variations and oddity of the Yorkshire dialect, each town and village almost having its peculiarity. Then the strange length of the days. I could read by daylight at near ten o'clock at night. While in Leeds I had a little shopping to

¹⁴ This bracketed conjecture was transcribed from the typescript of Smith's reminiscences.

do and went out at what seemed late in the afternoon, but I found all the stores or shops closed. My first thought was that it must be some national holiday, but I found that business had closed for the day, it being past eight o'clock. . . .

After visiting my numerous relatives I went up to London and spent several weeks very pleasantly. I had seen Queen Victoria when a young unmarried lady. The week before I started for America, she, with her mother, was attending the great Musical Festival held in York Minster. Grisi, Braham, and all the great celebrities in music were there.¹⁵ The first night I arrived in London I went to the Opera at Drury Lane Theatre. The Queen was there and Grisi sang. I saw the Queen several times afterwards, more especially upon a rather remarkable occasion at Windsor Park. This was just before the great Crimean war, which was then threatening to break out every day. Great preparations were being made by the Government and Nation to meet the shock. The Army and Navy were being put upon a war footing; large bodies of troops were encamped and constantly drilled in the Commons in the neighborhood of London. Sham battles were sometimes had, but the occurrences of these were carefully kept from the public, as too large crowds gathered to witness them. . . . The Queen was then a healthy, matronly looking woman, not very tall nor yet, as some have said, *umpy*. She looked the good wife and mother that she proved to be. She was plainly dressed and had nothing to distinguish her from any sensible lady in the crowd. She made a very *favorable* impression on my mind. . . .

After visiting several other places of note in different parts of the Kingdom my thoughts began to fly to what was now my home, and my face was once more turned to the Setting Sun. . . .

I now bid my early home another farewell; but how different was this to the first one! I now had a loved home of my own in the far off West, and I knew that the loved ones there had long missed me and were anxiously waiting for my return, so that instead of the dreadful heartsickness I had before felt when passing out of the orchard gate my heart, though sad at the thought of parting with my brother and sister probably for the last time upon earth, yet leaped with joy in the anticipation of soon having my loved ones in my arms. Arriving in Liverpool I engaged a passage in the Cunard ship America . . .

. . . After a pleasant voyage of twelve days we landed in Boston.

[**Editor's note:** After rendezvousing with Belvidere in Vermont and visiting her family, Smith returns to his business in Madison.]

The growth of Madison being stopped by several new railroads cutting off its best trade, many of its most interesting citizens left

¹⁵ Giulia Grisi was a celebrated Italian soprano who lived from 1811 to 1869. She made annual tours of England beginning in 1834 and lived much of the time in London. John Braham was a renowned English tenor who lived from 1774 to 1856.

for more desirable localities. This caused great depreciation of property and materially injured my future prospects. I had adopted the western plan in securing the possession of considerable real estate, hoping that the town would continue to grow. Property began to depreciate and trade to fall off. I began to cast about for a new locality. Some time before this my brother-in-law Curtis had been called to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago. This was then the largest church in the city. As our families were closely connected, he was very anxious for me to move there. Finding a favorable business opening, he pressed me to take it. I went up there in company with my wife. I found every thing excited and inflated. The opening was a promising one; but it was make or break. This was just before the war. The business was selling leather, which was then higher than it had been for many years. I considered buying a heavy stock at inflated prices a dangerous experiment, and so declined the partnership, and so missed the fortune the man made that took my place. . . .

Soon after this I had a partnership offer from J. R. Osgood of Indianapolis. I had known Mr. Osgood when he was traveling agent for a manufacturing company. While a very earnest Christian man and a member of the Baptist church, he was a most excellent salesman and was considered a very wide-awake, energetic business man. In connection with C. L. Crawford he had started a factory for making lasts, pegs, etc. Crawford's uncle having died he was obliged to take his place in Dayton, leaving Osgood alone. Wanting to visit our old English friends, Mr. and Mrs. Rockwood, my wife and I went over to Indianapolis.¹⁶ We found that Mr. Osgood was considered by his friends to be a man that was *making money very fast*. He had built a new brick factory, put in a new engine and machinery, and in addition to making lasts was doing quite an extensive business in cutting staves and making flour barrels. He had likewise just made arrangements with L. M. Bugby to make hubs of all kinds. Bugby was represented to be a man who understood making wagon and carriage material in all its branches; that he had been a *practical carriage* maker and was a fine mechanic well acquainted with machinery; then that he was a *good Christian man*, a member of the Baptist church. On looking at the business I found that it yielded *large profits* and was capable of very great extension. The carriage material business, since grown so large, was then in its infancy and I found that it only needed more *capital*

¹⁶ Of English descent William O. Rockwood and his wife, Helen Mar Moore, had moved west from New England. After engaging in businesses in Illinois and Missouri, Rockwood settled in Madison, Indiana, where evidently he met Smith. Later the Rockwoods lived in Indianapolis where he was involved in numerous businesses, especially the Indianapolis Rolling-Mill of which he was director and treasurer. Berry R. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia, 1884), 472-73.

and energy and good management to make it very profitable. Osgood professed to have made \$20,000.00, and offered me a half interest for \$10,000.00. I objected on account of my *ignorance* of the business; not knowing the real value of what I was buying, etc. There was the great mistake that I made in this transaction. This danger I clearly saw and felt at the time, but thinking Mr. Osgood's character *above suspicion*, I had full confidence in his truthfulness and *honesty*. He assured me that Bugby's experience and capacity in the new business was *beyond doubt*, and that he owned a very valuable patent right for morticing hubs. On account of Mr. Osgood's *religious character*, as an active Christian man, more than for any thing else, my wife was anxious for me to accept the offer. She hoped that I should be greatly benefited by his experience and influence, and in this I most heartily joined her. . . . I accordingly sold my business in Madison to Charlesworth, my foreman, and J. C. Smith, and made arrangements for moving to Indianapolis. This was in the spring of 1855. But houses being very scarce I was not able to move my family until December. I parted with the home I had built and the many warm friends I had made in Madison, with very great regret, on March 1, 1855. I now commenced a new era in my life with an entire change in my circumstances and mode of life. I had before been doing business *alone* and in my *own* way, had been the architect of my own fortunes, but now I found that I had to begin afresh, to learn a *new* business,—not a very pleasant thing at my age of life. I had not been very long in the factory before I found that "all is not gold that glitters," and that my ignorance and *credulity* had been *imposed upon*. The unpleasant truth began to be only too clear that my partner had not given me a full and true statement of his affairs; that instead of being as prosperous as I had been led to believe, they were in a very confused, involved, and in an unsatisfactory condition; that he was *fearfully in debt*; that his credit was very much impaired, and that his modes of doing business were loose and careless, all very different to the way in which I had been used to do business. Then I found that the inventory he had made of the property, machinery, and stock was in many cases a great *over estimate* of their value, some things put in at considerable price that were of no *value at all*. These very unpleasant discoveries showed me the mistakes I had made in giving up my experience and judgment and putting implicit faith and confidence in *another man*. This was not a happy time. I very reluctantly told my friend Osgood that I had been deceived, and was disappointed, and as my family had not moved *I wanted to withdraw*. I had then only put in a few thousand dollars. I had likewise received an offer from Joseph Hendricks to go into the wholesale boot and shoe business in Madison. Mr. Osgood was very much distressed by this proposition; told me, with tears in his eyes, that this would utterly *ruin him*, and begged me to remain with him, offering at the same

time to correct all overcharges in the inventory. Knowing that this would perhaps seriously injure and perhaps ruin him, I consented to remain. . . . I believed him to be sincere in his religion and yet he was in the habit of doing things from which my sense of honor and right recoiled. He thought it right to cover up and put imperfect and damaged articles in a bill of goods, giving as a reason that no goods were expected to be *perfect*. . . . I found too, a most unfortunate disposition of selfishness in our business matters. For many years I did the work of both partners. After a little time I made myself acquainted with the mechanical portion of the business and took the entire care and responsibility, which heavy burden I carried for many years. . . . I hope, however, though I got very little good from him, he perhaps received some from me. His ideas were considerably modified upon these subjects before he died. . . .

The first twelve years of my life at Indianapolis were years of disappointment, trouble and sorrow. Knowing that the last making business was not capable of much more extension and that the carriage material business was, I determined to push *that* as much as possible. But after expending a great deal of money in getting up machinery, buying material, and getting the business under way, I found that I had been again *deceived*; that Bugby, the man that had been so highly endorsed and recommended by my partner, was a *deception and a fraud*. He had never been a carriage maker and knew no more of the business than I did. He was as ignorant as a dolt and yet would not acknowledge it. He had spent several thousand dollars of my hard earned money in blundering experiments before I found out. I was unwilling to disbelieve the character Osgood had given him and was very nearly ruined by his blundering stupidity. I knew how important it was, when starting a new business, *to begin aright*, or disaster and ruin would be the result. I found the goods we had made were not *adapted to the market* and were of a very inferior quality, and my *bright partner did not know it*. . . . During this time I traversed the country all around in search of timber and material, and then canvassed almost every town in the Western states to introduce and sell the manufactured articles. This being then a new business it was not always an easy task. In many of the principal towns in Illinois I was the first to introduce the trade, though since that time an immense business has been done in this class of goods. By this constant perserverance [*sic*], and continued efforts to overcome the difficulties, we kept our business going and gradually extending and growing. . . . At that time [1864] a great misfortune befell us. Our factory, with all the machinery, was burnt down to the ground. The earnings of several years was lost in a night. My good natured partner, who always attended to our insurance, had most unfortunately let a large portion of it expire the week before the fire. Our friends, however, rallied around us and furnished what money we needed. . . .

My health for several years was very poor. I suffered very much from dyspepsia. Then I had some very severe attacks of bilious colic, cramps of the stomach, and other troubles. This was during the war, and was truly a gloomy time; the future was dark and uncertain. A greater trouble, however, now began to throw its shadow over me. The health of my dear wife began to fail and gradually give way. . . .

In the year [1865] another important change took place in our business. Woodburn and Scott had for some time been our Western competitors in the carriage material business. They had a large factory and were doing an extensive business in St. Louis. I had known Woodburn as a young machinist coming out to the West without money, locating in St. Louis and by industry and perseverance building up a large and profitable business. . . . We were filling a large contract which they had given to us, for Government spokes, when their factory burnt down to the ground with all the machinery and stock. About a year before this, in connection with the New Haven Wheel Co., they had taken an exclusive license for making the since celebrated "Sarven Wheel," then unknown. They had then, however, made enough to prove its superiority over all other wheels, and succeeded in convincing all the carriage makers in St. Louis, and some other places, of that fact. During the war two or three steamboats, which they owned, were pressed into Government service on the Mississippi below Vicksburg. While attending to these matters just at the close of the war both the partners thought they saw a great chance for speculation in buying up some Southern plantations and showing the Southerners how to grow cotton. Just at this time I happened to be in St. Louis. I ought to state that not having capital enough to rebuild a factory the size they wished, they had tried to get up a joint stock company, but had failed. While settling our account with them they made me a proposition to sell out their business, patent rights, stock and machinery, and sign a contract that they would not engage in the same business in St. Louis for five years. I knew that there was money in the thing. But it was a greater and larger enterprise than I had yet undertaken. Nelson and Kayner [Hayner?]¹⁷ of Alton, Illinois, however, told me that they would join me in any favorable business enterprise. I accordingly brought the matter before them and they thought so favorably of it that we arranged to form a partnership, they joining us as third partners. We accordingly paid Woodburn and Scott \$40,000.00, which bought their entire interest. In all this matter my partner, Osgood, was a mere cypher, though he had the same interest as myself. . . .

¹⁷ This material is transcribed exactly as it is in the typescript of Smith's reminiscences.

In a short time we had a very large establishment. We rebuilt and enlarged the Indianapolis factory until we worked 400 men. We had a factory and a large store and a warehouse in St. Louis; then we had a controlling interest in a factory at Metropolis upon the Ohio river in Illinois. Then we had two mills getting out timber. In these various factories and mills we worked near six hundred men. I found this a very hard life, more especially as my dear wife was now a constant care and source of anxiety. On looking back to those days I often wonder how I passed through them. My wife's disease being confirmed asthma she suffered dreadfully during the night. For some time before her death she was not able to sleep in bed. When the paroxysms would come on, which they often do several times during the night, I would get up and fumigate the room with saltpetre, and other things, to give her relief. During the two or three years before her death I had, when with her, been up more or less every night.

[**Editor's note:** Here Smith recounts the death of his wife from a long struggle with asthma (the details of which are on the missing page of the surviving document) and his marriage to Lizzie Sinclair, a girl whose father was an alcoholic and who had lived with the Smiths for years as a virtual family member. Smith was much older than Lizzie and acknowledges the "delicacy" of the new relationship. As husband and wife they had one child. The narrative resumes with the conclusion of Smith's story.]

In the year [1871] my partner, Osgood, died. His death was sudden and unexpected both by himself and his friends. This event made quite a change in the character of our business at the factory. Although for many years Mr. Osgood had taken very little part in the active work and business of the firm, he at the same time enabled me to hold my other impulsive, erratic partner in check. On this account his loss was a serious misfortune. I now found it very difficult to do business with Woodburn, either with comfort or self-respect. His egotism made him envious and jealous and thus destroyed that oneness and unity of action and purpose that is so essential to success in business. . . . And our business suffered in consequence of it. It was now very much extended. We had added a store in New York to our liabilities. Our expenses were enormous. We were in debt \$225,000.00 and Woodburn insisted upon borrowing \$25,000.00 more. . . .

In the early part of 1873 our factory was again partially burned down. This was a very serious misfortune. . . . Our insurance would cover the greater part of our loss, and the money we obtained from it paid off some of our most pressing debts. But I saw very little chance of doing any better with my intractable partner, and determined if possible to sell out my interest. I saw that an arrangement could be made by my sacrificing from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00, by which Julius Pratt, and of course my daughter, would be benefited to perhaps a larger amount than that. And that arrangement could

be made so as to prevent Woodburn from injuring the business. And so sacrificing a large amount of money which I had worked hard for many years, I sold out my entire interest for \$58,000.00, which will by care and economy be just a competence for me in my old age. I have now a good comfortable home and settled down for life a great deal better than I expected that I should ever be able to do. . . .

Epilogue

Smith ends his autobiography with reflections on various religious topics and references to his declining health. By 1875 he was suffering from dyspepsia and severe indigestion and probably from his doctor's recommended treatment—a "pounding" of his stomach and bowels every morning. But after a bout with rheumatism and an operation on his urethra, he was able to make another visit to Europe with the intention of improving his health and seeing Walton one last time. He also made a trip to California for health reasons. After a few more years of declining health, Samuel Fowler Smith died on March 12, 1879, at age seventy and was buried next to Judson Osgood in Crown Hill Cemetery. His rather simple obituary in the Indianapolis newspapers is explained by the fact that Smith had been for about eight years retired from business life and was thus less active in business and community affairs. He was remembered as "a thoroughly honest and estimable citizen and conscientious man."¹⁸

Smith probably would have been pleased with this simple epitaph. Through his journey from humble surroundings in Walton to wealth and success in Indianapolis, he had maintained a deep faith in God and a love and appreciation for his native village. It seems likely that among Smith's final thoughts before he died were recollections of his life in England and some of the pleasant images that he had recorded in his autobiography. Apparently he had made arrangements in his will to make some gesture of gratitude to his native village, for today in St. Peter's Church is a brass lectern with the simple inscription, "In Memory of Samuel Fowler Smith."

¹⁸ Indianapolis *People*, March 15, 1879. The Indianapolis *Journal* of March 15 records Smith's last will and the division of his property among his wife and children. Smith's character and devotion to charities is also recorded in *The Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis: One Hundred Years, 1838-1938* (Indianapolis, 1939), 141-42.