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Othniel Smith
Pioneer Settler of Norfolk County, Ontario
by
Grant Smith and Jannis Rogers
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“Your Petitioner was born in the State of New Jersey, and that he continued there during the late war between Great Britain and America, and having a great and lasting attachment to the British Constitution, would not join in opposition that was made to them or give assistance...on which account he was much hurt in his circumstances by fines and other impositions - and having a large family was rendered incapable of removing to this country until this year - and that a few days past he arrived in this province with a wife and nine children, most of them sons, several nearly of mens age.”

Othniel Smith  
25 Jun 1796 (1)

“I was acquainted with Othniel Smith in New Jersey ... his character was that of an honest and industrious man and that he was firmly attached to the British Constitution on account of which he did suffer much in his circumstances.”

Nathaniel Pettit  
26 Jun 1796 (1)

Othniel Smith’s Ancestry  
Othniel Smith was the fifth generation of Smiths to pioneer the wilderness of New Jersey. His great-great grandfather was John Smith, a millwright who first appeared in the records of Barnstable, Cape Cod, Massachusetts in 1639 (2) emigrating - according to family tradition - from Cheshire, England. (3) In 1676 he moved with some members of his family to the settlement of Woodbridge, New Jersey situated on the mainland across the Hudson River from Staten Island. John’s oldest son, Samuel Smith, Sr. (1644-1729) continued at Woodbridge and died there on 15 October 1729 leaving a large family. (4) His son, Samuel, Jr.(1685-1748) remained for a period of time around Woodbridge on land received from his father which lay “on the east side of the road leading to Elizabeth Town.” (5) In time he would move with his family a short distance up the Raritan Valley to land around the village of Bound Brook.(6) Samuel, Jr., merchant, died at Elizabeth Town in 1748 (7) His son, Joseph, was born in 1715 (8) and he in turn continued inland pioneering the area around Morristown, Morris Co. and Johnsonburg, Hardwick Twp., Sussex Co.

Johnsonburg, New Jersey  
Tucked away in the north-west corner of New Jersey lies the village of Johnsonburg. It sits in the middle of the township of Hardwick, Sussex County.1 As measured by the "post" route, it was 65 miles to the capital of Trenton on the Delaware River and half that distance to the town of Morristown to the east. It was a modest village in 1740 with several taverns, a general store, and a collection of ten or twelve dwellings including a yellow frame church which was home to a congregation of Presbyterians. A small stream flowed through the village giving purpose to a grist

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1 Sussex County was formed from Morris County in 1753 and the part containing Johnsonburg became Warren County in 1824.
mill whose industry increased as the surrounding forest was cleared revealing a fertile soil of limestone. One and half miles to the east stood the double log-tavern of Jonathan Pettit. It was called the Dark Moon, a name that was synonymous with the meeting house, the surrounding country side and the graveyard. In 1753, Jonathan Pettit and Samuel Green supervised the construction of a jail in Johnsonburg which was known far and wide as the "Log Goal". (9)

Joseph Smith lived nearby Johnsonburg with his wife, Rachel, and their family. He was born in 1715 somewhere in central New Jersey. Like many of his neighbors, Joseph had migrated up the valley of the Raritan River from East Jersey. In May of 1743, a son was born to Joseph and Rachel. He was named Othniel, or Othol for short. He had three older brothers: Benjamin, Joseph and Jeremiah; and six younger siblings would follow: Rebecca, Mary, Samuel, Rachel, John, Silas, and Sarah.² (8)

There is little information on the formative years of the children. Othniel and John were taught the cooper's trade of making barrels and with it probably came the other assorted skills of carpentry. And living on the edge of civilization, they were taught to read and write. It was not, however, a time for letters and pastoral thoughts. Their world was in turmoil. Land titles were constantly in dispute in New Jersey and it culminated in riots in the early 1740s. By the time Othniel was thirty, the land was in open revolt against the British. The war that began in 1775 would ravage northern New Jersey³ with over 90 engagements fought over it’s counties as Washington’s army cris-crossed the area four times.

Othniel had married around 1778. His wife’s name was Elizabeth. (9) Born in 1752, her maiden name remains unknown.⁴ By the end of the war in 1783, their family consisted of at least four sons: John and Joseph who were born in 1779, Andrew in 1781 and Garret in 1783. There were five other children, but only three are named; Samuel and Rachel, and Abraham, who was born in 1791.⁵ (11)

Fragments of information gleaned from old records are all that exist of the person named Othniel Smith. They, nevertheless, serve to reveal the real life conflicts, loyalties, hardships and struggles that he and his family endured. His father’s family was strongly divided in their loyalties to the Crown. Both brothers, John and Silas, were staunch loyalists and left for Canada in 1787. (8) Other brothers would remain in New Jersey. Othniel, on the other hand, remained until 1796. (1) Why had he delayed? A 1793 military census indicated that he had not served in the Revolutionary War or any other militia during the conflict. (12) There is no reason to doubt, therefore, that he was in fact a suffering loyalist as indicated in his petition. Not everyone joined the militia. Many secretly supplied the loyalist troops and were needed to stay with their farm or to work at their occupation - in his case making barrels for products like flour. Throughout the period of the war he would not join in opposition that was made to them or give assistance...on which account he was much hurt in his circumstances by fines and other impositions that would have included being ostracized by neighbors and having his property confiscated. In the end, one

² An eleventh child, Issac, was listed as a son of Joseph, Sr. but since he was born in 1771 it is more likely that he was the son of Joseph Smith, Jr.
³ To make matters worse, the New Jersey census for 1790 and 1820 were lost.
⁴ The most promising possibilities are that she was either a Soveriegn, a Pettit or a Freeman.
⁵ An Ann Smith, supposedly the daughter of Garret, married Richard Mandeville in 1818. Garret at that time was only 35 years old and he did not mention an Ann in his will. She may be one of the unidentified children.
could only escape the violence by swearing allegiance to the Continental Congress. Failing to do so, meant surrendering the rights to vote and using the courts for justice. The Tory loyalist had no freedom of speech, no right to practice his profession, to execute a will or to collect debts. Predictably, supporting the King's troops or assisting loyalists escape, resulted in imprisonment - a fate that befell the old Norfolk settler, Abraham Smith.

A unique record of some of the loyal inhabitants of Sussex County was provided by Nathaniel Pettit who had been appointed to a county judgeship in the Court of Common Pleas prior to the breakout of hostilities. When protest turned into rebellion, Pettit openly avowed his allegiance to the Crown and was given a Royal Commission to canvas the inhabitants of Sussex County for the purpose of having them renew their oath of fidelity to King George III. He was, therefore, well acquainted with the inhabitants of Sussex County. When he arrived in Canada in 1787, he served as one of the judges screening new comers as they entered Canada through Fort Erie. Among those that he certified were John Teeple, John Brown, Adam Tils, Harvey Dils, William Dils, John Dils, Nicholas Allington, all of whom certified they knew David Crummins. He also endorsed William Pace, John Peer, Asa Schooly, Henry and Jacob Smith and David Palmer, John Pettit, Jacob Beams, Henry Boughner, Mathias Boughner, Thomas Silverhorn, Lenard Mizner and the brothers, John, Silas and Othniel Smith. (13) He indicated that Othniel’s character was that of an honest and industrious man and that he was firmly attached to the British Constitution on account of which he did suffer much in his circumstances. (1)

Following the end of the war, Othniel’s brother, John, married Hannah Wilcox and the brother Silas married his cousin Esther Smith. They joined 46 other families in the summer of 1787 for the 500 mile trek to Canada. Among those making the trip were families of Joseph Smith, William Carpenter, Ashman Carpenter and Joseph Corwin, both of Hopewell, Allen Nixon of Sussex County, Elijah Chambers, John Pettit, Charles Pettit, Andrew and Nathanial Pettit, Eliakim Crosby and Thomas Morrow. They left New Jersey by crossing the Delaware into Pennsylvania, heading north west into New York State, arriving a month later at the bank of the Niagara River. The crossing of the Niagara was made below the Fort Erie rapids on July 2nd, 1787 in a primitive ferry manned by four oarsmen. (8)

One of Othniel’s sons would marry Elizabeth Sovereign whose uncle, Jacob, came to Canada with his wife and five children - the youngest being five months old. They traveled north from New Jersey with ten other families, making a train of 11 wagons. With them they herded over 100 head of horned cattle, several horses, seventy sheep and a great quantity of valuable moveable property. (14)

In the early part of 1791, Lieutenant Governor Simcoe had placed advertisements in the Philadelphia papers offering 200 free acres to every immigrant willing to swear allegiance to the crown. At the same time, the economic conditions in the new republic was far from bright. The only recourse was to attempt an English solution - issue a new tax. Predictably, the levying of the national tax on whisky in 1794 culminated in a violent rebellion by Pennsylvanians. Over 4,000 militia men from New Jersey prepared to cross the Delaware to once again fight against their own. They included Smiths of Sussex, Conklins, Havens, Brooks, Landons, Woodruffs and Andrews - all names that would find their way into different parts of Upper Canada and the Long Point Settlement. (12)
Norfolk Records

Norfolk Militia Records for December 31, 1799, record that Othniel’s family were last from Lincoln County, Upper Canada, and that they had been in the country 1 year and six months.¹ Othniel’s sons appear in the Charlotteville Company as privates and are all recorded as being farmers. John and Joseph were both 20 years old, Andrew was 17 and Garret was 16. Othniel was 56 years old and was listed as a cooper by occupation. All had been born in New Jersey. (11)

As he indicated in his petition for land, Othniel stated that he had not come earlier because he had a large family. This suggests that he was waiting for improvements in conditions. In Upper Canada, a barrel maker needed distilleries, an industry which was in its infancy prior to 1796. By that time, however, William Spurgin had an operating distillery in Charlotteville and would be followed later by flour mills in Port Ryerse. Waiting for Spurgin to develop his spirits may be the reason Othniel stayed in the Grimsby area in the beginning.

In sending him to his new home, the Crown recognized Othniel as a United Empire Loyalist and granted him 200 acres in the Long Point Settlement on Lot 24 in the 3rd Concession of Charlotteville, Norfolk County. (15) The shortest distance from Othniel's lot to Long Point Bay was eight miles to Port Ryerse. Turkey Point was nine miles away and the mouth of Big Creek in the marsh land of the inner bay was 17 miles. Othniel could reach his lot by several courses. One would take him by boat along the shore line of Lake Erie to a spot close to the site of Port Ryerse. The other route was the winding trail that one day would become highway number 3. In 1794 it was an Indian trail extending from Fort Erie to Windsor and passing through the future site of Simcoe. It would not become a road until Thomas Talbot opened it to the world in 1809. As early as 1785, the first settlers had cleared a road running from Ancaster to Niagara on the Lake to Fort Erie. Ten years later over 50 wagons rolled up and down the road daily. In 1793, 100 men cut a road from Dundas to the Thames River and a year later it was extended to London. (16) For a settler coming through from Fort Erie to Charlotteville township in 1793, the only sign of settlement was a small log structure near Simcoe. A year later when Jab Culver arrived, the Troyers, Abraham Smith, and the Maybees were already settled in the Long Point area. Culver’s family had to chop their way through the brush entangled woods and had to winter along the Grand River on their way through. (3)

It appears that Othniel surrendered his claim on Lot 24 Concession 3 probably because he saw something better. A cooper and carpenter would be looking for hard wood trees to build barrels and furniture. The biggest trees grew on the best soil and it was a fact that the hard woods were easier to clear than pines and cedars. One old timer recalled that if he had built his first cabin somewhere among the burtch and sugar maples instead of among the pines, his life would have been a play spell compared with what it had been. It was worth life itself to pick the right lot.

¹ His brothers, John and Silas, had settled in Lincoln County around the Grimsby area in 1787 and his nephew, Isaac, settled on 400 acres in Wentworth County in 1793.
Othniel found his hard woods on Lot 24, Concession 5. One hundred years latter it was claimed that no one made a wiser choice of land than Othniel. It would be transformed into one of the most beautiful and productive farms in the County. (3) The lot is as flat as a billiards table with a pocket in the south west corner formed by the erosion of a small creek. A sketch of the property still survives in the Eva Brook Donnelly Museum in Simcoe. It reveals a large frame house which was purported to have been the home to five generations of Smiths who were coopers making barrels for the flour mills in Port Ryerse. The house is long gone but the open fields of Lot 24 Concession 5, Charlotteville Township still sits timelessly in the County of Norfolk. The old homestead remained in the Smith family until 1937, having passed from Othniel to Andrew to Abraham Workman Smith, Andrew Hatch Smith, Frank Smith and finally to Othniel's great grand daughter and sister of Andrew Hatch, Emily Lillian Smith.

Business records for the period provided information on the everyday transactions of the early settlement. (17) Othniel and his sons appear on a number of occasions with entries for "mending of tongues, sharpening and shaving the colter, and mending chains. Documents belonging to Thomas Walsh reveal bills acquired by Othniel between 1797 and 1801 along with method of payment which included work performed by his sons on the constructions of roads to payment with bushels of corn. There is also a record of a suit Othniel brought against Abraham Vought. The reason is unknown. The two men had known each other for some time. Regardless, they went to court and Othniel won the case.

DEBITS OF OTHNIEL SMITH

1798, May... to 15 bushels of Indian corn  4 10 -
1799, June... to 1 grubbing hoe or matsch  1
... to cost of suit of Vought
1801.. to cost District Court at suit of Vought  3 8 91/2

With additional items, he owed Walsh 11.16.71/2 in British sterling. The method of payment were as follows:
By 19 days for your son Andrew in the Surveying Department  (1.8.91/2)
By 5 days (later the same year) of the above (.16.. )
By 12 days work on the Kings Highway (3.12.. )
By 2 bushels of Indian corn (..12.. )
By 3 bushels of seed oats (.15.. )
By fees paid by Abraham Vought (1..9..9)
By fees paid by you to Judge and Sherif ( ..12..6)
By 1 days work on the roads of son of Othniel ( ..6.. )
By 4 Bush wheat at 8 (1..12.. )
By Sundries as per Settlement ( ..13.. )
In 1799, Othniel had petitioned for Lot 23, Concession 5 which was adjoined to his home lot. He relinquished his rights to the lot in June, 1799 to allow Jacob Sovereign to make a petition. At the same time, John Davis surrendered his claim on Lot 15, Concession 6, Charlotteville in favour of Jacob Sovereign. Othniel's son Andrew would shortly marry Jacob's niece Elizabeth. Both facts tend to suggest that there were strong bonds between the two families formed perhaps by earlier marriages.

Sometime later in 1799, Thomas Walsh sent a note to James McCall of Charlotteville indicating that he was thereby required as soon as it conveniently can be done in the spring to call together the inhabitants of the township to perform the labour where it is most wanted on the road on the Fifth Concession which will be considered as part of their Statute Labour of the Roads for the year. The list included Othniel Smith, Samuel Smith, Fredrick Sovereign, James McCall, Robert Shearer, Daniel McCall, and Abraham Smith's sons, Jesse and William. (It should be noted that there is no evidence to date to suggest that Othniel and Abraham were related.)

The following is a letter from Othniel to the Honourable David Wm Smith, Esq., dated Charlotteville, 19th January, 1806 regarding money which he had given to William Chambers to take to Toronto.

Sir,
I take the liberty to inform you that very shortly after my return from York I sent six dollars to York to be delivered to you on my account and as I have not seen the person since, shall be happy knowing whether or not the money came safe to your hands. I am Sir your most humble servant.

Othniel Smith

Othniel died in the early part of 1813. He was pre-deceased by his sons, Joseph who died in 1812 and John in 1813. In his will, he mentions his wife Elizabeth and children Andrew, Garret, Samuel, Rachel (Boughner) and Abraham, Joseph Smith son of John, and John Smith son of Joseph. The will offered a humble departure. His first desire was that all his honest debts be paid. Then he gave and bequeathed unto his beloved wife, Elizabeth Smith, one cow and one bed and bedclothes. To his children, Andrew, Garret, Samuel, Rachel Boughner, and Abraham, and his grandsons, Joseph and John, he left all his real and personal property to be equally divided amongst them. His executors were Daniel Freeman, Andrew Smith and Samuel Smith. Elizabeth, his wife, died in 1817 in her 65th year.

Epilogue
There are no headstones to mark their resting place but if blood line and intuition runs deep, they are both lying beside their son Andrew and their friend Daniel Freeman in the Woodhouse Methodist Cemetery. There is no memorial to reflect their glory. Yet they were the springtime of our existence and our inheritance. When you look upon a full moon, you see and feel what they saw and felt. When you stand before an open field, one can only pretend to fathom the victory they claimed in clearing the land. And when you see a winter field with ravaged corn stalks standing forlorn in snow swept fields, you can only imagine the pride that came from harvesting the first crop planted between the stumps.
Children of Othniel Smith

1. Joseph Smith: born 1779 in New Jersey. His will bears the date of June 5, 1812, names his wife, Sarah, and in it he bequeathed his sons, John and Levi, the whole of the home farm being part of Lot 17 in the Gore of Woodhouse, and to Andrew, the one half of Lot 15, Concession 12 in Walpole, Haldimond Co. The will also names his daughters Charlotte, Rachel, Anna and Jewly.

2. John Smith: born 1779 in New Jersey and he married Sarah Pettit. His will is dated May 29, 1813 names his wife, Sarah, and bequeaths unto his sons, Joseph and Garret the whole of the home farm being Lot 18 in the Gore of Woodhouse.; unto Jonathan P. and Isaac Smith the one half of Lot 15 in Woodhouse. Also mentioned are his son, Othniel and daughter, Caty P Smith.

(There were no records to indicate that the brothers were killed as a result of the War of 1812. Owens indicated that a typhus epidemic had swept through the settlement that year and Dr. R. Pomroy of Burford was present when Joseph died. It is not known were they are burried.)

Joseph (1804-1881) m. Sarah Williams (1809-1891); Catherine (1804-1875) m. a Boughner; Johnathan b. 1805m. Lydia _____; Garret (1806-1871) m. 1st Sarah Sells in 1826, 2nd Mary Wilson in 1834; Isaac (1806-1869) m. 1835 Mandana Cheney.

3. Andrew Smith was born January 9, 1781 in New Jersey. He married Elizabeth Sovereign (b.1782) probably in Norfolk Co. about 1803. Elizabeth Sovereign was the sister of the infamous Henry Sovereign who murdered his wife and children. She died 26 August 1847 and Andrew died 12 October 1849. They are both buried in the Woodhouse Methodist Cemetery. The children included David (1806-1880), m. Jane Backus; Philip (1808-1876), m. Elizabeth L. Emes; Daniel (1812-1883), m. Jane Scott; Patience (1814-1844), m. Rev. Peter Kerr; Elizabeth, b. 1817, m. Edward Grace in 1863; Nancy Alimina, b. 1818, m. Robert Howey in 1836; Abraham Wortman (1820-1903), m. Susanan Laycock in 1862; Rachel; and, Mary Jane (1825-1905), m. Alfred Alway in 1853.

4. Garret Smith (11 November 1783 - 7 December 1846) m. Mary Pettitd. 1 March 1859. They moved to Yarmouth Township. (His nephew, Garret, settled near Five Stakes.) Their children included Sarah m. Malcolm Johnson; Abrahm; Jacob (1814-1878) m. Rachel Hannon (1818-1856); John C. (1816-1889) m. Jane Bowlby b. 1819; William Cornwell Smith (1819-1885) m. Jennett (1829-1853); David Mandeville (1823-1853) m. Maria Louisa Caughill (1821-1913); Joseph (1825-1882) m. Alice Penwarden.

5. Samuel Smith b. 1787 m. Mabel Brown b. 1792. Removed to the Township of Southwold: will registered Feb. 1871, Elgin Co. Their children were Elizabeth b. 1817; Catherine b. 1819; Phebe (1822-1917) m. Henry Wilcox (1815-1893); and David John (1831-1873).

6. Rachel Smith d. 1851 m. John Boughner. Moved with Samuel and Garret to the Talbotville area settling in the Township of Southwold. Their children were Mary Ann b. 1810 m. William Bowlby; Sidney (1812-1891) m. 1842, Sarah Ann Bowlby (1818-1880); Lavinia b.
1817 m. 1844 William Drake b. 1816; John (1820-1870) m. 1845 Editha Bowlby (1821-1911); Abraham (1821-1884) m. 1845 Rachel Bowlby (1822-1900); Wesley Frederick (1822-1872) m. 1st Many Bowlby (1823-1851), and 2nd Mary Ann Penwarden (1836-1915); Isaac b. 1823.

7. Abraham Smith was born 10 April 1791 and was one of the first settlers to pioneer in Sombra, Ontario. He married Annie Hoy (1793-1854) daughter of Joshua Hoy and Phebe Burdick. Abraham died 17 December 1855. Their children included Phebe b. 1814, m. Dr. David Ward; Abraham b. 1823; Rachel b. around 1825; Issac b. around 1828; Ann b. 1831; Andrew b. 1838; Polly m. Granville Smith; and Elizabeth.

**Land Acquisitions**

Othniel's two eldest sons, Joseph and John, received lots 17 and 18 in the Gore of Woodhouse. Joseph also held 100 acres of Lot 15, Concession 12 in Walpole Township, Haldimond County. Andrew Smith later obtained Lot 23, Concession 8, Charlotteville.
References

5. Smith, Samuel, Sr. to Samuel Smith, Jr. New Jersey Land Deeds; D-2, p 283.
7. Smith, Samuel. New Jersey Calendar of Wills. 27 Dec, 1748 intestate (Lib E, p 231).
In this article I assume that denial is particularly marked in settler societies since their very foundations lie in the dispossession, destruction and displacement of aboriginal peoples and they have never experienced any event like those that have forced other nations to repudiate the oppressive discourses that lie at their heart. The relationship between settlers and the state has often been tense. In my study of the fate of African squatters in the triad, settler farmers often pressed for state support to ensure a stable labour force (Youé, 1988b, 2002). However, in the aftermath of evicting Africans from European land (in Kenya in the late 1920s it was called the kifagio or sweeping), settler farmers were quick to appeal to their resident labourers to return. The minimum number of settlers has been calculated and the result is 110 individuals. Other assumptions can be made. The proposed method allows assessments and comparisons, opening the debate for the best strategy for survival. If this relatively low number is confirmed, survival on another planet might be easier than expected, provided that the organization of the settlers is appropriate. In the meantime, to ensure continued support, we are displaying the site without styles and JavaScript. Advertisement. View all Nature Research journals. Search. My Account. Login. Explore content. Journal information. Publish with us. Sign up for alerts. The Long Point Settlers Journals were quarterly publications edited by R. Robert Mutrie for over a decade from 1993 to 2004. In all, twenty-eight issues were published with insights into the early pioneers of the Long Point Settlement, the popular designation given to Norfolk County, Ontario during the day. Many authors contributed their ancestral research trail to the pages of the Journals with fully sourced detail of both the Canadian and the colonial American background for the first settlers. Don't miss out on this important collection of well researched and sourced articles. Includes 212 pages with index, maps and pictures. PDF format 10 MB file size sent by e-mail attachment. The Settlers series The Settlers 2 (10th anniversary) : Strategy Tips. Although generals only have twice as many health points as privates (7 versus 3), they also have better fighting abilities, so they can easily beat 3 privates one after the other, and they'll even heal after the battle. Fighting a war with privates leads to many casualties and wastes a lot of resources. Generals are much more economical on the long run, but they're slow to get, so aim for coins from the very beginning. Other aspects of your development (iron mines, Smithy and Metalworks) are less important, because you start with enough tools and privates if you manage to upgrade y