

The Loyalist Smiths of Smith's Cove, Nova Scotia

By Brian McConnell*

An imposing headstone towering over most others in the Thomas Cemetery at Smith's Cove, Nova Scotia is inscribed:

JOSEPH SMITH
UNITED EMPIRE LOYALIST
1783
FOUNDER OF
SMITHS COVE
DONOR OF THIS
CEMETERY

ALSO HIS WIFE
SARAH WARNE



**Monument to Joseph Smith (1742 - 1827)
& wife Sarah**

It is interesting that the story of how Joseph Smith became a founder of Smith's Cove includes an agreement being made by him with the father of a Patriot soldier, Joseph Potter, Jr.. When Joseph Smith arrived in the area in 1783 with other Loyalists as refugees from New York after the American Revolution his ship lay in the Annapolis Basin, off of Digby. His wife and family accompanied him along with a few household items which they had been permitted to bring. They remained on the ship through the winter and in the Spring he walked to Halifax, approximately a distance of 230 kilometers, to receive his land grant. (1) It is recorded he received 350 acres in Clements. (2)

The land Joseph Smith received was in present day Upper Clements. Soon after receiving this grant he made an agreement to exchange it with Joseph Potter, Jr., a pre – Loyalist settler in Smith's Cove. This land was exchanged for lot 10 of the Hoar Grant, named after Colonel Jonathan Hoar who received large grants of land in the area which included what would become Smith's Cove. He served in the French and Indian War and was elected the first representative of the County of Annapolis in 1759.

According to Potter family research Joseph Potter, Jr. "went from the States to Nova Scotia, a little before the War of the Revolution." (3) His son Israel Potter, born in Worcester County, Massachusetts was one of the six months' men raised in the town of Shrewsbury to reinforce the Continental Army in 1780. It marched from Springfield under the command of Lieutenant Taylor of the Second Massachusetts Regiment on July 6, 1780. After the war Israel Potter went to Nova Scotia, settled the estate of his father, and lived on the property which had been acquired from Joseph Smith. The homestead became called Potter's Point.(4)

Joseph Smith was born in Ridgefield, Connecticut. At the close of the American Revolution he had completed a Memorial (5) and Affidavit (6) which described his loyalty and service to the British Crown. They read as follows:

*The Memorial of Joseph Smith, late
of the County of Westchester and
Province of New York
Humbly sheweth*

That your memorailist was every uniformly and steadily attached to His Majesty's Person and Government and opposed to the measures of the American Congress.

That in consequence of his Loyalty and Allegiance, he wa obliged to seek Protection in the British Lines, and that from the time of his joining the Royal Army at New York, he hath rendered them every help in his power to suppress the Rebellion, and Re – Establish his Majesty's Government in America.

That by Reason of his having joined His Majesty's Troops, the whole of his Estate hath been seized and confiscated, the amount or value whereof is seven hundred and thirty – four pounds current money of New York equal to four hundred and twelve pounds, seventeen shillings and six pence Sterling money of Great Britain, as by the affidavit hereunto annexed may appear.

That because of the Seizure and Confiscation of his Estate, and the unfortunate Termination of the War, your memorialist is in the greatest want and distress and shortly before the Evacuation of New York by his Majesty's Troops, Removed with his Family to Nova Scotia, where he now is.

That from the Loyalty, Losses, and Serves of the Memorialist, he humbly hopes the benefit of the late Act of Parliament for the Relief of distressed Loyalists may be extended to him.

Your memorialist therefore prays, that his case may be taken into consideration, in order that your memorialist may be enabled under your Report to receive such Relief as his Losses and Services may be found to merit.

*Joseph Smith - by
John Le Chevalier Roome, his Attorney*

*County of Annapolis
Province of Nova Scotia, to wit:*

BE IT REMEMBERED that on the eleventh Day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty – three, Before me Joseph Winniett Esquire one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for said County, personally came and appraised Joseph Smith formerly of Salem in the County of Westchester and Province of New York, Farmer, for many years a Resident and Refugee within the British Lines, and now residing in the County of Annapolis, who being duly sworn on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, did Depose and Say, That he owned and possessed the following Estate as his own property which on his Oath he doth value and appraise as follows, that is to say, One hundred acres of land in Salem aforesaid with a good Dwelling House, Barn, and Outhouses thereon at Four hundred and fifty pounds New York money, Dollars at eight shillings each, four Horses at thirty two pounds, five Cows Twenty five pounds, eleven young Cattle Thirty three pounds, Six Swine six pounds, nine acres and a half of land in the Town of Ridgefield in Connecticut with a Dwelling House and Barn at one hundred and fifty pounds, also four acres of meadow in said Ridgefield at Thirty two pounds, all lawful money of New York at eight shillings the Spanish milled Dollar. And the Deponent further says that the said appraisement and Valuation of his real estate amounting to six hundred and thirty two pounds and of his personal estate amounting to one hundred and two pounds, hath been made by him with candor and without partiality and to his best knowledge and Ability, and that the same would have been sold for the said sums respectively in Gold and Silver previous to the year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and seventy – six and that the same is confiscated or lost by reason of his joining the Kings Troops and putting himself under their protection and further saith not.

JOSEPH SMITH

*Sworn this 11th day
of December A.D. 1783
Before me, Joseph Winniett*

The headstones of three of the children of Joseph Smith, who were also born in Ridgefield, Connecticut are viewable at cemeteries in Smith's Cove. His sons, Jeremy and Caleb have stones near their father in the Thomas Cemetery, while daughter Abigail was buried beside her husband John Sulis in the Smith – Sulis Cemetery. John Sulis was also a United Empire Loyalist originally from Westchester County, New York.



Headstone of Jeremy Smith (1763 - 1857)



Headstone of Caleb Smith (1771 - 1853)



Headstone for Abigail Smith (1768 - 1857) & husband John Sulis

Joseph Potter, Jr., has no grave marker in Nova Scotia as he was lost at sea. He had been travelling to the United States for the purpose of starting a company to build an iron works in Clements. However, there is a headstone for his wife Mary. She died in 1790. It is located on property in Upper Clements that was part of the original lands conveyed to Joseph Potter, Jr. (7)



Headstone for Mary Potter (1762 – 1790)

The headstone of Mary Potter is inscribed:

ERECTED
In Memory of
Mary Potter
Comfort of
Mr. Joseph Potter
who departed this life
June 30 A.D. 1790
Age 38 years
4 months 6 days

This is the first Monument
set up in this graveyard

Israel Potter, son of Joseph Potter, Jr., later became a minister in the Baptist Church. He was buried in the Goat Island Baptist Church Cemetery, which is located in Upper Clements.



Headstone for Reverend Israel Potter (1763 – 1847) & wife Mary

Notes:

* This article was prepared by Brian McConnell on May 11, 2022. He can be contacted by email at brianm564@gmail.com

- (1) Clayton, Hazel, editor, "Smith's Cove and Her Neighbors", Digby: Wallis Print Ltd., 1961, p, 68.
- (2) Harvey, D.C., "Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia", Milton: Global Heritage Press, 2006, p. 22.
- (3) Potter, J.S., "History and Genealogy of the Potter Family", Boston: W. Kellaway, Printer, 1885, p. 3.
- (4) Calnek, W.A., "History of the County of Annapolis", Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1980, pp. 249, 564.
- (5) The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; American Loyalist Claims, Series II; Class: AO 13; Piece: 015 Description. Title: Piece 015: New Claims P. Q. R. S., New York.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Headstone of Mary Potter is on private property at Upper Clements, Annapolis County. The laneway which enters the property is located opposite civic number 2660 on Highway 1. There are no other visible headstones in the area.