



Smithville MO Historical Society

Our new website:

www.smithvillehistory.com

Preserving the past for
appreciation in the future.

February 2026

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Historic Marker Project

Plans are in the making to erect a historical marker on the Smithville downtown park honoring the Smith family and providing information about the founding of Smithville on July Fourth this year. Dewayne Knott has been leading the effort to raise fund for this project, research on text for the marker, and the dedication ceremony. The society has committed \$2,000 to the project. Donations are welcome.

Plans for July Fourth Celebration

The Smithville MO Historical Society will join in a celebration of America's 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on the town square this year. Also participating are Nellie's Sweet Shoppe, the American Legion Band and Honor Guard, the Sons of the American Revolution Color Guard, and Smithville's Fire Department, EMS and Police Department. A parade will commence at 10:00 am, followed by reading of a proclamation, other remarks, music, and unveiling of the historical marker.

America 250 Patriot Celebration

Patriot ancestors of Smithville residents and society members are featured here to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

This month we will celebrate the service of some of the ancestors of Humphrey and Nancy Smith.

Pvt. Abraham Smith/Schmidt, father of Humphrey Smith, was born in 1749 in Monmouth County, colony of new Jersey. He served in the Second New Jersey Regiment of the Continental Army (the New Jersey Line) which was active from 1775 to 1783. Documentation that has survived indicates he served in Capt. Samuel Rading's unit from Aug. 1781 to Jan. 1782 (No. 2531 in April 1782) and from April 1782-1783 in Cumming's New Jersey Battalion. That would have placed him at the Battle of Yorktown in the Summer to October 1781. He moved to upstate New York around 1800 and received a pension commencing in April 1818. He died in Erie County, New York in 1838.

Pvt. Cornelius Davenport was a brother of Catherine Davenport, Humphrey's mother. He was born in 1739 in Milton in Morris Co, New Jersey. The New Jersey Militia Act of 1777 required "all effective men" between age 16-50 to serve in the militia.

50 Years Ago in Smithville

News in 1976 Smithville Democrat Herald in the Clay County Archives. B.J. and Vera Bunch, editors.

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Feb. 5, 1976: Clay County will sponsor three parks on Smithville Lake: the Little Platte Park (west side), the Crow's Creek Park (south side), and Camp Branch Park (east side). The openings will coincide with the opening of the lake in Spring 1977. The Corps of Engineers estimates that 1.4 million people will visit the lake in the first few years, rising to 3 million by 2020.

Feb. 12, 1976: The Ford dealership changes its name to Dave Littleton Ford after the purchase of the dealership from Rick Wittman, who has moved to Texas. City Council has authorized the Water Department to construct an eight inch waterline from Bridge Street up F Highway to service Woodland Heights. The amount of \$900,000 from the special police fund will be used to purchase a communications radio for the City fire truck.

Feb. 19, 1976: Fifth grader James C. Thomas III attending Smithville Elementary School won Class I first place in the Clay County Bicentennial contest. Senators demand that he Governor release \$13.1 million in public school money withheld. Revenues are up 10% and it is time for local school board to plan budgets for the next school year.

Feb. 26, 1976: National Future Farmers week started on Feb. 21st. The Smithville Chapter was chartered in 1932 with 44 members. Since then, 27 members have been awarded a State Farmer degree. The American Farmer degree was awarded to Stanley Armstrong (1974) and Billy Justus (1975). The Clay County Bicentennial Committee is planning a parade on May 8 in North Kansas City.

Each militia man was required to supply a musket, bayonet, sword or tomahawk, ammunition and a knapsack and to stand at readiness. Morristown was the "cockpit of the Revolution" as the frequent headquarters of General Washington due to its location between New York City and Philadelphia. This militia unit participated in the crossing of the Delaware River and the capture of Trenton. Other specific services of Pvt. Davenport is unknown. He received a Revolutionary War land bounty n. 7470 for 100 acres of land, issued in April 1791. He used his bounty to purchase land in Ulysses, Cayuga Co. New York where is build a house and mill. (His nephew Humphrey Smith was an apprentice). Cornelius also served in Capt. Herman Camp's New York militia unit from September to December 1812 at Lewiston (near Fort Niagara). He died in New York in 1815. His body was buried at the family plot in Marcella Union Cemetery in Morris County, New Jersey.

Pvt. Abraham Atwater, grandfather of Nancy Atwater Walker, was born in 1716 in Connecticut. He and his son Isaac enlisted in Capt. Brunnell's Company of the Fifth Battalion of Wadsworth's Brigade in June 1776. The militia unit marched to New York to reinforce General Washington's Continental troops in the Battle of Long Island in August -September 1776. In the hasty retreat from Brooklyn Heights, Isaac was killed. His 15 year old son Samuel was a drummer in another militia unit in the battle and survived. Abraham died in January 1786 and is buried at the Hillside Cemetery in Cheshire Connecticut, marked with a Patriot marker. It I rumored that is daughter Abigail married Thomas Walker, a British soldier born in Yorkshire in 1750, who was a prisoner of war in Connecticut. If true, this would have put Nancy Atwater Walker's father fighting on one side while her maternal grandfather fought on the other side.

Congratulations to Horizon Elementary School's STEM team. It finished in the Top 20 of the Battle of the Brains competition, sponsored by Burns & McDonnell, involving over 700 teams. The Top 20 finalists are guaranteed grant funding to support STEM learning at their schools and potential for their idea to become a permanent Science City exhibit.

