

Mary Nottingham Smith Dies At Home Sunday, Dec. 30

[From the *Eastern Shore News*]

Mary Nottingham Smith, age 65 years, long recognized as the leader in the advancement of education among the colored people of Accomack county, died at her home near Accomac, Sunday night, December 30, 1951.

"Mary" as she was familiarly known to residents throughout the county, will be long remembered, not only by those of her own race, for whom she fought to advance their welfare, but to hosts of the white population by whom she was highly regarded and respected.

"Mary" fought for those things, which in her own mind, she firmly believed necessary to bring improved conditions to the colored race—all of this through education. She went about her work quietly and modestly and was never questioned as to her ideals and aims in this direction. What she did for colored people she did unselfishly and with lofty motives.

Mary Nottingham Smith was born in Capeville, Northampton county, the daughter of John W. Nottingham and Fannie Nottingham. She attended local schools in lower Northampton and later Norfolk Mission College. Afterwards she went to Hampton Institute from which she was graduated.

After graduation she taught school in Essex county, where for two years she was principal. She returned home and taught at Townsend school, where again she was principal. From there she went to Concordia Parish, Louisiana as Supervisor of Schools and served there for five years.

The late G. G. Joynes, at that time School Superintendent of Accomack county schools heard of the record Mary Smith was making and offered her a place as Supervisor of the colored schools of Accomack county. She accepted and came here in 1920. Since that time she devoted her time—every moment of it—to the upbuilding of the Negro schools here. It was her life's work, and her record was one of service to others.

In the summer of 1929 the General Education Board sent her to work with Supervisors in training school principals at State College, South Carolina and in 1930 to State College in Florida to do work with a similar group.

Her work in Accomack county has been strictly improvement in every phase of school and community work. In 1934 the Accomack county School Board named the High School at Accomac in honor of her for her cooperative work with all people.

Whether in those things which meant something to her own race, or in things for the general welfare of all people, Mary gave the same interest and painstaking devotion. Thursday, December 20th, when she was stricken in her car before leaving her home she was enroute to the school board office on official duty. She slumped in the vehicle, never regaining consciousness.

Mary Smith was a member of the Negro Organization Society; member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; president of the Accomack Chapter, Alumni Association, Hampton Institute, and held various offices in Ebenezer AME Church, Capeville, where until the end she retained her membership.

Memorial services were held at Mary Nottingham Smith School at 11 o'clock in the morning, conducted by Rev. L. S. Roberts, pastor of Macedonia AME Church, Accomac and funeral services were held at Ebenezer,

Capeville, conducted by her pastor, the Rev. L. A. Stroud. Interment was in Ebenezer AME Church Cemetery.

Surviving the deceased is her husband, Robert L. Smith, a former teacher and contractor, and Mrs. Barbara H. Upshur, a teacher at Accomac Elementary School. This is a great-niece, Mary Smith reared and educated from a child of three years.

Tribute of Henry A. Wise, County School Superintendent:

The Accomack County School system has suffered a very great loss in the passing of Mrs. Mary N. Smith, Supervisor of Negro schools. Mrs. Smith, one of the first Jeanes supervisors in the state, had served as supervisor in Accomack county for thirty-two years and during those years of service not only set a pattern for supervisory work in Accomack county but in the state as a whole as well. Not only because of her years of service but because of her broad vision and sympathetic understanding of school problems. Mrs. Smith was held in very high esteem by the State Department of Education and was frequently called into consultation by the members of the State Supervisors in the Elementary and High School fields. Her influence was felt, therefore, not only in Accomack county but in the state at large as well.

To the teachers with whom she worked, Mrs. Smith was always an inspiration. She planned with them and for them, and her plans always envisioned a program that called for better teaching, better understanding on the part of teachers for pupils, better understanding of all teacher problems, and a better understanding of the responsibility resting on all teachers. Her vision extended beyond the school room and took in all phases of community life and her ideals for teachers and pupils took in the communities to which these teachers and schools belonged. That the county generally recognized this fact is shown by the fact that for all general community projects Mrs. Smith could always be counted on to do more than her part and to have teachers and pupils do their part in any program that had to do with the development of the health of the community, the morals of the community, the improvement of the community generally. As evidence of this Mrs. Smith was a member of the County Committee on Infantile Paralysis, a member of the County Schools Saving Committee, a member of the County Red Cross Committee, as well as holding membership on other committees that had to do with the development of a program for better living for her people and all people. To many people Mrs. Smith was "Mary Smith" and as Mary Smith she was known and respected by all those with whom she came in contact.

The Mary N. Smith High School, established in 1932, was most appropriately named by the Accomack County School Board in honor of Mrs. Smith and as something of a recognition of the work she had done in getting a high school for the Negro boys and girls of Accomack county. It was most appropriate that her funeral service should be held in the auditorium of this high school and that the pupils now in high school should have a part in the funeral service. In every Negro school in the county on Thursday morning a brief memorial service was held in memory of Mrs. Smith. Schools were closed after this service in further honor and in memory of a teacher and a supervisor who had given years of devoted service to the boys and girls now in school and to the many boys and girls who have passed through the schools and are taking their part in the lives of the communities in which they live.