

## George Rayford Smith

Here's some information on one of [Lewis Sharp](#)'s ancestors (and Aunts Mary, Jeri, and Shirley) - George Rayford Smith. You get to George by the following lineage:

Lewis Sharp to Barney Hilliard Sharp to Groves Hilliard Sharp to Bertha Amelia Sharp (Groves' wife) to James David Sharp to Martha Permelia Smith (James David's wife) to George Rayford Smith.

On September 14, 1862, George Rayford Smith wrote a letter to his brother. I think the brother he is writing to is Charles Crow Smith (1815 – 1894), as he refers to his other brother – William Winn Smith (1835 – 1902) in this letter. George knew many ways to spell words, so I will just spell them like he did! Here is my transcription of the text of that letter:

*Rushing Hose, Miss.*

*September 14, 1862*

*Dear Brother. I recv yours of last Tuesday last evening and seat myself this morning to repply.*

*You say you want my consent to a final settlement of Fathers Estate . I have no objection to your making a settlement at any time it may suit your convenience. You also wish me to come out at that time. I guess I shall not be thar. I do not expect to come till I can arrange all my business and I would here remark that if there is any money their for me you and William can use it and I will when I get ready to come give you notice that you may have time to fix for me. I do not need the money as I owe no one a red cent.*

*I have bin drafted and now have a man in my place. I give him \$25 per month and gather his crops. Robbert is or was at Chatanooga sick with fever the last we heard of him but said to be improving.*

*Tell William I want him to write to me. I have not received a letter from him in a long time. Our crops here are verry sorry and we will be hard run to make the connexion with the next crops particularly if Lincon **[John Note: Here is referring to President Lincoln]** should continue to work at the mote in our eye.*

*So we are verry uneasy here about salt. We fear we shall not be able to get it any price.*

*We are all well.*

*Yours, G. R. Smith*

This very letter is discussed in a book titled “Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front” by Timothy B. Smith (Let me know if you want a copy of this book uploaded. I have an Adobe pdf of it). Although I haven’t read this entire book, it looks very interesting. Timothy Smith (not known by me to be related to George R. Smith) states on page 101:

*Such a common letter spelled out the many difficulties facing Mississippians, including sickness, missing loved ones, conscription, shortages, Federal invasion, and the lack of salt. And this note was from a fairly well-to-do planter, not a member of the poorest class, upon whom many of these problems fell even harder. To end his gloomy note with the words “We are all well” is curious, but reflects the time in which the letter was written. Even in the fall of 1862, before Antietam, Emancipation, and Vicksburg, many Mississippians were still fairly optimistic about their fate. Within a year, however, those sentiments would change. For George Smith, the war would be disastrous. The conflict would cause economic and physical shortages and problems, and would take his son Robert, who was mortally wounded at Stones River soon after his father wrote this letter. His other son, also in the Confederate army despite being a lad of only sixteen, would become very sick, although he later recovered and survived the war. For untold*

*numbers of Mississippians, George Smith's example was repeated and compounded countless thousands of times. Mississippians faced almost inconceivable problems as the war progressed, and these difficulties had a definite effect on their support for the Confederacy. While most Mississippians never broke and went over to the enemy, many, while loyal to the end, nevertheless steadily lost the will to continue the fight and yearned for the horror to just be over, regardless of who won.*

It's a poignant letter. As Timothy B. Smith's book points out, George Smith's son Robert would die in captivity in January 1863 after being captured at the Battle of Stones River, in Murfreesboro, TN.