

= James McCune Smith =

James McCune Smith (April 18 , 1813 ? November 17 , 1865) was an American physician , apothecary , abolitionist , and author . He is the first African American to hold a medical degree and graduated at the top in his class at the University of Glasgow , Scotland . He was the first African American to run a pharmacy in the United States .

In addition to practicing as a doctor for nearly 20 years at the Colored Orphan Asylum in Manhattan , Smith was a public intellectual : he contributed articles to medical journals , participated in learned societies , and wrote numerous essays and articles drawing from his medical and statistical training . He used his training in medicine and statistics to refute common misconceptions about race , intelligence , medicine , and society in general . Invited as a founding member of the New York Statistics Society in 1852 , which promoted a new science , he was elected as a member in 1854 of the recently founded American Geographic Society . But , he was never admitted to the American Medical Association or local medical associations .

He has been most well known for his leadership as an abolitionist ; a member of the American Anti @-@ Slavery Society , with Frederick Douglass he helped start the National Council of Colored People in 1853 , the first permanent national organization for blacks . Douglass said that Smith was " the single most important influence on his life . " Smith was one of the Committee of Thirteen , who organized in 1850 in New York City to resist the newly passed Fugitive Slave Law by aiding fugitive slaves through the Underground Railroad . Other leading abolitionist activists were among his friends and colleagues . From the 1840s , he lectured on race and abolitionism and wrote numerous articles to refute racist ideas about black capacities .

Both Smith and his wife were of mixed @-@ race African and European ancestry . As he became economically successful , he built a house in a good neighborhood ; in the 1860 census he and his family were classified in that neighborhood as white , whereas in 1850 they were classified as mulatto . He served for nearly 20 years as the doctor at the Colored Orphan Asylum in New York but , after it was burned down in July 1863 by a mob in the New York Draft Riots , in which nearly 100 blacks were killed , Smith moved his family and practice out to Brooklyn for safety . The parents stressed education for their children . In the 1870 census , his widow and children continued to be classified as white . To escape racial discrimination , his children passed into white society : the four surviving sons married white spouses ; his unmarried daughter lived with a brother . They worked as teachers , a lawyer , and business people .

Smith 's unique achievements as a pioneering African @-@ American doctor were rediscovered by twentieth @-@ century historians . They were relearned by his descendants in the twenty @-@ first century when a three @-@ times @-@ great @-@ granddaughter took a history class and found his name in her grandmother 's family bible . In 2010 , several Smith descendants commissioned a new tombstone for his grave in Brooklyn . They gathered to honor him and their African @-@ American ancestry .

= = Early life and education = =

Smith was born free in 1813 in New York City (New York state had passed gradual abolition in 1799 ; children of slave mothers were born free but had to serve an indenture until early adulthood .) His mother , believed to be Lavinia Smith , achieved her freedom later in life ; she said she was a " self @-@ emancipated woman . " She was born into slavery South Carolina and had been brought to New York as a slave . His father was Samuel Smith , a white merchant and his mother 's master , who had brought her with him to New York from South Carolina .

The boy grew up only with his mother . As an adult , James Smith alluded to other white ancestry through his mother 's family , saying he had kin in the South , some of whom were slaveholders and others slaves .

Smith attended the African Free School (AFS) # 2 on Mulberry Street in Manhattan , where he was described as an " exceptionally bright student " . He was among numerous boys who went on to have brilliant careers , some of whom he worked with in the abolitionist cause . In the course of his

studies , Smith was tutored by Rev. Peter Williams , Jr . , a graduate of the African Free School who had been ordained in 1826 as the second African @-@ American priest in the Episcopal Church . (Williams had founded St. Philip 's African Church in New York City .) Upon graduation , Smith applied to Columbia University and Geneva Medical College in New York State , but was denied admission due to racial discrimination .

Williams encouraged Smith to attend the University of Glasgow in Scotland . He and abolitionist benefactors of the AFS provided Smith with money for his trip overseas and his education . Smith kept a journal of his sea voyage that expressed his sense of mission . After arriving in Liverpool and walking along the waterfront , he thought , " I am free ! " Through abolitionist connections , he was welcomed there by members of the London Agency Anti @-@ Slavery Society . According to the historian Thomas M. Morgan , Smith enjoyed the relative racial tolerance in Scotland and England , which officially abolished slavery in 1833 . (New York had finally abolished all slavery in 1826 .) He studied and graduated at the top of his class . He obtained a bachelor 's degree in 1835 , a master 's degree in 1836 , and a medical degree in 1837 . He also completed an internship in Paris .

= = Marriage and family = =

After his return to New York and getting established , in the early 1840s Smith married Malvina Barnett (c.1825 -) , a free woman of color who was a graduate of the Rutgers Female Institute . They had eleven children and five survived to adulthood . The name of one of the children is unknown :

Frederick Douglass (d . 1854) , not to be confused with Frederick Douglass

Peter Williams (d . 1854)

Mary S.

James W. (born 1845) became a teacher ; he married and had an independent household by 1870 .

Henry M. (1847 - d. before 1859)

Amy G. (c.1848 @-@ 1849 - d . December 1849)

Mary (also called Maude) , born c.1855 @-@ 56 ; never married ; became a teacher and was living with her widowed brother Donald in 1900 in Queens . (Note : In the 1900 census , her birth was reported as September 1842 , but this is not consistent with her age in the 1860 and 1870 censuses , and she did not appear in the 1850 census .)

Donald (born 1858) became a lawyer , married and was a widower by 1900 , living in Queens . His household included his older sister Maude and two siblings of his late wife : his widowed brother @-@ in @-@ law Edward , a physician born in England , and sister @-@ in @-@ law Emma Callaghan , an unmarried teacher .

John M. (born February 1860) worked in Florida in an orange grove in the 1880s , per the Florida 1885 census . He married in 1888 , and their three children were born in Florida . By 1900 had returned with his family to Brooklyn , where he worked as a printer .

Guy B. , born 1862 , first worked as a seaman . By 1900 , he was married with several children and worked as a salesman . His youngest daughter was named Antoinette .

In 1850 , the senior Smith 's household included four older women : Lavinia Smith , age 67 (his mother : b. c.1783 - d. bet.1860 @-@ 1870) , born in South Carolina and listed first as head of household ; Sarah Williams , 57 ; Amelia Jones , 47 ; and Mary Hewlitt , 53 , who were likely relatives or friends . By then Smith and his wife Malvina had three children : James , Henry and Amy . Each member of the household was classified as mulatto (or of mixed ancestry) , and all but Lavinia Smith were born in New York . They lived in a mixed neighborhood in the Fifth Ward ; in the census , nearly all other neighbors on the page were classified as white ; many were immigrants from England , Ireland , and France .

By 1860 , Smith was doing very well ; he had moved to Leonard Street within the Fifth Ward and had a mansion built by white workmen . His total real property was worth \$ 25 @,@ 000 . His household included a live @-@ in servant , Catherine Grelis from Ireland . Listed as a separate household at his address were Sara D. Williams , 57 , and Mary Hertell (should be Hewlitt , as above) , 50 . (These were likely the same Sara and Mary as in the 1850 census , although their

ages did not change .) No one on this census page had a racial designation . By the conventions of the time , this means that they were classified as white by the census enumerator ; totals of white persons only are given at the bottom of the page .

After the 1863 draft riots , Smith and his family were among prominent blacks who left New York and moved to Brooklyn , then still a separate city . He no longer felt safe in his old neighborhood . In the 1870 census , Malvina and her four children were living in Ward 15 , Brooklyn . All were listed as white . James W. Smith , who had married a white woman , was living in a separate household and working as a teacher ; he was also classified as white . The Smith children still at home were Maud , 15 ; Donald , 12 ; John , 10 ; and Guy , 8 ; all were attending school .

Five Smith children survived to adulthood : James , Maud , Donald , John and Guy . The men married white spouses , but Maud never married . All were classified as white from 1860 on .

= = Career = =

= = = Medicine = = =

When he returned to New York City in 1837 with his degrees , Smith was greeted as a hero by the black community . He said at a gathering , " I have striven to obtain education , at every sacrifice and every hazard , and to apply such education to the good of our common country . " He was the first university @-@ trained African @-@ American physician in the United States . During his practice of 25 years , he was also the first black to have articles published in American medical journals , but he was never admitted to the American Medical Association or local ones .

He established his practice in Lower Manhattan in general surgery and medicine , treating both black and white patients . He also started a school in the evenings , teaching children . He established what has been called the first black @-@ owned and operated pharmacy in the United States , located at 93 West Broadway (near Foley Square today) . His friends and activists gathered in the back room of the pharmacy to discuss issues related to their work in abolitionism .

In 1846 , Smith was appointed as the only doctor of the Colored Orphan Asylum (also known as the Free Negro Orphan Asylum) , at 44th Street and Fifth Avenue . (Before that time , the directors had depended on pro bono services of doctors .) He worked there for nearly 20 years . The asylum was founded in 1836 by Anna and Hannah Shotwell and Mary Murray , Quaker philanthropists in New York . Trying to protect the children , Smith regularly gave vaccinations for smallpox . Leading causes of death were infectious diseases : measles (for which there was no vaccine) , smallpox and tuberculosis (for which there was no antibiotic at the time) . In addition to caring for orphans , the home sometimes boarded children temporarily when their parents were unable to support them , as jobs were scarce for free blacks in New York . Waves of immigration from Ireland and Germany in the 1840s and 1850s meant there were many new immigrants competing for work .

Smith was always working for the asylum . In July 1852 , he presented the trustees with 5 @, @ 000 acres provided by his friend Gerrit Smith , a wealthy white abolitionist . The land was to be held in trust and later sold for benefit of the orphans .

In July 1863 , during the three @-@ day New York Draft Riots , in which most participants were ethnic Irish , rioters attacked and burned down the orphan asylum . The children were saved by the staff and Union troops in the city . During its nearly 30 years , the orphan asylum had admitted 1310 children , and typically had about 200 in residence at a time . After the riots , Smith moved his family and business out of Manhattan , as did other prominent blacks . Numerous buildings were destroyed in their old neighborhoods , and estimates were that 100 blacks were killed in the rioting . No longer feeling safe in the lower Fourth Ward , the Smiths moved to Williamsburg , Brooklyn .

= = = Abolitionist movement = = =

While in Scotland , Smith joined the Glasgow Emancipation Society and met people in the Scottish and English abolitionist movement . In 1833 Great Britain abolished slavery . When Smith returned

to New York , he quickly joined the American Anti-Slavery Society and worked for the cause in the United States . He worked effectively with both black and white abolitionists , for instance maintaining a friendship and correspondence with Gerrit Smith that spanned the years from 1846 to 1865 .

Publishing articles quickly brought him to the attention of the national abolitionist movement . His " Destiny of the People of Color " , " Freedom and Slavery for Africans " , and " A lecture on the Haytian Revolution ; with a note on Toussaint L 'Ouverture " , established him as a new force in the field . He directed the Colored People 's Educational Movement (to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln) .

In 1850 as a member of the Committee of Thirteen , Smith was one of the key organizers of resistance in New York City to the newly passed Fugitive Slave Act , which required states to aid federal law enforcement in capturing escaped slaves . As did similar groups in Boston , his committee aided fugitive slaves to escape capture and helped connect them to people of the Underground Railroad and other escape routes .

During the mid 1850s , Smith worked with Frederick Douglass to establish the National Council of Colored People , one of the first permanent black national organizations , beginning with a three day convention in Rochester , New York . At the Convention in Rochester , he and Frederick Douglass emphasized the importance of education for their race and urged the founding of more schools for black youth . Smith wanted choices available for both industrial and classical education . Douglass valued his rational approach and said that Smith was " the single most important influence on his life . " Smith tempered the more radical people in the abolitionist movement and insisted on arguing from facts and analysis . He wrote a regular column in Douglass ' paper , published under the pseudonym , ' Communipaw.'

Opposing the emigration of American free blacks to other countries , Smith believed that native born Americans had the right to live in the United States and a claim by their labor and birth to their land . He gathered supporters to go to Albany and testify to the state legislature against proposed plans to support the American Colonization Society , which had supported sending free blacks to the colony of Liberia in Africa . Smith contributed money to revive the Weekly Anglo-African in 1861 , as an anti emigrationist newspaper . His own writings were important for refuting commonly held racist assumptions of the time , as noted below .

Smith was also a prominent leader in the battle for the civil rights of the northern black minority . In the mid 1850s , he joined James W.C. Pennington and other black leaders in establishing the Legal Rights Association (LRA) in New York City . A pioneering minority rights association , the LRA waged a nearly ten year campaign against segregated public transportation in New York City . This organization successfully defeated segregation in New York and served as a model for later rights organizations , including the National Equal Rights League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) .

= = = Professional associations and writings = = =

Smith was a prolific writer and essayist . The historian John Stauffer of Harvard University says : " He was one of the leaders within the movement to abolish slavery , and he was one of the most original and innovative writers of his time . "

In 1840 he wrote the first case report by a black doctor , which his associate John Watson read at a meeting of the New York Medical and Surgical Society . (It acknowledged Smith was qualified , but would not admit him because of racial discrimination .) Soon after , Smith published an article in the New York Journal of Medicine , the first by a black doctor in the US .

He drew from his medical training to discredit popular ideas about differences among the races . In 1843 he gave a lecture series , Comparative Anatomy and Physiology of the Races , to demonstrate the failings of phrenology , which was a so called scientific practice of the time that was applied in a way to draw racist conclusions and attribute negative characteristics to ethnic Africans . He rejected the practice of homeopathy , an alternative to the scientific medicine being taught in universities . Although he had a successful medical career , he was not admitted to the American

Medical Association or local associations because of racial discrimination .

At Glasgow , Smith had been trained in the emerging science of statistics . He published numerous articles applying his statistical training . For example , he used statistics to refute the arguments of slave owners , who wrote that blacks were inferior and that slaves were better off than free blacks or white urban laborers . To do this , he drew up statistical tables of data from the census .

When John C. Calhoun , then US Secretary of State and former US Senator from South Carolina , claimed that freedom was bad for blacks , and that the 1840 U.S. Census showed that blacks in the North had high rates of insanity and mortality , Smith responded with a masterful paper . In " A Dissertation on the Influence of Climate on Longevity " (1846) , published in Hunt 's Merchants ' Magazine , Smith analyzed the census both to refute Calhoun 's conclusions and to show the correct way to analyze data . He showed that blacks in the North lived longer than slaves , attended church more , and were achieving scholastically at a rate similar to whites .

As Smith started publishing , his work was quickly accepted by newer scientific organizations : in 1852 Smith was invited to be a founding member of the New York Statistics Institute . In 1854 he was elected as a member by the American Geographical Society (founded in New York in 1851 by top scientists as well as wealthy amateurs interested in exploration) . The Society recognized him by giving him an award for one of his articles . He also joined the New @-@ York Historical Society .

Among numerous other works supporting abolitionism and dealing with issues related to race , Smith is well known for his introduction to Frederick Douglass ' second autobiography , *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) . It expressed the new independence in African @-@ American accounts of slavery , compared to earlier works , which had to seek approval for authentication from white abolitionists , as readers rejected some harsh accounts of conditions under slavery . Smith wrote :

... the worst of our institutions , in its worst aspect , cannot keep down energy , truthfulness , and earnest struggle for the right .

In 1859 he published an article using scientific findings and analysis to refute the former president Thomas Jefferson 's theories of race , as expressed in his well @-@ known *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) . Dr. Vanessa Northington Gamble , a medical doctor and historian at George Washington University , in 2010 noted , " As early as 1859 , Dr. McCune Smith said that race was not biological but was a social category . " He also commented on the positive ways that ethnic Africans would influence US culture and society , in music , dance , food , and other elements . His collected essays , speeches and letters have been published as *The Works of James McCune Smith : Black Intellectual and Abolitionist* (2006) , edited by John Stauffer .

= = = Later years = = =

In 1863 Smith was appointed as professor of anthropology at Wilberforce College , Ohio . It was founded in a collaboration between the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church) and the Methodist Church of Cincinnati as a college for students of color before the American Civil War . By 1860 , it had numerous mixed @-@ race students from the South , whose tuition was paid by their wealthy white planter fathers . The war caused the withdrawal of most southern students , threatening survival of the school . In 1863 the college was purchased by the AME Church and established as the first African American @-@ owned and operated college in the United States .

At the time , Smith was too ill to take the position . He died two years later on November 17 , 1865 of congestive heart failure on Long Island , New York at the age of 52 . This was nineteen days before ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States , which abolished slavery throughout the country . He was buried at Cypress Hills Cemetery , in Brooklyn . Smith was survived by his widow , Malvina , and five children .

In 1870 the Smiths were again all classified as white on the census . James Smith Jr. had married a white woman and had children . His siblings also would marry white spouses and have families . Because of trying to escape racial prejudice , it appeared that they did not pass on the stories about their father 's achievements , as later generations did not learn of them . It was not until the twenty @-@ first century that a connection was made again , and his descendants learned of some of their

African @-@ American ancestors .

= = Legacy and honors = =

Gradually Smith 's achievements were forgotten within the family , as his sons worked to escape racial prejudice in New York and did not discuss their African @-@ American ancestry .

= = Works = =

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