



'MISS ANNIE' SMITH AND HER COUSIN, DR. LOUIS SMITH MILES



SPECTACLES BELONGING TO LANDGRAVE THOMAS SMITH



DUTCH TILES FROM THE OLD 'MANSION' AT YEAMAN'S HALL

# THE LAST DESCENDANT OF AMERICAN ROYALTY

By Effie Leland Wilder

Photographed By Gene Evans

Miss Annie Miles Smith, 86, of Summerville is the last descendant of a man unusual in American history, in that he was considered a New World nobleman, with a title granted by the King of England.

If King Charles II's plan for an American nobility had continued, "Miss Annie" might now be the owner of 48,000 acres of Southern soil. This was the amount of land granted to her progenitor. An ancient document shows that Thomas Smith, "a person of singular merit, very serviceable by his great prudence and industry", was constituted a Landgrave of the Province of Carolina in 1691, and given four baronies of 12,000 acres each, with provision that the title and the four baronies should descend forever to his legal heirs.

Now, nearly three centuries later, there are numerous descendants of the distinguished landgrave, but "Miss Annie" is the last of the direct line to bear the name. She will be the last Smith to be buried in the family plot at Yeamans Hall.

**THE CHARACTER** of the New World in the late 1600's, with its diverse freedom-seeking settlers, was not favorable for rule by noblemen, and the landgrave system came to an end in 1719 when King George I purchased the lands of the eight Lords Proprietors for the sum of 50,000 pounds. Landgrave Thomas Smith had built a home on his Back River plantation, Medway, said to be the oldest brick house in Carolina, and he is buried there, with a tomb marked thus:

Here Lieth Ye Body Of Ye  
Right Honorable Thomas Smith  
Esq. One of Ye Landgraves  
Of Carolina Who Departed  
This Life Ye 16th Of Nov. 1694  
Governor Of The Province  
Of Carolina In Ye 46th Year  
Of His Age

The Second Landgrave Smith, Thomas's eldest son, acquired the plantation known as Yeamans Hall, with its large house built sometime prior to 1680 by Sir John Yeamans, a royal governor of the province. Thomas II lived out his life there, and his heirs resided there for nearly 200 years, long after the only "noble experiment"

ever attempted in America had been declared a failure, and the provincial titles had passed into history.

Miss Annie Smith has vivid memories of Yeamans Hall Plantation, having spent the first eight winters of her life there in "the mansions", as it was called. The family also had two summer homes, one on South Battery in Charleston, and one in Summerville.

It was in Summerville that she was born to Susan Boyle Smith and Thomas Henry Smith on June 19, 1878, and it was in Summerville that she happened to be staying when the earthquake of August, 1886, demolished the front walls of the Yeamans Hall house.

Her father had died two years before, and when a contractor gave her mother an estimate of \$50,000 for repairing the house, it was decided to abandon it and live year-around in Summerville.

Some years later Yeamans Hall was bought by a group of Northern businessmen as a private club, and the remains of the fine old house were torn down.

**MISS SMITH** remembers a three-mile avenue of cedars leading to the "mansion," with fields of oats on each side in which lambs grazed in the spring. She recalls many things about the handsome 16-room house: the Gobelin tapestries; the landscapes painted on the walls, still fresh after nearly two centuries; doorknobs of gold and mother-of-pearl in the guest chamber; tessellated floors; Dutch tiles in the fireplaces, particularly the ones in the nursery-schoolroom, which depicted Bible stories. It was in this room that "Miss Annie" was given her first schooling by an English governess.

There were fascinating remains of earlier days: a subterranean passage leading to the creek where escape boats were kept concealed in case of enemy attack; a deep well in the cellar for supplying a garrison with water in case of a siege; "Paul's Hole", a space between two walls where the family silver was hidden during two wars, and so called because a small slave named Paul had once hidden there when an Indian attack was threatened.

She remembers gay crowds of her parents' friends coming out from Charleston by boat for moonlight parties. She remembers innovations such as speaking tubes in all the rooms, and even a tube connected to the stable, by which horses could be ordered brought to the house for riding or driving.

**SEVERAL RELICS** of the original Landgrave Smith, formerly in the possession of Miss Smith, have been passed on by her to her second cousin and physician, Dr. Louis Smith Miles of Summerville, also a descendant of the early nobleman.

They include a crested silver cup, an official seal, a copy of the landgrave's commission as governor of Carolina, dated 1693 and signed by the Earl of Craven, a wine decanter used at the reception following the baptism of the second landgrave, two of the Dutch tiles from "the mansion," several pieces of china, a mortar and pestle used by the first landgrave in mixing his medications, and a remarkable pair of spectacles — probably one of the oldest pairs in the United States. Attached to the same frame as the magnifying lenses are green glass "shades" which are hinged so that they can be pushed aside for reading!

A portrait of the Second Landgrave Smith, painted by Theus and passed down through the family, was sold by Miss Smith to Mrs. Sidney Legendre and it now hangs on a wall at Medway, where he spent much of his young life.

And so a lady, now confined to bed and wheelchair and a circumscribed life, can at least turn her mind back to more gracious times, and can dream of the handed-down legends of a family with the distinction of having been American nobility. The experiment, in which two of her ancestors played leading roles, proved too un-American — even in those long-ago days — for success on this continent.