

**SMITH, John Cotton**, congressman and sixth governor of Connecticut (1813-18), was born at Sharon, Litchfield co., Conn., Feb. 12, 1765, descendant of Rev. Increase Mather; of Rev. Henry Smith, first minister of Wethersfield, and, counting both sides of the house, of five other clergymen. His father, Rev. Cotton Mather Smith, was pastor of the Congregational church at Sharon for fifty years, and in 1775-76 was chaplain of a Connecticut regiment which served at Ticonderoga and in Canada. The latter was married to Temperance, widow of Dr. Moses Gale, of Goshen, N. Y., and daughter of Rev. William Worthington, of that part of Saybrook, Conn., now called Westbrook. John Cotton Smith's ancestors were men and women of eminent virtues and of intellectual strength, and their best qualities were inherited by him. He was educated by his mother until he was six years of age; then began his classical studies, and at the age of fifteen entered Yale, where he was graduated in 1783. He studied law under John Canfield, of Sharon; after admission to the bar, in 1786, practiced in his native town, which he represented in the legislature in 1793, and again in 1796-1800. He was clerk of the house in 1799 and speaker in 1800. In October of the latter year he was elected to congress by the Federalists to fill a vacancy, and held the office for six years, serving as chairman of the committee on claims in 1802-06, and presiding over the committee of the whole in the discussion on the judiciary in 1801; under all circumstances showing himself a statesman of more than



*John Cotton Smith*

ordinary ability and an eloquent orator. "His prudence and wisdom," says Trumbull, "doubtless protracted for several years the dominion of the party with which his political life was identified." On leaving congress he returned to Sharon to practice and to engage in farming and literary pursuits. In 1808-09 he again served in the state legislature; in October, 1809, was renominated to the bench of the supreme court of Connecticut; but before opening the second term of this court he was, in 1810, called to fill the office of lieutenant-governor. On the death of Gov. Griswold, in October, 1812, he became acting governor, and then for four successive years was elected to that office. On the expiration of his term he withdrew from public life and devoted himself to the care of his large estate and to study. Gov. Smith contributed occasionally to scientific journals, and was a member of the Northern Society of Antiquarians at Copenhagen; also of the Connecticut and Massachusetts historical societies. He was president of the Litchfield County Foreign Missionary Society and of the Litchfield County Temperance Society; first president of the Connecticut State Bible Society; president of the American Bible Society in 1831-45 and of the American Board

Th Adler

Stearns

pp 26 & 67