

Ruth Smallwood

(- 1 Nov 1836)

Smallwood. Departed this life in this city on Wednesday morning last, Mrs. Ruth Smallwood. The friends of the family are invited to attend the funeral at her late residence this day at 11 o'clock a.m.

The National Intelligencer, November 11, 1836

It is due to the memory of the pious and amiable lady, whose death was announced in your paper of Thursday, to give a somewhat more extended obituary notice of her. Mrs. Smallwood was the relict of Samuel N. Smallwood, formerly Mayor of Washington. She was among the oldest female inhabitants of our city, in which she resided for upwards of thirty years, beloved and esteemed by all who knew her. Her disposition was so mild and gentle, and her temper so inoffensive and amiable, that she passed through life without making an enemy, or intentionally wounding the feelings of a single human being. "Her very failings leaned to virtue's side," and though she had her sorrows and afflictions (for who, in this vale of tears, can be exempt from them) she always bore them with pious resignation and yielded to the stroke of Providence with entire submission. Thus this excellent woman died as she had lived, a pattern of Christian virtue, and an example of moral purity, worthy of imitation.

The Evening Star, January 16, 1927

Great Changes in Southeast Washington Are Shown By Rambler

The will of Ruth Smallwood shows her feeling for her slaves and names bits of personal property--silver sugar bowl, etc.--which she thought a great deal of. Those things may have been left her by her parents. They may have been in the family for generations. They may have been associated with her early years as wife and mother. She was careful of them and bequeathed them to her children, Clara Smallwood and Mary Ellen Addison. Women understand how many memories may hang about a cream pitcher or a pair of sugar tongs.

The Rambler assumes that Ruth Smallwood was the widow of Samuel Nicholls Smallwood, lumber merchant and Eastern Branch wharf owner who died in 1824 and left an estate of large value. His widow, Ruth, and son, William A., were administrators. I have not found the will or the administration case of William, and I assume that he did not die in Washington, but I do not warrant that my search was complete. The will of Ruth shows that the wealth bequeathed by Samuel N. Smallwood to his widow and son decreased and nothing is extraordinary in that. It be an old story. Ruth's will was signed October 6, 1836, and offered to the court for proof November 8, 1836. The witness was D'Archy A. French. You will get more comfort from reading the will than reading my comment on it, so the will follows:

"Item--It is my will and request that my daughter Clara should if it be her wish shall sell and dispose of her house and lot on Eleventh street and purchase with the proceeds thereof the house and lot now in my possession on Seventh street, with the lot continuous thereto, that she may secure to herself a comfortable home and dwelling, and I desire and request that the rest of my children and heirs will consent to it.

"I give and bequeath to my daughter, Clara, one of my best beds, bedsteads, mattress and furniture attached to it, that I leave at my death, to be selected by herself, also my silver sugar dish, silver sugar tongs, silver cream jug, half dozen silver dining spoons, eight silver teaspoons, one pair of looking-

glasses to be chosen by herself, also my piano and claw-footed table, also my large Bible and my two trunks, one large and a small one.

"Item--I will and desire that my executor hereinafter named, as soon after my death as convenient will sell and dispose of my negro girl Harriet, now aged about 16 years, to some good master or mistress in the District of Columbia, and not to any one living outside the District, to serve as a slave the period of 10 years from the time of my death, and no longer, after which period I will the said negro girl Harriet to be free and set at liberty, being desirous to reward her for her fidelity to me, and I wish and desire my executor to apply the proceeds arising from the sale of negro Harriet for the term aforesaid to the payment, first of my funeral expenses and the balance to the payment of my just debts.

"Item--I will my negro woman Mima free from the time of my decease, and desire that she may be set at liberty immediately thereafter. I also will and desire that my old negro woman Lydia shall be free and set at liberty from the time of my death, and I will and desire that my negro woman Mima shall live with her, wait on her and take care of and treat kindly my said old faithful negro Lydia so long as she shall live.

"Item--It is my will and desire that my executor shall hire out somewhere in the country my negro man Robert and pay the proceeds of his hire regularly to my two daughters Mary Ellen Addison and Clara., the same to be divided equally between them.

"Item--I will and desire that my children will provide some small but comfortable house for my old faithful servant Lydia, to live in so long as she survives, and I will and desire my daughters, Mary Ellen Addison and Clara, to apply and appropriate so much of the funds arising from the hire of Robert as they may think necessary to the support of old Lydia.

"It is my will and desire that my beloved children and heirs will, after my decease, have the burial ground handsomely paved in as a token of respect and veneration."

John Addison, Jr. was named in the will as executor.

[Note: Mother of Rev. William A. Smallwood.]