

Lost in Training

Luther Gamewell Smith, Jr. of Kannapolis, North Carolina left Clemson College after his junior year. An English major, Smith enlisted in the Army and volunteered for the Air Corps.

As an Army private, Smith was assigned to Scott Field, Illinois, about 25 miles east of Saint Louis. The field was home to the Air Corps' Technical Training Command. Originally established after the United States' entry into World War I, Scott Field had served as home of the Army's Balloon and Airship School in the 1920s. With the passage of the Selective Service Act in 1940 and the anticipated build-up of the armed services, the Air Corps established its Radio School on the field that September.



With the establishment of the school, Scott Field's primary mission, which lasted throughout World War II, was to train skilled radio operators and maintainers. These young men were expected to serve as the "eyes and ears of the Army Air Forces."

August 16, 1941 was a Saturday. Perhaps he was on a weekend pass from his base, perhaps on a training mission, but that Saturday, the last of his life, Smith was in Bentonville, Arkansas. While there, he drowned.



Scott Field, Illinois in the 1940s

Smith's body was returned to Easley's First Presbyterian Church for a funeral service on the following Thursday. Smith is buried in the Pickens Chapel Cemetery in Anderson County.

Luther Gamewell Smith, Jr., was survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Luther G. Smith, Sr., two brothers and two sisters.

