Seba Smith Biography

Seba Smith

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Biography

Seba Smith (14 September 1792-28 July 1868), journalist and humorist, taught school around his home in Buckfield, Maine, before entering Bowdoin College in 1815. After he graduated in 1818, Smith taught briefly, travelled through New England and to England, and, upon his return in 1820, joined the staff of the Portland *Eastern Argus*. Smith became editor and part owner, married Elizabeth Oakes Prince, and settled down to an established family life. In 1826 he sold his share in the paper, only to start two other papers in 1829. One, the Portland *Courier* , carried his humorous letters by "Major Jack Downing of Downingville" after 1830 and brought him national attention. The Smiths lost their money in the panic of 1837 and moved to New York, where Smith contributed to and edited various newspapers and magazines until he retired to Long Island in 1860. Smith's *Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing of Downingville* (Boston: Lilly Wait, 1833) and *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate* (New York: Oaksmith, 1859) are considered among America's first political satires, examining the problems and squabbles of Jacksonian democracy, and are among the first portraits of the "Yankee type" in American literature. Smith also wrote' *Way Down East* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1854), a series of tales about New England life.