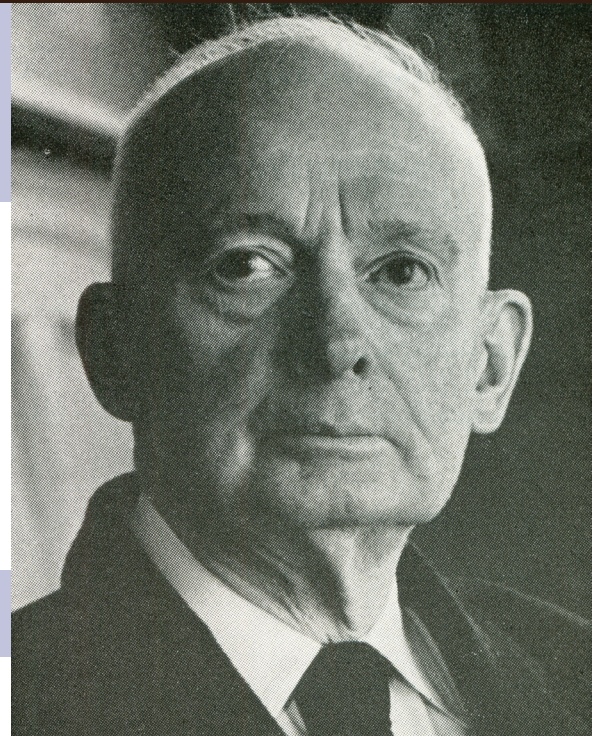




**Telling Our Stories**  
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## *Community Leader and Lay Member of Annual and General Conferences*

**1884-1972**

# Chester Allen Smith

A native of Peekskill, NY, Chester A. Smith was known for his perseverance, determination, and leadership skills. After retiring from a 54 year career as a court stenographer, he graduated from New York Law School at the age of 74!

A member of the First Methodist Church in Peekskill, Chester was active in the Epworth League and Sunday School from childhood and as an adult served on many church boards and committees, including serving as the church's Lay Member to Annual Conference for 32 years. He was a member and participant in 13 General Conferences, seven Jurisdictional Conferences, and the Uniting Conference of 1939, perhaps setting a record with his 48 years of service in this capacity.

Smith also served his hometown in many capacities. As early as the 1940s, Smith insisted that the Peekskill library board of trustees be changed to "represent the different races and creeds in the community." He received multiple awards for community building and beautification accomplishments, and was once called "the Robert Moses of Peekskill."

A stalwart conservative, Smith fought hard for every issue he believed served good moral purposes, including temperance. Not all agreed with him, but all respected his leadership and his dedication to his community, to his church, and most of all, to his God.

### *For Discussion*

- Smith garnered respect even from those who disagreed with him. Do you feel people have a harder time disagreeing respectfully today? Do you see this in your church? If so, what do you think can be done about it?
- Smith strongly supported the temperance movement. What issues do you feel alcohol consumption creates in society today?
- What are the elements of Holy Conferencing that help individuals with different views come together to seek solutions to problems? How does one find a path forward when there are very different visions?

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