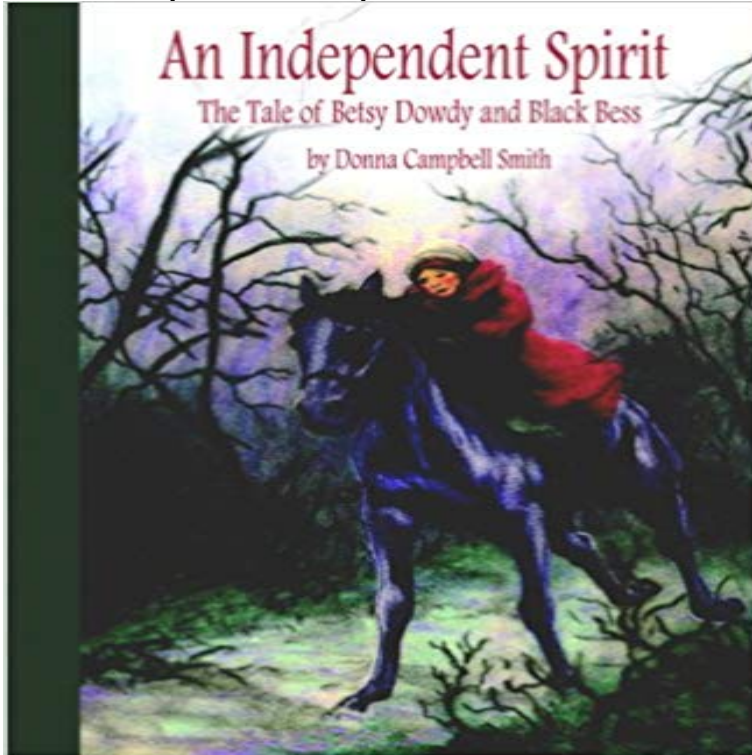


## An Independent Spirit - The Tale of Betsy Dowdy and Black Bess



Chapter Book - Recommended Reader Age - 10-12 to Adult In her historical fiction book, *An Independent Spirit: The Tale of Betsy Dowdy and Black Bess*, author Donna Campbell Smith recreates fourteen-year-old Betsy Dowdy's all-night ride for freedom during the American Revolutionary War and reminds young readers that one person's self-determination can change the course of history. Betsy and her parents live on Currituck Banks, an isolated community on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Betsy's mother is intent on sending her to the city of Edenton to learn proper etiquette and find a good husband, but Betsy has other ideas. She would much rather be riding her wild pony, Black Bess, and enjoying the independence she feels when she and Bess are galloping down the beach. At her family's annual oyster roast, Betsy hears folks talking about conflict in Boston between Britain's King George and the colonists. Betsy isn't worried, though, because Boston is far away from the Outer Banks. Soon after, Betsy's mother sends her to Edenton, to live with her Aunt Frances and learn how to behave like a lady. There, she is introduced to foxhunts, hoop skirts, Christmas balls, and promising young men. Meanwhile, the war is moving closer to home than Betsy could have ever imagined. When Betsy returns from Edenton, word comes that Virginia's governor, Loyalist Lord Dunmore and his British soldiers are moving towards Currituck Banks, burning houses and killing livestock. Suddenly, Betsy's family, her home, and her beloved Black Bess are in grave danger. Betsy decides she must do something. In a daring all-night ride, she and Black Bess race over fifty miles to warn Patriot General Skinner of the coming attack.

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