



Smithfield is an important historic property adjacent to the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. The manor house, constructed around 1774 on the frontier, is a premier example of early American architecture and is one of few such regional structures of that period to survive. It was the last home of Colonel William Preston, a noted surveyor and developer of western lands, who served as an important colonial and Revolutionary War leader. Preston named the 1,860-acre plantation “Smithfield” in honor of his wife, Susanna Smith. Today, the manor house is a museum that is interpreted and administered by a local group of volunteers.

In 1997 *The Smithfield Review* was founded with the purpose of helping to preserve the often neglected history of the region west of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and adjacent states. We seek articles about important personages and events; reports of archaeological discoveries; and analyses of the social, political, and architectural history of the region. Whenever possible and appropriate, the articles will incorporate letters, speeches, and other primary documents that convey to the reader a direct sense of the past.

A Note from the Editors

Many of our readers are accustomed to associating American history with leaders of a particular era or locality. An important and often neglected part of our history, however, involves people who were not well known. Studies of their lives often reveal characteristics and qualities that in their aggregate produced our society. Several articles this year examine various activities of such persons.

Our first article, "The Indian Captivity Narrative of Charles Johnston," describes the first-hand account of Johnston's harrowing experience with the Shawnee Indians in 1790 along the Ohio River. The author, John Long, also examines Johnston's narrative within the context of other stories of captivity on the American frontier in that era. Mr. Long, a senior lecturer from the history department of Roanoke College, is also the director of the Salem Museum and Historical Society.

During the Colonial period, and for many years after the birth of our country, public schools were rare, and those that did exist were considered to be for higher education. Early education was often provided by churches or by itinerate teachers. Many of these teachers were imported to provide elementary education for a family and perhaps a few neighboring families. Dr. Jim Glanville, a retired Virginia Tech chemistry professor, recently found an interesting document in the possession of Hubert Gilliam of Kingsport, Tennessee — a document that reveals an amusing story concerning such an arrangement. "To Refrain from Drinking Ardent Spirits: The Bet between Peter Byrns and Francis Preston" describes an unusual interaction between a teacher and his students.

The next article, by Jessica Wirgau, is entitled "'To Counterfeit the Soul': Portraiture at Smithfield." It investigates the artwork at Historic Smithfield within the context of American portraiture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and demonstrates the influence of British artists and culture. Mrs. Wirgau graduated from Duke University with a major in art history. She later received a mas-

ters degree in art history from the University of Virginia and is currently the museum coordinator for the Town of Blacksburg.

Women of nineteenth-century America are often overlooked in studies of that era. Their lives, however, provided the foundation that enabled their children to meet and overcome the challenges that were so prevalent in that troubled century. Zola Noble, the author of "An Ordinary Woman: Sarah A. McIntyre Greer of Saltville, Virginia," uses numerous old letters to demonstrate the influence that a group of women had on each other as they coped with difficult times in post-Civil War Southwest Virginia. Ms. Noble is an assistant professor of writing at Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana.

The final article, "Progress at Gunpoint," is a study of the labor wars in southern West Virginia in the early twentieth century. The author, Zack Fields, a recent graduate of the University of Virginia, describes how coal miners and their unions assertively engaged the coal mining companies in an effort to improve wages and living conditions, while the coal mining companies often retaliated with various forms of intimidation. These confrontations frequently erupted in violence with tragic consequences.

With this issue, we begin a new feature entitled "Brief Notes" immediately prior to our normal book review section.

The editors express their gratitude to Peter Wallenstein of the Virginia Tech history department, Mary Holliman of Pocahontas Press, and several anonymous reviewers for their considerable editorial assistance.

Hugh G. Campbell, Editor

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