



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

One of the greatest epics in human history is the formation and development of the United States of America. This volume of the *Smithfield Review* presents five diverse segments of that development during the formative years.

We begin with a description of parts of the infant nation as it appeared to an exiled prince of France. In “A Future French King Visits the Virginia Backcountry,” Sharon Watkins describes the interesting observations of young Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, as recorded in his travel diary. Sharon received her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a retired faculty member from the Department of History at Western Illinois University.

The Civil War has, on occasion, been viewed as the final stage of the American Revolution. A segment of social history from that final stage is provided by historian James Robertson. “A Floyd County Family in Wartime” tells a compelling story of the war’s impact on a family in rural Virginia. Civil War soldiers wrote many letters that survive, but these, written amidst the social disruption of warfare, also include those returned by his wife. The total collection reveals an engaging love story. Dr. Robertson, recently retired from Virginia Tech, now lives in eastern Virginia.

John Floyd was a key person in the frontier history of Virginia and Kentucky, and much has been written about him. In an effort to explore some questionable assertions about his life, David and James Mordy have done considerable research. That research has led them to some interesting aspects of naval warfare during the Revolutionary War which is presented in “The Phoenix Privateering Syndicate and Marine Captain John Floyd.” Both David Mordy and James Mordy are retired after careers in industry and law, respectively. The brothers are graduates of the University of Kansas and have served as officers in the United States Navy.

Jennie Hodge, a graduate of the University of Virginia and Hollins University, has been diligent in seeking information about Susanna Preston, wife of Col. William Preston. This research produced a few stories about Susanna that were handed down through later generations and are summarized here in “Spring’s Green Peas, Nocturnal Thieves, and Other

Family Lore About Susanna Smith Preston.” Although the accuracy of these stories cannot be verified, they do exhibit the high esteem that later generations felt for the matriarch of the large and influential Preston family – a family that played an unusually large role in the political affairs of Virginia and the United States prior to 1862.

Since his retirement from Virginia Tech’s chemistry department, Jim Glanville has undertaken a comprehensive study of the history of Southwest Virginia. In his latest article for the *Smithfield Review*, which carries the descriptive title “Southwest Virginia: A Thoroughfare of Nation Building,” Jim constructs a summary review of the crucial importance of the primary transportation route through Southwest Virginia in the early years of our nation’s development.

As the scope of the *Smithfield Review* has grown over the years, we have a growing number of benefactors to acknowledge as essential to our operation. A large number of authors, reviewers, editors, financial donors, and Management Board members all give freely of considerable time and money to make our publication possible. We are truly grateful! Special gratitude is expressed to Peter Wallenstein and the Virginia Tech Department of History.

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