



A Note from the Editors

Smithfield is an historic property adjacent to the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. The manor house, constructed around 1774 on the early frontier, is a premier example of early American architecture and is one of few such structures of that period to survive in the region. 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. Smithfield served as a land office involving property as far west as Kentucky. It was a home for the distinguished Preston family and a military base during the tumultuous Revolutionary War period. Today, along with Jamestown and other historic properties, Smithfield is owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) and is operated as a museum that is open to the public. A local group of dedicated volunteers administers and interprets the property.

The Smithfield Review is the culmination of a long-held desire by some APVA members associated with Smithfield to provide a journal in which the important but often neglected history of the region becomes available to the general public in a way that is both interesting and enlightening. *The Smithfield Review* will focus on the history of the area west of the Blue Ridge mountains in Virginia and adjacent states. Articles will include studies of important personages and events, reports of archaeological discoveries, and analyses of the social, political, economic, 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.

This inaugural issue consists of five articles that carry out our editorial mission. "Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life" was written a century and a half ago by Letitia Preston Floyd, the daughter of Col. William Preston and a childhood resident of Smithfield, who

later became the wife of Dr. John Floyd, a governor of Virginia. Her reminiscences include charming descriptions of the life and personalities of Smithfield's occupants and visitors alongside horrific tales of Indian fighting. The text of the document is introduced and transcribed by Wirt Wills, the director of the Montgomery County branch of the APVA, which supervises the Smithfield property, and June Stubbs, chair of the Accessions Committee.

In "Newport, Virginia — A Crossroads Village," longtime resident Douglas Martin, the Benefits Manager at Virginia Tech, and his son Perry, a Virginia Tech student, tell the lively history of Newport, situated across the mountain from Blacksburg alongside a picturesque creek that is spanned by three of Virginia's last covered bridges.

In "Our Native Stone: Architecture and Identity at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1872-1922," Daniel Pezzoni, architectural historian and preservation consultant based in Roanoke, Virginia, traces the development of his alma mater's campus, with its sweeping oval Drill Field and Gothic buildings patterned after those of the great medieval universities — all part of what the late architect J. Ambler Johnston called the "effort to lift VPI out of the appearance of a trade school cow college."

"The Coal Mining Way of Life in Virginia's New River Valley" by Mary La Lone, Radford University anthropologist, gives a fascinating account of the life of New River Valley coal miners and their families, involved in what was once the region's major non-agricultural industry. Adapted from the recently published *Appalachian Coal Mining Memories: Life in the Coal Fields of Virginia's New River Valley*, the article is based on interviews with surviving miners and their wives and children, by a Radford University research team.

Finally, in "William Ballard Preston and the Politics of Slavery" by Virginia Tech History Professor Peter Wallenstein, we share in the ordeal of one man's changing attitudes toward the evil institution of slavery, as expressed in his own words and speeches over a thirty-year period. Preston, the grandson of Col. William Preston, was active in state and national politics prior to the Civil War.

Hugh G. Campbell, Editor
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