

John Floyd, Kentucky Hero, and Three Generations of Floyds and Prestons of Virginia

Introduction by Wirt H. Wills

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In 1997 *The Smithfield Review* published a literal transcription of a manuscript copy (1848) of the first part of an 1843 letter from Letitia Preston Floyd to her son Benjamin Rush Floyd.¹ That letter, as published in the *Richmond Standard* in 1880, has served as a primary source for much of the story of Col. William Preston, her father.² The second part of the letter had to do with the life of her husband's father, Col. John Floyd. Amherst County* native James John Floyd was the first of three generations of John Floyds to play significant roles in Virginia history. Dr. John Floyd, his son by his wife Jane Buchanan Floyd, was the second; the third was John Buchanan Floyd, son of the second John Floyd. Both the second and third John Floyds served as Governors of Virginia, in 1830–34 and 1849–52, respectively.

Col. James John Floyd had a brief and turbulent life from 1750 to 1783, perhaps equal in excitement, danger, romance, and accomplishment to that of any man of action in American history. It is even more remarkable when one considers the brevity of his life. The second and third John Floyds, commanding their own spots in Virginia history as Governors of the Commonwealth, were leaders of their times and are better known in Virginia history than is Col. John Floyd.³ Col. Floyd's recognized place in history is in Kentucky, where he is accorded high honor as one of their most celebrated early heroes.⁴ However, his place in Virginia history is undeservedly neglected, especially since Kentucky was part of Virginia during his entire lifetime. The second part of Letitia Preston Floyd's letter to her son Benjamin Rush Floyd appeared in an 1880 newspaper account in the *Richmond Standard*. Two typed versions of the letter are currently housed in the Special Collections of the

* Until 1761 the area where James John Floyd was born was a part of Albemarle County.

Virginia Tech library, one of which includes endnotes and follows closely the newspaper version. The other copy appears to have been taken from what we now believe was the original letter. These versions vary slightly but not significantly in the story they tell. We have recently acquired what appears to be a facsimile of the original letter as written by Mrs. Floyd and signed Latitia Floyd (note the spelling of her first name).⁵ There is a section of about two pages in the original letter and in both of the Virginia Tech copies which is not included in the Cochran document published by us in the first number of *The Smithfield Review*. These pages precede the Floyd story as found in all copies we have seen. The omitted pages relate to the family of a distant relative of William Preston, John Preston of Washington County, Virginia, who married William Preston's youngest child, Margaret Brown (Preston) Preston. The details of that family may be found in Dorman.⁶ What is reproduced here are Mrs. Floyd's recollections of the life of Col. Floyd, as transcribed from the facsimile of the original. For more recent scholarly biographies, refer to the papers by Tapp⁷ and by Cartlidge.⁸ The latter presents a more thorough investigation of some of the anecdotal accounts of Col. Floyd's extraordinary life and adventures, including information not found in previous accounts.

Mrs. Floyd's account of Col. Floyd's adventures provides the reader with a chronicle of frontier life and Revolutionary War activities on the outer edges of the American colonies, spanning two continents and several cultures, from the Kentucky wilderness to Williamsburg to England and the French court.

Col. Floyd met his early death at the hands of the Indians in 1783. Not only did he die in Kentucky in an encounter with Indians, but so did several members of his generation of Floyds. His brothers Robert, Charles, and Isham went with him to Kentucky in 1779, and Robert and Isham joined him in death at the hands of Indians. Also accompanying him were his sisters Jemima and Abadiah and their husbands. Both sisters and their husbands were believed killed by Indians, as was the husband of a third sister.⁹ Mrs. Floyd stated that "Col. John Floyd, his brother Isham, his brothers-in-law Le Master, Sturgis, Pryor, Joseph Drake, William Buchanan, and John Buchanan were all killed during the Revolutionary War."¹⁰ By any accounting, the Floyds gave full measure to their country. In the next generation, Col. Floyd's nephew, Charles Floyd, gave his life during the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804.¹¹ Continuing the then-established tradition of western involvement, Col. Floyd's son Dr. John Floyd first proposed in 1821 the territorial organization of the Oregon Territory and continued to promote the idea from his seat in Congress,

where he also voted for the final version of the Missouri Compromise as a means of promoting western development before he became a states right advocate.¹²

Returning to the story of Col. John Floyd, although not as exciting as his adventures at sea and abroad and certainly not as hazardous as his dangerous and ultimately fatal encounters on the frontier, his civilian accomplishments enhanced his stature as a Kentucky hero and a Virginia contributor managing the expansion of the western frontier. Some public service aspects of his life which contributed to his stature as a significant presence in early Kentucky history include his service as one of five members of the Quarter Court in Kentucky County in 1777,¹³ as founder of St. Asaphs,¹⁴ as one of the original trustees of the City of Louisville in 1780,¹⁵ and as one of three original justices of the first session of the Court of the District of Kentucky in 1783.¹⁶ He was appointed County Lieutenant of Jefferson County in 1781¹⁷ and in 1783, not long before his death, Chief Justice of the Kentucky District Court.¹⁸

When, in 1770, twenty-year-old John Floyd arrived at Greenfield, Col. William Preston's home in Botetourt County, bearing recommendations from Col. William Cabell of Amherst County to Col. Preston, Surveyor of Botetourt County, a relationship began between the two families which was to last for at least three generations of Prestons and Floyds. John Floyd started the relationship when he married Jane Buchanan in 1778. Jane Buchanan, ward and young cousin of William Preston, was the daughter of John Buchanan and Peggy Patton, William Preston's mother's sister.¹⁹

Marriage between cousins was fairly common in early Virginia and routinely occurred in these two families. The following relationships are recorded in Dorman.²⁰ The son of John Floyd and Jane Buchanan, Dr. John Floyd, then married his second cousin, Letitia Preston, the author of the following letter, and their son, John Buchanan Floyd, married his first cousin, Sarah Buchanan Preston, daughter of Francis Smith Preston and Sarah Buchanan Campbell. Francis S. Preston and Letitia Preston Floyd were siblings, children of Col. William and Susanna Smith Preston. There were no children from this marriage of John B. Floyd and Sarah Preston, but they adopted the orphaned Eliza Mary Johnston, cousin to both of them, who was the daughter of John Preston of Greenfield, a brother of Letitia Preston Floyd and Francis S. Preston. As an example of the Preston family practice of marrying within the family, five of fifteen children of Francis S. Preston and Sarah Buchanan Campbell married their cousins.²¹ Consanguinity became the rule in the clan.

The story of the Floyds and the Prestons is a story of two families united by blood, common interests, and public service accomplishments perhaps unparalleled in American history. Col. John Floyd stands as a giant among a company of giants. The following is the continuing chronicle of Letitia Preston Floyd's view of her father and her father-in-law, the second part of her letter to her son, literally transcribed, describing the extraordinary life of Col. John Floyd.²²

I will now give you an account of your Grandfather Floyds Family. Early in the last Century his ancestors emigrated from Wales, settled on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Mr. William Floyd, the Father of Col. John Floyd, had two brothers, one named John who went North, and whose family (if he ever had one) is lost sight of. Charles, the youngest son went to Georgia and is the Ancestor of Genl. John Floyd of Darien in that State. William Floyd left the Eastern Shore and went up the Country as far as Amherst County, which was then a very wild region. He met with a Family by the name of Davis, whose ancestors had come from Wales. They had traded with the Catawba Indians, and got much property in that way. The Father of Robert Davis had married a half-breed indian Girl. This Robert Davis was the Father of Miss Abidiah Davis, whom Mr. William Floyd married. Davis owned many of the rich lands of Amherst. His other daughters married a Mr. Venable, and Genl. Evan Shelby of Maryland. His oldest son Robert Davis emigrated even at that early day to Natchez, where many of his descendants live. John Floyd, the oldest son of William Floyd and Abidiah Davis, his wife, was born in 1751 Amherst County, Virginia. At the age of eighteen he married a Miss Burfoot. In twelve months after their Marriage Mrs. Floyd died, leaving a daughter a few days old. The mother of Mrs. Floyd took charge of the child. Shortly afterwards Col. Floyd came to Botetourt and engaged in the business of teaching school and writing in the Surveyors office — he remained at Col. Prestons until the year 1773. Whilst at Smithfield his duties were arduous. Whenever the business of the Surveyors Office did not require his personal attention he rode as deputy Sheriff with Col. Daniel Trigg, both being employed by Col. William Christian the High Sheriff. In the year 1775, Col. Floyd went to Kentucky, where he made many surveys of all the best Lands on Elk horn Creek, many in Clark

County, in Woodford County, Shelby County, and Jefferson County. He returned to Smithfield after unparalleled sufferings. The Declaration of Independence had been made at this time. Dr. Thomas Walker, Edmund Pendleton, Col. Preston and one or two other gentlemen purchased a schooner, had it fitted up for a privateer, and gave the command to Col. Floyd. I remember to have read a Letter from Col. Floyd to my Father, dated "On board the Privateer Phonix." He sailed to the West Indies, obtained a very rich prize. Amongst the articles on board the Merchantman, was a very fine suit of Wedding clothes for a Lady. Col. Floyd was at that time engaged to Miss Jane Buchannan to be married. He thought his Fortune was made in the rich Cargo he had taken. On his return whilst nearly in sight of the Capes of Virginia he was overhauled by a British Vessel of War, captured, taken to England, put in Irons, and imprisoned. Whether it was in London or on the Coast of England I do not recollect. Whilst he was there Col. Radford was brought to the same Prison. They were nearly a year confined. The jailer had a Daughter to whom Col. Floyd appealed so successfully that she obtained the Keys and let him out. Col. Radford told me when Floyd left them, all the prisoners shed tears, so great a favorite had he made himself. Floyd begged his way to Dover, where he found a Clergyman who was in the habit of concealing all American fugitives and procuring a passage for them to France. It was in the season of the Vintage. The French gave him Grapes, and sometimes bread. In this way he got to Paris, applied to Dr. Franklin, who furnished him with money, and instructions to return to the United States. Whilst in Paris Col. Floyd was attacked with the smallpox which nearly cost him his life. During his sojourn, he obtained his wedding Clothes, a rich and beautiful pair of brilliant shoe buckles for his intended Bride, a Scarlet Coat for himself. No intelligence of the Privateer or its crew had reached the United States. The inference was that all was at the bottom of the Sea. A year after Col. Robert Sawyers a distant kinsman of Miss Buchannan, an officer in the Army and a rich man, addressed the young Lady. Sawyers had requested her to walk with him in the garden to which she consented, and whilst there agreed to marry him. In an hour thereafter Col. Floyd arrived at Smithfield much to the surprise and joy of his Friends. Miss Buchannans last engagement was immediately cancelled, and in the month of November 1778, she married Col. Floyd. Soon afterwards they went to Johns Creek and settled there. Col. Floyds Father and Family had left Amherst and were living on Johns Creek. He remained a year there, and then determined to move to

Kentucky. By this time their eldest son William Preston Floyd was born. In the month of October 1779, Col. Floyd, his brothers Robert, Charles and Isham, with his brothers in law Le Master and Sturgis, husbands of his sisters Jemima and Abadia, went with them. There were also two single sisters, one married a Mr. Pryor, the other a Mr. Alexander. The two oldest sisters, Mrs. Powell of Lynchburg and Mrs. Tuley remained in Virginia, when the latter moved to Kentucky the Autumn after her brothers death. Col. Floyd went to his fine Estate on Beargrass Creek, six miles from Louisville. He commenced building a Fort, got the houses completed in a short time, and a good Stockade made. The place was called Floyds Station. As soon as his Family was secure, he commenced organizing the County. Mr. John Howard, Col. Robert Todd, I think Benjamin Sebastian, and perhaps Judge Muter, and Judge Saml. McDowell, endeavored to arrange or enact laws for the better regulation of the people. When they convened to do so, Floyd made an address to them saying, "he felt he had placed his foot upon the Threshold of an Empire." This expression was looked upon as the boast of an ardent tempered man. Time has proved that it was prophetic. Much unity existed amongst the first settlers of Kentucky. Every one sought to bring to them some agreeable Friend whose Fortunes might be advanced by the opening prospects of that rich country. In accordance with this feeling Col. Floyd invited Mr. John Brown of Rockbridge, who had completed his Collegiate Studies at Dickenson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I forget who was Mr. Browns preceptor in the Study of Law. A very cordial friendship ensued. Brown was a sensible well poised man, of great application, consequently successful. Col. Floyd was frequently engaged in skirmishes with the Indians. Going one day to Louisville he encountered a huge Indian within half a mile of his Fort, killed him, took all his ornaments of medals, brooches, & Rifle. The Indian had silver enough in his ornaments to make a dozen of table spoons. Some little time after this matter Floyd rallied a company of eighteen or nineteen men, went about ten miles from his Fort, met a company of Indians. I think sixteen in number. The attack was made by Floyd. They fought for several hours, and there was fourteen of the Whites killed, and thirteen of the Indians. Floyd who was wounded in the foot & made his escape through the generosity of Mr. Wells who dismounted from his horse and gave him to Floyd. In the spring of 1801 I passed by the battle ground. Governor Madison was my escort. He showed me a large beech tree with the names of the fourteen soldiers carved on it, but it had so grown out, that few of the

names could be read. The bodies of the Whites and Indians were collected, placed in a sink hole near the field of battle, and covered with stones and limbs of trees— This encountre took place on a fork of Salt River, which has ever since been called “Floyds Fork” of Salt River. What is the date of this incident I do not recollect. I think it was in 1782.+ You will find a statement of it in Mr. Humphrey Marshalls History of Kentucky. General George Rogers Clarke was in Jefferson County about this time. He was commissioned by the State of Virginia to raise troops for the defence of Kentucky. The constant depredations of the Indians kept every man under arms. The Indians were instigated by the British Governor Hamilton, to destroy the Whites finding they would not be driven out. He made a proposition to Clarke and Floyd, if they would give up the Country to the British, they should have as much boundary of Land on the west bank of the Ohio as they might wish, and any title under that of Duke. Each gentleman had received the proposition at the same time but was afraid to divulge it. Floyd having less caution than Clarke, communicated the fact to Clarke. They agreed to keep it concealed from the Troops, who were too famished and discontented, that if they had known how, they would have gone to any help to be fed and saved from the tomahawk of the ruthless Savages. This incident was communicated to Mr. Charles Fenton Mercer upwards of thirty years ago by Mrs. Croghan, the sister of General Clarke, and mother of Colonel George C. Croghan, of Sandusky memory. Mrs. Breckinridge had at the same time corroborated the fact. In 1782 Mrs. Floyd gave birth to a son that her husband named George Rogers Clarke, after his Friend and fellow Soldier. About this time Isham Floyd was killed on the west bank of the Ohio. The Indians scalped him, cut off his ears, fingers and toes, after torturing him for three days. They cut out his heart and threw it to their Dogs — Colonel Floyd had invited Mr. William Breckinridge and his step-brother, Mr. Alexander Breckinridge, to make his house their home, in the year 1783. During the winter they assisted in writing in the Surveyors Office, and surveying many of the fine Lands Floyd located in now Galatin County for Colonel Preston & Mr. Howard. There were six thousand acres in one body on the banks of the Ohio for Mr., or rather Mrs. Howard. These lands with all their great appreciation mainly fell into the hands of Mr. Robert Wickliffe, the husband of Miss Margaret Howard. The Land on which a part of the City of Louisville and Lexington stand, was located and surveyed by Col. Floyd for Col. Preston. Likewise, the land in Woodford County on which Mr. Nathaniel Hart resides, con-

taining two thousand acres, and upwards. Mr. Joseph Drake, the husband of Miss Margaret Buchannan, her brother William, and sister Anne, settled in Kentucky. All were sustained by Floyds princely generosity. He never received the gratuity of one cent for all his personal trouble. How much wealth he procured for Others! Mr. Alexander Breckinridge and his brother Robert, were the sons of Col. Robert Breckinridge by his first wife Miss Poage, of Augusta County. After his marriage with Miss Lettice Preston, much disagreement existed between the children and step-mother. Col. Preston to relieve his sister, proposed to Col. Breckinridge to apprentice his sons to Mr. Francis Smith, the brother-in-law of Col. Preston, to learn the Carpenters trade. The proposal was assented to by Breckinridge. The lads were sent to Hanover County and soon became excellent workmen. After their apprenticeship was over Col. Preston employed them to build Smithfield house. This was done so well, the first roof lasted forty years, it being painted. When the covering and weather boarding was done both the young men decided to enter the Revolutionary Army. Alexander got an Ensigns commission, and Robert enlisted as a Sergeant. The latter served in the South and was taken prisoner in Charleston. When peace was concluded Colonel Floyd invited them to Kentucky to promote their fortunes — On the 12 of April 1783, Col. Floyd his brother, Charles Floyd and Alexander Breckinridge were going to Salt River about twenty miles from Floyds Station. Floyd wore a Scarlet Coat. On their return a party of Indians attacked them, shot Floyd through the arm, the ball entered the body. Floyd reeled on his horse, which his brother observing, dismounted from his, jumped on his brothers caught him round the body and rode off in full speed, to a house about five miles distant. By this time Col. Floyd was so exhausted from the loss of blood that he appeared to be dying. Nevertheless he lived that night, talked much to his brother, expressed unmitigated sorrow for his young wife, the unborn infant, and his two little sons. He desired to be buried at his Station on an eminence he had chosen for a Grave yard. All this was fulfilled — On the 26th day of April Mrs. Floyd gave birth to a son, whom she named John after his Father — Col. Floyd had bequeathed his wife the beautiful Estate he lived on, also a childs part in all his Lands (seventy-five thousand acres of which he owned in Shelby County) made her Executrix and his Friend Col. Pope Executor. He gave his Daughter Miss Mourning Floyd a fine estate on Beargrass, his eldest son William P. Floyd a superior tract of land on Bear grass called the Dutch Station. George Floyds Estate was in

Fayette and Clarke Counties, one thousand acres was bequeathed to his youngest son in Oldham County. Half the land was lost by an older Entry. In the course of the year 1783, William P. Floyd died of smallpox. His lands accrued to his brother George, in right of primogeniture. Soon after Col. Floyds death Captain Alexander Breckinridge obtained the Surveyors place in Jefferson County — One year only had elapsed, when, three brothers of the Breckinridges made suit for the hand of the beautiful, rich, relict of Col. Floyd — Alexander, Robert and William. The preference was given to Robert, an engagement took place. Robert went to Virginia to settle some business he had there, failed to write, or at least his letters never reached Mrs. Floyd. Meanwhile Capt. Breckinridge urged his suit, was successful, and became the husband of Mrs. Floyd. This union was not a happy one, Capt. Breckinridge had contracted habits of intemperance whilst in the Army. He was a kind tempered man, and always treated his step sons with the same affection he bestowed on his own children. There were six sons from this marriage. Four lived to manhood. The oldest son Mr. James D. Breckinridge is yet living — he was educated at Williamsburg. The sons of Col. Floyd had been sent to the neighborhood school. In the year 1796 Mr. John Brown proposed to take her son John Floyd and place him at Dickinson College. Mr. Brown was in Congress which at that time met in Philadelphia. An arrangement was made with Robert Breckinridge the Guardian of the Floyds, to pay the cost of John Floyds education by supplying and paying some workmen who were building a very large house in Frankfort for Mr. Brown, who promised to advance the money for young Floyd at College. Robert Breckinridge failed to pay the workmen. Brown ceased his advances and the young student was left to shift for himself. In this state of destitution, he was induced by the suggestion of Dr. Pendergrast, to return to Kentucky and such was his situation that he was obliged to borrow a pair of pantaloons from a boatman! Nevertheless through the whole of Governor Floyds life he always felt grateful to Mr. Brown for removing him out of the reach of his Guardian. That Guardian disposed of all the Shelby Lands to Colonels Lynch & Blanton for the sum of sixteen thousand dollars!! Mrs. Breckinridge had given all her Estate in Trust to Genl. Robert Breckinridge, for the benefit of her husband. In the month of February 1801, Capt. Breckinridge died, at the house of Mr. John Breckinridge in Fayette County. The entire arrangements of the family devolved on Genl. Breckinridge. Young Floyd returned to Carlille, pursued his studies, which were arrested by a violent illness, which so impaired his health

that his brother George determined to bring him Home. This happened in 1802. Genl. Breckinridge proposed to John Floyd to study medicine with Dr. Richard Ferguson of Louisville. This Floyd consented to, being yet in the hands of his Guardian. In the May of 1804, Mr. Floyd was married. He went to the University of Pennsylvania in the month of October, pursued his medical studies. In the October of 1805, he returned to Philadelphia. In the month of April 1806, he graduated as Doctor of Medicine. Matters had taken such a turn in Kentucky by this time, Dr. Floyd determined to settle in Virginia. George Floyd had married Miss Maupin, the daughter of Col. Gabriel Maupin of Williamsburg. She died in the June of 1807. This event determined George Floyd to enter the Army of the United States. During this year young Mr. Robert Breckinridge was sent to Williamsburg. By this time Genl. Robert Breckinridge had amassed great wealth. He sold the land he had obtained near Floyds Station (then known by the name of Woodville) for twenty-five thousand dollars. He built a good house on it, and occasionally lived at it. On the evening of the 13th of May 1811, some young ladies, the daughters of Doctor Grant who resided at the house formerly owned by Genl. Breckinridge, came to Woodville and spent it, with Mrs. Breckinridge. After supper they returned home. There was no white person at Woodville but Genl. Breckinridge. About midnight he said he heard an unusual noise in Mrs. Breckinridges room. He went to the Kitchen waked the servants, got a candle, went into the room and found her in convulsions. Next morning he sent to Louisville for a Physician, and Col. George Floyd who was living there at that time. When Col. Floyd arrived she was speechless and died that evening. No clue has ever been furnished for this sudden and unaccountable death. Mrs. Breckinridge had always desired that Col. John Floyds wedding Coat, and the scarlet one he was killed in (both of which she had carefully preserved) should be put into her Coffin. This was done by Mrs. Beale the sister of Miss Maupin. Mrs. Breckinridge was buried near the grave of Col. Floyd. There is a plain stone placed over the remains of Col. Floyd, without any inscription. There is no portrait of him. Col. Floyd was six feet high, somewhat slender, formed symmetrically, his complexion dark, brilliant black eyes, very black straight hair, fine white teeth. He was remarkable for his great beauty, generosity of temper, kindness of heart, and undaunted courage. There was in my Fathers possession a great number of letters from Col. Floyd giving details of nearly all the striking incidents of the early settlements in Kentucky. Col.

Prestons papers fell into the hands of his eldest son and Executor, Genl. John Preston. A family arrangement had been made, that all the undevised Lands belonging to Col. Wm. Preston should be divided amongst his Children. Mr. Nathaniel Hart, and Major Wm. Preston were made Agents for the Kentucky interests. Genl. Preston put all Col. Floyds letters into Mr. Harts hands. Doctor Floyd had often expressed a wish to obtain these letters for the purpose at some future day, to write a History of the early times of his native State. For some reason of Genl. Prestons they were withheld. Mrs. Susanna Radford of Greenfield, Botetourt County, has all the Letters and Papers that are extant belonging to her Grandfather, Col. William Preston. Colonel George Floyd continued in the Army. He married a second time. The young Lady was Miss Sally Fountain of Louisville. At the battle of Tippacano Col. Floyd manifested the same undaunted courage his ancestors had been conspicuous for. He was perfectly versed in Indian warfare, expressed to Genl. Harrison the day before the battle, "that the movements of the Indians augured some treachery." However no heed was given to the expression. The whole Army lay down to sleep on the night of the attack. Floyd was in his Tent when the war whoop was heard he jumped up, seized his sword, and at the door of the Tent cut down an Indian who was succeeded by a warrior with an uplifted Tomahawk. Floyd seized it, struck the Indian with it, killed him. All this was done in the Colonels Shirt-tails because he had not time to put on his pantaloons. When Floyd returned to Louisville all the surviving Friends of his Father met him with great cordiality. In the official Report of the battle of Tippacano Col. Floyd thought himself overlooked. He retired from the service. In the June of 1823 he died at Woodville and was buried near his Father. There is a tombstone placed over him by his widow. He left three children. John G. Floyd the son of his first wife, who was a Cadet at West Point. From his fine attainments whilst there, he was made Principal Engineer to the State of Indiana. He resides at Terre Haut in that State. He married a Miss Hager, formerly of Baltimore. In 1823 the Breckinridges became the proprietors of Woodville. General Robert Breckinridge gave it to his Nephew, Captain Henry Breckinridge inherited it after his death. I have since heard that Mrs. Cowan, their Grandmother, is the present proprietor. General Robert Breckinridge gave his great Estate to his grand niece, the daughter of Mrs. James D. Breckinridge. Col. John Floyd, his brother Isham, his brothers-in-law Le Master, Sturgis, Pryor, Joseph Drake, William Buchanan, and John Buchanan were all killed during the Revolu-

tionary War. From the year 1755 to the battle of New Orleans, your Paternal Ancestors unsheathed the sword and poured out their blood for the Country. The “last of the Mohicans” you will remember in your grand-uncle Nathaniel Floyd, whose old age did not deter him from service at New Orleans. You recollect the utter destitution of that old Age! I will add a Fact. In all this service given, not one cent of Public money was ever received by any individual of the whole race, except their daily compensation. I have done. My dear Son — May this faithful History teach you to look more to Individual Interest than ever your Ancestors have.

Should you transcribe this you will find many errors to correct from feeble hand and imperfect vision.

Ever your Affectionate Mother,
Latitia Floyd

Capt. John Buchannan was killed at the battle of Saratoga and William Buchannan at the siege of Boonsborough.

Endnotes

1. Letitia Preston Floyd, “Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life,” Blacksburg, Virginia: *Smithfield Review*, 1 (1997): 1–16.
2. Letitia Preston Floyd, *Incidents of Border Life in Virginia*. Letter from Mrs. Floyd to her son Benjamin Rush Floyd published in the *Richmond Standard*, June 5, 19, 26, and July 3, 1880. This version was published by R. A. Brock with endnotes.
3. The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College, June 1918, 5: 5–117; *Life of John Floyd* 119–233; *Diary of John Floyd*; and N. J. Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies of the Virginia-Kentucky Floyd Families* (Baltimore, Maryland: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1912).
4. Hambleton Tapp, *Colonel John Floyd, Kentucky Pioneer*, Louisville, Kentucky: *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 15 (January, 1941): 1–24; Anna M. Cartlidge, *Colonel John Floyd: Reluctant Adventurer* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Register Kentucky Historical Society, 1968), vol. 66, pp. 317–66.
5. We are indebted to Professor Thomas Costa of Clinch Valley College, Wise, Virginia, for obtaining this copy from the Special Collections of Clinch Valley College Library, to the Library of Clinch Valley College, and to Mrs. Gayle Cooper of Special Collections at the University of Virginia Library for alerting us to the possibility that the original letter might be found at Clinch Valley College.
6. John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville, Kentucky: The Filson Club, Inc., 1982).
7. Tapp, see note 4.
8. Cartlidge, see note 4.
9. N. J. Floyd, see note 3.

10. Quotation from the letter published hereinafter.
11. Floyd, see note 3.
12. Branch Papers, see note 3.
13. George Morgan Chinn, *Kentucky Settlement and Statehood, 1750–1800* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Historical Society, 1975), p. 145
14. *Ibid.*, 153.
15. See Cartlidge, p. 356.
16. See Tapp, pp. 20–21.
17. See Tapp, p. 15.
18. Hazel Dickens Garcia, *Notes on Kentucky Costs, 1786–1792* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Register Kentucky Historical Society, 1979), vol. 77: 186–200.
19. Dorman, see note 6.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. We have attempted to follow faithfully the spelling and punctuation of the original handwritten, signed letter. The original letter, if our facsimile is that of the original as it appears to be, does not have in it a mysterious description of an incident which is described in both typescript versions we have seen. It appears to be a later addition as a quotation from a book. The incident described is a raid led by Floyd on an Indian encampment. Considering that in the typed copy which most closely follows the original the incident precedes the statement “You will find a statement of it in Mr. Humphrey Marshall’s History of Kentucky” and follows the same quotation in the Richmond Standard version, it is not possible to be sure whether or not Mrs. Floyd was referring to the incident as described. The description of the raid consists of about eleven typed lines and is omitted from the text which follows because it does not appear in the facsimile of the original letter. We include it in this endnote for your edification.

In that year Col. Floyd had learned a party of thirty Indians had assembled to cross the Ohio and destroy the settlements on Bear Grass during the night. Floyd forthwith sent a runner, collected all the men the neighborhood could furnish, twenty in number, crossed the River above the Falls, marched to the encampment of the Indians, who were asleep, commenced the work of death, and only three Indians escaped. Two of Floyds men were killed. Hempinstal who was alive in 1844 living near Shelbyville, killed with his Tomahawk and butcher knife fourteen of the Indians. Such was the conflict for the possession of the “Dark and Bloody Land.

Also in the original, wherever the title Colonel was used by the author it was abbreviated in her distinctive handwriting but was spelled out in the other versions we have seen. We follow the author’s style. The author also spelled her name Latitia instead of Letitia and the name Buchanan with a double “n” as Buchannan. It should be noted that the facsimile of the original shows that the original has suffered considerable damage, obliterating some wording but not enough to impair its usefulness.