



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 2,000-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

Three of the five articles in this issue provide information about frontier life in southwestern Virginia during the last half of the eighteenth century. Before 1750, the region was primarily unexplored wilderness. Yet by 1800, thousands of immigrants had passed through or settled in the numerous communities that dotted the landscape, as the frontier of the great migration moved on to the west. That intervening fifty-year interval was a period of great turmoil and change in the western counties of Virginia. The complex history of the region during this time reveals atrocities, Indian wars, changing religious practices, amazing economic development, new roads, newly discovered mines, massive land deals, and the birth of one of the world's greatest political innovations, "the United States."

Our first article, "Early Presbyterians in Montgomery County," describes the migration of Presbyterians from Scotland and Northern Ireland to Southwest Virginia. The article explores the significant influence of these immigrants with respect to their newly formed society. The author, Charles L. Taylor, is a professor of political science at Virginia Tech.

At the outset of the civil war, many young men were caught up in the war fever that gripped the nation. "The Forgotten Fencibles," by April Danner, relates the enlistment, service, and tragic death of Milton Harmon as he fought for the Confederacy. Danner received her bachelor's and master's degrees in history from Virginia Tech.

William Ballard Preston, the third generation owner of Smithfield, had a daughter, Lucy Preston Beale, who attended Hollins College. After her death in 1928, her daughter decided to honor her mother by constructing a memorial garden at Hollins. Jennie Hodge, the author, describes the garden's origin and evolution in "Mother Dearly Loved Flowers: The Beale Memorial Garden at Hollins University." Hodge is a graduate of the University of Virginia and recently received her master's degree from Hollins.

Fort Chiswell was a well-known location in the frontier days of Southwest Virginia. Mary Kegley, who has done considerable research on the history of Southwest Virginia, presents "Fort Chiswell and Chiswell's Lead Mines of Wythe County, Virginia: A New Perspective."

In March 1774, Governor Dunmore dissolved the Virginia assembly. Meeting unofficially, the delegates planned an extra-legal August convention and called for Virginia counties to elect representatives to attend it. The resulting county meetings to select representatives and adopt resolutions opposing arbitrary British rule were among the first independent acts of democracy in Virginia. In October, formal county committees were created in response to the call from the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia. In early 1775, the freeholders of Fincastle and three other western Virginia counties adopted strongly worded resolutions foreshadowing the coming American Revolution. In "The Fincastle Resolutions," author Jim Glanville presents a comprehensive study of the role of western men in the unfolding revolutionary movement in Virginia.

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Hugh G. Campbell, Editor

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