

The William Preston / George Washington Letters

Jim Glanville and Ryan S. Mays

© 2014

Introduction

William Preston was arguably the most successful Ulster immigrant to Virginia during the entire Colonial period. His life's work as an eighteenth century surveyor and political leader in the newly forming counties along the Virginia frontier embodied the optimistic world view and expansionist ideology embraced by other Virginians such as George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, and George Mason. Collectively, these men took bold steps to promote a rich and prosperous, independent, and sovereign America with its economic base in the resources beyond the mountains. Preston saw clearly the potential of western land to shape a growing America, and accumulated great personal wealth through his land dealings.¹ He fathered twelve children and left America a mighty legacy through the public service of these children and his many descendants.²

However, as Richard Osborn wrote in the preface to his dissertation about William Preston, "aside from a few specialists who have studied developments on Virginia's frontiers, he remains virtually unknown to most scholars of the period."³ Additionally, and surprisingly, Preston is hardly known within the community of scholars who study the role of Scotch-Irish immigrants to colonial Virginia.⁴

As a measure of Preston's importance in the history of eighteenth century Virginia, this article describes his long relationship with George Washington. George Washington (1732–1799) and William Preston (1729–1783) probably first met in October 1756 while Washington was on his "forts tour" along the Virginia frontier. Between 1765 and 1771 they served together in seven sessions of the House of Burgesses. The article focuses on eight letters exchanged between Preston and Washington between February 1774 and April 1775, and it brings them together here for the first time in a single place. Of the eight letters presented, six are from Preston and two from Washington. (Preston refers to a third letter from Washington, which has been lost.)

The principal topic of all of these surviving letters is the surveying of western land by Preston's deputies and its acquisition by Washington.

These letters are important, not just because they explicate the relationship in those years between the western Virginia land surveyor and the future president, but for the insights they provide into the conditions on the frontier and the obsession with land acquisition that characterized those years. In 1774 the Virginians challenged the American Indians of the Ohio Country and sought land in a campaign known to history as Dunmore’s War. Preston did not personally campaign, but he was active in recruiting soldiers and serving as a commissary for the expedition. Both men were obsessed with land acquisition, though despite growing problems with Britain they continued to abide by British policies and regulations until the break with Britain became certain.

George Washington and William Preston, 1756–1775

In the fall of 1756, George Washington was on a tour of the Virginia frontier for the purpose of inspecting and siting forts. He spent the first four days of October in Augusta County.⁵ Washington’s expense account for those four days is shown in Figure 1. From October 6 to October 9, Washington journeyed from the Augusta court house (in present-day Staunton) to present-day Buchanan, then to Fort Vause at present-day Shawsville and finally to Halifax. From Staunton to Buchanan he traveled with William Preston, from Buchanan to Shawsville he traveled with Col. John Buchanan,⁶ and from Shawsville to Halifax he traveled with a guide. Based on the documents (Figure 1), it seems probable that Washington and Preston left Staunton on the sixth, slept on the road near Lexington that night, and reached the James River on the seventh.

Oct 1	By Ditto Paid the Saddle at Augusta Court House	2. 10
5	By Ditto Tavern Expenses at the same place	3. 11. 8
11	By Ditto for Hubs 2/6. Expenses at Turkey 1 Oct 7, 2/3	1. 5. 9
13	By Ditto Capt. at Arizon Evans's 3/-. By a guide 1/3	4. 3
	By Horse hire 1/3. a Horse bow. of G. Montgomery 2/8	8. 11. 3
	By Ditto of David Mitchell	15. 10. --
19	By Horse hire to Augusta Court House	3 7 2

Items from George Washington's Expense Account—on his tour of the Frontier

Figure 1. George Washington’s expense account, October 1–19, 1756. From: Kegley’s *Virginia Frontier, the Beginning of the Southwest, the Roanoke of Colonial Days* (Roanoke: Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938), 242. Used with permission of George Kegley.

Washington had hoped to assemble a ranging party at Staunton, but too few men applied. After hearing that men might be available at Col. Buchanan's home at Looney's (Luney's) Ferry across the James River, he decided to go there. On his journey, Washington traveled with William Preston as he described in his October 10 letter to Governor Robert Dinwiddie: "I set out immediately for his house [Col. Buchanan's at Luney's Ferry on the James River], attended by Captain Preston, who was kind enough to conduct me along, and acquainted the Colonel [Buchanan] with the motives that brought me thither."⁷

Osborn wrote that "On the journey, Preston and Washington engaged in intensive conversations about the manpower problems on the frontier and undoubtedly on many other topics of mutual concern."⁸ Washington wrote of his meeting with Preston in his October 10 letter:

He [Preston] told me with very great concern, it was not in his power to raise men; for that, three days before, some of the militia in a fort, about fifteen miles above his house, at the head of Catawba Creek, commanded by one Colonel Nash, was attacked by the Indians, which occasioned all that settlement to break up totally, even to the ferry at Luney's; that he had ordered three companies to repair thither, to march against the enemy, and not one man came, except a captain, lieutenant, &c., and seven or eight men from Bedford.

At the time they made their trip from Staunton to Buchanan, Washington was 24 years old and Preston 27. One imagines that their two-day journey together might have been idyllic—passing through magnificent, old-growth forest, amid tall, well-spaced trees beginning to take on their fall colors, and with bison to be seen and flocks of passenger pigeons overhead.

Washington had been made commander-in-chief of the frontier in August 1755, a position he held until late 1757. During this period, Washington engaged in regular correspondence with Governor Dinwiddie, thus much is known about his activities at that time from his letters (such as the one mentioned above). The year 1756 was (in Richard Morton's phrase) a time of "terror on the frontier," with American Indian raids all along it as the westward intrusions of the settlers provoked strong Indian response. Washington faced an almost impossible task of frontier defense. No system of static forts, and there were eventually over eighty of them, could prevent Indian penetration into the settlements. Washington knew that only ranging and offensive action could provide relief. However, neither Washington's Virginia regiment, nor even less the colonial frontier militia, were up to the task.⁹

In contrast to Washington, there is relatively little documentary evidence about William Preston's activities in 1756. His uncle and mentor James Patton had been killed by American Indians at Draper's Meadows the previous year, and Preston had taken over his uncle's land interests and begun his own spirited and successful career. At the time of his journey with Washington, Preston was in his fifth year of service as a deputy to the Augusta County surveyor Thomas Lewis. In 1755 Preston had been involved in building Fort William on the Catawba River. At various times in 1756–1758, he commanded troops on the Bullpasture River, and he built Fort George, located in Highland County about 50 miles northwest of Staunton, in spring 1757. Osborn notes that Preston was involved in sixteen land transactions of various kinds between 1754 and 1757, although none specifically in 1756.¹⁰

These two young men in the prime of their lives shared adventuresome spirits, several years of experience as land surveyors, ambition, and a hunger to acquire land. What they did not share was a common background. Washington was a fourth-generation, middling gentry, native Virginian with English roots. Preston was a recent Scotch-Irish immigrant who had come to Augusta County around the age of nine, after spending his childhood in the turbulent region in the north of Ireland near Londonderry, with its long history of religious strife.

Later, George Washington and William Preston overlapped in several terms of office in the Virginia House of Burgesses. From 1758 to 1764 George Washington represented Frederick County in the Houses of Burgesses. In 1765 Washington was elected to represent Fairfax County; that year Preston first took a seat in the Houses of Burgesses, representing Augusta County. Preston went on to serve seven terms. The first six of those were as a representative of Augusta County, while in his seventh term he represented Botetourt County. During all of Preston's seven terms Washington represented Fairfax County.¹¹

No documentary evidence specifically links Preston and Washington during the years they served together in the House of Burgesses. Richard Osborn notes that Preston did not "seem to enjoy" his terms of service in the House of Burgesses because being in Williamsburg took him away from local politics, which for Preston was where "the action was."¹²

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 and Western Land

The Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763 was issued with the central objective of establishing administrative regions through which the British government could control and organize the vast area of land in North America ceded to Britain by France and Spain under the terms of the Treaty

of Paris at the conclusion of the French and Indian or Seven Years War (variously cited as 1754–1763 or 1756–1763).¹³ The Proclamation provides a vital background to understanding the Washington–Preston letters, written more than a decade later.

The Proclamation was a declaration of imperial policy towards the North American possessions that Britain acquired under the provisions of the Treaty. It was signed by representatives of Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal in February 1763. Under the treaty, all territory east of the Mississippi River and north of the Great Lakes became British. Britain acquired *half a billion* acres of new territory in North America as a consequence of the treaty, and faced the problem of administering, organizing, and controlling this vast territory. The Proclamation, broadly speaking, was a management plan for the newly acquired British North American empire. The opening paragraph of the Proclamation reads:

WHEREAS we have taken into Our Royal Consideration the extensive and valuable Acquisitions in America, secured to our Crown by the late Definitive Treaty of Peace, concluded at Paris the 10th Day of February last; and being desirous that all Our loving Subjects, as well of our Kingdoms as of our Colonies in America, may avail themselves with all convenient Speed, of the great Benefits and Advantages which must accrue therefrom to their Commerce, Manufactures, and Navigation; We have thought fit, with the Advice of our Privy Council, to issue this our Royal Proclamation, hereby to publish and declare to all our loving Subjects, that we have, with the Advice of our Said Privy Council, granted our Letters Patent, under our Great Seal of Great Britain, to erect, within the Countries and Islands ceded and confirmed to Us by the said Treaty, Four distinct and separate Governments, stiled and called by the names of Quebec, East Florida, West Florida and Grenada, and limited and bounded as follows, viz.

From the point of view of the British Virginians, the newly-drawn boundaries limited settlement west of the crest of the Appalachian Mountains (across the so-called Proclamation line). Neither Washington nor Preston was pleased with this potential limitation on their prospects for further land acquisition.

For our purpose in the present article, an important part of the 1763 Proclamation was its Land Provision clause. This clause provided land rights to British Americans in compensation for their services in the French and Indian War. That clause reads:

We do hereby command and empower our . . . Governors of our several Provinces on the Continent of North America, to grant without Fee or Reward, to such reduced Officers as have served in North America during the late War, and to such Private Soldiers as have been or shall be disbanded in America, and are actually residing there, and shall personally apply for the same, the following Quantities of Lands, subject, at the Expiration of Ten Years, to the same Quit-Rents as other Lands are subject to in the Province within which they are granted, as also subject to the same Conditions of Cultivation and Improvement; viz. To every Person having the Rank of a Field Officer—5,000 Acres. To every Captain—3,000 Acres. To every Subaltern or Staff Officer—2,000 Acres. To every Non-Commission Officer—200 Acres. To every Private Man—50 Acres. We do likewise authorize and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all our said Colonies upon the Continent of North America to grant the like Quantities of Land, and upon the same conditions, to such reduced Officers of our Navy of like Rank as served on board our Ships of War in North America at the times of the Reduction of Louisbourg and Quebec in the late War, and who shall personally apply to our respective Governors for such Grants.

For the British, the promulgation of the 1763 Proclamation produced many unintended consequences. Among Virginians the principal unintended consequence was resentment for the loss of access to western land with the concomitant development of revolutionary sentiments.¹⁴

Particularly eloquent on the unintended consequence of the 1763 Proclamation was scholar Archibald Henderson,¹⁵ who wrote:

By the southern colonies, and especially by Virginia with her arrogant but hazy charter claims, to vast western territory, the proclamation was regarded as a tyrannical curtailment of their liberties for the benefit of the fur trade. In Virginia, the speculators and land-plungers were balked in their grandiose schemes; the great land companies foresaw the collapse of their colossal projects; and even the officers and soldiers felt themselves deprived of the opportunity to exploit the West, through lands to be granted them for military services.¹⁶

As described above, the Proclamation specifically granted, on a sliding scale based on rank, land rights to officers and soldiers who had participated in the French and Indian War. In the years immediately after issuance of the Proclamation, the provision for granting western land to persons with military

service was largely ignored and unused. However, a decade later, and following the appointment of John Murray, the fourth Earl of Dunmore, as Virginia Governor, the situation changed. In April 1773 the Board of Trade tightened the general rules for land acquisition in Virginia (and other colonies) but specifically upheld the officers' and soldiers' rights under the proclamation.¹⁷ This action resulted in a situation in which military land rights were being sought out and purchased by land speculators, such as Washington and Preston, who were seeking to accumulate vast land holdings in the West. Not surprisingly, Governor Dunmore himself took a strong interest in acquiring western lands.

William Preston was at the center of this furor for land acquisition. He was the surveyor of Fincastle County, which had been formed in 1772, and stretched from present-day Blacksburg to the farthest western point of present-day Kentucky, and included all the land of that future state. In 1774, Preston was running newspaper advertisements (Figure 2) seeking persons

NOTICE is hereby given to the gentlemen officers and soldiers, who claim land under his Majesty's proclamation of the 7th of October 1763, having obtained warrants from his Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Dunmore, directed to the surveyor of Fincastle county, and intends to locate their lands on or near the Ohio, below the Great Kanhawa; that several assistant surveyors will attend at the mouth of the New River, or Great Kanhawa, on Thursday the 14th day of April next, to survey for such only as have or may obtain his lordship's warrant for that purpose. I would therefore request that the claimants, or their agents, will be very punctual in meeting at the time and place above mentioned, properly provided with chain carriers, and other necessaries, to proceed on the business, without delay. As several gentlemen, who are acquainted with that part of the country, are of opinion, that to prevent insults from strolling parties of Indians, there ought to be at least fifty men on the river, below the mouth of the Kanhawa, to attend the business in such a manner as the gentlemen present judge most proper, until it is finished, or the season prevent them from surveying any more. Should the gentlemen concerned be of the same opinion, they will doubtless furnish that, or any less number of men, they may believe necessary. It is hoped the officers, or their agents, who may have land surveyed, particularly such as do not reside in the colony, will be careful to send the surveyors fees when the certificates are demanded.

WILLIAM PRESTON,
Surveyor of Fincastle.

Figure 2. A reproduction of Preston's "Notice," published in Rind's *Virginia Gazette* in March 1774, to gentlemen, officers, and soldiers, with a right to claim land near the Ohio River, under the terms of the 1763 Royal Proclamation. This notice is of considerable interest in its own right, and is particularly noteworthy for the light that it sheds on the Washington–Preston exchange of letters discussed in this article.

with military land claims to meet his deputy surveyors in the Ohio Country. Preston's purpose was to have the claimants obtain warrants on land that he would then buy from them.¹⁸

In 1774, William Preston had, in effect, three masters to serve: the Board of Trade in faraway London,¹⁹ Lord Dunmore in Williamsburg, whose land policies were not necessarily those of London, and the newly-formed Virginia Convention (wherever it was meeting).²⁰ The Convention in 1774 began making its own rules and regulations on the subject of land acquisition. Also affecting Preston's land surveying and purchasing were the activities of Judge Richard Henderson of North Carolina. In the summer of 1774, Henderson organized the Transylvania Company, which proposed to purchase from the Cherokee Indians vast tracts of land in modern-day Tennessee and Kentucky that had long been claimed by the Virginians and on which Preston had an eye. Henderson actually made the Transylvania Purchase on March 17, 1775, six days before Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech at the second Virginia Convention, and only a month before the first shots of the Revolution in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. The Preston-Washington letters offer a useful view of Henderson's activities.

Delegate John Jay at the first Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia in the fall of 1774, intensified the question of western land ownership by directly challenging the right of King George III to hold title to such lands:

Are not the proprietors of the soil of Great Britain lords of their own property? Can it be taken from them without their consent? Will they yield it to the arbitrary disposal of any man, or number of men whatever? You know they will not.

Why then are the proprietors of the soil of America less lords of their property than you are of yours? or why should they submit it to the disposal of your parliament, or any other parliament or council in the world, not of their election? Can the intervention of the sea that divides us cause disparity in rights? or can any reason be given why English subjects, who live three thousand miles from the royal palace, should enjoy less liberty than those who are three hundred miles distant from it?

Reason looks with indignation on such distinctions, and freemen can never perceive their propriety. And yet, however chimerical and unjust such discriminations are, the parliament assert, that they have a right to bind us in all cases without exception, whether we consent or not; that they may take and use our property when and in what manner

they please; that we are pensioners on their bounty for all that we possess; and can hold it no longer than they vouchsafe to permit. Such declarations we consider as heresies in English politics, and which can no more operate to deprive us of our property, than the interdicts of the pope can divest kings of sceptres, which the laws of the land and the voice of the people have placed in their hands.²¹

The Coal River Surveys

The principal topic of the Washington-Preston letters is land lying at the confluence of the Coal (also written Cole) and Kanawha Rivers in present-day St. Albans, West Virginia, about ten miles west (and down river) from the state capital of Charleston. The Coal River runs north into the Kanawha River at St. Albans. The site today is identified by an historic marker (Figure 3) titled “WASHINGTON’S LAND.” This tract of 2,000 acres was surveyed by John Floyd on April 18, 1774. Washington’s patent (land grant) was finally



Figure 3. Historical marker at St. Albans, West Virginia, located near U.S. Route 60 West (MacCorkle Avenue) in St. Albans Roadside Park, 0.4 miles east of St. Albans Bridge, St. Albans. This location is a few miles west of Charleston, West Virginia, at coordinates 38° 23.331 N, 81° 49.58 W, http://www.stalbanshistory.com/Historical_Roadside_Markers.htm. The date given for the patent is wrong (see text). Image used with permission of Neil Richardson and the St. Albans Historical Society.

issued ten years later on August 12, 1784. The original patent on this tract, issued by Governor Benjamin Harrison, is viewable online at the Library of Virginia.²² The patent shows that the land went by warrant to Charles Mynn Thruston²³ for his military service as a lieutenant in the French and Indian War. Thruston (probably for a price) assigned his land to Washington, who in turn received the patent for it from the Governor. This transaction exceedingly well-exemplifies the land dealings discussed in this article.

Remarkably, we know quite a lot about the survey that Preston had made on behalf of Washington at the “Cole River tract” site because there is a documentary record of the work of the survey party. The record is in the journal of Thomas Hanson, who was one of William Preston’s deputy surveyors.²⁴

Hanson writes that he and his party left “Col. Wm Preston’s in Fincastle County at one o’clock in high spirits” and records the departure date as “April 7th. 8th.” of 1774. They left, of course, from Smithfield Plantation. Preston’s assistant surveyor, John Floyd, was the leader of the eight-man party, and in addition to Hanson himself, its other six members were: Mr. Douglas (another assistant surveyor to Preston), Mr. Hite, Mr. Dandridge, James Nocks (Knox), Roderick McCra, and Mordecai Batson.

They were at the Coal River ten days later. Hanson recorded on the 18th of April: “We surveyed 2000 acres of Land for Col. Washington, bordered by Coal River & the Canawagh. Mr. Dandridge crossed Coal River, & lost himself, which put Mr. Floyd to a great deal of trouble to find him in the night. Mr. Taylor and his company joined us. The Bottoms or Low Grounds here are but narrow & not very good. We caught a Cat fish that weighed 40 pounds.”

This party of Preston’s deputies is well-known in Kentucky history, where they are referred to as the “Fincastle Surveyors.” Under the authority of 1763 Proclamation warrants, William Preston’s Fincastle deputy surveyors in 1774 laid out over 150,000 acres of land in the future state of Kentucky, including all of the present-day city of Louisville. Their work was disrupted by American Indian attacks in July 1774, and the party broke up into three groups that returned to Smithfield by widely different routes.²⁵

These 1774 Fincastle surveys include the taking of land for many of Virginia’s leaders. In addition to the tract for Washington, tracts were surveyed for Patrick Henry, William Byrd III, Andrew Lewis, Zachary Taylor, William Christian, Adam Stephen, and others.²⁶

The Eight Washington/Preston Letters

There are eight extant letters, from February 1774 to the end of April 1775. All are about land located at the confluence of the Coal and Kanawha Rivers.

The six letters from Preston to Washington come as transcriptions from *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers* [1752–1775], edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton and published in five volumes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898–1902). The preface to Volume 1 of this series states for the years 1752–1775 the five volumes constitute “a complete edition of the writings to Washington, given *verbatim et literatim* from the original letters as received and indorsed by him” and that “the manuscript collection was acquired from George Corbin Washington by purchase under the Acts of Congress approved June 30, 1834, and March 3, 1849, and deposited in the Department of State, Washington, D.C.” The first Preston to Washington letter is found in Volume 4 and the other five are found in Volume 5. All six letters have been published online at the Internet Archive (www.archive.org), and for each letter we have provided a short-form web link that will take the reader directly to the as-printed transcript.

The two letters from Washington to Preston come from Volume 3 (of a total of 39 volumes) of *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick and David M. Matteson (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931). The 39 volumes were prepared under the direction of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission and authorized by Congress. All 39 volumes have been published online at the Internet Archive (www.archive.org) and also as on line transcriptions by the University of Virginia.²⁷ The first Washington to Preston letter is stated in 1930 to have been in the possession of Nelly C. Preston of Seven Mile Ford, Virginia; we do not know its present location. The second Washington to Preston letter is in the Library of Congress. For both letters we have provided a short-form web link that will take the reader directly to the as-printed transcript.

In the opening letter (February 28, 1774), Washington asked Preston for a “certificate” for a survey done by Captain William Crawford, who worked as Washington’s western land agent. Preston replied promptly (March 7, 1774) that he had recently issued two such certificates, and that when he did so, they made a “great deal of noise” and that they were considered illegal. He went on to say that he had advertised for officers with land warrants on the Ohio River (Figure 2) and that his deputy surveyors would shortly be near Washington’s claim, and would order that Washington’s land be resurveyed. Two months later, in May 1774, Preston wrote telling Washington that he had sent John Floyd out to make the survey. In August 1774 Preston again wrote telling Washington that the survey had been made and remarked that he was fortifying his home, Smithfield. There is now the missing letter from Washington to Preston. On January 27, 1775, Preston

sent the certificate to Washington. Preston commented that Dunmore's War ("the late Expedition") was a great expense. He does not mention the Fincastle Resolutions that had been made one week earlier. He wrote again in a second letter four days later (January 31, 1775) telling Washington that Floyd had arrived back at Smithfield. This second letter discussed the prospective Transylvania purchase and enclosed Floyd's and his own charges for their expenses. Washington, on March 27, 1775, sent money for Preston's and Floyd's charges and said he had a new warrant for 3,000 acres in Fincastle. In the final letter Preston told Washington that Richard Henderson had made his purchase and that John Floyd had a nice 3,000-acre tract that Washington might like to have surveyed.

Letter 1²⁸

In this letter Washington opened the exchange of correspondence by sending Preston a survey of the Coal River tract made by Captain Crawford, and asked Preston to secure him a patent on the land. In the letter, Washington also gave Preston a detailed description of his extensive and active land maneuvers. The letter reveals the complexity of western land acquisition in 1774, when warrants for officers under the terms of the 1763 Proclamation were being upheld and increased to 1,000 acres in size by the Virginia Council. Washington was clearly seeking every avenue to secure western land wherever he could get it, and he wanted to do it quickly. This letter is in Washington's handwriting. It is particularly noteworthy because Preston added a notation to the letter in his own hand. The "Captain Bullett" mentioned by Washington in this letter was an old comrade from the French and Indian War, who had become a surveyor. Empty pairs of brackets in the following transcription indicate unreadable text in the original document.²⁹

To: WILLIAM PRESTON
Mount Vernon, February 28, 1774

Sir: I took the liberty before I left Williamsburg (at least the neighbourhood of it, about the 1st. of December last) to address a pretty long Letter to Colo. Andw. Lewis respecting my Claims under the Proclamation of 1763. I also Inclos'd him a Survey made by Captn. Crawford upon the Great Kanhawa at the Mouth of Cole River, as a Location for the [] returnd the Warrant and Survey (Inclosed) [] me; which for want of oppy., I have never [] in my power of sending till now, that it goes by Express in hopes of obtaining such a Certificate for the Secretarys Office, as will enable me to procure my Patent from thence immediately.

The Reason's for my Inclining to take this Land (which I am told is far from being of the first quality) are candidly these. It lyes in the [] (that is Colo. Lewis) as I had only heard, but was upon no certainty of your being at the Oyer Court, (if he thought there was no impropriety in it, and I saw none) to get the favour of you to give me a Certificate of this Survey, that I might, for the Reasons I then gave him, and shall mention to you, obtain a Patent for it immediately; The Colo. wrote me that you were obliging enough to promise that but, as the Council came to a Resolution to permit the Officers to Survey their Lands in thousand Acre [] might alter my Plan; and therefore [] in the desired dispatch [] by being contiguously [?]undirected, in order [] latitude this [] comes in like [] to you; which you [will] please to direct [] executed, and not be [] In order to explain the Reason of this [] (now Inclos'd to you) appearing as [] 200,000 Acres, I must observe, that some [part] of the Work being done by Captn. Crawford [him]self, and some by his Deputy, they did not [] that they had, between them, over run their quantity till after this Survey, and one other opposite to it, on the Kanhawa (which I am now applying for in Botetourt) were made. In short the mistake would not, I believe, have been discover'd at all; if it had not been for me, when I came to compare the different Tracts, in order to the allotment of them. this other Tract, in Botetourt, contains 18 Acres less than 3000; and it is very unlucky for me (as I obtain'd my Warrants before the Indulgence of Surveying in 1000 Acre Lots) that I am obliged to send my own Warrant for 5000 to that County, in order to secure that Tract, as I do not know where any more Land in that district is to be had; and want to shift the remaining 2000 into Fincastle; which I must yet do, as Captn. Bullett has offer'd me a Tract Surveyed by him about twenty odd Miles from the Falls of Ohio, and of[f] from it upon Salt River Including a Salt Pond. this Tract, thus Circumstanced; I beg the favour of you to [enter] in my name; as I will contrive to have [] Warrant for Bot[etourt] [] [Captn.] Bullett has either neglected to furnish me with a minute description of the spot, with a Plot agreeable to his promise; or, his Letter has [mis]carried; as he agreed before his Brother [to let me] have the Land upon certain conditions [] were then concluded upon; to the best [] collection, the above, is the substance of [] than the Falls, as well as [a] little wide of it, upon the River above mention'd. I shall add no more than my hopes of having my business done agreeably to the requests herein contain'd, and to wish you an agreeable Season for the accomplishment of your business, being with very great esteem, etc.

Dr. Sir, Yr. most Obt. & Hble. Sert G[e]o. Washington []³⁰

The annotation in Preston's handwriting reads:

I wrote to Col. Washington refusing to comply with his request, but let him know that I would send his field marks down by one of the assistants and have the land resurveyed, and the new survey sent to me as soon as Possible, and that after recording it I will endeavor to send it to him before the May Assembly Rises or afterward enclose it to Col. Russell to transact the Business for him in Town. W.P. March 1774.³¹

The notation shows that as surveyor of Fincastle County, Preston guarded his prerogatives. Osborn notes that "In effect, Preston was refusing to recognize the legality of any surveys not completed by his own assistant surveyors and deputies."³² There was also a real question in Williamsburg about the legality of such surveys, so Preston also had solid grounds for not wanting to risk yet another "great noise" in Williamsburg.

Letter 2³³

In his reply, Preston wrote that he was unable to comply with Washington's request for certification of 2,050 acres at the fork of the Great Kanawha and Coal Rivers because so doing had become a highly controversial subject in Williamsburg as being possibly illegal. Preston explained to Washington that he was uncertain of his authority as Surveyor of Fincastle County to certify land, and, that when he had made two such grants earlier, his action raised a "great deal of noise." Preston referred to the advertisement reproduced above. Dr. John Connolly and Charles and Robert Warrenstaff were active investors in land in the vicinity of the Falls of the Ohio (modern-day Louisville, Kentucky).³⁴ Here is letter 2:

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON. FINCASTLE—March 7th 1774

I rec^d. your Letter Inclosing a Warrant for 2000 Acres, & a Certificate of M^r. Crawford's for 2050 Acres in the Fork of the great Kanhawa and Cole River, by favour of Mr Young.

Be assured Sir that nothing could have given me greater Pleasure than to have complied with your Request had it been in my Power; and the rather as I see nothing in it that is unreasonable or unprecedented. When I was last at W^{ms}.burg his Lordship presented me with two Platts of 2000 Acres each one for Doc^r. Connilly & the other for one Warrenstaff and requested, nay even urged me to sign them; as they had been Accurately Surveyed by M^r. Douglas, an Assistant to Cap^t. Bullet who had been regularly appointed by the

College, I with some Reluctance Signed the Certificates by which those Gentlemen immediately obtained Patents. This Transaction has made a great deal of Noise; & indeed it is the Opinion of many good Judges that the Patents are altogether illegal. This alone is my Reason for not complying with your Request, and the promise I then made to Col^o. Lewis on your Behalf; for at that Time I could not foresee any ill Consequence that could attend such a Step.

I have Advertized the Officers who obtained Warrants from Lord Dunmore to meet my Assistants at the Mouth of New River the 14th. of April. Two of the Assistants will go from hence down the River, and not far from the mouth of Cole River they intend to provide Canoes to proceed down the Ohio. I can think of no better Method than what Col^o. Lewis has proposed; which is, that one of them on his way down shall Survey the Land and by the first Opportunity send me the Plan to be recorded. Col^o. Lewis says he will endeavour to persuade his Son to go, or send a Surveyor, to lay off the Tract you have in Botetourt, & that he will return from thence immediately: Should the Col^o Succeed in this, then my Assistant could send up the Plan, & by that Means & M^r. Lewis & myself might have it in our Power to send you the Certificates before the rising of the next Session of Assembly.—If M^r. Lewis can neither go, or send down the River at that Time, I shall leave no method in my Power unattempted to have your Survey made and returned to you before the Assembly rises, or to Col^o. Bassett afterwards, who I suppose will transact the Business for you.—In the mean time I shall Enter the Land on my Book & send you a Copy this I suppose will secure it to you untill it can be legally Surveyed.

The 2000 Acres on Salt River which Cap^t. Bullet mentioned to you & which he laid off last year, has been Entered some Time ago by Cap^t. Christian. M^r. Young has a Copy of the Entry. I believe all the Salt Springs discovered in that Country have been Entered.

I am Sorry it was not in my Power to comply with your Request, but for the Reasons I have given I hope you will excuse me, and the more so as I shall do all I can to have your Land Surveyed early in the Season, for which purpose I have kept M^r. Crawford's Certificate that it may be laid off accordingly.

I am with great Regard Sir

Your most Obed^t. & hble Serv^t.

W^m. PRESTON

Letter 3³⁵

Preston now told Washington that John Floyd had surveyed Washington's land at the confluence of the Great Kanawha and Coal Rivers. This is the land today identified by an historic marker (Figure 3) and the land described in Hanson's journal entry quoted above. He noted the dangers American Indians posed to surveying parties. The letter is significant for its discussion of Cherokee land claims. It refers to the 1752 Treaty of Logs Town (Logstown) which Preston himself attended as an assistant to his uncle James Patton, who was one of the Virginia commissioners who negotiated that treaty. Having been unable to get an answer from Governor Dunmore about the status of Virginia's land claims in the face of Cherokee opposition, he asked Washington to speak with the Governor about the matter.

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.

FINCASTLE May 27th. 1774

DEAR SIR

Agreeable to my Promise I directed Mr. Floyd an Assistant to Survey your Land on Cole River on his Way to the Ohio, which he did and in a few Days afterwards sent me the Plot by Mr. Thomas Hog. who M^r. Spotswood Dandridge who left the Surveyors on the Ohio after Hog Parted with them, wrote me that M^r. Hog and two other Men with him had never since been heard of. I have had no Opportunity of writing to M^r. Floyd Since. Tho' I suppose he will send me the Courses by the first Person that comes up, if so I shall make out the Certificate and send it down. This I directed him to do when we parted to prevent Accidents. But I am really affraid the Indians will hinder them from doing any Business of Vallue this Season as the Company being only 33 and dayly decreasing were under the greatest Apprehension of Danger when M^r. Dandridge parted with them.

It has been long disputed by our Hunters whether Louisa or Cumberland Rivers was the Boundary between us and the Cherokees. I have taken the Liberty to inclose to you a Report made by some scouts who were out by my Order; and which Sets that matter beyond a Doubt. It is say'd that the Cherrokees claim the land to the Westward of the Louisa & between Cumberland M [mutilated] and the Ohio. If so, and our Government gives it up we loose all the most Valluable part of that Country. The Northern Indians Sold that Land to the English at the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744. by the Treaty of Logs Town in 1752 and by that at Fort Stanwix in 1768. At that

Time the Cherrokees laid no Claim to that Land & how the[y] come to do it now I cannot imagine.

I have wrote twice to his Lordship on this Subject. If it is not disagreeable to you I would take it as a great Favour if you would Converse with his Excellency on this Matter; and endeavour to have it considered in Council. Most of the Officers have Entered their Lands below the Louisa; but I am almost certain the Surveyors will not Survey any there, untill they have further Instructions. My Reasons for taking Enter [mutilated] below that River was, that his Lordship gave Connolly and Warrenstaff Warrants for their Claims at the Falls; but I am doubtful that would not be sufficient Warrant for me to Survey the Land & Sign Certificates.

Your taking some Trouble on this Head will be doing a great Service to the Officers, and a very particular Favour to

D^r Sir your most Obed^t. and very hble Serv^t.
W^m. PRESTON

Letter 4³⁶

Preston told Washington in this letter that he had recorded the “platt” of Washington’s land on the Coal River, and that some of his surveyors had gone missing and were probably dead. He added that American Indians in his region had killed five persons within 15 miles of Smithfield 10 days earlier and that he was turning his house, Smithfield, into a fort.

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.

SMITHFIELD August 15th. 1774

DEAR SIR.

M^r. Thomas Hog who brought the Platt of Your Land on Cole River from Capt Floyd in April last with two other Men has never since been heard of, so that there is no Doubt of their being killed or taken, but I fear the former is the Case. Cap^t. Floyd with three others came in last Saturday. The other Surveyors with a Party of Men are still out but there is some Reason to hope they are safe.

M^r. Floyd at my Request immediately made out your Plan which I have Recorded & takes this Opportunity to Send it to Col^o. Fielding Lewis either to be forwarded to you or sent to Town as you choose. I had no Opport^y to send it directly down, otherwise I should have done it & sent the Patent Fee & had it put in at Once.

The Bearer M^r. Nash lives in Faquier but he has given me his

Positive Promise that he will send the Letter immediately to Fredericksburg[.] We are greatly harrassed in this Country by the Enemy. A Small Party got in about ten Days ago & killed 5 Persons mostly Children & took three Prisoners, about 15 Miles from this Place; which is greatly Exposed. I began yesterday to build a Fort about my House for the Defence of my Family,

I am with great Esteem Dr Sir your most Obed^t & very hble Servt
W^M. PRESTON

Letter 5³⁷

The letter from George Washington to William Preston, written on December 26, 1774, is referred to by Preston in his letter of January 17, 1775 as having been received by him. However, as noted previously, this letter from Washington to Preston is now missing.

Letter 6³⁸

In this letter Preston enclosed the certificate of the Coal River survey (which had been made eight months earlier) and commented that the expenses for the recently-concluded Dunmore's War would be great. The letter is noteworthy because it does not mention the Fincastle Resolutions (Preston had been present at the adoption of these Resolutions, and is reported to have signed them) which had been made by the Fincastle Committee exactly one week earlier. So perhaps at the time, the significance of those Resolutions was less regarded than it has been by later generations.³⁹

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.

Jan 27th. 1775

DEAR SIR

Your Letter of the 26th. Dec^r. came to Hand yesterday. I have inclosed a Certificate of the Survey made by M^r. Floyd at the Mouth of Cole River, But as the Members for this County set off two Days ago I shall not have an Opportunity of Sending this till Col^o. Fleming goes down which I hear will be some time in February. I understand that worthy Gentleman intends to make Application to Your House for some Yearly Allowance from the Country for his being disabled in its Service; I would fain hope the same Notice will be taken of his Merit that has been to many other Officers who were Wounded in the Service of the Country on former Occasions.

There is no doubt but the Expence of the late Expedition, & the forces employed for the Protection of the Frontiers will be very great. But as the Frontiers were in a great Measure defended & the Enemy Subdued there is reason to hope not only the Peace will be lasting, but that the Expence will be paid with the greater Cheerfulness; and the rather as the Men engaged in the Service with uncommon Ardour, depending wholly on the Publick Faith, as there was no Money in hand for defraying any part of the Charge or given as encouragement to men to enlist. The former well known Justice and Generosity of the Assembly, together with the Safety of the Country from our old inveterate Enemies appeared to me to be the only Motives which induc'd Men to engage so readily in the Service.

I am D^r sir with great Esteem your most Obed^t Serv^t
WM. PRESTON

Preston added the following footnote, citing the text of the survey:

Survey'd for Col. George Washington Assignee of Charles Myn Thurston a Lieutenant In the Virginia Regiment under the Command of Col. Byrd, By Virtue of the Governors Warrant, and agreeable to the Royal Proclamation of 1763. 2,000 acres of Land in Fincastle County, and bounded as follows. Viz. Beginning at a Sycamore at the mouth of a Draught on the bank of Cole River, marked GW. and running down the several Courses thereof and binding thereon 588 poles to its junction with the Great Kanhawa, and up the several courses thereof and binding thereon 1400 poles to a Sycamore at the mouth of a small draught marked GW. then leaving the River S45°. W. 170 po. to the Hill side and along the same 660 poles to the beginning.

WM. PRESTON S. F. C.
18th. Ap^l 1774

Letter 7⁴⁰

In this letter Preston told Washington that John Floyd had arrived back at Smithfield. He also told Washington that he could give the payment for Preston's and Floyd's services to Stephen Trigg, who was at the time serving in the House of Burgesses as the member for Fincastle County. Of considerable historic importance are Preston's comments about Judge Richard Henderson's Transylvania purchase, in which he told Washington that Henderson would sign for his great land purchase from the Cherokees at Watauga the following month, and called it a "Serious Affair."

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.

FINCASTLE Jan^y 31st. 1775

D^R. SIR

I wrote to you some days ago inclosing a Certificate of your Survey at the Mouth of Cole River & intended to have sent the Letter by Col^o. Fleming, but meeting with Capt Meredith who intends to Town in a few Days I got the favour of him to be the Bearer.

Capt. Floyd came here last night & has drawn up his charge which with my Account, I have (at your Request) inclosed. The money may be paid to Mr. Trigg a Member for this County whose rec^l. shall be good against Mr. Floyd & Myself.

I make no doubt but Col Lewis has informed you of a large Purchase made by one Col^o. Henderson of North Carolina from the Cherokees. Since I wrote to Col^o. Lewis on this Subject I hear that Henderson talks with great Freedom & Indecency of the Governor of Virginia, Sets the Government at Defiance & says if he h^o once had five hundred good Fellows Settled in that Country he would not Value Virginia, that the Officers & Soldiers Who have Lands Surveyed there must h^o hold under him otherwise they shall not enjoy an Inch there. This & such like Stuff has a great Effect upon ignorant People & will be a Means to induce great Numbers to settle in that Country next Spring.

There is now at Wautag [mutilated] eighty Indians & upwards of 700 more are expected to the Treaty whi [mutilated] to be held there some time next Month in order to receive the Goods which now amount to eight waggon loads & to Confirm the Sale by Conveying the Land.

This in my Opinion will soon become a Serious Affair, & highly deserves the Attention of the Government. For it is certain that a vast Number of People are preparing to go out and Settle on this Purchase; and if once they get fixed there, it will be next to impossible to remove them or reduce them to Obedience; as they are so far from the Seat of Government. Indeed it may be the Cherokees will support them.

I am most respectfully Sir your very hble Servt
W^M. PRESTON

Letter 8⁴¹

With this letter Washington sent payment for the services of Preston and Floyd. Washington told of his dislike of the Henderson purchase, that the Governor had issued a proclamation against it, and that the Virginia

Convention had taken action, about which William Christian would inform Preston on his return to Fincastle County. The Virginia Convention had at this time been acting for eight months as a *de facto* Virginia government independent of Governor Dunmore. Washington concluded by saying that he had obtained yet another warrant for 3,000 acres of land. This letter is in Washington's handwriting.

To: WILLIAM PRESTON⁴²

Richmond, March 27, 1775

Dear Sir: Your favours of the 27th. and 31st. of Jany. were both deliverd to me at this place; the first Inclosing a Copy of the Survey at the Mouth of Coal River, and the Second, an Acct. of the Expencc of doing it. By Colo. Christian []⁴³ I send, £3.6.8 for your Fee, and £2.10.0 for Capt. Floyd. []⁴⁴ It was impossible for me, with any sort of propriety to judge the value of Captn. Floyds extra: Services; and being told that this Survey was made in his way to Kentucke, and that no uncommon expence could possible have arisen, I have thought this an ample allowance, if I am mistaken, I shall be willing, at any time hereafter, to make a further allowance, as it is my wish to reward every person who performs any Service for me, adequate to their deserts.

It would give me pleasure, to contribute any little assistance in my power towards the promotion of Colo. Flemings application to the Assembly for relief as it will do to aid any Person who deserves well of the Country.

It is but very lately that I have come to the knowledge of Henderson's purchase of the Cherokee Indians; []⁴⁵ there is something in that Affair which I neither understand, nor like, and wish I may not have cause to dislike it worse as the Mistery unfolds. Colo. Christian will inform you of the only Notice taken of the Proclamation (Issued by Lord Dunmore) in this Convention, as well as the other proceedings of the Meeting, and renders a recital of them therefore, from me, unnecessary. I have only to add then that, with very great esteem I remain, etc.

P.S. I have got a Warrant for 3000 Acres, which, by Mistake is directed to Fincastle instead of Augusta; pray my good Sir could you advise me to a good piece of Land (not claimd by any) in your Country to Locate it on?

Letter 9⁴⁶

In this letter Preston told Washington that Henderson had made his purchase from the Cherokees and had gone out with 300 “adventurers” to settle below the Kentucky River. He also said he could have a prompt survey made of land that had been offered to Washington by John Floyd in response to Washington’s request in his letter of March 27, 1775. Ten days after Preston wrote this letter the fighting at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts signaled the beginning of the Revolutionary War. The demotion of Preston from Colonel to Captain is perhaps the editor’s error.

FROM CAPTAIN WILLIAM PRESTON

April 9th. 1775.

DEAR SIR

Yours of the 27th. Ult. came to hand yesterday with my Fee & that to M^r. Floyd with which we are satisfied.

Henderson I hear has made the Purchase & got a Conveyance of the great and Valluable Country below the Kentucky from the Cherokees. He and about 300 adventurers are gone out to take Possession, who it is said intends to set up an independant Government & form a Code of Laws for themselves. How this may be I cant say, but I am affraid the steps taken by the Government have been too late. Before the Purchase was made had the Governor interferred it is beleived the Indians would not have sold. ab^t 12 or 1300 of them met at the Treaty & I hear near one half went off much displeasd, as they shared no part of the Goods given by the Company.

M^r. Floyd has sent you a Description of 3000 Acres of Land he surveyed last Summer and which has not been appropriated. Should this suit, let me know by a Line & I will make out a Certificate & send it to any Place you direct As I imagine you will receive this before you set off for the Congress, you can send an Answer to the Care of Alex^r Craig in W^{ms}.burg at the meeting of the Merchants from whence I can readily get it

But if this Land will not answer your Purpose I can readily have a Tract Surveyed as Floyd sets off to morrow for the Ohio & I can when I receive your Letter have an Opp^y. of writing to him. The Warrant should be lodged with me, if it is sent to M^r. Craig I can get it safe.

I am with profound Respect Dr Sir your
most hble Serv^t.

W^M. PRESTON

Conclusions

This article demonstrates that William Preston and George Washington were acquainted for at least 27 years—from the time they met in 1756 until Preston’s death in 1783. All the surviving correspondence between them comes from the years 1774–1775. This was a time when Virginia was in a state of political flux and turmoil and on the very brink of the Revolution. The letters illuminate the dangers of frontier life, Washington and Preston’s desire for western land, and the competition for western land that occurred in those years between the Virginians and the North Carolinians.

The letters are of great interest for what they fail to discuss. They are all about the very current business of land surveys and land speculation. Unmentioned are the widespread troubles of “Lord Dunmore’s War” of 1774. American Indian hostility is only mentioned in passing: for example, when Preston refers to raids and settler casualties in the vicinity of Smithfield, which he was fortifying. The letters are totally silent about the Revolution, which we know in retrospect was about to happen and would shove land surveys and speculation to the back burner if not completely off the stove for some years.

The letters demonstrate that Washington and Preston were conducting their business following British regulations, the Proclamation of 1763, and the longstanding procedures established by the Virginians for land speculation and acquisition. This situation would dramatically change following the convening of the First Continental Congress in October 1774. Eight months later, the Second Continental Congress gave Washington command of the Continental Army.

The significant historical role of William Preston is generally underappreciated by Virginia historians, who tend to focus unduly on the Tidewater region of the state.⁴⁷ The neglect in the Scotch-Irish literature of the historical role of William Preston is particularly regrettable.

Acknowledgments

We thank the Interlibrary Loan staff and the Special Collections staff at Newman Library at Virginia Tech. We thank several anonymous referees whose excellent comments have helped us strengthen this article. As always, one of us (JG) thanks Deena Flinchum for ongoing support and encouragement.

Endnotes

1. Jim Glanville, "William Preston the Surveyor and the Great Virginia Land Grab," *The Smithfield Review* 17 (2013), 43–74.
2. John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville, Ky.: The Filson Club, 1982).
3. Richard Charles Osborn, "William Preston of Virginia, 1727–1783: The Making of a Frontier Elite" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), ii-vi; substantially reprinted in the *Journal of Backcountry Studies* in three parts: <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/jbc/article/view/40/82> (hereafter cited as Osborn dissertation part 1); <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/jbc/article/view/33/22> (hereafter cited as Osborn dissertation part 2); and, <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/jbc/article/viewFile/27/16> (hereafter cited as Osborn dissertation part 3); also in part reprinted in *The Smithfield Review* 12 (2008), 5–24 and 13 (2009), 43–62. Other works about William Preston are: Bruce D. Tuttle, "Colonel William Preston, 1729–1783" (Master's thesis, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, 1971), and Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Blacksburg, Va.: Walpa Publishing, 1976). See also: Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: Virginia Surveyors Foundation, Ltd., and The Virginia Association of Surveyors, 1979) *passim*; Mary B. Kegley and Frederick B. Kegley, *Early Adventurers on the Western Waters: The New River of Virginia in Pioneer Days, 1745–1800*, vol. 1. (Orange, Va.: Green Publishers, 1980), 245–255; Albert H. Tillson, *Gentry and Common Folk: Political Culture on a Virginia Frontier 1740–1789* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991) *passim*; Meredith M. Brown, "The Central Role of William Preston and Other Smithfield Region Leaders in the Opening Up of Kentucky," *The Smithfield Review* 13 (2009), 29–42; and Meredith M. Brown, *Touching America's History: From the Pequot War Through World War II* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 21–43. For a survey of the large body of archival documentary evidence about William Preston and his descendants see: Laura Katz Smith, "A Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections of the Preston Family," *The Smithfield Review* 2 (1998), 53–64.
4. William Preston is missing from both James G. Leyburn's *The Scotch Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962) and David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1989). David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly in *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000) include a single index reference to William Preston (pointing to page 216), but he is not on that page and in fact is absent from their text. Author JG pointed out these and other omissions in a recent symposium talk "William Preston the Surveyor and the Great Virginia Land Grab" (paper delivered at the Seventh Scotch-Irish Identity Symposium, York, S.C., Friday June 7, 2013).
5. Frederick B. Kegley, *Kegley's Virginia Frontier, the Beginning of the Southwest, the Roanoke of Colonial Days* (Roanoke: Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938). On page 238 Kegley shows a map of George Washington's route of travel on his frontier journey. A facsimile of a small portion of Washington's expense account appears on page 242, recording for October 1, 1756, an expense of 2s-10d to the saddler at Augusta Court House and on October 5 tavern expenses of £3-11-9 at the same place. Washington wrote from Halifax on October 10, 1756, and reported an "expence" of £1-3-9 at Hickey's Ordinary on October 11.
6. Col. John Buchanan (d. 1769) was married to Margaret Patton, daughter of Col. James Patton, whose sister Elizabeth was Preston's mother. Thus Margaret Patton and William Preston were cousins, so Buchanan and Preston were tied by marriage. Further, Jane Buchanan, daughter of John and Margaret, married John Floyd, who was one of Preston's surveyors in Kentucky and elsewhere. Also, in 1804, Floyd's son John married Letitia Preston, William's daughter. The early Scotch-Irish settlers on the frontier were close-knit kinfolk.
7. George Washington, "Letter to Governor Dinwiddie, from Halifax 10 October, 1756," in Worthington Chauncey Ford, compiler, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. 1, 1748–1757 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 354–359.

8. Osborn, dissertation, part 2, 20.
9. Louis Koontz, *The Virginia Frontier, 1754–1763* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1925). Richard L. Morton, “Westward Expansion and the Prelude to Revolution, 1710–1763,” *Colonial Virginia* (2 vols., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), vol. 2. Matthew Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: Seven Years War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754–1765* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2003). Louis M. Waddell, “Defending the Long Perimeter: Forts on the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia Frontier, 1755–1765,” *Pennsylvania History*, 62, (no. 2, (1995), 171–195.
10. Osborn, dissertation part 3, 89–91.
11. William Glover Stanard and Mary Newton Standard, compilers, *The Colonial Virginia Register: A List of Governors, Councillors and Other Higher Officials, and also of Members of the House of Burgesses, and the Revolutionary Conventions of the Colony of Virginia* (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell’s Sons, 1902).
12. Osborn, dissertation part 3, 83.
13. George R. (King George III) “BY THE KING: A PROCLAMATION,” October 7, 1763. The Avalon Project — Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale University, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc1763.asp.
14. E. James Ferguson, *The American Revolution: a General History, 1763–1790*, rev. ed., (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1979), 119–154. Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2006), 165–171. Marc Egnal, “The Origins of the Revolution in Virginia: A Reinterpretation,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 37 (1980), 401–428, in which the author argues that in every colony, including Virginia, the Revolutionary leaders were motivated by their vision of America’s bountiful future.
15. Archibald Henderson, “A Pre-Revolutionary Revolt in the Old Southwest,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 17 (1930), 191–212.
16. Archibald Henderson’s 1930 article is a delightful, charmingly written, no-nonsense piece that talks much about Washington and Preston, and describes exceedingly well the context in which the letters exchanged between them were written. Henderson (1877–1963) was a mathematician and a remarkable polymath who published books on topics as diverse as geometry, the theory of relativity, and history (five of them). He also wrote three separate biographies of the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, and a biography of Mark Twain. He was a descendant of Richard Henderson, who made the Transylvania Purchase in 1774 and who figures prominently in the Washington–Preston correspondence.
17. St. George L. Sioussat, “The Breakdown of the Royal Management of Lands in the Southern Provinces, 1773–1775,” *Agricultural History* 3 (1929), 67–98.
18. William Preston, “Notice to those who claim land on Lands near the Ohio River,” *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, March 3, 1774, p. 4; “Notice to those who claim land on Lands near the Ohio River,” *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, February 24, 1774, p. 3; “Advertised notice to those who claim land on or near the Ohio River,” *Maryland Gazette*, March 10, 1774, text cited in a footnote on pp. 47–48 in Consul Willshire Butterfield, ed., *The Washington–Crawford letters: Being the Correspondence between George Washington and William Crawford, from 1767 to 1781, Concerning Western Lands* (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1877).
19. In British America, the ultimate bureaucratic authority in London for regulating land fell to the Plantations Office, commonly referred to as the Board of Trade.
20. Glanville, “Preston the Surveyor,” 66.
21. John Jay, “Address to the People of Great Britain. [From the Delegates appointed by the several English Colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Lower Counties on the Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, to consider their grievances in General Congress, at Philadelphia, September 5th, 1774.] *The Correspondence and Public*

- Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston A. M., ed., (1763–1781). (4 vols, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1890–1893), vol. 2, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2326/219929>.
22. Governor Benjamin Harrison. Land Grant to George Washington, August 12, 1784. Library of Virginia Land Office Grants I, 1783–1784, p. 540 (Reel 50), <http://goo.gl/twrjUn>.
 23. Charles Mynn Thruston (1738–1812) of Frederick County, Virginia, recruited Thruston’s Additional Continental Regiment in March 1777 at the request of George Washington. He was an Episcopal minister who has been called a “fighting clergyman.” See John Walter Wayland, *A History of Shenandoah County, Virginia* (Strasburg: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1927).
 24. Thomas Hanson, “Extract from a Journal kept on the River Ohio in the year 1774, (April 7 – August 9),” in Reuben Gold Thwaites, and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore’s War, Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1905), 110–33. Hanson’s journal was copied in 1855 for Lyman C. Draper from the original in the possession of Mrs. Louisa Johnston.
 25. Neal Hammon, “Fincastle Surveys,” in John E. Kleber, ed., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 316–17. After the American Indian attacks, one group of surveyors was escorted home by Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner. John Floyd’s group returned via Pound Gap (on the present-day Virginia-Kentucky border). James Douglas’ party paddled downriver to New Orleans and returned to Virginia (and eventually to Smithfield) via boat. See also Neal O. Hammon, *Early Kentucky Land Records, 1773–1780* (Louisville, Ky.: Filson Club, 1992).
 26. Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia, 1746–1786, Washington County, 1777–1870* (Richmond: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1903), 146. Summers’ table on p. 146 is titled “Notable tracts of Land, Surveyed by John Floyd, Hancock Taylor, and James Douglas in 1774–1776, lying mostly in Kentucky.”
 27. Theodore J. Crackel, ed., *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008). Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN.html>.
 28. *The Writings of George Washington*, 191–92, <http://bit.ly/ZzEp35>.
 29. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: “Where blanks occur between brackets manuscript is mutilated and indecipherable.”
 30. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: “From a greatly mutilated original in the possession of Miss Nelly Campbell Preston, of Seven Mile Ford, Va., in 1930.” The authors do not know the present location of this letter.
 31. George Washington to William Preston, annotated by Preston, March 1774, folder 791, Preston Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The proximate source is only a typewritten transcript. The original was evidently in private hands and is perhaps now lost.
 32. Osborn, dissertation, part 2, 62.
 33. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 4, 345–47, <http://bit.ly/XcQnLK>.
 34. Hammon, *Early Kentucky Land Records, 1773–1780*.
 35. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 5, 1–3, <http://bit.ly/Uuj98e>.
 36. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 5, 46, <http://bit.ly/WmX1MK>.
 37. *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition*, <http://bit.ly/ZC3J8w>.
 38. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 5, 88–89, <http://bit.ly/VIZK4h>.
 39. Jim Glanville, “The Fincastle Resolutions,” *The Smithfield Review* 14 (2010), 69–119.
 40. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 5, 89–91, [http:// bit.ly/XBaKWQ](http://bit.ly/XBaKWQ).
 41. *The Writings of George Washington*, 278, <http://bit.ly/Vzzl9o>.
 42. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: “Of Augusta County, Va. He had been sheriff of Augusta and a delegate to the Virginia House of Burgesses; commissioner to the Shawnees and Delawares in 1757; surveyor of Montgomery County in 1771; colonel of Virginia Militia. He was wounded at Guilford Court House, N. C., in 1781 and died in 1783.”

43. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: "Col. William Christian, of Augusta County, Va. He studied law under Patrick Henry; was a delegate to the House of Burgesses and member of the committee of safety; lieutenant colonel of the First Virginia Regiment and was active on the frontier against the Indians; removed to Kentucky in 1785 and was killed in a raid by the Wabash Indians in 1786."
44. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: "Capt. Charles(?) Floyd." Floyd is, of course, John Floyd, not Charles.
45. Note from Fitzpatrick and Matteson: "Richard Henderson, of North Carolina. He was associate judge of the superior court. This land enterprise was the Transylvania Land Company, which acquired title from the Cherokees at the Watauga treaty to all the land lying between the Cumberland and Kentucky Rivers and the Cumberland Mountains south of the Ohio."
46. *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 5, 152–53, <http://bit.ly/UZPo2L>.
47. Peter Wallenstein, "The Grinch That Stole Southern History: Anthem for an Appalachian Perspective," *The Smithfield Review* 4 (2000), 67–82. Wallenstein says: "It is easy, when the Tidewater region of the South appears to be the center of the universe, to see all southern history from the perspective of that portion of the South. ... A[a] view from the mountains ... may give us a very different version of many portions of the history of 'the South.'"