

Governor John Floyd, Letitia Preston Floyd, and the Catholic Church*

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Introduction

Letitia Preston (1779–1852) was born at Smithfield Plantation in present-day Blacksburg, Virginia, and lived there until her marriage to John Floyd at the age of 24. For her biographical sketch see the companion article published in this issue of the *Smithfield Review*. Around 1820, as she approached the age of 40, Mrs. Floyd commenced a relationship with the Catholic Church that culminated three decades later, in the final year of her life, with her formal conversion to the faith. Specific documentary evidence about this relationship comes in six letters written to her by two different Catholic bishops and two other Catholic churchmen between the years 1843 and 1846.

This article consists mainly of these six letters, which are here published in full transcriptions for the first time, with added annotations and background information by the author. The six letters concern Mrs. Floyd's efforts to found a Catholic community in Burke's Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia, and her conversion to Catholicism.

With the death of her husband, Governor John Floyd, in 1837, Letitia Preston Floyd became a widow at the age of 58. She had been married to him for 33 years and had given birth to 12 children. At the time of the governor's death they were residing at Thorn Spring¹ in Pulaski County, Virginia, where they had lived for approximately two decades, or since about 1817. In 1839, two years after becoming a widow, Mrs. Floyd moved from Thorn Spring to Burke's Garden, to a home she called "Cavan." She lived at Cavan until her death there 13 years later, in 1852. The historian Ralph Mann has provided an excellent picture of what life was like in Burke's Garden during this final period of her life.² The six letters published here all come from this final period, and all were addressed to her at Burke's Garden. The letters deal principally with Catholic responses to her efforts

*This is one of three articles about Letitia Preston Floyd that appear in this issue of the *Smithfield Review*. The companion articles are a biographical sketch of her including some letters written by her and an article that describes her as a "Pioneer Catholic Feminist."

to establish a Catholic community in Burke's Garden, with several of them also urging her conversion to the Catholic faith.

The Floyd Family and Catholicism

Letitia Preston grew up in a Protestant household at the Smithfield Plantation. Her parents, William and Susanna Preston, had both been educated by Scottish Protestant clerics: William in Augusta County by the Aberdeen-trained Presbyterian minister John Craig and Susanna in Hanover County by the Edinburgh-trained Anglican minister the Reverend Patrick Henry (uncle and namesake of the founding father).³

John Floyd was born near present-day Louisville, Kentucky, in 1783, two weeks after his father had been killed by American Indians. His mother was Jane Buchanan (daughter of John Buchanan the surveyor and a ward of William Preston), and his stepfather was Alexander Breckinridge. Both his mother and stepfather were of Scotch-Irish extraction, so Floyd was no doubt raised in a Protestant, and probably Presbyterian, environment, and was educated at the local log schoolhouse.⁴

The association with, and conversion to, the Catholic church of the Floyd family was well described by an article published in the *New York Freeman's Journal* soon after Mrs. Floyd's death and reprinted in the February 5, 1853 edition of *The Tablet*.⁵ The article, titled "The Late Mrs. Letitia Preston Floyd, of Virginia, Her Conversion and Death," is in effect her obituary combined with a brief history of her family's relationship with Catholicism. The entire short article is reproduced below:

Our century has been renowned for the number of brilliant and eminent persons who have returned to the bosom of the Catholic Church. It is not as swelling the number of these, but as an edifying and consoling example of how souls of a high mould, sooner or later, find their true home in the bosom of the Church, that we devote a few lines to the memory of Mrs. Floyd.

Born, by her misfortune, outside of the Catholic Church, and remote from Catholic influences, she yet, by the instincts of a virtuous and noble nature, clung to the Catholic traditions of family and society that it is the misery of our times to see so fast dying out in the Protestant world. The proof of the excellent moral training of her family exists in the fact that of her surviving children no less than four are already garnered within the Catholic Church. Of the living we will not speak; we are only recording the memory of the dead.

Mrs. Floyd was the widow of the late General John Floyd, formerly Governor of Virginia; mother of ex-Governor Henry B. Floyd, sister of the late James P. Preston, ex-Governor, also, of Virginia, and aunt of the late Governor James McDowell of Virginia, and of the Hon. Wm. Campbell Preston, of South Carolina.

On the 12th of August last the Right Rev. Dr. Whelan, Bishop of Wheeling, had the satisfaction of receiving this lady into the Catholic Church,⁶ when she received the Holy Sacraments with the lively devotion and penitence that marks the true convert. Just four months from that date, on the 12th of December, after practising the duties of religion and enjoying its consolations, in the 74th year of her age she yielded up her soul to God at her residence, Burke's Garden, Tazewell Co., Va., and was buried according to the rites of the Church in a blessed grave⁷ by Rev. Mr. Parke, of Wytheville.

“Even in these days,” a friend writes to us, “when the Faithful are consoled and cheered by the conversion of so many that are good and great, the Church has not made conquest of a more elevated spirit, a warmer heart, or a more splendid intellect than hers for whom I request your prayers.”

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Mrs. Floyd's daughters Letitia, Lavalette, and Nicketti, were the first members of the Floyd family to formally convert to Catholicism. All were baptized at St. Peter's Church in Richmond. The church records do not give the precise dates, but the baptisms apparently occurred while their father was governor (1831–1834). The present-day Catholic historian Gerald Fogarty considers that Father Timothy O'Brien was the priest responsible for the “successful cultivation” of the Richmond elite for the Catholic church.⁸ The Catholic historian Joseph Magri gave “about 1832” as the conversion year of Mrs. Floyd's daughter Letitia and wrote that it “caused a sensation throughout the state.”⁹

The tenure of John Floyd as governor corresponds to the beginning of a period of rapid growth of Catholicism in Richmond at the time of building there of St. Peter's Church, which was consecrated in 1834. This rapid growth of Richmond Catholicism is evidenced by the records of baptisms and marriages during this church's early years. In 1834 and 1835 combined, 19 baptisms and 12 marriages took place at St. Peter's. In 1836, 28 baptisms and 17 marriages took place, and in 1837 there were 48 baptisms and 14 marriages.¹⁰

The best explanation that has been offered for the origin of the engagement of the Floyd family with Catholicism comes from a writer known to us only by his initials “JWJ.”¹¹ JWJ suggests the origin occurred when Congressman John Floyd sent two of his young sons to Georgetown-related Catholic schools in Washington City.

JWJ wrote “Perhaps no conversion ever occurred in this country which was so unexpected and surprising, and attended with such great consequences, as that of Miss Letitia P. Floyd ... the eldest daughter of [Governor and Mrs. Floyd].” JWJ added that Letitia’s mother (Mrs. Floyd, the governor’s wife) “was a member of the Preston family, which produced so many brilliant men and women, and was remarkable for her powers of conversation, in which she equaled any of the distinguished men of the day. She took the same interest in public affairs that her husband did, and kept well informed about them during her whole life.”¹²

As for the initial involvement of the Floyd family with Catholicism, JWJ explained that before Floyd became governor he “had been for a number of years a member of Congress, and, in order to have his sons near him, had caused two of them to be educated at Georgetown....”

John Floyd was first elected to Congress for the Fifteenth Congress which assembled in Washington City in March 1817 during the first two years of the presidency of James Monroe. Floyd’s two sons who attended Georgetown were William Preston Floyd (who was age 8 in 1817) and Benjamin Rush Floyd (who was age 6 in 1817). A Catholic school for secondary education that was associated with Georgetown Academy was opened in Washington, D.C., around 1821 and the two sons may have attended there, or possibly at an earlier Georgetown facility.¹³

Both William Preston Floyd and Benjamin Rush Floyd went on to graduate from Georgetown College. William Floyd received the A. B. degree in 1830 and the A. M. degree in 1836. Benjamin Floyd received the A. B. degree in 1832 and the A. M. degree in 1836. William Floyd made a valedictory address in 1830 that was “long remembered for its eloquence,” and in 1832 an address by Benjamin Floyd to the Philodemic Society at Georgetown was received with plaudits.¹⁴

Six Letters to Letitia Preston Floyd

Letter 1¹⁵

The letter below was written by Bishop Richard Whelan from Richmond on February 24, 1843, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke’s Garden. In 1842, Mrs. Floyd had proposed in a now lost letter to Bishop Whelan that Catholic colonists be sent to Burke’s Garden.¹⁶ This is Whelan’s response to her proposal. It is

noteworthy for Bishop Whelan's telling of his "attachments to the West." Six years later, he would propose that the Diocese of Richmond be divided into eastern and western sees. The Catholic Provincial Council in Baltimore in 1849 made this recommendation to Rome, and a Pontifical Brief in 1850 created the new Diocese of Wheeling with Whelan as its first Bishop.¹⁷ The Diocese of Wheeling originally encompassed (with the exception of the eight panhandle counties) all of present-day West Virginia counties and 17 and one-half counties in Southwest Virginia. In 1974, the Diocese of Wheeling was realigned to be coterminous with the state of West Virginia.¹⁸ Much of the letter consists of the bishop thanking Mrs. Floyd for a tub of butter.

Richmond, Feb, 24th 1843

My Dear Madam,

A few days since I received a letter from you which I read with much pleasure as a manifestation of your confidence & an evidence that you appreciated the sincerity of the interest I had expressed for the welfare of your estimable family. At the moment it was not convenient to reply and when this morning I determined to do so, judge of my surprise when I found that instead of replying to a letter of the last few weeks I was to answer a communication penned in November. No doubt you must have felt hurt that I should have remained so long seemingly indifferent to your kindness; unless perhaps your charity supplied an excuse for my delay. The letter was either lost sight of by the person to whom it was entrusted, or was allowed to remain in the [torn, length of about 15 alphabet letters absent] my knowledge that it was there. This will explain my apparent [torn, length of about 20 alphabet letters absent] explains also what had been somewhat of a mystery to myself. [torn, length of about 30 alphabet letters absent] large firkin [wooden tub] of butter for now some time since [ten letters in 3 words unreadable], possibly the sd. Mr. [torn, length of about 35 alphabet letters absent] could give no account of it; nor could I conjecture when [torn, length of about 25 alphabet letters absent] tho' I must admit, I strongly expected Lavalette [Mrs. Floyd's daughter] as the donor before(?) you will please, tho' late, accept my sincere thanks for your kind remembrance which has proven a most useful auxiliary at our table. Now you will permit me to tell you that your letter was as welcome an intruder as the firkin, & that I shall enjoy myself as much in the renderings of any little service to yourself & family as I could in making use of the fruit of your generosity.

I have made every exertion to send colonists to the garden [Burke's Garden], and I hope that my efforts will not be unsuccessful. Indeed

one of your own children would scarcely feel more pained at the idea of your giving up your house there, than would I. I wish to see you enjoying yourself many years yet in the midst of your hospitable and deserving family, & then leaving them in possession of comfort and contentment. Whatsoever I may be able to do in my humble way to effect this, shall be done. You are kind enough to observe that I would be a welcome visitant at the Garden, and I will not say that I shall allow the summer to pass without being there. My arrangements are still unsettled, but I am sure my attachments to the West will plead strongly when I begin to make up my mind. When the church at Lynchburg will be ready for dedication I am unable to say: but if your daughters desire to be present I shall not fail to give them due notice, & I am delighted to hear that they design to come to the ceremony. Present my kindest remembrance to each of the members of your family, Mr. Johnston and his mother, the Pole and his lady, & [torn, length of about 30 alphabet letters absent] Mr. Kelley.¹⁹ To yourself, my dear Madam, permit me to tender [torn, length of about 30 alphabet letters absent] & the assurance of my esteem

That God may bless you all is the ardent prayer of [torn, length of about 10 alphabet letters absent]

Yours most very sincerely
† Richard Vincent Whelan
Bp of Richmond

Letter 2²⁰

Bishop Richard Whelan wrote the letter below from Richmond on May 9, 1843, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke's Garden. A fascinating aspect of the letter is his reference to a letter written by Mrs. Floyd to his "Most Christian Majesty." In England, Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901. She married her Prince Consort, Albert, in February 1840. Judging from what Whelan wrote, Mrs. Floyd's letter was perhaps addressed to Prince Albert.²¹ Whelan also wrote that he had forwarded a letter from "Mr Kelly" to Ireland at the request of Letitia's daughter Lavalette and that Father Fox was working to get the church in Richmond completed.

Richmond May 9th 1843

Dear Madam,

Your last kind letter was deserving of a much earlier notice; but you are aware that it is not always in our power to render to each one

according to his deserts. I have been exceedingly occupied Since, & I must add that the difficulty of providing during these hard times for my large household has encroached upon Some of my already busy hours. Your letter convinces me too that you appreciate our increase of both during the Season of lent & the time immediately following Easter. I am just upon the point of setting out for our Synod which opens in Baltimore on the 14th Just. but my conscience would perhaps reproach me, if I did not beforehand make an acknowledgement for the very kind Imposition you have manifested & the zeal with which you are forwarding the religious views of your daughters: You are truly displaying the Spirit of "Old Virginia" in reaching across the Atlantic & lifting your petition to the throne itself. I hope his "Most Christian Majesty", as you very properly style him, will not deny your request & that you will be cheered by the sight of your children rejoicing in the consummation of their desires.

I have just received Lavalette's letter of March 1st inclosing one from Mr Kelly to a friend in Ireland. I have inscribed a few lines in the latter & forwarded it to its destination. Your daughter speaks to me both of this Church & the sale of a portion of your land. The latter shall be borne in mind during my approaching visit to the North, and I promise myself that my exertions will not [be] unavailing. Also the Church I hope that Rev Fhr [Father] Fox will now be found a useful agitant in pushing it to completion. I have just heard from him & he tells me he has visited the Garden. He writes in good Spirits & appears quite pleased. He is quite a zealous & active & pious young man & I expect much good from his assiduous labor. There is about him a simplicity & devotion that will abundantly compensate for more brilliant qualifications, & which fit him on a peculiar manner, I think, for his mission. L[e]t Lavalette therefore not be discouraged hearing return I may reply more at length to her letter; but in the mean time you will glean my thanks for the full & interesting Sheet I have just read. I must ask of you also to present my affectionate remembrance to her & her sister and all the other members & con[] of your excellent family with whom I met last Summer. May our Heavenly Father bestow on you all every blessings that appertain to this life & the next.

Most Sincerely & resply [respectfully] Your friend & Servt

Richard Vincent Whelan
Bp [Bishop] of Ri~ [Richmond]

Letter 3²²

The following letter was written by Father Edward Fox from Norfolk on August 13, 1844, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke's Garden. In early 1843, Bishop Whelan appointed Edward Fox as a circuit riding priest in western Virginia. There, Fox divided his time among Lynchburg, Wytheville, Burke's Garden, and some western counties. The letter was written while Fox was temporarily in Tidewater Virginia on "a begging trip in Norfolk."²³ It demonstrates that by August 1844 Father Fox was well acquainted with many residents of Burke's Garden, several of whom he names in the letter. Fox's short letter closes with a religious exhortation to Mrs. Floyd.

Norfolk Augst 13th – [18]44

Dear very dear Mrs. Floyd

Almost tired from begging and yet scarcely half equal to our debts, I, instead of being home to see you & any other dear friends am obliged to trouble you with the page I'm scraping – and to tell you that I dont know when I can enjoy the pleasure of seeing you, which indeed used be unalloyed pleasure to me – If Lavalette helped us with the little she has, it would expedite my return, and restore me to my little flock, & to the gratification above which I so anxiously desire – I too have become fond of the mountains & people about. I did think & do still that Lavalette owns a generous & sympathising heart – Won't she do it? I'm stationed here for a time only.

My best wishes to my sisters Lavalette Nicketti M^{rs} Floyd Darthula²⁴ M^{rs} Lewis²⁵ – yes, & to the poor Irishman & Lady, to Mr. Kelly affectionately, to Colonels Rush George & Doctor William;²⁶ in fact to all my Burke's Garden friends who are very dear to me – Certainly, M^{rs} Floyd, you are very dear to me – would that you would take my advice – in time & eternity it would inconcievably [*sic*] serve you – do once more to M^r Johnston Captain Matthews Captain John & Lady affectionate & best wishes

M^{rs} Floyd I am yrs procure a pupil [?] for the Bishop – in thanks & respect E. Fox

[ps] The Bishop & Rev^d M^r O Brien were well when last I saw them – about 2 weeks since. Dear M^{rs} Floyd, your term of existence is coming fast to a close – and shall it be that you will leave us without receiving the Sacrament of God your Saviour which He mercifully puts in your way?

oh M^{rs} Floyd – Reflect well.

Letter 4²⁷

The next letter was written by Bishop John Joseph Hughes from New York on January 8, 1845, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke's Garden. Its author was the fourth Bishop of New York (1842 to 1850) and the first Archbishop of New York (1850 to his death in 1864). A native of County Tyrone, Ireland, born in 1797, Hughes emigrated to the United States in 1817 at the age of 20, became a priest in 1826, and rose to great national prominence. He was a strong supporter of the Union cause during the Civil War and a correspondent of Abraham Lincoln. He has been characterized as one of America's foremost citizens and is said to have exhibited "towering character, genius for government, and intense patriotism." He was referred to as "Dagger John," both for following the Catholic practice of a bishop preceding his signature with a cross and, when provoked, his aggressive personality.²⁸

New York Jan'y 8 1845

Dear Madam

I have had the honor of receiving your letter of the 26 ulto which I read with great interest. I deeply regret that immigrants who arrive in this country with a view of settling on the soil as farmers should not be as convinced as I am of the advantages which they might enjoy in selecting your beautiful valley as the place of their residence. I shall not lose sight of the object, as set forth in your letter. But the great difficulty with me is the responsibility of giving advice. I should be right – but they, (having no experience of the Country) would think otherwise. I have not, at present, any prospects on the subject; but still you will not be surprised if you should hear from me again in relation to it.

I shall put a notice in the Truman's Journal for such a Dairyman, as, you want and if I can find one, such as I think will suit, I shall send him on.

Wishing you, dear madam, all the happiness and consolation of this holy season I have the honor to be

Your obt [obedient] Sert [Servant] in JCst [Jesus Christ]
† John Bp [Bishop] of N.Y.

Letter 5²⁹

Bishop Richard Whelan wrote the next letter from Richmond on May 8, 1845, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke's Garden. It demonstrates his ongoing effort to persuade Mrs. Floyd to convert to the Catholic faith, which, as noted above, did not come about until seven years later in 1852. We do not know from the record whether or not Whelan visited Burke's Garden in 1843, as he suggested in his letter. We do know he was there in 1852 to officiate at Mrs. Floyd's conversion ceremony. The reference in the letter to Carolina no doubt pertains to Mrs. Floyd's attending the marriage there of her daughter Eliza Lavalette in February of 1845.³⁰

Richmond May 8th 1845

My Dear Madam,

When I opened anew your last very kind letter & ascertained that it had been written just 4 months ago, I could scarce persuade myself of the reality. I will scarce be able to persuade you that there is not wanton neglect in my long silence, & yet I do assure you that it is not so. My time is so exceedingly occupied that days & weeks, nay months, run their course without my being aware almost of their quick succession. Your presumed absence from home & the wish to notify you that your very acceptable present had reached me safely induced me to defer my reply for a while. The gross neglect of the person to whom your kind token of remembrance was confided, in consequence of which it has never come to hand, made me put off from day to day an acknowledgement of your letter, still hoping that the enduring day would enable me to gratify you by the assurance that all was well. At length the arrival of Rev Fhr [Father] Fox apprized me of your return from Carolina & induced me to decide upon an immediate acknowledgement of your letter & intended Kindness. But if the rogue disappointed me in this I hope to avenge myself by partaking of butter & potatoe [*sic*] both with you during the coming summer. I shall write in a few days to our mutual friend, M^r Schreiber,³¹ to express to him your desire that he would accompany me in my expected jaunt to the Garden. Shall I not have the pleasure of meeting there M^{rs} Lewis & Lavalette? With you I regret that the latter did not select a Virginian for her partner. We cannot spare any of our small Catholic population, but particularly such as your daughter, such an ornament to the little Church by her personal qualifications no less than by her position in society. I think you were almost in duty bound to retain her, & now to make reparation to their Church, I see no other plan then to prepare yourself for admission. Do, my fond friend, do prepare for

this desirable event. Subdue the rebellious feelings of proud nature. I feel Sure that your intelligent & well informed mind will scarce allow you to admit any resting place between Catholicity & infidelity; I feel equally sure that Christianity carries with it too many evidences of truth to allow you to stake your everlasting hopes upon its rejection. Adopt then the part of prudence, take the safer course, Subdue proud nature, & make an humble & candid acknowledgement of fault, & I will almost guarantee that all difficulties will vanish. Consider the influence of your example for good or ill; how many may already have attempted before God to excuse or palliate their own neglect by your example; how many may still be led astray by it. It is now, my dear friend, the 11th hour for you, as you still have it in your power to repair much of the past, to do a vast deal of good, by acknowledging before men that Savior whom you wish to acknowledge you before his Father in Heaven. What a consolation will it be to me if in my approaching visit I shall be allowed to extend the grace of our Holy Religion to yourself, M^r Johnston & his mother. Apprize them of my hopes & for me ask them both to pray in the interval most earnestly to God that he may be pleased to enlighten their minds & exercise his gentle influence over their hearts.

With kindest remembrance to your daughter near you, to her husband & mother in law, & M^r Kelly, I remain, Dear Madam, with many thanks for your kindness

Most resply [respectfully] & Sincerely Yours
† Richard Vincent Bp of Ri

Letter 6³²

The final letter was written by Father Timothy O'Brien from Richmond on March 13, 1846, to Mrs. Floyd at Burke's Garden. We do not have a copy of the letter that was enclosed with this letter, but its import is readily apparent from what O'Brien says about it here. As demonstrated by several of the letters above, Mrs. Floyd was continuing her campaign to bring Catholics to Burke's Garden.

We know a good deal about O'Brien. He arrived in Richmond in 1832 and "commenced a new era of the Church in that city." From a small, rented rectory near the then-existing Catholic chapel in Richmond he raised funds to erect the church of St. Peter. The new church was dedicated in May 1834, and O'Brien wrote in a letter to Archbishop Whitfield in Baltimore that Governor Floyd had taken a pew in the new church.³³ The governor was apparently familiar with O'Brien from the time of this priest's first arrival

in Richmond. Writing in his diary for May 27, 1832, the governor recorded "I went to the chapel to hear Mr. O'Brien, who is a man of talents and a respectable orator."³⁴ Eventually, in 1850, O'Brien fell into a nasty dispute about the ownership of property (was it the church's or was it O'Brien's?) with the newly appointed, third bishop of Richmond, John McGill. O'Brien left Richmond in 1854 and moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, to administer a school founded by his brother, who was also a priest, and combat the local Know-Nothings.³⁵ O'Brien died in Lowell in 1857.³⁶

Richmond March 13th 1846

My D^r M^{rs} Floyd

On this same day I received your favor of the 24th Ult. I enclosed it in a letter to the Rev^d Mr Donelan of Washington, with a request that he would at once engage the Services of the young man who purposed to go to Burkes Garden. I have just rece^d the enclosed which will inform you of the result. I have thought it necessary to write you without a moments delay least you might be depending on him & neglect other arrangements. The reasons for not going I take to be obvious. I suspect the man does not Know the business he proposed to undertake & wishes to avail himself of any excuse to get off. I regret this disappointment very much for your Sake. Here he is not one who would be fit to undertake it.

I saw M^r Holmes³⁷ a day or two ago. We spen[t] [torn part of page] the day out at the Bishops & all seemed to be pleasa[nt] [torn part of page] I hope we shall always be as good friends as at presen[t] [torn part of page]. He seems very happy & has but one draw-back. It is that he is so far removed from his "darling wife & beautiful child" I hope he will Soon be able to effect a better arrangement for Mutual comfort. None will be more pleased than I. Make my compliments to M^{rs} Holmes & My other friends in & about the Garden & believe me

Very Sincerely & Respectfully
Yours I C [in Christ]
F Obrien

P.S. I fear I will not be able to See the Garden this Summer. Accept, however, my thanks for yr. invitation

Conclusion

We may conclude that Mrs. Floyd was casting her net very wide indeed in her search for Catholic immigrants for Burke's Garden—as evidenced by her communications both to a European monarch and to Archbishop Hughes, the leading Catholic American of her day. However her motives are not readily apparent, and Mrs. Floyd's exertions to bring Catholic immigrants to Burke's Garden after she moved further into southwest Virginia from Pulaski County after being widowed raise more questions than can be answered. Did she advocate the active importation of foreign workers? Did she favor an influx of poor Irish and possibly German Catholics? Why did she want immigrants? At present, it is not possible to answer these questions. The companion biographical sketch of her published in this issue of the *Smithfield Review* suggests many places where letters written by her presently unknown to students may be found. We may hope that future scholarship will be able to shed light on these questions.

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Endnotes

1. Thorn Spring is a large spring that debouches into Thorn Spring Creek. The house where the Floyds lived was situated on a low bluff above the spring, several hundred yards north of the intersection of the creek and Bob White Boulevard on what is today private property. The Floyd house was razed over a hundred years ago, and the successor house was torn down about twenty years ago. Other than a few outbuildings, there is little today to be seen at the site.
2. Ralph Mann, "Mountains, Land, and Kin Networks: Burkes Garden, Virginia, in the 1840s and 1850s," *Journal of Southern History* 58 (1992), 411–34. Mann wrote that Letitia Floyd's correspondence of the time shows how she "maintained cooperation among [her] children settled in various parts of mountain Virginia."

3. Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Blacksburg, Va.: Walpa Publishing, 1976), 69.
4. For Floyd's biography see Charles Henry Ambler, *The Life and Diary of John Floyd, Governor of Virginia, An Apostle of Secession, and the Father of the Oregon Country* (Richmond: Richmond Press for the Author, 1918). See also Nicholas Jackson Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies of the Virginia-Kentucky Floyd Families* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1912), 75–76, and Wikipedia entry at [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Floyd_\(Virginia_politician\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Floyd_(Virginia_politician)).
5. *The Tablet*, or *The International Catholic News Weekly*, has been continuously published in London, England, since 1840. Anonymous article online at <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/5th-february-1853/3/catholic-intelligence>. The *New York Freeman's Journal*, was published from 1949 to 1918. It was initiated by Archbishop John Hughes, one of Mrs. Floyd's correspondents as recorded by his letter in this article.
6. Her entry into the church occurred at her home "Cavan" in Burke's Garden, and probably near the big spring on Rhudy Branch about fifty yards north of the present-day Lutheran Church.
7. Her grave is in the Lewis family cemetery at Lynnside at Sweet Springs in present-day West Virginia.
8. Gerald P. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism: A History of the Catholic Church in Virginia* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 86.
9. F. Joseph Magri, "Virginia," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. Online at www.newadvent.org/cathen/15451a.htm. Mrs. Floyd's daughter Nicketti married John Warfield Johnston of Abingdon, who represented Virginia for thirteen years in the United States Senate when Virginia was readmitted to the Union after the Civil War. The *Encyclopedia* adds "The conversion of the Floyd and Johnston families led into the Catholic Church other members of the most distinguished families of the South."
10. James H. Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond: The Formative Years* (Richmond: Chancery Office, Diocese of Richmond, 1956), 67.
11. JWJ (initials only), "History of a Conversion," *The Catholic World: A Monthly Magazine of General Literature and Science*, 14 (1887), 844–45; online at <http://books.google.com/books?id=HroRAAAAYAAJ>.
12. JWJ wrote further "Mrs. Floyd was fond of the society of able men, and, not being at the time a member of any church, was in the habit of going where she could hear the best sermon regardless of denomination. Two priests came alternately to Richmond, one of whom was Father Shriber, who was a very able man, and whose sermons Mrs. Floyd delighted to hear, merely, however, as an intellectual treat. So, whenever it was his Sunday to preach in the little chapel to the mere handful of Catholics then constituting the congregation, she usually attended and often took her daughter with her. Of course the presence of the wife of the governor and her daughter could not be unknown to Father Shriber, and an acquaintance thus sprang up between the priest and his visitors."
13. Robert Emmett Curran, *The Bicentennial History of Georgetown University*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993), 93–94.
14. John G. Shea, *Memorial of the First Centenary of Georgetown College, D.C.: Comprising a History of Georgetown University* (Washington, D.C.: Published for the College by P. F. Collier, 1891), *seriatim*.
15. Richard Vincent Whelan, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from Richmond, February 24, 1843. Transcribed by Ryan Mays and Jim Glanville.
16. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 67.
17. Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 100–101. See also John Gilmary Shea, "Diocese of Wheeling," in *A History of the Catholic Church Within the Limits of the United States: From the First Attempted Colonization to the Present Time* (New York: John. G. Shea, 1886), 325–439.
18. Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Website online at www.dwc.org/boundary.html.

19. Mann in "Mountains, Land, and Kin Networks" says that George Kelly, a Catholic Irishman, was the neighbor in Burke's Garden of Letitia Floyd's son-in-law George Frederick Holmes, husband of Mrs. Floyd's youngest daughter, Lavalette.
20. Richard Vincent Whelan, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from Richmond, May 9, 1843. Transcribed by Cori Burner.
21. Prince Albert was not ever "His Majesty" in Britain. Victoria, not her husband, was the descendant of the previous British monarchs and as the hereditary Queen only she was "Majesty." Albert could be addressed as "Highness" or "Prince," but was not King and thus not "Majesty." Also, the title "his 'Most Christian Majesty'" was used by the Kings of France, bestowed officially upon them by the Papacy by 1510. The British rulers were styled "Defender of the Faith" for several hundred years, but not "Most Christian Majesty." Perhaps this letter was intended for the Pope? He too lived across the Atlantic and sat upon a throne and ruled a sizeable kingdom at that time. These American writers were clearly unsophisticated about European titles.
22. Edward Fox, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from Norfolk, August 13, 1844. Transcribed by Cori Burner.
23. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 83, 86, 89–90. Portions of this third letter are quoted by Fogarty.
24. Darthula was perhaps Darthula Thompson, a 12-year-old girl who, according to Internet genealogy sources, is listed in the 1850 census for Tazewell County, Virginia.
25. Mrs. Lewis was Mrs. Floyd's daughter Letitia Floyd Lewis (1814–1887) who was born near Blacksburg, Virginia, and was the third wife of William Lynn Lewis whom she married in 1837. Lewis lived for many years in South Carolina. The couple moved to Lynnside at Sweet Springs in Monroe County (now West Virginia) in 1848.
26. These are three of Mrs. Floyd's sons.
27. John Hughes, Bishop of New York, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from New York, January 8, 1845. Transcribed by Cori Burner.
28. Patrick Hayes, "John Hughes," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910); online at www.newadvent.org/cathen/07516a.htm. See also John Hughes (archbishop of New York) at [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hughes_\(archbishop_of_New_York\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hughes_(archbishop_of_New_York)).
29. Richard Vincent Whelan, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from Richmond, May 8, 1845. Transcribed by Cori Burner.
30. Mrs. Floyd's daughter Eliza Lavalette married George Frederick Holmes (a native of British Guiana) in South Carolina in February 1845. John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1982), 297.
31. This reference is probably to the Rev. Peter S. Schreiber, an Archdiocese of Baltimore priest who spent some time in Richmond. See Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 61–62. See also the "Individuals" archives of St. Mary's Seminary and University online at www.stmarys.edu/archives/collections/associated-sulpicians-of-the-United-States-archives/individuals/#schreiber.
32. Timothy O'Brien, letter to Mrs. Letitia Floyd at Burke's Garden from Richmond, March 13, 1846. Transcribed by Cori Burner.
33. Bailey, *A History of the Diocese of Richmond*, 62–72. The "new era" quote appears on page 62. See also the anonymous article "A Remarkable Priest: Many Converts Through Work of Rev. Timothy O'Brien," *The Sacred Heart Review* 59 (1918), 12; online at newspapers.bc.edu/cgi-bin/bosthonsh?a=d&d=BOSTONSH19180420-01.2.57#.
34. Ambler, *The Life and Diary of John Floyd*, 193.
35. Peter Condon, "Knownothingism" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910); online at www.newadvent.org/cathen/08677a.htm. In brief, Knownothingism was a fairly short-lived political movement antagonistic to recent American immigrants and favoring "nativism," interpreted as persons born in the United States. The movement had a particularly ugly anti-Irish and anti-Catholic flavor.

36. Fogarty, *Commonwealth Catholicism*, 104–108.
37. For Holmes, see Leonidas Betts, “George Frederick Holmes, Nineteenth-Century Virginia Educator,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76 (1968), 472–84. Holmes was born in 1820 in British Guiana and sent to England at the age of two to be educated. He moved to Virginia in 1838 to teach school in Caroline County, Virginia, later became a lawyer in South Carolina, and eventually a professor at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. In 1845 he married Lavalette Floyd, the youngest daughter of Governor John and Letitia Floyd. Betts writes: “In 1847, as a result of the influence of former President John Tyler and Laetitia Floyd, his mother-in-law, Holmes was given a position as professor of political economy at the College of William and Mary.” He died in Charlottesville in 1897 and is buried in the cemetery at Lynnside. John Newton Harman in *Annals of Tazewell County, Virginia* (Tazewell, Va.: Self published, 1922) reports that the Tazewell County records show that Holmes renounced allegiance to Queen Victoria in 1847 and became an American citizen.