

A Sketch of Letitia¹ Preston Floyd and Some of Her Letters*

Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays

© 2015

Introduction

This article demonstrates that Letitia Preston Floyd (1779–1852) of Smithfield Plantation, Thorn Spring Plantation, and Burke’s Garden, was a remarkable woman whom history has badly neglected.²

As evidence of that neglect, the authors are unaware of any published encyclopedia entry devoted to her, and note that even in today’s Internet age of abundant online resources, it is impossible to find an adequate electronic biography of her.³ Furthermore, the principal genealogical source for her is almost entirely devoted to her husband’s biography.⁴ Surprisingly, despite many efforts to find one, there is no known picture of her.

Letitia Preston Floyd wrote many letters, very few of which have been published. Some of her letters are published here for the first time while others are reprinted from obscure and little-known sources. Her letters reproduced in this article will give the reader a firsthand opportunity to assess the strength of the lady’s character, her abilities, and her historical significance.

A contemporary assessment of the quality of her character comes from her grand niece Sally Campbell Preston McDowell (1822–1895), who wrote of the Preston family in an 1856 letter to her future husband, John Miller, that “the women were clever & the men handsome” and added that “Aunt Floyd [Letitia Preston Floyd] was a wonder.”⁵ Edward Pollard wrote in *Lee and His Lieutenants* that “Letitia Preston, daughter of William Preston the surveyor, [was] a lady widely noted for extraordinary intellectual gifts and attainments.”⁶ This article presents some evidence in her own words for just how “wonderful” Mrs. Floyd was.

Letitia Preston (Mrs. Floyd) was born at Smithfield Plantation, Montgomery County, Virginia, on September 29, 1779. She was the tenth child of William and Susanna Preston. She married John Floyd Jr., the son of

*This is one of three articles about Letitia Preston Floyd that appear in this issue of the *Smithfield Review*. The companion articles are an article about the relationship she and her husband had with the Catholic church and an article that describes her as a “Pioneer Catholic Feminist.”

her father's "best beloved friend," and lived successively at Christiansburg (circa 1807–1818), Thorn Spring in present-day Pulaski County⁷ (circa 1818–1840), and as a widow at Burke's Garden in Tazewell County (1840–1852). She was the mother of twelve children, seven of whom survived to adulthood and lived to be married.⁸ Three of her children died very young, two after a few months and one after a year and a half, and two died as young children (aged 6 and 11) of scarlet fever at Thorn Spring Plantation in 1833. Her child-bearing years lasted from 1805 to 1827 or from the age of 25 (one month short of her 26th birthday) to the age of 47 and a half years.

Because her husband enjoyed a successful career as a Virginia congressman and governor, she had a ringside seat for some of the most important political events of the 1820s and 1830s. This was the time of the Nullification Crisis and the controversial presidency of Andrew Jackson, as well as the period during which arose the great American question of the balance between the powers of the federal government and the separate states. Letitia for a few years was a part of significant American history. Necessarily, much of her life was occupied by the mundane daily business of child-rearing and plantation-running. In contrast, for a year or two in the early 1830s she lived amidst the high drama of the great national political discussion of states rights during the Nullification Controversy, which was "one of the more dramatic events in United States history."⁹

This article is organized chronologically into six principal periods of her life:

- Childhood and marriage
- Her first thirteen years of marriage, during the latter part of which her husband served in the Virginia General Assembly
- Her twelve years as wife of a United States congressman
- Her four years as wife of the governor of Virginia
- The period of her husband's final illness at Thorn Spring Plantation, during which she served as his political and business adviser
- Her years of widowhood, passed in relatively isolated Burke's Garden

The article includes transcripts of fourteen of her letters including at least one from each of these six periods of her life. Twelve of the fourteen letters are here printed for the first time in the body of historical literature.

Following our examination of the sixth period of her life comes a critical discussion of the newly uncovered (in January 2014) *original* copy of Letitia Preston Floyd's only well-known letter, written in 1843 and

addressed to her son as “My Dear Rush.” The final section of the article offers a discussion of library repositories and other places where additional letters written by Letitia Preston Floyd may reside or may come to light.

Childhood and Marriage (1779–1804)

At the time of Letitia Preston’s birth, the outcome of the American Revolution was still undecided. The summer of 1779 had been a troubling time for her father William Preston (1729–1783). Parties of Tories were in the neighborhood and her father’s life was under threat. She was, however, too young to remember any of this, or to remember her father, who died suddenly two years after the Revolution had been won.¹⁰

Today, visitors who tour the restored Smithfield Plantation house are shown the upstairs bedroom in the west wing of the house, which is interpreted as the children’s room. Very likely, it was while sleeping here in this room that Letitia Preston grew to womanhood. Her mother, the widowed Susanna Smith Preston (1740–1823), ruled the household with a firm hand, supported by Letitia’s older brothers, the eldest of whom, John,¹¹ was 15 years older than she was. Daily operations of the plantation were conducted by overseers, who would have managed and supervised the many plantation slaves. While no direct evidence seems to have survived, we may speculate that Letitia was partly raised by the house slaves at Smithfield Plantation.

In keeping with the strong Preston family and Presbyterian tradition of giving their girls a good education, Letitia would have been well taught and tutored at Smithfield. While again we lack direct evidence, the circumstantial evidence is that Letitia’s likely first instructor was the Irish-born Peter Byrns.¹² He was a teacher at Smithfield from 1780 to 1793 (and perhaps until a year or two later). Letitia may well have been under his instruction into her middle teenage years. Another possible teacher of Letitia at Smithfield was Aaron Palfreyman.¹³

The authors have found only a single document related to Letitia’s youth and childhood¹⁴ and none of her letters. The first letter of hers we know of is one written in November 1803, when she was two months past her 24th birthday. This 1803 letter, reproduced below in full, was written by Letitia Preston from Franklin County, Kentucky, to her mother Susanna at Smithfield, from the home of her brother-in-law Nathaniel Hart. Hart, who was raised in North Carolina, in 1797 married Letitia’s older (by six years) sister Susanna Preston (1772–1833). The couple moved to Kentucky soon after their marriage and lived there for the rest of their lives.¹⁵

In the letter, Letitia repeatedly apologizes for her delay in returning from Kentucky to Smithfield, offers the explanation that she has been

detained in Kentucky by her sister's "critical situation at this period," and explains that Mr. Hart will return with me "as soon as she [her sister] is recovered." However, Letitia also told her mother that she had met John Floyd, the son of her father's "best beloved friend," and a man of good mind, person, and "equality of station." Letitia's father, and the father-in-law she would never know, had a many-year correspondence which has recently been published.¹⁶

In distant Kentucky, Letitia had fallen in love and found the man she planned to marry. He was four years younger than she was, but their marriage would indeed prove to be one of equals. Here is what Letitia wrote:¹⁷

Mr. Hart's, Novr. 30th 1803

To what shall I appeal but to maternal tenderness for the extenuation of an offence against that tenderness? Is not the bosom of a parent the safest and only tribunal for a child to trust its cause and feelings to? From the conviction that it is, let me ask of my Mother its operation in favor of her remaining orphan daughter. Oh! shall I confess that her protection is forsaken for that offered by a newly found friend, and then beg her to receive that friend as a Son, whose wishes, whose virtues, aspire to the choice? His evident claims of mind, person, equality of station, added to the circumstance of being the Son of my Father's best beloved friend Colo Floyd, will I trust place this request beyond the imputation of indiscretion. And yet farther, will I trust place this request by the consent and presence of my dear, dear Mother. This event (should it meet your approbation) will necessarily be postponed until my return to Virginia. In the meantime it will be my sincere desire that a strict silence be observed even to my brothers and sisters, from the fear that some incident may occur which would place me on an unpleasant footing and Besides, the possibility of its getting, through channel, to the ears of some¹⁸ of my relations in this Country who would enjoy a feind-like [*sic*] pleasure in destroying every prospect that tended to the promotion or advancement of my happiness in any degree whatever. I shall rely on your goodness in this point as in every other where the welfare of your child is at stake. And now a pardon for my breach of promise in not returning home at the time appointed. But the causes of my detention were unforeseen and are such as humanity compelled me to listen to. Susanna's critical situation at this period and a promise from Mr. Hart to return with me as soon as she is recovered, left me no alternative but that of staying. This conclusion has cost me much. To be deprived of your society at a time when it would be most cordial, is a loss I am scarcely able to sustain. A few weeks more will restore me to the bosom of my beloved

Mother. When I hope to receive her blessing and approbation to a measure that will secure my happiness on the solid basis of domestic endearment and confidence. Let me have it from your own hand that you are well and that I shall be remembered by you. May God bless you my dear parent and grant you health and tranquility, and make the evening of your life as happy as the morning has been prosperous.

Wishing it in sincerity I remain affectionately

Your Daughter

L. Preston

[ps] Susanna joins in love to the family.

The First Thirteen Years of Marriage (1804–1817)¹⁹

On May 13, 1804, Letitia Preston married John Floyd in Franklin County, Kentucky. According to Nicholas Floyd, family tradition holds that John and Letitia Floyd were married with both being dressed in black satin.²⁰ She was 24, he had just turned 20. She returned to Virginia, so that she could be near her immediate family, while he entered the University of Pennsylvania to complete his study of medicine. In addition to a brief period as a student at Dickinson College, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Floyd had earlier read medicine with a Dr. Ferguson in Louisville, so after marrying was able to graduate as a doctor in a relatively short time in 1806. We can infer from one of her letters that Letitia must have spent some time in Philadelphia while her husband was a student there, but we do not exactly know either when she was there or how much time she spent there.

After graduation, Dr. Floyd took up a short-lived medical practice in Lexington, Virginia, but soon moved to Christiansburg, Virginia, where, Charles Henry Ambler says, “he soon acquired a wide and favorable reputation as a physician.”²¹ We do not know exactly where the couple was living during the first six years of their marriage. However, we can get some notion from the birthplaces of Letitia’s children: Susanna Smith Floyd was born at Smithfield in March 1805; John Buchanan Floyd was born at Smithfield in March 1806; George Rogers Clark Floyd (who died in infancy) was born in Montgomery County in November 1807; William Preston Floyd was born in Christiansburg in January 1809; George Rogers Clark Floyd (the second child so-named) was born in Christiansburg in September 1810; and Benjamin Rush Floyd was born at Smithfield in December 1811. Dr. Floyd was appointed a justice of the peace of Montgomery County in June 1807.

Dr. Floyd was a surgeon in the Virginia Militia from 1807 to 1812, and was later appointed a surgeon with the rank of major to Lieutenant Colonel James McDowell’s Flying Camp²² during the War of 1812. John Floyd’s

political career began in 1814 with his election to the Virginia House of Delegates as a representative for Montgomery County. He served only one term in the state legislature, at the sessions of 1814 and 1815. It was during these years that Letitia must have grown accustomed to the prolonged absences of her husband on military or political duties which came to be a feature of their marriage until the final four years of her husband's life, when he finally gave up public office.

Ambler states that before Dr. Floyd entered the General Assembly in 1814, the Floyds moved to Thorn Spring Plantation in Montgomery County (in present-day Pulaski County), where he continued to practice for a number of years, and earned "a warm place in the hearts of the country folk who knew him." Nicholas Floyd notes:

Returning to reside in the home State of his ancestors the young couple made their home in Pulaski County on a beautiful estate known—or named by them—Thorn Spring.²³ Here Dr. Floyd soon won distinction in his profession to such an extent that within five years his home and all suitable buildings on the plantation were converted into an impromptu sanitarium to meet the requirements of patients from a distance, who needed and demanded protracted medical or surgical treatment. And here one of the two youngest sons of his Uncle Charles' numerous family (Nathaniel, ten years his junior), joined him to read medicine and assist in the dispensary of the sanitarium.²⁴

The land at Thorn Spring was a bequest to Letitia from her father. He left her 900 acres of land at Thorn Spring in the 1781 codicil to his will.²⁵ When the Floyds moved there in 1814 there was a residual 400 acres. Over half of Letitia's land had been sold nine years earlier on 5 November 1805 in a deed from "John Floyd and Letitia his wife late Letitia Preston of the County of Jefferson and Commonwealth of Kentucky" to Samuel Caddell for 500 acres "being the upper [northern] part of a larger tract of nine hundred acres."²⁶ Presumably, the Floyds sold a substantial portion of the Thorn Spring tract to finance the medical education of the doctor. Letitia Preston Floyd, the seventh child of Letitia and John Floyd, was born "near Blacksburg" in March 1814. Eliza Lavalette Floyd, their eighth child, was born at Thorn Spring in December 1816.²⁷ These dates suggest that the Floyds took up permanent residence at Thorn Spring in the latter part of 1814. This was to remain their home and base of operations for over twenty years. It was John Floyd's last home (for 23 years until his death), and Letitia's home until 1839.

After the death of their father at the relatively young age of 52, Letitia's brother, John Preston,²⁸ became the *de facto* male head of the Smithfield

Plantation. John Preston served in both the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates and as a major general in the Virginia militia. The following letter to him from his sister illustrates the frequent geographical separation of wives (such as Letitia herself) from husbands who took up military and political positions. Here is her 1807 letter which tells him of the death of his daughter in his absence:²⁹

My dear Brother

Oh how unable am I to fulfil the task imposed on me. I am requested by [y]our afflicted wife to tell you your precious little Mary died this morning about 3 o'clock. I cannot offer any consolation [for this] senslas [senseless] situation has convinced me nothing but time can quiet that agony of grief which as parents we feel in the death of promising and beloved children. Support it my dear Brother as becomes the father & Husband. Polly will delay the interment until your return which we expect on tomorrow evening. Sister Madison will be with her at Smithfield tomorrow evening. With the fullest sympathy for your misfortune.

I am Dr. Brother your affect[ionate and] honorable Sister L Floyd
Roanoke Sepr. 24th 1807.

The daughter, Mary, was only a few months old. The Polly referred to in the letter was Mary Radford Preston, the first wife of John Preston. She bore him seven children and died before reaching the age of 30. We do not know the exact significance of the letter being annotated as written from "Roanoke."

Despite John Floyd's medical practice and militia service, during the years 1807–1812 he and his wife were able to occasionally travel together. Thus in May 1811, he wrote to John Preston telling of their arrival in New York City.

Sir, We arrived here yesterday, all safe, except a good deal sea-sickness and flea bites but they were not the worst bites we have met with, but that's no surprise; I am however fearful that our expedition has not been or will be attended with such consequences as were to be [] as Letitia complains very much today particularly of her breast³⁰ and appressed respiration but we still hope for better prospects ... Laetitia desires her love to you and your lady and the rest of our friends in Richmond. I am sir, respectfully yours John Floyd.³¹

Strangely, while we have no picture of Letitia Floyd, we do know that one day at the age of 32 she was flea-bitten and suffered from "appressed respiration." In 1811, travel was an ordeal even for the wealthy.

Letitia Preston Floyd wrote the following letter from Christiansburg to her brother John Preston in Richmond on July 26, 1812. At this time, her brother had served for two years as the treasurer of Virginia, an office that he was to hold for a decade.³² In the letter, she inquires about medicines for which she had paid, and asked her brother to give a box of bones to Dr. Barton that her brother had apparently failed to transmit.

[torn] Previous to your leaving this County I had enclosed the check you furnished me to Mr. Cartson Radford with a list of the medicines wanted. As I have not heard from him since I feel apprehensive he has not received my letter. I am therefore compelled [torn] you about the matter and beg of [torn] to make some enquiry respecting it and [] know the result by the first opportunity [torn] is likewise a Letter here from Dr. Barton about his box of Bones which I pray you to convey him--Doctor Floyd has not yet returned but expected every hour--Brother Frank's family left this yesterday on their way to the Springs. Mother continues [failing?]. Nancy much as she was [torn] anxiety for your arrival now [torn] is advancing we hope nothing will prevent your comin[g] [torn] your family along. My love [torn] believe me dear Brother to be your affectionate Sister L Floyd.³³

As noted above, Letitia's husband Dr. John Floyd had received much of his medical training in Pennsylvania, and part of it as a student of the American founding father Dr. Benjamin Rush.³⁴ Rush was a Pennsylvania physician and chemistry professor, and a Revolutionary era patriot who signed the Declaration of Independence, served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Second Continental Congress, and as Surgeon General for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Rush died on April 19, 1813.

Dr. Rush's namesake, Benjamin Rush Floyd, was the sixth child of John and Letitia Floyd, born on December 10, 1811, at Smithfield Plantation. Some time before the baby reached the age of two years, Mrs. Floyd had apparently communicated with Dr. Rush and told him that her young son was named after him. That knowledge prompted Rush to send a charming letter to his namesake. It is reproduced as the second letter below.³⁵ Later, three months after Dr. Rush died, Mrs. Floyd sent his letter, accompanied by a transmittal letter, to the editor Hezekiah Niles of *The Weekly Register*, a Baltimore-based weekly news magazine.³⁶ The editor published both letters. The transmittal letter is reproduced in full immediately below, followed by the reply from Dr. Benjamin Rush to his namesake.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE WEEKLY REGISTER. SIR—Convinced of the importance of the enclosed letter on the conduct and prospects of a beloved son, I thought the best deposit I could make of so rich a legacy for him, was to obtain a place for it in your *truly American* paper. To attempt to eulogize the character of its illustrious author, would be an undertaking far beyond my capacity. The simple story of gratitude may be told in a few plain words. To the friendship and skill of the immortal Doctor Rush, my little family owe the lives and health of both parents. An impulse of a mothers heart prompted me to name a very promising child after the idolized friend of my husband.—Hearing of this circumstance, that truly benevolent and great man addressed the subjoined letter to my son. “He thus, though dead, does still befriend.”

With much esteem, I am sir, your constant reader. LÆTITIA FLOYD.
Christiansburg, Va. July 7th, 1813.

Dr. Benjamin Rush’s reply:

PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 21, 1812
To Master Benjamin Rush Floyd

My dear name-sake!—Your father has conferred a name on you which one of the dictionaries says is “proverbially worthless.” But it is possible for you to remove the ideas that are naturally associated with it, by your good conduct, in which respect I hope you will be more successful than I have been. May you be kept by a kind Providence from all the errors and follies that characterized my youth, and from the controversies and bitter persecutions that attended my middle life, and may your old age be blessed as mine has hitherto been with good health, a faithful Wife, dutiful children, and a competency of the good things of this world. For the attainment of these blessings permit me to advise you to begin in childhood, to honor and obey your parents, to learn your catechism, and to commit passages in the Bible to memory. As you advance in life, go constantly to a place of worship; avoid bad company, and be very attentive to your studies.

The less time you spend in fishing and hunting and other youthful amusements, the better. In reviewing my life I have often felt pain in recollecting the many innocent birds I killed for mere sport, for I had flesh enough and of a better kind than theirs to eat at any time I pleased, both at home and at the country school at which I passed my youth. I have been ashamed likewise, in recollecting how much time

I wasted when a boy in playing cat and fives and steal-clothes, &c. all of which consumed so many precious hours that might have been more profitably employed in getting my lessons, or reading instructing books.—In middle life avoid propagating new and unpopular opinions; but if you are impelled by a sense of duty to do so, never reply to anything that may be said to your disadvantage upon the account of them, for scandal will die much sooner of itself than you can kill it. Live temperately, that is, eat sparingly of simple food, and avoid tasting spirituous liquors in every part of your life. To a conformity to this advice I owe much of my present health, and pleasure in business and study, and probably the prolongation of my life. Adieu! my dear boy. May God bless you, and make you a comfort to your parents and an ornament to society!

From your friend and name-sake,

BENJAMIN RUSH

We reproduce below the fourth and final letter from this period of Letitia's life, which she wrote on June 20, 1815, to her oldest brother, the treasurer of Virginia. The letter came from Solitude, a Preston family property that still stands much restored as the oldest remaining structure on the Virginia Tech campus.³⁷ In the letter, she asked her brother to assist in getting a pension for the old soldier Nicholas Reeder, to whom she had been extending credit to purchase grain.³⁸

Solitude June 20th 1815. Dear Brother Sometime in April last Nicholas Reeder got Dr. Floyd to draw an order on the Treasury for his pension with the intention of sending it down by Barger or Ballard. Neither of them going down as expected the order was retained. The Doctor expected to see you on your way down and give it to you then. Failing in these calculations Reeder has been much pushed for money and insists on my making the application to you to procure the pension for him and send it by some private conveyance. If it is not out of your line of business or duty to do so, it will confer a favor on me as well as the poor old soldier in as much as I have advanced money to him (to buy grain) on the Faith of his pension—Enclose the money to me in small notes by the earliest private opportunity and at his request pay yourself out of it the postage of the present letter—Your Family are all well and are at Smithfield to day with the intention of hearing Sam [Thichell] preach in Blacksburg. James Preston's Family have been very ill with a fever and the youngest I think is in eminent danger—Your Friends, except them are all well in this quarter—with a sincere wish for the preservation of your health I am your affet Sister L Floyd

The Congressional Years (1817–1829)

For a student of history, these sixteen years of Letitia's life are interesting because of her involvement through her husband at an extremely high level at the very center of American political life.

How much time did she spend in Washington City and how much at Thorn Spring? We cannot answer that question with any certainty, but from the available evidence it seems that she spent most of her time at home on the plantation while making only occasional visits to Washington City. Similarly, it seems that her husband made only occasional visits home. The Oregonian historian John Schroeder says that Floyd was living at Brown's Hotel in Washington in 1820.³⁹



Figure 1. The site of the Thorn Spring Plantation house located on private property in modern-day Pulaski County near the intersection of Old Oregon Trail (a modern name) and Newbern Road. All that remains today is bare soil and a few decrepit outbuildings. The Thorn Spring lies in the valley just beyond the buildings. Photograph by Jim Glanville, March 2014.



Figure 2. The Thorn Spring. When the authors visited in March 2014 the spring was producing an estimated 600–800 gallons per minute. Photograph by Jim Glanville, March 2014

In this section we present three of Letitia's letters: In 1821 she wrote to her sister-in-law, Caroline H. Preston, in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1822 she wrote to her brother John Preston at nearby Horseshoe Bottom Plantation,

which was situated at the present-day site of the Radford Arsenal, about six miles west of Smithfield and fifteen miles northeast of Thorn Spring. In 1829 she described her experience at the inauguration of President Andrew Jackson.

The first letter⁴⁰ went to her sister-in-law telling of the death of her sister-in-law's husband, William Preston, at Smithfield, and was written by Letitia from Thorn Spring on January 25, 1821. It is published here for the first time.

My dear Sister,

The painful task has devolved on me of communicating to you the afflicting intelligence of the death of your devoted Husband.⁴¹ This sad misfortune took place on Tuesday, the 24th at 15 minutes past nine o'clock at night. His entire confinement since the first of November terminated in a dropsy⁴² which closed his unparalleled sufferings without a struggle or groan. Never a sigh or word betrayed aught of diminished fortitude. He died as he lived, satisfied with the justice and goodness of his Creator. A friend to all honest men and the foe of scoundrels, his remains will be taken to Smithfield tomorrow and interred by the side of our Father, at his special request. An increasing wish to see you and Hancock [Caroline's seven year old son] occupied many of his agonized moments.

... For the sake of his children he directed me to enclose to you a list of those friends and neighbors that visited him constantly. He wishes them to keep it in mind. They were his friends and to show them respect accordingly. Oh my Sister what a shield and stay his precious family have lost. I hope God will enable them to bear this sad bereavement.

His beloved remains are still, in our house. Tomorrow they will be taken to Smithfield accompanied by many friends and on Sunday be committed to their parent earth.

Sister Madison begs her love to you and dear Daughters. Accept the same from

Your afflicted Sister
Letitia Floyd

The next of Letitia's letters (transcribed below) was written at Thorn Spring Plantation on September 15, 1822 and sent to her brother John Preston at his plantation at Horseshoe Bottom.⁴³ From this letter we learn the names of some of the Preston/Floyd family slaves (Emanuel, Lucius, Nancy, Cynthia, Amy, and Sally, and possibly Armistead). Such knowledge is rare. We also learn that Dr. Floyd was absent, with the slave Lucius, on a trip to Kentucky. In sum, the letter gives a brief glimpse of life on a busy, working plantation.

Dear Brother

Manuel arrived a few hour ago in verry low [state?]. I fear part recovery. My Husband left home this day two weeks with Colo. McDowile⁴⁴ for Kentucky.⁴⁵ I am sincerly sorry it has so happened I can [illegible] do little for your Slave but as the poor creature is so solicitous to stay I have thought it right to indulge him and will make an experiment of the remedies Dr. Floyd has treated dropsy so successfully with. In order to do so it is necessary to have a gallon of Hard Cider. There is no fruit in this neighborhood and I have directed Armistead to bring it up tomorrow with a handful of parsley roots and [toss] with a quantity of Horse radish roots. The drugs necessary I will furnish. I must state the fact of my present situation to you and let you know that I am unable to do for Emanuel what his low condition requires. Dr. Floyd took Lucius to Kentucky—Nancy is the only Servant I have whose time is much taken up with my poor little sick Baby⁴⁶ Cynthia has to milk, churn, wash, and feed my Beeves. Amy cooks—Manuel will want clean clothes every other day and his Seaton [?] and Blisters dressed twice a day and his drinks handed at least three times a night to him. If you will send his Aunt Sally to nurse I will give him all possible attention. If you have time to spare it will give me sincere pleasure to see you here. I have heard nothing from Jas. McDowell but dread the worst. Sister Madison is with me. Accept the affection of your Sister—Laetitia Floyd

We now turn to briefly discuss the congressional career of Letitia's husband, Dr. John Floyd.⁴⁷

John Floyd entered Congress in April 1817 as the representative of Virginia's fifth congressional district.⁴⁸ He went on to serve six consecutive two-year terms in Congress before declining to seek reelection in 1828.⁴⁹ Over the entire course of his congressional career, Floyd was a supporter of Andrew Jackson but in the end lost his hoped-for reward for his devotion. Ambler says that Floyd declined congressional reelection in 1828 with the expectation that he would be invited to join Jackson's cabinet,⁵⁰ or be called to "some higher place in the federal service."⁵¹ However, as we learn from Letitia's letter reprinted below, her husband was offered only the territorial governorship of Arkansas, which he declined. Floyd's disappointment in failing to secure a prominent position in the Jackson administration was one factor in soon making him a bitter opponent of the president. Historian Charles Pinnegar said that the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828 was "pivotal to Floyd's career" and that in its wake Floyd "began a five year tirade against the administration."⁵²

Schroeder has provided an assessment of John Floyd's twelve-year congressional career.⁵³ Oregon historians have been long interested in Floyd, who bears the sobriquet "Father of the Oregon Country," which originated in the title of Ambler's biography of Floyd. Schroeder wrote that in Congress, Floyd had honest intentions and liked tackling gigantic projects. Because he sincerely espoused consistent states rights principles, in domestic matters he often inflexibly adopted narrow and extreme positions. In contrast, in matters of foreign affairs, his zeal and imagination led him to advocate ambitious and bold measures. His commitment to expanding the United States to the Pacific was, says Schroeder, "a result of his aggressive personality and frontier heritage."

Genealogist Nicholas Floyd summed up Dr. Floyd's congressional career by saying, "During his term in Congress his brilliant speeches on the Northwest Boundary question aroused the entire country, the North as well as the South, to the importance of taking some decisive action looking to the safeguarding of our territorial rights in that distant region. And it is to his untiring efforts, largely if not chiefly, and to the tenacious and comprehensive grasp of his mind upon the subtle intricacies of the subject, that we are indebted for the fact that the American flag floats over every foot of the 'Oregon Territory.'"⁵⁴

Charles Henry Ambler characterized Dr. Floyd's congressional years as a period when he served as a "Spokesman of the Frontier." Ambler wrote that after the American Revolution the new nation centered its interest "in the West, in the Indian wars, our relations with Spain, and our efforts to acquire and settle new territory," and that "[a]s a spokesman of these interests, if for nothing else, Floyd deserves a place in history."⁵⁵

John Floyd had become a supporter of Andrew Jackson in 1818, when the general came under congressional censure for his unauthorized military incursion into Spanish Florida to attack Indian raiders based there. Floyd, no doubt recalling the death of his own father at Indian hands, became one of Jackson's staunchest defenders.⁵⁶ Both men wanted Spain to transfer Florida to the United States, a transfer that occurred through negotiations in 1819. A decade later, Floyd took a prominent part in Jackson's successful presidential election campaign, calling Jackson "the only man capable of bringing the government back to true states rights principles."⁵⁷

President Andrew Jackson was inaugurated for the first time on March 4, 1829 and that day held a reception at the White House. In the letter⁵⁸ reprinted below, sent from Washington City to Captain Benjamin Howard Peyton⁵⁹ and dated March 13, 1829, Letitia describes attending the reception and meeting the president. Later that day the reception brought a

surging crowd of rowdy Jackson supporters to the White House and events got somewhat out of hand.⁶⁰ While there, Letitia was impressed by “[s]o many courtesies—so many greedy applicants—so many beautiful women.”

Dear Howard—

I designed writing to you some days ago but from the hurry of trifles I have put it off until this time. I can only say that I wished every friend I have had been present at the Inauguration. Never could I have imagined such a spectacle. The interchange of feeling between the people and President surpassed description. The old Hero was appalled at the majesty of the multitude.

We followed in the train to the Presidents house. Gen. Jackson received me kindly—he has offered your Uncle the Government of Arkansas which Dr. Floyd has declined accepting.

Since I came here I became acquainted with Mr. Herst from Louisville, Mrs. M. Popes Lawyer—he tells me Maria refuses to confirm her Mothers sale. Judging you would be glad to get her share in the Tract I told Herst I knew a man that would give her two thousands dollars for her share. I now write to apprise you of the matter. You had best consider of it and I will see Herst this evening and converse with him so as to put the business on such a footing as to enable you to get the Land.

I have visited Mrs Jessup who received me like a sister. How much difficulty false friends occasion poor Marias tale to her notorious Uncle was likely to deprive me of the Friendship of the Clarks, a family I always loved and valued.

Our young Folks went up to see Mary Robinson in the Staunton Hospital. She was entirely composed—very pale and reduced—she was making hair Plaits of her fine long hair which had been cut off, her bosom was full of them. She fastened one on Letitia’s wrist and one on Susannas. They continue to wear them. Dr Boys says she will be restored in six months. Old Green had been painting—he knew George and enquired about his corn potatoes and walnuts. Wm Peyton has not been well he is going to his Farm near the Warm Springs. Your Uncle was at Court.

I wish sincerely you had been with us to witness the management of this place—So many courtesies—so many greedy applicants—and so many beautiful women.

General Jackson’s Cabinet does not give entire satisfaction to his Friends.

I rejoice my Husband has retired before another storm sets in.

Give my sincere love to cousin Agatha, and for yourself accept the best wishes of your

Affectionate Aunt

Letitia Floyd

During her husband's congressional years, Letitia managed and operated Thorn Spring Plantation and gave birth to six more children, while raising the four born earlier.

The Gubernatorial Years (1829–1834)

This section includes two of Letitia's letters. In 1830 she wrote to Sally Buchanan Preston, who three weeks earlier had married Letitia's son John Buchanan Floyd. In 1833 she wrote a remarkable letter to Dr. Floyd giving her highly unflattering opinion of President Andrew Jackson (in office 1829–1837). If Letitia Preston Floyd were to be known for nothing else, she should be known for this letter.

Letitia's involvement with American political life was particularly intense during this period when her husband was at the center of a political maelstrom revolving around slavery, the abolition of slavery, the question of states rights, and indeed the very basis of the American Union. During his years as governor, her husband irregularly kept a diary that Ambler published in 1918.⁶¹ The diary deals not only with the great issues Floyd was dealing with, but also with his wife Letitia and their domestic business.

After resigning from Congress and departing Washington a disappointed man, Dr. Floyd briefly practiced medicine in Montgomery County, Virginia.⁶² He used his spare time to "enjoy the love and confidence of a large family of children and a devoted wife and to retrieve his declining fortunes ... [and] his children shared with him the pleasures of the chase and the violin."⁶³ However, he would not be long back home at Thorn Spring and out of politics. In October 1829, a Virginia Constitutional Convention convened in Richmond; after much debate it approved a new constitution on January 15, 1830, by a vote of 55 to 40.⁶⁴ The delegates were a glittering array, including two former United States presidents (Madison and Monroe) and United States Chief Justice John Marshall. John Floyd was not among them—Montgomery County was represented by Gordon Cloyd.⁶⁵ The principal issue that occupied the constitutional debate was what categories of white men should be entitled to vote. The delegates divided broadly into two camps of eastern and western interests, with the westerners, who favored

rapid economic development of their region and a reduction of the influence of the slave-owning easterners, seeking to broaden the electorate to include all white men.⁶⁶ While this convention was still sitting, Virginians elected a new governor, still using the old election system whereby the legislature elected the governor.

On January 9, 1830, less than a year after he had left Congress, John Floyd was elected Governor of Virginia. The vote was 146 for Floyd to 66 for his opponent, Peter V. Daniel, of Stafford County. Ambler suggests⁶⁷ that Floyd was chosen because of his states rights position and because he was a westerner and thus someone who could speak for the entire state of Virginia in the impending Nullification Crisis.⁶⁸ Nullification was the political doctrine that a state was sovereign within its own borders and could within its borders declare null and void Acts of the federal government. The Nullification Crisis arose in 1829 in South Carolina as a protest against the 1828 federal tariff to protect northern industrial interests to the detriment of the South and was anonymously articulated by the sitting vice-president from South Carolina, John C. Calhoun. Inherent in the crisis were the issues of states rights and the abolition of slavery. The crisis was exacerbated by the failure of the newly elected President Andrew Jackson to relieve the tariff as his supporters had promised in 1828.

Floyd was unanimously reelected⁶⁹ on February 11, 1831, to a three-year term of office, but was thenceforward term-limited, under the provisions of the new, soon-to-be-ratified, Virginia Constitution. During Floyd's four years as governor, between March 4, 1830, and March 31, 1834, momentous American political developments occurred, and Floyd used his position as Governor of Virginia to play a major role in them. Because of his actions during his governorship, Charles Henry Ambler (by choosing the phrase for his 1918 book subtitle) labeled Dr. Floyd "The Apostle of Secession."

As was the case during her husband's congressional service in Washington City, Letitia remained at home at Thorn Spring during much of the time he was in Richmond—her letter that follows demonstrates this situation. She wrote it on June 27, 1830, about three months into her husband's first term of office as Virginia governor.⁷⁰ This hitherto unpublished letter was rediscovered in January 2014.⁷¹ The letter transcribed below was postmarked Newbern, Virginia, and addressed to Mrs. Sally B. Preston at Abingdon, Virginia. The letter is dated three weeks after Sally's marriage, on June 1, 1830, to her first cousin and the future Virginia governor John Buchanan Floyd in Washington County. Among other things, Letitia tells her daughter-in-law that the governor will be returning to Thorn Spring in two weeks from Richmond with some of their children. She also reminds her son that he

has promised her to get serious about his legal studies. The recipient of the letter, Sarah “Sally” Buchanan Preston (1802–1879) was born at the Preston Salt Works in Saltville, and was a daughter of Francis Preston (brother of Letitia Preston Floyd) and his wife Sarah Buchanan Campbell.

My dear Sally

Let me embrace you cordially as a child, as the beloved wife of my first-born son — In this union may a gracious God spare you the vicissitudes and trials of our short and feverish Life. May the affections of your Husband remain undiminished and the moral force of his character sustain you in the hour of adversity.

The allotted time for your undivided pleasures (a month) being nearly out. I wish now to make a claim on you both to return home. This I hope will not be delayed any longer. My Husband and children will return by the 10th of July at farthest and I wish you all to be with me to welcome that return. Maria and Ellen Preston I hope will accompany you and either or both of your cousins the Miss Thompsons. We can have a happy family party. I think Sister Preston is compensated now for all maternal anxieties by seeing two thirds of her Family happily and respectably married she deserves also the enjoyment of life and bestows in her children as I never knew a more vigilant [?] affectionate [faded or water damaged] mother. My brother is the most indulgent of fathers, and I trust amongst the happiest

Say to my dear John I hold his bond now for the executions of his promises to me, namely the pursuit of his profession he has been gratified in that possession of the object of his wishes. [H]e must now resume his studies an[d] confirm his views to that pursuit most industriously.

I am happy to tell you brother James wife is better that we are also well but my poor little Mary⁷² whose situation here gives me much anxiety.

Remember me sincerely to my kindred and say to sister Peggy Preston I will write to her Husband that I would do it often but my eyesight is getting so worn out that I have difficulty in writing legibly.

God bless you my dear Daughter is the unceasing wish of your ever affectionate mother

Letitia Floyd

From Dr. Floyd's diary we can see that Letitia did sometimes visit him in Richmond. For example, the diary records that the Floyds spent the first half of July 1831 traveling from Richmond to Thorn Spring, stopping various places en route, including at Smithfield Plantation, so she must have been in the capital in June 1831. Similarly, for November 4, 1831 the diary records "This day my wife arrived and her children, John and his wife, William, Lavalette, Nicketti, Coralie, and Woushippagniga."⁷³

Letitia's second letter from this period contained much political content, reflecting the times in which she lived. Momentous issues Dr. John Floyd dealt with while governor were the so-called rights of southern states, the institution of slavery, and the movement for its abolition.

There had been for many years antislavery sentiment in Virginia, and when Floyd took office in 1829 as governor, there were strong Virginia voices calling for slavery's abolition. The year 1830 has been described as "the high watermark of antislavery feeling in Virginia."⁷⁴ The following year came the Nat Turner insurrection⁷⁵ of August 1831 in Southampton County. During the insurrection, the insurgents killed over 50 white people, including many women and children in their beds. In suppressing the revolt, white patrols killed at least 100 blacks, including dozens who were not rebels. The amount of sheer slaughter on both sides helped account for the extreme reactions among whites, whether for abolition or for stricter regulation. In the wake of these events, Governor Floyd urged the December meeting of the General Assembly to revise "all the laws intended to preserve in due subordination the slave population of our State."⁷⁶ In early 1832 a great debate took place in the House of Delegates over slavery's future in Virginia. Subsequently, increasing resentment against radical abolitionist propaganda from the North shifted collective Virginia opinion from decrying slavery to defending it as a vital factor in the state's social order.

What, we wonder, did Letitia and John Floyd say to one another during these events? Elizabeth Varon, in her book describing the role of elite Virginia women in antebellum Virginia, says that some of these women adopted an antislavery stance motivated by "sympathy and even affection, for blacks, whom they understood to be the victims of brutal oppression." An overt, political manifestation of this opposition came in the form of petitions ("memorials") to the General Assembly urging it to take steps to abolish slavery. Notable among these memorials were those from Fluvanna and Augusta counties. The Augusta memorial came with 215 signatories and was docketed with the title "Memorial of the Ladies of Augusta to the Gen^l Assembly of Virginia Praying the adoption of some measure for the speedy extirpation of Slavery from the Commonwealth." In addition

to their memorials, Virginia women organized the Virginia Colonization Society, as a branch of the American Colonization Society, which had been organized in 1816 with the objective of promoting the emigration of free blacks to Africa. Varon's book mentions many Virginia women by name, but Letitia Preston Floyd is not among them. Varon observes, however, that "[Governor] Floyd seems to have grasped what many contemporary historians have overlooked—that the political battle over slavery in Virginia which Turner's rebellion sparked was a battle for the hearts and minds of white women as well as men." One wonders if perhaps the governor's grasp of that situation had something to do with his wife.⁷⁷

Nat Turner was executed on November 11, 1831, in Jerusalem, Virginia. In his diary on December 21, 1831, Floyd wrote: "Before I leave this government, I will have contrived to have a law passed gradually abolishing slavery in this State, or at all events to begin the work by prohibiting slavery on the west side of the Blue Ridge Mountains."⁷⁸ Of this plan, John Alexander Williams wrote: "With the governor's encouragement, a group of 'talented young westerners' led by his nephews William Ballard Preston and James McDowell moved for the gradual abolition of slavery in the commonwealth, provoking a famous debate that went on in the General Assembly for more than a week. Eventually the motion failed, and the group did not put forward Floyd's fallback position of abolishing slavery only in western Virginia."⁷⁹ This fallback position grew from Governor Floyd's view that western Virginia was well-deserving of economic development and his belief that slavery was a wasteful, inefficient labor system.

Floyd took the position that the slave insurrection was the direct consequence of provocation in Virginia by Northern abolitionists. He laid out his opinions in a well-known November 19, 1831, letter to South Carolina Governor James Hamilton in which he blamed the "spirit of insubordination" on the "Yankee population" in general and Yankee peddlers and traders in particular; these travelers shared Christianity with the slaves and taught them that all are born free and equal, and told the slaves (in Floyd's words) "that white people rebelled against England to obtain freedom, so have blacks a right to do." Floyd placed the blame for masterminding the plan on the church leaders, but he believed that all the discussions about freedom and equality led to the uprising.⁸⁰ Incidentally, Nat Turner was a lay minister/preacher who moved around his home area a good deal because his owner hired him out to neighboring plantations and towns to do carpentry work.

In the presidential election of 1832 in which Andrew Jackson was reelected with 55 percent of the popular vote, John Floyd was awarded the

eleven (out of a total of 219) electoral college votes of South Carolina. David Ericson comments that the South Carolina electors “wasted” their ballots on Floyd rather than vote to reelect Jackson.⁸¹

The Nullification Crisis had brought America to a critical point in late 1832 and the threat of civil war loomed. Floyd pointed out the threat of civil war in a message to the Virginia House of Delegates on December 13, 1832. He told the delegates “On you now depends in a high degree the future destiny of this republic. It is for you now to say whether the brand of civil war shall be thrown into the midst of these states—and our fireside *altars* bathed in blood—or whether, trusting to the wisdom and integrity of the people, you will appeal to the states of the union for the maintenance of that harmony, and those states rights in which they have an equal interest with ourselves, and avert if possible the impending calamity of civil war. That your deliberations upon this important subject may result in a friendly and final settlement of the limitations of power, in imparting new life and vigor to the constitution, and in restoring the lost harmony of the country, is the ardent and sincere wish of your fellow citizen. John Floyd.”⁸²

Arguably, the single most historically important letter written by Letitia Preston Floyd was the one that she wrote to her husband on New Year’s Day of 1833.⁸³ The letter is notable because she comments on the political scene of the day and describes President Andrew Jackson as a “bloody, bawdy, treacherous, leacherous villian.”⁸⁴ The letter was published by Ambler almost a hundred years ago and is reprinted here with annotations. These annotations demonstrate that Letitia, despite being sojourning at the relatively remote Thorn Spring Plantation, was both highly knowledgeable of and remarkably well-informed about current political events.⁸⁵ The letter reads:

God bless you my dear Floyd—a happy, happy New Year to you. What will be its close? Will the alarming state of our country break up the enjoyments of our plentiful, peaceful home? Merciful Father! Is there not honesty enough in our government to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s? I rejoice to see you hold out to the people. I can not be patient at the possibility of a gallant enlightened community being sacrificed to the passion of a bloody, bawdy, treacherous, leacherous villian. Oh my husband, how prophetic has your friend Col. John Williams⁸⁶ been as to yours and Calhoun’s⁸⁷ fate, I fear power will crush you both. There is an universal indignation amongst the women of the country at the President’s course “for letting the negroes loose upon us.” Do you think such a thing is possible? Ritchie⁸⁸ I observe has got his cue from the Albany, Regency.⁸⁹ You are to be sacrificed. Have you no personal

or political friend to aid you In these attacks? I advise you at once to discontinue your subscription to Niles Register,⁹⁰ upon the principle that I would not pay any man for abusing me. Surely it has come to Ritchie's and Crosswell⁹¹ to meet out the same justice. Crosswell has forwarded a statement of your dues to him which I will send by Nathan Hart⁹² to you, which please discharge and stop the Albany Argus. If money is to be given let it be to our own side. Duff Green has lately had his arm broken for the cause; strengthen it by giving him that which has pampered Ritchie and Crosswell.

Letitia's comment "Duff Green has lately had his arm broken for the cause" refers to an attack by South Carolina United States House of Representatives member James Blair. Green was the editor of the *United States Telegraph*, a newspaper that early strongly backed President Andrew Jackson.⁹³ Former president John Quincy Adams' diary for December 24, 1832, records "I met a man on the street, who accosted me and said there had been a battle. That General James Blair, a member of the House of Representatives had knocked down and very severely beaten Duff Green, Editor of the Telegraph and printer to Congress."⁹⁴ It is noteworthy, and indicative of her high acumen, that Letitia was fully acquainted on January 1, 1833 with Blair's attack on Green that had taken place only eight days earlier. She obviously read the newspapers closely and stayed on top of current events.

The months of January and February of 1833 were particularly dangerous for America, with the "specter of Disunion stalking the land."⁹⁵ The South Carolinians, meeting in recent convention, had declared for nullification effective February 1, 1833, and in response "the old hero" Andrew Jackson had reinforced the federal forts in Charleston harbor and dispatched his leading general there.⁹⁶

Calling attention to a premonition of events to come in 1861 at the beginning of the Civil War, Nicholas Floyd explained "During Mr. Floyd's incumbency as Governor of Virginia the trouble growing out of South Carolina's nullification of an unfair tariff act of the Congress, caused President Jackson to make a tentative threat of coercion of that State by military force. This was so violative of Governor Floyd's idea of State sovereignty and political comity, that he sternly gave the President, his personal friend, to understand that no armed Federal soldier would be permitted to encroach upon the territory of Virginia with hostile intent upon a sister State."⁹⁷

However, "[a]s the nullifiers continued to make their own military arrangements, Jackson fixed his attention on the impending conflict. In mid-January he fully expected to hear that civil war had broken out in South

Carolina, and he considered the possibility of arresting John Floyd the governor of Virginia should the passage of federal troops through Virginia be obstructed.”⁹⁸ In this heated climate, many leaders worked quietly toward a compromise and Henry Clay helped the passage of a lowered tariff. These actions allowed the crisis to pass, and thereby averted civil war for thirty years.

Political and Business Adviser (1834–1837)

On April 17, 1834, the *Richmond Whig* reported: “Yesterday Governor Floyd left for his residence in Montgomery carrying with him the hearty good wishes of the great bulk of this population for his happiness and prosperity.”⁹⁹ In retirement, writes Ambler, “his wife became his most trusted political and business adviser.”¹⁰⁰

Dr. Floyd suffered a stroke soon after he left office¹⁰¹ and was in poor health for the remaining years of his life. No doubt, even with her husband back home permanently at Thorn Spring Plantation, Letitia carried on running the place as she had been doing for many years. There were no longer any small children at the plantation, with Mary Lewis Mourning Floyd, her last child, having died in the summer of 1833 at the age of six. Letitia’s daughters Lavalette, aged 18 and unmarried, and Nicketti, aged 15 and unmarried, were probably resident at Thorn Spring in 1834. Perhaps her two youngest sons, George Rogers Clark Floyd (aged 24) and Benjamin Rush Floyd (aged 23), were there part of the time, although lured by the cotton boom they left Virginia in 1834 to go to Swan Lake, Arkansas.¹⁰² During his waning years, Letitia and the children would have no doubt taken good care of the now invalided Dr. Floyd. From Letitia’s letter written from Thorn Spring on January 25, 1821, and reprinted above, we know the names of some of the Thorn Spring slaves. There were apparently twelve of them in 1831.¹⁰³

The letter that we reprint in this section was written during a visit that Letitia and her husband made to New Orleans in early 1837.¹⁰⁴ The letter is dated January 30, 1837, and is addressed to her niece “Miss Sarah E. Lewis, Charlottesville, Albemarle, Virginia. To the care of Mr. John Cochran.”¹⁰⁵ The letter probably began “My Dear Niece,” but the corner of the letter where that would have been written is missing because someone cut the stamps off it. In the letter, speaking of her husband’s health, Letitia notes that Dr. Floyd looks as well as he has for the past two years and is able to walk on his own a short distance. Apparently they stayed for some months in New Orleans and Letitia told her niece that she would have been quite content with the place, except that her “poor old gentleman” had got the idea that he should travel to Cuba to help his recovery. Here is her 1837 letter:

[My dear?] Niece

I have waited so long for the arrival of Letitia & Lavalette, whom I expected would write to you that I am out of patience, and determined I would scrawl something myself that would give you the intelligence of our condition. In the first place I would state that we have been nearly two months at this place, that your Uncle has recruited¹⁰⁶ more than I ever expected he would. [H]e walks the distance of 300 yards without any assistance, has measurably recovered his flesh, and but for the stoop in his shoulders (produced I think by the leation [lesion] in his neck) looks as well as he has done for two years. We left our two oldest Daughters at Louisville on the first of December, they promising to join us by Christmas. We have had not a line or letter of news from them. John Floyd¹⁰⁷ and his family came as far as Arkansas with us, where they landed. I have heard but once from him. Saley [Sally] was sick then. Tom Taylor from South Carolina saw Wm Floyd and your brother William, three weeks ago in Montgomery, Alabama. They purpose exploring the upper part of the State of Mississippi and then coming down here. On arriving at the City of New Orleans we were invited [by, clipped] Preston¹⁰⁸ to locate ourselves at his residence, [across, clipped] from town. We have been at his house during the winter. I find his wife a generous warm hearted Lady with many pleasing qualities, no formality, no forged grandeur of wealth or Style — (bye the bye her style is better than the most of our Folk), but a constant desire to give happiness to all around her. I should have been entirely content here, but for the unfortunate notion, my poor old Gentleman took in his head of going to Cuba. This desire, has harassed me because the course our children have taken has put it out of my power to gratify him. I feel spared all the amendment his disease, can ever [abate?] has been effected here, as well as it could have been done at Havanna. We hope to be at the Thorn Spring in May, what route we shall take home I cannot now say.

Saw [?] for an account of this Country, nothing short of one of Col. Bentons most gorgeous smiles [swells?] could give you an idea of it. The river so vast, the soil so fertile, the climate so delicious, the people so numerous such variety of colors and nations, their great wealth, their incredible industry, their striking want of education and cultivation, their scathelessness [?], and want of humane feelings for each other.

[tear] [m]uch surprised at the over proportion of men to the females. The City abounds with well draped, fine looking gentlemen – very few ladies. The Theatres are very splendid and much resorted to. Nicketti has spent much of her time in the Town with Mrs Grayson, the wife

of John Breckinridge Grayson a kinsman of ours, who is a very elegant gentleman. Nicketti is greatly pleased with the society of the place. I have passed an anxious winter on account of my dear old Sisters health – I hear that [Mr] Madison has been quite unwell – I have not heard a wo[rd from] my Sister McDowell, what her determination is, as to her [tear] residence. I see by the papers that old Mrs Peyton is dead what an even tenor her long life has been – How unlike your Aunt Madison who has checquered hers by her warm sympathies for others. I wish my darling Sarah you would write every thing to me and direct [it] to Helena, Arkansas to the care of my son John. Kiss little John Cochran for me, tell Lynn I love her and her most excellent Husband very sincerely. God bless you. Ever your most affectionate Aunt
Letitia Floyd

Dr. John Floyd died on August 21, 1837, while visiting his daughter Letitia Preston Floyd Lewis at her home at Lynnside at Sweet Springs in Monroe County (now West Virginia). He is buried there.



Figure 3. The Lynnside House and property in Sweet Springs, Monroe County, West Virginia. Governor John Floyd died here at the home of his daughter Letitia Preston Floyd Lewis. Governor John Floyd and his wife Letitia Preston Floyd are buried in the cemetery at the snow line on the hill behind the house. Photograph by Jim Glanville, February 2014.



Figure 4. The graves of Governor John Floyd (bottom) and his wife Letitia Preston Floyd (top) at Lynnside. Photograph by Jim Glanville, August 2014.

Widowhood (1837–1852)

Letitia Preston Floyd remained at Thorn Spring Plantation for only a year or two after her husband died. On December 12, 1839, soon after Pulaski County had been established, she and six of her children appeared at the courthouse at Newbern and sold and signed over to David Cloyd for \$15,000 the Thorn Spring land “that was devised to the said Letitia Floyd by her father the late Colonel William Preston deceased.”¹⁰⁹ She then moved to Burke’s Garden in Tazewell County, to a log cabin built by Samuel Sayers situated on 800 acres.¹¹⁰ She called her new home “Cavan.” George Gose asserts the name derived from the numerous caves on the property, but this seems fanciful.¹¹¹ Certainly, the cabin was situated on a low cliff above a large spring near the junction of Blue Spring Creek and Rhudy Branch, and at a place strongly resembling the setting at Thorn Spring.



Figure 5. Burke’s Garden, Tazewell County, Virginia. This view is looking north from the Burke’s Garden Central Cemetery behind the modern-day Lutheran Church. The stream is Rhudy Branch. The authors judge that Letitia Floyd’s widowhood home was behind the big tree to the left, on the far bank of the branch, and overlooking a big spring. Photograph by Jim Glanville, June 2014.

Her move was to land already owned by her son George Rogers Clark Floyd, who operated a store in Burke’s Garden in conjunction with his brother, John Buchanan Floyd.¹¹² John Buchanan Floyd had been swept up in the excitement of the 1837–1838 cotton boom and had ventured to Arkansas to try to make his fortune. In the outcome, the cotton growing enterprise was a failure and he grew dangerously unwell. He therefore abandoned Arkansas and returned to his family at Burke’s Garden, where he spent a considerable time recuperating. After regaining his health, he once again took up the successful practice of law at Abingdon, Virginia.¹¹³

Ralph Mann has provided us with an excellent picture of what daily life was like in Burke’s Garden during this final period of Letitia Preston Floyd’s life.¹¹⁴ New information, presented in one the companion papers, however, reveals that she was actively promoting a Catholic settlement in Burke’s Garden and corresponding widely to make that happen. Mann’s work and the new information provide quite a good picture of what her life was like as a widow.

Squabbles about money occur in many, if not most, families. Here is a letter from Letitia Preston Floyd written on January 27, 1845, at her home at Cavan complaining to her attorney that money promised her and her late husband for an expensive gold watch was never paid.¹¹⁵

Cavan Burks Garden Jany 27 1845
Mr Samuel Pack

Dr [Dear] Sir

A few weeks since I received your Letter relative to the Suit, I wished you to bring in Montgomery for me I sent the Letter to my son Rush who failed to return it, which is the cause of my not answering it earlier. I now reply from memory of it contents – My mother was in possession of Bank stock many years previous to her death which took place in June 1823. She made a will giving the Bank Stock to her Daughter as all her other property, estimated So I heard at twenty five hundred dollars. Then desired her Sons, Francis & James to act as her Executor – they refused to do so The sisters wished Mrs Madison the eldest of the Sisters to administer on the Estate, for the purpose of distribution she did so and gave the security required. There was some money on Lands and Bonds, amongst the Bonds was one from Govr. Floyd for one hundred and fifty six dollars I stated to Judge McComas the incidents growing out of that Bond. Who told me a Physicians accounts were legal offsets for indebtedness. Dr. Floyd's accounts amounted to upwards of three hundred dollars which made him a Creditor rather than a Debtor. Mrs Madison in the year 1826 or 7 paid me ten dollars interest on my share of the Bank Stock for which I gave a receipt – I often applied to her for my portion of the Estate, which she withheld pleading the neglect of the parties to make settlements. In 1831 Govr. [James Patton] Preston paid me ten dollars more interest on the Bank Stock as Mrs Madison again for which I gave him a receipt. In 1834 Mrs Madison, Mrs M Dowell, Mr Nathaniel Hart, Col. John Preston and myself win[?] at Abingdon. Genl Frans Preston proposed buying out our Interest, all sold but my self refusing to do because I thought Genl. Preston had affirmed a right as an Executor of my Father transfer a sum of money due me as a Legatee of Col Prestons from the Loyal Company, which was not the full amount of my interest and that money was taken out of my Hands for the benefit of Mr Hart and Col. John Preston, who had received a larger portion of my Fathers Estate than I thought had fallen to my Share. Moreover Govr Floyd was not present, and although he never exercised any ownership of my Mothers Legacy I judged it proper to ask his advice in the matter. Things stood in this state until 1837 when Mrs Madison died, (I was

absent in New Orleans) after some little time I applied to Mr Howard Peyton a Legatee and Executor of his Grandmother. He said he was willing to do whatever Mr Ballard Preston, who was another Executor thought right. I applied to Mr Preston who declined doing any thing. I then desired Mr Piper who was in Richmond to look into the condition of the Bank stock belonging to my mother, he found it all transferred to Genl Frans Preston. Whereupon I requested Judge McComas to sue Mrs Madisons Heirs – he failed to do so. Now sir you will perceive my perfect right to this money – and I pray you to obtain it for me. As to the Dower in the Lot in Montgomery. My brother in law Col. George Floyd gave me as a bridal present a remarkably fine gold repeating and alarm watch for which he paid two hundred and fifty dollars. When Col. Wm C. Preston was about to make the Tour of Europe his Father purchased the watch and paid for it in [meaning with?] the corner Lot on the public Square in Christiansburg. My brother made a conveyance to Govr. Floyd whether my Husband ever had it recorded I know not, sometime afterward the Lot was purchased by the Court of Montgomery for the sum of three hundred Dollars which the Deputy Sheriff Mr Thomas Bowyer collected and never paid it over to either Dr Floyd or myself. These are the Facts – Majr. Henry Edmundson and Majr John Taylor are appraised of them, Should a Title be necessary for Forms sake Genl Frank Prestons Executor will make me one I desire this Claim because the Court of Montgomery hunted up an obsolete Law which was Dealt out to Govr. Floyd, to deprive him of the Sheriffalty, as he thought for States rights opinions, and afterwards gave the Sheriffalty to Col James Barnet and Majr Edmundson both of who had held Federal offices. Moreover Mr Hamilton Wade who had been absent from the County was never objected to as a Magistrate – I hope the Patton prop[erty] and McComas business may be pushed. I am getting very old and the delays of the Law press heavily on widowhood and old age.

Offer my kindest regards to Mrs Pack and for yourself Accept the Esteem of your Friend and Hbl [humble] Sert [servant]
Letitia Floyd

The “My Dear Rush” Letter

The “My Dear Rush” letter is a 31-page document written by Letitia Preston Floyd dated February 22, 1843, (see figures). The authors of this article discovered the *original* copy of this important document in January 2014 (after its being unknown for 171 years) in a storage box at the Smithfield Plantation.¹¹⁶ The letter, written in Letitia’s own hand, records many things that can be found nowhere else in the historical record. It is the

most significant of all the writings about the early history of the Patton and Preston families in Virginia, and is a crucial document for understanding the European settling of southwest Virginia.

Despite the fact that the original document has only very recently come to light, the language and content of the “My Dear Rush” letter have been long known to historians, because near contemporaneous copies of the original document were made independently by George Frederick Holmes,¹¹⁷ son-in-law of Letitia Preston Floyd, in May 1846, and James Cochran,¹¹⁸ grandson of Letitia’s sister Mary Preston Lewis, in October 1846. We discuss these copies below.



Figure 6. The date, place of writing, and opening salutation of the original “My Dear Rush” letter written by Letitia Floyd. This letter is held at Smithfield Plantation and was discovered there by the authors in January 2014. Many Internet sources say that this letter was written at “Cairo.” Seeing the original explains how this error of transcription could have originated. Photograph by Jim Glanville, January 2014.

This “My Dear Rush” letter accounts for almost all of Letitia Preston Floyd’s online presence. Copies of the letter (usually with unexplained origins) are held in various repositories, and copies of those copies made at unknown times by unknown persons show up with regularity in the online genealogical literature. Fortunately, having now found the long-lost original, we are spared the responsibility (which was our original plan) of making a study and analysis of all those unknown-origin copies

The “My Dear Rush” letter was written at the instigation of the well-known Wisconsin historian Lyman Draper. Draper was an active seeker after the history of the development of America, and that he would request Letitia’s account was natural. Benjamin Rush Floyd duly sent a copy of his mother’s letter to Draper, writing to the historian in October 1846 “I ho[pe] [to] heaven my Mothers narration reached you safely. I hope it will be of service.”¹¹⁹ However, Floyd’s transmittal must have miscarried, for there is no record of the letter ever reaching Draper.

However, Draper did get another copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter by a different route. On May 18, 1846, Letitia’s son-in-law George Frederick Holmes wrote to Draper as follows: “Before me is your letter to Mrs. Floyd of last July dated at Baltimore, which she has sent to me. She had requested

me to copy out for you this manuscript account of the Floyd and Preston families, which she had written out at your request for your forthcoming work on the Pioneers of the West.”¹²⁰ This copy of the letter did arrive. Holmes’ copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter has been preserved in Wisconsin since 1846. In her 1844 letter to Draper, reproduced below, she commented that she wrote her account after Benjamin Rush Floyd forwarded to her Draper’s letter seeking historical information.



Figure 7. The closing of the original “My Dear Rush” letter reads “Ever your affectionate Mother. Latitia Floyd.” The coin shows the scale of her signature. Photograph Jim Glanville, January 2014.



Figure 8 The recipient address of the original “My Dear Rush” letter. Lines one and two read “Rush Floyd Wythe CH [Courthouse].” The third line is illegible. Photograph Jim Glanville, January 2014.

George Frederick Holmes apparently retained a second copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter in his possession for over thirty-five years before sharing it with R. A. Brock, the editor of the *Richmond Standard* newspaper. On Saturday, June 5, 1880, Brock published, with a scattering of footnotes, the first of four installments of the letter under the title “Incidents of Border Life,” with the announcement “We are indebted to the kind attention of Professor George Frederick Holmes, LL.D, of the University of Virginia for

the following valuable, graphic, and highly interesting narrative.”¹²¹ These newspaper installments were doubtless the source of many of the copies of the “My Dear Rush” letter now archived.¹²²

The handwritten James C. Cochran copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter is held in Special Collections at Newman Library at Virginia Tech.¹²³ This letter was expertly transcribed and interpreted, and published in two parts in Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Smithfield Review* with the titles “Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life by Letitia Preston Floyd” and “John Floyd, Kentucky Hero, and Three Generations of Floyds and Prestons of Virginia.”¹²⁴

The authors plan a future, definitive article about the “My Dear Rush” letter in its various versions and formats, which, along with discussion of the original, will include an analysis of the Holmes and Cochran copies. To that end, they have already prepared a three-column, side-by-side tabulation of the original and the Holmes and Cochran copies. That tabulation will allow the eventual publication of the authoritative transcription of the original “My Dear Rush” letter. As a summary, preliminary assessment, we note that while both the Holmes and Cochran copies have merit, neither is fully faithful to the original.

Virginia governor David Campbell (served 1837–1840) was another person approached by Lyman Draper in search of historical records. Campbell knew that Letitia was preparing her historical account for Draper and commented to Draper about Letitia: “The memoir prepared by Mrs. Floyd the daughter of Col Wm Preston will, I am sure be well done, as she is a well informed and highly intellectual woman. She can also tell you much about Colo John Floyd of Ken[tuck]y and the Lewis family.”¹²⁵ As a southwest Virginian (Abingdon) himself, Campbell must have been well acquainted with the Floyd family and in a good position to pass his judgment of Letitia.

As noted above, Lyman Draper finally received his copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter in 1846, three years after it had been written. Letitia had intended that Draper receive a copy two years earlier, and, as we learn from the following letter, from Letitia to Draper written in September 1844,¹²⁶ Letitia’s daughter Nicketti had made a fair copy for Draper because Nicketti wanted to keep her mother’s original letter for herself. We do not know what happened to the copy that Nicketti made for Draper, but we do know that “My Dear Rush” passed down from Nicketti through the family and eventually reached Smithfield Plantation many years later.

The letter below is noteworthy for Letitia’s telling of the loss of her father William Preston’s papers and her description of practicing her childhood reading skills among her father’s papers and correspondence.

To Mr. Lyman C. Draper Cavan, Burks Garden Sept. 30, 1844

[Page 1]

Your Letter of the 10th Instant was duly received. I [] [answering] it as early as I wished [] [sickness] of my son Colo. George [] Floyd from Virginia [] being [] of my [] I have determined to write to you. I regret much that I had not the satisfaction of meeting with you as you passed through Virginia. I would have detailed many Facts that would have shed light on the early settlement of the West as soon as my son [] Ben Rush Floyd sent your my Letter to him to me desiring whatever I might know as the above subject. I write now an account of my Family that of the many singular Incidents connected with the my family of western Virginia and as well as that of Kentucky. The [] to Mrs. [] Lewis her [] Floyd [] Kanawha to [] it to my son B. R. [] My daughter Mrs. Nicketti Buchanan Johnston of [] [county?] was very anxious to possess the original has transcribed a fair copy for you. I will write to Mrs. Lewis today on the subject. Rest assured [] the Papers as soon as Congress meets. I [] or against [] Colo. George W. Hopkins our Representative. I grieve that no great care was taken of my Fathers papers.

[Page 2]

His Letters were all Labeled and carefully put away in a Room attached to the Surveyors Office. After learning to read writing it was my constant habit to read those Letters. Fifty five years have obliterated much of their content from my memory. But the Letters of Colo. Thomas Lewis of Rockingham County, Genl. Andrew Lewis of Botetourt, Colo. William Christian, Colo. William Fleming of the same County Colo. John Floyd of Kentucky are yet vivid in my recollection. In the year 1806 Gen. John Preston gave Mr. Nathaniel Hart of Woodford County Kentucky the greater part perhaps all Colo. Floyd's Letters to my Father. My son George who passed through Kentucky this Autumn has advised me of an incident in Colo. Floyd's life related to him by Colo. George Thompson of Lexington who had it I believe from a man by the name of [Hempenstal] [near Shelbyville?] who was an actor in the affairs which will display the unequalled personal courage and devoted friendship of Colo. Floyd. The early death of this chivalrous, noble man [] to be an irreparable misfortune to his wife and sons and great loss to the opening West. His active and generous life secured the opulent fortunes of the Brown, Breckinridge, and Howard families as well as those of my Father when I know that all his great services to his Friends and Country were forgotten and that no remembrance was ever made to his Posterity by them one or other. I am almost obliged to conclude that it is the height of [] immediately for either.

[Page 3]

Friends or Country — I have promised Mr. James A. Lewis to give him an account of the Lewis's. If I have I will do so. Mr. Robert Wickliffe of Lexington Ky has probably the papers of Mr. John Howard his Father-in-law. Mr. Howard married my Fathers youngest sister and survived Colo. Preston fifty years. His second daughter Mrs. Mary Parker is yet living in Lexington her residence for half a century in Kentucky would furnish you with much original matter. Mr. Nathaniel Hart's [] property may have Colo. Floyd's Letters. I know Colo. George Thompson will aid you to obtain a view of them. Colo. [Byers?] met with the Messrs. Browns of Frankfort the sons of the [Horeljohns?] who was accurate in preserving Papers [] might [] much from them. Genl. William Clarks [] of [] Lewis The [] Croghan their [] whose Fathers service all the Wars of the West and [] might furnish you with much [] Fact. Many years ago a Gentleman by the name of Kercheval from Berkly County in this State called on me for more information relative to the settlement of Western Virginia. I referred him to my sister [Madison] who was living, paid my subscription to his intended work which has never appeared. I will be able to get an exact account of the Battle of Point Pleasant on the Ohio in 1774 from the memoranda of Capt. James Newell who was in the Battle. This I will furnish you with. Pardon this long Letter. Old age makes me prolix. Should I meet with anything of Interest to you I will [] it. Wishing you much success in your arduous undertaking.

I am Sir Your very Obt. Set.
Laetitia Floyd"

Potential Sources for Letitia Preston Floyd Letters

During the preparation of this article, its authors investigated where they might find sources of letters written by Letitia Preston Floyd, with the idea that they would use far more than the fourteen letters that they have included here. As the work developed, it became clear that a full investigation of the extant letters of Letitia Preston Floyd would carry their work far beyond the planned compass of a single introductory biographical article about her. Therefore, this concluding section summarizes their preliminary investigations and points to some of the archives that will likely reward future visits. In effect, this section is a set of recommendations for future work.

In the 1998 Volume 2 of the *Smithfield Review*, Laura Katz Smith surveyed libraries that hold Preston family manuscript collections, and her work remains the first place to look for family sources, including materials on or by Letitia. The information below in this section supplements but not

supplants Smith's catalog.¹²⁷ However, in the intervening 16 years, there has been a dramatic growth in the availability of archival records via direct online access.

There are two specific potentially useful collections at the Library of Virginia. The first is "The Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, 1830–1834,"¹²⁸ from which biographical information about the governor was cited above. The second collection is the Johnston Family Papers, 1779–1891.¹²⁹ This latter collection includes John Floyd's diary published by Ambler and frequently cited in this article, as well as some letters of Letitia Preston Floyd.

There are six potentially useful collections at the University of Virginia—five at the Alderman Library in Charlottesville and one at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. In Charlottesville are first the papers of Joseph E. Johnston and George Frederick Holmes.¹³⁰ The George Frederick Holmes papers include letters to his mother-in-law, Letitia Preston Floyd. Second, in Charlottesville is the book *Papers of James Lewis Woodville*, which includes letters from Mrs. Letitia Floyd of Newbern, Pulaski County, Virginia.¹³¹ Third, at Charlottesville is the correspondence of Leonidas Baugh of Abingdon, one of whose correspondents was Mrs. Letitia Floyd.¹³² The fourth potentially useful collection in Charlottesville is the papers of the Preston and related Radford families (1726–1895) which include letters of Letitia Preston Floyd.¹³³ The fifth potentially useful collection in Charlottesville is the papers of Charles Carter Lee and the Lee family (1768–1931), which includes various materials related to Jacksonian era politics as well as some correspondence of Letitia Preston Floyd.¹³⁴

At the University of Virginia's College at Wise are the papers of Daniel Trigg and John B. Floyd.¹³⁵ The Floyd papers relate to his public service and contain correspondence between the women of the Floyd and Johnston families. We know from the footnotes in Ralph Mann's paper "Mountains, Land, and Kin Networks: Burkes Garden, Virginia, in the 1840s and 1850s," cited above, that these papers include many letters of Letitia Preston Floyd. However, when Mann was engaged in his studies he made hand written notes, rather than making actual copies of Letitia's letters.¹³⁶

At Duke University are the John Warfield Johnston Papers (1778–1890).¹³⁷ This collection includes the papers of Johnston and his wife Nicketti Virginia [*sic*] (Floyd) Johnston, of her parents, Dr. John Floyd and his wife Letitia Preston Floyd, and of other members of the Preston family. It also contains the papers of Francis Smith Preston (1765–1835) and his sister, Letitia Preston Floyd, concerning pioneer life, plantation management, politics in Virginia and the nation, and family and personal affairs, including Roman Catholicism.

At the College of William and Mary are the George Frederick Holmes papers.¹³⁸ These include papers from the years 1790–1822 relating to the Floyd and Preston families.

An interesting recent development has been the discovery of chancery case records relating to Mrs. Floyd in Christiansburg, Virginia. These records have been found because of the project currently underway in the Circuit Court archives maintained by Montgomery County Clerk Erica Williams.¹³⁹ For example, one of the civil suits from the courthouse archives dating from 1848 pitted Letitia Floyd against the executors of the estate of Elizabeth Madison (Letitia's deceased oldest sister). Letitia claimed that the executors had denied her a proper share of their mother's legacy. The judge agreed, and awarded Letitia \$218.38 plus interest. The 1845 letter from Letitia Floyd to her attorney Samuel Pack, transcribed above, was drawn from this chancery case.¹⁴⁰

Finally, deserving of further investigation are the files at Smithfield Plantation, which have produced two of the letters published in this article.

In Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Letitia Preston Floyd of Smithfield, Thorn Spring, and Burke's Garden, was a remarkable woman whom history has badly neglected. Her letters reproduced here give the interested reader an opportunity to form his or her own opinion about Letitia from her writings.

She was an interesting and highly intelligent lady who is surprisingly absent from any of the feminist literature, which has seen a revival of interest among historians in the past two decades. She perhaps deserves a full biography, or at least a Master's thesis. In any event, she is worth studying not only in her own right, but also for the insight such studies may provide to the Jacksonian period of American history.

Sources identified here suggest a rich trove of Letitia's correspondence may remain to be discovered.

Acknowledgments

We thank Wirt Wills for his encouragement and for insisting that we examine the files at Smithfield Plantation. We thank Father Harry Winter for his collaboration and especially for providing the letter from his files. We thank Cori Burner for transcriptions. We thank Beth Pike Clemmons of Tazewell for guiding us on a tour of Burke's Garden, and Ray Scott of Blacksburg who was our driver when we visited the sites of Letitia's homes at Thorn Spring and Burke's Garden. We thank Mr. Sam Gregory of Pulaski County. We thank archivist Sarah Nerney. We thank the anonymous

referees whose comments strengthened our work and focused our attention. We thank Hugh Campbell for his gracious editorship. JG, as always, thanks his wife Deena Flinchum.

Endnotes

1. Letitia is the most common form. Variants are Laetitia, Lætitia, and even Latitia.
2. Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "The Mysterious Origins of James Patton, Part 1," *Smithfield Review* 15 (2011), 35–64. Quoting the prominent Preston family genealogist Preston Davie, the present authors criticized Letitia Preston Floyd's writings harshly. This article presents a reconsidered and different view of this remarkable woman.
3. Internet searches for "Letitia Preston Floyd" (made on October 19, 2014) produced 4,620 initial hits, a number which quickly reduced to a mere 45 independent hits when examined. The most prominent search result is to her "Memoirs" which is a misnomer for her lengthy 1843 letter addressed to "My Dear Rush," and that is discussed in detail in this article. Almost one half of the 45 hits go to genealogical sources. She has a very slight Internet presence.
4. John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville, Ky.: The Filson Club, 1982), 68–70.
5. Sally C. P. McDowell and John Miller, *If You Love That Lady Don't Marry Her: The Courtship Letters of Sally McDowell and John Miller, 1854–1856*, ed. Thomas E. Buckley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 792. The authors thank David McKissack for calling these Sally McDowell quotes to their attention. Sally McDowell was a great-granddaughter of William and Susanna Preston of Smithfield, a granddaughter of Francis and Sarah Campbell Preston Campbell of the Saltworks in Washington County, and a daughter of their daughter Susanna Smith Preston and her husband and cousin, Governor James McDowell. In 1841, Sally McDowell, at the age of 21, married the Maryland Congressman Francis Thomas, who was twice her age. The marriage was bitter, produced no children, and ended five years later in acrimony and divorce (Dorman, *The Prestons*, 228–29). A decade later, the divorcee entered into a three-year courtship by correspondence with the Presbyterian minister John Miller, whom she eventually married and with whom she had two daughters. More than 500 letters of that courtship correspondence survive.
6. Edward A. Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants: Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companions in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds* (New York: E. B. Treat & Co., 1867), 785.
7. Pulaski County was formed in 1839 from parts of Montgomery and Wythe counties.
8. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 68–70. She died at Cavan in Burke's Garden (Tazewell County), Virginia on December 12, 1852, and is buried beside her husband in the cemetery on the hill at Lynnside (the home of her daughter Letitia Floyd Lewis), at Sweet Springs in present-day Monroe County, West Virginia. John Floyd Jr. (1783–1837) married Letitia Preston in 1804 in Franklin County, Kentucky. He earned a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1806, served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1812 to 1817, in the United States Congress from 1817 to 1829, and was a two-term Virginia Governor from 1830–1834. See also Roy W. Kanode, *Christiansburg, Virginia: Small Town America at Its Finest* (Charlotte, N.C.: Jostens Printers, 2008, second edition), 136.
9. The quote comes from William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816–1836* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), vii.
10. Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Blacksburg, Va.: Walpa Publishing, 1976). The final years of William Preston's life battling Tories and making a not very successful military expedition to North Carolina are told in the final chapters of Johnson's book. Richard Osborn wrote of this period "Preston's efforts to support Virginia's cause during the rest of the Revolution were an embarrassment to him." Richard Charles Osborn, "William Preston of Virginia, 1727–1783: The Making of a Frontier Elite" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1990), 352.

11. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 48–52.
12. Jim Glanville and Hubert Gilliam, “To Refrain from Drinking Ardent Spirits: The Bet Between Peter Byrns and Francis Preston,” *Smithfield Review* 11 (2007), 17–28.
13. John Preston, “Some Letters of John Preston,” *William and Mary Quarterly, Second Series* 1 (1921), 46, n3.
14. The single record notes the purchase of a quarter of a yard of muslin cloth for nine-year-old Letitia by her mother. Debit account of “Mrs. Susannah Preston To Mr. Henry Bratton [probably a merchant]” dated 1798–1799. Under “3 November” [1798?] is listed “To ¼ yards muslin pr. Daughter L[etitia]. £0-15-0 [15 shillings].” Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2081, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
15. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 61–62.
16. John Floyd and Neal O. Hammon, *John Floyd: The Life and Letters of a Frontier Surveyor* (Louisville, Ky.: Butler Books, 2013). John Floyd the surveyor (the father of Letitia Preston’s husband-to-be) was a great admirer and friend of William Preston. Hammon reprints in his book almost ninety letters written by Floyd, fifty-one of which were addressed to Preston at Smithfield Plantation. A positive review of this book is found in: Jim Glanville, “Montgomery County and the Land Rush for Virginia’s West,” *Christiansburg News-Messenger*, Saturday, January 4, 2014, pp. 4 and 7, online at <http://goo.gl/ZpyJaZ>.
17. Letitia Preston, “Letter to her Mother Susanna Preston from Mr. Hart’s, [Franklin Co., Kentucky] November 30, 1803.” Typed transcript of a letter from Letitia Preston to her mother Susanna. Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2290, Virginia Historical Society, “Copied from original in possession of Miss E. M. Peyton, Asheville, N.C.” This letter is here published for the first time.
18. The two underscores in this letter are in the typed transcript.
19. The biographical information in this section derives from: 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); Dorman, *The Prestons*, 1982; Library of Virginia “Biographical information for John Floyd,” in “A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, 1830–1834,” online at www.lib.virginia.edu/vivaaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi01952.xml; The Congressional Bioguide for John Floyd, online at United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=F000221>.
20. Nicholas Jackson Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies of the Virginia-Kentucky Floyd Families* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1912), 76.
21. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 32.
22. Flying camps as used in the War of 1812 were mobile military units, centrally located, and capable of rapid deployment as needed either north or south to contest the British on the Chesapeake Bay. McDowell lived in Rockbridge County.
23. Conway H. Smith, *The Land That Is Pulaski County* (Pulaski, Va.: Pulaski County Library Board, 1981), says that John Floyd kept bears chained to trees at Thorn Spring, but we have been unable to document that assertion from any primary source.
24. Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies*, 76.
25. Osborn, “William Preston of Virginia,” 473.
26. Montgomery County Deed Book D: 283–284, Montgomery County courthouse, Christiansburg, Virginia, microfilm at Library of Virginia. John and Letitia Floyd sold the 500 acres to Samuel Caddall for \$2,166.67.
27. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 297.
28. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 48–52.
29. Letitia Preston Floyd, “Letter to her Brother John Preston, September 24, 1807 from Roanoke.” Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2437, Virginia Historical Society.
30. George Rogers Clark Floyd had been born September, 13, 1810, in Christiansburg, so his mother may have been breast-feeding him during her New York trip.

31. Doctor John Floyd to General John Preston, May 27, 1811. Endorsed "Doct. John Floyd May 1811 [to] Majr. Genl. John Preston Treasurer of Virginia city of Richmond Mail [postal stamp] New York 27 May." Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2693, Virginia Historical Society.
32. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 51.
33. Letitia Preston Floyd to General John Preston, July 26, 1812. Endorsed "Laetitia Flo[yd] July 1812 [to] Montgomery [illegible] 26th July General John Preston Richmond Virginia Mail." Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2781, Virginia Historical Society.
34. Abundant online information about Benjamin Rush is readily available. See for example his summary biography at his alma mater Dickinson College at <http://www.archives.dickenson.edu/people/benjamin-rush-1745-1813>.
35. Benjamin Rush, "My Dear Name-sake: Letter to Benjamin Rush Floyd, April 21, 1812," *The Weekly Register* [Niles], Baltimore, Saturday July 24, 1813, 329.
36. Letitia Floyd, "Letter to the Editor of *The Weekly Register*, July 7, 1813," written from Christiansburg, *The Weekly Register* [Niles], Baltimore, Saturday 24 July 1813, 329. See also Jim Glanville, "The Founding Father and the Christiansburg Baby," *Christiansburg News-Messenger*, Wednesday February 26, 2014, p. 4, online at <http://goo.gl/v1upbl>. The article points out that because of its reference to the game "cat and fives" the letter from Benjamin Rush has been widely noted by baseball historians, though not by Virginia historians.
37. See www.vt.edu/about/buildings/Solitude.html. Solitude was restored in 2011 to its mid-to-late 19th century appearance.
38. Letitia Preston Floyd to General John Preston, June 20, 1815. Endorsed "Laetitia Floyd June 1815 and, I draw an order on Garnett Peyton for the money. Montgomery [illegible] June 18th Genl. John Preston Richmond Va. Mail" Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 2989, Virginia Historical Society.
39. John H. Schroeder, "Rep. John Floyd, 1817–1829: Harbinger of Oregon Territory," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 70 (1969), 333–346. The quotation is on page 339. Brown's Hotel was one of Washington's famous old-time hotels and located on Pennsylvania Avenue. A companion article in this issue argues that the Floyd family involvement with Catholicism began about the time that Dr. Floyd entered Congress; his young sons Benjamin Rush Floyd and George Rogers Clark Floyd accompanied him to Washington City and attended Georgetown Catholic School. See "Governor John Floyd, Letitia Preston Floyd, and the Catholic Church," pp.121-136.
40. Reprinted from a copy of a letter in the files of Harry Winter (author of "Letitia Preston Floyd: Pioneer Catholic Feminist," pp. 137–145 in this issue). Winter obtained his copy of the letter from Mary Tabb Johnston, the author of the unpublished article "Smithfield Plantation House, Showplace of Montgomery County," during a visit to Smithfield Plantation in the late 1980s. The underscores in the letter are in the typed transcript.
41. William Preston (1770–1821) died while on a visit to Smithfield. He fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 and in the defense of Norfolk against the British in 1812, briefly held the office of Surveyor of Montgomery County, and settled in Louisville in 1814. Caroline lived on as a widow for 26 years. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 57–61.
42. Dropsy refers to a swelling in the tissue or a body cavity, today called edema. As a cause of death in the early nineteenth century it probably referred to kidney or heart disease.
43. Letitia Floyd to General John Preston, 15 September 1822. The letter is endorsed "Laetitia Floyd Septbr 15th 1822 to General John Preston, Horseshoe Bottom." Preston Family Papers of Virginia, folder 3427, Virginia Historical Society.
44. This was presumably James McDowell of Rockbridge County, husband of Letitia's sister Sarah (aka Sally). McDowell was a justice of the peace, briefly represented Rockbridge County in the House of Delegates, was a trustee of Washington College, and colonel of the 5th Virginia Militia Regiment in 1814. He and his wife lived near present-day Lexington. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 56–57.
45. The Kentucky trip was perhaps to visit Dr. Floyd's older brother George Rogers Clark Floyd (1781–1823) who lived at Floyd's Station, now part of metropolitan Louisville. See Kathleen

- Jennings, *Louisville's First Families: A Series of Genealogical Sketches* (Louisville, Ky.: The Standard Printing Co., 1920), 162.
46. The baby was Coraly (Coralee) Patton Floyd who was born on January 22, 1822 and died on July 14, 1833. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 70.
 47. It lies beyond the scope of this article to attempt any serious assessment of the congressional and gubernatorial career of John Floyd, or to summarize his complex and evolving views on topics such as the settlement of Oregon, states rights, and slavery. However, we do present some "snapshots" taken from source quotations. Given that Floyd's only biography was published more than a century ago, a new, modern biography of him is badly needed.
 48. Floyd was elected as a Republican to the 15th through 17th Congresses (March 1817–March 1823), as a Democratic-Republican to the 18th Congress (March 1823–March 1825), and as a Jacksonian to the 19th and 20th Congresses (March 1825–March 1829). He did not seek reelection in 1828. *Congressional Bioguide*.
 49. His home in the contemporary congressional documents was listed as Newbern, a village in Montgomery County that in 1839 became the first seat of the newly-created Pulaski County. The 1830 letter from Letitia to her daughter-in-law Sally was postmarked Newbern.
 50. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 79.
 51. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 97.
 52. Charles Pinnegar, *Virginia and State Rights, 1750–1861: The Genesis and Promotion of a Doctrine* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2009), 215–16.
 53. Schroeder, "Rep. John Floyd, 1817–1829."
 54. Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies*, 76. Nicholas Floyd was enthusiastic but "every foot" is inaccurate. The Oregon territory ("country") was a huge swath of land, and Americans claimed it as far north as 54 degrees 40 minutes. After a crisis provoked by the United States in 1846, Great Britain and the U.S. divided the large area by continuing the existing Canadian/United States border straight west to the Pacific Ocean. A lot of the original Oregon territory is today in Canada.
 55. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 33.
 56. J. M. Batten, "Governor John Floyd," *The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College* 4 (1913), 5–49. See page 13.
 57. Batten, "Governor John Floyd," 23.
 58. Letitia Preston Floyd, "Mrs. Letitia Floyd to Captain Benjamin Howard Peyton," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (1913), 30–31.
 59. Howard Peyton was the grandson of Letitia's sister Elizabeth Preston Madison. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 188.
 60. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, "'Not a Ragged Mob': The Inauguration of 1829," The White House Historical Association, online at www.whitehousehistory.org/history/documents/White-House-History-15-Heidler-Inauguration-1829.pdf.
 61. Ambler, *Life and Diary*.
 62. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 69.
 63. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 81.
 64. The electorate that ratified the new constitution consisted of only Virginia freeholders, householders, and leaseholders. The vote in April 1830 was 26,055 in favor and 15,563 against.
 65. Hugh Grigsby, *The Virginia Convention of 1829–1830* (Richmond: MacFarlane and Fergusson, 1854).
 66. Louis H. Manarin, "[The Virginia] Constitution of 1830." *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, online at www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1546 and Christopher M. Curtis, "Reconsidering Suffrage Reform in the 1829–1830 Virginia Constitutional Convention," *Journal of Southern History*, 74 (2008), 89–124.
 67. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 86.
-

68. See: Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, and David F. Ericson, "The Nullification Crisis, American Republicanism, and the Force Bill Debate," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (1995), 249–70. The text of the South Carolina Ordinance of Nullification of November 24, 1832, titled "An ordinance to nullify certain acts of the Congress of the United States, purporting to be laws laying duties and imposts on the importation of foreign commodities," is online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/ordnull.asp. For a useful overview of the Nullification Crisis for the general reader see Wikipedia "The Nullification Crisis," online at www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nullification_Crisis; this extensive article includes many lengthy quotes from professional historians of the Crisis.
69. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 93.
70. Letitia Preston Floyd. Letter from Thorn Spring on June 27, 1830, to Sally Buchanan Campbell Preston at Abingdon. Original, handwritten letter on file at Smithfield Plantation. Transcribed by the authors. This letter was one of a number of important documents discovered in a box labeled "Misc Important Archives" in January 2014. See Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "The Misc: Important Archives Box at Smithfield Plantation: Full Finding Aid and Complete List of Box Contents," prepared on March 22, 2014, and on file at Smithfield Plantation.
71. As a result of persistent inquiries by the authors at the Smithfield Plantation. See Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "An Important Smithfield Plantation Archive," *Historic Smithfield Newsletter*, Spring 2014, online at <http://goo.gl/TM9YWq>. This newsletter item tells how the authors tracked down this letter and found, in the same box, the very important 1843 letter (discussed later in this article) in which Letitia recounted the early history of Southwest Virginia.
72. Mary Lewis Mourning Floyd (1827–1833), who died of scarlet fever at Thorn Spring, was the youngest of Letitia's children.
73. Nicketti is often given as Nickette, for example by Dorman. "Woushippakniga" was apparently a nickname for George Rogers Clark Floyd. Its origin is obscure, though possibly related to a supposed American Indian forebear in the Floyd family.
74. Harrison J. Hancock, "Life and Thought in a Student Organization of the Old South," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 47 (1939), 315–29.
75. The insurrection was "the most significant event of [Dr. Floyd's] years of public service," according to Henry I. Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 250. Tragle devotes an entire chapter (pp. 250–76) to the writings of John Floyd about Nat Turner.
76. Hancock, "Life and Thought in a Student Organization of the Old South," quote at page 233.
77. Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 41–70, quotes at 43, 48. A transcription of the memorial from "Females of the County of Augusta" to the General Assembly, January 19, 1832, is online at http://www.virginiamemory.com/docs/AugustaPet_trans.pdf. See also: Patrick H. Breen, "Female Antislavery Petition Campaign of 1831–1832" *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 110 (2002), 377–98.
78. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 170.
79. John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 126.
80. John Floyd, "Governor of Virginia Discusses the Revolt," John Floyd, governor of Virginia, to James Hamilton, governor of South Carolina, November 19, 1831, holograph letter, Manuscript Division, (1–7), Library of Congress, American Memory, African American Odyssey pages, facsimile online at <http://goo.gl/IQHtBj>. The paragraph draws heavily from American Memory. Transcriptions of this letter have been printed in Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed., *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 110–111, and in Jeff Forret, *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Facts On File, 2012), 223–25.
81. Ericson, "The Nullification Crisis," 249–70.

82. John Floyd, "Message to the House of Delegates," December 13, 1832, reprinted in *Niles Register*, December 22, 1832, p. 275, online at <http://books.google.com/books?id=SZU-AQAAMAAJ>.
83. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 116. The original is among the Floyd manuscripts in the Library of Congress.
84. Letitia's description of Jackson is a direct reference to Hamlet's famous soliloquy at the end of Act 2 of *Hamlet* in which the unfortunate prince is bemoaning how others have conspired against him and his family in search of political power. Her reference to Shakespeare's play adds to our contention that Letitia was a well-educated, knowledgeable person. Both the spellings "leacherous" and "villian" are *sic*. As for Letitia's spelling, Andrew Jackson supposedly once remarked: "I have a small opinion of a man who knows only one way to spell a word!" We much thank an anonymous referee for calling these points to our attention.
85. The distance from the Thorn Spring Plantation house to the Newbern post office was about a mile and a half, and stagecoaches ran through the town. Newbern was not so remote that it couldn't promptly receive newspapers from Richmond, Washington City, etc.
86. Floyd's diary (Ambler, page 145), for June 3, 1831, records that he had received a letter from Williams. Floyd wrote "Colonel Williams is bitterly opposed to General Jackson, [and] says from many years of acquaintance with him that he is a bad man and will not be content with one term in the Presidency, nor two, nor three nor four, and then will try to appoint his successor." Williams played a key role in Jackson's victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814 but lost to Jackson in an 1823 reelection contest for United States senator from Tennessee. See "John Williams" in the online Congressional Bioguide at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000516>.
87. John C. Calhoun, "along with Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson, dominated American political life from 1815 to 1850." He was vice-president of the United States from 1825 to 1832 and senator from South Carolina from 1832 to 1843 and 1845 to 1850. "John Caldwell Calhoun," *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2004, online at <http://www.encyclopedia.com>. See also his online United States Senate biography at www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_John_Calhoun. Calhoun had resigned the vice-presidency two months before Letitia wrote her letter reprinted here.
88. Thomas Ritchie was for 41 years publisher of the *Richmond Enquirer*. At the time Dr. Floyd was governor, Ritchie strongly supported Andrew Jackson and opposed nullification. Charles H. Ambler, *Thomas Ritchie: A Study in Virginia Politics* (Richmond: Bell Book and Stationery Co., 1913).
89. The "Albany Regency" was a cabal that controlled New York state government from roughly 1820 to 1840. It has been described as one of the first American political machines. It supported Jackson and his vice-president, Martin Van Buren, of New York.
90. The magazine to which in 1813 she had sent the letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush reprinted above.
91. Edwin Croswell (1797–1871) was a New York American journalist and politician associated with the *Albany Argus*. He was also the New York state printer. Letitia in her letter is proposing to stop the Floyd family subscriptions to the newspapers of Ritchie, Niles, and Croswell, as retaliation for their opposition to her husband's views.
92. Probably Nathaniel Hart (1805–1854) Letitia's nephew from Kentucky. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 62.
93. After his initial support, Green soon broke entirely with Jackson over the so-called (in the South) Tariff of Abominations. Later, Green became an industrialist in Georgia and supported the Confederacy with his products.
94. This page from Adams' diary can be readily viewed online. See Massachusetts Historical Society: Diary entry of John Quincy Adams for December 24, 1832. Online at http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php/popup?id=jqad39_13. See also W. S. Belko, *The Invincible Duff Green: Whig of the West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 1.
95. Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 216.

96. Varon, *Disunion!*, 215.
97. Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies*, 77. By the time of the Nullification Crisis, President Jackson and Governor Floyd no doubt hated one another. Nicholas Floyd's characterization of President Jackson as the governor's "personal friend" is understandable only as a *former* personal friend.
98. Richard B. Latner, "The Nullification Crisis and Republican Subversion," *Journal of Southern History* 44 (1977): 19–38, quote at 33.
99. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 93.
100. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 81.
101. Ambler, *Life and Diary*, 118; Dorman, *The Prestons*, 70.
102. Peter C. Luebke, "John B. Floyd (1806–1863)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, 2014, online at www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Floyd_John_B_1806-1863.
103. There were 12 taxable slaves at Thorn Spring Plantation in 1831. Alison G. Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831–1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 84–85.
104. Letitia Preston Floyd, letter, dated January 30, 1837, written from New Orleans to her niece, Sarah Elizabeth Lewis of Charlottesville, Virginia. Library of Virginia, accession 38922, personal papers collection. Transcription by Cori Burner.
105. James C. Cochran, born June 5, 1830, was the son of Margaret Lynn Lewis Cochran and Capt. John Cochran III, and through his mother the grandson of Letitia Preston Floyd's sister Mary Preston Lewis. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 283.
106. A minor sense of the verb recruit means to recover health or strength,
107. Her son John Buchanan Floyd, the future governor, who had been married for four years and had an adopted daughter.
108. Probably Isaac Trimble Preston, attorney general of Louisiana 1824–1829.
109. Pulaski County Deed Book 1 (1839–1846): 15–16, Pulaski County Courthouse, Pulaski, Virginia, microfilm at Library of Virginia.
110. George B. Gose, *Pioneers of the Virginia Bluegrass (and Their Descendants)* (Radford, Va.: Commonwealth Press, 1971), 241; John B. Floyd and George R. C. Floyd to Letitia Floyd, 800 acres in Burke's Garden, June 10, 1841, Tazewell County Deed Book 1838–1843: 285, Tazewell County courthouse, Tazewell, Virginia, microfilm at Library of Virginia.
111. County Cavan is in the Irish Republic. Preston family connections are known to counties Donegal and Derry/Londonderry to the north, but none are known to Cavan.
112. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 292.
113. John Johnston, "The Sons of Governor John Floyd," *The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College* 4 (1913), 78–115, see 78–79; Floyd, *Biographical Genealogies*, 81–82; Luebke, "John B. Floyd (1806–1863)."
114. 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."
115. "Letter of Letitia Preston Floyd to Samuel Pack, January 1845, Montgomery County Chancery Cause 1848–016, Letitia Floyd vs. Executors of Elizabeth Madison," Local Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia, in Regan Shelton, "The Women of Smithfield," illustrated blog posting January 23, 2014 to http://www.virginiamemory.com/blogs/out_of_the_box/2014/01/23/the-women-of-smithfield/. Since 2014 an ongoing Library of Virginia digitization project for chancery cases headed by archivist Sara Nerney has been under way at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Christiansburg. This letter is an excellent example of the kind of new material that the project is uncovering.
116. Glanville and Mays, *Newsletter*. The "My Dear Rush" letter was the most important single item in the box labeled "Misc: Important Archives" brought to Smithfield Plantation in October 2004 by Jane Byrd (nee Sargeant) McCurdy and her sisters Evelyn (nee Sargeant) Hutton and

- Louisa (nee Sargeant) Dent, some time after their father had died. While not perfect, the 171-year chain of possession of the “My Dear Rush” original among Preston/Floyd descendants is strong and convincing. See Glanville and Mays, “The Misc: Important Archives Box at the Smithfield Plantation.”
117. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 297–98. For a full sketch of Holmes see Leonidas Betts, “George Frederick Holmes, Nineteenth-Century Virginia Educator,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76 (1968), 472–84.
 118. Dorman, *The Prestons*, 283–84.
 119. Letter from Benjamin Rush Floyd to Lyman Draper, from Wythe Courthouse, October 4, 1846, Boone Papers 24C: 65–66, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, reel 9.
 120. George Frederick Holmes, Letter to Lyman Draper, May 18, 1846, from Richmond College, Va. Draper Collection of Manuscripts, George Rogers Clark Papers, 6J109, reel 26, Wisconsin Historical Society.
 121. Letitia Preston Floyd. “Letter to her son Colonel Benjamin Rush Floyd,” February 22, 1843, *Richmond Standard*, June 5, June 19, June 26, and July 3, 1880, transcribed by George F. Holmes, with R. A. Brock editor and footnote writer.
 122. Copies of the newspaper installments are held, for example, at the Filson Club in Louisville, and the libraries of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the State of Indiana in Indianapolis.
 123. Letitia Preston Floyd, “Letter to her Son Colonel Benjamin Rush Floyd,” February 22, 1834. Copy by James C. Cochran dated October 13, 1846. Box-folder: 12:9 in Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, Montgomery County Branch Papers, 1754–1996, Collection Number Ms62–001, Special Collections at Newman Library, Virginia Tech.
 124. Letitia Preston Floyd, “Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life by Letitia Preston Floyd,” introduction by Wirt H. Wills, transcription by June Stubbs, *Smithfield Review* 1 (1997), 3–16; Letitia Preston Floyd, “John Floyd, Kentucky Hero, and Three Generations of Floyds and Prestons of Virginia,” introduction by Wirt H. Wills, transcription by June Stubbs, *Smithfield Review* 2 (1998), 39–52.
 125. Governor David Campbell, “Letter to Lyman Draper,” July 3, 1844, King’s Mountain Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts, 10DD47, Wisconsin Historical Society.
 126. Letitia Floyd, “Letter to Lyman Draper,” from Cavan, Tazewell County, September 30, 1844, King’s Mountain Papers, Draper Collection of Manuscripts, 15DD23, Wisconsin Historical Society. Transcribed by the authors from a faded and difficult-to-read microfilm copy.
 127. Laura Katz Smith, “A Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections of the Preston Family,” *Smithfield Review* 2 (1998), 53–64.
 128. See “A Guide to the Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, 1830–1834,” online at the Library of Virginia at www.lib.virginia.edu/vivaaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi01952.xml.
 129. Johnston Family Papers, 1779–1891, Accession 24154, 24321, Personal papers collection, Library of Virginia. According to the finding aid, “The Johnston family was a prominent family in southwestern Virginia and was related to the Preston and Floyd families. John Warfield Johnston (1818–1889) served as a member of the Virginia Senate from 1846 to 1848. He served the Confederacy as receiver for the Southwest District of Virginia during the Civil War. After the war, he was judge of the circuit court from 1866 to 1870. In 1869, he was elected to the United States Senate and served until 1883. Johnston married Nicketti Buchanan Floyd, the daughter of Governor John Floyd (1783–1837) and Letitia Preston Floyd (1779–1852).”
 130. See: “A Guide to the Papers of Joseph E. Johnston and George Frederick Holmes, 1821–1885,” a collection in The Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, online at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu03092.xml>.
 131. James Lewis Woodville, *Papers of James Lewis Woodville*, 1820. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville. Bound manuscript of the business and personal correspondence of Woodville, a lawyer and member of the Virginia General Assembly who lived in Fincastle in Botetourt County, Virginia.

132. Leonidas Baugh Papers, Accession 38–104, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library. Baugh was the printer of the *Abingdon Democrat* from 1820 to 1895. The collection includes legal and business papers, family correspondence, material on the *Democrat*, etc. See “A Guide to the Leonidas Baugh Papers.” online at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/uva-sc/viu00015.xml>.
133. Papers of the Preston and Related Radford Families (1726–1895), University of Virginia Library. See: “A Guide to the Papers of the Preston and Related Radford Families” online at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu00920.xml>.
134. Papers of Charles Carter Lee and the Lee family (1768–1931), Charles Carter Lee (1798–1871) collector. Online description at <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/647915474>.
135. Papers of Daniel Trigg and John B. Floyd, Special Collection at the John Cook Wyllie Library of the University of Virginia’s College at Wise, Wise, Virginia.
136. Jim Glanville, telephone conversation with Ralph Mann, Boulder, Colorado, May 2, 2014. It is a pity that Mann kept no copies as they would have made a nice addition to the Smithfield Plantation library.
137. The John Warfield Johnston Papers, Duke University Library. See “Guide to the John Warfield Johnston Papers, 1778–1890,” on line at <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/johnstonjohnw/>.
138. Tim Silver, archivist compiler, George Frederick Holmes Papers (1790–1898). See the finding aid on line at <http://scdb.swem.wm.edu/?p=collections/findingaid&id=7435&rootcontentid=142957>.
139. Thanks to a grant that the Library of Virginia obtained from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, three archivists are at the present time reorganizing and digitizing the chancery court records (records of civil suits) stored in the Montgomery County Courthouse. Library of Virginia archivist Sarah Nerney from Richmond is on temporary full-time assignment to the project, and Regan Shelton and Scott Gardner are working as local contract archivists. See Erica W. Williams and Sarah Nerney, “History Goes Digital: Wealth of Information in County’s Chancery Records: Since 2005, the Digitization of Chancery Records Has Been a Priority for the Library of Virginia’s Circuit Court Records Preservation,” *Christiansburg News Messenger*, August 16, 2014, pp. 1 and 7.
140. Shelton, “The Women of Smithfield.”