A Letter to the Editor —

May 18, 1999

...Volume III, 1999, of The Smithfield Review arrived last week. It did so just as Shirley and I were about to take a Charlottesville couple on a two-day tour of the inner bluegrass. We also had taken the tour in April with some friends from the Washington, D.C. area. During the latter tour we employed a guide, and at our request, she gave an abbreviated history of Transylvania University. Upon returning home, I sent her a letter in which the following paragraph appears.

I did not know until recently that one of Chief Justice John Marshall's sons, Louis Marshall, born October 7, 1773, was a president of Transylvania. This fact is noted in a book titled The Marshall Family by W.W. Paxton of Platte City, Missouri. It was printed by Robert Clarke & Co. of Cincinnati in 1882. Louis Marshall had a sterling education for the time, including the study of medicine and philosophy. On page 70 the book states as follows; "In 1838, Dr. Marshall was President of Washington College, Lexington, Va.; and in 1855, he was President of Transylvania University. He died at the age of 93, with a mind little impaired by time."

What does this have to do with the Review? Well, on page 33 there is a reference to "Doctr. Marshall." The reference is to the gentleman discussed in the preceding paragraph. . . . Since the letter [published] in the Review is dated 1831, I am of the judgment, Marshall became president of Washington College prior to 1831. The Marshall book also contains the following.

But he inherited the family talent and propensity for teaching, and at his country home, gathered the most promising young men in Kentucky . . . He was a fine linguist, and well read in science, history, philosophy, and bells-letters [sic]. His scholars admired and feared

1. Louis Marshall was president of Washington College from 1830–1834. James Francis Preston was a student there in 1831 (The Smithfield Review, vol. 3, 1999).
him. He was a strict disciplinarian — severe and dogmatic in his style. He treated his scholars often with rudeness, encouraged a combative style of argumentation, and instilled self-reliance. (Page 69).

If these attributes carried over to his tenure at Washington College, it is not difficult to understand why James Francis Preston had difficulty....

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