Smithfield Plantation: The Original Land Parcels

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Our original purpose was to identify the area of Blacksburg, Virginia, that constituted the original Smithfield plantation, so that a map could be constructed and viewed by visitors.

Our first opportunity to visualize this map came during data collection. The deeds to the property, found in the Montgomery, Botetourt, and Augusta County Courthouses, used meets and bounds to describe property lines. Many of the trees or rocks used to mark property boundaries, however, no longer exist. Mr. John R. Garrett, Field Supervisor for the Town of Blacksburg, had studied the original land parcels of Smithfield Plantation. He was able to draw them to scale, and place them on a map of the Town of Blacksburg using undivided land parcels from the late 1700s and his knowledge of the area. One problem, he told us, was that back in the late eighteenth century, many of the land parcels were short-measured by surveyors whose clients wished to avoid higher taxes. We might never know exactly where the original land parcels lay. Volume I of Early Adventures on the Western Waters by Mary B. and F. B. Kegley was used to verify our conception of the general shape of the parcels.

The final map then was constructed using current digital road and building data for the town of Blacksburg, and the digital land parcel outline given to us by John Garrett. Information from Kegley's book and original deeds told us from whom William Preston bought each tract of land, the acreage of each tract, and the year of purchase. The final map created for Historic Smithfield Plantation displays the town of Blacksburg with selected buildings, roads, and landmarks labeled. A transparent overlay shows the approximate location of the original land parcels in reference to current roads and buildings in the town.

Historical mapping can be a challenging process, especially when the items to be mapped are over two centuries old. We thank all those who helped us by providing vital information and by critiquing our drafts.
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Virginia Tech Campus

William Ingles to William Preston
1774 255 ac.

John Draper via Edmund Winslow to William Preston
1773 315 ac.

Prices Fork Road
Legend

- Land Parcels
- Buildings
- Roads

Sources


* Accuracy of property lines was verified by Kegley (1980)