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*James Patton Preston, 1774–1843,  
one of the first trustees of Blacksburg.*

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# *A Story of Continuity and Change: Blacksburg, Virginia, 1798–1998*

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Blacksburg, Virginia, like any other community, is the sum of its inhabitants, so any history of the town must be a history of the people who created it. The year 1998 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of Blacksburg. The expectant buildup to the anniversary celebration has renewed interest in local history, sending people into libraries and archives to rediscover the town's early years. This essay stems from that renewed interest and more than a few trips to the library. A walk through town indicates that little remains of the Blacksburg of 1798. William Black, the man who lent his name to the town, would not recognize the physical aspects of modern Blacksburg, except perhaps the original grid of sixteen blocks that he laid out, which still compose the heart of the downtown. Blacksburg overflowed its original survey years ago, none of the earliest buildings survive within the first sixteen blocks, the branches of Stroubles Creek that once ran through town have been diverted underground, and some of the streets bear different names. Perhaps the most significant change has been the establishment and growth of Virginia Tech. The school, a dominant player in shaping modern Blacksburg, did not exist during Black's lifetime. Despite these physical changes, William Black, I believe, would recognize that some essential part of the town's character remains intact in modern Blacksburg.

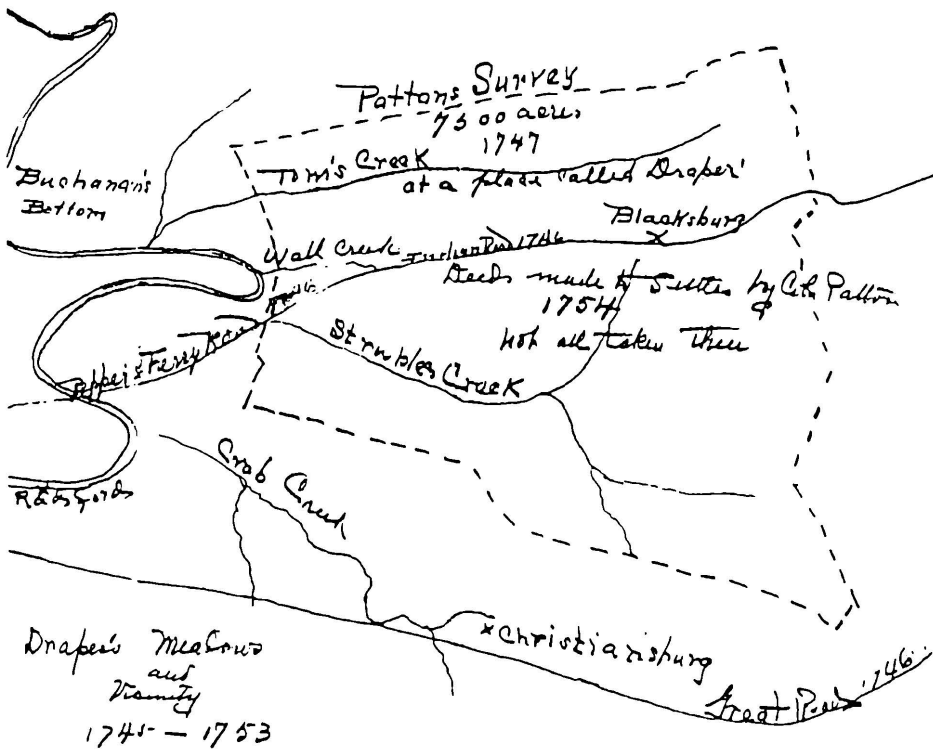
In this essay I will deal with the establishment and subsequent development of Blacksburg, but I am primarily concerned with the dynamics and relationships among some of the people who came into the region and founded the town. Blacksburg was not the creation of one man. It was a community effort involving many families over many years. In a brief overview such as this, it would be impossible to give a detailed account of everyone who played a significant role in Blacksburg's early history. My goals are much more modest. I focus on two families. The

Black and Preston families shared many common experiences with other settlers, and, at the same time, they were arguably the most influential people in Blacksburg's early years. The Blacks gave the land and the impetus to the plan, while the Prestons loaned their considerable reputation and support. Together they gave form to Blacksburg in its infancy.

Blacksburg had its beginnings as part of a 7,500-acre survey originally known as the Patton tract. The tract, roughly bounded by Tom's Creek to the north and Strouble's Creek to the south, was a small part of Colonel James Patton's large land holdings. Patton had come to Virginia from Northern Ireland in 1738 and quickly became an influential and prosperous speculator in western lands.<sup>1</sup> Although settlers were beginning to carve a life for themselves out of Virginia's backcountry wilderness as early as the 1740s, the Patton tract was not formally subdivided until Patton's nephew, William Preston, completed his surveys in 1753.<sup>2</sup> By that time the area was being called Draper's Meadow after George Draper, one of the area's first settlers. He — along with the Ingles, Price, and Barger families — settled within the bounds of the Patton tract. These families were the vanguard of a much larger migration that brought thousands of settlers out of Pennsylvania and eastern Virginia, southwest through the Shenandoah Valley, and into southwestern Virginia.

During the eighteenth century a majority of backcountry settlers were Scots-Irish and German immigrants who had left their own turbulent countries in search of better economic circumstances and religious freedom. Historians estimate that 250,000 Scots-Irish people migrated to the colonies during the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Although fewer Germans made the trans-Atlantic crossing, the relatively open land of southwestern Virginia became a favorite destination for them. The German and Scot-Irish immigrants intermingled with lesser numbers of Scot and English settlers and a few African slaves to form a patchwork of ethnic neighborhoods throughout the counties of southwest Virginia. At Draper's Meadow the Scots-Irish tended to settle along Strouble's Creek, while the Germans established themselves around Tom's Creek (see map 1). In a short time the rigors of frontier life melded the various ethnic groups into a tight-knit community. In 1754 one could find a mix of Scots-Irish and German names living side-by-side. Jacob Harman, Joseph McDonald, William Byars, Robert McGee, George Surface, Jacob Lingle, and John Draper counted on each other as neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

Just as the Draper's Meadow community began to grow and put down roots, events disrupted its natural evolution. During the first half of the 1750s, tensions along the frontier were building toward the French and Indian War. Conflict between Indians and settlers increased in fre-



Map 1. Draper's Meadow and vicinity, 1745-53. (Source: Harvey Lee Price Papers, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.)

quency and intensity. In 1755 a war party of Shawnee Indians attacked the Draper's Meadow settlement, killing James Patton, Casper Barger, Eleanor Draper, and her grandchild. Several other unnamed residents were killed or wounded. The Shawnee captured Henry Leonard, Betty Draper, Mary Draper Ingles, and Ingles' two small sons, Thomas and George, and carried them back to their villages in Ohio. Ingles later escaped without her children and eventually returned to the New River Valley. These and other incidents caused a number of the residents, among them the Draper family, to flee the region.<sup>5</sup> The end of the French and Indian War in 1763 brought an influx of new settlers into southwestern Virginia.

Those who settled in Draper's Meadow after the war encountered a community that had been clearing the land and tilling the soil for twenty years or more. The newcomers, including the Black and Preston families, and long-term residents shared many common experiences. Most were immigrants or the children of immigrants who had moved several

times before coming to southwestern Virginia. Samuel Black and William Preston were born two years apart in Northern Ireland and had come to Virginia as children with their parents. Black lived in Augusta County, Virginia, where he became a minister and served as a lieutenant in the Continental Army. He married Jane Porter, and they had nine children, two of whom played leading roles in the development of Blacksburg. John Black, the eldest child, was born in 1755; his brother, William, was eleven years younger. William Preston's parents also settled in Augusta County, Virginia. After his father's death in 1747, Preston became a private secretary and surveyor for his uncle, James Patton. In 1761 Preston married Susanna Smith, and they started a family at their Greenfield Plantation in Botetourt County, Virginia. Two of their sons, James and John, also played prominent roles in the founding of Blacksburg.<sup>6</sup>

Before moving to Draper's Meadow, the Blacks and the Prestons crossed each other's paths, at least briefly, at Beverley Manor, in Augusta County near present-day Staunton, where in 1741 Samuel Black's father purchased land that had been surveyed for John Preston, William's father.<sup>7</sup> The land remained in the Black family for at least three generations. In 1749–50 William Preston bought more than 330 acres in the same area.<sup>8</sup> It seems probable that the two families knew of each other from the time they spent near Beverley Manor. Perhaps Preston convinced Black to purchase land at Draper's Meadow. In 1772 Black paid 160£ for 600 acres on the eastern end of the tract,<sup>9</sup> and shortly thereafter Preston bought three properties at Draper's Meadow.<sup>10</sup> William began construction on a new home, Smithfield Plantation, and in 1774 the Preston family took up residence at Draper's Meadow. Whether by design or accident, the Blacks and Prestons became neighbors in Montgomery County.

Unlike William Preston, Samuel Black remained in Augusta County and reserved the Draper's Meadow tract for his sons, John and William Black. John moved to Montgomery County at least ten years before his brother. Although the date of his arrival is uncertain, John appears on the rolls of James Byrne's militia company during the Revolution, and in 1781 he was appointed overseer of roads from "glade to the foot of Sinking Creek Mountain."<sup>11</sup> When Samuel Black died in 1782, John assumed control of the entire 600 acres and grew flax on a portion of the land. John retained sole possession of the land until William joined him in 1794, the year after William married Jane McBeth in Augusta County. The brothers divided their father's land equally, each receiving 300 acres.<sup>12</sup>

Between the time the Prestons and Blacks settled in Draper's Meadow and Blacksburg's founding in 1798, they enmeshed themselves in the fabric of community life. The web of social relations in small, preindustrial, agricultural communities bound people together. County records only partially demonstrate how active and interrelated were the public lives of area residents. Friends witnessed land transactions and served as appraisers to their neighbors' estates. In 1772 William Preston witnessed the sale of land to Samuel Black, and in 1790 John Black served as an appraiser to the late William Preston's estate.<sup>13</sup> Neighboring men supervised, maintained, and built roads. Even large, private projects required community approval. When James P. Preston, William's son, wanted to dam Strouble's Creek to build a water-powered grist mill, the state required that twelve "freeholders" assess any potential damages. Among the assessors were John Black, William Argabright, John D. Helms, Dangerfield Dobyns, and Michael Kinzer, men James likely knew well through land transactions and a variety of public and private functions.<sup>14</sup> Friends also helped meet large financial commitments. The state required office holders to post large bonds ensuring their good conduct, and those unable to meet the financial obligation sought aid from wealthy neighbors. In 1807 John Black, Jr., John Hoge, and Harmon Sifford posted a \$1,000 bond so John Black could become county constable.<sup>15</sup>

White men came together to serve in militia companies. Montgomery County was divided into a number of militia districts, each under the command of a captain. The militia drew men from small, defined, geographic areas and often from the same families, a practice that reinforced neighborhood and kinship ties. During the early years of the Revolution, John Preston and John Black served together in Captain James Byrnes's militia company. In 1784 John Preston was promoted to captain in command of his own company, and John Black served as his ensign. In that same company, John Preston's brother Francis served as a lieutenant.<sup>16</sup> Of the sixty-two men in John Preston's company, 55 percent served with someone who shared the same last name. On the muster roll were five McDonalds, four Martains, and four Heavens.<sup>17</sup> Widespread participation in public duties and social events fostered a strong sense of community among free white men. They shared the joys of marriage, the mourning of a neighbor's death, and the hardships and rewards of frontier life.

It is not surprising that, when William Black decided to create Blacksburg, he sought the support of influential neighbors. The town's success was far from certain. In 1798 Draper's Meadow was not an ideal place to situate a town. Christiansburg, only eight miles to the south by eigh-

teenth century roads, had been established a few years earlier as the seat of Montgomery County. It had the dual advantages of an early start and a good location on the ridge of the Allegheny Mountains along the Great Road, which carried most of the overland trade in southwestern Virginia (see map 2). By comparison, Blacksburg had a late start and lay off the main road over the Allegheny Ridge, a site that diminished its potential for commercial success. Yet Blacksburg was not completely lacking as a town site. It lay in a fertile valley, several nearby springs provided fresh water, and the Pepper's Ferry Road, a parallel branch of the Great Road, ran through the proposed town (see map 1).<sup>18</sup> Supporters of the project hoped the Pepper's Ferry Road might divert some travelers and commerce from Christiansburg. William Black convinced several prominent neighbors that these advantages gave the town a reasonable chance to succeed. Supporters demonstrated their confidence by serving as trustees and purchasing lots in the village.

The first trustees were John Black, William Black, John Preston, James P. Preston, George Rutledge, Edward Rutledge, and John Henderson.<sup>19</sup> These seven men were among the most powerful and influential men in the area. In economic terms they outranked most of their neighbors. In 1810 six of the seven trustees each held at least 450 acres of land, and all but one owned slaves. The average trustee owned more than 1,766 acres and six slaves. Of the group, William and John Black owned the least amount of property. William Black possessed less than 300 acres and two slaves, while John Black worked 450 acres without any slaves. By comparison the largest slaveholder, James P. Preston, owned thirteen bondspeople, and John Preston owned the most land with over 7,500 acres (see Appendix 1).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, many of the trustees held important local and state offices. John Black became a county constable, and William Black was a justice of the peace.<sup>21</sup> John Preston was a member of the Virginia Senate, and James P. Preston was a state senator and later became governor.<sup>22</sup> Those who lent the greatest support to the venture were in a position to reap the greatest benefits. Most of the trustees owned land near the town and could expect their land prices to rise. John and William Black owned land adjacent to the town, while the Rutledges and Prestons bordered on the Blacks and were near the proposed village (see map 3). No doubt, these families counted on the benefits of a nearby commercial center to buy goods, obtain much needed services, and possibly market crops.

With approval from family and neighbors, William Black set to work laying off the town. The site he selected was  $38 \frac{3}{4}$  acres and 20 poles bordering on the northern edge of John Black's property. William Black

subdivided the tract into sixteen blocks. Each block contained four half-acre lots. The original sixty-four lots were bound by Smithfield Street (present-day Jackson), Clay Street, Roap Street (Water, then Draper),<sup>23</sup> and Wharton Street. Roanoke, Lee, and Washington streets crossed Tom's Creek (Main), Church, and Penn streets to form the major intersections. The first lots sold almost immediately. Robert King, John McGee, and John Preston purchased lots one through four, situated between present-day Main Street and Draper Road and between Jackson and Roanoke streets. What King and McGee did with their lots is unknown, but Preston proceeded to build a store. The following year Montgomery County granted Preston a merchant's license to operate a store in town. The Prestons did not have a monopoly as the county also granted a license to Dangerfield Dobyns.<sup>24</sup>

Between 1798 and 1807, the trustees sold just fourteen of Blacksburg's sixty-four lots. One reason for slow sales was a clause in each deed that required buyers to build "a house of wood, stone or bricks ... seventeen feet square with a brick or stone chimney fit to reside in or any other improvement for carrying on a useful trade or calling to the value of one hundred Dollars." The time allowed to build a house ranged between two and five years.<sup>25</sup> The building requirement prevented a few wealthy speculators from purchasing many properties and leaving them vacant. It also dissuaded poorer people who might not have the money or inclination to build immediately. In addition to the construction rider, Blacksburg's position off the main road and over the Allegheny ridge likely hindered its early development as a commercial center.<sup>26</sup>

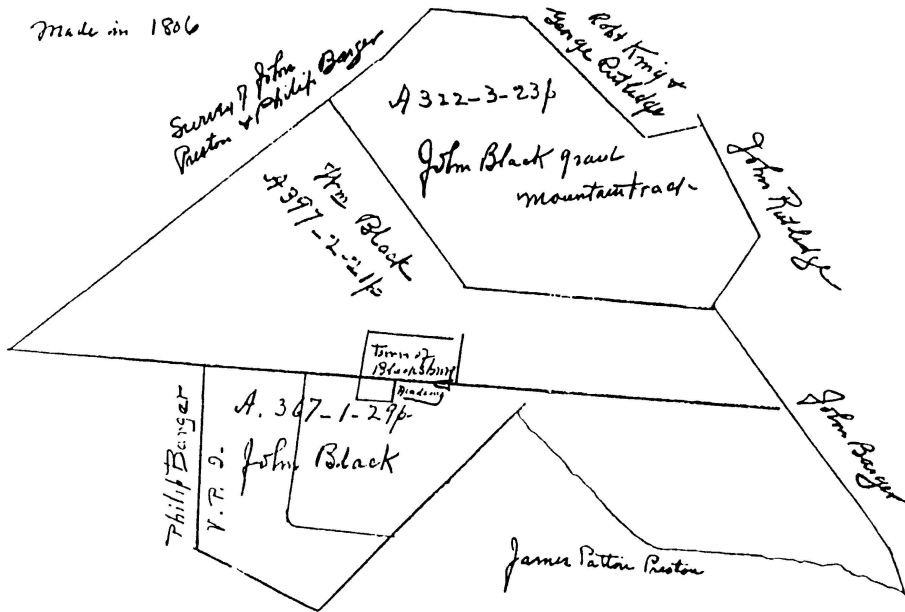
Although just a few lots sold in the first years, a lively land trade developed in properties already sold. Lot 22 changed hands four times between 1798 and 1810, from Robert McGee to William Lyon who sold it to John Burgess who, in turn, sold it to John Gardener. John Preston's lots 1 and 3 passed through three owners in less than twenty-five years. Some made handsome profits. Parrot Smyth, who purchased a quarter-acre lot for \$40 in 1807, sold it to Jacob and Hannah Stanger for \$200 the following year, and Zachariah Des Camp paid the Stangers \$305 three years later for the same property.<sup>27</sup> The properties nearest town also became desirable and valuable. William and Jane Black reaped the benefits of good location by selling lots of land that bordered the town. In 1809 Michael Kinzer paid \$40 for less than half an acre of land on Smithfield Street. The next year the Blacks sold Harmon Sifford a half-acre plot near Kinzer's property. George Surface witnessed the Black's prosperity and subdivided some of his own farmland into small lots. In 1818 Lydia Savine paid \$35 for one of George Surface's lots adjoining



*Map 2. A Civil War era map of the New River Valley, indicating the positions of towns, roads, creeks, and rivers. Note the location of Blacksburg in relation to Christiansburg, and the three Preston*



properties, which correspond to Solitude to the north, Smithfield in the middle, and Whitethorn to the south. (Source: Jeremy Francis Gilmer Collection, 1864, Newman Library, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg.)



Map 3. Relative location of several trustees' properties to Blacksburg and each other. (Source: Harvey Lee Price Papers, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.)

the town. Ten years later John Goodrich paid \$500 for twenty-five acres near Roanoke Street.<sup>28</sup> Blacksburg's development raised nearby property values and spurred a number of speculative land deals.

By 1807 the trustees abandoned the building requirement as a condition of purchase. The rate of buying, however, did not increase until Adam Croy, Jr. purchased two lots in 1819. Over the next twelve years the trustees sold twenty-five properties, and within forty years most of the original sixty-four lots were sold. John Preston's store was joined by a meeting house built on the corner of Church and Lee streets. The Methodist and Presbyterian congregations shared the meeting house for Sunday services. Important commercial shops and services moved into town. William Lyons and William Argabright operated a blacksmith shop, and a tannery was opened. Dangerfield Dobyns, in addition to his shopkeeping, opened (on Roanoke Street) the first schoolhouse within the original sixteen squares.<sup>29</sup>

Artisans brought more people into town and created opportunities for people such as Lydia Savine. In 1822 Savine applied to the county for a license to operate a tavern on the land she bought from George Surface. After reviewing her case, the court determined that Savine was

“of good character not addicted to drunkenness or gaming” and granted her license. Savine renewed her license the following year, but after that date she disappears from the county record.<sup>30</sup> The first buildings constructed by Savine, Dobyins, Argabright, and Lyons were modest, one-story, log structures with dirt floors. Not until the 1820s did wealthy Blacksburg residents begin constructing their homes with brick and mortar. From these humble beginnings the town grew, overflowing its original boundaries, and developed a lively commercial core. By 1845 the town boasted a population of 250.<sup>31</sup> Blacksburg moved into competition with Christiansburg and generated a rivalry that has lasted ever since.

William Black did not remain in the area long enough to witness Blacksburg’s growth. In 1814, sixteen years after he founded the town, forty-eight year old William, his wife Jane, and five children moved to Clark County, in west-central Ohio. By anyone’s standards William had been highly successful in Virginia. He farmed 300 acres of good land, established a town, became a justice of the peace, had family living close by, and even acquired two slaves. Moving entailed that Black leave his brother, surrender his public office, and sell his remaining 300 acres to George Surface. Unable to take slaves into the free state of Ohio, Black, according to family history, emancipated them.<sup>32</sup> Once settled, William and Jane Black never moved again. Jane died in 1843, and her husband followed eight years later at the age of eighty-four. Both are buried in the Black family cemetery in Clark County, Ohio.<sup>33</sup>

It might seem unusual for a successful, middle-aged couple such as William and Jane Black to give up expensive slave property and risk everything for an uncertain future in Ohio. Yet the Blacks typified the mobility that was common of eighteenth and nineteenth century Americans. The restless hunt for economic security, which brought immigrants to the colonies, kept them moving in search of better land. The first generation crossed the ocean and, if they were fortunate, staked their independence on good arable land.<sup>34</sup> The migration did not stop in the New World. Immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren chased the frontier, and the promise of good cheap land, farther and farther west. Settlers who opened new territories inevitably sent stories to their families of rich virgin lands that surpassed those already under cultivation. Many were lured south and west, opening up the lands of Alabama and Mississippi, while others, like the Blacks, opted for the Old Northwest. In the end William Black’s decision was indisputably a good one, as he amassed enough land to leave his three sons 400 acres each.<sup>35</sup>

The Preston family displayed a similar mobility. Four of William Preston’s five sons eventually moved away from Montgomery County.

Only James P. Preston, who inherited Smithfield Plantation, remained in Blacksburg. John Preston lived in Montgomery County for more than thirty years, until he married and moved to Botetourt County, Virginia. All of James P. Preston's three sons remained near Blacksburg. James amassed a fortune in land and slaves and was able to subdivide the family holdings among his sons without jeopardizing their future prosperity. William Ballard Preston inherited the family home, Smithfield, while Robert T. Preston constructed Solitude and James F. Preston built Whitethorn, the plantation near present-day Hethwood (see map 2).<sup>36</sup> Men of more modest means often could not divide their land into profitable farms for all of their sons, who then faced the options of an uncertain future at home or an equally uncertain future searching for land elsewhere.

Blacksburg has undergone many changes since its founding two hundred years ago. With the growth of Virginia Tech and a corresponding growth in the transient student population, people move in and out of Blacksburg at a more furious pace than ever. While the search for security continues to be the impetus for movement, it is no longer land but education that fuels Blacksburg's migratory population. The original ethnic mix of predominantly white, Protestant, Scots-Irish, German, and English settlers has been replaced, in part, by Chinese, Indian, and Korean immigrants, who come to learn and work at Virginia Tech. Although some old names such as Price, Linkous, and Long still thrive in Blacksburg, many of the earlier settlers have long since moved away. A few Black and Preston descendants continue to live in the area. Many no longer bear the names of their ancestors, but they provide links to Blacksburg's past and give continuity and context for an evolving, ever-changing town. People do not connect in the old ways. Militia musters, road construction, and property assessment no longer bind people together. Yet the people of Blacksburg still form communal attachments. Virginia Tech, the Blacksburg Electronic Village, and a host of social and sporting events help maintain a sense of community. Although the town has changed, the expansive pioneering spirit remains much the same, and it is the dynamism of the people that William Black would recognize in the thoroughly modern town of Blacksburg.

## Endnotes

\* The author thanks Greer and Mary Kent Elliott for their willingness to share Black family history.

1. For a biography of James Patton see Patricia Givens Johnson, *James Patton and the Appalachian Colonists* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1973).
2. Those families living at Draper's Meadow before William Preston's survey received

- titles to their land from James Patton. Mary B. Kegley and F.B. Kegley, *Early Adventures on the Western Waters* (Orange, Va.: Green Publishers, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 175-76.
3. For a discussion of the Scots-Irish migration to America, see David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 605-15, 759-65.
  4. Residential patterns taken from a map of Draper's Meadow in Kegley and Kegley, *Early Adventures*, vol. 1, p. 74. See also the essays by Kenneth W. Keller and Turk McClesky, in Michel J. Puglisi, ed., *Diversity and Accommodation: Essays on the Cultural Composition of the Virginia Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).
  5. George Ingles died in captivity and Thomas was ransomed thirteen years later. John P. Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers: Historical sketches of the First White Settlements West of the Alleghenies, 1748 and After*, ed. Harold J. Dudley (Radford, Va.: Roberta Ingles Steele, 1971), pp. 115-21; Johnson, *James Patton*, pp. 204-05; Gibson Worsham, *Montgomery County Historic Sites Survey* (Montgomery County, Va.: n.publ., 1986), pp. 27-28. For a brief history of Drapers Meadows, see Kegley, *Early Adventures*, pp. 175-78, 212-13.
  6. There are two biographies of William Preston. See Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Blacksburg, Va.: Walpa, 1976) and Bruce D. Tuttle, "Colonel William Preston, 1729-1783" (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1971). The Blacks have no biographer, but the family genealogy is traced in Nannie Francisco Porter, *Blacks and Other Families* (Richmond, Va.: n.publ., 1954) and Florence Black Weiland, *Fifty New England Colonists and Five Virginia Families* (Boothbay Harbor, Me.: Boothbay Register, 1965).
  7. Beverley Manor was also known as the Irish Tract for the large number of immigrants from Northern Ireland who settled there. It was named for William Beverley, James Patton's business partner. Johnson, *James Patton*, pp. 7-11.
  8. Lyman Chalkley, *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia: Extracts from the Original Court Records of Augusta County, 1745-1800* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1974), vol. 1, p. 237; John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville, Ky.: Filson Club, 1982), p. 14; Weiland, p. 8.
  9. The land originally belonged to William Lippard who, in 1754, purchased it from James Patton. There is no evidence that Lippard lived there, as the deed reverted to David Robinson and William Ingles. Montgomery County Deed Book A, p. 40, hereafter cited as Deed Book; Kegley, *Early Adventures*, p. 194.
  10. Preston purchased the properties of Draper, Ingles, and Buchanan-Smith between 1773-74, totaling almost 1500 acres. Kegley, *Early Adventures*, p. 177.
  11. *Fincastle and Montgomery County Revolutionary War Records, 1775-1783*, p. 62; Lewis Preston Summers, *Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800* (Kingsport, Ky.: Kingsport Press, 1929), p. 749.
  12. Porter, *Blacks and Other Families*, p. 3; Anne Lowry Worrell, ed., *A Brief of Wills and Marriages in Montgomery and Fincastle Counties, Virginia, 1733-1831* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1975), p. 9; Montgomery County, Virginia Commissioner of the Revenue, Land Tax Books, 1782-1850, microfilm, reel 2, indicates that John Black paid taxes on 600 acres of land until 1794

- when William assumed responsibility for half of the property. Hereafter cited as Land Tax Books.
13. Deed Book A, p. 40; Montgomery County Will Book B, p. 152, hereafter cited as Will Book.
  14. Will Book 2, pp. 282–83.
  15. Will Book 1, p. 297; Montgomery County Order Book 15, p. 233, hereafter cited as Order Book.
  16. *Montgomery County Revolutionary War Records*, pp. 62, 111; Order Book 1, p. 277.
  17. The names are spelled as they appear on the original muster roll, but it seems likely that they were the Martins and Havens. Haven has many alternate spellings, including Havens, Heavens, Heavin, Heavins, and Hevin. See Kegley, *Early Adventures*, p. 407.
  18. William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619* (Philadelphia: William Brown, 1823), p. 585; Worsham, *Montgomery County*, p. 33.
  19. John Preston also served as a trustee for Christiansburg. Samuel Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large of Virginia, From October Session 1792, to December Session 1806, Inclusive* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 133.
  20. There are no 1790 or 1800 census data for Virginia. I used the Manuscript Census, Virginia, Montgomery County, 1810. See also Land Tax Books, 1810.
  21. Porter claims that William Black was a circuit judge (*Blacks and Other Families*, p. 17), but Montgomery County Records list him as a justice of the peace. Order Book 15, p. 155.
  22. Dorman, *Prestons of Smithfield*, pp. 49–50, 63–64.
  23. In some sources Roap Street appears as Roop Street. See, for example, Kegley, *Early Adventures*, p. 195. I have spelled it as it appears in the Deed Books.
  24. Deed Book C, pp. 141–42; Order Book, pp. 11, 143.
  25. See, for example, the deeds of Samuel Black and Washington Dobyons in Deed Book D., pp. 226–27, 413–14.
  26. Worsham, *Montgomery County*, p. 33.
  27. Deed Book D, pp. 414–15, 513; E, pp. 87, 525; H, p. 10.
  28. Deed Book D, pp. 683–84; E, pp. 28–29; G, pp. 17–18; K, p. 174.
  29. Charles W. Crush, *The Montgomery County Story, 1776–1957* (n.p.: n.publ., 1957) p. 111.
  30. Order Book 22, pp. 45, 165; Deed Book G, pp. 17–18.
  31. Gibson Worsham, “Historic Architecture of the Blacksburg Historic District,” a talk prepared for the Town of Blacksburg, Spring 1997, pp. 3–4.
  32. Order Book 15, p. 155; Deed book C., pp. 463–64.
  33. Manuscript Census, Virginia, Montgomery County, p. 1810; Weiland, *Fifty New England Colonists*, p. 10.
  34. For eighteenth century mobility, see Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, pp. 610–12. James Oakes gives a good account of nineteenth century mobility in *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), ch. 3.
  35. Weiland, *Fifty New England Colonists*, p. 10.
  36. James P. Preston held about 3,000 acres and nine-one slaves. Deed Book IJ, p. 404; Will Book pp. 7, 137.

**Appendix 1:  
A comparison of property holding for  
Blacksburg trustees in 1810**

Name	Land Holdings in acres (number of properties)	Number of Slaves
William Black .....	290 ..... (1) .....	2
John Black .....	450 .... (2) .....	0
John Henderson .....	571 ..... (1) .....	3
James P. Preston .....	2380 ..... (3) .....	13
John Preston .....	7560 ... (22) .....	8
Edward Rutledge .....	574 ..... (2) .....	9
George Rutledge .....	541 ..... (2) .....	7
Average:	acreage, 1766.57;	number of slaves, 6

**Appendix 2:  
List of original lots and purchasers (when known)**

Lot #	Purchaser	Date Purchased
1 .....	John Preston .....	1798
	to Lawson Dunnington .....	1815
	to John Bell .....	1821
2 .....	Robert King .....	1798
	to Mary and Susanna Carleton .....	1818
3 .....	John Preston .....	1798
	to Lawson Dunnington .....	1815
	to John Bell .....	1821
4 .....	John McGee .....	1798
	reverts to trustees	
	to Lawson Dunnington .....	1815
5 .....	John Helms .....	1839
6 .....	John B. Goodrich .....	1828
7 .....	John Helms .....	1839
8 .....	John Helms .....	1839
9 .....	Harmon Sifford .....	1803
10 .....	Jacob Stanger .....	?
	to Harmon Sifford .....	1811

**Appendix 2, continued**

Lot #	Purchaser	Date Purchased
11		
12	Harmon Sifford	1803
13	Thos. Rutledge et al.	1821
14	Thos. Rutledge et al.	1921
15		
16	Lewis Amiss	?
17	Lewis Amiss	?
	to John Helms	1807
18	Henry Price	?
19	William Lyons	?
	to Jacob Taiber	1844
20	William Dobyns	1803
	to John Burgess	1806
	to James Mitchell	1814
21		
22	Robert McGee	?
	to Wm. Lyons	?
	to John Burgess	?
	to John Gardner	1810
23		
24	Samuel Black	1806
25		
26	Harmon Sifford	1807
27		
28		
29		
30	John Peterman	1845
31	Elizabeth Stanger	1830
32	John Peterman	1845
33	John Surface	1821
34	John Surface	1821
	to Peter S. Wax	1823
35	John Surface	1821
36	John Surface	1821
	to Peter S. Wax	1823

Lot #	Purchaser	Date Purchased
37	Adam Croy, Jr.	1819
38	Adam Croy, Jr.	1819
39		
40	split between Methodist Church	1830
	and Wm. Barger	1830
41	Wesley Argabright	1840
42	Parrot Smyth	1807
	to Jacob Stanger	1808
	to Z. DesChamp	1811
43		
44		
45	William Argabright	1827
46	William Argabright	1827
47	William Argabright	1827
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53	Andrew Croy	1830
54	Andrew Croy	1830
55	Andrew Croy	1830
56	Andrew Croy	1830
57		
58		
59	Thomas W. Jones	1844
60	Thomas W. Jones	1844
61	William Thomas	1822
62	William Thomas	1822
63	William Thomas	1822
64	William Thomas	1822

Source: Montgomery County Deed Books A-O

**Appendix 3:  
Town of Blacksburg in 1798, showing the first 64 lots**

Smithfield (Jackson) St								
2	1	18	17	34	33	50	49	
4	3	20	19	36	35	52	51	
Beanoke St								
Roop (Water → Draper) St.	6	5	22	21	38	37	54	53
	8	7	24	23	40	39	56	55
	Lee St							
	10	9	26	25	42	41	58	57
	12	11	28	27	44	43	60	59
	Washington St							
	14	13	30	29	46	45	62	61
	16	15	32	31	48	47	64	63
Clay St								

Source: Kegley, *Early Adventures on Western Waters*, 195; Montgomery County Deed Books.