

**Includes Ten-Year Index**



# ***The Smithfield Review***

***Studies in the history of the region west of the Blue Ridge***

**Volume X, 2006**

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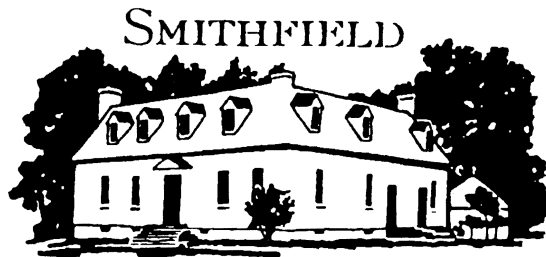
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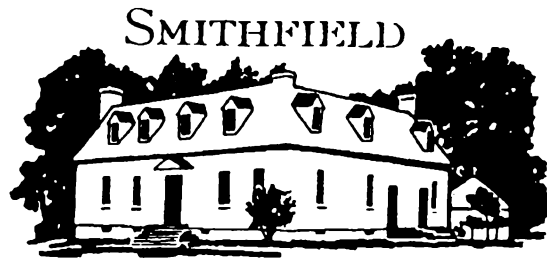
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Blacksburg, Virginia

**In Memory  
of  
Charles Modlin**

**1937 – 2006**

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Smithfield is an important historic property adjacent to the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. The manor house, constructed around 1774 on the frontier, is a premier example of early American architecture and is one of few such regional structures of that period to survive. It was the last home of Colonel William Preston, a noted surveyor and developer of western lands, who served as an important colonial and Revolutionary War leader. Preston named the 2,000-acre plantation “Smithfield” in honor of his wife, Susanna Smith. Today, the manor house is a museum that is interpreted and administered by a local group of volunteers.

In 1997 *The Smithfield Review* was founded with the purpose of helping to preserve the often neglected history of the region west of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and adjacent states. We seek articles about important personages and events; reports of archaeological discoveries; and analyses of the social, political, and architectural history of the region. Whenever possible and appropriate, the articles will incorporate letters, speeches, and other primary documents that convey to the reader a direct sense of the past.

## A Note from the Editors

The book review on page 77 presents a superb illustration of the importance of local and regional history in the study of broader historical concepts. The book's author, Professor Edward Ayers of the University of Virginia, uses Franklin County in Pennsylvania and Augusta County in Virginia to examine, among other things, the evolution of political thought from 1859 to 1863. In this issue of *The Smithfield Review*, we, too, use local history to gain a better appreciation for state and national currents in which the local events were embedded. The first article reveals a previously unpublished letter by an eyewitness to the surrender at the pivotal Battle of King's Mountain in the Revolutionary War. The letter provides additional evidence in a two-century-old controversy about the role of Colonel William Campbell, which was outlined in Volume 7. Next, we present a critical review of written material concerning one episode in the life of the flamboyant John Floyd, the father and grandfather of two Virginia governors. Floyd became entangled in some international intrigue. In several earlier volumes we have provided, through old letters and diaries, a sense of the social issues that affected soldiers and their families during the Civil War. Historian James I. Robertson Jr. adds to our collection by annotating a letter from a reluctant soldier from Montgomery County. The fourth article provides a description of interesting research that resulted from our earlier article on Saltville, Virginia. Our final presentation illustrates some statewide and national religious trends through an examination of the racial split within the Methodist Church of Blacksburg.

"An Unexpected Enemy and the Turn of the Tide: Andrew Creswell's King's Mountain Letter" includes a brief history of the battle and surrounding controversy. Very little is known about Andrew Creswell, but his letter is important because it is a first-hand account of the events of that historic day. One of the authors, Jim Glanville, a retired chemistry professor from Virginia Tech, was able to persuade the owner, Hubert Gilliam of Kingsport, Tennessee, that the letter's



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importance required its publication. Quotes from Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Lord Cornwallis provide the reader with an indication of the historical importance of the battle.

“The Phoenix Caper - A Frontiersman goes to Sea” analyzes several accounts of John Floyd’s foreign exploits. Floyd, who was introduced to our readers in Volumes 1 and 2, spent most of his short life on the Virginia and Kentucky frontier, but this one deviation has been the subject of widely divergent accounts. Author Wirt H. Wills, a retired Virginia Tech faculty member and active volunteer at Smithfield, attempts to distinguish historical fact from embellishments and other assorted distortions. The foreign trail leads Floyd from captivity on the high seas to England as a prisoner, followed by an escape to France.

“Montgomery County in August 1862: A Showalter Observation” reveals the attitude of one man with respect to being drafted as a soldier in the Civil War. Details about the lives of his family and friends also are expressed. The language and content provide insight into life in rural Western Virginia during the second year of the Civil War. The letter and annotations were furnished by James I. Robertson Jr., Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at Virginia Tech.

In “The Blade from Glade,” Jim Glanville describes his investigation into the origin of an artifact found near Saltville, Virginia. The artifact was brought to the author by a resident of the area who hoped that it would provide evidence of a visit to the area by 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish conquistadors. The outcome demonstrates that research often leads to unexpected results.

“Growth and Independence of Methodist Congregations in Blacksburg, Virginia” describes the birth of Methodism in Blacksburg and then follows the rapid changes during and soon after the Civil War. Particular attention is given to the birth of the African-American St. Paul Methodist Church. The analysis is embedded in the broader context of the events of the day as they played out on state and national scenes. Chris Donald, the author and a native of Blacksburg, is currently a student at Duke University Divinity School.

This issue of *The Smithfield Review* culminates a decade of publishing essays and old documents of local and regional historical interest. We mark the occasion with a comprehensive index for the first ten volumes. We think it is also appropriate to acknowledge those who have contributed so much to the success of this ten-year venture. Generous financial assistance and encouragement have come from the persons and institutions listed on the preceding pages of this issue. Many anonymous reviewers and proofreaders have devoted hours to the preparation of each article. Peter Wallenstein and James I. Robertson Jr. of the Virginia Tech History Department have furnished manuscripts and wise counsel on many occasions. Mary Holliman and the staff of Pocahontas Press have published each issue in a competent and efficient manner. Terry Nicholson and several volunteers from Smithfield have provided miscellaneous assistance that is absolutely essential in a venture of this scope. Last of all, our authors, who are the “life-blood” of the endeavor, have given much time, talent, and energy to bring you, the reader, a direct sense of the past. For all of these contributions we are deeply appreciative.

In closing, we pay tribute to one of our editors, Charles E. Modlin, who died on the first day of 2006. One of his last activities was to assist in the preparation of this volume. Charlie, a retired English professor at Virginia Tech, was one of the four persons who, twelve years ago, established this journal of local and regional history. We shall miss his friendship and wise counsel.

Hugh G. Campbell, Editor  
Editorial Board:  
Clara B. Cox  
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**An Unexpected Enemy  
and the Turn of the Tide:  
Andrew Creswell's King's<sup>1</sup> Mountain  
Letter\***

**Hubert Gilliam, Kingsport, Tennessee  
and**

**Jim Glanville, Blacksburg, Virginia**

**On this field, the Patriot forces attacked and totally defeated an equal force of Tories and British regular troops. The British commander, Major Patrick Ferguson, was killed and his entire force was captured after suffering heavy loss. This brilliant victory marked the turning point of the American Revolution.**

*Text of a commemorative plaque<sup>2</sup> at the site of the Battle of King's Mountain, fought October 7, 1780. The site is just south of the border between North and South Carolina, approximately 40 miles west of modern-day Charlotte, North Carolina.*

### **Introduction**

Concerning the Battle of King's Mountain, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

... I remember well the deep and grateful impression made on the minds of every one by that memorable victory. It was the joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of our independence.<sup>3</sup>

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Theodore Roosevelt wrote:

... at a crisis in the great struggle for liberty, at one of the darkest hours for the patriot cause, it was given to a band of western men to come to the relief of their brethren of the seaboard and to strike a telling and decisive blow for all America.<sup>4</sup>

Lord Charles Cornwallis said of the battle:

The event proved unfortunate .... A numerous and unexpected enemy came from the mountains; as they had good horses their movements were rapid.<sup>5</sup>

Western Virginians have more than once expressed the opinion that the significance of the Battle of King's Mountain has been underrated by eastern Virginians. For example, Arthur Campbell of Saltville

...was very dissatisfied by the lack of importance attached to Kings Mountain and he was furious when he heard that John Randolph had remarked in the [Virginia] House of Representatives that Cowpens was the most important battle fought in the South during the American Revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Heretofore, historians have relied almost exclusively on the Lyman C. Draper manuscripts<sup>7</sup> for serious research on the battle.<sup>8</sup> But this article introduces a new, never-before-known source: a letter,<sup>9</sup> unknown to Draper, written by a participant in the battle. The letter was sent in 1822 from Andrew Creswell to Col. John Preston of Walnut Grove, near Abingdon.

When the two authors of this paper met during the summer of 2005, they agreed to collaborate in its publication and – because of the letter's significance for our region and to the Preston family – chose to submit it to *The Smithfield Review*. As we will show, Creswell's letter finally answers a long unanswered question<sup>10</sup> posed by Theodore Roosevelt about the battle .

## **The Creswell Letter**

Knowledge of the existence of the Creswell letter was retained within the Creswell family, and the published family genealogy described a letter “written by Andrew Creswell, who had served in the Revolutionary War ... about his experience in the Battle of King's

Mountain ... [that] had been framed on a woman's living room wall until the 1960s when it was sold at auction."<sup>11</sup>

The letter is written in what we assume is Creswell's own handwriting and remains clear and readily legible almost 200 years after being written. The envelope (shown in Figure 1) is apparently written in the same hand. The address reads "Col. John Preston, Walnut Grove, Near Abingdon, Virginia." The return address at the upper right of the envelope appears to read "Free, [Alex?] Preston, [Pillp?], Sevier C [?] Ten." We do not understand the detailed significance of this notation, although clearly either the sender or recipient of the letter was entitled to free mail service. The concluding three lines of the letter and Creswell's signature are shown in Figure 2.

The letter reads as follows:

Sometime in September 1780, I was ordered on a Tour of duty to the South under the command of Col William Campbell of Virginia which tour I served under James Dysart<sup>12</sup> as my Captain. Without entering into details of the whole of the route I shall begin the day before the Battle when we eat our fresh beef in the morning without bread or salt, and then commenced our march

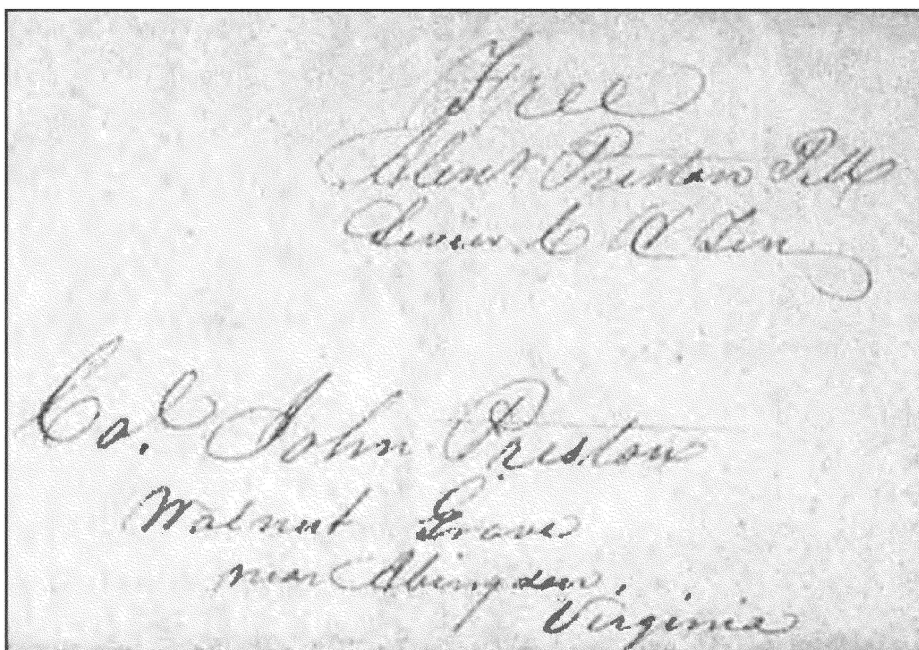


Figure 1. The envelope of the Creswell letter.

which lasted till Sun-set where we struck camp at the Cowpens but did not get leave to eat our beef till we took up the line of march which lasted all night, about Sunrise we crossed Broad River where we expected to fight but finding them removed from that place to Kings Mountain we pursued on till about 2 o'clock in the evening when we called a halt, when Col. Campbell came back along the lines telling us to prime our Guns afresh for we were then within two miles of the enemys camp. we started thru like in two collumns Col. Shelby at the head of the left collumn and Col. Campbell at the head of the right. with Captain Dysart in the front of the right collumn. we rushed to the foot of the mountain. left our horses without any confinement. Campbells front was ordered to push round which was done with rapidity. in the meantime Captain Dysart was wounded in the arm, his men rushed on making very little halt till we got within Gun shot of Shelby's line. I saw the smoke of their Guns and as I saw but one man further round than myself I spoke to him & told him we had better take care least we might make a mistake. I retreated about ten paces where I discharged my Gun. about that moment they began to run. I waited for nobody I ran without a halt till I ran into the center of their encampment at which moment the flag was raised for quarters. I saw Capt. Dupoister<sup>13</sup> start out from amongst his dirty crew on my right hand seeing him coming a direct course toward me. I looked round to my left. I saw Col. Mr. Campbell of Virginia on my left. Dupoister came forward with his sword hilt foremost Campbell accosted him in these words I am happy to see you sir. Dupoister in answer swore by his maker he was not happy to see him under the present circumstances at the same time delivered up his sword Campbell rec<sup>d</sup>. the sword turned it round in his hand and handed it back telling him to retire to his post which he received, rejoining these words God eternally damn the Tories to hells flames and so the score ended as to the surrender.

Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1822

A. Creswell

### **The Prelude to King's Mountain**

In the spring of 1780, nearly four wearying years after the United States had declared their independence, Lord Cornwallis and the British launched a Southern campaign. To win that campaign, they

which he received, rejoining these words God  
 eternally damn the Tories to hell's flames and so  
 to the same end as to the surrender  
 Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 1782 J. Creswell

Figure 2. The concluding three lines of the letter and Creswell's signature.

counted on the support of Tories and loyalists who – the authorities in London believed – could be found in large numbers in the South. This strategy led to what has been called the “struggle for the South.”<sup>14</sup>

That struggle began well for the British. On May 12, 1780, Charleston, South Carolina, fell to a British force of 10,000 under the command of Sir Henry Clinton. For the United States this defeat was the worst disaster of the entire Revolutionary War. Vast quantities of supplies were lost, most of the political and military leaders of South Carolina were seized, and some 5,000 soldiers of the Continental army and militia forces were taken prisoner. Clinton departed for the northern theater soon after the victory, turning command over to Lord Cornwallis, who pushed inland. At Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, Cornwallis's forces routed patriot forces led by Major-General Horatio Gates, the hero of Saratoga but a loser in the Carolinas. Of the 7,000 men under Gates's command at Camden, fewer than 1,000 escaped northward to Hillsborough, North Carolina, and they arrived there without arms, ammunition, or food. As summer 1780 turned to fall, the patriot cause lay gasping for life.

The patriot cause was resurrected almost by accident. Ranging to the west, a force of Tories and loyalists under the command of Scottish Major Patrick Ferguson<sup>15</sup> took advantage of the temporary British hegemony to attempt to bring under control the country to the west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Using two paroled patriot prisoners as his messengers, Ferguson sent a message of ultimatum westward to Col. Isaac Shelby in mountainous Sullivan County (then in North Carolina, now in Tennessee). The message said that if Shelby

and his mountain men continued to oppose British control, then Ferguson would “march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword.”<sup>16</sup> This ultimatum coalesced the opposition of mountain leaders such as Col. Charles McDowell of Burke County, North Carolina, Col. John “Nolichucky Jack” Sevier of what is now Washington County, Tennessee, Col. William Campbell of Washington (now Smyth) County, Virginia, Col. Benjamin Cleveland of Wilkes County, North Carolina, and Major Joseph Winston of Surry County, North Carolina. Together with Shelby, each of these men agreed to raise a fighting force from their respective localities and bring them to an assembly at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River on the 25th of September.

Thus came into being the fighting force ever more to be immortalized as the “Overmountain Men.” Of course, much of that fighting force already existed, though its elements were widely scattered and had not previously been conjoined. Mountain men had for years been fighting Indians as part of the ongoing westward expansion and settlement. Indeed, even during the War of Revolution, Thomas Jefferson had been so eager to secure Virginia’s claims to the Ohio country that he had tried to send part of the Virginia militia to that region during the summer of 1780.<sup>17</sup> But the mountain men had declined, preferring to stay close to home.<sup>18</sup>

These overmountain men were skilled woodsmen, fine horsemen, and expert riflemen. They were almost all Presbyterians,<sup>19</sup> Scots-Irish and Scots by birth or descent, most deriving from northern Ireland or the north British border country. They were thus steeped in the tactics and traditions of border wars<sup>20</sup> and had been recently further tempered by their bitter and brutal experiences of Indian fighting. Almost miraculously, they were the very men to revive the Revolutionary cause – though neither they nor George III knew beforehand that such was to be their destiny.

### **The Battle of King’s Mountain**

The story of the Battle of King’s Mountain is sufficiently well known from the many standard sources<sup>21</sup> to require in this section no more than a précis for the purpose of providing a context for the



Creswell letter. The reader will see that Creswell's account in his letter is fully consistent with this précis.

After assembling on September 25th at Sycamore Shoals, near modern-day Elizabethton, Tennessee, the combined militia force marched south as a united citizen army.<sup>22</sup> As September waned and the weather turned cold and wet, the army crossed Yellow Mountain Gap, at an elevation of 4,682 feet, marched through Spruce Pine, and skirted Linville Mountain on its western flank. By October 2, the army was drying out in North Carolina near Pilot Mountain. On October 5, the army was near the North Carolina-South Carolina border, but, lacking good intelligence, was heading west, away from Ferguson's force. Early on the morning of October 6, news came of Ferguson's whereabouts. The army swung around and marched through the day to Cowpens, where the men ate a hasty evening meal, and pushed on through a rainy night towards King's Mountain – as Creswell himself describes in his letter.

The prominence called King's Mountain is a stony humpback roughly 700 yards long by 300 yards wide. Although now wooded on its broad top and on its steeply sloping sides, at the time of the battle it was crested by a narrow, grassy area (a bald) where the tents of Ferguson's force were pitched. The overmountain army advanced rapidly, with surprising speed. Professional opinions differ as to whether Ferguson was either unable<sup>23</sup> or unwilling<sup>24</sup> to escape eastward to rejoin Cornwallis, only 40 miles away.

But whether Ferguson was there at King's Mountain by choice, or there because the overmountain men had marched sufficiently fast to catch him, Ferguson believed his defensive position on the humpback to be impregnable, declaring that "the Almighty could not drive him from it."<sup>25</sup> He was wrong, and the history of the world turned on his error.

The plan of attack was straightforward: surround the mountain and trap its defenders in a constantly shrinking perimeter of fire as the mountain sides were scaled. Four columns of men marched abreast to a point where they separated and spread out to positions along the base of the mountain. Around 3:00 pm, from their various positions, they began more-or-less simultaneously to climb the slopes. This method of advance relied heavily on their skills as riflemen and expe-



rience as Indian fighters. They used the cover on the slopes provided by the rocks and trees and fired with withering accuracy.

They were formidable and unstoppable. The action was concluded in an hour, perhaps a little more. Ferguson himself lay dead. The report<sup>26</sup> prepared two weeks later by the commanders placed Ferguson's losses as 225 killed, 163 wounded, 716 prisoners, and none escaped, a total killed, wounded, and captured of 1,104. The losses of the patriots were 28 killed and 62 wounded, a total of 90. Indeed a "brilliant victory," as recorded on the plaque at the site quoted above.

### Andrew Creswell

As a low-ranking participant in the King's Mountain battle, Andrew Creswell is only a minor historical figure and as such escaped the attention of even the encyclopedic Lyman Draper,<sup>27</sup> whose extensive index passes directly from Crawford to Crider's Fort. However, in an age when popular interest in genealogy has been greatly stimulated and enhanced by the internet, it is possible to reconstruct something of his biography, relying solely on online sources.<sup>28</sup>

According to the Mary Blount Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Blount County, Tennessee, Andrew Creswell was born on January 12, 1757, and died on July 16, 1838. He was married to Dorothy Evans, and is buried in Eusebia Church Cemetery<sup>29</sup> in Blount County, Tennessee, where the chapter placed a marker in 1976.<sup>30</sup>

Revolutionary War soldier's pension rolls<sup>31</sup> show that Andrew Creswell, a private of the Virginia Line<sup>32</sup> from Sevier County, Tennessee, received a \$40 annual pension for three years, beginning on Oc-

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*Figure 3. Andrew Creswell was formerly a member of the Virginia line. Seen here recently at Yorktown Victory Center is native Pennsylvanian and former member of the U.S. Navy, Don Reinart, wearing the uniform of a sergeant of the Virginia line. Reinert observed that members of the line would not have been dressed this well by 1780, the time that King's Mountain was fought. Creswell at King's Mountain would probably have been wearing typical mountaineer's skin clothing.*

*– Photograph by Jim Glanville.*

tober 25, 1833, when he was recorded as being 76 years old. His daughter, Nancy Creswell,<sup>33</sup> was born on February 5, 1776.

After the war Creswell lived in Tennessee and was the victim of an Indian attack, as attested by the following quote:<sup>34</sup>

In 1792 and 1793 the Indian outrages came thick and fast. ... Andrew Creswell was a settler, living in the neighborhood of McGaughey's station. He had with him his family and two other men. One day William Cunningham, walking along a winding road through the forest, heard a shot, felt a sharp pain in his right arm, and saw behind a neighboring tree the figure of a lurking Indian. Cunningham ran with all haste to Creswell's house. He clutched the door-knob, pushed his way in, and fell breathless on the floor. Every inmate of the cabin knew at once what it meant. Doors and windows were barricaded. They waited, but no foe appeared. An agitated conference was held as to whether they should abandon the cabin and seek refuge at McGaughey's station<sup>35</sup> or not. Mrs. Creswell spoke. She said, "I would rather die than go live in the filth and confinement of the stockade."

"Then," said Creswell, "I will defend this house until it is burned over my head." Every preparation was made for defense. From the barn-door a long lever reaching into the house underneath the ground, was arranged so that it could not be opened except from the inside of the house. With this and other arrangements, Creswell calmly awaited the foe. Whether they ever came or not we do not know. Such was the courage of the settlers.

### **Colonel John Preston**

We know a good deal about Colonel John Preston<sup>36</sup> of Walnut Grove, to whom Creswell addressed his letter. Our John Preston was the grandson of the earlier John Preston (1726-1796) of Londonderry, the progenitor of the Walnut Grove branch of the Preston family. Our John Preston was the husband of Margaret Preston and together they had fourteen children. Margaret was the twelfth child of Colonel William Preston and his wife Susanna Smith of Smithfield. Our John Preston was a captain in the War of 1812, later a colonel of the 105th Virginia Militia, and presiding Justice of Washington County from 1820 to 1852.

What we don't know are the circumstances that led Creswell to write his letter to Preston, 42 years after the battle. As noted above, Creswell fought in the Virginia Line, and that possibly is his link to Preston. Preston, in turn, perhaps had a taste for history, a common enough trait among Abingdon lawyers. But to say even this much pushes us close to the edge of outright speculation.

## Conclusions

The first broad conclusion we reach is that Creswell's account squares well with the known facts of the battle. Nothing in his letter contradicts the traditional account of the events of October 7, 1780.

A second and historically important conclusion we reach is that Creswell's letter finally answers a long unanswered question posed in 1889 by Theodore Roosevelt: "...[did] Campbell or another of Shelby's brothers receive De Peyster's sword." Creswell answers thus:

Dupoister came forward with his sword hilt foremost Campbell accosted him in these words I am happy to see you sir. Dupoister in answer swore by his maker he was not happy to see him under the present circumstances at the same time delivered up his sword....

Campbell received De Peyster's sword!

A third minor conclusion involves the so called Shelby-Campbell controversy.<sup>37</sup> Thirty or forty years after the battle, allegations by Isaac Shelby and others surfaced suggesting William Campbell had shown cowardice at the battle. These allegations were at the time demonstrated to be false: probably a case of mistaken identity combined with political ambition. However, although scholars have long since conceded that Campbell's reputation was unstained, Creswell's account provides direct eyewitness testimony of Campbell's presence in the thick of the fighting and confirms that this notorious controversy has been properly and definitively settled in Campbell's favor.

## Acknowledgments

The authors thank several anonymous reviewers who have aided them in substantially strengthening this article and improving its logic. We thank Deena Flinchum for helpful editorial comments on an early draft. We thank William C. Grigsby, at whose home we met. All the

mistakes, infelicities, and embarrassments that remain are the sole responsibility of the authors.

## Endnotes

1. Some authors, perhaps more punctilious in their English usage than others, write “King’s Mountain” but “Kings Mountain” is more common. A Google search in July 2005 yielded 36,000 hits for the latter in conjunction with the word “battle,” while only 13,500 for the former. Both usages are employed here.
2. <[www.henry.descendants.us/](http://www.henry.descendants.us/)>
3. Thomas Jefferson, Letter concerning the Battle of Kings Mountain to John Campbell, Esq. at Richmond, Monticello, Nov. 10, 1822. Online at <<http://philnorf.tripod.com/letterof.htm>> Jefferson added the following postscript: “I received at the same time with your letter one from William G. Preston on the same subject. Writing is so slow and painful to one that I must pray you to make for me my acknowledgment to him and my request that he will consider this as an answer to his as well your favor.” Jefferson was writing in response to inquiries about the behavior of William Campbell at the battle, as discussed in the “Conclusions” section of this paper.
4. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, vol. 2 (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1889), Chapter IX, “King’s Mountain, 1780,” pp. 150-85. Hereafter cited as Roosevelt, *Winning*.
5. Quoted in “Historical Statement Concerning the Battle of Kings Mountain,” Prepared by the Historical Section of the Army War College, 70th Congress, 1st Session House Document No. 328 (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1928). On line at <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/RevWar/KM-Cpns/AWC-KM-FM.htm>> Hereafter cited as “Historical Statement of the War College.”
6. Hartwell L. Quinn. *Arthur Campbell: Pioneer and Patriot of the Old Southwest*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: Macfarland Publishers, 1990), pp. 121-2.
7. J. David Dameron, *King’s Mountain: The Defeat of the Loyalists, October 7, 1780* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2003), p. 123. Hereafter cited as “Dameron, *King’s Mountain*.” Dameron writes “Original historical records of Loyalists and Patriots who served on King’s Mountain are rare, and the starting point for serious research is the Lyman C. Draper manuscripts. These records are vast, but not widely available. There is a microfilm copy (twelve rolls) available in the King’s Mountain National Military Park Archives (you must request an appointment through the park director).
8. Lyman C. Draper, *King’s Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King’s Mountain and the Events Which Led to It* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, Co., 1983, and various other facsimile reprints. Originally published Cincinnati, 1881). Hereafter cited as “Draper, *King’s Mountain*.” The name of Creswell does not appear in Draper’s lengthy index, so the Creswell letter escaped Draper’s evidentiary vacuum cleaner. Concerning Draper’s book the unnamed authors of the 1928 Historical Section of the Army War College Report on the

- battle wrote: "Collection of material for this history covered a period of 40 years. The book contains much source material of varying worth."
9. Letter from Andrew Creswell of Sevier County, Tennessee, to Colonel John Preston of Walnut Grove, near Abingdon, Virginia, dated December 8, 1822. Original copy in the collection of Hubert Gilliam of Kingsport, Tennessee.
  10. Roosevelt, *Winning*, p. 185. "But it is a fair question as to whether Campbell or another of Shelby's brothers received De Peyster's sword," is the concluding sentence of Teddy Roosevelt's long chapter about King's Mountain.
  11. Ian Creswell, Post of August 22, 2003, at the Creswell Family Genealogy Forum describing the Creswell Family History and Genealogy (Published in 1967). On line at <<http://genforum.genealogy.com/creswell/messages/283.html>>
  12. James Dysart was an Irishman born in Donegal around 1744. He entered the United States at Philadelphia in 1761 and, like so many others of his Scots-Irish kin, migrated southwest down the Appalachian chain, finally settling in Washington County, Virginia, some time before 1770. He was badly wounded in the left hand at the battle (Draper, *King's Mountain*, p. 404). He died in Kentucky in 1818 after a long and useful civic life in Washington County. See: Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786, Washington County, 1777-1870* (Johnson City, Tennessee: Overmountain Press, 1989). Originally published 1903.
  13. Abraham DePeyster was second in command of the loyalist forces at King's Mountain. Born in New York in 1753, he served as a Captain in the New York Volunteers and saw action at the siege of Charleston and with Ferguson during the summer of 1780. After the war he became a militia colonel.
  14. Bruce Lancaster and J. H. Plumb, *The American Heritage Book of the Revolution* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1958).
  15. Patrick Ferguson was a major at the time of the battle, although the order promoting him to colonel had already been issued. A Scot from Aberdeen, the son of a nobleman, and a single man with a good reputation among the ladies, he was 35 years old at the time of the battle and had been a successful soldier for 20 years, seeing service in Europe and the Caribbean. An ordnance specialist, he was skilled at the use of weapons and was the inventor of a patented breech-loading rifle (named after him) that had the potential to change the tactics of war as then constituted. By all accounts he was well suited to the task of organizing the Tory and loyalist forces in the South.
  16. General Joseph Graham, "The Battle of Kings Mountain, with anecdotes," *The Southern Literary Messenger*, September 30, 1845. Published on line at the "New River Notes" web site at <[www.ls.net/~newriver/misc/kingsmt1.htm](http://www.ls.net/~newriver/misc/kingsmt1.htm)>
  17. Annotation to letter of Thomas Jefferson to the Lieutenant of Berkeley Co. Dated October 22, 1780. On line at <[www.gilderlehrman.org/search/display\\_results.php?id=GLC01636](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/search/display_results.php?id=GLC01636)> The letter is titled "Concerning the arrival of British troops & mobilizing militia."
  18. No more than two months after King's Mountain, many of the overmountain men were once again in the field, this time fighting against the Cherokees. Perhaps incited by Cornwallis in retaliation for the British defeat at King's Mountain, the Cherokees rose up and attacked the western mountain settle-

- ments. Led by John Sevier and William Campbell's brother Arthur, of Royal Oak (modern-day Marion) and Saltville, the overmountain men burned many native towns, wreaked havoc, and broke the uprising. See Patricia Johnson Givens, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Walpa Publishing, 1976), pp. 272-4.
19. In his book, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World & Everything in It* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2001), at the top of chapter nine, titled "That Great Design: Scots in America," Arthur Herman places the following epigraph: "Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more or less than a Scotch Irish Presbyterian rebellion. – Anonymous Hessian Officer, 1778."
  20. Historian David Hackett Fischer, writing in *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), uses the phrase "from the borderlands to the back country" to characterize the transatlantic movement of people of Scots and Scots-Irish stock who formed the founding European population of the middle Appalachians. In Virginia, the Prestons and Campbells were typical of this tough, hard-bitten breed.
  21. Historical Statement of the War College, Draper, *King's Mountain*; Dameron, *King's Mountain*; William Campbell, Isaac Shelby, and Benjamin Cleveland, "The official report of the Battle of Kings Mountain to Major General Horatio Gates" in Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 522-524 and titled "A Statement of the proceedings of the Western Army, from the 25th of September, 1780, to the reduction of Major Ferguson, and the army under his command." The statement is not dated, but was probably written in late October 1780, two to three weeks after the battle. Hank Messick, *King's Mountain: The Epic of the Blue Ridge "Mountain Men" in the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976); Pat Alderman, *One Heroic Hour at King's Mountain* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1968; reprinted 1990 with added index). Locally written accounts of the battle can be found in "Memorial Addresses on the Battle of Kings Mountain" (Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, Bulletin, 1938) which includes the addresses of Francis Preston in 1810 and Lewis Preston Summers in 1938.
  22. The route of march, as well as the routes taken by other units that joined late in the march, have been collectively designated by the U.S. Park Service as the "Overmountain Victory Trail." The Park Service has published an excellent (undated) brochure and map with that name in cooperation with the Overmountain Victory Trail Association. See <[www.nps.gov/ovvi](http://www.nps.gov/ovvi)>
  23. Ensign Robert Campbell concluded that Ferguson waited for the attack on his chosen ground because he "must inevitably be overtaken" by the rapid pursuit. See pp. 537-8 in the appendix to Draper, *King's Mountain*.
  24. The staff of the War College concluded that Ferguson "acted with deliberation and with full intent to engage in battle" by taking up a defensive position and "remaining there for 24 hours before the enemy came in sight." *Historical Statement of the War College*, pp. 23-4.



25. Quoted by Isaac Shelby, p. 543 in the appendix to Draper, *King's Mountain*.
26. Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 522-4.
27. Draper, *King's Mountain*.
28. Other than what is available on line, the authors have been unable to find any traditional library resources that refer to Creswell .
29. Blount County, where Creswell is buried, and Sevier County, where he made his home, lie just north of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in south-eastern present-day Tennessee.
30. <<http://fscnma.org/dar/Mary/Eusebia.htm>>
31. Tennessee Pension Roll of 1835. Copied and indexed by William R. Navey, Holly Ridge, NC 28445. Available on line at <<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/military/pen1835.txt>>
32. A different online source citing the "DAR Patriot Index Cent. Ed. Page 706" states that Andrew Creswell was in South Carolina Service. See <<http://www.sevierlibrary.org/genealogy/militalist/revwar.htm>>
33. <<http://rpevans.home.att.net/und-ch7.pdf>>
34. Augustus Lynch Mason, Chapter XIX, "The Troubles of the Tennesseans" in *The Romance and Tragedy of Pioneer Life: A popular account of the heroes and adventurers who, by their valor and war-craft, beat back the savages from the borders of civilization and gave the American forests to the plow and the sickle* (Cincinnati: Jones Brothers and Co., 1883). On line at <<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/topic/colonial/pioneer/chap19.html>>
35. A settlers' fort on Boyd's Creek in Sevier County.
36. John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1982), pp. 72-4.
37. For a discussion of this long and convoluted story see Mason G. Robertson and June N. Stubbs, "The Strange Campbell/Shelby Controversy and the Role of John Broady at the Battle of Kings Mountain," *The Smithfield Review*, vol. 7 (2003), pp. 27-47. See also Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 559-91.

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## **The *Phoenix* Caper – A Frontiersman Goes to Sea**

**Wirt H. Wills**

### **Introduction**

John Floyd, a native of Amherst County, Virginia, moving westward as young Virginians of his time often did, came under the direction of William Preston, then of Greenfield in Botetourt County. Sometime after 1767, Floyd became an assistant surveyor under Preston and at times represented him in business affairs. On one such trip to Williamsburg in the fall of 1776, Floyd became involved in a scheme to engage in a privateering venture.

Little in the way of detail is available concerning the ensuing series of events in his career. Nevertheless, several writers have undertaken to write his story and have supplied details which in some cases have been either in conflict and/or unsubstantiated. The result is a not-very-neat story that in a way epitomizes the short and hectic, but significant, life of the man. Floyd was a man who stood in the first order of importance in that company of men and women who seemed to collect around William Preston, and who gave form to the frontier society leading to the western expansion in Virginia and then to Kentucky.

The accounts of Colonel John Floyd's life read like an historical romance, and abound in inaccuracies, conflicting records, and embellishments. With their "reluctant hero," as he was called by one biographer, and their fairytale quality, the accounts present a story of high adventure, grounded in fact, obscured by uncertainty, and filled with vitality. The fascinating life of Col. Floyd of Virginia ended when he died in 1783,<sup>1</sup> nine years before Kentucky moved from county status in Virginia to statehood.

One romantic tale, in brief and somewhat conjectural, begins in the fall of 1776 with John Floyd in Williamsburg, where he was negotiating to purchase a ship for the West Indies trade. Unsuccessful in

such a purchase, he shipped aboard the *Phoenix*, a privateer. William Radford has also been mentioned as aboard the *Phoenix*. The *Phoenix* was captured by the British navy, and Floyd taken to prison in England. Released from prison, he reached France, where he contacted Benjamin Franklin, possibly met other prominent persons, and was supplied with funds to return home. He arrived at home in time to prevent his fiancée, under the impression that Floyd was dead, from marrying another.

The purpose of this essay is to analyze one episode in his life that has been the basis of many conflicting renditions. It is not my intent here to add another version to the *Phoenix* story but to compare the several versions extant, determine – if possible – what can reasonably be accepted as the core truth, and point out the inconsistencies. If a bit of the more romantic aspects are lost in the process, the integrity of the basic story may be preserved and reinforced by the examination.

Most of the accounts used in this article were filtered through the memories of non-participants and were recorded many years after the events took place. The stories probably circulated in the family over the years and changed in the telling and re-telling. For example, one source, Nathan Reid,<sup>2</sup> was the son of a close friend of Floyd's, but only a fragment of Nathan's version remains, the balance having been used as wrapping paper by a servant. Also, Letitia Floyd – the daughter of William Preston and the wife of Dr. John Floyd, Colonel Floyd's son – wrote her family history in 1843,<sup>3</sup> when she was 64. She would have been a small child of three and a half years when John Floyd died, and her husband was born shortly after his father died, so neither had the benefit of first-hand story telling. However, none of the numerous discrepancies in the several narratives discredit the basic story.

### **Financing the *Phoenix***

Some prominent Virginians were engaged in promoting privateering,<sup>4</sup> the practice of which had been approved by the Continental Congress on March 23, 1776.<sup>5</sup> William Preston may have been among the promoters who, Patricia Givens Johnson<sup>6</sup> reports without documentation, included Edmund Pendleton, William Radford, and

Dr. Thomas Walker.<sup>7</sup> However, Preston, according to Johnson,<sup>8</sup> asked Floyd to attend to some business for him, to find a ship for the West Indian trade. Hamilton Tapp, also without documentation, states that Floyd met Colonel Preston, Dr. Thomas Walker, and Colonel William Radford in Williamsburg in early fall 1776, where the group informed Floyd that they had purchased a ship, the *Phoenix*, for privateering, and were giving Floyd the command of the ship.<sup>9</sup> Anna M. Cartlidge follows essentially the story line, also undocumented, that William Preston at Smithfield asked Floyd to rent a ship for him and two other gentlemen to be used as a privateer in West Indian waters.<sup>10</sup> Tapp and Cartlidge, it seems, proceed from Letitia Floyd's letter, which implicates Walker, Pendleton, and Preston in the venture.

The question here is, did Preston authorize his assistant surveyor, Floyd, who may have never seen the sea, to undertake privateering? A letter from Floyd to Preston, sent from Amherst County on November 21, 1776,<sup>11</sup> suggests that Preston was asking Floyd to rent a vessel for the West Indies trade, as Johnson states; the letter does not mention privateering. Floyd writes that there is little hope of pursuing the venture and that he is considering asking for a commission in Fincastle in hopes of a future in the west. On December 16, 1776,<sup>12</sup> a letter from Floyd advises Preston that the voyage to the West Indies will be "abortive" since he cannot get a ship; he admits to his mentor that he has signed on as a partner in a privateering enterprise financed by a group of twenty wealthy backers and that he is already sorry that he has done so. Apparently, he felt that his other employment opportunities had vanished and that this was a last resort. He writes:

I must tell you I am exceedingly unhappy, I shall be more and more so till I return. I wish I could have consulted you. I took this step which I fear you will call silly and imprudent . . .

He implies that Preston would not have approved. Where does that leave the assumption that William Preston was among the instigators of the privateering venture? A more logical explanation is that Floyd was desperate for employment and was persuaded to go into it by a group of prominent men who put him on board as their representative. Edmund Pendleton was famously persuasive, was a friend of William Preston's, and was certainly involved. Floyd's last word on the subject is that he had "seen the person who is to have the manage-

ment of the ship” and was sorry about going on this first voyage.<sup>13</sup> As Johnson points out, “This letter to Preston gives the lie to the traditional story that William Preston, Edmund Pendleton and John Radford were partners in the venture and Floyd was the captain.”<sup>14</sup> Incidentally, Johnson here incorrectly identifies William Radford as John Radford, who was William’s father and who died in 1759, the year William was born.<sup>15</sup>

That Floyd went to sea on the *Phoenix* is undisputed, as his letter ten days later attests. It was written from “on board the Privateer *Phoenix*” and was more upbeat about the vessel, but in the letter he vows to undertake something more suited to his qualifications next time.<sup>16</sup>

It seems doubtful that Preston knew anything about the *Phoenix* caper until he received Floyd’s letter on the subject. Although privateering had been sanctioned by the Continental Congress on March 23, 1776,<sup>17</sup> instructions for privateers had been provided on April 3,<sup>18</sup> and the Virginia Committee of Safety had been ready to grant commissions on May 3,<sup>19</sup> pursuit of the West Indies trade seems much more in keeping with William Preston’s style than does privateering. Such trade would indeed have been a logical outlet for Preston’s entrepreneurial efforts, since, as Osborn points out, his surveying business was in a steep decline: “Surveying activity declined from 209 sites surveyed in 1775 to virtually nothing by the end of the war, which resulted in serious loss of income for Preston.”<sup>20</sup>

There is the question of whether John Floyd and William Radford were together on the *Phoenix*. In a note in volume 2 of his biography of Edmund Pendleton, Mays noted that there were four or five privateers named *Phoenix* during the Revolution, including one owned by Carter Braxton of Virginia and Robert Morris of Philadelphia.<sup>21</sup> Is it possible that William Radford was aboard another vessel named *Phoenix*, not Floyd’s ship? The following strongly suggests that Radford and Floyd were not companions in any part of this caper.

### **Possible Role of William Radford**

Radford first appears in the *Phoenix* story as a possible participant in hatching the scheme. Tapp writes of “the romantic Colonel Radford” in association with Edmund Pendleton, Dr. Thomas Walker, and Colonel Preston in the fall of 1776.<sup>22</sup> At that time, Radford was a

mere youth of no more than eighteen years, hardly a likely crony of those substantial gentlemen. Moreover, there could be no mis-identification of him with his father John, who died in 1759, the year William was born.<sup>23</sup>

It has been established by all accounts that the imprisonment of Floyd in England, and his journey to Paris and then home, occurred in 1777. It is difficult to place Radford in Europe in 1777. Yates states:

It is possible that William Radford was on the privateer *Phoenix*, which was captured by the British in early 1777, that he was in Paris in October 1777, and returned to America late that year.<sup>24</sup>

Yates' speculation is not supported by documentation. It conflicts with the claim that Radford was captured by Banastre Tarleton, a point strongly argued by Yates.<sup>25</sup> In Yates' account Radford escaped by digging out from his prison cell in the Tower of London. No other account includes this escape or places Floyd in the Tower of London.

There are records<sup>26</sup> showing that a William Radford enlisted on August 4, 1776, and answered muster rolls from June 1777 to November 1779. Yates questioned whether this was the same Radford.<sup>27</sup> A Radford family history<sup>28</sup> supports the idea that two unrelated William Radfords served in the Revolution. Yates acknowledges

a paper received from the Virginia State Library which certifies that William Radford enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Va. Cont'l Regm't in the year 1777, that he re-enlisted for the war and served as Serg't and Serg't Major until the day of Buford's defeat, when he was wounded and died of his wounds while in the service of the United States.<sup>29</sup>

This paper was signed on September 21, 1787 by Ballard Smith, Lt. 1<sup>st</sup> Va. Regm't. Yates accepted this letter as referring to his ancestor William Radford.<sup>30</sup> Buford's defeat, it must be noted, was in May 1780 at the Battle of Waxhaws, where Tarleton earned his reputation for cruelty.

This part of the story of William Radford is difficult to reconcile to both the *Phoenix* story and the assignments of Tarleton in those years. Dates become very important in that effort. Yates was positive<sup>31</sup> about William Radford having been taken prisoner by Tarleton and sent to England. Certainly William Radford did not die as reported, so he may have been wounded and/or captured by Tarleton at

Waxhaws in 1780, or even caught by Tarleton on his raid to Charlottesville on June 4, 1781. Tarleton was in the northern campaign from 1776 until he was sent south in 1780, so Radford probably could not have been his prisoner prior to 1780.

Within that chronology, it is highly improbable that Radford was in the company of John Floyd in Europe in 1777.

### **Imprisonment and Freedom**

There is concurrence in all accounts on the capture of the *Phoenix* by the British and the removal of the crew to England; no specific dates are known. What happened to the crew, with the exception of John Floyd and perhaps William Radford, is never mentioned. It is possible that the crew was impressed into the British Navy. However, there are several versions of the subsequent events, some of which I will call the “Floyd” account and some the “Radford” account. The questions at issue here are:

- 1) Where were the prisoners kept?
- 2) Were they tried in an official court?
- 3) Did they escape, or were they released?
- 4) If they escaped, how did they manage it?
- 5) Were Floyd and Radford together in prison? If so, how did they get together?
- 6) Were they together in Paris, and did they have the same experiences there?

For these questions, there are no letters or statements from the participants, no first-hand accounts – only family memories of twice-or-more-told tales. William Radford’s daughter Mary was married to William Preston’s son John, and John Floyd’s son John was married to William Preston’s daughter Letitia; thus, these stories must have circulated within the family. The two accounts differ in emphasis and in hero-making, but a careful comparison should give a better picture of what happened.

The story of Floyd’s imprisonment, release or escape, and subsequent travel to France seems to be derived from Letitia Floyd’s letter of 1843. In the “Floyd” version, John Floyd charmed the jailor’s daughter into releasing him and got help from an American-sympa-



thizing clergyman who got him safely to France, where, subsisting on grapes and bread, he made his way to Paris. In Paris he contracted smallpox, had contacts with Benjamin Franklin and perhaps other prominent persons, and had help in arranging passage back to America. Tapp identifies Floyd's helpers at Dover, while the Draper manuscript Ms 5B does not.

The "Radford" story<sup>32</sup> adds another dimension of uncertainty, placing William Radford as (1) a companion to Floyd on the *Phoenix*,<sup>33</sup> or (2) a fellow prisoner,<sup>34</sup> or (3) a companion in France.<sup>35</sup> The association of John Floyd with William Radford may be real, but it is unverifiable, and therein lies a problem with this part of the story.

Letitia Floyd, in her letter to Rush, stated that "Col. Radford was brought to the same prison [where Floyd was held]."<sup>36</sup> She did not know whether the prison was in London or on the coast of England. Thus, she suggests that the two did not arrive together and that Radford was probably not on the *Phoenix*. Nowhere is there any suggestion that Floyd was in the Tower. He was reported variously to be in prison at Dartmouth,<sup>37</sup> in Devon (Dartmoor),<sup>38</sup> at Forton Gaol, Portsmouth,<sup>39</sup> and at an unidentified location.<sup>40</sup>

The "Radford" version has Radford imprisoned with William Chamberlayne in the Tower of London. In that account<sup>41</sup> Mrs. William Radford told fanciful tales about his imprisonment, describing in great detail the Tower itself and how Radford and Chamberlayne managed to dig their way out of the Tower prison.

Even though the location of Floyd's prison is uncertain, there are two distinct versions of how he got free. In one account, he was tried, pleaded for himself, and was acquitted.<sup>42</sup> Cartlidge could find no record of such a trial in England, but found that the Admiralty Court records for 1776 and 1777 were missing.<sup>43</sup> So that account cannot be confirmed or denied. The other version, the more popular and romantic one, is that Floyd charmed the jailer's daughter, who helped him escape.<sup>44</sup>

Incidentally, Ms 10NN – the surviving part of the Nathan Reid account – has Floyd twice caught by press gangs, sent to London, released, and helped by an unidentified man and his wife at Dover, who got him to Calais. In this manuscript is the only mention of Floyd in London. Cartlidge,<sup>45</sup> incidentally, is the only Floyd biographer who places Floyd and Radford together after prison.

The various versions agree that after Floyd's release or escape, he managed to find help, from an innkeeper and her husband<sup>46</sup> or a sympathetic sailor<sup>47</sup> or an American-leaning clergyman,<sup>48</sup> in getting to Dover and across the channel to Calais. Subsisting on grapes and bread provided by sympathetic French people, Floyd reached Paris and contacted Dr. Franklin,<sup>49</sup> who arranged a loan subsidy of ten guineas to get him back to America. This loan story is credible since the loan was repaid to the Treasury of the United States by Dr. Thomas Walker,<sup>50</sup> confirming the assistance of Dr. Franklin and the involvement of Dr. Walker, who seems to have had a hand in the venture all along. Floyd was reported to have contracted smallpox while in Paris and to have purchased a scarlet coat, which became his trademark.<sup>51</sup>

### **Was Lafayette a Player?**

At this point, the "Radford" and "Floyd" versions become even more entangled and confusing. Yates<sup>52</sup> quotes Fiske in his *History of the American Revolution* for his account, in which Radford and a companion named Floyd managed to escape prison and get to Paris, where Gen. Lafayette presented Radford to Queen Marie Antoinette, who gave him a brace of pistols and a pair of golden buckles. On the other hand, Cartlidge<sup>53</sup> has Benjamin Franklin present Floyd and Radford to Marie Antoinette at Versailles.

Lafayette left France in March 1777 and arrived in America on April 19, 1777. He returned to France in January 1779, came to Boston in April 1780, and went back to France in January 1782.<sup>54</sup> Since he was not in France from March 1777 to early 1779, Lafayette could not have presented John Floyd at court. Yates<sup>55</sup> quotes Cartlidge<sup>56</sup> to the effect that Franklin took Floyd and Radford to Versailles to be presented to Queen Marie Antoinette, who gave each of them a pair of silver-and-paste shoe buckles. Yates adds that "Dr. [Lyman] Draper said that Colonel William Radford had told the same tale to Floyd's daughter-in-law, Letitia (Preston) Floyd." Presumably, then, this account would have been incorporated into Letitia's letter to her son Rush. However, the stated source (Draper Ms 5B, pp. 55-60) contains no reference to Floyd's visit to the French court under any sponsorship, nor does Mrs. Floyd's letter suggest such a visit.<sup>57</sup> Tapp mentions the possible visit to the Queen but without documentation. Fit-

ting, depending on an account by a descendant of William, Sophie Radford deMeissner,<sup>58</sup> discusses these various possibilities, which are equally speculative.

With the Lafayette chronology what it is, it is difficult to sustain either the Franklin or the Lafayette versions of a visit to Versailles by John Floyd. As far as John Floyd is concerned, the Versailles incident seems to be, at best, a fantasy.

### **Home and Destiny**

Only scant detail exists in the story of John Floyd's journey from Europe (Paris?) back to Virginia, little of it verifiable. Apparently he landed at Charleston and proceeded immediately to Smithfield, Col. Preston's home in Montgomery County. A very brief account of this period in Floyd's life is told by his daughter-in-law, Letitia.<sup>59</sup> A longer and more fanciful account by Tapp<sup>60</sup> and a similar account by Cartlidge<sup>61</sup> with its own elaboration depend mostly on two Draper manuscripts: 10NN 189-194, the fraction of the Reid biography of Floyd, and 5B 56-68, Draper's biography of Floyd. Letitia's account is a family story that she naturally did not document, but it seems to have been Draper's chief source. Even though details of Floyd's journey from Paris to Smithfield are lacking, the fact remains that he did return by early 1778, ending Jane Buchanan's plans to marry another, thinking Floyd dead. On November 2, 1778, he and Jane Buchanan were married at Smithfield.

One thing is plain. From the fall of 1776 to his November wedding in 1778, John Floyd was one of the luckiest men alive. At every crucial point in that period, someone stepped up to rescue him from his difficulties, all brought on by a thoughtless and precipitous decision to become a privateer.

More than four years later his luck ran out. He was mortally wounded in an Indian ambush in Kentucky on April 12, 1783. Reports indicate that he was wearing his scarlet coat at the time,<sup>62</sup> a veritable invitation to any Native Americans in the vicinity to take aim at him. He was buried on an eminence at Floyd's Station, his chosen burial site. His widow subsequently married Alexander Breckenridge. When Mrs. Breckenridge died, the scarlet coat was put in her coffin, at her request.<sup>63</sup>

John Floyd's grave site was not sufficiently identified for anyone to find it with certainty. In 1934 Hamilton Tapp, the author of one of the Floyd biographies cited here, arranged to have thirty graves in the Breckenridge Burying Ground excavated and the skeletons examined.<sup>64</sup> Two skeletons of unusual length were found close together and assumed to be those of John Floyd and his son, George Rogers Clark Floyd. Thus, even in death, uncertainty plagued John Floyd. Perhaps his shade found some consolation in that both his namesake son and his namesake grandson earned historical recognition: the first, Dr. John Floyd, governor of Virginia 1830-1834; the second, John Buchanan Floyd, governor of Virginia, 1849-1852.

### Endnotes

1. Hambleton Tapp, "Colonel John Floyd, Kentucky Pioneer," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, vol. 15 (1941), pp. 1-24.
2. Nathan Reid; a fragment of his account is included in the collections of Lyman C. Draper, deposited in the Wisconsin Historical Society records and identified by MS and a number.
3. Letitia Preston Floyd, "History of 'The Preston Family'" (a letter to her son Benjamin Rush), in "Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life," transcribed by June Stubbs, *The Smithfield Review*, vol. 1 (1997), pp. 3-16.
4. John Floyd, Letter to William Preston, December 16, 1776, in "Letters of Col. John Floyd, 1774-1783," ed. Neil Hammon and James Russell Harris, in *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, vol. 83 (1985), pp. 215-17.
5. Robert L. Scribner and Brent Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), vol. 6, pp. 240-42.
6. Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Alleghany Patriots* (Pulaski, Virginia: n. pub., 1976).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
9. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," pp. 9-10.
10. Anna M. Cartlidge, "Colonel John Floyd, Reluctant Adventurer," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, vol. 66 (1968), p. 341.
11. Johnson, *William Preston*, p. 195.
12. Hammon and Harris, "Letters," pp. 215-17.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
14. Johnson, *William Preston*, p. 196.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Floyd to Preston, December 26, 1776; Draper Ms 33S, 312-13.
17. Scribner and Tarter, *Revolutionary Virginia*, vol. 6, pp. 240-42.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 314-16.

19. Ibid., p. 515.
20. Richard Charles Osborn, *William Preston of Virginia, 1727-1783: The Making of a Frontier Elite*, University of Maryland dissertation (1990), pp. 300-1.
21. David John Mays, *Edmund Pendleton, 1721-1803, A Biography* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1952; reprinted Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1984), pp. 369-70, note 52.
22. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 9.
23. Robert Somerville Yates, *A History of William Radford of Richmond, Virginia: His Ancestors and Descendants from 1700 to 1986* (Baldwin, Missouri: n. pub.), p. 3-12.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 3-7.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid, p. 3-8.
28. Minnie Adams Fitting, *The Radford Letters: A Radford Family History* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, Inc., 2001), pp. 7-12.
29. Yates, *A History*, p. 3-8.
30. Ibid., p. 3-7.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid, pp. 3-1 to 3-12.
33. Ibid.
34. Letitia Preston Floyd, "John Floyd, Kentucky Hero, and Three Generations of Floyds and Prestons of Virginia," as transcribed by June Stubbs, *The Smithfield Review*, vol. 2, pp. 42-51.
35. Cartlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 345.
36. Letitia Floyd, "John Floyd" pp. 42-51.
37. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 10.
38. Walter Distelhorst, "Colonel John Floyd, of Kentucky, a Story," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, vol. 31 (October 1957), pp. 317-32.
39. Cartlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 344.
40. Letitia Floyd, "John Floyd", p. 43; Draper Ms 5B 63.
41. Yates, *A History*, pp. 3-1 to 3-6.
42. Draper Ms 5B 60.
43. Cartlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 345, n. 76.
44. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 10; Distelhorst, "Colonel John Floyd," pp. 325-8.
45. Cartlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 345.
46. Ibid.
47. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 11.
48. Ibid.
49. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 11; Draper Ms 5B 62.
50. Draper Ms 5B 62.
51. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," pp. 11-12.
52. Yates, *A History*, p. 3-7.
53. Cartlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 345.
54. William Cutter, *The Life of General Lafayette* (New York: George F. Cooledge & Bro., 1849).

55. Yates, *A History*, p. 3-8.
56. Carlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 345.
57. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 11.
58. Fitting, *The Radford Letters*, pp. 7-9.
59. Letitia Floyd, "John Floyd" p. 43, note 2.
60. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," pp. 10-12.
61. Carlidge, "Reluctant Adventurer," p. 343-5.
62. Letitia Floyd, "John Floyd" p. 46, note 2.
63. Tapp, "Kentucky Pioneer," p. 23.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

## **Montgomery County in August 1862: A Showalter Observation**

**Edited by James I. Robertson, Jr.**

Letters from the Confederate home front are scarce in Civil War annals. Postal delivery was unpredictable; soldiers who received letters from loved ones either read them continuously until the paper disintegrated from repeated folding, or else lost them in the chaos of war. Similarly rare are communiqués from one writer to another behind the lines. Letters of that age were momentary and private exchanges of thoughts. Comparatively few civilians saw historical value in mail – or anything else in a struggle that taxed concentration and endurance. This is especially so in such regions as Southwest Virginia, where terrain and scattered population further reduced general communication.

Therefore the recent appearance of Henry Showalter's letter to his brother Samuel is a treasure in itself. Moreover, the contents of the letter give a fresh picture of individuals and life in eastern Montgomery County during the second year of the Civil War.

The Showalter family was German in background, large in number, mostly Mennonite, and, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, scattered throughout the Shenandoah Valley as well as the hill country to the south.<sup>1</sup> Henry Showalter was the progenitor of the family that settled in Botetourt, Roanoke, and Montgomery counties. Beginning around 1800, he purchased a number of tracts in those areas. Henry Showalter and his wife Magdalena raised seven sons and four daughters.

The fourth child, Nicholas, grew up in Botetourt County. He married Elizabeth Griffin and, around 1840, moved to a small farm in eastern Montgomery County. The couple had seven sons. The two who play a role in this letter are Samuel, born in 1821, and Henry, born five years later. By 1860 Nicholas Showalter was 65 years old, with \$2,000 in real estate and \$425 in personal property. In short,

Nicholas Showalter was a small-scale farmer among neighbors of similar station.

On reaching adulthood, Nicholas's son Samuel re-located in the Salem section of Roanoke County. Samuel's brother Henry soon purchased a small tract of farmland in the Alleghany Springs region of neighboring Montgomery County.<sup>2</sup> As was normal for the time, family members had only a limited education; in Virginia, schools were mostly private undertakings and not readily available, especially in rural and frontier areas.

The enthusiasm and excitement associated with the coming of the Civil War did not infect the majority of Showalters, who were Mennonites and believed in pacifism.<sup>3</sup> The April 16, 1862, enactment of a conscription act by the Confederate Congress aroused fresh, strong reactions against the Civil War because the measure appeared to be an encroachment upon both personal liberties and state rights.

Such was the environment in which Henry Showalter sent a letter to his brother. What became of the two siblings thereafter is unknown.<sup>4</sup> Still, for a moment in time, Henry Showalter reported on his region, his neighbors, and the current effects of civil war in Montgomery County. Because that contribution is unique, it has lasting value.

The original letter is in the possession of a Showalter descendant, Elizabeth Hubbard DeMaury of Troutville, Virginia. Her son, Virginia Tech student Joshua DeMaury, first brought the letter to the editor's attention. Deep appreciation goes to the DeMaury family for permission to publish the Showalter letter here.

Mont[gomery] Cty.

August the 27, 1862. Alleghany Springs

Dear brother, I take this privilege to inform you that We are tolerable well at present & hope these few lines will find you in good health. you requested me to write to you. Last Monday week the men over 35 was ordered to meet at Christians burgh.<sup>5</sup> Some thought they was to go under general floyd.<sup>6</sup> none of the Showalters did not go. The other day it was said that [those] under 35 was ordered out. but they have not been around to notice us.



Joseph is not stout.<sup>7</sup> some times he has very bad spells. Davison Myres came home before I got back from your house & is here yet, to gether with all the rest of us.<sup>8</sup> he expects to be discharged. I dont think there is many in this neighborhood that wants to go. I for one do not want to go. It has bin very dry here, but Corn looks tolerable well.

elliott Willis has got home since the exchange of prisoners.<sup>9</sup> the yankeys [kept] Him about 4 months. I believe he was not well treated. davison Myres seen a man when he was in the Army that told him that he was at Brother david's Wedding.<sup>10</sup> I did not ask Myres who he Married but I guess it was C. Ronk.<sup>11</sup> William willis died in the army.<sup>12</sup> About Richmond hospital. Miss willis took it very hard, he being her youngest child.<sup>13</sup>

archibald White<sup>14</sup> is making Copperas<sup>15</sup> up the river above Miss Martins.<sup>16</sup> there is Some very rich ore there. they sell their Copperas at \$1.00. I dont know how they have raised 50 cts. On it. Mother Colered with it & Colord very well. I have begun to thrash [and] Sell wheat, & its a hard way to thrash with flails.

I dont know how long they will let me stay out of [the] army. eli has got the sore throat. it not be dangerous. I expect William & Mary is uneasy after loosing the other one.<sup>17</sup>

I aloud to write to you last week but Isaac<sup>18</sup> & James<sup>19</sup> Showalter went to Salem last Saturday. Isaac aloud to go to your house but it rained so he Staid in Salem till Monday morning & then came back on the train & James Staid at James Woltz's.<sup>20</sup>

If you have any[thing] worth relating, write to me. So fare well for the present till next we meet. When this letter you see, remember me Till together in heaven we be.

Henry Showalter to Samuel Showalter

Come to see us as soon as you can. Jesus let me to thy bosom fly while the billows round me roll.<sup>21</sup>

## Endnotes

1. Genealogical material supplied by Elizabeth Hubbard DeMaury, Troutville, Va.; Judith Showalter Sandy, Blacksburg, Va.; and Louis R. Showalter, Roanoke, Va.
2. The 1860 Montgomery County census listed five Showalter families living in the Alleghany Springs area. Heads of the household were William, Nicholas, Anthony, Philip, and John Showalter. Nicholas was the oldest. The others were farmers with children ranging in number from two to six.
3. Showalters were one of some 400 Mennonite families in western Virginia when civil war began. The religious sect lived faithfully by the teaching of Jesus to “love your enemies” and to “turn the other cheek.” In 1861, one church authority wrote, the Mennonites “could not approve of, or support what they considered to be a rebellion against an established government ordained by God.” They had no grievance “against the Union at the outset of the war, and if they had, their doctrinal position would have obligated them to refrain from opposition or resistance.” Samuel Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1969), pp. 15, 16, 18.
4. On April 23, 1863, a Henry Showalter enlisted at Dublin in a new company being formed for the 26<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Battalion. The only other data in this man’s service record is that he was present on duty in April, 1864. Terry Lowry, *26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va., 1991), p. 151.
5. The first two paragraphs of the Showalter letter address the reaction to the Confederacy’s 1862 conscription act. This was the first instance in American history when the government ordered men into the army. Open opposition, inexperienced enforcement, multifarious methods of evading the law, and men continuing to volunteer for military service initially kept the number of conscripts low. At the time of the Showalter letter, the State of Georgia had furnished barely 2,700 conscripts – an average of about 24 men per county. Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York, 1924), pp. 123-7.
6. Following disgraceful behavior at Fort Donelson, Tennessee, in February 1862, Brig. Gen. John B. Floyd had returned to southwestern Virginia and minor duty. He was then commanding a band of conscripts estimated at 500-1,000 men. U. S. War Department (comp.), *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1902), Ser. I, 12: Pt. 3, pp. 446, 564.
7. The third son of Nicholas Showalter was twenty-three at his March 10, 1862, enlistment in the “Preston Guards” of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment. The remainder of Joseph Showalter’s short service record lists him as “absent sick.” Robert T. Bell, *11th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va., 1985), 93.
8. A. D. Myers, a Montgomery County farmer, had joined a nearby Floyd County company that became part of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia. Myers served with the regiment until deserting the army in January 1865. G. L. Sherwood and Jeffrey C. Weaver, *54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va., 1993), p. 206.
9. On April 17, 1861, Elliott Willis enlisted in the “Montgomery Fencibles,” which became a company in the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia. He was captured in March 1862, at the

- battle of Kernstown. Exchanged five months later, Willis returned to the army and gained promotion to sergeant. A foot wound in 1863 preceded his May 1864 capture at the battle of Spotsylvania. Willis died July 5, 1864, of disease at Point Lookout Prison, Maryland. James I. Robertson, Jr., *4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va., 1982), p. 81.
10. David Showalter of Botetourt County enlisted April 22, 1864, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Reserves. As of December 31 of that year, he was reported absent without leave. Patti O. Weaver and Jeffrey C. Weaver, *Reserves: The Virginia Regimental Histories Series* (Lynchburg, Va., 2002), p. 281.
  11. Showalter married his first cousin, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Showalter Ronk of Lincoln County, West Virginia (Family papers in the possession of Judith Showalter Sandy).
  12. William Willis of Montgomery County enlisted March 10, 1862, with Joseph Showalter in the “Preston Guards” company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia. Four months later, he died of unknown causes. Bell, *11<sup>th</sup> Virginia*, p. 98.
  13. Elizabeth Willis was a widow in her early sixties. At the time, she lived with her eldest son, Elliott, in the Alleghany Springs area. William Willis was the youngest of her three sons. 1860 Virginia Census – Montgomery County.
  14. Then in his thirties, Archer C. White was a “retired merchant” in the Shawsville area. His personal estate was in excess of \$16,000, a princely sum in those days. 1860 Virginia Census – Montgomery County.
  15. Copperas is the general name for ferrous sulfate, a green, crystalline compound used primarily in dyeing and the making of ink.
  16. Quite likely, Showalter was referring to Kezza Martin. The 70-year-old widow lived in Christiansburg with her son’s large family. 1860 Virginia Census – Montgomery County.
  17. Eli Showalter was the six-year-old son of William and Mary S. Showalter, a farming couple in the Alleghany Springs region. “The other one” was likely their infant daughter Janetta. 1860 Virginia Census – Montgomery County.
  18. Like the writer of this letter, Isaac Showalter also joined the new company raised in 1863 for the 26<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Battalion. His enlistment date was September 29, and he was reported present on duty in April 1864. Lowry, *26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Virginia Infantry*, pp. 23, 151.
  19. James Showalter was eighteen at the time and the oldest of six children of Philip and Mary A. Showalter in Alleghany Springs. 1860 Virginia Census – Montgomery County.
  20. A carpenter by trade, 38-year-old James H. Woltz enlisted March 21, 1862, in his hometown Salem’s Flying Artillery. He spent much of 1863 on detailed duty around the Salem area but surrendered with his command at Appomattox. 1860 Virginia Census – Roanoke County; Robert L. Nicholas and Joseph Servis, *Powhatan, Salem, and Courtney Henrico Artillery* (Lynchburg, Virginia, 1997), p. 225.
  21. Showalter presented a coarse rendition of the opening lines of Charles Wesley’s famous hymn: “Jesus, lover of my soul / Let me to Thy bosom fly / While the waters nearer roll/ While the tempest still is high ...”



*Figure 1: The Glade blade. General view. Photograph by the author.*

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# The Blade from Glade<sup>1</sup>

Jim Glanville

## Introduction

In March of 2004 I published an article <sup>2</sup> in *The Smithfield Review* summarizing the considerable evidence that Spanish conquistadors had twice entered southwestern Virginia in the sixteenth century: In 1540, when a scouting party from the De Soto *entrada* made its way north from Tennessee, and in 1567, when a gold-seeking expedition came north along the old Cherokee Trail from a base of Spanish operations near present-day Morganton, North Carolina. During the latter expedition the Spanish attacked a palisaded Native American village, probably located at what is now Saltville in Smyth County.

After its publication, no one challenged the conclusions of the article, and I received a number of communications describing direct archeological evidence of a sixteenth-century Spanish presence in Virginia. If such physical evidence could be found and validated, it would provide dramatic proof of my conclusions.

Whenever anyone approached me with a claim of such physical evidence, I immediately responded. I offered to travel anywhere on short notice to examine personally what any informant had to show. Sadly, until recently, all reports of evidence evaporated; objects that had been described to me vanished; alleged sightings were recanted; and scheduled meetings to examine artifacts were canceled.\*

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\*Perhaps the most amusing of these many nonstarters was the description of a bowl-like metal object, putatively a Spanish helmet, said to have been for many years in the possession of a prominent Marion, Virginia, family. "Perhaps a Cadillac hubcap?" I inquired rather archly of the intermediary who brought me the news. "More like a De Soto hubcap," he replied. But it turned out there wasn't even a hubcap to be examined, let alone a helmet. This object proved as ephemeral as the rest.

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I kept hoping, however, knowing that, even if an artifact did show up, the chances of its being the real McCoy would be very slim.

### **The Blade Makes its Appearance**

Finally, after more than a year had passed, a trusted informant<sup>3</sup> who lives in Southwest Virginia told me that he had personally seen an unusual blade – possibly Spanish – and that he could have it available at his home whenever I was ready to drive down to Washington County. Furthermore, he said that when I came I could examine it, handle it, and photograph it. It was, he said, a blade made of steel with a curious form. As a man with a many-year interest in antique weapons, my informant was certain it was not a Civil War bayonet, nor a knife from the Western Virginia frontier. It was, he reported, unlike anything in his experience to be found traditionally in local collections.

He further said that the blade had a detailed provenience, and told the following tale: Some fifty years ago a neighbor of his who lives in Washington County, not far from Glade Spring, was burning wood from an old chestnut tree. As the wood burned, an eighteen inch long steel blade emerged among the ashes. From the embers of the fire, his neighbor rescued and lovingly preserved the blade, which the neighbor judged must have been deeply embedded in the chestnut wood.

Over the years, the blade's owner had made some efforts to have the blade identified, but without success. A few years back, knowledgeable associates of the traveling television program *The Antiques Road Show* had assembled in nearby Abingdon to look at local collectibles. But when presented with the blade for examination and identification, none of the gathered experts had been prepared to offer an opinion as to its nature or origin.

### **Inspecting the Blade**

So on May 10, 2005, I drove down to inspect the blade. Sure enough it was a real object. It is pictured in Figure 1.

The blade is just one-eighth inch shy of being eighteen inches long and appears to be made of carbon steel. It is double edged, and it is quite sharp. I didn't actually try to shave with it, but I believe I

could have. My notes made on that day record that “the blade has blood grooves on both sides and is 5 mm thick at the *ricasso*.” My informant and I looked up that word *ricasso* in Harold Peterson’s 1958 book *American Knives*.<sup>4</sup> It’s the thick part at the base of the blade. I noted further that the “median strip” at the blade’s central axis is about 5 mm thick and the tapering blades (both edged) that come from that central strip are of roughly half that thickness and are offset along the central axis of the blade. The blade has distinctive markings near its hilt end, as shown in Figure 2.

So since a real blade had proved to exist, now came the job of identifying it.

### Investigating the Blade

Not unnaturally, I began my task with the assumption that I was dealing with a European blade from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. When an internet search failed to reveal anything that looked like the blade in question, I extended my search to the stacks of Newman Library at Virginia Tech. In the online library catalog, my quest soon narrowed to Ewart Oakeshott’s book<sup>5</sup> that features many



Figure 2: *The Glade blade*. Close up view of the markings at the hilt end. Photograph by the author.

sketches by its author of Europeans' bladed weapons from medieval times to the Industrial Revolution. Unfortunately, I couldn't get immediate access to the book; it was checked out to another library patron. Confident that this was the book I needed to examine, I initiated a book recall and waited with anticipation. In the meantime, not to be idle, I emailed a Spanish-period historian of my acquaintance, asking for the names of Spanish weapons experts in the Southeast. I explained the reason for my request, but told the historian that I wasn't jumping to any conclusions.

During this period of waiting, an archeologist expert in the colonial American period quite coincidentally arrived to lecture in Blacksburg under the auspices of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), which both owns and maintains the Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg and supervises the massive excavation project currently ongoing in tidewater Virginia under the banner of the Jamestown Rediscovery project. "Yes," said this Jamestown specialist, "I can put you in touch with an arms expert from the period you are researching. Send me an email." However, my email went unanswered.

At length, a couple of weeks after my recall request, I received email notification that the Oakeshott book had been returned. Aha! I jumped in the car and drove down to Newman Library, hopeful that at last the mystery would be solved. But repeated thumbing through the Oakeshott volume only complicated the puzzle. I read about, and studied pictures of, dirks and dudgeons and fusetos and flamberges, and not a one of them looked anything like the blade from Glade. The blade was something unusual, and I was convinced by now that experts from Jamestown and from university archeology departments in the Southeast were not likely to be much help – even when, and if, I got in contact with them. Obviously, the search had to broaden. So where next to turn?

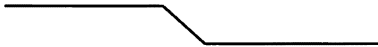
### **Identifying the Blade**

Stymied in the library, I went back to the internet, and in due course found [www.knife-expert.com](http://www.knife-expert.com) and its guru Bernard R. Levine of Eugene, Oregon. Levine is the author of several books about knives<sup>6</sup> and has written more than 500 knife-related articles.



The email message I sent him on May 28, 2005, was short and to the point: "Dear Mr. Levine: Can you tell me anything about the attached blade? Thanks. Jim." I sent an electronic image of the blade along with the message.

The reply came after only eight hours and was equally short and equally to the point: "I'm not certain, but it appears to be a sub-Saharan African spear or lance blade. If the cross-section of the blade is stepped, kind of like this



that confirms it. BRL...." Bingo! The blade was indeed stepped, exactly as described. A sub-Saharan African blade it is.

In a follow-up phone conversation, Mr. Levine suggested the date of the blade as possibly the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

Not that I needed additional convincing, but purely coincidental visits to two artifact collectors over the following few weeks added further weight to the conclusion. The first collector<sup>8</sup> amazed me by suggesting a sub-Saharan African origin after I merely waved a general outline of the blade in the air with my fingers. The second collector<sup>9</sup> actually produced for my inspection an African spear with a gigantic spear point, about three feet long, with the characteristic curved profile and L-stepped blade (Figure 3).

Further library searching, this time with African weapons as the objective, finally produced documentary evidence of the blade's provenience. A Smithsonian Institution publication<sup>10</sup> pictures two blades from the Fang people of Gabon in West Africa that are, with their median strips and backwards pointing spikes, of the same style as the Glade blade.

### **The African Background**

Unlike in the Middle East or the Mediterranean, there was no Bronze Age in sub-Saharan Africa, and evidence for iron working appears very early. Radiocarbon dates ranging from 1,000 BC-1,500 BC have been established for a dozen or more iron-making sites in central Africa, a time period long before iron was being made in En-



*Figure 3. A large African blade similar in style to the one from Glade being held by its owner, Tommy Beutell. The blade of this weapon is identical in style to the Glade blade but over twice the size.*

*Photograph by the author.*

gland, for example. Many additional sites all across Africa south of the Sahara have yielded radiocarbon dates from the first millennium BC, between 0 BC and 1,000 BC.<sup>11</sup>

The same source referenced in the previous paragraph tells (on page 31) that an iron furnace at Otumbi in central Gabon, a country on the African west coast at the southeastern end of the Gulf of Guinea, has been independently radiocarbon dated to both 690 BC and 450 BC. Gabon is the traditional homeland of the Fang people. So, while the blade from Glade is likely of relatively modern manufacture, it was produced in a part of Africa with a 2,500 year history of iron making.

Not surprisingly, iron making, blacksmithing, and iron trading took on important cultural and socioeconomic aspects in sub-Saharan African societies. The societal role played by iron in its many aspects has become a major focus of study for modern archeologists and ethnohistorians.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, some of the issues involved and some of the questions raised by these studies of iron show parallels with questions we ask and would like to answer about the comparable time period for the Native American inhabitants of the Southeast United States. In the Southeast, rather than iron, it is the uses and economy of objects made from steatite, marine shell, and copper we'd like to understand. The problems of interpreting and understanding ancient societies that left an archeological record – but not a written one – are universal.

## **Conclusion**

The Glade blade is an interesting object. But its place and probable date of manufacture place it one continent and three centuries distant from the Virginia conquistadors.

What may we conclude about how the blade came to be in the embers of a fire near Glade Spring? Nothing. We might speculate that some attorney from nearby Abingdon, who perhaps served as an officer during World War One (there were such men), picked up the blade in a London curio shop on his way home. How the blade wound up stuck in a chestnut tree is anyone's guess. My guess is teenage sons of the attorney and horseplay (there were such teenagers).

There's the pity and the glory of archeology. After a lot of hard work, sometimes just telling a plausible story is the best result that can be achieved.

### **Final Comments**

My retirement career as an amateur historian and improper archeologist has led me down some enchanting byways and brought me into contact with some fascinating people. Life once again teaches the old lesson: it is about the journey, not about the destination.

In my earlier article about the Virginia conquistadors I wrote: "It seems highly unlikely that direct archeological evidence of a Spanish presence in Saltville will ever be found. Together, the impaired nature of the Saltville environs, and what would have been very brief sixteenth-century encounters between Spaniards and Native Americans, weigh heavily against detecting a Spanish presence – but anything is possible; and those of us who live west of the Blue Ridge can hope."

So I continue to hope, and the saga of the search for Spanish artifacts in southwestern Virginia goes on. I've recently seen and photographed a curious dime-sized, apparently silver, coin with an unusual design. It was found after a rainfall on the surface of a newly plowed field in the Broadford section of Smyth County. I am still not jumping to any conclusions, but stay tuned...

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks first to Tom Merrihue, who located the blade, brought it to the author's attention, and arranged for the author to see it. Thanks to Bernard R. Levine, who provided the African identification of the blade and an interesting discussion of its probable background. Thanks to Gordon Barlow for confirming the African origin of the blade. Thanks to Tommy Beutell for hospitality and for showing the author his African blade. Thanks to Hugh Campbell, David Brown, and Michael Barber, who read and commented on earlier drafts of this article. For helpful discussions and sound editorial advice, thanks to Deena Flinchum. Thanks to the staff of Newman Library at Virginia Tech for their ongoing cooperation and support. All the mistakes, infelicities, and embarrassments that remain are the sole responsibility of the author.

## Endnotes

1. Glade Spring is a small town in Washington County, Virginia, just off of Interstate Highway 81. It was once an important railroad junction of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and the takeoff point of a branch line to Saltville.
2. Jim Glanville, "Conquistadors at Saltville in 1567? A Review of the Archeological and Documentary Evidence," *Smithfield Review*, vol. 8 (2004): pp. 70-108.
3. Tom Merrihue, Emory, Virginia.
4. Harold Peterson, *American Knives: The First History and Collectors' Guide* (New York: Scribners, 1958; reprint edition published by the Gun Room Press, 1980).
5. R. Ewart Oakeshott, *European Weapons and Armour: From the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution* (Guildford, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1978). With line illustrations by the author.
6. Bernard R. Levine, *Levine's Guide to Knives and their Values*, 4th edition (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1997); *Knifemakers of Old San Francisco* (Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 1998); and *Pocket Knives: The Collector's Guide to Identifying Buying and Enjoying Pocket Knives* (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Courage Books, 1994).
7. Bernard R. Levine, personal communications, May and June 2005.
8. Gordon Barlow, Staunton, Virginia.
9. Tommy Beutell, Tuckasegee, North Carolina.
10. Christopher Spring, *African Arms and Armour* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). The two blades very similar in appearance to the Glade blade are pictured on page 16 of this book.
11. Pierre de Maret and G. Thiry, "How Old is the Iron Age in Central Africa?" chapter 2, pp. 29-39, in *The Culture and Technology of African Iron Production*, ed. Peter R. Schmidt (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996).
12. Michael S. Bisson, S. Terry Childs, Philip De Barros, and Augustin F. C. Holl. *Ancient African Metallurgy: The Sociocultural Context*, edited and with a foreword by Joseph O. Vogel (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2000).



## **Growth and Independence of Methodist Congregations in Blacksburg, Virginia**

**Christopher Ross Donald**  
**Duke Divinity School**

**A note from the author:** While doing research for one of my classes at Duke Divinity School, I was examining Methodist church records on deposit in the Special Collections of Newman Library at Virginia Tech. These records have a mass of information about the early history of Methodism in Blacksburg, including the membership rolls of the church, dating back to the late 1850s. In addition to a chronological listing of members, there are class lists, baptismal records, and wedding records. As I looked through these records, I noticed that several members baptized or married in the late 1850s and early 1860s had the notation “colored” beside their names. Between 1862 and 1864, twenty-three white probationers and nineteen African-American probationers were listed. At that time, the Methodist denomination required a six-month probationary period of its prospective members before they were granted full membership in the church. In fact, whole class lists of African-Americans were recorded; of the five classes meeting at the church, two were wholly African-American. In 1860, Blacksburg Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS)<sup>1</sup> had 142 members; forty-eight of those members were African-American. In less than fifteen years, however, all 180 members of the church were white. The African-American members of Blacksburg MECS had disappeared from the membership and class rolls.<sup>2</sup> Where did they go? Why did they leave?

This study of Methodism in Blacksburg and the relationship between white and African-American Methodist congregations in the town will discuss three major areas of interest: 1) the introduction of Methodism into Blacksburg, as well as some relevant features of the physical, cultural, and economic setting of the area; 2) the develop-

ment of white and African-American Methodist congregations in America and the South; 3) the growth and ultimate separation of Methodist congregations in Virginia and in Blacksburg.

## **Beginnings of Methodism in Blacksburg**

### **Methodism Comes to Blacksburg**

The laity first brought the Methodist Episcopal Church to Blacksburg. Joseph McDonald was a Blacksburg farmer and merchant who lived near present-day Price's Fork. While in Philadelphia on business just before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, McDonald heard Francis Asbury preach. Asbury had been sent to America by John Wesley, Methodist founder, in the late 1760s to supervise the work of Methodist preachers. After the service, McDonald asked Asbury to come to Blacksburg to preach. Asbury promised, at the very least, to send a circuit rider, but the beginning of the Revolutionary war interrupted his efforts. So, after the second annual conference in 1785, at the farm named Green Hill in North Carolina, circuit rider Jeremiah Lambert was dispatched to Blacksburg and the western frontier. When Lambert arrived in Blacksburg, he found that McDonald had already organized a Methodist class meeting. Early visits by circuit riders were hosted by the McDonalds in their home or in the field at their farm.<sup>3</sup>

Methodism was popular in Blacksburg during those early days, attracting many of the village's leaders, including the family of William Black, for whom the town is named. When the original plan for Blacksburg was laid out in 1798, a lot was set aside for the Methodist Church – the lot where the Whisner Building of Blacksburg United Methodist Church stands today. For the next thirty to forty years, it was the only church building in the community, and was shared with the Presbyterians. After the Methodist Church had outgrown two different log structures, a brick church was built in 1846, and the Presbyterians constructed their own new building at about that same time.

Records from the eighteenth century are lost, but, according to the Recording Steward's Record from 1859-1880, several members of the Preston family, a prominent family in Blacksburg history, were members of the Methodist congregation. Mary Hart Preston, wife of Robert Taylor Preston and daughter-in-law of Governor James Patton



Preston, was an active and important member of the congregation for several decades before and after the Civil War. She appears in the Recording Steward's records frequently and, along with one of her daughters, Virginia Preston Means, is memorialized in a very large stained glass window in the Whisner Building of the present-day Blacksburg United Methodist Church. While Robert Taylor Preston's name does not appear in the Recording Steward's Record as frequently, he is mentioned several times, once as "General Preston" and at another time as "Colonel Preston." He was made a trustee of the local Methodist college when it began to operate under the name Preston and Olin Institute (see below). Waller R. Preston, son of William Ballard Preston, joined the Church in March of 1864. One James P. Preston is also listed as a Methodist member, who made contributions to various funds. It is not possible to tell from the Recording Steward's Record whether this James P. Preston is the son of Robert Taylor Preston or of William Ballard Preston, since both men had sons of about the same age named James P. and other offspring who were members of the Methodist congregation. Another interesting reference to the Preston name is listed in September 1863 when "Sarah Preston" is named as witness to the baptism of "James W. Preston (colored)." Though the record does not indicate whether James Preston was slave or free, it is reasonable to assume that he or his ancestors had taken their surname from their owners since that was the common practice of the day.<sup>4</sup>

### **Early Blacksburg: An Upper South, Mountain Community**

For most of its life, Blacksburg was a small farming village in the mountains. The economy of Blacksburg, from its beginnings in the late eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, was based on agriculture and mining. The people raised hogs and cattle, along with crops such as corn, wheat, rye, flax, and hemp. Corn was the most popular grain because it could be eaten, milled for flour or meal, or made into whiskey. Hemp was also a cash crop because the sailing and freight industries used large quantities of it to make rope. Though some area families such as the Prestons, Kents, and Cloyds were large landowners possessing dozens of slaves, most of the area's farming was very small-scale and oriented toward local markets. From the mid

nineteenth century onward, however, significant economic activity in the area surrounding Blacksburg centered around mining for coal, iron, and other minerals.<sup>5</sup>

Another notable nineteenth century economic change came in 1851 when the leaders of Blacksburg's MECS and town leaders established the Olin and Preston Institute. Two years later the school was officially made the men's college of the Baltimore Conference of the MECS. The college underwent a name change – becoming Preston and Olin Institute – and operated sporadically until 1872. William Ballard Preston and Robert Taylor Preston both served as members of the college's board until financial difficulties rendered independent operation impossible. In 1872, the local government authorities pledged a bond issue of \$20,000 to persuade the Commonwealth to take ownership under the Morrill Act, federal legislation calling for each state to establish a land-grant university. The school was renamed Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, although the Blacksburg Methodists, especially the Preston and Black families, continued to be involved in its governance.

According to the 1830 census, 12,306 people were living in Montgomery County, an area considerably larger than the Montgomery County of today. It is not possible to determine how many were considered residents of Blacksburg, but an important fact about the population is that it was overwhelmingly (83%) white. There were 2,082 African-Americans in the county, and most of them were slaves. Only 56 free people of color lived in the county, and 38 of them were under the age of 24.<sup>6</sup> The number of African-Americans in the area increased after the Civil War, when mining became a larger part of the local economy. However, this population ratio was still very small compared to some eastern Virginia counties, where the black-to-white ratio was two to one. This smaller population ratio in Blacksburg likely impacted the way town leaders exercised and preserved power through political and social institutions.

One event in the history of Virginia had a deep and long-lasting impact on race relations in the Blacksburg locale despite the low percentage of slaves in the area. This event reverberated throughout the Commonwealth and across the South. In 1831, Nat Turner, a slave and self-proclaimed preacher from Southampton County, Virginia, led a slave rebellion that resulted in the deaths of about 60 whites and

more than 100 blacks. Grossly exaggerated news reports spread rapidly, and legislatures across the South reacted by passing a number of harsh, repressive “Black Codes.” Two of these codes are significant here. The first prohibited slave assemblies for worship unless they were under the supervision of a white preacher. The second augmented federal fugitive slave laws, limiting the travel of African-Americans, both slave and free. In fact, free African-Americans from the North could not enter Upper South states such as Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.<sup>7</sup> Figure 1, which depicts only the violence committed by blacks against whites and ignores the African-American deaths at the hands of white mobs, illustrates the fear that gripped white Southerners. Given the white-to-black population ratio mentioned above, there was scant likelihood that African-Americans in western Virginia would stage a violent uprising. Still, Blacksburg’s political leaders, headed by William Ballard Preston in the General Assembly, moved to limit the further spread of slavery into southwestern Virginia.<sup>8</sup> Presumably, western Virginia legislators hoped such action could fur-

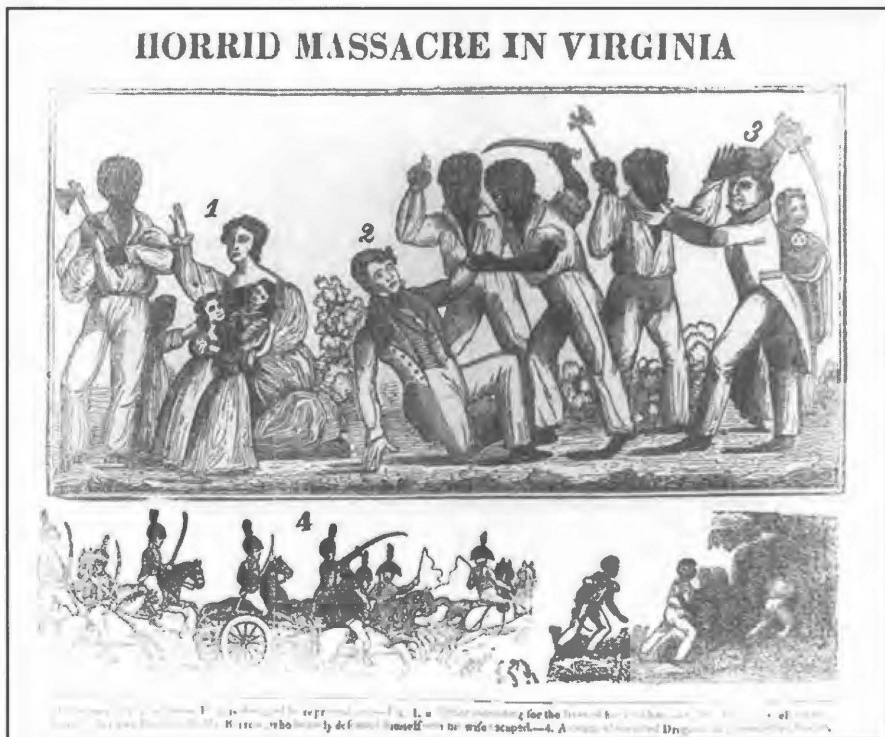


Figure 1. Press depictions of the Nat Turner rebellion.

ther solidify their political base of yeomen farmers and skilled artisans as well as guard their expressed position against slave-holding and/or industrial interests in Tidewater.<sup>9</sup> The threat of violence in the western region was virtually non-existent, but the fear was very real.

## **Early Development of American Methodist Churches**

### **American Methodist Episcopal Churches**

The Methodist Episcopal Church, with an emphasis on charismatic preaching and democratic polity, appealed to a broad spectrum of worshipers. However, in 1844 it fell prey to the same forces that would eventually split the country as irreconcilable differences over slavery led to denominational division. Despite both John Wesley's stance against slavery and explicit statements in Methodist doctrine against slave-holding, Southern Methodists felt slavery was consistent with Scriptural Christianity. The newly-formed Methodist Episcopal Church, South dedicated itself to a Scriptural defense of slavery, even while anti-slavery doctrines remained on its books.

In *The Story of American Methodism*, historian Frederick Norwood documents an observable pattern of division within Methodist churches.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Richard Heitzenrater and other historians have accepted Norwood's premise to explain the divisions that have marked various stages in the development of American Methodism. The pattern of division observed by Norwood is that early churches began as integrated congregations with a shared worship. As a congregation grew, ideological and theological separation within worship and church activities sometimes began. In other words, a type of "segregation" might develop inside a congregation. The minority group would then meet at a separate time and, eventually, in a separate place, sometimes driven out of the shared building and sometimes leaving of its own will. With few bonds still tying the minority to the majority, an independent organization developed. Eventually a regional denomination resulted, where there was affiliation with other, similar congregations. Examples of this pattern of separation taken from Methodist history include the establishment of two denominations – the Wesleyan Church and the Free Methodist Church. The earliest example of the pattern, however, is especially relevant to this study:



Figure 2. Bishop Richard Allen.

the division based on race that led to the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

### **African-American Methodist Episcopal Churches**

Methodism in the eighteenth century grew quickly. A number of Methodist “preaching houses” were built in Philadelphia, including St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church. St. George’s held integrated worship services and counted among its members licensed African-American preachers and exhorters, including Richard Allen (Figure 2). In 1787, the white trustees decided to set aside the balcony of St. George’s for African-American

worshippers; they were no longer welcome to sit on the main floor of the church. Allen and other African-American members found this segregation intolerable. One Sunday as they knelt in prayer on the main floor of the church during the worship service, white ushers attempted to forcibly move them to the balcony. Instead, Allen and the African-Americans of St. George’s walked out. They began the Free African Society and soon bought an old blacksmith shop which they renovated as a separate place to meet (Figure 3). This chapel was constructed by the African-American Methodists at their own expense, and worship there was led by African-American preachers and exhorters. Although exercising autonomy in teaching, nurture, and worship, the Free African Society was still technically under the control of the trustees and pastor of St. George’s.

After repeated attempts by white church leaders to exercise control, the Free African Society organized as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, popularly known as Mother Bethel Church. The experience of the Bethel AME Church was repeated, in various though not so dramatic ways, in many other congregations throughout the mid-Atlantic and Northeast. In 1816 Richard Allen and the leaders of other African-American Methodist congregations in Philadelphia and



*Figure 3. Blacksmith shop renovated to be first Free African Society meetinghouse.*

New York met to organize the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) as a denomination. The new denomination followed Methodist Episcopal organizational structures with annual conferences, bishops, and itinerant pastors. Its members professed belief in the Methodist doctrines and theology given to American Methodism by John Wesley. Richard Allen was elected the first bishop.<sup>11</sup>

Following its formation in 1816, the AME Church sent missionaries into the South. Their work was limited mostly to port cities such as Norfolk, Charleston, and New Orleans, where larger populations of free African-Americans lived.<sup>12</sup> The missions were not successful for several reasons. First, slaves were usually forced to attend the churches attended by their owners. Methodist and non-Methodist whites in these areas did not like the self-help and social uplift message preached by AME missionaries; slave-owners wanted control of the Gospel message preached to their slaves. Second, southern whites were comfortable with the hierarchy and racial roles of their society and did not want them upset by northern missionaries. Third, the

political and legal measures passed following the Nat Turner rebellion impeded any attempts to establish separate churches. By the 1830s the AME Church had withdrawn almost entirely from active mission efforts in the South.

## **The Pattern of Separation in Blacksburg**

### **The Virginia Annual Conference of the AME Church**

In the period just before and during the Civil War, most African-American congregations in Virginia had achieved the level of separate meeting times and places but not as independent organizations. Noted historian Luther P. Jackson notes,

In Virginia, separate Methodist churches were eventually set up for the blacks in certain cities, but in each case this was due to overcrowded conditions in the white church while after separation the parent body maintained complete control.”<sup>13</sup>

One such church was St. John AME Church in Norfolk, considered the mother church of the AME in Virginia. It began as the St. John Chapel of the white congregation at Butte Street MECS, and was welcomed into the AME in the 1860s.

During the war years, the AME Church was able to gain a strong foothold by following Union armies into South Carolina and Virginia. Doing so, AME missionaries saw themselves as obeying Providence and as “gathering in the Methodists who were as sheep without shepherds” in their work throughout the South.<sup>14</sup> Even before the war was over, missionaries in Charleston and other cities were winning over large numbers of African-American congregants from MECS churches where they had outnumbered white congregants two or three to one, yet had no say in church governance or worship. In 1863, the congregation worshipping at St. John Chapel in Norfolk was welcomed into the Baltimore Annual Conference of the AME Church. Within three years other AME churches in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Petersburg, and Richmond had been added.<sup>15</sup> The work of AME pastors and bishops was so successful that, in May 1867, the Virginia Annual Conference of the AME Church was organized with thirty-five hundred members. One of its first orders of business was a resolution instructing the bishop to “write an address to all colored Methodists in Virginia, defining our position and stating points of agreement and disagreement,

and urging all to unite in one common fold.”<sup>16</sup> The goal of the AME Virginia Conference was nothing less than winning over the entire African-American membership of the MECS to the AME Church.

As this description indicates, the missionaries of the AME Church were not really evangelists as much as community organizers. Historian Harry Richardson recounts:

Many of the persons who joined the A.M.E.’s had already been converted by M.E. preachers. They were dissatisfied in the M.E. Church, and joined the A.M.E.’s in protest or retaliation. This also applies to the black sections of congregations as well as to [individual] persons. At times, whole groups would leave the white churches and come to the black. Thus, with the A.M.E. evangelists, the emphasis was as much on organizing new churches as it was on preaching and trying to reach the unconverted.<sup>17</sup>

Their method of evangelization did not rely on conversions, but focused instead on setting up independent African-American churches recruited from the congregations of the MECS.

African-American members of the MECS transferred to the AME Church for many reasons. Some were encouraged to join the AME Church by ministers of the MECS, who thought it would be better than having African-American members affiliate with the Yankee-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps most important, though, former slaves sought to exercise their newly won freedom by choosing where to worship, away from the humiliating practices of slavery and the condescension of whites, thereby demonstrating the control they now had over their lives.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the primary work of missionaries of the AME Church following the Civil War was in organizing already-existing African-American Methodist congregations and meetings into independent AME churches.

### **Separation at Blacksburg MECS**

Very few systematic records exist that describe the earliest preaching meetings in Blacksburg. Moreover, the historical record is unclear about the racial make up of these very early classes and congregations in Blacksburg, but it seems entirely possible the meetings were racially mixed (Figure 4). As stated above, the population of free African-Americans in Blacksburg during the late eighteenth century was





*Figure 4. early Methodist class meeting which appears to show a racially mixed congregation.*

small, as it was in much of the South, and in other Southern areas free African-Americans attended Methodist preaching events. It also seems reasonable to assume that prominent and wealthy families of the community, such as the Prestons and the Blacks, owned slaves who would attend preaching events.

This practice would be consistent with the pattern found in the rest of the Upper South, as historian William Montgomery writes:

The style of evangelical preaching, especially that of the Methodists, as well as the gospel itself, attracted large numbers of slaves, especially in the Upper South.... Whites and blacks worshipped together, testified about conversion experiences, and enjoyed communion of Christian brethren.<sup>20</sup>

Montgomery also suggests that Methodist preachers would attract African-American followers because

Methodist theology did not draw invidious distinctions between whites and blacks; on the contrary it held that God was no respecter of man's earthly condition and that He loved the poor and the despised as much as the rich and privileged.<sup>21</sup>

In short, though the historical record is unclear about African-American or slave presence in Blacksburg Methodist meetings during the

late 1700s, they would most likely have been present for preaching by the itinerant pastor, even if they were not participating in class meetings.

By the mid-nineteenth century, events in the entire country were building rapidly toward a drastic change. Methodists, along with most other American religious groups, were debating the harshly repressive measures prompted by the Nat Turner uprising as well as the legal, economic, and theological justifications for the institution of slavery. Across the South, white masters became more intentional about Christianizing their slaves in order to exercise greater control. Historian Montgomery reports:

Most often, slaves... were segregated in the sanctuary, but they heard the same sermon, sang the same hymns, were bound by the same code of ethics.... By taking greater responsibility for bringing the Word of God to the slaves, [the masters] could determine exactly what that gospel contained.<sup>22</sup>

Slave owners feared the message that might be preached to their slaves by a traveling evangelist. In the hands of white masters, the Gospel was not a tool of liberation, but a weapon of repression.

The Blacksburg Methodists, too, were facing drastic change, and this change can be documented through a careful study of the Recording Steward's minutes of local quarterly conferences, the main business meetings of the congregation. Another Methodist church building (Figure 5) was built in 1846; it was the largest and grandest building in town. A year later the Presbyterians in Blacksburg also built a new church building. The Presbyterian building still stands on the corner of Main and Lee streets. Blacksburg Presbyterian Church history records that the building was built almost entirely with slave labor.<sup>23</sup> It seems likely this was the case for the Methodist church building as well.

The new Methodist building in Blacksburg was completed just two years after the issue of slavery finally divided Methodism along regional lines. So, when a new brick Methodist Episcopal Church building was constructed in Blacksburg in 1846, it had, quoting from a 1948 history written for the town's sesquicentennial, "a gallery to accommodate Negro slaves who accompanied their masters to church in that day."<sup>24</sup> Separation within the congregation was the order of



*Figure 5. 1846 Methodist Church building.*

the day at Blacksburg MECS. This separation was surely more than a physical separation and probably reflected broader social practices at the time, which hardened racial lines and more clearly defined racial roles. Though the Blacksburg MECS remained a racially mixed congregation, the pattern of separation described by Norwood was continuing to develop.

The local Methodists were also involved in debates about the role of African-Americans and the Scriptural defense of slavery. In 1860, only a few months before the beginning of the Civil War, the Church at Blacksburg made a strong and very public statement against the anti-slavery doctrines of the Methodist denomination. Dr. Harvey Black, a noted physician, town leader, and later the head of a Confederate Army field hospital, persuaded the quarterly conference of the Blacksburg Church to approve a resolution demanding that the Baltimore Conference and the General Conference of the MECS strike anti-slavery doctrines from the *Book of Discipline*.<sup>25</sup> White church leaders were leaving behind the interracial revivals of the eighteenth century. The action of the local quarterly conference, under the leadership of

Dr. Black, makes it apparent that the white leaders of the Blacksburg MECS not only accepted the secondary status of African-Americans in the church, but also were party to attempts to perpetuate it. On the eve of the Civil War, then, it seems the white leaders of Blacksburg MECS were using the church to reinforce their view of political and social order.

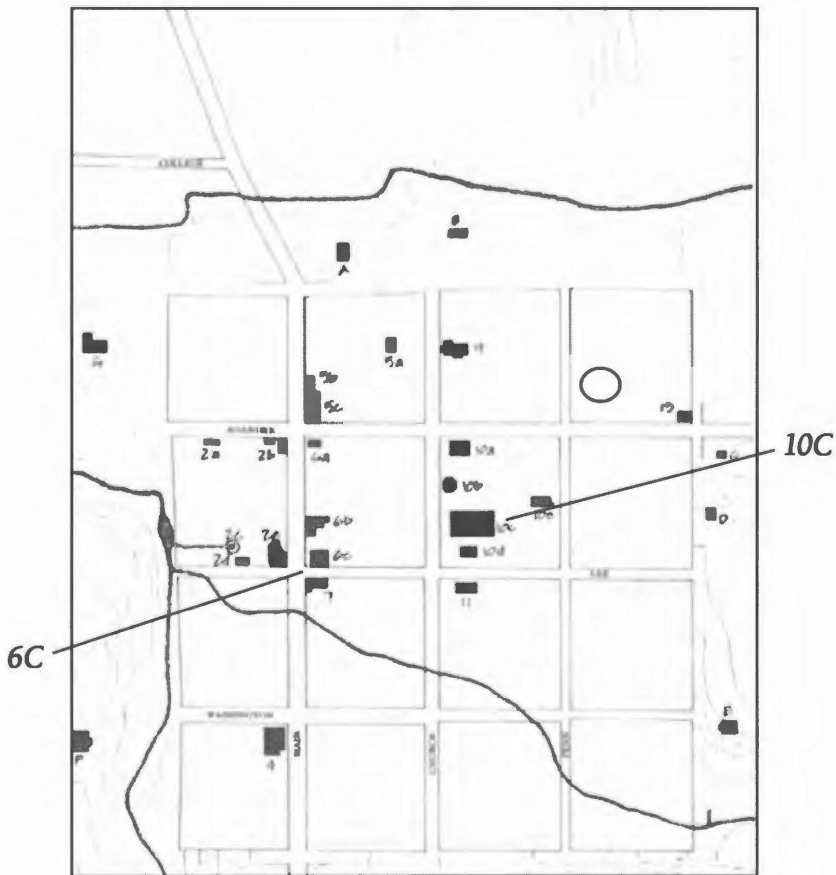
Also, sometime in the late 1850s, African-American Methodists apparently began meeting separately from the white church. Ms. Jacqueline Eaves, the historian of St. Paul AME Church in Blacksburg, has indicated that St. Paul traces its history to “the Methodist Church” established in 1857.<sup>26</sup> The earliest minutes of the Blacksburg MECS date to 1858/59 and do not mention a separate African-American congregation. Further, in 1858, the Steward recorded class rosters designated “colored,” and some of the newly baptized were similarly labeled. AME records or minutes from a separate African-American congregation during this period cannot be located, so there is no firm historical record for the 1857 date. Still, while it is impossible to state certainly that a separate African-American Methodist congregation existed in Blacksburg, it is equally impossible to state that one did not exist.

The oral history of St. Paul is firmly entrenched, and 1857 seems a reasonable date for a congregation of African-American Methodists to begin meeting separately from the white congregation, though such separation would not yet have been total. Racially separate congregations would still have been under the control of the white trustees at Blacksburg MECS. Virginia law, after the Nat Turner uprising, demanded that African-American congregations be supervised by white preachers, and Methodist practice at the time was for African-American classes to be led by white leaders. Thus, even if African-American Methodists in Blacksburg were meeting separately just prior to the Civil War, they almost certainly continued to be under the affiliation and supervision of the pastor at the Blacksburg MECS.

The membership rolls of the Blacksburg MECS support this possibility, as African-Americans continued to be baptized, married, and listed in classes at the Church through the Civil War. Six African-American probationary members were enrolled at the Blacksburg MECS on September 30, 1860, under the supervision of John B. Helm, a white Church member, a trustee, and a leader for one of the African-

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American classes. Between October 28, 1862, and September 6, 1863, twenty-eight African-Americans were baptized at Blacksburg MECS; of those, eight enrolled on October 28 and six were later received into membership. In 1865 three separate baptism ceremonies were held, in June, July, and December; a total of twenty “colored” were baptised.<sup>27</sup> Several marriages clearly marked “colored” are also recorded and witnessed by prominent church leaders. The last such notation appears



*Figure 6. This map shows Blacksburg in the 1840s. The Methodist church is the large building on Church Street (labeled 10C), and the building of the Presbyterian Church is one block away on the corner of Main Street and Lee Street (labeled 6C). No African-American church building on Penn Street is shown to exist (empty circle). (from Donna Dunay et al., Blacksburg: Understanding a Virginia Town: Town Architecture [Penn Washington, 1986]).*

on two weddings in 1874.<sup>28</sup> Still, the names of people who are identifiably African-American are not found on any of the alphabetized comprehensive membership lists from this period, indicating that, while Blacksburg MECS ministered to the African-American community, it in no way considered free African-Americans or slaves to be equal and fully participating members of the Church. Separate class rosters may indicate that African-American Methodists were meeting at a *separate time* from the white congregation.

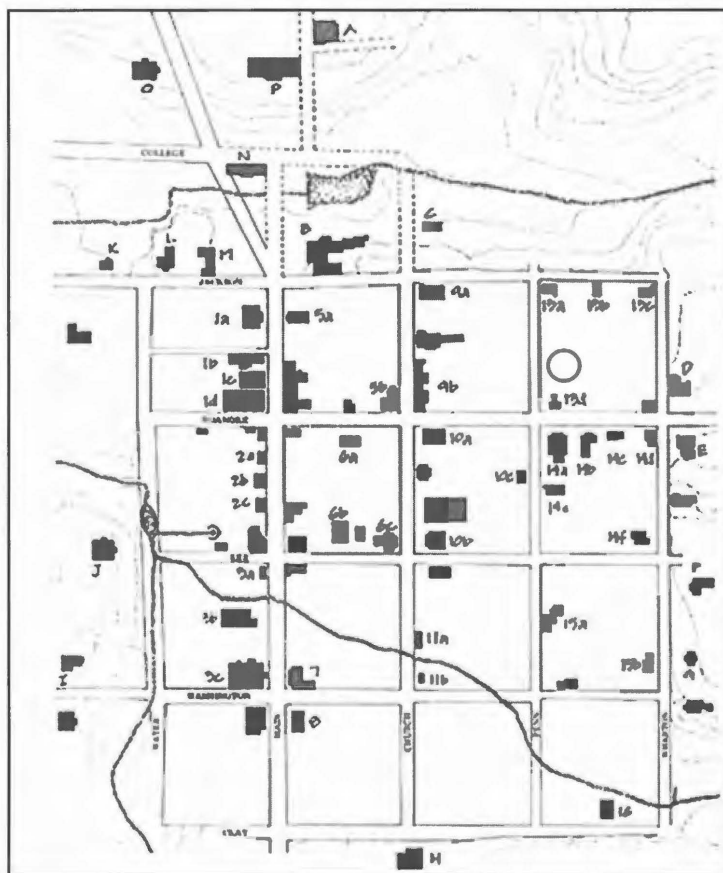


Figure 7. Blacksburg, 1870s. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches are shown in the same locations as in the 1840 map. No building is yet shown on the Penn Street property (circle) (from Donna Dunay et al., *Blacksburg: Understanding a Virginia Town: Town Architecture* [Penn Washington, 1986]).

What about meeting in a *separate place*? Oral histories at St. Paul indicate that the African-American congregation in Blacksburg has “always” met at the present location on Penn Street. However, the map presented in Figure 7 shows an architectural survey of the town from the 1870s; the Penn Street building for St. Paul’s is still not shown. Additionally, quarterly conference minutes from the Blacksburg MECS on two different dates in 1867 contain references that indicate the two congregations may have been separate but not yet entirely independent in the late 1850s. On August 13, 1867, a notation in the minutes refers to “colored members withdrawn.”<sup>29</sup> The minutes for the local conference in December of the same year indicate that the trustees were instructed to develop a plan to share their church building with the AME congregation and “the arrangement [will] expire by September, 1868 at the furthest.”<sup>30</sup> If the MECS church building was being shared in 1867, it seems unlikely that the African-American congregation was meeting in a separate place ten years earlier. Finally, property records and reports in the AME denominational journal, *The Christian Recorder*, indicate the purchase of a lot at a later date, after the affiliation of the congregation with the AME Church. Perhaps the African-American congregation met at the Penn Street location in a brush arbor or a private home, which would not have been uncommon for African-American congregations. However, no existing evidence points to a separate dedicated meeting place, owned either by the African-American congregation or the trustees of Blacksburg MECS. Although African-American members of the Blacksburg MECS likely were meeting separately beginning as early as 1857, they were still supervised by the white trustees and ministered to by the white pastor of Blacksburg MECS.

### **Affiliation of Blacksburg AME Church**

While the beginning date for a separate African-American Methodist congregation in Blacksburg is unclear, the first date for involvement by the AME Church in Blacksburg is documented in June 1867. Rev. John Wesley Diggs, an itinerant pastor for AME churches in the Roanoke Valley, mentioned Blacksburg in his letter to *The Christian Recorder*. “I also heard of others at Blacksburg, about thirty-six miles from here,” Diggs wrote: “I went there and gathered forty....”<sup>31</sup> This

report indicates that the gathering in Blacksburg was not a regular AME meeting, but one that Rev. Diggs was visiting for the first time. The forty people he found were probably part of the fifty-six African-American members on the 1866 “Roll of Members, Colored” of Blacksburg MECS.<sup>32</sup> This situation was ideal for the AME method of evangelizing, taking the African-American congregation from Blacksburg MECS and then reorganizing it as an AME congregation. Rev. Diggs apparently did his work organizing the ready-made gathering because, as explained above, in December 1867 the Blacksburg MECS trustees were instructed to develop a plan to “accommodate the African M.E. Church.”<sup>33</sup> The actions of Rev. Diggs and Blacksburg’s African-American Methodists followed exactly the AME model demonstrated elsewhere in Virginia and in the South.

These notations in the quarterly conference minutes seem to suggest that the whites at Blacksburg MECS were in agreement with the exodus of African-Americans from their congregation. If so, the white church leaders at the Blacksburg MECS were acting in accordance with resolutions passed by the Baltimore Annual Conference of the MECS and the General Conference of the MECS. The Baltimore Conference, meeting in 1866, passed a resolution declaring that the conference “has always taken a deep interest in the welfare of the colored people within our bounds.” and “we will not cease our efforts to benefit the colored people.”<sup>34</sup> While these could be interpreted as fairly meaningless platitudes, they were apparently taken in earnest in Blacksburg. The paternalistic tone of the resolution was probably also reflected at Blacksburg as the white trustees sought to help set up the new AME church. Whites could have welcomed the exit of African-Americans because they viewed former slaves as “uppity” as a result of their freedom. That was certainly the case in other parts of the South. The pastor who supervised this final exit of African-Americans from the white congregation was the Rev. Peter H. Whisner, for whom Blacksburg MECS was renamed in 1906 when the building pictured in Figure 8 was constructed.

This discussion thus returns to the question posed at the beginning. Why did the African-Americans leave? The exit seems to have been both a push and a pull, though in the absence of letters or diaries indicating motives, any conclusions drawn are conjecture based on regional and denominational patterns. The African-American Meth-





*Figure 8. The Methodist church building constructed in 1906 and named after the Reverend Peter Whisner.*

odists in Blacksburg, and African-Americans generally, were probably eager to express their freedom in an independent church that was not under white control or supervision. Whites, on the other hand, were likely relieved to have them leave because free blacks in the congregation only served as reminders of all that had changed and all that had been lost.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the South, Norwood's pattern of separation played out as local congregations and the leadership of the MECS and the AME Church fought over who owned and controlled the chapels where black congregations met and worshiped. The demise of slavery brought loss of social control, so white congregations tried to exercise control of the church, especially through property issues. The property question continued to create problems for the AME Church and the MECS for decades. The 1870 General Conference of the MECS went so far as to form the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church as a deep South

rival to the AME. As distrust between white Methodist and AME leaders grew, AME members felt snubbed and misled while whites felt their former African-American members were being politicized and corrupted. The independence that African-Americans in the AME church exercised, free of white control, could be perceived as threatening to those whites wanting to maintain control and the antebellum social order by means of the church.

Significantly, property issues that emerged elsewhere in the South did not create animosity in Blacksburg. In Blacksburg, since another chapel was not available for the African-American congregation, all continued sharing the building, even after the African-American Methodists had joined the AME in 1867. The spirit of cooperation that existed could be for two distinct, though not exclusive, reasons. On one hand, white church leaders may have been living out their faith and following the instructions of the 1866 MECS General Conference. This cooperation would still have reflected the racial morés of the time, manifest in paternalistic attitudes and actions. On the other hand, the leaders of the Blacksburg MECS – who were also the village’s political and social leaders – might still have been using the church as a means of enforcing social control over the African-American community. As long as the Blacksburg AME Church met in the same building as the Blacksburg MECS, the AME congregants were beholden to the white trustees and were not truly independent. While no record shows mistreatment of AME Church members at Blacksburg, it seems reasonable to assume that the old social order was still being reinforced through the white church and the trustees until the acquisition of a lot in the 1870s. As mentioned above, in the absence of letters or journals in which white leaders or former slaves revealed thoughts or particular actions, it is difficult to judge motive with certainty. In either case, the African-Americans still worshiped in a place where they had worshiped as slaves and they were still dependent upon their former masters for a place to meet.

Despite the hardship of having no separate place to meet, the Blacksburg AME Church grew. In December 1868, Bishop Alexander Wayman wrote a letter to *The Christian Recorder* reporting on activity in the Virginia Conference. Clearly, the Blacksburg AME Church had been sent a pastor who finally finished the task of organizing, because Wayman reports: “Brother Diggs, at Salem; Williams at

Wytheville, and Dericks [Derrick], at Blacksburg, have had great success in their work this year. When they went they had neither church nor people, but now they have both.”<sup>36</sup> Because of the reference to people and church, Bishop Wayman’s reference to “church” may mean a building that was owned and controlled by trustees of the African-American Methodists. Still, the property was probably not the present Penn Street location, as the 1870s survey mentioned above does not indicate such property. In 1869, Bishop Wayman wrote *The Christian Recorder* again, this time about a visit to Blacksburg:

Friday morning I took leave of Salem for Blacksburg. Rev. William B. Derrick met me at the depot in Christiansburg, with Colonel Preston’s fine pair of horses and a Jersey wagon, and took me to Blacksburg where I spent the Sabbath. ... Brother Derrick has a fine congregation and a large day school of sixty-five scholars, and no man stands higher in the community than he, for anything he wishes he can get.<sup>37</sup>

Bishop Wayman makes it obvious the white trustees and leaders of Blacksburg MECS cooperated with the AME pastor. This may have been a conscious attempt to control what happened in the African-American church or an honest attempt to live out the Christian faith and the 1866 commitments of the General Conference. Historian Montgomery writes: “Regardless of their motives or their perception of the freedmen’s religious condition, many whites remained paternalistically involved in the spiritual affairs of blacks who shared their world.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the pastors of the AME Church in Blacksburg, well-educated and dedicated to uplifting the African-American community, may have accomplished one of the primary goals of AME Bishop Daniel Payne – the dispelling of prejudice and hatred on the part of whites.<sup>39</sup> The AME Church grew and prospered with, or in spite of, the paternal guidance and oversight of such white leaders of the community as Colonel Preston. Without a clearer historical record, the exact situation is difficult to determine from a present-day perspective.

In any case, by 1869, just two years after official organization, a flourishing AME congregation existed in the Blacksburg African-American community. Less than 10 years after it was organized, the AME Church in Blacksburg was on its own, without the conflicts over property that characterized many other MECS-AME splits in the South



*Figure 9. St. Paul AME Church still stands on the lot purchased in the 1870s. Though it is now covered with stucco, the original wood siding is apparently still contained within the structure.*

(Figure 9). It had more than doubled its membership to ninety-five and in 1875 the Blacksburg AME Church finally achieved total independence when Rev. Jeremiah Cuffey arranged the purchase of a lot, as reported in the memoirs of long-time pastor and AME leader Rev. Israel Butt.<sup>40</sup> A later deed, dated 1882 (the original was lost in a fire at the Montgomery County Courthouse), confirms that this property was independently controlled by trustees of the AME Church in Blacksburg.

### **Conclusion**

The historical record is not clear on the division of the biracial congregation at the Blacksburg Methodist Episcopal Church, South into two racially separate congregations. The first meetings of Methodists in Blacksburg probably were of mixed race and socioeconomic status. As the region developed and more people moved into the area, the congregation continued to have both white and African-American members. However, during the years immediately after the Civil War,

the African-American members of the Blacksburg church left that church and formed what was to become St. Paul AME Church. The facts from Blacksburg Church records and African Methodist Episcopal records, seen in the light of the contemporary situation elsewhere in the South and reflected by local conference minutes, suggest that the African-American Methodist church began as a separate congregation of the Blacksburg MECS, not as an AME church. Thus, the evangelization of African-Americans in Blacksburg followed the standard AME form evident in port cities and coastal areas.

The oral tradition of St. Paul AME and the written records of Blacksburg MECS (and its successor, Blacksburg United Methodist Church) differ as to details of the separation of the two congregations. The preponderance of the evidence seems to support a later date of organization than the oral traditions of St. Paul's would indicate. However, the most important details show that the separation was an amicable one, unlike the separation of similar congregations in other parts of the South, though the reasons for this amicable split are unclear. The division was consistent with the policy position articulated by the MECS in the 1866 General Conference. African-Americans were, most likely, eager to express their newly-won freedom in forming their own congregation. For AME denominational leaders, the mission effort in Blacksburg followed the preferred form, as missionaries reorganized an MECS congregation, avoided the property question, and eventually bought their own land.

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## Author's Note

Christopher Ross Donald was born and raised in Blacksburg, Virginia. A graduate of the College of William and Mary and a former member of Teach for America, he is currently a third-year student in the Divinity School at Duke University.

Early in his research for this study, the author read a history posted on the church website, *Church and Community: A History of the Blacksburg United Methodist Church*, edited and adapted by Dr. James Shockley in 1996. It was taken from two earlier texts: memoirs of Miss Ellen McDonald written before her death in 1927 (great-granddaughter of founders of the Church), and an essay by Dr. Leland Burdine Tate written for the 1976 national bicentennial (Dr. Tate's family were also long-time members). Further research in Church records in Special Collections at the Virginia Tech library brought to light this remarkable story about whites and African Americans in Reconstruction-era Blacksburg. Also helpful in this study was C. A. Turner, Jr., *Methodism in Blacksburg, 1798-1948*.

The author especially thanks Ms. Jacqueline Eaves, church historian at St. Paul AME Church, and Ms. Karen Finch, Smithfield Plantation docent and his former teacher, for help in preparing this project.

Most of the portraits and pictures of church buildings are from internet sources in the public domain. The maps and pictures of Blacksburg are taken from town bicentennial sites and the online edition of *A Special Place for 200 Years: A History of Blacksburg, Virginia* found at the website of Special Collections, Newman Library at Virginia Tech, <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/> (accessed 29 October 2004). Architectural surveys of the town for 1840 and 1870 were completed and mapped by Donna Dunay in *Blacksburg: Understanding a Virginia Town* (1986). The 1921 map is the "Sanborn map," completed for fire insurance purposes, which now belongs to the Planning and Engineering Department of the Town of Blacksburg.

## Endnotes

1. The term "episcopal" comes from the Greek word for bishop (*episkipos*). The use of this term in the name of these churches, Methodist Episcopal Church, South and African Methodist Episcopal Church, does not indicate affiliation with the Protestant Episcopal Church in America or the Church of England.

- Rather, "episcopal" describes the churches as organizations whose polity and mission is overseen by bishops.
2. Recording Steward's Book, 1859-1880, Records of Whisner Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by various recording stewards, Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, and Record of Baptisms, Marriages, Probationers, Members, Classes, Blacksburg Station, Montgomery County, Virginia, 1857-1870, by various recording stewards, Records of Whisner Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg).
  3. McDonald, Ellen, "Contributions to the History of Methodism in Blacksburg and Vicinity," typewritten manuscript of personal and family memories, undated, pp. 2-3. (Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg).
  4. Record of Baptisms, Marriages, Probationers, Members, Classes and Recording Steward's Book for Whisner Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South, pp. 1 ff.
  5. *A Special Place for 200 Years: A History of Blacksburg, Virginia*, ed. Clara Cox (Blacksburg, Virginia: The Town of Blacksburg, 1998), accessed 29 October 2004; available from Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recol/histbook/specplac.htm>
  6. *5th Census: or, Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States As Corrected at the Department of State*, 1830, pp. 88-9.
  7. Luther P. Jackson, "Religious Development of the Negro in Virginia from 1760 to 1860," *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 16, no. 2 (April 1931), pp. 173, 204; William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p. 28; Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as It Developed Among Blacks in America* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1976), pp. 90, 98.
  8. For a more detailed discussion of William Ballard Preston's efforts to limit slavery, see Peter Wallenstein, "William Ballard Preston and the Politics of Slavery 1832-1862," *The Smithfield Review*, Vol 1 (1997), pp. 63 ff.
  9. *A Special Place*.
  10. Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 169.
  11. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-71.
  12. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, p. 28; Richardson, *Dark Salvation*, p. 90.
  13. Jackson, "Religious Development of the Negro," p. 200.
  14. Clarence E. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 51.
  15. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine*, p. 67; Jackson, "Religious Development of the Negro," pp. 226-7; Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, pp. 48-9, 66, 74.
  16. Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia or Forty Years in the Old Dominion* [book on-line] (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute Press, 1908,



- accessed 3 November 2004) available from Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina, at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html>; internet.
17. Richardson, *Dark Salvation*, p. 99.
  18. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, p. 94.
  19. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine*, p. 54.
  20. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 22.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
  22. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1.
  23. In the late 1990s, after thoroughly researching the building, the owners of the building at that time posted a bronze plaque dedicated to "Jake Deverle, Slave Mason, 1848" on an interior wall. Today it can be seen just to the left of the entry as customers exit the restaurant that now occupies the building. Also, interview with former pastor.
  24. Turner, C.A. Jr., *Methodism in Blacksburg, 1798-1948*. Pamphlet written by the pastor and published for the sesquicentennial of Blacksburg, 1948 (Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg), p. 6.
  25. Recording Steward's Record, Whisner Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South., p. 38.
  26. Jacqueline Eaves, interview by author, Blacksburg, Virginia, 29 October 2004; Julie Schwab, "Warm Thanks," *The Roanoke Times*, 28 November 1996, sec. NRV, pp. 1-2; Elizabeth Obenshain, "St. Paul: Small in size, but big part of members' lives," *The Roanoke Times & World-News*, 25 December 1994, sec. NRV, p. 4.
  27. Record of Baptisms, Marriages, Probationers, Members, Classes. There are no page numbers in this record book, but the book itself is divided into sections and each section is chronological. The 1865 baptisms appear in the "Record of Baptisms."
  28. *Ibid.*, "Record of Marriages."
  29. Recording Steward's Book, Whisner Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 92.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
  31. John Wesley Diggs, *The Christian Recorder*, 22 June 1867.
  32. Record of Baptisms, Marriages, Probationers, Members, Classes, "Record of the Classes Severally."
  33. Recording Steward's Book, p. 97.
  34. *Annual Register of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Baltimore, Maryland: Lucas & Son, 1866), p. 21.
  35. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine*, p. 109.
  36. A. W. Wayman, "Letter from Bishop Wayman," *The Christian Recorder*, 12 December 1868.
  37. A. W. Wayman, "Letter from Bishop Wayman," *The Christian Recorder*, 25 September 1869.
  38. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine*, p. 110.
  39. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, p. 15.
  40. Butt, *History of African Methodism..*

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## Book Review

Edited by Tom Costa

*In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* by Edward L. Ayers (W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. Pp. xxi, 472. \$15.95 paper)

In this complex but engaging study, Professor Edward Ayers of the University of Virginia explores the experiences of the people of Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania, as they stumbled into the Civil War. His story does not brim with “national affirmation” reflecting an emphasis on “a national redemption brought by the war’s trials and sacrifice,” so often the theme of sweeping histories and films of the war. Instead, he argues that we need to understand how ordinary people, however incompletely and inaccurately, viewed the issues and events surrounding them. He stresses the “deep contingency” of history, the “dense and intricate connections in which lives and events are embedded.” Dismissing any “easy correlation between individual attributes and political behavior,” he chooses “to emphasize the interaction between relatively stable local identities and a swirling context at the state and national levels.” As he claims,

Only a dynamic model that pays close attention to language as well as voters’ and counties’ material characteristics, to interaction over time, to institutional boundaries and pressures, and to events and passions can account for the political behavior that brought on the Civil War.

Indeed, he “dwells on facts that have poised significant challenges to our understanding of the Civil War,” facts that emerge in part from his insightful investigation into these two communities sitting in the same Great Valley.

Augusta and Franklin Counties in 1860 were similar to each other and to many other counties near the eastern sectional border. Both were predominantly agricultural. Franklin farmers grew more wheat to meet rapidly expanding urban markets, and Augusta husbandmen

produced more corn to feed themselves, their slaves, and a sizable distilling industry. Both counties enjoyed rail transportation and rising farm values, and both had invested in local manufactories, although Augusta's industries were more rudimentary than Franklin's. Spatially, Augusta was the larger county of the two, but had improved only about half its farm land; Franklin had about two-thirds of its acreage under till. On average, Augusta was only half as densely settled as Franklin. In 1860, census takers counted more than 42,000 individuals, including about 1,800 African Americans in Franklin, and more than 21,000 whites, about 600 free people of color, and roughly 5,500 slaves in Augusta. Just over one in five white Augusta families held slaves, a proportion close to the rest of the South. Although more people, more farms, more schools, more towns and villages, and no slavery distinguished Franklin from Augusta, most residents in both counties in 1860 shared strong support for the Union, and a belief in a common Christian God.

Professor Ayers uses the sacred scripture of the two counties for the title and subtitles of his study. The book is divided into four sections, each portion headed with a phrase from the twenty-third Psalm. In "Green Pastures and Still Waters" he describes the counties and the emerging crises wrought by John Brown's Raid, the earliest phase of which was staged in Franklin, and the contest over the presidential election of 1860. Lincoln won 56% of the vote in Franklin; Bell carried Augusta nearly two to one over Douglas and ten to one over Breckinridge. Lincoln was a "son of the border," and won the votes of former Whigs in Franklin, while Bell also enjoyed border support and appealed to Augusta's old Whigs. Loyalties towards the Union remained strong through 1860.

"Paths of Righteousness" traces the transition over the winter and through the spring of 1860 from Unionism to secession in Augusta and the response to the secession crisis in Franklin. Both sides felt sure of God's will. "The Shadow of Death" recounts the military actions that involved enlistees from the two counties between the summers of 1861 and 1862. White men in Augusta responded to calls for troops in far greater numbers and proportions than did their counterparts in Franklin. This response partly changed over the next year, the period covered in "The Presence of Mine Enemies." By the beginning of 1863 Franklin recruits outnumbered Augusta's but still lagged

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in proportion to the county's population. Women in Augusta nursed the wounded, sewed uniforms and cooked, and proved just "as blood-thirsty" as the men. Stuart's raid of Chambersburg brought the fighting directly to Franklin County, and Lee's troops moved through it towards Gettysburg. War transformed both counties. Ayers ends his story on the eve of the battle, leaving the reader anxiously awaiting the next installment of this tantalizing tale.

Ayers weaves several different levels of evidence and analysis through the book. He deftly moves back and forth between the two counties, measuring their response to regional and national issues and events. He offers italicized commentaries, a device he likens to "voice-overs in a film." In these he summarizes and contextualizes the comparisons and contrasts drawn between the two locales and their place in the momentous events of these years, and comments on interpretive issues. Illustrating his sense of contingency, he speculates in one of these "voice-overs" that if Confederate military actions had failed before Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in the fall of 1862, slavery might have lived on in a restored Union. In fact, slavery as an issue and African Americans as important actors in both locales figure prominently in his interpretation. As he ends the book, Ayers notes how black Americans, North and South, would be needed to save the Union.

The book demonstrates the value and importance of local history when it is done well. Ayers humanizes the experiences of these two counties through biographical threads woven through each section. John Imboden, county clerk and military partisan; Joseph Waddell, newspaper publisher and Unionist; Jed Hotchkiss, school principal and Stonewall Jackson's map maker; and Alansa Rounds, Hotchkiss' niece and a schoolteacher also from New York, are among the faces made familiar from Augusta. Alexander McClure – lawyer, publisher and Lincoln supporter – serves the same purpose for Franklin. Through their letters and diaries, augmented by shorter and more fragmentary records of dozens of others, Ayers links together local activities and observations and ties them to the events occurring on the larger regional and national stage. Indeed, the national crisis and the war shape the narrative structure of the book. There is no "so what" question to be raised here.

An additional virtue of the book that will prove valuable for teachers and students of the Civil War, historical methodology, local history, and genealogy is its link to the Valley of the Shadow Project headed by Ayers, part of the Virginia Center for Digital History. At <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu>, readers can find just about every primary source cited in the book. Want to read John Imboden's argument for secession cited on page 105, footnote 21? Go to and enter the web site, choose the section on the Eve of War, click on "site map" and look for Using the Valley project. Move to *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, and click on part 2, Paths of Righteousness. Scroll down to footnote 21 and click. An Adobe Acrobat image will appear of the newspaper page cited by Ayers that can be manipulated for easier reading. One can also explore a whole bevy of letters and diaries, many in typescript, tables, graphs, maps and images, and judge how Professor Ayers has used them to produce this award-winning book. And one might even "read ahead" in the sources that will undergird the next volume of the history of Augusta and Franklin Counties in the midst of the Civil War. I did, and I hope it appears soon.

Michael L. Nicholls  
Utah State University

## Index to Volumes I through X

Mary C. Holliman

- Family names are in all-capital letters, and come before other entries using the family name. Where possible, dates of birth and death, or other information that helps to identify a person, are given.
- Two or more people with the same family and given names are indicated by a (1), (2), etc. after the given name. In some cases, they may actually be the same person, but the text does not make that clear. Wives are listed under their maiden names, when known, with a cross reference to the husband.
- Information in the endnotes has not been indexed herein. However, the footnotes accompanying the two articles "The Diaries of James Armistead Otey" in volumes 6 and 7 have been included.
- Only the page range is given for persons frequently mentioned in the diaries published in volumes 6 and 7, such as Otey's sister Lizzie or his friend Alex.

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\* James Patton (3) and James Patton (4) are actually the same person. The correct death date is 1920 – as stated on his tombstone and verified by the James A. Otey diary of 1920. See entry for James A. Otey in this index.

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The Smithfield Review  
Volume X, 2006

*The Smithfield Review* publishes book reviews. The editors plan for each issue to carry one to three reviews of books dealing with all periods of trans-Appalachian history and culture. We enlist active scholars and professionals to write the reviews. Review copies, requests to review books, and other inquiries may be addressed to:

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**I** saw Capt. Dupoister start out from amongst his dirty crew on my right hand seeing him coming a direct course toward me. I looked round to my left. I saw Col. Mr. Campbell of Virginia on my left. Dupoister came forward with his sword hilt foremost Campbell accosted him in these words I am happy to see you sir. Dupoister in answer swore by his maker he was not happy to see him under the present circumstances at the same time delivered up his sword Campbell rec<sup>d</sup>. the sword turned it round in his hand...” – p. 8

**T**he accounts of Colonel John Floyd’s life read like an historical romance, and abound in inaccuracies, conflicting records, and embellishments. With their “reluctant hero,” as he was called by one biographer, and their fairytale quality, the accounts present a story of high adventure, grounded in fact, obscured by uncertainty, and filled with vitality. – p. 21

**L**ast Monday week the men over 35 was ordered to meet at Christians burgh. Some thought they was to go under general floyd. none of the Showalters did not go. The other day it was said that [those] under 35 was ordered out. but they have not been around to notice us.” – p. 34

**T**he blade is just one-eighth inch shy of being eighteen inches long and appears to be made of carbon steel. It is double edged, and it is quite sharp. I didn’t actually try to shave with it, but I believe I could have. – p. 40

**I**n 1869, Bishop Wayman wrote ... about a visit to Blacksburg: “Friday morning I took leave of Salem for Blacksburg. Rev. William B. Derrick met me at the depot in Christiansburg, with Colonel Preston’s fine pair of horses and a Jersey wagon, and took me to Blacksburg where I spent the Sabbath. ... Brother Derrick has a fine congregation and a large day school of sixty-five scholars, and no man stands higher in the community than he...” – p. 67

***The Smithfield Review, Volume X, 2006***