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The Smithfield Review  
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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 1,860-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.



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## A Note from the Editors

The first three articles of this volume provide insight into some of the early history of Virginia Tech. That history reveals the unusual vision of early leaders and the external forces that altered the course of that vision. As is often the case, the impact of these individuals and events often go unnoticed at the time, but in retrospect they become quite obvious. The fourth article presents the early history of the region now called Whitethorn where Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture does much of its research. The final two articles extend the discussion of the life and letters of Letitia Preston Floyd who was born at Smithfield and later became the wife of Dr. John Floyd, who served as the Governor of Virginia in the 1830s.

The first article is Part II of "Olin and Preston Institute and Preston and Olin Institute: The Early Years of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University" by Clara Cox. It traces the difficult transitions of the young Methodist school as it overcame disruptions from legal battles, financial problems, and the Civil War. It tells the story of leaders who were dedicated to education in an era when public schools as we know them today did not exist.

In "Change Amidst Tradition: The First Two Years of the Burruss Administration," author Faith Skiles presents the early plans of Virginia Tech's longest serving president, Julian Burruss, who served in that office from 1919 until 1945. Those plans included policy changes that required less time spent in military training and more time spent in academic studies. Burruss also arranged for the enrollment of the first female students---a movement that evolved and expanded until its completion in the 1960s.

The third article, "Thomas Nelson Conrad: Educator, Editor, Preacher, Spy" by Clara Cox is a brief biographical sketch of the man who served as president of both Preston and Olin Institute and Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. As a young man, Conrad lived an exciting life as a spy for the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Documents that provide information about the earliest settlers in Southwest Virginia in the 1740s are often difficult to find and interpret. Author Ryan Mays has done considerable research in presenting "Adam Harman, the New River and Tom's Creek: An Analysis of the Earliest Documentary Records."

In the previous volume of the *Smithfield Review*, Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays provided three articles about Letitia Preston Floyd, wife of Governor John Floyd and daughter of Colonel William Preston and his wife Susanna. New information has been found about Letitia and her final home in Burke's Garden, and it is reported in the fifth article "Letitia Preston Floyd: Supplemental Notes."

In 1843, Letitia Preston Floyd---at age 63--- was encouraged to record significant historical information in her papers and memory. She had been a witness to numerous historical events and also had read many letters and documents in her deceased father's large collection. A long 31-page letter was written to her son Rush Floyd. Several transcriptions of the letter---not all alike---were circulated over the years. Recently, the original was found in a storage box at Smithfield Plantation. Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays collaborated to produce a new transcription found in our final article, "Letitia Preston Floyd's 'My Dear Rush' Letter." A digitized copy of the original handwritten letter is referenced.

It is with sadness that we inform our readers of the death of Susanna Kibler, a member of the Smithfield Review Management Board since its beginning in 2008. That group of dedicated volunteers handles all business and distribution duties of our operation. Susanna's cheerful, helpful participation will be missed.

As usual, we acknowledge with gratitude the help we receive from Peter Wallenstein of the Virginia Tech history department; Barbara Corbett, who does all of the final production work; Rachael Garrity, who does our indexing; our financial donors; and all of our numerous volunteers who perform considerable editorial and business management duties. Of course, our authors deserve special thanks for all the time and effort that they donate to our production. They are the heart of our operation.

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