

Letitia Preston Floyd's "My Dear Rush" Letter

Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays

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Introduction

The present authors gave a sketch of Letitia Preston Floyd (1779–1852) in the previous volume of the *Smithfield Review*.¹ As background for the reader of this article, it may be briefly reiterated that Letitia Preston Floyd was born on the Virginia frontier in the newly created Montgomery County. Her parents were the Scotch-Irish immigrant William Preston of Augusta County and Susanna Smith of Hanover County. In 1804 she married John Floyd in Kentucky and went on to become a plantation owner, the mother of twelve children (seven of whom survived to adulthood and marriage), and the First Lady of Virginia.

The "My Dear Rush" letter is a 32-page manuscript written by Mrs. Floyd dated February 22, 1843. The authors of this article discovered the *original* copy of this document in January 2014 (after its being closely held within the Preston family for 161 years and ten further years in a Smithfield closet) in a storage box at the Smithfield Plantation.² The manuscript is in the form of a letter to her son Benjamin Rush Floyd and because of its opening salutation is referred to as the "My Dear Rush" letter.

The letter was written at her home on the Cavan estate in Burke's Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia, at the instigation of the historian Lyman Draper.³ The letter is in Mrs. Floyd's own hand and records many things that can be found nowhere else in the historical record. It is also a crucial document for understanding the European settling of southwest Virginia that was spearheaded by her great-uncle James Patton and her father William Preston. Additionally, the letter is foundational for the study of the westward expansion of America during the Early Republic Period. It is the most significant of all the writings about the early history of the Patton, Preston, Floyd, Breckinridge, and other families in Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky.⁴

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1. Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "A Sketch of Letitia Preston Floyd and Some of Her Letters," *Smithfield Review* 19 (2015), 77–120.
 2. Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "An Important Smithfield Plantation Archive," *Historic Smithfield Newsletter*, Spring 2014.
 3. Glanville and Mays, "A Sketch," 104–107.
 4. The letter's wealth of family information has made it a famous resource for genealogists.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the “My Dear Rush” letter was in the possession of Mrs. Floyd’s daughter Nickette Buchanan Floyd Johnston. After Mrs. Johnston’s death the letter remained in the possession of Floyd family members for about a hundred years until three great-great-granddaughters of Mrs. Floyd and their mother brought it and donated it to the Smithfield Plantation in October 2004.⁵

The original copy of the “My Dear Rush” letter remains presently at the Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg. The provenance of this original letter is discussed in the appendix to this article.

Previous Transcriptions of the “My Dear Rush Letter”

It was an interesting experience for the authors to be following 170 years later in the footsteps of the previous transcribers, James Cochran and George Frederick Holmes.⁶ In a few places the authors were able to make use of their transcriptions. The Smithfield original letter has holes on a few pages at folds where the paper has worn away over the years. Occasionally, reference was made to the Cochran and Holmes transcriptions for help. Some of the later transcriptions of the “My Dear Rush” article and present-day archival and Internet copies are described in the appendix.

About this Transcription

This transcription is a readable modern version of Mrs. Floyd’s letter with regularized spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The authors’ intent has been to make it as easy as possible for a modern reader to follow Mrs. Floyd’s language with a minimum of distraction. Thus they have added many commas, added capitalization, regularized and corrected spelling, and added explanatory transitions in brackets. Our intent is that the bracketed comments will serve either to ease the modern reader’s path or to call attention to ambiguities or uncertainties. A principal purpose of the footnotes is to elucidate matters that will be obscure to a modern reader.

This transcription keeps Mrs. Floyd’s pagination. Images of the original pages of her letter are posted on line.⁷ Thus anyone reading this transcription can readily check and compare it against the images of the handwritten version.⁸

5. Original family letters brought simultaneously with the “My Dear Rush” letter to Smithfield Plantation by three great-granddaughters of Mrs. Floyd and their mother give a good account of its provenance. The mother was great-granddaughter Evelyn Byrd (nee Henry) Sargeant. The great-great-granddaughters were Jane Byrd (nee Sargeant) McCurdy, and her sisters Evelyn (nee Sargeant) Hutton and Louisa (nee Sargeant) Dent. For further details see the appendix to this article.

6. Glanville and Mays, “A Sketch,” 104–107.

7. See www.lynnside.org/MDR-Images.pdf

8. The first photographic copies of the letter were made by coauthor JG in February/March 2014. High quality copies were made by staff of the Library of Virginia at the Montgomery County Court House in April 2015.

Transcript of the Original "My Dear Rush" Letter

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Cavan⁹ Feby 22' 1843

My dear Rush:

From the extreme rigor of the winter and diminished vision I have postponed answering your Letter of December 30th. enclosing one from Mr. Lyman C. Draper of Buffalo, New York. The object of Mr. Draper's letter is to collect materials for a work *Sketches of the Pioneers* though it be irrelevant in reply to repeat the traditions I have so often interested your childhood with on the facts of the life and death of Col. James Patton etc. He was born in the North of Ireland in the Town of Newton Lemavaddy¹⁰ in the year of our Lord, 1690.¹¹ He was bred to the sea and in the wars of England with the Low Countries served as an officer in the Royal Navy. After the Treaty of Utrecht [made in 1713] he procured a "passenger ship" and traded to the Colony of Virginia, at Hobbes Hole, on the Rappahannock. He penetrated the then wilderness of the state as far as Orange County, thence across the Blue Ridge and commenced a settlement near Waynesboro in Augusta County. He crossed the Atlantic twenty three or twenty five times. His traffic was peltries [animal skins] and tobacco, his return cargo was what was then termed "Redemptioners" – poor families of Irish who served a given time for the price of the passage. In this way the greater part of the County of Augusta was settled. The descendants of these emigrants, have furnished the West with many of its governors, senators, judges and distinguished literary men, and even intermarried with "the Imperial Family of Virginia" as the historian Burke terms the Pocahontas

9. Cavan was Mrs. Floyd's estate in Burke's Garden, Tazewell County, Virginia. She lived there as a widow from about 1839 to her death in 1852. See our accompanying article in this volume titled "Letitia Preston Floyd: Supplementary Notes." See pp. 69-77 of this issue.

10. Mrs. Floyd probably erred in recollecting her great-uncle's birth place. On page seven of her manuscript she states that her father's birthplace was also Newton Limavaddy and probably confused the two men. The present authors (in "The Mysterious Origins of James Patton," 46-47) offered circumstantial evidence that Patton was born near Lough Swilly, some miles to the north of Limavaddy.

11. The earlier transcribers of this letter, James Cochran and George Frederick Holmes, both wrote 1692 not the correct 1690. Following Cochran and Holmes, for many years, writers have been giving 1692 or "circa 1692" as the date of James Patton's birth.

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descendants of our state. Col. Patton had two sisters who married men of “quality” as the nieces termed them. This state of things kept two other sisters unmarried. The youngest sister Elizabeth, crossing the river Shannon¹² in a boat was much attracted by the beauty and deportment of a young man, whose name was John Preston. On inquiry he was found to be a ship carpenter. Nothing daunted by his humble pursuit an understanding took place and Miss Patton consented to a runaway match. This step placed her out of the pale of her family. Her brother Col. James Patton had by this time obtained governmental distinction in Virginia as well as a grant of land from Governor Dinwiddie of two or three hundred thousand acres. Col. Patton determined to remove his family from Whitehaven¹³ to his residence in Augusta County. He proposed to John Preston his brother-in-law to accompany him to America, and for his services as a shipwright he would secure him four thousand acres of land. Preston did not hesitate. He embarked with his three daughters and his only son William Preston who was then eight years old. In the summer of 1738¹⁴ both families settled in Augusta, Mr. Preston seven miles below Staunton and Patton at Springhill.¹⁵ As Preston had left the sea board his pursuits were changed and he worked at the cabinet trade. A silly augury of a native Irish woman, to wit, “that William Preston would get his uncles fortune” so impressed Mrs. Patton (who was a proud haughty lady) that no intercourse

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was allowed of in the two families. Seven years after their landing John Preston died at “Gibsons old Place” eight miles below Staunton. Mrs. Preston’s situation was then a straightened one. She sent her son to her brother’s with a message. The youngest daughter of Col. Patton, knew her

12. The Shannon River watershed is considerably distant from Patton and Preston hearth territory of Londonderry and Lough Swilly. The meeting described by Mrs. Floyd may more plausibly have occurred on the Lennon River, which is in Ulster. See Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, “The Mysterious Origins of James Patton, Part 1,” *Smithfield Review* 15 (2011), 35–64, at 46.

13. Whitehaven is a port in Cumbria, England on the Solway Firth. See Richard K. MacMaster, “Captain James Patton Comes to America 1737–1740,” *Augusta Historical Bulletin* 16(2) (1980), 4–13.

14. The earlier transcribers of this letter, James Cochran and George Frederick Holmes, both wrote 1735. The correct date was 1738, and the original letter shows some indication that an unknown later hand has corrected the manuscript.

15. Springhill was about 10 miles southeast of Staunton in present-day Augusta County near the town of Lipscomb along the South River, a tributary of the Shenandoah River.

cousin, but her mother did not. Peggy (afterwards Mrs. Buchannan¹⁶) passed William Preston off as a neighbor's son to prevent her mother turning him out of doors. By this time William Preston was 15 or 16 years of age. Mrs. Patton's dread of his getting the fortune by marriage with one of her daughters urged their early marriage with a kinsman of hers by the name of Thompson (who was a rich man), and the youngest to Col. John Buchannan. Shortly after their marriage, Mrs. Patton died. This event led her husband [to] look into the situation of his sister's family. Col. Patton placed his nephew with the Rev. Mr. Craig, pastor of Tinkling Spring congregation. A classical education was not attempted because William Preston was thought be too much grown. However an excellent course of history, mathematics, and penmanship was afforded. Col. Patton had the affairs of the then Mountain Region of the Colony entrusted to him by Gov. Dinwiddie. His sister Mrs. Preston was induced to remove to Hangers (Judge Baldwin's seat)¹⁷ for the purpose of affording her son the opportunity of posting merchants books and doing whatever writing her brother needed. Col. Patton left his seat and removed to Staunton and lived at his sister's house. Shortly after that he was sent to Logstown somewhere near Pittsburgh to make a treaty with the

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Northwestern Indians.¹⁸ William Preston then eighteen years of age was made his private Secretary. I remember to have read Col. Patton's journal, written by himself – with the speeches of Ocanostoto, the old Mingoe chief. After peace was made Col. Patton came up to the extreme western counties (now) of this state.¹⁹ He located all the fine lands of Upper James River, Catawba, and the Amsterdam lands in Botetourt County. He then came to North Roanoke, Stroubles Creek, embracing the Blacksburg lands and Smithfield the present seat of Gov. James Patton Preston. After that he came to Burke's Garden and the Rich Valley on Holstein, in which the celebrated salt works of Mrs. Sally Preston and Mr. William King are situated. Col. Patton tried to rally the settlers to defend the country from the inroads of the Indians on the frontiers of Virginia. This he was unable to effect. All the settlers from South Holstein to South Roanoke left the Country and went below [east of] the Blue Ridge. Patton maintained his ground as did Col.

16. Throughout her letter Mrs. Floyd uses the spelling Buchannan. It was always spelled "Buchanan" by Col. John Buchanan and his descendants, and that is the accepted modern spelling.

17. This is apparently a reference to the location of Judge Briscoe G. Baldwin's law school at Staunton.

18. The Treaty of Logstown was made in 1752.

19. Colonels James Patton and John Buchanan had actually been exploring and surveying the backcountry since the early 1740s, long before the Logstown Treaty.

William Ingles, Philip Barger, and Philip Lybrook on Sinking Creek.²⁰ On the 8th. day of July 1755,²¹ it being Sunday, a party of Indians came up the Kanhawa [River] thence to Sinking Creek thence to Stroubles Creek. Ingles and Draper, brothers-in-law, were living at Solitude²² the present residence of Col. Robert T. Preston. Barger half a mile nearer to the mountain.²³ The Indians came to Barger's, cut his head off put it in a bag (Barger was a very old man) [and] then came to Ingles and Drapers, killed old Mrs. Draper, two children of Col. Ingles, by knocking their brains out on the ends of the cabin logs, took Mrs. Ingles and her son Thomas, a boy of ten years of age, prisoners, as well as her sister-in-law Mrs. Draper, who was trying to make her escape with her infant in her arms, but was shot at by the Indians who

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who broke her arm, by which means, the infant was dropped. The Indians caught it up, and dashed its brains out on the end [of] the cabin logs. Col. Patton that morning after having dressed himself in his uniform and getting his nephew William Preston to sew up in the fob of his small clothes thirty English guineas, told him to go to Sinking Creek to get Lybrook to help take off the harvest which was then ready to cut. Preston went very early. After breakfast Col. Patton had sat down to his table to write. The Indian war-hoop was heard and some five or six of the[m] surrounded the cabin to set it on fire. The colonel always kept his sword on the table, he rushed to the door with it in hand and encountered two of them. (Patton was almost gigantic in size.) He cut two of them down, in the meantime another warrior had leveled his gun, fired, and killed the brave old pioneer — Patton fell. The Indians then ran off in the thicket and made their escape before any pursuers could be brought together. Lybrook and Preston came through the mountains by an unfrequented route, arrived at Smithfield (then called

20. It was Casper Barger who settled at Draper's Meadows. Phillip Barger, who settled on Casper's tract of land at Draper's Meadows after the French and Indian War (1754–1763), was probably his son.

21. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. The date of Patton's death was actually Wednesday, July 30, 1755.

22. Much altered, Solitude stands today as the oldest structure on the Virginia Tech campus. It received its name circa 1800.

23. Phillip Lybrook was located along Sinking Creek, a tributary of the New River, in present-day Giles County. See: Ryan S. Mays, "The Draper's Meadows Settlement (1746–1756), Part I: George Draper and Family," *Smithfield Review* 18 (2014), 25–50; Ryan S. Mays, "The Draper's Meadows Settlement (1746–1756), Part II," *Smithfield Review* 19 (2015), 1–32. Ingles and Draper were living in the vicinity of what later became known as Solitude; Barger was either near Solitude or at the location of Phillip Barger's later settlement about half a mile to the northeast.

Draper's Meadows) where they found Patton, Mrs. Draper, the mother of Mrs. Ingles and the children buried. The whole settlement was destroyed. The Indians on their retreat back stopped at Lybrook's told the Old Mrs. Lybrook they had killed two men one woman and three children, [and] to look in the bag and she would see an old friend. She immediately recognized the head of Philip Barger who was then aged and very gray. Mrs. Ingles, her oldest son a

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a boy of ten years of age, Mrs. Draper [and] her sister-in-law were taken to the Indian towns on the other side of the Ohio River. They traveled down the Kanhawa or as it is sometimes called "New River," [and] went through the northeastern part of Kentucky. Mrs. Ingles in three months after her capture, gave birth to a daughter. Her sister-in-law had been traded off to another tribe of Indians, as was her son. Three months after the birth of her child she determined to run off from the Indians who were dreadfully barbarous to her. Another strong impulse to return to her husband made her undertake a journey unparalleled in the incidents of pioneer life. She and a Dutch woman who was taken from the upper part of the Ohio, determined to run away from the towns. Mrs. Ingles left her child in a bark cradle asleep, knowing as soon as she was missed, the Indians would kill the infant. A series of remarkable events occurred to them on the route. Mrs. Ingles keeping up the water courses when she got to the Ohio river she and the Dutch woman tied logs together with a grape vine made a raft and crossed the stream. They were near perishing of hunger, living on blackberries, sassafras leaves, frogs, and in one instance eating a snake they found dead, then a raccoon in a great state of decomposition. All means failing, a proposition was made that lots should be cast [to decide] which of them was to be eaten by the other. The lot fell on Mrs. Ingles, who understanding her traveling companions temper, promised her a sum of money if she would refrain from killing her — Col. Ingles was a rich man. This had the desired effect [and] the Dutch woman forebore. Mrs. Ingles however, slipped off leaving the old woman to find her way as she could. After many weeks travel Mrs. Ingles arrived at Ingles Ferry on New River, the

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then residence of Col. Ingles. She was afterwards the mother of a highly respectable family who have always been distinguished for bravery and honesty. Her grandchildren lived on the place she made such wonderful efforts to return to. These transactions took place the year of Braddock's defeat [1755]. Mrs. Ingles lived to a very great age I remember to have seen her fifty years ago at a large Baptist Association, thirty miles from her home. She was then eighty years old, looked florid, and erect. Mr. [Lyman C.] Draper desires to know whatever particulars of my father Col. William Preston I may have a knowledge of. He was the only son of John Preston and Elizabeth Patton [and] was born in Ireland in the town of Newton Limavaddy on the 25th of December 1729. When he was seven or eight years of age his father emigrated to the colony of Virginia. His father was remarkable for fine personal appearance, great industry and unabated piety. The mother's qualities were masculine understanding, great ambition and impetuosity of temper. Humble fortunes which she brought on herself by marrying a ship carpenter, were powerfully resisted. She was however left a widow with a family of four daughters and an only son who was but stripling at his father's death. The forest was to conquer. This her young son did by daily labor in cutting down trees and making fences. After Mrs. Patton's death, Mrs. Preston removed to Hangers near Staunton. Her daughters were skillful needle women. It was the age of cross-stitch, embroidery, etc. They wrought diligently at the business [and] obtained a sufficiency of money to

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purchase a Negro woman. A little while afterwards, a young Presbyterian clergyman from Ireland, by the name of John Brown, settled in Staunton, became attracted to Margaret Preston, second daughter [of John and Elizabeth Preston], married her, went to Rockbridge County, took charge of a Congregation and preached fifty years in New Providence Meeting House. The eldest Daughter Lettice Preston married Col. Robert Breckinridge – a man of some wealth, who had been married before, and had two sons by that marriage. The third sister Ann Preston was then married to a young gentleman by the name of Francis Smith. During this period Col. William Preston was employed by Wallace Estill²⁴ the High Sheriff of Augusta to

24. Patton served only a one-year term as sheriff, being succeeded by several other men. No record has been found of Wallace Estill being sheriff of Augusta County, at least not in the 1750s–60s. He probably lived on the Bullpasture River in present-day Highland County, Virginia. No primary source record has been found of William Preston having served as a deputy sheriff in Augusta County, although he was appointed sheriff in 1759.

ride as deputy sheriff. The year after, Preston and Col. John Buchanan were elected Burgesses²⁵ to [the] House of Burgesses. Preston was required by the congregation of Episcopalians in Staunton to procure a carpenter to undertake the building of a church in town. A carpenter and undertaker living near Hanover Court house by the name of Francis Smith, who kept a tavern a short distance from the court house, was applied to by Col. Preston to attend to the building. Mr. Smith was a rich man, had an extremely beautiful daughter by the name of Susanna, who was educated by the Rev. Patrick Henry. Col. Preston was soon attracted by her beauty and manners. He addressed her and was married the 17th of July 1761. The summer of 1757, Col. Preston had been appointed Commissioner to hold a Treaty with the Shawnees and Delaware Indians at the mouth of Big Sandy River, a branch of the Ohio. Col. Thomas

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Lewis of Rockingham County²⁶ was likewise a Commissioner. Lewis I believe did not accompany the party. The treaty was made I think with Ocanostoto, who was now very old, and a chief called Cornstalk. Col. Preston endured singular hardships in this expedition.²⁷ He had tied his moccasin somewhat too tight. The string chafed the instep of one of his feet which produced partial mortification. The skills of a physician by the name of Dr. Thomas Lloyd saved his life. Lloyd had been purchased by Preston a year or two previously. Finding him a man of fine education with great knowledge of medicine the Dr. was made the companion and died very many years thereafter the firm friend of Preston's family. On their return from the mouth of Sandy they took up a fork of the river which was through a very rugged region [and] got so entirely out of food as to be compelled to eat the buffalo tugs which tied on their packs and hence the stream was named by Col. Preston the "Tug Fork of Sandy." The County of Fincastle was taken off Rockbridge County about the year 1764.²⁸ Col. Preston obtained the surveyors place, which determined him to leave Staunton. He settled on "Greenfield" near Amsterdam,²⁹ a valuable estate yet in possession of his granddaughter. Having some business to transact in Augusta Court in the month of May he left his family at Greenfield, early in the morning

25. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. Buchanan was never a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses.

26. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. Rockingham County had yet to be created.

27. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. The purpose of the 1756 Sandy Creek expedition was for warfare not treaty making.

28. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. Fincastle county was created in 1772 (not 1764), and it was formed from a part of Botetourt (not Rockbridge) County.

29. Near the modern town of Daleville in present-day Botetourt County, Virginia.

Mrs. Preston was startled by the firing of two guns in quick succession, at a neighbor's house within a half mile of hers. Very shortly afterwards Mr. Joseph Cloyd rode up on his plough horse with the gears³⁰ on, telling Mrs. Preston that the Indians had

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killed his brother John, shot at him, but missed him, although his shirt was powder burnt. They had gone to the house and he expected had killed his mother. Mrs. Preston sent a young man living at her house, to Captain Francis Smith, who commanded a small fort on Craig's [now Craig] Creek³¹ to bring his troops to pursue the Indians. She wrote a letter to him, which was free from tremor or trepidation. She then sent a white man and two Negro men to Mr. Cloyd's where they found Mrs. Cloyd tomahawked in three places [and] all the household destroyed. The money [had been] carried off – (Mr. Cloyd had a large sum of gold stowed away). Mrs. Cloyd was perfectly in her senses [and] told all the circumstances of the savages' revelry, in getting drunk, ripping up the feather beds, and one of them taking a corn cob and wiping off the blood from her temples. She died the next morning. After this irruption of the Indians, there appeared to be a pause in their depredations. I think about the year 1765 an expedition was ordered by the then Governor of Virginia Lord Botetourt and the command given to Col. Byrd who penetrated as far as the Tennessee line.³² What his success was I am not able to state. I think however the settlements were insecure. In 1773, Colonel Preston became possessor of Draper's Meadows, (now Smithfield), the County of Botetourt was divided and Col. Preston determined to follow the surveyor's office. Whilst Col. Preston lived at Greenfield, Col. John Buchanan determined to leave his residence near Pattonsburg,³³ and remove to Reed Creek to settle at Anchor and Hope, a splendid estate Col. Patton had given his daughter Margaret.³⁴ On his journey, he stopped at Greenfield took sick and died after several weeks illness.

30. Plow "gears" comprise the horse harness of a plow. The horse was wearing its plow harness.

31. A tributary of the James River flowing through Montgomery, Craig, and Botetourt counties.

32. Byrd commanded a Virginia force during the Anglo-Cherokee war of 1761 (not 1765). The force indeed reached Tennessee, but under the command of Adam Stephen. Byrd gave up command in present-day Wythe County, Virginia. See: Harry M. Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen and the Cause of American Liberty* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

33. On the James River at the present-day town of Buchanan in what is today Botetourt County, Virginia.

34. James Patton willed his daughter Margaret his Cherry Tree Bottom plantation on the James River in present-day Botetourt County. Col. John Buchanan received a patent for his Anchor and Hope tract in present-day Wythe County in 1753.

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Whilst on his death bed he desired Mrs. Preston to take charge of his daughter Jane, then ten years old. This was done. Col. Buchanan made Col. Preston the executor of his immense estate. A long and unbroken friendship existed between them. Buchanan is favorably mentioned by Gen. Washington (in Sparks' *Life of Washington*).³⁵ During Col. Preston's residence at Greenfield in the year 1770, a young gentleman by the name of John Floyd was introduced to him by Col. Joseph Cabell of Buckingham County, as very well qualified to a post as a deputy in the surveyor's office. It was always a rule with Col. Preston to require of every young man who was employed in his office to teach school six months at least, thereby finding out his temper, diligence, habits and trustworthiness. Messrs. Breckinridge's [and] Smith's children and my sisters and brothers constituted Floyd's School. When my father removed to Smithfield in 1773, Col. Floyd accompanied him. In the autumn of that year Col. Preston, with Col. Nathaniel Gist were appointed to make a treaty with the Cherokee and I think the Chickamauga Indians at Long Island on the Holstein River in the [future] State of Tennessee. The treaty was made and the Southern Indians were perfectly quiet. In the March of 1774 Col. Preston removed my mother and her children to Smithfield. There was a fort or stockade³⁶ around the house. Several of the neighbors families came into it for safety, because the Northwestern Indians made constant attempts on the settlements. Maj. John Taylor who had married a niece of Col. Buchanan, was one of the families. Mr. Robert Preston, Captain James Charlton, his brother Frank, and Capt. John Lucas were mainly the persons who defended the Fort. In the June of 1774 my brother Gov. James Patton Preston

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was born at Smithfield. Mrs. Preston's confinement was so protracted from typhus fever that a nurse for her infant was procured by the kindness of Mrs. Vanlear, who affectionately took upon herself that office. She was the mother of the Rev. John Vanlear. During the summer and autumn of 1774 the entire region of the Northwest of the Mountains of Virginia was put in commotion by the movements of the Indians on her borders. The Governor

35. John Buchanan is not mentioned in Sparks' *Life of Washington* (1839). However, he is mentioned in Jared Sparks' earlier book, *The Writings of George Washington* Vol. 2 (Boston, Mass.: Russell, Odiorne, Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1834).

36. Preston commented in a 1774 letter to George Washington that he was building a stockade around Smithfield. See Jim Glanville and Ryan Mays, "The William Preston / George Washington Letters," *Smithfield Review* 18 (2014), 51-77.

of the State Lord Dunmore made a visit³⁷ as far as Fincastle in Botetourt County to organize an expedition against the Shawneese, Guyandottes and Delaware Indians. Gen. Andrew Lewis, who had served in Braddock's war as a colonel and in the old French war as a major, was appointed to [be] the commander of the expedition. His youngest brother Col. Charles Lewis of Bath County, Gen. Lewis' sons, Samuel and Thomas Lewis, his nephew Thomas Lewis of Rockingham County and Andrew John Lewis and his nephew in-law Captain Trigg, and Capt. John McClannahan, were all in his Army. I think Col. William Christian, Col. William Flemming, his brother-in-law, Col. John Stewart, and Col. John Floyd were also in the Campaign. The battle of "Point Pleasant" was fought on the 10th of October 1774 – Col. Charles Lewis was killed, Col. Samuel Lewis wounded, Capt. John Lewis of Rockingham killed, Capt. Trigg killed, and Capt. McClannahan as was Capt. Monroe the brother-in-law of Col. Charles Lewis, Col. Floyd was sent on a foraging expedition and did not arrive until the day after the battle. I remember distinctly to have read a Letter from Col. Thomas Lewis of Rockingham County to my father giving a detailed account of that battle. Col. Preston was detained

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by the illness of Mrs. Preston, who was not expected to survive. The year after this battle, the country of Kentucky attracted much attention. Col. Preston's surveyor's office comprehended all that beautiful state. Col. Preston sent Col. Floyd out on an exploring expedition, with a view to take up the Lands for the benefit of Floyd and himself. For a long time it was supposed Floyd was killed by the Indians, however he returned to Smithfield by the route of Guyandotte, Coal River etc. having endured hardships which few men could have survived – In the summer of 1776 the American Revolution fairly commenced, [and] all plans for a settlement west were suspended. Col. Preston found himself surrounded by a neighborhood of Tories that kept him continually on the alert, to prevent their murdering himself and family as [well] as every other Whig³⁸ in the Country. Gen. William Campbell of Washington County, Col. Arthur Campbell of the same county, a brother-in-law of Gen. Campbell's, Col. Patrick Lockhart of Botetourt County, William Madison the son-in-law of Col. Preston, were all good Whigs and kept the Tories in check. Col. Preston was very intently engaged in educating his family, and improving the valuable estate he had by this time acquired. To

37. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. There is no record of Governor Dunmore ever visiting southwest Virginia.

38. Whig refers to American "patriots," persons who rejected the authority of George III.

effect the first named purpose he had purchased a gentleman by the name of Mr. Aaron Palfreman. This person was a poet and a scholar. He was the correspondent and friend of the celebrated Miss Carter the poetess. Mr. Palfreman had in a drunken frolic, consented to be married to a beautiful woman, who was represented to him as a Lady by his companions. Next morning finding he was made a dupe of, and that his wife was a woman of

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and was wounded, whilst performing some military [illegible] in the small of the back. The wound was a serious one – the Surgeons almost despaired of [illegible] it. Lewis had heard that the tongue of a dog would heal a wound when all else failed. He had a favorite dog in camp, which followed to Fort Cumberland when Lewis was taken. The dog was taught to lick the wound, which was healed –

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of the town, he embarked in a few hours for America. On landing at Williamsburg Col. Preston met with him, purchased him, and ever afterwards kept him in his family as a teacher. Col. Preston, Col. Thomas Lewis of Rockingham, Gen. Andrew Lewis of Botetourt, Col. Fleming, Mr. John Madison of Augusta, engaged Mr. Gabriel Jones an Englishman⁴⁰ to select for their libraries in London. This Mr. Jones was Mr. Jefferson's first partner in the practice of law. A good selection of the classics, ancient history, the distinguished poets of England, "The Dictionary of Arts and Sciences" a sort of encyclopedia, with much polemic and religious production constituted the libraries. I would observe that the use of these books gave to each family possessing them a station which outranked very many wealthier families than the above named. The multiplicity of business growing out the surveyors office, organizing the counties, and their civil politics seemed to require all Col. Preston's energies. In addition he held extensive correspondence with many of the then active Whig partisans of the Revolution. In this business he was greatly assisted by his nephew Mr. John Breckinridge who was undergoing the ordeal of teaching school at Smithfield. Mr. Breckinridge studied Law at William & Mary College, married Miss Polly Cabell the

39. This overlay (a hinged flap that lays over lines 3-9 of page 13) was apparently not seen by either Cochran or Holmes.

40. Mrs. Floyd is here in error. Gabriel Jones had spent time in England being educated, but he was born in Williamsburg. His sobriquet was "Valley Lawyer." See Lucille Griffith, *The Virginia House of Burgesses, 1750-1774*, second revised edition (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1970), 90-91.

second daughter of Col. Joseph Cabell [and] received a large fortune with her. In 1796 [he] removed to Kentucky acquired great celebrity as a lawyer, presented the famous Kentucky Resolutions on the Alien and Sedition Laws, [and] was elected to the Senate of the United States

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where he made a great display of political knowledge and an oratory that was not equaled ever by Governor Morris, who was in the Senate at that time. Mr. Breckinridge was made Attorney General of the United States by Mr. Jefferson, in which office he died, leaving four sons of distinguished talents. His eldest Daughter Laetitia married Gen. P. B. Porter Secretary of War in Mr. John Q. Adams' administration. After Mr. Breckinridge's leaving Smithfield his brother Gen. James Breckinridge took his place as teacher and assistant. Previous to this period there was a Company formed called "The Loyal Company" for the purpose of entering lands in the western counties of Virginia. Dr. Thomas Walker of Albemarle [County], Judge Edmund Pendleton, and one or two others [formed the company and] much surveying was required. Col. Preston was employed which still increased his estate. Col. Preston planned many of the military movements of that period. He was a man of consummate judgment and unremitting industry. He planned the campaign which made the demonstration in North Carolina that led to the battles of Guilford and King's Mountain. His health had greatly declined from frequent apoplectic premonitions, yet he undertook as Commandant of his County to march at the head of his regiment into North Carolina, to join Gen. Green at Guilford. You will see an account of this matter in Lee's *Memoirs of the Revolution*. A skirmish had taken place between the Americans and British at Whitsells Mill a short distance from the main battle. Col. Preston was riding a large fiery young horse, that took fright at the report of the guns, dashed through the

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mill pond, threw Col. Preston off who was likely to be cut down by the British light horse. At this critical moment Col. Joseph Cloyd dismounted put Col. Preston on his horse and thereby saved his friend's and officer's life. This signal service was always held in memory by Col. Preston and a sincere friendship continued during Preston's life. Cloyd was the young man who escaped when his brother and mother were killed near Greenfield. Cloyd married an excellent worthy lady – without any fortune, which so displeased his father that he was banished from [under] the paternal roof.

Preston furnished money to Cloyd which enabled him to purchase the estate his son David Cloyd lives on. After Col. Preston's return from North Carolina his health continued to decline. In the month of June 1783, he had spent the evening with his intimate friend Gen. Evan Shelby (the father of Governor Isaac Shelby) on the morning of the 28th he prepared to attend a Regiment muster at Michael Price's three miles from Smithfield. His eldest son Gen. John Preston, then a youth, accompanied him as did Gen. Shelby. The day was exceedingly hot. After being on the field a few hours, he beckoned to his son John to come to him, complained of pain in the head, desired to lie down on Price's bed. In a short time afterwards [he] requested his son to help him on his horse, he wanted to go home. When the horse was brought to the door he made an attempt to put his foot in the stirrup, sank down, was caught by his son, laid on the bed again. By this time he had lost his speech but took his son's hand rolled up his shirt sleeve and made a sign for his son to bleed him,

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this Gen. Preston could not do. Mrs. Preston was sent for who immediately reached the place. Col. Preston's reason had not been staggered in this conflict – he caught his wife's hand kissed it – shed tears – and made a motion to be bled. This could not be effected, from consternation and ignorance. Soon after the stentorious breathing of apoplexy came on and about midnight he breathed his last. Col. Floyd was killed on the 12th of April 1783. When the news reached Col. Preston such was the feeling produced by it, that Preston was never seen to smile afterwards. Col. Preston was above the ordinary height of men, five feet eleven inches – he was large inclined to corpulency – was ruddy, had fair hair and hazel eyes. His manners were easy and graceful he had a well cultivated intellect, and a fine taste for poetry. I remember reading several beautiful productions of his, addressed to my mother in praise of her domestic virtues. On the 18th of June 1823 this excellent lady expired, after having lived a widow forty years. She desired to be buried in the same grave with her husband – this was done. A tombstone was placed over the grave by their second Son Gen. Francis Preston. No portrait of either was ever taken.⁴¹ Col. Preston and wife had twelve children. The oldest was Mrs. Elizabeth Madison. She married the second son of Mr. John Madison, the father of Bishop James Madison, the learned President of William and Mary College, likewise Mr.

41. No portrait of William Preston is known to exist. A portrait of Susanna Smith Preston, which is a copy of an original by John Wallaston held at the Filson Historical Society, today hangs in the Smithfield Plantation house.

Thomas Madison who married the youngest sister of Patrick Henry, also Governor George Madison of Kentucky who married Miss Jane Smith the niece of Col. Preston. The next child was Gen. John Preston

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who married Miss Polly Radford, the daughter of Col. William Radford an officer of the Revolutionary Army. The third Child was Gen. Francis Preston, who married the only daughter and heiress of Gen. William Campbell of King's Mountain memory. Her mother was the third sister of Patrick Henry. The fourth child was Mrs. Sarah M^cDowell, the wife of Col. James M^cDowell of Rockbridge. She was the mother of Mrs. Susan Taylor, Mrs. Benton and her only son is Governor James M^cDowell of this State – the fifth Child Anne, died at 13 years of age. the sixth child was Major William Preston who was a captain in Gen. Wayne's Army. He married Col. George Hancock's second daughter. Hancock was a Revolutionary officer. The seventh child was Mrs. Susanna Hart who married Mr. Nathaniel Hart of Kentucky whose father was killed at the siege of Boonsborough. The eighth child was Governor James Patton Preston, he married the second daughter of Mr. Robert Taylor a merchant of Norfolk Borough. Gov. Preston was wounded at the battle of Crysler's Field⁴³ in Canada during the last war. He is yet living at Smithfield, is a pensioner, a gentleman of exceedingly graceful manners, greatly beloved by his neighbors and relatives. The ninth child was Mrs. Mary Lewis. She was the wife of Captain John Lewis an officer of the Revolution, he was entitled to half pay during life. He was the proprietor of the celebrated Sweet Spring⁴⁴ of Virginia. The tenth child is Mrs. Letitia Floyd [the writer of this letter] who married Gov. John Floyd of Virginia, the youngest son of Col. John Floyd and Jane Buchannan. The eleventh child was Thomas Lewis Preston, who married Miss Edmonia Randolph

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the second daughter of Col. Edmund Randolph of Williamsburg. Col. Randolph was at one period the aide of Gen. Washington, then Attorney

42. On manuscript page 18 there are five places where it has been corrected by striking out a word and writing another above it. The changes all involve ranking changes with second becoming third, etc. It is unknown when and by whom the changes were made.

43. The battle of Crysler's Field was fought on November 11, 1813, near Cornwall, Ontario.

44. The Sweet Springs resort in present-day Monroe County, West Virginia, was for many years a prominent and successful summer resort for the wealthy. See Agnes E. Gish, *The Sweet Springs of Western Virginia: A Bittersweet Legacy* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2009). Mrs. Floyd is buried not far from the resort.

General of the United States, then Secretary of State under Washington's administration. Thomas Preston was a lawyer of great popularity and a fine orator. The twelfth child was Mrs. Peggy Brown Preston the wife of Col. John Preston of Washington County, his Father was Mr. Robert Preston, surveyor of that county. Mr. John Preston the father of Robert and Mr. Walter Preston emigrated to Virginia in the year 1770. He was a distant relation of Col. William Preston's. In the year 1790, Mr. Robert Preston made a voyage to Ireland. On his return he brought a Coat of Arms of the Preston family. I remember to have seen it. There was a Fox *passant*. The other armorials I do not recollect. The motto was "*Sans tache*."⁴⁵ Mr. Robert Preston claimed descent from the family of Prestons from Lancashire in England, stating "that there was seven belted knights" that fought at the siege of Londonderry in 1688. Mr. Robert Preston's father was a shoemaker. This Mr. Preston acquired great wealth by the surveyors office. He married Miss Margaret Rhea, the oldest daughter of the Rev. Mr. Rhea, likewise the father of the Honorable Johnny Rhea of Tennessee. Their only child Col. John Preston of Washington was the heir to his father's wealth. This concludes the chapter of my father's family. I will add that Mrs. Brown was the mother of Mr. John Brown, who was the first member of Congress from the State of Kentucky. He was afterwards Senator to the United States. Mr. James Brown's second son was a representative in Congress from the State of Louisiana, afterwards Senator to the United States then Minister to France under Mr. J. Q. Adams. Dr. Samuel Brown was President of Transylvania University in Kentucky. Dr. Preston Brown was a skillful physician, and a wealthy man

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Mr. John Brown married a Miss Margareta Mason of the city of New York the daughter of a seceding clergyman.⁴⁶ Mr. James Brown married Miss Nancy Hart, the daughter of Col. Thomas Hart and sister of Mrs. Henry Clay. Dr. Preston Brown married Miss Elizabeth Watts the eldest sister of Gen. Edward Watts of Roanoke. She was exceedingly rich. Miss Elizabeth Brown married the Rev. Thomas Craighead. Miss Mary Brown married Dr. Alexander Humphreys of Staunton – a distinguished physician. Dr. Samuel Brown married a Miss Percy, of the State of Mississippi. Mrs. Lettice Breckinridge's sons were William Breckinridge, who married a Miss Gilliam of Augusta, [and] Mr. John Breckinridge the distinguished lawyer of Kentucky who married Miss Mary Cabell. Gen. James Breckinridge married

45. *Sans tache* = "without stain."

46. Seceding clergymen were ministers of the established Church of England who left it for non-established Protestant denominations. Many emigrated to America.

Miss Nancy Selden of Hampton, Virginia. Preston Breckinridge married Miss Betsy Trigg the daughter of Col. Stephen Trigg who was killed at the battle of the Blue Licks in Kentucky. Mrs. Smith was the mother of Mrs. Blair whose son is the distinguished Editor of "The Globe." Mrs. Smith's second daughter married Maj. William Trigg, the son of Col. Stephen Trigg. The third daughter Mrs. Jane Madison was the wife of Governor George Madison of Kentucky. The youngest daughter married Dr. Louis Marshall the brother of Chief Justice Marshall, he is the father of Mr. Thomas Marshall now in the Congress of the United States. Mrs. Smith had two sons only, the oldest Mr. John Smith married Miss Chinoe Hart the daughter of Col. Nathaniel Hart. William was a major in the Army and died at Baton Rouge. Mrs. Mary Howard was the youngest sister of Col. Preston. She was born in Augusta County in the year 1740. She married Mr. John Howard

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a young gentleman of great patrimonial wealth and superior education. She was the mother of Gen. Benjamin Howard, who died Governor of Missouri. Her youngest daughter married Mr. Robert Wickliffe of Lexington Kentucky. Mr. Wickliffe became possessed of those immensely valuable lands in Fayette County which accrued to his first wife from the death of her Sister Miss Howard and her brother Gov. Howard.

I will now give you an account of your Grandfather Floyd's Family. Early in the last Century his ancestors emigrated from Wales [and] settled on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Mr. William Floyd the father of Col. John Floyd had two brothers one named John who went north, and whose family (if he ever had one) is lost sight of. Charles the youngest son went to Georgia and is the ancestor of Gen. John Floyd of Darien in that state. William Floyd left the Eastern Shore [and] went up the Country as far as Amherst County, which was then a very wild region. He met with a family by the name of Davis, whose ancestors had come from Wales. They had traded with the Catawba Indians, and got much property in that way. The father of Robert Davis had married a half breed Indian girl.⁴⁷ This Robert Davis was the father of Miss Abidiah Davis, whom Mr. William Floyd married. Davis owned many of the rich lands of Amherst. His other daughters married a Mr. Venable and Gen. Evan Shelby of Maryland. His oldest son Robert Davis emigrated even at that early day to Natchez where many of his descendants live. John Floyd, the

47. Some of the typescript copies of this letter and several of the online versions here insert "Nickette." The authors consider this insertion an act of genealogical larceny committed by some unknown person at some unknown time with the intent of changing the historical record. See details in the appendix.

oldest son of William Floyd and Abidiah Davis his wife, was born in 1751 [correct is 1757] [in] Amherst County, Virginia. At the age of eighteen

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he married a Miss Burfoot. In twelve months after their marriage Mrs. Floyd died, leaving a daughter of a few days old. The mother of Mrs. Floyd took charge of the child. Shortly afterwards Col. Floyd came to Botetourt and engaged in the business of teaching school and writing in the surveyors office. He remained at Col. Preston's until the year 1773. Whilst at Smithfield his duties were arduous. Whenever the business of the surveyors office did not require his personal attention he rode as deputy sheriff with Col. Daniel Trigg, both being employed by Col. William Christian the High Sheriff. In the year 1775 Col. Floyd went to Kentucky where he made many surveys of all the best lands on Elkhorn Creek, many in Clark County in Woodford County, Shelby County, and Jefferson County. He returned to Smithfield after unparalleled sufferings. The Declaration of Independence had been made at this time. Dr. Thomas Walker, Edmund Pendleton, Col. Preston and one or two other gentleman purchased a schooner, had it fitted up for a privateer, and gave the command to Col. Floyd.⁴⁸ I remember to have read a letter from Col. Floyd to my father dated [no date given] on "On board the Privateer Phoenix." He sailed to the West Indies [and] obtained a very rich prize. Amongst the articles on board the merchantman, was a very fine suit of wedding clothes for a lady. Col. Floyd was at that time engaged to a Miss Jane Buchannan to be married. He thought his fortune was made in the rich cargo he had taken. On his return, whilst nearly in sight of the capes of Virginia, he was overhauled by a British vessel of war, captured, taken to England put in irons, and imprisoned. Whether it was in London or on the coast of England I do not recollect. Whilst he was there Col. Radford was brought to the same Prison. They were nearly a year confined. The jailer had a daughter, to whom Col. Floyd appealed so successfully

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that she obtained the keys and let him out. Col. Radford told me when Floyd left them all the prisoners shed tears, so great a favorite had he made himself. Floyd begged his way to Dover where he found a clergyman who was in

48. Floyd was commander of some soldiers, not the commander of the ship. See Wirt H. Wills, "The Phoenix Caper—A Frontiersman Goes to Sea," *Smithfield Review* 10 (2006), 21–32. See also David L. Mordy, and James C. Mordy, "The Phoenix Privateering Syndicate and Marine Captain John Floyd," *Smithfield Review* 16 (2012), 45–68.

the habit of concealing all American fugitives and procuring a passage for them to France. It was in the season of the vintage. The French gave him grapes and sometimes bread [and] in this way he got to Paris [and] applied to Dr. [Benjamin] Franklin, who furnished him with money and instructions to return to the United States. Whilst in Paris Col. Floyd was attacked with the small pox which nearly cost him his life. During his sojourn he obtained his wedding clothes, a rich and beautiful pair of brilliant shoe buckles for his intended bride, [and] a scarlet coat for himself. No intelligence of the privateer or its crew had reached the United States. The inference was that all was at the bottom of the sea. A year after, Col. Robert Sawyers [Sayers] a distant kinsman of Miss Buchannan's, an officer in the army and a rich man, addressed the young lady. Sayers had requested her to walk with him in the garden to which she consented and whilst there [she] agreed to marry him. In an hour thereafter Col. Floyd arrived at Smithfield much to the surprise and joy of his friends. Miss Buchannan's last engagement was immediately canceled, and in the month of November 1778 she married Col. Floyd. Soon afterwards they went to John's Creek⁴⁹ and settled there. Col. Floyd's father and family had left Amherst and were living on John's Creek. He remained a year there and then determined to move to Kentucky (by this time their eldest son William Preston Floyd was born) in the month of October 1779. Col. Floyd his brothers Robert, Charles, and Isham, with his brothers-in-law

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Le Master and Sturgis, husbands of his sisters Jemima and Abadiah went with them. There were also two single sisters one married a Mr. Pryor the other a Mr. Alexander. The two oldest sisters Mrs. Powell of Lynchburg and Mrs. Taley remained in Virginia, when the latter moved to Kentucky the autumn after her brothers death. Col. Floyd went to his fine estate on Beargrass Creek, six miles from Louisville. He commenced building a fort, got the houses completed in a short time and a good stockade made. The place was called Floyd's Station. As soon as his family was secure, he commenced organizing the county.⁵⁰ Mr. John Howard, Col. Robert Todd, I think Benjamin Sebastian and perhaps Judge Muter [and] Judge Samuel McDowell endeavored to arrange or enact laws for the better regulation of the people. When they convened to do so, Floyd made an address to them saying "he felt he had placed his foot upon the Threshold of an Empire."

49. John's Creek is a tributary of the James River, flowing eastward through present-day Giles and Craig counties, Virginia.

50. This was Jefferson County. It was one of three counties created by Virginia in 1780 when Kentucky County (contiguous with today's state) was subdivided.

This expression was looked upon as the boast of an ardent tempered man. Time has proved that it was prophetic. Much unity existed amongst the first settlers of Kentucky. Everyone sought to bring to them some agreeable friend whose fortunes might be advanced by the opening prospects of that rich country. In accordance with this feeling, Col. Floyd invited Mr. John Brown of Rockbridge, who had completed his collegiate studies at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I forget who was Mr. Brown's preceptor in the study of law. A very cordial friendship ensued. Brown was a sensible well poised man, of great application, consequently successful. Col. Floyd was frequently engaged in skirmishes

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with the Indians. Going one day to Louisville he encountered a huge Indian within half a mile of his fort, killed him [and] took all his ornaments of medals, broaches and rifle. The Indian had silver enough in his ornaments to make a dozen of table spoons. Some little time after this matter, Floyd rallied a company of eighteen or nineteen men, went about ten miles from his fort [and] met a company of Indians, I think sixteen in number. The attack was made by Floyd. They fought for several hours [and] there was fourteen of the whites killed and thirteen of the Indians – Floyd who was wounded in the foot and made his escape through the generosity of Gen. Wells⁵¹ who dismounted from his horse and gave him to Floyd. In the spring of 1801 I passed by the battle ground, Governor Madison was my escort. He showed me a large beech tree with the names of the fourteen soldiers carved on it, but it had so grown out, that few of the names could be read. The bodies of the whites and Indians were collected, placed in a sink hole near the field of battle and covered with stones and limbs of trees. This rencontre [encounter] took place on a fork of Salt River, which has ever since been called "Floyd's Fork" of Salt River. What is the date of this incident I do not recollect. I think it was in 1782 [and] you will find a statement of it in Mr. Humphrey Marshall's *History of Kentucky*.^{52, 53} General George Rogers

51 . Probably the Kentucky pioneer Colonel Samuel Wells (1754–1830).

52 . Humphrey Marshall, *The History of Kentucky* (Frankfort, Ky.: George S. Robinson, 1824).

53 . Holmes in his 1846 copy here makes the following interpolation: "In this year (1782) Col. Floyd had learnt that a party of thirty Indians had assembled to cross the Ohio and destroy settlements at Beargrass during the night. Floyd forthwith sent a runner and collected all the men whom the neighborhood could furnish, twenty in number, crossed the river above the falls, marched to the encampment of the Indians, who were asleep, commenced the work of death; only three Indians escaped; two of Floyd's men were killed. Hempinstal (who was alive in '44 living near Shelbyville) killed with his tomahawk and butcher-knife fourteen of the Indians. Such was the contest for the possession of the 'Dark and Bloody Land.'"

Clark was in Jefferson County about this time. He was commissioned by the State of Virginia to raise Troop for the defense of Kentucky. The constant depredations of the Indians kept every man under arms. The Indians were instigated by the British Governor [Hamilton] to destroy the whites. Finding they would not be driven out – he made a proposition to Clark and Floyd. If they would give up the country to the British, they should have as

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much boundary of land on the west bank of the Ohio as they might wish and any title under that of Duke. Each gentleman had received the proposition at the same time but was afraid to divulge it. Floyd, having less caution than Clark, communicated the fact to Clark. They agreed to keep it concealed from the troops, who were so famished and discontented that if they had known how, they would have gone to any help to be fed and saved from the tomahawk of the ruthless savages. This incident was communicated to Mr. Charles Fenton Mercer upwards of thirty years ago by Mrs. Croghan, the sister of Gen. Clark and mother of Colonel George C. Croghan of Sandusky memory. Mrs. Breckinridge had at the same time corroborated the fact. In 1782 Mrs. Floyd gave birth to a son that her husband named George Rogers Clark after his friend and fellow soldier. About this time Isham Floyd was killed on the west bank of the Ohio. The Indians scalped him, cut off his ears fingers and toes [and] after torturing him for three days they cut out his heart and threw it to their dogs. Col. Floyd had invited Mr. William Breckinridge and his step-brother Mr. Alexander Breckinridge to make his house their home in the year 1783. During the winter they assisted in writing in the surveyors office, and surveying many of the fine lands Floyd located in now Gallatin County for Col. Preston and Mr. Howard. There was six thousand acres in one body on the banks of the Ohio for Mr. or rather Mrs. Howard. These lands with all their great appreciation mainly fell into the hands of Mr. Robert Wickliffe the husband of Miss Margaret Howard. The land on which a part of the City of Louisville and Lexington stands was located and surveyed by Col. Floyd for Col. Preston. Likewise the Land in Woodford County on which Mr. Nathaniel Hart resides, containing two thousand acres and upwards. Mr. Joseph Drake the husband of Miss Margaret Buchannan, her brother William and sister Anne settled in Kentucky. All were sustained by Floyd's princely generosity. He never received the gratuity of one cent for all his personal trouble. How much wealth he procured for others.

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Mr. Alexander Breckinridge and his brother Robert were the sons of Col. Robert Breckinridge by his first wife Miss Poage of Augusta County. After his marriage with Miss Lettice [Letitia] Preston much disagreement existed between the children and stepmother. Col. Preston to relieve his sister proposed to Col. Breckinridge to apprentice his sons to Mr. Francis Smith the brother-in-law of Col. Preston, to learn the carpenter trade. This proposal was assented to by Breckinridge. The lads were sent to Hanover County and soon became excellent workmen. After their apprenticeship was over Col. Preston employed them to build Smithfield house. This was done so well, the first Roof lasted forty years [after] being painted when the covering and weather boarding was done. Both the young men decided to enter the Revolutionary Army. Alexander got an Ensigns commission, and Robert enlisted as a Sergeant. The latter served in the South and was taken prisoner in Charleston. When peace was concluded Col. Floyd invited them to Kentucky to promote their fortunes. On the 12 of April 1783 Col. Floyd his brother, Charles Floyd and Alexander Breckinridge were going to Salt River about 20 miles from Floyd's Station. Floyd wore a scarlet coat. On their return, a party of Indians attacked them, shot Floyd through the arm [and] the ball entered the body. Floyd reeled on his horse, which his brother observing, dismounted from his, jumped on his brother's [horse], caught him round the body and rode off in full speed to a house about five miles distant. By this time Col. Floyd was so exhausted from the loss of blood that he appeared to be dying. Nevertheless he lived that night, talked much to his brother, expressed unmitigated sorrow for his young wife the unborn infant, and his two little sons. He desired to be buried at his Station on an eminence he had chosen for a grave yard. All this was fulfilled. On the

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24th day of April, Mrs. Floyd gave birth to a son, whom she named John after his father. Col. Floyd had bequeathed his wife the beautiful estate he lived on. Also a child's part in all his lands (seventy five thousand acres, of which he owned in Shelby County), made her executrix and his friend Col. Pope executor. He gave his daughter Miss Mourning Floyd a fine estate on Beargrass, his eldest son William P. Floyd a superior tract of land on Beargrass called the Dutch Station. George Floyd's Estate was in Fayette and Clarke Counties. One thousand acres was bequeathed to his youngest son on [Harrod's Creek,] Oldham County half of this land was lost by an older

entry.⁵⁴ In the course of the year 1783 William P. Floyd died of smallpox. His Lands accrued to his brother George, in right of primogeniture. Soon after Col. Floyd's death Captain Alexander Breckinridge obtained the surveyor's place in Jefferson County. One year only had elapsed, when three brothers of the Breckinridges made suit for the hand of the beautiful, rich relict [widow] of Col. Floyd. Alexander, Robert and William. The preference was given to Robert. An engagement took place. Robert went to Virginia to settle some business he had there [and] failed to write or at least his letters never reached Mrs. Floyd. Meanwhile, Capt. Breckinridge urged his suit, was successful, and became the husband of Mrs. Floyd. This union was not a happy one. Capt. Breckinridge had contracted habits of intemperance whilst in the army. He was a kind tempered man, and always treated his stepsons with the same affection he bestowed on his own children. There were six sons from this marriage. Four lived to manhood. The oldest son Mr. James D. Breckinridge is yet living. He was educated at Williamsburg. The sons of Col. Floyd had been sent to the neighborhood schools. In the year 1796 Mr. John Brown proposed to take her son.

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John Floyd and place [him] at Dickinson College. Mr. Brown was in Congress which at that time met in Philadelphia. An arrangement was made with Robert Breckinridge the guardian of the Floyds to pay the cost of John Floyd's education, by supplying and paying some workmen who were building a very large house in Frankfort for Mr. Brown, who promised to advance the money for young Floyd at College. Robert Breckinridge failed to pay the workmen. Brown ceased his advances and the young student was left to shift for himself. In this state of destitution, he was induced by the suggestions of Dr. Pendergrast to return to Kentucky. Such was his situation, that he was obliged to borrow a pair of pantaloons from a boatman. Nevertheless, through the whole of Governor Floyd's life he always felt grateful to Mr. Brown, for removing him out of reach of his guardian. That guardian disposed of all the Shelby lands to Colonels Lynch and Blanton for the sum of sixteen thousand dollars. Mrs. Breckinridge had given all her estate in trust, to Gen. Robert Breckinridge, for the benefit of her husband. In the month of February 1801 Capt. Breckinridge died at the house of Mr. John Breckinridge in Fayette County. The entire arrangement of the family devolved on Gen. Breckinridge. Young Floyd returned to Carlisle, pursued

54. Lost to an older entry means that a prior claim to the land existed and the new entry was partially denied.

his studies, which were arrested by a violent illness which so impaired his health that his brother George determined to bring him home. This happened in 1802. Gen. Breckinridge proposed to John Floyd to study medicine with Dr. Richard Ferguson of Louisville. This Floyd consented to, being yet in the hands of his guardian. In the May of 1804 Mr. Floyd was married. He went to the University of Pennsylvania in the month of October [and] pursued his medical studies. In the October of 1805 he returned to Philadelphia.

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In the month of April 1806 he graduated as Doctor of Medicine. Matters had taken such a turn in Kentucky by this time, Dr. Floyd determined to settle in Virginia. George Floyd had married Miss Maupin, the daughter of Col. Gabriel Maupin of Williamsburg. She died in the June of 1807. This event determined George Floyd to enter the Army of the United States. During this year young Mr. Robert Breckinridge was sent to Williamsburg. By this time Gen. Robert Breckinridge had amassed great wealth. He sold the land he had obtained near Floyd's Station (then known by the name of Woodville) for twenty five thousand dollars. He built a good House on it, and occasionally lived at it. On the evening of the 13th of May 1812 some young ladies, the daughters of Dr. Grant who resided at the house formerly owned by Gen. Breckinridge, came to Woodville and spent it with Mrs. Breckinridge, after supper they returned home. There was no white person at Woodville but Gen. Breckinridge. About midnight he said he heard an unusual noise in Mrs. Breckinridge's room. He went to the kitchen waked the servants, got a candle, went into the room and found her in convulsions. Next morning he sent to Louisville for a physician and Col. George Floyd who was living there at that time. When Col. Floyd arrived she was speechless and died that evening. No clue has ever been furnished for this sudden and unaccountable death. Mrs. Breckinridge had always desired that Col. John Floyd's wedding coat and the scarlet one he was killed in (both of which she had carefully preserved) should be put into her coffin. This was done by Mrs. Beale the sister of Miss Maupin. Mrs. Breckinridge was buried near the grave of Col. Floyd. There is a plain stone placed over the remains of Col. Floyd without any inscription. There is no portrait of him. Col. Floyd was six feet high, somewhat slender, formed symmetrically, his complexion dark, brilliant black eyes, very black straight hair, fine white teeth. He was remarkable for his great beauty, generosity of temper, kindness of heart, and undaunted courage. There was in my father's

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possession a great number of letters from Col. Floyd⁵⁵ giving details of nearly all the striking incidents of the early settlements in Kentucky. Col. Preston's papers fell into the hands of his oldest son and executor Gen. John Preston. A family arrangement had been made, that all the undevised lands belonging to Col. William Preston should be divided amongst his children. Mr. Nathaniel Hart and Maj. William Preston were made agents for the Kentucky interests. Gen. Preston put all Col. Floyd's letters into Mr. Hart's hands. Dr. Floyd had often expressed a wish to obtain these letters, for the purpose at some future [time] to write a history of the early times of his native state. For some reason of Gen. Preston's they were withheld. Mrs. Susanna Radford of Greenfield [in] Botetourt County, has all the letters and papers that are extant belonging to her grandfather Col. William Preston. Colonel George Floyd continued in the army. He had married a second time. The young lady was Miss Sally Fountain of Louisville. At the battle of Tippacano Col. Floyd manifested the same undaunted courage his ancestors had been conspicuous for. He was perfectly versed in Indian warfare [and] expressed to Gen. Harrison the day before the battle "that the movements of the Indians augured some treachery." However no heed was given to the expression. The whole army lay down to sleep on the night of the attack. Floyd was in his tent when the war whoop was heard. He jumped up, seized his sword, and at the door of the tent cut down an Indian who was succeeded by a warrior, with an uplifted tomahawk. Floyd seized it struck the Indian with it [and] killed him, all this was done in the Colonel's shirttail because he had not time to put on his pantaloons. When Floyd returned to Louisville all the surviving friends of his father met him with great cordiality. In the official report of the

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battle of Tippacano, Col. Floyd thought himself overlooked. He retired from the service. In the June of 1823 he died at Woodville and was buried near his father. There is a tombstone placed over him by his widow. He left three children. John G. Floyd the son of his first wife, who was a cadet at West Point. From his fine attainments whilst there, he was made principal engineer to the state of Indiana. He resides at Terre-Haute in that state. He married a Miss Hager formerly of Baltimore. In 1823 the Breckinridges became the proprietors of Woodville. Gen. Robert Breckinridge gave it to

55. Many of these letters from Floyd to Preston survive and have been transcribed and published. See Neal O. Hammon, *John Floyd: The Life and Letters of a Frontier Surveyor* (Louisville, Ky.: Butler Books, 2013).

his nephew Captain Henry Breckinridge whose family inherited it after his death. I have since heard that Mrs. Cowan their grandmother, is the present proprietor. Gen. Robert Breckinridge gave his great estate to his grand niece, the daughter of Mr. James D. Breckinridge. Col. John Floyd, his brother Isham, his brother-in-law Le Master, Sturgis, Pryor, Joseph Drake, William Buchannan and John Buchannan were all killed during the Revolutionary War. From the year 1755 to the battle of New Orleans, your Paternal ancestors unsheathed the Sword and poured out their blood for this Country. The "Last of the Mohicans" you will remember in your grand uncle Nathaniel Floyd,⁵⁶ whose old age did not deter him from service at New Orleans. You recollect the utter destitution of that old age. I will add a fact: In all this service given not one cent of public money was ever received by any individual of the whole race, except their daily compensation. I have done, my dear son. May this faithful history teach you to look more to individual interest, than ever your ancestors have. Should you transcribe this you will find many errors to correct from feeble hand and imperfect vision.

Ever your Affectionate Mother
Letitia Floyd

Manuscript page 33, the envelope

Capt. [Lieutenant not Captain] John Buchannan [Jr.] was killed at the Battle of Saratoga⁵⁷ and William Buchanan at the Siege of Boonsborough.⁵⁸

Rush Floyd

Wythe C. H. [Court House]
Virginia

56. Perhaps Rush Floyd's grand uncle Mrs. Floyd refers to was Nathaniel Floyd, 1767–1842. He would have been 47 years old if he had fought at the battle of New Orleans in 1814. What this man has to do with the "Last of the Mohicans" is obscure, other than perhaps to Mrs. Floyd he embodied the last of a breed.

57. The Battle of Saratoga was fought on October 11, 1777. The siege of Boonesborough occurred in September 1778. This notation was added to the envelope apparently as an afterthought.

58. The notation on the envelope apparently was not written by Mrs. Floyd. In our opinion, its handwriting more closely matches that of Benjamin Rush Floyd, as for example in his letters found in the Draper Manuscript collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Conclusions

The overall accuracy of Mrs. Floyd's "My Dear Rush" letter is surprisingly good. As pointed out in many of the footnotes, she made minor errors in dates and places. However, it seems to us that Mrs. Floyd did remarkably well for a person aged 63 who was often writing of events about which she learned four of five decades earlier.

In an earlier article the authors cited Preston Davie's caustic opinion of the historical value of the "My Dear Rush" letter.⁵⁹ They quoted Davie as writing "Indeed some of the events as described in this letter are such a jumble of inaccurate hearsay and fact as to make them more imaginative than real." In retrospect, that judgment can be seen to be harsh and unjustified.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix

This appendix summarizes the provenance of the original "My Dear Rush" letter and discusses some of the other archived copies.

The Provenance of the "My Dear Rush" letter

A letter that Mrs. Floyd wrote to the historian Lyman Draper in September, 1844, tells that her fourth daughter, Nicketti Buchanan Floyd Johnston (1819–1909), kept Mrs. Floyd's original letter for herself.⁶⁰ Mrs. Johnston was the wife of John W. Johnston, who was elected the first Virginia United States senator after Virginia was readmitted to the Union in 1869.

According to a 1941 letter written by Anne Mason Lee,⁶¹ Nicketti Buchanan Floyd Johnston died in Richmond leaving the following descendants: Lettie Floyd Johnston, who was unmarried; Louisa Bowen

59. Glanville and Mays, "The Mysterious Origins of James Patton," 40–41.

60. Letitia Floyd, "Letter to Lyman Draper," from Cavan, Tazewell County, September 30, 1844. King's Mountain Papers, Draper Collection of Manuscripts, 15DD23, Wisconsin Historical Society. Published in Glanville and Mays, "A Sketch," 108.

61. Anne Mason Lee, "Letter to J. Adger Stewart, June 9th, 1941," from her home at 1504 Grove Avenue Richmond to Stewart at 4980 Crittenden Drive, Louisville, Kentucky. Typescript with some handwritten annotations. Original at the Smithfield Plantation, copy in the authors' files.

Johnston, who was married to Daniel Trigg and had six children (letter annotated in an unknown hand: Mrs. Geo. Sargeant, 1087 [?] Westover Avenue, Norfolk, VA [was their] daughter); Sally Buchanan Johnston, who was married to Henry Carter Lee and had four children (letter annotated in an unknown hand: 1564 Grove Avenue, Richmond, Va.); Lavalette Estill Johnston, who was married to John Francis McMullen and had eight children; George Benjamin Johnston, who married first Miss Mary McClung with whom he had no children, and second Helen Rutherford with whom he had four daughters; and Joseph Beverly Johnston and Coralie Henry Johnston, who were both unmarried. Among the grandchildren, the sixth child of Louisa Bowen Johnston Trigg married George R. Sargeant. Grandchild Anne Mason Lee (the writer of the cited letter) was the daughter of Sally Buchanan Johnston and Henry Carter Lee.

The line of descent of the letter-writer Anne Mason Lee was: Letitia Preston Floyd → Nicketti Buchanan Floyd Johnston → Sally Buchanan Johnston → Anne Mason Lee.

The line of descent of the Sargeant sisters who brought the "My Dear Rush" original letter to Smithfield was: Letitia Preston Floyd → Nicketti Buchanan Floyd Johnston → Louisa Bowen Johnston Trigg → Evelyn Byrd Henry Sargeant → the three Sargeant sisters.

It is not possible to state exactly which descendant held the "My Dear Rush" letter at what times. However, strong confirmation that the original letter was in family hands circa the 1920s comes from the archives of the Patricia W. and J. Douglas Perry Library at Old Dominion University. This library is the only archive known to contain a photocopy of the original "My Dear Rush" letter. The photocopy is in the Robert Morton Hughes [senior] Collection.⁶²

Robert Morton Hughes Sr. (1855–1940) was a prominent Norfolk, Virginia lawyer who served as a president of the Virginia Bar Association and helped establish what later became Old Dominion University in Norfolk. His mother was Eliza Mary Preston Johnston Hughes (the daughter of Mrs. Floyd's oldest brother John), and his father was Judge Robert William Hughes; they married in 1850. Robert Morton Hughes was born in Abingdon, Virginia, at the home of his mother's adoptive parents, Gov. John Buchanan Floyd (Mrs. Floyd's son) and Sally Preston Floyd. His mother's parents, Elizabeth Madison Preston and Congressman Charles

62. Robert Morton Hughes Collection, Old Dominion University. Biography and extensive finding aid on line at <http://www.lib.odu.edu/specialcollections/manuscripts/hughes.htm>. The collection holds positive and negative copies of the original letter, which suggests that they were made in the 1910s or 20s. See the Wikipedia entry "Photostat Machine."

Clement Johnston, both died young, which resulted in Hughes' mother's adoption by her parents' cousins.

In summary, the letter written in February 22, 1843, remained in the hands of Floyd family members until October 2004, when it was brought to the Smithfield Plantation. The authors found it there in a storage box in January 2014.

Some Other Archived Copies of the “My Dear Rush” letter

The Holmes (May 1846) and Cochran (1846) copies of the “My Dear Rush” letter were discussed in our 2015 sketch of Mrs. Floyd.⁶³ Also discussed there was the well-known four-part *Richmond Standard* June–July 1880 publication of a version of the Holmes transcription.⁶⁴ Subsequently, it has been ascertained that several newspapers reprinted the *Richmond Standard* printing. For example, the *Staunton Spectator* reprinted in June 1880 the first three parts of the letter from the *Richmond Standard*. Also, the letter was reprinted from the 1880 *Richmond Standard* in *The Lexington Standard* on May 1, 1910, and in large part in the *Christiansburg News Messenger* in an article by John Nicolay dated 10 October 1982.

Under the title “Letitia Preston Floyd memoirs, 1843,” the letter is cited at the WorldCat Union Library Catalog for the 72,000 libraries around the world that collaborate in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). It is cataloged as OCLC Number 34671586 and stated to be held in the libraries of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Indiana State Library. Both of these are typescript copies, and both of them incorrectly record the place of the letter being written as “Cairo,” and include the added word “Nickette” after the phrase “Indian girl” on manuscript page 21.⁶⁵ The provenance information for the Chapel Hill typescript copy is a transmittal letter dated March 14, 1931, from A. Y. Walton of San Antonio, Texas to “Shook” stating that Walton obtained his information from a diary at the Filson Club. The provenance information for the Indiana copy is a transmittal letter dated April 16, 1951, from Clifton F. Davis of Shreveport, Louisiana, to Albert R. Floyd of Chicago.⁶⁶

It is the opinion of the authors that the Chapel Hill and Indiana copies derive from photostatic copies of the original letter, originating with Robert M. Hughes Sr., who is believed to have provided such copies to persons

63. Glanville and Mays, “A Sketch,” endnotes 119, 120, 123, and 124, on p. 119.

64. Glanville and Mays, “A Sketch,” endnotes 121 and 124 on p. 119.

65. For a discussion of “Cairo” see Glanville and Mays, “A Sketch,” figure 6 and its legend.

66. Personal communication Stephanie Asberry, Indiana State Library, telephone conversation, September 2015.

interested in Floyd family genealogy. One of these persons was no doubt responsible for the Cavan to Cairo mistranscription.

Unfortunately, incorrect copies with the place of the letter being written stated incorrectly as "Cairo," and including the added word "Nickette," have found their way onto the Internet. The most durable of these web postings is at the "Preston's Page."⁶⁷ Presumably it derives from either the Chapel Hill typescript or the Indiana typescript.

The Filson Historical Society (formerly the Filson Club) holds three typescript copies of the "My Dear Rush" letter. The first is annotated "Mss AP937d folder 25, Preston family papers, Davie collection" and includes the first 19 pages of the Holmes transcription held at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The second is a double-spaced typescript cataloged as item 929.2 F645 and annotated "Received from J. Adger Stewart April 16, 1941," and "From Mrs. Brockenbrough Lamb, Richmond, Va., April 6, 1941 through Mr. J. Adger Stewart." The third, single-spaced with pages numbered 1–19, is in the Preston Family Joyes Collection (folder 66) and accompanies a 1941 Janie Preston Boulware Lamb letter to J. Adger Stewart. The second and third Filson transcripts were likely made by Floyd family members in the 1920s or 30s.

The authors have recently ascertained that the University of Kentucky at Louisville and the University of Virginia at Wise hold transcriptions similar to the second and third copies held at the Filson Historical Society.

67. Fred Preston, "Letitia Preston Floyd's Memoirs." On line at <http://www.suddenlink.net/pages/fpreston/>. Originally posted May 28, 2001 and last updated February 9, 2007. Examined October 25, 2015.