



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.

A Note from the Editors

After the 1607 settlement at Jamestown, it took almost 150 years for the earliest wave of colonial settlers to reach the Allegheny Ridge—or eastern divide—where streams and rivers begin their westward flow toward the Mississippi River. As this large migration evolved, Native Americans, or Indians, were pushed farther and farther to the west. Our first article conveys the impact that this migration had on the Indian way of life, as described in a diary. This presentation, “A Future French King Visits the Overhill Cherokee in 1797,” was written by Sharon B. Watkins, a retired history professor from Western Illinois University. The article is the second part of her study of the lengthy and descriptive diary of young Prince Louis Philippe as he and his two brothers explored the American frontier during the first decade of the newly formed United States.

Our second article describes the long migratory journey of a German family, whose members were among the first wave of immigrants to cross the eastern divide and settle along the western waters. Life was difficult, hazards were numerous, and interactions with various Indian tribes were often dangerous. “The Early Bingamans in the New River Area” was written by Sheila M. Bingaman, a descendant of this early family. These first two articles allow us to visualize some of the consequences for individuals on both sides of this huge clash of cultures as people from the Eastern hemisphere began to colonize territory that eventually became the United States.

The earliest settlers were followed by a host of land speculators, all competing for large portions of fertile land vacated by the Native Americans as they were pushed ever westward. Land ownership by the Europeans required surveys and deeds. Consequently, ambitious, well-educated young men could gain both status and wealth by securing the job of county surveyor, as each new county was born. Jim Glanville, a retired chemistry professor, describes how William Preston did just that in Fincastle County in 1772—and again in Montgomery County in 1776. In those times, some of the early Virginia counties extended as far west as the Mississippi River and included all of what is now West Virginia and Kentucky. The title of this article is “William Preston, the Surveyor, and the Great Virginia Land Grab.”

By the turn of the century in 1800, the frontier had moved far to the west of the Allegheny Ridge. Local settlements in Montgomery County became

more stable, and both large and small plantations developed. The completion of the railroad from Lynchburg to Bristol in the early 1850s provided new markets for local products. Consequently, enterprising landowners needed additional workers to meet the new demand for their products, and this often led to the purchase of a significant number slaves. As a result of this and other factors, the slave population grew during the first 60 years of the 1800s. Within a few months after the 1860 election, state's rights, slavery, and secession issues had generated considerable debate and political activity within Montgomery County. Dan Thorp, a history professor at Virginia Tech, describes the impact that these pre-war issues had on the county's citizens and slaves. It is likely that the story told in "'Learn your wives and daughters how to use the gun and pistol': The Secession Crisis in Montgomery County, Virginia," is similar to those in other locations throughout the Upper South during the early months of 1861.

Our Brief Notes section illustrates how relatively new computer research can unearth long forgotten, or undiscovered, stories from the past. An obscure article, published more than a hundred years ago by historian Charles Francis Adams and titled "From Thoreau to Confucius, via Abingdon Virginia," was discovered by Jim Glanville as he surfed the Internet searching for information about Southwest Virginia.

Michael K. Shaffer of Kennesaw State University presents an interesting book review of *Skirmish at Pearisburg* (Lynchburg, Va.: Blackwell Press, 2012) by George A. McLean, Jr.

The editors again acknowledge our anonymous group of reviewers. Their help is essential and greatly appreciated. We also express gratitude to Peter Wallenstein, Christy Mackie, Rachael Garrity, and Barbara Corbett for their special assistance in producing this volume. Over the years, the Department of History at Virginia Tech has been extremely helpful to the *Smithfield Review* in many ways, and that was especially so this year. We thank you.

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