



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

This issue tells the story of exploration, land development, and conflict in the midst of a huge human migration, as masses of people from the eastern hemisphere abandoned their homelands, under a variety of conditions, to make a new life in the western hemisphere. The articles in this issue of the *Smithfield Review* provide illustrations of the lives and times that occurred during that large migration.

Our first article, “Political Passions in the Backcountry of Tennessee and Kentucky in 1797: As Reflected in the Travel Diary of Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans,” is the third article in a series presented by Sharon Watkins, a retired history professor from Western Illinois University. This final part includes an excellent analysis of the diary of a well-educated French prince as he completed his long journey in the new, rapidly evolving United States during a time of exploding westward migration.

Many years ago, the land now within the town limits of Blacksburg, Virginia, was called Draper’s Meadows. This early community of migrant settlers was named for the first, or at least one of the first, settlers to live within the legally surveyed village consisting of about two dozen large parcels of land. Our second article, “The Draper’s Meadows Settlement (1746-1756), Part I: George Draper and Family,” provides a considerable extension of what we know about these early settlers. It was researched and written by Ryan Mays, a staff biologist at Virginia Tech.

Ryan Mays also collaborates with Jim Glanville, a retired chemistry professor at Virginia Tech, to present “The William Preston/George Washington Letters.” These eight letters, written on the eve of the American Revolutionary War, provide ample evidence of the importance of land development in the mind of each of the correspondents. As the authors state: “Both men were obsessed with land acquisition, though despite growing problems with Britain, they continued to abide by British policies and regulations.” At the outset, the authors describe the approximately 26-year acquaintance of the two men.

In “A summary of 19th-Century Smithfield, Part I: The Years Before the Civil War,” Laura Wedin begins a three-part series that summarizes the transition of both the Smithfield Plantation and members of the Preston family during a century of dramatic change. In the years prior to

the outbreak of the Civil War, Smithfield remained a seat of considerable political and economic power. All three sons of Governor James Patton Preston, an owner and resident of Smithfield, remained in Blacksburg. They enjoyed a relatively prosperous lifestyle during the antebellum period, and their homes and families are described. Laura Wedin is an active volunteer at Historic Smithfield Plantation and is the author of an earlier *Smithfield Review* article about the Smithfield Cemetery that appeared in Volume 7.

“Conquistadors at Saltville in 1567 Revisited,” by Jim Glanville, provides additional insights concerning Spanish excursions into what is now called the Southeastern United States. His first article on this subject appeared in Volume 8 in 2004. The current article presents additional evidence and a new mapping analysis in the ongoing study of the early Spanish presence in southeastern North America by historians and archaeologists. As the author states in his conclusion: “The hybrid map developed in this article changes what Virginia historians have traditionally labeled as ‘English’ America and ‘Spanish’ America ... in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” In other words, as the author states elsewhere: “Virginia historians tend to overlook the fact that Virginia was Florida before it was Virginia.”

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