



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

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

A Note from the Editors

The American frontier in the last half of the eighteenth century was populated by an adventurous group of people, who were subjected to many natural hardships and dangers. Through most of this period, they also had to contend with battles and wars generated by European rivalries, conflicts with Indians, and the American Revolution. The Preston family and the land that eventually became Smithfield Plantation were in the midst of this turmoil and played a significant role in the ensuing drama.

Our first article examines in detail a well-known 1755 event: the Drapers Meadow Massacre and the story of Mary Draper Ingles, her capture, escape, and later life. It is a fascinating tale that has been studied extensively by Virginia Tech graduate student Ellen Brown. The presentation here will provide the reader with new insights into this familiar story.

The existing historic Smithfield manor house was constructed soon after Colonel William Preston began buying the land in 1773. The large house, similar to some found in Williamsburg, contrasted with the nearby frontier log cabins. In a brief note, Wirt Wills, a Smithfield Board member and retired Virginia Tech faculty member, traces the owners of the stately old manor house from the time of its construction until 1959 when it was given to the APVA, its present owner. During that period, it was always owned by Preston descendants or their spouses.

Another well known eighteenth century event was the pivotal 1780 Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain in which a coalition of Whig militias from the mountainous frontier overwhelmed an army of Tories marching north from South Carolina. A descendant of William Preston and a retired medical doctor, Mason Robertson, discovered some old letters that shed new information about a strange controversy arising from that battle. June Stubbs, a Board member of Smithfield and an instructor at Virginia Tech, condensed the research of Dr. Robertson into an interesting essay entitled "The Strange Campbell/Shelby Controversy and the Role of John Broady at the Battle of Kings Mountain."

Laura Wedin, a Smithfield Board member, spent many months researching the old Smithfield burying ground that was first used in 1783 upon the death of Col. William Preston, the originator of Smithfield. The cemetery, near the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine on the Virginia Tech campus, is obvious from the Southgate Drive entrance to the Tech campus. It was the scene of numerous burials in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it today provides one of the few remaining tangible local links with that era. Many interesting features of the old frontier burying ground are described in "The Preston Cemetery of Historic Smithfield Plantation." Plans are underway to conduct tours of the cemetery, and this article provides ample preparation for such a visit.

Finally, James O. Hoge Jr., a professor of English at Virginia Tech, presents the second segment of the James Otey diaries. This segment begins at the outset of 1909 — about eighteen years after the close of the first part. In the intervening years, James Otey's first wife died and he married a second time. He also lost both parents and seven infant children. The numerous diary entries together with the generous annotations provide an unusually complete insight into daily life a century ago. In years to come, the diaries will be a valuable resource for persons researching Montgomery County history.

This issue also features a review of John Alexander Williams' engaging new book, *Appalachia: A History* by David L. Rouse of the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

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— Hugh G. Campbell, Editor
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