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Early Presbyterians in Montgomery County

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None of Queen Anne's 17 children were alive when she died in 1714. That fact was ultimately to have consequences for Presbyterian churches in Southwest Virginia. Ever since James VI of Scotland had succeeded Elizabeth I of England in 1603, a single monarch had reigned over both countries. Yet each remained a separate kingdom with its own parliament and its own rules for succession to the throne. As Anne's death approached, the English Parliament became concerned that the next monarch in England might not also rule in Scotland. With memories of recent religious warfare, the prospect of a foreign — possibly Catholic — sovereign to the north was a frightening one. So the English made an offer the Scots could not refuse. They proposed a United Kingdom with a single Parliament and a single king: George of Hanover.

The union of the two kingdoms in 1707 opened up Scottish trade with and immigration to the English colonies in North America. Indirectly, it broadened possibilities for the people in Ireland as well, especially for the Protestants of Ulster in the north. Prompted in the seventeenth century by the English desire to establish a Protestant beachhead in Ireland, Presbyterians from Ayrshire, Wigtonshire, and Galloway in southwest Scotland had crossed the North Channel to settle in Ulster.[1] These people were frugal; they had to be. Life was hard and was becoming increasingly so in the early eighteenth century. The harvests of 1717 and 1719 were failures; the hard winter of 1721 killed most of the cattle, and exports of the cottage linen industry fell. Moreover, the 21-year cheap leases on the land — designed to encourage emigration under William III — expired in 1717 and were replaced by much more costly ones. In 1727, the 31-year leases also ran out. On one estate in the vicinity of Downpatrick, charges to the tenants increased from £1,244 in 1713 to £2,254 in 1731.[2] Clergy of the Church

of Ireland (Anglican) followed suit and doubled mandatory tithes. In theory and to some extent in practice, Presbyterianism was an illegal religion in Ireland. Presbyterians, however, were allowed to maintain their religion provided they paid tithes to support the established church.

Prospects in the New World, on the other hand, looked promising. Estimates are that between 100,000 and 250,000 Scotch-Irish[3] came to the North American colonies between 1707 and 1776. As usual in human migrations, it was not the poorest of the poor who made the move. Only about one-fifth of the immigrants indentured themselves to pay the passage over. The relatively prosperous linen weavers were more likely to immigrate than those who depended directly on the soil.[4] The weavers had already turned from farming, but they sought further improvement in their lot. Even if they were not starving, higher rents and more expensive food were good incentives to leave.

The initial migration of 1717–1718 was followed by additional waves in the tough years of 1725–1729, 1740–1741, 1754–1755, and 1771–1775. Smaller numbers came even in the interstitial years. Most of the immigrants from Ireland arrived in North America through Philadelphia and moved westward in Pennsylvania, settling along the way. Each new wave moved just a bit further inland and then southward through the Great Valley of Virginia. The Van Lears, who were to be crucial in the foundation of the Blacksburg and Christiansburg Presbyterian churches, illustrate the multigenerational movements of the immigrants, although they were of Dutch extraction and arrived initially in New Amsterdam (New York). Christoffel Van Lear[5] sailed from Amsterdam in 1650 to settle there. His son, John Van Lear, moved to Philadelphia in the late seventeenth century and is reported to have helped build the first church for Presbyterians at the corner of Chestnut and Second Streets. His nephew Jacob, under John's care after his father had died at sea, moved to Lancaster County in Pennsylvania and later to Augusta County in Virginia. Jacob's son, also named John Van Lear, moved from Augusta County to Montgomery County about the time of the Revolutionary War. A half-century later, his descendants were to move further west into Kentucky, thus continuing the great migration pattern of the early settlers.[6]

The wave of 1740–1741 brought many new settlers into the Great Valley of Virginia. The wide Shenandoah basin afforded relatively good travel and excellent farming lands. Scotch-Irish and Germans from the Pa-

latinate leapt over one another in settlement after settlement until they reached the site of the future city of Roanoke, where the wide valley comes to an end. At this point, one possibility for settlers was to cross the gap in the Blue Ridge formed by the Roanoke River and head southward down the Great Wagon Road to the Carolinas. Most did so, but others chose the narrower valley leading to the southwest. This valley and its parallel dells had fertile land, but they were generally too narrow to support very large agricultural communities.[7] Even so, both Germans and Scotch-Irish began to take up land in what is now Montgomery County or to proceed even farther to destinations in Tennessee or Kentucky.

The migration had become big business by this time. Letters from the colonies encouraging new settlers had begun to arrive in Ireland. Ships' agents also advertised the glories of America and canvassed the Irish countryside. A pattern of regular shipping developed to accommodate the larger numbers of immigrants. There was a market for linen in Pennsylvania and plenty of flax for export to Ireland. Linen took up less space than flax so the trip westward could be made more profitable by transporting settlers. Since Pennsylvania was the primary source of flax, most of the ships from Ulster arrived in New Castle or Philadelphia, feeding the stream of Scotch-Irish westward and southward.[8]

According to family tradition, Col. James Patton, an Ulsterman who as a young man had served in the Royal Navy, was a ship captain who made numerous round trips to America.[9] There is no firm evidence of frequent crossings, but he did apparently command merchant ships.[10] In any event, Patton himself immigrated in 1738 and obtained several land grants, including one of 7,500 acres that occupied roughly the current boundaries of the Town of Blacksburg. Parcels of 100 to 600 acres were surveyed and sold between 1751 and 1754. The settlement there was known as Draper's Meadows. On July 30 or 31, 1755, however, in an opening skirmish of the French and Indian War, warriors on their way back from a battle with another native tribe attacked the settlers. Col. Patton was among those killed, and his settlement languished.[11]

Eighteen years later, his nephew Col. William Preston[12] returned to the area, bought back 1,860 acres of the original tract, and established Smithfield Plantation.[13] After another quarter century, William Black, who with his brother John had taken possession of farms just east of Smithfield, laid out plans for a town of 38 acres in sixteen square blocks.[14] Their peti-

tion to the legislature in Richmond to establish the town of Blacksburg was granted in 1798. Just across the eastern continental divide lay the North Fork of the Roanoke River. The land there was not part of the original 7,500 acres. Patton had obtained another grant of 4,470 acres in 1751 that he divided and sold to the Robinsons, the Brights, and several others. Later, settlers along the banks of the North Fork included the Bennetts, the Browns, the Rutledges, and the Van Lears. These families shared a common Presbyterian history with settlers in the vicinities of Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Together they were the seeds for the eventual organization of the Blacksburg and Christiansburg Presbyterian churches.

What fundamental understanding of the world did these early Scotch-Irish settlers have? First and foremost, their beliefs about life were grounded in the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth century. Calvinism had spread rapidly on the continent and had taken hold in the lowlands of Scotland through the fiery preaching of John Knox after his return from exile in 1559. It was transmitted in powerful form to Ulster through the settlements of the next century. Few farmers or weavers would have read much of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but its conceptualizations permeated their culture. They were socialized into its theology and understood its implications for ordinary life through strong preaching and simple music. Calvin had encouraged both. The Scottish Psalter, patterned on the Geneva Psalter, along with Scottish and Irish folk songs, deeply influenced the music on the American frontier.

John Leith, formerly Professor at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, identified the "motifs that have given a particular style and manner to Reformed theology, worship, polity, culture, and life." Among these are the conviction that every moment of human life has to do with a sovereign God, the rejection of all forms of paganism (broadly defined), the belief that God is working out divine purposes in history, the insistence that Christians should live a life of holiness, the emphasis upon the mind in the service of God, the priority of preaching, the need for pastoral care through organized church structures, and the adherence to a disciplined and simple life.[16] These values came with the immigrants from Scotland through Ulster to the mountains of Virginia. Even though they were not always put into practice in everyday life, they reached into the depths of the soul to make exacting claims on what life should be like.

Nuances of Calvinist theology, however, had been undergoing change, and the settlers in America were indirectly affected by recent theological disputes in the old country. In the Church of Scotland, a quarrel between the "Auld Lichts" and "New Lichts" had centered on the question of the right and responsibility of individual interpretation of the Scriptures. Ulster Presbyterianism, however, remained overwhelmingly committed to strict Calvinism, as interpreted in the Westminster Confession of 1643. English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians, meeting in the Chapter House at Westminster Abbey during the English Civil War, had written this Confession, along with the Longer and the Shorter Catechisms. These documents can perhaps be understood as a somewhat starker statement of Calvinist theology than that made by John Calvin himself.

But in time, the new ideas made their way even to Ireland. The New Lights there supported recent theological and political ideas that borrowed from the Enlightenment as well as from the Reformation. Manmade creeds, they said, infringed upon religious liberty and the right to private judgment. Their understanding of religious matters was grounded in a nascent individualism rather than in a closed ecclesiastical community. These new ideas were making such headway that the Synod of Ulster responded in 1698 with the resolve "that Young Men, when licens'd to preach, be obliged to Subscribe the Confession of Faith, in all the Articles thereof, as the Confession of their Faith."[17] In this way, the Old Lights hoped to re-enforce the disciplinary powers of the church,[18] based upon the authority of the Westminster Confession, and to seek legal establishment of the "divinely ordained Presbyterian Church" alongside the existing Church of Ireland. Disturbed by modernizing cultural changes taking place in Ulster, they sought to return to a communal existence that would allow Presbyterians to keep a safe distance from the civil institutions of the state. Crimes and sins alike should be disciplined within the church, at least for members of the church.

It would be difficult to know just how the settlers along the North Fork and on the Patton grant stood on the complex issues of Subscription to the Confession and the attendant issues surrounding the controversy. We do know that the prized possession of one family in Montgomery County was a copy of the Confession, the catechisms, and documents of the Scottish Reformation. It was "bound neatly and substantially with leather" but "worn by much use."[19] Probably only a few of the frontier farming people

could have put their thoughts into words and phrases used by the ministers and professors of theology. Yet we can be confident that coming to America to create a new way of life — away from church establishments, rigid class distinctions, and constricted opportunities — they were increasingly sympathetic to the new ideas of individualism. The church's strict oversight of personal behavior would certainly not be as acceptable in Virginia as in Ulster. The notions of individual freedom instinctively brought a new empowerment for the laity in relation to both clerical and political authority.

The leaders of the American Revolution were also individualists. Theirs was a more secular individualism grounded in the Enlightenment as well as the Reformation. The vast majority of the colonists did not share this worldview of the elite. Their religious views were more static over time. Freedom for them was more likely to denote grace and freedom through the Gospel than protection for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. True emancipation would bring an end to oppression, and God's chosen people would become the instrument for God's transformation of the world. Jonathan Edwards, leader of the First Great Awakening earlier in the eighteenth century, had been convinced that through religious revivals, Christians would bring in the kingdom of God.[20] This transformation could be read not only in religious but also in economic and social terms.

The New Light-Old Light controversy of the old world morphed into a New Side-Old Side conflict in the new. The Old Side continued its strict interpretation of the Westminster Confession and its emphasis on decency and order, but the New Side took on somewhat greater openness to interpretation, although it maintained allegiance to the doctrine in its essentials. More strikingly, it adopted an intensive emotionalism. Feeling was given priority over reason; religious conversion was necessary for salvation. The rationalism and orderliness of the Old Side clergy was attacked as formalism without substance.

William Henry Foote, a Presbyterian minister and nineteenth century historian, gives an account of evangelism in the mid-eighteenth century that illustrates the similarity of doctrine but the dissimilarity of deportment:

> There is no evidence that the parties disagreed on important doctrines. Mr. John Davenport was guilty of most extravagant conduct, perhaps the most objectionable known during the excitement. An opponent, the Rev. Mr. Fish, of Connecticut, makes a statement respecting this singular man,— in

> the midst of his regularities the good thing about him was that he was a fast friend of the doctrines of grace; fully declaring the total depravity, the deplorable wretchedness and danger, and utter inability of man by the fall. He preached with great earnestness the doctrines of man's dependence on the sovereign mercy of God; of regeneration; of justification by faith, etc. The things that were evidently and dreadfully wrong about him were, that he not only gave full liberty to noise and outcries but promoted them with all his power. When these things prevailed among the people, accompanied with bodily agitations, the good man pronounced them tokens of the presence of God. Those who passed from great distress to great joy, he declared, after asking them a few questions, to be converts. ... The worse thing, however, was his bold and daring enterprise of going through the country to examine all the ministers in private, and then publicly declare his judgment of their spiritual state.[21]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the new Great Awakening in America reached Virginia and Kentucky. The Rev. George A. Baxter, a minister in Lexington, Virginia, in a letter to his fellow Presbyterian the Rev. Archibald Alexander at Hampden-Sydney, wrote:

> In the older settlements of Kentucky the revival made its first appearance among the Presbyterians last spring. The whole of that country about a year before was remarkable for vice and dissipation; and I have been credibly informed that a decided majority of the people were professed infidels. ... The power with which this revival has spread, and its influence in moralizing the people, are difficult for you to conceive of, and more difficult for me to describe. ...
>
> Persons who fall [in repentance] ... shed tears plentifully for about an hour. Immediately before they become totally powerless, they are seized with a tremor, and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks ... some unable to speak, some lose all signs of life for nearly an hour.[22]

These week-long revivals were not well received by the more austere Presbyterians (nor by Old Side Congregationalists, Lutherans, and Quakers). Within Presbyterianism, the subsequent argument between the two sides led to a split in which the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination was born. Lexington Presbytery, whose territory included Montgomery County, remained Old Side and discouraged "extraordinary bodily exercises which appear voluntary and ostentatious."[23] Even so, the religious fervor

and evangelical enthusiasm of the New Side led to the growth of congregations and the establishment of new churches. At the meeting described by Baxter, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian ministers preached. The Methodists and the Baptists, however, gained more converts in the Awakening than the demanding, austere Presbyterians. Vital piety was more in touch with the urgencies of life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than with the concerns of an educated ministry.[24]

Denominations sometimes cooperated and sometimes competed. Clergy were scarce and tended to travel in order to serve several communities. Methodists and Presbyterians would gather whenever a minister of either denomination was in town. The McDonald farmhouse between Blacksburg and Price's Fork was host to many of these religious meetings. The first Methodist building in Blacksburg also hosted preachers of both persuasions.

But Methodist ministers in the early nineteenth century often preached against Presbyterians, their ecclesiastical arrangements, and their doctrine, particularly that of predestination. Presbyterian ministers did not frequently reply for the simple reason that there were few at hand to do so. But plenty of defenders were among the people, especially among non-church Presbyterians who strongly held to the ancient identity of their ancestors. One day in Christiansburg, when the animosity between a particularly outspoken Methodist minister and the Presbyterian defenders was strong, a group of about 20 men near the Court House were engaged in increasingly angry disputation. Eventually coats and ties were cast off in preparation for battle. Just at this time, a woman noted for "drunken frolics" came galloping down the street and charged the group. In some amazement, they scattered, but she checked her horse, stretched her hands in blessing over the two parties, and sang a song for them. The belligerents shamefacedly dispersed. Shortly after, the Presbyterians aided the Methodists in building their meeting house in Christiansburg.[25]

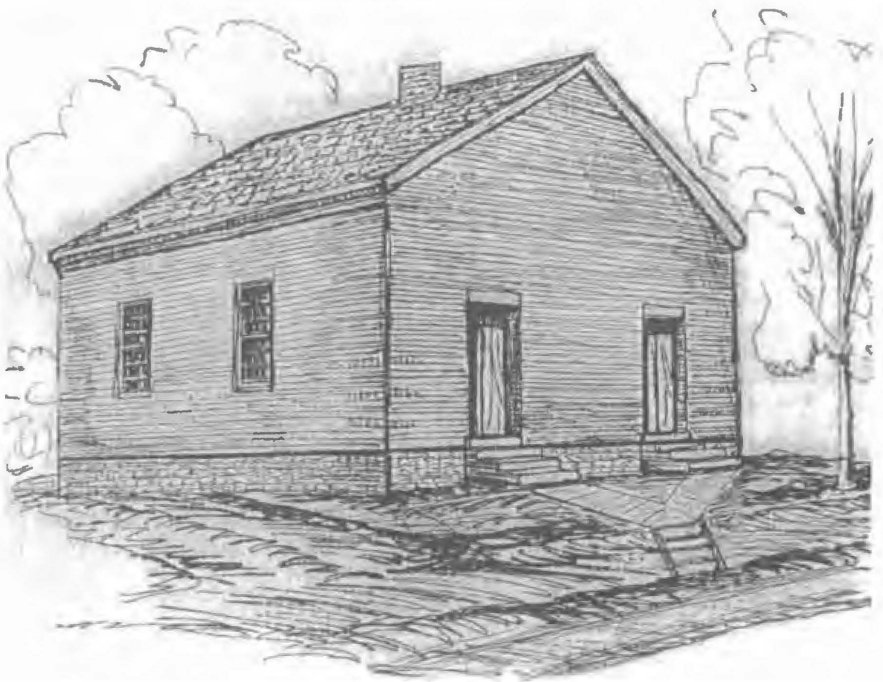
Settlers, of course, varied in their degrees of religious intensity and commitment. Many were indifferent and carried their religion only as a general orientation to occasional spiritual contemplation. James Charlton, who gave hospitality to some of the earliest visiting Presbyterian preachers in the area that is now Montgomery County, was said to be "a Presbyterian in sentiment." His wife "was not only a Presbyterian, but a professing Christian."[26] Some, particularly men, boasted of not being a part of the

church, even as they shared the general cultural orientation of Reformed Christianity. Few males were professing Christians, and these were mostly Methodist. John Peterman, husband of Jane Hoge Peterman, a charter member of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, had been a "very worldly man," according to a pastor of the church. On his death bed, he was "for some days thoroughly awake to his awful situation. ... He unites his testimony to the millions who have preceded him, that a death bed is a poor place to prepare for eternity."[27] Many could sometimes be persuaded toward piety when the occasion arose. A revival could bring out their best religious sentiments, at least for awhile.

Among the more intentional and consistent in their commitment was John Van Lear. In the first effort to organize a Presbyterian church in Montgomery County, he was chosen to be an elder sometime in the latter part of the eighteenth century. He was the first ordained in Southwest Virginia. The going was tough in the absence of a minister to preach. He sometimes attended services at the New Dublin Presbyterian Church, even though the journey required considerable time and effort in those days. The religious tradition of John and Sarah Van Lear was indeed strong. One of their sons, the Rev. John Ambrose Van Lear, who served as pastor of Mossy Spring Church and as stated clerk of Lexington Presbytery in the mid-nineteenth century, reported:

> Father of ten children, three sons and seven daughters; he trained them up in the old-fashioned way of keeping the Sabbath, and saw them all members of the church; two of his sons elders, and one a minister of the gospel. ... "The Bible, and Shorter Catechism, and a sermon from Davies or Burder on every Sabbath" says his son was the order of his house.[28]

Revivals and Calvinist theology aside, life was raw on the frontier. The stereotype of the Scotch-Irish as "the very scum of mankind" was not entirely without basis, especially when they were compared with the much more orderly, industrious, sober, and honest Germans. But the English settlers, just as their cousins in England, disliked the Scots and abhorred the Irish even more. They portrayed them as drunken, criminal, and lazy. The settlements of Ulster immigrants indeed tended to be somewhat chaotic. Patrick Gordon, governor of Pennsylvania, in a letter to the Penns in 1729, described the Scotch-Irish as having "little Honesty and less Sense."[29] Most of them were living with very few resources, either economic or societal.



Presbyterian Church on the North Fork of the Roanoke River, 1879. Pencil sketch adapted by Donald Elson from a drawing in Ellison A. Smyth, *A History of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church: Its First 150 Years* (see Endnote 45).

They were not only financially impoverished but also poor in social organization. In their efforts to scratch out a living from the land, they scattered out onto lonely farms, having only infrequent meetings with their nearest neighbors. The difference between the German and the Scotch-Irish settlers in social and religious cohesion surely played a role in formal church organization. With a strange language in a strange land, the Germans tended to settle in the kind of close-knit communities they had known back along the Rhine. They formed St. Michael's Lutheran Church (sometimes also known as St. Peter's) in 1750, about a quarter of a century before the organization of the first Presbyterian church.[30]

It was this mixture of religious heritage and contemporary reality that the Presbyterian leadership attempted to address. Immediately upon its organization in 1755, Hanover Presbytery devoted attention to the Albemarle settlers in the mountains. In 1768, it sent the Rev. John Craig on a mission farther into western Virginia to organize Presbyterians into congregations. Craig had been ordained by Donegal Presbytery in northwest

Ulster. Although Hanover Presbytery was in sympathy with the New Side, Craig was an Old Sider. On his journey to the southwest, he organized eight churches. Six were in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Today, of these six, only New Dublin remains. When Craig reported back to a Presbytery meeting at Tinkling Springs in 1769, he estimated 45 families in the New Dublin area able to pay £45 for the support of a minister.[31]

The scarcity of ministers and elders in the area, however, made it difficult to sustain regular services and organized churches. The poverty of the population made it difficult to maintain buildings in which to meet or to pay the pastors. After becoming pastor of Tinkling Spring, John Craig wrote, "The people of my charge were all new settlers and generally of low circumstances. Their own necessities called for all their labors; they could or did do little for my support, except a few."[32] Services of worship in most places tended to be sporadic and to take place in homes or in open spaces.

A petition for a supply preacher, i.e., someone to preach on one or more occasions, was sent from the Roan-Oke to Hanover Presbytery in 1760.[33] The exact source of that request is not fully known. It could have been the North Fork near Blacksburg, the South Fork across from Christiansburg, the Elliston area, or even Big Lick (Roanoke). Less clear is the location of "Roanoke in Augusta" from which another request came, but the area that is now Montgomery County was then in Augusta County. In 1762 Hanover Presbytery provided that Rev. Craig would supply one Sabbath at Roan-Oke. In 1766, it sent a Mr. Brown "to ordain Elders in the Congregation on Roanoke in Augusta" and to examine their views with regard to the sacrament. Further reference is made to supplies in 1767 and 1768. Again in 1782, the Presbytery directed a Mr. Houston to supply one Sabbath at the head of Roan-Oke.[34] Services were held in log houses or fields of the Van Lears, the Rutledges, or others until the community was able to build a meetinghouse.

In 1784, a call was issued "from the North & South fork of the Roan-Oak to W. Andrew McClure." Mr. McClure, licensed in 1782, also received a call from Sullivan County, North Carolina, but he accepted the call in Montgomery County and was ordained for service there.[35] Four years later, he moved on to Kentucky. The following year, a Mr. Crawford was asked by Lexington Presbytery "to supply two Sabbaths" at Roan-Oke. One year later, a Mr. Graham was appointed the same duty.[36] In the next decade, the Rev. Robert Logan, stated supply[37] at Fincastle, preached and

catechized on occasion in the valley at the invitation of the Rutledges and the Van Lears. How often or how long he did so is not known. Preaching took place on a wooded knoll on the Van Lear farm. In 1791, William Hall and John Lyle, two students from Hampden-Sydney, preached at Mrs. William Preston's place, the only reference found for preaching in the Blacksburg area in the eighteenth century. The students also stopped on the Roanoke, where they reported "religion as well as presbyterianism is nearly if not quite worn out."[38] Again in 1796, "a verbal supplication was presented from the North Fork of Roan-Oak, New Dublin, and Boiling Springs." A Mr. Erwins was sent in response. The requests and the response continued into the next century.[39]

There is reason to believe that at least some of this activity was related to the North Fork Presbyterian Church, located four miles from Blacksburg on a small plot beside Indian Run not far from the river.[40] John Van Lear and George Rutledge, who owned farms in the neighborhood, were instrumental in the foundation of this church that became the predecessor to the Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and other Presbyterian churches in the area. The primary evidence for the church's existence is a deed of 1798 that conveyed 124 acres of land from William Robinson to Edward Rutledge for £400 (current money[41]) with provision for an enclave as follows:

> ... except only three Acres part of the above tract of one hundred and twenty four acres lying on the Indian run whereon the Meeting House stands, which is excepted and reserved out of the above land for the use of the North Fork Congregation of Presbyterians and the house now standing on the same, which is to be laid off as the Elders of the said Congregation shall direct so as to include a spring near the same.[42]

The North Fork church did not survive. The date of its demise as well as the date of its birth is unknown. In a census of its churches in October 1826, Lexington Presbytery provides no data for the "Head of Roanoke" and states its status as "unable."[43]

Efforts to organize Presbyterian churches in Montgomery County continued. The united congregations of New Dublin, Christiansburg, and Blacksburg issued a call to Mr. Samuel McNutt in 1816, a licentiate of Lexington Presbytery. When McNutt accepted the call, the Presbytery resolved to ordain him at its next meeting. At New Dublin the following April, Presbytery examined, ordained, and installed him in the three-church field.

Presbyterian Church in Christiansburg, 1853 (from a postcard).

The following year, however, he reported that all obligations had been fulfilled, but requested "that pastoral relations between him and the Congregation of Christiansburg and Blacksburg be dissolved on account of their not continuing their engagement for his support." Presbytery resolved that Mr. McNutt "be at Liberty to suspend his labours in the Congregation of Christiansburg and Blacksburg, and that said Congregation be required to show cause at the next meeting of Pby why the pastoral relation between them and Mr. McNutt should not be dissolved." In August, the next meeting of Presbytery noted that it had "satisfactory information that said church means to make no opposition to Mr. McNutt's request" and the relationship was dissolved.[44] Another attempt to organize a Presbyterian church in Montgomery County was thwarted.

The Rev. Daniel Baker, representing the Lexington Missionary Society, was in Blacksburg in October 1820. He reported:

> Some tenderness manifested. It was an interesting meeting. After short intermission, the services were resumed, and I preached again. Congregation somewhat larger and perhaps more generally solemn. The countenances of the people plainly indicated their hearts were by no means callous. At candle lighting, preached again. The house was full to overflowing. It was a blessed meeting. Many were much wrought upon, and even sobbed aloud. Yet there was no confusion. Surely the Master of Assemblies was there, and that to receive and bless.[45]

But no church was organized. That was to take another few years. Mr. William G. Campbell preached his first sermon at the Christiansburg Court House on November 19, 1826. Afterward he preached on alternate Sundays in Christiansburg and then preached otherwise either in Blacksburg or at places out in the country, such as the house of Thomas Rutledge on the North Fork.[46] Finally, a church was organized in Christiansburg on October 9, 1827. On July 27, 1832, a second church was organized in Blacksburg. Sons of the founders of North Fork Church were prominent in both. John Van Lear's son, William, and George Rutledge's son, Thomas, became charter members and were ordained as founding elders of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church and five years later played the same roles in the birth of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church. Both churches have continued as viable institutions and have given rise to other churches in the county.

Endnotes

1. Their ancestors had migrated in the opposite direction over a thousand years before. The Scots, a Celtic tribe living in Ireland, invaded northern Britain to join the Gaels and the Britons who were already there and to give their name to the country.
2. Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 67–72.
3. This group of settlers is sometimes called the Scots-Irish these days. Presumably that is because people living in Scotland consider Scotch to be a drink and Scots to be a people. The English in the eighteenth century, however, referred with opprobrium to the oat eaters in the north as the Scotch or, in their occasional polite moments, as North British. American descendants began referring to themselves as Scotch-Irish in the nineteenth century to distinguish themselves from the new wave of Irish Catholic immigrants.

4. Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 79.
5. The Van Lears (whose name appears in at least five different spellings) were adherents of the Reformed faith. Calvinists on the European continent are generally referred to as Reformed and those in the United Kingdom, as Presbyterian or Congregationalist, although many other groups were also deeply influenced by John Calvin.
6. Family genealogy in private papers prepared by Mary Ann Sanford.
7. James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 169–209.
8. Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 92.
9. Letitia Preston Floyd's manuscript of 1843 on the Preston family, edited by Wirt H. Wills and June Stubbs, "Recollections of 18th Century Virginia Frontier Life," *Smithfield Review*, vol. 1 (1997), 3–16.
10. Patricia Givens Johnson, *James Patton and the Appalachian Colonists* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1973), 5.
11. Mary B. Kegley and F. B. Kegley, *Early Adventures on the Western Waters: The New River of Virginia in Pioneer Days, 1745–1800*, vol. I (Orange, Va.: Green Publishers, Inc., 1980), 55.
12. William Preston received an education with the Rev. John Craig of the Tinkling Springs Presbyterian Church in Augusta County. He became Col. Patton's private secretary, and later his heir.
13. Most of Preston's holdings are now the property of Virginia Tech. Sara Beth Keough and Blaine Adams, "Smithfield Plantation: The Original Land Parcels," *Smithfield Review*, vol. 6 (2002), 71–3; and Wirt H. Wills, "The Genesis and Dissolution of William Preston's Smithfield," *Smithfield Review*, vol. 8 (2004), 31–8.
14. William and John Black were sons of a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Samuel Black. Born in Northern Ireland in 1700 and graduate of the University of Edinburgh, he was pastor at Rockfish Church in Nelson County.
15. F. B. Kegley, *Kegley's Virginia Frontier: The Beginning of the Southwest* (Roanoke, Va.: The Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938), 102.
16. John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), 67–85.
17. Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 20.
18. Calvin's Ordinances, which created a new polity for the church, was accepted as the guide for church governance and had indeed frequently been substituted even for civil governance in Ulster.
19. The Rev. Daniel Blain, "History of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church," Works Progress Administration of Virginia, Historical Inventory, 1938, 1.
20. Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 79–84.
21. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical First Series* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), 116–7; originally published in 1850.
22. Monty S. Leitch, *Baptized Into One Body: The First 165 Years of Christiansburg Presbyterian Church* (Christiansburg: Board of Trustees of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church, 1993), 23.
23. Leitch, *Baptized Into One Body*, 24.

24. Presbyteries set stiff "trials" for ordination. In July 1757, Hanover Presbytery began the examination of a Mr. Richardson for the ministry. Unfortunately, he fell ill and was not able to attend the committee meeting. "But the members of the committee, having had considerable acquaintance with his Progress in learning, by their private Conversation with him, conclude that they have sufficient Reason to dispense with his Trials at this time ... & appoint him to prepare a Sermon on Jn°. III. 2. We know thou art a Teacher come from God; & an Exegesis on this Question. Undè apparet Nerefaites Christi Mortas, et Peccatores fervati Just? to be delivered at the next Presbytery." In September, the Presbytery examined Mr. Richardson in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, logic, ontology, natural and moral philosophy, geography, and astronomy. Then it heard his religious experience, exegesis, and sermon — all of which were sustained. After that they appointed him a new sermon on II Corinthians 5:17. In January 1758, he delivered a "lecture" on II Corinthians 4-7 at Presbytery. This was also sustained as part of his trial, after which he was examined in Divinity. Finally, Presbytery judged him qualified to preach the gospel and "having declared his Assent to, & approbation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the confession of his Faith," he was licensed to preach "as a Candidate for the Ministry of the Gospel." In April, he preached yet another sermon before Presbytery, which was again sustained, this time unanimously, and was given another exegesis to do: Hum Sabbalum Judaicum post Christi Resurrectionem in priraum Diem Hebdomadis mutates. [Possibly the clerk was not thoroughly acquainted with Latin.] Eventually, he was ordained. A few years later, he was reprimanded for leaving Hanover for Abingdon Presbytery without having been dismissed. Perhaps he did not think life was long enough. From Minutes of Hanover Presbytery (July 20, 1757; September 28, 1757; January 25, 1758; April 27, 1758).

    The earliest Presbyterian ministers were expected to have graduated from the universities in Edinburgh or Glasgow. Later, Yale and Princeton were added; then came Hampden-Sydney, Washington Academy, and Union Theological Seminary. Methodists and Baptists were not particular about educational attainments, if any.
25. Blain, "History of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church," 16.
26. Blain, "History of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church," 4.
27. H. William Gabriel, "William P. Hickman in the New River Valley, 1852–64," *Smithfield Review*, vol. 3 (1999), 52–82, quotation, 63–4.
28. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical Second Series*, second edition (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1856), 38–9.
29. Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 100–4.
30. St. Michael's, in varying locations, has claims to be the oldest church in Montgomery County. Burn Gross, www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org/history.html/.
31. Joseph W. Guthrie, *A Brief History of New Dublin Presbyterian Church* (privately printed, 2004). Craig's report is included in the April 13, 1769 minutes of Hanover Presbytery.
32. Leitch, *Baptized Into One Body*, 15.
33. Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, March 23, 1760. The name was also sometimes spelled Roan-Oak.

34. Mary Kegley, I, p. 109; Minutes of Hanover Presbytery (April 16–18, 1766; April 1, 1767; October 11, 1767; October 5, 1768).
35. Minutes of Hanover Presbytery (May 18, 1784), 35.
36. Minutes of Lexington Presbytery (April 16, 1789; October 27–28, 1790). In 1786, Hanover Presbytery was divided, and the western part was given the name of Lexington.
37. In Presbyterian polity, a stated supply is a minister assigned to a church for a specific period of time, but who has not been called and installed as regular pastor.
38. Howard McKnight Wilson, *The Lexington Presbytery Heritage* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1971), 75–6; Leitch, 35, 44–5; Minutes of Lexington Presbytery (April 16, 1789; October 27–28, 1790).
39. Minutes of Lexington Presbytery (April 19, 1796; April 22, 1796; April 21, 1797; April 10, 1798; October 17, 1798; May 9, 1798; etc).
40. The location of the building was a few hundred yards northwest of Gateway Baptist Church at Luster's Gate.
41. Current money refers to the account value based on the colonial exchange rate between local currency and the British pound sterling.
42. Deed recorded on the "thirtieth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety eight" by Charles Taylor, clerk of Montgomery County. Deed Book C, pp. 120–3.
43. Minutes of Lexington Presbytery (October 30, 1826).
44. Minutes of Lexington Presbytery (September 28, 1815; April 26, 1816; April 18–19, 1817; August 29, 1817).
45. Daniel Baker in the Third Annual Report of Lexington Missionary Society, October 14, 1820 as quoted in Ellison A. Smyth, *A History of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church: Its First 150 Years* (Blacksburg, Va., October 1982), 1–2.
46. Monty Leitch, *Baptized Into One Body* (Christiansburg Presbyterian Church, 1993), 51; Smyth, *A History of the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church*, 2. The Rutledge house still stands. It is the log cabin located on route 785 on the right shortly after passing Luster's Gate.