

**Olin and Preston Institute  
and Preston and Olin Institute:  
The Early Years of Virginia Polytechnic Institute  
and State University**

**Part I**

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**Introduction**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, popularly known as Virginia Tech, traces its official founding to 1872, when it opened its doors as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (VAMC).<sup>1</sup> That year, the Virginia General Assembly used provisions of the federal “Act Donating Public Lands to the Several States and Territories Which May Provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts” (popularly known as the Morrill Act or the Land-Grant College Act of 1862)<sup>2</sup> to appropriate land-grant scrip to the Preston and Olin Institute, a school for boys in Blacksburg, to become Virginia’s white land-grant institution.<sup>3</sup>

The state legislation required that Preston and Olin relinquish its name to become the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. It also directed that the real estate belonging to Preston and Olin, which consisted of a three-story brick building and about five acres of land, be transferred to VAMC.<sup>4</sup> Preston and Olin’s predecessor school, the Olin and Preston Institute, had been responsible for constructing the building and purchasing the land.<sup>5</sup> The quest to secure the land-grant money that created VAMC had been led by officials of the Preston and Olin Institute.

Although Virginia Tech counts 1872 as the official year it started, an argument can be made that the university is actually a continuation of both the Preston and Olin Institute and the Olin and Preston Institute. This article looks at the first two decades of Virginia Tech history, which the university acknowledges as leading up to its founding but does not claim as part of its official existence.<sup>6</sup> Part I of the article covers the university’s earliest years as the Olin and Preston Institute and includes short biographies of the men for whom that institute was named and its first principal. Part II, planned for

a later issue of the *Smithfield Review*, will relate the history of the Preston and Olin Institute and examine its conversion into the college known today as Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

### **Secondary Schools Open in Blacksburg**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Virginia had begun to make advancements in the realm of education for its youths, aided by the establishment in 1810 of the Literary Fund, which provided money for public education throughout the commonwealth. Statewide, colleges were growing in number; academies were spreading; and schools for girls had already become well established, spurred by the changing roles of women in society, economics, and politics. Religious denominations contributed to the spread of educational opportunities, building seminaries and colleges.<sup>7</sup> “Good academies were everywhere,” reported Alfred James Morrison, who examined the beginnings of public education in Virginia in a 1917 study.<sup>8</sup>

In Montgomery County, Virginia, education during much of the nineteenth century consisted primarily of (1) tutorial and private schools, which served the wealthier classes; (2) the state-supported primary system of schools, which mainly served the poor; (3) classes taught by itinerant teachers, who traded lessons for board and a small fee; and (4) the quasi-public, old field schools that operated on tuition fees and donations. A new mode of education was introduced in the county with the opening of the Blacksburg Female Academy, incorporated by legislative act on 13 March 1840, making it the county’s first recognized academy.<sup>9</sup> The school’s trustees purchased land the following year<sup>10</sup> and constructed more than one building on the site.<sup>11</sup>

This educational institution most likely played a role in the establishment a decade later of a school in Blacksburg for boys. Certainly it would have focused attention on the lack of similar educational opportunities for male youths in the area, and around 1850,<sup>12</sup> several Methodist leaders in Blacksburg, some—or most—of whom were trustees of the female academy,<sup>13</sup> joined the widespread fervor to establish a seminary of learning “wherein youth might be instructed within a Christian atmosphere.”<sup>14</sup> According to the 1926 historical notes of Ellen Tyler McDonald, building the school “was then considered a very important event” in Blacksburg, and although it was a Methodist school, citizens of the town contributed to the effort.<sup>15</sup>

G. F. Poteet, who examined secondary education in Montgomery County, reported that these education-oriented Methodist leaders bought land from Jacob and Mary Keister on 5 March 1850,<sup>16</sup> which would have gotten the boys’ school off to a start similar to that of the female academy. According to the deed filed in the Montgomery County Courthouse in

Christiansburg, Virginia, however, the land transaction actually was recorded ten years later on 5 March 1860, five years after the trustees had constructed a school building (see below). This purchase of land, made as much as a decade into the life of the institute, calls into question the original location of the school.<sup>17</sup> Based on court records in Montgomery County, the 1860 land purchase was not the first property acquired by the trustees, although no records of additional deed transfers seem available. It is possible that a deal was made with the Keisters to purchase their land but was not recorded until much later, although records indicate that the Keister plot abutted another lot previously acquired by the trustees.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of its original site, the new school was christened the Olin and Preston Institute. Its founders selected the name “Olin” to honor the popular Methodist preacher and educational leader Stephen Olin, who had been the first president of Randolph Macon College, another school in Virginia that was founded by the Methodist Church, this one two decades earlier. Since the citizens of Blacksburg had contributed to the local educational project, they were allowed to determine part of the new school’s name. They selected the name “Preston” to honor William Ballard Preston, a native son and respected community leader who was a well-known politician, businessman, and lawyer.<sup>19</sup>

### **Biographical Sketches of Olin and Preston**

Little has appeared locally about Stephen Olin, one of the two men for whom the new school was named, other than to identify him as a “beloved Methodist minister”<sup>20</sup> and “the first president of Randolph Macon College.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, a short biography of this man follows, as does a brief look at the life of William Ballard Preston, about whom more has been published locally, especially in the *Smithfield Review*.

#### **Stephen Olin**

A sickly man with weak lungs most of his life, yet a charismatic speaker and prolific writer, Stephen Olin was born in 1797 in Leicester, Vermont, to Lois Richardson Olin and Henry Olin, at various times a congressman, a lieutenant governor of Vermont, and a judge. Stephen was the fifth of nine children and the couple’s first son to survive infancy.<sup>22</sup>

Educated at Vermont’s Middlebury College, Stephen Olin taught<sup>23</sup> at a new seminary in Abbeville District, South Carolina, planning to commence legal studies, a goal for him held by his father. However, he experienced a religious conversion, determined to become a Methodist preacher, and commenced preaching in 1823 at different churches in the area where he

lived. Twenty-six-year-old Olin relinquished his teaching job and received a station in Charleston, South Carolina, as a traveling minister,<sup>24</sup> becoming known almost immediately, according to biographers James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, “as one of the most powerful and fervent preachers in the denomination.”<sup>25</sup> In 1826, he was named a professor of belles-lettres at Franklin College (today’s University of Georgia) in Athens, Georgia, and at the beginning of 1827, he started his new duties.<sup>26</sup> He continued to preach, however, writing to a friend after two months in Athens: “I am now in much better health than I have been since I first lost my health in 1824. I have not missed one duty; I have preached every Sabbath but one, and on one occasion twice upon the same day, without any permanent injury.”<sup>27</sup>

Olin married Mary Ann Bostick, a native of Georgia, in 1827 when he was 30 years old and his bride was probably around 35.<sup>28</sup> The following year, he was ordained an elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He maintained his connection with Franklin College for seven years, according to the Rev. Dr. Wightman, “in bad health most of the time; nevertheless, he was a brilliant professor, and has left the impress of his mode of instruction on the institution to this day.”<sup>29</sup> Because of his poor health, Olin moved back to Vermont, and he and his wife lived in a room at the rear of his father’s house. During the fourteen months they spent there, his poor health rendered him unable to preach, write, read, or study.<sup>30</sup>

In late 1832, the same year in which he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Middlebury College, the trustees of Randolph Macon College, a new Methodist institution located in Boydton, Virginia,<sup>31</sup> elected Olin,



Figure 1. Stephen Olin, for whom Olin and Preston Institute was named, in part, was a minister, the first president of Randolph Macon College, and a president of Wesleyan University. This engraving of him by J. F. E. Prudhomme appeared in the *Randolph Macon Monthly*, April 1882. Courtesy of Mary Virginia Currie, Randolph Macon College.

then 35 years old, to become the school's first president, but he declined the appointment because of his delicate health. However, the trustees appealed to him to withdraw his resignation and accept the position, and with the added urging of his friends, he finally consented, with the caveat that he could spend several months annually in Vermont during the hotter part of the year if necessary for his health. He resigned his professorship at Franklin College, effective Christmas 1833, and delivered his inaugural address at Randolph Macon three months later. That fall, he began writing a series of articles for the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. The following year, both the University of Alabama and Wesleyan University conferred honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees upon him.<sup>32</sup>

In 1836, with his health remaining poor after his return to the college from his customary stay in Vermont, he decided to travel abroad, where he anticipated receiving the best medical advice. He left Randolph Macon—his last commencement there was in June 1836—and he and his wife embarked on their long journey in February 1837. His wife died in 1839, during the trip, and was interred in an English cemetery near Naples, Italy.<sup>33</sup> While still abroad, Olin was elected the second president of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, but he postponed the appointment while he attempted to recover his health, and another man filled the position until he could accept it.

According to William North Rice, writing about Wesleyan University in 1876, when Olin finally arrived at the school in 1842—by then he was the third president—his

fame as a pulpit orator, and his previous success in similar institutions, caused him to be greeted with an enthusiastic welcome. His health was so feeble as never to allow him to devote himself as he wished to the work of the institution. He was, however, successful in improving the financial condition of the university, and especially in extending its reputation, and his noble and commanding character was itself an inspiration to all the students under his charge.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to putting the university back on track financially, Olin consolidated the curriculum and won the respect of the students. During his presidency, he continued to preach and debate, gaining support for the university, both monetary and otherwise.<sup>35</sup>

Olin had owned slaves while living in the South, but during his presidency at Wesleyan, he was the 1844 delegate from the slavery-opposing New York Conference to the Methodist Episcopal General Conference. In

James M. Buckley's history of Methodism, the author noted that Olin gave the only speech at the conference that exhibited "a full comprehension and just estimate of all sides of the subject."<sup>36</sup> Working to avoid a schism in the church, Olin served on a committee trying to find "a basis of agreement for the pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups." Following the conference, he led a movement to secure fraternal relations between the two factions.<sup>37</sup>

In 1843, at the age of 46, Olin married again, this time to 29-year-old Julia Matilda Lynch of New York. The couple had two sons, Stephen Henry and Lynch. Lynch died on 29 July 1851 at the age of two. Always in delicate health, Olin was profoundly affected by his child's death, which precipitated his own fatal illness and death on 16 August 1851, less than a month later, at the age of 54.<sup>38</sup>

Olin published several works during his lifetime, and after his death, his widow used his letters as the basis of a two-volume autobiography, *The Life and Letters of Stephen Olin*.<sup>39</sup> His trip abroad provided material for his *Travels in Egypt, Arabia, Petra, and the Holy Land*, published in 1843.<sup>40</sup> Two of his baccalaureate sermons at Middletown were published in 1846 and 1851, soon after each was delivered, and, after his death, in a single volume entitled *Youthful Piety* (1853).<sup>41</sup> Other posthumous publications included *Greece and the Golden Horn*, edited by his widow,<sup>42</sup> and *College Life, Its Theory and Practice*.<sup>43</sup> These publications undoubtedly contributed to Olin's widespread fame, even after his death.

### **William Ballard Preston**

The man honored with the second part of the institute's name, William Ballard Preston, was born at Smithfield Plantation in Montgomery County, Virginia, in 1805 to James Patton Preston and Ann Taylor Preston. He was the second child born to the couple and the first of three sons. Four daughters of James and Ann Preston died young, including their first-born child, who lived only a few months; a fifth daughter survived long enough to marry but died in childbirth.<sup>44</sup>

William Ballard Preston, known as "Ballard," studied at Hampden-Sydney College in Prince Edward County, Virginia, from 1821 to 1824 and began studying law at the University of Virginia the following year. He was admitted to the bar in 1826 at the age of 21 and successfully practiced law in the commonwealth. The son of a three-term governor of Virginia, he soon entered politics and served as a delegate and then as a senator in the Virginia General Assembly before his election as a Whig to Congress, where he served a two-year term beginning in 1847. President Zachary Taylor, also a Whig, named him secretary of the navy, and from 8 March 1849 to 22 July 1850,

Preston was a member of the president's cabinet. Upon Taylor's death in 1850, the 45-year-old Ballard Preston withdrew from politics for several years.<sup>45</sup>

The 34-year-old Preston married Lucinda Staples Redd, who was 20, in 1839, and the couple had six children. After his father died in 1843, Ballard and his family moved into the original Smithfield manor, which he shared with his mother, and he farmed the section of the plantation that he had inherited. Although he had spoken against slavery during his days in the Virginia legislature, he became a large slaveholder.<sup>46</sup> According to Preston biographer William Harris Gaines Jr., in addition to engaging in politics and farming, Ballard again practiced law, quickly winning "a statewide reputation as a defense attorney."<sup>47</sup>

According to Laura Jones Wedin, who has completed part one of a three-part article on Smithfield and the Prestons for the *Smithfield Review*,<sup>48</sup> Ballard Preston "understood the importance of education and its link to prosperity in the area" and was a trustee of the Montgomery Female Academy in Christiansburg, Virginia,<sup>49</sup> a school for girls that opened in 1852 and was supported by the Montgomery Presbytery.<sup>50</sup> After the founding of the Olin and Preston Institute, he, along with his brother Robert T. Preston, became a trustee of that school as well.<sup>51</sup> By 1854, the two men's brother, James F. Preston, had joined them on the board at Olin and Preston.<sup>52</sup> Since Ballard's name appears first in several lists of trustees of Olin and Preston, he most likely was president of the board.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the Preston brothers, and particularly Ballard, likely played crucial roles in the operation of Olin and Preston Institute.

In 1858 and 1859, Ballard Preston visited France as a commissioner representing a project to establish a direct line of commercial steamers between Norfolk, Virginia, and Le Havre, France. The specter of war as the United States struggled with issues of slavery and states' rights, however, doomed the project.<sup>54</sup>

As war loomed, Preston was elected a delegate to the Virginia convention considering secession, which he initially opposed. The convention appointed a delegation, which included Preston, to meet with President Abraham Lincoln to discuss his policy regarding the South. With Lincoln resolved to hold the forts in the South, the delegation returned to Richmond. There, Preston submitted an ordinance of secession—the Preston Resolution—and the convention reversed its decision, voting in favor of secession after Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina and President Lincoln called for volunteers to put down the rebellion. Ballard Preston was elected a senator from Virginia to serve in the first Confederate Congress, which met on 22 February 1862. He died at Smithfield nine months later—on 16 November 1862—at the age of 57.<sup>55</sup>

### **The First Principal of Olin and Preston Institute**

In addition to naming the Blacksburg school for two nationally prominent men, the founders of Olin and Preston Institute tapped William Ryland White, who later became a well-known educator and pioneering educational leader in West Virginia, as the first principal, or president,<sup>56</sup> of the institute.<sup>57</sup> Likely, the actual appointment of White, who had previously been a Methodist minister, came from the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The man named to guide the new academy was born in Georgetown, D.C., in 1820<sup>58</sup> and, according to his friend, Thomas C. Miller,

enjoyed exceptional advantages for that day. His father was an educated man who had been in some of the best schools of Ireland, and had come to this country in his early manhood to enjoy the freedom of the then young republic. Young William's early training was with reference to the law as a profession, but afterwards he chose the ministry and began his preparation for this work at Dickinson College.<sup>59</sup>

White graduated from Dickinson, a school in Pennsylvania, in 1841 and entered the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 at the age of 24, becoming "one of the best known and most distinguished men in the Methodist ministry" in what later became West Virginia.<sup>60</sup> He earned that reputation while serving as the pastor of various churches in the Baltimore Conference from 1844 until 1852.<sup>61</sup>

According to Miller, when White's voice began failing him, he "relinquished ministerial work for awhile, and naturally turned to the education field."<sup>62</sup> At the age of 32, he moved to Blacksburg, Virginia, to serve as the principal of Olin and Preston Institute, beginning in 1852 and remaining until 1855, in what apparently was his first job in education. According to Frankie Davis Lucas, who reported on schools in southwestern Virginia in 1935, White also taught classes.<sup>63</sup> It was most likely during his three years in Blacksburg that he met and married Cecelia Leavitt Kent,<sup>64</sup> a sister of Mary Irby Kent Black, wife of Dr. Harvey Black, whose role in the founding of Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1872 will be discussed in part II of this article. Although new to the field of education, the preacher-turned-educator reportedly was "held in the highest esteem by all" while working at the fledgling school for boys. Many years later, after White had died, a Blacksburg resident told Miller, "[H]is memory is very precious to many of us."<sup>65</sup>

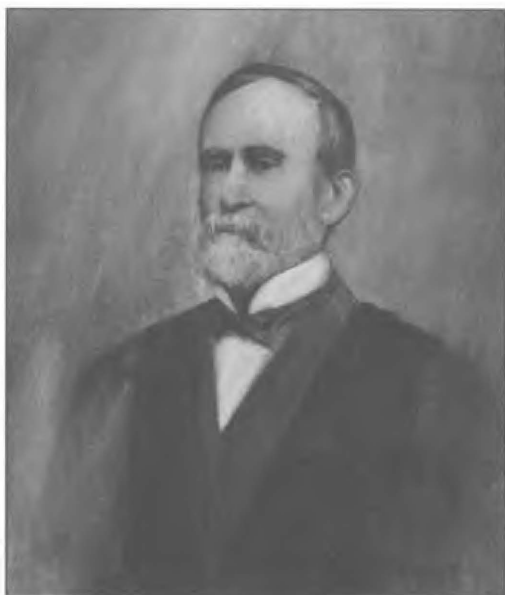


Figure 2. William R. White served the Olin and Preston Institute as its first principal (1852–1855) and later became the first superintendent of free schools in the new state of West Virginia. Photograph by Cynthia Staley of a portrait of White. Courtesy of Amy Baker Pellegrin, Fairmont State University.

In 1856, by which time White had moved to Fairmont, Virginia (West Virginia after 1861), he commenced an eight-year term as principal, or president, of the Fairmont Male and Female Seminary (or Academy),<sup>66</sup> reportedly establishing “a seminary of high grade” there. While working at the seminary, he was an advocate of the new state government of West Virginia.<sup>67</sup>

White became the first superintendent of free schools for West Virginia, elected to the position for a two-year term by the state legislature in 1864.<sup>68</sup> He began working to put the new school system into operation and “so well did he do this that he won for himself the title ‘the Horace Mann of West Virginia.’”<sup>69</sup> As superintendent, White led the movement to establish normal schools (schools that taught students how to teach) and other institutions of higher education in the state, reporting to the legislature at one point, “It would be better to suspend the schools of the state for two years and donate the entire school revenues for that time to the establishment and endowment of a state normal school than to have none at all.” Through his efforts, West Virginia had three normal schools by 1867 and added another three in 1872.<sup>70</sup>

White worked to improve the education of both the black and white races. After he stated during his first year in office that “Negroes deserved educational assistance from the state,” the West Virginia legislature amended its original free school law, which it had passed in 1863, to authorize “township boards of education to establish separate schools for Negroes

between six and twenty-one years of age.” White assured the Freedmen’s Bureau in West Virginia of the desire of West Virginians and state authorities “to secure to the colored youth, the same educational advantages that the whites enjoy.”<sup>71</sup>

According to Miller,

As State Superintendent, he had many discouragements, everything being new and untried, and yet within five years [the] system was well under way, free schools had been organized in all sections, the Normal Schools had been established, and much done to popularize the work throughout the State. Probably Professor White’s most efficient service as Superintendent was in traveling over the State and addressing the people on educational topics. In the transition from the old to the new much prejudice had to be over come, and in many communities the estrangements caused by the Civil War produced a great deal of friction. All these obstacles he labored earnestly to remove, and no man in the State could have succeeded better in the effort.<sup>72</sup>

The two-year appointment as state superintendent that began in 1864 stretched into five years, lasting until 1869,<sup>73</sup> when White resigned to become the first principal of the West Virginia normal school at Fairmont—Fairmont Branch Normal School, now Fairmont State University—one of the schools he had helped found. When the school year ended in 1870, he resigned his position to become the West Virginia agent of the American Bible Society.<sup>74</sup>

In 1875, White returned to the ministry, working as a religious leader in various Methodist Episcopal churches in West Virginia. He was stationed as pastor in Morgantown in 1875, moved back to Fairmont in 1877 for a similar position, and went to Wheeling to fulfill that role for a year beginning in 1878. He then served as presiding elder in the Buckhannon district from 1879 to 1883. In 1884, he returned to his ministry in Fairmont for two years and then went back to Morgantown for three years, beginning in 1886, the same year that the Allegheny conference conferred the degree Doctor of Divinity upon him.<sup>75</sup> A history of the Wesley United Methodist Church in Morgantown, where White had already served twice, listed him as the church’s minister again in 1891.<sup>76</sup>

In 1892, White returned to education, serving as principal of Buckhannon Public Schools. By the time he died on 11 November 1893 at the age of 73, he had been named superintendent in charge of all schools in the Fairmont district.<sup>77</sup> According to his obituary, he “was a ripe scholar and an able preacher.”<sup>78</sup>

Four years after White's death, Miller described the character of the man:

In thinking of an old instructor and personal friend, Professor White, I recall very distinctly his strong personality, his critical accuracy, his dislike for sham and pretense, and his emphatic views and actions upon all moral and social questions. As a teacher he came very nearly being the ideal English rector of olden times, who was a moral, a social and a spiritual guide for the entire community. Professor White served respectively as a teacher, pastor, lecturer, moral and social reformer, and as an acknowledged leader in every patriotic and benevolent enterprise.<sup>79</sup>

### Olin and Preston Opens

The new institute in Blacksburg led by William R. White was “founded under the guardianship of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church”<sup>80</sup> with “support and cooperation from members of other denominations.”<sup>81</sup> Olin and Preston “was officially made the men’s college of the Baltimore Conference of the [Methodist Episcopal Church, South]” in 1853,<sup>82</sup> but the year that the school opened its doors to students could not be determined because of conflicting dates reported by historians. Jenkins M. Robertson, a Virginia Tech historian, wrote that it opened in 1855.<sup>83</sup> Anson Watson Cummings, author of *The Early Schools of Methodism*, and Christopher Ross Donald, who delivered a series of lectures on Blacksburg Methodist churches, identified an 1853 opening,<sup>84</sup> but other historians have reported that it opened in 1851.<sup>85</sup> Regardless, the first principal did not begin



Figure 3. Student Abraham Hogan used this textbook at the Olin and Preston Institute in 1855. His great-grandson, Dr. David Minichan Jr., loaned the book to Virginia Tech in 1997 for use in a display. Photograph by William E. Cox.

working at the school until 1852.<sup>86</sup> It is possible that the founders spent the year 1851 organizing the institute and soliciting money for its operation. It is also possible that the school began operating without the services of a principal.

Where the school held its classes once it did open is uncertain, but accommodations must have been made to house its classes. No records could be found of any building projects early in the school's existence, perhaps because the Baltimore Conference had advised the trustees not to initiate a building program without sufficient financial backing. The Committee on Seminaries, the educational oversight committee for the conference, recommended that the trustees "take no steps toward erecting buildings for educational purposes, until they have secured on subscription at least three-fourths of the sum necessary to build—and in the failure to use such precaution, it will be fruitless to look to this conference for aid."<sup>87</sup> Apparently, the trustees ignored this advice when they constructed a school building a few years later (see below).

In addition to a principal, Olin and Preston had an agent, and the first one reported in the records of the Baltimore Conference was J. N. Davis, appointed by the conference in 1852.<sup>88</sup> An "agent," according to Robert Shindle, archivist of the United Methodist Historical Society of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, "was used as sort of an all-purpose term for someone acting on behalf of the denomination or one of its boards. . . . Agents appointed by the conference to get a project under way were usually fairly prominent and persuasive clergy or lay members who could manage the project and convince others to get behind it."<sup>89</sup>

In 1853, the Baltimore Conference failed to identify an agent.<sup>90</sup> Operating without such an official apparently hampered the financial operations of Olin and Preston since the institute reported to the Committee on Seminaries that it needed the conference to provide it with one. Based on the entire report from Olin and Preston and on reports from two other schools supported by the Methodists, the committee made five recommendations, including the following four:

1. *Resolved*, That [the other schools] and Olin and Preston Institute, Blacksburg, Va., institutions under the patronage of this Conference, are hereby commended to the confidence and support of our church, and of the public generally.
  
2. *Resolved*, That we recommend the appointment of an agent from among the members of the Conference, to travel and collect funds for [the other schools] and Olin and Preston Institute, all single men if practicable.

3. *Resolved*, That the bishop be requested to appoint visiting committees for the Institutions named above, for the ensuing year, each committee to consist of three members of Conference.

5. *Resolved*, That each of the Seminaries under the control of the Conference be requested to send a general statement of its condition and prospects to the Conference at every annual session thereof, to be placed in the hands of the Committee on Seminaries, to aid them in making out their report.<sup>91</sup>

### **Olin and Preston Constructs a Building, Becomes Incorporated**

The year 1854 was an important one for Olin and Preston Institute, a high-water mark in its history. William R. White continued to run the daily operations of the school, and a newly assigned agent, John T. Stansbury, raised money for it.<sup>92</sup> The Baltimore Conference's Committee on Seminaries reported that Olin and Preston "promises to be a flourishing school and an efficient auxiliary to the interests of the Church in the section of the country where it is located."<sup>93</sup>

The report possibly reflected two significant events that occurred that year. First, the trustees of Olin and Preston Institute commenced a building program, entering into a contract (see Figure 4) on 6 February 1854 with Samuel H. Stokes and Alden Pusey, partners who were carpenters and house joiners, and John N. Lyle and O. Alexander, partners who were brickmasons, to construct a building for \$8,500 (nearly \$243,000 today<sup>94</sup>). According to the contract, the builders were to "erect a college building on the land purchased by the said institute" following plans attached to the contract and using materials specified in another attachment and "done in workmanlike manner." It also gave permission to the builders to make the bricks needed in the construction "on the lot purchased by the Institute."<sup>95</sup> The contract specified 1 August 1855 as the final completion date.<sup>96</sup> The facility erected by Stokes & Alden and Lyle & Alexander was a three-story brick building 100 by 40 feet and was located on a hill near today's intersection of Alumni Mall and Main Street. This project was to play an important role in both the demise and rebirth of the school, but at the time, it gave the institute the capability to accommodate about 100 students.<sup>97</sup>

Another important event in the life of the school occurred on 28 February 1854 when the Virginia General Assembly passed an act to incorporate the Blacksburg school for boys, designating it as "a seminary of learning for the instruction of youth in the various branches of science and literature,



Figure 4. Page three of the 1854 contract to construct a building for the Olin and Preston Institute includes signatures of the school’s trustees and the contractors they engaged. The trustees agreed to pay \$8,500 to erect the building. Scan by Sarah A. Nerney, Library of Virginia senior local records archivist working at the Montgomery County Courthouse. Courtesy of the Office of the Clerk of Court, Montgomery County Courthouse, Christiansburg, Virginia.

and useful arts, and the learned and foreign languages.” The legislature also officially recognized the name as “Olin and Preston Institute.”<sup>98</sup>

The act of incorporation listed the institute’s trustees as William Ballard Preston; E. R. Anderson; M. R. White (this probably should have been “W. R. White,” the principal); James R. Kent; David G. Douthat; Joseph Cloyd; W. A. Wade; Harvey Black; James F. Preston; John R. Philips; Benjamin L. Brown; David Barnett; N. M. Ronald; John Wall; Waller R. Staples; William H. Snidow; M. Goheen; A. Buhiman (two 1860 newspaper articles listed an “A. Buhrman” as a trustee,<sup>99</sup> and an “A. Burman” was included in a list of trustees in the 1860 land transaction documents for the school,<sup>100</sup> so the name probably was misspelled in the act of incorporation; “Buhrman” most likely was the correct spelling); J. R. Wheeler; and Giles J. Henderson. It also listed the following men who had also served as trustees of the Blacksburg Female Academy: Robert T. Preston, Edwin J. Amiss, William H. Peck, and Alexander Black. The act delineated the powers these men would hold as trustees, named the officers they could hire to operate the school, and granted them the power to confer degrees.<sup>101</sup>

In 1855, only White's name appears in the minutes of the Baltimore conference as an official of Olin and Preston<sup>102</sup> in what was to become his last year at the school. Although no agent is identified in the conference records, Edmund B. Snyder served in that capacity that year. Snyder's agent's book, held in Special Collections in Newman Library on the Virginia Tech campus, lists the trustees in 1855 and provides other information about financial supporters of the school. Six of the trustees at the time of incorporation—Cloyd, Wall, Goheen, Buhiman (Buhrman or Burman), Wheeler, and Henderson—apparently had left the governing board since their names do not appear in Snyder's list, and two men—John Hale and A. L. Pitzer—had been added.<sup>103</sup> Although it could not be determined if the Baltimore Conference appointed trustees to the board on a regular basis, it did so on at least one occasion<sup>104</sup> and most likely selected the various Methodist ministers who served in that capacity during the life of the school.

The agent's book also lists subscriptions, which Shindle defined as "a pledge of support, a written promise by someone to give a certain amount of money within a certain timeframe." Institutions, he continued, "were often built 'by public subscription,' meaning that they were built on the pledge of support by presumably trustworthy people (such as church members)."<sup>105</sup>

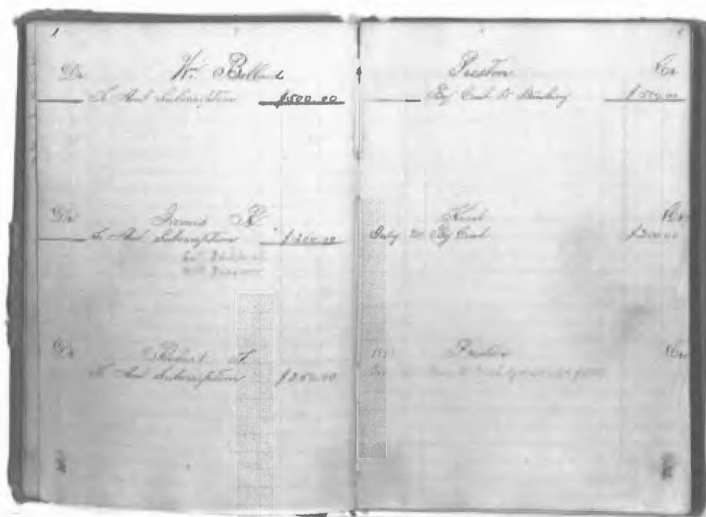


Figure 5. This two-page spread from the record book kept by Olin and Preston's agent for 1854, John T. Stansbury, shows three subscriptions made in support of the institute, including one for \$500 from William Ballard Preston and another for \$250 from Robert T. Preston. Courtesy Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Many of the initial names listed in the agent's book as subscribers (see Figure 5) are those of the trustees, with William Ballard Preston subscribing the greatest amount: \$500<sup>106</sup> (just over \$13,500 today), making him a—if not the—principal supporter of the school that bore his name.

### **Financial Difficulties Surface**

Another agent—Joshua M. Grandin—was working on behalf of the school in 1856<sup>107</sup> but left by 1857, and the Baltimore Conference minutes that year reference financial difficulties for the first time, even while praising the institute's site, its facilities, and Grandin's work:

The *Olin and Preston Institute* is beautifully located in Blacksburg, Montgomery County, Virginia. It possesses every facility for the instruction of those who may be committed to its care. The satisfactory statement, which has been presented to the committee by the recent efficient agent Rev. J. M. Grandin, justifies the prediction that *a high and honorable destiny awaits it* [emphasis added]. The only difficulty which at present seems to interfere to any extent with its prosperity, is a *financial* one, which however, we regard not a *serious* embarrassment; but with a view to its removal, and at the request of the Trustees of the institution, the committee recommend the appointment of an agent for the coming year.<sup>108</sup>

Grandin's prediction of "a high and honorable destiny" for the institute took a number of years to realize. Meanwhile, Jacob Montgomery succeeded him in the position as agent.<sup>109</sup>

In 1858, the academy hired Charles A. Smith, a graduate of the University of Virginia, to teach mathematics. Perhaps he replaced William Henry Dawson, who reportedly was the school's first math teacher. Since Dawson has also been identified as the person in charge of the "primary" department,<sup>110</sup> he may have moved into the latter position when Smith was hired. The principal succeeding White could not be determined, but Ellen Taylor McDonald, who in 1926 recorded some historic notes of the area, reported that the school in 1859 was "in the care of Mr. Gilmore and Rev. Mr. Smith. Then Mr. McNeice and the Rev. Mr. Graham."<sup>111</sup> However, Mrs. S. A. Wingard claimed in her 1939 history of Blacksburg that the principal in 1859 was Gilmore Smith, a combination of the two names given by McDonald. Wingard also listed a "Mr. McNeele" and a "Reverend Graham"—the first name similar to the one reported by McDonald and the second name the same—as having taught at the institute.<sup>112</sup> More than likely, Wingard incorrectly reported information that came from McDonald or that she had heard locally.

The year that Smith was hired to teach at Olin and Preston, the Baltimore Conference named a visiting committee to the Blacksburg boy's school.<sup>113</sup> The Committee on Seminaries again called for "the attention and support" of the Baltimore Conference for the institute, expressing its belief that such support would help it become "a first class college":

To thus elevate this Institution should be one of the special aims of the Conference, as a college is no where more earnestly demanded by our interests than in [southwestern] Virginia. As we have no literary Institute of first order in all that section, the colleges under the patronage of other churches receive the support of our people.

We therefore recommend [Olin and Preston Institute] to the patronage of our preachers and people, and to the public generally.

Especially we recommend that the preachers of Rockingham, Lewisburg and Roanoke districts, call the attention of the public to this Institution, and make earnest efforts to procure for it sufficient patronage.<sup>114</sup>

That call for financial support may have been spurred by a lawsuit filed by Stokes & Pusey and Lyle & Alexander in January 1858 to recover money promised them in the contract to construct the Olin and Preston Building. The suit, which was filed against each individual member of the board of trustees, alleged that the trustees failed to make any of the payments delineated in the contract: \$1,500 on 1 May 1854, \$2,000 on 1 November



Figure 6. This three-story brick building, completed in 1855, was the subject of a long-running lawsuit filed against Olin and Preston Institute by the contractors who built it and remained unpaid. Courtesy Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

1864, \$2,500 on 1 April 1865, and \$2,500 in three annual installments from completion of the building.<sup>115</sup> On 22 July 1858, Lyle met with the board of trustees and agreed to a settlement on behalf of the builders. According to the minutes of that meeting, he accepted \$2,946.16 (around \$84,000 today) “as the balance due to the contractors for the said building.” In return, he agreed to dismiss the action that he had brought in circuit court.<sup>116</sup>

However, on 8 February 1859, Lyle was forced to file another suit against the trustees, this time collectively rather than individually, for the money that had been agreed upon at the July 1858 board meeting. According to the suit, the institute had refused to pay that settlement. The suit was continued for years, with the final conclusion not reached until after Lyle had died and the Civil War had ended.<sup>117</sup>

In 1859, perhaps again reacting to the suit in the courts, the Committee on Seminaries noted that Olin and Preston deserved and required

at this time the special attention and cordial support of the church. A just and proper care of this Institution may, at no distant day, elevate it to the character of a first class College. This, your Committee think, should be one of the special aims of the Conference, as our interests in [southwestern] Virginia imperiously demand such an Institution.

Your Committee heartily endorse the Institution, and cordially commend it to public confidence.<sup>118</sup>

In 1860, the Baltimore Conference appointed the Reverends John S. Martin, William F. Speake, and C. W. Dalrymple to form a committee of visitation to the Blacksburg school. Additionally, it named S. Register, Speake, A. Buhrman, H. A. Gaver, J. C. Dice, and W. S. Edwards as trustees.<sup>119</sup>

In other action in 1860, a committee appointed by the conference to receive money for educational purposes mentioned a resolution passed “at the last session” to take up “a collection for educational purposes” that was to be equally divided among four schools supported by the conference, including Olin and Preston. The total amount raised was \$422.34, making Olin and Preston’s portion almost \$105.59<sup>120</sup> (about \$3,000 today). However, holdings in Special Collections at Virginia Tech include a photocopied receipt for \$136.78 from Thomas Myers, chairman of a committee, presumably the Committee on Seminaries, for “the share of the educational collection for Olin and Preston Institute,”<sup>121</sup> which might be the portion actually received by the Blacksburg school—or it could constitute an additional amount collected to support the academy.

The money raised by the Baltimore Conference may have gone toward the 1860 purchase of land from Jacob and Mary A. Keister. Those representing the institute on the deed were “Wm B. Preston, E. J. Amiss, Wm H. Peck, Robert Preston, Jas. F. Preston, James R. Kent, D. G. Doughit, E. R. Anderson, Harvey Black, and N. M. Ronald all of the county of Montgomery and state of Virginia and Wm F. Speak, J. S. Martin, A. Burman, J. E. Armstrong, J. R. Wheeler Ministers of the Methodist Church of the Baltimore Conference,” who were named as trustees of Olin and Preston. The amount of land purchased was four acres, “adjoining George Keisters (sic) tanyard lots.” One of the borders ran “to a stake passing through [indistinguishable word] Jacob Keister’s land back of the college building,” then ran “to a stake at the edge of the Salem and Pepper’s Ferry turnpike.” The Keisters received \$650 (just over \$18,500 today) from the trustees for the parcel.<sup>122</sup>

Although the Blacksburg school now had land and a building, the ongoing suit by Lyle, weak support from the Baltimore Conference, and heightened tensions leading to the Civil War forced Olin and Preston to close its doors. While a number of historians have reported that the institute closed during or at the end of the war,<sup>123</sup> a Preston and Olin Institute catalogue produced in the late 1860s stated that Olin and Preston was “successfully conducted until the commencement of the late war [Civil War].”<sup>124</sup> Thus, it had already been closed for a few years when, on 11 May 1864, Major General George G. Crook established his headquarters in the vacated Olin and Preston Building as he and his Union troops made their way back to West Virginia following the Battle of Cloyd’s Mountain in Pulaski County.<sup>125</sup> But like a phoenix, the school rose once again after the war to be rechristened the Preston and Olin Institute, which later became Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, known today as Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### Endnotes

1. Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg, Va.: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Educational Foundation, Inc., 1972), 41; Clara B. Cox and Jenkins M. Robertson, *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech* (Blacksburg, Va.: University Relations, Virginia Tech, 2010), [www.unirel.vt.edu/history/](http://www.unirel.vt.edu/history/); and Stephen O'Hara, "The War of the Colleges and the Birth of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College," *The Founding of Virginia Tech*, [www.vt.edu/landgrant/essays/founding-virginia-tech.html](http://www.vt.edu/landgrant/essays/founding-virginia-tech.html).
2. The act provided each state with 30,000 acres of federal land for each member of the state's congressional delegation. The states then sold the land "to fund public colleges that focused on agriculture and the mechanical arts" ("Primary Documents in American History: Morrill Act," *The Library of Congress Web Guides*, [www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Morrill.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Morrill.html)). Because Virginia had seceded from the Union, it did not take advantage of the provisions of the act for a decade after its passage.
3. *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia at Its Session of 1871-'72* (Richmond, Va.: R. F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1872), 312-15; "The Land Scrip—The Question Finally Disposed Of," *Bristol News* (Bristol, Va. and Tenn.) 7, no. 346 (5 April 1872), 1; "The Educational Land Scrip," *Daily State Journal* (Alexandria, Va.) (14 March 1872), 4; Cornelius Jacob Heatwole, *A History of Education in Virginia* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 204; and Cox and Robertson, *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech*. Preston and Olin received two-thirds of the scrip; the other third went to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural School—today's Hampton University—to serve as the commonwealth's black land-grant college. In 1920, the state legislature transferred the black land-grant school designation to what is now Virginia State University ("The University History, Virginia State University Undergraduate Catalog 2006-2008," [vsu.edu/files/docs/academics/undergraduate-catalog-2006-2008.pdf](http://vsu.edu/files/docs/academics/undergraduate-catalog-2006-2008.pdf), 4).
4. *Acts and Joint Resolutions, 1871-'72*, 312.
5. Isaac Edwards Clarke, "Part IV: Art and Industry," *Congressional Serial Set 7* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898), 600; William H. Ruffner, J. R. Anderson, and W. T. Sutherlin, "Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College," report from the committee planning organization and instruction, presented to the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College Board of Visitors, 14 August 1872, Yellow Sulphur Springs, Va., published in pamphlet form and adopted by the board as its annual report to the Virginia General Assembly (no publication information given), 2-3; and Cox and Robertson, *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech*.
6. According to "The University Shield" in Virginia Tech's online *Factbook: About the University* ([www.vt.edu/about/factbook/about-university.html](http://www.vt.edu/about/factbook/about-university.html)), the numerals 1872 in the shield "recognize the year the university was founded."
7. A. J. Morrison, *The Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia, 1776-1860: Study of Secondary Schools in Relation to the State Literary Fund* (Richmond, Va.: D. Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 15; Foney G. Mullins, "A History of the Literary Fund as a Funding Source for Free Public Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia" (Ed.D. diss., Virginia Tech, 2001), [scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-04262001230201/unrestricted/Mullins\\_Foney.PDF](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-04262001230201/unrestricted/Mullins_Foney.PDF); Courtney Hoffberger, "Nineteenth Century Reform Movements: Women's Rights,"

- Teaching American History in Anne Arundel County Program, Maryland, n.d., [www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/Nineteenth\\_Century\\_Reform\\_Movements\\_Womens\\_Rights\(PrinterFriendly\).pdf](http://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/Nineteenth_Century_Reform_Movements_Womens_Rights(PrinterFriendly).pdf), 11; and Kinnear, *First 100 Years*.
8. Morrison, *Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia, 1776–1860*, 15.
  9. Clara B. Cox, “Blacksburg Educates Its Children, 1740s–1990s,” in *A Special Place for 200 Years: A History of Blacksburg, Virginia*, ed. Clara B. Cox (Blacksburg, Va.: Town of Blacksburg, 1998), 82.
  10. *Deed Book N*, 11 and 12, Montgomery County Courthouse, Christiansburg, Va.
  11. “Virginia Legislative Petitions Database Index, 1776–1865,” Library of Virginia, Richmond, box 172, folder 69, reel 132.
  12. Christopher Ross Donald, “Growth and Independence of Methodist Congregations in Blacksburg, Virginia,” *Smithfield Review* 10 (2006), 52, reported that the year was 1851 “when the leaders of Blacksburg’s MECS [Methodist Episcopal Church, South] and town leaders established the Olin and Preston Institute.”
  13. Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 11, wrote that most of the Methodist leaders who started Olin and Preston “were trustees in the Blacksburg Female Academy.” A comparison of the trustees who signed the 1860 deed to purchase land for Olin and Preston and the institute’s trustees listed in the 1854 act of incorporation with the trustees who signed the 1840 deed for the Blacksburg Female Academy, however, indicates that only four men were trustees of both. Since the female academy had been in operation for about 20 years by the time the Methodist leaders recorded the land deed, other Olin and Preston trustees may have served terms as Blacksburg Female Academy trustees during that time.
  14. Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 11, and Harry Downing Temple, *The Bugle’s Echo*, (6 vols., Blacksburg, Va.: Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Alumni Inc., 1996), 1: 11.
  15. Ellen Taylor McDonald, “Notes on Draper’s Meadows and Blacksburg and Vicinity” (1926), Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.
  16. G. F. Poteet, “Secondary Education in Montgomery County 1776–1936” (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1937), 142. Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 12, implied that the land was purchased before 1851.
  17. For a discussion of a possible location, see Mrs. J. B. Lucas [Frangie Davis Lucas], “The Schools of Southwestern Virginia” (Blacksburg, Va., 1935), manuscript in Special Collections, Virginia Tech, 11–12. Lucas reported that she had not been able to learn the location of the male academy organized in Blacksburg in 1850 but said, “There is some indication that it was the building across the street from the Odd Fellow’s hall.”
  18. *Deed Book Q*, 503–504, Montgomery County Circuit Court, Christiansburg, Va.
  19. McDonald, “Notes on Draper’s Meadow and Blacksburg”; Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 12; Temple, *Bugle’s Echo*, 1: 11; C. A. Turner Jr., “Methodism in Blacksburg, 1798–1948” (Blacksburg, Va.: n.p., 1948), Special Collections, Virginia Tech; and “History,” Randolph Macon College, Ashland, Va., [www.rmc.edu/about/history](http://www.rmc.edu/about/history).
  20. Temple, *Bugle’s Echo*, 1: 12.
  21. Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 11.
  22. Stephen Olin, *The Life and Letters of Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.*, ed. Julia Matilda Olin (2 vols., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), [books.google.com/books?id=HBZZAAAAAYAAJ&prints\\_ec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=HBZZAAAAAYAAJ&prints_ec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false), 1: 9–137, and “Biographical Sketch – Stephen Olin, D.D., L.L. D.,” The George Washington University, [www.godrules.net/library/gorrie/147gorrie\\_b20.htm](http://www.godrules.net/library/gorrie/147gorrie_b20.htm).
  23. However, he is designated the school’s “principal” by Anson Watson Cummings, *The Early Schools of Methodism* (New York: Phillips & Hunt; Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1886), [books.google.com/books?id=JOBDAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA428&lpg=PA428&dq=Olin+and+Preston+Institute+1853&source=bl&ots=J7Cc4qJMHL&sig=kilikbKDeeKRGSTn1ZSQViqUjwQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QllqVO-hBrOasQSV64DIDA&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=Preston&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=JOBDAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA428&lpg=PA428&dq=Olin+and+Preston+Institute+1853&source=bl&ots=J7Cc4qJMHL&sig=kilikbKDeeKRGSTn1ZSQViqUjwQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QllqVO-hBrOasQSV64DIDA&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=Preston&f=false), 84.

24. Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 9–137.
25. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (6 vols., New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), [books.google.com/books?id=u8JBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA74&lpg=PA74&dq=James+Grant+Wilson+and+John+Fiske,+eds.,+Appletons'+Cyclopaedia+of+American+Biography+vol.+IV&source=bl&ots=ARPGSd1OqW&sig=RCbkZwqsbULziUkAZppJs1vckWs&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XurLVNrnLseZNuiDgvAB&ved=0CDoQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=Stephen%20Olin&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=u8JBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA74&lpg=PA74&dq=James+Grant+Wilson+and+John+Fiske,+eds.,+Appletons'+Cyclopaedia+of+American+Biography+vol.+IV&source=bl&ots=ARPGSd1OqW&sig=RCbkZwqsbULziUkAZppJs1vckWs&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XurLVNrnLseZNuiDgvAB&ved=0CDoQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=Stephen%20Olin&f=false), 4: 571.
26. Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 9–137, and Adam Bermudez, “Stephen Olin,” *Bronx Chronicle* (Bronx, N.Y.), 29 October 2014, [thebronxcharinicle.com](http://thebronxcharinicle.com).
27. Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 139.
28. Ms. Bostick was probably born around 1792; see “Bostick Family,” [oursouthernuncousins.com/BOSTICK%20FAMILY.pdf](http://oursouthernuncousins.com/BOSTICK%20FAMILY.pdf), 21, and Ancestry.com ([records.ancestry.com/mary\\_ann\\_bostick\\_records.ashx?pid=23190618](http://records.ancestry.com/mary_ann_bostick_records.ashx?pid=23190618)).
29. Rev. Dr. Wightman (only last name given), writing in Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 140.
30. Wightman in Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 143–46, and Wilson and Fiske, *Appleton's Cyclopaedia*, 4: 571.
31. The college was moved to Ashland, Va., in 1868 (“R-MC's History of Success,” Randolph Macon College, [www.rmc.edu/about/history](http://www.rmc.edu/about/history)).
32. Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 154–77.
33. Olin, *Life and Letters*, 1: 177–266, and Robert Paine, *Life and Times of William M'Kendree: Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (2 vols., 1869; Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1922), [books.google.com/books?id=mn5HAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=mary+ann+bostick+olin&source=bl&ots=XYzRcVtsWO&sig=4b1UwH0z2RmZUvK8HHnLsNxVQ\\_Q&hl=en&sa=X&ei=VyLBVImI0ZDcgwSu54OoBg&ved=0CEkQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=mary%20ann%20bostick%20olin&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=mn5HAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=mary+ann+bostick+olin&source=bl&ots=XYzRcVtsWO&sig=4b1UwH0z2RmZUvK8HHnLsNxVQ_Q&hl=en&sa=X&ei=VyLBVImI0ZDcgwSu54OoBg&ved=0CEkQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=mary%20ann%20bostick%20olin&f=false), 2: 124.
34. William North Rice, “Wesleyan University,” *Scribner's Monthly* 12, no. 5 (September 1876), [books.google.com/books?id=D6\\_PAAAAMAAJ&pg=PR4&lpg=PR4&dq=william+north+rice+scribner%27s+monthly+1876&source=bl&ots=hAQmJER5XK&sig=la\\_iGL4ZRcVn1hQnG1HgPaRkPIU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=DIfSVMKApDagwT7qIS4DA&ved=0CCYQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20north%20rice%20scribner's%20monthly%201876&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=D6_PAAAAMAAJ&pg=PR4&lpg=PR4&dq=william+north+rice+scribner%27s+monthly+1876&source=bl&ots=hAQmJER5XK&sig=la_iGL4ZRcVn1hQnG1HgPaRkPIU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=DIfSVMKApDagwT7qIS4DA&ved=0CCYQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20north%20rice%20scribner's%20monthly%201876&f=false), 652.
35. “Wesleyan's Third President,” Office of the President website, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., [www.wesleyan.edu/president/pastpresidents/olin.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/president/pastpresidents/olin.html).
36. “Olin,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, [www.mocavo.com/Dictionary-of-American-Biography-Volume-14/647349/28](http://www.mocavo.com/Dictionary-of-American-Biography-Volume-14/647349/28), 14, quoting from James M. Buckley, *A History of Methodism in the United States* (2 vols., New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1897), no page numbers.
37. “Olin,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, 14.
38. Wilson and Fiske, *Appleton's Cyclopaedia*, 4: 571; Olin, *Life and Letters*, 2: 453; and “Web Family Cards,” [olinfamilysociety.org/webcards/wc16/wc16\\_103.html](http://olinfamilysociety.org/webcards/wc16/wc16_103.html).
39. Olin, *Life and Letters*.
40. Stephen Olin, *Travels in Egypt, Arabia, Petra, and the Holy Land* (2 vols., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843).
41. Stephen Olin, *Youthful Piety: Discourses Addressed to the Graduating Classes of Wesleyan University, A. D. 1845 and 1850* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1854).
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45. Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, 3: 43; Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 84; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*; and *American President: A Reference Resource*.
  46. S. W. Brown, “Eminent West Virginians: A Sketch of the Life of Charles James Faulkner,” *West Virginia School Journal* 6, no. 3 (March 1887), 5; Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 83, 85, 89–90; L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers, eds., *The Old South’s Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 182; Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia* (2 vols., Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC–CLIO, 2007), 1: 496; Ballard C. Camp and Jeff Forret, “Slavery in the United States,” *Issues and Controversies in American History*, ed. Jeff Forret (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2012), 204; Christopher Michael Curtis, *Jefferson’s Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 144.
  47. William Harris Gaines Jr., “William Ballard Preston,” *Biographical Register of Members: Virginia State Convention of 1861, First Session* (Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Library, 1969), 64.
  48. Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 79–95.
  49. *Ibid.*, 90–91.
  50. “Montgomery Female College Collection, 1875–1892,” Special Collections, Virginia Tech, *ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=vt/viblv00343.xml*.
  51. Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 90–91.
  52. “Schools and Academies,” *Virginia Acts of Assembly, 1853–54*, 67–68.
  53. Ballard Preston’s name is listed first in the act of incorporation, in the contract to construct the Olin and Preston school building, in the 1855 Agent’s Book for Olin and Preston Institute, and in the 1860 land purchase record.
  54. Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 91.
  55. Wedin, “Summary of 19th–Century Smithfield,” 91–92; Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, 3: 43; Barnes et al., eds., *The Old South’s Modern Worlds*, 182; and Lawrence M. Denton, *Unionists in Virginia: Politics, Secession and Their Plan to Prevent Civil War* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2014), [books.google.com/books?id=YUAmBQAAQBAJ&pg=PT15&lpg=PT15&dq=william+ballard+preston+and+slavery&source=bl&ots=9MAYFNXqSM&sig=5y\\_-JUKI94bd0nJt77OIniH6MVw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=mDfBVM2pLMGngwTpnlCoBg&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20ballard%20preston%20and%20slavery&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=YUAmBQAAQBAJ&pg=PT15&lpg=PT15&dq=william+ballard+preston+and+slavery&source=bl&ots=9MAYFNXqSM&sig=5y_-JUKI94bd0nJt77OIniH6MVw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=mDfBVM2pLMGngwTpnlCoBg&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20ballard%20preston%20and%20slavery&f=false), no page numbers.
  56. The terms “president” and “principal” seem to have been interchangeable. Some sources use “president,” e.g., James Edward Armstrong, *History of the Old Baltimore Conference: From the Planting of Methodism in 1773 to the Division of the Conference in 1857* (Baltimore, Md.: Printed for the Author by King Brothers, 1907), digital edition printed 26 October 1998 by Holiness Data Ministry (no page numbers). Others use “principal,” e.g., “Baltimore Conference Appointments,” *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.) 4, no. 125 (18 March 1854), 1. Minutes of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church call White the “principal.”
  57. “Dr. W. R. White Dead,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, W.Va.) 42, no. 69 (11 November 1893), 1; Kenneth M. Plumer, *A History of West Virginia Wesleyan College, 1890–1965* (Buckhannon, W.Va.: West Virginia Wesleyan College Press, 1965), [www.archive.org/details/historyofwestvirOOplum](http://www.archive.org/details/historyofwestvirOOplum), no page numbers; Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 12; Temple, *Bugle’s Echo*, 1: 12; McDonald, “Notes on Draper’s Meadow and Blacksburg”; and Armstrong, *History of the Old Baltimore Conference*.
  58. Armstrong, *History of the Old Baltimore Conference*, in Appendix A, “Clerical Sketches,” gives the year of birth for White as 1829, but other sources list his birth year as 1820: “Dr. W. R. White Dead”; “Necrology: Dr. William Ryland White, the First State Superintendent of Free

- Schools of West Virginia,” *Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Free Schools of the State of West Virginia for the Years 1893 and 1894*, Virgil A. Lewis, State Superintendent of Free Schools (Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia, State Department of Education, 1894), 36; and Plumer, *History of West Virginia Wesleyan College*.
59. Thomas C. Miller, “William Ryland White,” *Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Free Schools of West Virginia for the Two Years Ended June 30, 1900*, J. R. Trotter, State Superintendent of Free Schools (Charleston, W.Va.: State of West Virginia, 1901), 9, reprinted from Thomas C. Miller, “William Ryland White,” *West Virginia School Journal* 17, no. 1 (April 1897), 1–2.
60. “Dr. W. R. White Dead.”
61. Plumer, *History of West Virginia Wesleyan College*.
62. Miller, “William Ryland White,” 11.
63. Lucas, “Schools of Southwestern Virginia,” 11.
64. “Cecelia Leavitt Kent,” Ancestry.com, [records.ancestry.com/cecilia\\_leavitt\\_kent\\_records.ashx?pid=169003764](https://www.ancestry.com/cecilia_leavitt_kent_records.ashx?pid=169003764).
65. Miller, “William Ryland White,” 11.
66. “Dr. W. R. White Dead”; “Necrology,” 37; and Plumer, *History of West Virginia Wesleyan College*. An anonymous author reported in *The History of Education in West Virginia*, revised edition (Charleston, W.Va.: State of West Virginia, 1907), 42, that White succeeded Doctor Alexander Martin as principal of Northwestern Virginia Academy and had served twelve years when he was elected the West Virginia State Superintendent of Free Schools. That time, however, conflicts with his principalships at Olin and Preston Institute and the Male and Female Seminary in Fairmont, Virginia (later West Virginia), and can thus be assumed to be incorrect.
67. Miller, “William Ryland White,” 11.
68. “West Virginia Legislature,” *Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, W.Va.), 17 February 1864, 2.
69. Anonymous, *History of Education in West Virginia*, 46–47.
70. *Ibid.*
71. John E. Stealey III, “The Freedmen’s Bureau in West Virginia,” *Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society* 68 (December 2002), 39, 41.
72. Miller, “William Ryland White,” 11.
73. “Dr. W. R. White Dead”; “Necrology”; and Plumer, *History of West Virginia Wesleyan College*.
74. William P. Turner, *A Centennial History of Fairmont State College* (Fairmont, W.Va.: Fairmont State College, 1970), excerpt from the book, without page numbers, sent to the author by Amy Baker Pellegrin, Director of Marketing and Branding, Fairmont State University, 21 January 2015; Jo Ann Lough, Retired Professor, Fairmont State University, information related to Pellegrin and forwarded by Pellegrin to the author, 21 January 2015; and Miller, “William Ryland White,” 13.
75. “Dr. W. R. White Dead”; “Necrology”; and Miller, “William Ryland White,” 13.
76. “Historical Timeline of Wesley Church, Morgantown, W.Va.,” Wesley United Methodist Church, [www.wesleymorgantown.org/about/History.htm](http://www.wesleymorgantown.org/about/History.htm). In addition to listing White as having served there as church minister from 1886 to 1889, the timeline lists his first year as the church minister as 1877.
77. “Necrology,” and Miller, “William Ryland White,” 13.
78. “Dr. W. R. White Dead.”
79. Miller, “William Ryland White,” 9.
80. Temple, *Bugle’s Echo*, 1: 11.
81. Goodridge Wilson, “The Southwest Corner,” newspaper unknown, page number unknown, scan of article provided to the author by Mary Virginia Currie, Special Collections Librarian, Randolph Macon College, 30 October 2014.
82. Donald, “Growth and Independence of the Methodist Congregations in Blacksburg, Virginia,” 52.
83. Jenkins M. Robertson, “In and Out of Context: Blacksburg’s ‘Roots,’” *Context* 11, no. 2 (1977), [spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recoll/roots.htm](http://spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recoll/roots.htm), no page numbers.
84. Cummings, *Early Schools of Methodism*, 428, and Christopher Ross Donald (in conjunction with Gunnar Teilman), “Blacksburg Methodist Churches: Blacksburg Methodist Episcopal

- Church, South and the Beginnings of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church,” 16 April 2005 lecture, Blacksburg United Methodist Church, Blacksburg, Va., [www.joepayne.org/MethodisminBlacksburg.pdf](http://www.joepayne.org/MethodisminBlacksburg.pdf), 3.
85. Temple, *Bugle's Echo*, 1: 11; Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 12; Donald, “Growth and Independence of Methodist Congregations in Blacksburg, Virginia,” 52; Jenkins Mikell Robertson, comp. and ed., “Historical Data Book, Centennial Edition,” *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* 65, no. 4 (Blacksburg, Va.: Virginia Tech, 1972), 6; and “Blacksburg United Methodist Church,” [www.blacksburghistory.org/?page\\_id=2301](http://www.blacksburghistory.org/?page_id=2301).
  86. “Dr. W. R. White, Dead.”
  87. Photocopied final report of the Committee on Seminaries (n.d.), Preston and Olin Institute Records, Ms1964–001, Special Collections, Virginia Tech.
  88. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1852* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1852), [books.google.com/books?id=GpdAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA162&lpq=PA162&dq=baltimore+methodist+conference+olin+and+preston&source=bl&ots=gqBQ9v6mzD&sig=YxvFj20BK11CfzphPXgOmmEr3d8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5EMTVJ2kGMLgsAS-pILoCA&ved=0CDQQQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=baltimore%20methodist%20conference%20olin%20and%20preston&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=GpdAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA162&lpq=PA162&dq=baltimore+methodist+conference+olin+and+preston&source=bl&ots=gqBQ9v6mzD&sig=YxvFj20BK11CfzphPXgOmmEr3d8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5EMTVJ2kGMLgsAS-pILoCA&ved=0CDQQQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=baltimore%20methodist%20conference%20olin%20and%20preston&f=false), 6.
  89. E-mail correspondence from Robert Shindle, Archivist, United Methodist Historical Society of the Baltimore–Washington Conference, to Paul L. Nichols, Historian of the Grace United Methodist Church, Gaithersburg, Md., forwarded electronically from Nichols to the author, 23 October 2014.
  90. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1852–55* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856), 162, and Mrs. R. B. Lancaster to Lucy Lee Lancaster, 3 July 1963, Special Collections, Randolph Macon College.
  91. “Report of the Committee on Seminaries,” *Annual Register of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Armstrong and Berry, 1853), 21.
  92. “Baltimore Conference Appointments,” *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.) 4, no. 125 (18 March 1854), 1.
  93. “Report of the Committee on Seminaries” (1854), Preston and Olin Institute Records, Ms1964–001, Special Collections, Virginia Tech.
  94. [www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php](http://www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php) was used throughout the article to convert 1800s money to modern-day values.
  95. The author uncovered no land transactions prior to one in 1860, although the trustees had apparently purchased property before.
  96. Common Law, A–4861, *Lyle & Alexander Co. vs. William B. Preston et al.* (1858), Montgomery County Courthouse, Christiansburg, Va. The files for this suit include the original construction contract, but two attachments mentioned in the contract are missing from the file.
  97. “General Information: Historic Statement,” *Catalogue, Preston and Olin Institute, Session 1869 and 70* (Blacksburg, Va.: Preston and Olin Institute, n.d.), Special Collections, Virginia Tech, 11.
  98. “Schools and Academies,” *Virginia Acts of Assembly, 1853–54*, 67–68.
  99. “Closing Session. Winchester, Va., March 8, 1860,” *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, Md.) 5, no. 633 (9 March 1860), 1, and “Proceedings of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Winchester, Va., March 6 (sixth day),” *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, Md.) 5, no. 632 (8 March 1860), 1.
  100. Deed Book Q, 503–504, Montgomery County Circuit Court.
  101. “Schools and Academies,” *Virginia Acts of Assembly, 1853–54*.
  102. *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1852–55*, 498.
  103. Edmund B. Snyder, “Agents Book for the Olin and Preston Institute” (1855), Special Collections, Virginia Tech.
  104. “Closing Session,” *Daily Exchange*.
  105. E-mail correspondence from Robert Shindle, to Paul L. Nichols, forwarded to the author 23 October 2014.
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106. Snyder, "Agents Book."
107. "Virginia Appointments of the Baltimore Conference," *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.) 9, no. 67 (24 March 1856), 1, and *Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1856–57* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), 10.
108. *Annual Minutes of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held in Light Street Church, Baltimore City, Maryland, March 4–18, 1857* (Baltimore: Armstrong & Berry, 1857), 35.
109. *Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1856–57*, 199.
110. *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, Md.) 1, no. 146 (11 August 1858), 1; Nadine Allen, "House is Oldest in Blacksburg on Original Site," *News Messenger Bicentennial Edition*, 1 July 1976, p. H8; and McDonald, "Notes on Draper's Meadow and Blacksburg."
111. McDonald, "Notes on Draper's Meadow and Blacksburg."
112. Mrs. S. A. Wingard, "History of Blacksburg, Virginia" (1939), [spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recoll/wingard.htm](http://spec.lib.vt.edu/bicent/recoll/wingard.htm).
113. "Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Wesley Chapel, Washington, D.C.," *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, Md.) 1, no. 17 (12 March 1858), 1.
114. "Seminaries," *Annual Register of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Armstrong and Berry, 1858), 29.
115. Common Law, A-4861, *Lyle & Alexander Co. vs. William B. Preston et al.* (1858), Montgomery County Courthouse.
116. Common Law, A-5087, *John N. Lyle vs. Trustees of Olin and Preston Institute* (1859), Montgomery County Courthouse. The records include the minutes of the meeting in which a settlement was reached by the plaintiffs and defendants.
117. *Ibid.*
118. "Seminaries," *Annual Minutes of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Armstrong and Berry, 1859), 24.
119. "Proceedings of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Daily Exchange*, and "Closing Session," *Daily Exchange*.
120. "Report of the Committee to Receive Educational Money," *Annual Minutes of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: William M. Iness, 1860), 29.
121. Photocopied receipt signed by J. W. Marshal, Winchester, Va., 3 March 1860, Preston and Olin Institute Records, Ms1964-001, Special Collections, Virginia Tech.
122. Deed Book Q, 503-504, Montgomery County Circuit Court.
123. McDonald, "Notes on Draper's Meadow and Blacksburg"; Cox and Robertson, *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech*; Temple, *Bugle's Echo*, 1: 12; Turner, "Methodism in Blacksburg," 10; Poteet "Secondary Education in Montgomery County," 142; Kinnear, *First 100 Years*, 13; and Mrs. J. B. Lucas [Frangie Davis Lucas], "Early History of Whisner Memorial Church" (1939), Special Collections, Virginia Tech, 5.
124. *Catalogue, Preston and Olin Institute, Session 1869 and 70*, 11.
125. Dorothy H. Bodell and Mary Elizabeth Linden, "Blacksburg during the Civil War," in Cox, ed., *A Special Place for 200 Years*, 27.