

The Smithfield Review  
Volume 19, 2015

The *Smithfield Review* publishes book reviews. The editors plan for each issue to carry one to three reviews of books dealing with all periods of trans-Appalachian history and culture. We enlist active scholars and professionals to write the reviews. Review copies, requests to review books, and other inquiries may be addressed to:

Tom Costa, Book Review Editor  
The *Smithfield Review*  
Department of History and Philosophy  
The University of Virginia's College at Wise  
Wise, VA 24293

The *Smithfield Review* is published annually by the Smithfield Preston Foundation.

Subscriptions are \$14.70 per year, including tax; please add \$3.50 for shipping. Make checks payable to the Smithfield Museum Store.

Proposals or manuscripts to be considered for publication are welcome. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Texts may be of varying length, but should ordinarily not exceed 8,000 words. Annotations should be collected as endnotes.

Please address all correspondence to:

The *Smithfield Review*  
555 Edgewood Lane  
Blackburg, VA 24060

---

---

## In this issue —

**L**ocated in the New River Valley in what is now Montgomery County, Virginia, the Draper's Meadows settlement was one of the earliest Euro-American settlements in the colonial Virginia backcountry. Its first known settlers were George and Eleanor Draper and their children, John and Mary, who arrived apparently in the year 1746. — **page 1**

**T**he 1868 [Methodist] Annual Conference did take action. The minutes reported . . . the following resolutions . . . “That the Baltimore Conference . . . negotiate a loan for the purchase and repair of the building known as Olin and Preston Institute, with authority to mortgage said property for that purpose, and to secure a suitable Principal to put the School in successful operation as soon as possible.” . . . The Conference reappointed Rev. Whisner as preacher of the Blacksburg church and president of the school in 1869 and again in 1870. The 1869–1870 Preston and Olin Institute catalog listed him as the school president, a member of the board of trustees, and as professor of English and moral philosophy. — **page 37**

**A**lthough 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. . . . 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. — **page 51**

**B**ecause [Letitia Preston's] husband enjoyed a successful career as a Virginia congressman and governor, she had a ringside seat to some of the most important political events of the 1820s and 1830s. This was the time of the Nullification Crisis, the controversial presidency of Andrew Jackson, and . . . the great American question of the balance between the powers of the federal government and the separate states. Necessarily, much of her life was occupied by the mundane daily business of child-rearing and plantation-running. In contrast, . . . in the early 1830s she lived amidst the high drama of the great national political discussion of states rights. — **page 78**

**M**rs. Floyd's daughters Letitia, Lavalette, and Nicketti, were the first members of the Floyd family to formally convert to Catholicism. All were baptized at St. Peter's Church in Richmond. The church records do not give the precise dates, but the baptism apparently occurred while their father was governor (1831–1834). . . . The Catholic historian Joseph Magri gave “about 1832” as the conversion year of Mrs. Floyd's daughter Letitia and wrote that it “caused a sensation throughout the state.” . . . The tenure of John Floyd as governor corresponds to the beginning of a period of rapid growth of Catholicism in Richmond at the time of building there of St. Peter's Church, which was consecrated in 1834. — **page 123**

**W**hen Alexis de Tocqueville was finishing *Democracy in America*, about 1835, he asked what was “the chief cause of the extraordinary prosperity and growing power of this nation,” and he wrote succinctly, “the superiority of their women.” . . . [O]ne of these women, . . . Letitia Preston Floyd (1779–1852) . . . was to the manor born, with her brother, James Patton Preston, serving as the governor of Virginia from 1816 to 1819; her husband, John Floyd Jr., from 1830 to 1834; and her son, John Buchanan Floyd, from 1848 to 1852. — **page 138**