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## Messages from Our Publishers



### The Smithfield Saga

The story of William Preston's Smithfield is quintessentially American, with all the excitement and optimism that defines such a saga, but also with the darkness and troubles that so often, perhaps necessarily, accompany the good. Smithfield's patriarch, Col. William Preston, was an Irish immigrant who followed in the footsteps of his already successful immigrant uncle, James Patton. In the wilds of the Virginia frontier, William became a successful surveyor and militiaman.

In 1755, Colonel Preston inherited a large portion of Draper's Meadows (in what is now Blacksburg, Virginia) from Patton, who was killed when indigenous peoples attacked Draper's Meadows. In 1772, he built a home on this property and named it Smithfield after his wife, Susanna Smith Preston, who was part of the elite of the emerging American society. The success William and Susanna found in western Virginia could not have been imagined in the European homes of their ancestors. America has been, and hopefully always will be, a land where people could hope and aspire to be more, to contribute more, to realize more... From Smithfield, William and Susanna witnessed a steady stream of westward migrants along the Great Wagon Road heading toward their own dreams of success. From Smithfield, William struggled to comprehend and articulate the cause for American independence. He eventually supported this cause by signing the Fincastle Resolutions and leading a militia in its name.

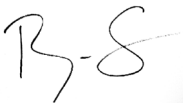
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From Smithfield, William and Susanna's heirs went out into the world, making their marks as prominent leaders in the new American republic. Yes, the Smithfield story is full of excitement and optimism, but it is also a story of struggle and oppression. Between 1772 and 1865, much of Smithfield's success was born on the backs of one hundred ninety enslaved workers, and the tide of westward migration that Smithfield represents pushed indigenous peoples who had lived in the region for thousands of years farther and farther from their native homes.

Today, William Preston's Smithfield operates as an independent non-profit museum. Its beautiful grounds and interactive displays encourage guests to think about their places in history and learn from all those who once called Smithfield home: the Preston Family, their enslaved workers, and the native peoples they displaced. It is my hope that Smithfield's values of **courage**, **leadership**, and **education** will inspire a new generation to shape a better future for all those who call Southwest Virginia home.

William Preston's Smithfield is proud to sponsor *The Smithfield Review*. May the hard work and collective wisdom it represents inspire you, its readers, to visit Smithfield. Here you will find the heart and soul of the region *The Smithfield Review* celebrates so well. Productive reading!

With warm regards,



Ryan J. Spencer  
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## Reconsidering Our Shared National Story

We humans love to tell stories about ourselves. It is how we explain, to ourselves and to others, who we are. To relate my own past is to shape how family, friends, co-workers, and strangers come to know me. As interpreters of the past, historians are consummate storytellers. Historians tell stories to help us understand who we are, to help us understand the nature of the communities in which we live, to help us understand what it means to be human. Our stories help us think in new ways about ourselves and, hopefully, improve ourselves and our communities.

Most historians today seek to tell stories that include more perspectives than those considered by earlier generations of historian. Many skilled and brilliant scholars wrote celebratory histories of white settlement in British North America and paid scant attention to enslaved Black people and Native Americans whose stories seemed inconsequential to the march toward democracy and freedom. Historians now consider the stories of the enslaved and the dispossessed to be fundamental to our shared national story; in consequence, we must fundamentally reshape the stories that have been told. We must rethink who we are.

This is why the Virginia Tech Department of History is happy to continue its support for *The Smithfield Review*, a venue for historians to look again at the stories we have been told about the area of Virginia and adjoining states that lie west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. I hope that readers and authors will find the *Review* to be a place for looking at our past anew. May we appreciate stories from many different perspectives and traditions and use those stories to create a better future for all.

Brett L. Shadle  
Professor and Chair  
Department of History  
Virginia Tech

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## A Message from the Editors

### Announcements

Marc Brodsky, public services and reference archivist in Special Collections at Virginia Tech, has joined *The Smithfield Review (TSR)* Editorial Board. Marc has helped numerous researchers in his professional capacity, and we relish the opportunity to work with him. Aaron Purcell, head of Special Collections, has left the board after fulfilling the time period he had promised to serve, and we thank him for his contributions.

Changes have also occurred in the leaders of two of our publishers. Attorney and Preston descendent Charles D. Fox IV now heads the Smithfield-Preston Foundation, with historian Ryan Spencer serving as executive director of Historic Smithfield<sup>®</sup>. And in Virginia Tech's Department of History, Professor Brett L. Shadle now chairs the department. The leadership of these gentlemen in publishing *TSR* is indicative of their love of history and recognition of its value.

### Contents and Acknowledgments

Volume 24 brings three articles focused on western Virginia and West Virginia during the mid to late 1800s. Two carry us into tumultuous events and difficult decisions required by the circumstances of what essentially was a small civil war inside a larger civil war. The other article focuses on the life of one person, including his singular role in Virginia Tech history.

In the first article, "Crossing into War: Hostages in Civil War Virginia and West Virginia," Randall S. Gooden examines the practice of hostage-taking by two contending Virginia governments (one in Richmond, the other in Wheeling) and the imprisoning of these hapless civilians. Both governors ordered or condoned seizing hostages assumed to disagree with them politically and offered those taken no opportunity to mount a legal defense and no right of *habeas corpus*.

Next, the focus shifts to southwestern Virginia. "The Life and Times of William Addison Caldwell" by Clara B. Cox looks at the first student to enroll at Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (VAMC) in Blackaburg. As Cox explores the life of "Add" Caldwell, she also tells the early story of VAMC, which evolved into Virginia Tech.

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The third article, “To ‘whiten’ the Mountains: Abolishing Slavery in West(ern) Virginia, 1861–1863,” returns readers to the West Virginia area and the same time period. In it, Adam Zucconi addresses the role of the divisive issue of slavery in creating a constitution for the Mountain State. Ultimately, that document enshrined a gradual freeing of most enslaved people but gave them few political or civil rights. Lawmakers’ treatment of blacks reflected a desire to “whiten” West Virginia.

Volume 24 also includes Sharon B. Watkins’s book review of *The Blacksburg Drama: A history of Blacksburg in three acts*. Written by Hugh G. Campbell, the book provides a personal historical exploration of Blacksburg and its region. Campbell’s goal was to “organize, generalize, and synthesize” the town’s rich history in a way that presented that history “as the drama that it is.” According to Watkins, he has succeeded in that goal.

Additionally, Ryan Spencer, who manages Historic Smithfield<sup>®</sup>, provided a photograph of a special document and its transcription for this volume: an original letter written by Thomas Jefferson in 1771. As an attorney and member of Virginia’s House of Burgesses, Jefferson was asked by James McDowell, a relative of the Preston who founded Smithfield, to provide a legal opinion regarding the bounty for wolf heads in Augusta and Botetourt counties. The letter states that opinion.

The editors and editorial board extend sincere appreciation to these authors and other contributors. Special acknowledgment goes to Barbara Corbett for her graphic design talents and to Dan Thorp of the editorial board for convincing Drs. Zucconi and Gooden to submit their two outstanding articles. We also express sincere gratitude to the Smithfield-Preston Foundation and Virginia Tech Department of History for publishing the journal and to University Libraries, particularly Gail McMillan and Peter Potter, for publishing *The Smithfield Review* online.

Editors: Clara B. Cox (*history@vt.edu*) and Sharon B. Watkins

*The Smithfield Review* Editorial Board:

Hugh G. Campbell, Founding Editor and Charter Member

Marc Brodsky

Daniel B. Thorp, History Advisor

Charles L. Taylor, Charter Member

Sherry Joines Wyatt

See volumes 21, 22, and 23 of *The Smithfield Review* online at <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/smithfieldreview/>.