

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third and last installment of the author's 1990 University of Maryland dissertation, directed by Professor Emory Evans, to be republished in *JBS*. Dr. Osborn is President of Pacific Union College.

William Preston and the Revolutionary Settlement

BY RICHARD OSBORN

Patriot (1775-1778)

Revolutions ultimately conclude with a large scale resolution in the major political, social, and economic issues raised by the upheaval. During the final two years of the American Revolution, William Preston struggled to anticipate and participate in the emerging American regime. For Preston, the American Revolution involved two challenges--Indians and Loyalists. The outcome of his struggles with both groups would help determine the results of the Revolution in Virginia. If Preston could keep the various Indian tribes subdued with minimal help from the rest of Virginia, then more Virginians would be free to join the American armies fighting the English. But if he was unsuccessful, Virginia would have to divert resources and manpower away from the broader colonial effort to its own protection. The other challenge represented an internal one. A large number of Loyalist neighbors continually tested Preston's abilities to forge a unified government on the frontier which could, in turn, challenge the Indians effectively and the British, if they brought the war to Virginia. In these struggles, he even had to prove he was a Patriot.

Preston clearly placed his allegiance with the revolutionary movement when he joined with other freeholders from Fincastle County on January 20, 1775 to organize their local county committee in response to requests by the Continental Congress that such committees be established. Within a few short weeks these committees, later known as Committees of Safety, took over the role of government on the county and state level as English officials fled from America.¹ Recognizing his key leadership status, the freeholders elected Preston along with thirteen of his co-military officers from the recent conflict against the Shawnees and the Reverend Charles Cummings as their fifteen-member committee.² Fincastle, thus, became the first western county to elect such a

¹County courts once again took over their role of local governance in the summer of 1776 when Virginia's new constitution became effective. For an overview of the establishment of these committees, see Larry Bowman, "The Virginia County Committees of Safety, 1774-1776," 79 *VMHB*, (July 1971): 322-337.

²Cummings was a Presbyterian clergyman. Proceedings of the Fincastle County Committee, 20 January 1775, Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed. *The Committees of Safety of Westmoreland and Fincastle. Proceedings of the County Committees, 1774-1776* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1956), 61, hereafter referred to as *Fincastle Committee Proceedings*. The originals can be found in Original Records, Montgomery County, VSL. The other officers elected to the committee included Colonel William Christian as chairman, Captain Stephen Trigg, Major Arthur Campbell, Major William Inglis, Captain James McGavock, Captain William Campbell, and Captain Evan Shelby. For further biographical details, see Mary Kegley, "Who the 15 Signers Were," *Journal of the Roanoke Valley Historical Society*: 9:33-7.

committee, placing itself squarely on the side of the growing patriotic movement.

Preston and his fellow freeholders went further than other counties when they adopted a statement known as the Fincastle Resolutions addressed to Virginia's delegates at the Continental Congress.³ They clearly attempted to steer a compromise middle course between those demanding independence and those who justified recent actions taken by the mother country. On the one hand, they called for a restoration of harmony "by the most lenient measures that can be devised by the heart of men" and affirmed that their "hearts overflow with love and duty" to George III whose family had been a "guardian of civil and religious rights and liberties." But they reminded their delegates that many of them had escaped from a country where they had been denied those rights in order to find liberty in America. With this suggestion, a majority of those signing the resolutions who came from a Scotch-Irish background were reminded of their roots in Ireland and their earlier ancestry in Scotland where they felt the English had abused their liberties. In spite of these feelings, they expressed a willingness to support the King with all of their power "if applied to constitutionally, and when the grants are made by our own representatives." As in the later Declaration of Independence, they similarly attempted to distinguish between a good King on one hand and a "venal British parliament" and "corrupt ministry" on the other side.⁴

The authorship of the Fincastle Resolutions is unknown but Preston echoed similar thoughts in a letter to his longtime friend and delegate to Congress, Edmund Pendleton. He observed that as people in the backcountry became more aware of certain "ministerial measures," their "Spirit of Opposition" continued to increase. Alluding to potential problems of loyalism, he expressed the hope that if citizens could see that they no longer had a duty to support the king's ministers when "Tyranical or at least Unconstitutional Steps" were taken, the support would grow stronger. And he also echoed the anti-English theme so natural to the Scotch-Irish:

Many of them are Descended from those brave men who so nobly defended their Religion & Liberty in Ireland in a late inglorious & Despotick Reign, & were so instrumental in Supporting the Revolution in that Kingdom. Those Transactions almost every Descendant from the Protestant Irish is well acquainted with either by History or Tradition. Therefore they cannot bear the Thought of degenerating from their Worthy Forefathers, whose Memory, & ought to be held very dear to them.

³Illustrating the interests of the entire colony in such statements, *The Virginia Gazette* (Purdies) printed the resolutions on 10 February 1775.

⁴20 January 1775, *Fincastle Committee Proceedings*, 61-4. Harwell discounts some of the exaggerated claims made for the document in *ibid.*, 20-1: "The Fincastle Resolutions have sometimes been cited as a sort of precursor of the Declaration of Independence. Only as a part of the general movement toward independence is this true. As a revolutionary document they have less force than the comparable Westmoreland Resolutions on June 22, 1774. They are in a pattern of the county resolutions, most of which took pains to affirm their loyalty to Great Britain. And they are far less strong in their sentiments for independence than the Albemarle County document, probably the strongest of the resolutions, which was written by Thomas Jefferson." Also see Thad Tate, "The Fincastle Resolutions: Southwest Virginia's Commitment," *Journal of the Roanoke Valley Historical Society*, 9:19-31.

Preston may have been emphasizing this theme because many Patriots suspected all Scotch-Irish were Loyalists. Preston's hope that the cause of liberty would "find almost as many Friends as there are Inhabitants in the back Country" would soon prove to be wishful thinking.⁵

Frontier leaders now faced a real paradox. They had just defeated the Shawnees with the help of the Royal governor but now faced the prospect of having to fight the same governor over other issues. Colonel William Peachey, a military colleague of Preston's, noted this contradiction to Preston early in 1775 after congratulating him on the recent peace with the Shawnees. He warned, "The next attack, I fear, will be from worse Savages for so, Such may truly be deem'd who will take up arms to enslave their Friends, Countrymen and fellow subjects."⁶ So the Fincastle Committee prepared for the worst and Preston helped his fellow committee members develop their own sources of ammunition. And as the Revolution developed, southwest Virginia became one of the major gunpowder sources for both the Continental Army and the militia in Virginia. Saltpeter was found in many of the area caves and there were numerous sulphur springs.⁷ To make gunpowder one needed twelve parts of saltpeter, one-and-a-half parts of sulphur, and two-and-a-half parts of charcoal--ingredients found in abundant supply in southwest Virginia. The Fincastle committee began purchasing sulphur and looking for individuals who might establish saltpeter mines and a powder mill for the county.⁸ In some cases incentives were needed which Preston could provide as the county surveyor. Arthur Campbell asked for his help in giving a small piece of land on which John Beck, who agreed to establish a powder mill, could live.⁹ With supplies in hand and growing concerns about the future and with the growing threat of Indian attacks, Preston and other militia leaders were now able to get their militia captains motivated to hold private musters and to arm their men.¹⁰ Although ostensibly targeted at Indians, the Fincastle committee undoubtedly knew those same militiamen could be used against the English if relations continued to deteriorate.

Even with such militant preparations, cooperation still remained strong between

⁵[WP] to Edmund Pendleton, [1775], PP-DM, 4QQ 34.

⁶William Peachey to WP, 24 January 1775, PP-LC, 863.

⁷In other areas saltpeter could only be gotten from pigeon and chicken droppings. By the middle of 1776, Preston reported to Edmund Pendleton that attempts to make saltpeter among the mountains had now been "discovered & made by a number of People." [WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50.

⁸The skills involved in making ammunition caused Preston to worry when Captain Vanbebber taught a recently freed white man who had been raised since childhood by Indians how to make saltpeter and gunpowder. Now this man had returned to his Indian family where Preston feared he would teach them the same skills. WP to _____, 28 January 1777, DM, 3ZZ 13.

⁹Colonel William Christian to [WP], 26 January 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 3 and Major Arthur Campbell to [WP], 27 January 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 4.

¹⁰WP to Colonel William Christian, 1 May 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 14.

Dunmore and Preston who had mutual interests in the further settlement of the western lands of Kentucky and Ohio. Within a few months, this collaboration would bring serious charges of loyalism against Preston, charges which lingered even after he died. With the Shawnees supposedly defeated, both the colony and the two leaders stood ready to benefit from westward expansion but in the way stood Colonel Richard Henderson of North Carolina. In mid-1774 he had organized the Transylvania Company which proposed to purchase lands from the Cherokees that were claimed by Virginia in modern-day central and western Kentucky and north central Tennessee.¹¹ Henderson began his negotiations with Chief Little Carpenter, while Virginians fought the Shawnees at Point Pleasant, by promising goods worth ,10,000. Preston got wind of this impending deal and wrote alarming letters to both Dunmore and George Washington in early 1775. To Dunmore he reported that Henderson had recently passed through Fincastle County with six wagon loads of goods on his way to Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga where final agreements would be signed with the Cherokees in March, 1775. Preston was concerned with Henderson's assertion that he would not respect any warrants issued by Virginia's governor nor recognize any of the surveys already completed based on officer's warrants unless the owners "compound with him and Behave Well." Such threats directly challenged Preston's rights as county surveyor. He also noted Henderson's plan to sell the lands for a much lower price than that offered by the colony which might encourage people to buy and forget that Henderson's titles were not as good as those from the colony. As an additional inducement, Henderson would not require purchasers to pay any quit rents unless the King recognized the purchase; otherwise, he would simply view himself as a sole proprietor of the lands with or without the King's approval. A direct consequence of such actions would be a reduced income and authority for both Preston and Virginia. Kentucky settlers might not see themselves as subject to any laws and at that distance it would be difficult to remove them from lands already legally claimed by others. Preston explained to Washington, "Henderson talks with great Freedom & Indecency of the Governor of Virginia, Sets the Government at Defiance & says if he once had five hundred good Fellows Settled in that Country he would not Value Virginia." ¹² Apparently the Cherokees did not see the impending sale quite as antagonistically as Preston because they sent Dunmore belts of wampum asking for peace and trade

¹¹Secondary source accounts of Henderson's efforts can be found in Abernethy, Western Lands, 123-135; John Richard Alden, The South in the Revolution from Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Mertoun Coulter, eds., A History of The South (Louisiana State University Press, 1957), III:136-9, and Jack M. Sosin, The Revolutionary Frontier, 1763-1783 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 76-81.

¹²WP to Dunmore, [January 1775], PP-DM, 4QQ 1 and WP to George Washington, 21 and 31 January 1775, Stanislaw Murray Hamilton, ed., Letters to Washington, 5:88-9. When Henderson finally signed the agreement on 17 March 1775 with the Cherokee leaders, including Little Carpenter and Oconastota, about 1,200 Indian warriors were present. Dragging Canoe and a younger group of Indians opposed signing the treaty which made the Kentucky River the northern and eastern border and the Cumberland watershed the border on the south and west. Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777 (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1908), n. 3, 1-2. Two months later George Washington gave his reaction to Henderson's purchase in a letter to Preston: "I neither understand, nor like, and wish I may not have cause to dislike it worse as the Mistery unfolds." 27 March 1775, Washington Writings, 3:278-9.

at the same time.¹³ Within a few months, Preston on Dunmore's behalf wrote a letter to his friend, Oconastota, the Cherokee chief, protesting the sale of lands to Henderson as illegal and possibly bringing great offense to the King who might "withdraw that Fatherly Love & Protection which you have so long enjoyed from him."¹⁴ Both the English and the colonists continued to woo the Indians for if war came they did not want to fight on two fronts.

Dunmore had basically been ignoring the provisions of the Proclamation Line of 1763, much to the agreement of most Virginians. But now he greatly complicated Preston's life with the announcement on March 21 of a new land policy he had received one year before from the English Privy Council but had not wanted to initiate while efforts to defeat the Shawnees proceeded.¹⁵ This policy called for land to be sold at public auction to the highest bidder in parcels of one hundred to one thousand acres which would probably result in much higher prices. Quit-rents were also doubled.¹⁶ The Virginia Convention immediately questioned the new policies and appointed a committee to investigate whether the King in his eminent domain had the right to grant such lands or if authority over the land actually rested with local government.¹⁷ Pressure began to mount on Preston as Fincastle County surveyor where most of the disputed lands lay and he had some difficult choices to make.¹⁸ He could side with the governor and alienate local citizens who would now have to pay significantly higher costs for land. Or he could side with the Virginia Convention and alienate the governor whose expansionist interests coincided personally with his own. Or he could strike a deal with Henderson and get the lands much less expensively. At this stage most Virginians felt a compromise would be worked out with England which would result in Dunmore remaining as governor. In fact,

¹³William Byrd to WP, [11 January 1775], PP-DM, 4QQ 2.

¹⁴WP to Oconastota, June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 17. Preston outlined their contention that those lands had already been purchased from the Indians over the years beginning with the treaty with the Six Nations in 1744 in Lancaster, the Treaty of Logstown twenty-three years before, and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix seven years before where further confirmation was received. Preston then informed Dunmore that reports from the Cherokees indicated they had been duped into signing the treaty. When their young men saw the goods, they forced the older chiefs to sign or face losing their authority "as they hold it on no other foundation than the Love of the People which a refusal would have forfeited." WP to Dunmore, June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 18.

¹⁵Thomas Lewis told Preston in a letter written 19 June 1775 that Dunmore told him about his instructions from England before May 1774 and "made Several Judicious & Diverting remarks on them needless to repeat, in Short he Seemed but little Inclined to Carry them into Execution" and soon thereafter received instructions not to proceed until further instructions came. PP-DM, 4QQ 20.

¹⁶Dunmore to [WP], 21 March 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 9.

¹⁷Robert Scribner, ed. and comp., Revolutionary Virginia. The Road to Independence. III. The Breaking Storm and the Third Convention, 1775 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 280; Virginia Convention Minutes, 27 March 1775, Peter Force, ed., American Archives (Washington, D.C. & M. St. Clair Clarke, 1839), ser. 4, II:172 and Abernethy, Western Lands, 128.

¹⁸Rumors spread that warrants issued before would no longer be honored which caused William Peachey to write Preston with his frustrations about a "faithless and venal Ministry" who would do "any thing that promises to make for their own Advantage or purposes." Apparently Preston had urged Peachey to lobby the governor personally. 24 January 1775, PP-LC, 863.

the Fincastle Committee had recently gone on record offering their "unfeigned thanks for the great services" he had recently performed on the frontier and wishing he "may long govern the brave and free people of Virginia."¹⁹ No matter which choice Preston made he would alienate a significant group of people. Daniel Boone was at that moment cutting a road to the Kentucky River for Henderson's company, running from Long Island on the Holston River through the Cumberland Gap and Preston had little time in which to decide. Talk about the attractiveness of Kentucky began to spread quickly, causing John Brown to ask Preston, "What a Buzzel is this amongst People about Kentuck? to hear people speak of it one would think it was a new found Paradies."²⁰

To get advice from Dunmore, Preston sent John Floyd, his trusted assistant surveyor, with a letter acknowledging that some land purchasers would prefer to pay higher prices to Virginia in order to get an unquestionable title. But with the Transylvania Company giving orders that no lands would be surveyed in their territory by Virginia, Preston expressed fear that armed force would be necessary if he sent out surveyors to carry out the governor's new instructions. On a more pragmatic level, he knew many settlers would leave anyway and hoped a plan could be worked out providing them with proper titles.²¹ Dunmore decided to take Preston's strong hints and have Floyd go to Henderson's territory in Kentucky where he would make several "trial" surveys on a very "private basis" including officer's warrants from the governor for service in the recent war and other surveys.²² Floyd experienced extreme pressure from several fronts on carrying out this mission for Preston and the governor. Immediately upon his arrival, he began getting reports that Indians from unknown tribes were determined to keep settlers out of Kentucky and were terrorizing people and killing whole families. He warned Preston that "I shall go on" and "it appears to me that my journey will be lost."²³ As to the surveys, he quickly discovered that those actually settling in Kentucky would simply take up lands as squatters wherever they pleased and then worry about titles. Henderson offered them deeds as a result of negotiations with the Cherokees and they figured they would take a chance and give him the money.²⁴

¹⁹March 1775, Proceedings of the Fincastle County Committee, Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 64-6.

²⁰John Brown to WP, 5 May 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 15. Brown worried about clergymen going to Kentucky where they would have "thin Congregations, but why need I fear that, Ministers are moveable goods as well as others & stands in need of good land as any do, for they are bad Farmers."

²¹WP to Dunmore, 10 March 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 7.

²²John Floyd to WP, 21 April 1775, DM, 33S, 267-70. The John Floyd letters to William Preston as they appear on the microfilm edition of the Draper Manuscripts from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin were transcribed by Lyman Draper from originals in possession of various owners who did not want to give them up to the Historical Society. Over forty of these letters exist in the S series of the Draper Manuscripts under "Draper's Notes," and in the CC series under the "Kentucky Manuscripts." What appears here are not originals but transcriptions. The microfilm edition used for these letters is the first edition of the Draper Manuscripts owned by the Library of Congress Manuscript Division.

²³John Floyd to WP, 15 April 1775, DM, 33S, 264-5.

²⁴John Floyd to WP, 21 April 1775, DM, 33S, 267-70.

While Floyd surveyed in isolation in Kentucky, conditions worsened in Virginia when Dunmore ordered on April 21 that powder from the magazine at Williamsburg be taken to an off-shore English naval vessel. Local colonial leaders barely prevented a violent response and the governor found it necessary to evacuate his wife and family until emotions died down.²⁵ Before long word came about the April 19 skirmish at Lexington and Concord. Reverend John Brown sent news of both events to Preston in early May with an ominous news report that three ships of the British line with four companies of marines were on their way to Virginia "to keep us in Order." He hoped Virginia could "do something for the defence of Life & Liberty" but wondered, "what can they do? They are like sheep in the wilderness without a head."²⁶

Floyd, in the meantime, continued his efforts in Kentucky to carry out the will of Preston and Dunmore in testing the governor's new land policies. In addition to problems with Henderson, Floyd angrily reported that two old former comrades in arms, William Christian and William Russell, headed what he called a "mob" and were causing trouble. So far they had not done any damage, but they were asking militia officers and Henderson to let Floyd carry out surveys for officers only and no others. Floyd knew this information about Preston's two former military colleagues would be a surprise but felt he should be "properly armed against enemies who have heretofore lain so closely concealed." He asked Preston to hold off on calling them to account so he could have "the pleasure of revenging your cause at the same time I do my own."²⁷ Several months later Floyd got access to the actual correspondence and discovered to his chagrin that it was not Christian who was the problem but another Preston colleague, Arthur Campbell. Floyd reported that

I am called through the whole packet [of letters] one of your creatures who is entirely at your disposal & would not stop at anything to put any of your oppressive measures in Execution. You are the artful, scheming, mercenary, ministerial gentleman²⁸

Several factors may have motivated Preston's enemies. By keeping Preston from carrying out the governor's new land policies, they may have felt they were upholding the

²⁵For help on the sequence of events, John E. Selby, *A Chronology of Virginia and the War of Independence, 1763-1783* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1973) has been helpful.

²⁶John Brown to WP, 5 May 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 15.

²⁷Floyd seemed so angry he did not even want to give complete details about the incident in writing to Preston: "You may be informed by Major Robinson the contents of the letters, if you think it worth your while or worthy to be taken the least notice of. For my part I look down on the person & settlers in so contemptible a manner that I will not repeat a single sentence. . . Surely did our two great & mighty patriots know with how much contempt certain letters have been treated, & how far short they were of answering the purpose they intended, they would lay down their pens & employ themselves to some more Suitable purpose, if it was only some money & pay off their messenger. If they had given you an opportunity of writing by him, I would have paid part myself." John Floyd to WP, 30 May 1775, DM, 33S, 270-5.

²⁸John Floyd to WP, 1 September 1775, DM, 33S, 282-5.

Virginia Convention's concerns about the matter while its committee conducted an investigation. But more ominously for Preston, they began harboring doubts about his support of the patriot cause. Usage of the word, "ministerial," to describe Preston placed him in the same category as the "ministerial" elements who were giving the King bad advice in England about the colonies. Within a few weeks one of the "mob," William Russell, wrote that those "sycophants to Brittain's Interest, will now appear Patriots, as long as our Arms prove Victorious; but should ever our present success change . . . you'll find Traytors enough prick up their Ears." Preston, in his mind, seems to have been the villain. And even deeper seated jealousies and questions of authority were emerging. In the same letter, Russell's emotional language revealed an intense distrust of Preston. Dunmore had ordered Russell to leave Fort Blair but he delayed wondering if the Virginia Convention would countermand the order. Finally accepting the original order from the governor, he told of another order from Preston's "pretended authority" that Major Ingles take possession of the cattle and horses at Fort Blair. Since Dunmore had not made a similar request, Russell polled his officers who felt it to be in the best interest of the revolutionary movement that they keep the stock together rather than giving it to one of Preston's subordinates unless the Convention gave different orders. He hoped the incident would "at least open the Eyes of the Designing Col. [Preston] to see his folly, in aiming to make use of me as a Tool, in any one of his unfair Intentions."²⁹ This incident reveals the dilemmas faced by colonial leaders. On the one hand, Russell ended up obeying the English governor's orders to leave the fort but he disobeyed the orders of Preston, his superior officer in the Virginia militia, in the interest of keeping together an important stock of potential value to the revolutionary cause which opposed the English Dunmore.³⁰

Preston also felt caught in the middle and wrote to Thomas Lewis who had been county surveyor while Preston served as his assistant asking advice on a new strategy he was contemplating. He would continue to have surveys completed but would withhold them until a resolution of the problem occurred. Lewis agreed and suggested that if the governor questioned his actions, the only apology he could make would be "the Dread of an Injured & Incensed populace," but wondered whether the governor would be satisfied. Anticipating growing problems for Preston's role, he promised to use his effort to "remove the prejudices" that might have developed against him.³¹ About the same time,

²⁹William Russell to [William Fleming], 12 June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 19.

³⁰Ironically William Christian along with Arthur Campbell and William Preston appealed as a group to the Virginia Convention on 3 January 1776 for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the Indian wars of 1774, a request ultimately denied. Scribner and Tarter, eds. and comps., The Clash of Arms and the Fourth Convention, 1775-1776, V, Revolutionary Virginia. The Road to Independence (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 316-8, 327. On 21 May 1776 the Virginia Convention referred Preston's part of the petition to committee for further study. Brent Tarter, comp. and ed. Independence and the Fifth Convention, 1776, Vol. VII of ibid. (1983), 204. On 22 June 1776 the Convention discharged the committee from proceeding on Preston's petition and then on 22 June 1776 rejected his request without any stated reasons. Ibid., 7:583, 635.

³¹The letter from Preston to Lewis has not been found. In the Lewis letter to Preston, he appeared to be completely disgusted with politicians. After Dunmore changed positions on granting land warrants to provincial officers, Lewis reflected, "I cannot discover any traces of good policy or Justice in the whole Conduct in this matter . . . It has been said, 'the Fool says in his heart there is no God,' our Rulers seem to talk in the Same Stile & Deny there is any such thing as Faith, or Justice. Let them all go to the Devel their

Preston closed his surveyor's office, possibly to avoid further problems, but his surveyors continued to conduct their surveys in the field.³²

It appears further that many Virginia settlers were now in favor of Henderson's efforts. As noted, Christian and Russell were cooperating, at least partially, with Henderson.³³ Even Preston's surveyor, Floyd, no longer had negative things to say about him and reported favorably about the formation of a formal government in Transylvania with delegates arriving to establish laws, courts, and officers at the newly founded town of Boonesborough, named after Daniel Boone.³⁴ Delegates even arrived from St. Asaph, the town Floyd had just established. Henderson had already responded to Floyd's inquiries about possible land purchases by offering to give each of Floyd's group one thousand acres at the same price as that sold to the first settlers in Transylvania.³⁵ Gradually Preston began to see the need for his cooperation with Henderson if he wanted to get any lands in Kentucky for himself or other clients. And he may have feared that his opponents would get the upper hand over him in their dispute over Dunmore's new land policy. In a possible hint of formal cooperation between Preston's surveyors and those of Henderson, John Brown asked Preston in June to make an entry of four hundred acres for two individuals adjacent to Boonesborough. Such a request would have been unthinkable if some informal agreements had not been reached because Boonesborough formed the center of Henderson's government.³⁶ After Henderson asked Floyd to take care of his land

own way. Indeed they move so rapidly that way a Short time will bring them to the Destined Goal. I would Shorten their Jounrey, I have a great Inclination to be of Service to those kind of Gentlemen." Later in writing about the dilemma of meeting the demands of the governor or the people, he felt like lending "these poor Devels a kick on the A-se as often as they fall in their way & Bandy him about from one to the other whilst he has a rage in his Back whether this is a Serious or a Laughable matter Judge ye." 19 June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 20.

³²Sagismond Stribling and Daniel Hollenback wrote Preston asking him to make entries which had been surveyed by James Douglas. Since they heard his office was closed for that kind of business, they asked him to file the letter noting the entry since they planned to settle their 2,000 acres on Licking Creek the upcoming fall. 26 June 1775, PP-LC, 880. On the same day, John Moore wrote Preston asking him to enter 400 acres on the same creek also as a result of a Douglas survey. An interesting note appeared on the bottom of the letter in Preston's handwriting, "Directed to care of Col. Harrod in Pleasantfield County, Transylvania." The usage of the word, "Transylvania," indicates further cooperation by Preston with Henderson; however, it is unclear when the note was placed on the bottom of the letter. PP-LC, 881.

³³Floyd reported on these letters to Preston on 30 May 1775, DM, 33S, 270-5. Further evidence for such communication came on 12 June 1775 when Russell reported to Colonel William Fleming, "I have wrote several Letters to Col. Henderson, since I returned to this Post." PP-DM, 4QQ 19.

³⁴John Floyd to WP, 30 May 1775, DM, 33S, 270-5. Not everyone shared the same positive feelings. Thomas Lewis as late as 19 June 1775 reported to Preston that the Virginia Convention had not decided to prohibit Henderson's surveyors due to certain "abettors" present who used "Ingrigue" to get their way. PP-DM, 4QQ 20. According to Abernethy, one of Henderson's strongest supporters in the Convention was Patrick Henry who favored Henderson's less expensive lands over Dunmore's newly announced land policy. Western Lands, 132.

³⁵Abernethy, ibid., 130.

³⁶In the same letter, Brown asked that these entries not be made under the governor's new proclamation but under the old orders for officer's grants. John Brown to [WP], 26 June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 22.

entry office in August, Floyd openly wrote to Preston that Henderson's "repeated kindness to me & his seeming willingness to oblige us both, makes me wish you acquainted." Floyd alluded to several motives in changing his position. One of Henderson's kindnesses to Floyd was granting him land claims for only the payment of the fees which came out to less than Floyd could get the same lands from Virginia, even though he was Preston's assistant surveyor. Floyd even told Preston that if Henderson succeeded in the purchase of Transylvania, both of them could expect to get the quantity of lands they had discussed at "the most reasonable price." He then offered a partnership to Preston with both receiving half of the lands he was able to procure. Lastly, he had been looking for land in Kentucky where Preston could move and described one thousand acres of the "best land you ever saw." Floyd tried to cement his letter to Preston by asking Henderson to deliver it in person since he was going near Preston's home on a trip.³⁷

In the midst of these attitude changes toward Henderson, one of the major crises in Preston's life confronted him. His three former colleagues--Campbell, Christian, and Russell--now decided to embarrass him before the next meeting of the Virginia Convention by taking formal action against him in the Fincastle committee. They were still upset about his support of Dunmore's new land policies. Christian sent Preston notice of the meeting only six days ahead of time and did not send it express which almost guaranteed he would not receive notification in time to attend. Additionally, Christian almost seemed to encourage Preston to stay home by providing him with a good excuse:

I wish you could be there, but the weather being hot, & you so lately come off a journey, it makes me uneasy to ask you, but however if all is well & yourself well rested perhaps you may try to come.³⁸

And when the committee met, with Preston absent, it was clear why Christian did not want him there. The committee charged that in carrying out the governor's orders Preston was feathering the nest of a few people. The petition spoke of Dunmore's new land regulations which they deemed "hard & burthensome." The petitioners reminded the Convention of their recommendation that no lands be purchased under the new rules and

³⁷John Floyd to WP, 10 August 1775, DM, 33S, 279-82. Earlier on 30 May 1775 Floyd wrote Preston about his efforts to find a place where Preston could settle but wanted to wait until he had seen more land. DM, 33S, 270-5. By 27 July 1775, Floyd reported that he had surveyd land for Preston--"the best on these waters, except my own." DM, 33S, 277-9. The next day Floyd wrote another letter with his goal: "I think I can make a fortune in a little time if I can purchase four or five slaves." DM, 33S, 275-7. Relationships continued to improve between Preston and Henderson in 1775. On 8 November 1775 the Fincastle committee chaired by Preston even voted to support Henderson's efforts to open a wagon road from the Holston River area to Boonesborough. In their official minutes, they described the territory as "Transylvania" which indicated their approval of Henderson's new government. Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 71-2. All appeared to be normal on 1 December 1775 when Floyd reported to Preston that Henderson "says you would have removed every prejudice he ever had against you, but that it was done long ago." DM, 33S, 290-1. After many protracted battles over whether Transylvania could be represented in the Continental Congress, the territory became known as Kentucky, a county of Virginia. To indemnify Henderson's company for their expenses, the Virginia legislature granted 200,000 acres on the Green River to the Transylvania Company. Thwaites, Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 2.

³⁸Colonel William Christian to WP, 4 July 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 23.

explained that they discovered that after Dunmore gave written instructions to the surveyor of Fincastle, surveyors had gone out to survey under the new orders and also to "mark out Lands to private Adventurers" which they felt would have an "evil and injurious tendency." If lands were reserved for private individuals, they questioned how those would be distinguished from grants to officers. The result would be "Confusion and Litigation . . . extremely prejudicial to the Prosperity of those, who may settle in that extensive and most fertile Country." In conclusion, they asked for "immediate attention" and for advice on dealing with the issue.³⁹ This petition represented a serious blow against Preston by suggesting his possible collusion with the governor rather than following the Convention's will and suggesting that he was looking out for the needs of private individuals rather than the officers who deserved a first chance at available frontier lands. Two days after the committee met, Christian wrote a quick apology to Preston for not getting him proper notice but downplayed what had happened at the meeting. Their chief task had been to pass a resolution thanking the volunteers who had recently gone out to defend their neighbors. But he also enclosed the petition explaining that "had I known of it I should have wrote you pressingly & made you acquainted that such a thing was on foot." He tried to call by in person so Preston would be aware of the action, but summarized their action:

I understand that the people generally approve of such a thing and with the Surveying stopt altogether for a little time, except for the Officers, the only thing I doubted might in the least make You uneasy was that part that hints that lands are marked for private persons, &c. In my opinion that will not operate to your disadvantage.

He would be presenting the petition to the Convention and would have Major Robertson "throw some light on it" to Preston. Christian concluded by suggesting, "if you think of any thing necessary to write me."⁴⁰

Preston responded immediately to Christian's letter expressing surprise and hurt that anyone would think he ever did the country or individuals any evil. He would gladly have paid the express charges of getting the meeting notice to him on time since he had always made a point of attending every Fincastle committee meeting "under every Inconvenience." Furthermore, he could prove that several of them knew that no surveys had been returned under the governor's orders nor was there any such intention in the future. He had always made it clear that he would do nothing without the permission of the Convention in regard to surveys. He knew nothing about any surveys for private individuals but accepted their assertions by suggesting, "let the Censure fall upon the Actors when they can be heard & not upon me, who am altogether Innocent of the Charge. . . . If they kill a Man, or Rob a House, am I to be Answerable." As it stood, he complained about having no power to answer for himself since all of the charges had been made without his presence. He enclosed a petition only slightly revised from an earlier version which he had already sent to some of his friends who served on the

³⁹Scribner, ed., *The Breaking Storm*, III:275-6.

⁴⁰Colonel William Christian to [WP], 12 July 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 25.

Convention asking for clarification on the land issue and pledging not to return any surveys without the permission of the House of Burgesses or the Convention. He asked Christian if his petition would not serve the same purpose as the one approved by the Fincastle committee but without the problem of placing "Invectives against an absent Person." This was not a request "to betray your Trust to the People, or to lead you into a Snare; I only request you to do, what in my opinion is strict Justice between the Committee and an Individual." In conclusion, he roundly defended his patriotism stating,

that I have as high Conceptions of Liberty as any other man of my Capacity or knowledge can have. & notwithstanding the present Attack, I will one Day be able to convince my Country that these are my Principles, as I had the Vanity to think my former Conduct had done, and always should have done could I have had liberty or an Opportunity to have Justified it.⁴¹

When the Virginia Convention met in Richmond in July one week after the Fincastle committee's actions, they had far more important concerns than land issues. In early June two young men in an attempt to break into the Williamsburg powder magazine were wounded by a shotgun triggered to fire when the door opened. With colonists, as a result, calling him an assassin, Dunmore fled to an off-shore naval vessel. The Convention also dealt with an endeavor to raise one thousand regular troops for the Continental Congress and several thousand militiamen, some of whom would be stationed on frontiers such as Fincastle County.⁴² In spite of these broader concerns, the Virginia Convention accepted Archibald Cary's presentation of Fincastle's petition and Thomas Lewis's submission of Preston's response.⁴³ In his petition, Preston defended his actions by pointing out that the Convention had said nothing nor passed any resolution in regard to surveying lands while waiting for the committee's report. While the committee was making its decision, Preston admitted his surveyors had gone to Ohio to finish their work from the previous year. In spite of this fact, Preston asserted that he had given the "Strongest Assurances that he will not return a Single Survey" under Dunmore's orders without approval of either the House of Burgesses or the Convention. No lands had been surveyed under Dunmore's orders yet he found that "many People are displeased with his Conduct, not knowing the Motives from which he has Acted." He asked for them to give orders or directions so he might know how to proceed "let the Consequence be what it will to his Family or Private Emolument."⁴⁴ The point was that since he returned no

⁴¹[WP] to Colonel William Christian, August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 32.

⁴²Thomas Lewis to [WP], 19 August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 29 and William Christian to WP, 27 August 1775, PP-DU. Some military planners viewed getting the frontiersmen to serve as soldiers as a real asset as reported by Thomas Lewis to Preston: "Great Expectation are formed on the prowiss of the Frontier Counties. One of these, in his hunting Shirt, with his Rifle & Tomhaw Stuck in his --- is looked on as a Sufficent Ballance to 10 English mercenaries, So much has ye Virginians Improved that British maxim that One Englishmen is an overmatch for three French men." Thomas Lewis to [WP], 19 June 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 20.

⁴³Thomas Lewis to WP, August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 33.

⁴⁴Scribner, ed. *The Breaking Storm*, III:275-6.

surveys his income had suffered.

The Convention responded on July 18 by appointing both individuals who had submitted the petitions, Cary and Lewis, and other prominent members, including Richard Bland, to a committee chaired by Robert Carter Nicholas which would investigate the land issue.⁴⁵ Preston's former boss, Lewis, who lobbied behind-the-scenes on his behalf by showing a letter from Preston, reported to him that the leading members placed no blame on him nor charged him with anything.⁴⁶ Finally on August 15 the committee reported back that Preston was not culpable and recommended no further surveys be made under Dunmore's directions. The Convention unanimously approved this report while awaiting a report from another committee working on the broader land issue.⁴⁷ As the Virginia Convention became the quasi official government providing for the annual election of delegates and membership on county committees and the establishment of a Committee of Safety to operate between sessions of the Convention, many of the disputed land issues within Virginia took second place in a few months to the more controversial question of whether the states should give up their western land claims to the Continental Congress.⁴⁸

Who was to blame for the attack on Preston? In a letter to Preston, Reverend John Brown, his brother-in-law, charged Reverend Charles Cummings, the only non-military member of the Fincastle committee, with writing the petition against Preston. Brown questioned the right of Cummings as a clergyman to also sit on the committee by asking, "who made him a Ruler & a judge in civil affairs?" Perhaps he was after the "love of fame that universal Passion had prompt him to it." In any case, Brown recommended that Preston should go about the task of clearing his name. Brown reported that Preston's character was being attacked in the county and that he was being accused of being a "Government man & consequently friend to the Contenent," meaning he was loyal to the

⁴⁵Third Virginia Convention, 18 July 1775, *ibid.*, III:315-6. Throughout the session additional members kept being appointed to this committee, eventually totaling fifteen members. *Ibid.*, III:411, 419. A committee appointed earlier in May 1775 to also study the issue of who owned the lands--the King or the colony--had still not reported back because of a problem in obtaining original papers and charters for further study. Thomas Lewis to [WP], 19 August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 29. The four members on the original committee were also added to the committee appointed at the July 1775 session. Scribner, ed. *The Breaking Storm*, III:411.

⁴⁶Thomas Lewis to [WP], 19 August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 29.

⁴⁷Third Virginia Convention, 15 August 1775, Scribner, ed. *The Breaking Storm*, III:446 and *American Archives*, ser. 4, III:382. Within four days after the Convention took its actions, Thomas Lewis reported to Preston on the outcome. Thomas Lewis to [WP], 19 August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 29. Preston's nemesis in this issue, William Christian, also reported on 27 August 1775 about the outcome. After giving a detailed report on military staffing issues from the Convention, he mentioned in one sentence that no surveys were to be allowed. PP-DU.

⁴⁸Thomas Lewis reported on these actions to Preston on 19 August 1775. PP-DM, 4QQ 29. The actual laws passed by the Convention illustrating the further establishment of self-government by Virginia include "An ordinance for raising and embodying a sufficient force, for the defence and protection of this colony," Hening, *Statutes*, 9:9-35 and "An ordinance appointing a Committee of Safety, for the more effectual carrying into execution the several rules and regulations established by this convention for the protection of this colony." *Ibid.*, 9:49-53.

English government rather than the revolutionary movement in the colonies. The two charges being made were that he knew about letters sent to the Cherokees "upon a pernicious design" and that he carried out surveys in accord with Dunmore's wishes. The rumors continued that the Fincastle committee had decided he must give up surveying and if he did not they would put him into prison. Brown agreed to help by providing previous private letters from Preston illustrating his "patriotick spirit" which could be used to defend him. Brown also wrote Cummings asking for a complete list of the charges asserting that Preston was far from being an enemy of the country based on these letters. He agreed with his relative's intention not to retaliate against Cummings but admitted that he had a duty to defend his character. As in much of Brown's correspondence with Preston, he turned theological. Even if Preston was innocent of the charges, Brown wondered if perhaps he was guilty of some other sin or neglecting duties owed to God which provoked God to "let the tongues of men loose upon you: surely there is a Cause & it is your duty to enquire into it."⁴⁹ Preston continued to get encouragement from other friends. Floyd offered hope that "the great Disposer of Events protect your person & estate from all vile sycophants."⁵⁰ And one of his captains wrote expressing concern about the malicious reports being spread by his enemies to "Prejudice your Well Established Character."⁵¹

Within a few weeks Preston was completely vindicated of all charges in a series of very positive steps. On September 6 the Fincastle committee cleared him of all charges in a detailed written statement in which they admitted that Preston had agreed not to submit any surveys in the disputed lands without the approval of the House of Burgesses or the Convention and that in their opinion he had "acted Consistently with the . . . Promise Ever since." They also discovered that Preston had sent a petition to the Convention asking for clarification before the meeting in which the anti-Preston petition had been prepared. They also claimed no intention to reflect on his character in the petition. They further cleared him of charges made about the petition to the Cherokees which they found to be focused on the validity of Henderson's purchase from them rather than other unsubstantiated charges.⁵² To help spread the word, the committee action was to be publicly read throughout the county much to the satisfaction of his supporters.⁵³ Further vindication came on October 7 when the Virginia Committee of Safety gave him a commission as lieutenant and commander-in-chief of the Fincastle County militia.⁵⁴

⁴⁹John Brown to WP, 10 and 27 August 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 28, 31.

⁵⁰John Floyd to WP, 1 September 1775, DM, 33S, 282-5.

⁵¹Captain Herbert to WP, 20 September 1775, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA.

⁵²Fincastle Committee Action on WP, 6 September 1775, *ibid.*

⁵³John Brown to [WP], 10 October 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 34. Even from Williamsburg came word from Hugh Mercer of the exoneration by the Fincastle committee. He admitted that it gave him pleasure to vindicate someone he held in high esteem, but since no one in his county had heard of the affair, he would have been mortified if the "calumny" had spread too far. Hugh Mercer to WP, 10 February 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 36.

⁵⁴WP Commission, 7 October 1775, PP-LC, 899.

The greatest exoneration came when the Fincastle committee, the same group which only months earlier had sent the anti-Preston petition to the Virginia Convention, elected him as their new chairman replacing William Christian who now served as an officer in Virginia's detachment of the Continental Army.⁵⁵ Obviously Preston's name had been cleared of the charges and he was now viewed as a full-fledged Patriot by his fellow citizens.

But other Scotch-Irish relatives of Preston's did not fare as well. Edward Johnson, his major merchant in the Richmond area and also his wife's brother-in-law, became concerned in 1775 when a "man's Country would be imputed to him as a Crime." Recently he heard "Scotsmen abused & suspected in the . . . Convention for no other reason but (as a member said in his debate) for having the misfortune to be born in Scotland."⁵⁶ Scottish merchants such as Johnson dominated much of the colony's trade, particularly in the Norfolk area. They had little to gain financially from joining the Patriots so many remained some of the most loyal supporters of the King. In addition, many suffered from jealousies experienced by fellow colonists because they did so well financially.⁵⁷ In December Johnson reported to Preston about a frightening episode in which he got permission from his local county committee to go to Norfolk in order to take care of business matters. Upon his return home, someone charged him with saying when he was drunk on the trip "that if I was forced to take Arms on the American side, the fighting was disagreeable to me I would fight, but would embrace the first oppty of deserting to the Governour." He denied the charge with the question, "Do you think that any set of men who has known me for years, can upon the oath of a worthless fellow half

⁵⁵Fincastle Committee Minutes, 8 November 1775, Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 69. William Preston's children had to deal with charges of Loyalism against their father in 1797 when Francis Preston got into a dispute with Alexander Smyth over an election. Preston wrote a printed response defending charges made by Smyth against his father: "I also find by the above letter from my friend, that I am not only the subject of abuse, but that the memory of my deceased father has been brought into question. Whatever may be the nature of this slander, I feel very little uneasiness about it; for I well know the character of Col. William Preston deceased, cannot be impaired by the envenomed shafts and corrupt pen of Alexander Smyth, the assassin of reputations." Francis Smith to Constituents of his Congressional District, 13 February 1797, Preston Family Papers, Joyes Collection, FC, Mss AP937j Folder 56. Two years later Smyth responded to charges by Francis Preston that his father was not loyal to the American cause which led to this written exchange by Smyth: "Mr. Francis Preston had said to me, in very inteligible terms, 'Sir, your father was a person attached to the British government.' Answer. 'Sir, your father was also suspected and accused, perhaps unjustly Too.'" Alexander Smyth to Major William Preston, February 1799, ibid., Folder 10.

⁵⁶Edward Johnson to WP, 24 August 1775, PP-LC, 893.

⁵⁷For further information on the Scottish connection with Loyalism, see Emory G. Evans, "Private Indebtedness and the Revolution in Virginia, 1776 to 1796," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXVIII (July 1971): 349-50; Isaac Harrell, Loyalism in Virginia. Chapters in the Economic History of the Revolution (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926), 33-4, and Brenda Lynn Williams, "Thorns in the Side of Patriotism: Tory Activity in Southwest Virginia, 1776-1782," (M.A. thesis., VPI, 1984), 30-2. Even Robert Munford's play, "The Patriots," affirmed Johnson's feelings. In the play, a committee of safety questioned suspected Loyalists. A Col. Strut states, "The nature of their offence, gentlemen, is, that they are Scotchmen; every Scotchman being an enemy," at which point the notion is put to a vote "whether all Scotchmen are not enemies." When asked for proof that he was a Loyalist, they responded, "Proof, sir! We have proof enough. We suspect any Scotchman: suspicion is proof, sir." Ibid., 31-2.

mad, think me capable of such sentiments to leave my wife and Child and whole Estate in the power of the Committee and go to share the Fortune of a mad man." He saw the charges being the result of "little more than a Spirit of Freedom, which I cannot think unworthy a free man, yet on acct of the Violent prejudice of this time prevailing against Scotsman." The "rabble," as Johnson called them, also took twenty-seven bushels of salt he had saved for Preston but they did not find thirteen bushels he had in the cellar. He suggested to Preston, "if you want it, the Sooner you can Send for it the better as I do not Think any thing is Safe in my Custody that a Virginian wants."⁵⁸ On the day he was to face his accuser, the man refused to come saying he had never said what was reported. But Johnson would still face the charges at the next court

which on account of the Number of people that will be present will be very disagreeable, tho' I depend for my innocence & doubt not getting clear of the charge, but there are some of the Members much prejudiced against me as a Scotsman."⁵⁹

Although the outcome of this case is not recorded, Johnson apparently defended himself well and never left Virginia as did many Scottish merchants during the Revolution. However, at this early stage he never expressed strong support of the Patriots but rather used family interests as his major motivation in cooperating with them. One wonders if Preston's close association with a Scotch-Irish merchant accused of Loyalism may have caused others to think they both were Loyalists. However, such charges in connection with the Scotch-Irish prevailed largely on the coast. Most of the leaders for the Patriot cause on the frontier, including Preston, came from Scotch-Irish stock so would not be questioned simply on the basis of their birthplace.

Other frontier residents were not as faithful to the Patriot cause and began to talk openly of their loyalty to the King. At the first meeting of the Fincastle committee in 1776, Chairman Preston and his fellow committee members dealt with two such individuals. John Spratt "damned" the committee by saying "he could and would raise one Hundred men for the King to enforce the present measures" and further threatened the committee with fifteen loads of powder and two just for Preston. They also received a report of John Hiell who told one of the committee members that all of his neighbors, including himself, were for the King except for two individuals. In an even more ominous threat, he told a servant that "in about a month he and all the negroes would get there Freedom." Both men were ordered to appear before the next meeting of the committee.⁶⁰ Only recently the Virginia Convention had passed legislation aimed at prosecuting loyalists with five members of each county committee appointed to serve as judges in such cases.⁶¹ At the next meeting, Spratt came and made concessions to the committee by

⁵⁸Edward Johnson to WP, 16 December 1775, PP-LC, 908.

⁵⁹Edward Johnson to WP, 23 December 1775, PP-LC, 909.

⁶⁰10 January 1776, Fincastle Committee Minutes, Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 76-7.

⁶¹December 1775, "An ordinance for establishing a mode of punishment for the enemies to America in this colony," Hening, Statutes, 9:101-7. The law provided that the Virginia Committee of Safety could

promising to show "good behaviour for the future and voluntarily taking an oath to be faithful & True to the Colony and Dominion of Virginia." As a result, he was "acquitted and restored to the Friendship & Confidence of his Countrymen."⁶² Hiell, a German by birth, fled to Dunmore before his scheduled appointment promising the Governor that "some Hundreds" of residents in Fincastle were loyal to the King and only needed assistance.⁶³ The number of Loyalists continued to grow on the frontier with some even moving on to Preston's lands in Kentucky.⁶⁴ The other issues dealt with by Preston's committee were more routine such as swearing in new officers, making contracts for the production and transportation of gunpowder, buying supplies of salt, appointing commissioners to discover Loyalists, and approving the inclusion of western inhabitants in the Pendleton district as part of Fincastle's government.

After staying out of colony-wide politics for many years, Preston decided to run for Fincastle's delegate position to the Virginia Convention. He may have been motivated to run in a desire for further vindication since his opponent was Arthur Campbell, his recent nemesis. Floyd wrote from Kentucky urging him to run and recounted a recent trip by Campbell to Kentucky where some of Campbell's acquaintances stayed on the road "some days to flog me, but had not the courage to make the attack. Pray contrive it so that the Gentl. may not sit in the Convention."⁶⁵ Within days Floyd further offered, "I would not that Campbell should be allowed to sit in the Convention for any Convention: Pray have it prevented at any Expense, & I will pay it."⁶⁶ But it was not to be. Edward Johnson wrote with consolations about Preston's loss:

at this Critical moment I think we want in our Senate the assistance of men of experience and approved probity, not fortune hunters and fellows who has taught the world to believe they'd stick at nothing to promote their Interest, or Gratify their vanity, This seems some to be the Character (from Numbers) of a Certain upstart Gentleman whose fame can't last longer.⁶⁷

imprison and sell the estates of convicted individuals who would "aid or assist the enemy, by enlisting soldiers, giving intelligence, or furnishing them with arms, provision, or naval stores, or shall bear arms against this colony."

⁶²23 February 1776, Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 80.

⁶³Scribner and Tarter, eds. and comps., The Clash of Arms and the Fourth Convention. 1775-1776, V of Revolutionary Virginia. The Road to Independence (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), n. 28, 382.

⁶⁴Floyd wrote Preston about twenty-eight men led by Byrns and "other Tories" who had taken over the 1,000 acres on the Elk Horn recently surveyed for Preston. Floyd explained, "They talk good & say they don't design to keep forcible possession but would willingly purchase the land." These kinds of squatters led Floyd to warn that a "civil war" would take place in Kentucky if the Virginia Convention did not come up with a solution to the land problem with so many disputed land titles. 19 May 1776, DM, 33S, 292-5.

⁶⁵John Floyd to WP, 1 May 1776, DM, 33S, 291-2.

⁶⁶John Floyd to WP, 19 May 1776, DM, 33S, 292-5.

⁶⁷Edward Johnson to WP, 1 June 1776, PP-LC, 930.

Preston must have still aroused suspicions among the residents to lose this race. Possibly his support of the governor's new land policies had hurt him since they required people to pay higher prices for land. At the May meeting of the Virginia Convention which he had hoped to attend as a delegate, a new Constitution was approved which "totally dissolved" rule under Great Britain and provided for a republican government with a governor, bicameral legislature with a House of Delegates and a Senate, Privy Council, and separate judiciary.⁶⁸ In spite of their continuing close association on the Fincastle committee, Campbell and Preston continued to feud throughout 1776.⁶⁹ James McGavock strongly encouraged Preston to consider running again for the legislature in order to bring to that body a sense of justice from the common people. In his conversations with various constituents, McGavock reported an

Earnest Desire of Every person . . . That you should offer and heartily Sit your Shoulder to it once more, For it is thought by many People were you a member of that House, the Chain that Links the Club together would perhaps be Brook, and Every thing Run Nearer the ----- Channel, indeed Sir I think you ought to Goe once more.

But only one complication existed. McGavock had recently been asked by two individuals in Williamsburg "if it was possible that Col. Preston was an Enemy to his Country." Upon inquiry, Campbell had once again been at work telling people that Preston was "full of Doubts and Fears that the British Troops would over power america, and what affect would Such Conduct have on pepel that were in a weavering Condition." McGavock reported, "I Satisfied them Both as far as I was Capable" and that neither of them believed the story anyway. But he felt if Preston wrote him a note with his thoughts on the question, it would help with those who did not know him.⁷⁰ Such questions undoubtedly caused Preston to focus his energies on his own county so he would no longer suffer further political losses.⁷¹ Campbell continued his attacks in December when Floyd reported to Preston that Campbell had "done every thing in his power to prejudice you & myself, which has added no little to his Disgrace." In recent debate in the Senate over a Campbell-sponsored resolution asking Colonel William Christian to take steps to protect the frontier, members of the Senate told Floyd that Preston had been "extremely

⁶⁸May 1776, Hening, *Statutes*, 9:412-9. The Convention approved the Constitution on June 29, 1776 only days before the Continental Congress declared independence.

⁶⁹During Preston's chairmanship of the Fincastle committee, Arthur Campbell was sworn in as a Lieutenant Colonel on 4 April 1776. *Fincastle Committee Proceedings*, 86.

⁷⁰James McGavock to [WP], 14 August 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 69.

⁷¹Throughout this period Preston continued to serve Fincastle County in addition to chairing the county's committee. Preston along with John Montgomery, James McGavock, James McCorkle, and his nemesis, Arthur Campbell, became justices of the peace for the county. Ironically Campbell and Preston administered the oaths of office to each other. On the same day Preston also took oath as county sheriff. 3 September 1776, Montgomery County Order Book, 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:148-9.

ill-treated" by Campbell in the debate to the extent that he even questioned Preston's right to remain as county lieutenant.⁷²

Beginning in late spring and continuing through the fall of 1776, Preston did not have much time to think about such petty political disputes. Once again the challenge of how to handle the Indian problem confronted him directly as the key military and political leader in Fincastle, placing him in the pivotal role of coordinating the efforts on the southwestern frontier.⁷³ After defeating the Shawnees in 1774, the northern part of the frontier remained relatively quiet. But now their old allies, the Cherokees, began to make threats with the support of English agents and numerous Loyalists. Led by Dragging Canoe, the Cherokees demanded in March that settlers living in Nolichucky and Watauga beyond the agreed-upon Donelson Line from the 1770 treaty leave immediately. Henry Stuart, British deputy Indian superintendent for the southern department, asked the Cherokees for twenty days in which to get the settlers to move voluntarily as a way to avoid war from breaking out. The English feared such a war might result in Loyalists also being attacked due to the difficulties involved in determining on whose side each colonist stood. This might then cause them to switch to the Patriot side. After two warnings, the residents of Watauga decided to stay put and appealed directly to Fincastle County for help. With the aid of a forged letter claiming that the British planned to land in West Florida and then proceed through Creek and Cherokee territory gathering 500 Indian braves from each tribe before taking over the borders of North Carolina and Virginia, Fincastle leaders such as Preston decided that they faced a grave threat if the English successfully put together a coalition of Indians and Loyalists on their own borders.⁷⁴ Even though the letter was a forgery, enough fear existed for them to believe its validity. Major Anthony Bledsoe, Preston's officer closest to the scene on the Holston River, felt the residents in Watauga would move back across the line since they had no ammunition and their reports indicated the Indians would soon attack.⁷⁵ By May 22 their fears worsened when they actually saw the forged letter for the first time causing many of them to leave

⁷²John Floyd to WP, 16 December 1776, DM, 33S, 308-12.

⁷³Secondary accounts of these struggles with the Indians leading up to the attack on the Overhill Cherokee towns can be found in John Richard Alden, The South in the Revolution. 1763-1789 (Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 268-75; Arthur G. Barnes, "The Virginia-North Carolina Frontier in 1776. William Preston, William Christian and The Military Expedition Against the Overhill Cherokee Towns" (M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1969); James H. O'Donnell, III, Southern Indians in the American Revolution (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 34-53; John E. Selby, The Revolution in Virginia. 1775-1783 (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 187-8; Jack M. Sosin, The Revolutionary Frontier. 1763-1783 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 82-92, and Lewis Preston Summers, History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786, Washington County, 1777-1870 (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1979 reprint of 1903 edition), 218-50.

⁷⁴Two copies of a purported letter from Henry Stuart and Alexander Cameron were circulated. The first letter received by Preston was probably genuine and came from Major Anthony Bledsoe in the Holston River area on 14 May 1776. PP-DM, 4QQ 39.

⁷⁵Ibid. Gilbert Christian writing from Long Island on the Holston (modern-day Kingsport, Tennessee) wrote Preston that "the peopell is all in a flying Condtion, For want of Amunition is the main Cause." He assumed Preston would help not only with ammunition but with manpower. PP-DM, 4QQ 40.

their homes contrary to the advice of Bledsoe. If Preston could only send some powder, the remaining inhabitants would stay. Bledsoe also pled for an immediate meeting of the Fincastle committee in order to put the frontier into a "posture of defence."⁷⁶ By the middle of May, Preston also began to encourage settlers over the line to move back in order to avoid any possible excuse by the Indians to attack. To help prepare for all eventualities, he also called out a fourth of the militia to be prepared to move quickly and sent out five scouts on the roads to Watauga to look for signs of an attack.⁷⁷ The Virginia Committee of Safety also decided to help the frontier counties in their defense against the Indians by sending Fincastle County five hundred pounds of powder, two thousand flints, and orders for the Lead Mines at Fort Chiswell to give powder.⁷⁸

Preston began to receive encouraging signals from throughout Virginia. Captain Aaron Lewis wrote with a report about a muster he held recently where thirty volunteers indicated a willingness to help defend Watauga "at any warning" and the whole company "if Need requires."⁷⁹ Captain William Cocke reminded the leaders that the frontier region had always sacrificed to defend Virginia by leaving homes and crops and exposing their families to great danger. In every colonial war they had furnished their proper quantity of men and now hoped they would no longer be seen as a separate people but as a group of people supporting the "glorious cause . . . in defence of Liberty & property."⁸⁰ In another encouraging development, the Virginia Committee of Safety on May 27 decided to send Fincastle and Botetourt Counties two hundred more pounds of powder on the basis of a letter from Preston containing an affidavit from Gabriel Shoat and John Kamey indicating a high probability of an Indian attack on the frontier by the Cherokees who were being urged on by the English.⁸¹ Reports continued to come to Preston from individuals such as

⁷⁶Major Anthony Bledsoe to WP, 22 May 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 42.

⁷⁷The original orders from Preston have not been found, but William Christian's letter to him on 8 June 1776 outlines a response to his plans. Word had come to Christian that James Cloyd and members of a Lawrence family were planning to cross the line to remove those who would not voluntarily do it. Christian felt Preston should place one-third to one-half of his militia in readiness because in case of an emergency they would end up with the quarter they needed. Christian also wrote about rumors that residents of Watauga might switch to the Cherokee and English side to avoid problems, but he warned they would be hunted down and forced to leave. PP-DM, 4QQ 49. The five scouts were reported in a letter from [WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50.

⁷⁸Most of the western counties were given equal portions to help with their defense. Fincastle Committee of Safety Orders, 14 May 1776, Montgomery County, Original Records, VSL. Pat Lockhart, Botetourt's representative to the Convention, also reported on this help to Preston on 14 May 1776. PP-LC, 928.

⁷⁹Captain Aaron Lewis to [WP], 24 May 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 43.

⁸⁰Captain William Cocke to Major Anthony Bledsoe with copy to WP, 27 May 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 44.

⁸¹The actions by the Committee of Safety on 27 May 1776 can be found in Montgomery County, Original Records, VSL; PP-DM, 4QQ 48, or Tarter, ed., *Independence and the Fifth Convention*, 7:270, 280. The deposition taken by John Montgomery and James McGavock from Gabriel Shoat reported that Isaac Thomas had recently informed the Watauga inhabitants to remove themselves in twenty days or face being killed by the Cherokees. Thomas also reported that British agents Cameron, Stuart, and Captain Nathaniel Gist were all present in the Indian camp where he heard Cameron tell the Indians that if the "White People went to war with them that he would find them Backers enough." More alarmingly the

John Bryan who had just recently been at the Cherokee camps, indicating a close collusion between British officials and the Indians.⁸² All of these developments led Preston toward the end of May to send powder to the Holston River area as an encouragement to those on the frontier to begin laying in a stockpile of powder in case of a general war.⁸³ And now word came from North Carolina that they would provide ammunition and two thousand men to help Watauga if needed.⁸⁴

While these plans proceeded, the Cherokees also began making plans in late May and early June to carry out a major offensive on the frontier with the strong encouragement of a delegation of Northern Indians including Shawnees, Delawares, and Mohawks. Their plans consisted of a several-pronged attack calling for Cherokees from the Overhill towns to attack in two groups with one headed by the Great Warrior taking on the residents at Watauga and Nolichucky and the other under the leadership of Dragging Canoe going after settlements at Carter's Valley and the Holston area. The Lower and Middle Towns of the Cherokees would invade settlements in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.⁸⁵

In early June Preston began to receive hints that one more effort should be made to achieve peace with the Cherokees before a possible war. Because of his many years of experience in dealing with the subtle diplomacy of the Cherokees, he had been successful in averting war or in bringing about a peaceful resolution with Indians through written communications or face-to-face negotiations. William Christian wondered if it was too late to send messengers to "undeceive" them from the urgings of the British agents. But at the same time, he also told Preston to allow the Fincastle committee "to use any Coercive measure within or without your County" to discourage settlers from changing to the English side. If needed, he could send five thousand soldiers "with all Possible Speed, which will not be slow."⁸⁶ But the greatest encouragement came from Isaac Thomas, an Indian trader in regular communication with the Cherokees, who felt a letter should be sent "expressive of their Desire to continue in Friendship" with warnings that the

Indians had received a large supply of ammunition from Mobile to help them fight the settlers. When Thomas was asked if there "would be an open War," he replied they were already in that situation. Only recently the scalp of a white man from Powell's Valley had been brought in and was "received with great rejoicings" after which they had a great war dance which Thomas considered "an open Declaration of War." He also discovered that the older Indian chiefs did not want war but that the young men could no longer be restrained. PP-DM, 4QQ 38.

⁸²Bryan had been in the Cherokee camps around May 17 where he found that Cameron had recently brought those in "Favour of the Cause of Liberty" into the Indian camps as prisoners promising them freedom if they would declare their loyalty to the King. Cameron even took horses from them and gave them to the Indians which indicated a growing alliance between the Cherokees and English. John Carter to [WP?], 30 May 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 45.

⁸³WP to Colonel William Fleming, 30 May 1776, DM, 1U 18.

⁸⁴Matthew Brooks to Major Anthony Bledsoe, 30 May 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 46.

⁸⁵O'Donnell, Southern Indians, 42-3.

⁸⁶William Christian to WP, 8 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 49.

Cherokees might be destroyed as a nation if they continued to murder people and "Commit Outrages" on the frontier.⁸⁷ And so the Fincastle committee decided to make one more try at peaceful resolution by using their considerable skills in writing a letter to Oconastota and other chiefs of the Cherokees. They pled for a continuation of the "Chain of Friendship" which existed between the Cherokees and Virginians for so long and wondered what had possibly brought "Specks of Rust" to their previous relationship. Perhaps they had gotten bad counsel from white men who lived among them who attempted to persuade them that the Virginians were rebels against the King. They assured them that their dispute with the King was a quarrel between "friends, indeed between Parents and dutiful Children." They argued that if residents of Watauga had violated treaties, efforts should first have been made to resolve the problem peacefully with the "Great Men" in Williamsburg. Even now men were being murdered by "hotheaded Young" Indians on trails purchased by Henderson from the Cherokees for travel to Kentucky. If these attacks spread to innocent travelers or helpless families, the letter warned of the consequences in dramatic language:

they may be as Sure as the Sun shines they will draw upon them Selves the Vengeance of the Virginians and the Neighbouring Colonies, who will march armies into Your County to the destruction and perhaps utter extirpation of the Cherokee nation. For while we have Men, Arms and Ammunition, and we thank the Great God, we have all these, we Cannot sit Still and see Our Friends Slaughtered without the least Provocation.

They encouraged them to "brighten the Chain, to wipe the blood Out of the path and Shake the hand of Friendship (which we now offer)."⁸⁸

At the same time they wrote to the Cherokee chiefs, the Fincastle committee also began making preparations for an attack. Recently the Virginia Convention had asked the county to raise one hundred men to be stationed as approved by the committee. As a result, the committee placed fifty men near the Great Island on the Holston River, thirty-eight at Rye Cove on the Clinch, and another twelve at Fort Chiswell to protect the Lead Mines which would be a logical target of both the Indians and English. However, Preston admitted that while these locations represented the best places to station soldiers, they would not be a large enough force to protect the frontier in an actual war.⁸⁹ Within one

⁸⁷Thomas had agreed to take such a letter to the Cherokees. Preston admitted they might have gone further than the Virginia Convention would have wanted but the committee decided to take a chance. Thomas was not willing to delay leaving while Fincastle got advice from Williamsburg. [WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50. Ironically a military court of inquiry from the company of Captain John Shelby ordered on 3 June 1776 that Thomas be taken into custody and disarmed for "appearing inimical to the common Cause of American Liberty." Tarter, ed., Independence and the Fifth Convention, 7:345.

⁸⁸11 June 1776, Preston Davie Papers, VSL, Mss1 D2856 d 8.

⁸⁹[WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50. On the importance of the Lead Mines to Virginia's war effort, see Vera Lee Austin, "The Southwest Virginia Lead Works, 1756-1802" (M.A. thesis., VPI, 1977), 33-5.

week the Virginia Committee of Safety further helped by sending six companies of militia to Fincastle including one company each from neighboring Augusta and Botetourt Counties to "oppose, repel and pursue the Enemy."⁹⁰ To help defend the Watauga area, one hundred men from those areas were stationed in a strategic pass below their settlements and they purchased from Fincastle one hundred pounds of gunpowder and two hundred pounds of lead.

A growing problem of loyalism now developed in Watauga and Fincastle. Rumors spread that residents in Watauga planned to use their recent arms purchases to support the English. Upon receipt of this report, Captain Shelby from Holston immediately went to the area and detained seventy suspected people who gave their loyalty oath to the American cause and were discharged.⁹¹ And the same problem increasingly confronted the Fincastle committee chaired by Preston which met on June 11. Initially, they passed a resolution requiring that every officer and soldier "take an oath to be Faithfull and True to the Colony and dominion of Virginia, and that they will well and Truly to the utmost of their power, serve on the Frontiers." Then they confronted charges of loyalism in their own ranks by accusing a number of individuals with acts of loyalism, ordering that witnesses appear, appointing subcommittees to hear the charges, and having members of the militia appointed to protect the subcommittees. They charged John McCarty with degrading "the Characters of Many Members of this Committee, that he has said that he keeps a particular account of the men whom he knows to be in favour of the Country . . . & expects one Day or other to appe[ar] as a Witness against them." Jeremiah Pate was accused of offering forty half "Joes" for someone to enlist in the King's service. They accused two individuals with stealing horses and threatening to kill a Patriot captain which "shew that their Intentions are unfriendly to the American cause." Jacob Kettering "often declard himself a friend to the King and his measures, That he endustriously propagates many false reports that have strong Tendency to prejudice the American cause in General." Three men were charged with failing to appear for a muster "by reason of their Attachment to the Enimies of american Liberty and their Correspondence with Tories in the Cherokee nation." The committee accused Shadrick Morris with declaring openly that he was a "Kings man and would not deny."⁹² German residents in Fincastle also began showing resistance to the Patriot cause leading Preston to seek advice from Pendleton on how to proceed. While not causing any problems then, he worried that their "backwardness to give Assistance of any Kind, and the Freedom with which they frequently express them selves, deserves Notice," especially now that an invasion might take place on the frontier.⁹³ And so Preston began confronting the dual problem of external threats from Indians and the internal problem of Loyalists who increasingly posed almost as serious an obstacle.

⁹⁰At the same meeting, the Virginia Committee of Safety also encouraged Colonel William Russell to send a letter to the Cherokee chief in an attempt to prevent an invasion. 20 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 51.

⁹¹In the same letter, Preston reported he was trying to verify a rumor that "one Roberts with a Gang of Upwards of forty Tories" were on Elk Creek thirty miles from Fort Chiswell trying to recruit men to join with the Cherokees. [WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50.

⁹²11 June 1776, Fincastle Committee Minutes, Fincastle Committee Proceedings, 89-93.

⁹³[WP] to Edmund Pendleton, 15 June 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 50.

The Indians did not take kindly to the warnings from Fincastle and began to implement their plans against the frontier areas. The Lower Towns carried out their part of the plan by taking on South Carolina while other attacks in the Catawba River area resulted in thirty-seven people being killed on the North Carolina frontier. In late July the Overhill Indians brought great destruction with a siege against stockaded Watauga, although loss of life was minimized due to advance warnings.⁹⁴ Preston kept up with the action on the frontier through almost daily letters from Captain William Russell. On July 7 he reported three deaths on the frontier and by the 17th Russell appealed for 150 well armed men to repel a reportedly large raiding party.⁹⁵ And by the 20th the situation worsened when the Indians struck against Watauga and appeared headed for settlements in Fincastle with only 240 standing in their way on Long Island.⁹⁶ Soon Russell was informing Preston that the raiders were within the settlements below Fort Chiswell "and no one knows where they will strike."⁹⁷ At the time Russell did not know that the Virginians had successfully defeated a group of Indians on Long Island killing thirteen Indians without suffering any casualties themselves. But this did not deter the Cherokees and people began to flee from their homes. Russell recommended to Preston that he should station "a Guard at your House."⁹⁸ By the end of the month Russell reported no relief was in sight as men and ammunition grew short.⁹⁹ John Floyd warned Preston that conditions were no better in Kentucky.¹⁰⁰ Preston was beginning to feel desperate and to a friend he described the "Ravages and Depredations" now being committed on the frontier as the "most extensively & heavily experienced in any former War . . . and the distress situation of the Inhabitants is beyond my Power to fully describe." The Indians were now near the head of Holston River and were burning homes, destroying fields of grain, killing and driving off stock, and murdering any in their way. To protect themselves nearly four hundred people were confined in Captain Evan Shelby's fort (in modern-day Bristol, Virginia) with no ammunition.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴O'Donnell, *Southern Indians*, 41-3.

⁹⁵Captain William Russell to WP, 7 and 17 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 53-4.

⁹⁶Captain William Russell to WP, 20 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 55. Preston was apprehensive that the soldiers would arrive in time to help. WP to William Fleming, 18 July 1776, DM, 1U 24. Preston then relayed the information from his field officers to Williamsburg. To the President of the Council, he wrote on 2 August 1776 with news about the Lead Mines being well protected with a company of Bedford militiamen. PP-DM, 4QQ 64.

⁹⁷Captain William Russell to WP, 23 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 58.

⁹⁸Captain William Russell to WP, 23 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 57.

⁹⁹Captain William Russell to WP, 27 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 60. Preston reported to Fleming of his apprehension of a successful fight due to a lack of men and ammunition. He predicted, "this County will be broke up & dispersed. The Roads from Holston are crowded, and numbers preparing to start on the least notice of an Alarm. . . . The Confusion of the People beyond Description." 25 July 1776, DM, 1U 26.

¹⁰⁰John Floyd to WP, 21 July 1776, DM, 33S, 300-5.

¹⁰¹WP to _____, 30 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 61. The tone of the letter indicates it must have been written to John Page.

To put an end to these hostilities, Virginia called on General Charles Lee of the Continental Army to help launch a strong, coordinated offensive attack to eliminate the Cherokees as an effective force.¹⁰² The plan called for South Carolina to go after the Lower towns of the Cherokees, North Carolina to destroy the Middle and Valley towns, and Virginia to devastate the Overhill towns. To help implement their part of the plan, the Virginia Council ordered Colonel Charles Lewis on July 22 to proceed immediately with his batallion of militia to the frontier where he was to be joined shortly by an additional 1,500 troops, all of whom Preston was going to have to procure supplies for.¹⁰³ They would be faced by an estimated 600 to 800 Cherokees well supplied from the deserted settlements they were overtaking on their steady march toward Virginia. As Preston analyzed the Cherokee advantages, he found many--large numbers, a good supply of the best arms, able commanders, battle-toughened warriors, and a navigable river on which they could have their families secured. He also knew that part of his soldiers would have to be used to protect the frontier from a possible attack by northern and western Indians.¹⁰⁴ William Christian was now made commander-in-chief of Virginia's forces going into combat against the Cherokees. The instructions given Christian called for his forces to "severely" chastise "that Cruel and Perfidious Nation, which you are to do in the manner most likely to put a stop to future Insults and Ravages."¹⁰⁵

The expedition itself went very smoothly. Nearly 2,000 soldiers, including 400 from North Carolina, met at Long Island on Holston River (modern-day Knoxville, Tennessee).¹⁰⁶ They built a new fort on Long Island named in honor of Virginia's first governor under independence, Fort Patrick Henry. They moved out for the Indian towns

¹⁰²Several leaders with long experience fighting the Indians argued that a defensive battle would not work. Archibald Cary wrote Preston that "an offensive (war) must be Undertaken, and by the Bravery of our Men and the Justness of the Cause I hope for a Happy Issue; but my Friend Great must be the distress of Numbers before those Infernal People can be Subdued, Indeed nothing but a Total Extirpation Can Answer I Apprehend." Archibald Cary to WP, 31 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 62. William Fleming also agreed that "carrying the War into the Nation, is the only way to secure our Frontiers and make us respected." He only wished they did not have to rely so much on Carolina for the plan's success but could act independently from them. William Fleming to [WP], 2 August 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 65.

¹⁰³Virginia Council Journals, 22 July 1776, H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the Council of State of Virginia (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981), I:82, hereafter referred to as Virginia Council Journals. In his role as Fincastle's key leader, Virginia Lieutenant Governor John Page asked Preston to supply this large force. 26 July 1776, PP-LC, 936.

¹⁰⁴WP to _____, 30 July 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 61.

¹⁰⁵Instruction to Colonel William Christian, 1 August 1776, H. R. McIlwaine, ed. Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia, I, The Letters of Patrick Henry (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1926), 20-1. To help this force, Virginia allocated more supplies for Preston to use including 100 pounds of sulphur, 1,000 pounds of powder, 2,000 flints, and 20 bushels of salt. John Page to WP, 6 August 1776, PP-LC, 938.

¹⁰⁶Efforts to coordinate with the Carolinas never worked during this expedition, but they earlier destroyed the towns assigned them in the Lower and Middle area of Cherokee territory with large numbers of soldiers. The number of men involved in this concerted campaign may have totaled 6,000. Selby, Revolution in Virginia, 187.

on October 6. Morale was high and Captain James Thompson reported elatedly to Preston that "our Men is in the highest Spirits & think will make a noble Battle as there is undoubtedly the most best Men among them for the Number ever collected in the world."¹⁰⁷ But no battle ensued for the Cherokees withdrew as the army approached, destroying empty towns on the way. When they got to the French Broad River on October 13, the Cherokees asked for a truce which Christian agreed to.¹⁰⁸ The Indians promised to attempt a capture of British officers, agents, and Loyalists in the area and to give up some of their lands as payment for war expenses. Treaty negotiations were to follow.¹⁰⁹ By early November things had gone so smoothly that Christian returned home, leaving 600 soldiers at Fort Patrick Henry as a precaution in case the Cherokees changed their minds. Throughout this entire episode, William Preston played a crucial role. He kept Virginia authorities informed on a regular basis which ensured a state-wide effort. His communication with the Cherokees early in June may have helped create the background which encouraged them to sue for peace before attempting to take on the large expeditionary force Preston had warned them about. And his efforts to provide supplies and manpower on an emergency basis while the rest of Virginia attempted to get an expedition together bought enough time so that settlers on the frontier did not completely give up and flee from their homes.

The results of this expedition were farreaching. Ultimately the removal of the Cherokees as a major force to be reckoned with during the Revolution eliminated one other potential problem which could have distracted Virginia from their ultimate enemy, the English. Furthermore, all Indians would now be wary of following English advice in fighting the Patriots. Loyalists were also placed on notice that their opponents could put together a major force to counteract their efforts, eliminating English hopes for a Loyalist colony on the frontier from which they could operate.

The treaty negotiations did not get underway at Long Island until April, 1778 because of sporadic Indian attacks.¹¹⁰ William Preston, William Christian, and Evan Shelby were appointed by the Council of State to meet with the Cherokees.¹¹¹ They met the Cherokee negotiators, twenty-one chiefs backed up by sixty warriors, on April 18 at

¹⁰⁷Captain James Thompson to WP, 6 October 1776, PP-DM, 4QQ 74.

¹⁰⁸Barnes, "The Virginia-North Carolina Frontier," 49-63 makes this persuasive argument.

¹⁰⁹Dragging Canoe complicated the peace process when he refused to cooperate and fled south on the Tennessee River where he planned to create a new series of towns centered around Chickamauga, the name of this new tribe. O'Donnell, Southern Indians, 48-9.

¹¹⁰The Cherokees felt their women and children might be attacked while they were gone. Anthony Bledsoe suspicioned that Stuart was telling them that they had gotten "bad advice" to agree on a treaty with the Patriots. Anthony Bledsoe to WP, 8 December 1776, Preston Family Papers, College of William and Mary, 39.1 P91, Folder 1.

¹¹¹18 January 1777, Council Journals, I:317. Governor Patrick Henry wrote a letter to Christian informing him of the appointments to prepare a treaty "establishing a firm and lasting peace" with the Cherokees "on terms of equity and mutual advantage." Patrick Henry to William Christian, 24 January 1777, McIlwaine, ed., Patrick Henry Letters, 94-5. Christian informed Colonel Arthur Campbell of the appointments on 24 February 1777, Arthur Campbell Papers, FC, AC187:1.

Long Island.¹¹² During the next week the commissioners met regularly with the Cherokees promising to supply any ammunition and supplies they needed and offering to protect them from their enemies. The commissioners asked, "Is it not better to clean and brighten every link of the great Chain which held our Fathers together, than to prepare for War? . . . Let us be Friends, and become one people, then we shall be like a great spreading Tree with large Branches & strong Roots."¹¹³ The Indians responded in kind stating that the "beloved men are fastening a Chain, the one end in Chote [Chota, one of the major Indian villages] & the other in Williamsburg; and the young men will hold it fast and keep it bright and clean, and never look off from it, or forge it."¹¹⁴ Preston, who knew the language of Indian diplomacy, served as a key negotiator.¹¹⁵ But ultimately negotiations were postponed until June 26 in the hope that a key Cherokee Chief would be present. In the interim, the Virginians agreed not to allow any new settlements below Powell's Valley or on the Holston River and that only messengers or public officials from Virginia would be allowed in Cherokee territory. As a further guarantee, the Great Warrior and thirty Indians agreed to go to Williamsburg to meet the governor.¹¹⁶ Preston and his fellow commissioners wrote Henry with a report encouraging him to provide goods to the Cherokees to keep them peaceful. They warned that the consequence of not helping would be that those "disaffected & unfriendly to the American Cause" might move into their territory and "inflare their Minds & raise that warlike Spirit, which is the highest Glory and Ambition of Indians."¹¹⁷

In late June negotiations began again and this time the Virginian group was joined by representatives from North Carolina.¹¹⁸ Discussions dragged on for nearly a month and a frustrated Preston wrote his wife Susanna that, "I have little more to say than that I am in Health and weary of staying here without doing the Business for which I came." He hoped the process would be over soon for "I really long to see you & my Dear

¹¹²The negotiations are well documented in PP-DM, 4QQ 76-153 with many of the actual speeches that were given.

¹¹³Treaty Negotiations, 1777, PP-DM, 4QQ 93.

¹¹⁴PP-DM, 4QQ 97.

¹¹⁵Toward the end of the negotiations, Preston's fellow commissioners left him to negotiate by himself. The following message which he gave the Cherokees illustrates his skill in talking with the Indians: "I give you a hearty Welcome to the Council Fire to be kindled at this Place; and as I believe it to be your Desire, to Shake & Smoke the Pipe of Peace with your former Brothers, you shall be received in Friendship and well Treated by them. That your Eyes may be open to See, & your Ears to hear, that your Talks may be good & your Hearts Clean, and that we may have an agreeable meeting, I send you a string of Wampum." PP-DM, 4QQ 107.

¹¹⁶PP-DM, 4QQ 143-6, 150. Between 23 and 28 May 1778 the Indians stayed in Williamsburg where they met the governor and received gifts. 23, 26, and 28 May 1777, Council Journals, I:416-9.

¹¹⁷PP-DM, 4QQ 151.

¹¹⁸WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 17 June 1777, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:50. Waightstill Avery, William Sharp, Robert Lanier, and Joseph Winston represented North Carolina. Governor Richard Canswell to Commission on Cherokees, 12 June 1777, PP-DM, 4QQ 155.

Children."¹¹⁹ Finally on July 20 the Cherokees agreed to yield all their lands east of the Blue Ridge and north of the Nolichucky River which brought Cumberland Gap into Virginia's territory.¹²⁰ For awhile the Indian threat to southwest Virginia abated.

But now the problems of Loyalism became a major concern. Earlier, in May, 1777, the Virginia Assembly passed a law requiring all free born male inhabitants sixteen years or over to take a loyalty oath before October 10. Those who refused would not be allowed to hold office, serve on juries, sue for debts, buy lands, or vote.¹²¹ And so Preston and other justices of the peace began to administer the loyalty oaths throughout their region.¹²² Very quickly Preston ran into difficulties. Almost forty of his neighbors refused to take the oath as did Captain Thomas Burk and his militia company with the exception of four or five. Preston explained that,

Next week I intend to order them to be disarmed, having them this week to come in and take the Oath, and I have the greatest reason to believe that it will be attended with much Trouble and perhaps Resistance.

He did not feel the ringleaders would really worry about the law until it began to impact on their properties more directly. The current punishment was only a diversion for them because,

they bring no Suits, they never Elect, they dont attend Court; they can dispose of their arms and they dont want to purchase Land, to which I sincerely wish some amendments could be made to stop this growing Evil. . . . In short they do as they Please.¹²³

¹¹⁹This represents the only existing letter from Preston to his wife. 9 July 1777, McDowell Family Papers, VHS, Mss1 m1485 a1.

¹²⁰Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*, 188 and O'Donnell, *Southern Indians*, 58-9.

¹²¹The following oath was to be taken: "I do swear, or affirm, that I renounce and refuse all allegiance to George the Third, king of Great Britain, his heirs and successors, and that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the commonwealth of Virginia, as a free and independent state, and that I will not, at any time, do, or cause to be done, any matter or thing that will be prejudicial or injurious to the freedom and independence thereof, as declared by congress; and also, that I will discover and make known to some one justice of the peace for the said state, all treasons or traitorous conspiracies which I now or hereafter shall know to be formed against this or any of the United States of America." May 1777, Hening, *Statutes*, 9:281-2.

¹²²On 2 September 1777 the Montgomery County Court appointed several to administer oaths of allegiance to the military. Montgomery County Order Book, 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:159. John Breckinridge swore his loyalty before Preston on 6 December 1777. Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:54.

¹²³WP to Colonel William Fleming, 2 December 1777, Thwaites, *Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio*, 169-70 and DM, 2ZZ 43. Fleming responded, "I am sorry to hear you have any trouble with Weak Infuriated Blind People in Your County. I sincerely wish they may consider better of the Matter, than Expose themselves to the resentment of their County which they will infalibly bring over their heads." William Fleming to WP, 15 December 1777, PP-LC, 973.

A few weeks later Preston received Burk's resignation as an officer with the explanation that while he was a friend of the country he could not in good conscience take an oath about which he had any doubt.¹²⁴ The case of Thomas Heavin represented a more difficult one to deal with because when an officer went to disarm him supporters successfully resisted the effort.¹²⁵

The entire situation was made worse when in November several Augusta County soldiers killed Shawnee Chief Cornstalk with three other chiefs "in cold blood."¹²⁶ Now the threat of northern Indian attack loomed. Preston could barely contain his anger as he reported in early 1778 to the governor of the "barbarous, inhuman, and impolitic Murder committed . . . by a Number of rash inconsiderate Villains." He predicted the Indians would not take these murders lightly with the strong possibility that an Indian federation would be formed to attack all along the frontier. The frontier had some serious weaknesses since almost one hundred individuals had still refused to take the loyalty oath. Since most individuals living in these areas were not rich enough to move back to the interior, they would be helpless to defend themselves without help from outside for which Preston appealed. With tremendous shortages in salt, corn, wheat, and lead, the situation appeared even more hopeless. Without such help, Preston predicted the frontiers would be depopulated by May.¹²⁷ Governor Henry's response expressed open anger at what happened because Virginia would now have to transfer soldiers who could have helped Washington's army defeat the British. He asked, "Is not this the work of Torys? No man but an Enemy to American Independence will do it, and thus oblige our people to be hunting after Indians in the woods, instead of facing General Howe in the field." Assuming they would bring the murderers to justice, Henry outlined a military strategy for Preston to use which called for getting all guns in order, procuring lead from the mines, sending out scouts, building stockades where settlers in danger could stay, enlisting volunteers or using the draft to build up the military, and discussing the possibility of establishing a communication post near the mouth of Elk River. He concluded with hopes that negotiations could begin soon for a peace treaty with the

¹²⁴Captain Thomas Burk to [WP], 18 February 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 205-6.

¹²⁵Preston ordered Constable Bryan McDonald to get a larger group of men together to bring Heavin into court and to find witnesses to testify in court. WP Warrant to Constable Bryan McDonald, 23 February 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 160. Heavin's case is documented in Emory G. Evans, "Trouble in the Backcountry. Disaffection in Southwest Virginia during the American Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman, That W. Tate, and Peter J. Alberts, eds., An Uncivil War. The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 189.

¹²⁶WP to Colonel William Fleming, 2 December 1777, Thwaites, Frontier Defense on Upper Ohio, 109.

¹²⁷One of Preston's particular worries was that the state government would not want to help because of the atrocious murder of Cornstalk, yet he kept reminding the governor that the "baseness" of a few should not condemn the many "who deplored what had happened." WP to Governor Patrick Henry, 16 January 1778, "Preston Papers," The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College, IV (June 1915): 291-4, hereafter referred to as "Branch Papers." The governor was gone when the letter arrived, but Lieutenant Governor John Page responded on behalf of the Council that they could not send a large amount of cash to buy provisions but they did send an order for 500 pounds of lead. 4 February 1778, Council Journals, II:79 and Lieutenant Governor John Page to [WP], 4 February 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 161.

Shawnees.¹²⁸ Once again a Virginia governor, this time one of their own, expressed frustration with the questionable actions taken by frontiersmen and their will to defend themselves.¹²⁹

Preston and Fleming agreed with the recommendations but still felt they needed more help from outside the county since they had an eighty mile frontier to cover. They also reported results of their initial investigation into the murder of Cornstalk. It appeared that the murderers lived in Augusta, Rockbridge, and Greenbrier Counties which meant the officers in those areas would need to help. They also suggested printing a copy of the governor's proclamation which could be sent to the Shawnees as evidence of their serious intent to apprehend the murderers.¹³⁰ Preston and William Fleming now tried to get negotiations started by sending a letter to the Shawnees in which they expressed sorrow for the murder of Cornstalk but reminded the Shawnees that just like in the chief's murder, "hot headed young Men" had also murdered a white officer shortly before the other murder. They assured the Shawnees that the murderers would be dealt with as if a white man had been murdered. They then stated that, "We love you, because you are Generous & Sensible. We wish to be Friends with you. We have no desire to injure or molest you. We covet nothing you have. All we desire is Peace with you."¹³¹ While attempts began for a peace treaty, Indians continued to be seen along the frontier.

Now Preston began to focus attention on his own family who faced serious danger at Smithfield. Residents were fleeing the area within two miles of Smithfield leaving

¹²⁸Patrick Henry to WP, 19 February 1778, William Wirt Henry, Patrick Henry. Life, Correspondence and Speeches (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), III:144-8. Henry's letter was based on actions taken by the Virginia Council on 4 February 1778, Council Journals, II:86-7. As of 4 March 1778, Preston still had not received Henry's response and wrote requesting advice on whether the "distressed People" in frontier settlements should move or stay. [WP] to [Patrick Henry?], 4 March 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 162.

¹²⁹Albert H. Tillson, Jr. argues that attacks on friendly Indians represented a way for frontiersmen to undermine the will of the frontier elite such as Preston who favored a broader provincial outlook rather than the local perspectives of the average citizen. "The Militia in Upper Valley Virginia," 306 and "The Southern Backcountry. A Survey of Current Research," VMHB, 98 (July 1990), 410.

¹³⁰WP and William Fleming to [Patrick Henry], 14 March 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 163. Henry on behalf of the Council agreed with their response by ordering fifty men each from Botetourt and Greenbrier Counties and sending , 1,000 to buy supplies. 27 March 1778, Council Journals, II:111 and Patrick Henry to WP and William Fleming, 27 March 1778, Thwaites, Frontier Defense on Upper Ohio, 240-1. In the midst of these problems, General Edward Hand, on behalf of the Continental Army, asked Preston to send 150 soldiers to help in the Fort Pitt area, an order resisted by Preston and eventually countermanded by Governor Henry on the grounds that Montgomery County faced too many dangers on their own frontiers to be sending men elsewhere. [Edward Hand] to WP, 27 March 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 166; WP to Colonel William Fleming, 13 April 1778, Thwaites, Frontier Defense on Upper Ohio, 268 and Patrick Henry to William Fleming, 5 May 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 167.

¹³¹WP and Colonel William Fleming to Shawnees, 3 April 1778, Thwaites, Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio, 258-61 and DM, 2ZZ 44. Preston had difficulty writing this letter so he sent it on for revision to Fleming but was "ashamed to show it. I have tried to make a better of it to no Purpose." He asked Fleming to make any necessary alterations or replace it completely with his own. WP to [William Fleming?], 29 [March?] 1778, DM, 3ZZ 22.

Preston and his family totally exposed without a fort and no soldiers.¹³² Preston, with the Loyalist problem in mind, wrote William Fleming that he had "neither authority nor influence enough in this County, with the assistance of several of the Officers, to raise even six men to guard the Place" despite the fact that the public ammunition was located at his home along with all of the surveyor's records for Washington County and Kentucky. He pondered his options:

I am really at a loss what to do. To leave my Property as an Individual, & my Duty as an Officer of the Militia, is very Disagreeable to Me; To continue, thus exposed & Defenceless, an easy Prey to a small Party of Savages, and run the Risque of having my Wife & numerous helpless Family Sacrificed at some unhappy and Unguarded moment looks like madness or Stupidity.¹³³

For help he asked Stephen Trigg who was attending the General Assembly meeting in Williamsburg to ask the governor for a sergeant and twelve men to guard Smithfield, a request eventually granted as an inducement to get him to stay home and "to encourage others to do so."¹³⁴ Ominous reports continued of Indian parties, with as many as forty in a single group. Preston felt besieged:

Those in distress are crying out against me for not sending them Assistance. These to be draughted and ought not to go out, cursing me for disturbing them; my own Family in Danger & myself in Trouble & Confusion; Such is the very Disagreeable Situation.¹³⁵

He appealed to Henry to call out the militia from adjoining counties, but the governor refused because he could not call out men on the "prospect" of being attacked.¹³⁶

Toward the end of May the Shawnees actually began to attack along the Greenbrier River. Without any soldiers to help him, Preston was left to simply ride around the frontier and warn residents of the danger.¹³⁷ By early June Preston sent his family to his old home, Greenfield, which was protected by a stockade.¹³⁸ Minor Indian

¹³²WP to William Peachey, 29 April 1778, PP-LC, 984. Earlier on 13 April 1778 Preston wrote Fleming, "I am excessively uneasy about our Frontiers in general & my own exposed Family in particular." Thwaites, Frontier Defense on Upper Ohio, 268.

¹³³WP to William Fleming, 10 May 1778, DM, 2U 16.

¹³⁴Stephen Trigg to [WP], 16 May 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 169; Patrick Henry to WP, 12 May 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 168 and 12 May 1778, Council Journals, II:131.

¹³⁵WP to Colonel William Fleming, 17 May 1778, DM, 3ZZ 15.

¹³⁶Patrick Henry to WP, 17 May 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 170.

¹³⁷WP to Colonel William Fleming, 30 May 1778, DM, 3ZZ 16 and Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 640; William Fleming and WP to Patrick Henry, 8 July 1778, DM, 2U 35 and Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 647.

¹³⁸WP to Colonel William Fleming, 30 May 1778, DM, 3ZZ 16 and Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 641. Edward Johnson had not gotten word of the departure of Preston's family to Greenfield because he wrote a

attacks continued in many areas including Sinking Creek, Little Kanawha Creek, and the lower New River with reports that nearly 300 Indians had gathered at Point Pleasant.¹³⁹ But killings and depredations were limited, leading some to believe that they were just getting ready for a "heavy stroak."¹⁴⁰ Henry and the Council sent ammunition but authorized no military force.¹⁴¹ Preston, with his family absent, was beginning to feel the strain--so much so that Dr. Thomas Walker recommended bleeding and taking sixty grains of "Pliccerific" every morning, noon, and night in any liquid he would choose. He also suggested that Preston "live Sparingly & use as much exercise as you can without much fatigue."¹⁴²

But despite the fact that the year 1778 ended with no massive Indian attacks Preston continued to be depressed about future prospects. In Montgomery County, which had recently been created out of Fincastle County, there were only 260 single men eligible for military service and many of them had fled to South Carolina or the mountains. Married men hesitated to come forward for to leave their homes to serve in the military would leave their families to "ruin and Beggary." Faced with difficulties and possible Indian attacks, he was near despair.¹⁴³

This despair resulted not only from Indian and Loyalist problems but also from political and administrative ones. Earlier Fincastle County, because of its size, was replaced by two counties--Washington and Montgomery.¹⁴⁴ And Preston, who lived in Montgomery and who emerged again as a pivotal leader--he was made justice of the

very strong letter of concern on 2 July 1778: "I hope you have before this removed your family to Botetourt. . . . I wonder you do not Settle Your Self at Greenfield. I wou'd not for the whole you possess at Smithfd live there with my famy. in one of these Indian irruptions. my wife is very uneasie & blames you much for running the many risks you have, and is of Opinion that you'll Continue till some of your family get Butchered or you lose your own life with these Mercyless Neighbours . . . however, I know no man that has more pleasure in a family, nor one who Studies their Safety and happiness more than yourself. I therefore Comfort my self that you will always be watchful & take the Earliest Opportunitys of Securing the helpless of them in a proper Asylum." PP-LC, 990.

¹³⁹William Fleming to WP, 5 June 1778, PP-LC, 987 and WP to Captain William Robinson, 6 June 1778, PP-LC, 988.

¹⁴⁰Colonel William Fleming to Patrick Henry, 19 July 1778, DM, 2U 23 and Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 648.

¹⁴¹Stephen Trigg to WP, 14 June 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 176.

¹⁴²Dr. Thomas Walker to WP, 23 October 1778, PP-DM, 4QQ 183.

¹⁴³WP to Patrick Henry, 25 November 1778, "Branch Papers," 296-7 and Auditor's Accounts, William Preston Papers, VSL.

¹⁴⁴The original territory of Fincastle County was eventually divided into twenty-one counties in Virginia and all of Kentucky. "An act dividing the county of Fincastle into three distinct counties, and the parish of Botetourt into four distinct parishes," October 1776, Hening, Statutes, 9:257-61. Montgomery County was named for General Richard Montgomery who died a hero in Quebec on 31 December 1775. Regional accounts of Montgomery County include two books by Lula Porterfield Givens, Highlights in the Early History of Montgomery County, Virginia (Pulaski: B. D. Smith & Bros., Inc., 1975) and Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Virginia in the Heart of the Alleghenies (Pulaski: Edmonds Printing, Inc., 1981).

peace, county surveyor, and county lieutenant--was faced again with the problems of a new county.¹⁴⁵ Even with his continuing status as a major leader, those envious of his success tried to undermine his authority.¹⁴⁶

Through all of this, Preston gave considerable attention to his business and family affairs. As a member of the frontier elite, he continued to provide his family with luxury items not enjoyed by fellow residents. In one sixteen month period he ran up a bill with one trading company of over \$21 for such items as three yards of ribbon, silk, combs, and worsted hose and mittens.¹⁴⁷ Children continued to be born. Predictions from Edward Johnson that Susanna Preston's sickness "may be what you expect and that the usual period will bring it to a happy issue" came true with the birth on September 29, 1776 of Mary, their eighth child.¹⁴⁸ A few weeks later the death of Preston's mother, Elizabeth, on Christmas Day at Greenfield tempered this good news.¹⁴⁹ But she had instilled strong values in her only son which included a deep religious faith and a belief in the value of education. He worked constantly to keep Presbyterian ministers in the county who would not only provide regular religious services, but schooling for his children. Because of Preston's position as county surveyor he was able to find land on which potential ministers could settle.¹⁵⁰ And he even tried to get subscriptions for a Presbyterian seminary in the county, an effort that failed. Preston's children and many of his nephews continued to receive instruction at Smithfield from Aaron Palfrenan. He even considered establishing a community school--something that did not materialize--but he did take in the children of more relatives and in 1778 an orphan boy as well.¹⁵¹ Showing his interest

¹⁴⁵For county lieutenant positions, see Commission by Patrick Henry to WP, 21 December 1776, PP-LC, 949 and 7 January 1777, Montgomery County Order Book, 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:153. For Justice of the Peace appointment, see *ibid.*, 20:152. For surveyor's license, see 2 September 1777, Montgomery County Misc. Records, Correspondence and personal papers, Folder O; WP Bond as Surveyor, 2 September 1777, Montgomery County Deed Book A, 1773-1789, VSL, 1:169-170 and 2 September 1777, Montgomery County Order Book, 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:159. Over a year passed before plans were made to construct a courthouse on land given by James McGavock and to build a prison from a tax of 6 shillings levied on each tithable in the county. 8 April 1778, *ibid.*, 20:165-6.

¹⁴⁶Thomas Lewis earlier expressed sorrow that Preston had "such a variety of Enemies as you mention to Encounter" and he encouraged: "Time that Great Operator, I hope will Soon bring relief, and rid you of those inimical Insects of whatever kind they be . . . They will stick to you as long as you stick to Smithfield." Thomas Lewis to WP, 18 August 1776, PP-LC, 940.

¹⁴⁷WP Account with John Grafton and George Rutledge, 1775-6, PP-LC, 951.

¹⁴⁸Edward Johnson to WP, 1 June 1776, PP-LC, 930 and Preston Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1.

¹⁴⁹Dorman, *Prestons*, 1. Edward Johnson wrote words of comfort a few days later: "I observe your good old mother has left this troublesome stage, and can only wish all who are dear to me might live to her age and die with her fortitude." [Edward Johnson] to [WP], 16 January 1777, PDGC-FC.

¹⁵⁰Brown feared that without a regular minister they would be in "danger of falling into Sectaries by the influence of irregular or pretended preachers which will be destructive to that regularity that ought to subsist in Christ's Church." Reverend John Brown to WP, 4 April 1775, PP-DM, 4QQ 12.

¹⁵¹Preston made arrangements with Philip Barragar, a neighbor, for board and room so his sister Letitia's boys could attend. Barragar agreed to "put a House in good Order for their reception and as far as Beef,

in education, Preston served as a trustee of Liberty Hall Academy, an academy connected with the Hanover Presbytery at Timber Ridge (near present day Lexington).¹⁵² As his own boys got older, Preston faced a choice of continuing their education in a smaller school such as Liberty Hall Academy or at the larger College of William and Mary. For advice he wrote his brother-in-law, Granville Smith, who had recently attended the College in 1776 and two years later was still living in Williamsburg.¹⁵³ Smith first answered a question Preston had about an acquaintance then attending the College. He did not feel the young man should continue because he did not study diligently due to a "thousand alluring Temptations to engage a young Man to spend his Time unprofitably, and join in Scenes destructive to his Constitution and Interest." At that time, the College was not under "proper Reputations, nor are there here the most eligable Sett of Companions." But more to the subject, he gave a detailed analysis of Preston's sons and what would be best for them:

I have heard you intend to send your Boys to College next Year. I very well know how solicitous you are to give them a liberal Education and at the same Time procure to them that Innocence and Virtue in which they have been educated, as a Friend and Relation I am no less anxious for their Prosperity, therefore, I would wish you would defer sending them for some little Time, at least 'till their Judgments are riper, when they will be able to view Things and Appearances in their proper Lights. When they have learnt Latin & Greek, enough to enter as regular Students into the School of moral and rational Philosophy it will be the best and properest Time to send them. At a country School under the direction of a good Teacher they will learn the Languages better than at College, for the present Professor of Humanity is not, in my Opinion, possessed of the most shining Abilities. I hope you will not consider that as impertinent . . . my knowledge of the College induced me to make these Observations.¹⁵⁴

Bacon, Milk, Butter & good Bread, Turnips & Cabbage went he would turn his Back on no man" for , 10 per child. WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 13 October 1777, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:53. Edward Johnson made arrangements for the orphan boy to attend at the request of "old Mrs. Todd." Johnson promised Preston that the cost of any clothes for the child would be covered. Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1778, PP-LC, 990.

¹⁵²Wilson, *Tinkling Spring*, 197-8. John Brown founded Augusta Academy in Staunton sometime before 1763. Shortly before the Declaration of Independence, the board renamed the school, Liberty Hall Academy, and moved it to Timber Ridge. Hart, *Valley in the Revolution*, 31-2.

¹⁵³On 17 January 1776 Granville Smith wrote to Preston of his very harsh criticisms of the College of William and Mary. With the independence movement in full force at that time, the College was in a "disorderly Situation" with only one master left, a Reverend J. Dixon, described by Smith as "deaf, debauched, and notoriously infamous." With Madison gone to England, the College had degenerated and Smith described his education as "very little advanced." At this point, Mann Page offered to treat him as part of his own family if he would serve for , 40 as a tutor to his children. Smith admitted, "The Business of a private Tutor is what I am not very fond, but have engaged in it not knowing what else to do." He had considered Princeton also but did not know if he could afford to attend since his father had died recently and left no provision for his education in the will. He asked for Preston's advice. PP-LC, 914.

¹⁵⁴Granville Smith to WP, 24 October 1778, PP-LC, 997.

Preston delayed sending his sons to Williamsburg.

Education and culture at the Preston home consisted of more than formal schooling during these early years of revolution. Despite the war he continued to build the family library by sending book orders to his merchant relative, Edward Johnson, and through purchases from another relative, Francis Smith. Some of the books he added to his collection included Aesop's Fables, Ovid's Metamorphosis, the Lives of 12 Caesars, and a work by Homer.¹⁵⁵ But he did more than build a library. He also lent his books to relatives such as Granville Smith.¹⁵⁶ And he discussed his books with fellow readers such as Edward Johnson who asked for his opinion on Cato's Letter.¹⁵⁷ Newspapers formed another important educational tool and several friends regularly supplied him with "large bundles."¹⁵⁸ And to keep up with political affairs in Virginia, he received copies of legislative journals from the House of Burgesses.¹⁵⁹ He must have had a twinge of regret for his removed position when Edward Johnson expressed the wish that Preston's daughter, Elizabeth, could be with them because one of their neighbors had recently gotten a fine harpsichord and an excellent teacher had been found from whom Elizabeth could learn.¹⁶⁰ It would have been easy during this time of war and tumult on the frontier to neglect educating one's children. But the Preston family continually placed a high priority on both formal and informal learning, thus setting them apart from the rest of the frontier society in which they lived.

Taking care of the needs of a rapidly growing family required a regular source of income, even in time of war. So Preston continued to develop his agricultural interests,

¹⁵⁵WP Order from Francis Smith, 13 July 1776, PP-LC, 935. On 31 July 1776 Edward Johnson reported that he had sent Preston's list of books to several places including Petersburg, Williamsburg, and his own Manchester neighborhood without any success. An old schoolmaster, Mr. Swain, promised him one set of books. With this letter Johnson sent nine old volumes of different kinds of books. Edward Johnson to WP, 31 July 1776, PP-LC, 937. Johnson got Preston's brother-in-law, Granville Smith, to look for some of the books. Edward Johnson to WP, 17 January 1776, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267a15. By 15 November 1776 Johnson had more success when he sent him five paper parcels of books including one by Homer. Edward Johnson to WP, 16 November 1776, PP-LC, 945.

¹⁵⁶Granville Smith to WP, 17 January 1776, PP-LC, 914.

¹⁵⁷Edward Johnson to WP, 1 June 1776, PP-LC, 930.

¹⁵⁸Both Edward Johnson and Granville Smith represent two examples of many who supplied Preston with newspapers. Granville Smith to WP, 17 January 1776, PP-LC, 914 and Edward Johnson to WP, 13 February 1776, PP-LC, 918. Supplying newspapers became a running joke when Johnson's quantity of newspapers to Preston decreased as a result of his wife using them for stuffing her bonnets. Edward Johnson to WP, 2 September 1777, PP-LC, 967. On 2 July 1778 he apologized for sending only three newspapers but wrote, "I can't keep them from Betsey or shou'd have had a pretty large parcel." PP-LC, 990. On 10 August 1778 he mentioned that "your hemp hunting Mrs. Johnson destroys all the Newspapers." Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA.

¹⁵⁹Edward Johnson to WP, 17 July 1775, PP-LC, 888.

¹⁶⁰Edward Johnson to WP, 13 February 1776, PP-LC, 918.

with hemp serving as his major commodity.¹⁶¹ Rough cloth could be produced from hemp as could rope for the war effort and in a period of war time scarcity it could be sold or traded for scarce items such as salt.¹⁶² Not all of his hemp was of high quality. Johnson once complained of dirty hemp so carelessly tied up that he had difficulty showing it to potential customers, but its price steadily increased from ,27.10 per ton in March to ,45 per ton by June, 1777.¹⁶³ In September, Johnson's need for hemp became more apparent when he informed Preston that he had recently taken a share in a ropewalk factory which used hemp as the essential ingredient. He hoped the business would go well but needed a regular supply which he hoped Preston could provide for between ,45 and ,50 per ton.¹⁶⁴ By 1778 the demand for hemp grew even stronger. Johnson suggested two of his clients would purchase all the hemp he could supply and that he would give Preston as much as anybody and pay cash on receipt for the product. He even suggested that if the current crop was completely sold, he would be glad to buy the next one and asked him to send regular information on the prospects of the crop.¹⁶⁵ By July the price in Richmond rose to ,140 but Johnson offered Preston ,150 and suggested he would give him ,5 more than anyone else just to get what he needed.¹⁶⁶ Preston also continued to produce whiskey at Greenfield and Smithfield.¹⁶⁷ But he wanted to expand production with a larger still

¹⁶¹Because of a great paucity of material on his financial dealings during this period, it is difficult to determine how much money he made. The bulk of our information comes through letters written by Edward Johnson who appears to have been his major merchant. These letters only contain limited details about the actual financial transactions but give a sense of his business interests. In one instance, Preston sent ,128 to pay off his account which indicates they were doing a fairly large volume of business. Alexander Baine Receipt on Behalf of Johnson to WP, 4 May 1776, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353.

¹⁶²On 24 August 1775 Edward Johnson asked Preston to send what hemp he had available with Johnson furnishing the wagons. PP-LC, 893. In earlier years, the colonial government paid a bounty as an encouragement to farmers to produce hemp. On 15 March 1776 James Lyle wrote to Preston informing him that no money existed in the treasury for paying such a bounty anymore. PP-LC, 920.

¹⁶³Edward Johnson to WP, 12 July 1775, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267a14; Edward Johnson to WP, 17 March 1776, 3 June 1777, PP-LC, 921, 961, and PDGC-FC.

¹⁶⁴Edward Johnson to WP, 2 September 1777, PP-LC, 967. By December the salt shortage appears to have eased. Johnson sent Preston salt and sugar on the wagons which would bring back hemp. Edward Johnson to WP, 12 December 1778, Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA. At least six ropewalks existed in Virginia before the Revolution and another twelve new ones came into existence to support the needs of the war. Herndon, "Hemp," 164-73.

¹⁶⁵Edward Johnson to WP, 3 February 1778, PP-LC, 977.

¹⁶⁶Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1778, PP-LC, 990. On 10 August 1778 Johnson wrote Preston offering the "highest price" for hemp. Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA. These increasing prices parallel a trend throughout Virginia as the Revolution began to force demand higher which in turn increased prices. See Herndon, "Hemp," 138-41.

¹⁶⁷Evidence of his production needs can be seen in an order of twenty-five gallons of molasses from Edward Johnson. PP-LC, 896. On 16 June 1777 Preston asked his sister, Letitia Breckinridge, to take strong whiskey out of his forty-four gallon cask of a Mr. Howard and send it to him on a wagon going his direction with salt. Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:50. A few days later, he once again asked Letitia Breckinridge to go over to his plantation to have four hundred gallons of whiskey measured for a sale to a Mr. Woods. He

which he ended up getting in exchange for hemp.¹⁶⁸ It is impossible to estimate Preston's income from hemp and whiskey during this period but he was certainly living well.

In addition to hemp, Preston also continued other business ventures he had started in earlier years. As an outgrowth of his successful agricultural endeavors, he sold grass and flax seed.¹⁶⁹ He may have also been involved in clothing production for he ordered substantial quantities of cotton on several occasions.¹⁷⁰ Ever the enterprising businessman, he also continued on a smaller scale the indentured servant and slave business originally started with Johnson, although more frequently he was purchasing for his own use, rather than selling.¹⁷¹ He also looked into the possibility of starting new ventures including the breeding of horses. Johnson recommended buying for ,200 an imported stud which, though "badly kept" and "blind of an eye," had sired 18 foals the previous year with many earlier foals placing first in races.¹⁷² Another business venture explored to no effect was the possibility of renting a ship to engage in trade with the West Indies.¹⁷³

hoped she could make sure the whiskey got into the wagon and that the casks were good because Woods was hoping to renege on their deal but Preston did not want to leave him with any excuse. WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 22 June 1777, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:53. On 3 June 1777 Johnson asked for as much whiskey "for my own use" which could be brought. Edward Johnson to WP, 3 June 1777, PP-LC, 961 and PDGC-FC.

¹⁶⁸Negotiations for a 120 gallon still began on 30 June 1777 when Johnson informed Preston that a Mr. Taylor who lived at Smithfield could procure one. Johnson recommended the distilling business as "very valuable." PP-LC, 963. On 3 February 1778, Johnson wrote Preston that he had bartered part of his hemp for a still. He asked him to send down the rest of the hemp to pay off the deal but suggested that Preston make the parcels of hemp more precise and lighter. PP-LC, 977.

¹⁶⁹Edward Johnson to WP, 14 October 1775, PP-LC, 900.

¹⁷⁰Edward Johnson to WP, 16 December 1775, 3 June 1777, PP-LC, 908 and 961.

¹⁷¹Evidence of this trade continues with Johnson writing about the settlement of the servant account soon. Edward Johnson to WP, 5 September 1775, PP-LC, 894. On 23 June 1776 Johnson received ,37 from Preston on the servant account. PP-LC, 933. Thomas Lewis wrote Preston on 19 March 1776 about settling the "Negro Account." Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA. On 7 April 1776 he received from James McGavock a bond for ,19 for a servant. 7 April 1776, James McGavock Papers, VHS, Mss2M1725b1. In January 1777 Preston paid Johnson ,13 for a servant sold to William Robinson. [Edward Johnson] to [WP], 16 January 1777, PDGC-FC and Edward Johnson Receipt to WP, 15 January 1777, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353. On 15 August 1775 he signed an agreement with John Millstead, an indentured servant, to buy the remainder of his years and to offer him a reduction of one-third of the time he had remaining in exchange for honest and faithful service. He also agreed to pay him extra money beyond a certain number of rails. Agreement between WP and John Millstead, 15 August 1775, PP-LC, 891. On two occasions Edward Johnson agreed to purchase slaves at auctions for Preston's personal usage. Edward Johnson to WP, 16 December 1775, PP-LC, 908 and Edward Johnson to WP, 12 December 1778, Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA.

¹⁷²Edward Johnson to WP, 3 June 1777, PP-LC, 961 and PDGC-FC. Preston's response has not been found.

¹⁷³His colleague in this venture, John Floyd, reported on problems to engage a vessel "suitable for our intended voyage" because of high costs amounting to ,40 per month exclusive of all expenses and the value

Surveying activity declined from 209 sites surveyed in 1775 to virtually nothing by the end of the war which resulted in a serious loss of income for Preston.¹⁷⁴ His own personal land acquisitions also declined markedly. In 1775 and 1776 he sold land and purchased other pieces of property for about the same amount. He also received several military grants for service in the previous war.¹⁷⁵ In another transaction which may reveal how land agreements were reached, Preston agreed with John Preston to purchase for \$170 a plot of 250 acres, but the agreement noted that the "greatest part" of the payment was to be made in corn at two shillings per bushel, hay at two shillings per 100 pounds, "choice Cows & Calves" at \$3, and "the remainder in ready money."¹⁷⁶ While no other similar agreements have been found, this raises the possibility that some of the land purchases and sales in a time of scarce money may also have been bartered in goods rather than cash. In 1777 Preston engaged in no land deals and in 1778 made one land sale.¹⁷⁷ Little evidence exists on how he managed the large number of lands he already owned but he probably leased out much of it. One such agreement with Obadiah Monsey in 1776 illustrates the process of leasing. Preston agreed to provide him with cows, heifers, and sheep to be raised and then sold in three or four years at which time they would divide the proceeds equally. Monsey would also plant 100 apple and 100 peach trees, construct a barn and other houses with materials coming from Preston, and put in 20 acres of meadows and 30 acres of plowed lands. The agreement would last initially for

of the vessel if it was lost. He also did not see any hope of finding an experienced person for partnership. John Floyd to WP, 21 November 1776, DM, 33S, 306-8. After this failure, Floyd entered into a privateering venture which eventually ended him up in an English prison. John Floyd to WP, 16 and 26 December 1776, DM, 33S, 308-13 and Johnson, Preston, 195, 197, 205-6.

¹⁷⁴Montgomery County Record of Plotts, A, 1773-1782, VSL, 33:172-250 and List of Survey Fees, 2 May 1775, PP-LC, 875. Preston's assistant surveyors consisted of Robert Preston, John Floyd, David Smith, and James Douglas who surveyed Loyal Company grants on branches of the New River, and other surveys on the Holston River and in Kentucky. All of these surveys listed Preston as the county surveyor with the name of the assistant who actually did the survey.

¹⁷⁵See Appendix E for more details. 13 February 1775, Botetourt County Deed Book, 2, 1773-1780, VSL, 1:78-82; 8 August 1775, *ibid.*, 1:182-5; 9 August 1775, Montgomery County Record of Plotts A, 1773-1782, VSL, 33:227; 15 June 1776, Augusta County Deed Book 21, 1775-1777, VSL, 10:458-500, and 22 December 1776, Botetourt County Deed Book, 2, 1773-1780, VSL, 1:281-4.

¹⁷⁶This agreement with John Preston, who was not a relative and could not have been William Preston's son because he was only fifteen years old at the time, was made on 1 December 1779. The original purchase by William Preston from Joshua Phipps took place on 1 March 1776. According to the new agreement, in the fall of 1776 William Preston agreed to let John Preston reside on the land at no charge for rent or interest. John Preston agreed to pay William Preston \$170 worth of "Articles, Corn, or Stock at the Prices they stood and were bought and sold at" in March 1776 or at the prices he received from Phipps for payment of the land, or in "Gold & Silver or the Paper Currency of the State" so that "neither he nor his Heirs shall be any way a Looser by the Sale of the Said Land further than he has been pleased to give up, which is seven years Interest on the original price." The agreement would come due in November 1783. Further, John Preston also agreed that he would not give William depreciated currency at the time of settlement but would attempt to determine the true value. William Preston's motives for such an agreement are unclear since he did not appear to get much back in return. Preston Family Papers, VPI, 1.

¹⁷⁷6 May 1778, Botetourt County Deed Book, 2, 1773-1780, VSL, 1:378-9.

six years, and if no disagreements took place, be extended for another two years. However, many of his lands remained undeveloped until his children inherited them.¹⁷⁸ In the case of Greenfield, Preston continued to actively operate the plantation giving instructions to relatives who lived nearby to hire overseers to handle his day-to-day affairs. Being an active land dealer also involved hazards with one's own family. Mary Howard, his youngest sister, apparently complained to an older sister, Letitia, that her brother had sold some of her lands for ,2,300 below their value. Preston became so distraught over the complaint that he ended up with a headache one hour after he got her letter, a headache that continued in spite of taking eleven tablets of "Price's Cupping Gourds." On the very day he received these charges, he was setting out for negotiations with the Indians and told his sister:

it is known only to Providence whether ever I shall return or not, but I can freely call my Maker to Witness, that the Interest of that Family and their Well being has, next to my own Children & Wife, ever lain closest to my Heart since their Misfortunes, the Consciousness of which makes Complaints on my Conduct Sit very Heavy on me. . . . However, I have one Consolation that support me under the Complaints of friends and Enemies, that is a Consciousness of my own Integrity.¹⁷⁹

His conscience obviously bothered him but one would guess not too much.

The war, a growing family, and the possibility of his own demise resulted in William Preston preparing, in 1777, his first will, a will which reveals his personal priorities and concerns in a vivid manner.¹⁸⁰ After his debts were paid, Susanna was to have the "use and profits of all my Plantations, Slaves and Stock of every Kind" for her life. He wanted her and the children comfortably supported and he especially wanted the children educated that "no reasonable Expense may be spared especially for my sons where their capacities will admit of it." He was so concerned about education that later in the will he even specified that his sons be placed on an equal footing in regard to their education:

but should any of them be neglectful about their Education or be deficient in point of genius after a proper tryal made, it is my will that such son or sons be bound to some genteel trade or calling till they come of age that they may know how to

¹⁷⁸WP Agreement with Obadiah Monsey, Fall 1776, PP-LC, 950. He had similar agreements with James Norvel and William Commack, both mentioned specifically in Preston's will prepared on 29 March 1777. When his children were willed undeveloped lands, he specifically absolved them of certain financial obligations he imposed on children inheriting developed lands. PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267b17.

¹⁷⁹WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 17 June 1777, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:50. The lands in question may have been 600 acres in Amherst County on the James River or 700 acres in Goochland County. Dorman, Prestons, 25.

¹⁸⁰For specific details, see Appendix F which contains a detailed summary of Preston's will and "1777" in Appendix E which shows a distribution of lands. Preston's first will can be found in 29 March 1777, PP-LC 959; Preston Papers, VPI, Set 1, 4:6, and PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267 b17.

make a living by their labour.

Here was a man who wanted all of his children to get an education but at the same time recognized that each child might have different talents. One gets the sense that while he preferred them to get a formal education, he recognized the value of a good trade. Susanna, as long as she remained single, should "Superintend the Education of her children particularly her Daughters." Further he directed that his books be equally divided among his four sons "except such as my wife may choose to keep for the use of herself and my daughters." Such educational concerns for his daughters reveals a man concerned that females also receive a proper education rather than just focusing on males which would have been more typical for many families. Education served as one of the key foundations of Preston's family and he wanted to ensure that each child would be provided for if he died. Each child was then willed a piece of property depending on where their mother chose to live. Because the older sons had more financial obligations to their mother and sisters, they were to receive the larger and more valuable pieces of property such as Greenfield and Smithfield. But he did not neglect his daughters who each received a good piece of property. He also provided that Susanna should give each child, when they got married, some slaves, stock, or money with the advice and consent of two executors. He did not want her making any promises to the children before their marriage but rather to give

rather sparingly at first until she is convinced of their Frugality and that she may at a future day have it in her power to supply them more amply in case of misfortune to which all are liable.

This provision reveals a very advanced family ethic that you needed to be careful with your money, but if you got into trouble the family was there to help. Preston also willed special tokens to different children. John got a small sword, and Francis was to receive his watch and wedding ring. He willed a male slave originally owned by his mother to such of his mother's children "as may be in lowest circumstances." Another provision stated that if a son died before coming of age, his part of the estate would be divided among the remaining sons. A similar provision applied to his girls who would divide among the remaining females their part of the estate. Reflecting on his own experience as the executor of several estates, he asked his executors, George Skillern, Francis Smith, John Floyd, and Robert Preston to carry out the "same Justice . . . that I have uniformly endeavoured throughout my life to have done to families in the same situation" which had been many over the years. This provision also reveals a sense of fairness and justice by which he attempted to live his life. As he came to the end of his will, he once again came back to education:

I would request a second time that they will do all in their power to give my sons a good Education and to prevent them all they can from running into the follies and extravagancies to which unguarded Youth are but too liable.

This will reveals a man with a strong passion for family--a man who saw education as the key to success along with other values such as hard work, fairness,

frugality, property ownership, and sharing. These concerns came as Preston's children began entering their teenage years and as war threatened on the borders. He based these values on a strong background in his Presbyterian Church upbringing and hoped his children would also inherit similar traits to those he received from his own parents and broader extended family.¹⁸¹ Other relatives also noticed Preston's strong family orientation. Edward Johnson in writing him about the dangers faced at Smithfield attested, "I know no man that has more pleasure in a family, nor one who Studies their Safety and happiness more than yourself."¹⁸² As the Revolution continued, he would need strong family support as many of his own neighbors now turned against him.

Revolutionary (1779-1781)

As the Revolution entered its final years, William Preston's status as one of the major revolutionary leaders of southwest Virginia placed him in a vulnerable position. Earlier he had been forced to answer questions about his patriotism, but now as an undisputed revolutionary leader, he faced dangers posed by his Loyalist and disaffected neighbors--a problem that was compounded by continued threats from Indians. In the midst of these two challenges, Preston also had a desire to help the broader cause of the Revolution by leading his county's militiamen against British forces in the Carolinas. During these crucial years, state and regional leaders looked to Preston as a key leader in their efforts to win the war, and his task was made extremely difficult by the fact that Montgomery County had the largest population of Loyalists in Virginia. At times the situation could only be described as verging on a "civil war."¹⁸³

In facing these issues, Preston's role as colonel of the Montgomery County militia provided the major context for all of his actions. In this position, the state made him responsible for coordinating not only the response of Montgomery County to the Indians, Loyalists, and English, but in some cases, for the entire southwestern region for which he

¹⁸¹His religious concerns come out in the preamble to his will: "I recommend my Soul to God and restore my body to the Earth in all humble hopes of a blessed Immortality to the one end a glorious Resurrection to the other, through the all sufficient Merit of my Redeemer; and that when he Resigns His Meditorial Kingdom to His Father I shall after the Reunion of my Body and Spirit, be an humble attendant on that most glorious of all Triumphs." But then he continued, "And as touching such Worldly Estate as it hath pleased God to bestow upon me in this Life . . ." *Ibid.*

¹⁸²Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1778, PP-LC, 990.

¹⁸³Historians have recently focused on the problem of Loyalism in southwest Virginia including Evans, "Trouble in the Backcountry" from *An Uncivil War*; Albert H. Tillson, Jr., "The Localist Roots of Backcountry Loyalism: An Examination of Popular Political Culture in Virginia's New River Valley," *The Journal of Southern History* LIV (August 1988): 387-404, and Williams, "Thorns in the Side of Patriotism." In addition, see Johnson, *Preston*, 217-257. For similar problems in the Shenandoah Valley, see Hart, *Valley in the Revolution*, 102-113. General overviews of loyalism can be found in Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans. The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969); Isaac Samuel Harrell, *Loyalism in Virginia. Chapters in the Economic History of the Revolution* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965 reprint of 1926 ed.), and Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats. A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

had carried militia responsibilities before the most recent division of counties. And so when Loyalists and disaffected neighbors refused to serve in the militia and had to face court martial, he coordinated the county's efforts to bring them to justice. When Loyalists threatened bodily harm or military action, he had to call out not only the militia of Montgomery County but of adjoining counties with the help of fellow colonels George Skillern in Botetourt County and Arthur and William Campbell in Washington County if the threat got too intense. In his role as the senior justice of the peace in Montgomery County, he also had to deal on a legal basis with those refusing to take loyalty oaths to the American cause. When Indians attacked he bore responsibility for coordinating the militia's response for the region. Virginia also had its own regular state soldiers, and of course, the Continental Army relied upon men from Virginia for its regular army. At times Preston would be called upon to help in efforts to bolster these military units either through the draft or through volunteers. In carrying out these orders for help, he had to walk a careful balancing line between the need to have enough men to protect his own borders and the obligation to help the broader effort. While his militiamen primarily defended their own region, Preston, as their commanding officer, also led them into the Carolinas to bolster the efforts of the Continental Army. As will become evident, Preston's life for the remaining years of the Revolution was defined around his role as colonel of the Montgomery County militia.¹⁸⁴

In April, 1779 the Indians began to attack ever closer to Smithfield when two residents were killed at Clover Bottom about forty-five miles away and six members of one family were killed near Muncy's Fort on Walker's Creek only eighteen miles away. As a consequence, Preston reported that neighbors began to gather in groups around protected homes placing them in a real dilemma: "Should the People remove it will ruin them, & to stay is dangerous." Preston had no militiamen or provisions to help any of them so he was forced to appoint officers from among those coming together in an attempt to put a minimal defense together. Given the threat, Preston immediately canceled the scheduled general muster for the county so that the men could stay home and protect their families. Even his own family's situation was "far from being agreeable. Indeed it is such that I believe the greatest Enemy I have, even on Holston, will not envy."¹⁸⁵

Preston's allusion to enemies on the Holston did not mean Indians but Loyalists, because in the midst of these Indian attacks, Preston began to receive several disturbing accounts of a concerted Loyalist plot against him and other Patriots. One account reported that a group of twenty Loyalists would join with the English and Indians in an effort to kill Patriots before proceeding to destroy the Lead Mines near Fort Chiswell. More ominously for Preston, one of the plotters, Duncan O'Gullion, vowed to scalp Preston and James McGavock. The reports made sense. With the state and Continental Army relying on the Lead Mines for much of their ammunition supply, it represented a likely target.

¹⁸⁴John McBride's dissertation on manpower policies outlines the multiple roles played in the Revolution by an individual such as Preston who was forced to balance the needs for regional defense against the broader effort to defeat the English elsewhere. John David McBride "The Virginia War Effort; 1775-1783: Manpower Policies and Practices" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1977).

¹⁸⁵WP to Colonel William Fleming, 4 April 1779, DM, 3ZZ 18 and Kegley, *Virginia's Frontier*, 649-50.

And with Montgomery County's arms supply located at Smithfield, it also represented a natural target for attack. And what better way to damage the Patriot cause than to kill Preston, the major revolutionary leader of southwest Virginia? The threat came even closer home when word arrived that only three miles from Smithfield in the general vicinity of Michael Price's home oaths of loyalty were being taken by the King's supporters.¹⁸⁶

The whole question of loyalism or disaffection continued to pose a real problem of identifying which individuals belonged in each category. The variety of motivations can best be illustrated through depositions taken from individuals captured as Loyalists in this period. Informant Michael Henninger told a story of Loyalist plotting in which they would assist the English and Indians in "destroying the Country." But an ethnic element entered the picture. He reported that John Griffith, a key Loyalist leader who lived on the South Fork of the Holston River, had already gotten at least twenty citizens in that area to swear allegiance to the King with many of those mentioned bearing German names such as Weiss, Kittering, Vant, and Bronstedder. Many Germans felt more comfortable with the status quo and had no reason to support the Patriot leaders with whom they had experienced poor relationships over the years. Some of the depositions showed the wild nature of rumors being spread throughout the area to raise unfounded fears which could be a motivational tool. Henninger reported that Matthias Crumb told of 4,000 men who had subscribed to a paper which placed them against the Patriots and warned that "the dispute . . . would shortly be finished."¹⁸⁷ Given the population in the region, no such number was remotely possible. After giving his testimony, Henninger asked that it not be divulged until after all of the accused were in custody because he feared for his own life.¹⁸⁸ John Henderson's confession revealed still another motive used by English recruiters to get people on their side. They reminded him that the French, Virginia's recent enemy, had joined the American cause leaving him to ponder what the French might do, even if the Americans defeated the English.¹⁸⁹ Would they try to get back their old lands and seek revenge against the colonists who had defeated them in the recent war? As other Loyalists said at the time, "they may as well fight under the King of Great Britain as to be Subjects to France."¹⁹⁰ Henderson revealed an even stronger motivation. He was asked to draw up lists of those on each side because when the Americans suffered the defeat that most expected, a distinction would be made between Whigs and Tories--a distinction not spelled out but clearly a case of the victors getting the spoils of lands and property.¹⁹¹ But

¹⁸⁶WP Acquittal of George Patterson, 24 April 1779, PP-DM, 5QQ 2.

¹⁸⁷Deposition of Michael Henninger to Colonel William Campbell, 18 April 1779, "Branch Papers," 304-5.

¹⁸⁸William Campbell to WP, 19 April 1779, PP-LC, 1018.

¹⁸⁹John Henderson Confession, 1780, "Preston Papers," VMHB XXVI (October, 1918) 375-6, hereafter referred to as "Preston Papers"-VMHB.

¹⁹⁰James McGavock to WP, 15 April 1779, PP-LC, 1017 and "Branch Papers," 303-4.

¹⁹¹Sometimes the threat of losing land was made very directly. James McGavock reported to Preston on

the English also held out a "carrot" as a strong motivating tool. Those who joined the Loyalists were promised ,0.20.6 per day and 450 acres of land without any obligation to pay quit rents for twenty-one years. Such incentives give a hint that those involved in loyalism may have represented individuals without much land who resented the wealthy Preston and others of his elite group who had controlled land sales for years in the southwest.¹⁹² Another group did not feel comfortable taking oaths, some for reasons of conscience, others not willing to undertake the strong promises made in the required oaths. To keep them quiet, these "non-jurors" were allowed to put up bonds of ,1,000 pledging they would not support England.¹⁹³ So ethnic diversity, resentment against Preston and those like him who played such a dominant role in the economy of the area, desire for more land, loyalty to the King, religious conviction, and just plain confusion about what was going on all played a part in motivating the disaffected.

It is difficult to determine what motivated those plotting that spring to capture the Lead Mines or to kill Preston. To counteract such plots, local militia officers were authorized to move immediately on major threats if warranted and then inform Preston, the county lieutenant, of their actions. Illustrating the seriousness with which this plot was taken, Major Walter Crockett of the Montgomery County militia sent fifty militiamen to help the sheriff arrest the suspected Loyalist plotters. As required, he immediately sought Preston's advice.¹⁹⁴ When nine suspects were brought in by James McGavock, some were

25 April 1779 about a conversation between George Parks and John Cox. After being asked by Cox whether he was for the King, Parks responded that he had taken the state oath and "had no reason to be against his Country." Cox then warned that he was "sorry for him, and if that was his sentiment he never would enjoy a foot of land in America, and what little he had gathered would be taken from him." "Branch Papers," 306-7.

¹⁹²Walter Crockett to WP, 7 April 1779, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 371-2. William Campbell in writing to Preston had also heard of the plan to kill Preston: "You are, it seems, yourself a principal Object of those Wretches hellish Contrivance." 19 April 1779, PP-LC, 1018. Preston also served as the target of another death threat later in the year when Samuel Ingram was arrested for saying he would "Shoot and maim" Preston. 21 and 23 October 1779, Montgomery County Records, Misc. Records, Correspondence and personal papers, VSL, Folder O. In regard to land ownership, Emory Evans, "Trouble in the Backcountry," 208-9 argues on the basis of land tax and personal property records that eighty-five per-cent of the disaffected brought into court were landholders. In comparing their landholdings with the county justices, Evans found little difference between the two groups. He concluded: "It is reasonable to assume that those charged with treason or lesser crimes differed little in economic terms from the rest of Montgomery County's population. Class conflict--if wealth can be seen as an adequate index to class--does not appear to have fueled this opposition to the Revolution." Tillson in "Localist Roots," 395-6 took the same figures used by Evans but argued that there were major landholding differences between the justices and the Loyalists. However, he conceded that the Loyalists did not differ much from other settlers in their landholdings "except for the large number of them who did not appear on the land tax rolls."

¹⁹³Twenty-nine individuals signed such a bond in Montgomery County. Of this number, ten could not sign their names but placed a mark on the paper. "Bond of non-signers to oath of allegiance," 26 April 1779, Montgomery County, Original Records, VSL. Evans in "Trouble in Backcountry," 207-8 found very few individuals using conscience as a reason not to take an oath. In at least one case, Preston received a report that non-jurors in his area planned to join with those from Walker's Creek and Red Creek to fight against the Patriots. James McGavock to WP, 15 April 1779, PP-LC, 1017 and "Branch Papers," 303-4.

¹⁹⁴Walter Crockett to WP, 7 April 1779, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 371-2.

released on bond so that the investigation could continue, while others facing the most serious charges, like O'Gullion, were placed in irons to keep them from escaping. After hearing the charges against recruiter John Griffith, they also arrested him but soon released him on bail while the investigation proceeded. McGavock reported that those hearing the testimony of these captured Loyalists became "alarmed, and Expected themselves to be in great danger." Even some of the county militia helped exacerbate these feelings by playing jokes on their fellow citizens. Preston had to arrest two men returning from duty for

hanging a Blanket on a Stump & setting a hat on it: & Laying by the road side with their Arms ready to Fire; and at another Place firing their Guns & Hallowing like Indians in the night amongst the Inhabitants to alarm them.¹⁹⁵

As Loyalists increased their strength throughout Montgomery County, area leaders began to feel isolated. "We seem," said James McGavock in a letter to Preston, "but a handful in the Middle, and Surrounded by a Multitude. Just Consider your own Quarter, and we are much the Same." To help counteract these growing problems, he requested Preston to call for assistance from other counties. And Preston, who as senior county justice was needed to try accused Loyalists at Fort Chisell, felt so threatened that he hesitated to leave his family to attend the trials. Some worried they would not make a quorum without his attendance, but, more importantly, others felt that with so many young justices on the court not well versed in law a "Good Steady old Gentleman" was needed to help guide them to a "fair cool and Impertial tryal."¹⁹⁶ When the young justices heard the nineteen cases against the Loyalists on May 5 without Preston's presence, they generally treated them with leniency which became the prevailing practice in the county. Most of those charged put up a , 1,000 bond guaranteeing their support of the American cause while others were fined and sentenced to jail.¹⁹⁷ Such leniency would, on the surface, appear to make Edward Johnson's prediction to Preston more difficult to achieve: "The Tories I imagine were only a little perplexing as I shou'd suppose your Courts have long since put it out of their power to be dangerous."¹⁹⁸

Ever the man of direct action, Preston early on decided to confront his neighbors directly with some of the rumors he had been hearing. In the late spring and early summer of 1779 he invited several heads of family, "whom I have long respected," to a meeting at the home of a Mr. Shull for a "neighbourly" visit to which he did not bring any arms. At the meeting, they assured him that none of them intended to "disturb the tranquility of the State or to injure me either in my Family or Reputation" and agreed to inform him of any future problems that might be "in the Way to our good Neighborhood and Social

¹⁹⁵22 April 1779, Montgomery County, Original Records, Bonds, 1751-1797, VSL.

¹⁹⁶James McGavock to WP, 15 April 1779, PP-LC, 1017 and "Branch Papers," 303-4; Walter Crockett to WP, 24 April 1779, "Branch Papers," 306.

¹⁹⁷5 May 1779, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL.

¹⁹⁸Edward Johnson to WP, 29 May 1779, PP-LC, 1020.

Intercourse." After getting further reports which led him to believe he had been duped, he asked for another meeting to clear up and disprove the rumors from the previous time. He pledged to "Pawn my Honour, my Life and everything that is" not to disturb them either in coming, or while attending the meeting, or on their return home and that he would treat them "Collectively with that same Respect & good manners I ever did any one of you Singly." He wondered why anyone would doubt his good intentions in this regard. He reminded them, after all, that he was raising his family among them and that he had "labored incessantly for several years, in all our troubles, without Reward for the Protection of all against a savage Enemy." In fact, his good treatment of those who refused to support the American cause had subjected his own character to charges that he was part of them. He assured them that his goal in having the meeting did not come from any "mean, low Motive as fear or the like." But rather he wanted to

remove Doubts and to lay a lasting foundation for Social Intercourse and Confidence amongst Neighbours, & to prevent all rash or hasty Measures by either Party which are generally attended with bad Consequences.¹⁹⁹

In this letter Preston revealed his belief that all one needed to do in dealing with suspected Loyalists or the disaffected was to sit down and reason with them as neighbors. In later months, even when the Loyalists took more aggressive actions, he still used a moderate approach in punishing them hoping to maintain some semblance of community and neighborliness through the conflict.²⁰⁰ No evidence exists that any of his neighbors accepted his offer to have another meeting.

After the May, 1779 court session, the Loyalist problem persisted with continuing reports coming to Preston from his regional officers about attacks on Patriot families. In the case of William Phips, a group came to his house and fired bullets through both his front door and upstairs where they heard people talking, and then tried to set the house on fire. At the home of James McGavock they killed several sheep and then stayed around with the probable intention of killing him and burning his house.²⁰¹ In July more detailed reports about possible plots by the Loyalists came from William Campbell who had led a group of Washington County militiamen to guard the Lead Mines at the request of

¹⁹⁹WP to Neighbors, [April through June 1779], PP-LC, 1023 and "Branch Papers," 344-5. This document is not dated but the context would place it near the time when the plot against Preston's life developed in April 1779.

²⁰⁰Evidence of this approach can also be seen in Montgomery County court sessions attended by Preston. On 3 August 1779 several individuals who admitted to being part of the recent insurrection were allowed to take an oath of loyalty to the state after putting up bond for ,200. 3 August 1779, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:202-3. Evidently many individuals were also falsely charged leading to several acquittals at other court sessions. 5 August 1779, *ibid.*, 20:260 and 8 September 1779, *ibid.*, 20:266.

²⁰¹Field officers such as James Montgomery had few men to call upon to counteract these attacks. In this situation, he wrote for six men out of each of the companies led by Captains Pierce and Frances to be added to Montgomery's small detachment for the purpose of ranging two or three days until receiving additional instructions from Preston. James Montgomery to WP, 11 June 1779, PP-LC, 1022 and "Branch Papers," 307-8.

Montgomery County. He had recently been joined by Captain John Cox who had been taken by twenty-five Loyalists. Cox had been pressured after several days of captivity to take an oath of loyalty to the King to save his life. While in the camp, they told him of their plans. Thousands of Loyalists on the western waters were ready to attack the Patriots at any moment. After being released to return home, Loyalists showed up at his home twice, once merely to threaten him into continued silence and another time to take money and clothing from him. He also witnessed the wide diversity of opinion when more than one hundred Loyalists gathered to discuss strategy. Some argued for compromise, so a letter was developed for Preston which Cox felt was "only done with a design to amuse those against whom their designs are concerted, and to gain time to collect a large number of Men of their Party." They agreed to return home in order to organize larger groups for the purpose of seizing the principal militia officers in their various neighborhoods at a "prefixed time." If these officers would not take a loyalty oath to the King, they would be taken to the English army in Georgia.²⁰² Giving credence to this plot, Loyalists assembled up the New River where they took two men as prisoners who had been sent to spy on them. These spies, released after twenty-six hours of captivity, reported that the Loyalists had 105 men with them and another 400 nearby prepared to take the Lead Mines. Preston now decided to test an officer suspected of Loyalist leanings. He asked Colonel William Ingles, "as a Touchstone of his Sincerity in the American Cause," to draft men into the militia in order to enforce the forty-eight men already at the Lead Mines with Colonel William Campbell of Washington County.²⁰³

As Preston reacted to this new plot, one senses a change in his tone. Now he referred to Loyalists as "disorderly Deluded Wretches." Surprised by the quick response of Washington County to assist a fellow neighbor, Preston thanked Campbell. Surely this aid "must convince those stupid Wretches that they have more Counties than one to contend with, and consequently deter them from any future attempts of that kind."²⁰⁴ Apparently these efforts worked for awhile because another six months would pass before the Loyalists would pose a further threat to Preston.²⁰⁵

If the Loyalist problems were not enough, the Indians represented a similar challenge. Earlier in the spring, Virginia's General Assembly passed a law to guard the frontiers against Indian attack by creating two state batallions to protect the state from eastern and western enemies.²⁰⁶ In accord with this law, Governor Thomas Jefferson

²⁰²Deposition of Captain John Cox taken by Lieutenant Colonel William Campbell, 16 July 1779, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 372-4. Cox asked Campbell to keep his testimony secret since he feared for his safety. Already under suspicion and threat of life and property, he had been unable to send earlier word of this plot. William Campbell to WP, 16 July 1779, PP-LC, 1026 and "Branch Papers," 308.

²⁰³WP to _____, 18 July 1779, DM, 3ZZ 19.

²⁰⁴William Campbell to WP, 19 July 1779, PP-LC, 1027 and "Branch Papers," 308-9.

²⁰⁵The Loyalist problem did not completely go away during this period. On 28 December 1779 Colonel Crockett wrote Preston about the growing problem of too few justices to handle the workload because "there are too many People Disaffected with the present government." He asked him to urge the Council to make some new commissions soon. PP-DM, 5QQ 15.

²⁰⁶May 1779, "An Act for raising a body of troops for the defence of the commonwealth," Hening, Statutes, 10:32-4.

instructed Preston to "hold themselves [the militia] in readiness on the shortest warning to proceed to such post on the Southwestern frontier" if an attack was to occur.²⁰⁷ In stationing the men on the western frontier, General Andrew Lewis, brigadier general of Virginia's forces in the Continental Army, decided it would be best to place them nearer the Shawnee tribes rather than close to where the people lived, in order to prevent them from entering Virginia's territory. They assigned Preston's Montgomery militia to the mouth of the Big Sandy River with another group to be located at the mouth of the Guayandot River.²⁰⁸ Their fears materialized in October when Indians killed six persons in the Clinch River area and took as captives the two daughters and slave of Bryce Russell.²⁰⁹ Even these attacks did not help raise Montgomery County soldiers for the approved batallion. Colonel Joseph Crockett reported to Preston in December that only six men showed up to march to their assigned area. With the "number being To Small, and the Weather bad," he asked to delay the march until January, 1780 when he would be able to write to the "defiant" companies.²¹⁰ It was with great difficulty during the last months of 1779 that Preston dealt with any such problems due to a severe illness he suffered.²¹¹ By December, although he still had a weak appetite, probably from a lack of exercise according to Edward Johnson, he reported to friends that he was basically recovered.²¹²

Loyalist plots grew even worse in early 1780. John Griffith, now free on bail, plotted to "disarm the Friends to the Country & kill some" and then "destroy the Lead mines" followed by joining with the "Indians & with them to burn Destroy & cut their Way to the English Army and assist them in reducing the Country." But he ran into one problem. While successful in administering oaths of loyalty to the King to many individuals, others doubted his authority to carry out such actions and requested that he bring an English officer to reassure them. He promised to return by the end of March with a Colonel Robinson who would give them what had been promised by other recruiters-- 2/6 sterling a day and 450 acres of land clear of quit rents for twenty-one years. When

²⁰⁷Thomas Jefferson to WP, 7 August 1779, Jefferson Papers, 3:62-3.

²⁰⁸General Andrew Lewis and Colonel William Fleming to Thomas Jefferson, 31 August 1779, Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 652-3.

²⁰⁹William Christian to WP, 22 October 1779, PP-DM, 5QQ 11.

²¹⁰Colonel Joseph Crockett to WP, 28 December 1779, PP-DM, 5QQ 15.

²¹¹Jefferson wrote Preston on 15 October 1779: "Having heard the disagreeable news of your illness, and that there was a doubt whether you would recover in time . . ." Auditor's Accounts, William Preston Papers, VSL. John Brown, Jr. on 20 October 1779 expressed similar concerns to Preston that "your great indisposition, has given me much uneasiness, & am truly impatient to hear of your recovery; which I hope will be speedy, & the knowledge of which would relive me." PP-DM, 5QQ 10. By 17 November 1779 Preston reported to a Mr. Boyd that he was on his way to recovery. Montgomery County Records, Miscl. Court Records, 1772-1834, VSL.

²¹²Edward Johnson to WP, 2 December 1779, PP-LC, 1045. John Brown, Jr. was happy to get word from Preston about his "partial recovery." 9 December 1779, PP-DM, 5QQ 14.

Robinson did not show up, some of the residents got so angry at Griffith that he fled.²¹³ When Preston heard about these plots, he reported to Jefferson that fifteen individuals were roaming that area commissioned to swear the people's loyalty to the King. The nearly seventy-five residents in one location who had already responded favorably to the Loyalists were now in the process of communicating with like-minded individuals in Washington County, North Carolina, Georgia, and throughout America. Their plan called for "Individuals in Authority" to be murdered and that once the English arrived with troops in South Carolina, they would join with them "to disturb the Peace of this unhappy Frontier." As militia commander, Preston immediately ordered his captains to disarm the suspected individuals and to seize the ringleaders of the movement. Since the confiscated arms were to be taken to the Lead Mines, Preston requested that a guard be placed there as this would be one of the first attack points in any Loyalist uprising. But Preston's biggest question was over what to do with the prisoners. Montgomery County did not have a prison where they could be kept. Since there was only circumstantial evidence against the ringleaders, he doubted Augusta County would allow them to be imprisoned in their county without solid written evidence.²¹⁴ Even in those perilous times they tried to observe rules of law in regard to suspected criminals. Jefferson warned Preston to avoid any "irregularity" in order to prevent the suspects from averting punishment. Since the requirements for treason involved greater evidence as a capital crime, he suggested they be tried for a lesser crime which would only involve a fine and imprisonment unless they could get the strong evidence needed. He agreed that the Lead Mines needed strong protection and authorized him to use newly recruited soldiers to guard that area.²¹⁵

While concentrating on the Loyalists and disaffected, Preston also kept the Indian threat in focus. To Jefferson he worried about how he could confront both groups at the same time if the Indians chose to disturb them in the spring. But Jefferson assured him that "nothing which I have heard gives me reason to fear any disturbance in your quarter with the Indians." Unbeknown to either of them, even as they wrote, Indians scalped seven children and the wife of James Roark seven miles from the head of the Clinch River.²¹⁶ Within weeks more disturbing news came of the Cherokees supplying Loyalists with twenty horse loads of ammunition in preparation for a joint attack on April 25 along the frontier from Georgia to Virginia. Martin Armstrong wrote from North Carolina appealing to Preston for immediate assistance to keep the frontier residents from fleeing before a defense could be made.²¹⁷ However, this was the wrong time of year to get busy

²¹³Reports on Nonjurors, [March 1780?], PP-DM, 5QQ 27.

²¹⁴WP to Thomas Jefferson, March 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 28. Rumors of a possible Loyalist uprising were confirmed in a confession from John Henderson who told of Loyalists being instructed to wait until a "Runner would come from the English" at which time they were to join up with the English in the south. "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 375-6.

²¹⁵Thomas Jefferson to WP, 21 March 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 24 and Jefferson Papers, 3:325-6.

²¹⁶John Taylor reported this news to Preston on 23 March 1780. Most people in his area were gathered together in small parties at key homes. They were also experiencing a severe shortage of corn. PP-DM, 5QQ 26.

²¹⁷Martin Armstrong to [WP], 10 April 1780, "Branch Papers," 310-1 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB,

farmers away from planting their spring crops.²¹⁸ Besieged on every hand by Loyalists and Indians, Preston felt completely frustrated when Letitia, his sister, wrote requesting immediate help. Usually very solicitous of any family members, this time he complained about how "ungrateful" she was for some unidentified issue, but promised:

Tho' destitute of a good horse, Money, Cloathing or what is dearer than all good Health & tho' I quit Business of great Consequence at our Court . . . & leaves my Numerous but helpless Family . . . to the Barbarity of Savages & ye Resentment of more than Savages, Tories with which I am Surrounded. Under all these & many more Inconveniences I hope to be at your house on Saturday.²¹⁹

In addition to problems with the Loyalists, Virginia now faced the prospect of three fronts. Indians from the northwest continued to pose the first threat, leading to a meeting at which Preston joined his fellow commanding officers from Botetourt, Greebrier, Rockbridge, and Washington Counties in creating a plan which called for a unified command of their 3,500 militiamen to make a concerted attack against the Indians.²²⁰ Reports began to trickle in confirming the prospect of a joint attack by the English and Iroquois in the northwest region of Ohio.²²¹ A second front had been developing in the South over a period of months beginning in May, 1779 when Commodore George Collier led a successful British naval invasion into the Chesapeake against such areas as Hampton, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Fort Nelson just outside of Portsmouth. The British left almost as quickly as they came, but General Henry Clinton, on orders from England, returned to the South in 1780 where they hoped to take advantage of the large number of Loyalists who resided in the Carolinas and Georgia. With the opening of this second front, southwest Virginia became more directly involved in the broader war effort. British forces moved at will throughout the South raising the specter of a possible invasion of eastern Virginia. The surrender of Charleston on May 12, 1780, probably the greatest single defeat for the Americans in the entire Revolution, followed by another British victory at Waxhaws, South Carolina on May 29 increased such a prospect.²²² And from John Floyd in Kentucky reporting weekly scalplings by Indians to such an extent that he had gotten "too cowardly to travel about the woods

376-7.

²¹⁸Colonel Walter Crockett to WP, 15 April 1780, "Branch Papers," 310 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 377-8.

²¹⁹WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 27 April 1780, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:72.

²²⁰Proceedings of the Officers in Botetourt &c, 8 May 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 42-6. They were probably part of the effort by George Rogers Clark to take Detroit. When a series of debts came due from previous expeditions, Virginia decided to cancel his plans. Meanwhile Clark on his own withdrew and built a fort where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers met. Selby, Revolution in Virginia, 198.

²²¹Arthur Campbell to WP, 7 June 1780, "Branch Papers," 311-2 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 46-7.

²²²Arthur Campbell feared that the loss of Charleston would encourage the Loyalists. Arthur Campbell to WP, 7 June 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 47.

without Company," a third front seemed inevitable.²²³ With so many arenas to contend with, Jefferson informed Preston that Montgomery and Washington Counties would have to bear responsibility for operations against the southern Indians since the rest of the state would need to focus elsewhere. He ordered him to raise one hundred men from Montgomery in order to cooperate with the Carolina militiamen in an offensive attack against the Cherokees. He was also to post guards at the Lead Mines to replace the militia from other counties who were now needed elsewhere.²²⁴

In the midst of these military preparations against the Indians in late June, the Loyalists attacked Patriot families. Twenty Loyalists appeared in an area known as the Glades at the head of the south fork of Holston River, close to the Lead Mines, where they robbed five men. And another group of one hundred Loyalists killed nine individuals in the New River area. Preston's field officer, Walter Crockett, decided to reinforce the most likely target of their efforts, the Lead Mines, and planned to organize an attack against them.²²⁵ Further reports indicated that these were not just isolated attacks but part of an organized effort not only to take property but key men. James McGavock reported to Preston that John Griffith, still loose on bail, promised "that whoever would take some of the principal men of this County, (your name and mine being particularly mentioned) should be rewarded with a large number of Gunias." He also reportedly told the Loyalists in the Walker's Creek area that he would soon return from Ramsour's Mill, North Carolina with a large body of Loyalists who would help their effort. A further evidence of an organized plot was the fact that many Loyalists who recently left their homes did not take any property with them, seeming to indicate they planned to be back soon. Obviously Preston needed to solicit help from neighboring counties to put down this major insurrection.²²⁶ What none of them knew yet was that 250 Patriots had defeated 700 Loyalists on June 20 under the command of Colonel John Moore at the same Ramsour's Mill in North Carolina where Griffith was headed.²²⁷ Still unaware of this recent defeat,

²²³John Floyd to WP, 31 May 1780, DM, 17CC 127-9. Arthur Campbell wrote Preston about the serious scarcity of beef and ammunition in Kentucky with a joint company of English and Indians expected any day. 13 June 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 33. To help get flints for Kentucky, Preston even offered to send his own son to Fort Chiswell. WP to Walter Crockett, 15 June 1780, DM, 3ZZ 21.

²²⁴Thomas Jefferson to WP, 15 June 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 34 and Jefferson Papers, 3:447-8. On 15 June 1780 Preston wrote to Walter Crockett asking him to raise one hundred men but doubted he would be successful. DM, 3ZZ 21. With so many demands on Virginia, Jefferson confirmed to Preston on 28 June 1780 that no further men could be expected for the frontier. PP-DM, 5QQ 36 and Jefferson Papers, 3:469.

²²⁵Walter Crockett to WP, 24 June 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 49. John Breckinridge confirmed rumors of a potential attack in a letter to Preston on 25 June 1780. His report also mentioned that British officers were leading the Loyalists. "Branch Papers," 314-5 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 157-8. Thomas Jefferson ordered William Campbell on 3 July 1780 to change his plans from going on an expedition against the Chickamaugas to helping defend the Lead Mines which were seen as a higher priority. Jefferson Papers, 3:479.

²²⁶James McGavock to WP, 30 June 1780, "Branch Papers," 315-6 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 159-60.

²²⁷Captain James Byrn, writing to Preston about the Patriot victory, expressed the hope that this would "put an end to Toryism in this Country." WP to Captain James Byrn, 5 July 1780, "Branch Papers," 316-7 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 160-1.

Preston ordered out fifty men with officers to head toward the Lead Mines and while on the way to disarm the disaffected who lived in the Walker's Creek area and other areas beyond the New River where Griffith had recently been recruiting.²²⁸ In addition, he called for assistance from Botetourt and Washington Counties, a move supported by Jefferson. With problems growing in Carolina, Jefferson promised no further help, but encouraged Preston to undertake offensive measures against the Loyalists by suppressing them in their own settlements rather than waiting for them to come since "time and Space to move in will perhaps increase their numbers."²²⁹ He also placed Colonel William Campbell in command of the joint militias of the three counties and he instructed them to "take in hand those Parricides" and to "take such effectual Measures of Punishment as may secure the future safety of that Quarter."²³⁰

In spite of the murders and robberies committed by the Loyalists, Preston still hoped for reconciliation with them. Patriot officers such as Charles Lynch did not have a reputation for kindness, but Preston generally encouraged benevolence toward the very enemies who vowed to kill him as a way of contrasting the Loyalists and Patriots.²³¹ He instructed Captain Isaac Taylor:

That the friends to american Liberty may be distinguished from its Enemies; and even to the latter, I would hope that no cruelty or unnecessary outrage be committed upon them or their Property Especially on the Women & Children or the old & helpless.

Furthermore, he did not want any Loyalist property being sold until the courts allowed the accused individuals a chance to defend themselves. He moralized: "As true Bravery & humanity are inseparable; Your Company Exercising the latter on every Occasion will convince Mankind that they are possessed of the former."²³² In at least two instances, Preston guaranteed protection to known Loyalists in an effort to get them to change sides. One of those individuals, Thomas Heavin, had even accepted a commission in the British service and enlisted others to serve the King. Yet in spite of these treasonable acts, Preston offered to withdraw from investigating and punishing him and other similar

²²⁸WP to Captain James Byrn, 5 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 37. Preston also asked Captain Isaac Taylor to raise thirty men with horses who would help in this endeavor. Any captured Loyalists were to be kept at the Lead Mines until trials could be held. WP to Captain Isaac Taylor, 12 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 40.

²²⁹Thomas Jefferson to WP, 3 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 38 and Jefferson Papers, 3:481.

²³⁰Thomas Jefferson to Colonel William Campbell, 3 July 1780, McIlwaine, ed., Official Letters of Governors of Virginia, II:138.

²³¹The word, "lynch," comes from the same Charles Lynch who carried out justice without the benefit of courts through the process of lynching. Preston within a few weeks had to order him to stop trying Loyalists because of his cruelty. In responding to Preston's charges, Lynch wrote that he examined them strictly and released those who were innocent. But others he kept as soldiers or witnesses with the explanation: "Perhaps Justice to this Country May Require they Shou'd be Made Exampels of." Charles Lynch to WP, 17 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 57.

²³²WP to Captain Isaac Taylor, 12 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 40.

individuals because Virginia, "being full of Mercy and ever willing to forgive her rebel & Disaffected Sons would rather Reclaim & Pardon a Number of them than Punish one." He invited Heavin and others to "return to his or their Allegiance to the Commonwealth" without the loss of property or punishment.²³³ In another case, Preston offered Philip Lambert "lenity" and protection from injury if he would give himself up.²³⁴

In his own neighborhood, Preston decided to make one more effort to get eight of his Loyalist enemies together for a visit. He reminded them that resentment ran high against their behavior but that he had restrained those feelings "not from any love to your Political Sentiments but from a Regard to you as Neighbors." He could no longer tolerate their "Dark, Sullen disgusful Suspicious and Offinsive" behavior. For years he had attempted to warn them of their "folly & Danger" to no avail. But now a storm was gathering against them "from every Quarter, which will surely burst upon you without prudent & Speedy Measures be fallen upon to prevent it." He requested them to meet at his home in two days

to consult in a Neighbourly way, the Proper Steps for you to take for your own Peace, Safety & security, & at the same time to secure the Peace of the Community so far as relates to You & others in the same situation in this Company.

If they did not appear, he would "take it for Granted that you have farther Views which are distructive to the Peace of the Country."²³⁵ On the appointed day, July 22, John Heavin, one of those getting the letter, defended himself in writing rather than appearing in person. He denied any wrongdoing and claimed all of his accused neighbors only wanted peace. But he did not want to swear any oaths to the American cause--"I Never meddled with war from the first moment and Cant think of Intangleing my self with it now." If he was being truthful, he was clearly aligning himself with the disaffected rather than with the Loyalists. He pled for compassion for his wife and children and vowed that neither he nor his neighbors planned to raise arms against Preston.²³⁶ It is not known whether Preston ever got to use the speech notes he made for the meeting but they reveal many legitimate grievances against the disaffected. Among his concerns were reports about gun purchases and preparations for war, plans to divide up his lands by blazing and marking trees, offers of money "to an Assassin to Murder me in this Neighbourhood," threats against his life if the sheriff collected taxes from certain individuals, threats against his son's life, and a "Purse of Guineas offered for me on Walkers Creek &

²³³WP Promise to Thomas Heavin, 14 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 55.

²³⁴WP Court Order Granting Protection to Philip Lambert, 20 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 61.

²³⁵The eight individuals to get the letter were Michael Price, John and Howard Heavin, James Beany, Jacob Shull, John Wall, a Mr. Harless, and Poopick Hoover. WP to Neighbors, 20 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 41.

²³⁶John Heavin to [WP], 22 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 42. Perhaps this particular group best illustrates Albert Tillson, Jr.'s argument that local concerns prevailed over an ideological commitment to either side. Tillson, "Localist Roots," 387-404.

Elsewhere." He planned to ask, "For what these Threatnings? what have I done?" He wanted to remind them: "Although the Troubles were Extensive, no One came to consult his own or his friends Safety, but listened to false reports." They kept a "Suspicious Distance" from him and then made "Preparations for extending the Trouble." He planned to conclude his speech by asking his neighbors:

What can you promise yr Selves by standing out? The Tories are used by the British as Draught Horses or beasts of Burden. Can a few dispersed people without a Leader fly in the face of Continent? it is true some Secret Stabs may be given, & some Murder committed, but will it not end in the Destruction of the Perpetrators & their Adherents?²³⁷

Relationships between Loyalists and Patriots continued to deteriorate with reports of additional threats against Preston's life. John McDonald reported one such example when he declared that he would pay no taxes and if they were taken away from him by force, Preston should be warned to "take care of himself & if any harm followed he might blame himself." He further predicted there "would Soon he Supposed be a king in every County," a reference to leaders such as Preston.²³⁸ Conditions finally got so intolerable that Preston and his fellow leaders decided in July to infiltrate the Loyalist movement by sending two spies to discover their plans. The spies posed as British officers and quickly discovered "a most horrid conspiracy" by the Loyalists to capture the Lead Mines on July 25, kill the leading men of that area, and then to "over run the Country with the Assistance of the british Troops." They would head over the mountain to Charlottesville to release British prisoners being held there from the Saratoga battle where both groups would join together to "subdue the whole state."²³⁹

Preston immediately set in motion two approaches to the problem. Not only did he

²³⁷Speech Notes by WP for Neighbors, 20 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 41.

²³⁸Joseph Gregg Arrest Warrant for Joseph McDonald, 24 July 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 43. Such talk gives credence to the argument that disgruntlement against members of the elite like Preston fueled a lack of support for the Patriot cause among many disaffected individuals in the Southwest.

²³⁹One of the spies, John Wyatt, surrendered with Virginia's troops at Charleston where he became an English prisoner for six months. Eventually he bought his way back to his home in Botetourt County where he was convinced by Preston and others to become a spy for them among Loyalists in the New River area. He was given an altered captain's commission signed by Dunmore to serve as his identification as a British officer. He discovered the details of their plot, but the timing was so soon that he could not get back in time to warn Preston, so he convinced the Loyalists that British troops would be joining them shortly if they would only wait a few days. He rushed home with the information giving them time to plan their defense. John C. Dann, ed., *The Revolution Remembered. Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 351-3. Preston later asked General Muhlenberg to excuse John Wyatt from further military duty out of fear that some of the Continental soldiers who were serving as a penalty for not swearing allegiance to the American cause might kill him. WP to General Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, [September 1780], PP-DM, 5QQ 81 and Kegley, *Virginia's Frontier*, 655. In an ironic twist to this story, Wyatt served two months of militia duty in the summer of 1781 paid by two of the Loyalists he had turned in. Part of their penalty was an obligation to pay men to perform their duty. Dann, ed., *Revolution Remembered*, 353.

call on Montgomery County's militia, but he asked for assistance from Washington and Botetourt Counties, the result being that over four hundred men were on duty by early August to suppress the plot. The other part of the plan resulted in the rounding up of over sixty Loyalists throughout Montgomery County for trial. Some individuals got released from the charges soon after their arrest based on confessions they made and bonds they put up to Governor Jefferson amounting anywhere from ,5,000 through ,20,000 pledging they would no longer aid the English in any manner.²⁴⁰ Robert King wrote directly to Preston who headed the Montgomery County Court admitting his guilt in working for a wrong cause but appealing for them to "Look over it as Easely as You posably Can."²⁴¹ In early August, 1780 actual trials took place in an unprecedented joint meeting involving fifteen justices of both Montgomery and Botetourt Counties with Preston acting as the chief justice. As the trial proceeded, new prisoners were brought in "every hour and new Discoveries making." Eventually fifty-five men were tried for treason at this one court session which extended into early September.²⁴² The court acquitted five men with three of those being required to put up a bond as high as ,100,000 in one case, guaranteeing their support of the Patriot cause. Seven were found guilty and sent to the Augusta jail for a further trial. Illustrating once again Preston's emphasis on leniency, three individuals, including fifty-eight year old Joseph McDonald, were found guilty of being Loyalists but due to age their sons were allowed to enlist in the Continental Army in their place. In three situations, they took into consideration the condition of the accused men. To illustrate, since Gasper Garlick appeared to be a "Simple Fellow," they acquitted him even though they felt the charge of treason was substantiated and ordered that he receive thirty-nine lashes. Similarly Abraham Morgan, "an Ignorant Poor Man with a small Familly" received thirty-nine lashes. Three youths who actually joined the British service were acquitted on the basis they were too young to know what they were doing and had been improperly persuaded to enlist in the enemy's cause. Two men found guilty agreed to enlist in the Continental Army and another ten took the same route without their cases being heard. Nine men agreed to enlist after their cases were not proven. In a real boon to the Continental Army, Preston later reported that he had been able to enlist eighty additional soldiers with their property serving as a guarantee of their faithful performance. The disposition of another eleven men is unknown.²⁴³ Still others escaped which resulted in the Patriot soldiers selling and

²⁴⁰On 26 July 1780 several bonds were made by such individuals as Jacob Seiler, James Bane, Jr. and Sr., and Robert and James McGee. PP-DM, 5QQ 44-6. On 29 July 1780 Thomas Burk and William McMullen gave a similar bond. PP-DM, 5QQ 47. On 8 August 1780 Samuel and James Robinson, Walter Stewart, James Norvell, and Thomas Giles also put up such bonds. PP-DM, 5QQ 49, 52.

²⁴¹Robert King to WP, [1780], PP-DM, 5QQ 71. In his actual trial, the court waved judgement on the case since he had enlisted as a Continental Army soldier and pledged his own estate. Furthermore, his father-in-law also pledged his estate that King would find another good soldier. PP-DM, 5QQ 77.

²⁴²On 26 August 1780 Preston wrote Colonel Martin Armstrong that he still had at least ten more days to go before being finished. PP-DM, 5QQ 62.

²⁴³Botetourt and Montgomery County Trials Vs. Loyalists, August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 73-9; WP to Thomas Jefferson, 8 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 50 and Jefferson Papers, 3:533-4, and [WP] to Colonel Martin Armstrong, 26 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 62.

dividing up their property as plunder. When informing Jefferson of an officer's approval for such sales, Preston admittedly had questions and sought counsel.²⁴⁴

While the trials proceeded, Loyalists continued their resistance by killing at least one man and stealing horses. To counteract these actions, loyal militia already in the field continued their march through the New River area looking for more Loyalists and, more importantly, sending a message that the Patriots were pursuing them aggressively.²⁴⁵ Pendleton wrote his friend Preston several weeks later wishing him success in rooting out "those paricides, who have kept their Countrey from peace for some time past, and if they could be extinguished I believe we should soon Enjoy that blessing."²⁴⁶ While the number of Loyalists remained very high in Montgomery County, perhaps as much as fifty percent of the population, never would the Loyalists mount another organized effort in southwest Virginia, in part because both sides became more involved in supporting their respective causes in the Carolinas.²⁴⁷

The initial news of August was terrible for the American side. General Horatio Gates with a force of 4,000, including 2,800 Virginia and North Carolina militiamen, suffered a crushing defeat at Camden, South Carolina on August 16 by a British army under the command of Lord Cornwallis. But the frontier leaders were not discouraged. After being informed by Preston of the loss, William Campbell wrote encouragingly, "We must exert ourselves, to retrieve, if possible that Misfortune."²⁴⁸ Preston seemed determined to be upbeat as he summarized his feelings to Colonel Martin Armstrong from the Carolinas who had requested immediate help:

The general defeat of the Southern Army, and the unhappy and dangerous Situation of your States are Considerations truly alarming to every friend to the Liberties of America. But I trust in God that the neighbouring States will give you every assistance in their Power & that these Disasters, tho' great, will not be decisive, but only tend to rouze the Americans from their late Langour. Be this as it will it is our indispensable Duty to continue the glorious Struggle while there is the least probability of Success.

But Preston did more than talk. First he sent two wagonloads of lead from the Lead Mines

²⁴⁴WP to Thomas Jefferson, 8 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 50 and *Jefferson Papers*, 3:533-4. Dudley Digges responded on behalf of the Virginia Council to Preston's inquiry about plunder: "It is a point upon which it behoves us to be perfectly silent: since it is, and must remain altogether a judicial Matter." In other words, they would look the other way. With respect to Preston's other actions with the Loyalists, they approved of all he had done to suppress the conspiracy. Dudley Digges to WP, 17 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 56.

²⁴⁵Colonel Walter Crockett to [WP], 6 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 48.

²⁴⁶Edmund Pendleton to WP, 11 October 1780, VHS, Mss2 P3743 a2 and *Pendleton Papers*, 316.

²⁴⁷Evans writes, "It is safe to estimate that more than 40 percent of both the militia and the population of Montgomery County did not support the patriot cause." "Trouble in the Backcountry," 207.

²⁴⁸William Campbell to WP, 22 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 61.

to help Gates. And he also ordered two companies of men from Montgomery County to go south under the command of William Campbell.²⁴⁹

He kept thinking about how he could be of more tangible help. To Jefferson he sent a proposal calling for Augusta, Botetourt, Montgomery, Rockbridge, and Washington Counties to raise five hundred soldiers to be paid by the state and commanded in an overall sense by Virginia's commander-in-chief. Each man would provide his own arms and the counties would provide an infantry unit with horses. He proposed that they would rendezvous by October 15. Preston was so optimistic the plan would be accepted that he asked George Skillern to start raising soldiers. Showing even greater optimism, he also predicted they could easily raise one thousand volunteers which would "at least, be equal to the like number in any part of America."²⁵⁰ On September 21 the Virginia Council responded favorably to Preston's proposal by approving two regiments.²⁵¹ The plan initially failed. Preston blamed the governor for not "fully" adopting the proposal, a factor recognized by Jefferson who wrote of their failure "on account of some circumstances contained in them" which failed to attract volunteers.²⁵² Apparently the volunteers did not want to be under Gates' command. And they did not like the provision that only two companies would have rifles while the rest of the regiments would fight with the much less accurate muskets, a plan later modified by Jefferson "as we found that absolutely necessary to induce them to go."²⁵³ Despite Preston's optimism it became increasingly difficult to raise soldiers. Walter Crockett wrote Preston on October 2 that he had "try'd all in my power to raise the Militia of this County, but never saw them so backward before." He had only raised 150 including two light horse companies which he sent south under Major Joseph Cloyd to join the other soldiers already helping Gates.²⁵⁴ As Robert Fristoe reminded Preston, the more crucial problem was "the Losses I must sustain and to Leave my Family Exposed to every Distress is what I hope you will consider."²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹[WP] to Colonel Martin Armstrong, 26 August 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 62.

²⁵⁰WP to George Skillern, 13 September 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 80 and PP-LC, 1099.

²⁵¹Order in Council respecting Volunteers for the Southern Army, 21 September 1780, Jefferson Papers, 3:653.

²⁵²WP to General Horatio Gates, 27 October 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 84 and Jefferson to County Lieutenants of Botetourt and Montgomery, 1 November 1780, Jefferson Papers, 4:85. Apparently Jefferson did not know about the failure of Preston's plan until the first of November because on 22 October 1780 he wrote to General Gates expressing the hope that the volunteers from Montgomery and Botetourt, "as proposed by Colo. Preston," would be a "useful reinforcement to you." Ibid., 4:57.

²⁵³Thomas Jefferson to Horatio Gates, 10 November 1780, ibid., 4:108. Because rifles were slow to reload and could not be used in hand-to-hand combat since they had no attached bayonets, smoothbore muskets were preferred by the officers. Generally the Tidewater militia used the muskets, but the backcountry militia did not like using them because they found their rifles more accurate. McBride, "Virginia Manpower Policies," 15-6.

²⁵⁴Walter Crockett to WP, 2 October 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 165-6 and "Branch Papers," 319.

²⁵⁵Robert Fristoe to WP, 2 October 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 166. Although undated, a petition came to Preston from the Clinch River area responding to orders to appear for a court martial because they

But all was not despair. While Preston struggled to get men into the field, William Campbell who was in North Carolina with 400 Virginians aided by Isaac Shelby, John Sevier, Benjamin Cleveland, and Charles McDowell, assembled more than 1,000 militiamen from frontier counties at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River on September 25 to stop the continuing advance of the English and Loyalists. Only a few days earlier, the British had sent Major Patrick Ferguson into the Tryon County area of North Carolina for the purpose of organizing the Loyalist allies in the Gilbert Town area into an effective fighting unit. Cornwallis eventually hoped to consolidate these Loyalists with others in the eastern part of the state. The 900 frontiersmen under William Campbell's command began to track Ferguson with his nearly 1,800 Loyalist soldiers and eventually fought a battle at King's Mountain, South Carolina, on October 7.²⁵⁶ According to William Davidson, lieutenant colonel of the North Carolina militia, the battle lasted forty-seven minutes with a clear victory for the "mountain men" as they were called. In writing Preston, he summarized his deep feelings: "the Blow is great, and I give you my Joy upon the Occasion."²⁵⁷ In the battle, the Loyalists lost 157 killed, 163 badly wounded, 698 taken prisoner, and 1,500 weapons captured compared to a loss of only 28 frontier Patriots killed and 90 wounded.²⁵⁸ Everyone was excited to hear the news, especially Preston whose frontier militiamen had contributed to the victory. He congratulated Gates:

The important news . . . ought to give the most heart felt Joy to every Friend to the Liberties of America. The Bravery & Conduct of the Frontier Militia deserves the greatest Applause; and there is reason to hope that the happiest consequences to the American arms in the Southern department will ensue so complete a Victory.²⁵⁹

The victory also represented good news for George Skillern who had been busy recruiting

had not participated in the Carolina invasion. They vividly outlined their "detached and exposed situation" in light of frequent Indian attacks on their homes. They explained: "Thus detached as we are and placed in so dangerous a situation, the Ties of Nature and Humanity forbid the leaving of our families, and the most dearest connexions we have upon Earth, thus exposed to the Mercy of the Cruel Savages, whose well known kind of Warfare are an indiscriminate destruction of all Ages and Sexes." They pled not to be drafted so they could protect their families and to serve as a "Barrier of Defence to the inner settlements." Petition from Inhabitants of Clinch to WP, [1780], PP-LC, 1097.

²⁵⁶Detailed accounts of the battle at King's Mountain can be found in Lyman C. Draper, King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1967 reprint of 1881 edition); Johnson, Preston, 261-6; John S. Pancake, This Destructive War. The British Campaigns in the Carolinas. 1780-1782 (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 108-121, and Mark M. Boatner, III, Encyclopedia of the American Revolution (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), 575-583.

²⁵⁷William Davidson to [WP?], 10 October 1780, "Branch Papers," 320.

²⁵⁸Boatner, Encyclopedia of the American Revolution, 582.

²⁵⁹WP to General Horatio Gates, 27 October 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 84.

men throughout Montgomery County.²⁶⁰ He now assumed Preston did not need the 100 volunteers he had raised in early October.²⁶¹ But Preston informed him otherwise after Jefferson and other county lieutenants wrote Preston requesting that they continue efforts to send soldiers to the southern front in order to give a needed "decisive blow."²⁶²

The King's Mountain victory also presented Preston with another problem when General Gates asked Preston to become commissary for the prisoners and prepare for them to be kept at the county courthouse in Fincastle where he was to build a strong pallisade eighteen feet high.²⁶³ Preston, "on considering Age and Inability for such service together with exposed situation of my numerous Family & the several Avocations in which I am necessarily engaged," declined the position, although he admitted the "emoluments arising therefrom" would be pleasing. But more importantly, he did not like the idea of putting the prisoners at the courthouse. First, he was "sorry to inform you [Gates] that we have more Tories in this County than any other I know of in Virginia" with great time, trouble, and expense expended by the militia in trying to suppress them. In addition, with that area being so close to the frontier, it would be possible for Indians and Loyalists from the Carolinas to make it difficult to secure them. And finally, the farmers did not have enough provisions to supply the prisoners with food because so many had been out on militia duty protecting themselves from Indians the previous summer and fall that crops had not been grown. He recommended Botetourt be considered instead where another barrier of mountains would protect them. In the meantime, he promised to raise provisions to care for the prisoners as soon as they entered Virginia.²⁶⁴ By this time Montgomery County had a strong reputation for having problems because Jefferson accepted Preston's arguments by calling that area "the most disaffected part of our State." He also worried about their being located so near the Lead Mines, placing them in greater danger. He recommended that the prisoners be marched further north where they might form an American batallion in exchange for being released.²⁶⁵

From the fall of 1780 there were no further coordinated Loyalist plots but the problem of disaffected people did not go away. Thomas Madison was, for example,

²⁶⁰George Skillern to WP, 13 October 1780, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 310-1.

²⁶¹George Skillern to WP, 30 October 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 85.

²⁶²Jefferson to County Lieutenants of Botetourt and Montgomery, PP-DM, 5QQ 87 and Jefferson Papers, 4:85.

²⁶³Horatio Gates to Officers, 12 October 1780, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267c and Horatio Gates to Thomas Jefferson, 1 November 1780, Jefferson Papers, 4:86.

²⁶⁴Preston also sent estimates to Gates of how much it would cost to set up the prison area. WP to General Horatio Gates, 27 October 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 84. Gates wrote Jefferson, "I had no conception that the Setting Up Two hundred Yards of Picketing, could cost 100,000, ." Horatio Gates to Thomas Jefferson, 3 November 1780, Jefferson Papers, 4:91.

²⁶⁵Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Huntington, 7 November 1780, ibid., 4:98-100 and Thomas Jefferson to Horatio Gates, 10 November 1780, ibid., 4:108-9.

premature when he congratulated Preston "on the Reformation of the Tories."²⁶⁶ The job of pacifying Loyalists continued. The Montgomery County court began that same November to restore property to several individuals who had been accused of loyalism. In at least one case, they accepted a promise of good behavior in a proven incident of "offences as an Enemy to his Country."²⁶⁷ Their efforts were nevertheless only a "drop in the bucket" and Preston was to assert the following spring that nearly half of the militia were disaffected. Most of them could not be drawn into service "either by threats or otherwise." And those Loyalists who had earlier been forced into militia service deserted quickly.²⁶⁸

With the approach of winter, the frontier leaders faced two problems. Gates needed soldiers in the south to keep Cornwallis and his army in the Carolinas from moving northward. Further rumors began to circulate that the Cherokees planned an imminent attack against the frontier. Plans redoubled to raise volunteer militiamen. Some of the adjoining counties were successful in their efforts to get their militia motivated, but Preston, in spite of strong appeals for help from his counterparts, experienced no such success because most of his men were "out hunting" until Christmas.²⁶⁹ It now became clear that the Cherokees would attack, but Virginia put off any offensive plans due to winter conditions and a lack of ammunition. Rather they put themselves into a defensive posture and as the situation worsened Preston began to draft every fifth man from the militia and ordered them to Washington County to help Colonel William Campbell's defensive efforts.²⁷⁰ In December Jefferson approved Preston's plans to build a fort at the Lead Mines rather than relying for protection on Fort Chiswell located eight miles

²⁶⁶Thomas Madison to [WP], 9 November 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 86.

²⁶⁷Eight individuals on 8 November 1780 received property back "as nothing appears against them with Regard of their being Enemies to the State." Philip Dubton had his case dismissed and an order given that property taken by the militia of the counties be restored "whilst he behaves as a good Citizen otherwise he is to be tried for his past offences as an Enemy to his Country." Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:302. Not all individuals were similarly treated. Peter Raizor was required to put up ,5,000 while being investigated for his loyalties. *Ibid.*, 20:300. In 1781 similar actions took place when David Fulton had his goods returned since no evidence had been produced that he ever left the Patriot cause. 7 February 1781, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:306.

²⁶⁸WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, *Jefferson Papers*, 5:436-7.

²⁶⁹Colonel George Skillern to WP, 23 November 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 88 and Arthur Campbell to WP, 5 December 1780, PP-LC, 1091. Apparently this represented a state-wide problem. The Virginia legislature even considered taking slaves on a proportional basis from those who had a good number and then providing one slave and a small bounty of money to men who would volunteer to join the army. Thomas Madison to WP, 30 November 1780, PP-LC, 1090. WP to Colonels Arthur and William Campbell, 6 December 1780, Preston Family Papers, Gray Collection, FC. George Skillern from Botetourt County marched south on 12 December 1780 with sixty volunteers, "the finest Company I ever see." George Skillern to WP, 13 December 1780, "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 316-7.

²⁷⁰The Deposition of William Springstone, [December 1780], "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 313-4; Colonel William Campbell to [WP], 17 December 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 89, and WP to Colonel William Campbell, 20 December 1780, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267c23.

away.²⁷¹ In addition to being called to provide men for the American army in the Carolinas now commanded by General Nathanael Greene, Preston and his colleagues in southwest Virginia worried about the inevitable attack they expected from the Cherokees as soon as the weather improved.²⁷²

As 1781 began, news arrived of a crushing defeat the Americans inflicted on British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton at Cowpens, South Carolina on January 17 arrived. American Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, using militia from Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia had routed the English. Cornwallis still possessed superior manpower which created a need for Greene to have more soldiers if he was to wage an effective campaign. Word now arrived that Cornwallis was on his way toward the Moravian towns in North Carolina and from there he was expected to head toward Virginia in order to destroy the Lead Mines. Once again Virginia looked to Preston and Montgomery County for ammunition from the Lead Mines and for more soldiers. Preston called his fellow county officers together on February 8 and ordered out all of the militia. In spite of a great decline in his own health "from frequent apoplectic premonitions" he decided to join the men going to the Carolinas and he called his sixteen year old son Francis home from school to take care of the family. Jefferson wrote Preston that Cornwallis, "maddened by his losses at the Cowpens & Georgetown," had burned his wagons so he could move more quickly toward Virginia and he urged Preston in the "most earnest terms" to collect a quarter of his militia and send them immediately to help Greene--"I cannot believe you will rest a moment after receiving this till you see your men under march." Preston had, of course, already acted and county militiamen were assembling at the Lead Mines.

On February 18 Preston marched with 350 riflemen to join militia units from Botetourt and Washington Counties to combine with the forces of General Andrew Pickens of South Carolina near Hillsborough where Tarleton's Legion waited. Even while marching, Preston got word from Pickens that the English were on the move making it expedient that the Patriot forces harass their rear guard to prevent them from getting to a place where naval ships could come. He pled, "For God's sake don't delay." Pickens followed this initial message up with another one urging: "General Greenes dependence lies greatly on the mountain men. I am sure you will not delay."²⁷³

Very few details are known about the role of Preston and his men in Greene's

²⁷¹Thomas Jefferson to WP, 7 December 1780, PP-LC, 1093.

²⁷²WP to William Campbell, 20 December 1780, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267c23.

²⁷³WP to Thomas Jefferson, 10 February 1781, *Jefferson Papers*, 4:579; Thomas Jefferson to WP, 15 February 1781, PP-LC, 1104 and Auditor's Accounts, William Preston Papers, VSL; Andrew Pickens to WP, 20 February 1781, "Branch Papers," 323; Andrew Pickens to WP, 21 February 1781, *Jefferson Papers*; WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, *ibid.*, 5:437-8, and LPF Letter. Only one third of the militia showed up which greatly disappointed Preston. He expected more for several reasons--the enemy was only a day's ride away from the Lead Mines, that time of year was very slack, and he wanted only a short tour of duty. WP to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., 28 July 1781, *Calendar of State Papers*, II:264. Jefferson asked that all of the lead be sent to him rather than half to the south as previously ordered on the basis that the state was being invaded and had a greater need. Thomas Jefferson to Manager of Lead Mines, 19 January 1781, PP-LC, 1101.

skirmishes with the English during February and March, 1781. On their way to their assigned locations, they passed through Moravian towns in North Carolina. The accounts of their visit written by Moravians living in Salem provide an interesting picture of this group of Montgomery militiamen both before and after they engaged in battle.²⁷⁴ The Moravians generally found Preston's men to be very "orderly" when Preston was present--a great contrast to soldiers from other areas.²⁷⁵ An advance party of Preston's men, "most of them drunk," arrived in the Moravian town around February 21 without their leader, frightening several church members. In contrast, five blacksmiths from Preston's unit were very orderly and began working on horse shoes once they arrived. The next morning Preston's soldiers continued to create a disturbance and had to be entertained with organ playing and "other interests." But once Preston and Walter Crockett arrived the whole atmosphere changed. Their initial meeting was "unusually hearty on both sides, and Colonel Preston assured us of his favor and that nothing that we had suffered from his soldiers should go unpunished." He also promised that none of his men would be quartered in their homes but would stay in the magazine, sheds, and stables around town. After everyone settled down, the following idyllic scene took place according to the Moravians:

Colonel Preston, his officers, and many privates listened to the organ, and the Colonel had a most friendly conversation with Br. Marshall about our affairs, looked at the bark-mill with interest, and said once that he prized this day as one of the most pleasant in his life. . . . In the Tavern it was as quiet as though only two men were there. The soldiers, around their camp-fires, were also orderly, and when there was a hard rain during the night they withdrew into the sheds and stables with all modesty.

Another account related that after Preston took possession of their stables, the soldiers "behaved very well" after the Moravians supplied them with bread, meat, and corn." By 9:00 p.m. "it was so quiet that no one would have known that so many men were in the town." On February 23 Preston left with his men, but before they left, Preston gave the Moravians a "letter of thanks, written and signed by his own hand, expressing his appreciation of all the good and friendly service which had been given to him here. At leaving he spoke most affectionately to us." In contrast, later that same day another group came demanding food and drink "and some of them went further." Several days later South Carolinians commanded by General Andrews Pickens stole hats from the Moravians and took bread without paying for it. On the same day, more men from Preston's unit led by Joseph Cloyd arrived on their way to join Preston and provided a

²⁷⁴These accounts written in diary style by the Moravians can be found in Adelaide Fries, ed., Records of the Moravians in North Carolina (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1968), 1680-7, 1715-7, 1744-7.

²⁷⁵Soldiers from Botetourt could be very rough and insolent. Margaret Campbell, sister of Arthur and William, complained to one of her brothers on 29 December 1780 that soldiers from Botetourt "insulted me a good deal and Gave me the worst Language ever I got from any one that traveled the road." Describing them as "mean Raskils," she hoped her brother would never have to argue with them. PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267c16.

contrast to the other soldiers: "They were very polite and obliging, and spent the night here." These accounts suggest some of the atmosphere and leadership Preston was able to engender among those who served under him. He conveyed a relatively effortless style of leadership based on his aura and example rather than an authoritarian approach.

Once Preston's militiamen arrived in the Hillsborough area, the Loyalists, who had been forced to join Preston's army to keep from having their lands confiscated, deserted, reducing his force considerably. Preston did not leave a detailed account of what transpired except to report that they did "hardy duty" under General Pickens for twelve or fourteen days on the enemy lines without the benefit of full provisions. He further reported: "Part of the men were in one action, and the whole in a second; in both overpowered by numbers, and in the last broken and dispersed with the loss of their blankets."²⁷⁶ From other accounts, it is known that Preston became part of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee's Legion and Pickens' soldiers from South Carolina with these three units moving between Greene's American army and English forces led by Cornwallis in the area around Troublesome Creek and Reedy Fork (southeast of modern day Fayetteville).²⁷⁷ In the process of their maneuvers, Preston's forces along with other American forces engaged Tarleton's soldiers on March 2 near a plantation on the Alamance River. In the initial encounter, the Americans managed to kill several English soldiers but the British then defeated the Americans in a counterattack. Many of the wounded were brought to Salem for care before being sent home. And for the next two days after the battle, the Moravian towns began to experience "commotion . . . in full force, for one party after another came from the army with riderless horses" sent away from the battle area by Greene due to a lack of forage. Part of these were reportedly "all Colonel Preston's horses and about fifty of his men." The Moravians again provided food, shelter and, in some cases, spiritual comfort.

After the Alamance River defeat, Greene repositioned his forces placing Preston at Wetzell's Mill a few miles from the previous encounter at Alamance River as a way of keeping the English from attacking the main force of the Americans. On March 6 the Americans were again soundly defeated. Preston's militiamen complained that the "burthen, and heat, of the Day was entirely thrown upon them, and that they were to be made a sacrifice by the Regular Officers to screen their own Troops."²⁷⁸ In this brief skirmish, Preston's daughter related that her father, who was riding a "large fiery young horse that took freight at the report of the guns," took off through a mill pond which resulted in Preston being thrown off the horse with British light troops on horses breathing down his back. At this point, Colonel Joseph Cloyd dismounted and helped the overweight Preston get on Cloyd's horse which saved his life.²⁷⁹ In commenting on this accident a few weeks later, John Floyd told Preston, "I do not think it reasonable that you should stand in the fighting department" and offered to "stand in your place if I can have

²⁷⁶WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, Jefferson Papers, 5:438.

²⁷⁷Charles Magill to Thomas Jefferson, 10 March 1781, ibid., 5:115-6 and Johnson, Preston, 283-90.

²⁷⁸Charles Magill to Thomas Jefferson, 10 March 1781, Jefferson Papers, 5:115.

²⁷⁹LPF Letter.

timely notice by Express." He asked, "Is she [Mrs. Preston] willing for you to engage personally in war?"²⁸⁰ By this time the colonel was having difficulty keeping his militia in the field and he decided to return home.²⁸¹ Preston and William Campbell's men were reentering the Moravian towns by March 7. Some were wounded, some without shoes or stockings, and others "utterly worn out." Starving for food, some of the men broke into a spring house and took all of the eggs, but after Preston arrived around March 10 he got things under control and "looked after the wounded with all love and faithfulness." Illustrating his courtesy, Preston and his fellow officers later wrote a note of thanks to the Moravians in Salem "for their polite behavior, the hospitable manner in which they received and treated the Troops; and the Inconvenience to which they put themselves to entertain them, and to make their stay one Night Comfortable."²⁸² Preston even took time to discuss literature with these devout people and he borrowed Greenland History from one of their members.²⁸³

Soon after Preston and his men left on March 15, the main American force under Greene fought a drawn battle with the British at Guilford Courthouse. And before long Preston began to hear "illiberal Reflections . . . being wantonly thrown out against my Character by several Gentlemen down the Country" for him leaving the army early and calling out the Montgomery militia without state approval.²⁸⁴ Preston also felt a need to defend his early departure to Jefferson:

It gave me great pain that our Militia returned so soon; but I will venture to say, they did duty on the Enemy's lines as long as any other that went from behind the mountains, and much longer than some. I obeyed every order that I received either from Genl. Green, Gl. Pickens or Colo. Williams of the Maryland line; and underwent the same fatigue, watching, fasting and Danger, that any other militia officer did while I was on duty.²⁸⁵

Jefferson accepted his explanation by chiding: "This Narrative was not necessary with us

²⁸⁰John Floyd to WP, 26 April 1781, DM, 17CC 135-7.

²⁸¹WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, Jefferson Papers, 5:438. Charles Magill in a letter to Jefferson on 10 March 1781 wrote of repositioning soldiers after the Wetzell's Mill defeat but noted that many of the "Riflemen" used this as a "plausible excuse for their return home." Ibid., 5:115.

²⁸²Fries, ed., Moravians, IV:1910-1 and Auditor's Accounts, William Preston Papers, VSL.

²⁸³Later Preston wrote the Moravians with his impressions of the book. According to the Moravian diary, Preston wrote "that he had read with interest and sympathy what our Brethren had endured for the good of the heathen, and that he had never before read anything like it. 'Certainly,' wrote he, 'the hand of the Lord was with them, His wisdom guided them through all, and His grace supported them wonderfully. Through His blessing have they reaped a rich harvest, and have brought so many stupid heathen to the Church and to Christ the great and previous Head thereof. Such examples of disinterested fear of God are all too rare in our times.'" Fries, ed., Moravians, IV:1793.

²⁸⁴WP to Thomas Jefferson, 10 April 1781, Jefferson Papers, 5:398.

²⁸⁵WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, ibid., 5:438.

for your personal Justification." He found Preston's actions "not only justifiable but laudable."²⁸⁶ Other Preston friends such as James Robertson were just "heartily glad you escaped out of the hands of your enemies in Carolina."²⁸⁷

But William Preston's problems were not over. The Cherokees, who had earlier appeared to be on the verge of attacking the frontier, still remained a potential problem and with the English army threatening Virginia there was the need to pacify them. The Virginia Council, as a result, appointed Preston along with Colonel William Christian and Major Joseph Martin to meet with commissioners from North Carolina in order to "treat with the Cherokee Indians on the subject of peace."²⁸⁸ Preston found it necessary to decline the appointment because of the distance he would be required to travel to the negotiations and his "very infirm state of Health, together with the Care of the Militia, which engrosses far the largest part of my Time."²⁸⁹

Preston's efforts to support Virginia's cause during the rest of the Revolution were an embarrassment to him. As colonel of Montgomery County, he would frequently be called upon by Virginia to raise a certain number of militia to help out the cause but he could not produce the men. In late March the Virginia Council passed an order requesting that several counties including Montgomery raise one fourth of their militia to reinforce Greene's army in the South.²⁹⁰ Preston warned Jefferson that he would do his best but did not expect any success because of the continued disaffection of at least half of his militia and the fact that most of his men and officers "have been so harrassed with hard Duty for near a Year past that they begin to complain for want of Time to attend their Farms for the Support of their Families."²⁹¹ Added to these problems was the fact that he had only five companies to cover a frontier of eighty miles so that if he drew militia from those areas, their families would be left exposed to ongoing Indian attacks. Preston, as a result, could not even find enough men to guard the strategic Lead Mines, now in great danger from Loyalists.²⁹² When word came that Cornwallis had crossed the James River near

²⁸⁶Thomas Jefferson to WP, 21 April 1781, *ibid.*, 5:524.

²⁸⁷James Robertson to WP, 30 March 1781, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267b5.

²⁸⁸24 March 1781, *Council Journal*, II:318. Jefferson informed Preston on 24 March 1781 of the appointment. *Jefferson Papers*, 5:236-7.

²⁸⁹WP to Thomas Jefferson, 10 April 1781, *ibid.*, 5:398.

²⁹⁰29 March 1781, *Journals of the Council*, II:322.

²⁹¹WP to Thomas Jefferson, 10 April 1781, *Jefferson Papers*, 5:398.

²⁹²WP to Thomas Jefferson, 13 April 1781, *ibid.*, 5:437 and WP to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., 28 July 1781, *Calendar of State Papers*, II:265. Some of Preston's friends felt the Loyalist problem had been reduced. James Thompson wrote him on 2 June 1781: "I understand you have been much Troubled your way with the Torreys but I am informed they are Pretty well Dispersed." PP-DM, 5QQ 96. In terms of success on recruiting, Walter Crockett reported to Preston on 17 May 1781 that only eighteen men and three captains had shown up as required. He expressed frustration that if the law was not enforced no one would come. At the same time, he recognized that since most of these men were "obliged to work and Raize thire Living out of the Ground" it would always be hard to raise the 350 or 400 men that were constantly requested by the state. "Branch Papers," 324-5.

Richmond in pursuit of Lafayette, Jefferson immediately wrote Preston requesting that he send all available men to help the French general. He reminded Preston: "The whole Country lies open to a most powerful army headed by the most active, enterprising & vindictive officer who has ever appeared in arms against us."²⁹³ Preston tried to meet the orders in two ways. He initially wrote to Colonel Walter Crockett asking him to raise soldiers as requested by the governor--"I can only beg of you for Heaven's Sake to spare no pains, but use very possible Exertion to raise these men by the time appointed."²⁹⁴ Preston also tried to encourage his men by taking a ride through the county urging them to rendezvous and march but to "little purpose."²⁹⁵ Then in June when Banastre Tarleton raided Charlottesville in an effort to capture Jefferson and his fellow legislators who had fled there recently from Richmond, Preston was again requested to raise men, a request which he could not fulfill.²⁹⁶ And when another request was made in July, a frustrated Preston wrote the new governor, Thomas Nelson, Jr., to explain the reasons for Montgomery County's dismal record in responding to calls for soldiers. Dissaffection, already at more than one half, was "gaining Ground every day." In the previous year after spending one month attempting to put down a Loyalist insurrection, he did not believe "one Proselyte was gained." By now he knew that some of the Loyalists who agreed to serve in the Continental Army had deserted. With so many Loyalists, the Whigs were afraid to leave their properties and families to their "mercy." Just as important was the large frontier area to be protected from Indians who usually visited them two or three times a year. For these reasons, he found it "impossible" to comply with the governor's orders.²⁹⁷ To Colonel William Davies, Commissioner of the Virginia War Office, he was even more pessimistic about his chances: "I might venture to add as my Opinion that such is the Temper and Situation of the People, that if the Fate of the United States was to depend on this draught being complied with on the part of the Private men of our Militia, they would not go."²⁹⁸ All of these problems, including the possibility that Greene would

²⁹³Thomas Jefferson to WP, 28 May 1781, *ibid.*, 328-9. This was not the first reminder Preston received from Jefferson that he wanted his militia sent south. On 21 April 1781 Preston got similar orders. Thomas Jefferson to WP, 21 April 1781, *Jefferson Papers*, 5:524.

²⁹⁴WP to Colonel Walter Crockett, 2 July 1781, "Branch Papers," 330-1 and "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 321-2.

²⁹⁵WP to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., 28 July 1781, *Calendar of State Papers*, II:265.

²⁹⁶William Fleming to WP, 12 June 1781, "Branch Papers," 329-30 and "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 320-1.

²⁹⁷WP to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., 28 July 1781, *Calendar of State Papers*, II:265. Governor Nelson's appeal came to Preston on 19 July 1781. He promised Preston that "vigorous exertion this campaign will insure to America what she has been contending for." Greene was close to recovering the south and only needed a little extra help. "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 110-1 and "Branch Papers," 333. The request came from Colonel William Davies that Preston send one seventh of his militia to the south to join Greene. Two days later Davies increased the order to one fourth. Colonel William Davies to WP, 15 and 17 July 1781, "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, 109-110 and "Branch Papers," 331-2. On 17 July 1781 the Virginia Council voted the one fourth request. 17 July 1781, *Journals of the Council*, II:357.

²⁹⁸WP to Colonel William Davies, 28 July 1781, *Calendar of State Papers*, II:266.

call for men, led Preston's old friend, Thomas Lewis, to commiserate:

You live in a rascaly County So do I & so dos every body a majority of Rascals will render any place Rascaly. I wish it were in my power, to retire with Some few I could name from such rascaly Sceens as too frequently present themselves.²⁹⁹

Apparently the state gave up on getting soldiers from Preston and no further requests were made. However, the war office sent a circular to Preston requesting his assistance on getting clothing together to help the cause.³⁰⁰ When Cornwallis surrendered to the Americans on October 19, 1781 at Yorktown, tensions on the frontier decreased and William Preston, in an "infirm State of health," turned his attention to "private affairs."³⁰¹

In many ways the Revolution actually bolstered Preston's business interests and he took advantage of every opportunity. In particular, a strong market developed for hemp, the major crop produced at Greenfield and Smithfield. With no imports coming from England, citizens relied on the coarse linen made from hemp and the state counted on the local ropewalk factories to produce all of their war needs. This market placed Preston in such a strong position that he could not grow enough hemp to meet the demand. In fact, he did not even have to look for people to buy his hemp since Edward Johnson in Manchester purchased all he could produce and continued to negotiate most of his business deals throughout the war. In this kind of market, he could generally barter his hemp for any needs he had or he could demand cash as inflation continually increased the value of hemp. For example, in 1779 Johnson set up a joint venture with Preston in which slaves, who were in high demand, would be bartered for hemp.³⁰² Preston also served as Johnson's business agent on the frontier, looking for hemp wherever he could find it, and

²⁹⁹Thomas Lewis to WP, 1 August 1781, PP-DM, 5QQ 97.

³⁰⁰Circular from War Office, 25 September 1781, PP-LC, 1118.

³⁰¹20 July 1781, Journal of the Council of State, II:361-2 and WP to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., 28 September 1781, Calendar of State Papers, II:501.

³⁰²Edward Johnson to WP, 14 and 24 July 1779, PP-LC, 1025, 1029. In his desperate attempts to get hemp, Johnson received a bad lot of the crop "not worth the Carriage, it appears to me to have got rotten in the stack and the chief of it got wet on the road so that it's fit for nothing but stuffing saddles." Edward Johnson to WP, 29 August 1779, PP-LC, 1032. Some of Johnson's dealings were directly with James Norvell who was renting property from Preston, but Johnson kept Preston informed in a general way of their business dealings. Edward Johnson to WP, 28 October 1779, PP-LC, 1039. In their efforts to establish a price level for their business, Johnson tried to get Preston to take a fourteen year old slave. The skipper on the slave boat liked him so much he offered Johnson , 1,800 Continental currency for him, whereas Johnson had paid , 1500 for him. Because inflation was running so rampant, Johnson had a tough time setting a price for the young slave but tried to equate previous prices with the current market. He figured he would have cost , 65 earlier when one ton of hemp cost , 35. So now when hemp was of greater value, he offered him to Preston for two tons of hemp. Johnson ended up keeping the young slave but continued his efforts to have Preston purchase him. On 28 October 1779 Johnson offered him to either Preston or Norvell "as low as possible, but if the terms should not suit you I will direct a price to be put on him to your hemp." Johnson wrote that "a better boy than he is from Character cannot be found." Illustrating the extreme inflation taking place, Preston then offered to pay 1 1/2 tons of hemp which Johnson thought was a very fair price since he had only recently seen a smaller slave sold for , 2,300. PP-LC, 1039 and 1048.

they also engaged in other deals to procure the valuable hemp. On at least one occasion, Johnson sent three wagons loaded with such scarce items as iron and salt in order to get hemp on which he would now pay a five per-cent commission. After suggesting a price of , 700 per ton of hemp, he told Preston that he was willing to go higher to get enough for his ropewalk factory. By October, 1779 with inflation rampant, Johnson asked Preston not to establish any firm contracts before the hemp arrived at his store because he would pay the going rate at the time it arrived. And still hemp continued to rise in value faster than any other crop. Johnson and Preston had only one major argument during their business ventures. Preston felt uncomfortable taking a commission from his brother-in-law for finding hemp, but Johnson insisted that those running the ropewalk factory expected to pay commissions. If it had only been for Johnson's personal use, he would not have given Preston a commission, "but as you threaten never to do me another good office without your request is granted if you insist upon it I must comply."³⁰³

The only signs of trouble in Preston's business operations were disturbing reports from his various properties including Greenfield. In early 1779 he engaged Robert Harris as new overseer at Greenfield. Harris, who arrived in May, 1779, reported that the plantation looked like the neighbors were just waiting to confiscate it and he faced a major task in repairing fences which protected the crops from animals.³⁰⁴ Other reports from renters were similarly bad. In one case, many fences had been destroyed and hogs had gotten in and damaged the corn and hemp with a loss of 1,000 pounds.³⁰⁵ From these scant accounts concerning hemp and properties it is clear Preston tried to keep his business affairs going during the traumatic concluding years of the war. But aside from these activities and the fact that he grew flax, wheat, rye, barley, corn, potatoes, turnips, hay, oats, and probably cotton and cabbage on his farms, little else is known.³⁰⁶ He also

³⁰³Preston apparently lost money on one of their transactions when he was not able to cover the cost of transportation and commission charges for a load of salt and sugar. Johnson hoped Preston would get "credit with your Country folks, for your great tenderness to them, but I fear you will not." Edward Johnson to WP, 28 October 1779, PP-LC, 1039. Apparently Preston became very sensitive over these comments, because Johnson responded, "you certainly know me better than to suppose I meant the smallest reflection on your Integrity or attention in the mention of your Country folks. I assure you I did not dream that you would have taken the Expression in any other than a laughable light & shall in future be more Careful in Writing, & am as I was then satisfied that you acted as you thought best for my interest." By December Johnson was expressing optimism that with Preston's help and that of other counties he would find enough hemp to keep the ropewalk factory running through the winter. Edward Johnson to WP, 10 December 1779, PP-LC, 1048.

³⁰⁴Robert Harris to WP, 26 February 1779, PP-LC, 1013 and Robert Harris to WP, 31 May 1779, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353.

³⁰⁵Robert Preston to WP, 4 September 1779, PP-LC, 1033.

³⁰⁶Johnson asked Preston for flax so that his wife and others could use their three spinners. 14 July 1779, PP-LC, 1025. Thomas Tate and David Carr who worked for Preston at Greenfield and on Catawba River gave an accounting of grain products on 24 July 1781. PP-VHS. Preston entered into an agreement with Richard McCoy as an overseer for Smithfield in which McCoy agreed to be responsible for supervising the field hands in growing several kinds of crops using his own horses and plough. He was also to repair and build fences. In exchange, he would receive one seventh of the crop, two barrels of corn, hay, and rough fodder for his own stock during the winter, and enough tanning leather to make a pair of shoes for each of his family. Richard McCoy Agreement with WP, 27 March 1781, PP-LC, 1107. On 29 March 1780

continued his successful distillery business.³⁰⁷ And of course he continued to work or rent his lands. For example he rented land on the New River, known as Dingus's Old Place, for six years to Mathew Kennedy. In exchange, Kennedy agreed to teach one of Preston's slaves how to weave with Preston providing all materials. The agreement specifically stated that Kennedy did not have to make any buildings or clear any ground except what he needed to support his own family. What Preston was really thinking about was having Kennedy run a ferry over the New River with Kennedy to receive half of the fares and Preston the other half.³⁰⁸ What is clear is that Preston did very well with his business activities during the war because in late winter, 1780, he reassured his nephew, John Brown, Jr., who he was helping financially to attend William and Mary College, that he could easily assist him:

Don't let yourself be straitned, nor suffer the thoughts of it to sit heavy on your mind. For what I can spare, I will send it with the same Pleasure as to my own Son; and believe me, I have a good prospect of making pretty largely out of my Distillery & other means this Spring.³⁰⁹

As the Revolution ended, the major economic problem confronting all families in Virginia was a dramatic increase in inflation, a frequent subject of letters to Preston.³¹⁰ Since most of his wealth was in land and easily bartered crops, he probably survived these economic problems better than his poorer neighbors.

Preston's activities as a surveyor naturally suffered during the last years of the war. From 1779 through 1781 the Montgomery County Record of Plotts shows no activity by

Johnson informed Preston he would send cotton seed at the first opportunity. PP-LC, 1068. John Brown, Jr., Preston's nephew attending William and Mary College, sent him an ounce of cabbage seed on 7 March 1780. PP-DM, 5QQ 20.

³⁰⁷John Floyd to WP, 5 May 1780, DM, 17CC 124-7.

³⁰⁸WP Lease to Mathew Kennedy, 2 March 1780, PP-LC, 1060. Other agreements did not turn out as well for either party. Preston had to go into arbitration with David McNeely who was supposed to build fences on one of Preston's plantations as part of his rental agreement. Arbitrators agreed with Preston that McNeely had not fulfilled his part of the agreement and ordered him to either carry out the assignment or pay Preston \$200. 21 May 1781, PP-VHS. Thomas Tate and David Carr informed Preston they did not plan to continue their agreement to work at Greenfield because the house was "not fit to live in," but they agreed to put in a fall crop. 24 July 1781, *ibid.*

³⁰⁹WP to John Brown, Jr., [March 1780], PP-LC, 1055.

³¹⁰Thomas Madison wrote Preston on 9 November 1780: "the Scarcity & Demand for money is great. . . . The Demand for Money will continue, till a new Emission takes Place. which will be done." PP-DM 5QQ 86. After the Revolution ended, inflation increased even more dramatically with John Breckinridge writing Preston from Williamsburg on 26 November 1781: "As to Store Goods, they are many Hundred P Cent higher than they formerly were, and sold chiefly for hard money. You perhaps can form some Idea of the Prices, when I assure you, a Person cannot live in Town, one Day, for less than two thousand dollars. I saw the exchange of fifteen hundred for one, given for Store Goods." He had chosen to live five miles out of town to save money and for the exercise of riding his horse into town. Even so it was costing him about seven shillings per day to live. PP-DM, 5QQ 100.

either Preston or his assistant surveyors.³¹¹ But he received numerous inquiries about previous land questions arising primarily from grants given to soldiers in earlier years or in regard to Loyal Company land grants in Kentucky.³¹² In the spring of 1779 the Virginia legislature enacted two laws which attempted to deal with past problems and to look ahead to the future for how Virginia should grant or sell its lands in the west. To settle past problems, the law approved all surveys made by county surveyors or their assistants before January 24, 1778. This law made many people happy for it certified such longstanding practices as previous headrights, treasury rights, and military bounties. Preston must have been pleased also because, in effect, it approved the 200,000 acres already surveyed by the Loyal Land Company for whom he had worked as a surveyor in earlier years. Other companies such as the Ohio Company which had not yet surveyed their lands were not as happy because they lost all of their claims. All past claims had to be completed within one year, although this deadline was extended four times.³¹³ Another 1779 law reopened the Virginia land office and set up detailed provisions on the appointment of surveyors and how they were to conduct their business.³¹⁴

Almost immediately after passage of this bill Preston began to get requests for settling previous land claims which had gone dormant during the early years of the Revolution. For example, Jefferson requested that he look up land entries for Colonel Byrd's widow so that she could claim lands given her husband by governor's warrants.³¹⁵

³¹¹The only exception was five surveys completed by Preston for himself and William Thompson as executors for James Patton in November, 1779. Montgomery County Record of Plotts A, 1773-1782, VSL, 33:239.

³¹²The intricate politics involved in western land dealings during this period can be traced in Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 217-57 and Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 230-2.

³¹³"An Act for adjusting and settling the titles of claimers to unpatented lands under the present and former government, previous to the establishment of the commonwealth's land office," Hening, *Statutes*, 10:35-50. Further extensions were made at the fall session, 1779, the spring sessions of both 1780 and 1781, and the fall session of 1781. *Ibid.*, 10:177-180, 237-41, 403, 484-8.

³¹⁴"An act for establishing a Land office, and ascertaining the terms and manner of granting waste and unappropriated lands," Hening, *Statutes*, 10:50-65. Edward Johnson sent Preston a copy of the land act on 29 August 1779 and asked for advice on how he could get land in Kentucky to give his five boys: "Should he purchase it from officers or from the State or whether it would not be better to get some one to purchase for me lands already settled." PP-LC, 1032. Johnson later approved Preston's overture to John Floyd to purchase lands for him and guaranteed that he would "Cheerfully comply with any Contract he makes." Edward Johnson to WP, 10 December 1779, PP-LC, 1048. Preston received approval as a surveyor for Montgomery County on 11 March 1780 and from the county on 5 April 1780. Preston Family Papers, WMC, 39.1 P91, Folder 1 and Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:292. On 19 January 1780 Preston nominated John Breckinridge to serve as Deputy Surveyor. Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:68. Before he took up office, the legislature passed a new law providing that deputies be tested by an individual appointed by the county court. Hening, *Statutes*, 10:353. Breckinridge wrote Preston about his concerns that he had not yet perfected his skills but was as good as others who had gotten commissions. He promised that if given a commission, "I will promise not to stretch a Chain until I am thoroughly Master of the Business." December 1780, Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA. Later in this period, Preston nominated David McGavock on 7 February 1781 as an assistant who was approved after examination by James McCorkle on 6 November 1781. Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:306, 314.

³¹⁵Thomas Jefferson to WP, 22 October 1779, Auditor's Accounts, William Preston Papers, VSL and

Preston also had to send individuals to Williamsburg to find the original patents for lands at the College of William and Mary so that he could meet the deadlines of the new law.³¹⁶ Some of the requests dealt with land issues in Montgomery County, but the majority revolved around surveys completed by Preston's surveyor in Kentucky, John Floyd, as part of the Loyal Land Company properties when Kentucky was still part of Montgomery County.³¹⁷ Preston also took personal advantage of the law by sending his own warrants to Floyd asking him to survey five separate pieces of property of five hundred acres each.³¹⁸ The effort to honor past military warrants was so successful that by May, 1780 no lands were left for newcomers under state warrants as provided by the law.³¹⁹

Preston's personal landholdings dramatically increased during the last years of the Revolution. It was almost as if he was deliberately trying to put together an inheritance for his rapidly increasing family at a time of declining health. Between 1779 and 1781 Preston received grants of land from the state amounting to 10,431 acres, most of it in Kentucky coming as a result of military warrants from the earlier war against the French and Indians in the 1760s. Many of these lands were never surveyed and later generations of his family would lose them because they could not get to Kentucky fast enough to claim them. He also engaged in buying and selling lands amounting to 2,035 acres of purchases for a cost of \$2,973.17 and 1,343 acres of sales for \$1,343.³²⁰ His biggest

Thomas Jefferson to Mary Willing Byrd, 24 October 1779, Jefferson Papers, 3:113.

³¹⁶John May to WP, 20 October 1779, PP-LC, 1036.

³¹⁷Preston's first request came from John Stadler on 21 July 1779 only one month after the Virginia legislature reopened the land office. PP-LC, 1028. On 29 July 1779 Colonel William Russell wrote asking for advice on how his son could get a patent for the father's lands in Kentucky. PP-DM, 5QQ 3. On 30 July 1779 Preston's old boss, Thomas Lewis, wrote about getting title for lands granted in Kentucky to Charles, his deceased brother. PP-DM, 5QQ 4.

³¹⁸Other relatives included a warrant for 1,000 acres for John Breckinridge and two warrants of 500 and 1,500 acres for Letitia Breckinridge. PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267b7. William Breckinridge reported to Preston that Floyd had located Preston's warrants on lands adjoining those he already owned on Bear Grass Creek and the Elk Horn. William Breckinridge to WP, 1 June 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 31.

³¹⁹John Floyd to WP, 5 May 1780, DM, 17CC 124-7. Helping alleviate these problems were Indian attacks in Kentucky which lasted through 1781, making it impossible for anyone to even think about surveying when their very lives were in jeopardy. Floyd sent numerous accounts to Preston of their problems with Indians including John Floyd to WP, 25 August 1780, 26 April, 11 August, and 30 September 1781, DM, 17CC 130-2, 135-9.

³²⁰February 1779, Botetourt County Deed Book 2, 1773-1780, VSL, 1:383-4; 8 February 1779, *ibid.*, 1:375-8; 2 September 1779, Montgomery County Deed Book A, 1773-89, VSL, 1:216-20; 29 November 1779, Augusta County Deed Book 23, 1779-1783, VSL, 11:191-4; 1 December 1779, Land Office Grants B, 1779-1780, VSL, 43:167-8, 206-7; Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:39, 58; 9 January 1780, 10 April 1780, 13 April 1780, Botetourt County Deed Book 2, 1773-1780, VSL, 1:502-3, 504-7, 507-13, 513-6; 21 March 1780, Augusta County Deed Book 23, 1779-1783, VSL, 11:195; 23 March 1780, Montgomery County Records, Misc. Records, Correspondence and personal papers, VSL, Folder O; 5 April 1780, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:292; 15 July 1780, PP-LC, 1079, 1080; 15 July 1780, Land Office, Grants A, 1779-1780, VSL, 42:679-80; 17 July 1780, Land Office, Grants B, 1779-80, VSL, 43:423-4, 426-7 and Breckinridge Papers, LC, Box 2; 20 July 1780, Land Office, Patents E, 1775-1776, 1780-1781, VSL, 46:48-9; 1 September 1780, Chalkley, Chronicles, III:574; 14 September 1780, Augusta

single land acquisition during his lifetime also became official when he inherited Robinson's Tract on Woods River (now known as New River) from his father who had died more than thirty years before.³²¹ As the last year of the Revolution began in 1781, Preston found it necessary to prepare a codicil to his will since so much had changed since his previous one. Basically the codicil, which ended up governing his final estate settlement two years later, focused on reallocating his lands taking into consideration his new purchases and the increase in his family.³²² This substantial land acquisition late in the war was clearly done with one goal in mind. He wanted to leave each of his children, who now numbered eleven (Letitia was born in 1779 and Thomas Lewis in 1781) a substantial piece of property.³²³

Preston's devoted attention, not only to his own family but to his broader extended family, continued during the final years of the Revolution. One of the nephews he showed the greatest concern for was John Brown, Jr., who was attending William and Mary College with the financial help of Preston. In a series of twelve letters written to his uncle over an eighteen month period, Brown shows a love, affection, and generosity for his uncle which illustrates the close relationship Preston had with many of his nieces and nephews.³²⁴ He showed his generosity to his nephew in an open-ended offer for his nephew to get money whenever he needed help on Preston's account with John May, one of Preston's business colleagues who lived in Williamsburg.³²⁵ It is also seen in the frequent solicitations by the nephew for advice from his uncle on topics such as which classes he should take and who he should study with. One of the classes Preston advised him to take was fencing!³²⁶ Brown, the preacher's kid, recognized that Williamsburg posed some real temptations to a young person, and given the fact that Preston was still considering William and Mary College as a possible college for his own sons, Brown's analysis must have made Preston think twice about such a choice:

Vice prevails much in this place but it is of such a kind, that it has a tendency

County Deed Book 24, 1783-1785, VSL, 11:30-2;7 September 1781, Montgomery County Deed Book A, 1773-89, VSL, 1:240-2; 7 November 1781, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:315, and 20 December 1781, Robert Preston Family Papers, WMC, 39.1 P92.

³²¹23 December 1779, Land Office Grants B, 1779-1780, VSL, 43:262-3.

³²²See Appendix F for details on the codicil. Codicil to Preston Will, 14 February 1781, PP-VHS, Mss1 P9267b17 and PP-LC, 959.

³²³Letitia, named after Preston's sister, was born on 29 September 1779 and baptized in December by her Presbyterian uncle, Reverend John Brown. Thomas Lewis, named after Preston's second cousin and military colleague, was born on 19 August 1781 and was baptized by Reverend Craighead. John Floyd Family Bible, Bible Records, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2 and Preston Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1.

³²⁴All of these letters have been printed in "Glimpses of Old College Life," *WMQ*, 1st Ser., IX (June, October 1900): 18-23, 75-83 and can be found in PP-DM, 5QQ 1, 10, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 39, 63, 82-3.

³²⁵John Brown, Jr. to WP, 30 March 1779 and 15 February 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 1, 18.

³²⁶John Brown, Jr. to WP, 15 February 1780, PP-DM, 5QQ 18.

rather to disgust than Alure. It is by no means disguised under the Specious appearance of Virtue, but Open, Profane, & contrary to the Sentiments of a Rational Mind. upon this account I think the danger is not so great, & hope by Shunning bad company, by proper Vigilance, together with Divine Aid to avoid this Whirlpool into which so many sink irrecoverably.³²⁷

In spite of this analysis, Preston still hoped his sons could join Brown so "that such a parcel of swinging mountaineers would be able to stand their hands at a crowded Table, not overloaded, with fat roast beef."³²⁸ Other relatives also sought advice. For example, after nephew John Breckinridge was elected to the Virginia legislature in 1781, he mentioned his discomfort in going to a position "that I have the smallest Knowledge of, and which I should imagine, would require a good deal of Prudence and Caution." He hoped his uncle would provide him with any cautions that might serve as a "Guide to my Conduct."³²⁹

As the Revolution ended, Preston was not a well man and in a letter to Thomas Lewis informing him of his brother Andrew's death it appears he knew he was nearing the end of his life and he turned philosophical in trying to comfort his friend:

For my part I can almost cry out, "my Soul is weary of my life." The loss of less than half a dozen of Friends more, exclusive of my Family, would make me do so most heartily. Still I believe it to be our Duty to submit without Complaint to the Dispensations of Providence however adverse or Disturbing they may appear to our benighted minds. . . . I would add a short Prayer, That the God of our Fathers may prepare You & I & our Connexions for this certain Change from time to Eternity, and that we may cheerfully resign the Trouble of this World for the well grounded hopes of a Better.

Preston then gave a strong clue on his own feelings about his prospects for living much longer. He regretfully turned down being an executor of Lewis's estate:

At an advanced Age, in a declining state of health, tied down to numerous helpless Family of my own, engaged for the ill fated Estates of two deceased Friends and their worse fated Posterity; I am afraid I cannot act in the Trust your

³²⁷John Brown, Jr. to WP, 30 March 1779, PP-DM, 5QQ 1.

³²⁸WP to John Brown, Jr., [March 1780], PP-LC, 1055. Brown's father also suggested that Preston not send away his sons but suggested he continue hiring someone to teach them at home. He reminded Preston, "Your parental care for the education of your dr Children is very natural & praise worthy." Reverend John Brown, Sr., 29 May 1781, PP-DM, 5QQ 95. While these discussions went on, Preston continued to receive books at home. Granville Smith sent Preston two volumes of a "Roman History" and wrote him: "The books you mention I will procure & if it is possible to get them though such at this time are very scarce." 14 February 1780, PP-LC, 1059. Edward Johnson sent him eight newspapers and some magazines on 28 October 1779. PP-LC, 1039. William Graham wrote from Liberty Hall Academy requesting that he donate on a permanent basis a set of Fordyce's books on preaching he lent earlier. 2 August 1780, PP-LC, 1082.

³²⁹John Breckinridge to WP, 22 April 1781, PP-DM, 5QQ 94.

good Brother and My Friend was pleased to repose in me.³³⁰

Preston must have looked back on the years of the Revolution with mixed feelings. He could be satisfied about the progress made in his own business, land, and family affairs. But he had only been able to help the revolutionary cause against the Loyalists, Indians, and English in a very limited way. The fact that the Loyalists had not been able to more openly support the English in Montgomery County in contrast to the large organized effort in the Carolinas and Georgia was an achievement he could be proud of. And limiting the Indians to minor skirmishes due to the efforts put up by his militiamen relieved the rest of Virginia of a major defensive problem. But in an overall sense, he could not claim any major credit for the war's outcome. For the remaining eighteen months of his life, he would continue to focus on the same basic themes which had dominated his life during the Revolution--public affairs, Indians, business, and family.

Founder (1782-1783)

The pattern of William Preston's life did not change markedly after the conclusion of the American Revolution. He spent the remaining months of his life preparing for attacks from hostile Indians, handling responsibilities as a county leader in a primitive frontier area, managing his personal business affairs, and watching over the development of a large family. By the time of his death in June, 1783, he had successfully served as founder of a family prepared to continue his strong leadership tradition.

The year 1782 began traumatically for Preston. In late February his daughter Ann died at the age of thirteen.³³¹ Colonel Mart Armstrong recalled a son who died when only four, who "I almost Doated on" but he reminded him that Ann was now in heaven where "all tears are Wiped from their Eyes."³³² Reverend John Brown reminded him that he still had a "loving wife & and affectionate mother" to watch the remaining children, "for if you ballance your comforts with your afflictions the former will out weigh the Latter." But he understood his brother-in-law's pain and spoke of his "tender sympathy" in "all your troubles."³³³ Life went on and Preston told his sister Letitia that he "felt the stroke without repining." Ann probably died from smallpox because Preston soon was to have his sons inoculated against this dread disease.³³⁴ It is remarkable that out of his twelve children, only one did not reach adulthood at a time when infant and adolescent mortality

³³⁰WP to Thomas Lewis, 29 September 1781, PP-VHS, Mss2 P9265b.

³³¹Preston Family Bible Records, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1.

³³²Colonel Mart Armstrong to WP, 7 March 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 105.

³³³Reverend John Brown to WP, 7 March 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 106.

³³⁴WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 27 March 1782, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:105. Preston waited patiently one month after sending his sons for inoculation for their return home. WP to Colonel Davies, 26 April 1782, *Calendar of State Papers*, III:140.

rates were very high.³³⁵

In the middle of his daughter's illness, reports came to Preston from the lower settlements on the Clinch River about two men being killed by Indians and three others missing.³³⁶ The war had not really ended for the frontier despite the English defeat at Yorktown. And as was the case earlier, he had problems calling men into service to help defend these settlements.³³⁷ The spring did not bring improved conditions for with better weather the Indians again attacked settlements on the lower Clinch River area, scalping and taking prisoners. Preston appealed to the new governor, Benjamin Harrison, for ammunition and militia as more alarming reports arrived.³³⁸ Some of the attacks raised in Preston's mind another suspicion because four of the five attacks were against the homes of militia officers leading him to speculate that they were "conducted by Tories." In brief the situation in Southwest Virginia had not changed. With no public credit and many of the population disaffected, both supplies and men were difficult to come by. Preston wrote of his situation as "beyond description."³³⁹ Montgomery County was in disarray and Preston asked Harrison to send commissions to fill vacancies among the county justices for a full court would "be extremely useful for keeping good order in this frontier county to which many disorderly People Resort from different parts of this State as well as the Southern states."³⁴⁰

³³⁵The Preston family had very strong genes. William Preston's parents had only one child not survive into adulthood--a strength shared by his sisters. Letitia lost only one of six children. Three of Margaret's eleven children died before adulthood. All of Ann's six children and Mary's five children became adults. Thirty-five out of forty grandchildren of William Preston's parents made it into adulthood with thirty-three of them getting married.

³³⁶Thomas Martin to WP, 31 January 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 104.

³³⁷Colonel William Davies wrote Preston on 5 April 1782 that he was surprised at the constant number of commissions needed for officers: "one would think the officers were all deserting the Service of their country, or that an uncommon mortality raged among them." "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 115-6.

³³⁸WP to Governor Benjamin Harrison, 10 April 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 107 and Calendar of State Papers, III:126-7.

³³⁹WP to [Governor Benjamin Harrison], 26 April 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 108 and Calendar of State Papers, III:139-40; WP to Colonel Davies, 26 April 1782, ibid., III:140. Preston and his colleagues on the county court continued to treat former Loyalists with lenience even though reports continued to persist that they were attacking the winners. The court heard Dr. William Smith, a physician who "inadvertently joined the enemy" in trying to get back to his native Scotland during the Revolution. He "never took up arms or committed any hostile Act" and had now returned to Montgomery County where he originally lived. Based on his inoffensive conduct and his desire to be a "good Citizen," they agreed to give him back his citizenship after he took the oath of allegiance to Virginia. 2 July 1782, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:344. In another case, Mart Armstrong asked Preston to be lenient with Timothy Murphy, an American who became a British soldier. Recently he had been robbed of a slave on the basis of his stand during the Revolution which Armstrong did not think was fair since "his Caricature is good" now. Armstrong described those who robbed him as "Villains . . . for we have too many such Thundering People." Mart Armstrong to WP, 2 November 1782, Preston Family Papers, Preston Davie Collection, VHS.

³⁴⁰WP to Governor Harrison, 15 March 1782, "Branch Papers," 333-4 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 114-5. On 26 December 1782 Preston sent Harrison recommendations for justices. "Preston Papers"-

The state government responded initially by authorizing the release of ammunition and giving Preston the right to impress provisions.³⁴¹ Harrison also requested that Preston and his fellow field officers from both Montgomery and Washington Counties meet to develop a strategy which would utilize two hundred militiamen. The governor did not want them stationed at forts which he called "extremely expensive and answers no good purpose." Instead, they should be "constantly ranging" avoiding at all costs offensive operations "til the country is in better circumstances." He also placed Preston in command based on "his long experience and the advantages arising from an undivided command."³⁴² At the meeting on July 2 he declined the appointment because the assembled group felt he should not be in charge. When the officers met on July 2, they recommended that Preston not be in charge and as a result he declined the appointment. Perhaps the fact that Preston lived 180 miles from the scene of most of the difficulties was a factor in the position taken by the other officers. But they followed Harrison's advice in all other respects although they were unable to raise a full complement of men.³⁴³ Fortunately during the summer Indian attacks decreased in Southwest Virginia.³⁴⁴

VMHB, 350-1.

³⁴¹Governor Harrison to WP, 4 May 1782, Calendar of State Papers, III:203-4; John Watkins to WP, 5 May 1782, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 241.

³⁴²Colonel Sampson Mathews to WP, 5 May 1782, "Branch Papers," 334-5; William Lewis to Lt. Co., Montgomery Co., 6 May 1782, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 241; William Davies to WP, 8 June 1782, PP-LC, 1141; Governor Harrison to WP, 10 June 1782, Official Letters of Governors, III:247; Governor Harrison to Commanding Officer of Washington County (Arthur Campbell), 10 June 1782, ibid., III:247-8. On 17 June 1782 Arthur Campbell wrote Preston asking when he planned to convene the meeting. "Branch Papers," 335. For an overview of the militia called and strategies involved, see Mary B. Kegley, comp., "Militia of Montgomery County. 1777-1790," typescript, 1975, VSL.

³⁴³Those attending this meeting included Preston, Walter Crockett, Joseph Cloyd, Daniel and Abraham Trigg, Arthur Campbell, and Patrick Lochart. Proceedings of the Board of Officers at Fort Chiswell, 2 July 1782, "Branch Papers," 336-8 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 242-3. After their meeting, Preston immediately sent orders to his officers raising the men from their ranks and giving them their assigned locations. WP to Colonels Crockett and Cloyd, 3 July 1782, "Branch Papers," 338-9 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 244-5. Preston informed Colonel William Davies and Governor Harrison in Richmond of their decision. They hoped they could avoid using militia from other counties due to the "enormous expense & too frequently with disorderly Behaviour on the march." He also informed Davies of his decision on not being named as the chief officer of the joint militia on the basis of the great distance. WP to Colonel William Davies and WP to Governor Harrison, 6 July 1782, Calendar of State Papers, III:209-10. Some confusion appears on who objected to Preston serving as the chief officer. The minutes of the officers' meeting indicate he voluntarily withdrew his name. However, Harrison wrote to Preston on 23 July 1782: "It is some surprise to me that Col'o Campbell should object to the militia of both Counties being under your command, the proposal came from himself that the person should command but nothing less that his being the man would content him. I shall write to him directing him to conform to the arrangement." "Branch Papers," 339 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 112-3. In Harrison's letter to Campbell, he wrote: "am a little surprized that an objection should be made to the whole being under Col Preston when I reflect who it was that proposed their being under direction of one Officer." Official Letters of Governors, III:278. Perhaps the longstanding rivalry from earlier days continued. On 15 August 1782 the state accepted Preston's refusal. William Davies to WP, 15 August 1782, "Branch Papers," 339-40 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 245-6. Walter Crockett reported to Preston on 17 August 1782 that only six men appeared for one tour of duty headed for the Clinch River. Crockett decided to threaten the men that if they did not join his

Further west in the Kentucky and Ohio regions the situation worsened as the northern Indians intensified their efforts.³⁴⁵ Preston and Arthur Campbell agreed to cooperate with Colonel William Christian from Kentucky to meet the problem, but Virginia state officials refused to accept the plan because of the approach of winter and the great expense.³⁴⁶ But the state authorities did ask Preston to order out sixty-four Montgomery County men to be placed under the command of George Rogers Clark who was preparing to attack Shawnee towns in Ohio and this while sporadic raids continued to force some settlers to flee from exposed positions in the county.³⁴⁷ Fortunately Clark's expedition was successful and this brought at least a temporary quiet to the frontier.³⁴⁸

Despite Indian problems settlers continued to move into Southwest Virginia and as a result, county surveyor Preston and his assistant surveyors returned to work in October, 1782 renewing an income he had been without for five years. They surveyed 267 separate locations by the end of the year and another 124 sites during the first six months of 1783. By this time, Preston's health prevented him from personally working in the field, but assistant surveyors Granville Smith, Hugh Fulton, John Breckinridge, David McGavock, and James Newell concentrated their efforts on land next to Walker's, Tom's, Meadow, and Plumb Creeks (all tributaries of the New River), on the North Fork of the Holston River, and on the South Fork of Reed Creek.³⁴⁹ He also kept very busy answering

militia they would be sent to the Continental Army instead. Preston Family Papers, Preston Davie Collection, VHS. These problems persisted at the end of the year when Crockett's men would not go out due to a lack of salt and their unwillingness to live for three weeks without proper provisions. Walter Crockett to WP, 9 November 1782, "Branch Papers," 342 and "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 347-8.

³⁴⁴WP to Governor Harrison, 6 July 1782, Calendar of State Papers, III:207-8 and Colonel Arthur Campbell to Colonel William Davies, 10 July 1782, ibid., III:213.

³⁴⁵Illustrating the feeling that the war was still being fought, on 1 January 1782 John Floyd wrote Preston from Kentucky: "I have lately had a confirmation of the glorious success of the American army at York, please therefore to accept of my hearty congratulations on that head. I hope the effects of it will even reach to miserable Kentucky." DM, 17CC, 139-41. But as late as 28 March 1783 Floyd wrote Preston: "Now I do not expect that pleasure till the War is ended, if ever I should survive that time." DM, 17CC 144-9.

³⁴⁶Colonel William Christian to Governor Harrison, 28 September 1782, Calendar of State Papers, III:332; Governor Harrison to Colonel William Christian, 9 October 1782, Official Letters of Governors, III:337-8.

³⁴⁷William Davies to WP, 12 October 1782, "Branch Papers," 341-2. From the front, Alexander Breckinridge kept Preston informed of developments in Kentucky. On 21 October 1782 he reported that Clark would set out against the Shawnees the next day with 1,000 men. PP-DM, 5QQ 112. Joseph Cloyd to WP, 19 October 1782, PP-VHS.

³⁴⁸Clark destroyed Chillicothe on November 10 and went on to destroy other Shawnee towns in the Ohio region.

³⁴⁹Montgomery County Record of Plotts, A, 1773-1782, VSL, 33:248-300; ibid., B, 1782-83, 3:1-122. In January, 1783 Preston is listed by himself without an assistant surveyor's name for eight surveys in addition to the 126 cited. On 17 January 1783 he carried out five surveys, on 18 January one survey, and 26 January three surveys. With the exception of one survey, they were all done on branches of the New River such as Meadow Creek, Crab Creek, and Plumb Creek. Montgomery County Record of Plotts, A, 1773-1782, ibid., 3:80.

questions about previous surveys and dealing with requests for lands.³⁵⁰ Some of the best news he received on land issues came from Dr. Thomas Walker, leader of the Loyal Land Company, who informed him in May, 1783 that the Virginia Court of Appeals finally confirmed in May, 1783 all of the company's surveys as well as those of the Greenbrier Company.³⁵¹ Preston had surveyed these lands for Walker before the Revolution and this represented a major victory for both men.

Although little evidence exists on Preston's personal business activities during this period, hemp continued to provide a major part of his income as did his distillery operation. In fact, he could not produce enough whiskey to meet the demand and he began to purchase it elsewhere to meet all of his orders.³⁵² In order to help increase the supply, he entered into a new business of selling stills to other possible producers.³⁵³

By 1782 when the state required each county to assess property and land ownership of all citizens, Preston was the wealthiest man in Montgomery County and probably in Southwest Virginia. In Montgomery County alone he owned 34 slaves, 36 horses, 82 cattle, and 7,036 acres. While others came close to him in some of these categories, no one even approached his overall wealth. Out of 1,339 free males over twenty-one years of age, only 153 individuals owned the 565 slaves in the 1782 report. Sixty of the slave holders owned only one slave. William Christian with 33 slaves came closest to Preston's 34. But Christian owned only 22 horses, 30 cattle, and 1,900 acres. William Ingles also came close in two categories to Preston's holdings with 51 horses compared to 36 for Preston, 67 cattle compared to Preston's 82, but he owned far less land with only 907 acres. Charles Devereaux owned the third highest number of slaves with 13 but he owned only 13 horses and 23 cattle. Others with large holdings, not compared to Preston but to their fellow citizens, included James Moore with 40 horses and 28 cattle, but no slaves; Skidmore Muncey with 51 horses and 21 cattle, but no slaves; and George Reeves with 3 slaves, 40 horses, and 18 cattle.³⁵⁴ Preston was in a category by himself,

³⁵⁰Examples would be William Christian to WP, 7 February 1782, Preston Family Papers, Preston Davie Collection, VHS; Thomas Adams to WP, 19 June 1782, *ibid.*; Richard Madison to WP, 1 August 1782, *ibid.*; WP to James Muldrock, 19 August 1782, *ibid.*

³⁵¹On 21 August 1782 Walker asked Preston to send all the papers he could find related to the Loyal Land Company's affairs including a copy of surveys, field books, and plotts. PP-DM, 5QQ 109. On 9 May 1783 Walker informed Preston of the successful ruling in the Company's favor. He gave Preston information for the settlers on land costs. PP-DM, 5QQ 118. Preston and William Thompson, executors of the Patton estate, continued to argue with North Carolina over lands Patton surveyed in territory that had become theirs as a result of negotiations. PP-LC, 1137-8; Isaac Shelby to WP, 25 May 1782, Preston Family Papers, Gray Collection, FC.

³⁵²In contrast to earlier periods when source material is abundant in regard to his businesses, little exists for 1782-3. An account of hemp by Preston, 1782-3, appears in very tattered condition in PP-LC, 1260. Preston asked his sister, Letitia, for fifty gallons of whiskey since he owed some to tavern keepers "who are in great want of it." 8 February 1783, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:118.

³⁵³James Thompson to WP, 2 June 1782, Preston Family Papers, Preston Davie Collection, VHS; Andrew Boyd to [WP], 19 October 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 111. In April, 1783 James Thompson paid Preston , 78.18.0 for a 117 gallon still and Andrew Boyd purchased a 111 gallon still for , 74.2.0. PP-LC, 1209.

³⁵⁴Sources for his holdings include WP Listing of Property, 10 April 1782, Montgomery County Records, Miscl. Records, Correspondence and personal papers, VSL, Folder O; Montgomery County Land

particularly if you add the 13,477 acres he held elsewhere.³⁵⁵

Despite Preston's involvement in business and public affairs in this period, he did not neglect his large family. Education for his children and for other relatives remained important.³⁵⁶ He helped local schoolmasters get necessary books, and he continued to lend books from his own library to friends and neighbors.³⁵⁷ Education was important if one was to get ahead in the world and he set an example for others, not only through his support but through his own intellectual interests. He read widely and was fascinated with science. Before sending Thomas Jefferson an animal's tooth he had found, Arthur Campbell sent it to Preston for his comments.³⁵⁸ William Preston was an exceptional person.

But he was not a well man and in late 1782 his health began to deteriorate when he found himself "incapable of doing business."³⁵⁹ Early in the new year he experienced a small recovery but immediately found himself dealing with the tension associated with rumors of Indian attacks which certainly did nothing to help his fragile health.³⁶⁰ In

Tax Books, 1782-1806A, VSL, Reel 19; Mary B. Kegley, comp., "Tax List of Montgomery County. 1782," typescript, located at VSL and VPI, 1974; Evans, "Trouble in Backcountry," 209. In 1783 his listing of property remained close to the same with 34 slaves, 40 horses, and 69 cattle. Montgomery County Records, Misc. Records, Correspondence and personal papers, VSL, Folder O.

³⁵⁵His Montgomery County holdings represented only 34% of his total landholdings when he died one year later with 20,513 acres. See Appendix E.

³⁵⁶John Madison served as the teacher of his older sons. John Brown, Jr. to WP, 30 January 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 103. Brown's father, the Reverend John Brown, tried to convince Preston to send his two older boys, Francis and John, to a new school at the New Providence meeting house being taught by a nineteen year old man from Pennsylvania "who understands the latin & greek well." Since the school could take more students, he asked for Preston's help in promotion. Reverend John Brown to [WP], 28 January 1783, PP-DM, 5QQ 113.

³⁵⁷Reverend John Brown asked if Preston could send books to his new school such as copies of "Rudiman's Gramers . . . Cordarys & Esop's & Erasmus's." Reverend John Brown to [WP], 28 January 1783, PP-DM, 5QQ 113. Mart Armstrong thanks him for sending two books and "for being So perticular as to remember my desire to read Them, & Shall be carefull that they receive no abuse." Colonel Mart Armstrong to WP, 7 March 1782, PP-DM, 5QQ 105.

³⁵⁸Campbell reported to Jefferson on 29 November 1782: "At first sight, before I told him [William Preston] where it was found, he give it as his opinion that it was of the same animal as those found near the Ohio, a tooth of which he had obtained above 30 years ago and thinks it was sent to England." A Dr. Lee told Campbell the tooth belonged to a carnivorous animal. Slaves on his plantation were sure it was from an elephant. As if to confirm this story, another individual had recently returned from Indian captivity west of the Missouri and reported that Indians described animals they had seen which seemed like elephants to him. Arthur Campbell to Thomas Jefferson, 29 November 1782, *Jefferson Papers*, 6:208. Preston also had an interest in geometry as seen in the geometry propositions he wrote in a memorandum book along with some geometric figures. 1782 Memo Book, PP-LC, 1171.

³⁵⁹WP to William Anderson, 20 December 1782, Stuart Family Papers, VHS, Mss1 St9102 d163, Section 10. William Christian needed him to help with an estate settlement but discouraged him from traveling if it would endanger his health which was still bad at that time. William Christian to WP, 24 and 31 January 1783, PP-LC, 1183, 1188.

³⁶⁰Rev. John Brown to [WP], 28 January 1783, PP-DM, 5QQ 113. James Moore who lived in Abbs

March he asked a doctor to give him purges because his legs and feet swelled up "like posts" each evening and were so "inflamed" that "one might see their face in them. . . ." He pled with his sister, Letitia, to have William Norvell bring an ounce of "Jalap" since his efforts to get medicine from Dr. Thomas Lloyd had failed. As his pain intensified, he lashed out at his old friend Lloyd, calling him a "demented savage" and

a wretch . . . insensible of the feelings of humanity. Gratitude or any other Passion that ought to warm or actuate the human heart, he has paid to no regard to my application, nor taken any Notice of my Letter or distress, for which he does not deserve a Place in any mans breast or even in Society itself.

He hoped warmer weather would bring relief from pain and allow him to travel.³⁶¹ Friends wrote him with their analyses of his illness. John Floyd felt a "long cold disagreeable ride to Save an Estate" caused it along with being

loaded with cares & business, not of your own family, but of those who have less to do than yourself, & some of whom I fear will not think themselves under any obligation to you for shortening your Days in their service.³⁶²

James Robertson suggested he put "Bark of (Prickley Ash)" into water or spirits to soak for several days. If in wine, he should drink three glasses each day, or "plentifully" if in water. Some of the bark should then be rubbed where the pain occurred.³⁶³ And to make matters worse he learned in the late spring that his friend and protege, John Floyd, had

Valley by Clinch River wrote Preston on 21 February 1783 reporting on signs of Indians by the Sandy River and pleading for assistance to keep residents from moving. "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 29-30. Inhabitants on Clinch River, Blue Stone, and down the New River so feared Indian attacks that they began to move back into the interior. WP to Governor Harrison, 22 February 1783, Calendar of State Papers, III:445.

³⁶¹WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 2 and 4 March 1783, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:124-5. An account from chemists/druggists Townsend & Speakman on 18 March 1783 shows a bill of ,3.9.6 for such items as orange peel, tartar emetic, tincture, and colomel. PP-LC, 1200. Jalap was a purgative drug obtained from the Mexican climbing plant or other convolvulaceous plants with the active ingredient being the resin in the tubers. OED, VIII:182. Preston wrote John Brown on 7 March 1783 that "the infirm state of my health prevents me from going down." He pled with Brown to visit him in person rather than through letters: "The weather will probably be very good, you will have an agreeable companion, and the best stages on the road, and if other charms fail, you will have my sorrel to ride, so that the journey will be pleasant." PP-LC, 1194.

³⁶²In contrast, Floyd told of bringing his own affairs into a "Small Compass in order to spend more of my time at home: & I have in some measure effected my purpose by disposing of my right to a large Quantity of Land which I am not even oblinded to show." John Floyd to WP, 28 March 1783, DM, 17CC 144-9.

³⁶³This treatment had worked on one of his slaves who had a knee swell to the size of a horse's head. After using this remedy for one month, she recovered with all of the pain gone. James Robertson to WP, 10 April 1783, PP-DM, 5QQ 117. Perhaps he did not have to try this newest remedy, because on 6 April 1783 James Norvell reported that Preston's boys told him their father was better. James Norvell to WP, 6 April 1783, Breckinridge Family Papers, Roanoke Valley Historical Society as filmed by UVA. "Prickley ash" could be any of several North American shrubs or trees whose aromatic bark was used medicinally. OED, XII:461.

been killed by Indians in Kentucky. It was reported by his daughter Letitia that he "was never seen to smile afterwards."³⁶⁴

With better weather the Indians renewed their attacks on Walker's Creek and Clinch River killing two men and taking the family of one of the men as prisoners.³⁶⁵ This resulted in Governor Harrison authorizing an ill Preston to call out militiamen to help frontier settlers.³⁶⁶ In his last written appeal to his neighbors, Preston recommended:

Under these Circumstances I would earnestly recommend it to every man who can Spare any Provisions and that hath the least remaining Spark of humanity to part with them for the Support of the Men who goes out to protect our Friends and Neighbours, and to keep the Evils of Murder, Captivity & Rapine, as far from our own families as possible. Good Policy as well as a proper feeling for the Distresses of others will dictate this Measure.

He promised that the government would pay for any provisions and urged them to avoid having the impressment system used since it would represent a "stain" on their reputations.³⁶⁷ He and Arthur Campbell were also directed to develop a plan of defense and raise 600 men to implement it.³⁶⁸

But Preston did not have much time left to work on the defense of his beloved Southwest Virginia. On June 27, 1783, General Evan Shelby spent the evening with his friend. The next morning they traveled three miles by horseback with Preston's son, John, to attend a regimental muster at Michael Price's home--the same Price whose loyalty to the American cause had been questioned throughout the Revolution. After several hours of military activity on the field under very hot conditions, William Preston beckoned for John to come, complaining of a pain in his head and desiring to lie down on Price's bed. After a short time, he asked his son to help him get on a horse so he could go home, but when the horse was brought, he could not put his foot in the stirrup and would have fallen down if it had not been for his son's help. They placed him on the bed again. Letitia, his daughter, described what happened next:

By this time he had lost his speech, but he took his son's hand, rolled up his shirt sleeve and made a sign for his son to bleed him. This, General [John] Preston could not do. Mrs. Preston was sent for and immediately reached the place. Col. Preston's reason had not been staggered in this conflict - he caught his wife's hand, kissed it - shed tears - and made a motion to be bled. This could not be effected

³⁶⁴LPF Letter. Letitia later married John Floyd's son.

³⁶⁵WP to Governor Harrison, 5 May 1783, Calendar of State Papers, III:479.

³⁶⁶Harrison wrote Arthur Campbell with these plans but disapproved his proposal to build a fort due to a lack of money in the state treasury. 6 March 1783, Arthur Campbell Papers, FC, Mss. AC187. Folder 3.

³⁶⁷WP to Commissary Appointed to Provide for the Troops, 23 March 1783, Nita Blincoe Collection, VSL, 21373.

³⁶⁸William Davies to WP, 8 June 1783, "Preston Papers"-VMHB, 31.

from consternation and ignorance. Soon after the stertorous breathing of apoplexy came on and about midnight he breathed his last.³⁶⁹

Such was the death of William Preston, born in Ireland in modest circumstances, he who had in his lifetime served Virginia and the new nation well and in the process had accumulated substantial wealth and left a large and flourishing family that included his pregnant wife Susanna and ten children.³⁷⁰ Preston's nephew John Breckinridge certainly expressed the distress of most people when he said that this "Shock I have been for some time preparing myself to receive, & after all my fortitude find the separation almost insupportable. The Subject is really too gloomy to think seriously on."³⁷¹

William Preston died a very wealthy man.³⁷² His estate included a total of 20,513 acres spread throughout southwest Virginia in Botetourt and Montgomery Counties and in Kentucky, at least \$7,562 worth of personal property, and 42 slaves, 88 cattle, 91 hogs, 36 horses, 24 sheep, and a library of 273 volumes. Various other items such as farming utensils, the distillery, blacksmith's tools, a silver watch, a small sword, and household furniture made up the rest of the estate.³⁷³

As with most estates in Virginia, decades passed before all claims against the estate were settled and the family could finally divide the unapportioned property.³⁷⁴ In

³⁶⁹LPF Letter. "Apoplexy" was a malady which came on very suddenly which would arrest more or less completely the powers of sense and motion. It was usually caused by an effusion of blood or serum in the brain preceded by giddiness or partial loss of muscular powers. Today it might be similar to a stroke. OED, I:555.

³⁷⁰Margaret Brown Preston was born on 23 February 1784 at Smithfield. Dorman, Prestons, 72.

³⁷¹John Breckinridge to Letitia Breckinridge, 12 July 1783, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:142. Others wrote with their similar feelings. Felix Gilbert lamented his death "as I think every good person who had the pleasure of his acquaintance do." Felix Gilbert to John Madison, 20 August 1783, Breckinridge Family Papers, Roanoke Valley Historical Society as filmed by UVA. Years later James Robertson wrote to John Preston: "The Good Man your Father go through [public position] with as few aspersion as any other Man I ever was acquainted with. Though we know he had Enemy's his Memory ought to be clear to almost every Man that was acquainted with Him, and to my Self in a Peticular Manner, I wish it may ever be in my power to retaliate any Favour to any of his Posterity for the many unasked ones he has done for me." 4 April 1793, Preston Papers, Preston Davie Collection, VHS.

³⁷²The court appointed John and Francis Preston, John Brown, and one year later, John Breckinridge, to serve as executors of the estate. PP-LC, 1233. On 5 August 1783 they put up ,40,000 bond on the estate. Campbell-Preston-Floyd Family Papers, LC, 1:181.

³⁷³See "1783" in Appendix E for a listing of the properties and who would get each piece and Appendix F for a listing of what each family member would get according to the 1777 will and 1781 codicil. The listing of landholdings can be found in Preston Family Papers, VPI, 1:4-5 and "Journal of Francis Preston," 1833, Preston Family Papers, Gray Collection, FC. Additional appraisers were added to assess his estate on 2 February 1790 and on the same day the estate appraisal came back. Montgomery County Order Book 3, 1778-1780, VSL, 20:101, 106.

³⁷⁴Examples of claims against Preston's estate can be seen in PP-LC, 1235, 1239, 1241, 1243-4, 1258, 1261, 1272, 1275, 1284, 1288, 1291-3, 1302-3, 1308, 1323, 1325, 1328, 1338, 1452, 1563, 1580, 1665, 1834, 2460, 3437; Miscl. Montgomery County Courthouse Records, Christiansburg, Virginia, Folders 192, 247, 635-7, 723; Breckinridge Papers, LC, 2:280, 289, 312; Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353; Preston

fact, the disputes within the family grew so intense that Susanna Preston called the family together at Smithfield in 1803 to work out a compromise settlement.³⁷⁵ Even into the 1830s the estate was still being challenged but one never reads of any complaints about a lack of money to pay the various claims.³⁷⁶ As his son Francis later wrote, his father died "rich and greatly esteemed."³⁷⁷ While her family eventually moved to the various properties they inherited, Susanna Preston remained at Smithfield where she watched over the development of her children, many of whom were still very young including a newborn baby. She continued to help her son, James, manage the Smithfield operation. On June 9, 1823 she died, almost forty years after her husband's death, and was buried, according to her will, in the family plot near Smithfield.³⁷⁸

The story of William Preston and his family is a remarkable one. The Prestons arrived in Southwest Virginia--one of the roughest frontiers in the colonial period--directly from Ireland where their Scottish ancestors had settled decades before. The frontier they found in Virginia contained many contrasts. Most of their neighbors were hardworking, illiterate, uncultured people just trying to eke out an existence during a time of persistent Indian attacks. But amidst this chaos, some families managed to break from the pattern and form themselves into an elite which dominated the economic, political, military, and religious life of the community. The William Preston family was the exemplar of this group.

William Preston gained this status through several means. Certainly family ties to important frontier families such as the Pattons, Lewis's, and Breckinridges made it easier for him to attain this status. His close connections with his uncle, James Patton, who dominated that area before he died, provided him with a role model. Not only did he duplicate his uncle's achievements, but he even surpassed his influence. Patton enabled him to begin building his land fortune and to secure political positions at an early age. But Preston himself had to show initiative in rising above the rest of his neighbors. Through his family connections which tied him into other influential families, he served in many appointed and elected positions on the county level. He further gained the respect of his neighbors through active military service. Their respect for him resulted in his election to the House of Burgesses, a position he did not seem to enjoy because it took him away from local politics where, for a man of Preston's interests, the action was. As he gained in stature, Virginia looked to him as the key leader in establishing three new counties and

Family Papers, VPI, 1:4; Preston Family Papers, VHS, Mss19267a39; Preston Family Papers, VPI, Box 1; Botetourt County Deed Book 4, 1788-1793, VSL, 2:477, 486-7, 501-4; Preston Family Papers, Joyes Collection, FC, Mss. AP937j, Folder 3, 54, 56; Montgomery County Deed Book C, 1797-1803, VSL, 2:548-9.

³⁷⁵"Journal of Francis Preston," 1833, Preston Family Papers, Gray Collection, FC. Some of the disputes revolved around who would get which lands and whether the education obligations under the original will had been fulfilled. The outcome of these arguments has not been found.

³⁷⁶Deposition of William Pope, 10 April 1831, Taylor Family Papers, FC, Mss. AT238b:16.

³⁷⁷"Journal of Francis Preston."

³⁷⁸PP-LC, 3437; Susanna Preston Will, 10 December 1817, Preston Papers, VPI, Set I, Folder 6.

named him to virtually every available position of standing. Through this leadership, Preston served as a formidable force in bringing a sense of order and decency to the frontier through his own personal example. As the colonel of these new counties, he bore responsibility for raising militiamen and coordinating the fight against the Indians who continually threatened the frontiersmen. Throughout his life, Preston faced the same dilemmas his militiamen faced--to stay home in order to plant and harvest crops and protect one's family against Indian attack or to participate in the broader colonial effort to keep the Indians in check. Preston and his family stayed put serving as an example for others not to move. And he generally directed military operations from his home rather than going into the field. With a few exceptions, his leadership resulted in only a few casualties and the Indians were never able to mount a large, sustained attack against any county where Preston served as the militia leader. The loss of even a few families was terrible, but considering the potential, Preston was definitely a successful leader in minimizing the losses. On the other hand, the perception of the colonists was that they faced imminent attack from Indians almost continually, so the stabilizing influence of a William Preston still living on the frontier with his own family facing the same dangers helped create a more secure atmosphere.

The one position which gave him the greatest satisfaction and status was that of county surveyor. In this position people had to get along with him or face problems getting lands. And he could also seek out the best lands for his own holdings. In this capacity, he played a crucial role in the distribution of lands to westward moving patterns. Many of his own family members eventually joined that movement carrying with them the same leadership skills they observed in their father. He also built up several very successful businesses during his lifetime, especially in the growth of hemp and the production of whiskey, from which he profited greatly during the Revolution.

The Revolution represented the most difficult time of his life. In failing health and confronted by large numbers of Loyalists and Indians, he only helped Virginia's efforts in the war to a limited degree. By preventing the Loyalists and Indians from becoming more active and organized, he enabled Virginia to focus its energies elsewhere. By keeping the Lead Mines near Fort Chiswell out of the hands of his opponents, he also kept open this major supply of ammunition to the entire American cause. His moderate approach toward the Loyalists enabled that area to have a quicker reconciliation process after the Revolution than if he had pursued harsher measures. But his efforts at helping the cause in a broader sense resulted in a failure to recruit many men to fight outside his county and in skirmishes of little consequence to the overall results.

William Preston's greatest success resided in his own family. In the middle of a raw frontier, besieged on every hand by attacks from fellow neighbors and Indians, he created an oasis of culture and literacy for the eleven children born during his lifetime and the one who came after he died. He built a beautiful home more reminiscent of a Williamsburg home rather than the more typical rough frontier dwellings. The home was furnished with items revealing a culture more similar to wealthy families in eastern Virginia. He carefully built a large library comparable to elite Tidewater plantation families constituting 273 volumes at his death. And these books served as more than decoration. He borrowed, discussed, and loaned books in his own personal pursuit of knowledge. Education became one of his highest priorities, not only with his own children, but with his nieces and nephews. He bought indentured servants to teach his

own children and he paid for relatives who could not afford the costs to attend colleges like William and Mary. The cultural milieu developed with his family stood as a symbol to the entire frontier of his elite status. But he also passed back to his community a devoted dedication to public service.

Of greatest long range significance to the country is the legacy of public service he passed on to his children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews matched by few families. Through them he made his greatest contribution to the country.³⁷⁹ Of his eleven surviving children, six either served themselves or married someone who was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates or Senate. His son, John, became Treasurer of Virginia. Another son, James Patton, became Governor of Virginia in 1816 and was honored with the naming of Preston County, Virginia after him. And his female offspring seemed to marry individuals who also served the public.³⁸⁰ His daughter, Letitia, married John Floyd who also served as governor of Virginia.³⁸¹ As his family spread across the United States, twenty-five of his grandchildren (or male in-laws) served in a state legislature including Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Ten were elected to either the United States House of Representatives or Senate. Three served as state governors in South Carolina and Virginia. Two were appointed as United States ambassadors overseas. William Ballard Preston was appointed as Secretary of the Navy and John Buchanan Floyd became Secretary of War in the Buchanan administration. The Preston family carried a strong military tradition during these years with almost every individual holding rank as an officer in the United States or Confederate States of America Armies. Another grandchild became President of the University of Mississippi. Preston's great-grandchildren continued the family tradition with eight receiving election to a state legislature, five to the United States Congress, two as state governors in California and Maryland, three ambassadors, and a great-granddaughter married John Fremont, California conqueror and nominee of the Radical Republicans for United States President. Another great-grandson became President of Louisiana State University. His nephews and nieces did not maintain quite the same level as his own family, but many of them also achieved prominence. Seven were elected to state legislatures, four to the United States Congress, two as governors, and one was appointed as a United States ambassador. John Breckinridge became Attorney General of the United States and Breckinridge County, Kentucky was named in his honor. Howard County, Missouri was named after another great nephew, John Howard. Some of his grand nieces and nephews also achieved prominence by themselves or through marriage. Letitia Preston Breckinridge married Peter Buell Porter who became a leader of the "war hawks" in Congress and served as United States Secretary of War. John Cabell Breckinridge served as Vice President of the United States and presidential candidate for the Southern Democrats, later serving as Secretary of War for the Confederacy. Benjamin Grady

³⁷⁹See Appendix G for a summary of achievements by his family.

³⁸⁰Many of the following examples represent male in-laws at a time when females could not achieve any prominence on their own.

³⁸¹Some of these individuals are counted more than once if they served both in the Virginia legislature and the United States Congress.

Brown ran for Vice President on a ticket headed by Horace Greely. And Francis Preston Blair, owner of Blair House in Washington, D.C., was nominated for Vice President of the United States by the Democratic Party.³⁸²

William Preston and his family represent the positive accomplishments one family can achieve if provided with the proper environment and encouragement. As founder of this family, William Preston provided his descendents with a model of not only how to achieve wealth and status but how to serve both community and country.

APPENDIX E: Personal Land Dealings of William Preston

The following tables attempt to trace the personal land dealings of William Preston during his lifetime. The chart is based upon more over 210 separate references to land records found in the following sources:

Augusta County Deed Books, VSL
Augusta County Order Books, VSL
Augusta County Surveyors Record, VSL
Augusta County Will Books, VSL
Botetourt County Deed Books, VSL
Botetourt County Order Books, VSL
Breckinridge Family Papers of Grove Hill, UVA
Chalkley, Lyman, Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1966 originally published in 1912)
Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI
French and Indian War Bounty Land Certificates, VSL
ed. Hillman, Benjamin J., Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, VI (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1966)
Keley, F. B., Kegley's Virginia Frontier (Roanoke: The Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938)
Kegley, Mary B., Tax List of Montgomery County. 1782 (Roanoke: Copy Cat, typescript, 1974 in VSL)
Montgomery County Deed Books, VSL
Montgomery County Miscl. Records, Correspondence and Personal Papers, VSL
Montgomery County Order Books, VSL
Montgomery County Record of Plotts, VSL
Personal Papers, 28161, VSL
Preston Family Papers, UVA
Preston Family Papers, VPI
Preston Family Papers, Didier Collection, VPI
Preston Family Papers, Joyes Collection, The Filson Club
PP-LC

³⁸²The most recent example of a descendent holding public office was Blair Lee, Governor of Maryland, who took the place of Marvin Mandel in 1977.

PP-PDC-VHS

Preston-Radford Papers, UVA

Robert Preston Family Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary

Virginia Carrington Scrapbook, Preston Papers, LC

Virginia Land Office Grants, VSL

Virginia Land Office Patents, VSL

At four points during Preston's lifetime or upon his death, lists of his properties can be found which are good reference points for assessing his landholdings. In the following tables, these will be noted as follows:

"1759" -"William Preston's Sheriff's Account with John Bowyer for 1758," PP-LC, 3:287

"1770" -"William Preston's Quit Rents to James McGavock, Sheriff of Augusta County," in several sources including PP-LC, 4:696; PP-PDC-VHS, Mss1P9267a33; Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI, 1

"1777 will" - "William Preston Will, 03-29-1777," Preston Family Papers, Set I, Box 4, Folder 6, VPI; PP-PDC-VHS, Mss1P9267b17

"1781 codicil"- "Codicil to William Preston Will, 02-14-1781," Ibid.

"1783 estate" - "Appraisal of William Preston's Estate after death on 06-28-1783," PP-PDC-VHS, Mss1P9267b12-16; Preston Family Papers, Set I, Box 1, Folder 5, VPI

The tables present a record of all land transactions involving the personal lands of Preston as compared to those he might have surveyed for the public as a county surveyor. After each purchase or grant of land which is printed in larger type, an attempt is made to trace the history of that land through Preston's life, including those given to his family in his will. Later transactions are noted in smaller type. In addition, cross references are made when land sales are made so that patterns of purchases and sales can be ascertained.

Key for Tables:

LG =Land grant be either treasury right or military land warrant

LS = Land Sale (used only for reference purposes; see date in "description" for details)

WP =William Preston

* =Although surveyed or entered by Preston or granted to him, these land were never claimed by him.

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** =Land sale by William Preston or with Susanna, his wife

=No record in Preston will nor any evidence of being sold

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Buyer/Seller</u>	<u>Description</u>
<u>Inherited from John Preston in 1748 or later years</u> (no will has been found for John Preston; however, land records indicate WP owned the following properties previously held by his father.)				
520	Inherited	1748	WP inherits from father in 1748	Great River of the Calfpasture; 1759
**	, 100	01-26-1762	WP & Susanna sell land to Mary Preston	Preceding property
215	Inherited	148	WP inherits from father in 1748	Part of 1,054 acres purchased by John Preston in 1747 on Great or West River of Calfpasture
**	, 16.5	02-27-1751	WP sells to George Campbell & Samuel Tencher	Preceding property
2675	, 13.17	12-23-1779	WP gets land grant from Patton estate as result of inheritance from father; known as Robinson's tract	John Preston as assignee of Patton of land parcel surveyed 02-28-1748 in Augusta, branch of Woods River called Peek Creek to WP; 1759; 1770; willed to William in 1777 will; in 1783 will 700 acres of this tract willed to Susanna; acreage differs by 100 acres with 1783 estate listed at 2,775 acres
		00-00-1780	Value of WP land called Robinson's Tract lowered	Ordered that this property be valued at , 5,000 and not at that returned by the assessors;

1749

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334	, 10.4	03-02-1749	WP buys from William Beverley;	John Maxwell's line; Col. Lewis' line;
**	, 60	05-31-1751	WP sells land to Alexander Waugh;	Preceding property
365	No price	03-02-1749	WP buys from William Beverley;	Beverley Manor on branch of Lewis' Creek; 1759
**	, 330 (also includes 2 other lands)	11-29-1779	WP & Susanna sell land to Peter Hanger	280 & 85 acres of above 365 acre plot sold as part of sale of 3 plots; other part of property purchase on 03-17-1773

1751

LS		02-27-1751	Land Sale	See "Inherited from John Preston in 1748 or later," , 16.5; 215 acres
LS		05-31-1751	Land Sale	See 03-02-1749; , 60; 334 acres

1752

277	, 21.0	11-17-1752	WP buys from James and Agnes Brown	Augusta County on branch of North River of Shanadoe of Thorny Branch; 1759; 1770
		11-22-1753	WP orders Silas Hart, John Malome, John Trimble, Henry Smith to:	Value improvements to this land regarding expenses and report to next Court
**	, 46	10-27-1772	WP & Susanna sell to John McDougal	Preceding property
		02-11-1773	Susanna gives up rights to this land	Confirms her agreement with Francis Smith & James Thompson

1754

400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry	Head of Pott's Creek
400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry	Large bottom on Pott's Creek above Potts' improvement

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400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry formerly for Tobias Bright	Craig's Creek
400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry	Forks of Tom's Creek
400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry	Forks of Tom's Creek; two of these entries on same day
400*	Entry	04-14-1754	WP land entry	Next large bottom above Col. Patton's uppermost survey on Craig's Creek
626#	,215	09-26-1754	WP buys from James Davis	Augusta County on Catawbo Creek; see 08-30-1770 when Davis' wife verifies sale; 1759; 1770
		08-30-1770	Court verifies purchase of land by WP from James and Anes Davis	Preceding property
650 (but 3 separate @ 112, 204, 333	Survey	11-08-1754	WP survey	Augusta County with 112 on North Branch of John's Creek; 204 on both sides of John's Creek; 333 on John's Creek; willed to Sarah in 1777 will; 1783 estate
LG	,3.5	04-06-1769	WP Land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
260#	Transfer	12-30-1754	WP gets transfer from John Gamble for non-payment of fees	Branch of Looney's Mill Creek
<u>1755</u>				
	Survey	02-24-1755	WP land survey for himself	WP surveyed 196 acres in Augusta on branch of Looney's Creek but not granted to him by Fauquier until 08-07-1761 for ,0.20 and sold by WP on 06-25-1770 to Solomon Simpson for ,28

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1757

200	,50	11-15-1757	WP buys from James Davies	Augusta County on Northwest side of Catawbo on Davies branch; 1759; 1770; 1783 estate
		11-17-1757	James Davies acknowledges deeds of lease & release;	
145	,50	11-16-1757	WP buys from James Coyle	Augusta on waters of North River of Shanado; 1759
**	,15	11-21-1759	WP sells to Thomas Waddel	Preceding property

1759

191	,100	02-12-1759	WP buys from Stephen Rentfro	Augusta on west side of Blue Ridge next to John Buchanan's land; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1759; 1770
	,50	04-23-1766	WP buys land from James and Sarah Robinson	James as eldest heir George Robinson sold this property on corner of John Buchanan's land now in possession of David Cloyd on branch of Buffalo Creek, branch of Roanoke; in 1770 quit rents mentions "191 - conveyed by Stephen Rentfro and after by James Robinson"
203#	,50	08-12-1759	WP buys land from John Marshall	Two surveys in Augusta on Catawbo Creek, a branch of James River; corner of Burden's patent line, top of Mount Hadley; 1759; 1770

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LS		11-21-1759 12-31-1759	Land Sale WP Sheriff's Account with John Bowyer for lands owned by WP	See 11-16-1757; , 15; 145 acres 520 - Calfpasture 365 - Beverley Manor 277 - formerly Townsend 148 - Coyle 626 - Catawbo 200 - Catawbo formerly Davies 191 - formerly Rentfroes 203 - formerly John Marshalls Total - 2530 acres with rents for 1758 & land tax for 1759
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1760

226	LG; , 0.25	03-03-1760	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on waters of Roanoke; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1770
	, 10	10-07-1765	WP buys from Steven Rentfro	WP paid Rentfro , 10 for this Augusta property on branch of Roanoke called Buffalo Creek; later note is that included in patent granted to WP of 226 acres; see previous grant on 03- 03-1760
144	LG; , 0.15	03-03-1760	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on waters of Roanoke; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1770

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330	,60	05-12-1760	WP buys land from Tobias Smith	Augusta on waters of Roanoke; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1770
		05-22-1760	Robert McClenachan & Sara to James Hughes of Staunton	From Deed Book mentions 32 acres of Woodland, part of No. 10 surveyed for McClenachan, Joseph Gamble's lot, Wm. Preston's land; also lot 7 in Staunton; referring to Staunton properties but WP connection is unclear;
		06-00-1769	County court judgements mentions WP lands	In Mathews vs. Hughes, a lawsuit begun on 07-23-1767, "Jas. Hughes owned lots in Staunton, sold him by Wm. Preston, by order of County Court, being property of the County."
100#	,430	09-26-1760	WP buys land from Patton executors	North side of James River;
<u>1761</u>				
60#	LG; ,0.10	02-14-1761	WP land patent from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on branch of Catawbo Creek going to corner of John Marshall; 1770
254	LG; ,0.05	02-14-1761	WP land patent from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on small branch of Roanoke joining Job Smiths old place; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1770
32	LG; ,0.05	02-14-1761	WP land patent from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on north side of James River; 1770
**	,7.10	11-09-1764	WP & Susanna sell land to Peter Cochran	Preceding property
	Privy exam	09-01-1768	Susanna to have privy exam on above property	Actually executed on 09-21-1768

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400*	Entry	02-18-1761	WP land entry as Asst. Surveyor	Between lands of David Cloyd, James Johnston, William Ralston
400*	Entry	02-18-1761	WP land entry as Asst. Surveyor	Small branch of Craig's Creek above Jacob Patton's old place known by names of Mill Place
200	Land grant; ,0.20	08-07-1761	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Waters of Roanoke in Augusta; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773; 1770
196	Land grant; ,0.20	08-07-1761	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	First surveyed by WP on 02-24-1755 but this land in Augusta on branch of Looney's Creek not granted by Fauquier until this time;
**	,28	06-25-1770	WP & Susanna sell land to Solomon Simpson	Preceding property

1762

LS		01-26-1762	Land Sale	See "Inherited from John Preston in 1748 and later;" , 100; 520 acres
	Legal agreement	02-24-1762	WP agreement with Patton heirs	Award WP from son-in-law of Patton to pay WP 1/20 of land sales minus surveyor's charges, etc.
	Legal agreement	06-27-1769	WP agreement with Patton executors	Wm. Thompson & John Buchanan as Patton executors agree to give WP his portion of his father's original amount (1/20) when lands are laid off

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338	, 3.12. 10	04-16-1762	WP survey	John Madison signed receipt for WP survey in Augusta with 7 rights and patents fee & Governor's fee; 1770
**	, 100	02-08-1773	WP & Susanna sell land to Lodowick Francisco	Preceding property; Craig's Creek, branch of James River
	Affirmed	04-10-1793	Sale to Francisco affirmed by John Preston, John Smith, & Matthew Compton	Preceding property sale affirmed after WP's death
1/4 acre; 25 acres	, 170	09-06-1762	WP buys land with Thomas and Andrew Lewis from John & Sarah Stewart	1/4 acre lot being part of lot 3 in Staunton, lower end of Francisco's house in Main St., Robert Read's lot; lot on which John Stewart now resides; and 25 acres of woodland, part of 50-acres lot No. 8 bounded by lot 7, 9, by William Beverley's land;
		08-22-1767	Reference to above 50 acre lot	In describing land deal refer in Augusta Deed Book to "one-half undivided moiety of 50 acres adjoining said town, now held by Israel Christian, Andrew Lewis, WP, & Thomas Lewis"
1/4 acre **	, 140	06-15-1776	WP with Andrew & Thomas Lewis and wives sell land to William McDowell	1/4 acre plot in Staunton which was part of Lot No. 3 to be half the length of John Stewart's lot or square off from lower end of Francisco's house on the main street, joining lot John Stewart formerly lived on
<u>1763</u>				
142	, 180	02-08-1763	WP buys land from Joseph McDonald	Augusta on branch of Tinker Creek; became part of Greenfield, see 06-15-1773
	Land dispute	02-11-1763	Dispute over land between WP & James McAfee	Difference over who had first entry to land on Catawbo; ruled in favor of WP;

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Lots 8, 15, 21; 50; 50;	,200	04-07-1763	WP & Robert Bratton buy land from Thomas and Elisabeth Fulton	Lots 8, 15, & 21 in Staunton; 2 lots of woodland, Nos. 6 & 7, 50 acres each. Conveyed to Thomas by Alexander Wright, 1760
		06-24-1763	Elisabeth Fulton gives up dower on above land	
**		06-24-1763	Thomas and Elisabeth Fulton sell above lands	Three 1/2 acre lots in Staunton
	,26	06-24-1763	WP & Robert Bratton buys household goods from Thomas Fulton	Whole list of household items such as walnut desk and tables, pillows, chairs, maps, pots
		07-04-1763	Thomas Fulton gives items to WP & Robert Bratton	To pay off debt; gives full liberty to dispose of his property to pay for debt
**	,260	03-20-1764	WP & Susanna sell land to Daniel Kidd	3 1/2 acre lots in Staunton, Nos. 8, 6, 7 and 2 lots of woodland with 87 acres
130	LG; ,0.15	05-23-1763	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on small branch of Bull Pasture
**	,20	08-06-1765	WP & Susanna sell land to Edward Hinds	Preceding land
204	LG; ,0.20	05-23-1763	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on branch of Roanoke called the North Fork
**	,40	08-06-1765	WP & Susanna sell land to Daniel McCormick	Preceding land
50	LG; ,0.05	05-23-1763	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on waters of Roanoke
**	,25	08-06-1765	WP & Susanna sell land to Michael Cloyd	Preceding land

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175	Land grant; , 0.20	08-30-1763	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on North Branch of Roanoke River; 1770
**	, 125	04-13-1780	WP & Susanna sell land to Henry Waterson	Preceding property

1764

150#	WP land survey Deeds of lease & Release	01-21-1764 08-20-1765	WP land survey from himself WP acknowledges deeds of lease & release for land to Edward Hinds; Daniel McCormick; Michael Cloyd	Catawbo Creek, branch of James River Preceding property
LS		03-20-1764	Land sale	See 04-07-1763; , 260; three 1/2 acre lots; 87 acres
LS		11-09-1764	Land sale	See 02-14-1761; , 7.10; 32 acres

1765

41	Land grant; , 18	07-26-1765 05-06-1778	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier WP sells land to George Robertson	South side of Roanoke in Augusta; 1770 For , 18 warranty
LS		08-06-1765	Land sale	See 05-23-1763; , 20; 130 acres
LS		08-06-1765	Land sale	See 05-23-1763; , 40; 204 acres
LS		08-06-1765	Land sale	See 05-23-1763; , 25; 50 acres
135	LG; , 0.05	09-16-1765	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on waters of Roanoke; 103 acres included in Greenfield survey, see 06-15-1773
	Quit rents	10-21-1765	WP pays quit rents to Augusta Sheriff	3302 acres for 1764 and tax for 1765 of , 7.12.5;

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80	,5.13.4	10-10-1765	WP buys land from Patton estate	Augusta on branch of Catawbo called Daily Branch; 1770; willed to Francis in 1777 will; 1783 estate
<u>1766</u>				
Land Purchase	,50	04-23-1766	Land purchase	See 02-12-1759; ,50; 191 acres
<u>1767</u>				
96	Survey	07-30-1767	WP land survey for himself	Craig's Creek, branch of James River; 1770
	LG; ,0.10	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
**	,20	01-13-1782	WP & Susanna sell land to Charles Tuley	Preceding property
	Land entries	08-21-1767	WP produces entry for several tracts of land in Augusta County order book	
250	LG; ,0.25	09-10-1767	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on Milligan Run, branch of James River
	,300	02-13-1775	WP sells land to Joshua Phipps	Preceding land;
77	LG; ,0.10	09-10-1767	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on Pattersons Creek, branch of Craigs Creek
**	,18	02-06-1770	WP & Susanna sell land to John Crawford	Preceding property now in Botetourt
250#	LG	09-00-1767	Land grant	Mentioned in 12-31-1770 quit rent list, but no other record of this grant, presumably by Francis Fauquier
210#	LG ,0.25	09-10-1767	WP land grant from Francis Fauquier	Augusta on branch of Catawbo; 1770

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390	Survey	10-01-1767	WP land survey for himself	Pott's Creek, branch of James River; below the Forks; 1770; willed to Anne in 1777 will and to Sarah and Anne in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
LG	LG; ,0.40	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
200	Survey	10-02-1767	WP land survey for himself	Both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River; 1770; this land may have been willed to Sarah in 1777, however, acreage in will is listed as 215 acres; reference is made in 1781 codicil to this property as forks of Pott's Creek, thus this land seems to be the closest match; 1783 estate
	LG; ,0.20	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
250	Survey	10-02-1767	WP survey for himself	Pott's Creek, branch of James River; 1770; willed to Elizabeth in 1777 will; withdrawn from Elizabeth and given to Sarah and Anne in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
	LG; ,0.25	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
150	Survey	10-03-1767	WP survey for himself	Both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River; 1770; willed to Sarah and Anne in 1781 codicil
	LG; ,0.15	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property

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300	Survey	10-03-1767	WP land survey for himself	Pott's Creek, branch of James River called Walnut Bottom; 1770; willed to Elizabeth in 1777 will; withdrawn from Elizabeth and given to Sarah and Anne in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
	LG; ,0.30	04-06-1769	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
95	Survey	10-05-1767	WP land survey for himself	Both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River; 1770
	LG; ,0.10	04-06-1769	Land Grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
**	,30	08-14-1772	WP & Susanna sell land to John Galloway	Preceding property
395	Survey*	10-06-1767	WP survey for himself	Pott's Creek, being first large Bottom above Potts, branch of James River
250	Entry*	12-30-1767	WP entry	Between Gilbert Marshall and James Alexander on Back Creek
400	Entry*	12-30-1767	WP entry	Joining Jasper Tarry, James Neely, Andrew Wilson
400	Entry	12-30-1767	WP entry	Pott's Creek joining and above the Paint Bank
		02-11-1781	Codicil to WP's will	May be preceding property plus 600 more acres which is referenced in 1781 codicil; description is the same
<u>1768</u>				
60	Land survey	07-15-1768	WP land survey for himself	Milligans Run, branch of James River
LG	LG; ,0.10	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property; 1770
**	,25	02-13-1775	WP & Susanna sell land	Preceding property

1769

250	Survey	02-25-1769	WP survey for himself	Vance's Spring, branch of Little Catawbo
	LG; ,0.25	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Preceding property
**	,55	00-00-1781	WP sells to James Snodgrass	Preceding property; reported in 1781 codicil
196	Survey	02-25-1769	WP survey for himself	Holston's Spring, branch of Catawbo Creek, branch of James River; 1770
	LG; ,0.20	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Augusta on Holston's Spring, branch of Catawbo Creek, branch of James River
**	,45	04-13-1780	WP & Susanna sell land to James Snodgrass	Preceding property
23	Survey*	03-20-1769	WP survey	May not be for himself but a general survey; in Augusta part of Loyal Company Grant on waters of New River
300#	Assigned lands	03-27-1769	WP assigned land by John Draper	Originally made to Dr. Walker on 11-25-1753 where North Fork of Walkers Creek comes into Middle Fork
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-02-1767; 250 acres on Pott's Creek, branch of James River
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-01-1767; 390 acres in Augusta on Pott's Creek, branch of James River
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 11-08-1754; ,3.5; 650 acres

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	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-03-1767; 150 acres in Augusta on both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River, below the Laurel Gap
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-02-1767; 200 acres in Augusta on both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-03-1767; 300 acres in Augusta on Pott's Creek, branch of James River called the Walnut Bottom
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 10-05-1767; 95 acres in Augusta on both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River
	LG	04-06-1769	WP land grant	See 07-30-1767; 96 acres in Augusta on Craig's Creek, branch of James River
420#	Survey	04-19-1769	WP survey for himself from Loyal Company	North fork of Walker's Creek
		06-09-1769	WP agreement with Patton heirs	See 02-24-1762
<u>1770</u>				
220	,25	02-09-1770	WP buys land from William Lee	Branch of Craig's Creek called Barbers Creek
**	,50	12-22-1776	WP & Susanna sell land to John Burk	Preceding property
LS		02-06-1770	Land Sale	See 09-10-1767; , 18; 77 acres

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137		03-03-1770	WP buys land from Donnelly's estate	Buys from John & Lydia Clark and Elizabeth Stedman; Botetourt is 3/5 of the tract of land on waters of Catawbo; 1770; 1783 estate
**	,20	09-24-1772	WP buys land from Donnelly estate	Preceding property; do not know why this sale was listed twice for ,20; both of these are from the Botetourt County Deed Book
		12-12-1772	WP receives land from Donnelly estate for John Bryant debt	Assigned to WP 1/6 of 137 acres on Catawbo in Botetourt for debt. Bryant married to Mary, daughter of Donnelly who died intestate and left lands to daughter
94	LG; ,0.10	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Augusta on branch of Jackson's River called Stoney Lick; 1770
**	,10	08-10-1771	WP & Susanna sell land to Robert Galloway	Preceding property
45	LG; ,0.05	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Augusta on branch of Looney's Creek; 1770
**	,13	02-09-1772	WP & Susanna sell land to William Crow & Thomas Barnes	Above property
LG		05-12-1770	WP land grant	See 07-15-1768; 60 acres in Augusta on Milligan's Run, branch of James River
330	LG; ,0.35	05-12-1770	WP land grant	Augusta on both sides of Craig's Creek; 1770
	LG; ,0.25	05-12-1770	WP land grant	See 02-25-1769; 250 acres in Augusta on Vance's Spring, branch of Little Catawbo
165	LG; ,0.20	05-12-1770	WP land grant from Botetourt	Augusta on waters of Glade Creek, branch of Roanoke; 1770
**	,30	04-10-1780	WP & Susanna sell land to John Thompson	Preceding property

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LG		05-12-1770	WP land grant	See 02-25-1769; 196 acres in Augusta on Holston's Spring, branch of James River
LS		06-25-1770	Land sale	See 08-07-1761; , 28; 196 acres
200	Rental agreement	08-18-1770	Thomas Lloyd has rental agreement with WP about Brazillas Spring Land	WP allowed Thomas Lloyd to use Brazillas Spring land during lifetime; cannot find this land in any sources
		12-31-1770	Quit rents for 1770 of WP lands in Botetourt County to Sheriff McGavock	Listing of Quit Rents to James McGavock, sheriff, from WP: 626 - deeded by James Davies in Augusta & Boteoturt 200- conveyed by James Davies 203 - conveyed by John Marshal 330 - conveyed by Tobias Smith 60 granted by patent in July 1761 191 - conveyed by Stephen Rentfro & after by James Robinson 200 - granted August 1761 254 - granted in February 1761 226 - granted in March 1760 144 - granted in March 1760 250 - granted in September 1767 175 - granted in August 1763 135 - granted in September, 1765 195 - granted to John Reiley(?) and conveyed to WP (see 08-14-1771 for this purchase) 210 - granted to WP in Sept., 1767 80 - conveyed by Patton's executors 41- granted to WP in July 1765 142 - conveyed by Joseph McDonald 390 - granted by patent 04-06-1769 200 - granted on same day 95 - "

170

Patented for Francis
Smith & _____
Thomp-
son

250 - "
150 - "
300 - "
650 - "
330 - Augusta near Stantion,
paid to sheriff of Augusta
277 - near Col. Smith in
Augusta
170 -Augusta patented for
Francis Smith & conveyed to

Thompson which WP was to
pay this year (no other record)
TOTAL - 6474 ACRES

165 - granted 05-12-1770
94 - "
45 - "
250 - "
196 - "
60 - " and paid by Wm.
Lauderdale
338 - granted 05-12-1770
96 - granted 04-06-1769
137 - granted to John Donilly &
Paul Garrison
TOTAL - 7885 ACRES

130.50.32 acres formerly
granted me - first conveyed
Edward Hinds; 2nd to Michael
Lloyd; 3rd to Peter Cochran
"several years ago with sundry
others that I don't recollect"
(these lands were all sold before
1770)
On back side -
brot over
7855 acres
96 acres for 1769
137 acres Donillys old place
(because he had not paid quit
rents in 1769 for these 3 pieces,
they are duplicated from above)
TOTAL - 8088 ACRES at 2/6
1/2 is , 10.5.7

				By 330 acres of land in Augusta & 60 acres Lauderdale (previously in this report)
				On another sheet from another source total is , 21.7.9 for levies, fees, etc.
70	Land purchase		Bought of William Lee	Also mentions 70 acres of land bought of Wm. Lee (no record of this purchase); 1783 estate
**	LS	00-00-1781	WP directs sale of land	In 1781 codicil the above piece of 70 acres was ordered for sale
<u>1771</u>				
75*	LG; ,0.10	02-16-1771	Land grant from Wm. Nelson	Botetourt on south side of James River
283	Dispute	06-12-1771	WP vs. Margaret Buchanan & Mary Boyd over John Buchanan lands	283 acres in Augusta on north side of James River where John Buchanan lately dwelt; in executive journal of Va. Council Does not know reason; along with another caveat by WP vs. William Thompson
		04-23-1773	James Hubbard reports to WP that this has been dismissed	
60	LG; ,0.10	08-03-1771	WP land grant from Wm. Nelson	Back Creek, branch of James River
		12-05-1771	Assignment by John Moore to WP of lands	2 tracts on Back Creek Branch of James River surveyed on 02-18-1768 and unsurveyed entry on same creek; no other details given in terms of acreage or reasons for this assignment;
**	,3			On same day receipt given by Moore to WP for the ,3 pd. by WP for land which Moore purchased from him on Back Creek, branch of James River "which I have this day given up to him by agreement;" probably preceding 60 acre plot

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147	LG; ,0.15	08-03-1771	WP land grant from Wm. Nelson	Botetourt on Spreading Spring Draft, branch of James River
**	,45	02-08-1779	WP sells land to William Winston	Preceding property
LS		08-10-1771	Land Sale	See 05-12-1770; , 10; 94 acres
195	,15	08-14-1771	WP buys land from John Riley	Branch of Catawbo Creek
**	,90	10-26-1772	WP & Susanna sell land to Robert Caldwell	Preceding property probably
LS			Land Sale	See 08-03-1771; , 3; 60 acres
<u>1772</u>				
84 60	,72	02-10-1772	WP & John Armstrong buy 2 parcels of land from Joseph Jenkins	84 acres at Big Meadows; 60 acres on Looney Creek
**	,132	01-10-1779	WP, Susanna & Armstrongs sell land to Andrew Moore	Three tracts on waters of James River of 84, 60, 58 (cannot find purchase of this last piece of property)
LS		02-09-1772	Land Sale	See 05-12-1770; , 13; 45 acres
		03-28-1772	WP quit rents to James McGavock, Augusta County sheriff, for 1770	Total due of ,36.15;
90	LG; ,0.10	06-20-1772	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Bradshaws or Brush Creek, branch of Roanoke
**	,40	04-13-1780	WP & Susanna sell land to Joseph Reyburn	Preceding property
760	,300	08-01-1772	WP buys land from Francis Smith	Botetourt (part of Smithfield tract); willed to John in 1777 will if WP's wife chose to live there; 1783 estate

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136	LG; ,0.15	08-01-1772	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Carvins Creek, branch of Roanoke; 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
		08-13-1772	Susanna gives up dower to land sold by WP to John Thomas	Cannot find original purchase of this 212 acre parcel in Augusta in Brocks Gap
Purchase		09-24-1772	Land Purchase	See 03-03-1770; ,20; 137 acres
LS		10-26-1772	Land Sale	See 08-4-1771; ,90; 195 acres
LS		10-27-1772	Land Sale	See 11-17-1752; ,46; 277 acres
44#	,5	11-11-1772	WP buys land from Stephen Rentfro	Branch of Roanoke called Buffalo's Creek
22	,20	11-12-1772	WP & Susanna sell land to Thomas Madison	22 acres on waters of Roanoke; cannot find this property; perhaps wrong acreage
	Quit rents	00-00-1772	WP Quit rents for 1772	,13.09.11
<u>1773</u>				
LS		02-08-1773	Land sale	See 04-16-1762; ,100; 338 acres
320	,30	03-17-1773	WP buys land from Robert Beverley through attorney Thomas Lewis	Beverley Manor;
**	,330 (part of sale of 3 plots) Dower rights given up	11-29-1779	WP & Susanna sell land to Peter Hanger	Preceding property
		09-14-1780	Susanna gives up dower on sale of property to Peter Hanger	Above property, except listed for 684 acres in Beverley Manor; examined by James Thomson & William Christian

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315 220	,270	05-24-1773	WP buys land from Edmond Winston	Formerly conveyed to James Patton to James Draper; 315 acres in Fincastle on waters of New River with corners to land of William Ingles; also 220 acres being one equal and undivided to sd. John Draper & William Ingles by deeds of lease & release on 02-8,9-1754 next to land where Draper formerly lived in Fincastle on waters of New River; part of Smithfield; willed to John in 1777 will; 1783 estate
400	LG; ,0.40	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Pott's Creek, branch of James River, placed called Black Oak Land
**	,115	05-10-1774	WP & Susanna sell land to Robert Galloway	Preceding property probably; Pott's Creek; there are other Pott's Creek of 400 acres but this is only one which we have proof they owned in contrast to others which are just land entries by WP
210	LG; ,0.25	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on waters of Roanoke River; 1783 estate
1233	LG; ,0.45	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on both sides Catawbo Creek, branch of James River; 1783 estate
220	LG; ,0.20	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Back Creek, branch of James River
**	,40	02-14-1775	WP & Susanna sell land to William Ward	Preceding property
350	LG; ,0.10	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Catawbo and Lick Run on waters of James River; willed to Francis in 1777 will; 1783 estate
585	LG; ,3	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore; but also part of Greenfield plot	Botetourt on waters of Buffalo Creek, branch of Roanoke and some part on waters of James

totaling 2,175 acres

River known as "Greenfield."

Shows how acreage developed:

142 - part of larger tract of 400 granted to James Cole by patent letters on 09-20-1745

191 - formerly granted to George Robinson by patent with date 09-20-1745

330 - formerly granted to Tobias Smith by patent on 03-10-1746

"Rights and titles to these lands become vested in WP."

Also:

254 - formerly granted WP by patent on 02-14-1761

226 - granted WP by patent on 03-03-1760

144 - to WP on 03-03-1760

200 - granted WP by patent on 08-07-1761

103 - other part being part of larger tract of 135 acres granted WP by patent on 09-16-1765;

585 - residue never before granted

Greenfield willed to John Preston unless WP's wife chose to live there in which case James Patton is to have Greenfield in 1777 will; 1783 estate

183	LG; ,0.20	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on Tery's run, branch of Roanoke; 1783 estate
345	LG; ,0.35	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on small branch of Catawbo Creek, branch of James River; willed to Francis in 1777 will; 1783 estate

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34	LG; ,0.05	06-15-1773	WP land grant from Dunmore	Botetourt on waters of Catawbo, branch of James River; 1783 estate
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2000		09-23-1773	WP listed for 2,000 acres in Fincastle County	Along with other landholders;
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1774

3000 in-cludes three 1,000 plots;	Land grant	01-18-1774	WP land grant by governor's warrant according to W. Ingles	3000 breaks down to: 1000 - joining land of Dr. Connelly and entry of Alex. Waught on southeast side near falls of Ohio; mentioned in 1781 codicil
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1000 - on Kentucky about 20 miles from mouth on south side including large Buffalo Lick and Salt Spring; in 1777 will remainder of Kentucky lands to be divided equally among children

1000 - on large spring about 6 or 8 miles east of Ohio on waters of Bear Grass Creek; willed to unborn child in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate

	Land survey	05-16-1774	J. Hite, Asst. Surveyor surveys one of above 1,000	Fincastle on south side of Kentucky River about 25 miles from mouth
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	Land dispute	01-06-1780	WP, John May, and Col. Lynn dispute over Salt Spring land above	All three men claim this land; WP suggests to May that they get an arbitrator to settle the difference between them and whoever wins will take on dispute with Col. Lynn
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255 220	,270	03-25-1774	WP buys land from William and Mary Ingles	255 acres in Fincastle on waters of New River being part of large tract patented to James Patton; the other tract of 220 acres is one equal and undivided moiety of 400 joining above tract and conveyed by James Patton to Ingles and John Drpaer which Draper has since sold; part of Smithfield; willed to John in 1777 will; 1783 estate
1,000	Survey	05-01-1774	Survey for WP	Kentucky County on Ohio River near the falls; Preceding property
	LG	07-17-1780	WP land grant from Thomas Jefferson for military service	
LS		05-10-1774	Land Sale	See 06-15-1773; ,115; 400 acres
2,000	Land grant	05-31-1774	WP as assignee of Alexander Waugh	Due to Proclamation of 1763 by King; Fincastle on Ohio River near the Falls; also one listed for 1,000 acres on same date
1,000	Survey	05-31-1774	Survey; WP gets land in accord with Governor's Warrant agreeable to Proclamation of 1763	Kentucky County on branches of Ohio River and on south side of Ohio River; grants from French and Indian War Preceding property
	Military service grant	12-01-1779	WP gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	
1,000	Survey	06-06-1774	WP survey on Governor's warrant	Kentucky County on branches of Ohio River and on south side of Ohio River; grants from French and Indian War Preceding property
	Military service land grant	12-01-1779	WP gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	

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1,000	Land grant	07-13-1774	WP land grant on Governor's warrant	Waters of Elk Horn Creek, north branch of Kentucky River about 20 miles from same on south side of Ohio River and about 90 miles from its junction with Kentucky beginning at Buckeye & Elm
3,000 1,000	Land grant	12-01-1774	WP as assignee of Abraham Hite who was assignee of John Savage as part of Governor's warrant	3,000 acres but appears that 1,000 surveyed in Fincastle known by name of Cave Spring on waters of South Fork of Elkhorn Creek, a branch of Kentucky River; Cave Spring mentioned in 1783 estate to Mary
	Land grant	04-15-1776	WP & James Thompson as assignee Alexander Waugh by Governor's warrant	1,000 acres; part of preceding property; Branch of south fork of Elk Horn Creek, including a place called the Cove Spring; willed to Mary in 1777 will
	Land certificate	01-08-1777	WP gets land certificate from James Thompson	1,000 acres, Elk Horn, part of preceding property
<u>1775</u>				
LS	,300	02-13-1775	Land Sale	See 09-10-1767; ,300; 250 acres
LS		02-13-1775	Land Sale	See 07-15-1768; ,25; 60 acres
LS 1,000	Survey	02-14-1775 06-29-1775	Land Sale Survey for WP from military grants	See 06-15-1773; ,40; 220 acres Kentucky County on branches of Spring Creek; branch of Kentucky River; grants from French and Indian War
	Military service grant	12-01-1779	WP as assignee of George Skillern who was assignee of John Smith	Preceding proerpty

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347 ,300 08-08-1775 WP buys land from 347 on Cove Creek, branch of
87 Joshua & Hester Rean(?) Oak(?); 87 on Carvins
Phipps Creek in place called the Cove;
to be divided among children in
1781 codicil; 1783 estate

1,000 Land 08-09-1775 WP survey by Fincastle on SE side of
grant Governor's warrant Kentucky River about 25 miles
from its mouth

1776

250 ,170 03-01-1776 WP purchases land No description of land but
from Joshua Phipps probably in Botetourt County

** ,170 12-01-1779 WP sells land to John Preceding property; contained in
Preston same agreement as above

LS 06-15-1776 Land Sale See 09-06-1762; , 140; 1/4 acre

1,000 Survey 07-15-1776 WP survey for Kentucky County
military grants
Military 12-01-1779 WP as assignee of Preceding property
service Abraham Hite who
grant was assignee of John
Savage military
service grant from
Thomas Jefferson

LS 12-22-1776 Land Sale See 02-09-1770; , 50; 220 acres

1777

WP Will 03-29-1777 WP Will gives 300 & 250 - to Elizabeth two
account of land tracts of land on Pott's Creek
owned at this time joining & above the lands of
Henry Smith, the Walnut
Bottom;
2,175 - Greenfield to John
Preston unless WP's wife
chooses to live there in which
case James Patton is to have; or
1,860 - Smithfield to John if
WP's wife chooses to live there;
1,233 - Catawbo where James
Norvell dwell to Francis;

215

350 - Marshall's old place on Lick Run to Francis;
 345 - on hills south of the place James Norvell lives to Francis;
 80 or thereabouts - Dayleys old place to Francis;
 650 - John's Creek where William Commack lives to Sarah;
 215 - joining & below the same above to Sarah; (cannot find this property)
 390 - forks of Pott's Creek to Anne;
 No acres given to Robinson's Tract on Peak Creek, branch of New River to be given to William except for 700 acres to be laid off on the lower end on creek to daughter Susanna and residue to son William;
 1,000 - Kentucky County land known as Cave Spring on waters of Elk Horn to Mary;
 Remainder of Kentucky lands to be equally divided among children after all debts paid off;
 Executors authorized to sell any lands not mentioned in this will

1778

LS		05-06-1778	Land Sale	See 07-26-1765; , 18; 41 acres
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1779

150	, 600	02-00-1779	WP buys land from Henry Smith	Both sides of Pott's Creek, branch of James River below Laurel Gap
	Lease , 0.05	01-09-1780	WP gives lease on land to William Madison but not release	Preceding property; no evidence that release ever given
LS		02-08-1779	Land Sale	See 08-03-1771; , 45; 147 acres

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900	,560	09-02-1779	Thomas Pickens deeds land to WP	Thorn Spring by waters of New River; originally conveyed to Pickens by estate of James Patton; willed to Letitia n 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
		00-00-1780	Thorn Spring place of WP valued lower	Valued at ,1,000 which was lower than originally assessed by court
LS		11-29-1779	Land Sale	See 03-02-1749 and 03-17-1773; ,330; 320 acres
LG		12-01-1779	Land Grant	See 07-15-1776; 1,000 acres in Kentucky County
LG		12-01-1779	Land Grant	See 06-29-1775; 1,000 acres in Kentucky County on branches of Spring Creek, branch of Kentucky River
LG		12-01-1779	Land Grant	See 06-06-1774; 1,000 acres in Kentucky County on branches of Ohio River and on south side of Ohio River
LG		12-01-1779	Land Grant	See 05-31-1774; 1,000 acres in Kentucky County on branches of Ohio River an on south side of same
LS		12-01-1779	Land Sale	See 03-01-1776; ,170; 250 acres

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3,250	Warrants	12-17-1779	List of warrants sent by Robert Nourse to Capt. Floyd to Survey (signed by WP)	Lists WP for with Skillern name - 500 WP by himself: 500 500 500 WP & Patton Preston 200 WP: 50 500 500 Lettice Breckinridge for 1500; 500 In 1781 codicil 500 acres willed to Mr. Brown
Inherit		12-23-1779	Inheritance	See "Inherited from John Preston in 1784 or later;" 2,675 acres known as Robinson's Tract; , 13.17
<u>1780</u>				
200	Land entry	03-23-1780	WP enters land by virtue of treasury warrant	Between patent lines of Horse Shoe Bottom and Great Ridge on the South to be bounded at each end by New River; treasury warrant dated 12-04-1779; willed to John and Francis in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate
LS		04-10-1780	Land Sale	See 05-12-1770; , 30; 165 acres
LS		04-13-1780	Land Sale	See 08-30-1763; , 125; 175 acres
LS		04-13-1780	Land Sale	See 02-25-1769; , 45; 196 acres
LS		04-13-1780	Land Sale	See 06-20-1772; , 40; 90 acres
640*	Land	04-24-1780	John Adair Receipt to	On behalf of WP & Col.

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640*	entries		Robert Preston for WP land entries	William Campbell; no descriptions given of lands
400*				
640*				
640*				
640*				
250	LG	07-15-1780	WP gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	Botetourt on branch of James River
LG		07-17-1780	Land Grant	See 05-01-1774; 1,000 acres in Kentucky County on Ohio River near the falls
250	LG; ,0.25	07-15-1780	WP as assignee of John Floyd gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	Botetourt on Potter's Creek, branch of James River
1,000	LG	07-17-1780	WP as assignee of Alexander Waugh gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	Kentucky on Ohio River near the Falls; for service in French & Indian War;
61	LG; ,0.10	07-17-1780	WP as assignee of John Floyd gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	Botetourt on Pott's Creek, branch of James River
120	LG; ,0.15	07-20-1780	WP as assignee of John Floyd & Henry Smith gets land grant from Thomas Jefferson	Botetourt on Pott's Creek, branch of James River; willed to Sarah and Anne in 1781 codicil; 1783 estate

1781

	WP codicil to will	02-11-1781	WP codicil to will details changes from original will made on 03-29-1777	Reports on sale of 250 acres at Vance's Spring, branch of Catawbo to James Snodgrass for ,55; directs sale of two tracts of land on south side of Roanoke (no acreage given) and 77 acres on waters of Craig's Creek for which he had William Lee's
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bond to make title;
withdraws will to Elizabeth Madison on Walnut Bottom on Pott's Creek & adjoining tract because has given her 1,000 acres on Pott's Creek called the Paint Bank which sent warrant to Mr. Floyd for and assigned to William Madison to be surveyed in Madison's name; (see 12-30-1767)

gives Walnut Bottom on Pott's Creek and adjoining tract and all other of his lands on the creek including the Forks Tract now to Sarah & Anne to be divided quantity and quality between them with Sarah to have first choice in exchange for lands given in previous will at forks of John's Creek and at forks of Pott's Creek;

tract at fork of Pott's Creek is property of Col. John Floyd to whom it is to be conveyed or sold as he may direct;

to John Breckenridge wills 700 acres of land Mr. Floyd purchased from James Harrod, but since the 1,000 acres will be surveyed and patents in WP's name, but Floyd has given Harrod obligation for one-half, and that Breckenridge be given the other half;

900 - Thorn Spring to Letitia;

1,000 - Jefferson County on waters of Beargrass called Poplar Levels and also the best 1,000 acres that Mr. Floyd may have surveyed on any of state warrants sent him to be given to one of WP's unborn children, if male (see 12-17-1779);

1,000 - if the child is female on north side of Kentucky River

surveyed by Floyd but not known exactly by WP when writing the will (see 12-01-1779);

if the son dies before age, Poplar Levels and 1,000 acres on the Ohio above the mouth of Beargrass Creek be equally divided among the four sons now living with choices in this order--John, Francis, William, and James Patton;

Horse Shoe Bottom with an adjoining entry to John & Francis with proviso that their mother enjoy the use of the plantation or at least 100 acres of the low ground for her support and that of her children & their education;

Carvin's Cove where William Commack lives will be divided among the children as WP's wife may judge proper when Commack's lease expires;

500 - to Mr. Brown if he proves this will and assists in its execution, the lands to be the second best tract from state warrants being laid off by Mr. Floyd;

1,000 - if WP's wife is pregnant with a son, then this acreage just above the Falls is to be equally divided between John & Francis on proviso that they settle at Horse Shoe Bottom during life of their mother, etc.; if they fail in this duty, the lands will go to William and James Patton;

985

,1800

09-07-1781

WP buys land from Thomas Walker

Montgomery on west side of New River known by Horse Shoe Bottom; 1783 estate

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2,000 500	Treasury Warrant Treasury warrant	10-15-1781 01-20-1783	Treasury warrant John & Francis Preston are assigned land by WP	On head waters of Cole River, a south branch of New River Preceding property; WP was assigned 2,000 acres by George May due to land office treasury warrant on 10-15-1781; another 500 acres on 10-15-1781 assigned WP by George May; WP then assigned the total to his two sons, John & Francis
50	Land grant	11-07-1781	WP enters land due to state warrant	East side of New River including the improvement he bought of Peter Dingus and those he has made to run down the river to where the hill binds and thereon and back for quantity; 1783 estate
Grant for 1,000 but only 994 sur- veyed with 160, 120, 100, 80, 94 with sub- total of 554 and added 440 for total of 994	Land grant	12-20-1781	WP preemption warrant surveyed	No description given of property
<u>1782</u>				
LS		01-13-1782	Land Sale	See 07-30-1767; , 20; 96 acres

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Tax list	12-31-1782	WP's lands listed in 1782 tax list for Montgomery County	Land without acreage listed as follows: Smithfield, Horse Shoe, Dingus, Thorn Spring, Robinson's Tract, By the Horse Shoe, By Smithfield
Land tax , 11.10	12-31-1782	WP's sheriff account for Botetourt County	Pays , 11.10 for lands in Botetourt County

1783

2,500	Trea- sury war- rants	01-20-1783	John & Francis Preston are assigned land by WP	WP was assigned 2,000 acres by George May due to land office treasury warrant on 10-15-1781; another 500 acres on 10-15-1781 assigned WP by George May; on head waters of Cole River, a south branch of New River; WP then assigned the total to his two sons, John & Francis
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WP Estate		06-28-1783	List of properties owned by WP at time of death according to estate records	<p>2175 - Greenfield in Botetourt County willed to eldest son, John;</p> <p>1233, 350, 345, & 80 for total of 2008 - called Catawbo or Arcadia willed to second son Francis;</p> <p>2775 - Robinson tract will to William, his third, except for 700 at lower end willed to Susanna;</p> <p>1860 - Smithfield to Js. P. Preston, 4th son;</p> <p>1,000 - called Cave Spring to Mary - on Potts Creek to Sarah & Anne;</p> <p>300 - Walnut Bottom</p> <p>250 - above do.</p> <p>200 - do.</p> <p>120 - do.</p> <p>390 - forks do.</p> <p>900 - called the Thorn Spring to Letitia;</p> <p>1000 Poplar Levels to Thomas;</p>
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1,000 - the best of all the warranted lands. do.

985 - called the Horse Shoe Bottom to John & Francis;

1,000 - called Bear Trap at the Fall of Ohio to John & Francis;

The above is part of Wm. Preston's real Estate which he devised. (underlining provided)

344, 136, 86 for total of 564 - Carven's Cove

850 - Forks, Johns Creek;
(actual acreage should be 650)

70 - Lees Meadows

137, 34 for total of 171 - Donally sold 15th Feby 1794 to Wm Eakens for , 200;

183 near Terry's on Roanoke;

210 - do ----- do.

250 - on Catawbo called Snodgrasses

200 - Catawbo, near JP's lands

50 - Laurel Lick

The above undivided & lying in Virginia.

1,000 - Glens Creek

1,000 - joining do.

1,000 800	Land deal	11-21-1783	James Speed writes about land deal with WP	James Speed of Lincoln County agreed with John Brown, WP executor, to divide an agreement with WP on 05-07-1780 of 800 and 1,000 adjoining the settlement; no record of this agreement
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APPENDIX F: William Preston's Will

William Preston prepared his first will on March 29, 1777 and added a codicil on February 11, 1781.³⁸³ Preston's will departed from other wills commonly made during this period in several ways.³⁸⁴ His strong emphasis throughout the will on ensuring the education of his sons in particular illustrates one of his highest priorities as a father. His desire that his daughters also share in the bounties of the estate and that their mother take care of their education shows a further care for females in a male-dominated society. Although they did not receive as much as his sons, his daughters were well provided for in the will's provisions through grants of actual land to them rather than just money. There is no question that the sons were better treated, but even within their ranks he had a rationale for giving the older boys more than the younger ones--they bore a greater responsibility for taking care of their mother and the younger children. The fact that he felt it necessary to justify this inequality gives a further feeling of his sensitivity. He also gave his wife great power in this will in consultation with the executors giving her the choice of where she wanted to live and how she would divide up items in the personal estate not already mentioned. Preston accomplished one of the major purposes in his life

³⁸³ An original will with the codicil in Preston's handwriting can be seen in Preston Family Papers, VHS, Mss1P9267b17 and in typescript in PP-LC, 959 or Preston Papers, FC, Set I, 6:4.

³⁸⁴ For a study on inheritance, see Carole Shammas, Marylynn Salmon, and Michel Dahlin, Inheritance in America From Colonial Times to the Present (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 41-62.

of creating an estate which would leave both his wife and eleven remaining children well provided for in future years. In later years, disputes arose over some of the provisions in the estate. But this will with codicil reveals the priorities and emphases of the value structure he developed as a parent--openness, love, respect for learning, and family harmony.

The following section summarizes in paraphrase form what his wife and each child received in the 1777 will and 1781 codicil. In addition, he established other scenarios which also governed the will.

To Susanna, His Wife

Wife, Susanna - use of profits of all plantations, slaves, and stock of every kind for the decent and comfortable support of herself and my children and for their education, particularly those sons whose capacities show ability.

Conditions: first, she will continue single and superintend raising and education of her children, particularly her daughters; second, she will determine within five years after I die on which tract she intends to spend the remainder of her days; third, when my daughters are married or my sons come of age or are married, she will give that child with consent of two executors such slaves and stock or money in lieu of that they think just and reasonable; other, she should not make any promises before their marriage and then give rather sparingly until convinced of their frugality so that in the future if they have misfortune she can supply them with additional help. If she chooses to marry again, she should get what the state requires.

To His Children:

Elizabeth - 1777: 300 acres on Walnut Bottom; 250 acres on Potts Creek joining and above lands of Henry Smith; 1781: because he gave her 1,000 acres on Potts Creek called Paint Bank, the earlier gift of 300 and 250 acres was voided and given to Sarah and Anne to be divided equally between them with Sarah having first right to choose.

John - 1777: 2,175 acres at Greenfield provided Susanna does not choose to settle there for life. Should she choose to live at Greenfield, John would get Smithfield with 1,860 acres, this to happen when he turns twenty years of age or when he marries if earlier; To pay mother yearly ,25 (1781: in gold) if demanded so she can support the other children; and at twenty five years of age to pay Anne ,50 to put her on a footing with her sisters (1781: obligation voided); Also a small sword. 1781: To John and Francis, tract called Horseshoe Bottom and adjoining entry on condition their mother would enjoy use of plantation or at least 100 acres of low ground for support of herself and children and their education; if she lives until John and Francis marry or settle, recommends they settle on Horseshoe Bottom in order to assist her especially in education of my other children; if the pregnant Susanna has a boy, John and Francis will equally divide 1,000 acres just above the Falls if they settle on the Horse Shoe Bottom during the life of their mother to

care for the education of my other sons; if she dies in this process, they are to continue bearing the expense of education without taking from their brother's estates; if they fail, William and James Patton will equally divide this land between them.³⁸⁵

Francis - 1777: land where James Norvell lives with 1230 acres; Marshall's Old Place on Lick Run with 350 acres; tract on hills south of where Norvell lives of 345 acres; Dayley's old place of 80 acres; Condition: Pays mother , 25 (1781: in gold) per year to start when he takes lands at twenty one years of age or when he marries; also to pay Anne , 50 when she reaches twenty five years of age (1781: obligation voided); Also give him my watch and wedding ring as token. 1781: To John and Francis, tract called Horseshoe Bottom and adjoining entry on condition their mother would enjoy use of plantation or at least 100 acres of low ground for support of herself and children and their education; if she lives until John and Francis marry or settle, recommends they settle on Horseshoe Bottom in order to assist her especially in education of my other children; if the pregnant Susanna has a boy, John and Francis will equally divide 1,000 acres just above the Falls if they settle on the Horse Shoe Bottom during the life of their mother to care of the education of my other sons; if she dies in this process, they are to continue bearing the expense of education without taking from their brother's estates; if they fail, William and James Patton will equally divide this land between them.³⁸⁶

Sarah and her heirs or assigns - 1777: land where William Commack lives with 650 acres on Johns Creek and 215 acres joining and below it and stock on that land when lease with Commack runs out; 1781: she has first choice on deciding which land to take now coming to her as originally willed to Elizabeth--either 300 acres on Walnut Bottom or 250 acres on Potts Creek; she loses the 650 and 215 acres on Johns Creek which is now given to John Floyd.

Anne and her heirs or assigns - 1777: 390 acres at forks of Potts Creek; , 200 in money to be paid by her brothers (1781: obligation voided); 1781: depending on what Sarah decides, she will get either 300 acres on Walnut Bottom or 250 acres on Potts Creek as originally willed to Elizabeth; she loses the 390 acres at the forks of Potts Creek which is now given to John Floyd.

³⁸⁵This 1781 provision of the will ended up being the most contested beginning on 11 April 1793 when Francis Preston wrote his brother, William, hoping he would not contest provisions about Briar Patch since he had attempted to live within the spirit of the agreement. Preston Family Papers, Joyes Collection, FC, Mss.A P937j, Folder 3. On 3 August 1802 John Preston paid his brother, William, \$200 after William agreed that John had lived up to the will's agreement. Montgomery County Deed Book C, 1797-1803, VSL, 2:548-9. On 3 August 1811 Francis and William Preston submitted their mutual claims to the Briar Patch property for arbitration by a group of lawyers. The original agreement called for Francis to live on the Horse Shoe property in order to get the Briar Patch property. He contended that putting his slaves there should count as his living there. The lawyers disagreed and awarded the property to William who had purchased the share of James Patton Preston. Preston Family Papers, Joyes Collection, FC, Mss. A P937j, Folder 54-Land Papers. The lawyers in part based their investigation on a series of questions between Francis and William Preston prepared in 1805. *ibid.*, Folder 56-Legal Papers.

³⁸⁶*ibid.*

William - 1777: Robinson's Tract on Peak Creek, branch of New River, except 700 acres off lower end on the Creek for Susanna; To pay Anne ,50 when he reaches twenty two years of age (1781: obligation voided); no obligation to pay mother anything because his land is not cultivated.

Susanna and her heirs or assigns - 1777: 700 acres from lower end of Robinson's Tract given to William.

James Patton - 1777: Greenfield with 2,175 if Susanna chooses to live there; otherwise, he gets Smithfield in fee simple and John will get Greenfield; required to pay Anne ,50 when he reaches twenty one (1781: obligation voided); not to pay mother anything because she will be living with him.

Mary - 1777: 1,000 acres in Kentucky known by Cave Spring on waters of Elk Horn.

Letitia - 1781: 900 acres at Thorn Spring.

If wife is pregnant when I die: 1781: if a son, 1,000 acres in Jefferson County on waters of Bear Grass called Poplar Levels and also the best 1,000 acres surveyed by John Floyd on any of state warrants I have sent him when child reaches five years of age; if a daughter, 1,000 acres granted to me on north side of Kentucky River surveyed by John Floyd; if this son dies or the child is female, 1,000 acres on Poplar Levels and one other 1,000 acres tract on Ohio just above mouth of Bear Grass Creek be equally divided between four sons with choice going in following order: John, Francis, William, and James Patton the remainder.

Remaining Lands in Kentucky - 1777: after debts paid, titles obtained, rents and taxes paid, are to be equally divided among all my children or their lawful representatives.

Books - 1777: equally divided among four sons except those chosen by wife for her and her daughters.

Negro boy named Lender which my mother gave me - 1777: to my wife and then to such of my mother's children in lowest circumstance when boy reaches twenty one years of age.

If a son dies before becomes adult or has children born in wedlock - 1777: property divided among remaining sons.

If a daughter dies before are married or of age - 1777: share of estate allotted to them should be sold on long credit with money to be divided equally among surviving daughters or their legal representatives.

If wife dies single before personal estate distributed - 1777: executors should deduct ,100 for each of four sons for their education and residue to be divided equally among all

the children or their heirs lawfully begotten;

If wife marries before personal estate distributed - 1777: her lawful share to be laid off for her and remainder after ,100 set aside for each son's education to be divided amongst all my sons and daughters without the sale of slaves.

Equality of estate for sons - 1777: put all my sons on an equal footing in estate and for their education; if not good at school should be trained in a trade; 1781: have given oldest sons more than the younger ones since more of the care of their mother and family upon them.

Equality of estate for daughters - 1781: want daughters to be nearly equal with each other as can be; if it appears otherwise the executors with consent of wife can add more to the estate to achieve better equality.

If differences take place over the will - 1777: be settled by arbitration to avoid legal expense.

Executors - 1777: George Skillern, Francis Smith, John Floyd, Robert Preston; Also sons John (when he reaches twenty) and Francis (when he reaches nineteen); 1781: substitutes William Madison, John Breckinridge, and John Brown for Skillern, Smith, and Preston.

Lands not mentioned in will - 1777: executors have power to sell.

Further request for executors on education - 1777: do all in their power to give my sons a good education and prevent them from running into the follies and extravagances which unguarded youth are liable for.

Payment for executors - 1777: court to give each of them a just and generous allowance for their trouble and expenses.

John Breckinridge - 1781: for teaching school at my house, half of 1,000 acres to be surveyed in Kentucky by John Floyd.

If lacking money to pay debts: 1781: sell lands in Carvins Cove, and where William Commack lives, and any other lands in Kentucky not devised. If these do not need to be sold, Susanna can distribute them among the children with consent of a majority of executors.

APPENDIX G: The Preston Legacy

Many of William Preston's children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews achieved prominence as public figures. The following brief description only lists some of the most successful examples focusing primarily on William Preston's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren with a few examples from his sister's families. These examples are based on an outstanding genealogical study done by John Frederick Dorman, The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia. Descendents of John and Elizabeth (Patton) Preston Through Five Generations (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1982).

WILLIAM AND ELIZABETH PRESTON

Children of William and Elizabeth:

- 1. Elizabeth-** (1762-1837) - Married William Strother Madison: justice; sheriff
- 2. John-** (1764-1827) - Married Mary Radford, Eliza Mayo
Member, Virginia House of Delegates and Senate; justice; surveyor; sheriff; Treasurer, Virginia;
- 3. Francis-** (1765-1835) - Married Sarah Buchanan Campbell
Lawyer; Member, Virginia House of Delegates and Senate; Member, U.S. Congress; Major General, Virginia militia;
- 4. Sarah-** (1767-1841) - Married James McDowell: justice; sheriff; Member, Virginia House of Delegates; numerous military officerships;
- 5. Ann-** (1769-1782) - died at thirteen years of age
- 6. William-** (1770-1821) - Married Caroline Hancock
Surveyor; Major, U.S. Army;
- 7. Susanna-** (1772-1883) - Married Nathaniel Hart: Military aide-de-camp; participant, Battle of Fallen Timbers; agent, Bank of Kentucky;
- 8. James Patton-** (1774-1843) - Married Ann Barraud Taylor
Justice; deputy surveyor; postmaster, Richmond; Colonel, U.S. Army; Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Governor, Virginia (1816-1819) when University of Virginia established; Preston County named in his honor;
- 9. Mary-** (1776-1824) - Married John Lewis: Early settler, Monroe County, West Virginia;
- 10. Letitia-** (1779-1852) - Married John Floyd: Physician; justice of the peace; Member,

Virginia House of Delegates; Member, U.S. Congress for 12 years where he first proposed the occupation and organization of Oregon Territory; Governor, Virginia (1830-33);

11. Thomas Lewis- (1781-1812) - Married Edmonia Madison Randolph
Attorney; Member, Virginia House of Delegates;

12. Margaret Brown- (1784-1843) - Married John Preston (son of Robert and Margaret):
Lawyer; justice; Colonel, 2nd Battalion, Virginia;

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Grandchildren of William and Elizabeth

Only a few of the more prominent grandchildren are listed below. The number appearing before each name refers to their parent's number as listed above.

1. Susanna Smith Preston Peyton- (1780-1820) - Married John Howe Peyton: lawyer;
Member, Virginia Senate; founder, Virginia Female Institute at Staunton;

2. John Breckinridge Preston- (-1833)
Member, Kentucky Legislature;

2. Elizabeth Madison Preston Johnston- (-1828) - Married Charles C. Johnston:
Member, U.S. Congress;

3. William Campbell Preston- (1794-1860) - Married Maria Eliza Coalter, Louisa Penelope Davis
Lawyer; Member, lower house, South Carolina legislature; Member, U.S. Senate;
President, South Carolina College;

3. Eliza Henry Carrington- (1796-1877) - Married Edward C. Carrington: Member,
Virginia House of Delegates; Board member, Hampden-Sydney College;

3. John Smith Preston- (1809-1881) - Married Caroline Martha Hampton
Member, South Carolina House of Representatives and Senate; Brigadier General,
Confederate States;

3. Thomas Lewis Preston- (1812-1903) - Married Elizabeth Breckinridge Watts, Anna Maria Saunders
Member, Virginia House of Delegates;

3. Margaret Buchanan Frances Preston Hampton- (1818-1852) - Married Wade Hampton, III: Member, South Carolina House of Representatives and Senate; Governor, South Carolina (1876-79); Member, U.S. Senate;

- 3. Isaac Trimble Preston-** (1793-1852) - Married Catherine Lawn Layton, Margaret Hewes
Attorney General, Louisiana; Member, Louisiana House of Representatives; Judge, Louisiana Supreme Court;
- 4. Susan Preston McDowell Taylor-** (1793-1849) - Married William Taylor: Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Member, U.S. Congress;
- 4. Elizabeth Preston McDowell Benton-** (1794-1854) - Married Thomas Hart Benton: Member, Tennessee Senate; Member, U.S. Senate, Congress;
- 4. James McDowell-** (1795-1851) - Married Susanna Smith Preston
Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Governor, Virginia (1843-46); Member, U.S. Congress;
- 6. William Preston-** (1816-1887) - Married Margaret Preston Wickliffe
LL.B., Harvard University; Member, Kentucky House of Representatives; Member, U.S. Congress; U.S. Minister to Spain; Confederate Minister to Mexico; Major General, Confederate States of America;
- 7. Sarah Simpson Hart Thompson-** - (1800-1883) - Married George Claiborne Thompson: Speaker of the Kentucky House of Representatives;
- 7. Mary Howard Hart Voorhies-** (1814-1857) - Married William Voorhies: Member, Louisiana House of Representatives;
- 8. William Ballard Preston-** (1805-1862) - Married Lucinda Staples Redd
Member, Virginia House of Delegates and Senate; Member, U.S. Congress; Secretary of Navy; Member, Confederate Senate;
- 9. Mary Sophia Lewis Woodville-** (1796-1836) - Married James Littlepage Woodville: Member, Virginia House of Delegates;
- 9. William Lynn Lewis-** (1799-1869) - Married Anne E. Stuart, Harriet D. Thomson, Letitia Preston Floyd
Member, South Carolina House of Representatives and Senate;
- 9. Pollydora Eugenia Lewis Goss-** (1817-1871) - Married John Walker Goss: Member, Virginia House of Delegates; sheriff; county clerk;
- 10. John Buchanan Floyd-** (1806-1863) - Married Sarah Buchanan Preston
Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Governor, Virginia (1849-51); Secretary of War (Buchanan administration); Brigadier General, Confederate States of America;
- 10. George Rogers Clark Floyd-** (1810-1896) - Married Ellen Mead
Secretary, Wisconsin Territory; Member, West Virginia House of Representatives;

10. Benjamin Rush Floyd- (1811-1860) - Married Nancy S. Mathews
Member, Virginia House of Delegates and Senate;

10. Eliza Lavalette Floyd Holmes- (1816-1887) - Married George Frederick Holmes:
Professor of History and Political Economy, William and Mary College; President,
University of Mississippi; Professor of History, University of Virginia;

10. Nickette Buchanan Floyd Johnston- (1819-1908) - Married John Warfield
Johnston: Member, Virginia Senate; Receiver, Southwestern District, Virginia during
Civil War; Member, U.S. Senate;

11. John Thomas Lewis Preston- (1811-1890) - Married Sarah Lyle Caruthers,
Margaret Junkin
Professor, Virginia Military Institute (1841-1882);

12. John Preston- (1811-1882) - Married Mary Howard Wickliffe
Judge; Member, Kentucky House of Representatives;

12. Eleanor Fairman Preston Sheffey- (1812-1887) - Married James White Sheffey:
Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Board of Visitors, University of Virginia;

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Great-Grandchildren of William and Elizabeth Preston

Paulina Cabell Preston- (1824-1891) - Married John Archer Talley: Member, Missouri
Legislature;

Eliza Mary Johnston- (1825-1908) - Married Robert William Hughes: editor, Union,
Buchanan administration's newspaper; Board of Visitors, University of Virginia; U.S.
Attorney, Western District of Virginia; U.S. Judge for Eastern District of Virginia;

Sally Preston Hampton- (1844-1886) - Married John Cheves Haskell: Member, South
Carolina House of Representatives;

James McDowell Taylor- (d. 1888)
Member, Virginia House of Delegates;

Susan Taylor Weller- (1812-1875) - Married John B. Weller: Member, commission to
establish border between California and Mexico; Member, U.S. Senate from California;
Governor, California (1858-60); U.S. Minister to Mexico;

Jessie Ann Benton Fremont- (1824-1902) - Married John Charles Fremont: explorer; participant in conquest of California; Member, U.S. Senate from California; nominated by Radical Republicans for U.S. President;

Susan Virginia Benton de Boileau- (1833-) - Married Baron Gaudree de Boileau: Secretary, French legation at Washington, D.C.; French Consul General, Calcutta, India; Minister of France to Peru;

Sallie Campbell Preston McDowell Thomas- (d. 1895) - Married Francis Thomas: Member and Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates; Member, U.S. Congress; Governor, Maryland (1841-44); divorced in 1846;

William Preston Johnston- (1831-1899) - Married Rosa Elizabeth Duncan, Margaret Henshaw Avery
Aide-de-camp, Jefferson Davis; Chair, History and English Literature, Washinton College; President, Louisiana State University; Regent, Smithsonian Institution;

Susan Cristy Preston Draper- (1853-1919) - Married William Franklin Draper: Member, U. S. Congress from Massachusetts; Ambassador to Italy;

Randall Lee Gibson- (1832-1892) - Married Mary Montgomery
Brigadier General, Confederate States of America; Member, U.S. Congress and Senate from Louisiana;

William Preston Gibson- (1833-) - Married Eldie Mary Humphreys
Surgeon, Confederate Army; Member, Louisiana legislature;

Nathaniel Hart Gibson- (1837-1863) - Married Mary Duncan
Member, Kentucky legislature;

Susanna Preston Breckinridge Grigsby- (1830-1891) - Married John Warren Grigsby: U.S. Consul at Bordeaux, France; Attache, Paris; Member, Kentucky legislature;

Susan Madison Peyton Baldwin- (1822-1899) - Married John Brown Baldwin: Board of Visitors, University of Virginia; Member, U.S. Congress; Member and Speaker, Virginia House of Delegates;

Louisa Bowen Johnston Trigg- (1846-1895) - Married Daniel Trigg: Member, Virginia House of Delegates; President, Abingdon Academy;

George Ben Johnston- (1853-1916) - Married Mary C. McClung, Helen Coles Rutherford
Physician; first to perform operation in Virginia under antiseptic conditions; President, American Surgical Association;

Sisters of William Preston

Letitia Preston Breckinridge- (-1797) - Married Robert Breckinridge: militia captain; sheriff; justice; vestryman;

Margaret Preston Brown- (-1802) - Married Reverend John Brown: prominent Presbyterian minister;

Ann Preston Smith- (-1813) - Married Francis Smith: justice; militia captain; deputy sheriff; surveyor;

Mary Preston Howard- (1740-1814) - Married John Howard: vanguard of settlers into Kentucky;

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Nieces and Nephews of William Preston

The following represent only a sampling of nieces and nephews of William Preston and will only include brief information:

John Breckinridge- Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Attorney General, Kentucky; Speaker, Kentucky House of Delegates; Member, U.S. Senate; Attorney General, U.S.; Breckinridge County, Kentucky named for him;

James Breckinrdige- Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Member, U.S. Congress;

John Brown, Jr.- Member, Virginia Senate; Member, Confederate Congress; Member, U.S. Congress and Senate from Kentucky;

James Brown- Secretary of Louisiana Territory; U.S. District Attorney, Louisiana; Member U.S. Senate; U.S. Minister to France;

Elizabeth Smith Blair- Married James Blair: Member, Virginia House of Delegates; Attorney General, Kentucky;

Jane Smith Madison- Married George Madison: Governor, Kentucky;

Benjamin Howard- Member, Kentucky House of Representatives; Member, U.S. Congress; appointed by Madison as Governor of District of Louisiana; Governor, Territory of Missouri; Howard County, Missouri named after him;

Margaret Preston Howard Wickliffe- Married Robert Wickliffe: U.S. Attorney, Kentucky; Member, Kentucky House of Representatives and Senate;

* * * * *

Grand Nieces and Nephews of William Preston

Letitia Preston Breckinridge Porter- Married Peter Buell Porter: Member, U.S. Congress from New York; Leader of "war hawks"; U.S. Secretary of War;

John Cabell Breckinridge- Member, U.S. Congress from Kentucky; Vice President, U.S.; Member, U.S. Senate; Presidential candidate, Southern Democrats; Secretary of War, Confederate States of America;

Benjamin Grady Brown- Member, U.S. Senate from Missouri; Governor, Missouri; Candidate for Vice President of U.S. under Horace Greely;

Francis Preston Blair- Member, U.S. Congress and Senate from Missouri; Nominated for Vice President of U.S. by Democratic Party; Statue placed by Missouri in U.S. Capitol;

Edward Colston Marshall- Member, U.S. Congress from California; Attorney General, California;

Abbreviations

CC - Kentucky Manuscripts, Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DM - Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

FC - The Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky

JHB - Journal of the House of Burgesses, H.R. McIlwaine, ed.

Journal of Backcountry Studies

LC - Library of Congress

LPF Letter - Letitia Preston Floyd letter to Benjamin Rush Floyd

OED - Oxford English Dictionary, 2d ed.

PDGC-FC - Preston Family Papers, Preston Davie Genealogical Collection, The Filson Club

PP-DM - Preston Papers, Draper Manuscripts as transcribed by S. C. Stuntz from State Historical Society of Wisconsin

PP-DU - John and William Preston Papers, Duke University

PP-LC - Preston Family Papers, 1727-1896, "f" series at Virginia Historical Society as microfilmed and catalogued by the Library of Congress

PP-UVA - Preston Family Papers, University of Virginia

PP-VHS - Preston Family Papers, "a" through "e" series, Virginia Historical Society

RVHS-UVA - Roanoke Valley Historical Society as filmed by the University of Virginia

S - Draper's Notes, Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

U - Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

UVA - University of Virginia, Archives

VHS - Virginia Historical Society

VPI - Virginia Polytechnic Institute

VSL - Virginia State Library, Manuscript Division

UTS - Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia

VMHB - Virginia Magazine of History & Biography

WMC - College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia

WMQ - William and Mary Quarterly

WP - William Preston

ZZ - Virginia Papers, Draper Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

