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William Preston in the American Revolution

BY RICHARD OSBORN

Virginia backcountry patriot leaders like William Preston tackled exceptionally complex tasks of mobilization of armed forces, competition with peers for military preeminence, the suppression of toryism, and the maintenance of social stability. These tasks were integral to the Revolutionary struggle everywhere, but in the backcountry such compartmentalization was much more difficult and unnerving. Moreover, Preston's pre-Revolutionary success as a surveyor and speculator made him a man to be watched, and feared, by British officialdom and new-found associates in gentry.

Maturation (1755-1764)

William Preston had acquired experience, maturity, and standing by 1755 when his uncle James Patton died which would allow him to become a key leader in southwest Virginia. Through such offices as vestry clerk and assistant surveyor, he began developing political leadership skills and important contacts for even greater influence. He also possessed a modest amount of land from inheritance and purchases which formed the basis for becoming a major landholder. As a recently appointed militia captain, he was also developing crucial military experience in fighting Indians which would give him even greater status as a regional leader. During the next ten years through 1764, Preston experienced further maturation in all of these critical areas. He would receive appointment to additional offices, gain more land, marry and begin a family, develop commercial contacts, and lead Augusta militiamen and rangers into important engagements with the Indians. During this period he came out from under the shadow of his powerful uncle and matured into a leader and member of the elite in his own right.

The conflict between the French and English over who would control territory in the Ohio Valley dominated the lives of Preston and his fellow colonists in southwestern Virginia as they sought to purchase, develop, and sell lands on the frontier. Ultimately the efforts of both sides to enlist Indian allies on their side posed the greatest disruptions to the daily life of those families actually settled on the frontier. This war, later known as the French and Indian War, the Seven Year's War, or The Great War for Empire, ultimately became part of a larger world war.¹ But for Preston's fellow settlers on the frontier in Augusta County, the war constituted a local struggle by families to stay on their frontier lands in safety rather than a desire to help Great Britain add further territory or protect its empire. On the other hand, a few frontier leaders who worked as surveyors for the Ohio Company had a business stake in seeing that their land company's claims to lands in the Ohio territory be maintained in English hands.² Even though

¹At the time, colonists referred to this conflict simply as "the war." Although the term, "French and Indian War," does not accurately describe the conflict, this terminology will be used because of its general acceptance today. The French and English fought against each other in this war, but in reality different Indian tribes took sides and also battled against each other. In some cases, the Indian fights against each other went back many generations.

²General historical accounts of the French and Indian War consulted include Hayes Baker-Crothers, *Virginia and The French and Indian War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928); Billings, *Colonial*

Preston served as one of those surveyors, local motivations centered around a desire to live in peace on the frontier represented his major motivation for taking a leadership role in the upcoming war. For this reason, the focus here is on his role in the Augusta County response.

What began as a very optimistic July, 1755 for Governor Dinwiddie with hopes for a quick British victory over the French ended with an emergency call for a special session of the Virginia legislature to deal with the problems left as a result of Braddock's defeat and the growing threat of Indian attacks on the frontier. The withdrawal of regular troops of the British army leaving Virginia's borders completely exposed to attack created great dismay in Dinwiddie.³ The Governor's language in his opening address to the House of Burgesses on August 5 was vivid:

As the Road from F't Cumberland to the Ohio is now open'd and our Enemies possess'd of great Part of our Artillery, y's Colony is extremely laid open and expos'd to the Insults of a barbarous and inhuman Enemy, flush'd and elated with their late Success. This lays You, Gent'n, under an indispensable Necessity of doing ever Th'g y't may conduce to dislodge those Murderers and preserve our Fellow Subjects from the base and horrid Butcheries y't they have already given us so many exasperat'g Specimens of, and are impatient to repeat. . . . The brutal Savages who are lurk'g and prowl'g ab't our habitations to perpetrate the most cruel Outrages have justly subjected themselves to be consider'd rather as devour'g Beasts of Prey than hostile Men.

In Dinwiddie's view, Virginia faced a fight to preserve its religious and civil liberty.⁴ Within three days after giving this speech, the undeclared war came even closer as the burgesses received word of the death by Indians of one of its own members, James Patton.⁵ Sometime during this session, Preston also arrived in Williamsburg with direct news of his uncle's death.⁶

Virginia, 251-283; Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington. A Biography. Young Washington*, 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948); Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988); Patricia Givens Johnson, *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots* (Pulaski: B. D. Smith & Bros., 1976), 25-87 and *General Andrew Lewis of Roanoke and Greenbrier* (Blacksburg: Southern Printing Company, Inc., 1980), 20-122; F. B. Kegley, *Kegley's Virginia Frontier* (Roanoke: Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938), 206-297; Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), II:599-750; Walter Stitt Robinson, "Indian Policy of Colonial Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1950); Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786, Washington County, 1777-1870* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1979 reprint of 1903 edition), 55-107, and Chester Raymond Young, "The Effects of the French and Indian War on Civilian Life in the Frontier Counties of Virginia, 1754-1763" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1969). The most detailed account for Augusta County's involvement in the war can be found in Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia*, 2d ed. (Bridgewater, Virginia: C. J. Carrier Company, 1958 reprint of 1902 edition). For an overview of Governor Dinwiddie's role in the war, see Alden, *Dinwiddie*.

³Governor Dinwiddie to Governor De Lancey, 25 August 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:175. In later weeks, Dinwiddie complained even more strongly about the "blunder" of withdrawing British troops as "not consistent with military Discipline." He had hoped to once again attack the French by reinforcing the regular British troops with 1,000 Virginia troops before winter came. Dinwiddie to Governor Dobbs, 18 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:204.

⁴Address of Governor Dinwiddie to the House of Burgesses, 5 August 1755, *ibid.*, 2:134-135 and *JHB*, 1752-1755, 1756-1758, August 5, 1755, 297-299.

⁵8 August 1755, *Virginia Gazette* (William Hunter, pub.) and 15 August 1755, *JHB*, 1752-1755, 1756-1758, 307.

⁶"William Preston's account with Virginia," July 1755, PP-LC, 164 provides evidence that he came to Williamsburg during this period by noting, "To my Pocket Expenses going to and returning from Wmsburg for Orders from His Hon. the Governor after the Death of Col Patton."

These dramatic reports brought from the frontline by such individuals as Preston moved the legislature from its lethargy and it adopted four measures which helped confront the grave threat faced in Augusta County.⁷ A poll and land tax would support a ,40,000 issue of paper money for "raising, maintaining, arming, and providing" for 1,200 men to protect the frontier.⁸ As an incentive for joining the military, volunteers would receive a ,10 bonus and an exemption from most taxes. If not enough men could be raised from these incentives, the law also provided for a draft from the militia. However, a provision allowing a person to get out of military service by finding someone else to serve in his place or pay a ,10 fine somewhat weakened the law.⁹ Still, the law represented the strongest effort yet for raising an adequate military force to defend Virginia's frontier areas.

The law aided militia captains such as Preston who faced major problems of discipline by providing for a thorough accounting of all available men, better supplying of the militiamen, more regular musters, and stronger penalties for those who refused to cooperate.¹⁰ Further, another law provided for quick response to potential threats by allowing militia officers to call out their militia, before notifying the county lieutenant, upon the report of any invasion or insurrection.¹¹

To provide an even greater incentive for frontiersmen to look for Indians, frontiersmen would receive a ,10 scalp fee for any Indian above the age of twelve taken prisoner or killed. Of course, problems developed with this kind of an incentive when whites killed members of Indian tribes allied with the English and colonists such as the Cherokees just to get the scalping fee or because of confusion.¹² Even with their Indian allies, a tendency existed among Virginians to lump all Indians together, even though at this time they had strong allies among the Cherokees. The Shawnees of the Six Nations posed the greatest threat until 1759 when the Cherokees switched sides. Even the preamble to the scalping act reveals this colonial attitude with no differentiation made between Indians:

Whereas divers cruel and barbarous murders have been lately committed in the upper part of this colony, by Indians, supposed to be in the interest of the French, without any provocation from us, and contrary to the laws of nature and nations, and they still continue in sculking parties, to perpetrate their barbarous and savage cruelties, in the most base and treacherous manner, torturing, killing and scalping, not only our men, who

⁷The proceedings of the special session are recorded in 5 August 1755 - 23 August 1755, JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758, 295-315.

⁸In later weeks, Dinwiddie wrote to fellow governors about having these troops "learn the Exercise" over the winter to be ready for joining forces sent during the spring from Great Britain to take on the French again. Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, 20 September 1755, Dinwiddie Papers, 2:206.

⁹"An Act for raising the sum of forty thousand pounds, for the protection of his majesty's subjects on the frontiers of this colony," Hening, Statutes, 6:521-520.

¹⁰"An act for the better regulating and training the Militia," ibid., 6:530-544.

¹¹"An act for amending an act, intituled, An act for making provision against invasions and insurrections," ibid., 6:544-550.

¹²In a message from Dinwiddie to the Catawba and Cherokees, he asked them to make certain that they traveled with a white person in Virginia to avoid any confusion which might be "attended with some bad Consequences." He also asked if they could "contrive some Mark of Distinct'n to know You from our Enemies." 22 August 1755, Dinwiddie Papers, 2:168-9. In the October 1755 session of the House of Burgesses, the ,10 scalping fee extended to friendly Indians who killed enemy Indians. "An Act to amend an act, intituled, An Act for preventing and repelling the hostile incursions of the Indians, at enmity with the inhabitants of this colony." Hening, Statutes, 6:564-5.

live dispersedly in the frontiers, but also their helpless wives and children, sparing neither age nor sex; for prevention of which shocking inhumanities, and for repelling such malicious and detestable enemies.¹³

Virginians had seen too many years of shifting alliances with Indian tribes who understandably sought agreements most advantageous to their own interests. In the view of many colonists, all Indians, even their allies, represented a slightly subhuman and untrustworthy category of people. They had little sympathy for the genuine needs of the native Americans who feared further encroachments on their lands.¹⁴

Governor Dinwiddie in a further attempt to defend the frontier gave George Washington the commission of colonel to serve as commander-in-chief of the Virginia forces being raised to fight the French and Indians. The governor hoped that in the Spring of 1756 this force would be effective enough to regain control of the forts in Ohio.¹⁵ And it was hoped that local county leaders such as William Preston with the support of the previously mentioned laws would be able to better defend their communities. Preston probably received orders while still in Williamsburg to join his recently recruited company of rangers with those of Major John Smith to "scower the woods" for the enemy, urge people to return to their plantations, and begin the process of building a series of forts along the Augusta County border as an encouragement for colonists to feel protected.¹⁶ With continuing Indian attacks taking place throughout the frontier, many settlers, fearing their "wholesale destruction," moved to more populated areas.¹⁷ Through these measures, Dinwiddie hoped to avoid calling out the nearly useless militia and instead, to rely upon ranger companies headed by captains like Preston until the colony could strengthen the regular regimental army.¹⁸

By the end of August, 1755, rumors continued to mount that the French and Indians would very soon launch an attack on the Augusta borders where Preston now patrolled with his rangers, thus taking advantage of the absence of regular troops on the border. Meanwhile, the desertion rate among the militia and even officers reached alarming numbers.¹⁹ Obviously the

¹³"An act for preventing and repelling the hostile incursion of the Indians, at enmity with the inhabitants of this colony," *ibid.*, 6:550-2.

¹⁴Young, "Effects of French and Indian War," 27, points out that the French managed to get Indian allies more easily because their notions of land ownership corresponded more closely: "Even though Indians were hunters, they were primarily tillers of the soil. Fundamental in their concept of ownership of land was its communal use for farming and hunting. The French *coureurs de bois* had accommodated themselves to this fact of Indian life; accordingly, they enjoyed greater rapport and camaraderie with the red huntsmen than did the British, who thought of land as property to be exclusively and personally possessed."

¹⁵Commission from Governor Dinwiddie to Colonel George Washington, 14 August 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:184 and Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, 20 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:206.

¹⁶Although no evidence exists that Preston received these orders personally, it seems very likely that the Governor would have talked with him when Preston visited Williamsburg with news of his uncle's death. Governor Dinwiddie to Major John Smith, 11 August 1755, *ibid.*, 2:153-4 and Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, 25 August 1755, *ibid.*, 2:171.

¹⁷Baker-Crothers, *French and Indian War*, 83.

¹⁸Governor Dinwiddie wrote to Colonel John Buchanan on 11 August 1755: "I am sorry to hear from You y't the Militia is not to be depended on or will they obey Orders, w'ch makes it obvious they have not been properly disciplin'd or kept in proper Com'd. . ." *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:154-5. Young writes in "Effects of French and Indian War," 98, that next to the regular colonial regimental army the ranger company provided the next greatest use of manpower. This afforded great opportunities for employment of frontiersmen with a "minimum amount of dislocation."

¹⁹Governor Dinwiddie to Lord Fairfax, 25 August 1755, *ibid.*, 2:178-9 and Governor Dinwiddie to Colonel

new militia laws did not work. These rumors came to fruition in September in the Greenbrier area when Indians killed twelve or thirteen colonists and took another ten as prisoners including eight children.²⁰ Throughout the entire frontier area of Virginia, Dinwiddie reported that "flying Parties robbed our frontier Settlem'ts, murdered and carried off[f] above 100 of our People and burnt all their Houses."²¹ This reality caused even further desertions and families fleeing from their farms, a fact that bothered Dinwiddie greatly. The governor became so upset that he requested a list of names of all who left their plantations. It was not easy for him to sense the true feelings of danger on the frontier from the governor's palace in Williamsburg.²²

To counteract this problem, Dinwiddie agreed with Preston's request that he "range the Woods," urging him not to stay in one place but to go wherever he thought the Indians might annoy the settlers.²³ He asked Preston to stay on duty with his rangers until Christmas when cold weather would diminish the threat of Indian attacks. The arrival of Cherokee allies was also expected who would remain through the winter to help guard the frontier--good news for the beleaguered frontier.

The governor gave permission for Preston to impress tools from local inhabitants in order to build forts located at strategic places where frontiersmen could come when threatened by Indian attacks.²⁴ Not a great deal is known about the first fort built by Preston during the fall, but later records refer to Fort William or Fort Preston, named after its young builder.²⁵ Preston took a

T. B. Martin, 26 August 1755, *ibid.*, 2:179-180.

²⁰The "Preston Register" lists twelve but Dinwiddie cites thirteen in writing to Major Andrew Lewis on 15 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:198.

²¹Dinwiddie to General Shirley, 18 October 1755, *ibid.*, 2:244. By 31 October 1755 in a letter to Governor Morris, Dinwiddie's estimates lowered to eighty frontier settlers being "murdered and taken off." *Ibid.*, 2:259.

²²Governor Dinwiddie wrote to Major Andrew Lewis: "I think the People in Augusta in general have not acted with proper Spirit in not resist'g the flying Parties of the barbarous Ind's. This I think, w'n I consider the No. of Y'r Militia and the small No. of Ind's y't do the Mischief." 15 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:198-9. On 20 September 1755, he wrote to Captain Overton: "I am perswaded if the People of Augusta had exerted themselves the few flying Parties of Ind's c'd not have succeeded so as to murder so many People; but they are seiz'd with a Shameful Panick, so as to leave their Estates and Crops." *Ibid.*, 2:210-1.

²³Governor Dinwiddie to Captain William Preston, 15 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:199-200. He also gave Preston permission for his rangers to use unharvested grain left by settlers who fled due to their fears of being attacked. The number of rangers Preston had under his control is unknown for this time. Dinwiddie asked Captain Overton to find out how many rangers Preston and Captain Smith commanded. Apparently the governor had gotten word from Preston that he had thirty men under his control, but Overton alluded to the possibility that he had much fewer. Governor Dinwiddie to Captain Overton, 20 September 1755, *ibid.*, 2:210-1.

²⁴After Preston's fort was completed, Dinwiddie wrote Colonel David Stewart on 26 November 1755 that the inhabitants should initially take care of themselves "and if attack'd may be protected by his Fort and Y't of C't. Preston's." *Ibid.*, 2:288.

²⁵Young, "Effects of French and Indian War," 168-171, describes several types of forts including a fortified house, blockhouse, stockade, station, and a fort proper. It appears that Preston built a "fort proper," described by Young as "a combination of blockhouses, stockades, and log cabins. Rectangular in form, the fort consisted of two or four blockhouses located at the corners. The stockades and cabins forming the intervening outer walls of the fort were indented about two feet from the exterior walls of the blockhouses' first story, thus affording to defenders within a blockhouse the command of the adjacent outside walls of the fort. Along at least one side of the fort were ranged log cabins for the occupancy of families who fled there in time of alarm. The outer walls of the cabins were sometimes ten or twelve feet in height; cabin roofs sloped inward. The floors of the cabins were earthen or made of puncheons. A fort had one gate, made of heavy timber, and placed on the side nearest the water supply." Evidence for Preston's being a "fort proper," comes from a bill he paid to Charles Stringham "for making a large Gate for in the Fort." "WP statement of account vs. country," 15 January - 19 May 1756," PP-DM, IQQ 129.

very personal view of this fort, continually referring to it as "my fort."²⁶ Part of a series of forts, Preston's was located on the South Branch of Catawba Creek guarding Catawba Valley and Stone Coal Gap's opening to the Greenbrier.²⁷ At least sixteen rangers helped in the task of building the fort and later received a reward of six gallons of whiskey for their efforts.²⁸

With a fort being built that served like a local tourist attraction, the Cherokees who visited Preston and his men also had to be kept happy. Virginians did not want to lose their valuable allies and tried to keep them satisfied with various gifts. In September Preston purchased for their Indian visitors four gallons of rum, ten pounds of tobacco, a shirt for a "Cherroke Indian going to the Catawbo Nation," three dozen pipes, and an "extraordinary fine tamohak for a Cherroke Warrior."²⁹ A month later Indians visited the fort while Preston was absent and his friend and subordinate, David Robinson, reported that they had

endeavour'd to pay them all Deference imaginable. We were obliged to send for Rum in the Night that we might answer their Expectations, and accommodate them to their Satisfaction.³⁰

During the fall of 1755 Preston's men spent much of their time "ranging the woods" looking for the French and Shawnees.³¹ It was difficult work and to prevent them from becoming too tired, he divided them into two detachments.³² No evidence exists that any more settlers were killed by Indians in 1755, but the possibility of Indian attack was always present and they lived in a constant state of tension.³³ Only the occasional arrival in camp of one like Mr. Stringham claiming to be a captain provided diversion and relief. Robinson reported that "we have metamorphosed him into a common Soldier till you [Preston] return."³⁴

Preston's role as a ranger captain involved more than recruitment, supervision, and oversight. Detailed financial and personnel records had to be kept. Most of the expenses had to

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷"Location of the forts," [9 November 1756], Washington Writings, 1:490.

²⁸The reward was made in November according to "Preston accounts with Virginia, July-November 1755," PP-LC, 164.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰David Robinson to [WP?], 14 October 1755, PP-DM, 1QQ 88-9. He also had to send for a fresh supply of beef because their Indian visitors ate so much.

³¹Dinwiddie to William Preston, 18 October 1755, Dinwiddie Papers, 2:246-7.

³²David Robinson to William Preston, 14 October 1755, PP-DM, 1QQ 88-9.

³³No more names were recorded for 1755 in "Preston's Register," PP-DM, 1QQ 83. George Washington wrote Dinwiddie from Winchester on 11 October 1755, Dinwiddie Papers, 2:238-9 about false rumors spreading in regard to Indians being around. He received reports that a party of Indians were seen twelve miles away. Before sending off militiamen and rangers to find the Indians, a further report came that the Indians were now four miles from town and "were killing and destroying all before them . . . had heard constant Firing and the Shrieks of the unhappy Murder'd." When finally arriving at the noise, they discovered three drunken soldiers "carousing, firing their Pistols, and uttering the most unheard of Imprecations." Washington concluded, "These Circumstances are related only to show what a panick prevails among the People, how much they are alarm'd at the most usual and customary Crys, and yet how impossible it is to get them to act in any respect for their common safety's."

³⁴David Robinson to [WP?], 14 October 1755, PP-DM, 1QQ 88. Robinson was also sensitive a month later when he reported that Mr. Pearis, a trader who had become close to the Indians, wrote Robinson that he had sent twenty Indians and three white men as far as "your Fort to try if they can find the Track of the Enemy." Robinson commented, "As if we were such stupid indolent Creatures as not to be able to discover the Enemy, tho' passing by, and skulking about our own Fort: but perhaps this a wrong criticism."

be funded personally and then billed to the government for reimbursement.³⁵ For example, he paid for food and lodging for his company at ordinaries when they were available and it appears he even used his own mother's ordinary on occasion.³⁶ In addition, his men used him as a kind of bank, borrowing money and buying goods from him purchased for the company.³⁷ Thus, a ranger captain had to be able to fund significant expenditures. While Preston usually maintained very accurate records, Dinwiddie complained in October, 1755 to him that he had not yet received a certified copy of his muster roll and refused to send any money until this responsibility had been completed. Apparently Preston wrote earlier asking for provisions. Dinwiddie reported that lead had already been sent; powder would be coming soon; but no arms or blankets were available.³⁸

The regular October session of the House of Burgesses, as the result of the failure of voluntary recruiting efforts, attempted to give a commander such as Washington on a colony-wide level and a captain like Preston on the local county level further authority to force men into military service.³⁹ The new law provided the death penalty for any soldier who mutinied or deserted, or for any officer who refused to obey orders from a superior officer.⁴⁰ Despite the new law Dinwiddie was disgusted with this session of the legislature for several reasons. Reflecting worries about the wisdom of paper money, he did not like their idea of issuing , 200,000 of paper money and charged them with neglecting their duty. Furthermore, only half of the members came to the session and they fell into "factious and ill tim'd Disputes." For these reasons, he dissolved the session in order to take a chance on a new election which he hoped would have "more good Temper and Inclinat'n for the public Good."⁴¹

Dinwiddie's call for a new election gave Preston the opportunity to run for a seat in the House of Burgesses vacated by his uncle's death. He may not have been ready for such a post since his only experiences in public life had been as a vestry clerk and assistant surveyor. In the military, he held the second lowest officer rank of captain. He did own a sizable amount of land compared to most frontiersmen, but his lack of a wife and family further illustrated that he might need more time to gain more maturity and experience before being a viable candidate. Perhaps the black suit he ordered in November became part of his campaign clothes as he traveled around the county recruiting more rangers and seeking votes at the same time.⁴²

If Dinwiddie was hoping for a more docile legislature, the election in Augusta County in which Preston ran as a candidate served as an omen of future trouble. In fact, this election

³⁵Many examples of such accounts by Preston exist in PP-DM, 1QQ 129 and PP-LC, 164, 170, and 179.

³⁶In the July-November 1755 accounts by Preston with Virginia, , 11.10.2 was charged for "Mrs. Preston Tavern kepr as per acct." This must have represented several days because expenses for one night for sixteen men as reported by Preston in the same account generally ran around 8 or 10 shillings. PP-LC, 164. In an account with Edward McDonald, credit was given Preston for "2 nights quarters at yr mothers." PP-LC, 173.

³⁷"1755 Soldier's accounts with Preston," PP-LC, 153.

³⁸Dinwiddie to William Preston, 18 October 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:246-7.

³⁹Washington urged Dinwiddie to place the militia under tighter controls or he would have to decline further service as commander of the Virginia forces. He complained, "In all things, I meet with the greatest opposition. No orders are obey'd, but what a party of Soldiers, or my own drawn Sword Enforces . . . I see the growing Insolence of the Soldiers, the Indolence and Inactivity of the Officers . . ." *Ibid.*, 2:237.

⁴⁰"An Act to amend an act, intituled, An Act for amending an act, intituled, An Act for making provision against invasions and insurrectons," Hening, *Statutes*, 6:559-564.

⁴¹Dinwiddie to Governor Dobbs, 13 November 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:266 and Dinwiddie to the Lords of Trade, 15 November 1755, *ibid.*, 2:269.

⁴²"Preston accounts with James Donnelson," Nita Blincoe Collection, VSL, 21373 and 30 March 1756, *JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, 347. Preston charges Virginia L3.17.6 for recruiting at the November court session. PP-LC, 164.

became the focus of a chapter in Charles Sydnor's classic book, Gentlemen Freedholders, entitled, "Tumults and Riots."⁴³ The election probably took place on a regular court day on December 17 when Augusta County residents came to Staunton in order to handle other business which helped increase the size of the electorate. The election occurred in the county courtroom and centered around a table with the sheriff, James Lockhart, seated at the center and Preston with other candidates seated at the end surrounded by the candidate's hired clerks who kept track of the vote for their candidate. As the voter came to the table, the sheriff called his name and asked how he intended to vote. The clerk for the candidate then wrote down his vote which meant those assembled in the room could constantly see who was winning the election. Efforts could then be made to get more voters for your candidate. Balloting was supposed to stop when the sheriff determined that all voters had carried out their duty. Heightening the problems at these elections was the treating of voters by the candidates with large amounts of liquor which further contributed to a poor atmosphere.

In Preston's election the sheriff reported to the House of Burgesses that he could not finish the balloting process because the people were "so tumultuous and riotous." When asked by the House who the "chief movers of tumult were," Lockhart identified Richard Woods, David Cloyd, and Joseph Lapsley who all happened to be supporters of Preston's election. The House ordered that these three men appear before the Committee of Privileges and Elections.⁴⁴ The investigation proceeded through the March-May 1756 session. Preston asked Burgess Edmund Pendleton to assist his supporters.⁴⁵ The three accused men arrived on April 23 claiming their complete innocence which they testified could be backed up by many witnesses who could not come in person "especially at this Time, when their Families would be exposed to Danger from the Enemy."⁴⁶

One year later the Committee finally produced their report and found "great Contrariety of Evidence." On one hand the three accused Preston supporters reported

the Poll was taken till towards the Evening, when the People crowded into the Court-House and pressed upon the Sheriff, who struck several of the Freeholders with his Staff on the Shins, and pushed them with the same in the Breast and other Parts of the Body, and threatened to push it down their Throats if they did not keep back: That he was desired to summon a Guard to keep the Crowd off, and that the Petitioner Woods offered to be one of the Guard: That the Sheriff whispered to several Freeholders as they came to vote to know who they were for, and then refused to take their Votes: That he several Times during the Election left the Court-House, which stopped the same while he was out: That after Candles were lighted the Petitioners Lapsley and Cloyd came to give their

⁴³Charles S. Sydnor's book was later reprinted as American Revolutionaries in the Making. Political Practices in Washington's Virginia (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 24-6.

⁴⁴30 March 1756, JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758, 381.

⁴⁵Apparently Preston had written to Pendleton with this request, because on 12 May 1756, Pendleton wrote Preston, "From the several papers produced by Mr. Cloyd & friends, I was fully satisfied of their Innocence & on your request & Col. Buchannons as well as my regard to Justice, was inclined to Assist them, but as the Sheriff was supposed to Act upon Oath when he returned them as the principal movers of the Riot, & was not present to answer for himself nor had he attended their taking Depositions so that it was entirely ex parte, for this reason & as the Sherif will meet with the Censure of the House upon their acquitting themselves, we could do no less than refer the matter to the next Session & direct the taking of Depositions in the mean time regularly upon notices given on both sides and the Costs to be paid by the Sherif or the others, which ever is Adjudged in fault." PP-DM, 1QQ 125.

⁴⁶23 April 1756, JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758, 381.

Votes, and the Sheriff seized Lapsley by the Breast and pushed him backwards on a Bench, upon which Cloyd, with some Warmth, said, "Collar me too Sir;" that Lapsely and Cloyd then gave in their Votes, and the Poll as continued some Time afterwards.

Naturally the sheriff presented a far different account to the Committee:

That while the Poll was taking the Petitioner Lapsley pulled out his Purse in the Court-Yard and offered to wager that Mr. Preston and Mr. Alexander, two of the Candidates, would go Burgesses, and that he and his Party would carry the Day; and that the Petitioner Woods was noisy and loud in the Interest of Mr. Alexander, and offered to wager as Lapsley did: That when the Crowd pressed on the Sheriff he endeavoured to keep them back in a civil Manner, by putting his Stick across their Breasts, and summoned a Guard to assist him, which was broke thro': That a Person came out of the Court-House and said to Cloyd, "The Election is going against us," who answered, "It should not, if we cannot carry it one Way we will have it another: I will put a Stop to the Election;" and immediately the Crowd increased: That when Lapsley pressed thro' the Crowd to give his Vote the Sheriff desired him to keep back, but he pushed on and seized the Sheriff and pushed him against the Table: That after Lapsley and Cloyd had voted, the Sheriff desired them to withdraw, which they did not do, and in a short Time afterwards the Candles were struck out by the Petitioner Woods, and the Riot began which put an End to the Election, the Sheriff being thrown on the Table, which was broke under him, and the Clerks fled to the Bench; and during the Tumult Lapsley called out, "Lads, Stand by me. I'll pay the Fine, cost what it will: You know I am able." And all the said last mentioned Depositions mention that there was no unbecoming Behaviour in the Sheriff that Day."

The Committee stated their conviction that the three accused men had not proven their allegations. The burgesses then voted to reimburse the sheriff for his expenses in coming to the legislature and to charge Preston's supporters--Woods, Cloyd, and Lapsley--for those expenses.⁴⁷ The decision represented a serious blow against Preston. The first issue surrounding his name before the House of Burgesses involved his supporters thwarting an election from taking place. Perhaps the embarrassment of this defeat is the major reason why another ten years would pass before Preston once again tried to win election to the House of Burgesses, only the next time he would win. By that time, he had also fulfilled the steps of maturation and seasoning necessary to be considered a viable candidate and his membership in the elite was more of an established fact.

William Preston's abortive election effort did not leave much time to bemoan for active plans had to be developed for a spring offensive against the Shawnees who were creating the greatest problems for Augusta County. Virginians had thus far employed only defensive measures, but now offensive efforts would be contemplated. Dinwiddie, as part of the process,

⁴⁷2 May 1757, *ibid.*, 446-7. McCleskey attempts to argue that Woods, Cloyd, and Lapsley were owners of sizable landholdings but were angry because they had not received the kind of public office they felt they deserved. He further argues that in the case of Lapsley and Woods, they had been part of Lewis's party that had lost their positions in a power struggle with Patton and were reacting to this loss. McCleskey never mentions Preston as a candidate in this election but focuses on their support of Archibald Alexander who had also been denied offices. His thesis weakens by the fact that they also supported Preston, the protege of Patton, their former opponent. "Across the Divide," 223-230.

first ordered Preston and Captain John Smith to draft sixty men from their two companies to go on an expedition under the command of Smith. Preston was to stay with the remaining men to range the country and protect county inhabitants.⁴⁸ The governor also sent two members of the Council, Peter Randolph and William Byrd, to meet with the Cherokee and Catawba Indians to work for a treaty of alliance to prevent these two tribes from being wooed away by the French.⁴⁹ He also hoped to persuade them to augment the force of 130 Cherokees who had been helping with frontier defense and to join with a Virginia force in an attack on Shawnee towns on the Ohio River near the current Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The two tribes agreed when it was promised that a fort would be built to protect their families in their absence.⁵⁰

Dinwiddie appointed Preston's second cousin, Major Andrew Lewis, to command this expedition against the Shawnees. He, along with 220 rangers and volunteers and 130 Cherokees, was ordered to attack the Shawnees in their towns and "to punish them for y'r Insults and great Barbarities."⁵¹ But Washington's reservations and predictions that the expedition would "prove abortive" because the Shawnees had moved further up the river to Fort Duquesne were rejected by Dinwiddie.⁵²

Major Lewis began the process of carrying out his directives with the first order going to his cousin, William Preston, informing him that, pending the governor's approval, he would probably be needed on the expedition.⁵³ The governor responded by leaving the decision to Lewis but urged him, "use all possible Frugality."⁵⁴ With this permission, Lewis then ordered Preston to rendezvous with the Cherokees and other assembled troops at Fort Frederick on the New River with an officer, two sergeants, two corporals, and thirty men in addition to whatever horses were necessary for baggage and provisions including 2,000 pounds of beef.⁵⁵ Before Preston's men would march, they insisted on their pay which he provided out of his own pocket.⁵⁶

Preston was joined by four other officers in Lewis's command and Richard Pearis, a Cherokee trader and major contact with the Indians, who Dinwiddie hoped in vain would behave "well and keeps sober." He also expressed great concern that Outacite, the Cherokee's chief, be shown "proper Regard and Respect" and hoped that "every Thing will prove easy and agreeable."⁵⁷

The Sandy Creek Expedition had little impact on the ultimate outcome of the war, but

⁴⁸Dinwiddie to Captains Preston and Smith, 15 December 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:295-6. If Preston and Smith divided the sixty men between their two companies, each would have to draft thirty, a real challenge for Preston who had only thirty-seven men under his command according to financial records he filed with Virginia on 25 January 1756. PP-LC, 179.

⁴⁹Dinwiddie gave instructions to Byrd and Randolph and messages to the Catawbans and Cherokees on 23 December 1755. *Ibid.*, 2:298-305.

⁵⁰On 20 April 1756 the House of Burgesses appointed Major Andrew Lewis and Captain Samuel Overton to oversee construction of this fort, later known as Fort Loudoun, *JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, 372 and Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II:689.

⁵¹Preston had also worked closely under Andrew's brother, Thomas, as an Assistant Surveyor. Dinwiddie's instructions to Major Lewis, 15 January 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:320-2. The numerical breakdown was given in a letter from Dinwiddie to the Earl of Halifax, 24 February 1756. *Ibid.*, 2:348.

⁵²Washington to Dinwiddie, 13 January 1756, *ibid.*, 2:315-6 and *Washington Writings*, 1:285-6.

⁵³Andrew Lewis to Preston, 28 January 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 94.

⁵⁴Dinwiddie to Lewis, 6 February 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:336-7.

⁵⁵David Stewart signed a receipt for 2,000 pounds of beef to Preston on 10 February 1756, PP-LC, 182.

⁵⁶Preston revealed this detail to Dinwiddie on 8 April 1756 after the expedition ended and he was requesting reimbursement of his expenses. PP-DM, 1QQ 124.

⁵⁷Dinwiddie to Lewis, 6 February 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:336-7.

because of three eyewitness reports it serves as one of the most dramatic accounts of any colonial military expedition. Preston's report is the most detailed but ends early. However, it provides information concerning the problems encountered and illustrates why it was so difficult to get men to volunteer and why desertion rates soared so high during wars of this period.⁵⁸

The expedition began on February 7, 1756 when Preston and his thirty-two men marched three days in order to join Lewis and the other companies totaling 340 soldiers including Indians. As they marched past the Cherokee camps, they saluted their Indian allies by firing guns which the Indians "returned with great Joy & afterwards honour'd with a War Dance." Several days after they began, Reverend John Brown, a Presbyterian minister and Preston's brother-in-law, preached the first of several sermons which provided solace and motivation for the company. On February 13, upon conclusion of the first parade by the soldiers, Yellow Bird and Round O were granted commissions as officers by Lewis. Word now came from James Burke that Shawnees had killed one man and taken five horses nearby. Even though only four hostile Indians were involved, a Council of War decided to send sixty white men and forty Indians out next morning to look for the perpetrators. Illustrating the tolerance of different cultures, on Sunday, the 15th, they heard an "Excelently Treated upon" sermon by Reverend Brown in the morning and concluded the day watching Indians dance a "Grand War Dance." Preston finished his day by taking a "cold bath in the River." Two days later those remaining at the camp discovered thirty horses missing which resulted in a small detachment being sent to find them, further delaying the departure of Preston's company for another two days. Still another sermon was preached, this time by Preston's former teacher, John Craig. When they finally left camp on the 19th, the journey lasted twenty miles where they "Lodged very well on his [William Sayer's] barn floor."

On Friday, the 20th, Preston experienced firsthand the cultural differences between the Indians and English. He "had occasion to switch one of the soldiers for misbehavior" for "swearing profanely" which incensed the Indian chiefs because they never used such punishment. As a result, the Indians left camp claiming that they knew a closer way to the Shawnees but in reality they were deserting the English. The next day Major Lewis, along with Indian trader Pearis, found the Indians and "with many persuasive Arguments prevailed on them to Return & Join the Army which they Did in the Evening to our great Satisfisfaction."

The first two weeks had been relatively easy. But beginning on Monday, February 23, conditions worsened. Hard rains fell making their trip over a mountain very difficult. That night they lost more horses at Bear Garden on the North Branch of Holston River. The next day they marched nine miles and "with great trouble & Fatigue" went over another two mountains finally arriving at Burk's Garden.⁵⁹ Compounding their fatigue was the snow which fell that night. Next day orders to hunt for food in order to avoid using provisions brought complaints from Preston's company since he had killed only "one poor Turkey" after seven hours of hunting. The contingent next crossed three large mountains with "great Difficulty" and arrived after dark at the head of Clinch where they joined with other soldiers who had been looking for Indians. That night

⁵⁸The three reports include William Preston's diary from 9 February - 13 March 1756, 1QQ 96-123; Thomas Morton's diary for 3-6 March 1756, *The Virginia Historical Register*, IV (July, 1851), 143-7, and a letter from an indentured servant of Preston's, Thomas Lloyd, to Edmond Hector, October 1756, with a typewritten summary in High Court of Admiralty (H.C.A.) Survey Report No. 5703; 5440, VSL and the actual letter in H.C.A. 30/258, VSL, Reel 452. Unless otherwise noted in footnotes, this account is based on Preston's diary.

⁵⁹Preston described this land up from Reed Creek as "a Tract of Land of about 5 or 6,000 Acres, as Rich & Fertile as any I ever saw, it is well watered with many beautiful Streams & Lyes Surrounded with Mountains almost Inaccessable." "Preston's Diary," PP-DM, 1QQ 104. Kegley, *Virginia Frontier*, 195 described it as a "famous wilderness garden."

rain fell again giving Preston "great Uneasiness as I was Ill Provided for a Tent." Because Preston had sent his personal riding horse home the previous Sunday with Col. Buchanan's servant "which I soon after Repented," he now bought a little horse to carry him further. Heavy rain continued to fall the next two days which "brought great Trouble & Fatigue," especially since they had to cross swollen creeks numerous times. Meanwhile, hunters sent out for food sometimes came back with buffalo and deer, but on other days found nothing, further increasing the hunger level of the soldiers.

The "Sabbath Day" (Sunday, the 29th) was spent "very Disagreeably." On the twelve mile journey down Sandy Creek they crossed the creek an incredible sixty-six times. The pack horses became so tired they could not even carry their loads further. The month of March arrived like a lion with Preston seeing "Lightning to the West and heard Thunder" before daybreak which did not prevent him from taking another cold bath in the river. Due to a "great Gust of Thunder hail & Rain," they shortened their journey to six miles that day and stayed in a "very Inconvenient place" on the large bend of the creek. A hunter reported evidence that the enemy had been there two days earlier setting out animal traps. With food running scarce again, the men received half of their normal allowance of beef. By mid-week conditions worsened further with nearly impassable roads, numerous river crossings, and mountains which "Closed in on Both Sides."⁶⁰ Now they ran out of meat completely, forcing them to rely on their hunting which produced a few bears for food. To compound problems further, their horses began wandering off looking for food since the campsite had none. Meanwhile their search for Shawnees based on earlier reported sightings resulted in failure.

The exhausted soldiers began a fifteen mile journey on Friday, March 5. Continued crossings of the river resulted in some men almost dying due to the "utmost Extremity for want of Provisions." Preston's recently purchased horse died and he was "left on foot with a Hungry Belly which Increased my Woe -- & indeed it was the Case with almost Every man in the Company." That night one of the volunteers killed an elk but the starving Indians took half of it "which disgusted the Volunteers very much."⁶¹

The expedition now entered a critical phase with food supplies running short and the men completely exhausted. Thomas Morton described his feelings on Friday in the following manner:

We were now in a pitiable condition our men looking on [one] another with Tears in their Eyes, and lamenting that they had ever Enter'd in to a Soldier's life, and indeed our circumstances were very shocking, for in our Camps was little else but cursing, swearing, confusion and complaining and among our officers much selfishness and ambition which naturally produced deivision and contention and a discouragement in all the thoughtful.

At this point Morton, obviously a man with strong religious convictions, felt it would have been dishonorable to God for the colonists to have won. Religion was not only neglected but "his'd [hissed] out of company with contempt as tho' it had carried a deadly infection with it," despite the fact that, as Preston reported, several sermons had already been preached. Morton also found problems of disunity among the officers. He described Lewis as behaving with "sobriety and

⁶⁰"Morton's Diary" begins on March 3 and continues through March 8. As reported in *The Virginia Historical Register*, IV (July, 1851), 143-4, the diary was found in an account book used by Thomas Morton who owned an ordinary in New Kent. Apparently several pages of the diary had been torn out when found by family members. Some of the details of the Sandy Creek expedition will come from his account.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

with prudence," but found Captain Peter Hogg dominating the decision-making and "scarcely" treating the soldiers with "humanity." The contrast to the Indians "might shame us, for they were in general quite unanimous and brotherly."

The week ended with the Cherokees proposing to make bark canoes to carry themselves and the company's ammunition and flour down the river. But the soldiers had reached their limit by this point and threatened to return home. Preston took their concerns to Major Lewis "which very much Concern'd him & had no way to please them but to order a Cask of Butter to be Divided among them which was no more than a taste to Each man." Their hunger increased even more to the point "that our Strength is now almost exhausted, and [we have] never been allowed to hunt but very little, and now we are not able and if we were, this place is barren, so that there is little or thing to be kil'd."⁶²

The week beginning with Sunday, March 7, started with Preston's company joining a total group of one hundred who took the company's horses to search for hunting grounds. Morton reported that their journey continued to be difficult because

Our case grew more and more lamentable as the way was now much worse than ever, and the creek now impassable by Horses, and the mountains higher and worse than ever on all accounts and lying in larger Clifts on the river.

Preston wrote, "our hunger & want Still Increased, as we Could not get any Flesh meat & had but one pound of flour allowed to Each Man." One can only wonder how Preston's men held out this long, but they now reached their limit. They informed Preston that they intended to go home because

they were fainty & Weak in hunger and could not Travel the Mountains or Wade the Rivers as they formerly had done, & that there was no Game in the Mountains Nor no appearance of a Level Country.

Preston hoped to dissuade them by offering to kill some horses for food but his soldiers refused. If it was for going home, they might agree, "but It was no Diet Proper to Sustain men on a longer March against an Enemy." In spite of these arguments, Preston had enough influence and credibility to convince his men to at least go one more day. Monday's tortuous journey ended with two elks being killed and divided unequally among the soldiers for food

to the no small Joy of Every Man In Company, for by that Time hunger appeared in all our Faces & most of us were got Weak & Feeble & had we not got that Relief I doubt not but several of the men would have died with hunger, their Cries and Complaints were Pitiful and Shocking & more so as the Officers could not give them any help, for they were in equal want with the Men.

Morton reported that he, Preston, and John Breckinridge, shared their small portion which amounted to two pounds per man, "but near half of it bone." He also noted that a great number of the men "here have this day fallen on a resolution to go back, for we can see nothing before us

⁶²Ibid.

but inevitable destruction."⁶³

Tuesday's events further confirmed the men's desire to return home when several men who spent the day hunting and viewing the country came back with a disturbing report. After climbing a tall mountain, all they could see ahead were "several prodigious great Mountains . . . so that the Country Behind them appeared level in Comparison to that we had to travel"--an account which understandably "very much Disturbed the Men," leading all of them to agree that they would return home the next day. Preston called the officers together and they agreed to advise their men to stay until Major Lewis arrived with the remaining men. Preston summarized his feelings, "I was in utmost Disorder & Confusion to think of the men Returning in Such a Manner which would Infallibly Ruin the Expedition." Heavy rain fell again all night. The next day Preston decided to use the most personal argument to convince the men to stay. He told them that if they left, "I would be blamed for it & my Character would Suffer." Further illustrating the high standing Preston had with his men, they agreed to stay as did the other companies.⁶⁴ An emergency message went to Lewis requesting his immediate presence in the camp. That afternoon word came that the canoes carrying provisions would leave that morning.

In spite of their promises to stay, Preston had to put further pressure on Thursday for his men to wait a little longer until Lewis arrived. A little venison to feed his company helped convince his men to stay. That afternoon two Indians came in a canoe to inform the camp that Lewis and the rest of the company would arrive that night. But the arguing continued throughout the day. An encouraging report came from two scouts who reported seeing signs of buffaloes, elks, and turkies which

Pleased the Officers very much; But it Rather increased the Mutiny among the Men for they Looked upon the Report to be formed only to Draw them So much farther from home, & said were the game ever so plenty it was Impossible to Support 340 Men by it as there was nothing Else to Depend upon & if they Porceeded any Further they must Inevitably Perish with hunger which they Looked upon to be more Inglorious than to Return & be yet Serviceable to their County when properly Provided for.

Preston acknowledged that the men had a good argument. They had been sent out on the expedition with only fifteen days of provisions for a three hundred mile journey. Ultimately this lack of proper provisioning doomed the expedition from the start.

Preston got so desperate on Friday that he sent someone to urge Lewis to come faster. Even that morning Preston had to disarm several of his soldiers and take away by force their blankets to keep them in camp. In spite of this, the men were so desperate that five of them left anyway, only to be caught and brought back. The reason for Lewis's late arrival soon became apparent. His canoe had sunk in the river in addition to two other canoes containing tents, guns, and other valuables. By now Preston had a tent again so that night Lewis stayed with him and enjoyed a little bear for supper and breakfast.

The last day of Preston's report, Saturday, March 13, found Lewis calling all of the soldiers together for the purpose of convincing them to continue their journey forward. He used

⁶³"Morton's diary" ends on this day, Monday, 8 March.

⁶⁴Tillson uses this incident to illustrate Preston's "close identification and dependence on the men" in contrast to Lewis's more authoritarian style. When the men eventually marched off in formation in spite of Lewis's pleas, they showed a "strong sense of solidarity, common purpose, and shared opposition to the leadership of Lewis." Tillson, "Militia and Popular Culture," 295.

all the arguments he could muster. He warned them about the "ill consequence" of mutiny and desertion. He argued that they would be well supported once they got to the hunting grounds reported about earlier. But they still resisted, arguing that "if they went forward they must Perish or Eat horses neither of which They were willing to do." Lewis then walked several yards away and asked for all who were willing to serve their country to step forward. All of the officers responded positively but only twenty or thirty soldiers joined him. Only four of Preston's privates and one lieutenant stepped forward and the others began their march in formation home. Later in the day a report came that one of the men had drowned in the river while trying to get some food. Preston sympathized,

indeed hunger & Want was so much Increased that any Man in the Camp would have Ventured his life for a Supper . . . it is Impossible to Express the abject Condition we were in both before & after the Men Deserted us, except when a little fresh meat was brought in which would not last any Time nor had it any Strength to Suport men, as the Salt was all lost.

By the end of March, all of the men returned to their homes after one of the worst experiences any of them would ever encounter. Thomas Lloyd, the surgeon of the expedition and Preston's indentured servant, described his ordeal seven months later.⁶⁵ While exaggerating the number of colonial soldiers killed, he wrote of the French and Indians surrounding their camps waiting in ambush as having the "nature of a wolf." In terms of their own supplies, he reported that out of two hundred horses on the trip, only four or five survived, "the Rest we were forc'd to eat Being all like to Perish." Food was so short that he had to fast three or four days. With the failure of the expedition, he recounted that Augusta County was "laid Waste" with only one-half of its inhabitants still in Augusta County while the rest were either dead or gone to safer areas. Throughout all of the struggle, he claimed the colonists had only been able to kill ten of the enemy, but in a large exaggeration, he reported that about one hundred colonists had died. He surmized that what appeared to be God's cooperation with the enemy was "as a Scourge for our Sins."

In Virginia's only offensive attempt during the war, the colony failed miserably. Even Governor Dinwiddie explained to Washington that it had "done nothing essential. I believe they did not know the way to the Shawnesse Towns."⁶⁶ The Governor's account to a fellow governor was similarly terse,

The Expedit'n ag'st the Shawnesse prov'd unsuccessful. They wre gone upwards of a Mo.; met with very bad Weather; a great part of y'r Provis's lost cross'g a River, the Canoes

⁶⁵Thomas Lloyd to Edmond Hector, October 1756, H.C.A. 30/258, VSL, Reel 452. In this letter, Lloyd writes, "to give a Description of my Servitude is Impossible." Perhaps the experience of the expedition framed his feelings about his servitude, because we have no evidence that Preston was a rough owner with his indentured servants or slaves.

⁶⁶Dinwiddie to Washington, 8 April 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:382. Washington was not surprised with the failure because he had predicted problems. In a letter to Dinwiddie on 7 April 1756, he wrote, "It was an expedition from which on account of the length of the march, I always had little hope, and often express my uneasy apprehensions on that head. . . . I also hope you will order Major Lewis to secure his guides, as I understand he attributes all his misfortunes to their misconduct. Such offences should meet with adequate punishment, or else we may ever be misled by designing villains." *Washington Writings*, 1:301.

being over-set. They were oblig'd to eat y'r Horses and are ret'd⁶⁷

Eventually the House of Burgesses and the Virginia Council got involved in investigating this failure. The explanation from Major Lewis to the Virginia Council blamed

their ignorance of the Road and the licentious Behavior of the soldiers under the different ranging Captains and want of Provisions, that bad weather, high waters, and scarcity of Game caused them to labor under many Difficulties which they did not expect; and the volunteer mutinying.⁶⁸

The investigation by the Burgesses completely exonerated Lewis as having "discharged his Duty with Integrity and Resolution," but blamed Captains Obadiah Woodson, John Smith, and John Montgomery who commanded the volunteers with "mutinous Behaviour."⁶⁹

But more than a failure, Preston and the men who went on the expedition would always bear the terrible memory of those weeks of hunger, cold, and fear. Not only would their feelings make it harder for them to volunteer for service again, but they spread the stories of their awful experience throughout the region making it even more difficult to recruit already reticent men into service. Apparently the failure of this mission did not affect the Cherokee's continuing support of the English. To help assuage any possible negative feelings, Virginia gave clothes to the male Indians and presents to the squaws which left them "well pleas'd."⁷⁰

As the expedition ended, Preston's home county, Augusta, sent a desperate petition to the House of Burgesses requesting immediate help "against the Incursions and Depredations of the Savages." They asked for the erection of a chain of forts across the frontier and for a treaty of "trade and friendship" with confederate Indians to help serve as a barrier against the French.⁷¹ The Burgesses responded favorably with a law that allowed for raising , 25,000 to provide 2,000 more men for the regular regimental army in Virginia. In addition, a chain of forts would be

⁶⁷Dinwiddie to Governor Dobbs, 13 April 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:382. A month later Dinwiddie gave further details to several individuals including the Earl of Halifax, "The Expedit'n ag'st the Shawnesse prov'd unsuccessful. The Rangers and Cherokees y't were sent, meet'g the Rivers they were to cross, much rais'd by the heavy Snow and Rains, y't they lost several of their Canoes with Provis's and Ammunit'n, w'ch oblig'd 'em to ret'n in a starv'g Condit'n, kill'g y'r Horses for Food." Dinwiddie to the Earl of Halifax, 24 May 1756, *ibid.*, 2:416.

⁶⁸6 April 1756, *Executive Journals*, VI:673.

⁶⁹15 April 1756, *JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, 369-70. The House also asked that the Governor stop the pay of these officers and that they "never more be employed as Officers in His Majesty's Service." This action by the Burgesses set off several years of petitions by Obadiah Woodson that he be exonerated as seen in *ibid.*, 385, 409, 426, 435-6, 470-1. After investigation by a legislative committee, the House voted on 4 October 1758, that a lack of provisions caused the failure of the expedition, but also that Woodson "did not behave himself in such Manner as an Officer ought to have done." *JHB, 1758-1761*, 37. Edmund Pendleton, in a letter to Preston, blamed the residents of Frederick County for not securing their wives and children and then joining together in forts to oppose the "serpents." He was informed that the county had 1,000 militia but that most of the residents either stayed by themselves or ran to safety. This allowed the enemy to penetrate more deeply into Virginia, whereas, with a little unity the struggle could have ended much earlier. Now the neighboring counties were having to defend Frederick County, and the Indians had retreated with their spoils--something they anticipated happening from the start. Pendleton to [WP], 12 May 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 126.

⁷⁰Dinwiddie to Governor Morris, 28 June 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:450.

⁷¹30 March 1756, *JHB, 1756-1758*, 349. Dinwiddie reported to the Lords of Trade on 11 June 1756, "This Spring we have been greatly Harrass'd w'th No's of French and Indians invading our Back Settlements, committing many barbarous Murders, and destroying by Fire and Sword the poor People's Plantations." *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:441.

erected across the frontier "to put a stop to those violent outrages of the enemy, and to protect the inhabitants in their lives and properties."⁷²

But there were problems. Washington told Dinwiddie that forts without an adequate number of men supporting them would never answer the expectations of the frontier. He anticipated needing a regular army with strong discipline to counteract the tactics of the Indians who "prowl about like wolves, and, like them, do their mischief by stealth." The murders then being committed in the Winchester area and the daring attacks by Indians on their forts during the middle of the day constituted a more immediate problem. Further, Washington predicted that "unless a stop is put to the depredations of the Indians, the Blue Ridge will soon become our frontier." He suggested the possibility of having the frontiersmen live in towns and then work each other's farms on a shared basis which would prevent their being cut off by small parties of Indians. Although the suggestion was impractical when one considers the independent minds of men living on the frontier and the nature of frontier farming, the idea illustrates the desperate feelings of many who dealt with the grave threat to Virginia.⁷³

To help Washington, Dinwiddie ordered Preston and other captains on April 24 to summon all of their militiamen immediately for the purpose of drafting one-third of the "most Chosen men" to defend the Augusta frontier. He also asked that they be kept in readiness to march towards Winchester when needed, while the remaining militia would patrol during their absence.⁷⁴ When the militia officers of Augusta County actually met as a Council of War on May 20 to carry out the drafting order, they quickly determined that most of their able bodied single men were already on duty on the frontier in order to protect the inhabitants. Until forces from elsewhere relieved these men, they requested a postponement of the draft.⁷⁵

The previous thirteen months of militia service left Preston strapped for money. Not able to survey or carry out much other work during that period, he asked the Governor in April for relief "being urged by my present want of money & Low Circumstance." At that point, he had only received , 80 to compensate for considerable personal advances for military salaries and provisions.⁷⁶

⁷²"An Act for raising the Sum of Twenty-five Thousand Pounds, for the better protection of the Inhabitants on the Frontiers of this Colony, and for other purposes therein mentioned," Hening, *Statutes*, VII:9-20. The law provided for volunteers to be sought from the militia, but if that approach did not work, a lottery system using sheets of paper drawn out of a box would be used with one out of every twenty men being drafted.

⁷³Washington to Dinwiddie, 7 April 1756, *Washington Writings*, 1:300-1. Washington had serious reservations about the concept of forts being used to protect the frontier. As explained to John Robinson on 24 April 1756, "if these forts are more than fifteen and eighteen miles, or a day's march, asunder, and garrisoned with less than eighty or an hundred men each, the intention is lost, and for these reasons, 1st, if they are at greater distances, it is inconvenient for the soldiers to scout, and allows the enemy to pass between without being easily discovered, and when discovered so soon pursued. And secondly, if they are garrisoned with less than eighty or an hundred men, the number is too few to afford detachments. Then, again, our frontiers are so extensive, that, were the enemy to attack us on the one side, before the troops on the other could get to their assistance, they might overrun and destroy half the country. And it is more than probable, if they had a design upon the first, they would make a feint upon the other. Then we are to consider what sums the building of twenty forts would cost, and the removing stores and provisions to each, and in the last place, we are to consider where and when this expense is to end. For, if we do not endeavour to remove the cause, we are liable to the same incursions seven years hence as now, if the war continues, and they are allowed to remain on Ohio." *Ibid.*, 1:332-3.

⁷⁴Dinwiddie to [WP], 24 April 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 125.

⁷⁵"Proceedings of the Council of War by Augusta County Militia," 20 May 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 130. For some reason, Preston missed this meeting at which Colonel John Buchanan served as President and fifteen other officers attended.

⁷⁶[WP] to Dinwiddie, 8 April 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 124. No record exists on how much reimbursement he

Virginia's problems were further compounded by lack of support from neighboring colonies and the appointment of Lord Loudoun as commander-in-chief of all English forces in America. He was also made governor of Virginia, something which greatly pleased Dinwiddie who felt so "harrass'd and fatigu'd with our Militia and House of Burgesses, that if it was a proper Time, I shou'd desire to come home."⁷⁷ But another year would pass before Dinwiddie got his wish to return home, for London recalled Loudoun before he ever set foot in Virginia.

For William Preston there was no relief either.⁷⁸ Tension continued to build on the frontier which resulted in Ephraim Vause becoming so concerned with the safety surrounding his 680-acre plantation located in a strategic pass on the South Fork of the Roanoke that he financed his own fort called Fort Vause.⁷⁹ In the middle of June, 1756, a small group of Indians appeared at Vause's fort but since the colonists only had four or five men in the fort they could not chase them. However, the Indians took a white man as prisoner where he heard of plans by the Shawnees with the encouragement of the French to drive the Englishmen out. As part of this effort, these same Indians had also been conducting surveillance of Fort William to find out how many men would be confronting them when the larger group came. While the Indians washed their tomahawks, the white prisoner escaped to warn his countrymen of the threat.

When Preston arrived home in Staunton from a trip to Williamsburg carrying the governor's orders to disband his company of rangers, within hours word came from Fort Vause appealing for reinforcements to help with an expected Indian attack. His company was dispersed and he did not respond immediately, but when news came three days later of an actual attack on the fort by one hundred Indians, he began to mobilize as many men as possible. On June 25 he marched with forty-seven militiamen including eighteen of his own. When they arrived within a few miles of the fort, one of Vause's servants informed them that the buildings had all been burned to the ground and the people either killed or taken prisoners. Later reports indicated that those guarding the fort had been surprised since they had not maintained constant guard duty.⁸⁰

Later Vause reported that he had not been at his fort when it was attacked but had watched from a safe distance where he saw Indians in the morning burn down the fort which he had built with his money and then his home in the afternoon. But more than the loss of mere

requested or whether he received any help.

⁷⁷Dinwiddie to Augustus Keppel, June 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:439. By 24 September 1756 Dinwiddie was in a "bad State of Health . . . seiz'd with a Paraletic Disorder y't reaches my head, and gives me a good deal of Concern. I do not think it proper to write for Leave to go home before I see L'd Loudoun, but really my Health requires it." Dinwiddie to James Abercomby, *ibid.*, 2:522.

⁷⁸Unless otherwise noted, the following account of the loss of Fort Vause comes from [Andrew Lewis] to [Dinwiddie], June 1756, PP-DM 1QQ 131-133, and [WP] to [?], 24 August [1756], PP-DM, 1QQ 134-5. For a vivid account of the French perspective, see Johnson, *Preston*, 48-51.

⁷⁹Young, "Effects of French and Indian War," 126; Washington to Dinwiddie, 9 November 1756, *Washington Papers*, 1:496. Washington personally visited Fort Vause during October 1756 describing it as being located in a "pass of very great importance, being a very great inroad of the enemy, and secure, if it was strongly garrisoned, all Bedford and the greatest part of this county." Washington to Dinwiddie, 10 October 1756, *ibid.*, 1:479.

⁸⁰Washington reported to John Robinson on 9 November 1756, "The Garrison I found weak for want of men; but more so thro' indolence and want of order. None I saw were in a posture of defense; and few that might not be surprized with the greatest ease. An instance whereof happened at Dickerson's fort; when the Indians ran down, caught several children playing under the Walls, and had got to the Fort gate before they were discovered. Thus Vass's fort was surprized and lost with the Garrison. They keep no Guards, but just when the enemy is about, or under fearful apprehensions of them: nor ever stir out of the forts from the time they reach them, until relieved, when their month is out: and they march off, whatever be the event." *Ibid.*, 1:500-1.

buildings, the Indians murdered his wife, two daughters, two servants, and a slave. Yet despite this tremendous loss, Vause wanted another fort built on the same location. A few months later the colony provided the men and resources for reconstruction.

Preston and his men, impressed with the danger to all, hastened home to protect their families. And another mass exodus of families began from the threatened areas on the south side of the James River. As described by Lewis,

To See the Mothers with a train of helpless Children at their heels stragling through woods & mountains to escape the fury of those merciless Savages to see Sundry Persons crawling home with Arows sticking in Several Parts of their Bodies which with the Cries of Widows & Fatherless Children is really Shocking

He pled for the regular regimental army to man the forts since the militiamen needed to protect their own families. Captain Christian with a company of militiamen was dispatched to Fort William as an encouragement for settlers to return and harvest their crops, but the situation remained tenuous.⁸¹ Preston reported that more than one hundred fifty families had already left their plantations with more planning to do so very soon.⁸² All of these events continued to leave the governor with the feeling that unless the English drove the French out of the Ohio area and especially from Fort Duquesne, "fly'g Parties of these Banditti" would constantly harass the frontier.⁸³

The news of the British declaration of war against the French in May arrived in Virginia on August 7, 1756.⁸⁴ For Augusta County this made little difference and happily the late summer and early fall that year were peaceful. Little is known of Preston's activities in this period. After months in the field, he probably returned home, near Staunton, to be with his mother and sisters.⁸⁵ And the peace was deceptive. Indian attacks began as early as mid-September in the Jackson River area with thirteen colonists killed, two wounded, and five taken prisoner. The only good news came when the twenty-four prisoners from the Fort Vause fight escaped safely from

⁸¹[Andrew Lewis] to [Dinwiddie], [June 1756], PP-DM, 1QQ 131-3.

⁸²[WP] to [?], 24 August [1756], PP-DM, 1QQ 134-5.

⁸³Dinwiddie to Governor Dobbs, 22 July 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:459. Dinwiddie devoted much of his remaining time as governor to an attempt at organizing an expedition against Fort Duquesne. He constantly appealed to England to provide the manpower and resources needed to carry out such an ambitious endeavor. Washington agreed that an expedition against Ohio would be "the best and only method to put a stop to the incursions of the enemy, as they would then be obliged to stay at home to defend their own possessions." But he also warned that they must buy up provisions to prepare for such an attack since they were unprepared at that time for such a venture. Washington to Dinwiddie, 4 August 1756, *Washington Writings*, 1:423.

⁸⁴Dinwiddie to Governor Dobbs, 22 July 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:459 and 7 August 1756, *Executive Journals*, VI:12.

⁸⁵Washington informed Dinwiddie on 4 August 1756 that "out of three companies of rangers on the frontiers of Augusta, which ought to be one hundred and twenty men, there are not thirty." With less pressure on the frontier, Preston was also probably taking some time off from duties as a captain of rangers. *Washington Writings*, 1:420. Dinwiddie also expressed to Washington on 13 September 1756 his gladness at the quiet on the frontier but warned that they should not "depend on the pres't Tranquility, but to be watchfully on Y'r Guard, for I fear the Enemy will y's Fall make some strong Attempt ag'st us." *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:507. On 8 September 1756, Washington cautioned Dinwiddie that even though the Cherokees and Catawbas were still allies of the English, they should be treated with "all possible respect and the greatest care" because "one false step might not only lose us that, but even turn them against us. *Washington Writings*, 1:464. By 28 September 1756 Washington wrote to Dinwiddie that most of the rangers had deserted from their positions. *Ibid.*, 1:474.

their captors.⁸⁶

Efforts now focused on getting forts built along the frontier with twenty to thirty mile intervals between each one.⁸⁷ Both Dinwiddie and Washington expressed reservations about having such a large number of small forts. Washington preferred having three or four "large, strong forts, built at convenient distances," and garrisoned with a large number of soldiers. He envisioned problems of providing provisions to ranging parties sent out from small forts which then left only a few men to guard the fort.⁸⁸ Dinwiddie agreed but argued that the House of Burgesses was so "fond" of them that he could not alter their position. The problem became further complicated with the poor quality of militiamen in Augusta County being used to garrison the forts. Dinwiddie called them a "dastardly set of People" who had "neither Courage, Spirits or Conduct."⁸⁹

These questions about the forts and militia led to George Washington's first trip to Augusta County as commander and to his first meeting with Preston. On September 28, 1756 Washington left his Winchester headquarters for southern Virginia. Upon leaving he received word of Indian "depredations" and so attempted to raise a party of militia to "scour the woods" around Jackson's River. Washington got a firsthand illustration of the recruiting difficulties on the frontier. After waiting five days for Colonel Stewart to raise the militia, only five men showed up. Preston, who was also present, was subsequently "kind enough to conduct" Washington on the sixty mile journey to Luney's Ferry on the James River in order to get help from Colonel John Buchanan, then the leader of the Augusta militia.

On the journey, Preston and Washington engaged in intensive conversations about the manpower problems on the frontier and undoubtedly on many other topics of mutual concern. Washington reported that he acquainted Preston

with the motives that brought me thither. He told me with very great concern, it was not in his power to raise men; for that, three days before, some of the militia in a fort, about fifteen miles above his house, at the head of Catawba Creek, commanded by one Colonel Nash, was attacked by the Indians, which occasioned all that settlement to break up totally, even to the ferry at Luney's; that he had ordered three companies to repair thither, to march against the enemy, and not one man came, except a captain, lieutenant, &c., and seven or eight men from Beford.⁹⁰

And there was little success in recruiting men after their arrival at Luney's Ferry. A survey with Colonel John Buchanan of Fort Vause and other forts in Augusta County followed and Washington concluded the trip in a deep "melancholy" feeling that it was not within his power to change "it to our satisfaction and interest."⁹¹ It is not known if Preston was present for the later stages of Washington's tour.

The trip confirmed Washington's views of the need for at least two thousand regular troops on the frontier and of his disgust with the militia. He described them as

⁸⁶"Preston's Register," PP-DM, 1QQ 83.

⁸⁷Peter Hogg was commissioned to supervise the building of these forts. "Instructions for Captain Peter Hog," 21 July 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:460-1.

⁸⁸Washington to Dinwiddie, 23 September 1756, *Washington Writings*, 1:468-9.

⁸⁹Dinwiddie to Washington, 30 September 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:523.

⁹⁰Washington to Dinwiddie, 10 October 1756, *Washington Writings*, 1:477-8.

⁹¹Washington to Lieutenant Colonel Adam Stephen, 23 October 1756, *ibid.*, 1:482.

under such bad order and discipline, that they will go and come when and where they please, without regarding time, their officers, or the safety of the inhabitants, but consulting solely their own inclinations. There should be, according to your Honor's orders, one third of the militia of these parts now on duty at once; instead of that, I believe scarce one-thirteenth is out. They are to be relieved every month; they are more than that time marching to and from their stations, and will not wait one day longer than the limited time, whether they are relieved or not, let the necessity for it be ever so urgent.⁹²

And he did not find the officers any better. During his visit to the forts he had found "whooping, hallooing gentlemen soldiers" who viewed with "derision and contempt" any matter of "order, regularity, circumspection, and vigilance." And only one or two of the forts "had their captains present, they being absent chiefly on their own business, and had given leave to several of the men to do the same."⁹³

Dinwiddie's view of Augusta's militia went even further. He described them as a "dastardly set of People and under no managem't or Discipline, much owing to y'r Officers who I fear are little better than the private Men."⁹⁴ He felt the residents of Augusta were under bad management and just wanted to make money "unjustly from the Distresses" confronting them.⁹⁵ These feelings resulted in a rejection of accounts from militia officers in Augusta whose reports Dinwiddie thought were "falacious and a great Imposition on the Country."⁹⁶ As an officer, Preston was probably under suspicion along with his colleagues, but no charges levelled against him through this period.

Local residents, well aware of their militia's deficiencies, pled in a "most earnest manner" for regular soldiers. Surely part of the background of Washington's comments was the information given him by Preston during the first part of his trip. As summarized by Washington, the residents were "truly sensible of their misery" being forced to depend for protection on the militia, but also unwilling to make any changes which would result in anything but their own ease. As a consequence they continued to flee southward which would soon mean that "scarce a family" would live in Frederick, Hampshire, or Augusta Counties.⁹⁷

With winter approaching and the lessened threat of attack, Dinwiddie ordered Major Lewis in Augusta to recall the rangers and militia from the frontier. He also asked him to keep three companies on duty, each consisting of about sixty men to be stationed at the most strategic points in the county.⁹⁸ A draft was to take place to form these companies for the winter. Preston as one of three officers in charge was ordered by the governor to Fort Miller with one of the companies. He warned Preston to be on guard against the practices of some of his fellow officers who were "absent half the time from their Companys" and who gave leave to their men to "Strol

⁹²Washington to Dinwiddie, 10 October 1756, *ibid.*, 1:479-80.

⁹³Washington to Dinwiddie, 9 November 1756, *ibid.*, 1:492.

⁹⁴Dinwiddie to Washington, 26 October 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:529.

⁹⁵Dinwiddie to Colonel Clement Read, 8 September 1756, *ibid.*, 2:503. By 15 December 1756 Dinwiddie wrote to Colonel Read, "I'm sorry the Inhabitants of our frontiers are seized with so strong a Panick as to leave their Plantations. . . The Augusta People have been a great Load to the County, with't doing any essential Service." *Ibid.* 2:564.

⁹⁶Dinwiddie to Captain Hogg, 1 November 1756, *ibid.*, 2:537.

⁹⁷Washington to Dinwiddie, 9 November 1756, *Washington Writings*, 1:495.

⁹⁸Dinwiddie to Major Lewis, 15 November 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:551.

about the Country." Preston was also to keep scouts out on a regular basis and report any enemy sightings immediately to other forts in the area, but this must have been difficult since recruiting went very badly.⁹⁹ And clearly officers were as much of a problem as their men since Dinwiddie encouraged Lewis to "dismiss those unruly and senseless Officers and apoint such as you think will be of Service to the Country."¹⁰⁰ Augusta County was a problem as far as Dinwiddie was concerned for he reported that it gave him more "ill usage" than from any other county in Virginia.¹⁰¹ But throughout all of this Preston was never criticized, suggesting that he must have acquitted himself well.

Preston must have returned home to Staunton for Christmas with relief and pleasure. Waiting for him was a letter from surgeon William Fleming which illustrated that even through all of the fighting and turmoil he enjoyed a lifelong hobby of reading.¹⁰² Fleming received his education at the University of Edinburgh and then served as a surgeon in the British navy before retiring to Virginia in 1755.¹⁰³ Before long he returned to military service as a surgeon under the command of Washington.¹⁰⁴ Somewhere in military service Preston and Fleming discovered each other's love of books and began trading their favorites. Fleming expressed appreciation for the books Preston had sent including three volumes of the "Dean of Colrain" and one volume of Blake Morris's "Manuscript of Salees trip to New Orleans." In his letter he also discussed his views of literature and his analysis of Swift's *Gulliver*, "the severest satire I know is universally Admir'd, but leaves a Secret disgust on the mind of the reader."¹⁰⁵ He asked for a copy of Brown's *Voyage to the Levant*. This communication illustrates that Preston, in spite of being in

⁹⁹Andrew Lewis to Preston, 23 November 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 137.

¹⁰⁰Lewis also indicated to Dinwiddie that the militia had displayed a "refractory disposition," but he would do the best he could under the circumstances. With the pay being so good, he could not understand why young men would not join. 17 December 1756, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:566.

¹⁰¹Dinwiddie to Major Lewis, 23 December 1756, *ibid.*, 2:569. After being assured that three hundred Augusta volunteers wanted to march against the Shawnees during this period, suddenly they changed their opinion saying they would not go unless they had six hundred men. This led Dinwiddie to write Colonel Clement Read on 5 April 1757, "I find it has been usual with the People of Augusta to dorm Schemes out of lucrative Views, w'ch, for the future, I will endeavor to prevent." *Ibid.*, 2:592. A few weeks later, further frustration came out as Dinwiddie wrote John Blair on 22 March 1757, "the people of Augusta continually endeavour to load the Country with extraordinary and unnecessary Expence; but I approve of what Yo. and the rest of the Councell have done, or can I depend on these people of Augusta to perform any Duties but in a very selfish view." *Ibid.*, 2:597.

¹⁰²William Fleming to WP, 17 December 1756, PP-DM, 1QQ 140-1.

¹⁰³An overview of Fleming's background can be found in Wyndham B. Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Inc., 1931), 239-43. When he died in 1795 he had a large library of 324 volumes valued at \$176.13. *Ibid.*, 94-6.

¹⁰⁴"General instructions for the recruiting officers of the Virginia Regiment," [3] September 1755, *Washington Writings*, 1:165 and 1:176.

¹⁰⁵Fleming commented on how the "taste of the Age is much Altered from what it was formerly in the Choise of Books of Amusement." At the beginning of literature, the monks "threw out to the Illiterate many, as Marriners do a tub to a Whale, incredible stories of enchanted Castles, flying horses & huge Giants, which Amazed the Gaping crowd, & made them Glibly swallow the more Absurd Impostures palm'd upon them, by those unerring teachers of Religion." As the power of the monks decreased and learning increased among the people, novels first appeared in an "English dress." In this school, "they paint Vice in any form, they spare the person but they lash the fault, they sooth at the same time they expose oure Crimes." While not the most brilliant analysis, this shows that even on the frontier discussion took place about the development of literature in Europe. The "Manuscript of Salees trip to New Orleans" refers to the journal of John Peter Salling who explored between 1742 and 1745 western lands along the New and Ohio Rivers finally ending up in Charleston, South Carolina. McCleskey suggests that his journal played a major role in shaping a vision among those living in the southwest of plentiful western lands with rich farmlands open to those seeking improved economic opportunities. "Across the Divide," 15-49.

the middle of the frontier and only having a limited education, made learning a lifelong pursuit. During the middle of the war, Preston also took the time to pay for the translation of some volumes.¹⁰⁶ Not many on the frontier shared these interests, but when he found someone with a similar love, an immediate bond developed. In later years he then passed on this love of learning to his own children and relatives.

Fleming ended his letter asking Preston to give his "compliments to the Young lady's & wish them a Merry Christmas & good husbands." Although each of his four sisters would be married by 1764, none had yet taken that step. Considering the high quality of husbands they eventually married, the Preston home must have seen in these years many suitors coming to impress the sisters and hoping for a good word from their brother William.¹⁰⁷ And they were no mean catch for they were not only attractive but industrious. They, for example, became "skillful needle-women" creating items for sale using cross-stitch and embroidery--efforts which eventually enabled their mother to buy a female slave.¹⁰⁸

The frontiers were quiet early in 1757, and Preston in February took up the job of repairing and building new forts.¹⁰⁹ He had, at Major Lewis's direction, to decide where forts should be located to serve the greatest number of people. For example, Fort Wilson was abandoned because of the departure of two families and it was determined, after consulting with the inhabitants, to build one on the Bullpasture River which would serve twelve families.¹¹⁰ Nine of these families agreed to move to the fort and not leave the country while a military company guarded that area. Construction of this 80 foot square fort began in March but bad weather and a lack of strong support from the local residents delayed completion.¹¹¹ Eventually the House of Burgesses approved payment of , 579.07 to Preston for this and other work.¹¹²

During the remainder of 1757, Preston continued leadership of his ranger company with seventy men serving with him during this period for an average of 138 days per man. Preston himself served 213 days and a loyal group of thirty-three men gave him at least 170 days of service or more. Aiding in leadership were two lieutenants, two sergeants, and two corporals. Interestingly, Thomas Lloyd, his indentured servant, served as one of the sergeants.¹¹³

In the midst of his military duties, Preston began to receive a series of political and military appointments to almost every available major office in Augusta County, illustrating his growing status as a member of the frontier elite and further paralleling the career of his uncle James Patton. Within a few years he would also be elected to the House of Burgesses, but before

¹⁰⁶"Invoice of Stephenson to WP," 29 December 1757, Preston Family Papers, VPI, 3.

¹⁰⁷Apparently Elizabeth Preston continued to operate an ordinary out of her home through these years as seen in her bond of , 50 on 18 March 1757, Augusta County Ordinary Bonds, 1745-1777, Augusta County Courthouse.

¹⁰⁸LPF Letter.

¹⁰⁹Dinwiddie to Lord Halifax, 4 January 1757, *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:578. Washington reported in [January] 1757 to Captain James Cunningham, aide-de-camp to the Earl of Loudoun, that conditions in many of these small forts were "destitute (almost) of the necessary's of Life." *Washington Writings*, 2:5.

¹¹⁰Andrew Lewis to WP, 26 February 1757, PP-DM, 1QQ 150-1.

¹¹¹[WP] to Andrew Lewis, 4 April 1757, PP-DM, 1QQ 152.

¹¹²The breakdown included , 370.8.4 for pay to Preston, his officers and soldiers; , 168.0.4 for provisions; , 31.13 to pay a detachment of Preston's company stationed at Bull Pasture; and , 8.18.10 for provisions of this detachment. 26 May 1757, *JHB, 1752-1755, 1756-1758*, 477. In other accounts for this period, it is obvious that a large amount of liquor was purchased by Preston for his soldiers. In March 1757, eighteen gallons were sent to Fort Miller for his troops. In 1757 over , 380 was expended by Preston just on liquor for his soldiers. PP-LC, 213.

¹¹³"A list of the company of rangers under the command of William Preston," 1 May 1757 - 29 November 1757, PP-LC, 238.

he could realistically attain that higher office he needed to prove his abilities on the county level. But he never received the prize he most wanted in Augusta County--county surveyor--and eventually moved to a newly formed county to attain this lucrative office.

Various levels of public office existed in a local county.¹¹⁴ Preston already had proven himself in the entry level post, such as clerk of the vestry and as a lower level militia officer. His next step would be to become a justice of the peace which made him part of the influential county court. Although the governor had the right to appoint replacements, in reality the county court had become a truly independent and self-perpetuating body and usually the governor appointed replacements from recommendations made by the court.¹¹⁵ Generally only those with family connections or growing wealth would be recommended by the other justices--factors which Preston now possessed.¹¹⁶ He was appointed to the court on June 20, 1757.¹¹⁷ Ironically, Richard Woods, one of Preston's supporters in his failed 1755 election bid, also took the oath from Preston as a justice on the same day. Obviously both men had regained community respect after their earlier humiliation.

The court on which Preston now sat represented the highest level of county government with responsibilities for wills, estates, taverns, liquor prices, water mills, ferries, levies, and legal document notarization. It was the "fountainhead of justice in Virginia."¹¹⁸ Individual justices could hear minor cases, handle depositions, and issue warrants with the monthly meeting of the county court disposing of the more serious criminal and civil disputes. This was not a detached political position from which a man could govern without feeling the actual needs of his fellow citizens. But even more important, the county court also controlled the appointment of virtually every other office including clerk, sheriff, coroner, lower ranking militia officers, and tobacco inspectors. Without their recommendation the governor did not dare appoint anyone else. It was through the court that the elite maintained their control over the county.

The court came to symbolize many values in Virginia society. The status accorded the position of justice probably represented its greatest symbolic value. Charles Sydnor wrote of the court representing

¹¹⁴The lowest level of office consisted of commissioned officers, unpaid grand and petit jurymen, constables, and road overseers. The middle level included the vestry clerk, deputy county court clerk, jailer, undersheriff, and militia officers below captain. At the highest level, one would find the justice of the peace, church warden, vestryman, tithable counters, militia officers with the rank of captain and higher, coroners, sheriffs, court clerks, and the two county representatives to the House of Burgesses. McCleskey, "Across the Divide," 199.

¹¹⁵For a good description of how the county court functioned, see Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries*, 76-85, 100-02; Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, I:127-9, and Billings, *Colonial Virginia*, 73, 79.

¹¹⁶Rutman's analysis of those holding the highest offices in Middlesex County, Virginia reveals that possession of wealth and land were correlated to high officeholding in that county. They summarized: "It can be argued, they selected those who were known to have the skills, sagaciousness, trustworthiness, and stature needed for the work--in other words, those who had particular status (or standing) in the society of the community." Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, *A Place in Time* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 144-6. The same applied to Augusta County when Preston was appointed as a justice. Although characterizing the seventeenth century, this description from Billings, *Colonial Virginia*, 79, could also apply to eighteenth century Augusta County--"Possession of the office of justice of the peace symbolized the holder's superior standing as one who had outdistanced everyone else in the quest for riches and preferment. Having won the place, he sought to pass it on to succeeding generations of his family through family and political alliances with other justices."

¹¹⁷"WP oath of Commission of Peace," 20 June 1757, Augusta County Order Book, 5, 1755-1757, VSL, 63:367. After John Buchanan and Preston took their oaths, they in turn gave the same oaths to Richard Woods, John Bowyer, James Buchanan, John Archer, and Daniel Smith.

¹¹⁸Young, "Effects of French and Indian War," 384-5.

a legislative, executive, and electoral, as well as judicial body. Separation of powers, and checks and balances, were unknown in Virginia county government. Every variety of governmental power was vested in the single body known as the county court.¹¹⁹

The court also stood for law in the community which came to represent an important form of culture on the frontier.¹²⁰ As justices worked with each other, they also established close social and political links which further enhanced their power in the community.¹²¹ Preston's appointment as a justice represented his greatest public accomplishment to date. From this position, he would be able to gain other offices and further influence throughout the region.

At the same time he became justice, Preston became deputy to Wallace Estill, the Sheriff for Augusta County.¹²² The first evidence of his work in this capacity came as he carried out court orders such as seizing goods.¹²³ A year later he became a Sheriff, a post he would hold several years, fulfilling the many duties connected with it including tax collection.¹²⁴ Rounding out his appointments, in 1759 he also was appointed as escheator and coroner for Augusta County.¹²⁵

Amidst his very active military duties, Preston found time to carry out the routine jobs in Augusta County which his positions required. As a justice he leased land in Staunton for county buildings.¹²⁶ He made arrangements for repairing the jail and for adding a "ducking" stool.¹²⁷ A few months later he complained about the "insufficiency" of the jail he had just repaired.¹²⁸ He also oversaw completion of the county courthouse.¹²⁹ As part of his continuing orientation to

¹¹⁹Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries*, 80. Billings, *Colonial Virginia*, 73 wrote of the county court as "an amalgamation of assorted administrative, admiralty, civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical jurisdictions."

¹²⁰Rhys Isaac wrote of the monthly meeting of the court as a place where a "powerful form of high culture--the Law--met with a compelling local need--security of property." *Transformation*, 93-4.

¹²¹Billings, *Colonial Virginia*, 73, wrote of this relationship, "They came close to replicating the familiar bridge between the great power and social standing, just as they made themselves more independent of royal rule."

¹²²LPF Letter. Although this part of her letter confuses dates, evidence of Preston's work in carrying out functions of the sheriff's office are apparent.

¹²³"Clerk notice of seizure of goods by WP from George Elliot," June 1757, PP-LC, 220.

¹²⁴His appointment as Sheriff along with his military commander, John Buchanan, and his political supporter, Richard Woods, in the earlier contested election to the House of Burgesses, represented further vindication. In particular, Woods, who had been charged by a previous Sheriff with disrupting the election process when Preston had been up for election, would now be one of those in charge of conducting elections. Preston's initial appointment came on 17 August 1758, Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1757-61, VSL, 63:204. Preston was again recommended for Sheriff by the Augusta County court on 19 May 1759, Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1757-61, VSL, 63:296. On 21 November 1759 William Thompson, Robert Breckinridge, and Preston put up , 1,000 bond as a guarantee that Preston would properly collect the officer's fee and quitrents. 21 November 1759, Executive Papers, Augusta County Courthouse, I:23-4 and Augusta County Will Book, 1753-1760, VSL, 2:335-6. On the same date Preston took his "oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy" and the "adjuration oath" before the Augusta County Court to be Sheriff. 21 November 1759, Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1756-71, VSL, 63:316. On 26 November 1759 Preston and Felix Gilbert put up a bond for Preston of 112,768 pounds of tobacco as a guarantee of his collection of the county proportion of taxes. Augusta County Will Book 2, 1753-1760, 42:349-350 and Augusta County Executive Papers, 1745-1776, Augusta County Court House, I:25.

¹²⁵Fauquier signed his appointment as escheator on 18 October 1759, PP-LC, 303. On 21 November 1759 he took his oath as escheator and coroner. Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1757-1761, VSL, 63:316.

¹²⁶Preston and Buchanan as justices of the peace rented two lots in Staunton from Robert McClanachan on 15 August 1759, Augusta County Deed Book, 8, 1758-1760, VSL, 5:185-6.

¹²⁷18 August 1759, Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1757-1761, VSL, 63:297.

¹²⁸22 November 1759, *ibid.*, 334.

¹²⁹On 19 August 1758 Preston along with four other commissioners reported that the court house was

vestry duties, Preston also agreed in 1758 to take in another "bastard child," Elizabeth Evans, as he had done six years earlier. Part of his agreement included a responsibility to "teach her to read and write and cause her to be taught to sew and spin."¹³⁰ While common for male orphans, rarely did individuals who took in female orphans agree to educate them, which may illustrate Preston's lifelong commitment to education not only with his own children, nieces, and nephews, but to the social charges he agreed to help.¹³¹

These new political appointments did not prevent Preston from having to face the reality of his military leadership for in July, 1757 Indian attacks again began. Early on four colonists were killed, three wounded, and ten taken prisoner, including a woman with seven children.¹³² Dinwiddie ordered militia companies to those areas until a regular detachment of the Virginia Regiment arrived, but also raised questions about Preston's initiative in counteracting the attacks:

the Officers or Men did not do their Duty, and now, on this Alarm, why does not Capt. Dickeson and Capt. Preston march their Men to repel the force of the Enemy and protect the Front'rs? I'm assured they neglect their Duty and don't act with the Spirit that may be expected.¹³³

Dinwiddie also wrote to Buchanan with questions about Preston's leadership. In one situation he received reports that only six Indians had attacked a settlement, a number he felt could have easily been repelled by the rangers. At such a distance Dinwiddie felt helpless. Buchanan, as Augusta's military leader, would have to take that responsibility. He charged that Virginia was "greatly impos'd on by Neglect of the Officers" while at the same time expressing sympathy for the frontiersmen,

Pray God protect Yo. and the poor People from any further Insults from the barbarous and inhuman Enemy. I'm sensibly concern'd for the poor People, and heartily wish it was in my Power to give them a thorough Protect'n.¹³⁴

Where was Preston during this period? Was he shirking his duties or did he have other reasons for not repelling the Indians? Was he too busy in his new position as a Justice of the Peace? Sickness may have been the explanation since his friend and lawyer, Edmund Pendleton,

completed "except a door, which the Indians broke." Chalkley, *Chronicles*, I:325.

¹³⁰6 April 1758, Augusta County Vestry Book, 1746-1776, Augusta County Courthouse, 200.

¹³¹For the period 1738-1757 in the Augusta County Vestry, John Logan Anderson found only one example of a female who was to be taught to read and write and one other female who was also supposed to be given additional instruction in arithmetic. Anderson, "The Presbyterians." This finding conflicts with McCleskey's assertion that Virginia law required bound boys and girls to be taught how to read, write, and learn a suitable trade. "Across the Divide," 100.

¹³²"Preston's Register." Apparently Colonel Read, who was not in Augusta County at that time, wrote Dinwiddie on 28 July 1757 about reports he had heard of these attacks because Dinwiddie responded on 3 August 1757, "I'm heartily sorry for the Information Yo. have of the Fr. and Ind'ns invad'g our Front'rs, committing Murders, &c. I hope the Affair is not so bad as is represented to You . . . It surprises Me that I've no Acco't from Augusta of the terrible Murders committed on the Front'rs." *Dinwiddie Papers*, 2:677-8. Finally on 6 August 1757 Dinwiddie received word from Buchanan about the attacks as acknowledged in Dinwiddie to Buchanan, 8 August 1757, *ibid.*, 2:681-2.

¹³³*ibid.*, 2:677-8.

¹³⁴Dinwiddie to Buchanan, 8 August 1757, *ibid.*, 2:681-3.

congratulated him for recovering from a "tedious and dangerous confinement" in October.¹³⁵

The Indian attacks continued with more fatalities in the fall of 1757. Pendleton wrote to Preston, "I am truly sorry for the uneasy situation of your Inhabitants and God only knows when it will be better, as our Affairs every where have a bad Prospect."¹³⁶ All of these threats led one colonist to write:

Poor Miserable Country! Poor ill fated Frontiers! . . . We shall be forced at the last, & very soon too I fear, to Yield up all our large and fine Back Country to the Enemy, and then where will be our Barrier? . . . Godalmighty, who hath in his hands the Disposition of Kings and Kingdoms &c only knows what will be the issue of all these things, I, for my part with resignation to the Divine will, patiently wait the event.¹³⁷

Meanwhile Preston continued to lead his rangers with orders from Lewis to stay in the Bullpasture area.¹³⁸ By October he moved to Fort Prince George where he received further orders from Lewis to continue.¹³⁹

By this time Preston had been on duty for many months, and no relief was in sight. In November he received even more specific orders to recruit as many of his militia as he could to serve as rangers until August, 1758.¹⁴⁰ The orders also included assurances of pay at the end of every two months. The men were to serve in Augusta County only and not be incorporated into the Virginia Regiment led by Washington. In addition, Lewis gave Preston permission to purchase 17,000 pounds of beef and 7,000 pounds of pork for this period of time. To make sure he had enough men on duty at all times, no more than two should be furloughed at a time.

Obviously Preston's growing maturity as a military leader had become evident through such assignments. He had already received major political appointments as a justice of the peace

¹³⁵Edmund Pendleton to WP, 26 September 1757, Pendleton Papers, I:13 or PP-DM, 1QQ 160. In Letitia Preston Floyd's letter (LPF Letter), further confusion is created by her account of Preston's activities in the summer of 1757 when she reported that he was appointed a commissioner along with Thomas Lewis to conduct treaty negotiations with the Shawnees and Delaware Indians at the mouth of Big Sandy River, a branch of the Ohio. She thought the treaty was made with Ocanastoto and the Indian chief, Cornstalk. As she remembers the story, "Col. Preston endured singular hardships in the expedition, he had tied his mocasin somewhat too tight, the string chafed the instep of one of his feet, which produced partial mortification. The skill of a physician by the name of Dr. Thomas Lloyd saved his life. . . On their return from the mouth of Sandy, they took up a Fork of the River which was through a very rugged region - so entirely out of food as to be compelled to eat the buffalo tugs which tied on their packs, and hence it was named by Col. Preston, the "Tug Fork of Sandy." If this incident actually happened that summer, this could account for Preston not being very active. However, the problem with this account is that no references in the official records or Dinwiddie's exhaustive correspondence can be found to Preston's appointment or to any such treaty. Possibly his daughter got her dates and events confused in her account.

¹³⁶Edmund Pendleton to WP, 26 September 1757, Pendleton Papers, I:13 or PP-DM, 1QQ 160.

¹³⁷Clement Read to John Buchanan, 9 August 1757, PP-DM, 1 QQ 154-7. Read also expressed regret that Buchanan was having to "fly a Second time before the destroying Ravages of Country, to be forced again with your family to seek a shelter for your Lives in a part where probably you will be a third time Routed, is really Shocking, - intollerable."

¹³⁸Andrew Lewis to WP, 27 August 1757, PP-DM, 1QQ 158.

¹³⁹Andrew Lewis to WP, 28 October 1757, PP-DM, 1QQ 162.

¹⁴⁰"Orders to WP from Andrew Lewis," 19 November 1757, PP-DM, 1QQ 164. Dinwiddie felt very strongly that he no longer wanted to pay militiamen, whom he considered to be "Pick Pockets to the Country." He insisted that Preston not have any militia but that he command a company of rangers. Several fraudulent accounts had been submitted for the militia which had led Dinwiddie to this conclusion. Dinwiddie to Lewis, 1 December 1757, Dinwiddie Papers, 2:719.

and sheriff. Now he would also begin to receive military promotions. The new governor, Francis Fauquier, appointed him to the rank of major in the militia in September, 1758 and a year later he was made lieutenant colonel in the Augusta County militia.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile Preston's company of rangers continued their service on the frontier in 1758-1759 at Fort George and Fort Young.¹⁴² After relative quiet on the frontier for several months, Indians again began to appear in the Calfpasture area in July, 1759, scalping one woman. To help protect the inhabitants, Preston ordered the immediate draft of twenty men, an action opponents later charged was illegal.¹⁴³

And even when men were finally forced to serve they were difficult to control. The case of John Walker provides an example. Walker's superior, Lieutenant Edward Hubbard, confined this sergeant in Preston's company for refusing to obey orders. According to Hubbard's account, Walker came with Preston's ranger company which consisted of two corporals and sixteen privates. He ordered them to stay at one fire that night which they refused to do and "took up their bundles, and with a laugh of contempt went to another." When that failed, Hubbard then ordered Walker to mount a guard with a corporal and four rangers which he refused to do saying he did not see any need for such duty. When Hubbard replied that his duty was to obey, Walker responded that "he did not think there was any danger, and would not mount any guard, or do any thing but what he thought fit." Hubbard repeated the orders again and in a very revealing response, Walker replied

that they had been under other officers, and had always hunted, and done as they pleas'd. Many of Capt. Prestons men being bye, who seem'd to assent and be pleas'd with what he said that they would not mount guard, would hunt when they had a mind; had orders from their own Lt by which they would abide; and would not obey any orders, I should give them.

Unfortunately for Hubbard's needs,

They were in every respect as good as their word, hunting, firing at a mark, neglecting even one sentry separating themselves; mentioning when, and how far they would march and behaving the whole time with great neglect.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹Preston's appointment as major can be seen in "Dinwiddie Commissions," 30 September 1758, UVA, #7868. Although listed as a Dinwiddie commission, Fauquier signed the actual commission. On 11 December 1758 Fauquier gave him a commission as captain of a company of rangers. PP-LC, 273. On 14 June 1759 he received a commission as lieutenant colonel in the militia for Augusta County from Fauquier. PP-LC, 291. On 18 August 1759 he took the oath as lieutenant colonel. Augusta County Order Book, 6, 1757-1761, VSL, 63:297.

¹⁴²Preston signed receipts for beef delivered to Fort George in September through November, 1758. By January 1759 provisions were coming to Fort Young. Preston had at least twenty-six men in his company as evidenced in signed receipts for the first three months of 1759. PP-LC, 276. According to records filed for bounty lands from Virginia by William Preston, this company of rangers was disbanded by order of the governor on 4 May 1759. From 5 April 1780, Montgomery County, French and Indian War Bounty Land Certificates, VSL, Box 6.

¹⁴³WP to Captain James Lockhart, 27 July 1759, PP-DM, 3QQ 138. A lawsuit initiated by Israel Christian against George Wilson, charged that Wilson had accused him of being a "public liar." As part of this lawsuit, Preston may have been referring to this draft held in 1759 when he read a report at a general muster "to confute a report that prevailed to his disadvantage." While the account is confusing, it appears that accusations were made about Preston's legal right to carry out a draft. February 1763, County Court Judgements, Chalkley, Scotch-Irish, I:500-01.

¹⁴⁴20 March 1759, PP-DM, 2QQ 16-7.

Perhaps part of the problem was Preston himself who may have had a casual approach to command which brought respect when he was personally present but posed problems for more authoritarian officers.

By 1759 the war was beginning to wind down. The English captured Fort Niagara and Quebec, thus removing any direct threat by the French against the Ohio area. But the Cherokees now turned against their former English allies as a result of skirmishes with aggressive Virginia frontiersmen who had always hated all Indians. Since the Cherokees did not live in Virginia, only using the colony as a pathway home, Virginia did not face the same kind of threat experienced by fellow colonists in North and South Carolina.

Despite the lessened threat Augusta County residents still felt under pressure. Shawnee attacks continued resulting in deaths and capture.¹⁴⁵ Preston apparently wrote Fauquier on behalf of his fellow citizens requesting that additional militia be stationed in their area. But the governor, following the example of his predecessor, replied that no militiamen would be forthcoming to help quiet the "ill-grounded Fears" of a "few people." The Indians were already fighting a war in their own territory, he said, which would help protect Virginians from any possible Indian threat. Furthermore,

It is a Shame [for] Men to talk of deserting a Country and their growing Crops, because 10 or 11 Indians have been seen thereabouts, but I have long seen it is not in the power of Man to rid the Augusta people of their unreasonable Fears, and there is no keeping them easy without a Militia; of which they have long enjoyed the Sweets, and therefore will not for the future, I suppose; be easy without them.¹⁴⁶

With the surrender of Montreal by the French in September, 1760, the war basically ended.¹⁴⁷

A few weeks before the end, Preston saw a business opportunity to make some additional money from the war, leading in 1760 to a partnership with William Davies, a Philadelphia businessman. They purchased four wagons and sixteen horses with drivers which could be leased to Virginia with all profits and losses to be shared equally between them. No evidence exists on how much money they made from this venture, but obviously few concerns existed on Preston's part about a conflict-of-interest between being an officer and reaping private benefits.¹⁴⁸

With the war coming to an end, William Preston found himself having accomplished much, but he was thirty years old and he did not have a wife or children. His two older sisters, Letitia and Margaret, had married successful men and given William several nieces and nephews. Letitia's husband, Robert Breckinridge, served as a sheriff, vestryman, and justice of the peace in Augusta County during the 1750s. With the establishment of Botetourt County in 1770, he became a justice and lieutenant colonel of the militia. Margaret's husband, the Reverend

¹⁴⁵15 October 1760, *JHB*, 1758-1761, 194. In this attack, twelve residents were killed and thirteen prisoners were taken.

¹⁴⁶Fauquier to WP, 24 June 1760, George Reese, ed., *The Official Papers of Francis Fauquier* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1980), I:381-2, hereafter referred to as *Fauquier Papers* and PP-DM, 2QQ 28. Preston's letter to Fauquier has not been found but references in the earlier mentioned letter from Fauquier to Preston lead to conclusions that a letter was circularized to county lieutenants informing them that the militia would not be called out that year. See *ibid.*, I:364.

¹⁴⁷Hostilities did not end officially until 1762 and a peace treaty was not signed until February 1763.

¹⁴⁸For the agreements signed by Preston and Davies on 19 August 1760, see PP-DU. On 23 September 1760, three of their horses were appraised for , 38. *Ibid.*

John Brown, had graduated from the College of New Jersey (later known as Princeton University) and served a number of Presbyterian parishes in Augusta County including the Providence and Timber Ridge churches. He was also to establish a grammar school which became Augusta Academy, the forerunner of Washington and Lee University.¹⁴⁹ Both were establishing flourishing families. Such examples may have encouraged William Preston to seek a wife.

William diligently proceeded in his quest. His friends watched on in amusement. David Robinson, a close friend and militia officer, kidded him about enrolling in dancing classes taught by "Mr. Fribble, the Knight of the Garter." In 1759 he joked, "Whilst I am examining the comets . . . you (Honest Man) no doubt are trying with equal anxiety whether you can kiss a Girl sixty times in a minute -- A Glorious Enterprise, indeed!" Robinson noted, "However incredible it may appear this was actually undertaken by Captain Preston & affected in less than half a minute." Robinson continued, "Whilst I am inquiring into the Nature of Good and Evil and what true Happiness consists in, you very likely are studiously learning how to perform the Lagoon and Cupel. . . ." The latter represented a popular colonial dance learned by cultured Virginians. Further he asked,

Is there the least conformity between us in Temper or Disposition? How then can we associate together? 'Tis a maxim with you, 'That Nothing in Life is pleasing but Love' and accordingly all your Actions & Passions tend to this noble End. But I am for admitting Virtue which makes an essential Difference
 . . . The Posey of your Ring is to Live is To Love.

Robinson may or may not have been joking but he continued:

I have known you in the silent Watches of the Night slip out of your Bed as by some Secret Impulse and repair to a certain corner where I could easily discover you. 'Twould be too tedious to tell you the story of the Girl you Surprised Once in a Chest, and your ingenious Conduct on that occasion . . . But I shall conclude these remarks by observing in general, that you now act the Beau Monde in a proper sense. You have made yourself acquainted with every young Woman's Face and Leg in the County & know well how to appear agreeable.

Apparently Preston planned to tour Philadelphia and the Eastern Shore "in Order to enlarge your Sphere of Knowledge" and Robinson wondered if "any Man of Judgment & Candor . . . should act a rational part in Complying with your invitation." Robinson concluded, "But, I suppose, I have now Sufficiently provoked your Patience & Attention and 'tis very probable Mr. Fribble calls upon you - Now pray, mind your Cupel."¹⁵⁰

Robinson was now to leave Augusta but his affection and friendship can be seen in his farewell letter.

Am I at last deprived of my best Friend - a Friend possess'd of every amiable Quality - Must a Friendship wholly founded on Love be thus lost? - It must - Fate has so determined. . . . Must it not only be lost, but buried in Oblivion?--No, no. - Believe me

¹⁴⁹Dorman, *Prestons*, 6-12.

¹⁵⁰David Robinson to WP, 18 May 1759, PP-DM, 2QQ 21.

dear Billy, my Affection for you will continue 'till the last Moments of my Existence. . . . I shall often, with a pleasing Sorrow, reflect on the many pleasant Days I have been happy with your presence in the charming Plains of Augusta. But shou'd I go on and write as my Grief dictates, I might perhaps run into Extravagance.

To Robinson, he and Preston were putting their youth behind them "with all its Bloom & Vigor" and were proceeding toward inevitable mortality.¹⁵¹

But such reflections by his friend did not deter Preston's search for a wife. He was frequently on the road and John Madison, after talking with Preston's surveying boss, Thomas Lewis, expressed their reflections on his quest. He reported that he had interrogated Preston's traveling partner, Billy Anderson, the orphan taken in by William Preston's father shortly before his death. The questioning went as follows:

Billy Dear. Where did your Master lodge the first Night? at Michael Woods. The next? at Doctor Allegres. Very Well. I suppose the next at Mr. Underwoods! Billy answered in the Affirmative. Very Well. Had she any likely hussies of Daughters. Billy assented to that, Might well. Did your Master Eye them? No answer to that. Well you're a Sly dog. I suppose the next night you reached Col. Henrys or one Woodsons, but I think Billy Landed you at New Castle sent you Church and only let you Call at the Colonels in your way up and I don't remember whether you saw Miss Jenny or not. In short your footsteps have been had & all that could be, but from Billy's ambiguous answers the Old Gentleman is still in Doubt it is but a Step, come down & Clear up your Character.¹⁵²

Despite such efforts Preston still had not found a woman he was interested in marrying. He was not handsome but he was certainly impressive. His daughter later described him as "above the ordinary height of man, five feet eleven inches. He was large, inclined to corpulency, was ruddy, [and] had fair hair and hazel eyes." But more important for courting purposes, "His manners were easy and graceful. He had a well cultivated intellect, and a fine taste of poetry."¹⁵³ Further he already held substantial property, was a recognized county leader, and he came from a well established family all of which must have made him one of the most eligible bachelors in Augusta County.

In looking for a contractor to build an Episcopal Church in Staunton, Preston finally found his future wife. Preston contracted with Francis Smith,¹⁵⁴ a rich carpenter who operated a

¹⁵¹David Robinson to WP, 22 August 1759, PP-DM, 2QQ 24-5. As expressed by Robinson, "YOUTH, with all its Bloom & Vigor, which we may vainly imagine to be immortal, will not be long able to repel its frequent Assaults, but must soon submit to it's invincible Assailants."

¹⁵²John Madison to WP, 5 May 1760, PP-DU.

¹⁵³LPF Letter.

¹⁵⁴Preston Davie, in a 1962 revised draft chapter entitled, "'Greenfield' and the Prestons of 'Greenfield' and 'Smithfield,'" for his proposed book about the Prestons traced the Smith and her mother's Waddy background as follows: "Francis Smith was son of William Smith and Elizabeth (Ballard) of Spotsylvania, Virginia, and grandson of the progenitor of the family in America, Major Lawrence Smith, of York and Gloucester Counties, Virginia, a man of much prominence in the early colonial period. Surveyor of the counties of York and Gloucester in 1686, he laid out Yorktown in 1691, was possessed of large properties and was recommended to a seat in the Governor's Council, but died before the appointment was made. His eldest son, John Smith, however, became a member. This family of Smiths, of which Major Lawrence Smith was the progenitor in Virginia, were descended from a family bearing that surname seated at Totne, Devonshire, England. On her mother's side Susanna Smith Preston was granddaughter of Anthony and Sarah (Parke) Waddy, of St. Peters Paris, New Kent County, Virginia, Anthony

tavern near the Hanover courthouse, to construct the new church.¹⁵⁵ In the process, Preston discovered his "extremely beautiful" twenty year old daughter, Susanna, and was attracted by her "beauty and manners." Her roots in Virginia were older and more distinguished than the recent migration of the Prestons. The fact that she had been educated by the Reverend Patrick Henry also meant she had received a better education than most women of her day.¹⁵⁶ Coupling her beauty, manners, and education into one package, she must have been a great find for a man with similar interests in learning. On January 17, 1761 they were married by Reverend John Todd.¹⁵⁷

Before long Preston's friends began writing their congratulations to him. Thomas Lewis offered "heartly and Sincere Compliments of Gratulation on your Espousal, an Event you have been wishing for, & such as I hope, will Exceed your warmest Expectations, in the production of your Futer Felicity."¹⁵⁸ Even his old friend, David Robinson, held off further teasing, "I shall not say One Word about W-m-n, as, it wou'd now-a Days be very Impertinent."¹⁵⁹ Preston now stood in a position to give advice to other bachelors. Peter Hogg wrote about his determination to visit a potential wife "that I may no longer worship a Shadow but either banish the Idol or admire the Fair, therefore must request you to let me know by the first Conveyance the name of the Charmer & whether the Elder or younger of the two Sisters that bears the amiable Character of being the most worthy of her Sex."¹⁶⁰

Preston's marriage was followed shortly by that of his younger sisters. As in the case of his two older sisters, the new brothers-in-law were also men of substance. His sister Ann became wife to Francis Smith in August, 1761. Smith, who was not related to Preston's new wife, held various positions in the county including militia officer, sheriff, justice, and he even served as deputy surveyor to his brother-in-law William. Finally in 1764 William's youngest sister, Mary, married John Howard who led a less distinguished life but still was a person of some standing.¹⁶¹ The mother of the family, Elizabeth, now lived by herself but she must have been comforted by the fact that her growing family was nearby.

Preston now turned to the business of creating a suitable home for his new bride and hoped for children. He continued building his library with the addition of an eight volume Dictionary of Arts & Science and with pamphlets on sermons.¹⁶² And with the prospect of a

Waddy being descended from a family of that name seated from the early part of the seventeenth century in York County, Va." PDGC-FC, 150:11.

¹⁵⁵The bond for the new church was put up by WP, Francis Smith, and Charles Lewis on 24 November 1760. Augusta Parish Vestry Book, Augusta County Courthouse, 319, 323. Preston carried on a long business relationship with his father-in-law, Francis Smith, as seen in detailed accounts kept between 1762 and 1772 including such items as lottery tickets, leading for the church windows, church cleaning costs, skin dressing, slave purchases, flour, wheat, stockings, shoe mending, and leather britches. PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a 29.

¹⁵⁶LPF Letter.

¹⁵⁷Preston Family Bible Records, 1761-1843, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1. Also found in John Floyd Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2. Elizabeth Preston was born on 31 May 1762.

¹⁵⁸Thomas Lewis to WP, 6 August 1761, PP-DM, 2QQ 31.

¹⁵⁹David Robinson to WP, 5 November 1761, PP-DM, 2QQ 34-6. Robinson could not resist passing on some rumors about Col. Alexander McNutt, formerly from Virginia but expected to become governor of Nova Scotia: "It may not be amiss too, to acquaint you that the Col. last year, in the Highth of his Gaiety, performed Two other Exploits in N. England which I leave you to guess. You may be assured however that he has given sufficient Proof of his MANHOOD in them both."

¹⁶⁰Peter Hog to WP, 15 September 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ 56.

¹⁶¹Dorman, Prestons, 22-7. Both of these sisters later moved with their husbands to Kentucky after the American Revolution--a trend repeated by other Preston family members.

¹⁶²WP to David Robinson, 27 May 1761, PP-LC, 3:362. Letitia Floyd described these volumes as "a sort of Encyclopedia, with much polemic and religious production." LPF Letter.

larger family, in good Virginia fashion, he worked diligently to increase his landholdings. He already by 1759 owned 2,530 acres on which he paid land taxes.¹⁶³ And in that same year he had begun to put together an estate approximately five miles west of Fincastle and one mile from Amsterdam, later to be known as Greenfield, which would eventually be the first real home for him and his wife. He first purchased 191 acres from Stephen Rentfro about six miles from the city of Roanoke on a branch of Buffalo Creek.¹⁶⁴ In the next two years he added another 824 acres to this original purchase from land grants given by Governor Fauquier for military service and purchased another 472 acres.¹⁶⁵ By 1773 the Greenfield estate consisted of 2,175 acres.¹⁶⁶ There was some delay in taking up residence there probably because of title disputes, but by late 1762 or early 1763 they had moved to "Greenfield."¹⁶⁷ By this time their first child, Elizabeth, had been born and baptized as a Presbyterian in Staunton by her father's former teacher, Reverend John Craig.¹⁶⁸ His old bachelor friend, David Robinson, writing "from my little apartment," teased that,

Tho' you have now reach'd your agreeable Habitation and are extremely happy with your Wife & Child, which were the Constant Subject of your Conversation all the While you was here; tho' you now think yourself blessed in being rid of the Clamour, Noise and Nonsense which prevail in the Streets of Staunton, but more especially, in being deliver'd from my Trouble & Impertinency in particular, I shall however, find Means again to

¹⁶³Preston paid a total of \$6.13 in quit rents for 1758 and land tax for 1759. PP-LC, 287.

¹⁶⁴Preston purchased this land for \$100 located in Augusta County on the west side of the Blue Ridge next to John Buchanan's land. 12 February 1759, Augusta County Deed Book 8, 1758-1760, VSL, 5:89-91.

¹⁶⁵Fauquier made two land grants on 3 March 1760 of 226 and 144 acres. Virginia Land Office Patent #33, 1756-61, VSL, 31-2:725-6 and PP-LC, 313. WP bought 330 acres for \$60 from Tobias Smith on 13 May 1760, Augusta County Deed Book, 8, 1758-1760, VSL, 5:362-6. The release can be found in 12 May 1760, Preston Family Papers, Didier Collection, VPI, 1:7. The deed can be found in PP-LC, 316. On 14 February 1761 the governor granted another 254 acres in Virginia Land Office Patent #34, 1756-61, VSL, 33-4:827 and PP-LC, 349 and on 7 August 1761 another 200 acres in Virginia Land Office Patent #34, 1756-62, VSL, 33-4:876-7 and PP-LC, 371. On 7 February 1763 Joseph McDonald sold 142 acres for \$180 in Augusta County Deed Book, 11, 1762-1765, VSL, 6:214-7 and Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI. In 1765 Fauquier granted another 135 acres in Virginia Land Office Patent #36, 1764-7, Vol. II, VSL, 36:866 and PP-LC, 463.

¹⁶⁶The complete development of the Greenfield estate is traced in 15 June 1773, Virginia Land Office Patent #42, 1773-4, VSL, 41:484-8.

¹⁶⁷Evidence of a possible title search problem came in 1761 when friends wrote expressing concern. Thomas Lewis wrote that Preston had a "troublesome Jobb on your hands since your purchass." Thomas Lewis to WP, 6 August 1761, PP-DM, 2QQ 31. Several months later James Adams expressed similar concern that "you were visited with Misfortune last year, but where your having enter'd into the honourable State of Marriage, and has got a good and agreeable Wife in that Same Year, am persuaded will surpass any Grievance you have Sustain'd." James Adams to WP, 11 February 1762, PP-LC, 384. Johnson, *Preston*, 75, speculates that Preston's efforts to get his father's share of original ownership in one of Patton's land companies may have been at issue because he was trying to get Patton's executors, John Buchanan and William Thompson, to give his father's twentieth share to him at that time. Eventually he had to turn the problem over to arbitrators to resolve the problem. The original land transaction of the Greenfield estate involving Preston's purchase of 191 acres for \$100 from Stephen Rentfro in later years appears to be confused. In 1766 he bought the same piece of land from James and Sarah Robinson for \$50. James was the oldest son of George Robinson and one of the executors of his father's will. Augusta County Deed Book, 13, 1766-1767, VSL, 7:50-2. In quit rents paid by WP to James McGavock, the following notation was made: "191 conveyed by Stephen Rentfro & afterwards by James Robinson" from PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a33 and in Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI, 1. Perhaps these land problems caused the trauma mentioned by his friends.

¹⁶⁸Elizabeth was born on 31 May 1762. Preston Family Bible Records, 1761-1843, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1 and John Floyd Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2.

break in upon your Retirement and wheresoever you turn yourself, like Brutus's Ghost I'LL MEET YOU THERE.¹⁶⁹

So William Preston, proud father and husband, settled into family life far from the urban noise of Staunton! The location was beautiful for they could see from their home such mountains as the "Twin Peaks of Otter" and watch the beginnings of Tinker Creek on their property. Since Greenfield stood on the "Great Road," also known as the "Indian Road" which led to the Alleghenies, they had plenty of visitors to keep their social life active. Preston Davie who examined the home in this century described the original residence as a

block-house or fort surrounded by a stockade. . . . The original portion, for defence against Indian attack, was of heavy log construction, and, according to tradition, loop-holed. Later this original log construction was covered over with hand sawed clapboarding outside, and finished inside with plaster and wood paneling.¹⁷⁰

Within one year of occupying Greenfield, their first son, John, named after William's father, was born. During an eight year period up to 1772, Greenfield would be the birthplace for half of William and Susanna Preston's twelve children.¹⁷¹ The house remained in the Preston family until 1959 when it burned.¹⁷²

During the years prior to his marriage it is difficult to determine exactly how Preston made a living. Military service of course occupied most of his time.¹⁷³ But he was clearly involved in other activity. As early as 1755 he had purchased with Israel Christian nine indentured servants to sell.¹⁷⁴ Four years later he purchased from merchants John Champe & Company sixteen slaves for ,752 brought to Maryland on the "True Blue."¹⁷⁵ They were probably bought for resale and it is unclear whether these purchases of indentured servants and slaves were long-term business ventures or whether the purchases were a one-time effort during the war to make quick money.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹David Robinson to WP, 21 March 1763, PP-DM, 2QQ 39.

¹⁷⁰Davie, "Greenfield," PDGC-FC, 150:1. Preston enlarged the original log structure. In 1840 descendents added a new wing at right angles to the older section. Frances J. Niederer, The Town of Fincastle, Virginia (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), 22.

¹⁷¹John Preston was born on 2 May 1764. Preston Family Bible Records, 1761-1843, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1.

¹⁷²Johnson, Preston, 75-7 and Niederer, The Town of Fincastle, 22.

¹⁷³A list of Preston's ranger company from 1 May 1757 to 29 November 1757 puts his pay at 10 shillings per day for 213 days with a total of , 106.10. PP-LC, 238. Provision for this pay came in "An Act for amending the several acts, for making provision against invasions and insurrections, and for amending and explaining an act passed this present session of Assembly, intituled, An Act for raising the sum of twenty five thousand pounds for the better protection of the inhabitants on the frontiers of this colony, and for other purposes therein mentioned," which passed in the March 1756 session. Hening, Statutes, 7:27.

¹⁷⁴4 September 1755, PP-LC, 166. Preston owned at least one indentured servant, Richard Mihills, who agreed not to enlist in the army in exchange for Preston lessening his term of service by one year. Even though Preston was a militia and ranger captain during this period and knew of the great shortages of volunteers, this fact apparently did not deter him from talking one of his own servants into staying out of the military. By keeping him, Preston also gained the financial advantage of not losing a servant since the British granted freedom to such individuals for joining the army. Augusta County Order Book, 5, 1755-1757, VSL, 63:257.

¹⁷⁵28 August 1759, PP-LC, 301.

¹⁷⁶Preston owned at least two slaves during this period for his own personal usage. The Augusta County Court on 19 November 1761 judged his slave, Tom, to be twelve years old. Augusta County Order Book, 7, 1761-

By 1764 he also owned land amounting to 4,442 acres. It is likely that he farmed the 1,233 acres comprising his Greenfield plantation at this time. In 1764 he asked Alexander Sayers to pick up some cattle possibly for usage on his expanding Greenfield operation.¹⁷⁷ The remaining property he either leased, rented, or made some sort of share cropping arrangement.¹⁷⁸ For example, in 1761 he made detailed agreements for the care of two other properties. George Patterson agreed to plant corn and oats on thirty acres on two plantations, repair fence railings, get tools and provisions for himself, and provide half the seed. Preston provided Swift and Jack, two slaves, to help raise the crops, and gave at least one horse or mare and the other half of the seed. Of the crops, Preston would receive two thirds of the hay and one half of the corn and oats. Patterson also agreed to put in a fall crop of wheat and rye of which he could keep half.¹⁷⁹ Preston signed another agreement with Jacob Kimerlin to raise a spring crop on another plantation, but this time the renter could keep all of the results. Kimerlin also agreed to put in fences on the plantation with any rails made to be paid for by Preston at the customary price.¹⁸⁰ Possibly other lands were rented, but during the war this was certainly difficult. That part of his income came from leases and rentals is further confirmed by the fact that in 1763 and 1764, for the first time, he began to sue people for money owed. During this period he filed eight separate lawsuits for debt collection and in one case, the debt amounted to , 105.12--a significant amount of money.¹⁸¹ Other debts were for smaller amounts, but the collection helped reduce his own financial debts--something his cousin, Thomas Lewis, wished could be paid "whether much or little."¹⁸²

Surveying constituted another substantial source of income for Preston but during the war county surveyors did not do much work. With settlers fleeing from their lands rather than moving even further into frontier areas onto new lands, the need for new surveys decreased. And Preston himself was involved in military service and he conducted no surveys during this period. But once the war began to wind down he again had another source of income as an assistant to Thomas Lewis.¹⁸³ In 1760 he carried out fourteen surveys, mainly in the Middle River area off of the Shenandoah River. In 1761, the first year of his marriage, no evidence exists of any work as a

1763, VSL, 64:114. On 21 August 1762 he purchased "one negro boy named Murray." Chalkley, *Scotch-Irish*, III:395.

¹⁷⁷Alexander Sayers to WP, 13 April 1764, PP-VHS, P9267 a23.

¹⁷⁸Benjamin Hawkins paid Preston , 2.18.6 in 1763 for renting three acres of meadows. PP-LC, 777.

¹⁷⁹23 January 1761, Breckinridge Family Papers, RVHS-UVA. In a caveat to the agreement John Rork was added to help Patterson. The land they cared for included a 200 acre purchase by WP from James Davies in 1757 and a 203 acre purchase from John Marshall in 1759, both lands located in Augusta County on Catawbo Creek.

¹⁸⁰24 January 1761, *ibid.* Kimerlin agreed to care for a 330 acre parcel purchased from Tobias Smith in 1760 in Augusta County on the Roanoke River which became part of the Greenfield estate. McCleskey argues that leases helped perpetuate the notion of the elite through a hierarchical relationship. "Across the Divide," 62.

¹⁸¹On 25 April 1763 Preston sued James Hughes & James Huston; George Wilson & Andrew Greer; and George Wilson, Andrew Greer, and James Hughes. Augusta County Order Book, 8, 1763-1764, VSL, 64:69, 71. On 16 November 1763, Preston won all three of these lawsuits. *Ibid.*, 64:415.

¹⁸²On 24 June 1763 Preston went after Stephen Wilson and Hance Harper in separate suits. *Ibid.*, 64:157. On 25 June 1763 he went after James Hughes & James Huston again. *Ibid.*, 64:168. On 22 June 1764 William Terry was taken to court. *Ibid.*, 64:49. On 24 November 1764 Thomas Hamilton & Jane McCandless were sued for , 33. Augusta County Order Book 9, 1764-1765, VSL, 64:227. Thomas Lewis to WP, 22 August 1764, PP-VHS, P9267a18.

¹⁸³While it is difficult to determine the exact location of many of Preston's surveys, a general description for this period can be found in Augusta County Surveyors Record 1, VSL, 107:91; *ibid.*, 2, VSL, 107:16, 20-2, 33, 35; William Preston Account Book, 1762-1790, PP-DM, 2QQ 62-90; William Preston Notebook of Surveys, 1762-1767, PP-LC, 612, and P. Pelham Receipt of Land Certificates from WP, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353.

surveyor.¹⁸⁴ But in 1762 with family responsibilities he once again increased his pace with fourteen surveys, followed in 1763 by an additional twenty-five. By 1764 he had picked up where he left off when he began surveying in his younger years with forty-seven surveys. For each survey he averaged , 2.1.8 income.

While the demands for the services of surveyors increased with peace, a greater threat came from the accompanying Proclamation of 1763.¹⁸⁵ For several years during the war, questions arose about the advisability of allowing colonists to settle on lands claimed by the Indians on the frontier. To avoid problems, Colonel Henry Bouquet, a British officer of Swiss nationality in charge of Fort Pitt, gave an order in October, 1761 outlawing settlements west of the Appalachian divide which ran along the ridge of the Allegheny Mountains. Permission for such settlements could only come with Bouquet's permission or from a colonial governor.¹⁸⁶ Two months later the British government ordered the governors not to grant any land which conflicted with Indian claims which in effect transferred the right to purchase Indian lands from the colonies to the British imperial government. Initially Virginians who constantly opposed these new policies viewed them as temporary until more permanent arrangements could be made after the war ended. But on October 7, 1763 the king signed the Proclamation of 1763 confirming the earlier actions but now ordering settlers in the forbidden areas to leave.¹⁸⁷ A major problem with this decision involved the lands promised to soldiers during the war in exchange for their military service.¹⁸⁸

This action caused great consternation among settlers who fought and lost friends in the war only now to have their lands taken away or be forced to move from their former homes. David Robinson wrote satirically after the loss of other lands to the Indians, "'Tis a great Mercy that Roanoak has not in like Manner been given as a Compliment to our good Friends and

¹⁸⁴An account book kept by Thomas Lewis indicates that Preston signed a receipt to Lewis amounting to , 118.8.4 for "surveying, for Quit Rents, Land tax, & Surveys & fees," which represented the full amount owed "except my fee for making about Sixteen Surveys now in my hands in order to be Sold and Disposed of to pay the Charges of Surveying the Same." These could have been surveys from earlier work completed by Preston. Lewis Family Papers, VHS, Mss1L5896b7.

¹⁸⁵Information about the Proclamation of 1763 can be found in several sources including Lewis Preston Summers, History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786 (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1979 reprint of 1903 edition), 82-3; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, Western Lands and The American Revolution (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), 11-13; Kegley, Virginia's Frontier, 293-4, and Morton, Colonial Virginia, II:739-45.

¹⁸⁶On behalf of Virginia, Governor Fauquier complained to Henry Bouquet on 17 January 1762, that his proclamation "gives Rise to some Uneasiness of this Colony . . . as it seems to tend to obstruct the resettling the Lands by the Persons who have taken up Lands by Patent under His Majesty, and have been formerly settled on them; but drove from their Settlements by the late Disturbances. . . . On these Considerations, I have been desired to apply to you, that you would do me the Favor to make known to me Your Intentions in publishing the said Proclamation; and whether the Certificate you require, is only to ascertain the Identity of the Persons who are now, or hereafter may be settling to the Westward of those Hills to prevent any other persons who have no right to settle on the Lands which may be claimed by those who have legally taken them up by Patent under the Crown. This is a laudable Intention and may prevent Vagabonds from taking Possession of the just Rights of others." On 8 February 1762 Bouquet reassured Fauquier that his intent was not to hurt those with legal authority to settle the lands but to confront the issue of vagabonds who were settling without permission, much to the consternation of the Indians who kept finding new settlers on their lands. Fauquier Papers, II:663-4; 677-8.

¹⁸⁷Hening, Statutes, 7:667.

¹⁸⁸George Washington and others sent an appeal to King requesting that they be given the lands promised them for fighting in the war. Fauquier Papers, II:775.

faithfull Allies, the Shanee Indians."¹⁸⁹ Much of the disputed land lay in Preston's surveying territory and he had already surveyed lands in the forbidden area.¹⁹⁰ John Buchanan, one of his uncle's executors, even talked of going to London in an attempt to lay out the case for his continued ownership of lands in the disputed area.¹⁹¹ In later years Preston as an executor of Patton's estate appealed to the North Carolina and Virginia legislatures to receive the lands they felt had been wrongfully deprived them because of this proclamation.¹⁹² Even though the British never officially changed their policy, the colonists resisted by refusing to move and even continuing their surveying efforts.¹⁹³ In the next ten years leading up to the American Revolution, this action by the British formed one of the grievances used to show how unfair the British had been. Yet the British were merely trying to gain time to work out more official agreements with the Indians so the frontier could be settled on a peaceful basis. They feared the opposite approach would result in continuing skirmishes between Indians and colonists which would require a large expense to maintain an army to protect the settlers. If strictly enforced, the British proclamation represented a real threat to Preston's ability to earn income through surveying in the disputed territory and through personal land purchases.

One goal still remained for Preston which could potentially increase his income further. He wanted to be the county surveyor instead of the assistant, but Thomas Lewis, his relative, continued to have tight hold on the position for Augusta County. His only possibility would be to move or for Augusta County to divide into two counties. His friend, Richard Starke, promised that if county division took place as he expected, he would actively promote Preston's appointment as surveyor with the College of William and Mary where such appointments were made.¹⁹⁴

In addition to being a surveyor, Preston's other civic duties continued. As a justice of the peace, he bore responsibility for maintaining the courthouse in an appropriate manner including the making of a square table, paying for 230 panes of glass and for glazing the courthouse, and for employing someone to keep the court-house clean and provide candles.¹⁹⁵ As a sheriff, he carried out such routine duties as keeping the prison repaired, paying for guards to watch the prison day and night, and handling bonds guaranteeing that accused citizens would show up for

¹⁸⁹David Robinson to [William Thompson], 18 February 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ 44-5.

¹⁹⁰Even Fauquier complained vigorously to the Board of Trade on 13 February 1764 outlining Patton's legal grants in the disputed area, and numerous laws passed encouraging colonists to settle in the very areas they were now forbidden to enter. He also pointed out the problem that the head branches of the waters which go into the Atlantic Ocean interlocked with those going into the Mississippi making it difficult to determine what should happen to lands lying between them. *Fauquier Papers*, III:1076-9. On 13 July 1764 the Board of Trade outright rejected his concerns. *Ibid.*, III:1125-6.

¹⁹¹David Robinson to [William Thompson], 18 February 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ 44.

¹⁹²28 October 1778 petition to Virginia House of Delegates from WP and William Thompson, PP-LC, 998 and 29 March 1780 petition from WP to North Carolina legislature, Grigsby Collection, FC, Mss.A G1857 375.

¹⁹³Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1979 reprint of 1903 edition), 83, cites Dr. Thomas Walker, agent of the Loyal Company, as an example of this violation. Walker surveyed and sold lands in Patton's original area around the Holston and Clinch Rivers, now forbidden for settlement, in the amount of 1,756 tracts of land containing 156,164 acres. In 1766 Walker even advertised for people who had left their lands during the war to return or face having their lands sold. In 1778 the Virginia legislature approved of Walker's actions.

¹⁹⁴Richard Starke to WP, 17 February 1760, PP-LC, 312.

¹⁹⁵Preston paid Michael Bowyer ,0.12.6 for the table on 24 November 1760. Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353, 5, Misc. On 24 February 1761 Alexander Wright was paid ,5.5 for the glass. *Ibid.* On 16 November 1761 Henry Murray received 20 shillings for glazing the court. PP-LC, 379. Preston and Felix Gilbert were ordered to find someone to clean the court on 20 November 1761. Augusta County Order Book, 7, 1761-1763, VSL, 64:120.

court appearances, supervising elections, and collecting taxes.¹⁹⁶ An added responsibility came in 1763 when he was appointed as a surveyor of the highway which involved keeping clean and repairing a certain section of road.¹⁹⁷ He also continued as clerk of the Augusta County vestry with his duties increasing as a result of the vestry ordering him to buy a large record book to record all transactions from the initial establishment of the vestry until 1761. Preston's careful record keeping and meticulous handwriting in this vestry book can be seen--traits he learned as a young adult under his uncle's tutelage which were now fully developed.¹⁹⁸

While Preston's business, civic, and personal life continued with more normalcy, the threat of further Indian attacks continued in spite of the recent peace treaty with the French. Settlers began to return to their homes which necessitated the Augusta County Court to ask Preston to apportion the tithables in the frontier district as far as Fort Lewis.¹⁹⁹ Now a new challenge developed. Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas, organized a full-blown attack by many Indian tribes, later known as "Pontiac's Conspiracy," against British forts and settlers along much of the frontier in May, 1763.²⁰⁰

With the threat of Indian attack once again revived, Preston sent an express in June, 1763 to Governor Fauquier requesting help. To assist the frontier counties, the governor ordered out the militia from the neighboring Bedford County and sent ten barrels of powder and some lead for Preston's usage. Again he reiterated a common attitude among Virginia's governors that the Augusta frontiersmen should be inspired with courage so they would not run away anytime twenty or thirty Indians showed up.²⁰¹ In private correspondence to the Board of Trade, Fauquier placed major blame on the colonists for agitating the Indians as a result of their illegal settlements in the New River area. He feared that the English would never be "able to live upon the same terms with the Indians as the French did, unless the Enthusiasm of running backwards to hunt for fresh Lands can be stopped."²⁰²

The few remaining families in the Roanoke River area now began to gather around the various forts. Preston also built a little fort which protected a total of eighty-seven people including his own family and two of his sisters with their families. Although no Indians had yet appeared, Preston reported that "their guns are frequently heard and their footing observed, which makes us believe they will pay us a visit."²⁰³

During the middle of these threats, Preston received another major promotion in August when Fauquier appointed him as a colonel of the militia for Augusta County four years after his

¹⁹⁶James Clark received 30 shillings on 2 July 1761 from WP for repairing the prison. PP-LC, 367. On 17 June 1761 he paid John Thompson and John Sell each 10 shillings for guarding Robert McGary four days and nights. PP-LC, 364. There are many evidences of bond being put up to guarantee the appearance of accused citizens including several in 1761. PP-LC, 352, 354, 356, 370, and 376.

¹⁹⁷On 26 April 1763 WP was appointed with John Armstrong to keep the road clear between Bryan McDaniels and James Wa_____. Augusta County Order Book, 8, 1763-1764, VSL, 64:206. On 22 August 1764 he was appointed to watch the highway from Buffalo Creek to the ford of the North River. *Ibid.*, 9, 64:71.

¹⁹⁸On 20 November 1761 the order was given to purchase the book. Augusta Parish Vestry Book, 1746-1776, Augusta County Courthouse, 349. On 19 November 1762 Preston received payment for carrying out the order to transfer all records to the new book. *Ibid.*, 356.

¹⁹⁹23 April 1763, Augusta County Order Book, 8, VSL, 64:51. William Thompson was ordered at the same time to apportion tithables to Fort Chiswell. Preston returned his list on 15 November 1763, *ibid.*, 64:326.

²⁰⁰Brief accounts of this war can be found in Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II:741-3 and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, 287. For a different interpretation, see Jennings, *Empire*, 438-53.

²⁰¹Francis Fauquier to WP, 24 July 1763, *Fauquier Papers*, II:997 and PP-DM, 2QQ 42.

²⁰²Fauquier to Board of Trade, 8 July 1763, *ibid.*, II:987.

²⁰³WP to Rev. John Brown, 27 July 1763, Kegley, *Virginia's Frontier*, 284-5.

last promotion.²⁰⁴ But just as with the county surveyor's position, someone else, in this case his cousin Andrew Lewis, still held the top position of county lieutenant. In any case he had greater responsibility. But no attacks came in his area during that summer and fall. William Ingles, one of his subordinates, did report in September about a skirmish between his militiamen who "all behaved like good soldiers" and a group of Indians who were "loath to give way." The ensuing battle resulted in several Indians being killed and the colonists taking plunder of thirty horses. As a token of appreciation, Ingles sent his leader Preston a shot pouch taken from one of the Indians' captains as a "small trophee of our Victory." Although short of powder and lead, Ingles asked Preston for permission to continue serving on the frontier since they could help protect settlers in both Augusta and Halifax Counties.²⁰⁵

The year 1764 did bring trauma to the young Preston family. In late winter or early spring, Preston left Susanna and his young family to transact some business in Staunton. Many years later their daughter, Letitia, reported that early one morning her mother was startled by hearing two guns fired in "quick succession." Shortly thereafter Joseph Cloyd, a neighbor, arrived on his "plough horse with gears on" with word that Indians had just killed his brother John, had shot at him but missed, "although his shirt was powder burnt," and had then gone to his house where they probably killed his mother. Susanna, in complete control, immediately wrote a letter "free from tremor or trepidation" to Captain Francis Smith who commanded a small nearby fort on Craig's Creek for help in pursuing the attackers. Next she sent a white man and two black men to the Cloyd's house where they found the mother

tomahawked in three places, all the house destroyed, the money carried off (Mr. Cloyd had a large sum of gold stowed away.) Mrs. Cloyd was perfectly in her senses, told all the circumstances of the savage revelry, in getting drunk, ripping up the feather beds, and one of them taking a corn cob and wiping off the blood of her temples, exclaiming 'poor old woman.' She died the next morning.²⁰⁶

The gold stashed by Cloyd became the subject of great dispute. Immediately after the attack, militiamen went after the Indians eventually attacking and killing one of them. They found the gold taken from Cloyd which amounted to , 137.18.0 after being weighed. A dispute then took place over who should own the gold--Cloyd or the militiamen who had recovered it from the Indians. To avoid a big argument, they gave the gold to James Montgomery who distributed it to the militia. When one of the Cloyd brothers, David, came for the gold, most of the militiamen felt guilty enough to return what they had been given amounting to , 106.17.2 which was , 31.10 short. In order to get back other plunder the militiamen had taken such as slaves and other household goods originally owned by Cloyd, he agreed to pay each man thirty shillings. He then sued Montgomery for the remainder in a suit settled in favor of Cloyd but with an unknown decision on appeal.²⁰⁷ Andrew Lewis expressed disgust to Preston about the problems over Cloyd's gold describing the action of the militia and others as "extremely ungenerous . . . and I think (Murder excepted) thire Disposition as bad as the Savages." He promised to get orders

²⁰⁴2 August 1763, Preston Family Papers, WMC, 39.1 P91, Folder 1. He took the oath as colonel on 16 August 1763, Augusta County Order Book, 8, VSL, 64:212.

²⁰⁵William Ingles to WP, 13 September 1763, PP-DM, 2QQ 43.

²⁰⁶LPF Letter.

²⁰⁷Chalkley, *Chronicles*, 1:344 and Waddell, *Annals*, 183-4.

from the governor on how to settle the problem.²⁰⁸ Ironically Preston's brother-in-law, Francis Smith, was one of the officers of the group in dispute.²⁰⁹ The attitudes which perturbed Lewis illustrate the roughness of frontiersmen who could not see the moral issue involved in their position. In a world in which the fittest survived, little room existed for fairness and "turning the other cheek."

In early spring, the continuing threat of Indian attack caused Andrew Lewis to request immediate help from the governor who authorized him to employ 450 men to protect Augusta County. Lewis hoped to raise all of the men from their own county without going to other counties with a draft. Lewis then gave instructions to Preston on how to deploy the men. Eighty men were to protect settlements on the Roanoke with fifteen or twenty going to Fort Lewis and the rest to be positioned as determined by Preston. Lewis suggested that he might want to keep a considerable number of them together so they could oppose groups of Indians. Preston's men would receive three hundred pounds of powder with one thousand pounds of lead to come from Fort Chiswell.²¹⁰

The news that spring was not all bad. Seven out of twenty-eight prisoners taken by Indians from the Cowpasture area were rescued. But the threat remained constant and personal. Preston's mother Elizabeth in Staunton was fearful for her safety and contemplated leaving despite the fact that there was a guard of thirteen or fourteen men who watched the area on a twenty-four hour basis to "haloo out when they see the Indians enter the town." Preston's brother-in-law, John Brown, worried about her moving since

she now enjoys a very Good state of health, if she shou'd change her Climate, food & drink and go to a sickly place, together with her further distance from her Children, relations, and acquaintances I fear the Consequences wou'd be bad.²¹¹

Within a few months, the problem resolved itself with a lessening of tensions.

All of these threats and loss of lives over the years caused frontiersmen to do some soul searching about why God would permit such tragedies to take place. Preston may have shared the theological explanation of his brother-in-law, Reverend John Brown, who blamed community sin as the cause of all calamity but denied that the suffering by a few could "expiate the sins of many, or even their own sins." He also rejected the idea that individuals "do not suffer only for the sins of the nation to whom they belong, but more especially for the particular sins that they themselves have committed. for Instance, None have suffered equivilent to the demerit of their sins &c."²¹² Such thoughts would be expected from a clergyman, but one wonders whether such views impacted on the way people actually practised their religion. Did it cause them to lead more moral and upright lives? If others "acted up," did the community come down on those individuals for bringing potential calamity on the whole community as a result of the sins of a few?

The attacks against Augusta County residents represented only a small part of Pontiac's

²⁰⁸Andrew Lewis to [WP], 4 April 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ 46-48.

²⁰⁹Dorman, *Prestons*, 22-3.

²¹⁰Andrew Lewis to [WP], 4 April 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ 46-48.

²¹¹Two letters on this topic exist from John Brown to WP. Neither of them are precisely dated but appear to have been written in 1764. One has no date. PP-DM, 2QQ 50-1. The other has no month but the year 1764. PP-DM, 2QQ 49. Based on their contents, the first letter cited above was probably written in June or July since Brown mentions a recent trip in June. The other letter cites some of the same information but appears to have been written several months later after Brown forgot what he had written about in the earlier letter.

²¹²John Brown to WP, [1764], PP-DM, 2QQ 50-1.

effort. After initial success by the Indians against virtually every fort except for Detroit and Fort Pitt, the British managed to relieve the threatened Fort Pitt under the leadership of Colonel Bouquet in August, 1763.²¹³ Two regiments from Augusta County aided him in this relief effort, a main goal being to retrieve prisoners taken by the Indians in recent raids. Bouquet's peace negotiations with the Indians resulted in a peace treaty with the Ohio Indians in November, 1764 causing a marked reduction of tension and the discharge of most militiamen. To guarantee the treaty, Lewis reported that hostages were being given by each Indian nation to guarantee the peace. While always wondering about the validity of Indian claims, they expected to find out their true intentions by the manner in which they treated the few prisoners still held in Indian captivity. Illustrating the more peaceful atmosphere, Lewis ordered Preston to discharge all but nine of his men.²¹⁴

The time now came for Augusta County to begin the process of restoring itself from the ravages of the war--a war that had clearly delayed the county's growth. In 1754 the county contained 10,560 inhabitants which went to a low of 5,496 in 1758 at the peak of the struggle. With the end of the war in 1763, the county's population came to 10,160 inhabitants, still under its high point ten years earlier.²¹⁵

William Preston stood poised to take advantage of the upcoming years of expansion on the frontier. The last ten years up to 1764 had been years of great maturation for William Preston as he furthered his experience in personal, business, and civic affairs. He was now on the verge of becoming the most significant founder and leader in three new counties which would prepare him for the pivotal role of leadership he carried into the American Revolution.

Developer (1765-1774)

By 1765 William Preston was a well established figure in Augusta County and over the next ten years he was to become a major developer of western Virginia. In this period he expanded his political horizons beyond local county offices by finally winning election to the House of Burgesses, but more important in his eyes was the role he played in the development of three new counties--Botetourt, Fincastle, and Montgomery. This role was facilitated by his achieving his long term goal of becoming a full-fledged county surveyor. As a surveyor he not only increased his own landholdings but also became heavily involved in the politics of western land development. His family grew and flourished and he developed Smithfield at a beautiful location near modern-day Blacksburg where he moved and lived until his death. He ended this period as a supervisor to a war fought against the Indians. All of these development activities then placed Preston in a position to become the dominant military and political leader in southwestern Virginia during the American Revolution.

Ten years had passed since Preston's earlier unsuccessful try for election to the House of Burgesses in which an investigation into tactics used by some of his overly eager supporters

²¹³Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, 287.

²¹⁴Andrew Lewis to WP, 20 December 1764, PP-DM, 2QQ, 58-9. Soldiers began to receive discharges almost immediately as evidenced on 27 December 1764 when David Robinson discharged William Hays. PP-DM, 2QQ 60-1.

²¹⁵Young, "Effects of French and Indian War," 207. The total population of Augusta County for each year during this period illustrates the dramatic impact of the war as follows: 1753-10,283; 1754-10,560; 1755-9,010; 1756-7,891; 1757-7,427; 1758-5,496; 1759-6,987; 1760-6,852; 1761-9,053; 1762-9,057; 1763-10,160. Bordering counties such as Bedford, Frederick, and Halifax experienced similar declines.

resulted in embarrassment. In 1755 he stood for office as a political novice who owned few lands, but in 1765 he possessed all of the essential ingredients for becoming a serious candidate. He had some natural advantages due to family connections. But he had also achieved membership into the elite through active involvement as a local political and military leader with substantial landholdings. A good marriage and a growing family were also positive advantages.²¹⁶

Preston had visited Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, in May, 1765.²¹⁷ The reasons for going are not clear but shortly after his arrival news came from his cousin, Andrew Lewis, who was Colonel of the Augusta County militia, that five Cherokee Indians, part of a group of ten on their way to the Ohio, had been killed near Staunton by a gang of "Villainous bloody minded Rascals" who would later be called the "Augusta Boys." Lewis, after warning the Indians of frontiersmen who hated them, had granted a pass for safe travel. Unfortunately among those killed was Choconantee, son of The Standing Turkey, Emperor of the Cherokees.²¹⁸ Absolutely certain that the remaining Indians who escaped would return home with the bad news, Lewis quickly wrote the Cherokee chiefs of the Overhill Towns confirming the murders and informing them that two of the perpetrators had already been imprisoned. He assured them that the governor abhorred the "spilling of blood in so detestable a manner" and pledged that the Chain of Friendship treaty would continue.²¹⁹

In Williamsburg government leaders must have consulted Preston and the action was quickly condemned with a reward offered for the apprehension of the murderers.²²⁰ In addition, Fauquier wrote a personal letter to the Cherokee chiefs blaming the murders on "some hot headed inconsiderate young men, whom yourselves own you cannot sometimes restrain from mischief."²²¹ Fauquier told Lewis that "I wish your county were made sensible of the rescue they run of losing their property if not their lives by permitting these atrocious practices."²²² Lewis probably did not have time to reflect on this because one hundred armed men had broken into the jail of Augusta County and freed one of the arrested men. These Augusta boys declared that no one should ever be brought to trial for the "killin of Savages," and in fact the perpetrators were never brought to justice. They even at one point offered a reward of , 1,000 for the head of

²¹⁶During his remaining years in Augusta while he served in the House of Burgesses, Preston continued to hold a number of local positions such as justice of the peace. 12 June 1765, Augusta County Order Book, 9, 1764-1765, VSL, 64:440; 21 August 1767, *ibid.*, 65:239; 15 February 1768, *ibid.*, 65:487-8; 17 May 1768, *ibid.*, 65:134, and 29 November 1768, *ibid.*, 66:72. Several times he served as a surveyor of highways. 19 October 1765, *ibid.*, 65:40; 21 August 1765, *ibid.*, 65:239-40, and 24 August 1767, *ibid.*, 65:313. He also worked as a sheriff. 21 March 1767, *ibid.*, 65:499. The county court appointed him to return a list of tithables on several occasions. 20 May 1766, *ibid.*, 65:152; 20 August 1766, *ibid.*, 65:202, and 19 May 1768, *ibid.*, 65:160. He also remained as clerk of the vestry. Chalkley, *Chronicles*, I:494-5.

²¹⁷Patricia Johnson in *Preston*, 89-90, errs in giving May, 1765 as the time when Preston attended his first session as an elected member of the House of Burgesses. While he was in Williamsburg at that time and received writs for elections to take place for the following year, Israel Christian and John Wilson represented Augusta County and both received appointments to serve on a committee to prepare a bill on 5 May 1765. *JHB*, 1761-5, 313, 335.

²¹⁸Andrew Lewis to Fauquier, 9 May 1765, *Fauquier Papers*, III:1234-5.

²¹⁹Andrew Lewis to Cherokee Chiefs of the Overhill Towns, 8 May 1765, *ibid.*, III:1235-6.

²²⁰13 May 1765, *JHB*, 1761-5, 336; *Executive Journals*, VI:600; *Fauquier Papers*, III:1237, 1239.

²²¹Fauquier to Cherokee Chiefs of the Upper Towns, 16 May 1765, *ibid.*, III:1240-2.

²²²Fauquier charged that the frontiersmen were acting worse than the Indians themselves yet whenever Indians appeared they expected protection from the colony at great expense. Dinwiddie had expressed similar feelings about the resilience of the frontiersmen. Fauquier to Andrew Lewis, 14 May 1765, *ibid.*, III:1237-9.

Lewis.²²³ And in an act of frontier solidarity, the Paxton Boys of Pennsylvania sent word that they would help if the Augusta boys were not "strong enough to rescue any of their Party who may be apprehended."²²⁴ Such was the frontier world of William Preston, a world in which many people cared less about obeying either colonial or county government than upholding their own individualism. Such an attitude would later cause problems for Preston during the American Revolution.

Preston must have been concerned for his young family's safety but he was soon assured that all was well--his neighbor and brother-in-law Robert Breckinridge had taken them in.²²⁵ And in Williamsburg the murder of Indians on the frontier was not the only exciting news.

During Preston's visit Virginia's opposition to the new Stamp Act came to a head when new House of Burgesses' member, Patrick Henry, introduced seven resolutions against the Act, five of which were ultimately passed on May 29.²²⁶ Williamsburg was a very small town and Preston certainly discussed and perhaps witnessed Henry's "sublime eloquence," as well as the resolutions which argued that Virginians received all of the liberties of English citizens including the right to be governed in their internal affairs by their own elected representatives.²²⁷ William Preston must have, at this early point eleven years before the Declaration of Independence, begun to form initial attitudes toward the burgeoning movement of the Patriots, or Whigs as they became known. Soon thereafter he was on his way home, taking with him writs for election of burgesses from Frederick and Hampshire Counties. Unfortunately his "travelling chair" broke down and the writs did not reach the proper authorities, an incident which resulted in an investigation and ultimate exoneration of Preston during the November 1766 session of the House of Burgesses.²²⁸ By that time Preston was a member of that body.

It is not known exactly when Preston was elected, but at least seven months before he went to Williamsburg as a burgess, influential Virginians began their lobbying efforts with the new legislator, illustrating the intense political struggle that was emerging. Henry had managed to change the face of politics in Virginia with the introduction of his set of resolutions against the Stamp Act. He along with his younger followers confronted the more moderate approach of accommodation and flexibility used by colonial leaders then in power. In contrast, the new leaders, many of whom grew out of the ranks of the older leadership rather than representing a new social class, favored a strategy which called for the colony to stand up for its rights.²²⁹

The death in May 1766 of John Robinson, Jr. who had served as Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer of Virginia for twenty-eight years created intense lobbying among those who wanted to replace him.²³⁰ Archibald Cary, representing the older leadership, requested Pres-

²²³Proclamation of the Augusta Boys, 4 June 1765, *ibid.*, III:1255-6. Lewis claimed to Fauquier that Peter Hogg, a lawyer in Frederick and Hampshire Counties, wrote the proclamation and hoped his right to practice law could be removed since he had joined the "Banditti in Mockery and Disrespect to your Honor's Proclamation and for the sake of making himself popular amongst the Disaffected with a view to increase the number of his Clients." 5 June 1765, *ibid.*, III:1253-5.

²²⁴Fauquier to Board of Trade, 14 June 1765, *ibid.*, III:1257.

²²⁵Robert Breckinridge to [WP], 31 May 1765, PP-DM, 2QO 94. John Preston would have been only one year old at this time having been born on 2 May 1764 at Greenfield. Preston Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4 P9266:1 or John Floyd Family Bible, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2.

²²⁶29 May 1765, *JHB*, 1761-1765, 358.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, lxx, 360.

²²⁸George Earnest billed WP, 15.6.9 for repair of a carriage chair on 24 December 1766. PP-LC, 510. 8 November 1766, *JHB*, 1766-1769, 18-9.

²²⁹Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, 311-3.

²³⁰Both Governors Dinwiddie and Fauquier had tried to separate the offices of Speaker and Treasurer with

ton's support for Peyton Randolph, the colony's Attorney General, to become Speaker of the House, describing him as "Uniformly Just, and his Behaviour in the House has allways prov'd him to be a firm friend of his Country Void of Passion and Prejudice." He encouraged Preston to be on time since the vote would take place the first day of the session. He also passed on news of the repeal of the Stamp Act by the British.²³¹ Obviously Randolph represented the candidate of the establishment because Fauquier also supported his election describing him as best qualified to repair the damage from the previous session.²³² Robert Carter Nicholas, the recent appointee by the Governor as Treasurer, also wrote Preston promising to "act with Vigour & a becoming Spirit upon every Occasion, being warmly disposed & determined to do equal Justice to my Country, as well as to the Memory of my worthy Predecessor."²³³ He passed on word that some wanted to divide the office of Speaker and Treasurer but urged Preston to suspend judgement until the House fully debated the matter.²³⁴

When Preston arrived in Williamsburg to attend the opening session on November 6, the dominant issue soon became the public accounts of Robinson, the recently deceased Treasurer. For several months rumors abounded about his personal usage of public funds, but now an investigation by the House revealed the truth. While not personally benefiting from this practice, Robinson had not retired paper currency issued during the recent war as required by law but had loaned those funds instead to many of his friends. This placed his accounts with Virginia more

the encouragement of the Board of Trade. Because of the powerful position of Robinson and the need for both Governors to get support from the House of Burgesses during the French and Indian War, neither Governor was willing to implement the Board of Trade wishes. See Jack P. Greene, "The Attempt to Separate the Offices of Speaker and Treasurer in Virginia, 1758-1766," *VMHB*, 71 (January, 1963): 11-18.

²³¹Col. Archibald Cary to WP, 14 May 1766, PP-DM, 2QQ 95-6. Repeal of the Stamp Act took place on 18 March 1766. *JHB*, 1761-1765, lxxiv-lxxv. Around 9 June 1766 Fauquier issued a proclamation to Virginia announcing the repeal which was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* (Purdies) on 13 June 1766. *Fauquier Papers*, III: 1363-4.

²³²Fauquier to Board of Trade, *Fauquier Papers*, III:1359-60. The Governor strongly supported Randolph describing him as possessing "the good Qualities of his late most intimate Friend (Robinson), and has always been one of the foremost to promote his Majesty's Service in the Requisitions of the Crown, and has always used his Endeavors to induce the Assembly to concur with me in all Measures which were conducive to the Honor and Dignity of the Crown and the Peace and Advantage of the Colony." Fauquier also suggested that George Wythe would be a good replacement for Randolph as Attorney General. He concluded, "I cannot my Lords deny this Truth, that I have conceived a Love and Esteem for these Gentlemen; but if I know my own heart, it was at first generated and has been since nourished by my observing their Conduct both in public and private Life, which has been uniformly void of Guile, and steady in the Support of Government."

²³³Fauquier's appointment of Nicholas represented a shift in his original intention to appoint James Cocke, the Clerk in the Treasurer's office. Fauquier described Cocke as having a "great reputation" who could be trusted to pass on the financial papers to the permanent appointee. He really wanted to appoint Peyton Randolph to the position of Treasurer but the law required Randolph to resign his position in the House of Burgesses and then be reelected to the same position. Fauquier wanted to get Randolph elected first as Speaker and then nominate him as Treasurer. Meanwhile Cocke could serve on an interim basis as Treasurer. On the other hand, if a Speaker was appointed "who has been remarkable in opposing all Measures of Government," Fauquier would split the two offices. Fauquier to Board of Trade, 11 May 1766, *ibid.*, III:1360-1. Meanwhile, Robert Nicholas, described by Fauquier as a "Gentleman of an unexceptionable Character," offered to resign his seat to get the treasurership. Since the Council supported him for this position, Fauquier agreed. He heard reports that Nicholas's friends "who are pretty numerous" wanted to divide the office of Speaker and Treasurer so that Nicholas could continue as Treasurer. Fauquier to Board of Trade, 22 May 1766, *ibid.*, III:1361.

²³⁴Robert Carter Nicholas to WP, 21 May 1766, PP-DM, 2QQ 97. Nicholas strongly hinted that he should also be considered for Speaker when he wrote, "I flatter myself that my Conduct will be such as to meet the general Approbation, and, if with my best Endeavours, I should be fortunate enough to give Satisfaction, I shall think myself extremely happy, & then take the Liberty to hope for your favourable Countenance & Regard."

than , 100,000 in arrears to the embarrassment of the old line leadership whom he represented. No longer would the House allow for the offices of Speaker and Treasurer to be held by the same person.²³⁵ They wisely elected Peyton Randolph of the old line leadership as Speaker while Robert Carter Nicholas, a personal rival, remained in the appointed position of Treasurer.²³⁶ The efforts to lobby Preston by both factions reveals the intensity of the debate. Preston's position throughout this debate is unknown although one would suspect some sympathies with the younger group of leaders due to Preston's newness and acquaintance with Patrick Henry.

With one hundred other Burgesses, Preston listened to Governor Fauquier's opening address which took a patronizing tone in regard to repeal of the Stamp Act, "the Act you thought oppressive." The Governor argued,

Your Mother Country has on this Occasion not only acted with her usual Prudence, but also the greatest Kindness and Affection towards you her Children; and as an indulgent Parent has a right to expect a Return of Duty, Obedience, and Gratitude, from her natural Children, she has a Right to claim the same from you, her political Ones.

Such parent-child talk surely bothered many burgesses, but they responded officially with a statement of willingness to defend the King "with our Lives and Fortunes . . . in doing which we shall pursue the real Interest of Great Britain."²³⁷

The House Journals for this session contain only three references to Preston. On the opening day, he received an appointment to the twenty-nine member Committee of Public Claims.²³⁸ Another reference involves an investigation referred to earlier in which Preston's failure to deliver election writs to two counties came into question with his ultimate exoneration. The final reference had nothing to do with his membership in the House but dealt with a petition he and Andrew Lewis sent to receive reimbursement for paying Augusta militia.²³⁹ The , 100 later allowed Preston in payment for his services, traveling costs, and for the militia pay seems like a very small amount.²⁴⁰ Because no roll call votes appear in the Minutes, no evidence exists

²³⁵A resolution favoring separation of these two offices passed on a 68 to 29 vote on 12 November 1766. JHB, 1766-1769, 24.

²³⁶Tate, Colonial Virginia, 310-1.

²³⁷6 November 1766, JHB, 1766-1769, 12-3. On 12 November 1766, the House after heavy debate and several amendments responded in more formal language. They defended their actions of opposition to the Stamp Act and reminded the Governor that "real Prudence" guided their actions in favor of a "preservation of their Rights and Liberties." Ibid., 23. Fauquier kept his London superiors informed about the problems the burgesses encountered in getting the statement adopted due to "difficulties as to the mode of Expression." Fauquier to Earl of Shelburne, 10 November 1766, Fauquier Papers, III:1390-1. Later in the session, the burgesses even approved the erection of a statue in honor of the King "as a grateful Acknowledgement for repealing the Stamp Act, and thereby restoring the Rights and Privileges of his American Subjects, and consequently the Ease and Happiness of this Colony." 20 November 1766, JHB, 1766-1769, 33. A later action also approved the erection of an obelisk in honor of the "noble and worthy Patriots" who helped the colonial cause in Parliament by helping to "perpetuate the Glorious Repeal of the late unconstitutional Stamp Act." Ibid., 34. The burgesses tabled both actions later and nothing ever came of the idea. Perhaps neither side could agree and they both knew the Governor would never agree to an obelisk being erected in honor of opponents of the Stamp Act in Parliament. For good reason, Fauquier never mentioned anything about this possibility in his letter to London.

²³⁸7 November 1766, ibid., 15-6. This committee reviewed all public claims made by individuals against the colony.

²³⁹8 December 1766, ibid., 57.

²⁴⁰16 December 1766, ibid., 73-4.

on how long he spent at the session although his cousin mentioned his "long abod" at the capitol.²⁴¹

Over the next six years, Preston's constituents showed their confidence by electing him to the House of Burgesses as their delegate from Augusta County two more times and from the newly formed Botetourt County twice. But they did not elect him on the basis of either participation or attendance. Aside from the first session he attended in 1766, no further reference to his name appears in the Journals but from other evidence it is clear that he attended parts of two other sessions in March, 1767 and November, 1769.²⁴²

Obviously Preston did not enjoy his service in the House of Burgesses or he would have become more involved and attended more regularly. Perhaps the fact that frontier legislators carried little influence or clout in the House was a factor in his absences but more importantly, attendance at Assembly meetings involved spending several weeks away from home each year leaving his family exposed on a dangerous frontier.²⁴³ Spending time in Williamsburg also took him away from his many businesses which represented a loss of income. During the 1767 legislative session he expressed his discomfort to his brother-in-law, Robert Breckinridge: "I have heard nothing from home since I recd. your Leter, Which gives me the greatest uneasiness I ever felt in my absence from my Family." He asked him to "ride over when at Leasure & See how my little affairs go on. It will I fear be late in the month before I get home."²⁴⁴

Preston's lack of active attendance and participation is harder to understand because his own potential for career advancement stood in the balance. Debate steadily increased over the possibility of dividing Augusta County into another county because of its current size which stretched along the crest of the Blue Ridge north to Lake Erie, south to North Carolina, and west to the Pacific Ocean. If division took place, Preston would become one of the prime candidates for the position of chief surveyor of a new county.²⁴⁵ The politics involved in dividing the county revolved around where the lines would be drawn and who would become surveyor, not over whether a new county should be formed. Even the willingness of Virginia leaders to divide counties on a regular basis, thereby constantly adding new members to the House of Burgesses, illustrated their commitment to keeping a broad base of representation. It would have been easy

²⁴¹Thomas Lewis to WP, 16 December 1766, PP-LC, 514.

²⁴²According to Kennedy's records in JHB, 1766-1769, 3, 79, 135, 221 and JHB, 1770-1772, 3, and 113, Preston served as a burgess from Augusta County in November 1766, March 1767, and March 1768, and from Botetourt County in November 1769, May 1770, and July 1771. For the May 1769 session he is not listed as a member even though Jefferson lobbied him to elect the Reverend James Fontaine as chaplain of the House. Jefferson to WP, 18 August 1768, Julian P. Boyd et al, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), I:23, hereafter referred to as Jefferson Papers. Kennedy only lists him as attending the November 1766 session. Evidence for his attendance at the March 1767 session comes from a letter addressed to him at Williamsburg from Andrew Lewis on 19 March 1767, PP-DM, 2QQ 101 and a memorandum written by Preston with a list of errands to be performed while in Williamsburg. PP-LC, 522. Evidence for attendance at the November 1769 session comes from a letter written by WP from Williamsburg to Robert Breckinridge on 16 November 1769 reporting on the legislative session. Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:16.

²⁴³One of the advantages of being a burgess was the many errands which could be carried out in Williamsburg for neighbors and family members. In 1767 he wrote extensive lists in a memorandum book related to land matters, reminders to pick up two pairs of stockings for a neighbor, teaspoons and a dozen china cups and saucers for Mrs. Buchanan, and a "white silk Damask gown and petticoats for Miss Moly." 12 March 1767, PP-LC, 522.

²⁴⁴WP to Robert Breckinridge, 1 April 1767, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:8.

²⁴⁵The events leading to a new county including the political struggles over who would be named county surveyor are well documented in Hughes, Surveyors, 100-1.

for them to keep their own power base more intact by not allowing for such divisions, but this approach, in contrast to other colonies, kept east-west division almost non-existent in Virginia. They had wisely helped foster a leadership in the backcountry which shared their own value structure and so they had little to fear. Early in 1767 several petitions circulated throughout Augusta County, each asking for a division in a different place. Lewis hoped that an interim division which would satisfy both ends of the county could be worked out and wrote Preston trying to figure out his position.²⁴⁶ John Madison also wrote a strong letter describing Israel Christian's "stupid performance" in passing a petition around the county in favor of division. Madison first thought Christian's motivation "proceeded from Vanity but it Seems, he has a better, will you believe it? His Son has a promise of the Surveyors place at least from two of the Masters of the College." Such a warning must have caused some consternation in Preston who had labored many years as an assistant surveyor while waiting for a full position to open. Madison also jokingly counseled concerning the division of the county that if all else failed, "on a pinch you might strike up an Indian War." More seriously he expressed the hope that "you who by this time must be a Politician enough to split a hair" could get the county line to begin at the North Branch of the James as the "properest Place for a Division." But he warned, "I assure you that many eyes are on you and some of 'em prying ones too."²⁴⁷

And after his arrival in Williamsburg for the 1767 legislative session, his efforts to gain a surveyor's post were complicated by the fact that his cousin, Andrew Lewis, wrote asking for help in getting the surveyor's position if a new county was formed. It appears, strangely, that he did not know of Preston's interest for he stated that "doubtless some others may have Some pretensions but of this you will be acquainted." He asked Preston to write a letter to the Masters at the College of William and Mary, who approved such licenses, and to wait on the officials "with such Gentile Compliments and wining adress in my favour as canot faile of success." He hoped his chances would improve if Preston reminded them of his application for a surveyor's position in 1760 and of the promises received then of assistance.²⁴⁸

The petitions for county division caused great confusion in the legislature because of the disputes as to where the county lines should be drawn. Some recommended that the division be Beverley Manor and others the James River.²⁴⁹ The result was that the Assembly referred consideration to the next Assembly session by which time, Preston wrote, "I hope we shall have all matters amicably sttled amongst ourselves."²⁵⁰

The question of who would be surveyor of the new county also remained in question. Thomas Lewis wrote Preston that he had "done much & in inconvenient places" but warned that the position might elude him. Lewis had heard that Israel Christian had been promised the position by at least four masters at William and Mary College and that the master "upon whom you most depended was gone to England," thus leaving Preston's position "on a precarious footing. I mention this Dear Billy that you may be on your Guard, & Employ your own Interest . . . to prevent Disappointment."²⁵¹ Preston took his cousin's advice seriously and wrote to

²⁴⁶Thomas Lewis to [WP], 24 February 1767, PP-DM, 2QQ 100.

²⁴⁷John Madison to WP, 1 March 1767, PP-LC, 521.

²⁴⁸Andrew Lewis to WP, 19 March 1767, PP-DM, 2QQ 101.

²⁴⁹18 and 30 March 1767, *JHB, 1766-1769*, 82, 102. A petition from residents on the New River asked that they be exempted from levies and taxes a few more years, but that if the county should be divided, they be added to the new county. 1 April 1767, *ibid.*, 106.

²⁵⁰Thomas Lewis to WP, 26 December 1767, PP-LC, 540.

²⁵¹Thomas Lewis to WP, 26 December 1767, PP-LC, 540.

Edmund Pendleton soliciting his help. Pendleton's response could not have brought comfort, "I have scarcely an Acquaintance with the Masters of the College and my writing immediately to them would rather be improper." He offered to work through "my friend," John Blair, the burgess from the College of William and Mary in the House of Burgesses, "and should any other means offer, I will critically embrace them."²⁵² By April, 1769 Thomas Lewis reported a complete reversal from a few months earlier. Most of the Masters at the college "all Seem to Say they are under Engagements to you, & I from thence took opportunity Saying as much in your favour as I could."²⁵³ Victory finally came during the 1769 session of the House of Burgesses. A new county was formed, named after the recently appointed governor, Lord Botetourt.²⁵⁴ And Preston was appointed its surveyor.²⁵⁵ The county was a huge area comprising much of current Virginia and the entire modern states of Kentucky, Illinois, and parts of Indiana, Ohio, and West Virginia. Now Preston, as surveyor, took on the role of county developer, a position he would repeat two more times with other newly formed counties in southwestern Virginia.

To help survey the vast territory for which he bore responsibility, Preston selected assistant surveyors from a pool of applicants who desired the position, not only for the income generated, but for the political contacts created and the possibility of enhancing one's own property ownership. A few short days after his appointment, John Floyd, a recent widower from Amherst County, arrived carrying a recommendation from William Cabell who praised him as a

very sober Judicious young man & am Convinced wou'd be very Careful in the Discharge of every trust that shou'd be Committed to his Charge or should you think proper to Employ him I am persuaded you will have no reason to Complain.²⁵⁶

Preston not only hired Floyd as an assistant surveyor but used him as the first teacher of his children.²⁵⁷ Eventually Preston's daughter, Letitia, would marry Floyd's son.²⁵⁸ Such family con-

²⁵²Edmund Pendleton to WP, 6 February 1768, *Pendleton Papers*, I:37 and PP-DM, 2QQ 103.

²⁵³Thomas Lewis to [WP], 13 May 1769, PP-DM, 2QQ 112-3. Lewis outlined the position taken by the Masters as follows: "ye persons who are most likely to listen to you on this Subject may be Mr Carr & Mr Johnston, at least they Speake ye freest on ye Subject would to god it were more in power to Serve you, nothing on my part should be wanting, I need say no more I have done all I could, Mr Jones makes a point of promising to none, (but as to Mr Chistian he has promised that he will vote against him) I think he has little prospect of Succeeding. tho he has been latley down pestring them. Capt Bullet has some pretentions of promises, but Hope he will not Succed to your predjuce - one Mr May who is to have ye Clerks place I am afraid you will be in most Danger off, but I hope your Intrest will get ye Better of all, I have wrote a few lines to Dr Walker who I hope will be of all ye Service he can to you in ye mean tim use all ye prudential measure in your power to Effect your purpose, I think you stand well with Mr Horrex - ply him by means of mr Everard." One can understand why Lewis asked Preston to burn the letter "for on review thereof I think it well Deserves yt fate." Obviously Preston did not follow these instructions.

²⁵⁴Those favoring a line running along the north branch of the James River won. "An act for dividing the county and parish of Augusta," November 1769, Hening, *Statutes*, VIII:395-8.

²⁵⁵Even before the county division bill passed, Preston had already received the surveyor's license from the Masters at the College of William and Mary. 1 November 1769, WMC Archives, "Surveying-Individuals" under "William Preston." He put up a bond of , 100 as guarantee that he would faithfully carry out his duties. After the division bill passed, Preston left immediately leaving to John Wilson, his fellow Augusta legislator, the job of filling the remaining county positions. WP to Robert Breckinridge, 16 November 1769, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:16.

²⁵⁶William Cabell to WP, 27 December 1769, PP-LC, 609.

²⁵⁷LPF Letter.

²⁵⁸John Floyd married the daughter of Preston's first cousin, Margaret Patton Buchanan, wife of John Buchanan. Hughes, *Surveyors*, note 30, 182. Letitia married their son, Dr. John Floyd, M.D., who served in the Virginia House of Delegates from Montgomery County and became governor of Virginia from 1830-4. Dorman,

nections became important in choosing other assistant surveyors.²⁵⁹ In Botetourt County, those appointed to serve as assistant surveyors included Francis Smith, brother-in-law of Preston and John Trimble, son of Augusta County assistant surveyor, James.²⁶⁰

Preston's dominant role in the new county is illustrated by the fact that he was appointed coroner, colonel of the militia, and was continued as a justice of the peace as were all of the residents who had held that position in Augusta County.²⁶¹ These offices were confirmed by the Botetourt County Court in February, 1770, as well as those of escheator and member of the court of oyer and terminer.²⁶² Even before these most recent appointments, his cousins in Ireland reported hearing that he had become a "person vested with power, & authority in a very extensive manner."²⁶³ For the next three years until he helped organize the new Fincastle County, Preston guided the development of Botetourt County.

During the first year of Botetourt County's existence, the county court gradually developed a structure and procedures for how the county would operate. After approving several positions at the opening session, the county court ordered Preston to get some weights for the county. They then proceeded to establish rates for West Indies rum and Virginia malt and heard several lawsuits.²⁶⁴ At that point the court did not have a place to meet, a problem which was solved several months later when Israel and Elizabeth Christian donated forty-five acres for a courthouse, a prison, and for thirty half-acre lots which could be sold to defray the expenses of the buildings in a new town to be named Fincastle after George Lord Fincastle, the son of Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia.²⁶⁵ The court ordered the county surveyor, Preston, to lay out the new town.²⁶⁶ The court's orders for a new courthouse illustrated the primitive nature of county government facilities since it was to be a log cabin twenty-four feet by twenty with two small

Prestons, 68-70.

²⁵⁹Hughes, Surveyors, 91.

²⁶⁰13 March 1770, Botetourt County Order Book 1, 1770-1771, Part 1, VSL, 27:16 and 12 March 1771, ibid., 27:239.

²⁶¹WP Commission as Colonel, 10 December 1769, PP-LC, 608. Appointment as coroner came from Botetourt on 22 December 1769. Preston Family Papers, WMC, 39.1 P91, Folder 1. The Council voted the provision on justices on 15 December 1769, Executive Journals, VI:339.

²⁶²Preston, Francis Smith, and Robert Breckinridge put up a , 500 bond guaranteeing the work of Preston as county surveyor. Botetourt County Deed Book 1, 1770-1773, VSL, 1:101. Also, for several of these positions see 13 February 1770, Botetourt County Order Book 1, 1770-1771, VSL, 27:1, 4, and 10-13. Other key individuals appointed to serve included the following as justices of the peace: Andrew Lewis, Richard Woods, Robert Breckinridge, John Bowyer, Israel Christian, John Maxwell, James Trimble, Benjamin Hawkins, David Robinson, William Fleming, George Skillern, and Benjamin Estill. Many of these were longtime friends and relatives of Preston.

²⁶³James Preston to WP, 22 February 1769, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a22.

²⁶⁴14 February 1770, ibid., 27:9.

²⁶⁵Agreement by the Christians with Justices of Botetourt County, 13 June 1770, Original in "Historical Writings of Botetourt County," Botetourt County Courthouse, Fincastle. See Niederer, Fincastle, 2-3, on the town background and layout. On 12 June 1770 the court ordered that several justices sell the lots "as they shall Judge most for the advantage of the County and for the Improvement of the Town." Botetourt County Order Book, 1, 1770-1771, Part 1, VSL, 27:89. The House of Burgesses approved the establishment of Fincastle on 25 February 1772, and passed the bill on 16 March 1773. JHB, 1770-1772, 189, 249, and "An act for establishing the town of Fincastle, in the county Botetourt." Hening, Statutes, 8:616-7. The Virginia Council received these actions on 21 March 1772 and 8 April 1772, H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Legislative Journals of Council of Colonial Virginia (Richmond: Virginia State Library, MCMXIX), III:1459, 1469, hereafter referred to as Legislative Journals.

²⁶⁶9 May 1770, Botetourt County Order Book, 1, VSL, 27:66. In 1772 the legislature finally passed "An act for establishing the town of Fincastle, in the county of Botetourt." Hening, Statutes, 8:616-7.

sheds at each end for jury rooms and a log cabin for a prison and jailer's house.²⁶⁷ The next day the court ordered that stocks be built for the new jail and set the pay of prison guards at 3s. for every twenty-four hours.²⁶⁸

The court itself dealt with the usual range of issues confronted by local authorities including receipt of commissions for offices, approval of hemp for bounties from Virginia, appointment of a grand jury, resolution of estate matters, approval of ordinary licenses, orders to get tithables, and jurisdiction over many lawsuits. The sheer volume of the court's work could be staggering. On one day alone, Botetourt residents initiated 180 lawsuits, many of them involving disputes over debt.²⁶⁹ Preston's attendance initially was good but in 1771 it fell off dramatically.²⁷⁰

Typical of a day's session attended by Preston might be March 13, 1770 shortly after the court began its initial session. On that day Preston along with fellow justices received certificates for rotted hemp, approved ordinary licenses, appointed a constable, issued authorization for a new mill, laid off a new road, and received many indentures of lease and release for land ownership. The court gave three orphans the right to choose guardians, probably as a result of parental death. Also, citizens filed sixty-seven lawsuits including cases of debt and estate problems.²⁷¹

The court on which Preston sat also dealt with cases involving moral questions. The May 9, 1770 session illustrates some of these problems including suits against a woman having a "bastard" child, against a couple for cohabiting together, and against a man for unlawfully keeping someone else's wife.²⁷² Decisions of the court of oyer and terminer, with Preston present, also illustrate attitudes toward slaves on the frontier. The court charged Will, a slave owned by a John Bowman, with "not having the Fear of God before his Eyes" and serving "by Instigation of the Devil" when he "with Force and Arms feloniously, and make an assault upon Elizabeth Gray," the twenty-five year old wife of Walter. When Will denied his guilt, the court then asked Elizabeth to give her testimony after which the court ruled that Will be "hanged by the Neck until he be dead."²⁷³ In another case heard by Preston, charges against Jacob Vardaman of several unspecified felonies resulted in an innocent plea by the defendant, but after he heard several witnesses he asked to have thirty-nine lashes on his bare back as a punishment.²⁷⁴

Preston also continued his service as a member of the House of Burgesses but now from the new county. When the Burgesses met in May, 1770, no one came from Botetourt because writs had not been issued for the election.²⁷⁵ Subsequently, Preston and John Bowyer won election but neither attended this session nor the one in July, 1771.²⁷⁶ With such a record Preston

²⁶⁷ 11 April 1770, Botetourt County Order Book, 1, 1770-1771, Part 1, VSL, 27:44.

²⁶⁸ 10 May 1770, *ibid.*, 27:84.

²⁶⁹ 8 May 1770, *ibid.*, 27:47-65.

²⁷⁰ Augusta County experienced a similar problem with court attendance setting up an argument between Turk McCleskey and Albert Tillson, Jr. over the reasons. Tillson argued that it showed apathy toward the court processes. But McCleskey countered by arguing that justices took turns sitting on the bench and remained in the general vicinity of the court when not on duty just like justices in the Tidewater. McCleskey, "Across the Divide," n.61, 110-1.

²⁷¹ 13 March 1770, *ibid.*, 27:16-7.

²⁷² 9 May 1770, *ibid.*, 27:47.

²⁷³ 14 August 1770, *ibid.*, 27:117-8.

²⁷⁴ 30 August 1771, *ibid.*, 27:399.

²⁷⁵ 22 May 1770, *JHB, 1770-1772*, 10.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 3, 113.

now faced opposition for his seat in the House of Burgesses. His friend, Peter Hogg, alluded to a weight problem Preston would fight the rest of his life which tended to limit his energy level in getting around the county--"if you lose your Election you may thank your fat Sides & lazy Humour that you grumble at climbing the Hills of Botetourt."²⁷⁷ In this election his cousin, Andrew Lewis, replaced him as a burgess.²⁷⁸ After this time Preston never again ran for election to the House of Burgesses as he seems to have made a conscious decision to leave legislative service in Williamsburg. However, he made one abortive attempt at the Senate after the Revolution began. Edmund Pendleton wrote expressing regret:

I am afraid you have deserted the Metropolis, and I shall Seldom have the Pleasure of seing you, however I rather envy Your happiness, then blame your retirement, as I am convinced true pleasure is not to be found in a Public bustle.²⁷⁹

For a relatively unknown member of the House of Burgesses, Preston apparently found little satisfaction in serving in colony-wide office. In a local county he could dominate the political life through greater influence and power where he had the added bonus of staying near his growing family and building up his business interests.²⁸⁰

His dominance of Botetourt County lasted three short years and in 1772 he transferred his energies to the formation of another new county, again showing the confidence the leaders in Williamsburg had in him. In early 1772, settlers from the far reaches of Botetourt on the Holston and New Rivers began appealing for another county division since they lived so far from the county's courthouse "whereby they suffer many Inconveniences."²⁸¹ The appropriate committees found their petition reasonable and before the session ended a new county, Fincastle, came into existence to consist of land west of the New River.²⁸² They located the new county seat at the Lead Mines on the New River, placing those settlers on the southwestern frontiers in closer proximity to a courthouse.²⁸³ With Preston's home at Greenfield located just inside the boundary for the new county, he played a critical role for the second time in helping establish a new county. Illustrating his standing, again he was appointed as a justice of the peace, county

²⁷⁷Peter Hogg to WP, Undated, PP-LC, 821.

²⁷⁸JHB, 1770-1772, 144. Robert Doack wrote Preston on 20 November 1771 expressing approval of Andrew Lewis as a candidate. Another Preston friend, John Trimble, wrote him on 3 December 1771, "I cannot Conveniently Come to the Elections." PP-LC, 680.

²⁷⁹Edmund Pendleton to WP, 18 December 1773, *Pendleton Papers*, I:80.

²⁸⁰Even after he left office, potential employees of Virginia sought his approval. Richard Purdie wrote him on 21 February 1774 requesting that he lobby members of the House of Burgesses for the position of printer which he promised would be "done well & faithfully by me." He and Dixon who had been in business together were separating their partnership. He further reported that all of the principal members were for him. PP-LC, 787.

²⁸¹19 February 1771, JHB, 1770-1772, 175.

²⁸²26 March 1772, 30 March 1772, 8 April 1772, *ibid.*, 271, 278, 304 and "An act for dividing the county of Botetourt into two distinct counties," Hening, *Statutes*, 8:600-1. Emily Salmon, editor, postulates the following theories for the naming of Fincastle: "named either for George, Lord Fincastle, Lord Dunmore's son; for John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore, Viscount Fincastle; or for the town of Fincastle, Virginia, which was established in 1772 and named after Lord Botetourt's home in England." *A Hornbook of Virginia History*, 3rd ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1983), 109.

²⁸³A dispute arose over whether the courthouse was located on lands purchased from Dr. Walker or part of a parcel purchased from the heirs of James Patton by Colonel Chiswell, owner of the Lead Mines. Colonel William Byrd offered to buy that parcel and asked Preston to purchase lands for him next to the Lead Mines if possible. 16 November 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 138-9.

lieutenant, sheriff, and most importantly for him, county surveyor.²⁸⁴ He then appointed a number of assistant surveyors including John Floyd, his family's school teacher, and a distant relative recently migrated from Ireland, Robert Preston, William Russell, and Daniel Smith.²⁸⁵

Primitive conditions prevailed for the new county. Preston vigorously objected to the insufficient prison and the county court ordered that the sheriff hire guards to take care of the prisoners until construction of a proper prison occurred.²⁸⁶ As in Botetourt the court dealt with the usual range of suits such as having "bastard" children, openly threatening and swearing to destroy another person, keeping in "an unlawful manner & cohabiting with a woman and having a bastard child," and for not keeping the road in sufficient repair.²⁸⁷

Within two short years residents in Fincastle County began to ask for another new county.²⁸⁸ Preston picked up rumors about a petition circulating throughout Fincastle asking for a new county to be centered at the head of the Holston River. Apparently many considered the location of the courthouse at the Lead Mines as too far south, a fact to which Preston agreed, but he opposed another new county on the basis that only twenty freeholders, most of them in new settlements and very poor, lived in the proposed territory. He wondered if such a small population could support a new county and parish with all of the offices involved. In addition, "not one man perhaps in ten have Business at Court once in two or three years." If they could move the courthouse further north between Fort Chiswell and the headwaters of Reed Creek, it would be closer to where most of the people lived and where future population growth would most likely occur, thus delaying a division.²⁸⁹ Edmund Pendleton agreed with Preston that no further division should take place since the governor had specific instructions not to grant any

²⁸⁴10 October and 26 October 1772, *Executive Journals*, VI:505, 508; 1 December 1772 Sheriff's Commission from Dunmore, Preston Family Papers, College of William & Mary, 39.1 P91 Folder 1 and 5 January 1773, Montgomery County Order Book 1, 1773-1788, VSL, 20:1, 2. Preston's , 1,000 bond for sheriff can be found in 5 January 1773, Misc. Montgomery County Courthouse Records. John Floyd again became his assistant surveyor. PP-LC, 731 and 2 March 1773, Montgomery County Order Book 1, 1773-1788, VSL, 20:11. Fincastle County records appear under Montgomery County since Fincastle only existed until 1776. On 6 July 1773 Preston received a commission as Justice of the Peace and member of the court of oyer and terminer. *Ibid.*, 20:80.

²⁸⁵One year before he arrived, Thomas Preston, one of William Preston's relatives, wrote from Londonderry, Ireland that Robert Preston, grandson "to my Uncle Samuel Preston," would be coming to America. He encouraged William Preston to "give him Some Friendly Admonitions, how to Act & Manage; he is a pious good Young Man; & have Dealt in the Pedlar way for some Years past." PP-LC, 743. Evidence for these appointments can be seen as follows: William Thompson, 20 May 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 146; Daniel Smith, 1 March 1774, Misc. Montgomery County Courthouse Records; William Russell, 2 August 1774, Montgomery County Order Book 2, 1774-1782, VSL, 20:109; and Robert Preston, 3 August 1774, *ibid.*, 20:111.

²⁸⁶5 January 1773, Montgomery County Order Book 1, 1773-1788, VSL, 20:3. Apparently his objections took time to be heard because by the end of the year nothing had been done when Daniel Trigg, under sheriff to Preston, objected on behalf of Preston to the prison's insufficiency. 3 November 1773, *ibid.*, 20:146.

²⁸⁷2 November 1773, *ibid.*, 20:143. Preston also received the assignment to help build a new road from the Glades to the ferry operated by the Ingles family through Draper's Meadows, soon to be the Preston's new home. 7 September 1773, *ibid.*, 20:107.

²⁸⁸The first intimation of problems came in a petition to the House of Burgesses on 10 May 1774 asking that Fincastle County have its own parish rather than being joined to Botetourt. The House found the request reasonable on 18 May 1774 and wrote a bill which never passed. On 13 June 1775 the same petition came again but the session ended before a report could be brought back. *JHB, 1773-1776*, 88, 107, 226.

²⁸⁹[WP] to Colonel William Byrd, 14 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 24. Apparently Byrd's son lived in the Lead Mines area so Preston was appealing to his father to put aside personal interest in order to prevent a county division by moving the courthouse further north. Preston also wrote his friend Edmund Pendleton with the same concerns on 14 May 1774, PP-DM 3QQ 25. He hoped that Pendleton, a member of the House of Burgesses, would use his influence to have the petition referred to the next session.

further divisions. He also wondered if the county could financially support sending two burgesses, considered "so essential a right, to Williamsburg."²⁹⁰ While nothing came of these discussions, by 1776 another division took place and this time Preston supported the effort.

William Preston's role as a leader in these new counties arose from several factors including his success as a business man, his unselfish service in a variety of public capacities, his defense of the frontier from Indian attacks, and his relationship with leading families such as Patton, Lewis, and Breckinridge. He was a responsible and successful citizen.

Preston made his living during this period primarily from three sources--his plantation at Greenfield, surveyor's fees, and other fees earned as a local officeholder. In addition, he and his wife continued to buy and sell lands as they built up a small land empire to pass on to their growing family. Although few records remain of Preston's business ventures at Greenfield, hemp constituted his major cash crop.²⁹¹ The colonists used hemp for making such products as rope, coarse cloth or linen, and sails. Almost from the beginning of the colony's history, the crown and the colony made efforts to find an alternate crop to tobacco such as hemp or flax through such means as bounties and the elimination of import duties. But even with these incentives, production of hemp did not dramatically increase until 1765 when a depressed tobacco market caused some planters to shift to other crops at the same time that an increased bounty for hemp offered by Parliament in 1764 began to work. As a reaction to the Stamp Act, patriots urged colonial families to produce a coarse linen called osnaburgs from hemp which could then be turned into shirts, jackets, and trousers, thus avoiding a need to get such items from England.²⁹² Especially on the frontier hemp became a substitute for tobacco as a cash crop. The Preston's move to Greenfield, an area with an ideal climate and soil for hemp production, came at just the right time to take advantage of this new market.

The hemp plant represented a real challenge to planters such as Preston. To begin, he needed at least one skilled hired hand to handle three acres of hemp which would produce , 30 per year of gross income compared to tobacco which would result in , 25 per year. Due to the complexity of planting and harvesting hemp, a planter could not just hire any unskilled indentured servant or slave to oversee preparation of the plant for production.²⁹³ The hemp seedbed required some of the greatest preparation of any plant with most hemp planters plowing their fields three times before planting the seeds from late March through June. Thomas Jefferson suggested that a bushel of hemp seed could produce an acre of hemp. And so Preston's purchase of six bushels of hemp seed from Benjamin Hawkins in 1767 shows that he possibly grew around five acres of hemp since most farmers would need extra seed to plant over areas where seed did not germinate.²⁹⁴ In addition, he may have purchased seeds from other merchants, further increasing his production levels. The plants grew for thirteen to fifteen weeks to a height of between eight and fourteen feet depending on the kind of soil. Laborers then pulled the hemp plants out of the ground and tied them in bundles to be stacked along a fence allowing the sun to dry the sap out of the plant stalks. After a few days, they either "winter rotted" or "water rotted" the hemp. "Winter rotting," the most popular method in Virginia, involved placing

²⁹⁰Edmund Pendleton to WP, 4 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 36 and Pendleton Papers, I:91.

²⁹¹This section on hemp relies largely on George Melvin Herndon, "The Story of Hemp in Colonial Virginia," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1959) and Mitchell, Commercialism, 162-72.

²⁹²Herndon, "Hemp," 154.

²⁹³Herndon credits the Scotch-Irish as being responsible for the success of the hemp industry in Virginia since they brought skills to America from Ireland which they taught others. Ibid., 195-7.

²⁹⁴WP Accounts with Benjamin Hawkins, PP-LC, 777.

the bundles around a field exposing the hemp to different elements of the weather until the fiber filaments rotted and dissolved. Fewer Virginians used the more effective "water rotting" in which plants were placed in a stream, ditch, or pond producing a very disagreeable smell. Next, the planter had to determine the exact moment when the "rotting" finished or the crop would diminish in size. After drying the "rotted" hemp along a fence, skilled laborers would "break" the hemp using a machine which separated the plant into small pieces causing the lint or fiber to fall out. Before being sent to market, the "broken" hemp had to be weighed and inspected by a county official in order for the bounty to be paid. Following these procedures, Preston received in 1768 a hemp certificate for a bounty from the Augusta County court.²⁹⁵

Apparently the quality of hemp being produced in the Shenandoah Valley needed improvement because residents from neighboring Augusta County petitioned the House of Burgesses at both 1769 sessions asking for an inspection system similar to that in place for tobacco because of the plant's depreciation due to the "Negligence and ill Management of many Persons who make it."²⁹⁶ The House did not pass an inspection bill, but in 1770 they enacted a law for "encouraging the making Hemp" which provided four shillings for every 100 pounds of "winter or water-rotted, dry, bright and clean" hemp.²⁹⁷ The county justice of the peace or constable would weigh the hemp and certify to the county court the amount of bounty which should be paid to the planter. Preston followed this procedure when he received a hemp certificate from the Botetourt County court in 1772 for 2,038 pounds of hemp.²⁹⁸ In addition to growing hemp, Preston also used it as a trading commodity by receiving or giving hemp in exchange for debts due on estates or other financial obligations.²⁹⁹

Although the British wanted Virginia's hemp because of its high quality, most hemp ended up being used by the colonists for their own production of rope and rough clothes. Local merchants handled this trade and often a planter like Preston would trade hemp for other items purchased from these merchants. Over the next few years Edward Johnson, brother-in-law of Susanna Preston, served as Preston's primary merchant in Manchester, Virginia across the James River from Richmond.³⁰⁰ Other merchants actively sought Preston's trade promising to buy any

²⁹⁵18 March 1768, Chalkley, *Chronicles*, I:148. No amount was specified.

²⁹⁶15 May 1769 and 13 November 1769, *JHB*, 1766-1769, 210, 253.

²⁹⁷11 June 1770, *JHB*, 1770-1772, 62 and Hening, *Statutes*, 8:363-4. Hening places this bill in November 1769 but the House Minutes indicate 1770. The inspection bill was finally passed in 1784 at a time when the entire hemp industry was declining. Herndon, "Hemp," 93.

²⁹⁸10 March 1772, Botetourt County Order Book, 1772, VSL, 27:78.

²⁹⁹Illustrating the value of hemp as a commodity, Maurice Fowler owed , 6 to the estate of a David Miller secured by Preston. In order to indemnify Preston, Fowler assigned "my Right Title & Claim to all my Hemp on David Miller's Plantation" to Preston and obliged himself not to sell or dispose of any of the hemp until the debt was paid. 8 September 1768, PP-LC, 564. Another example came when David Robinson sent his brother John to Preston with a letter asking for help on John's behalf. John Robinson had recently been served with papers for , 60 even though he had remitted a ton of hemp to cover the debt. Now he had no alternative but to pay the whole amount or go to prison. As David Robinson explained, "The former is at present impossible, and the later will prove ruinous." He asked if Preston would help and promised indemnification if anything happened. David Robinson to WP, 13 August 1770, PP-DM, 2QQ 118. As the executor of John Buchanan's estate, Preston promised James Buchanan five or six tons of hemp in the winter of 1771 in payment for a debt owed from the estate. James Buchanan got so frustrated at not receiving the hemp because he had already promised it to a Norfolk colonist that he almost initiated a lawsuit against the executors but gave them one more chance. James Buchanan to WP, 6 March 1771, PP-LC, 650. While hemp was valuable through most of the period, at times a merchant such as Edward Johnson would not accept hemp as payment for debts. January 1774, Edward Johnson to WP, PP-LC, 785.

³⁰⁰The first evidence for this business relationship comes on 6 October 1769 when Edward Johnson wrote to WP, "No hemp delivered for now. Will try to comply with any orders you may have." PP-LC, 606. Evidence for

hemp or tobacco produced and asking for his recommendation to others. In at least one case, the merchant outlined an important part of the agreement to Preston: "I also shall make it a rule that where a person is a Customer to pay him his ballance (if any due him) in Cash yearly."³⁰¹ As these trade arrangements continued to develop, residents in Botetourt County appealed to the House of Burgesses in 1772 to build a road over South Mountain from the James River to Bedford County which would lessen the distance needed to carry their commodities, "the chief of which is Hemp."³⁰² The Burgesses agreed and appointed a committee including Preston to examine the proposed location for the road and to report back to the next session--a report which does not appear to have been delivered.³⁰³ Hemp continued to be an important part of Preston's business ventures even when he moved further south in a few years.

The operations at Greenfield plantation involved more than hemp which can be seen in an agreement made by Preston with James Dalzell to become his overseer for 1773.³⁰⁴ On his plantation he had at least sixteen slaves as well as oxen, horses, and cattle.³⁰⁵ Preston further agreed to provide Dalzell with enough seed so that he could plant forty acres with the provision that the overseer could keep one-fifth of the hemp, flax, corn, and other grain.³⁰⁶ The plantation also had a still to produce whiskey from rye and an iron works/blacksmith shop to produce more items for sale and to repair equipment.³⁰⁷ Preston also rented at least one piece of property at the

their family relationship comes from Edward Johnson to WP, January 1774, PP-LC, 785, in which Johnson reports, "my wife is much afflicted with a pain in her head and is reduced to a Shadow. She writes her sister." Freeman Hart notes that Johnson dealt with most of the major planters of southern Virginia. Freeman Hart, The Valley of Virginia in the American Revolution, 1763-1789 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 24.

³⁰¹March 1770, Richard Crump to WP, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a11.

³⁰²10 March 1772, JHB, 1770-1772, 233.

³⁰³12 March 1772, ibid., 235 and "An act to appoint commissioners to view a place proposed for a road through the South Mountain." Hening, Statutes, 8:552.

³⁰⁴5 December 1772. PP-LC, 722.

³⁰⁵In 1771 Preston purchased five slaves from the Patton estate for , 300 and eleven slaves from John Howard for , 350. WP agreement with Andrew Boyd, 21 May 1771, Augusta County Will Book 4, 1767-1772, VSL, 43:401-2. WP bond with John Howard, 25 October 1771, Botetourt County Deed Book 1, 1770-1773, VSL, 1:418. In the agreement with Howard, Preston agreed to sell the slaves at public auction to help pay off debts. This illustrates that Preston probably had some involvement in slave trade beyond his own personal needs. Another evidence of slave trade comes in a memo Preston wrote to himself of errands to be completed on a trip to Williamsburg in 1771 when he noted that Colonel Breckinridge wanted two slaves. PP-LC, 688. On 28 July 1773 Preston's major merchant, Edward Johnson, wrote that his slaves had arrived and would be "taken Care of till you send for them." PP-LC, 750.

³⁰⁶Two crops which never took hold were cotton and rice. Mitchell, Commercialism, 183. Apparently Preston never took up on merchant Edward Johnson's offer to furnish "good Carolina rice." Edward Johnson to WP, 16 September 1773, PP-LC, 757. Flax was as difficult a crop to grow as hemp, requiring skillful labor. Dorothy Foster McCombs, "Virginia Cloth: Early Textiles in Virginia. Particularly in the Backcountry between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains until 1830" (M.A. thes., VPI, 1976), 83.

³⁰⁷Evidence on production levels of Preston's still are difficult to determine because he ordered rum and sugar throughout this period from other individuals. On 17 February 1767 John Esdale sent Preston a barrel of sugar, presumably for production of rum. PP-LC, 519. On 9 April 1767 he paid Thomas Newton , 15 for two hogsheads of West Indian rum and 100 pounds of New York loaf sugar for delivery to John Esdale. PP-LC, 527. On 1 April 1767 he wrote Robert Breckinridge that he could not buy any rum until another shipment arrived from the West Indies. In 1769 Joseph Woods billed WP , 1 for distilling 60 gallons of whiskey. Edward Johnson sent him 20 pounds of brown sugar on 10 September 1771 which could have been used for production of rum. Edward Johnson to WP, PP-LC, 672. In 1772 William Thompson sold Preston a tub for the still. PP-LC, 898. In March 1773 Johnson informed him that he could not find any Norward rum for him. Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA. In 1773 Preston ordered nine bushels of rye from Benjamin Hawkins which probably indicates his involvement in the production of rum. PP-LC, 777. In 1771 Preston purchased 60 tons of iron and bellows through the services of Edward Johnson. 10

forks of John's Creek in 1772 to William Commack for a twelve year period. In this case, Commack agreed to plant an orchard with 100 peach trees and 50 apple trees from Preston's "own Orchard."³⁰⁸

Preston possessed a good reputation for being a fair and honest businessman and he was clearly a successful one. He frequently received requests for counsel and help which he freely extended. Andrew Boyd asked whether he should bring up a package of goods for sale from Scotland or keep them in storage.³⁰⁹ Another friend, James Buchanan, responded to Preston's offer for a line of credit for , 500 in order to buy summer goods:

From the repeated tokens of your Love and Friendship, which I have experienced (though I must acknowledge them far above my Desert) I am inclined to think you a Friend to all mankind in general. Your goodness is not limited to the narrow sphere of Friends and Relations, but is even extended to those unworthy of it as I have myself experienced. This is truly imitating that grand Philanthropist who showers down his Bounty upon Mankind.
 . . .³¹⁰

Still another friend, George Elliot, needed help purchasing beef cattle and received a note from Preston guaranteeing payment.³¹¹ He could also drive a hard bargain. Clergyman John Todd grew exasperated and then realistic in 1768 with Preston's offer to buy Todd's slave, Nell. Apparently Nell ended up at Preston's house requiring medical attention which he paid for. Preston then offered to buy her from Todd for , 50 which Todd claimed would represent a loss of , 17.10 since slaves then brought between , 60 and , 70. He decided to take his chances on a local slave dealer who could possibly get the going market rate rather than Preston's cut-rate offer. As a counter offer to Preston's, Todd offered Nell for , 59 in exchange for Preston caring for her medical bill. Todd cleverly wrote:

You need not harbor a thought of my suspecting you of any little or crafty design of detaining Nell to Serve your own interest to the prejudice of mine. I have always had very different ideas of you and I hope always shall have assurances of more noble principles and practice.³¹²

Within three months, Todd decided that Preston's offer represented the best he would get and accepted it.³¹³ By this time Nell was living with Preston's relative, Reverend John Brown, who Todd instructed to send back to Preston for he was desperate for cash in order to "get free from encumbrances."³¹⁴

From the end of the war on and with overseers or renters taking care of his lands, Preston

September 1771, PP-LC, 672. On 19 October 1772 Preston paid , 6 to William Tharp for a bill from William Treadway on a total bill of , 23.11.6 for 2,106 pounds of iron. Treadway had to shut down his iron works that summer because he lacked money to operate. PP-LC, 716.

³⁰⁸WP Agreement with William Commack, 14 September 1772, PP-DU.

³⁰⁹Andrew Boyd to [WP], 17 June 1766, Preston Family Papers, Didier Collection, VPI, 1.

³¹⁰James Buchanan to WP, 15 February 1769, PP-LC, 585.

³¹¹22 December 1772, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA.

³¹²John Todd to WP, 12 April 1768, PP-LC, 556.

³¹³John Todd to WP, 5 July 1768, PP-DU.

³¹⁴John Todd to John Brown, 5 July [17]68, Preston Family Papers, Didier Collection, VPI.

spent more and more time surveying. His pace of activity gradually picked up during the latter 1760s as he continued to work as an assistant surveyor under Thomas Lewis.³¹⁵ His average charge for a survey appears to have been , 2.1.8 regardless of size with offsetting fees to William and Mary College amounting to 7 shillings per survey. In addition, he paid the county surveyor an unknown portion of his charge.³¹⁶ In 1765 he surveyed only six sites for a total of 951 acres mostly in the Craig's Creek area around Roanoke River. In 1766 the pace increased with twenty-three surveys totaling 3,815 acres scattered throughout Augusta County including the headwater areas of the Roanoke and James Rivers. And in 1767 he completed one hundred fifty surveys for a total of 21,811 acres--a staggering amount of work. And these were only part of the surveying going on. Most of his surveys were located, as in the previous year, around the Roanoke and James River areas, although he also surveyed several sites around Catawba Creek. For the next two years he shifted his energies to the New River area. In 1768 the pace slackened somewhat with sixty-four surveys for a total of 8,891 acres, but 1769, his last year as an assistant surveyor in Augusta, he again worked at a high level with ninety surveys for a total of 15,602 acres. Oftentimes he would work under very intense pressure for a few weeks such as November 4 through 21, 1768 when he surveyed twenty-five sites. In 1769 between March 17 and April 22 he completed an astonishing eighty-three surveys. Four surveys on one day was typical during this period.³¹⁷ Assuming that he received , 2.1.8 for each survey during this period, Preston earned a gross income of , 693.15 from 1765 through 1769 with offsetting fees to William and Mary College for , 116.11 and an unknown amount for the county surveyor for a possible net income of , - 577.04--an income level placing him among the economic elite.

Once he became county surveyor his personal level of involvement diminished greatly but his assistants now carried out the work for him. To illustrate, in 1770 he personally carried out thirty-one surveys amounting to 2,762 acres, mostly on the James River. In 1771 he surveyed nine pieces of property, whereas in 1772 he only completed one survey, none in 1773, and eight in 1774. But between 1773 and 1774, his assistants surveyed 562 different sites.³¹⁸

The county surveyor also stood in a position to get many varying requests. Nicholas Davis sent eight land grants he received more than twenty years before and promised Preston an eighth part of any he could get for him now.³¹⁹ Pendleton granted him power of attorney to sell three tracts of land in Botetourt.³²⁰ Others wrote requesting him to purchase lands for them or attempting to work out financial agreements.³²¹ The more unfortunate side of the job involved

³¹⁵The totals cited only include those directly surveyed and signed by Preston. These surveys can be found in WP Notebook of Surveys, 1762-1767, PP-LC, 612; Augusta County Surveyors Record 2, 1761-1774, VSL, 107:16-189; WP Account Book, 1762-1790, PP-DM, 2QQ 62-90; Augusta County Will Book, 4, 1767-1772, VSL, 43:38; WP Survey Book for 1768-9, PP-LC, 581; Miscl. Receipts, PP-DU; WP Survey for Joseph Grymes, PP-LC, 666; Montgomery Record of Plotts A, VSL; Film 33; WP Kentucky Survey Book, 1774, PP-LC, 833, and WP survey for Casper Garlick, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353, Box 4.

³¹⁶For average charges by WP per survey, see WP Account Book, 1762-1790, PP-DM, 2QQ 62-90; Accounts of Captain John Taylor with WP, PP-LC, 1083; Fees delivered by WP to William McClenachan, PP-LC, 694; Miscl. Accounts, PP-DU, and Robert Preston Survey Book, 1774-1776, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267b514. For evidence of charges by William and Mary College, on 28 December 1771 WP was charged , 28.9.53 for 82 single surveys which amounts to approximately 7 shillings per survey. PP-LC, 682.

³¹⁷WP Survey Book, PP-LC, 581.

³¹⁸Montgomery County Record of Plotts, A, 1773-1782, VSL, 33:1-248; PP-LC, 666, 833, and PP-DU.

³¹⁹Nicholas Davis to WP, 2 February 1771, PP-LC, 647. Davis wanted to use some of this land for a "Charity School and A Hospital which I am making all the provision for."

³²⁰12 August 1772, Botetourt County Deed Book 1, 1770-1773, VSL, 1:108.

³²¹William Campbell to WP, 2 February 1773, Preston Family Papers, College of William & Mary, 39.1

the expulsion of squatters from lands legally claimed by others, but in many of these cases, Preston attempted to work out a purchase by the squatters.³²² At least one individual viewed a piece of property improved by a squatter as a "bargain" and wanted to buy it through Preston's office.³²³

The office could involve other problems. Captain Robert Doack informed Preston that the masters at William and Mary College, who technically supervised all land transactions, had agreed that all private surveys should be paid to them. He warned Preston to get money for his surveys to Williamsburg soon "lest you be superseded" by others.³²⁴ Sometimes disputes even arose between surveyors. Francis Smith, Preston's brother-in-law, apologized profusely for surveying on the wrong side of the New River. As he explained, one neighbor after another kept asking him to do another survey for them which drew him "Nearer & Nearer to your House. . . . If There be Truth in me I had no Avaricious Intention & was only influenced by the Persuasion of the People." After hearing about Preston's feelings expressed in a large group and then conveyed to Smith by mutual friends, he avoided coming by Preston's house in worry that passions would get too high "which I had rather let pass over as a Cloud, if Possible."³²⁵

Surveyors also got requests from fellow surveyors. Preston's old boss, Thomas Lewis, requested him to take in his son, Andrew, and teach him the surveying business. But more than that, he wanted his cousin to "break him [Andrew] of his stubborn Disposition." He admitted it would be a "Disagreeable" task "but it must be attempted."³²⁶ A few months later about the time Preston planned to move, Lewis asked him if he had "moved yet, is Andw with you have you set him to work, how dos he behave."³²⁷

Beyond these land surveys and requests, Preston became involved in the great controversy raging over settlement of the lands outlawed by the Proclamation Line of 1763--controversies such as the claims of several land companies, questions about boundary lines with other colonies and with different Indian tribes, appointments of special surveyors to circumvent the county surveyors, and claims made by veterans from the War who had been promised lands in the disputed areas in exchange for service.³²⁸ In spite of tremendous disagreement with the proclamation, Virginians took the orders in stride. Many simply remained in the disputed areas

P91 Folder 1 and George Rutledge to WP, 7 September 1774, PP-DM, 2QQ 137.

³²²Preston asked Captain Robert Doack on 1 October 1771 to tell some people who settled "Inadvertantly" on some of Pendleton's lands that they could purchase the land for , 30 per one hundred acres. Campbell-Preston-Floyd Family Papers, L.C., 1.

³²³Benjamin Logan to WP, 11 October 1771, PP-DM, 2QQ 127.

³²⁴Captain Robert Doack to WP, 28 October 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 137.

³²⁵Francis Smith to WP, 5 May 1774, PP-LC, 812. Smith worried that debts owed Preston had also created a bad atmosphere and he promised with "Cheerfulness" to settle up. He concluded his thoughts on this subject, "I may with Propriety Repeat part of the Church Ceremony & say Naked come I into the World & Naked I will go out."

³²⁶Thomas Lewis to WP, 4 January 1774, PP-LC, 780.

³²⁷Thomas Lewis to WP, 15 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 13.

³²⁸While the complex issues related to these controversies are beyond the scope of this biography, more details can be found in Eugene M. Del Papa, "The Royal Proclamation of 1763. Its Effect upon Virginia Land Companies," *VMHB*, 83 (October, 1975): 406-11; Richard O. Curry, "Lord Dunmore and the West: A Re-evaluation," *West Virginia History*, XIX (July, 1958): 231-43; Hughes, *Surveyors*, 101-2, 139, 149-53; Barbara Ann Burgner, "Lord Dunmore, the West, and the Revolution in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Cornell University, 1952); John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 15-18, and Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and The American Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937).

hoping the temporary measure could be resolved soon through negotiations already under way with Indians to resolve territorial borders. Augusta County residents became more activist in 1766 when they appealed to the House of Burgesses for redress. They wanted to settle on the Ohio River but complained that land companies deterred their efforts and surveyors refused to survey in the disputed areas. They predicted that if such settlements had been allowed the area would have been more densely settled and able to repel the Indians. They would also have been able to produce hemp and flax as valuable exports to England.³²⁹ The House went beyond their request in an official appeal to England by mentioning that many colonists had settled in the banned areas with legal patents and grants and with the encouragement of Virginia, only now to be told they had to move. They asked England to rescind the proclamation and allow settlement to proceed as normal.³³⁰

The attitude of the land companies who hesitated to act in light of the Proclamation also helped keep the controversy at a low level. Although the petition did not specifically mention the land companies by name, the Loyal Land Company and the Ohio Company constituted the two major players. Founded in 1745 by John Robinson and others, the Loyal Land Company received grants to 100,000 acres of land on Greenbrier River in what is now West Virginia and another 800,000 acres in 1749 in the region of Kentucky. The Ohio Company, founded by Thomas Lee and other gentry two years after the Loyal Company, received 200,000 acres on the Ohio River in 1749. Many of these lands were located in areas prohibited from settlement by the Proclamation which effectively blocked any development. One historian asserts that the Proclamation "proved successful in preventing collective, organized settlement west of the Appalachians."³³¹

County surveyors such as Thomas Lewis and William Preston also helped put a damper on protest. They used a two-pronged strategy. First, they took requests for surveys so that when the border issue became settled those with requests would get first priority.³³² Second, they were conservative in where they surveyed. Thomas Lewis gave instructions to Preston, his assistant, to only go as far as the mines on Reed Creek which was within the legal limits.³³³ After Preston became county surveyor, he also observed the limits as his assistant surveyors carried out surveys for the Loyal Company and other individuals. As they concentrated on surveying between Roanoke and Abingdon, they had plenty of work without breaking the Proclamation.

The three governors of Virginia during this period also played a key role in working toward settlement of the land issue. Fauquier did his best to enforce the Proclamation by issuing his own explicit proclamation in 1766 asking those beyond the line to "immediately" evacuate their settlements.³³⁴ Much to his chagrin, settlers ignored his orders and continued to settle in areas claimed by the Indians to the consternation of some colonists who feared another war if the matter was not soon resolved.³³⁵ The Earl of Shelburne also gave Fauquier specific orders to get the illegal settlers out before another war began.³³⁶ But Fauquier reported that because the lands

³²⁹24 November 1766, *JHB, 1766-1769*, 37.

³³⁰13 December 1766, *ibid.*, 69-70.

³³¹Del Papa, "The Royal Proclamation of 1763," 410.

³³²Andrew Lewis to WP, 19 March 1767, PP-DM, 2QQ 101.

³³³Thomas Lewis to WP, 14 January 1769, PP-DM, 2QQ 106. Earlier Lewis also implied to Preston that once the southern limit was established with the Indians they both would probably want to survey in that area which would imply that they were obeying the limits at that time. 17 August 1768, *ibid.*, 2QQ 105.

³³⁴Proclamation, 10 April 1766, *Fauquier Papers*, III:1355-6.

³³⁵Fauquier to Board of Trade, 22 May 1766, *ibid.*, III:1361-2 and Thomas Gage to Fauquier, 2 July 1766, *ibid.*, III:1368.

³³⁶Earl of Shelburne to Fauquier, 13 September 1766, *ibid.*, III:1386.

were "so extremely fine that people will run all risques whether from Governments or from Indians to take possession and seat themselves on these lands without the least plea of Right for so doing."³³⁷ By April, 1767, Fauquier concluded that "nothing but military force will have any effect to remove these lawless Settlers."³³⁸

Botetourt, who replaced Fauquier, placed his emphasis on a series of treaties with various Indian tribes resulting in a clearer delineation of Virginia's borders.³³⁹ The Ohio River became the effective northern boundary for Virginia through the Treaty of Fort Stanwix with the Iroquois Six Nations in 1768. Other treaties with the Cherokees modified the western line. The Treaty of Hard Labor in 1768 ran a line from Chiswell's Mine to the mouth of the Kanawha River, a line further modified by the Treaty of Lochaber in 1770 which gave Virginia more territory by moving the line from the Holston River to the Kanawha River. When John Donelson, Preston's close friend, actually ran the line he went way beyond his directions and ran the line up the Kentucky River later claiming that the Cherokees wanted a line which followed a natural boundary rather than an artificial one. While historians have disputed which river the Indians really had in mind, his line resulted in adding thousands of acres of land to Virginia.³⁴⁰ When Botetourt died, William Nelson, President of the Council, became acting governor for eleven short months, a period during which progress toward resolution of the land issues slowed down.

All of this changed with the arrival of John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, as the new governor in October, 1771. He did not like being transferred from New York where he owned many lands, but he decided to take full advantage of his new appointment in promoting the interests of western land developers and in the process he further extended his personal landholdings. He also cooperated with George Washington to fulfill promises of grants made to Washington's soldiers during the War.³⁴¹ Earlier Botetourt agreed to fulfill the original promise of 200,000 acres, and Dunmore now actually granted 122,293 acres in November, 1772 even though he had specific instructions not to do so. He later argued that he allowed for such grants "in case" it was later allowed.³⁴² With the encouragement of George Washington, the Governor appointed William Crawford as special surveyor of these lands, an appointment initially accepted by both Lewis and Preston, even though the granted lands were located in their surveying territory.³⁴³ However, when Thomas Bullitt in October 1772 also announced his intention to survey in Kentucky for soldier's grants, Preston balked. Under pressure from Dunmore, Preston finally signed one survey for Dr. John Connolly, one of Dunmore's chief agents, which Preston later asserted was illegal.³⁴⁴ And when Bullitt's assistant, William Thompson, who had received

³³⁷Earl of Shelburne to Fauquier, 18 December 1766, *ibid.*, III:1411-2.

³³⁸Fauquier to William Murray, 12 April 1767, *ibid.*, III:1437-8.

³³⁹The following account is based on Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 59-90 and Hughes, *Surveyors*, 149-53.

³⁴⁰Hughes claims that in spite of protests about this line, the royal government ultimately accepted it because of their efforts to establish a new colony to be called Vandalia in that area. *Ibid.*, 150-2. Also, see Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 74-6.

³⁴¹Other officers not involved with George Washington also felt they were eligible for land grants. Captain David Robinson encouraged Preston on a trip to Williamsburg to petition the governor and Council on behalf of these officers. 1 May 1769, PP-DM, 2QQ 109.

³⁴²John E. Selby, *Dunmore* (Williamsburg: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 15.

³⁴³Thomas Lewis later wrote Preston with details about Crawford's appointment as an assistant surveyor due to Washington's influence. 15 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 13.

³⁴⁴In a lawsuit filed in 1778, these details came out in depositions by several individuals involved in the dispute including Arthur Campbell, Abraham Hite, and John Floyd. *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond* (Richmond, Virginia State Library, 1875), I:303-11, hereafter referred to as *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*.

a commission as an assistant surveyor to Preston without his knowledge, Preston refused to sign any of his surveys. He stated that those working under him had to be approved in advance before their appointment by the masters at the College of William and Mary.

The controversy over who could survey brought an investigation by the Council of State in November, 1773 of the surveyors in Augusta, Botetourt, and Fincastle Counties. The Council had heard rumors of collusion between the surveyors and individuals who had surveys already prepared to be entered the minute they received legal approval for such grants. As historian Abernethy noted, appointing the three men who were to conduct the investigation, John Byrd, Thomas Walker, and John May, was like "appointing cats to guard the mice" since they all had vested interests in the outcome.³⁴⁵

Early on questions had risen over the meaning of the reference in the Proclamation of 1763 allowing grants in the disputed areas to officers who had fought in the War. Did this provision apply only to British officers or were colonial officers also to be included? As early as November, 1773, Dunmore signaled his view in violation of orders from England when he started issuing warrants to colonial officers in areas not allowed for by the British government or by treaty with the Indians.³⁴⁶

With so many issues at stake, Andrew Lewis pled with Preston to travel with him to Williamsburg that November to lobby the governor and Council for help on several issues. They had a petition to carry from long-time residents in the Greenbrier area who feared they would be thrown off their lands by land companies who had prior legal claim to the same lands. James Robertson predicted that if efforts to remove such individuals continued blood might be shed.³⁴⁷ Their major goal, however, focused on having the governor approve the idea that colonial officers from the War were as eligible for land grants as British officers. As Lewis reminded Preston:

I think your Compy down will be Absolutely Necessary on many Accts as well as on your own & shall expect you espeshally as the Warrants that you may procure for your self and Rangers for Land may be applied to ye best uses & prevent some fradelent designs.

The rangers viewed the task as so important that they agreed to help share costs for the trip.³⁴⁸ Robertson hoped Preston and Lewis would have success on their trip and offered that the "Prayers of three Countys with you." He had nothing good to say about William Christian, their burgess from Fincastle:

Where you & Col. Lewis is once Blest by the people. Billey Christian is three times Curs't -- I believe Billey would Sacrifice any of his Best friends for A Trifle of Intrest to himself at any time.

³⁴⁵Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 89.

³⁴⁶See land warrants from Dunmore to Captain William Fleming, 6 November 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 151; William Fleming to WP, 19 November 1773, PP-LC, 768; to Hugh Allen, 27 November 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 152; to Captain Thomas Fleming, 4 December 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 156; to Charles Warranstoop, 14 December 1773, PP-DU; to William Edmondson, 16 December 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 158; to Alexander Waugh, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA; to John Dickinson, 17 December 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 158; to Samuel Edmondson, 17 December 1773, 2QQ 156, and to Holt Richardson, 31 December 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 159.

³⁴⁷Captain James Robertson to WP, 4 December 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 155.

³⁴⁸Andrew Lewis to [WP], 23 November 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 153-4.

Their efforts resulted in partial success when Dunmore on December 15, 1773, made his determination official in a proclamation that colonial officers could receive 1,000 acre grants, an action later harshly criticized by English Secretary of State Lord Dartmouth.³⁴⁹ Apparently other aspects of their trip went less successfully because Thomas Lewis compared decisions made at Williamsburg to the weather at Preston's new home at Draper's Meadow:

you may find them as various as you will the weather at Drapers Meadows in April. Here you will find, sunshine, Clouds, Hail, Rain & Snow so Intermingled that you will be at a loss how to Denominate your weather, there you will find judgments against Judgments, orders Confounding Orders, Justice & Injustice so blended with Each other, And that in as Quick Succession, as the weather. There is as much Certainty in it one as the other & perhaps may be governed by the same Principles.³⁵⁰

Unaware of the behind-the-scenes maneuverings between the governor and his superiors in England, Preston gave notice in January, 1774 that on April 14 his assistant surveyors were prepared to meet soldiers with warrants in Ohio to conduct surveys for them.³⁵¹ In effect, Preston was refusing to recognize the legality of any surveys not completed by his own assistant surveyors and deputies. Even George Washington attempted to get around the need for new surveys in a special appeal to both Preston and Thomas Lewis. Washington asked Preston to approve a survey carried out and conveyed to Washington from Bullitt. He also mentioned Crawford's surveys which must have irritated Preston who noted on the bottom of Washington's letter:

I wrote to Col. Washington refusing to comply with his request, but let him know that I would send his field marks down by one of the assistants and have the land resurveyed, and the new survey sent to me as soon as Possible, and that after recording it I will endeavor to send it to him before the May Assembly Rises or afterward enclose it to Col. Russell to transact the Business for him in Town.³⁵²

A few months later when Preston sent out a surveying crew he made certain that John Floyd, his surveyor, surveyed 2,000 acres for Washington.³⁵³

Thomas Lewis reported to Preston that he also received similar requests from Washington to approve two surveys done by Crawford. He wrote, "These are Strange Sort of

³⁴⁹Curry, "Lord Dunmore and the West," 234.

³⁵⁰Thomas Lewis to WP, 4 January 1774, PP-LC, 780.

³⁵¹In early January Preston already started to get queries about where, when, and how he would begin the surveys. Hugh Mercer to [WP], 8 January 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 1. Others wrote with recommendations for assistant surveyors to go on the trip. Thomas Walker recommended Mr. Rutherford who "is so well known to you, that saying anything of his probity or ability appears to me needless." Thomas Walker to WP, 1 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 10.

³⁵²George Washington to WP, 28 February 1774, Washington Writings, 3:191-2 and WP to George Washington, March 1774, PP-LC, 792.

³⁵³Alexander Spotswood Dandridge to [WP], 15 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 26. Dandridge reported that Thomas Hogg, who had been appointed by Floyd to carry Washington's survey to Preston, had never been heard from again along with two other men. Preston reported these orders to Washington on 27 May 1774, Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., Documentary History of Dunmore's War (Harrisonburg: C. J. Carrier, 1974 reprint of 1905 ed.), 24-5, hereafter referred to as Thwaites, Dunmore's War.

requests & I think ought not to be Complied with."³⁵⁴ Shortly before they left, Bullitt made one more effort with Preston to get his surveys legalized. Both the Council and the masters of the College of William and Mary urged Preston to help avoid a "good Deal of Confusion" by going ahead and signing them.³⁵⁵ William Christian wrote Preston with advice that these important groups were not commanding him to sign but wanted him to feel at liberty "to do what you thought consistent." Christian felt more confusion would be created, especially with Preston's surveyors already on the frontier ready to resurvey the lands under question.³⁵⁶ Preston proved to be a very stubborn man and never signed any more Bullitt surveys, much to Bullitt's disgust.³⁵⁷

Before Preston's surveyors left, Thomas Lewis raised a crucial issue. He did not feel the British government would uphold Dunmore's grants of land to colonial officers and feared what would happen if they completed the surveys and then lifted them. In spite of his qualms, he urged, "let them go on," and then left Preston's house in April "in high spirits."³⁵⁸ John Floyd commanded the group of eight men and Preston joined them on the first day of a trip that would last four months.³⁵⁹ They carried with them many land warrants given to colonial officers by Dunmore with orders for the Fincastle County surveyor to lay out the lands.³⁶⁰ Preston made certain that his surveyors did not violate the new Donelson line by giving specific instructions that once his surveyors arrived at the mouth of the Kentucky River they were to send out a party to discover if the Donelson line went up the Kentucky or another river. One of Floyd's assistants later admitted that while waiting for Floyd to discover the answer to this question, they surveyed some tracts south of the Kentucky which later proved to be out of their legitimate territory.³⁶¹ Within weeks after leaving to conduct surveys, Preston received word that the governor had been ordered not to issue any more patents in the west to colonial officers.³⁶²

On a more personal level, Preston took advantage of the best reason for being a surveyor or assistant during this period--building one's own landholdings after finding the best available lands. In 1759 he owned 2,530 acres which increased to 3,302 acres in 1764, 7,248 acres in 1769, and 8,088 acres in 1770.³⁶³ Most of this land was acquired through treasury rights on

³⁵⁴Thomas Lewis to WP, 15 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 13.

³⁵⁵On 4 May 1774 Bullitt sent a request to Preston that he sign his surveys, accompanied by a letter from John Blair to WP, 3 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 21-2 and 3 May 1774, Executive Journals, VI:559.

³⁵⁶William Christian to WP, 11 May 1774, PP-LC, 813.

³⁵⁷Captain Thomas Bullitt to [WP], 15 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 95.

³⁵⁸Thomas Lewis to WP, 15 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 13. Lewis probably knew he had the support of Dunmore in surveying lands in Kentucky, an act bound to upset the Shawnees. Barbara Ann Burgner, "Lord Dunmore, the West, and the Revolution in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Cornell University, 1952).

³⁵⁹Thomas Hanson Journal, 7 April 1774, Thwaites, Dunmore's War, 110-1.

³⁶⁰Thomas Lewis was correct when he wrote Preston, "I make no doubt but you have a great many officers Warrants presented you before now. I have but very few & some of those not far from Pitsburge." 15 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 13. Preston had received many warrants from Dunmore in early 1774. See PP-DU, PP-LC, 764, 780, 797, 812, 816, 828; PP-DM, 3QQ 5-7, 9-12, 16, 33; Taylor Family Papers, FC, Mss.A T238b, Folder 1; Preston Papers, Misc., FC, Mss C P; Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA, and Arthur Campbell Papers, FC, Mss. A C187, Folder 1. The warrants were usually issued in allotments of 1,000 acres and were given to such individuals as Andrew Boyd, William Christian, Angus McDonald, Arthur Campbell, Thomas Gist, Zachary Taylor, Joseph Bickley, John Gilliam, Theodosius McDonald, George Moffett, John Tennant, James Byrn, James McCorkle, Thomas Bowyer, Shad Vaughan, Andrew Lewis, and Alexander Spotswood Dandridge.

³⁶¹Calendar of Virginia State Papers, I:310.

³⁶²Thomas Lewis to WP, 8 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 38.

³⁶³On 21 October 1765 Preston paid , 7.12.5 for quit rents on 3,302 acres of land. PP-LC, 470. In 1769 he paid quit rents for 7,248 acres. Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI, Folder 1. In 1770 he paid quit rents of , 10.5.7 for 8,088 acres. PP-VHS, Mss1P9267FA2, 696.

crown lands granted by the governor to Preston. He bypassed the first step which was to request a survey of a particular piece of land by the surveyor. After he surveyed the land, he then filed the surveyor's plat in Virginia's secretary's office in Williamsburg and paid a few shillings for an administrative fee. For this he would receive a freehold patent which finished the process. Between 1765 and 1773 he received 7,010 acres in governor's grants for a total outlay of only ,24.5!³⁶⁴ He could then turn around and sell one piece of property of only a few acres for that same amount in a few years. In fact, on one day in 1765 William and Susanna Preston sold for ,85 three pieces of property with 384 acres on the Roanoke River originally granted by the governor to them two years before for ,2--a profit of ,83.³⁶⁵ Since he was already surveying for others, it took very modest effort for him to survey lands for himself and then patent them on his regular business trips to Williamsburg as a surveyor. In contrast, a regular colonist would have to pay a surveyor a fee for the survey and for patenting the lands on a trip to the colony's capital. In a sense, Preston's land acquisitions were being financed by his fellow colonists with little personal money being expended by himself for his gains.

Preston generally took advantage of getting personal lands at the same time he surveyed for others and so his landholdings were scattered throughout southwestern Virginia. While serving as an assistant surveyor, he patented lands for himself on the Roanoke and James Rivers and Catawba Creek. When he became county surveyor in Botetourt in 1770, he continued in many of these same areas. Shortly after he became full surveyor, his former boss, Thomas Lewis, wrote expressing concern about some personal lands Preston planned to take, probably from squatters. Lewis warned that some might try to "depricate" his character and advised:

Give room for serious reflections. What would be said of such an affair. Everything would be taken against you, any other would have ten times a better chance in a contention than a surveyor. My Sentiments are that you drop sd. matter so Quickly as you can, or take Better Council than mine.³⁶⁶

The record is unclear as to whether or not Preston followed his advice. With the formation of Fincastle as a new county Preston continued his personal acquisitions by finally finishing development of his Greenfield property which now totaled 2,175 acres.³⁶⁷ Although the bulk of Preston's land acquisitions came from treasury grants as has been seen, he also engaged in an active practice of buying and selling lands. Between 1765 and 1774 land records reveal that after purchases he would frequently sell off other lands to pay for those purchases. During this time, he sold lands amounting to ,539 and purchased additional acreage costing him ,1,084.18.4. This might seem like a huge difference, except for the fact that ,840 of these purchases involved three purchases as part of his effort to establish a new plantation in the Draper's Meadow area where he could eventually move his family.

The years at Greenfield represented not only years of business and political growth but also a period of family growth. Between 1764 and 1772 their oldest child, Elizabeth, was joined by six siblings--John, Francis, Sarah, Ann, William, and Susanna. All of them were baptized into

³⁶⁴See Appendices D and E for more details.

³⁶⁵6 August 1765, Augusta County Deed Book, 12, 1765-1766, VSL, 7:120-7.

³⁶⁶Thomas Lewis to WP, 2 April 1770, PP-LC, 620.

³⁶⁷Governor Dunmore granted 585 acres on 15 June 1773 to make up the final part of Greenfield. In this grant, the nine separate land transactions it took to create Greenfield were documented. Land Office Patent 42, VSL, 41:484-8.

the Presbyterian Church shortly after their birth.³⁶⁸ Having such a large family involved large expenditures to care for their needs beyond the regular income from plantation operations. Accounts with various merchants during this period illustrate that the Preston family were part of an elite group who enjoyed a standard of living beyond that of most people who lived around them. They purchased such clothing items as socks, ribbons, ivory combs, buttons, silk, leather shoes, buckles, linen handkerchiefs, and Irish linen--items that were uncommon on the Virginia frontier. Their household goods revealed a similar pattern with the purchase of bed blankets, knives, a china bowl, a tin funnel, a pewter chamber pot, an iron pot, a dutch oven, jugs, a complete set of "Queens China" with one dozen mugs, a copper kettle, and soap. Their household needs also required the purchase of hinges, nails, locks, garden spades, chisels, and hammers as well as food items such as coffee, sugar, salt, flour, and molasses.³⁶⁹ While many frontiersmen enjoyed only their own alcoholic brews, the Prestons bought wine and whiskey in addition to chewing tobacco.³⁷⁰ Preston even engaged the services of James Geddy, a silversmith, to create a seal, spoons, knee buckles, and studs.³⁷¹

In spite of having many of the finer enjoyments of life, especially for a frontier family, the Prestons shared with all families an overriding concern--health--a concern frequently referred to in their letters. They and their relatives constantly struggled with the vicissitudes of health brought on by germs, infectious diseases, changing weather, and a lack of good medical help. From the early 1770s until his death in 1783, Preston struggled with recurring illnesses. Edward Johnson, his merchant, expressed hope in 1771 that his "ague & fever will not quite demolish you."³⁷² He repeated the same theme two years later, only this time Preston's daughter lay sick.³⁷³ Within a few months Preston reported to his sister, "I am something better in Health than when I

³⁶⁸Each child bore the name of one of their parents or a close relative. Elizabeth, the eldest child born in 1762, was named after both William and Susanna Preston's mothers who shared the same first name. John, named after William Preston's father, was born in 1764. The following year Francis, named after Susanna Preston's father arrived, followed in 1767 by Sarah, named after her mother's grandmother, Sarah Waddy. Ann, named after one of William's younger sisters, came in 1769. Then the parents named the next two children after them--William in 1770 and Susanna in 1772. John Floyd Bible, Bible Records, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2 and Preston Family Bible, VHS, P9266:1.

³⁶⁹WP account with Richard Woods, 28 September 1766, PP-LC, 503; Account with Archibald Buchanan, 30 October 1766, Preston Family Papers, Didier Collection, VPI, 1; Thomas Smith to WP, 8 April 1771, PP-LC, 656; WP memo book for Williamsburg, July 1771, PP-LC, 688; Account with James Lyle, 25 July 1771, PP-DU; Account with Robert Hook, 8 April 1772, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353, 4; Account with Edward Johnson, 16 September 1773, PP-LC, 758; Account with Edward Johnson, 1774, Preston Family Papers, VPI, 1; Account with Ross Trigg, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353, 4, and Account with William & James Donald, Co., 1773-4, PP-LC, 859.

³⁷⁰WP account with James Robinson, 1767-1772, PP-LC, 726 and Account with Benjamin Hawkins, 1767, PP-LC, 777. Many frontiersmen drank extensively. Preston's close friend, David Robinson, declined his invitation to visit for "at least a Dozen of moral and physical Obstructions which are really insuperable, had I Time. Let me only name One. Mrs. Breckinridge has sent me a large Jug of Rum. -- I need say no more." David Robinson to WP, 21 December 1770, PP-DM, 2QQ 121. On 3 August 1774 Edward Johnson sent Preston six "twists" of tobacco. Edward Johnson to WP, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA. On 13 October 1774 George Purnell sent Preston "a few twists of Tobo. which I think is good." *Ibid.*

³⁷¹WP account with James Geddy, 22 December 1766, PP-LC, 515. This silversmith is also discussed by Edward Morris Davis, III, "Historical Silver in Commonwealth Virginia," *VMHB*, XLIX (April 1941): 106.

³⁷²Edward Johnson to WP, 10 September 1771, PP-LC, 672. "Agues and fevers" could be any of several diseases rampant in parts of Virginia at this time including yellow fever, typhoid fever, smallpox, malaria, and dysentery. Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 50-70. Some of the symptoms sound similar to varieties of flu experienced today.

³⁷³Edward Johnson to WP, 28 July 1773, PP-LC, 750.

saw you last."³⁷⁴ And in 1774 his brother-in-law, John Brown, observed that his frequent illnesses resulted from overwork.³⁷⁵ Chests full of medicine, filled by a doctor, became an important tool in fighting sickness on the frontier. William Pasteur prepared one such box at a cost of , 35.10 for Preston in 1772 but because of its heaviness they could not get anyone to take it immediately.³⁷⁶ On the other hand, the Preston babies generally enjoyed good health as reported by their father, "my little James Patton . . . is right hearty. Between his Mommy, Cutty Robinson & a Sucking Bottle he makes out pretty well."³⁷⁷

In any case frequent illness was common on the frontier as can be seen in John Brown's family. On one occasion, Brown reported that his wife, Preston's sister, was very "destress'd with the toothake for some time past but at present is tolerably well."³⁷⁸ Brown's son died "after a sore conflict occationed by getting Teeth (which threw him into Fitts.) he fled from this unfriendly world, into the other." Brown had, in fact, already lost three other sons in contrast to the Prestons who continued to have healthy children. As preacher Brown reminded Preston,

There is but a narrow passage between Death & Life, and it is attended with such important Consequences that it is the greatest Wisdom to prepare for a happy Eternity. . . . The more of our dear Relations that are gone before us, ought to be Exceitments to us to prepare for the grant Event."³⁷⁹

On another occasion, Brown could not write his relative for several weeks because he had so much pain in his back, "the violence of which I cannot express; but thro divine goodness I am so far recovered that I can walk a little, ride a little, and preach a little, but I can but sit very little as yet."³⁸⁰ The concerns continued when another son of the Browns, Ebenezer, fell sick for six weeks accompanied by a large swelling on his shoulder. Brown predicted, "his recovery is very uncertain."³⁸¹ Another time they delayed a trip to visit the Prestons because "my Wife was sick and my little Polly took a worm fit & was very bad."³⁸²

With a growing family, Preston showed a strong personal and financial commitment to his own pursuit of knowledge and to the formal education of his children and relatives. In this dedication to learning, he showed that he belonged to the frontier elite in ways not practiced by most of those living on the frontier. He worked assiduously on building his library. In 1766, James Adams, a Wilmington, Delaware merchant, sent a System of Farriery and promised to send other books he had purchased, presumably for Preston's children, including the Essay on the Gospel Ministry, and two each of spelling books, primers, and catechisms. In addition, he would send a Life of David, and Locke's Letter Concerning Toleration.³⁸³ Preston's interest in books

³⁷⁴WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 12 October 1773, Breckinridge Papers, LC, Box 1.

³⁷⁵John Brown to [WP], 18 February 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 8.

³⁷⁶William Pasteur to WP, 3 July 1772, PP-LC, 703. Pasteur was the son of a Swiss physician who migrated to America in 1700. William Pasteur took up his father's profession and became a prominent citizen in the process serving as a justice of the peace and mayor of Williamsburg. Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, 321-2.

³⁷⁷WP to Lettice Breckinridge, 9 October 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, Box 1.

³⁷⁸John Brown to [WP], 5 March [1771], PP-DM, 2QQ 123.

³⁷⁹John Brown to [WP], 18 March 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 133.

³⁸⁰John Brown to [WP], 20 January 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 130.

³⁸¹John Brown to [WP], 23 August 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 149-150.

³⁸²John Brown to [WP], 28 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 29.

³⁸³James Adams to WP, 13 August 1766, PP-LC, 497. In 1768 Preston paid Francis Smith , 4.5.0 for books in Williamsburg. PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a29.

also shows up in his memo lists involving travel to Williamsburg, the cultural center of Virginia.³⁸⁴ On one such trip in 1771, he made note to get Harwood's translation of the New Testament and to inquire at William and Mary College about Clark's Essay on Education.³⁸⁵ On the same trip he also purchased a Latin and Greek book.³⁸⁶ In the same month he purchased the History of Telemarchus and two spelling books.³⁸⁷ In 1774 he even purchased a set of law books from Richard Purdie, one of Virginia's official printers and publisher of the Virginia Gazette.³⁸⁸ Obviously some of these books became part of his own reading interests while others served as educational tools for his children. But he did not stop with his own collection. On at least one occasion he got fifty subscriptions each for two religious books--"Edwards on Original Sin and Bate's on Man's Redemption"--and ordered the books from James Adams, his Wilmington book dealer. Adams then solicited his help in marketing a forthcoming book of poetry by Reverend Samuel Davies. As an incentive, Adams sent along a pocket almanac as a gift.³⁸⁹

Preston also established a school at Greenfield not only for his own children but for his nieces and nephews, using John Floyd, his assistant surveyor, as teacher. He used this practice of testing a new employee as his children's teacher on several occasions as explained by his daughter:

It was always a result with Col. Preston to require of every young man who was employed in his office to teach school six months at least, thereby finding out his temper, diligence, habits and trust-worthiness. Mrs. Breckenridges, Mrs. Smiths children, and my sisters and brothers constituted Floyds school.³⁹⁰

Getting books for this family school could be a problem as acknowledged by Reverend John Brown who "search'd from Dan to bersheba but cannot procure one Greek Grammar for my dr Cusions." Brown admitted to a shortage of books due to the fourteen or fifteen young scholars in his own school, Augusta Academy, but promised to keep looking.³⁹¹ In addition to having relatives at his family school, Preston helped finance their education. One such relative, cousin James Thompson, responded from Patrick Henry's home in Hanover to a letter from Preston about the importance of education:

You may depend that I will pursue my Education with all the Eagerness and Ardour that is in my power. . . . And you may depend that I will shun Evil company. For in my opinion there is nothing that will corrupt Youth sooner, and bring them at length to commit the most Shocking crimes in Nature.

³⁸⁴In October 1768 Preston paid , 4.5.0 for books in Williamsburg. Account Book with Francis Smith, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a29.

³⁸⁵WP Memo Book, 1771-2, PP-LC, 688.

³⁸⁶Account with Francis Smith, July 1771, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a29.

³⁸⁷WP account with James Lyle, 25 July 1771, PP-DU; Thomas Smith to WP, 8 April 1771, PP-LC, 656.

³⁸⁸R. Purdie to WP, 21 February 1774, PP-LC, 787.

³⁸⁹The books came to Preston in March 1772. James Adams to WP, Preston-Radford Papers, UVA, #6353. Apparently sales did not go that well in Reverend John Brown's area as they were overpriced for that region according to Brown in a letter to Preston. 6 March 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 144. Toward the end of 1772, Adams inquired whether Preston had received the books and solicited his help on other projects. 25 December 1772, PP-LC, 724.

³⁹⁰LPF Letter.

³⁹¹John Brown to WP, 13 January 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 141.

The expense of maintaining himself in proper style represented Thompson's biggest challenge for he reminded his benefactor,

This is a much more polite place than Augusta, so it is much more expensive, consider, here are great Variety of Ladys amongst whom a person is not looked upon unless the Dress Genteel and make some Figure, and the going to Balls which a person that lives here cannot avoid is expensive, but I hope the time will be that I shall be able to make some satisfaction for these expensives.³⁹²

He even asked Preston to send him a horse so they could see each other. Perhaps Preston became frustrated with his cousin because nine months went by without a reply which irritated Thompson greatly. He admitted that he spent his "time very agreeably here" but the lack of seeing his "Dear Friends Clouds all my present Happiness and makes it appear but as a meer Phantom of Visonary Bless." Not only did he ask for a horse and a boy to help in order to visit Preston's family but he wrote that a "Wheel Carriage" would be "much better."³⁹³ Illustrating the growing wealth he had procured, Preston also paid for the education of another second cousin, Andrew Lewis, son of surveyor Thomas. Because of a shortness of money, Lewis asked Preston to pay David Robinson , 24 for two years of education for his son.³⁹⁴ Less than a year later Andrew's father, Thomas, asked Preston to find a "young trounchy mare that might bring him a foal" so that he could return home.³⁹⁵ He also helped his wife's side of the family when he paid Robinson , 25 for two years of education for her nephew, Granville Smith.³⁹⁶

Education was an expensive proposition on the frontier. Not only did the teacher have to be paid or if an indentured servant, taken from other duties, but books and supplies had to be purchased. Many of Preston's friends and relatives who could not afford a teacher of their own also had to pay room and board for their children at schools run by ministers. In Brown's case, he even deferred paying Preston past debts in order to cover the costs of his son to attend college the next fall. But he, like Preston, felt the investment was worth the cost for as he told his brother-in-law:

It is my ambition to give my Children Education, and if the Lord gives them Grace they may be useful members of society, & if not the contrary; Experience or common observation may teach us that the happiness of ourselves or ours neither lye in Riches or Education, tho' they be means yet they often prove abortive or what is worse an incentive to Vice.³⁹⁷

While they knew that education guaranteed nothing, it represented one of the best ways to bring culture and refinement to Scotch-Irish descendents in a primitive frontier. They may have been

³⁹²James Thompson to WP, 12 November 1767, PP-LC, 535.

³⁹³James Thompson to WP, 10 August 1768, PP-LC, 561.

³⁹⁴Thomas Lewis to WP, 18 September 1773, PP-LC, 759; David Robinson account with WP, 18 July 1774, PP-DU. David Robinson ran a school several years but closed it down for several months. Preston informed his sister, Letitia Breckinridge, that Robinson planned to reopen the school and encouraged her to send her son to the school on Preston's horse. 9 October 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1.

³⁹⁵Thomas Lewis to WP, 8 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 38.

³⁹⁶WP account book with Francis Smith, July 1771, PP-VHS, Mss1P9267a29.

³⁹⁷John Brown to [WP], 18 February 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 8.

attempting to duplicate for their children what their parents experienced in Ireland and what they witnessed in towns such as Williamsburg and among the elite in the Tidewater region. Formal and informal education became an important tool for promoting order and culture amidst many frontiersmen who lacked in social graces and intellectual curiosity. But it must be remembered that Preston, Brown, and those like them, were the exception on the frontier which placed them among the very elite of that society. Most people did not have the resources and, perhaps, the inclination to educate their children.

The church also represented another form of education. With the founding of two new counties, Preston no longer served on the county vestry, but he continued his close involvement with the Presbyterian Church.³⁹⁸ While living in the Staunton area, he and his family could attend church regularly, but in Greenfield they relied upon visiting clergymen to preach and offer the sacraments, always hoping for a fulltime minister. As an example, Reverend John Todd promised to preach a sermon in connection with a business trip in 1768 but suggested that if another minister could come and offer the sacrament it "might have a good tendency."³⁹⁹ Preston also appealed without success to the Presbyterian synod in Pennsylvania to supply missionaries for their area.⁴⁰⁰ In the 1770s the synod assigned various pastors to preach on a rotating basis to isolated Presbyterians. Their favorite visiting preacher was probably Preston's brother-in-law, Reverend John Brown, who would stay a week when he made his visit to their area. But their quest for a regular pastor continued, leading Brown to offer encouragement after one potential candidate went elsewhere. He urged, "let not the disappointments you have met with discourage you, the lord of the Harvest may have a better reaper for your Congregation than ever you yet had in expectation."⁴⁰¹ A few weeks later he wished Preston "a good prudent faithful minister; where so much good may be done, & so many are in want of the bread of life broken among them; & pray the lord of the harvest to send a faithful labourer amongst you."⁴⁰² Several prospects developed over the next few months but in one case, both credentials and the preaching style presented a problem.⁴⁰³ One of the best potential candidates, James Waddel, probably declined because the Preston family decided to move away from Greenfield.⁴⁰⁴

Beginning in 1772 Preston began to piece together a new plantation through the careful purchase of lands in the Draper's Meadows area near modern-day Blacksburg.⁴⁰⁵ He named the

³⁹⁸Preston showed a keen interest in affairs of the Presbyterian synod. As an example, John Brown wrote him an extensive letter detailing actions taken by the synod. 23 August 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 149-150.

³⁹⁹John Todd to WP, 5 July 1768, PP-DU.

⁴⁰⁰James Latta wrote Preston about the synod reading Preston's request but not having time to get specific appointments. In fact, Latta admitted that the synod had enrolled his name as a missionary against his will, but that if he went, Preston's residence would be "my first and most immediate Object." 3 September 1769, PP-LC, 605.

⁴⁰¹John Brown to [WP], 26 November 1771, PP-DM, 2QQ 129.

⁴⁰²John Todd to WP, 30 January 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 131-2.

⁴⁰³A Mr. McClaine ran into problems with his credentials. John Brown to WP, 3 October 1772, PP-DM, 2QQ 136. Apparently he then received approval because Brown again wrote Preston wondering why they let McClaine, "that flaming preacher," go. He asked, "Did you not want an orator it is a pity you did not." 13 January 1773, PP-DM, 2Q2QQ 141.

⁴⁰⁴John Brown to WP, 6 March 1773, PP-DM, 2QQ 144.

⁴⁰⁵Mary B. and F. B. Kegley in *Early Adenturers On The Western Waters* (Orange: Green Publishers, Inc., 1980), I:247-8 has traced the development of Preston's new home at Draper's Meadows. The original 7,500 acre Draper development was given to James Patton. His young nephew, William Preston, surveyed the site in 1754. The Kegleys disagree with allegations that Preston inherited these lands from Patton with some claiming Preston owned anywhere between 3,000 and 19,000 acres. In reality, Preston purchased a total of 1,770 acres on the following basis. On 1 August 1772 he purchased 760 acres called "White Thorn" from Francis Smith for ,300. Botetourt

new plantation "Smithfield" in honor of his wife, Susanna Smith, even before they actually moved from Greenfield in March 1774.⁴⁰⁶ Although he never indicated why he moved, he probably wanted to be closer to where his own personal land empire was developing and to where he could more easily direct the surveying of lands as county surveyor. Greenfield was located just at the edge of Fincastle County, whereas Smithfield placed him nearer the center of the county where future growth would take place. Being closer to these lands also would enable potential settlers to use his plantation as a center from which to leave for their new lands. A further consideration for the move may have been the rich farmlands in that area located on a plateau 2,200 to 2,300 feet above sea level with an average growing season of 161 days, average precipitation of 38 inches per year, and an average snowfall of only 20 inches.⁴⁰⁷ The house he built there, now beautifully restored, represents a remarkable achievement for a frontier family.⁴⁰⁸ The house clearly conveyed Preston's commitment to being among the elite living on the frontier. The home he built showed the civility and sophistication that might be expected from a Williamsburg home or a Tidewater plantation residence he had seen on his trips to the east.⁴⁰⁹ This L-shaped frame structure with a stone and brick foundation and three chimneys, consists of ten rooms including a drawing room with a handsome mantle over the fireplace, a great bed chamber, dining room, kitchen, and two bedrooms.⁴¹⁰ An outstanding feature is a Chinese chippendale lattice railing, going up the stairs to the second story, similar to one in the Coke-

County Deed Book 1, VSL, 27:494-5. On 24 May 1773 he purchased from Edmond Winston and his wife two tracts for , 270. The first consisted of 315 acres "formerly conveyed by James Patton to John Draper . . . corners to land of William Ingles." The second consisted of 220 acres conveyed to James Patton and then to John Draper and William Ingles on 9 February 1754 next to land where Draper formerly lived. Montgomery County Deed Book A, VSL, 1:43-5. On 25 March 1774 he purchased from William and Mary Ingles another two pieces of property for , 270, the first consisting of 255 acres and the second 220 acres which had originally been part of the 220 acres sold to Preston the year before by Edmond Winston. *Ibid.*, I:56-60.

⁴⁰⁶Letitia Preston Floyd gave March 1774 as the date when they made the move to Smithfield. LPF Letter. Even before the move, Preston wrote his sister, Letitia, from "Smithfield" on 12 October 1773. WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 12 October 1773, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:27. On 18 February 1774 John Brown wrote Preston, "I hope by this time you are comfortably settled in smithfields with your dr spouse & affectionate children around you." PP-DM, 3QQ 8. For general articles about Smithfield, see Janie P. B. Lamb, "'Smithfield' Home of the Prestons, In Montgomery County, Virginia," *VMHB*, XLVIII (January, 1939): 109-125 and Calder Loth, ed., *The Virginia Landmarks Register*, 3d ed. (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1986), 279.

⁴⁰⁷Gibson, Musselwhite, Roth, Throckmorton, Toth, Westbrook, Williams, "An Interpretative Plan for Smithfield Plantation," 30 May 1975, rev. August 1975. Located in Smithfield Plantation Records at Smithfield Plantation, Blacksburg, Virginia.

⁴⁰⁸No evidence exists on how or when the house was built.

⁴⁰⁹Loth, *Virginia Landmarks*, 279, describes the house as "indistinguishable from a prosperous Tidewater Virginia plantation house, Smithfield has the generous scale, refined proportions, and careful detailing typical of the colonial Virginia architectural idiom." In a report by the VPI Department of Architectural Engineering, 1930, they argued of its importance to American architecture: "Here are seen examples of the brick work, plastering, timber construction, door and window treatment, hand-forged iron work, hand-cut doors, mouldings, mantles, etc., and the L type plan of some of American's first construction work." In other records located at Smithfield Plantation from 1962, nationally-known architect, Milton Grigg, who designed the new American Embassy in Australia, argued that Smithfield was the finest colonial house west of the Blue Ridge. Professor Frederick Nichols from UVA's School of Architecture suggested the house "would be considered distinguished if it had been located in Williamsburg, instead of on Virginia's frontier in 1772."

⁴¹⁰Strong similarities exist between the mantle in the Apollo Room of Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg and the drawing room of Smithfield. Although the number of panels differ, the construction and detailing appear very similar.

Garrett House in Williamsburg which he may have visited.⁴¹¹ The small transom over the front double doors may have made Smithfield one of the first to use such construction. The Prestons added small touches of elegance throughout the house including special mouldings, mantles, and doors which show their care of details in making their home comfortable.

The early weeks at Smithfield found sickness among Preston's slaves and family.⁴¹² Preston himself was also "oppressed with Business trouble & anxiety" trying to establish sources of family income at a new location.⁴¹³ He needed to find an overseer quickly but, showing his deep concern for his sister, Letitia, ended up letting her have his best prospect because of her great needs.⁴¹⁴ Hemp continued to be an important cash crop on the new plantation to which he now added the sale of New River grass seed.⁴¹⁵ He also entered into partnership with merchant Edward Johnson to sell indentured servants. Although the scarcity of cash greatly hurt their business, Johnson sent Preston many servants to sell. The first shipment arrived one month after he moved to Smithfield when seven servants came with solid recommendations from Johnson, "I would wish to good masters, as they are very well behaved sober men, and am convinced will give satisfaction to whoever purchases them." Two were good farmers, another a weaver, and another knew husbandry.⁴¹⁶ One month later Preston got another shipment of 27 indentured servants to sell but fears developed that a competitor also sent out some about the same time which "may hurt our sales." Johnson suggested,

After all we have said you must first do with them as you can, and we make no doubt you will do the best, should this adventure turn out well, our partnership may last longer, and our dealings become more extensive.⁴¹⁷

Growing winds of war on the frontier hurt Preston's efforts to get rid of the indentured servants, although he sold twelve by August.⁴¹⁸ Johnson finally admitted, "I hope we shall not lose by our partnership, tho' I am of opinion the profit must be trifling."⁴¹⁹ Perhaps the opinion of Preston's brother-in-law John Brown came too late. Earlier Preston had asked his advice and Brown told

⁴¹¹Although no evidence exists that Preston stayed at the Coke-Garrett House in Williamsburg, we know it was used as a tavern and ordinary during the period Preston visited the town as a member of the House of Burgesses. Mary Stephenson, "Coke-Garrett House. House History," typescript at Colonial Williamsburg, 1953. The "Chippendale stairs" were probably added to the Coke-Garrett House sometime during the third quarter of the eighteenth century so could have been seen by Preston during his visits. "Architectural Report. The Coke-Garrett House. Block 27," Colonial Williamsburg Library.

⁴¹²He reported that one of his slaves, Peter, was "so spent that he cannot live many Hours." WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 7 March 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:32. Within a few days he died, but illustrating the feelings of the age, James Robertson consoled Preston, "it is Luckey it did not happen to your wife or one of your Children." James Robertson to WP, 21 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 14.

⁴¹³WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 7 March 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:32.

⁴¹⁴He described the young man as "Well behaved & a very Industrious Young Fellow." WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 7 March 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:32.

⁴¹⁵WP account with John Griner, 16 August 1774, PP-LC, 840. Edward Johnson wrote Preston, probably in 1773, with an order for one or two bushels of New River grass seed, described as being larger than blue grass which would make it more suitable for poor lands. PDGC-FC.

⁴¹⁶Edward Johnson to WP, 8 April 1774, PP-LC, 804.

⁴¹⁷Edward Johnson to WP, 30 May 1774, PP-LC, 819.

⁴¹⁸WP to Edward Johnson, 2 August 1774, PP-LC, 836. This batch of servants brought additional expense to Preston from James McGavock of , 3.19.10 1/2 for ordinary expenses due to their being "water bound" for five days. PDGC-FC.

⁴¹⁹Edward Johnson to WP, 3 August 1774, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA.

him that in his area there was a scarcity of money, plenty of servants already, and too much debt. He advised that it would not pay to get involved "at this present juncture, [for] you have business enough upon hand, but these things you can better think of than I can."⁴²⁰ Due to a paucity of records, it is impossible to determine how much money the partnership made or lost.

One unfortunate consequence of the indentured servant trade for Preston may have been the illness they brought to the Preston family. Susanna Preston had just delivered on June 21 their first child at Smithfield named after her husband's mentor, James Patton, when a group of sick indentured servants arrived.⁴²¹ Johnson expressed sorrow that doctors had been needed to care for Preston's allotment of indentured servants and hoped the "horriblesome, perplexing wretches" could soon be sold.⁴²² But the sickness carried into the Preston's slaves and Susanna Preston who fell ill with a seizure of "Dimness of Sight & Giddiness & fainting" shortly after delivering their seventh child.⁴²³

One positive result of the business came in July, 1774 in the person of Aaron Palfrenan, an indentured servant, poet, and scholar, who Preston acquired for \$25. Letitia recounted many years later the circumstances for Palfrenan coming to America. In a "drunken frolic" he agreed to be married to a beautiful woman, "who was represented to him as a lady by his companions." But the next morning finding he had been duped, "his wife was a woman of the Town," he fled within hours for America. Johnson recommended him to Preston as a "good recorder & is very Fond of doing his duty" and advised Preston to "set him to work, he'll be better employ'd than in his poetical Essays." Apparently Preston did not initially like him because Johnson wrote a few weeks later, "am Sorry he does not suit you, he might been sold here, but I thought he'd please you." Ultimately their relationship improved and Palfrenan became an integral part of Preston's family as the teacher of their children.⁴²⁴

Beginning in the spring of 1774, many of these business activities were threatened by the increasing danger of Indian attacks. During the remainder of 1774, Preston became the pivotal leader in orchestrating and coordinating the frontier response to these challenges which became known as Dunmore's War.⁴²⁵ In many ways the experience gained here was to prepare him for the larger responsibilities that emerged when the American Revolution began in a few months. The borders between Virginia and the Indians which resulted from the Proclamation of 1763

⁴²⁰John Brown to WP, 22 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 81.

⁴²¹John Floyd Family Bible, Bible Records, VHS, Mss6:4F6695:2.

⁴²²Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1774, PP-LC, 826.

⁴²³WP to Edward Johnson, 2 August 1774, PP-LC, 836. Preston wrote that Sam was close to the point of death. He was as concerned about his inability to visit his mother who was "extremely ill" in Botetourt.

⁴²⁴LPF Letter; Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1774, PP-LC, 826 and 3 August 1774, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA.

⁴²⁵No thorough history of Dunmore's War has yet been written. Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., prepared a Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774 (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1905, reprinted by Harrisonburg: C. J. Carrier Company, 1974), which contains most of the primary source materials related to this war and a good introduction. Most of the Preston Papers from the Draper Manuscripts are reprinted in their book; however, for this study, we will continue to use the Stuntz transcription found at the Filson Club of the 3QQ section. Other accounts of Dunmore's War can be found in Patricia Givens Johnson, Preston and Andrew Lewis of Roanoke and Greenbrier (Blacksburg: Southern Printing Company, 1980); Thomas Perkins Abernethy, Western Lands and The American Revolution (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), 98-115; Richard Orr Curry, "Lord Dunmore and the West: A Re-evaluation," West Virginia History, XIX (July 1958): 231-243; Jack M. Sosin, "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War," VMHB, 74 (January 1966): 34-50, and Barbara Ann Burgner, "Lord Dunmore, the West, and the Revolution in Virginia" (M.A. thes., Cornell, 1952).

constituted a major issue. And the border between Pennsylvania and Virginia was similarly disputed with both colonies claiming the lands around Fort Pitt. The stakes were high since Virginia still claimed Kentucky and Ohio as their territory with surveyors from Virginia continuing their efforts to lay out lands for claims from Virginians. In March one of Preston's surveyors, Captain Daniel Smith, reported from Castle's Woods on Clinch River that people in that area feared the Indians more than he expected--so much so that four families fled, leaving their stock and household furniture. When they got to the area around Holston River, Smith prevailed upon them to return.⁴²⁶ Within two months, even the settlers on the Holston River heard rumors of an impending Cherokee attack to force them out of their homes.⁴²⁷ In April Preston ordered Captain William Russell to send out scouts to determine if the Indians planned to attack settlers immediately in the Clinch and Holston Rivers areas and to encourage settlers to remain on their farms. In addition, the scouts were to find the boundary line between the Cherokees and Virginia so that the House of Burgesses could determine where legal land claims could be given. If by accident they found any Indians, he cautioned the scouts to avoid any hostilities since Virginia did not want a war to interfere with plans to settle Ohio as rapidly as possible.⁴²⁸ The scouts' mission was evidently successful for their report "eased the Minds of the People who returned to their Habitations again." They also determined that the Louisa River rather than the Cumberland formed the boundary line, which cleared up much confusion on where land claims could be made.⁴²⁹

Incidents between whites and Indians continued to multiply, heightening the apprehensions of colonists that a larger attack must be imminent. In late April, John Floyd wrote Preston about three white settlers being ordered away by an Indian party. Earlier the Shawnees had taken seven prisoners, held them for three days, and then

took every thing they had & sent them off telling them at the same time it was their directions . . . to kill all the Virginians they Could find on the River & Rob & whip the Pennsylvanians. this they told them in English.

In another incident, Indians killed one white man and wounded another one forty-five miles south of Pittsburgh. On another occasion, rumors proved false that whites killed several Indians when in reality the Indians had only robbed some whites.⁴³⁰ The Indians also had their legitimate grievances. On April 30 a group of whites got several Indians drunk at Yellow Creek, a branch of the Ohio River about fifty miles south of Pittsburgh, and murdered them.⁴³¹

In May, 1774, Dunmore called for the House of Burgesses to meet for the first time in over a year. In that period relations had worsened between Great Britain and her colonies. Dunmore tried to focus the attention of the Burgesses on the Indian problem and border disputes with Pennsylvania urging them to raise troops for their defense. But the Assembly was not prepared to pay for regular troops and, in any case, their attention was directed toward the closing of the port of Boston by the British. When the Burgesses approved June 1 as a "day of

⁴²⁶Captain Daniel Smith to WP, 22 March 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 15.

⁴²⁷[WP] to Colonel William Byrd, 14 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 24.

⁴²⁸Captain William Russell's Instructions to Scouts, 15 April 1774. PP-DM, 3QQ 18.

⁴²⁹William Russell to [WP], 7 May 1774, and WP to Captain Samuel McDowell, 27 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 23, 27.

⁴³⁰John Floyd to WP, 26 April 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 19-20.

⁴³¹Reminiscences of Judge Henry Holly, 1849, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 10.

Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer" which would focus on "averting the heavy Calamity which threatens destruction to our Civil Rights, and the Evils of civil War," Dunmore dissolved the Assembly.⁴³²

Dunmore's motives in this situation were mixed. Certainly he wanted to protect the frontier but it is clear that he was also interested in increasing his western landholdings in violation of his own government orders. Since the House of Burgesses would not approve of any regular soldiers, Dunmore now turned to frontier leaders such as Arthur Campbell, William Christian, and William Preston to aid his cause, and theirs, through laws which allowed the use of militia in the case of Indian attacks. Undoubtedly these leaders would also have preferred help from regular soldiers, but now they had to count on raising volunteers from their own local militias.

To begin the defense, Dunmore asked these three men to use their best efforts to keep inhabitants from fleeing "from the approach of an Indian War . . . just about to break out on the Frontiers" and "to give assurance to the people that the war should be carried into the enemies country." Dunmore planned to lead the troops himself and word was forwarded to Lieutenant Colonel Preston "to take proper steps" for the frontier's defense as inhabitants continued to flee to the point that "it was feared great part of the county would be evacuated."⁴³³ Preston acted immediately on the Governor's orders. As an encouragement to keep his neighbors from moving, he built a little "fort" at Smithfield and orders were sent out for musters to take place throughout the county to determine how many troops could be raised.⁴³⁴ And efforts were started to assure a necessary supply of ammunition.⁴³⁵

By June reports arrived that "an Indian War is commenced."⁴³⁶ Up until this time, most of the squabbles involved Shawnees, but now war with the Cherokees became a possibility when a Mr. Crabtree killed "Cherokee Billy," a relative of Chief Outacite, at a horse race on the Watauga River (near the border of North Carolina and Tennessee). Arthur Campbell warned Preston that it "would be easier to find 100 Men to screen him from the Law, than ten to bring him to Justice."⁴³⁷ Hoping to avert retaliation, Preston immediately sent a letter to the Cherokees with a special appeal to "my friends Outacite & the Little Carpenter." He reminded the Cherokees that only the last fall five whites had been "barbarously murdered" by Indians in addition to several other "Acts of Violence." He hoped the Cherokees would view the murder in the proper light--as an act committed "by a few of the basest amongst them." Furthermore, he pledged that those who committed the murder would be brought to justice with hopes the Cherokees would also punish

⁴³²24 May 1774, *JHB*, 1773-1776, 124.

⁴³³Petition of William Christian, William Preston, and Arthur Campbell in Regard to Their Services in Dunmore's War, "Virginia Legislative Papers," *VMHB*, XVII (April 1909): 169.

⁴³⁴Such Preston relatives as John Brown wrote with grave concerns about his family's safety at Smithfield: "I can assure you I am no ways satisfied with your situation, you lay too much in the way of the Indians. New River has been the Course they came formerly to War & probably will come you had need to be upon your watch & take every prudent method to prevent a surprize. . . . You have a great number under your Care whose dependance for protection (under God) is upon you; a loving wife and a number of helpless Children I think it would not be amiss if any apparent danger come to remove them to some place of greater safety. but in these things I am only a Tyro." John Brown to [WP], 28 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 29. Preston received reports with lists of militiamen from Captain Michael Woods on 29 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 30 and from Captain Robert Doack on 2 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 34.

⁴³⁵Daniel Smith to WP, 30 May 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 149.

⁴³⁶Abraham Hite, Jr. to WP, 3 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 35.

⁴³⁷Arthur Campbell to WP, [June 1774], PP-DM, 3QQ 40.

their young men who had robbed and murdered whites.⁴³⁸

In spite of these assurances, Preston could not control the actions of frontiersmen. Campbell informed him that Crabtree and a "few mislead followers, will frustrate all we can do." Just the previous week Crabtree had heard reports of two or three Indians being in the vicinity and went after them. Instead of finding only a few, thirty-seven Indian warriors suddenly appeared to take on Crabtree. Campbell reported a shifting of attitudes among the colonists with most now ready to charge him with murder to avoid further problems.⁴³⁹ Word spread throughout the colony about the unprovoked attack by whites against Indians, leading Preston's merchant relative in Richmond, Edward Johnson, to report that most colonists in his area felt the "Indians have been the most Barbarously treated."⁴⁴⁰ And the Cherokees seemed satisfied with Preston's assurances of friendship and good will.⁴⁴¹ Within a month, Oconastota, the Cherokee chief, responded favorably to Preston's letter with a letter and two strings of wampum, but warned that white men must stay away from Cherokee hunting grounds well established through formal treaties--"whoever breaks it first again must be in the fault."⁴⁴²

However, the threat continued with the Shawnees since their lands were more directly placed in jeopardy by the continuing encroachments by surveyors and settlers. Dunmore by early June received intelligence from the Fort Pitt area about the movements of Indians, leading him to believe that

hopes of a pacification can be no longer entertained, and that these People will by no means be diverted from their design of falling upon the back parts of this Country and Committing all the outrages and devastations, which will be in their power to effect.

Dunmore now sent a circular letter to Preston with instructions not only to prepare the county militia for defense but to be prepared to "march to the Assistance of any other." He left up to Preston's judgement whether small forts should be erected to protect settlers and to secure passes. As a way to "awe the Indians," he suggested that they keep communication open from the mouth of the Great Kanahwa and Fort Pitt, now called Fort Dunmore. So that the rest of the country would see his resolution, Dunmore promised to furnish powder and ball "as expeditiously as possible."⁴⁴³

As summer approached Preston hesitated to call out the militia in the absence of an Indian invasion. Some disagreed with his caution. William Christian urged him to consider encouraging men to voluntarily go to the threatened areas without actually ordering them to

⁴³⁸WP Letter to Cherokee Indians, 11 June 1774, Preston Davie Papers, VHS, Mss1 D2856 d, Section 6:7. Preston also wrote to Dunmore asking his assistance in assuring the Cherokees of their peaceful intentions, but Dunmore refused to write them feeling it would be "more proper and effectual" to do it through the British Superintendent of Indians for that area. Dunmore to WP, 3 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 53.

⁴³⁹Arthur Campbell to WP, 22 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 41.

⁴⁴⁰Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1774, PP-LC, 826.

⁴⁴¹Colonel Arthur Campbell wrote Preston on 23 June 1774 that from expressions made by Little Carpenter, he was convinced the Cherokees "would willingly avoid a War with us; except some repeated affront from Crabtree provokes them to it." Campbell heard that the Cherokee supply of powder had been damaged by being stored in bags in a cave. However, he cautioned they should be on guard lest the Cherokees might be infiltrated by the Shawnees who might "choose to take some Scapts with them, by way of a Declaration of War." Within a few weeks he expected to find out "by whom we are to be attacked." PP-DM, 3QQ 44.

⁴⁴²Oconastota to Colonels Andrew Lewis and WP, 16 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 142.

⁴⁴³Dunmore Circular Letter to WP, 10 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 39.

march.⁴⁴⁴ Preston finally accepted Christian's advice and on June 25 after a meeting with his officers, he ordered six captains to raise twenty men each out of their companies either on a voluntary basis or by draft to become part of a unit of 150 men. These units were to proceed from the Holston River area to Clinch River and then over Cumberland Mountain into Kentucky in order to "discover & Repulse the Enemy on their Approach to our Settlements." Even though the Cherokees were supposedly at peace with the English, Preston still suspected that they might join the Shawnees. If these units saw Indians he warned their officers to use "prudence" as they judged "by the manner of their Approach . . . what Indians they are & then you will act Accordingly." He was encouraged by the fact that the units would consist of

none but choice officers & men on this little Expedition therefore the Eyes of the Country will be upon you; So that I have no doubt but every person in his station will Exert himself to answer the wishes & expectations of his Country; and serve it as much as in his power lies.⁴⁴⁵

The activity of these militia units was cut short when Dunmore decided to go to war against the Indians who had killed one man and wounded two others at Greenbrier. An outright attack seemed inevitable so instructions to erect forts were sent as well as orders for another muster of men who were to each bring a horse and ammunition.⁴⁴⁶ Anticipating problems with Loyalists during later years, not all of the musters went smoothly. Captain William Russell reported to Preston of a particularly obstreperous group living on Moccasin Creek who said they lived too far away to come to the muster field. While others came from much further than the ten or twelve miles from where this group lived, they wanted their own scouts and even nominated two of their own men for captains including one who lived in North Carolina.⁴⁴⁷ Unprotected frontier residents were traumatized by the threat of attack, extremely hot, dry, weather, a lack of ammunition, and the possibility of lost crops if they left their homes.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴Colonel William Christian to WP, 22 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 42, 43. Christian felt so concerned about the issue that he wrote Preston two letters on the same day. He admitted that some militiamen were disappointed that no Shawnees had shown up because they wanted a war. He also expressed another reason for a volunteer group. The surveyors sent out several weeks before had not been heard from and there was concern over their safety. Christian argued that their return could be helped--"could I save one life I should think my self recompensed."

⁴⁴⁵Petition of William Christian, WP, and Arthur Campbell in Regard to Their Services in Dunmore's War, "Virginia Legislative Papers, VMHB, XVII (April 1909): 169-170 and WP to William Christian, 27 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 47. Fears of a Cherokee-Shawnee coalition constantly crop up during this period. Captain William Russell suspected such a coalition might take place resulting in "many Murders they will be capable to perpetrate, Attended with a general Devastation of the Frontiers; it really appears shocking to Humanity; and I am too much afraid such a Confederacy will be form'd." Captain William Russell to [WP], 26 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 46.

⁴⁴⁶Colonel William Christian to Captain Joseph Cloyd, 29 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 49.

⁴⁴⁷Russell also reported that his company voted to erect two forts. Captain William Russell to [WP], 26 June 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 46. The rank and file militiamen were not the only ones to give problems. Captain Bledsoe resigned "alleging he did not get the Rank he ought have done" forcing Preston to appoint someone else. WP to Captain Shelby, 2 March 1774, DM, Tennessee Papers, 5:4.

⁴⁴⁸Michael Woods to WP, 5 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 56. Captain Daniel Smith also complained to Preston that "powder and lead are yet very scarce article with us." 8 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 57. On 12 July 1774 Captain Robert Doack also complained to Preston about a scarcity of ammunition--"if any is Come up for the Country pray let us have Our Proportion of it - Should it not be made use of in Defending the Inhabitants I will take Care that it shall not be wasted & such Orders as you give About it Shall be Obeyd." PP-DM, 3QQ 61. By the end of July and beginning of August, some powder and lead was forthcoming. James Robertson received ten pounds of powder and twenty-one pounds of lead from Preston on 24 July 1774. In August several more distributions were made by

Rumors continued to persist that the Cherokees and Shawnees had already joined forces, but Preston worked successfully to keep the Cherokees from the warpath. He wrote a letter to Oconastota in late July which illustrated his knowledge of how to communicate with Indians in their own language and customs. He thanked them for "keeping the Path clean between your Country and this and of cultivating the Friendship & Harmony which ought to subsist between the Cherokees & their Brothers the Virginians." But he warned them to avoid contact with the Shawnees who "have upon all Occasions broke their Treaties with Virginia, by robbing & murdering our People without any just Cause." Conditions had gotten so bad that Preston reported in a great exaggeration that a force of 3,000 Virginians under the leadership of the governor was right now on their way to "punish" the Shawnees. In an even greater exaggeration, Preston solemnly warned that if more troops had been thought necessary "other Warriors could with Ease have taken out three or four Time the Number, many of whom are now in Forts & ranging the Woods."⁴⁴⁹ This obvious untruth in light of complaints from captains in the field that they could not find enough men to help was meant as a pure threat and bluff against the Cherokees. With the Cherokee threat defused, the Shawnee peril remained.

Preston now received additional instructions from Dunmore. The governor wanted Preston and Lewis to send additional soldiers to help John Connolly, now building a fort at Wheeling (in current West Virginia). He felt they could put a quick end to the Indian threat by marching soldiers into Indian territory.⁴⁵⁰ By now the Pennsylvanians, who had recently established better relationships with the Shawnees, heard of Dunmore's plans on the frontier and even published a letter in the Pennsylvania Gazette charging him with joining a "scheming party" of "land-jobbers" devoted to getting lands for their own private usage.⁴⁵¹ Obviously the Shawnees had plenty of advance warning of the impending invasion of their territory by Virginians. And talk of peace fell on deaf ears. Although Charles Lewis reported that envoys in the Fort Pitt area heard that the Indians wanted to sue for peace, Dunmore was so committed to war that he instructed Andrew Lewis to raise a force of men and "proceed directly to their [Indian] Towns & if possible destroy their Towns & Magazines and distress them in every other way that is possible." He assured Lewis that Preston "will do all in his power to Assist you & I flatter myself that from your Joint efforts you will be able to give a pritty good Acct. of them."⁴⁵²

Now that they had raised a good number of militiamen, Christian developed a strategy for attacking the Shawnees. He proposed to Preston that 150 or 200 men would be sufficient to march to the Ohio and then proceed to attack one of the lower towns of the Shawnees.⁴⁵³ Another key strategy was the erection of several forts, some named after military officers such as Preston and Christian.⁴⁵⁴ Preston now sent out a circular letter to the militia captains in his county asking them, in response to the request of Dunmore and Andrew Lewis, to raise 250 volunteers for an expedition against the Indians. He promised that every volunteer would be rewarded "in a handsome manner . . . as the plunder of the County will be valuable, & it is said the Shawnese have a great Stock of Horses." He hoped that "we shall not be behind our Neighbours in

Preston. WP's Soldier Book, 1 July 1774-6 October 1775, PP-DM, 3QQ 151.

⁴⁴⁹WP Letter to Oconastota, July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 143.

⁴⁵⁰Dunmore to WP, 3 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 53.

⁴⁵¹13 July 1774, Pennsylvania Gazette, from Thwaites, Dunmore's War, 66-7.

⁴⁵²Colonel Charles Lewis to [WP], 9 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 59 and Dunmore to Colonel Andrew Lewis, 12 July 1774, Thwaites, Dunmore's War, 86-7.

⁴⁵³Colonel William Christian to [WP], 12 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 63.

⁴⁵⁴Captain William Russell to [WP], 13 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 64. Russell complained to Preston that his hands were so sore from building the fort that he could scarcely write.

furnishing men" since the "Eyes of this & the Neighboring Colonies are upon us." Anticipating potential difficulties, Preston urged them to disregard the "lenth of the Journey, or the badness of the Road . . . as we cannot expect any Rest from these Indians, untill it is Travelled for this purpose."⁴⁵⁵ Dunmore's strategy by now had also crystallized more clearly. He planned to march 250 or 350 men to Fort Dunmore where he would join with a force raised by Andrew and Charles Lewis. Depending on whether Indian spies knew their whereabouts, Andrew Lewis was to march to the Great Kanawha River or any other place on the Ohio River where they could safely gather.⁴⁵⁶

Even before Dunmore got to Fort Dunmore, ominous reports came to Preston from Major James Robertson at Fort Dunmore of fresh signs of Indians seen every day. But now an even more serious threat developed. The militiamen stationed at Fort Dunmore were threatening to go home in order to harvest their crops, thus placing their own personal needs above those of the broader community. Only with great persuasion had Robertson convinced some to remain to the point that "I must stay with not more than six men unless I kill one part and tye the Other. I Expect we will have a war amongst our Selves with out that of the Indians." Robertson promised, "I shall Stand by the Place Agreeable to my Orders if Death Should be my Fate."⁴⁵⁷ In August Robertson continued to report from Culbertson's Bottom, a branch of the New River, with reports of continuing Indian attacks.⁴⁵⁸

Up until August, the area around Preston's home had been spared of any major signs of Indian activity, but the panic still remained as the colonists fled from their homes to safer areas such as Smithfield in Draper's Meadow. Even from Richmond, Edward Johnson wrote with concern about the anxiety the Preston family must be feeling with such frequent alarms--"my wife has been, & is Still very uneasie for your & Familys Danger, but I flatter my self you will not Leav yr. family, without having a proper Guard with them."⁴⁵⁹ In actual fact, Dunmore ordered Preston to stay at home in order to guard the frontier area while the expedition continued.⁴⁶⁰ In addition, with his wife very sick and near death, he might have felt a need to stay home.⁴⁶¹ Even at home Preston expressed tremendous trauma in this dramatic account to Johnson:

There is nothing but War, Confusion & Consternation in this Country. The Inhabitants flying in Crowds; leaving their Farms in Ruin and Desolation. News from all Quarters, continual Expressions to me for assistance, amunition, etc. My whole time is taken up in this Business & with all not a Drop of Blood spilled or an Indian seen in Fincastle, tho'

⁴⁵⁵WP Circular Letter to Militia Captains, 20 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 139.

⁴⁵⁶Dunmore to Colonel Charles Lewis, 24 July 1774, "Preston Papers," *VMHB*, XXVI (October 1918): 366, hereafter referred to as "Preston Papers"-*VMHB* and Dunmore to Andrew Lewis, 24 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 141.

⁴⁵⁷Major James Robertson to WP, 26 July 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 67.

⁴⁵⁸Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 76.

⁴⁵⁹Edward Johnson to [WP], 3 August 1774, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA. Throughout this conflict, families faced these dilemmas. In October 1774 when manpower shortages grew extreme, John Montgomery wrote Preston that "unless Men were to Leave their wives and Children exposed to the Mercy of the Enemy, which we in reason Cannot Expect," they would continue to have shortages. 2 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 110.

⁴⁶⁰WP to Arthur Campbell, 13 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 76 and Petition of Christian, Preston, Campbell, "Virginia Legislative Papers," *VMHB*, XVII (April 1909): 170.

⁴⁶¹Susanna Preston may have appealed to her husband to stay home. William Russell's wife also placed pressure on her husband to stay home rather than go on the expedition, but he ultimately ended up commanding a company at Point Pleasant. Major Arthur Campbell to WP, 10 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 72.

our Neighbouring Counties have not come so well off and indeed we have great reason to believe it will not be our Case long. Smithfield is now almost a Frontier & my Family are much exposed.

It was a low time in Preston's life but in his mind anything was better than "Running" for "you know I am too Clumsy for that Exercise." And further from

this Picture of my Distress you may guess my Dear Johnson how unhappy my situation is. My Country flying & leaving all in Destruction, My Family in Sickness & Danger, My Relation's & those of the Dearest, on a sick Bed & I can't Visit them or yield them any Relife; ere is a Complication of Evils; but I hope God will bring all to an happy issue.⁴⁶²

His hopes for happiness evaporated quickly on August 7 as Indians killed several members of the Balser Lybrook family who lived on Sinking Creek only ten miles from Preston's home.⁴⁶³ When details of the incident were heard in the fort at Preston's home, it must have brought even greater fear. Two boys who escaped from the Indians after the attack reported that they watched two Indians and one white man, "intirely naked without Either Blankets or match Coat," scalp in a canoe five or six children, probably those from the Lybrook family. Robertson also expressed fear for his own family but admitted that Preston's situation was probably "Dangerouser." He advised him to keep a watch on constantly since the white men who traveled with the Indians on their forays "undoubtedly know men of the Best Circumstance and that is What they Generally aim at."⁴⁶⁴ Campbell also sent word of concern, "The late stroke in your Neighborhood is alarming. I hope it will rouse our Spirits to make Speedy reprisals." He also hoped to use this incident to "spirit up our people to go on the expedition." Campbell faced a similar dilemma to Preston of wanting to do what was best for the overall good of the area. He admitted to Preston, "The Expedition is the Principal object of my attention: but if you order the care of this Frontier to me; I will submit."⁴⁶⁵

Finally on August 12 four high officers including Preston, William Fleming, Andrew Lewis, and William Christian convened a council to assess their situation. They admitted that "the people in general are backward in entering themselves Volunteers in the intended expedition" because of their desire to protect the frontier if too many left. They appealed to Bedford and Pittsylvania Counties to provide officers and militia to guard the frontier of Fincastle County so that men from Botetourt and Fincastle would feel comfortable joining Dunmore's expeditionary force. If they still did not get enough for the expedition with these measures, they agreed that the militia should be drafted rather than relying only on volunteers.⁴⁶⁶

The next day Preston began to inform his officers of the decisions made by the council of officers. He asked Campbell to stay in the Holston River area to protect his own frontier with the anticipated militia from Pittsylvania County to guard the Clinch River area. For

⁴⁶²WP to Edward Johnson, 2 August 1774, PP-LC, 836.

⁴⁶³Arthur Campbell to Captain Daniel Smith, 9 August 1774, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 134 and Arthur Campbell to [WP], [9 August 1774], PP-DM, 3QQ 79.

⁴⁶⁴Captain James Robertson to [WP], 12 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 74.

⁴⁶⁵Arthur Campbell to [WP], [9 August 1774] and Arthur Campbell to WP, 10 August 1774, PP-DM, 79, 72.

⁴⁶⁶Consultation of Officers at Fort Lewis, 12 August 1774, "Preston Papers"-*VMHB*, XXVI (October 1918): 367.

psychological purposes, Preston requested him to have his officers put their men "in Motion, as it will encourage the People not only in this, but the Neighbouring Counties to prepare for the Journey; & indeed there is no time to be lost."⁴⁶⁷ In contrast, he encouraged Captain David Long to continue getting volunteers for the expedition even to the point of accepting demands from one group that they would only go if their designated lieutenant served as their leader.⁴⁶⁸ In like manner, he accepted the offer of Captain John Litton Jones to raise fifty men for the expedition with the warning that "every Minute is Precious." He instructed both groups to meet at William Thompson's place ten miles from the New River, from where they would rendezvous at Camp Union (modern-day Lewisburg, West Virginia) on Big Levels of the Greenbrier before the end of the month.⁴⁶⁹ As might be expected, a certain amount of bickering went on about who would be in charge of which areas on the frontier or who would receive certain commissions. But overall, the spirit among the men for cooperating in making sure that the needs of both the frontier and the expedition were met appeared to be good.⁴⁷⁰ By August 25 with men on the march to begin the expedition, Preston began to carry out a draft for the first time to procure enough men to protect their own frontier borders.⁴⁷¹ Robertson responded to Preston's orders by not drafting any men with families but only those "Hulking younge dogs that Can be well Spar'd." He also expressed real exasperation with those "backward scoundrels" who needed to be forced to respond since "no Honour nor Intreateys will move them." Frontier inhabitants were not easily manipulated and Robertson reported that some frontier gentlemen were threatening mutiny unless they received commissions to be officers.⁴⁷²

Dunmore had withheld information about the proposed expedition from his superiors in England but in August he finally wrote to Lord Dartmouth, justifying his actions in the face of Indian attacks and stated that he planned to march over the Alleghenies down the Ohio to the

⁴⁶⁷WP to Arthur Campbell, 13 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 76.

⁴⁶⁸WP to Captain David Long, 13 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 140. Similar problems developed in other units. Arthur Campbell wrote Preston of a situation in which some of Crabtree's friends (the murderer of Cherokee Billy) would not go unless they had Joseph Drake as their officer, which led to two other companies insisting they wanted an officer not connected with Crabtree. 12 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 75. Within a few days, Campbell wrote Preston with concerns about Drake who had apparently disobeyed secret orders. He expressed alarm at the "falsity of the Man; that he might betray the best intended design when committed to his trust." He hoped Drake would receive a "proper reprimand for his conduct." 25 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 82. Drake also had his strong supporters with Preston. J. Thompson lobbied him to give a commission to Joseph Drake who deserved one "as much as any Capt in the Service." He warned that Drake had some foes who might try to prevent such an appointment and give Preston contrary information. 19 August 1774, Mrs. Walter Beal Ellett Papers, VPI. However, problems with Drake persisted to the point that he refused to accept any orders from superior officers in regard to his men, even threatening to march them to the expedition instead of joining with John Floyd's company as instructed. Campbell expressed further exasperation to Preston, "I don't know by what term to express the idea I have of Mr Drakes Character and behaviour it seems to be a complication of such Qualities as deserved a very coarse name." He wondered why a man who had "so prevaricated, and trampled on Orders" should not be "severely cashier'd." 28 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 85.

⁴⁶⁹WP to Captain John Litton Jones, 13 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 147.

⁴⁷⁰Captain William Russell wrote to Preston with his willingness to do whatever he wanted. He willingly resigned his interest in going on the expedition to John Floyd "to serve my good Friend." He did hope to command a company on the Clinch. 16 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 78. In contrast, William Cocke complained that he was overlooked for a commission when men were drafted out of his company. He insisted that in the future he should be placed on an equal footing with other men. [William Cocke] to WP, [August 1774], 3QQ 87. Later he received appointment as a captain after Captain Anthony Bledsoe resigned "alleging he did not get the Rank he ought to have done." WP to Captain Evan Shelby, August 1774, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 106-7.

⁴⁷¹WP to Arthur Campbell, 25 August 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 82.

⁴⁷²Major James Robertson to WP, 1 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 88.

mouth of the Scioto where he expected "to put an end to the most cruel war in which there is neither honor, pleasure, nor profit."⁴⁷³ While he probably could find no pleasure in fighting under miserable conditions, the possibility of personal profit for Dunmore in procuring lands for himself remained a strong motivation. Meanwhile Preston received reports of other events in the colonies of equal significance to the future of Virginia. In the first real signal of where Preston stood on the Patriot movement, Thomas Walker sent him a copy of Thomas Jefferson's "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" which "I expect will give you satisfaction." Walker also reported on the appointment of seven delegates from Virginia to meet in Philadelphia along with delegates from other colonies. Virginia's delegates included a "who's who" of Virginia's leadership, many of whom were friends of Preston including George Washington, Patrick Henry, Edmund Pendleton, and Richard Henry Lee. They had been empowered to agree to a non-importation agreement with Great Britain after November 1 and non-exportation agreement to Great Britain after August 10, 1775.⁴⁷⁴ This brought an expression of concern from Preston's merchant relative, Edward Johnson.⁴⁷⁵ Johnson wrote Preston wondering if the Burgesses would give the merchants a "proper proportion of their Annual income to support them in Idleness till these matters are Setled betwixt the Colonies & Britain" if non-importation/exportation went into effect.⁴⁷⁶ And perhaps in jest he suggested that he spend time with Preston learning how to survey, farm, and even get a lesson in multiplication since he expected to be idle during the upcoming year since the dispute between the colonies and the mother country would certainly drag on.⁴⁷⁷ Such friendships and relationships with merchants by Preston were to later contribute to false charges of loyalism against him.

Preston received a more positive report from Hugh Mercer about developments with the mother country. He heard that the friends of America daily increased while at the same time the "cool and sedate Intrepidity" of the Bostonians stood firm. Virginia's deputies at the Congress in Philadelphia were highly respected and taking the lead in "conducting the affair."⁴⁷⁸ However, their deliberations were kept secret, much to the frustration of those on the outside who wanted to know what was happening. George Purnell reported to Preston about the many pamphlets coming out on the subject. He surmized, "every man is now a Politician," and comiserated that if they were in Preston's critical condition on the frontier they would truly be brought to the test-- "fighting and talking are quite contrary. Sleeping on Beds of Down, & lvin on mother earth is certainly so likewise."⁴⁷⁹ These kinds of letters show that the frontiersmen were also intensely interested in the emerging conflict between England and her American colonies.

In the meantime Dunmore's expedition against the Ohio Indians proceeded. With Preston staying home to guard the frontier and his family, Andrew Lewis from Botetourt County had overall command of the units from southwestern Virginia. Under him were his brother, Charles Lewis, and William Christian who respectively led units from Augusta and Fincastle Counties. Preston, from Smithfield, made certain that the southwestern frontier was protected.

⁴⁷³Dunmore to Lord Dartmouth, 14 August 1774, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 149-150.

⁴⁷⁴Thomas Walker to [WP], 4 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 90.

⁴⁷⁵Johnson continued to supply Preston not only with personal goods but with ammunition for the soldiers involved in frontier defense. On 2 August 1774 Johnson sent Preston 120 pounds of gun powder for , 10.6.8 and 20 pounds of powder for , 2.10. PDGC-FC.

⁴⁷⁶Edward Johnson to WP, 2 July 1774, PP-LC, 826.

⁴⁷⁷Edward Johnson to WP, [1774], PDGC-FC.

⁴⁷⁸Hugh Mercer to WP, 20 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 100.

⁴⁷⁹George Purnell to WP, 13 October 1774, Breckinridge Papers, RVHS-UVA.

By September 7 the units from Virginia's frontier counties had assembled at Camp Union. Andrew Lewis expressed pleasure at a "much Larger Number then was Expected" which caused him to be concerned about supplies. He could count on 1,490 men including 300 from Preston's county, Fincastle. In addition Dunmore had another 700 men with him. Christian was delighted with the high morale of the soldiers, especially those from Fincastle because "no Troops have yet appeared, equal in goodness to them. And if I may add none disciplined, or equal to them, as to the order of their march &c."⁴⁸⁰

The logistical problems for provisioning such a large group of men can be easily illustrated. Charles Lewis proceeded several days ahead of the main force with 600 militiamen, 108 beef cattle, and 400 pack horses carrying 54,000 pounds of flour. Their task was to prepare canoes to transport flour.

In camp the motivation level of the soldiers remained high due to continuing Indian attacks nearby. But the spirits of Andrew Lewis became very low when Dunmore ordered him to meet further up the Ohio River than their original plan--an order he refused to obey because "it was not in my power to alter our rout."⁴⁸¹

And back in Fincastle, Preston was faced with the dual problem of keeping the Fincastle militia supplied while protecting the southwestern frontier. It was a substantial problem. Generally a small group of Indians would attack an isolated farmer and family and then move on quickly before they could be caught--enough of a nuisance to bring great fear into the remaining families. When such attacks occurred, the militia usually "shew'd great willingness both to go out, and do what Service in their Power," but sometimes a "few obstinate Wretches . . . selfishly refuses Duty." Campbell asked Preston for advice "for if they go unpunished it will set a bad example to others."⁴⁸² The seeds for problems of loyalism in this same territory may have been sown during this period.⁴⁸³

Lack of ammunition and reports of Cherokee attacks made it difficult to keep inhabitants from fleeing the Holston River area near the North Carolina border.⁴⁸⁴ Preston's officer in the field, Captain William Cocke, became so desperate that, on his own, he went to the Carolinas to recruit soldiers to defend that area.⁴⁸⁵ But Preston became incensed with his actions and accused him of a breach of duty.⁴⁸⁶ In response, Preston received one of the strongest personal attacks of his career:

I Should always Expect a Gent would never Condemn another without being Sertain he

⁴⁸⁰Colonel William Christian to WP, 7 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 92. Andrew Lewis also reported to Preston his surprise at the good behavior of the soldiers. 8 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 93.

⁴⁸¹Colonel William Christian to WP, 7 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 92.

⁴⁸²Arthur Campbell to [WP], 17 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 98. On 16 September 1774 Michael Woods and James Robertson wrote to an unnamed person, probably Preston, about six men who refused to be drafted. They understood that they planned to ask him for help but hoped "you may not Countenance any of them: and we Expect to get them and some more." PP-DM, 3QQ 97.

⁴⁸³Tillson argues that such refusals were, in part, a way for frontiersmen to show that they would not let the elite run their lives. Albert H. Tillson, Jr., "The Militia and Popular Political Culture in the Upper Valley of Virginia, 1740-1775," 94 *VMHB* (July 1986): 293.

⁴⁸⁴Captain William Cocke to [WP], 19 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 99.

⁴⁸⁵William Cocke to Holston Frontier Inhabitants, 25 September 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 103.

⁴⁸⁶Preston sent Campbell the letter to deliver to Cocke. Campbell wrote Preston that he would try to "soften matters" before delivering the letter since he knew Cocke would "put his own construction on it which is often very wrong ones. He is half distracted already about getting into employ." He wondered if Preston might assign Cocke to take the place of a captain to soften the blow. 17 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 125.

had made a breach If using my best Indeavours to percure the Safety and well fair of the Country and Strict Obedience to the Orders or advice to my Superiors be a Breach I Readily Confess my Error on the Other Hand If I am Justifiable in my Conduct I think you Have treated me with Ingratitude and that I have an Absolute Right to pay a just Resentment to your treatment I shall not give my Self the trouble to Justify my Conduct to a man who Condemns me without a hearing."⁴⁸⁷

Preston wanted to avoid a two-front war--one on his own frontier with the Cherokees and another with the expedition taking on the Shawnees in Ohio. But he was getting conflicting reports. Daniel Boone reported from Clinch Valley his feeling that a Cherokee attack was imminent while his superior Arthur Campbell demurred. He wondered if some Shawnee fugitives from earlier skirmishes had taken refuge in that area and now tried to "willingly deceive" them in order to deliberately create a misunderstanding with the Shawnees.⁴⁸⁸ But the fears were real. For example, George Adams appealed from the Holston River area to Preston to provide soldiers so those on duty could harvest their large crops of grain now ready but rapidly being eaten by vermin. In addition, continued shortages of ammunition brought an "abundance of Feare."⁴⁸⁹ One can imagine the stress faced by these families, each with their own fears. This meant that many theories abounded on where the next Indian attack would come from. Of course, they demanded that Campbell support their individual theories by either building a fort in a particular area or providing scouts and militiamen to protect them. Campbell became frustrated,

In short the most of people in this Country, seem to have a private Plan of their own, for their own particular defense. . . . You may thus see what a task one would have to remove every ones fears; I wish I could be instrumental in defending from real ones, imaginary danger, would give me less anxiety.⁴⁹⁰

A few days later Campbell continued to complain that many were "so stupidly obstinate that they won't assemble in large Bodys, but every few Familys wants a Fort & a Guard." He wondered if some only wanted to draw provisions from the county "which in some places they made an extravagant use of."⁴⁹¹

Another puzzle developed when a slave woman was taken prisoner by Indians led by a large man whiter than the rest who spoke English very well. Speculation centered on John Logan, the son of a Frenchman raised by the Oneida Indians from an early age, or Will Emery, a half breed Cherokee. They asked questions about the number of guns and soldiers in her area.⁴⁹² The Indians became even bolder in their attacks, some of whom were fleeing from Shawnee towns being threatened by Dunmore's army. In one incident, they scalped a man only fifty-five steps from the fort at Blackmore's in Clinch Valley and during the night even stole horses and

⁴⁸⁷Captain William Cocke to WP, 27 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 126.

⁴⁸⁸Arthur Campbell to WP, 1 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 109. Daniel Boone became so popular with residents in the lower settlements of Clinch that they requested he be appointed a captain, a plea conveyed by Daniel Smith to Preston. He commented, "Mr. Boon is an excellent woodsman." 13 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 119.

⁴⁸⁹George Adams to WP, 4 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 113.

⁴⁹⁰Arthur Campbell to [WP], 6 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 115.

⁴⁹¹Arthur Campbell to WP, 17 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 125.

⁴⁹²Arthur Campbell to WP, 9 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 117.

cattle from enclosures located directly next to the fort. Campbell warned, "If Ammunition don't come soon, I will have no Argument that will have any force to detain them."⁴⁹³ Undoubtedly some of these attacks came from young Cherokees who had gone out contrary to the consent of their chiefs. To prove their good intentions, the Cherokees had already put to death one of the Indians involved in the unapproved attacks and were holding another in confinement.⁴⁹⁴

With so many threats on his own frontier, Preston could not leave his command post at Smithfield since he received reports almost daily from his officers in the field seeking advice. On October 9 he conveyed word to Letitia, his sister, that due to bad news from Holston and Clinch the "agreeable Journey" would be "impossible at this Time." But he rejoiced in the recovery of his wife, "Sucky," who "is so far recovered that she rode with me a Mile the other Day." He had anticipated that his wife would die but her return to health

is the most pleasing News to me I ever had an opportunity of giving you; it is what I once expected would never be in my Power; and believe me if ever I felt Gratitude and thankfulness to Heaven it was on the present Occasion.

And his new son, James Patton, was "right hearty."⁴⁹⁵

While the frontier lay under attack, the expedition led by Dunmore and Andrew Lewis proceeded to prepare for an attack on the Shawnee towns in Ohio. Dunmore settled in at Hockhocking twelve or fifteen miles below the mouth of Little Kanawha River while Lewis arrived with men from Augusta and Botetourt Counties at Point Pleasant, a fork of the Ohio and Great Kanawha Rivers, on October 6, and reports began to filter back to Preston.⁴⁹⁶ Major William Ingles wrote that having seen no enemy "we looked on our Selves in Safe Possession of a fine Encampment and thought our Selves a terror to all the Indian Tribes on the Ohio and thus Luld in safety." Comforted by a sermon preached by a "Rev. Terrey" they believed the Indians "to be so much inferiour to us in Number."

But the Shawnees, joined by the Mingoos, were preparing to attack. They were discovered accidentally on October 10 by a hunting party which enabled Lewis to prepare his troops and a full blown battle ensued which lasted three hours. Ingles admired the courage of the Indians who "disputed the Ground with the Greatest Obstinancy often Runing up to the Very Muzels of our Guns." According to Christian, their chiefs "ran continually along the line exhorting their men to 'lye close and shoot well and fight and be strong.'" He described the bravery of the Indians in this battle as exceeding "every mans expectation." The Indians even had braves positioned along the river to kill those who might try to escape by swimming and encouraged them to "drive the white dogs in." After an initial retreat, the Virginians recouped and formed a strong line from which they remained stationary for the remainder of the day due to an equally strong position held by the Shawnees. Many on both sides died in the initial battle,

⁴⁹³ Arthur Campbell to [WP], 12 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 118.

⁴⁹⁴ Arthur Campbell to WP, 16 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 124.

⁴⁹⁵ WP to Letitia Breckinridge, 9 October 1774, Breckinridge Papers, LC, 1:42.

⁴⁹⁶ The following account of the battle at Point Pleasant will focus on Preston's knowledge of what happened as received from officers in the field. Preston did not receive these accounts until 31 October when the letters finally caught up to him at the Fincastle Courthouse. Those accounts include Major William Ingles to WP, 14 October 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 121; William Christian to WP, 15 October 1774, PP-LC, 844, and John Floyd to WP, 16 October 1774, *ibid.*, 266-9. In a letter from WP to Patrick Henry on 31 October 1774, he basically repeated verbatim what he had read in the preceding letters. PP-DM, 3QQ 127-8. In addition, the journal of Colonel William Fleming will be utilized from Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 281-91.

none more dramatic than the popular Colonel Charles Lewis, who received a mortal wound early in the battle, but exhorted his men while leaving the battlefield, "I am wounded, but go on & be Brave." Colonel William Fleming was seriously wounded but weeks later recovered. Half an hour before sunset, the Indians retreated to their rafts and once again crossed the Ohio River with their dead and wounded. But late in the evening they yelled across the river that tomorrow they would have 2,000 men with them and "damn'd our people often for sons of bitches saying Dont you whistle now (deriding the Fife) and made very merry about a Treaty."⁴⁹⁷

About midnight Preston's volunteers from Fincastle County finally arrived under the command of William Christian. They originally planned to arrive on Tuesday, but when they heard about the fighting they quickly marched the twelve or fifteen miles to Point Pleasant. The "cries of the wounded prevented our resting any that night." Christian gave a very disturbing account of many wounded men with "bad Doctors, few medicines, nothing to eat or dress with proper for them, makes it still worse." Ingles also recalled that the Indians left many an Indian brave "Waltirring in his Gore." The official casualty figures from Dunmore reported 49 Virginians dead and 80 wounded with 30 Indians killed and some wounded.⁴⁹⁸ Ingles reported that they scalped twenty Indians on the field and that the Indians themselves scalped some of their wounded and also dragged some into the river.⁴⁹⁹

The Indians withdrew from the area and Dunmore ordered Lewis to join his troops about twenty miles from Chillicothe where he suspected that the entire Shawnee's force was located. After giving strenuous objections, Lewis finally obeyed the Governor's orders and on October 17 marched his 1,000 men with only twelve days of provisions across the Ohio to rendezvous with Dunmore's force.

Lewis then got word from Dunmore to halt his march since the Indians had sued for peace.⁵⁰⁰ He ordered Lewis to join him immediately, but he continued on due to the inconvenience of their campsite and the sniping they were experiencing from the Indians. The next morning he received another order from Dunmore asking him to stop and that he and other officers come to his camp. Christian's brief account to Preston reveals the problems in greater detail:

On the Monday evening following we encamped within about 3 miles from a Shawnese Town where their greatest force were assembled. His Lordships Camp was then about 7 miles from us, & about 6 miles from the Town we intended for his Camp but passed the path that took off to our right hand expecting he had encamped nearer the Towns, That day we were met By several expresses from his Lordship, the last one informing us that he had concluded a peace. As we went on further than was expected. The Indians who

⁴⁹⁷John Floyd sent Preston an interesting analysis on 16 October 1774. He felt that only 500 Indians were probably involved in the attack based on counting tracks and rafts the next day. On the Virginian side, no more than 300 to 400 men were involved. He also wrote about the bravery of many men but complained about others who "lurked behind and could by no means be induced to advance to the front." They would use the trees and logs from the camp to the battle site as "shelters for those who could not be prevailed on to advance to where the fire was." Great confusion existed in the camp with no officer having his own men. When other officers would try to get others to fight, "they refused and said they would be commanded by their own officers." *Ibid.*, 266-9.

⁴⁹⁸Dunmore to Dartmouth, 24 December 1774, *ibid.*, 385.

⁴⁹⁹Lyman Draper's estimates of the casualty figures after careful study estimated nine commissioned officers and forty-six non-commissioned officers and privates killed with ninety-two wounded of which fifteen later died. Thwaites and Kellogg accept an estimate made by a Mr. Stuart as more accurate with seventy-five killed and another 140 wounded. *Ibid.*, n. 65, p. 344.

⁵⁰⁰Some of the following account is based on Colonel William Fleming's Journal, *ibid.*, 289-91.

watched every motion of our army, informed the Govr that we had not stopt but were pushing strait for their Towns & would be in that day (which we could have done). His Lordship with the Interpreter Mr Gibson & an Indian Chief & 50 men came to our Camp at Dusk. The next day he called the Captains together, told what he had & desired us to return home. We began our march that day, all but about 50 Fincastle men who went to the other Camp. On Friday night we reached Point Pleasant. On Sunday evening the greatest part of the Fincastle & Augusta Troops set out for home, everybody being anxious.⁵⁰¹

Later reports indicate that Christian's account obscured some of the real strain felt between Lewis and Dunmore. In fact, Lewis had to place a triple guard around Dunmore when he visited their camp due to the anger of the frontiersmen who did not like being told they could no longer go after the defeated Indians.⁵⁰² The treaty negotiations between Dunmore and the Shawnees at Camp Charlotte resulted in an initial agreement by the Shawnees to return all their prisoners, horses, and other valuable effects; that they would not hunt on the Virginia side of the Ohio nor bother any boats passing on the river; that they would agree to trade regulations as dictated by the King's instructions later; that they would give hostages to the governor as a guarantee of the sincerity in abiding by these agreements; and that they would "never more to make war or disturb us." Christian reported that "it is a general opinion in the Govr army that the peace with the Shawnese will be lasting."⁵⁰³

So, for awhile, peace came. Preston's militiamen from Fincastle now headed on home where families waited anxiously to get news of the recent battle and on which way to go to meet returning friends and relatives.⁵⁰⁴ By early November most of the militia had returned. Arthur Campbell reported to Preston that the Cherokees "say we need not be afraid of any future disturbance from that people."⁵⁰⁵

Great controversy grew out of both Dumore's motivations in the expedition to the west and the battle at Point Pleasant.⁵⁰⁶ Some argue that Dumore's motivation was only personal economic interest, while others feel defense of the frontier was paramount. But at the time Dunmore was highly praised by many Virginians for his gallant efforts even in song:

Great Dunmore our General valiant & Bold
 Excels the great Heroes --the Heroes of old;
 When he doth command we will always obey,
 When he bids us fight we will not run away.⁵⁰⁷

Freeholders from Preston's home county, Fincastle, also appreciated Dunmore's efforts on their behalf by sending him an address expressing their "unfeigned thanks."⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰¹Colonel William Christian to WP, 8 November 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 130.

⁵⁰²Curry, "Lord Dunmore:" 236.

⁵⁰³*Ibid.* and Dunmore to Dartmouth, 24 December 1774, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 386.

⁵⁰⁴Major Arthur Campbell to WP, 4 November 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 129.

⁵⁰⁵Major Arthur Campbell to WP, 21 November 1774, PP-DM, 3QQ 134.

⁵⁰⁶Various theories on both regards can be found in Richard Curry, "Lord Dunmore and the West: A Re-evaluation," *West Virginia History*, XIX (July 1958): 231-243 and Johnson, *Preston*, 150-5.

⁵⁰⁷Journal of James Newell, 17 October 1774, Thwaites, *Dunmore's War*, 361.

⁵⁰⁸Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed. *The Committees of Safety of Westmoreland and Fincastle. Proceedings of the County Committees, 1774-1776* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1956), 64-6.

Whatever the case for Virginia there were positive advantages, not the least of which was the experience future officers and leaders received in this short expedition. Some of the key officers such as Arthur Campbell, William Christian, Andrew Lewis, and William Russell all served as officers in George Washington's army during the American Revolution. Potential problems also emerged for the future as independent-minded frontiersmen determined on their own whose orders they would follow and whether or not they would fight.

Through this conflict Preston also showed his full development as a frontier leader. Although he could not be present for the expedition, he effectively coordinated the effort to raise troops and provisions. He also provided a sense of security for his frontier neighborhood through his personal presence and coordination of defense efforts on Virginia's frontier. Mature and experienced, William Preston now represented the full embodiment of the frontier leader as a public servant, politician, family man, surveyor, businessman, and colonel. He was fully prepared for the larger conflict that was now to take place.

Appendix: What Happened at Draper's Meadow in 1755?

The events surrounding the death of James Patton in July, 1755 have been heavily disputed. The accounts closest to the event cited in Chapter 3 from the Virginia Gazette and The Gentleman's Magazine probably contain the greatest accuracy. Second-hand accounts written in later years by family members were probably exaggerated. John Ingles, Sr., the son of Mary Draper Ingles and Thomas Ingles, wrote an account sometime before his death in 1836 based on first person accounts told him by both of his parents as a child and an adult as follows:

there had been several parties of the northern Indians, to wit, the Shawnees passed by where my grandfather lived on their way to the South and would commit depredations on the Cawtaba Indians but was still friendly to the whites at that time however this happy state of things did not last long the Indians found out that they (M.S. faulty) gratify their heathen thirst for bloodshed and plunder much nearer home and at length commenced a warfare on the frontier settlements & at a time it was little expected a party of Shawnees fell in upon my father's family and an uncle's family John Draper which lived at the same place and killed several and took the balance prisoners, to wit, my mother and her 2 children Thos. 4 year & George 2 & Aunt Draper & others. My grandmother Draper being a widow at that time & living with my father was killed by (M.S. faulty) Col. Patton who was there who had a large claim of land in (Blot on M.S.) waters was killed, also, & some other persons not recollected . . . it so happened they made the attack on their harvest day and although there were several men at the place the Indians took the advantage of attacking the house while the men (M.S. faulty) at their work in the harvest field and the field being some distance (M.S. faulty) the house knew nothing of the attack until it was entirely out of their power to render any service to the family. My father when hearing the alarm run up very near to the house thinking perhaps he might render some service in some way although entirely unarmed the Indians discovering him two stout active Indians took after him with their tomahawks expecting to outrun him and kill him with their tomahawks & was very near affecting their purpose & nothing but a providential act saved him while the Indians were pursuing him & gaining on him very fast one on each side at some distance running through the wood where it was a little thick with brush & undergrowth, fortunately in jumping over a log fell. The Indians being so eager in pursuit over run him my father on rising immediately tacked back the other way and by that means made his escape as there was no chance for what white men that was there to render any relief to the prisoners.⁵⁰⁹

In this account nothing is said about why Patton happened to be present in that area nor is any mention given of Preston. Since William Preston later moved to the Draper's Meadow area where he built Smithfield, one would have expected Ingles to mention him if he had actually been part of the story. The harvest story will be repeated in other accounts. The escape by William Ingles by hiding in some underbrush is later picked up by other writers. His is the only

⁵⁰⁹Roberta Ingles Steele and Andrew Lewis Ingles, ed., The Story of Mary Draper Ingles and son Thomas Ingles as told by John Ingles, Sr. (Radford: Commonwealth Press, Inc., 1969), 7-9.

account to identify the Shawnees as the Indian tribe involved in this incident.

The account of William Preston's daughter, Letitia, written in 1843 eighty-eight years after the event, is the most interesting and dramatic recollection:

On the 8th day of July, 1755 it being Sunday, a party of Indians came up the Kanhawa - then to Sinking Creek, thence to Stroubles Creek. Ingles and Draper, brothers-in-law, were living at Solitude, the present residence of Col. Robert T. Preston. Barger half a mile nearer to the mountain. The Indians came to Bargers, cut his head off, put it in a bag (Barger was a very old man) then came to the Ingles, and Drapers, killed old Mrs. Draper, two children of Col. Ingles, by knocking their brains out on the ends of the cabin logs, took Mrs. Ingles and her son Thomas, a boy of ten years of age, prisoners, as well as her sister-in-law. Mrs. Draper, who was trying to make her escape with her infant in her arms, but was shot at by the Indians, which broke her arm, by which means the infant was dropped. The Indians caught it up and dashed its brains out on the end of the cabin logs. Col. Patton that morning, after having dressed himself in his uniform, and getting his nephew, William Preston, to sew up in the fob of his small clothes thirty English guineas, told him to go to Sinking Creek to get Lybrook to help take off the Harvest, which was then ready to cut. Preston went very early. After breakfast Col. Patton had sat down to his table to write, the Indian war-hoop was heard and some five or six of them surrounded the cabin to set it on fire. The Col. always kept his sword on the table - he rushed to the door with it in hand, and encountered two of them (Patton was almost gigantic in size) he cut them down, in the meantime another warrior had leveled his gun, fired, and killed the brave old pioneer. Patton fell, the Indians then ran off in the thicket and made their escape before any pursuers could be brought together.

Lybrook and Preston came through the mountains by an unfrequented route, arrived at Smithfield, (then called Drapers Meadows) where they found Patton, Mrs. Draper, the mother of Mrs. Ingles, and the children buried. The whole settlement was destroyed. The Indians on their retreat back stopped at Lybrooks, told old Mrs. Lybrook they had killed two men, one woman, and three children, to look in the bag and she would see an old friend. She immediately recognized the head of Philip Barger, who was then aged and very gray.⁵¹⁰

New details begin to develop in Floyd's story. An actual date is given, even though it is wrong. The brutal death of Mrs. Draper's baby is given in great detail. Preston is present in the story and misses being killed due to an errand he was sent on by Patton early in the morning of the incident. Due to his size and strength, Patton was able to kill two Indians with his sword during the attack. In this story, Barger's head is shown to Mrs. Lybrook by Indians. We are not told how all of the bodies could have been buried so quickly by the time Preston returns.

Lee Pendleton writing in 1968 disputes the following facts in Floyd's story:

1. The date for his death, July 8, 1755, is wrong. Patton was still in Williamsburg at that time pleading for military assistance. More contemporary accounts place his death on either July 30 or 31.

⁵¹⁰LPF Letter.

2. It would be too late to be harvesting wheat at the end of July. And yet the earlier account by Ingles which Pendleton did not use also mentions harvesting.
3. If they were harvesting wheat, these devout Presbyterians would not have engaged in such an activity on a Sunday.
4. He does not understand how four men would not have their guns within reach which would have been common practice at that time.⁵¹¹

Twelve years after Letitia Floyd wrote her account, Presbyterian pastor and historian, William Henry Foote, wrote another account of this incident as follows:

The Shawnees in their expeditions against the Catawbias frequently passed the Draper settlement, which was in the direct line of one of their great war paths, without molestation or signs of displeasure, till the year 1756. Excited by the French, and jealous of the rapid encroachment upon their hunting grounds, the Alleghenies being already scaled, the Shawnees made a sudden descent upon Draper's meadows in the midst of harvest, while the men were all in the field securing their crop unarmed and unsuspecting of danger. The savages surrounded the dwelling, in which were the women and children, and the arms of the families, and of the men who had come to aid in the harvest; and murdered the widow of George Draper, and also Colonel James Patton from Tinkling Spring, in Augusta, who was on an exploring expedition, and spending a few days at the meadows to refresh himself from his journey and some illness that had come upon him. The wife of John Draper, and Mrs. Inglis and her two sons, Thomas of four years of age, and George of two years, were made prisoners to be taken to the Indian towns. Mr. Inglis hearing the noise at the house hastened home in alarm. He approached very near the dwelling before he discovered the Indians; hoping to aid his family he drew still nearer. Two stout Indians discovered him and rushed at him with their tomahawks. He fled to the wood; they pursued, at a little distance from each other, one on each side of Mr. Inglis to prevent his secreting himself by turning aside. He perceived that the Indians were gaining upon him, and attempting to jump over a fallen tree he fell, and gave himself up for lost. Owing to the underbrush, the pursuers did not see him fall, and passed by on each side of him as he lay in the bushes. In a few moments he was upon his feet and escaped in another direction. The harvest hands deprived of their arms, believing resistance ineffectual, left the Indians unmolested and secreted themselves in the wood around the meadows.⁵¹²

Foote's inspiration seems to have come from the Ingles account including the story about the harvest and William Ingles successful escape from the Indians. Except for Foote's account that Patton was there to refresh himself due to illness, all other details come from the account by William Ingles.

The final account by John Hale written in 1886 clearly draws from all three accounts

⁵¹¹Lee Pendleton, "Indian Massacres-Montgomery County. 1755-1756. Draper's Meadow Massacre Retold and Fort Vause and its Traditions," 1968 typescript, VPI.

⁵¹²William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, 2d ser. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1855), 150-1.

cited above.

On the 8th of July, 1755, being Sunday, and the day before Braddock's memorable defeat, near Fort DuQuesne, when all was peace, and there was no suspicion of harm or danger, a party of Shawanees, from beyond the Ohio, fell upon the Draper's Meadows settlement and killed, wounded, or captured every soul there present, as follows:

Colonel James Patton, Mrs. George Draper, Casper Barrier and a child of John Draper, killed; Mrs. John Draper, James Cull, wounded; Mrs. William Ingles, Mrs. John Draper, Henry Lenard, prisoners.

Mrs. John Draper, being out of doors, a short distance from the house, first discovered the enemy approaching, and under circumstances indicating hostile intent.

She ran into the house to give the alarm and to get her sleeping infant. Taking the child in her arms she ran out on the opposite side of the house and tried to make her escape. The Indians discovered her, however, and fired on her as she ran, breaking her right arm, and causing the child to fall. She hastily picked it up again with her left hand, and continued her flight. She was soon overtaken, however, and made a prisoner, and the child brained against the end of one of the house logs. The other Indians, meanwhile, were devoting their attention to other members of the families and camp, with the results in killed, wounded, and captured, as above stated.

Colonel James Patton, who had large landed interests hereabout, was here at this time, and with him his nephew, William Preston.

Whether Colonel Patton was only temporarily here, or was then making this his home, I do not know. He had command of the Virginia militia in this region, and had just brought up a supply of powder and lead for use of the settlements, which, I believe, the Indians secured.

Early on the morning of the attack, Colonel Patton had sent young Preston over to the house of Mr. Philip Lybrook, on Sinking Creek, to get him to come over and help next day with the harvest, which was ready to be cut, and this fortunate absence doubtless saved young Preston's life.

Colonel Patton was sitting at a table writing when the attack was made, with his broadsword, which he always kept with him, lying on the table before him. He was a man of large frame (he was six feet four inches in height), and herculean strength. He cut down two of the Indians with his sword, as they rushed upon him, but was, in turn shot down himself by others out of his reach. He was a widower sixty-three years of age, and full of health and vigor when he met his untimely death. . . .

William Ingles, who was in a grain field, some distance from the houses, received his first notice of the attack through the ascending smoke and flames of burning buildings. He at once started, instinctively, towards the scene of the tragedy, with the hope of giving

aid to his family; but upon approaching near enough to see that there was a large force of well armed Indians, and that, single handed, unarmed resistance would be madness, he turned and sought his own safety in flight; he was seen, however, and pursued by two fleet warriors, each with tamahawk in hand.

He soon got out of the fields and ran down the slope of the hill through the woods and brush, the enemy, meanwhile, gaining on him slowly. In jumping over a fallen tree that lay in his path, he fell, and being concealed by the log and brush, the Indians did not know he had fallen, and passed by him, having run around the upturned roots of the tree, instead of jumping over it as he had done.

Seeing that the Indians had overlooked him and passed on, William Ingles hastily got on his feet, changed his course and succeeded in making his escape. . . .

About half a mile or a mile to the west, on their route, they stopped at the house of Mr. Philip Barger, an old and white haired man, cut his head off, put it in a bag, and took it with them to the house of Philip Lybrook, on Sinking Creek, where they left it, telling Mrs. Lybrook to look in the bag and she would find an acquaintance.

Lybrook and Preston would, probably have shared the same fate as Barger, if they had been found at Lybrook's house; but they had started back to Draper's Meadows on foot, by a near pathway across the mountain, and thus missed meeting the Indians and saved their lives.⁵¹³

The only detail added by John Hale to the accounts by Ingles and Floyd was his speculation that Patton may have been living there at the time.

Obviously family stories can get exaggerated as time passes. Taking into consideration all of these accounts, the following facts appear to be accurate:

1. Patton was killed by Indians in the home of William Ingles in the Draper's Meadows area on either July 30 or 31, 1755.
2. Patton was traveling with a convoy of militiamen with arms and ammunition for the frontier area when he left the group for a side trip.
3. Mary Draper Ingles was taken captive by the Indians for several months during this attack.
4. In spite of Pendleton's questions about harvest time, all accounts agree that harvesting was involved in this incident.

The following questions still remain:

1. Why did Patton leave the rest of his convoy to make such a dangerous trip

⁵¹³John P. Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers* (Cincinnati: The Graphic Press, 1886), 29-33.

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without proper guard? Was he just stopping by to visit friends or was he on personal business?

2. Did Patton kill two Indians during the attack with his sword?
3. Was William Preston in the general vicinity with Patton? Did he just escape being killed by being sent on an errand by Patton?

These accounts serve as an illustration of how historians can build upon previous sources to create stories which may or may not be truthful in all aspects.

Appendix: How William Preston Developed His Landholdings

At the time of William Preston's death, he owned 20,513 acres according to a detailed estate appraisal completed on June 28, 1783.⁵¹⁴ Appendices D and E represent one of the few attempts to trace in detail the complex land dealings of a major colonial landholder in frontier Virginia.⁵¹⁵ This Appendix is based upon more detailed information contained in Appendix E, "Personal Landholdings of William Preston."

Such large landholdings as William Preston acquired had not been in the original plan for colonists when Virginia was founded. Settlers were only supposed to have enough land to take care of their individual family needs. By the eighteenth century, major changes had taken place with land being viewed as a "commodity to be bought, sold, and leased in the open market." Within this atmosphere, families such as the Prestons began to gain more land than needed for their immediate needs as a form of speculation or as a potential inheritance for their children. In addition, colonial governors began to view land grant policies in Virginia as a way to strengthen the frontiers by having speculators take ownership of large grants in order to get more settlers into threatened areas of the colony.⁵¹⁶

William Preston and other colonists could acquire lands on the frontier in at least six ways:

1. Inheritance

As the eldest child and only son of John Preston, William stood to inherit most of his lands. No will has been found for John Preston, but through comparison of known landholdings of John and William some of the lands he inherited can be discovered.

Preston began his landholdings with 735 acres in two plots inherited from his father in 1748. Within three years he sold 215 acres of this property for \$16.5. The largest amount of his inheritance came in 1779 when he received "Robinson's tract," a 2,675 acre plot on Woods River, from the estate of James Patton on account of money owed to John Preston.

2. Headrights

English policy provided that each adult male who migrated to Virginia at his own expense could receive 50 acres of land free for each member of the family. By the time William became involved in land dealings, headrights had basically been eliminated.⁵¹⁷

3. Treasury rights

⁵¹⁴Account of William Preston's Property Holdings," 28 June 1783, Preston Family Papers, VPI, 1:4.

⁵¹⁵For general background information on the history of land development in Virginia, see Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen. Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond: The Virginia Surveyors Foundation, Ltd., and The Virginia Association of Surveyors, Inc., 1979); Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier. Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia, II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Faye Bartlett Reeder, "The Evolution of the Virginia Land Grant System in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1937), and Manning Curlee Voorhis, "The Land Grant Policy of Colonial Virginia. 1607-1774" (Ph.D. diss., UVA, 1940). Several historians have noted the lack of a detailed analysis of how a major land developer went about building up large landholdings.

⁵¹⁶Mitchell, *Commercialism*, 4, 59-61.

⁵¹⁷Voorhis, "Land Grant Policy," 90 and Hughes, *Surveyors*, 107.

The Virginia legislature passed "An Act concerning the Granting, Seating, and Planting, and for Settling the Titles and bounds of Lands . . ." in 1705 which provided the most popular and cheapest way to get land through the purchase of treasury rights from the local county surveyor at a cost of 5 shillings for every 50 acres.⁵¹⁸ Once the treasury right was purchased, the county surveyor was required to survey and issue a patent for the land. Since Preston served as an assistant surveyor or head surveyor for most of his adult life, he had an advantage in finding the best lands to procure with treasury rights.

4. Military land warrants

During the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, the governor of Virginia was allowed to issue warrants for land based upon the rank held in the military. Since Preston served as an officer during both of these wars, he became eligible for large amounts of land through military warrants.

5. Purchase

Preston could buy lands from individual sellers or from one of the large land companies. In order to finance these purchases, he could also sell his own lands to raise the needed capital.

6. Debts

Preston could take lands in exchange for debts owed him.

* * * * *

In analyzing how Preston developed his land empire, two methods can be used. The total record method takes all of Preston's land dealings into consideration and produces totals for each category of land involvement. The estate appraisal method just takes those lands mentioned in Preston's estate appraisal and analyzes how he received those lands to gain a picture of his land development practices. Because of a large amount of unaccounted acreage, we prefer using the estate appraisal method; however, for comparative purposes both results will be cited.

A. Total Record Method

The total record method reveals that Preston was involved in personal acreage amounting to 46,494 acres which includes lands he inherited (3,410 acres or 7%), lands purchased (11,374 acres or 24%), lands received from treasury rights or grants from the governor (30,112 or 65%), lands he surveyed for himself and claimed (1,338 or 3%); and lands he received through transfer due to debts (260 acres or 1%). During his lifetime he or his wife Susanna sold 5,675 acres. The record also reveals another 2,489 acres in ten plots which we know he acquired but which do not appear in his will or in records of land sales. It must be assumed that most of these lands were sold and that the records have been lost. This means that 38,388 acres has been traced which leaves a difference of 17,875 acres compared with the 20,513 acres appearing in the 1783 estate appraisal. Almost all of this land was located in Kentucky and came to Preston during the 1770s and 1780s in the form of military warrants. As later reported by his son, General Francis Preston, most of these Kentucky lands were lost to the estate in spite of the efforts of his brother, John, who went to Kentucky "at a considerable hazard."⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸Hening, *Statutes*, 3:304-329.

⁵¹⁹26 September 1833, "Journal of General Francis Preston," Preston Family Papers, Gray Collection, FC.

B. Estate Appraisal

The 1783 estate appraisal can be analyzed to get an overall sense of property development. Out of the 20,513 acres mentioned in the appraisal, 2,675 acres (14%) came from inheritance, 10,723 acres (52%) from treasury rights or grants from the governor, and 7,015 acres (34%) from lands purchased.

Summary

Preston made very little cash investment in building his land empire. The lands he inherited from his father provided him with a solid start early in his life, and the large "Robinson's tract" which he inherited well into his adult life in 1779 made up 14% of his estate-- a substantial part of his estate. In using either the total record or estate appraisal method, the very inexpensive treasury rights or outright military warrants from the governor account for over half of his total property. The record reveals that he sold many of these virtually free lands to produce needed cash for other land purchases. In other words, most of his land empire was based on grants from Virginia.

Even his land sales and purchases reveal that on an average basis he spent a relatively small amount of money considering the total acreage involved. During his thirty-five years of land dealings, he spent , 6,274.4.14 purchasing lands but he sold , 2,827.15 of lands also for a net cost of , 3,507. However, these figures are somewhat misleading. Of this amount, , 2,973.17 came in two purchases in 1779 and 1781, a time of extremely high inflation in Virginia.⁵²⁰ If we were to just consider his land sales and purchases between 1749 and 1778, a twenty-nine year period when inflation was on a more even basis, he spent , 3,301 on purchases and , 1,962 on sales for a difference of , 1,339 which amounts to an average net cost of approximately , 46 per year, a small cost for a man with Preston's income.

In summary, Preston used his inheritance to begin his land dealings and quickly supplemented those lands with some he purchased. However, treasury rights and military warrants made up the largest part of his land dealings. His political connections as a militia officer and surveyor gave him the basis upon which to receive grants and to procure treasury rights for desirable lands. The estate he left enabled his wife and children to live comfortably on lands they inherited upon his death and to continue the family tradition of political, military, and economic leadership.

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.

LC - Library of Congress

⁵²⁰Mitchell, *Commercialism*, 84, notes that land prices tripled by August, 1779, and a year later prices as high as , 60 to , 65 per acre began to appear with the peak year coming in the fall of 1780.

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