



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA

Connecting people and resources to ensure the continued vitality of Virginia's historic places

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NEWS FROM

PRESERVATION VIRGINIA

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Preservation Virginia Announces Historic Smithfield Plantation Stewardship to transition to the Smithfield Preston Foundation

Preservation Virginia is pleased to announce that an operating agreement has been reached between Preservation Virginia and the Smithfield Preston Foundation regarding the future management of Historic Smithfield Plantation. Preservation Virginia and the Smithfield Preston Foundation have partnered since 1998, pooling resources to provide a robust interpretation experience incorporating preservation and educational programming year round.

The operational agreement transfers the responsibility for the day-to-day activities of Smithfield Plantation to the Smithfield Preston Foundation. The desired goal is to centralize leadership locally to promote an expanded program of activities and events and to enhance fundraising efforts to ensure the continued preservation of the property.

Elizabeth Kostelny, Executive Director of Preservation Virginia notes that “one of the primary goals of Preservation Virginia is to work with its friends and partners throughout the Commonwealth to create the best model for the stewardship of Virginia’s historic places in order to ensure their relevancy and viability for generations to come. This new operating model draws on the strengths of our local leadership formerly within the Montgomery County Branch and combines that volunteer passion with the interests and capacity of the Smithfield Preston

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Foundation. We are indeed pleased that this transition is taking place after years of careful planning and collaboration.”

Preservation Virginia currently serves as steward to 26 additional historic sites throughout the Commonwealth, with the ultimate goal of preserving, contributing to local economies and sharing the stories of these historic places. These historic sites hold the key to much of Virginia’s and ultimately America’s history, truly serving as living, breathing interpretations of significant milestones in American history.

Louis Malon, Director of Preservation Services for Preservation Virginia, adds “Preservation Virginia has served as the steward for the Historic Smithfield Plantation for more than five decades (52 years to be exact) and is confident in the ability of the Smithfield Preston Foundation to operate this site. This transition will allow Preservation Virginia to once again focus additional resources to other historic sites in much need of assistance, through work completed via programs such as the Partners in the Field and Revolving Fund Programs.”

Through the Operating Agreement with Preservation Virginia, the Smithfield-Preston Foundation and the dedicated volunteers at Historic Smithfield can continue to provide access to the Preston home in its original state complete with furnishings and possessions of the time period. Each year Historic Smithfield is the site of workshops, exhibitions, events and activities that portray life in the late 18th century along the Blue Ridge frontier of Virginia.

“The Foundation is pleased with the confidence shown in us by Preservation Virginia” said William G. Foster, Jr., President of the Smithfield-Preston Foundation. “Preservation Virginia has been extremely helpful in making this Operating Agreement become reality. We look forward to the challenge and opportunity that befalls preservation of Historic Smithfield’s late 18th century lifestyle” Foster said.

About Preservation Virginia

Preservation Virginia, a private non-profit organization and statewide historic preservation leader founded in 1889, is dedicated to perpetuating and revitalizing Virginia’s cultural, architectural and historic heritage thereby ensuring that historic places are integral parts of the lives of present and future generations. Preservation Virginia provides leadership, experience, influence, and services to the public and special audiences by saving, managing, and protecting historic places, and developing preservation policy, programs, and strategies with individuals, organizations, and local, state, and national partners. For more information, visit www.preservationvirginia.org, find us on Facebook or Follow us on Twitter @preservationva.

About the Smithfield Preston Foundation

The Smithfield-Preston Foundation was established to advance the interpretative and programming activities of the Historic Smithfield Plantation. The Board’s goal is to further expand knowledge of William and Susanna Smith Preston, who built the home in 1774, and the Preston Family legacy. The Foundation’s Board includes members with backgrounds in history, education, business, banking, philanthropy and the legal profession. Four members of the Board are Preston descendants.

About Historic Smithfield Plantation

William Preston was about 45 years old when he moved his family to Smithfield in March of 1774. He and his wife had seven children at that time; five more children were born at Smithfield. Colonel Preston began at once to make Smithfield a productive and profitable plantation.

Colonel Preston had served as a member of the House of Burgesses and held the offices of County Lieutenant, Sheriff, and County Surveyor for Fincastle County Virginia. One of his greatest contributions was opening up the Kentucky lands for settlement by the colonists who were pushing westward.

As troubles with England grew, Preston's political responsibilities increased. He signed and possibly wrote the Fincastle Resolutions of 1775. These resolutions expressed the signers' sense of freedom, liberty, and popular sovereignty.

In 1776, Montgomery County was formed from Fincastle County and the colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. Colonel Preston was appointed County Lieutenant and had almost total authority over the new county's affairs. During the Revolutionary War, the Preston family and other Patriot families were threatened by the Shawnees and the Cherokees, as well as the many Tories in the New River area. Colonel Preston lived to rejoice in the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in October 1781, but died two years later in June 1783 while attending a regimental muster.

Susanna Smith Preston, Colonel Preston's wife, was left the use and profits of all of her husband's plantations, slaves, and stock if she remained single and supervised the rearing and education of their children, particularly their daughters. She lived at Smithfield for forty more years until her death in 1823. Smithfield continued to be the family seat for several generations afterward.

James Patton Preston, the first child born at Smithfield, inherited Smithfield. He served in the Virginia House of Delegates, fought in the War of 1812, and was Governor of Virginia from 1816-1819. He died in 1843 and Smithfield became the home of his son, William Ballard Preston. **William Ballard Preston served in the Virginia General Assembly and in 1849 was appointed Secretary of the Navy under President Zachary Taylor. A college in Blacksburg, Preston and Olin Institute, was named for him. It was from this school that Virginia Tech evolved.** William Ballard Preston was the last Preston to make Smithfield his home, but it would remain in the possession of the family for two more generations.

In 1959, Janie Preston Boulware Lamb, great great granddaughter of Colonel William Preston, presented Smithfield to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (now Preservation Virginia) with the stipulation that the newly formed Montgomery County Branch of Preservation Virginia would restore, maintain, and open the house to the public.

The Preston Family's rich legacy of contributions to the Commonwealth and the nation as well as the exquisite frontier residence deserve continued research and dissemination. The family legacy

is rife with contributions in government, both in Virginia and nationally, education, the military from the Revolutionary War to today, and medicine.

Smithfield was first opened to the public in 1964, and today is a living document of the past, a testimony to the bravery and devotion to country of the Prestons who made it their home. To learn more visit: www.smithfieldplantation.org.

*Editors Note, please credit photo in the following manner: *Courtesy of Preservation Virginia*

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