



**For Immediate Release**

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**Historic Smithfield kicks off a year long celebration with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Smithfield Homecoming and Preston Family Reunion**

Blacksburg, VA ----The Montgomery County Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA Preservation Virginia) will begin its year long 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the Smithfield Homecoming and Preston Family Reunion on August 14, 2010. In 1959, Janie Preston Boulware Lamb, great-great granddaughter of Colonial William Preston, presented the APVA with Smithfield and 4 plus acres of land to the APVA with the stipulation that the newly formed Montgomery Branch of the APVA would restore, maintain and open the house the public and under the leadership of George G. Shackelford, Smithfield House was restored and opened to the public. Today, Historic Smithfield continues to bring history to life as Mrs. Lamb desired. Historic Smithfield provides educational programs and tours for local schools by offering a valuable learning experience that enhances the SOLs and also gives tours to daily visitors and special interest groups. Historic Smithfield hosts special events throughout the year including Opening Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day Celebration, the Apple Festival, and Holidays at Smithfield.

August 14, 2010 will mark the beginning of a year long celebration for the anniversary of the Museum and provide the Preston Family descendents with the opportunity to experience a day in their ancestral home. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Smithfield Homecoming and Preston Family Reunion will also allow the entire community to explore their own roots while learning about the history of Smithfield. A full day of activities is planned including speakers, genealogy experts, and exhibits.

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Smithfield Homecoming and Preston Family Reunion Schedule**

10 – 11:30 am Dr. Richard Osborn “William and Susanna Preston: The Making of a Frontier Elite”

Location: Assembly Hall of the Virginia Tech Holtzman Alumni Center

Dr. Richard Osborn, Associate Director of the Senior College/University commission of the Western States Association of Schools and Colleges, is the leading authority and author of a biography of William Preston. Aside from a few specialists in colonial Virginia frontier history and individuals who live in the Blacksburg area, few people have ever heard of William Preston and even fewer the name of Susanna, his wife. As a frontier leader, he was the most important leader in Southwest Virginia around the period of the American Revolution serving as a legislator, land surveyor and developer, and militia leader. While he was busy away from home, his wife was bearing twelve children while creating the beautiful home called Smithfield, a symbol of culture in a desolate frontier. Osborn tells the story of this important family. This special seminar will be held at 10 am in the Assembly Hall of the Holtzman Alumni Center at Virginia Tech.

10 – 4 pm Exhibits  
Libraries Focusing on the local genealogy collection  
The Virginia Room of the Roanoke Public Library  
Montgomery County-Floyd Library System

**Ask a Genealogist**

Pam Young, Don Vaughn and Karen Kappesser will be available to assist in researching your heritage.

Museums            Museum of Blacksburg: Display of African American genealogy research in connection with Odd Fellows and New Town

                          Montgomery Museum and Lewis and Miller Art Center: Featuring the book Montgomery County History Book.

#### Oral History

Visitors will have the opportunity to record their oral history with the assistance of Kathy Calvert a volunteer with the MFRL Library System.

#### Publications

Pocahontas Press will be displaying books by local authors with an emphasis of history.

#### Museum Store

The Museum Store will feature “William Preston of Virginia 1727 – 1783: The Making of a Frontier Elite”, the dissertation by Dr. Richard Osborn this weekend. It will also have prints by local photographer Walt Hughes of the seasons at Smithfield and The Smithfield Review. The Museum Store also features gifts and a variety of books about local and Virginia history.

11:30 – 2:30 pm    Vendors

Log Cabin BBQ, a local Blacksburg restaurant, will be on site selling its delicious bbq.

Noon and 3:30 pm        The Preston Family Cemetery Tours led by Laura Wedin

The Preston Cemetery has served as the burying ground for six generations of Prestons including Colonel William Preston, a Revolutionary War leader and patriot and the owner and builder of Smithfield Plantation. The earliest assumed burial in the cemetery dates to February, 1782 with the death of William and Susanna Preston's daughter Anne Nancy. The first documented and marked burial is that of Colonel Preston who died in June, 1783. The cemetery and the surrounding land has been owned by Virginia Tech since 1967. Preston descendants continue to be buried in the cemetery.

The most recent internment was John Baldwin Preston (1924-2008) in spring 2009. His great-great grandfather was James Francis Preston, son of Governor James Patton Preston, and grandson of Colonel William Preston. There is a strong tradition for the descendants of James Francis Preston to be buried in this cemetery. James Francis Preston built the home White Thorn (later sold to the Heth family) on Smithfield property.

10 – 4 pm            House Tours

Museum Tours will be \$4 for adults, students, children 12 years and older and free to children all day.

1 pm                    Laura S. Wickstead, MLS “A Primer in Genealogy Research”

“A Primer in Genealogy Research” will offer a brief introduction to family history research. This lecture will be held in the Pavilion at Historic Smithfield. Ms. Wickstead is the librarian for the Virginia Room of the Roanoke. The Virginia Room, holds the Roanoke Public Libraries' collection of historical and genealogical research resources. It is a non-circulation research library that collects materials for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Roanoke Valley.

2 pm                    Dr. Richard Osborn                    “Smithfield: More Than a Home for the Prestons”

Dr. Osborn, will offer more insight on the Preston Family during his lecture, “Smithfield: More than a Home for the Prestons”. William and Susanna Preston moved to the home they called Smithfield in 1774. This home, reminiscent more of a Williamsburg tavern than a frontier dwelling, became even more as a symbol of culture and stability during a time of major land surveys, crop development, trade, Indian attacks, and schooling for children. Richard Osborn tells the story of how a home stood as a force for stability as the Prestons and their twelve children began a legacy of service lasting even to modern times.

3 pm Professor Hugh Campbell  
Publications in the Preservation of History”

“The Smithfield Review: The Importance of Scholarship and

In his lecture, “The Smithfield Review: The Importance of Scholarship and Publications in the preservation of History”, For those interested in history, a well documented story about people and events from a bygone era can greatly enhance our understanding of the past and present -- and if constructed well, such stories can simultaneously bring considerable enjoyment. The Smithfield Review seeks letters, speeches, and other documents to convey to the reader a direct sense of the past. A few illustrations will demonstrate our efforts to accomplish our goal. Mr. Campbell serves as the editor of The Smithfield Review.

The Preston Family Reunion will continue through the evening with Evening in the Pavilion. Evening in the Pavilion will begin with a Wine and Cheese Reception featuring the wines of the Vintage Cellar and catered by Kelly Erb of “The Invisible Chef” at 5:30 pm followed by a picnic supper and program catered by Mikie’s 7th. In the tradition of a meal that may have been served by Susanna Preston, Mikie’s 7<sup>th</sup> will serve a summer supper featuring local foods and a colonial dessert. Dr. Jim Glanville, professor emeritus of chemistry at Virginia Tech, will be the keynote speaker. “From Foyle to Fincastle: The Roots of a Southern Dynasty” will focus on the legacy of James Patton, uncle to William Preston, and the founding of a southern dynasty. Tickets for this event are \$50 person.

### **About Historic Smithfield**

“On the eve of the American Revolution, the Virginia backcountry was a place of colliding cultures, clashing ideals, and physical danger. Wolves howled at night, panthers roamed the forest. Europeans and native Shawnee and Cherokee vied for the same fertile farmlands, often erupting into murderous violence. It was here, at the eastern continental divide, the literal edge of European/American civilization, that the leader of westward expansion and Revolutionary War patriot William Preston established Smithfield Plantation. In a land of log cabins and physical hardship, Smithfield provided a haven of aristocratic elegance and became the social and political center of the country.” More than 225 years later, this house still stands as a cultural center to the surrounding community.

Historic Smithfield is owned by Preservation Virginia (APVA Preservation Virginia), which was founded in 1889 as the first statewide preservation organization in the United States. Since then, the Preservation Virginia has saved and/or restored more than 50 historic properties. Currently Preservation Virginia owns or administers properties that range from historically furnished house museums and civic buildings to cemeteries and gravesites. The local Montgomery Branch of Preservation Virginia manages the daily operations of Historic Smithfield. For more information or to become a member, visit [www.smithfieldplantation.org](http://www.smithfieldplantation.org) or call 540.2313947.

Historic Smithfield and the Museum Store are open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 10 – 5 pm and Sundays 1 – 5 pm. House tours are \$7 for adults, \$4 for students (12 yrs – college) and \$3 for children 5 – 12 years of age. House tours are given on each open day every half hour until 4 pm. Proceeds from the Museum Store and events are used to support the operational budget and preservation of Historic Smithfield, located adjacent to Virginia Tech’s campus off Duck Pond Drive.

For more information, please call 540.231.3947 or visit our website at [www.smithfieldplantation.org](http://www.smithfieldplantation.org).

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