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The Career of William Preston

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Preface

There is no lack of information available on the more important figures of Virginia during the colonial and Revolutionary periods. Considerable work has been done regarding both their personal lives and public careers, with emphasis on the part these men played during the Revolutionary War. However, it is the purpose of this thesis to describe the public career of one who cannot be called one of the great figures of the age. A true pioneer, William Preston participated in and encouraged the rapid development of the Virginia frontier during the eighteenth century. He had personal contacts with the colonial aristocracy and the new leaders that arose after the beginning of the war. He could have become a valuable leader in the new government. Yet, because of his invaluable experience as a frontier leader, he chose to remain in that new region and to help in the bringing of civilization to that area. Preston's career is not spectacular, but his efforts in western Virginia were important to the subsequent development of that part of the state. The story of this period necessarily involves a description of the Indian wars that harassed the settlers of the new region, in addition to the realization of the increasing importance of the frontier border during the American Revolution. Preston was an active member of the society that met these problems and survived them.
Although Preston remained a less important figure in the history of colonial Virginia, knowledge of a career such as his is necessary for a more complete understanding of the period in which he lived. Similar men lived in other western Virginia counties, and each contributed his share to the development of the state. None should be considered unimportant when a study of the colonial period is made.
Chapter I
The Valley of Virginia

In 1700 Virginia was still very much a frontier region, as were all of the colonies along the Atlantic seacoast. Throughout her hundred years of settlement, the southern colony had managed to develop only one of her four fairly distinct geographical areas: the tidewater region along the coast. Even there, the boundless tracts of land and the endless forest had, in a hundred years, helped to produce a leveling effect on the highly stratified society of Europeans that became more pronounced as settlement gradually moved to the west. However, as the rest of Virginia was settled, the Piedmont, the Valley, and the area beyond the Appalachians, there arose a distinct type of individual that was the principal factor in bringing to this new frontier the beginnings of law and order. For as civilization advanced, so the problems that came with it also advanced, and although any frontier region was at first lawless, increased settlement by a home-seeking people meant the eventual establishment of a legal system of government. In Virginia, the county lieutenant was developed: a person who,
while sharing the common dangers of the frontier with the other outlying settlers, nevertheless became the link between civilization on the coast and his fellow frontiersmen. It was the county lieutenant who established and maintained the political rights of the frontiersman; at the same time, he was the military leader, to whom the settlers turned for protection from the many and devastating Indian raids. The leaders of the new pioneers in Virginia often devoted their entire lives to service on the frontier. The offices held were not prominent, but years of labor and responsibility were spent in combating dangers and hardships along the Virginia border. The western county lieutenant was an important factor in the problem of Indian defense, and he became even more important during the Revolutionary War.

As long as settlement in Virginia remained along the coast, the county lieutenant could not assume his full responsibility; the population was small and colonial government close at hand. In 1689, eighty-two years after the first settlement at Jamestown, the colonists in Virginia had reached only the falls of the James River, and it was not until the second decade of the eighteenth century that settlers were to push beyond the Piedmont over the Blue Ridge Mountains into the Valley of Virginia. However, as the population along the seacoast slowly increased, the demand grew to open new land in the west. In 1728, therefore, the first grant
was made in the Shenandoah Valley to those men who had crossed the mountains from the most western of the organized Virginia counties, Spotsylvania. To go two hundred miles had taken 125 years.

The new settlers who came to "that fruitful vale" were primarily of a different stock from those who had come to the earlier settled regions of Virginia. These new immigrants were more often than not Protestants from Northern Ireland, along with other Scots and Irish, Germans, and German-speaking Swiss. If they landed in Virginia, the frontier was generally reached by going up the three principal rivers that led into the interior: the James, the Roanoke, and the Rappahannock. Others entered the Valley from Pennsylvania. Early in the eighteenth century the British Parliament began to encourage settlement in the Valley, first to foster the production of naval stores, and later to prevent the eastward advance of the French. As this encouragement became known, efforts were made by some farsighted individuals to obtain land in the area which could later be sold at a handsome profit, or which could be used to establish one's own family in the dense forests of western Virginia.

One of the first of the large landowners who settled in the western part of the colony was James Patton, who migrated permanently to the Valley between 1732 and 1740.
He had previously been a lieutenant in the British navy, and before moving to Virginia with his wife and two daughters, had made at least twenty trips across the Atlantic. He had thus established contacts in both Great Britain and the colony; when he made his last trip to America, it was with a grant of 120,000 acres given by George II. Moving an entire family to a new home was no easy matter, and Patton soon found that the journey from the coast into the interior was just as serious an undertaking as the trip across the Atlantic. Aside from the rivers, there were no well marked paths to lead the new Virginia family to their frontier home; horses were the only means of transportation through the thick forests and over the mountains.

Once he was settled in his new home, Patton, like so many other Scotch-Irish who settled in the Valley, became a surveyor and land speculator. He was quick to see the possibilities offered by the new and fertile land and became convinced that more new settlers could be attracted to it. He took employment under William Beverley, who had, by encouraging still more settlers to come from the British Isles to Virginia, received a grant of 100,000 acres in what was later to become Augusta County. In return for his services to Beverley, Patton also received an additional 100,000 acres to be located farther down the Valley, and in
1749 he became one of the charter members of the Loyal Land Company, which had been granted 800,000 acres along the North Carolina border. As his personal land holdings grew, he rose in importance in frontier society. He was the first lieutenant colonel of the Augusta County militia, commissioned in 1742, and the next year he moved to Staunton in order to be nearer the center of his land activities.

While employed by Beverley to bring new settlers from Britain to Virginia, Patton was successful in encouraging his sister and brother-in-law to leave Ireland and make a new home in the colony. John Preston was no doubt eager to leave his home in Northern Ireland. Life for the Scotch-Irish had not been easy since the Revolution of 1689. Their industries had been ruined, their homes confiscated, and the Test Act of 1704 had almost made Presbyterians outlaws. Thus, when the chance for escape offered itself, it was quickly seized upon, and many came to America with a bitter hatred for England in their hearts. When James Patton's offer reached the Preston home in Ireland, it was an opportunity that could not be refused. Sometime between 1737 and 1740, Preston, his wife, Elizabeth, and their five children made the long and painful journey to Virginia and settled in the new county of Augusta with Patton.

When the family first arrived in Augusta, they were
utterly dependent on their benefactor for support. In Ireland John Preston had been employed as a ship's carpenter; in Augusta he found employment as a cabinet maker, but in a region where land was so plentiful and population scarce, it was not a profitable occupation. In addition, living with the Pattons was not an ideal arrangement for the Preston family. Since Patton himself had reached a position of some importance in the neighborhood, other members of his family, especially Mrs. Patton, looked down on the new immigrants from Ireland. In particular, Mrs. Patton feared that John Preston or his wife might inherit part of her husband's now considerable fortune, and as long as she held that belief, it could not be a happy home for anyone at Springhill. It was not until 1744 that Preston was able to purchase 1,054 acres of his own; it was on this small farm that he died in 1747.

A wife and five children were then left to manage the new farm near Staunton. The greatest burden fell upon William, the only son, who had been born in Northern Ireland in either 1729 or 1730 and was thus about seventeen years old when his father died. Until the time of the latter's death, he had remained at home, for with only two men in the family it was difficult to manage even so small a home as Spring Farm. The death of John Preston meant that it would be almost impossible for the farm to be kept up; William therefore applied immediately to his uncle for work in his grow-
ing business and surveying enterprises. Patton needed all the help he could obtain, for his land speculations were increasing rapidly. Already he, Doctor Thomas Walker, and others were encouraging settlement along the Holston River in southwest Virginia in preparation for the formation of the Loyal Land Company. Therefore, in spite of the continued opposition of Mrs. Patton, William not only was given employment by his uncle, but also through the latter's help he found additional employment in Staunton as a bookkeeper. Both of these occupations were something out of the ordinary for a frontiersman only eighteen years old. As a rule, the young pioneer at that age either worked at home or had already established his own farm. Nevertheless, as Preston proved himself capable of upholding two positions at once, Patton began to take more than a casual interest in his nephew.

When Mrs. Patton died, the Preston family moved back to Staunton to live with Colonel Patton. Constant association with William had convinced the businessman that the former should be given full opportunity to develop his talents and become an asset, not only to his own family, but also to the Patton land interests. Schools, of course, were unknown in western Virginia; any education was either furnished at home or by tutors. Patton managed to secure the services of John Craig, pastor of the Tinkling Springs congregation as a teacher for William, and a better than average education
was thereby attained by the budding businessman. In addition, Patton himself taught his nephew surveying, a very essential knowledge for one who was to spend the greater portion of his life in marking off the western frontier. Patton was of course preparing him for work in his own enterprises, and it was while Preston was still in his uncle's employ that he received his first land grant: 529 acres was given to him in 1749 by William Beverley.

Colonel Patton's sponsorship of his nephew's public career began when the latter was twenty-three years old. By 1752 the land speculator had become fully determined that Preston was worthy of any sort of help that might be given him. In the spring of that year, Patton was appointed one of the Indian commissioners to attempt to settle differences with the savages, and in June Preston accompanied his uncle as secretary during the negotiation of the Treaty of Logston. This was apparently his first trip into Indian territory and his first real journey away from his Virginia home. However, there are indications that he no longer lived with his family in Staunton after that year. In November, after his appointment as deputy surveyor of Augusta County, he was required to travel over most of the frontier borders of the county and was at home only on rare occasions. Also, as his ability became known, he was appointed a deputy sheriff of the county, and this too required tours of inspection over
the frontier area for over two years. It is impossible to estimate the importance of his uncle's influence on Preston's first entrance into public life, but his own ability was the primary reason for his continued appointments to positions of authority.

The coming of the French and Indian War caused increased activity all along the Virginia frontier. As early as 1752 there had been reports that the French were building a chain of forts along the Tennessee River and were just as busy in Kentucky. To offset the French, both the Ohio and Loyal Land Companies were given large grants of land in the disputed region to the west. It was hoped that newcomers to Virginia could be encouraged to move west and thus firmly establish the British claim, while creating an additional barrier to French penetration. Although the increase in population was not all that could be desired, the new acquisition of a large amount of land meant that surveying had to be done.

In the early summer of 1755 both Patton and Preston made the tedious journey farther west to survey for the Loyal Company. The Indians had been unusually quiet during the early part of the year, and it was hoped that the surveying could be accomplished without serious incident. Both men were extremely busy as new plats were entered in the record books. Then, without warning, on July 30 the Indians struck. The surprise attack was a complete success as far as the In-
dians were concerned. It came at Draper's Meadow, the home of Patton while he was on the frontier; Patton himself was killed before he could even begin to defend himself. Preston was away on a surveying expedition, or he too might have been caught in the massacre. The death of his uncle meant that Preston became even more involved in his benefactor's land affairs. As one of the executors of Patton's will, Preston spent many years settling the affairs of the speculator's personal estate and also those of his many and varied activities with the Loyal Land Company.

By 1755 Preston was becoming an important figure in many phases of frontier life. He was already a county surveyor and a deputy sheriff; that year he also began his military career when, during the summer, he was appointed captain of a company of rangers. He found, however, that these varied activities did not conflict with each other, and in the fall of the year he announced his candidacy for a seat as a representative from Augusta to the House of Burgesses. There is no record of the campaign conducted, but it must have been a very lively one, for during the actual voting the people became so disorderly that a correct poll could not be taken. Augusta was without a representative for that session of the Assembly.

It was perhaps just as well that Preston did not go to Williamsburg that fall; Indian relations were rapidly ap-
proaching a crisis that would require full support from the county militias. Raids on the frontier settlements, similar to that at Draper's Meadow, had continued during the rest of the summer and early fall. As long as the frontier did not resist with any degree of strength or coordination, the Indians were encouraged to increase the severity and frequency of the attacks. It was known that the Shawnee tribe was responsible, but no effective defense measures were suggested at once. The frontier settlements did nothing but send pleas for help to the government in Williamsburg, but the officials there did not at first realize the precarious situation of the desperate inhabitants.

During the fall, however, Governor Dinwiddie began to formulate a plan of his own, and while working out his scheme, he wrote to Preston in September approving the latter's intention to range the woods with detachments of three companies in search of roving Indian parties, adding that he hoped Preston would remain on duty until December at least. What the Governor was actually planning was a campaign against the Shawnees in the dead of winter; thus he hoped to have all militia companies organized before that time so that no delay would be necessary when his plans were complete.

The young captain was agreeable to remaining on duty as long as the threat of an attack remained, but he little realized that Dinwiddie contemplated keeping the western militia
on duty until well past December. Although he had agreed to keep his company at full strength, still as time passed and no further word came from the Governor, he relaxed his discipline somewhat until in October, he was reprimanded by Dinwiddie for failing to send an attested copy of his muster roll. The Governor's plans against the frontier Indians required that a complete report be made of the strength of the frontier county militias, and by the middle of December, 1755, he had completed his preparations. By a letter to Captain Preston and Captain John Smith, Dinwiddie authorized each man to make a draft of thirty men from his company, the total to be commanded by Captain Smith. Preston was left to command the remainder of the two companies in guarding the frontiers of the county. In addition to the sixty men furnished by Augusta county, 130 Cherokee Indians had agreed to go with the small force and aid in the fight against the Shawnees.

Preston was disappointed in the Governor's decision to keep him at home on the frontier while most of the troops moved to the west. Although he had been a militia captain for only six months, he felt himself perfectly capable of leading his own men against the Indians. For over a month the young captain resented his apparent exclusion from any chance to invade and attack the Shawnees on their own ground. Finally, while it was agreed that defense at home was ab-
olutely necessary, it was decided that Preston's help would be a valuable acquisition to such an expedition. Late in January, 1756, he was ordered to make plans to march with the other troops, even though it meant quick preparations to get ready before the main body of the force left.

With Major Andrew Lewis in supreme command, the western militia, consisting of 263 white men under nine captains and supplemented by 130 Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians, left Fort Frederick on February 19. Governor Dinwiddie himself had high hopes for the success of the small expedition. "I think by Diligence you may soon destroy the flying Parties of Indians," he wrote to Captain Preston. Nevertheless, his cheerful optimism was not shared by the inhabitants of the sparsely settled county. To anyone who lived for any length of time on the frontier, it was known that the dead of winter was hardly the most advantageous time to begin a long march into Indian territory; even for those remaining at home, the problem of obtaining food was often serious. The prospect of a disastrous food shortage combined with the thought of leaving their frontier homes practically unprotected combined to keep the morale of the expedition at a low level. From the beginning, the enlisted men had questioned the practicality of the westward march; only the officers were more inclined to speak hopefully of success.

Captain Preston's own journal of this Sandy Creek Ex-
pediton can be considered a reliable reference for the causes of the ultimate failure of the venture. It is the only day-by-day record that he ever kept; the excitement of his first Indian mission was probably the reason for this first and only attempt. The weather, lack of game, and the restlessness of their own Indian allies were the principal problems of the frontier rangers. Troubles with the Indians began almost immediately; several times the small group of Cherokees deserted, and it was only with much persuasion that they rejoined the other troops. When the head of Sandy Creek was finally reached on February 28, heavy rain and the lack of beef had severely reduced the morale of the entire group, and only the belief that the enemy was very near kept the expedition together. By March 6, however, after a week of constant rain, lack of food, and still no sign of the enemy, mass desertion seemed certain; only the finding of game on the seventh prevented a mutiny at that time. The increasing uneasiness and ill temper of the enlisted men alarmed all of the officers. On March 10, Preston wrote in his journal that he would surely be censured when he returned home if a mass desertion in his company was allowed to take place, and on March 12 he forceably restrained some of his own men from deserting.

Obviously, the purpose of the expedition had been lost
in internal dissension. If such conditions were allowed to continue, proper defense could not be maintained for their own safety. A general meeting of all the men was therefore called on March 13 to determine whether or not the original plans to force the Indians to fight should continue to be followed. All of the officers agreed to push on, but only thirty of the men acquiesced. With this last entry on the thirteenth, Preston ended his journal. It is not known how much longer the small band remained in the wilderness, but there can be no doubt that his first Indian expedition had been a decisive failure. The troops were never able to find the Indian raiding parties; even before the final council was held, horses, buffalo rugs and even shot pouches were eaten. "Any man in the camp would have ventured his life for a supper," wrote Preston.

Although the Virginians could not find the Shawnees, the latter still had no trouble in making serious and devastating raids on outlying settlements. Eternal vigilance along the border of the county was necessary. After his return from the Sandy Creek Expedition, Preston was continued on active duty and was not released until June 24. During most of that time he was required to keep at least one third of his rangers in constant service to guard against unexpected Indian and French attacks, and even after the ranger company
was disbanded during the summer of 1756, Preston continued to command a small company of militiamen which could be used in case of a severe threat to the frontier.

Frontier officials often found it impossible to judge just when to expect an Indian attack. Through the ability to strike without warning, the savages were able to choose their own time and place of attack; with a long and thinly settled frontier to defend, the colonists found it impossible to predict accurately where the next blow would occur, or if there would be another attack at all. In August, 1756, after a period of comparative calm, Preston was ordered by Governor Dinwiddie to discharge his company of militia. The very day that the company disbanded, August 24, word reached the settlers that Fort Vause, an outlying post to the west of the main settlements, was being attacked by a party of Shawnee Indians. The Virginia garrison there, under the command of Captain John Smith, could not possibly last long. To make matters still worse, it was learned that a still larger force, led by a Frenchman, would soon attack the fort. Before Preston or any other militia captain could reach the post with reenforcements, there was an attack by over one hundred Shawnees; twenty-four white men were killed or burned to death. The Indians had succeeded again, as they had at Draper's Meadow, in completely surprising the
colonials and defeating them before effective help could arrive.

The calamity at Fort Vause was the most severe setback that southwest Virginia had received for some time. It was the worst in a series of sporadic Indian attacks throughout the entire length of the comparatively undefended Virginia frontier. Even a large militia would have found it difficult to keep up a strong line of defense; with a small population, the militia officers found it almost impossible to protect the borders. In addition, it was extremely difficult to keep the militia ranks filled; while all recognized the desperate common need that forced men to join together for protection, the majority of the eligible men could supply good excuses at one time or another and thus avoid service. Those who made thin excuses were despised by their neighbors, but constant efforts to rotate the turns of militia duty still did not produce enough men. The necessity for maintaining patrols between the widely scattered and weakly manned outposts meant that part of the militia had to be on duty at all times. Eloquent appeals to the officials in Williamsburg, now far removed from the Indian danger, brought regretful replies. In fact, Governor Dinwiddie was inclined to blame the frontier militia and its commanders for the failure to stop the attacks.
Thrown back on their own resources, the leaders on the frontier attempted to solve the problem in their own way. Another company of rangers was organized in 1757 with Preston again at the head, and as rumors of Governor Dinwiddie's impending resignation grew, hopes also rose that aid would be forthcoming from the council in Williamsburg. The usual messages of regret came from the capital, however, and in November, an additional levy had to be made on the Augusta militia. As winter weather approached, both the Virginians and the Indians expressed the desire for peace; late in 1757 Preston and Thomas Lewis were appointed commissioners to deal with the Shawnee Indians at the mouth of the Big Sandy River. A treaty was there concluded with the Shawnee chief, Cornstalk, and Oconastota of the Cherokee tribe, and peace for a while was restored to the Virginia frontier.

The seriousness of the Indian affairs from 1755 to 1757 occupied most of Preston's time and forced him to be on active duty with his militia company during most of that period. However, other activities were not completely excluded. Following the bungled election of 1755, Preston decided to try again the next year to represent Augusta in Williamsburg. This time, although the election was carried off, he was defeated, possibly because of a temporary unpopularity of the militia officers following the Sandy Creek disaster.
In addition, the election came at a time immediately following the massacre at Fort Vause when all available officers were needed on the frontier. This second defeat ended Preston's political aspirations for quite some time.

While his political career was stopped before it began, his surveying and other land activities continued to increase in importance. After peace with the Shamesoo was made in 1757, he began to make purchases of his own, in addition to continuing his public surveys for the county. In 1759 only 191 acres were purchased, but in 1760 he purchased 954 acres, and in 1761 he acquired another 1,222 acres. These land purchases were in a measure indicative of Preston's growing importance and leadership on the frontier. Any western surveyor was bound to grow land rich as he continued, year after year, to open up new locations for settlement. He could select the choice locations for his own use or sell them as the case might demand. Preston's land activities received an additional boost from his uncle's association with the Loyal Land Company, for which he continued to survey. By the time he was thirty years old, Preston was therefore able to command a position of respect on the frontier that reflected itself in his increased public duties. His participation in both civil and military offices multiplied. By August of 1763, he had advanced from captain
to a full colonel in the Augusta County militia; in the meantime he had also taken over the duties of Sheriff, Coroner, and Escheator, and in 1761 he became one of the first trustees appointed for the town of Staunton.

His personal life had also taken on the typical pattern of frontier society. In the summer of 1761 he married Susanna Smith of Hanover County, after a courtship that began when he secured her father's services to build a church for the Episcopalians in Staunton. The marriage meant that Preston would have to establish his own home; thus he moved farther west in Augusta and built "Greenfield" in what was later to become Botetourt County.

In spite of increased responsibility in civil affairs, operations with the militia continued to claim a great part of Preston's attention. Although peace with the Indians had been made in 1757, it, like so many Indian treaties made during the period of the Seven Years War, proved to be a transitory affair. Westward expansion by the colonial Virginians increased from year to year, while the Indians, aided by the French, attempted to retaliate by raids and actual warfare. Mutual distrust of motives created suspicions and wariness so that the slightest breach of faith on either side could lead to retaliatory raids and the beginnings of another Indian war. By late 1759, tempers had reached the breaking point again; Indian trouble began north of the
Virginia frontier in Pennsylvania, this time provoked by the murder of Indians by colonials as the westward push continued. It did not take long for the raids in Pennsylvania to spread to the south, and in the summer of 1760 the attacks in Virginia had increased to such an extent that the militia was called up again with the idea of sending part of the troops against the Cherokees.

Preston, now a lieutenant colonel in the militia, was ordered to remain at home to keep peace and protect the county frontiers from any surprise attack. He was extremely handicapped, however, because after the men for the Cherokee expedition had been chosen, the remainder of the militia had been ordered dismissed. Efforts by the colonel to call up again the remaining militia proved futile. A petition to Governor Francis Fauquier asking for the authority to call for the troops and also to call on neighboring counties for aid in case it was needed was denied. The Governor assured Preston that his fears were groundless but that on no account were the outlying settlements to be abandoned. Fauquier's refusal produced no disastrous consequences, but the inhabitants of Augusta were far from satisfied during the absence of most of the militia. Since troops were not available for defense, all Preston could do was to return to his surveying.
Indian troubles again reached a climax in the summer of 1763, when in July it was necessary to take drastic action for the defense of the county. On the twenty-seventh Preston wrote to his brother-in-law, John Brown, that the population of the county was fast moving eastward in the hopes of evading an Indian massacre. All the valleys along the Roanoke had already been depopulated, and Preston's own home at Greenfield was left in an exposed position. Fears of another incident such as that at Draper's Meadow gripped the entire area. A small fort was constructed at Greenfield large enough to house eighty-seven people; relatives and neighbors crowded into the structure which was soon filled to capacity.

The cries of distress from Augusta eventually reached Governor Fauquier in Williamsburg, who called the council into special session on August 1 to consider the plight of the western counties. The result of this meeting was that Major Andrew Lewis was made county lieutenant, and Preston was promoted to the full rank of colonel, but no effective help was sent to the beleaguered colonists. No expedition was ordered; the majority of the settlers were forced to wait helplessly until the Indians decided to return to their own lands.

Governor Fauquier continued to send encouraging messages to the frontier officials, but no real aid was forthcoming from the capital. As a result the Indian outbreaks followed their usual pattern: isolated attacks over a widely scattered
area, with no effective resistance offered by the Virginians. There is evidence that the French were continuing to encourage the Indian raiders; if true, they were remarkably successful, since trouble continued through all of 1763 and 1764. At one time during the unrest, Governor Fauquier authorized Major Lewis to use 450 men in an attempt to restore order. This was accomplished, but the peace that followed was as uneasy as all the preceding truces.

Preston continued to divide his time between his militia responsibilities and his other county offices. During the period of unrest, Indian defense was the most important factor in his daily life, but as sheriff and county surveyor much more time was consumed in looking after the affairs of others.

In 1766 he assumed still another responsibility. After a lapse of ten years, he ran again for election to the House of Burgesses, and this time he was successful. Leaving his home and growing family, he traveled east to Williamsburg, where on November 7 he was made a member of the committee of public claims. He was extremely active in urging increased support for the county militias, drawing upon his own experiences in pointing out the lack of money and supplies for the maintenance of this vital defense unit. He made extensive inspection trips throughout the western area obtaining evidence to prove his case and was eventually awarded £100 as
payment for the tours. Ko continued as a member during
the sessions of 1767 and 1768, but while his name appears
on the roll, he did not attend a single session. The long
and uncomfortable journey from Greenfield to Williamsburg
became a chore during the one session he did attend, and
by 1767 the increase of his activities at home offered a
further excuse for not making the trip.

By 1765 the older sections of the Virginia Valley were
rapidly expanding in population. The movement to the west
had not been a slow and orderly one, and as new waves of
immigration poured into Virginia and found the desirable
land in the east already taken, there flowed this "now
swirling, now eddying" stream of people into the Virginia
Valley. As it too began to fill up along its eastern fringes,
the westward push continued, bringing with it the need for
the continued expansion of law and order. Preston, who had
lived in the Valley for twenty-five years, not only held a
position of authority as the new inhabitants pushed their
way in after the long journey over the Blue Ridge Mountains,
but he soon found himself involved in encouraging the con-
tinued push to the west. It was impossible to keep back the
flood of settlers who made many unauthorized settlements;
also, as a county surveyor Preston was responsible for the
many legal demands that could be made on remaining land in
the Valley. Any militiaman who had served during the per-
led of one of the Indian wars was entitled to a land bounty; this regulation included practically every settled westerner. Preston himself received a bounty for his services as a ranger captain, and other requests poured into his survey office asking for select pieces of land.

Moreover, because of the increased demand for western land, the Proclamation of 1763 was extremely unpopular with anyone who moved into the Valley only to find the best land already taken. It cut off a source of abundant land just when it seemed to be needed most. Not only was the land supply cut off, but also those few settlers who had ventured farthest west, and were thus beyond the line, were ordered to give up their new homes and move back east. The British government never intended the dividing line, as decided upon in 1763, to be permanent, but there was probably official agreement that some sort of dividing line should and must be drawn. The constant uneasiness of the frontier counties during the first two thirds of the century showed that definite boundaries had to be decided upon if a lasting peace was to come to the frontier. Thus the Proclamation Line was created in October, 1763 as a protection both to the frontier settler and to the Indian. Pending the adoption of a clearer policy, it attempted to please both sides and failed. It forbade the granting of lands "for the present... beyond
the heads or sources of any of the rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean from the west or northeast."

Immediately the Line was not only evaded by the new settlers, but also efforts were begun to move the boundary westward and establish a clear dividing line between the Indians and the colonials. Although the British government could not agree on a concerted plan of action, the two Indian superintendents in the colonies, Sir William Johnson of the northern district and Captain John Stuart of the southern district, proceeded to act on their own initiative and commenced negotiations with the Indians. While Johnson proceeded more cautiously, Stuart entered into a series of treaties with the southern Indians by which a continuous boundary was established, beginning at a point near the southern border of Virginia and running south and west. The new agreements moved the old Proclamation Line considerably to the west and thus opened up a great amount of new territory to legitimate settlement. Prospects seemed even brighter when the superintendents, in the spring of 1768, received instructions from England to confirm the new Indian treaties in such a manner that a continuous line would be formed running north and south. Thus, in the South, two treaties were concluded, one with the Cherokees on October 14, 1768, and the other with the Creeks on November 12, 1768.
A third treaty, the Treaty of Lochaber, October 22, 1770, moved the Virginia boundary still farther west.

The opening of new land meant that surveys would have to be made and returned in the new areas in order to fill the applications for land grants, especially those from former soldiers. Although the governor's council was slow in permitting new surveys, there could be no doubt that ultimately the territory would be thrown open. Preston was quick to see his opportunity for an additional means of revenue and to obtain sections of the new land for himself. He therefore applied to the President and Masters of William and Mary College for an appointment as surveyor of the new territory.

As the population of the Valley moved westward, the demand for new counties, in most cases meaning more convenient local government, arose. Thus late in 1769 the new county of Botetourt was carved out of a section of Augusta. Counties were created where there was population, and although Preston's home remained the same, he was now a resident of Botetourt and took an important and active part in its formation. On one day, February 13, 1770, he was appointed to four offices in the new county: justice of the peace, coroner, escheator, and county surveyor, the last appointment coming from the College of William and Mary. During the next two days, he was formally made one of the justices of the county court and colonel of the county militia. To complete his list of
duties in Botetourt, he was elected a member of the House of Burgesses in May, 1770 and July, 1771, but pressing affairs in the county prevented his attending either session.

The entire southwestern frontier was expanding at such a rate that any western official found little time to pay attention to happenings in the east. The new county was hardly two years old when agitation was increased to encourage the formation of still another new western county. The movement came principally from settlers along the Holston and New Rivers who complained that the great distance of their small settlements from Botetourt courthouse made it difficult for them to transact their business. So sure were the agitators that their pleas would be successful that preparations for the formation of the new county went forward before final action had been taken by the authorities in Williamsburg. Even the site for the new courthouse had definitely been decided upon before permission came from the capital. The final decree from Williamsburg authorized the establishment of a new county after December 1, 1772, with the courthouse of the county, Fincastle, located at the lead mines.

It is not clear whether or not Preston's home at Greenfield was included within the boundaries of the new county. Probably it was since Preston not only encouraged the formation of the county, but also held several important positions when the county was officially organized. When the first
county court met on January 5, 1773, he was made county lieutenant, justice of the peace, justice of the county court, sheriff, and county surveyor. Later in the year he moved his wife and family to Draper's Meadow, now officially located in Fincastle. He renamed the farm "Smithfield" in honor of his wife and lived there until he died.

As the new lands were gradually opened after the signing of the Indian treaties of 1765-1770, new problems were created for both the surveyors and those more daring settlers who had first ventured beyond the Proclamation Line. In most instances land was occupied with no reference to actual ownership, and this resulted in conflicting title claims. This was particularly true when unauthorized settlers moved onto land owned by the large landholding companies. Efforts by the original grantee to regain custody of the land often did nothing but create dissatisfaction among the people, coupled with a desire for revenge if efforts were made to retake the land by force. This problem was a source of much worry for Preston, who found himself a surveyor for a county that was composed of all of the border territory of southwestern Virginia, including what is now Kentucky. With such large amounts of territory under his control, he was appealed to from all sides to try to settle the raging dispute. He received petitions from outlying settlers to ask the governor for aid, while at the same time Doctor Thomas Walker of the Loyal
Land Company was asking for help in settling disputes with new inhabitants who had occupied company land.

The Indian problem had been somewhat eased by the efforts of the Indian superintendents during the preceding eight years. When Lord Dunmore first sent surveyors into Kentucky in 1773, it was with the expectation that the problem of the Indians would not prevent still more land from being thrown open to settlement. Preston, who with Nathaniel Grist was appointed an Indian commissioner in 1773, had successful dealings with the Cherokee and Chickamauga Indians. Both men realized that the prosperity of the western counties depended on peaceful relations with the Indians, and while affairs were calm during the first year of Fincastle's existence, 1774 brought a fresh outbreak of trouble and a new Indian war.
Notes

Chapter I

1. Thomas P. Abernethy, Three Virginia Frontiers (Baton Rouge, 1940), p. 3.


5. Ibid., p. 32; J. Adams, Provincial Society, p. 189.

6. Thomas L. Preston, Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of an Octagenerian (Richmond, 1900), p. 9; R. B. Harston, "Colonel William Preston," John B. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph Macon College, IV (1915), 256-288; Draper MSS. 1065a, Lyman C. Draper Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. Thomas Preston gives the date as 1732; Harston, 1737; while the reference in Draper gives 1740 as the date for Patton's arrival.


10. Ibid., p. 57.


13. T. Preston, Historical Sketches, p. 113; "Preston Papers Relating to Western Virginia," p. 363; Draper MSS. 21058. 1737 seems to be the more likely date.

15. Draper MSS. 21U58, 5B31, 1Q9a. There is some doubt as to both the date and place of Preston's birth in Ireland. The most specific date is December 25, 1729, but 1730 is also mentioned. Both Londonderry County and Dounegal County are mentioned as his birthplace.


17. Draper MSS. 5B31.


19. Draper MSS. 5B31.


22. Draper MSS. 21U37.

23. Will of James Patton, Draper MSS. 1Q965.


29. Robert Dinwiddie to William Preston and John Smith, December 15, 1755, Draper MSS. 1Q990.

30. Andrew Lewis to William Preston, January 18, 1756, Draper MSS. 1Q94.


32. Preston's Journal of the Sandy Creek Expedition, February 9 to March 13, 1756, Draper MSS. 1Q9123.
33. Robert Dinwiddie to William Preston, April 24, 1756, Draper MSS. 10Q125. Dinwiddie was acting on the advice of Colonel George Washington.

34. Account by Preston of the attack on Fort Vause, Draper MSS. 10Q134.

35. In Draper MSS. 21U59, Draper tells the following story: "In the autumn of 1756, Washington, escorted by Colonel Buchanan and Captain Preston, was going from Winchester to New River to inspect frontier defenses. Several Indian warriors had been stimulated by a generous reward offer by the French to make an effort to secure Washington's scalp. They learned of this inspection tour from Indian prisoners. There were two trails to Fort Vause on the Roanoke, the shortest way lay across a mountain top; the other was along a flat area. Seven warriors waited in ambush for two days and nights by the level road. The leader then left to examine the mountain road, ordering that no shot be fired. While he was gone, Washington and his escort passed by."

36. Robert Dinwiddie to John Buchanan, August 6, 1757, Dinwiddie Records, II, 682.

37. Andrew Lewis to William Preston, October 28, 1757, Draper MSS. 10Q162.

38. F. Kegley, Virginia Frontier, p. 183.

39. Ibid., p. 507.

40. Augusta County Court Records, Lyman Chalkley, Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlements in Virginia (Rosslyn, Virginia, 1912), I, 82, 108.

41. Ibid., I, 85; William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large, A Collection of all the Laws of Virginia (Richmond, 1820), VII, 475.


43. James Adams to William Preston, February 22, 1760, Draper MSS. 23Q27. A reward of £100 was offered in Pennsylvania for the capture of those who murdered the Indians.

44. F. Kegley, Virginia Frontier, p. 284.
45. Francis Fauquier to William Preston, June 24, 1760, Draper MSS. 2Q028.


48. Francis Fauquier to William Preston, July 24, 1763, Draper MSS. 2Q042.

49. John Brown to William Preston, June 8, 1764, Draper MSS. 2Q049.

50. Andrew Lewis to William Preston, April 4, 1764, Draper MSS. 2Q046.


52. David Robinson to William Preston, May 1, 1769, Draper MSS. 2CQ109.


54. Ibid., p. 786.

55. Ibid., p. 787.

56. Map in Ibid., p. 784.


Chapter II
Lord Dunmore's War and the Expansion of the Virginia Frontier

By 1774, two conflicting forces were at work on the frontier, both of which had their origin in earlier events, but seemingly reached a climax in that year. The apparent insatiable demand for more land coupled with the attempts of the Indians to keep the new settlers out of Indian territory created a situation that to all intents and purposes had no peaceful solution. "They acquire no attachment to Place: but wandering about seems engrafted in their nature; and it is a weakness incident to it, that they Should forever imagine the Lands further off, are Still better than those upon which they are already settled." In this way Lord Dunmore summarized the continuing westward push into the Virginia Valley and the area beyond from 1770 to 1774. However, as the rumors of Indian discontent grew more persistent, the entire frontier was caught in a wave of excitement, fear, and anger that gripped the people during most of 1774. For William Preston, in command of Virginia's most western county, the year
brought increased responsibility that only twenty years' experience could help him face.

The uneasy Indian peace of 1773 continued early in the year, and Preston made preparations to send surveyors to Kentucky. The possibility of more land being opened up was the cause of many inquiries regarding the Kentucky venture.

When I had the pleasure of seeing you in Williamsburgh, we had some conversation as to the time you intended to begin the officers surveys and the necessary assistance each claimant should furnish. I should be extremely glad to have your sentiments on these particulars - and also to know whereabout on the Ohio you would choose to begin.

Although some Indians had denied the validity of the Treaty of Lochaber, there was no evidence that the new settlers believed seriously in their discontent. Requests for surveys continued to pour into Preston, and the news that surveyors were preparing to go beyond the line set by the treaty merely strengthened their desires to move west.

Preston himself was especially eager to get the new surveys under way, although it was probable work could not start until March because of the poor weather. Not only did he have more applications for land than he could take care of, but also those persons entitled to a land bounty from the colony had recently been increased. It had already been determined that those soldiers serving in
the Virginia regiments were to be granted a land bounty. Now an additional number, those who had been officers in the independent ranging companies, were added. There can be no doubt that January and February were busy months for Preston as he prepared his assistants for their trip to Kentucky in the spring. Nor could his other duties in the county be neglected, especially his responsibility for effective Indian defense. Three years of comparative calm had not created a real sense of security among the frontiersmen. By the time the surveying party was ready to leave, Preston was far from well and was no doubt glad to have some of his duties taken off his shoulders by his subordinates.

There can be no question but that expeditions such as these into Kentucky and other western areas did much to increase the Indian menace and bring efforts at retaliation. The Shawnee Indians especially, under French control for many years, were the most feared tribe on the frontier. As the uneasy peace of 1773 gave way, in the spring of 1774, to persistent expectation of Indian reprisals, murmurs of discontent grew all along the frontier fringe. Possibly too, an Indian war was desired by many who felt that the only way to open the western territory permanently was to defeat the Indians decisively and then force them to surrender the disputed land. For those living in safety
on the coast, especially those who stood to profit by the opening up of new territory, this idea may have had some foundation, but for those settlers who lived isolated and, in many cases, practically without means of defense, the prospect of another Indian war was something terrible to contemplate. There were many who remembered the Indian wars of 1755 and 1763; and as rifles were cleaned and knives sharpened, stories of the Indian massacres of those years were told and retold. It had mattered little to the settler that he had built his home in Indian territory, but as the fear of approaching trouble increased, many families made haste to move farther east where there was protection of some sort.

The first movement to the east came from those settlers who had moved into land along the Clinch River. As Daniel Smith wrote to Preston:

The people on this River are much more fearful of the Indians than I expected to find them. The late Reports alarm'd them so much that 4 families in my neighborhood mov'd over to Holston before I heard of their Setting off, they went in Such haste that they left all their Stock and the greatest part of their Household Furniture. When they got to Holston they heard news that mitigated their fears a little, and they ventur'd back again... then I saw them and prevail'd on them to Stay. 7

Every effort was made to keep the extreme frontier populated in order to form a buffer between the Indians and the more populated areas, but as reports of increasing
Indian activity and isolated attacks were received, it became correspondingly difficult to prevent the settlers from leaving. The surveyors in Kentucky were having their troubles also. Reports received by Preston in April were alarming.

Last night Thos. Glen Lawrence Darnell & William Nash came to our camp who were Ordered off the River by a Party of Indians who only saw them across the River. The Shawnees took Darnell & 6 Others prisoners a few Weeks ago & held a Counsell Over them three Days;... The whites and Indians the 15th Instant had a skirmish at the mouth of Beaver Creek... One white Man killd another wounded & One other yit missing.... Our Men are almost daily Retreating.

With reports such as these, and rumors that caused even more fear and unrest, the entire frontier was thrown into panic. Dr. John Connolly, who had been sent to the frontier as Lord Dunmore's representative in that area, became extremely excited, and since it was difficult to distinguish truth from rumor, he issued, on the twenty-first of April, a circular asserting that a state of war already existed, calling on the frontier to arm itself in its own defense. In time, these frightening reports reached Williamsburg, along with the news that the Indians had actually penetrated into Virginia territory and were thirty miles from Botetourt Courthouse. On June 10, Dunmore made his decision and called out the militia.

You are...upon the receipt of this letter immediately to give orders that the Militia of your County be forthwith embodied, and held in readiness either to defend that part of the Country or to march to the Assistance of any other, as occasion may require...
Preston had not waited for official word from Lord Dunmore before making his own preparations for the expected Indian attacks. His first concern was for the party of surveyors in Kentucky. If they should stay too long in that country, they would surely be in danger since hostile Indians would be between them and safety. Captain William Russell was thus ordered to secure runners to go through Kentucky and warn the surveyors and any outlying settlers of the impending danger. In a circuit of sixty days, the two runners, Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner, were successful in warning all surveyors except two. The surveying was far from being completed, but several large tracts were laid off and numerous returns filed.

The defense of Fincastle itself was Preston's next concern. As late as May, he had been advised by Dunmore to try to prevent the frontier inhabitants from leaving their homes completely and moving farther east, and an effort was made.

Upon my return from Williamsburg, finding the upper Settlers on Clinch River had totally Evacuated their Plantations; I thought it my Duty, agreeable to your Instructions, to employ four Men as Runners, in the service of the Country; in hopes thereby to prevail on the remainder of the Inhabitants to desist from so Ruinous an undertaking.

Although all the residents could not be persuaded to remain, those that decided to remain near their homes were gathered together in small forts or stockades, garrisoned by those
in the neighborhood who were not serving elsewhere in the militia. Ammunition was the major problem.

There is a very great scarcity of Powder and Lead in this part of the Country, a Circumstance as alarming as any that occurs to me now. For should there be an immediate invasion, I believe that one half the people could not raise five Charges of Powder, Altho' I have threatened to fine several, who on hearing these threats have assured me they knew not where to buy it. 14

The scarcity of men, ammunition, and other supplies was certainly not unknown to the county lieutenant. However, it was almost impossible to prepare adequate defenses for all of Fincastle, the largest county in Virginia. The weaknesses of the defenses, nevertheless, was probably the cause of the attempt of some of the residents of the western area to form a new and separate county. The movement was born among the settlers along the Holston River, who, in a petition to the House of Burgesses, claimed that the Fincastle courthouse was too far east to serve them adequately. The fact that the petition came at a time when the Indian menace seemed most threatening emphasizes the fact that the outlying settlers resented the inadequate defense measures, mistaking weakness for indifference. Preston himself opposed any plan for division, adding that some wanted the formation of a new county in order that they might fill the new offices that would be created. He requested a postponement of action on the petition until the next session of the Burgesses, which was granted. Also, in the interests of defense, all grants of lands were halted until the Indian menace was over.
By the middle of June, the entire southwestern frontier had prepared itself for the expected Indian attacks. Small forts were being built to afford some sort of protection to the inhabitants, and the desire was growing among the more ambitious frontiersmen to send out small ranging parties to try to determine the strength of the Indians. "I have given orders to Six Captains to raise twenty men out of each of their Companys either as Volunteers or by a Draught," wrote Preston on June 27. It was hoped in this way to prevent a surprise attack, although it was not expected that the small ranging parties could attempt to defeat a large Indian body. Spies were also sent out in an effort to learn the plans of the Indians. These maneuvers were successful to the extent that the majority of the settlers were given warning before too much damage was done.

The first major Indian attack came early in July, and Preston drew on all his resources to attempt to fight back.

I have just now recd. a letter by Express from Capt. Arthur Campbell on Holston, Informing me that he has Intelligence from the Cherokee Nation that the Traders are all Murdered & that they have also murdered the two men who went from Watauga in Behalf of the People to endeavor to Compromise the affair....

Upon the whole, as you will be upon the Spot you will be best able to Judge what Steps may be most for the Protection of the Country, and those steps you will no Doubt take, but at the Same time I would have you endeavour all in your Power not to Incur any Expence to the Country but what is absolutely Necessary for the Protection of the People....

The knowledge of impending attack and the words of encouragement sent to them by Preston did much toward healing
any breach between the inhabitants along the Clinch and Holston Rivers and the county officials.

We are obliged to you for your advice to stand our ground and to build forts for our defense but our scattered situation makes it very difficult. We are but 69 in number in Captain Luny's company of which 30 have listed volunteers. We are open to the enemy about 12 miles on one side, 14 on the other, and 8 on another. We are all very willing to stand our ground but if we get not a supply of men and ammunition, I think it will be impossible for us to stand it if our enemies should attack us as I make no doubt they will.

Meanwhile, in Williamsburg, Governor Dunmore had determined to invade enemy territory, leading the troops himself, and thus bringing the Indian disorders to an end. Already, in early July, the Governor's representative in the west, John Connolly, was preparing to move against the enemy and hoped to have aid from the southwestern troops.

"This plan I much approve of," Dunmore wrote and ordered Preston and the other western county lieutenants to keep in constant touch with both him and Connolly. Later in the month he wrote to Colonel Andrew Lewis, Commander-in-Chief of the militia of southwestern Virginia:

All I can say now is to repeat what I have before said which is to advise you by no means to wait any longer for them to attack you, but to raise all the men you think willing and able, and go down immediately to the mouth of the great Kanawha and there build a fort, and if you think you have force enough to proceed directly to their towns & if possible destroy their towns and magazines and distress them in every other way that is possible.

The Governor, who was already on his way to join Connolly...
farther north, apparently felt that the southwest militia had failed to take the initiative. Although the expected mass attack by the Indians had failed to materialize, the Fincastle militia continued erecting forts and sending out small ranging parties. Isolated attacks occurred, and many Indians were seen on patrol, but a full scale engagement had yet to take place. During June and July Preston was an extremely busy man; all the necessary paper work connected with the forming and the equipping of the militia had to pass through his hands, and all decisions had to have his final approval. The Governor was not entirely correct in believing that the militia was merely waiting for the Indians to attack before taking drastic steps; Preston and his fellow officers were making their own plans for moving directly into the Indian territory.

We have these two Days been consulting what is best to be done; the result of which is, that I should let you know, it is the opinion of the officers here, that 150 or 200 Men are sufficient to March to the Ohio;... & then if nothing extraordinary happened, that we might go over & attack the lower Shawness Town, which is not above 45 Miles from that Place ....23

There can be no doubt that Dunmore's opinion of the southwestern militia was due principally to lack of information; on the other hand, it is doubtful that such an expedition as planned by the Fincastle militia could have been successful. In any event, before Preston could give his final approval of the projected plan, orders were received from
Colonel Lewis which eventually made the Fincastle militia a part of a still larger expedition with the Governor at the head.

However, because of the Governor's poor opinion of the southwestern militia Colonel Lewis at first determined to form a separate expedition against the Indians on the Ohio. Although a truce had been arranged with Oconastota and the Cherokee tribe, not only were the Shawnees still extremely hostile, but in spite of the efforts of Oconastota, separate groups of Cherokees slipped off and joined the Shawnees in their raids. A concentrated effort against the Shawnees seemed to be the only solution. On July 20, after receiving orders from Colonel Lewis, Preston sent out a circular letter to his lieutenants calling for "at least two Hundred & fifty Men, or more...." Preston used every persuasive device at his command as he urged that "we should turn out cheerfully on the present Occasion in Defence of our Lives and Properties...." Every phrase of the letter was designed to stimulate the desire for revenge against the Shawnees and to ultimately bring about "a lasting Peace with all the Indian Tribes Arround us...." Before preparations could be begun in earnest, new orders were received by Lewis from Lord Dunmore:

The unhappy situation of the Divided People settled over the Allegany Mountain's makes it necessary... to
Support that Country... and give the Enemies a Blow that will Breake the Confederacy & render their plans abortive. I intend to take ... men from this quarter... & Desire you to raise a respectable Boddy of Men and join me....
Forward the Letter to Colo. Wm. Preston with the greatest Dispatch as I want his Assistance as well as that of your Brother, Charles Lewis. 26

Preparations were thus begun for a complete expedition to move against the Indians. Five weeks were allowed in recruiting, enlisting, securing ammunition and supplies, and the final marching to the rendezvous for the southwestern counties. It was assumed that Preston would personally lead the Fincastle troops, but his wife fell ill during the summer, and it was decided to turn the command over to William Christian, leaving Preston behind to protect the frontier while the militia was away. Until the actual departure, however, Preston supervised the provisioning of his troops and continued to encourage enlisting. Intense rivalry developed among the various militia captains to see who would have the largest and best equipped company, rivalry that was apparently not shared among the enlisted men. "I have been through the whole Company and meets with poor Success though picked up Some," wrote James Robertson to Colonel Preston. "I... dont want to Concern with any that has famlyys, but Only these Hulking younge dogs that Can be well Spar'd," he continued as he attempted to reach his quota. Each militia captain was expected to raise and equip his own company of men, and it soon be-
came apparent that there were too many officers attempting to form a separate militia company. Attempts to decrease the number of companies by assigning more officers to a single company only brought about dissension among the men who promptly refused to serve under new officers. "The Men insists that they may have an Officer out of their own Company" was a familiar complaint to Preston's ears.

Efforts were made to enlist every male inhabitant between eighteen and fifty, although it was realized that many would not be able to serve. It was hard for the settlers to leave their only means of livelihood, the farm, unattended for a month or more, while their families remained at home to face the possibility of attack by stray Indian bands. It was only the realization of the necessity of formulating a common defense that forced many settlers into the frontier militia.

All was not quiet on the frontier during the five weeks of recruiting. Small Indian raids continued and constantly served to remind those who would remain behind that they would continue to have problems after the militia had left.

We are greatly harrassed by the enemy in this country: Abt. ten days ago, a small party killed five persons, mostly children, & took three prisoners about 15 miles from this place, which is greatly exposed. I began yesterday to build a fort about my house for the defence of my family.  

Signs of the Indians were seen by many of the more isolated families; it was necessary for scouts to be out in the woods constantly attempting to gain information. "...The men Seems
Resolute for a Sculp or two, and I have Offered £5 for the first Indians hand that will be brought in to the fort," wrote Robertson to Preston. However, successful retaliation did not seem to be possible, because of the necessity of properly fitting out the expedition. The officers realized, nevertheless, that some kind of extra protection would be needed for the frontier while the expedition was away; the Indian raids only served to emphasize the point. At a council, held in Botetourt County on August 12, the problem was debated for some time, and it was decided to call on the neighboring counties of Bedford and Pittsylvania for aid. A message was thus sent, asking for two companies of militia from each to stand by to aid Botetourt and Fincastle counties. Preston asked that the men sent to his aid be ordered to cover the Sandy Creek area, while he, who had by this time received permission from Dunmore to remain in Fincastle, would remain farther east.

As the end of August drew near, it became necessary to gather all the troops in preparation for the march to the rendezvous at Camp Union on the Greenbrier River. By August 22, word had been received that troops from neighboring Augusta County had already left for the meeting place; yet the Fincastle troops were slow to start. They were not leaving a well prepared county at home. The Indian raids had not
been subdued, and the remaining inhabitants were mostly gathered into small forts, thus neglecting their farms and preventing the formation of a large group to deal effectively with the Indians. Many of the settlers were continuing to move east, and it was with a great deal of reluctance that many Fincastle militiamen made ready to leave. For Preston, the departure of the Fincastle troops under the command of someone else meant that he would be left with the painful duty of trying to defend a long and exposed frontier with a handful of men remaining, while waiting anxiously for good news from the expedition.

After the departure of the troops in late August, there were two weeks of comparative calm. Taking advantage of the lull, Preston sent Major Arthur Campbell to the frontier of the county to consolidate the defenses along the Clinch and Holston Rivers. Campbell was far from satisfied at conditions there, and early in September, the raids began again. He reported to Preston:

I have sent out Orders, to this and the two next Companies on Holston, for all the Men that has Arms, or any ammunition to assemble Tomorrow, in Order to patrol a few Days.... I shall be glad if you should think it proper to allow me a few Men at this place, as... my House is now a Frontier except what Forts is on Clinch. The want of Ammunition is still a general cry, indeed we have very little as the Inhabitants was so incautious to shot away their late supply to save their Crops.34

Actually there was little that Preston could do to help the frontier settlements. The county was drained of the ma-
jority of its fighting men, who had also taken the best supplies with them. To all intents and purposes, the frontier of the county could easily be destroyed by roving bands of Indians, and each report from Campbell told of some new Indian outrage. The latter continued to send out small parties to pursue the attacking Indians, but they were never able to overtake them, although the company often ran the risk of being surrounded. "...If we had Powder; I hope in the Almighty we shall be able to give a good account of the Enemy, if they trouble us with any more Visits." To complicate matters even more, there were some remaining men who refused to fight with the militia.

There is a few obstinate Wretches, that selfishly refuses Duty, when in their power to perform it; Please give Orders what course is to be taken with such, for if they go unpunished it will set a bad example to others. 36

It was not clear to Preston just what tribe of Indians was responsible for the raids on Fincastle. Supposedly, he had made peace with Oconastota and the Cherokees; yet there was evidence that members of that tribe were the cause of all the trouble. Reports from Indian traders, reaching Preston through Major Campbell, indicated that two war-parties of this tribe had left their villages; whether to go to the aid of the Shawnee or to attack the settlement was not known. There was no doubt in the minds of the settlers along the Holston, however; they were convinced that the Cherokees were entirely
to blame, and the raids were merely another proof that Indian truces could not be depended upon. Major Campbell recommended sending another sharp letter to Oconastota, pointing out that Shawnee emissaries had recently paid the Cherokee chief a visit. His suggestion was made more urgent by the constantly increasing tension along the frontier all during the month of September with the expected approach of a large body of the enemy. "The want of Ammunition is truly disheartening at this crisis," he wrote. "I hope you will judge it proper to send an express to the Army to hurry the return of the men from this County." Although Preston received word that Oconastota was not responsible for any marauders, the chief admitted that he could not control his braves effectively.

It was unlikely that any militiamen could return from the Shawnee expedition in time to aid the few remaining on the Fincastle frontier. Realizing this, Campbell turned to other sources for aid. On September 29, he wrote to Preston regarding the advisability of accepting an offer of aid from "a Gentleman in Carolina." By circulating such hopeful news, Campbell hoped to calm his fellow defenders and prevent any more from leaving the area. Encouragement such as this did not, however, prevent the Indians from continuing their attacks. Hardly a day passed that Preston did not receive another report from his commander on the frontier concerning new Indian depredations. He frantically searched for means to
raise additional men to go to Campbell's aid but continued to receive the same excuse: agreement in principle but failure to act. John Montgomery wrote to him:

...That Number I really believe Cannot be raised in Capt Crockett's Company, unless Men were to Leave their wives and Children exposed to the Mercy of the Enemy, which we in reason Cannot Expect. Mr Dougherty is Still willing to serve if you Can but Contrive how he may Make up that Number of men. he... hath no Certainty of More than 5 or 6 men, as the Chief of the young men are Already Gon out as I remarked, before. 40

Assured that there would be no effective aid from any section of Fincastle, Preston determined to turn to higher authorities for help. He wrote to Thomas Nelson, the President of the Governor's Council, early in October, begging for relief, particularly in the matter of ammunition. In a letter to Captain Daniel Smith, he added:

I have the greatest hopes something will be done for our defence; and that without loss of Time. I shall endeavour all I can to get a few men to Garrison the Important Pass at Culbersons Bottom & if I succeed therein, I will order the Party there to your Assistance. This is all I can do if my own Family was at any one Fort on your River, and each of my sisters Families at the others. 41

Events to the north, meanwhile, were moving rapidly to a climax, and a settlement was to be reached that would bring about another Indian truce. The Fincastle militia under William Christian had arrived at the southwestern rendezvous, Camp Union, on September 6, the evening before the entire body from that section of Virginia was to march to join Lord Dunmore and his troops still farther to the north. This tardiness
resulted in the Fincastle troops being assigned to the rear rank, in charge of the baggage and supplies for eleven hundred men. "What to do I dont know when our men hears they are to stay behind," wrote Colonel Christian. "I doubt they will be much dissatisfied." Nevertheless, with Colonel Andrew Lewis at the head, the militia set out to meet the Governor at the mouth of the Kanawha. By October 6, the army had reached the Ohio and camped at Point Pleasant, the triangle formed by the junction of the Kanawha and the Ohio.

Unknown to the Virginians, the Indians, principally Shawnee, had decided to attack before the two armies could be formed into one. It is probable that they realized the greater probability of success of defeating two small armies rather than one large body; therefore, during the night of October 9, they crossed the Ohio in rafts and prepared to attack the camp at Point Pleasant. It is certain that the majority of the Fincastle troops did not participate in the battle that took place on October 10. Nevertheless, the Indians withdrew from the scene of battle a half hour before sunset, when they believed Colonel Christian, bringing up the rear, was arriving with reinforcements. Actually, Christian did not arrive with his troops until midnight; he had been fifteen miles away from the scene of the fighting when he first heard of the engagement.

Christian was welcomed, nevertheless, as fighting was
expected to continue the next day. The Indians, however, had become discouraged, and Cornstalk of the Shawnee tribe determined to make peace. Matthew Eliot, a white man with the Indian army, was sent to intercept Lord Dunmore and offer to make peace. Eliot did not reach Dunmore until October 16; the latter by that time had already heard of the victory at Point Pleasant and was not unprepared to accept the offer of peace. Moving to within eight miles of the chief Indian village, he formed Camp Charlotte and prepared to open negotiations.

Before business could start, alarming news came from Colonel Lewis at Point Pleasant. Having received no new instructions from the Governor, he had crossed the Ohio and was proceeding to the Indian towns. When a command from Dunmore to halt was not immediately obeyed, the Indian deputies at Camp Charlotte hastened to rejoin their tribes. It was not until Dunmore visited Lewis's camp in person that the latter reluctantly issued a retreat order.

News of the victory reached Colonel Preston on October 31 when he received word from several Fincastle participants in the battle. One hundred and forty seven men were killed or wounded, but the victory brought hopes for a new peace on the frontier. By November 4, Preston was able to order the discharge of part of the county militia, having been informed that "the enemy will find employment beyond the Ohio."
On November 8, the militia was again in Fincastle, and Colonel Christian could write an orderly report of the battle. By November 21, all but thirty of the militia had been discharged.

Peace was thus quickly restored to the frontier, while Dunmore at Camp Charlotte endeavored to make a more lasting peace with the Indians. The treaty signed there was actually a preliminary to a more important council to be held at Fort Pitt the following spring. Nevertheless, one important provision was agreed upon: the Ohio River was to be the boundary between the Indians and the whites, and the entire area of Kentucky was thereby opened, legally, to the many on the frontier who were anxious to move there. Fincastle County was to become the springboard for new western settlement.

This year of Indian troubles, culminating in the Battle of Point Pleasant and a signed Indian peace, has often been called the first battle of the Revolution. This is certainly an overstatement, but it was a distinct American victory. In spite of Dunmore's later royalist leanings, he definitely risked official disapproval in formulating and carrying out his plans. As late as the following March, when revolution was in the air, the convention of the colony resolved that "the most cordial thanks of the people of this colony are a tribute justly due to our worthy Governour, Lord Dunmore, for his... spirited conduct on the late expedition against our Indian enemy;.... There is little likelihood that
William Preston received a similar commendation, but his work, along with the other western county officials, played a vital part in the ultimate victory. With the ending of hostilities and the peaceful opening of new land, he was sure to be busy in the coming year. The beginning of the Revolution was to increase his responsibilities even more.
Notes

Chapter II


5. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. xi.


8. John Floyd to William Preston, April 26, 1774, Draper MSS. 30Q19. It was claimed by some of the surveyors that the action of the Indians was due somewhat to the influence of George Croghan, a Pennsylvania Indian agent, who wanted to keep the Virginians out of the area.


10. Circular letter of Lord Dunmore to the county lieutenants, June 10, 1774, Draper MSS. 30Q39.

11. Instructions by Captain William Russell to scouts, Draper MSS. 30Q18.

12. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. xvi.


16. William Preston to Edmund Pendleton, May 14, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.25.
17. Thomas Lewis to William Preston, June 8, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.30.
18. William Preston to William Christian, June 27, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.47.
20. Bryco Russell to William Preston, July 2, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.52.
22. Lord Dunmore to Andrew Lewis, July 12, 1774, Draper MSS. 46.7.
24. William Preston to Oconastota, July, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.147.
25. Circular letter of William Preston, July 20, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.139.
26. Lord Dunmore to Andrew Lewis, July 24, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.141.
27. James Robertson to William Preston, September 1, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.82.
28. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, August 12, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.75.
32. John Brown to William Preston, August 22, 1774, Draper MSS. 300.81.

34. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, September 9, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q494.

35. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, September 17, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q498.

36. Ibid.

37. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. 210. It was later determined that the Cherokees were not the cause of this particular raid. Rather it was a body of Shawnee and Mingo.

38. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, September 23, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q4102.


40. John Montgomery to William Preston, October 2, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q4110.

41. William Preston to Daniel Smith, October 9, 1774, Draper MSS. 4XX44.

42. William Christian to William Preston, September 7, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q492.

43. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. xix.

44. William Preston to Patrick Henry, October 31, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q4128.

45. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. xx1.

46. Ibid., p. xxii.

47. William Preston to Joseph Martin, November 4, 1774, Draper MSS. 4XX5.

48. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, November 21, 1774, Draper MSS. 3Q4134.

49. R. Thwaites, Dunmore's War, p. xxiii.

50. Ibid., p. 307.
Chapter III

The Beginnings of the Revolution

On January 20, 1775, a meeting was held in Fincastle to form the first Committee of Safety in that county. Fifteen members were chosen, including Colonel William Preston and his recent commander in the Indian war, Colonel William Christian. The latter was made chairman of the Committee. The frontier counties thus followed the example of those in the east in establishing an organization which would keep the leaders of the community informed regarding important decisions, while at the same time forming a nucleus for deciding on concerted action. It is not known who was the author of the "Fincastle Resolutions" adopted at that meeting, but the decision to "resist the aggressions of England by force" showed clearly that western Virginia was supporting the radical leaders in Williamsburg.

Southwestern Virginia had its own particular reason for supporting the desire to end Royal authority: the land policies adopted by the government in England. While it cannot be truly claimed that Dunmore's War was popular in the beginning with the westerners, the successful outcome
was expected to bring many advantages to the frontier settler. Not only was peace with the Indians restored, but also thousands of new acres of land were opened for legal settlement, a fact that would please both the frontiersman and the land speculator in the east. Lord Dunmore's policy in regard to the western lands could not have been more popular, whatever his unpopularity in other endeavors, and western dissatisfaction with Royal control was not directed at Dunmore himself.

But the Governor was not long in finding out the attitude of the government in England toward westward expansion. When he returned to Williamsburg after the campaign in the west, he found a sharply critical report waiting for him. He was severely reprimanded for the encouragement he had given to surveys and settlements beyond the mountains and for the attempts to take possession of land formerly belonging to the Indians. The criticism further added:

> It is the King's pleasure that you do exert every power and authority which the constitution has vested in you, to preserve inviolate the engagements entered into in the King's name with the Indians, and to prevent any settlement whatever being made upon any pretense beyond the line settled at the Congress at Lochaber in October, 1770. You are to make no grants nor exercise any other jurisdiction than shall be absolutely necessary to preserve public peace.

When knowledge of the Indian war actually reached London, Dunmore was again criticized for opening war against
the savages without making known his intentions to the Indian Superintendent in Virginia. Faced with Royal disfavor at home, the Governor had no alternative but to refuse, for the time being at least, to give his consent for surveying lands west of the mountains.

The Royal land policy was therefore a chief reason for western desire for independence, though the westward advance was not stopped because of official disapproval. Nevertheless, direct and swift action was needed early in 1775 to insure Virginia's claim to the desirable area of Kentucky, and until Dunmore was deposed, the west looked to him for support. In January, Preston first informed the Governor of a rival claim to Kentucky. Writing to Dunmore in Williamsburg, the county lieutenant claimed that Colonel Richard Henderson of North Carolina had lately been in the Cherokee country of Kentucky trying to purchase land from them. Not only would this purchase produce a rival to Virginia in Kentucky, but also Henderson, who returned to North Carolina through Fincastle, planned to sell the land at such a low price that Fincastle residents would be encouraged to leave and would thus be out of range of Virginia laws. Rival claims in Virginia itself were bad enough, and Preston who was, officially at least, surveyor for the Virginia claim to Kentucky, was deathly afraid of a rival in Kentucky. A
reduction in fees for himself and the necessity of having to bear the complaints of fellow Virginians caused him to look anxiously toward Williamsburg in the hope of quick official action.

Lord Dunmore, however, was slow in making his decision. According to information received from England, he could not be sure that any effective steps he might take would be looked upon with favor. In addition, he was having increasing trouble with the recalcitrant House of Burgesses, which, by the spring of 1775, had moved to the village of Richmond to avoid being influenced by the Governor. As weeks and even months went by and Preston received no official word, he wrote again:

I shall only observe... that at least 500 People are preparing to go out this Spring from Carolina beside great Numbers from Virga to Settle there & that the Company intends to have a Treaty with the Wobaush Indians & give them a considerable present to Permit the Settlement on those lands....

It has been said that your Lordship intended to have those Lands Surveyed and Sold for the Crown at a reasonable Price....

Should yr Lordship incline to dispose of the Land in this or any other Manner & order it to be laid off in Lotts, I will cheerfully wait for my Fees until money can be raised out of the Sales, & should any unforeseen accident prevent the Sales thereof I am willing to run the Risque without having any charge against your Lordship or the Governt. for that service....

... I have been informed by Colo Christian and others that your Lordship intended to send me Instructions how to proceed in this important Business....

The county lieutenant was convinced that only Virginia was entitled to the full claim to Kentucky. The Treaty of
Lochaber in 1770 and the recent treaty with the Indians at Camp Charlotte had supposedly legally opened up the land for white settlement. The Indians claimed, however, that they had been promised £500 for the Kentucky lands which they had never received. They therefore felt themselves at liberty to sell the land again, and on March 17 Richard Henderson and his Transylvania Company consummated the land purchase at a meeting of 1,200 Indians on the Watauga River.

Preston's second letter to the Governor was more effective than the first had been. Dunmore wrote on March 21 that "all must try to defeat the plans of Henderson," and at the same time he enclosed his plans for a new land proclamation to become effective immediately. Surveying of the vacant lands was to begin at once in lots of 100 to 1,000 acres. They were then to be put up at public sale and sold to the highest bidder with 5 pence sterling quit rent per acre. With orders to advertise the proclamation throughout the county, Preston began his agreeable task at once. A party of surveyors was again sent out to Kentucky as had been done the previous spring, and although Henderson had opened up a land office at Boonesborough, Preston was confident in the knowledge that he had official protection.

The county lieutenant had received the Governor's orders and sent out the surveyors early in April. Events were approaching a climax in the east, however, and on
March 27 the Governor had been questioned regarding his policy toward the western lands. His reluctance to call the House of Burgesses into session had caused the formation of the Virginia Convention, which met in Richmond from March 11 to 27, and on the last day of its session, it passed a resolution calling for a committee to investigate the validity of Dunmore's new proclamation. The committee, composed of Thomas Jefferson, Richard Bland, Robert Carter Nicholas, Patrick Henry, and Edmund Pendleton, strongly questioned the provisions of the new act, especially with regard to quit rents, but failed to make a report immediately. Preston, therefore, did nothing to prevent the surveying, although no returns were registered with the land office at that time.

The spring and summer of 1775 was a confused period in Virginia history; it was extremely difficult for a public official to determine who held the reins of authority. The confusion increased as the western borders were approached because of the difficulty of keeping in touch with Williamsburg. The radicals during the March convention at Richmond had hoped that the Convention itself would assume the functions of government, but a united and determined conservative opposition prevented any such event. Nevertheless, while Dunmore remained in Williamsburg, an undeclared rebellion was in the making. It was touched off on April 30
when the Governor ordered powder removed from the powder house in Williamsburg to one of the King's ships lying in the harbor. Seizing on the opportunity, with a force of men gathered from his own county of Hanover, Patrick Henry marched on the capital, fully prepared to take control of the colonial government. It was not until the conservative element intervened again that the plan was abandoned. When the Governor finally reconvened the House of Burgesses on June 1, it was a tacit admission that power had passed out of his hands. War in the North had already begun, and the House of Burgesses, in reality the same as the Convention of the preceding March, was not likely to sit idly. One of the first acts passed in June made legal the actions of the March Convention.

As feeling against the Governor increased throughout June, he fled to H.M.S. Fowey in Williamsburg harbor and attempted to control the Burgesses from there. Since he refused to give his consent to any of the legislation passed by the House, it soon became evident that Virginia had come to the point of revolution. When the House of Burgesses dissolved at the end of June, both the executive and legislative functions were assumed by the Convention.

Preston on the frontier was torn between two duties. As a member of the Fincastle Committee of Safety, he was obligated to uphold American protests against British encroachments. He respected the authority of the Virginia Convention
that met in March and went so far as to obey its instructions regarding the regulation of the militia. Yet he continued to keep in touch with Dunmore, advising the latter about the actions of the rival company in Kentucky. As late as May the Governor was informed that according to information received from the Indians in Kentucky, the young men of the tribe were responsible for the sale of the lands to Henderson. Later, it was at the Governor's request that Preston wrote to the chiefs of the Cherokee Indians. If Henderson continued to force his claim, the King would "withdraw that Fatherly Love & Protection which you have so long enjoyed from," wrote Preston to Oconastota. The chiefs were reminded that the land was not theirs to sell and that no claim except Virginia's was to be allowed. Thus one of the last official acts of Dunmore as Governor was to outlaw Henderson's purchase.

The news of fighting in the North at Lexington and Concord helped to crystalize public opinion in western Virginia and remove the problem of divided allegiance. Preston's brother-in-law was one of the first to hear the news.

I think it is time for the Continent to do something for the defense of Life and Liberty. I am no politician yet I can see that we are in no posture for defense, were we independent of England & laws military and civil, money struck to support an army, it would not (I am apprehensive, be easy to subdue us or Make us Slaves as is intended.

Nevertheless, as the old established authority was
gradually being undermined in the east, it became increas-
ingly evident that Preston's divided loyalty to both the
Governor and the Convention could lead to nothing but con-
flict. The attempt of the county surveyor to follow the land
policy of Dunmore was the primary cause of the conflict, and
the entire spring and summer of 1775 were trying ones indeed
in Fincastle. As early as April Preston had been warned that
the people in general did not approve of the Governor's
instructions with regard to the surveying and selling of the
Kentucky land. Direct reports from there from John Floyd
told Preston that neither Dunmore's new land proclamation
nor the policies of Henderson were popular with the settlers.
Rather than risk losing their claims altogether, settlers
were moving eastward to the Holston River where they knew
their claims would be secure. Others also wrote to the
surveyor warning him that it would be best to make no fur-
ther surveys and to withhold those already made.

When the Governor's instructions arrived late in March,
Preston had been extremely anxious to send his assistant
surveyors to Kentucky as soon as possible. He felt that quick
action by the Virginia officials would forestall any plan
that Henderson might have to sell land cheaply; therefore,
he was willing to accept any plan that would start action
against the North Carolina speculator. When the surveyors
left for Kentucky, each had been given a verbal order to sur-
vo y a small district according to the plan outlined by Dun
to more. As the unpopularity of the Governor grew and the
order became known, Preston was subject to severe attack
from his neighbors in Fincastle, none of which eventually
reached the surveyors in Kentucky.

You may yet number me among the living, & tho’ in a very
remote corner of the world, as happy enough to be informed
that the note (with our trusty & well beloved friends
Christian and Russell at the head of it) had not, a short
time ago done your person nor Estate any considerable
damage. I have seen two of Russell’s letters,... which
were sent here post haste, in order to induce the men to
prevent my surveying any lands:... they undertake to
launch out pretty logically against you and myself.... If
they continue to use you ill or not, dont call them to
any account till I return that I may have the pleasure
of revenging your cause at the same time I do my own. 23

Preston apparently received this letter from Floyd
about the middle of July, for he wrote to Floyd at once
to cease his surveying and return home. At the same time,
realizing the seriousness of the charges that were growing
against him, he publicly announced that no further surveys
would be made and that none of the previous ones would be
returned until he had definite instructions from the con-
vention. As late as July, Preston had received no report
from the committee appointed the proceeding March to inves-
tigate the legality of Dunmore’s proclamation; therefore,
Preston, himself, sent a petition to the convention, asking
for definite instructions as to what his actions should be.
He reviewed his earlier plan of action and reiterated his
determination to do no more surveying until the convention had taken final action.

Preston's petition to the convention came at a time when his popularity in the county was greatly diminished. It was common knowledge that although the investigating committee had failed to make a formal report, it had nevertheless recommended that no one should buy or accept grants under the proclamation. As the surveyors left for Kentucky, mutterings of discontent arose against Preston's "pretended authority," and as the months passed, more severe rumors reached his ears. He was accused of making private surveys beyond his authority and of having large tracts of land surveyed and set aside for his own use. Both charges were denied. "That land I have I purchased and paid for; or located according to the ancient Rules of Government," he wrote to William Christian, one of his chief critics. "As to surveying or marking Lands for Private Adventurers, I solemnly declare I know nothing of it," he added.

Preston's assurances that he had done nothing illegal did little to calm the excitement of the county, and news of the unrest soon reached other sections of the frontier. His brother-in-law wrote from Augusta that Preston had become very unpopular there and that many rumors were circulating about him. He was accused of trying to incite the Cherokees to begin their raids again; that he was a Governor's
man; that he was "a friend to the continent;" and that he
had been removed from the Fincastle Committee of Safety.
It was even rumored that Preston was in prison for refusing
to surrender his surveying instruments.

There is no evidence that Preston was ever threatened
with removal from the Committee of Safety or that his authori-
ty was ever seriously questioned by the majority of the in-
habitants. Nevertheless, a petition was sent to the conven-
tion by the residents of Fincastle, complaining of Preston's
actions, and the Fincastle Committee of Safety also lodged
a complaint, to which Preston replied:

In the name of God, what have I done in public or private
life; to my Country, or Individuals, that I should induce
a number of Gentlemen, from whom I should have expected
every Friendship, at least the strictest Justice to draw
up such a representation of my Conduct; or rather Condemn
me, unheard....

I do assure you, and I do it with great Truth, that
I would be as unwilling to do anything against the Inter-
est of the Country as any member of the Committee; and
that I have as high Conceptions of Liberty as any other
man of my Capacity or knowledge can have & not withstand-
ing the present attack, I will one day be able to convince
my Country that these are my Principles, as I had the
Vanity to think my former Conduct had done.... 29

With the receipt of Preston's petition by the conven-
tion early in August, his reputation was in their hands.
Still, the body was slow to act, and it was not until the
fifteenth that formal action was taken. The convention re-
ported that until the committee appointed five months be-
fore had made its report, no one should buy or accept grants
of land under the late instructions of the Governor. All surveyors should make no surveys under orders of the said instructions, nor should any regard whatever be paid to the said proclamation. "I showed your Exculpatory Letter to ye Leading members, no blame was laid or attempted to be Charged on you," wrote Thomas Lewis to Preston. This favorable decision by the convention was further accentuated by action later in the session. With the final report of the committee in October, Preston was fully vindicated of any charges that had previously been made against him. As congratulations reached him from all parts of the county and even beyond, Preston could feel assured that he had not lost the confidence and support that he had enjoyed through so many years of public service. Nevertheless, his experience was indicative of the suspicion and mistrust of all public officials that was prevalent during the first months of the Revolution. The added incentive, the possibility that valuable western lands were being illegally disposed of, served to quickly increase their protests.

The swiftness with which Preston regained popular favor was of great value to the new government in the east. The Virginia convention had quickly realized the importance of having strong and experienced county lieutenants in the western counties, for if war actually did begin against the
British, the position of the Indians could be of vital importance. If the British in Canada succeeded in turning the Indians against the Americans, a frontier war could again develop which would draw valuable troops away from strategic areas in the east. Peace with the Indians was therefore an absolute necessity, and the preservation of this peace rested with the ruling class in the west and their representatives.

When Lord Dunmore concluded peace with the Indians at Camp Charlotte in the fall of 1774, he had planned to return to Fort Pitt in the spring and arrange a more permanent settlement. To insure the maintenance of peace until then, he took a body of Shawnee hostages with him to Williamsburg and left twelve Mingo prisoners at Fort Pitt under the command of his representative in the west, John Connolly. As political troubles increased at the capital, however, it became evident that another trip to the frontier in the spring would be dangerous; therefore in February Connolly visited Dunmore in Williamsburg. At this meeting, the Governor persuaded Connolly to support him in his quarrels with the convention and instructed him to make sure that the Indians would support the King in case of any trouble with the colonists. When Connolly returned to Fort Pitt, messages were sent out to the Indian chiefs, calling for a meeting
at Fort Pitt. At the same time, the Mingo hostages were released and were sent home with messages to rely upon the King, their father, and to come to Fort Pitt for a peace treaty. Sometime in June, the representatives of the Mingo and Delaware Indians met with Connolly at Fort Pitt, and according to his own words, they gave assurances that they would support the king. Connolly wrote that he had been successful in his "first work to convene the Indians to a treaty, restore the prisoners, and endeavor to incline them to espouse the royal cause." His duty done, Connolly ordered the disbanding of the garrison at Fort Pitt and went back to Williamsburg to join Dunmore. He was more than confident that the full force of the Indian raids could be turned on the colonists as soon as ordered by the Governor.

The success of his work at Fort Pitt did not, however, mean that the Governor had received full support of the Indians, nor that the Indians fully understood what they had done by agreeing to support Dunmore and the King. As rumors of the beginnings of the Revolution reached the Indian villages, probably soon after Connolly's work at Fort Pitt, there was much confusion and misunderstanding. The Loyalists began their work at once, laying special emphasis on the fact that Dunmore had used the Shawnee hostages with him to protect himself against colonial violence. Other
Indians also fancied themselves hated by the Americans and were encouraged in their belief by the Loyalist traders in the Indian villages.

The Indians were not the only ones who were alarmed by the first reports of fighting in the north. The frontiersmen well knew of the possibility that the British would turn to the Indians for aid.

The Cora Stalk left me, last Thursday; and in the space of four days conversation, I discovered that it is the intention of the Pick Tribe of Indians to be troublesome to our new settlements whenever they can; and he further assured me, that the Mongoes behave in a very unbecoming manner frequently upbraiding the Shawnees, in cowardly making the Peace; & call them big knife People; that the Corn Stalk can't well account for their intentions. If this be true, and a rupture between England and America has really commenced, we shall certainly receive trouble at the hands of those People in a short time,...

The idea that the Americans should also try to enlist the aid of the Indians to fight against the British was apparently not taken too seriously. The long and exposed frontier would bring the danger of retaliatory attacks which would outweigh any advantages that the Indian aid might offer. The safest policy would be to attempt to secure Indian neutrality, and all efforts of the Virginia Convention were directed toward that end. In July it appointed Thomas Walker, James Wood, Andrew Lewis, John Walker, and Adam Stephen as commissioners to deal with the Indians and attempt to ratify a peace. Later, the Continental Congress appointed a simi-
lar commission, and the two committees met jointly at Fort Pitt in September. There they were joined by the largest Indian delegation ever seen at this frontier fort. In addition to the Mingo, Shawnee, and Delaware tribes, there were representatives from the Ottawa, Wyandot, and Seneca nations, many of whom were still bitter because of the defeat at Point Pleasant the year before. For over a month, from September 12 until October 19, the American representatives and Indian delegates conferred regarding a peace treaty. At the end, one of the Virginia representatives was able to announce a successful conclusion.

"...We are much pleased to find all the Nations present so heartily disposed to Establish the Peace of this Country. Brothers, we have heard your respective promises and Engagements relying on the Most faithfull Performance thereof we shall rest satisfied and desire you will all be strong in this Good Work that the Peace now Established betwixt us may Endure forever... We are now in perfect Friendship with you all and hope to remain so forever A String to Each Nation...."

There was general rejoicing along the frontier when news of the successful negotiations at Fort Pitt was received. Although the Cherokee nation had not joined in the treaty making, it was generally felt that peace had been made more secure along the frontier, leaving men free to go east to join the Continental Army. Also, and this was just as important, the negotiations at Fort Pitt had permitted the settlement of Kentucky as had been agreed at Camp Charlotte the year before. With his own vindication by the conven-
tion assured, Preston was able to send surveyors into the "rich cane-lands" of Kentucky again. Accordingly, in the spring of 1776, John Floyd and his band of surveyors set out again.

With the departure of the surveyors, the rigorous work of frontier defense began again. At the beginning of 1775, the only fortifications along the frontier had been at Fort Pitt and Fort Blair, the latter the scene of the Battle of Point Pleasant. Fort Pitt had been ordered disbanded during Dunmore's struggle with the Convention, but the Americans seized it before the orders could be carried out. Fort Blair, however, according to Dunmore's orders had in reality been abandoned and burned. With the commencement of hostilities, it became glaringly evident that the frontier border, long and exposed, lacked adequate defense. Coupled with the presence of an energetic British commandant at Detroit, the knowledge of the frontier's weakness spurred the defenders to erect new forts along the entire frontier. Preston's part in the scheme became doubly important because of the lead mines in Fincastle, a valuable possession that must not fall into the hands of the British. The misunderstanding over the surveying in Kentucky seemed to be completely forgotten as the county lieutenant put himself at the head of renewed defense efforts.

These preparations did not begin a moment too soon.
Scarcely had the Americans completed the treaty at Fort Pitt when alarming reports filtered back to the frontier regions from Indian traders. The most persistent rumor was that the British at Detroit were attempting to incite an Indian war that would throw the frontier from Pennsylvania to the Carolinas into confusion. French traders, who had enormous influence with the Indians, also joined the British service and encouraged the Indians to revolt.

As the old story of Indian discontent reached Preston early in 1776, he was again faced with the problem of protecting the surveyors in Kentucky. More than likely he thought that any Indian trouble would come from the Cherokees, who not only had failed to sign the treaty of the year before, but also had objected from time to time to the presence of colonials in Kentucky. Nevertheless, the lieutenant's first news from the surveyors was reassuring. "We have been much discouraged on the way by alarms &c, but on our arrival here find the greatest part of the news to be false," wrote Floyd early in May. This slightly encouraging report was not shared by all the frontier region. As summer approached, Fincastle and other western counties began to prepare themselves for the worst. Calls on the government at Williamsburg for more ammunition became more frequent and were granted. "The Supply of Ammunition given by the Convention will be a great encouragement to the People of the Frontiers who were entirely destitute of that Article," wrote Preston.
The encouragement came none too soon, for by June the Cherokees again had threatened to begin their attacks against the isolated settlements along the frontier, and Preston realized that he would have to raise a sufficient body of men to defend the county. By June 15 he was able to inform Edmund Pendleton, President of the Virginia Committee of Safety, that one hundred men had been raised in defense of the county but that more would be needed when the expected attacks began. The Committee of Safety acted promptly. Pendleton was one to realize the strategic importance of Fincastle and ordered aid sent to the county lieutenant at once. Plans for a concerted expedition against the Cherokees went forward more slowly. As late as the end of July, Preston could only report that preparations for such a move were being formulated and that additional men would be needed to guard the frontier during the absence of the troops.

During August his appointment as commissary for the troops was revoked by the Committee in Williamsburg, although this was apparently done because an earlier appointment of Thomas Madison had been overlooked. Preston surrendered his responsibility cheerfully and concentrated his efforts toward raising men from the militia companies in Fincastle.

There is no evidence, however, that the plans to move against the Cherokees were ever put into effect. Events were moving at a rapid pace all along the frontier during the summer, and as the situation changed, so did the defense
plans. A general expedition against the Indians came to be frowned upon, for fear of inciting a general Indian war. Also, messages of Indian uprisings were received from the frontier north of Fincastle, caused, in all probability, by the British. Therefore, as the Shawnee and Wyandot tribes threatened to move against Virginia, it became impossible to concentrate forces into one single expedition.

The decision to abandon a general offensive against the Indians meant that each small frontier area would be responsible for its own defense measures. Preston found himself as busy with county protection as he had been in preparation for the expedition. Along with the other residents of Fincastle, he had become concerned over the fact that the Indians along the Ohio had learned how to make gunpowder, increasing the probability of severe Indian raids. At least three hundred new settlers in Kentucky left their new homes and moved back to Virginia when they heard this news.

After an anxious fall and early winter, Governor Patrick Henry, in January, 1777, decided to try to make peace with the Cherokees. On the twenty-second he appointed Preston, William Christian and Evan Shelby as commissioners to deal with the marauding tribe. Negotiations, however, did not begin until spring, when the three deputies reported that the Cherokees seemed to be inclined for peace. Although
Chief Dragging Canoe and his warriors were not at the conference, the commissioners were assured that he would agree to the proposed peace treaty. As finally agreed upon, the new treaty destroyed the validity of the claims of Henderson and his Transylvania Company, in return for which it was proposed that no new settlements be made that year along the Holston and Broad Rivers.

The coming of the Revolution brought an entirely new kind of problem to the Fincastle county lieutenant: that of the Loyalist. The problem was very close to Preston since he himself had been accused of Toryism, but the Loyalists in the county made no effort to urge him to join their number. Nevertheless, because of the large number of Tories in the county, Preston was at a loss to know how to deal with them effectively. His first impulse was to write to the Committee of Safety asking for instructions. Later, he was urged to run again for election to the House of Burgesses in order to support punitive legislation against the Loyalists. He refused this last request on the grounds that affairs at home were far too pressing to allow him to spend time in Williamsburg.

He was correct in this last statement, for the problem of the Tories grew worse as the Americans suffered serious defeats during the first two years of the war. By May of 1777, Preston sadly reported that a whole company of his
militia had refused to take the Virginia oath of allegiance.

It is difficult to gain a clear picture of the first two years of the Revolution along the frontier. Many old problems remained, especially that of the Indians. On the other hand, Kentucky and the lands to the west were legally opened up for settlement during these years, and Preston's authority and responsibility were definitely extended. The question of his own loyalty to the American cause was quickly settled, and although the Loyalists remained a problem, another satisfactory peace had been negotiated with the Indians which all hoped would last for some time.
Notes

Chapter III


3. T. Preston, Historical Sketches, p. 23.


5. Dartmouth to Dunmore, September 8, 1774, Ibid., p. 17.

6. Ibid., p. 18.

7. William Preston to Lord Dunmore, January, 1775, Draper MSS. 4Q01.

8. William Preston to Lord Dunmore, March 10, 1775, Draper MSS. 4Q07.


15. Ibid., p. 52.

16. Ibid., p. 54.

17. Ibid., p. 55.

18. William Preston to William Christian, May 1, 1775, Draper
MSS. 4QQ14. Although the militia was being prepared for increased efficiency, Washington was not in favor of using it as an integral part of the army. Militiamen were too individualistic to submit themselves to army life. Lewis G. Hatch, The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army (New York, 1904), pp. 72-73.


21. John Floyd to William Preston, April 21, 1775, Draper MSS. 33S268.


27. William Preston to William Christian, August, 1775, Draper MSS. 4QQ32.


30. Thomas Lewis to William Preston, August 19, 1775, Draper MSS. 4QQ29.

31. John Brown to William Preston, October 16, 1775, Draper MSS. 4QQ34.

32. R. Thwaites, Revolution Upper Ohio, p. 18.
33. Ibid., p. 19.
34. Ibid., p. xi.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 20.
37. Ibid., p. xii.
38. William Russell to William Fleming, June 12, 1775, Draper MSS. 4QQ19. Cornstalk was the most powerful of the Shawnee chiefs.
40. Ibid., p. xiii.
41. From minutes of the treaty kept by Thomas Walker, Ibid., p. 125.
42. Ibid., p. xiii.
43. Ibid., p. xi.
44. Ibid., p. 143.
46. William Preston to Edmund Pendleton, June 15, 1776, Draper MSS. 4QQ50.
47. Edmund Pendleton to William Fleming, June 20, 1776, Draper MSS. 1U19.
48. John Page to William Preston, August 1, 1776, Draper MSS. 4QQ63.
49. R. Thwaites, Revolution Upper Ohio, p. xvii.
50. Ibid., p. 206.
51. Patrick Henry to William Christian, January 22, 1777, Draper MSS. 4QQ108. Commissioners were also present from North Carolina.
53. William Preston to Edmund Pendleton, June 15, 1776, Draper MSS. 4Q50.

54. James McGavock to William Preston, August 14, 1776, Draper MSS. 4Q69.

In the midst of the Indian negotiations in the spring and summer of 1777, a new county was formed in southwestern Virginia. Neither the Revolution nor the continued Indian uprisings had slowed the westward push of the Virginia pioneers, and the demand again arose for the creation of a new county which could serve the needs of the new inhabitants. Montgomery County was the result of this agitation, and in addition to becoming county lieutenant, Preston was also appointed county surveyor, a justice of the county court, and coroner. The new county did not, as Fincastle had done, include the new settlements in Kentucky. Nevertheless, Preston had been concerned with Kentucky's defense problems for too long to allow his interest to drop entirely. Even more important was the fact that since the first surveys in that region were made under his direction, he was still necessarily involved with the numerous details that continued to develop out of the returning and recording of the surveys.

Preston therefore continued to attempt to keep peace with the Indians, with his efforts being directed, at first, toward the Cherokees. If this tribe could be successfully
dealt with, the southern Virginian frontier and Kentucky could be kept open for settlement. Although a truce had been settled with the Cherokees in May, the commissioners from Virginia were keenly disappointed that not all of the Cherokee chiefs, particularly Dragging Canoe, had agreed to the provisions. In June therefore, another meeting was held with the Indians in the hopes of gaining the approval of that powerful chief. Again he was not present, but the Virginians once more received the promise of those present that he intended to abide by the decisions of the others. The apparently limitless optimism of the frontiersman thus was sustained again in the hope for peace with the Indians.

Farther to the north, however, there was constant apprehension that Indian uprisings would break out into a full scale war. In June, 1777 the Continental Congress appointed General Edward Hand to be commander-in-chief of the western area, with headquarters at Fort Pitt. Commanding only a handful of regular troops, he was expected to recruit the major part of his army from the various county militias. There seemed to be little doubt that he would soon need such an army. The British, still located at Detroit, were doing all in their power to encourage any sort of Indian uprising in the hope of splitting the eastern and western sections of the American forces. In addition, Loyalists were urged to take refuge in British forts, in return for which
they were promised land bounties as a sign of faithful ser-
vice. General Hand was thus faced with the difficult task
of attempting to calm the Indians as well as trying to deal
effectively with the Loyalist element. He saw at once the
importance of the western county militias. "Should a General
war with the savages be inevitable, I have the highest Con-
fidence in the fortitude of the Militia & their Zeal for
the public Service, which Comprehends their dearest Interests," he wrote. The four principal forts along the western fron-
tier were reinforced, and numerous local blockhouses were
added to the defense areas. As a final precaution, Governor
Henry called out the militia in the northern counties.

The frontier was at first successful in keeping peace
with the Indians. Although the treaty made in 1775 was an
uneasy one, the tribes closest to the settlers, for the most
part, continued to abide by its provisions. It was only
those Indians who were located nearer British authority
who were induced to declare war against the border. However,
under constant prodding from the British, and no doubt in-
fluenced by their western neighbors, even the more friendly
tribes grew restless during the summer of 1777; small bands
were formed, and raids were begun again. General Hand sent
out the first warning.

The Murders lately committed by the Savages on our Fron-
tiers have occasioned much distress and uneasiness in the
minds of the Inhabitants, and as a General Confederacy
of the Western tribes has taken place at the Instigation
of the British Emisaries in their Country it will no doubt be productive of Multiplied Greivances to us except we can penetrate their Country and take on them the Vengeance due to their perfidy....5

The decision to form a new expedition against the Indians was therefore decided upon, and preparations were made as far south as Botetourt County. Preston, busy with the formation of the new county, was not called upon for aid, probably in the expectation that his recently concluded peace with the Cherokees had freed his sector from the possibility of attack. Nevertheless, although General Hand attempted during the late summer and fall to stimulate interest in the expedition, the other western counties remained apathetic toward the plan. Disappointed at the lack of support given him, Hand reluctantly released the county militias on November 5 when he yielded to the fact that his plans were not being supported.

Although Preston was not involved in the latest plan to invade the Indian country, he was concerned, as were all western officials, with the alarming fact that many frontiersmen refused to distinguish between friendly and enemy Indians. Long acquaintance with the Indian and the futility of making Indian truces had caused many frontiersmen to take nothing for granted when dealing with the Indians; nevertheless, there were many Indians during the first years of the Revolution who preferred American to British friendship. One of the powerful chiefs who supported the American cause
was Cornstalk, the important Shawnee leader. To prevent his own tribe from joining the British forces, he agreed to come to Fort Randolph in Botetourt County with several of his braves to remain as hostages. There, in November, 1777, he was murdered by American troops in retaliation for Americans killed along the Kanawha River.

The alarm soon spread throughout the frontier; the murder of Cornstalk was more than retaliation, for it meant the end of the Shawnee truce. The news reached Montgomery early in December. "I am apprehensive this Conduct will be followed by very bad consequences to the Frontiers, by engaging us in a war with that Revenqful and Warlike Nation and their Allies," wrote Preston to William Fleming. To Governor Henry he wrote that he expected the British to help form a general Indian confederacy with all the Indians beyond the Ohio. War would then break out from Fort Pitt to the Clinch River. Similar feelings were shared all along the frontier, causing Governor Henry to act promptly. He warned the frontier:

The Murder of the Shawanese Indians will no doubt bring on Hostilities with that People. In order to ward off the Stroke which may be expected it is necessary to have ebery Gun in your County put into good order & got ready for Action.... I beg the favor of you to confer with Col. Preston on the propriety of establishing a Post to pro- serve the Communication with Fort Randolph,... I submit it to you and Col. Preston to do for the best being on the Spot. 10

The western officials received the full force of Gov-
Governor Henry's criticism of the murder. The fact that nothing was being done to punish the murderers alarmed him to the point of threatening to withdraw the government's protection from the frontier. As a final resort, he ordered that while full protection should be continued along the Virginia frontier, the militia was to act on the defensive only; there were to be no plans for an offensive expedition.

Ordinarily winter on the frontier meant peace. But the fear occasioned by Cornstalk's murder created the need for erecting new defenses against the expected retaliatory attacks and for maintaining the militia in constant readiness in case the Indians should decide to move eastward. Preston, with a frontier of eighty miles to defend, found it necessary to call on neighboring counties for aid in establishing new forts and supplying the required militia. As spring approached, the Governor made new efforts to establish friendly relations again with the Shawnees. He ordered Preston to make new overtures of peace, to assure the Indians that every effort was being made to bring the murderers to justice. He also sent printed proclamations denouncing the murderers to the western county lieutenants with instructions that they be distributed among the Indians. Feeling that he still had not done enough, Henry wrote to Preston for advice:

Will you please tell me what preparations you judge best to make in order to facilitate this work of peace? For indeed the Injustice of pursuing by offensive and vig-
Encouraged by Governor Henry's earnest desire for peace, Preston and his neighboring county lieutenant, William Fleming, attempted to deal with the Shawnees. A message was prepared and sent to the Shawnee chiefs, giving assurances that every effort was being made to find the killers and proposed that a peace treaty be made at Fort Randolph to make reparations. There is no evidence that serious hope was entertained by Preston and Fleming that the offer to negotiate would be accepted. Even before the message was sent, Preston had been ordered by General Hand to call out his militia to defend his frontier, and by April 12, Henry faced the inevitable and sent out new orders for maintaining frontier defense.

The orders came none too soon; already Preston was receiving reports from his county frontier.

It is supposed by the People that a large Body of Indians are come in and that a Number have passed by the garrisons down the River to strike the Inhabitants. This supposition, I think is probable, and if I hear any further Accounts this Day, I shall make use of the kind Indulgence you gave me of calling some Men from Botetourt.... I am excessively uneasy about our Frontiers in general & my own exposed Family in particular.

Throughout the rest of April, it became more apparent that the Indians were making definite preparations to attack the frontier settlements. As more definite information became known to him, Preston grew even more anxious for the safety of his family and the many important documents that he kept
with him.

In this exposed situation I have neither authority nor
Influence enough in this County... to raise even six men
to guard the Place, tho' I have the Public Ammunition here,
and the Records of the Surveys in this & Washington County
& the Kentucky with most of the Plats. I am really at a
loss what to do. 16

In the interest of safety, Preston requested that a guard
be stationed at his home, and the request was granted "to
enable him to continue at his Habitation & to encourage others
to do so." A sergeant and twelve men were added to the al-
ready large family at Smithfield.

By the middle of May, the entire frontier was engaged
in speculation as to where the first Indian attack would
come. The news of the French alliance with the American for-
ces had not yet reached them; therefore they had no reason
to hope that the powerful French influence with the savages
would later be exerted in their behalf. For the time being,
the settlers could only wait. It was assumed that any attack
that would come would be led by Shawnees determined to avenge
Cornstalk's death; therefore, when Preston heard of the first
attack in Greenbrier, on May 17, he believed, as did the other
leaders, that the Shawnees were responsible. His alarm was
considerable, for he well knew the ferocity of the aroused
Shawnee tribe.

I have no one, even to consult with; for God sake advise
me what to do; I dont think your County & can spare any
Men, therefore cant ask them; but if you are of opinion
that a Company could be Raised, I am sure you will do it....
Those in Distress are crying out against me for not sending them assistance. These to be draughted ... cursing me for disturbing them; my own Family in Danger & myself in Trouble & Confusion. 17

Preston had already written to Governor Henry asking permission to call on more easterly counties for aid, but the Governor, pressed for aid from all sides, refused, giving Preston permission only to call on Botetourt in case the attacks became severe. By the time of the attack on Greenbrier, orders had already been sent to Botetourt to aid Preston in Montgomery in case of a serious attack. In spite of Preston's alarm, however, the attacks continued to be centered in Greenbrier. "I have not a doubt but the Enemy will endeavor to make the stroke as extensive as Possible & spread Destruction and Terror along our whole Frontiers," he wrote to Colonel Fleming in Botetourt. He continued his own defense measures, sent his family to the comparative safety of Botetourt, and tried to keep the frightened inhabitants of Montgomery calm.

Good news was on the way from Greenbrier, however. The militia there was not caught in a complete state of surprise since warning had come from Fort Randolph that a large body of Indians was on the way. Rather than Shawnee, the party consisted of Wyandots and Mingo; at Fort Donnally on May 29, they were decisively defeated by Greenbrier troops. For Preston, it was the best news since the victory at Point.
Pleasant in 1774. "Praise be to God who has given us the
Victory," he wrote to Andrew Lewis. The Indian defeat meant
that his family could return home and that his responsibil-
ities for frontier defense could be somewhat lessened.

Preston's exultation was rather premature. The victory
in Greenbrier did bring a feeling of confidence back to the
frontier settlers and decreased the danger of another seri-
ous attack. Nevertheless, small parties of the defeated
tribe remained in the frontier region and kept the southern
border in an uproar for another two months. No sooner had
he heard of the victory at Fort Donnelly than Preston was
forced to write to Andrew Lewis requesting additional gun-
powder and to the Governor for additional money. It is prob-
able that Preston had further reasons for demanding more
ammunition and money for supplies. With the restoration of
self-confidence, there arose a demand for a new expedition
to go into the Indian country and defeat the Indians again,
removing the small roving parties from the frontier. Preston
undoubtedly knew of the plan and informed Governor Henry:

I greatly approve the Spirit of the young men who are
to go to the Enemy's Country, & it may be expected that
any Service they render their Country, they will be
paid for. It is bold of the men and commendable;.... 20

The newly planned expedition faced great obstacles
from the start. Approval by the Governor did not mean that
all necessary supplies would be immediately forthcoming nor
that the Indians would cease their attacks in the immediate
vicinity. Constant pressure had to be applied by the county lieutenant to receive the needed equipment, both for the expedition and for immediate defense at home. The Governor continued to receive pleas for help:

Men are not armed,... and this deficiency has induced us to Apply to your Excellency to get an order for one hundred & fifty rifles, or muskets for each County as they can be spared from the publick magazine.... We forbear particularizing the Murders committed by the Enemy tho they are many at present as it is a disagreeable subject. 21

Preston was able to forestall panic in Montgomery, although hardly a day went by without some kind of report of Indian violence. As in previous Indian wars, the majority of the settlers banded together in small forts, neglecting their crops, but creating a sense of security by being able to fight together. The other western counties were not so fortunate, and as plans for the advance against the Indians continued, the constant raiding by the Indians themselves played havoc with defense measures. "I am apprehensive the Executive Authorities' attention is too much engross'd with the affairs Eastwardly, or else they don't feel for the miseries, that happens on the Western frontier," wrote the county lieutenant of the newly formed Washington County.

Thus, by the end of August, it had become obvious that while the officials in Williamsburg approved of the expedition, the actual formation and supplying of the men would
have to be done by the frontier alone. At a meeting held in Botetourt on September 15, it was proposed that six hundred men be formed at once for the excursion across the Ohio, for although winter was approaching, it was decided that "that Season would suit as well as any for Men determined with proper spirit to do good for the Country." Although the final plans were formed by officials in Washington County, Preston knew and approved of the idea and attended the meeting in Botetourt. A final decision was thereby reached, but it came too late. On October 2, the Virginia Council disallowed the southwest expedition, and the plans were reluctantly abandoned.

The removal of support of the expedition by the Governor and Council was probably due to events in the North. General Lachlan McIntosh had replaced General Hand as commander-in-chief at Fort Pitt in August; upon his arrival, he had immediately begun plans for an expedition of his own into the Indian country. The general was successful in obtaining the support of Governor Henry in his plans for attack, the latter going so far as to allow McIntosh to direct the calling out of the western militias in preparation for "this measure so necessary to relieve the distresses of many worthy citizens of this state."

Henry gave this directive in August, assuming that the general's plans would soon be carried into execution. The
latter soon discovered, however, that it was one thing to plan an expedition and another actually to carry it out. Following the abandonment of the southwestern expedition, he wrote to the county lieutenants of that area, calling on them for two hundred men from each county to accompany him on his offensive. All declined to comply with his request. They were undoubtedly disappointed over the fact that their own plans had been postponed; in addition, there was no assurance that the Indians would not attack again along the southern border. Their decision to refuse the general's request was later supported by Henry and the Council. Both were hesitant to interfere with McIntosh's plans, but the coming of winter and the scarcity of supplies forced them, on November 20, to countermand the orders. Preston settled down to pass the winter unhampered by calls from the North.

He was very much in need of a rest. Indian defense had been his constant responsibility for well over a year. In addition, he had to continue his other activities, even though the Indian menace made surveying practically impossible. Nevertheless, important decisions were reached in the Virginia Legislature that made legal earlier actions of the surveyor. Late in March, 1778, Preston received word that the Assembly was planning to consider the validity of the surveys made under colonial authority beyond the Proclamation Line of 1763. According to Thomas Walker, the decision
reached by the Assembly would especially affect those sur-
veys made for the Loyal Land Company under Preston's direc-
tion. It was therefore necessary for Preston to devote
considerable time in making sure that his surveys made for
the company, some as long ago as 1763, were in order and
could be presented to the Assembly for ratification. Final
action by that group was postponed until October, when it
was hoped that the land offices could be opened again. At
that session the action of Preston and the other surveyors
was confirmed, thereby legalizing large amounts of land
that had been sold before the Revolution. The action of
the Legislature was extremely popular in the west since it
assured many claimants that they would be allowed to keep
their lands, and it gave Preston the opportunity to make
final settlement on many of the pending claims in his of-

A comparatively peaceful winter was thus spent in Mont-
gomery, but again activity to the north brought a change
during the spring of 1779. In spite of lack of support from
the southern counties, General McIntosh had succeeded, dur-
ing the fall of 1778, in establishing a western outpost in
Indian territory. It was hoped that this new Fort Laurens
could be used "to make Excursions to any of the Hostile
Towns, who will dare to offend and insult us, which I hope
will Secure the peace of our Frontiers in this quarter at
least," wrote General McIntosh. With such a far reaching outpost, it was hoped that an attack could be made on Detroit in the spring, and a considerable garrison was stationed at the fort. However, Indian raids continued throughout the winter, and with the coming of spring, they became even more severe because of the goading of the British at Detroit. By April 1 the attacks had spread the entire length of the frontier, and Preston was again writing anxious letters to his associates.

Were it even possible to raise a Company it is impossible to procure Provisions for their support. The whole Country is alarmed. Should the People remove it will ruin them, & to stay is dangerous. I am at a great loss what to do for the best. 30

Bad news was also heard from Kentucky where it was rumored that five hundred British troops were preparing to march to the falls of the Ohio with no effective defense expected.

It had apparently already been determined that the new Indian raids were the work of Chief Dragging Canoe, whose failure to attend the peace treaty in 1777 had in reality signified that he would not make peace with the Americans. An expedition was formed in the south immediately under the command of Colonel Evan Shelby to march to the Cherokee country to try to defeat the band before too much headway could be made. The response was overwhelming as the frontier hastened to arms, and a successful maneuver was concluded. The decisive defeat of the Cherokees left the settlers free
to turn to other affairs. Good news also came from Fort Pitt; Colonel Daniel Brodhead, who had replaced General McIntosh, had made successful treaties with the Wyandot, Delaware, and Shawnee tribes. The American cause in the west had never looked brighter.

Preston was unable to take part in the expedition against the Cherokees under Chief Dragging Canoe. He was involved in affairs closer to home that directly concerned the safety of the entire southwestern area: the problem of the Loyalists. From October, 1776 to May, 1777, over forty of his neighbors had refused to take the oath of allegiance to Virginia, and the presence of over one hundred people in Montgomery County alone who had refused to take the oath by January of 1778 created a serious problem, which Preston was unable to solve successfully. They were subject to British influence at all times, and the latter spared no efforts to use them in creating dissension along the frontier. Yet, the Loyalists looked to Virginia and Preston in particular for adequate defense against Indian attack. Their position as a first line of defense against the Indians along the Holston River meant that Preston could not refuse them aid.

Following the first refusal of the Loyalists to support the American cause, there was no serious trouble until the spring of 1779. On April 7, Preston was informed of a new Tory plot that involved the capture of the valuable lead mines in the county. Acting quickly, the county lieutenant arrested the
ringleaders of the group, led by John Griffith and tried them at the May session of the county court. As a result, Griffith was freed on bail, while others were sent to the Staunton jail in Augusta County. Early in the summer, the Loyalists again broke out in a series of revolts. In addition to threats, the Loyalists attempted to burn houses, kill valuable domestic animals and hoped eventually to join Lord Cornwallis on the coast.

The ferocity of the new uprising convinced Preston that he and other Montgomery officials could not handle the insurrects alone. Several companies of his militia were called out without success. However, to admit defeat would merely encourage Loyalists in other sectors to similar tactics. Preston therefore appealed to neighboring counties for aid. William Campbell from Washington County with a force of one hundred and thirty men marched to the lead mines in Montgomery and succeeded in breaking up the Loyalist group.

Our People shot one, Hanged one, and whipt several, and next Monday are to have a Sale of the Tories Estates. The one who was Hanged has twice Deserted & is also a noted Thief. I expect this Affair will settle the Tories for a While.

With the submission of the Tories and the defeat of the Indians in Kentucky, Preston enjoyed a brief period of comparative calm. At fifty, the increased activity of the Revolutionary years had taxed his strength. He was in poor health during the summer of 1779, and he looked forward to the coming of winter when all activity was lessened. After the coldest winter in the memory of the frontier, the Tories were ready to cause additional trouble and forced the county lieutenant to take drastic action.
Notes

Chapter IV


4. Edward Hand to David Shephard, June 3, 1777, Draper MSS. 1SS57.

5. Edward Hand to William Fleming, August 12, 1777, Draper MSS. 1U60.


7. Ibid., p. 158.

8. William Preston to William Fleming, December 2, 1777, Draper MSS. 2ZZ43.


18. Louise P. Kellogg, ed., Frontier Advance on the Upper Ohio, 1778-1779 (Madison, 1916), p. 16. Two scouts disguised as Indian warriors were able to slip past the Indians and warn the settlers.

19. Ibid., p. 17.


22. Arthur Campbell to William Fleming, July 31, 1778, Draper MSS. 4Q78.

23. L. Kellogg, Frontier Advance, p. 137.

24. Ibid., p. 125.


29. Lachlan McIntosh to William Fleming, December 7, 1778, Draper MSS. 2U53.


31. John Floyd to William Preston, May 31, 1779, Draper MSS. 17CG127.

32. L. Kellogg, Frontier Advance, p. 364.


34. William Preston to William Fleming, December 2, 1777, Draper MSS. 2ZZ43; William Preston to Patrick Henry,

35. William Preston to William Fleming, April 8, 1779, Draper MSS. 3ZZ20.


37. Ibid.

Chapter V

Frontier Participation in the Revolution, 1780-1783

By 1780 the frontier settlements had endured nearly five years of almost constant fear and danger. When the Revolution first started, the sentiment in the west was overwhelming for support of Revolutionary measures passed by the Virginia Council and the House of Burgesses. The problem of Loyalism, while present to a certain degree, was a minor problem to the western officials. In those early years the more important problem of attempting to deal with an Indian menace that was encouraged constantly by British troops to the north and west called for the attention of all the western leaders and left little time for worry about affairs in the east. In fact, the problem of maintaining western defense was such that a westerner often seemed to be out of touch with what was going on along the coast of the country. It did not often occur to him that a successful Indian defense was extremely important to the ultimate success of the entire Revolutionary effort, for by successfully keeping the British troops occupied there, there was much less likelihood of a defeat in the east. No spectacular victories were won, but after five years, the fron-
tier settlements were still intact, the people still determined to defend their homes as long as there was hope for success.

However, even those who did not support the Loyalist cause had become restless during the summer of 1779. Doubt and discouragement increased as the war wore on in the east with no apparent signs of ultimate success, while in their own section, the Indians were constantly threatening to annihilate whole communities. British agents, slipping through the back country, offering bounties for effective aid to their armies, were constant temptations to those who had begun to question the final outcome of the war in the east.

The cold winter of 1779-1780 found the entire frontier free from Indian attacks and apparently secure all along the Ohio. A new system of forts was begun which would, it was hoped, make it almost impossible for a surprise attack to descend on the outlying settlements. The calm, however, was deceptive, and to those in Montgomery who had experienced the Tory outbreaks of the preceding summer it was merely a prelude to increasing trouble in the coming year.

As the fighting on the coast shifted from the north to the south during the late months of 1779, the restlessness of the frontier increased. It was even more accentuated by the tremendous increase in population of the southwestern counties during the early months of 1780. Many came
lured by the favorable reports that the Indians had ceased their raiding, and the land was therefore safe to occupy. "Incredible" numbers began to pour into Kentucky. "The settlements at Kentucky by next fall will be able to turn out 15,000 men, and the villainous Shawanese and their allies will soon find very troublesome neighbours from that quarter," was the report received by those in the east.

The increase in population did no doubt offer more protection against the problem of Indian raids, but far too often the new inhabitants proved ineffective, and at times they served to increase the dangers of frontier life. Having come from the eastern sections of Virginia, they knew little or nothing of Indian warfare and were therefore practically defenseless in any kind of Indian trouble. Their own confusion and panic often quickly spread to other inhabitants, thus creating the problem of uncontrolled hysteria along the frontier borders that more settled residents found hard to control.

Far more important to immediate events on the frontier was the arrival of a second class of settler: the fleeing Loyalist. As enthusiastic Whigs forced them out of their eastern homes, the Tories often fled to the western frontier in the hopes of reaching British forces at Detroit. Many others, however, fled to the western counties and settled there, joining forces with Loyalists already at home.
in the area. Equally important, they attempted to influence those along the frontier who had become weary of the never-ending Indian struggle, the interruption of trade caused by the war, the new heavy taxes and the authority imposed by the western officials. The Tory uprisings of 1779 were only the beginnings of even more trouble in the coming year. And as the scene of battle moved to the south, Montgomery and other southwestern counties became even more vulnerable; the large Loyalist colony in North Carolina could easily attempt to unite the British army in the east and the Tory element in the west. "Should the English go there and offer them Protection from the Indians the greater part will join." "I am sensible," wrote another report, "that there are a great number of disaffected inhabitants on this side of the mountain, that wish for nothing more than a fair opportunity to submit to the British Government, and, therefore, would be glad to have the regular troops withdrawn."

As the long winter gave way to spring, Indian attacks began again in northern Virginia and in Pennsylvania. Petition after petition crossed the mountains asking the eastern counties for help and relief. In the south, however, affairs remained calm for the time being. In Montgomery Preston, recovered from the illness of the preceding fall, turned his attention more and more to the defense of the lead mines in the county. The Tory outbreak of 1779 had taught him that
the mines would be the first objective if another outbreak occurred, and rumors of contemplated Loyalists plots grew during the late winter months. In March he felt it was necessary to report to Governor Thomas Jefferson:

I am sorry to acquaint your Excellency that three Days ago an Information was made to a Magistrate... That a Number of Non Disaffected to the present Government had combined to disturb the Peace of this unhappy Frontier as soon as the Season would Permit... That 75 or thereabouts had taken the Oath of Allegiance to the King... & carried on a constant Correspondence with all the other Disaffected People....

Through long experience, Preston knew that to make such information public would be to encourage nothing but unrest; therefore, this report obtained from two former Tories was not generally known throughout the county. To Jefferson, however, he confided that three of the suspected ringleaders had been arrested and that he intended to disarm the militia companies containing large numbers of Loyalists, at the same time increasing the guard at the lead mines.

Shortly after Preston sent his report to the Governor, he received more specific information from the two ex-Loyalists. Their aims were short and to the point:

To destroy the Lead mines - To Join the Indians & with them to burn destroy & cut their way to the English Army and assist them in reducing the Country.

Having sent Jefferson his ideas of the "daring and treasonable Conspiracy," Preston waited for official orders on his future course of action. The idea that the Tories were attempting to kindle the dormant Indian fire alarmed him, and
he toyed with the idea of sending out new Indian scouts to spy on the Cherokees. Reports of new Indian alarms along the old trouble area, the Clinch River, added to his consterna-
10 tion. Reassuring word from the Governor that he expected no Indian trouble did not alter the fact that distant regions of the county were sending new and frightening reports back to the county seat.

Jefferson also warned that the lead mines must be protected at all cost; however, Preston should be careful to avoid any irregularity in dealing with the "disaffected persons" that would give them a legal opportunity to avoid punishment in case of any uprising. The Governor further suggested that if enough evidence could not be found to convict the Tories of treason, then Preston should attempt to prove misprision of treason, punishable by fine and imprison-
11 ment.

The swiftness and effectiveness of Preston's arrest of the three ringleaders of the plot dampened for a time the ardor of the frontier Loyalists, leaving Preston free to turn once more to the Indians. Another warning in April from North Carolina regarding a possible Tory plot was not looked upon as serious, but the continuing complaints of isolated settlers was an ever present problem. An attempt at concerted action was begun in May when officers from Washington, Montgomery, Botetourt, Rockbridge, and Greenbrier
Counties met to form a plan of offense. In addition, word had reached them that George Rogers Clark was planning a new expedition against Detroit, and it was resolved to send troops, with William Campbell in charge, to join his forces.

Before plans for either expedition could be entirely completed, distressing news reached Montgomery and the frontier from Kentucky. Clark, stationed at the falls of the Ohio, had received word that a British force of unknown size under Captain Henry Bird was marching toward Kentucky, probably with the intention of joining the English troops then fighting in South Carolina. Word was at once sent back to southwest Virginia calling for aid.

"We are in a very defenceless situation in this country, & I hear of reinforcements from you, but I fear if they come they can do us but little service. They will be obliged to return for want of provisions as we have none but broad."

To make matters worse, the frontier received word that Charleston had been captured by the British, giving encouragement to the Loyalists in the county and giving an added incentive to the British attack expected in Kentucky. Nevertheless, the Tories remained quiet for the time being, and a new expedition was planned to go to the aid of the settlers in Kentucky. By June 23 three companies were almost ready to march, and an attempt was being made to raise more men from those guarding the lead mines.

Unfortunately this last plan reached the spies for the
Tory element in the county, and on June 24 Preston and the
other county leaders were horrified to hear that more than
two hundred Tories had armed themselves and were stationed
five miles from the lead mines.

I have just received another Express from Colo Crockett
and Capt Quirk the Tories are actually embodied in
the Glades, to the Amount of Two Hundred, and some have
certainly kill'd nine Men.... The matter will be decid¬
ed in a few days. 16

The uprising of the Tories was somewhat premature, for
the militia company at the lead mines had not left for
Kentucky and was thus in a fair position to withstand any
attack. Preston himself was in a dilemma. In addition to
the panic in Kentucky and the Loyalist revolt, he had re¬
ceived orders from Jefferson to furnish one hundred men
from the Montgomery militia to go to the aid of the Caro¬
linians in their expedition against the Chickamauga Indians.
Requests for aid from other counties were refused at first,
and it was not until July 3 that the Governor authorized
Preston to call on nearby counties for help.

Meanwhile, the majority of the county's inhabitants
flocked to the aid of the county officials. Hearing that the
British had failed to enter Kentucky, the troops formed for
that expedition were used to defeat the aims of the Loyal¬
ists. Arthur Campbell and his troops from Washington Coun¬
ty pursued the armed band of Tories to the North Carolina
border, where they scattered into the mountains and woods. Back in Montgomery Preston had a plan of his own. Under pretense of going to reinforce the lead mines, Captain James Byrn was instructed to disarm another large band of Tories at Walker's Creek.

Those who make it appear to the Court or any two Magistrates that they are & have been friends to american Liberty are to have their Arms delivered back to them;... no Violence is to be offered to Women or Children, or the old & helpless;...

I have hopes that if the Plan is properly Executed it will be a means of humbling those People and of course removing the Cause of so much disturbance for the future. 20

By insisting on orderly and fair treatment for the Tories and suspected enemies, Preston hoped to keep popular feeling down to the minimum. He was successful at first, and three weeks after the initial revolt, it was claimed that the "late insurrection" was a thing of the past. Nevertheless, Preston ordered that two small companies be kept on active duty for "two or three months should there be occasion to continue them so long."

"You cannot be insensible that the resentment of the well affected in this, and the Neighbouring Counties runs very high against you; & that you have enjoyed every Protection, that the best Citizens enjoyed notwithstanding your Conduct," wrote the county lieutenant to the leaders of the Loyalist group. "This resentment has been hitherto restrained, I may say without Vanity, by myself," he continued and urged
them to come to his house to discuss the proper steps for their safety and security. It is to Preston's credit that he continued to try to deal with the Loyalist problem in a quiet though effective way, for he made it plain that failure to meet with him would constitute an admission that the Tories had not been sufficiently punished.

The county lieutenant's efforts to keep the Tories in a state of submission were not successful. The continued news of British successes in the Carolinas kept the entire county on edge and encouraged the Tories to make another attempt to seize the lead mines and thus deprive the surrounding country of its immediate war needs. This "most horrid Conspiracy" was planned for July 25, but hints of its occurrence were abroad before that time. Two men were therefore sent among the Loyalists disguised as Tory officers. There they succeeded in learning the new plans to arouse the county and ultimately subdue the entire state, and they reported the plot to Preston. Sixty Loyalists were taken into confinement at once and were carefully examined. Governor Jefferson received the report:

I am convinced the Enquiry will continue at least a fortnight, as there are Prisoners brought in every hour and new Discoveries making.... Some have been whipped & others, against whom little can be made appear, have enlisted to serve in the Continental Army. 23

The new method of attempting to question every suspected Loyalist almost caused a reign of terror on the frontier. Every person who had not supported the American cause was
brought before the county court to be examined. It was with extreme difficulty that Preston and the other officers maintained a firm control on proceedings that went on for the entire month of August. An effort was made by the county lieutenant to arrange a pardon for the "Dissaffected Sons." Provided that the oath of allegiance to the state of Virginia was taken, it was promised that property would be returned to them under full protection. For the most part, the younger men were released if they promised to join the Continental forces, while the more important leaders were held under heavy bond until they could be sent to the east to be properly tried. Loyalist property was seized and sold. It was not until September that Preston could report that "I believe they are now suppressed & I have enlisted near one hundred of them into the Continental Army as Security for their own & friends future good Behaviour." In spite of Preston's efforts to maintain the law, there were some cases in which the suspected person was dealt with rather harshly. Threats of violence were often used to obtain confessions of participation in the "Hong Cause," so much so that in 1782 the Virginia Legislature passed an act indemnifying Preston and his fellow officers from all actions or suits connected with the Tory uprising. This action taken by the Legislature more than two years after the trouble occurred was necessary to calm the cries of injustice that
arose after fighting had ceased. Nevertheless, at the time, Preston was complimented for his thoroughness in dealing with the Tory menace.

Indeed, the strict measures taken during the August uprisings kept the Loyalists from making further serious threats. Although various western officials received ominous warnings during the remainder of the year, there was no concerted effort to take control of the western affairs. Officials could afford to devote more time to other problems of the war.

The fall of Charleston on May 12, 1780 was not only discouraging to the southern leaders, but it was also one of the principal causes of the sudden rise of Loyalist protest groups in the western sections of Virginia and the Carolinas. General Gates was sent to South Carolina to try to stem the British advance under Lord Cornwallis, but the success that he enjoyed at the Battle of Saratoga was not with him in the south. At the very time that the western Virginia counties were engaged in suppressing the Tory revolts, Lord Cornwallis was again attacking the American forces in South Carolina. At Camden, on August 16, the army of General Gates was routed, and gloom and despair enveloped the entire southern sector. When the news reached Montgomery on August 22, the Tory investigation by militia officers was still in progress; the remainder of the militia
had gone with Colonel William Campbell to Surry County, North Carolina to suppress a Tory uprising in that state.

The accounts of the defeat at Camden were accompanied by reports that the British army was continuing to move inland in an attempt to subdue both North Carolina and Virginia. It was impossible, however, for the western officials to act immediately, and until it was definite that the Tories had been defeated, no definite plans were made. By September 13, Preston had formulated a plan and submitted it to his fellow lieutenants. He proposed that five hundred men from Augusta, Rockbridge, Botetourt, and Montgomery Counties be raised to form a corps that would march to the aid of General Gates. While remaining a separate body, they would be directly under Gates' command to serve for a period of three months. Preston fervently hoped that before the three months were up that a decisive engagement could be fought and the British threat ended. His plans were sent to the Governor who, it was hoped, would approve of the idea and swiftly order its execution. On September 21, the Governor laid the plan before the Council, and they promptly accepted, provided that part of the troops furnish their own supplies. William Campbell and William Christian were to command the new army.

In the meantime, rumors continued that the British were proceeding to advance inland and northward toward
western Virginia. As the British moved forward under Major Patrick Ferguson, Loyalists who had fled the Virginia frontier joined the English troops, while loyal Americans in the Carolinas were forced to leave their homes and flee farther west. The stories they told left no doubt in the minds of the frontiersmen that the British were planning an attack in that region. Final proof came when Major Ferguson sent an ultimatum to Colonel Isaac Shelby in North Carolina demanding his surrender.

News of the ultimatum spread quickly along the entire frontier. Shelby himself immediately planned to raise troops to withstand any attack by Ferguson, at the same time calling on Virginia for help. The plans to raise five hundred men to go to the aid of General Gates were dropped immediately in order to call out the militia swiftly to go to Shelby's assistance. With William Campbell placed in command, the quota was raised and was ready to move out by September 25. Preston again proved his knowledge of frontier warfare by equipping the troops so rapidly that the troops moved out before confirmation of his earlier plan came from the Governor.

Once again Preston became one of those who remained at home to maintain order and wait for news from the militia. He could take consolation in the fact that as in previous expeditions, his help and experience had proved in-
valuable, but he would have liked to accompany Campbell in his march to Carolina. The latter, after joining Shelby, determined to lead his one thousand troops farther into Carolina and attack Ferguson before the British troops could be fully aware of what was happening. By September 27, the mountains had been crossed, but on October 5, it was learned that Ferguson was retreating, and redoubled efforts were made to catch him.

On October 6, Ferguson halted at King's Mountain, determined to fight the Americans and believing himself to be in an impregnable position. When the Americans arrived on the next day, hard fighting commenced at once, and by the end of the day the British had been completely defeated. The Americans regarded the battle as a mere continuance of the day's march, but a more complete defeat would be hard to imagine. Out of 1,125 British troops, 1,105 were killed or taken prisoner.

As in all frontier battles, it became difficult to keep the troops in order once the objective had been obtained. Loose organization and lack of discipline meant that the majority of the troops clamored to return to Virginia as soon as the victory was certain. The march back to the frontier began the next day, although at a much more leisurely pace than the first trip through Carolina. The news of the victory did not reach the Virginia frontier until some two
weeks later when Preston received word from General Gates. The former was asked to undertake the superintendence and management of having a site arranged for the detention of prisoners taken at the battle. The general suggested Fin-
castle Courthouse, but the actual decision was left up to Preston. Preston was hardly prepared for a request involv-
ing so much responsibility. The news of the victory had cheered all of the loyal Americans in Montgomery, but the idea of bringing more Tories and British troops into the county was not appealing. After all, only two months had passed since the last Loyalist uprising; any increase in their numbers would mean added incentive to rise again.

Also, for the first time in his long frontier career, Preston admitted that his age would not permit him to take on the added responsibility of maintaining a prison guard in conjunction with his other militia duties. He therefore recommended Botetourt County as a safer location for the housing of the British prisoners.

As it turned out, no elaborate preparations were needed to house the prisoners from King's Mountain. As the frontier militias disbanded while returning to their homes, the Brit-
ish and Loyalist prisoners became extremely adept at escaping. At first, escapes could be managed only in pairs, but soon, as many as a dozen at a time were able to break away from their guards. By December only 130 were left, and soon
after, this number was reduced to 60. Those that escaped managed to return to their homes in many cases or were successful in rejoining Lord Cornwallis to the south.

When Cornwallis learned of the defeat of Ferguson at King's Mountain, he decided to return to South Carolina, abandoning, for the time being, his hopes of gaining control of North Carolina and Virginia. Even in South Carolina, the news of the victory had encouraged the Americans to make new efforts to regain control of the state; the British general was thus placed in the position of having to calm disorders in that state before he could think of advancing north again. In Virginia, the army formed under William Campbell melted away, and General Nathaniel Greene, who replaced General Gates, found himself without an effective fighting force. In vain Governor Jefferson wrote to Preston urging him to aid in supplying troops from the western counties for the army to the south. If only a company at a time could be sent, it would help in reinforcing the American army.

The success at King's Mountain had cooled the enthusiasm of the westerners for further fighting with the main body of troops. In addition, when they returned home, they found that the Cherokees had again begun their attacks on the frontier settlements. The fear of leaving their homes and families unprotected made it even more difficult to re-
cruit new quotas to serve in the south. It soon became clear to General Greene that the quickest way to keep the western militias with his own army was to try to make another Indian peace. Already, in December, William Campbell had marched against the Cherokees in an effort to drive them out of the western settlements. His success there, combined with the knowledge that their ally, the British, had been decisively defeated, might induce the tribe to make a favorable peace settlement. In February, 1781, therefore, Greene appointed eight commissioners, including Preston, from both Virginia and North Carolina to meet with the Indians.

Greene delayed too long in making his decision; when the appointment of the commissioners was made known, the British in South Carolina were again on the move, and the Indians refused to make a peace. Preston did not even make the trip to the Indian country, for by February 10, Lord Cornwallis had penetrated so far into North Carolina that the militias of the western counties were called up again. The Americans had defeated a British force at Cowpens on January 17, but after the victory the army had withdrawn into North Carolina with Lord Cornwallis in hot pursuit. General Greene sent frantic messages to the Governors of North Carolina and Virginia asking for increased support. Not only was the number of his troops inferior to that commanded by Cornwallis, but also his supplies were practically
Before calling out the militia on February 10, Preston called a meeting of the other western county lieutenants. All the officers knew that the militias would have to be called out, but there was some discussion as to the advisability of leaving the lead mines unguarded. Toryism was still strong in the county, and if Cornwallis was successful in North Carolina, new attempts would probably be made to seize them. It was this fear of Cornwallis' success that decided the issue. It would be better to send all available troops to North Carolina to aid Greene than to risk an American defeat there and have Cornwallis pushing into Virginia. Even the menace of the Cherokees was given second place in the plans to send reinforcements to the south.

For the first time since Dunmore's War in 1774, Preston himself prepared to lead his own troops to the aid of General Greene. It was not an easy decision to make. He was 51 years old and had not led an expedition since the Sandy Creek excursion in 1756. Although he had planned, equipped, and encouraged many such moves since then, he had always remained at home to keep peace in the county. Fighting against the British would involve different tactics than those used with the Indians; nevertheless, Preston was determined to prove that he was still capable of leading the frontiersmen successfully. His oldest son, sixteen years old, was to
accompany him as orderly. It was hoped that the rest of his family would be safe from Indian attacks; only a small guard would be left in the county to protect the inhabitants.

By February 18, Preston and his other officers had been successful in raising three hundred men and were ready to move into North Carolina. On the way they were joined by Colonel William Campbell with an additional hundred militiamen. The latter had been personally threatened by Cornwallis after the victory at King's Mountain and was anxious to prove to the British general that he could not be intimidated easily.

With the four hundred troops, Preston led the successful crossing of the mountains, and the main army of General Greene was reached by March 2. The men did not have to wait long for action. Taking advantage of a thick fog, Lord Cornwallis sent forward a detachment of troops to fall on the advance party of General Greene, composed primarily of western militiamen. The American general supposed that the object of the British was to seize the stores of the army, located at Whitzell's Mills, seven miles from the main body of the camp; therefore, he ordered the advance party to attempt to hold off the enemy only long enough to allow the supply wagons to pull out to a position of safety.

The Americans formed their lines on the south side of Reedy Creek about two hundred yards below the mill and waited
for the British to approach them from higher ground. Fighting was short, for although the English outnumbered them, the Americans made better use of their rifle fire and were able to hold them off until the supplies had been moved out. Seeing that their mission was accomplished, the militia prepared to cross the creek and rejoin the main body of the army. Preston mounted his horse and was about halfway across the creek when the horse stumbled on the slippery bottom and threw the rider violently. It was a desperate moment, for the British, aware that the Americans were withdrawing, were anxious to trap them in the confusion of crossing the creek. The colonel, dazed and shaken by his fall, was in danger of being left behind as the men withdrew. If it had not been for Colonel Joseph Gloyd who managed to drag Preston onto his own horse, it is quite probable that the latter would have been killed or captured by the British.

The militia rejoined Greene, with Preston apparently none the worse for his fall in the creek. Nevertheless, command of the westerners was turned over to Colonel Campbell, who led the valley militia during the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15. There, the British partly made up for their defeat at King's Mountain by forcing Greene's entire army to retreat. "The militia were certainly a strange arm of the service," wrote one critic of the battle, "sometimes so efficient as at Saratoga and the Cowpens, and sometimes so worthless as at Camden and Guilford Court.
The oricitlsm is a little harsh, for the American troops were not routed, and Cornwallis himself was forced to halt for a time to recoup his losses. Nevertheless, as Greene saw that both of his flanks were about to be enveloped, he was forced to retire. The western militia had forced one whole wing of Cornwallis' army to retreat before lack of cavalry support made it necessary for them to fall back along with the main army.

It was this lack of support from the rest of Greene's army that disgusted the westerners after two weeks of actual fighting. Always first in the engagements and last in the field, Preston and Campbell felt that they were exposing themselves needlessly to danger. In spite of messages from General Greene thanking them for their "faithful services," soon after the battle, the militia from Virginia left North Carolina and returned to their homes beyond the mountains. Shortly thereafter, another four hundred men left Greene's army, leaving him desperately in need of reinforcements and with a victorious Cornwallis waiting to march forward again.

The Montgomery militia reached home late in March or early April. It had been a long, hard trip for the county lieutenant, and it was assuredly a relief for him to be home again. There had been little or no Indian trouble while the militia had been gone, his family was safe, and he hoped that he could enjoy a long vacation. However, while the
militia was returning home, General Greene had been writing to Governor Jefferson, informing him that most of the militia had left for Virginia and lamenting the fact that he was totally unprepared for any new attack by Cornwallis. Preston had no sooner arrived home from the long march when messages began to arrive from Jefferson requesting a new requisition of troops to go to Greene's aid. The county lieutenant promptly issued orders that the required number of men be raised, but in a letter to the Governor he confided that he did not think the entire amount would be forthcoming. The majority of the active militiamen had accompanied him to North Carolina and were now needed at home to look after their families and crops. The rest of the troops were not physically able to stand the long march to Greene's headquarters. Still feeling resentful of the treatment of the militia in the recent engagements, Preston pointed out that his militia company had spent as many days on the front lines as had any from behind the mountains: twelve to fourteen days.

During April, however, Preston was able to recruit enough men to be able to send a small company to assist Greene in Carolina. The general soon found that Cornwallis did not intend to follow up his advantage gained at Guilford Courthouse and took the opportunity to move back into South Carolina, while the British general withdrew to Wilmington,
North Carolina at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. For a time he considered sending a force to South Carolina to deal with Greene, but on April 25, he directed his troops to move into Virginia. Benedict Arnold had been in Virginia since the preceding December; by joining the two armies Cornwallis hoped to defeat the forces under the command of Lafayette.

The Virginia tidewater area, threatened by two British forces, was thrown into confusion and panic much like that of the frontier region during the Tory uprisings of 1780 when Cornwallis seemed about to invade that area. Lawlessness along the coast became rampant, taxes could not be collected, Tories were robbing plantations and attempting to gain the assistance of the slaves; the jails were full of prisoners waiting trial for political offences.

In the midst of this confusion, Governor Jefferson was forced to call on the back country for assistance in the attempt to hold off the British. On May 28 he wrote to Preston requesting that the remainder of the spring quota be filled immediately and sent to the east to join Lafayette. An enlistment of two months was urged along with the advice that speed was all important or the entire state would be lost to the British. The call went out once more for volunteers to go to the coast, but Preston was no more successful in raising the second requisition than he had been in the first call during the spring.
Nevertheless, enough men were recruited to keep Cornwallis bottled up along the coast. To the south, however, General Greene, engaged in South Carolina, was forced to depend on Virginia for all his supplies and reinforcements. In spite of British reverses in Georgia and South Carolina, by the end of June Greene was retreating again in North Carolina. Feeling he had been unsuccessful in his earlier attempts to regain territory in the south, he wanted to join Lafayette in Virginia and aid him in defeating Cornwallis. Nevertheless, as news of his retreat through the Carolinas reached Virginia, the call went out to send additional troops to his aid. On July 15, Colonel William Davies, head of the Virginia State Board of War, sent out an order to Preston to call up one-seventh of the Montgomery County militia, and two days later, he increased the draft to one-fourth of the county troops.

By this time, Preston was weary of constant demands on the manpower of the county. Six years of war, and especially the last three in the west, had caused even the most ardent patriot in the west to frown on further requests for duty which would mean time spent away from his farm and family. Preston did not refuse to issue the order for the militia, but he knew the quota had no chance of actually being filled. To both Colonel Davies and the new Governor, Thomas Nelson, he wrote his excuses, saying that not only
were the Indians abroad again, but also at least one-half of the militia had Tory tendencies that would make it dangerous to send them to North Carolina, a hot bed of Tory-ism. Faced with this situation, there was not much that the Governor could do. Preston could not be reprimanded since the order had actually been issued. It was decided, therefore, not to force the issue with the frontiersmen; their friendship and support might be more valuable at a later date. On August 1 Colonel Davies wrote to Preston suspending his previous order and merely ordering that the Montgomery militia be kept in readiness in case they were needed.

With one exception, this was the last demand made upon the frontier for men before the end of the war. The importance of the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown in October, 1781 was not realized at first in the capital, and as late as March, 1782 Preston was making his usual excuses to Governor Benjamin Harrison that he would do all he could to meet the quota established for the county, but many desertions would make it practically impossible. However, sometime before the victory at Yorktown, Preston had been forced again to turn his eyes to the west and attempt to deal with the Indians. Montgomery was no longer so exposed to the raids of the savages because of the creation of Washington County; nevertheless, Indian troubles affected the disposition of all the frontier, and Preston had lived in the region too long.
not to be concerned. When word that "our frontier is now threatened with an invasion by the Creek Indians" went back to the coast, Preston became vitally interested. When word was received that the county was low on ammunition, Preston was the one to write to the governor or council and try to obtain help. By 1782, Preston had become the central figure in western Virginia, the connecting link between the old and the new.

As the war neared its close, Preston tried to slow down his activities. In September, 1781, he was asked by Governor Nelson to make the long trip to Kentucky to check the surveys made there during the war and to inspect Indian defense measures. Preston wanted to go; he himself owned land there that he had never seen, but he declined the opportunity, saying that his age would no longer permit him to make such an extended trip.

He therefore remained at home and during the winter of 1781-1782 gradually took up his surveying activities again. In March, he was ordered by the county court to settle the boundary dispute between Montgomery and Washington Counties and was engaged in that operation when the Indians, according to schedule, began their spring raids. Surveying was forgotten while the county lieutenant made new preparations to meet the Indian attacks. He soon found that the public credit was so low that it was impossible to raise sufficient
provisions to meet the demand of the militia companies; in addition there was an acute shortage of gunpowder that was rendering many of the settlers helpless against the attacks. By July 6, the county lieutenant had been successful in raising and equipping one hundred troops which were to defend the borders of the county. It was hoped by Governor Harrison that Preston would be in command of men from both Montgomery and Washington Counties, but he again declined taking command. William Campbell had objected to Preston's being in charge of both militia groups; in addition the former again felt that his age prevented him from making an extensive Indian campaign.

This was, in fact, Preston's last supervision of an Indian expedition, for after the summer of 1782, he never took to the field again. His increasingly poor health became even more pronounced. There is some doubt that he ever fully recovered from the severe fall he sustained at Whitzell's Mills. In any case, the symptoms of illness became more apparent after his return from North Carolina in 1781. During the spring of 1783, he was cautioned against being out in wet weather while suffering from swelling in his legs. For this last ailment, a remedy was suggested to him. It was "the Bark of Prickley Ash, the Bark is put into water or spirits and stored for some days then three wine glass full taken each day if in Spirits, if in Water drink plen-
It was while attending a regimental muster near his home at Smithfield that he suffered a stroke on June 28, 1783. His oldest son, who had accompanied him, left to get the doctor, while Preston, who did not at first lose consciousness, made motions that he wanted to be bled. By the time the doctor arrived, he was dead.

It is difficult to evaluate the career of a man such as Preston. All but the first few years of his life were spent with the dangers of frontier existence, gradually following the westward movement of civilization. Most of his adult life was spent in holding some sort of public office, often two or three offices at one time. It can hardly be claimed that the history of frontier Virginia and Kentucky would have been radically different if Preston had not spent twenty eight years of his life in serving the inhabitants of that region. He was not a great Indian fighter nor a great soldier. On the other hand, tremendous advances were made in frontier Virginia and Kentucky during his term of service. If he did not actually fight the Indians, he certainly planned the course of action that would be taken against them. If he did not actually lead exploring parties into uncharted territory, he was the one to bring law and order to it and help defend it after the settlers had moved in. Preston was one of many such men on the frontier, not
indispensable in themselves, but absolutely necessary to the subsequent development of the frontier society as it gradually approached a more leisurely life. The pattern of his official life was complicated by the fact that his civil and military duties were too numerous to allow a full exploitation of any of them; yet he tried always to do what he thought was best for his country. In the more democratic frontier society, he is an outstanding example of a leader of a most individualistic race of men.
Notes
Chapter V

3. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Ibid.

7. The British made many tempting offers to those who would support their army. Those who joined were to receive during active service two shillings sixpence per day and at the close of the war, 450 acres of land free from quit rents for twenty one years. A roll of their names was to be laid before the King and Parliament.

13. Actually a larger British force was preparing for an attack on St. Louis; Bird was to march toward Kentucky to divert attention from the Mississippi expedition.
14. John Floyd to William Preston, June, 1780, Draper MSS. 338318.
15. Arthur Campbell to William Preston, June 23, 1780,

17. Thomas Jefferson to William Preston, June 15, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q34.


19. When news of Clark's actual presence in Kentucky reached the Indians under Bird's command, they refused to travel any farther. The British thus retired to the Indian country.

20. William Preston to James Byrn, July 5, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q37.

21. William Preston to the Loyalist leaders, July 20, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q41. On the back of this letter, Preston listed the topics he intended to discuss with the Tories if they decided to come to his home. The list included:
   a. Attempts to get guns and ammunition.
   b. Trees marked with insults to the country.
   c. Threats to murder himself and his family.
   d. Bribes that had been offered Preston.

22. William Preston to Thomas Jefferson, August 8, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q50.

23. Ibid.

24. William Preston to John Muhlenberg, September, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q81.


26. Dudley Bigges to William Preston, August 17, 1780, Draper MSS. 50Q56.


29. William Preston to George Skillern, September 13, 1780, Draper MSS. 5Q280.


34. L. Draper, *King's Mountain*, p. 543.

35. Horatio Gates to William Preston, October 13, 1780, Draper MSS. 8DD56.

36. William Preston to Horatio Gates, October 27, 1780, Draper MSS. 5Q284.


38. Thomas Jefferson to William Preston, November 1, 1780, Draper MSS. 5Q287.


40. Appointment of Indian Commissioners, 1781, Draper MSS. 1XX30.


44. William C. Preston to Lyman C. Draper, July 10, 1840, Draper MSS. 8ZZ1.


61. William Preston to James Monroe, April 10, 1782; William Preston to James Monroe, April 26, 1782, Draper MSS. 500107-108.


63. James Robertson to William Preston, April 10, 1783, Draper MSS. 500117.
Bibliography

It is unfortunate that the majority of the material concerning Preston's life and career is available only through study and interpretation of his official correspondence. Details of his personal life are practically non-existent; thus the student is forced to lay particular emphasis on his public career.

I. Primary sources.

A. Manuscripts.

Lyman C. Draper Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

B. Printed material.


II. Secondary sources.

A. Books.

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11. Kegley, Frederick B., Kegley's Virginia Frontier (Roanoke, 1938).

12. Preston, Thomas L., Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of an Easterner (Richmond, 1900).


B. Magazines and periodicals.


