
JOURNAL
of the
ROANOKE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



Volume Seven

Number Two

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Editor of the JOURNAL

The Journal of the Roanoke Historical Society, Volume VII, Number 2. Published twice yearly by the Society at Box 1904, Roanoke, Virginia 24008, to chronicle the past and present of that part of the state west of the Blue Ridge. Single copy price for members: \$1; for non-members, \$1.50. The Society will be careful in handling unsolicited material but cannot be responsible for its loss.

Gen. James Breckinridge, Frontier Man for All Seasons



James Breckinridge

BY KATHERINE KENNEDY McNULTY

James Breckinridge, frontier aristocrat, was active in the Virginia House of Delegates during the formation of the United States under the new Constitution.

He was a member of Congress from 1809 - 1817, a time when the young nation was beginning to stand on its own and develop internally and internationally. Bearing the Federalist label, Breckinridge's career fluctuated with Republican mistakes. But he was more of an

independent politician than a doctrinaire Federalist. He voted with expediency to benefit his state and his agricultural section of Virginia. Genuinely interested in developing education and transportation in Virginia, he served on a James and Kanawha River canal commission and he worked with Thomas Jefferson in initiating the new University of Virginia.

Of great significance to Breckinridge was the Virginia militia of which he was a member from his boyhood days during the Revolution until the War of 1812, when he attained the rank of brigadier general.

But it was Breckinridge's estate, Grove Hill, that gave him the status of frontier aristocrat. Breckinridge amassed a land empire in the Valley of Virginia at a time when land could be bought almost for the asking.

Soldier, surveyor, lawyer, educator, politician, and planter, Breckinridge led a full and interesting life and can lay claim to being another of Virginia's outstanding citizens.

Early Life

To be a Breckinridge of Virginia or of Kentucky between 1750 and 1865 was to belong to one of the most prominent political dynasties in the United States of America. All the members of this family before the end of the American Revolution spelled their name "Breck-enridge"; afterwards both John Breckinridge, who removed to Kentucky, and James Breckinridge, who remained in Virginia, adopted the spelling "Breckinridge."

Although its members were convinced of the superiority of a republican form of government and of the necessity for the protection of individual freedom by means of a Bill of Rights, the Breckinridges were not less devoted to the maintenance of property rights. Not unlike European aristocrats, in the fertile valleys of transmontane Virginia and in Kentucky, these "barons of the Bluegrass" were acutely conscious of their interrelationship with similar families, chief of whom were the Prestons and their cousinly network of Pattons, Buchanans, Floyds, McDowells, and Browns. Among the first families of these border lands between Piedmont, Virginia and the Ohio, there were some of German origin, such as the Hites, and some of Anglican roots, such as the Innesses and Donelsons; but most were, like the Breckinridges and Prestons, Scotch-Irish. With few exceptions before the Civil War, they "went in for land speculation and Indian fighting, for politics and public affairs. . . ."

Fellow citizens honored one Breckinridge with a nomination as U. S. presidential candidate after he had already been a vice president

at thirty-five years of age. Before the Civil War, the Breckinridge name was borne by two senators, five representatives, four generals, three ministers and college presidents, and a minister of Russia. Marital connections included governors, senators, representatives, generals, and cabinet members.³

With dignity and sometimes with elegance, the Breckinridge men disproved the old Virginia saying that "Gentlemen and clams end at the fall line." They were usually "over six feet (in height); handsome with auburn or chestnut hair, which turned prematurely silver or iron gray; eyes piercing and deep set."⁴ James Breckinridge was six feet, two inches in height with broad shoulders and an erect carriage. He possessed "a fine head with high, expansive brow, a well-shaped mouth and a keen piercing eye. He was elegant in his dress, generally appearing in public with neat fitting cloth coat and pants, polished boots, spotless ruffled bosom, and gold headed cane."⁵

Land Was Important

Just as was the case among Tidewater planters, the Breckinridges sought and acquired title to large, undeveloped tracts of land as a legacy for their children. Since there were not even banks in British North America, there was little alternative to investment in land. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Breckinridges became successful speculators in the lands located in the Western counties of Virginia and in Kentucky. In this activity they followed in the train of the Prestons who came to western Virginia somewhat sooner, with greater capital, and with pre-existing political and financial allies in the Virginia Tidewater.

In 1728 Alexander Breckenridge arrived in Philadelphia with his wife, family of young children, and a small amount of capital. He was possessed of an ambition fired by a capacity for hard work; and his subsequent activities gave proof of his success. He was the progenitor of the Breckinridges of Virginia and Kentucky and the grandfather of the subject of this study.⁶ Direct evidence is lacking to establish Alexander's motives in coming from Great Britain via Philadelphia to what became the town of Staunton in the Valley of Virginia. Yet there is abundant indirect evidence to project the broad outlines of the Breckinridges' hardy independence on Virginia's transmontane frontier in the half century before the United States of America won its independence. If the Breckinridges' achievement of the American dream revealed a mixture of aristocratic and democratic values, of material success and religious satisfaction, it is likely that they were typical of frontier leadership.

Economic opportunity in Northern Ireland was restricted enough,

but for a man of as large a family as Alexander Breckenridge's, it was oppressive. For a man of as enterprising nature as Breckenridge was to remain in Pennsylvania where the Penns sold land for between ten and fifteen pounds an acre was hardly a meaningful option. In Virginia, on the other hand, land was to be had from the crown for only ten shillings for each hundred acres. Even after the costs of locating, surveying, and registering land were paid by the Virginia settler lucky enough to obtain land directly from the colony, amounting to about two pounds per hundred acres for small tracts, he paid a great deal less than what was required in Pennsylvania for his homesite.

Advertisements in port towns lured many emigrants to the border settlements. By 1736 William Beverley, a grandson of the famous William Byrd of Westover and a member of the colonial council, had settled sixty-seven Scotch-Irish families on his tract situated on the headwaters of the Shenandoah that he called his Manor of Beverley, after having sold to the settlers on generous terms of payment parcels of less than 400 acres for about one-half shilling per acre. Because of his success in thus populating the frontier, Beverley and a syndicate he formed received 118,491 acres.⁷

The Family's First 450 Acres

Alexander Breckenridge was no longer a greenhorn when, on May 22, 1740,^{7-A} he traveled to Orange Court House to obtain 450 acres of land to which he swore that he was entitled under Virginia's ancient head-rights system of land tenure which awarded to whom-ever transported persons into a colony a bounty of fifty acres per head. Alexander Breckenridge might have been stretching the truth when he swore that he transported to the Augusta region himself, his wife, and their seven children: John, George, Robert, James, Smith, Jane and Letitia.^{7-B} It is possible that Alexander Breckenridge may have been in the vicinity of Staunton in the Augusta area for some while since deeds were registered in his name in 1738. B. B-A

The village of Staunton grew up on Lewis Creek after its foundation by John Lewis in 1732, but it was not incorporated as a town until 1761.⁹ If the Breckenridges lived there, as was likely, they moved farther west in the 1740's to the Tinkling Spring neighborhood. At about the same time some other Scotch-Irish settlers made similar moves. Among these were the Pattons and the Prestons; and all three families were members of the congregation of the Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church, which was founded in 1738. When Breckenridge died in 1744,^{9-A} he was a member of its board of trustees.¹⁰ So was Colonel James Patton, the frontier magnate who had invested in Augusta County the proceeds of his voyages between the British Isles and North America, in which trade he had been an associate of Col-

onel Beverley in transporting Scotch-Irish settlers to transmontane Virginia.¹¹

Upon Alexander Breckenridge's death, the leadership of his family passed to his son Robert who was then about twenty-two years old.¹² He was destined to establish his family's fortune as a surveyor, Indian fighter, and civic leader of the frontier. In 1750, the young man's stature was sufficiently recognized for him to be joined with such established figures as Andrew Lewis, the Indian fighter, and Robert McClanahan, the high sheriff of Augusta, as surveyors of lots in the growing town of Staunton. A decade later, when the town was incorporated, Breckenridge was elected to its board of trustees.¹³

It can only be a matter of conjecture to attribute any financial involvement by the Breckenridges in the grandiose schemes for a landed empire that Colonel James Patton had inherited from his business dealings with William Beverley, but the role of minor partner in such an enterprise became a stronger probability with the son, Robert, than it had been with the father, Alexander. Certainly, Robert Breckenridge was as concerned as his fellow frontiersmen when, in July, 1755, Colonel Patton was killed by the Indians when seeking to plant a settlement about 150 miles southwest of Augusta at Draper's Meadows.¹⁴ It appeared as if the Virginia frontier would be engulfed in a general uprising, and retrenchment was the order of the day. Robert Breckenridge had been commissioned a captain of Rangers since 1755 and he became a lieutenant colonel of the Augusta militia during the French and Indian war.¹⁵ However, when Augusta did not furnish its militia to aid Braddock's march, Virginia's Governor Dinwiddie became so furious at Breckenridge that he ordered Andrew Lewis to "put him out of his commission." The disaster of Braddock's march and the alarms on the southwestern frontier so impressed Lewis that he did not follow the Governor's orders against his long-time associate and friend.¹⁶

In 1752 Robert married Mary Poage who bore him two sons, Robert Jr., and Alexander, before her early death. In 1758 he remarried, this time to Lettice, or Letitia,¹⁷ ^{17-A} the daughter of John and Elizabeth Patton Preston and the sister of Colonel William Preston, who had succeeded his uncle, Colonel Patton, as the leader of their family and of its land speculations. By this alliance, the Breckenridges gained full acceptance as leaders of transmontane Virginia.

The Move to Botetourt in 1760's

Following Colonel Preston's example, Robert Breckenridge Sr., moved his family southward "sometime in the early 1760's" to the area near Fincastle in what was to become in 1769, Botetourt County.

Here, he and his wife raised their five children: William, their first son; John, the second; James, born March 7, 1763, was the third; followed by their daughters, Elizabeth and Jane, who died young; and Preston, the youngest son.¹⁸

According to family tradition, young Alexander and Robert Breckenridge Jr., did not get along with their new stepmother, although they were on good terms with her brother, Colonel William Preston. Probably at the boys' request, the latter arranged for Robert Breckenridge Sr., to apprentice them in the building trade to Francis Smith, the "undertaker" of Hanover County who was Preston's father-in-law. This was accomplished, and when Robert Jr., and Alexander completed some eighteen months apprenticeship, they built in 1772-1773, Colonel Preston's new seat, Smithfield Plantation, some sixty miles southwest of Fincastle in what was to become in 1776, Montgomery County. These two Breckenridge boys subsequently removed to Kentucky, where Colonel Preston had extensive lands which required management; but they did not pass on until after Alexander had served Colonel Andrew Lewis' division in Lord Dunmore's War.¹⁹

Few details are known of James Breckinridge's boyhood. Like most lads, he liked to hunt and fish and shoot; and he probably disliked performing chores. From the time that his father died, when the boy was nine years old, his Uncle William Preston served as his and his younger brother Preston's guardian. He was at least occasionally under the kindly admonition of his mother's brother-in-law, the Rev. John Brown, parson of the New Providence and Timber Ridge Presbyterian churches in Augusta County.²⁰ But the boy must have been more interested in the militia musters that took place near his father's ordinary at Fincastle,²¹ and perhaps he helped wash the mugs from which the soldiers in buckskin quenched their thirst. He was eleven when his family's friend, Andrew Lewis, received orders from Governor Lord Dunmore to enlist more men into the Botetourt militia and to march them down the Kanawha River to its junction with the Ohio in order to crush the Shawnee Indian power. Among those commanded by Colonel Lewis in Dunmore's War were James Breckinridge's half-brother, Alexander, while his cousin, James Brown, served in James Harrod's party under Colonel William Fleming.²²

Like most Virginians, Robert Breckenridge Sr., had been "hard-pressed for cash." By raising "hemp as his chief money crop," he prospered enough to purchase two slaves in 1771 for 150 pounds.²³ We may safely speculate that these two slaves were intended for the cultivation of hemp and for helping Mrs. Breckenridge as house servants. Eight additional slaves were purchased before Robert's death on August 17, 1772.^{23-A} After his demise, his ten slaves and

2,000 acres were divided among his wife and children. By his last will and testament he provided that when James became twenty-one in 1784, he should receive half of his father's 800 acres of land on Tinker Creek "known by the name of the Lower Place."²⁴ Although his will was valid, Robert Breckenridge's usual informal way of transacting business led to land disputes that complicated settlement of the estate.

Mrs. Letitia Preston Breckenridge was confined to her house by illness during most of the first year of her widowhood. Not only was she burdened with the problem of finding an overseer, but many of the problems of settling her husband's estate fell upon her. Numerous joint claims and dual ownerships made settlement particularly difficult.²⁵

Like most families whose capital was invested almost exclusively in land, the Breckinridges were short of cash during immediately after the Revolutionary War. As a consequence, they turned to the production of hemp, brandy, and whiskey to obtain goods which they hoped to exchange for cash but which they knew they could barter for articles.²⁶

Shift To Episcopal Church

Evolution of the Breckenridges from Presbyterians into Episcopalians occurred after their removal to Botetourt. Bishop William Meade gave the contradictory and implausible explanation that James Breckinridge was one of those recalled to "the faith of their forefathers" by the Reverend Mr. Gray, who was the Episcopal minister at Fincastle in the late 1790's before he "died in the parish poor-house, the miserable victim of drink."²⁷

Chronologically it is much more probable that Fincastle's rector in 1774-1776, the Rev. Adam Smyth, brought young Breckinridge into the Anglican Church. Contrary to general belief, the Episcopal ministers in the valley, led by the Rev. John Jones of Augusta, were patriots, not loyalists. During the Revolution, they managed to join together in the popular mind their clerical complaints against the royal authorities with popular resentment against British authority that seemed ready to thwart acquisition of land in Kentucky.²⁸ But theological hair-splitting was hardly the normal preoccupation of a schoolboy whose uncle was a Presbyterian minister and who grew up to be an Anglican.

In 1770 young Jaimy Breckinridge, along with his Preston and Smith cousins, was tutored at his uncle William Preston's Greenfield estate near Fincastle. Colonel Preston was a resourceful man in se-

curing tutors for his family. He once had bought the services of a fine classical scholar named Palfreman, whose creditors in England had sold him into indentured servitude in Virginia, but he came to admire that tutor so much that he released him from his obligations. Utilizing his commanding position as county land surveyor of Bote-tourt—and later of Montgomery—which extended indefinitely to the south and west and included all of the present state of Kentucky and most of West Virginia, Preston required persons desirous of becoming his deputy surveyors to teach his children for about six months. John Floyd accepted these terms, and it was to him that Jaimy Breckinridge went to school until 1773. In that year, Colonel Preston moved his family and the school to his new seat, Smithfield Plantation, farther west, from which he better could superintend his own and his relatives' extensive land claims. At the same time, the Colonel dispatched John Floyd to Kentucky. Both John and James Breckinridge later taught for awhile at Smithfield after completing their studies at William and Mary.²⁹

In 1777 Colonel Preston secured a new tutor by the name of Philip Bacragar who would teach his son and his sister's sons. Everything would be provided for the children who lodged at the tutor's home except for bedding, which they would have to bring by wagon. Meals would include "beef, bacon, milk, butter, turnips, cabbage, and good bread." Colonel Preston paid 10 pounds a year for each boy, with a bonus if the Colonel thought it deserved.³⁰ It is likely that the curriculum of the tutorial school did not differ greatly from that at Nomini Hall, Westmoreland County, where in 1773-1774 Philip Fithian taught the eight children of the Tidewater nabob, Colonel Robert Carter. Just before his graduation from Princeton, Fithian received from Carter an offer of 35 pounds a year to teach his eight children English, Latin and Greek.³¹

Breckinridge Goes To War

James' education was, however, interrupted by the tumultuous events of his times. At eighteen years of age Jaimy Breckinridge joined his Uncle Preston's company of riflemen and served briefly under General Nathaniel Green in North Carolina.³²

Like most young men, Breckinridge wanted to see for himself places about which he had heard exciting tales. In 1783 he wrote his mother of an intended trip to Kentucky, stressing with the innocence of a favored son that he was short of both money and clothes.³³ Writing to his elder brother Johnny, he mentioned that another intended trip on surveying business was delayed because of poor horses. Surveying jobs in Kentucky gave the young man a good excuse to explore in that area in September, 1784.³⁴ Four years later, when

John contemplated moving to Kentucky, James was still so enthused about the bluegrass region that he declared that Kentucky was "the country in which at present I design burying my bones." He advised John to wait two or three years before moving his family thither, by which time the area would have become more settled and freer of Indian trouble. He confided to his brother that only his lack of money had prevented him from purchasing a larger Kentucky land claim.³⁵

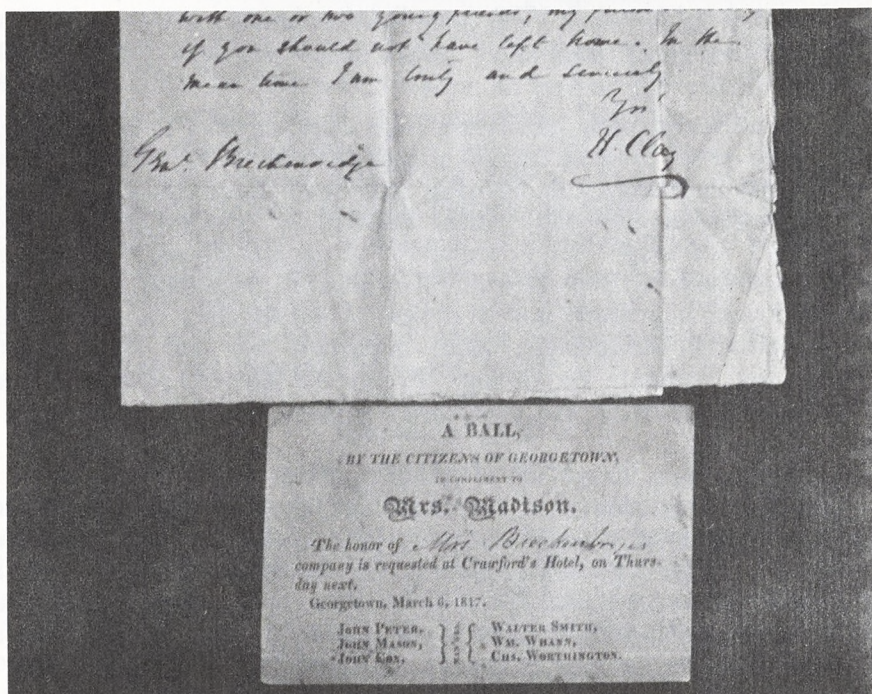
Even so, he was interested in 7,000 acres of military warrants, in which his cousin John Brown and his half-brother, Robert Breckinridge were also interested.³⁶ The hard times of post-Revolutionary years curbed most speculative schemes everywhere in the United States, but deflation was particularly severe in Virginia. Well aware of his inability to fulfill his contract to buy, and equally aware of the decline of land prices, John Brown expressed hopes that Jaimy could interest in their project speculators in Richmond and Williamsburg.³⁷

Breckinridge's enthusiasm for Kentucky waned and his cousin James Brown questioned his intentions. Urging him to come to Kentucky to live, Brown described how good-looking the girls of Kentucky were in hopes that such a "very womanish man" as Breckinridge would regain his earlier enthusiasm. He reproached Jaimy for his conviction "that Beauty without wealth have no charms." Continuing his bantering, he wrote that his cousin must have "turned Jew" to believe that there was "No Happiness in Life without Money—No honor without Money, No Women without Money . . ."³⁸

Study at William and Mary

Following in the footsteps of his brother John, the Brown boys, and several other relations, James Breckinridge decided to complete his education which had been interrupted by the war. There is difference of opinion on when John and James attended the College of William and Mary because its records are so fragmentary for the years 1780-1790. Because the History of the College listed James as graduating in 1785 with John's subsequent achievements, there has been much confusion.³⁹ According to his biography, John entered William and Mary in the fall of 1780 but returned home in 1781 when classes were suspended because of Revolutionary War activities. He returned to Williamsburg in 1783, when classes resumed, but left again in June, 1784, because of a money shortage.⁴⁰ That John was in Williamsburg in 1784 rather than James is certain from a letter of May 23, 1784, in which James recounted how he and his cousin, John Preston of Greenfield, campaigned in Botetourt for John's reelection to the General Assembly while John divided his time between his studies at Williamsburg and his legislative duties at Richmond.⁴¹





Interesting antiques from Gen. Breckinridge's home, Grove Hill, which stood near Fincastle until it was destroyed by fire in 1909, are now owned by Mrs. English Showalter of Roanoke, a descendant. Shown here are a Girandoli Independence mirror, made by a lost art; an Adam chair; a bowl and pitcher from the home of Breckinridge's father-in-law, Cary Selden of Elizabeth City County; a letter from Henry Clay and an invitation to Mrs. Breckinridge to a ball given by "the citizens of Georgetown in compliment to Mrs. Madison" in March, 1817.

In November, 1786, James announced his intention to winter in Williamsburg because his clients would give him no surveying business in that season. Asking John to advise him on the merits of studying natural and moral philosophy, the twenty-three-year-old Jaimy blithely requested his brother also to forward his clothes, which he had forgotten.⁴² In the spring of 1787, John wrote to his mother of James' financial distress and suggested that, since he could not spare any money, Mrs. Breckinridge should insist that the play-boy Jaimy return home. Apparently the feckless blade did return to Botetourt, but it was only for a summer vacation until his return to Williamsburg in the autumn.⁴³ The last record of James' residence in Williamsburg was in December, 1788, when he had recovered from what must have been a severe illness. To the prodigal, Brother John conveyed their mother's uneasiness about Jaimy.⁴⁴ Since Jaimy's reply was dated March 6, 1789, from Botetourt,⁴⁵ one may surmise that James Breckinridge terminated his studies at William and Mary in the winter of 1789.

Nevertheless, both James and John were exposed to the changes which Governor Thomas Jefferson instigated in 1779 at the College of William and Mary. Chief among these was the establishment of a professorship of law and police, chaired by George Wythe, who previously had taught law informally. The method of legal instruction was based more upon philosophic principles in those days, but Wythe also lectured extensively and made use of Blackstone's Commentaries as a convient abridgement. More important was the Moot Court, which met "monthly or oftener" in the old General Court in the Capital, over which he and other professors presided as judges.⁴⁶

Letters To Brother John

It is at this point in his life that James Breckinridge had the time to correspond with his brother Johnny in letters that show the warmth of his personality. Professing to be more homesick than a prodigal son, Jaimy declared that his brother abandoned and neglected him, ignoring the fact that John was burdened with a family and a business:

I have written to you so frequently since I came here without receiving any answer . . . I would not think of taking up your time with reading my nonsense, was it not to convince you that time or the distance which separate us has not yet eradicated my usual affection for you . . . Your not writing I am sure has not been occasioned by the want of opportunities, you have the daily (post) to Richmond from where the (letter) would come by the Stage safe to me. But I believe nothing is wanting but an inclination which I don't think any apology ought to excuse . . .⁴⁷

Yet the following winter his cousin, Francis Preston, admonished James for being "ungrateful, ungenerous, & lazy" in not answering his letters. Moreover, his mother was also anxious to hear from him.⁴⁸

Actually, correspondence with the two brothers was frequent, often treating scholastic problems. John wrote to James that he was quite courageous in studying Blackstone, but that he should not fear being overpowered by him. He thought James' talents would suit him well as a lawyer and advised him to "look around you (among those I mean, whose Line in Life you intend to pursue), it is impossible you can be discouraged." As a course of study, he recommended Lawson's Orator, Cicero's de orator, Sheridan's On Elocution, and Blair's Sermons.⁴⁹

Jaimy was quite a ladies' man, to judge from somewhat racy allusions in his correspondence with his cousin, John Brown, and friend, Samuel McCraw.⁵⁰ The college youth spent much time traveling back and forth to Richmond, where he visited his cousin, Francis Preston, during sessions of the legislature. When on one occasion he forgot his shirt, Preston declared that he himself would have kept it, but that more honest people had sent it on. Most likely, Breckinridge engaged in the favorite pastime of having sport with the reynards while he was in Richmond.⁵¹ Another indication of Jaimy's gallantry showed that the young swain could summon up the strength of a warrior. According to cousin John Preston, "Jeamy Breckinridge fought a duel in Richmond with a certain Young-husband . . . the story was told very favorably for Jaimy."⁵²

Debates of 1788

It was on one of the expeditions to Richmond that James Breckinridge attended debates of the Ratifying Convention of 1788. Properly impressed by that galaxy of Virginia founding fathers who included Edmund Randolph, Patrick Henry, James Monroe, Edmund Pendleton, George Mason, John Marshall, Henry Lee, and James Madison, the young man from Botetourt wrote to Brother Johnny that the debates were "elaborate, elegant, eloquent, and consequently entertaining and instructive." He noted that the convention had intended to argue the Constitution clause by clause, but that the members abandoned such a methodical course as being inexpedient. According to him, it was commonly believed that the only important point of contention was whether amendments should be added before or after adoption of the Constitution. It was his opinion that the anti-federalists' major purpose was only to require that adherents of immediate ratification give assurance that the Bill of Rights would be added soon after ratification.

Sarcastically, James noted that delegates from Kentucky and the western regions were afraid that northern interests might try to thwart their economic and political progress. The Kentuckians, he commented, succumbed to Patrick Henry's "eloquence and oratory" which often led "ignorant people astray." Instead of the mercurial Henry, Breckinridge preferred "Madison, plain (and) ingenious," even if he was easily eclipsed once the orator of the Revolution persuaded the gullible.⁵³

When he returned to the valley in the winter of 1789, James Breckinridge was admitted to the Botetourt bar. Because his community could not support a lawyer who did not have other economic interests, he became quite active as a surveyor.

Most of his law cases were routine, being mainly concerned with "land titles, the collection of debts, the interpretation of wills, and the management of estates." The careless Virginia land grant system allowed for litigation, and the need for uniform currency caused difficulty in collecting debts.⁵⁴

Deputy Clerk at 19

Breckinridge already possessed experience with legal forms inasmuch as he, at the ripe old age of nineteen, had been, in June, 1782, the unanimous choice of the county justices for the position of deputy clerk. As a popular young war veteran, as well as being the most prosperous young man of the county, Breckinridge in 1789 easily secured election to the General Assembly. His appointment as one of the trustees of Fincastle on November 14, 1789, was almost perfunctory. In May, 1796, he was appointed, along with Henry Bowyer and John Miller, to contract the building of a clerk's office on the Courthouse Common, which was not to cost more than 200 pounds.⁵⁵

On March 15, 1791, George Washington noted to the Secretary of the Treasury that James Breckinridge had been appointed inspector of survey No. 6, which included the counties of Rockbridge, Botetourt, Montgomery, Wythe, Washington, Russell, Greenbrier and Kanawha. Breckinridge undoubtedly welcomed his salary of \$450 and a commission of one percent.⁵⁶ He particularly welcomed the receipt of hard money, after a decade of Revolutionary deflation and depression, because he had only recently acquired a bride.

James Breckinridge and Ann Selden were married on New Year's Day, 1791. By marrying the daughter of Cary Selden of Elizabeth City County,⁵⁷ Breckinridge won acceptance of his family by long-established Tidewater families, who often were inclined to disparage men from beyond the mountains. The marriage ceremony was per-



1. BOTETOURT 2. ROCKBRIDGE 3. GREENBRIER
4. KANAWHA 5. MONROE

THE FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL,
OR BOTETOURT DISTRICT, OF VIRGINIA.

REPRESENTED BY JAMES BRECKINRIDGE

1809 - 1817

formed by the Rev. James Buchanan, the rector (1785-1822) of St. John's Church, Richmond. The Seldens long had been associated with St. John's, where their kinsman, the Rev. Miles Selden, had been rector of Henrico Parish from 1756 to 1785 and had been a prominent Revolutionary leader as chairman of the Henrico Committee of Safety.⁵⁸

The young Breckinridges set up housekeeping in Fincastle and soon witnessed the birth (on August 26, 1791)^{58-A} of their first child, Letitia. Their family increased almost annually and caused father James to return to the legislature to help provide for his growing family.

Thus, at twenty-eight years of age, James Breckinridge could look back upon an exciting youth that might have led him into the life of a Kentucky speculator, but which saw him combine an education for a Virginia career in law and politics with the high jinks of a young blueblood. The prosperous state of the nation in 1791 permitted Breckinridge to look forward to wealth and station in Botetourt, Virginia, and perhaps the nation.

Service in the House

For thirteen sessions, during the years 1789-1824, James Breck-

inridge served as a member of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He was first elected in 1789, the year of George Washington's inauguration, as an ambitious young man just out of the College of William and Mary. He and his neighbor, Robert Harvey, were selected to make the trip to Richmond to represent the citizens of Botetourt County. The following year he was accompanied by Martin McFerran to the General Assembly.⁵⁹

Around 1790, when Virginia had a population of only 691,737,⁶⁰ annual elections to the legislature were decided on a personal basis and differed little from those for the House of Burgesses a generation before. A candidate's qualifications for office were his personal character and his integrity as a citizen as well as his record of potential for public service. As befitted an aristocrat seeking the favor of small freeholders, he usually treated the voters on election day to a rum punch or other drink.⁶¹ That Breckinridge regularly was elected to a Virginia office before 1800 proves that he was a well-liked and well-off young man. His election neither marked him as a doctrinaire Federalist politician, nor did it attest to the popularity of Federalist principles.⁶²

Breckinridge in Washington

In 1808 James Breckinridge reached what might be called the high plateau of his long political career by winning election to the Eleventh United States Congress as the Representative of Virginia's Fifth Congressional District, because it had been, and was to be, centered about that county. The district also included the county of Rockbridge to the Northwest and the counties of Greenbrier, Monroe, and Kanawha to the west.⁶³ The incumbent between 1804 and 1809 had been a Republican, Alexander Wilson of Rockbridge, who appears not to have stood for reelection. It was remarkable that Breckinridge, the Federalist from Fincastle, was not opposed by any known Republican aspirant during his four terms in Congress and that he declined renomination in 1816. In the Botetourt District, it is clear that party structure and sentiment were weaker than the heritage of leadership by the frontier aristocracy.

A panoramic view of the House of Representatives over the years 1809-1817 reveals that James Breckinridge was a true son of the generation of which John Randolph of Roanoke and Henry Clay are perhaps the best-known exemplars. This was a generation that often deserved the adjectives Revolutionary, Romantic, and Quixotic. Posterity often has viewed Randolph's erratic course as the product of a disordered mind and considered Clay's gyrations to be sheer political opportunism. Granting that there is some truth in such assertions, one must admit that the times did not permit very stable

political ideology or consistency in alliances. James Breckinridge was not so great a man as Clay or Randolph. He was neither so opportunistic as the former nor consistent and more pragmatic than either. Indeed, he comported himself as a natural, frontier aristocrat—not as a brilliant, but flawed, scion of the Tidewater nabobs. Without making a parade of his good education, he was better equipped than Clay to guide his little rural world into the brilliance of an enlightened, agrarian republic in which the Revolution's liberty and pursuit of material happiness might be secured.

When the forty-six-year-old Breckinridge took his seat in the old hall of the House of Representatives in 1809, that body numbered 140 members. Virginia then had twenty-two representatives. She gained another as a result of the Census of 1810, but this did not effect the composition of the Fifth District.⁶⁴

Service in War of 1812

As somewhat of a defense measure, Breckinridge was promoted to brigadier general in the Virginia militia—even though he was a Federalist. For the most part, he was stationed at Camp Mitchell outside Richmond and missed the opening of the last session of the Thirteenth Congress. He arrived at the Capitol on Dec. 5, 1814, after being absent from the first forty-nine votes.⁶⁵

Aid for Dolley Madison

The most dramatic, and at the same time pleasant, incident of Congressman Breckinridge's career involved the sociable Mrs. Dolley Madison. Breckinridge was one of Mrs. Madison's party on board a schooner sailing up the Rappahannock River, when a low tide stranded the vessel far from the shore. The schooner could furnish no small boats to negotiate the shallows. Proving his chivalrous gallantry as well as his muscular prowess, Breckinridge suggested that each gentleman take a lady and wade through the water. He promptly took Mrs. Madison in his arms and carried her safely to the shore. Unfortunately, the other men were unable to follow his example.⁶⁶ Evidently politics were not allowed to disrupt sociability in the first quarter or the nineteenth century.

Retirement from Office

After his 1823-1824 term in the Virginia House of Delegates, Breckinridge finally retired from elected offices, but he had a pet project in the new University of Virginia to hold his interest. Breckinridge was now sixty-one; and with the exception of an occasional trip to Charlottesville, he remained at his Fincastle residence. From time to time he visited his nearby relatives and his valley neighbors. He particularly enjoyed the company of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Burwell,

who resided at "Rustic Lodge" in Botetourt.⁶⁷ Judging from family correspondence, Breckinridge and his wife entertained their neighbors and family, who came to visit for weeks at a time, often accompanied by their in-laws.⁶⁸

Death at 70

After a long and full life, Gen. James Breckinridge died May 13, 1833, at his Grove Hill home. A constant rain set the mood for his grieving family; and not withstanding the weather, his three o'clock funeral was attended by a "concourse" of friends and neighbors. He was buried with full military honors.

Family and associates paid their respects and made their tributes. His daughter-in-law wrote: "Poor old gentleman, we miss him sadly, and shall for many years to come."⁶⁹ The Botetourt County Court passed the following resolution.

The Court being informed that Genl. James Breckinridge, long a distinguished member of this Bar and a most valued citizen, departed this life on this morning and deeming it right and proper to show their affection for his faithful services in the many public offices to which he has been called by his fellow citizens, do therefore, order this Court be adjourned until tomorrow morning, 9 o'clock.

And on motion, resolved that the members of the Court and Bar, and the officers of the Court will wear crepe upon their left arms for one month. (Order, signed by Thomas N. Burwell & Charles B. Penn.)⁷⁰

Breckinridge was survived by his wife Ann, and five children: John and Cary Breckinridge of Botetourt, Mrs. Henry Bowyer of Botetourt, Mrs. Edward Watts of Roanoke, and Mrs. Robert Gamble of Florida.⁷¹

In his will and testament, he named his sons and Edward Watts as executors. Breckinridge provided that his Negroes and stock be retained and that his estate managed according to his plans for seven years for the benefit of his wife. At the end of this time, the estate was to be divided among his five children in whichever equitable manner they chose. He specifically noted that the child of his deceased son Robert should not be awarded any portion of his estate.⁷²

Although his will does not include an inventory of his estate

(and none appears to have been made subsequently), Breckinridge died a wealthy man. By the end of his seventy years, the General had amassed a land empire in Botetourt and adjoining counties and he owned an elegant mansion furnished in the best styles of the day.

In other areas he practiced law as "an intellectual pursuit," rarely charging over ten shillings (less than \$2), which was the proper pocket change for a gentleman.⁷³ Breckinridge was an adept surveyor, but this occupation often provided an excuse for him to explore new western lands that he might purchase. He was always interested in furthering education, whether he was serving as the Smithfield tutor or maintaining a seat on the Board of Visitors of the new University of Virginia.

The Virginia militia was most important to the existence of frontier settlements, often being the only means of protection. Advancing through the ranks to brigadier general provided social status on the frontier and possibly satisfied the cavalier notions of a would-be military hero. The militia, however, did remain a life-long interest of Breckinridge.

He was a keenly interested participant in American government at a time when political ideologies were forming the basis of the present system, first in the Virginia House of Delegates and then in the United States House of Representatives. His role in political life after 1815 was equivocal insofar as the expansion of democracy was concerned, as he displayed a genuine interest in gaining more equal representation for his section of Virginia.

All writers eulogize their subject, but James Breckinridge was overshadowed by the more dynamic statesmen of the Revolutionary War era. Breckinridge was great only in the sense that he was a satisfied individual in a world of unhappy stereotypes. He was a privileged person to have the capacities and abilities to satisfy his many interests.

- 1 James Breckinridge spelled his name both Breckenridge and Breckinridge, but he signed his will, a legal document, "Breckinridge." Both his father and grandfather used the spelling "Breckenridge." James' contemporaries used both spellings along with several other variations.
- 2 Thomas P. Abernathy, *Three Virginia Frontiers* (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1940). Hereinafter cited as Abernathy, *Three Virginia Frontiers*, pp. 59, 67.
- 3 Stephen Hess, *American Political Dynasties: From Adams to Kennedy* (Garden City: Doubleday Co., Inc., 1966). Hereinafter cited as Hess, *Political Dynasties*, pp. 626-627.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- 5 Thomas D. Houston, "Early Days in Fincastle," June 20, 1873. Speech in possession of Mrs. English Showalter, Roanoke, Virginia.
- 6 Mary S. Kennedy, *Seldens of Virginia and Allied Families* (2 vols., New York: Frank Allahan Genealogical Co., 1911). Hereinafter cited as Kennedy, *Seldens of Virginia*, II, 588. See also Thomas M. Green "A Sketch of the Breckinridge Family," typescript, Library of Congress. Hereinafter cited as Green, "Sketch," p. 2.
- 7 Richard L. Norton, *Colonial Virginia* (2 vols., Chapel Hill: Virginia Historical Society, 1960), II, 549-550. See also Abernathy *Three Virginia Frontiers*, pp. 55, 60.
- 7-A Orange Co. Order Book II, p. 155.
- 7-B Letitia was a minor in 1747 (Chalkley Vol. I p. 79)
- 8 Kennedy, *Seldens of Virginia*, II, 588.
- 8-A Records of Augusta County, Va. 1745-1800, Lyman Chalkey, Vol. I, pp. 307; Vol. II, pp. 372.
- 9 James R. V. Daniel, *A Hornbook of Virginia History* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Conservation and Development, 1919), p. 31.
- 9-A Died prior to May 24, 1744, when his son George posted bond as administrator of Alexander Breckenridge. Orange County Will Book I, 1735-1743 abstracted by John Frederick Dorman, p. 59.
- 10 Kennedy *Seldens of Virginia*, II, 588. See also Howard M. Wilson, *The Tinkling Spring: Headwater of Freedom* (Fishersville, Va.: The Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church, 1954).
- 11 Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II, 550, 570-72.
- 12 This estimate of Robert Breckenridge's age presupposes that: (1) Alexander Breckenridge's petition for headrights was truthful in implying that his children were all born before 1728, (2) that none were twins, etc., (3) that each child was one year older than the next younger, (4) that Robert was the eldest child, and (5) that Letitia was the youngest and only one year old in 1740.
- 13 Louis A. Burgess, *Virginia Soldiers of 1776* (2 vols., Richmond: Richmond Press, Inc., 1927). Hereinafter cited as Burgess, *Virginia Soldiers*, II, 733.
- 14 Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II, 678.
- 15 Burgess, *Virginia Soldiers*, p. 733.
- 16 Green, "Sketch", p. 6. See also Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II, 642-643.
- 17 Robert Breckenridge referred to his wife as Lettice in his will.
- 17-A License issued July 6, 1758. Chalkley, Vol. II p. 276.
- 18 Lowell H. Harrison, *John Breckinridge: Jeffersonian Republican* (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1969). Hereinafter cited as Harrison, *John Breckinridge*, p. 3.
- 19 Green, "Sketch," p. 8. See also Euben G. Thwaites and Louise P. Kellogg, *Documentary History of Dunmore's War: 1774* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1905). Hereinafter cited as Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, p. 422.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 21 Harrison, *John Breckinridge*, pp. 3-4.
- 22 Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War*, pp. 420-422.
- 23 Harrison, *John Breckinridge*, p. 3.
- 23-A August 17, 1772 date of his will which was recorded Nov. 7, 1773. *Early Marriages, Wills and some Revolutionary War Records*, pp. 53. Anne Lowry Worrell, pp. 53. Will published. *Kegley's Virginia Frontier*, pp. 508-10. F. B. Kegley. Also Botetourt County Will Book A, pp. 36.
- 24 Will Book A, 1770-1801, Botetourt County, Virginia, 36. The executors of Robert's will were William Preston and Andrew Woods.
- 25 William Preston to Mrs. Lettice Breckenridge, Oct. 12, 1773. *Breckinridge Papers*, Library of Congress. Hereinafter cited as Breckinridge papers, DLC. See also Harrison, *John Breckinridge*, p. 5.
- 26 Harrison, *John Breckinridge*, p. 5.
- 27 William D. Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (2 vols., Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1939) II, 65. See also Robert D. Stoner, *A Seed-Bed of the Republic: A Study of the Pioneers in the Upper (Southern) Valley of Virginia* (Roanoke: Roanoke Historical Society, 1962). Hereinafter cited as Stoner *Seed-Bed of the Republic*, p. 332.
- 28 George M. L. Brydon, *Virginia Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which It Grew* (2 Vols., Philadelphia: Church Historical Society, 1952). Hereinafter Cited as Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, II, 127, 177-188 passim, 609.
- 29 Letitia Preston Floyd to John B. Floyd, Apr. 5, 1860, typescript, Newman Library, Virginia Polytechnic Institute.
- 30 William Preston to Mrs. Lettice Breckenridge, Oct. 13, 1777, *Breckinridge Papers*, DLC.
- 31 Philip V. Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter D. Farish (Williamsburg, Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1943), p. 8. See also John Harrower, *The Journal of John Harrower, An Identified Servant in the Colony of Virginia: 1773-1776*, ed. Edward M. Riley (Williamsburg: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

- 32 Breckinridge's military career will be treated later.
- 33 James Breckinridge to Mrs. Lettice Breckinridge, 1783, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 34 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, May 23, 1784; J. Brown to John Breckinridge, Ky., Sept. 20, 1784, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 35 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, Aug. 29, 1788, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 36 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge at Albemarle, Botetourt, Mar. 18, 1790, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 37 John Brown to James Breckinridge, Feb. 25, 1787, Breckinridge Papers, Albemarle County Historical Society, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Hereinafter cited as Breckinridge Papers, ViU.
- 38 James Brown to James Breckinridge, Apr. 4, 1790, *ibid.*
- 39 The History of the College of William and Mary From its Foundation, 1660 to 1874 (Richmond, J. W. Randolph and English, 1874), p. 98.
- 40 Harrison, John Breckinridge, p. 7.
- 41 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, May 23, 1784, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 42 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, Nov. 6, 1786, *ibid.*
- 43 John Breckinridge to Mrs. Lettice Breckinridge, Apr. 11, 1787, June 14, 1787; James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, July 31, 1787, *ibid.*
- 44 John Breckinridge to James Breckinridge, Dec. 2, 1788, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 45 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, Mar. 6, 1789, *ibid.*
- 46 Robert M. Hughes, "William and Mary, The First American Law School," William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd series, II (1922), 40.
- 47 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, Mar. 15, 1787, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 48 Francis Preston to James Breckinridge, Dec. 20, 1787, Breckinridge Papers, ViU.
- 49 John Breckinridge to James Breckinridge, Jan. 25, 1788, Breckinridge Papers, DLC.
- 50 John Brown to James Breckinridge, Feb. 25, 1787; Samuel McCraw to James Breckinridge, Oct. 21, 1787, Breckinridge Papers, ViU.
- 51 Francis Preston to James Breckinridge, Nov. 11, 1788; Francis Preston to James Breckinridge, Oct. 21, 1787, *ibid.*
- 52 John Preston to Francis Preston, Dec. 26, 1786, quoted in Stoner, Seed-Bed of the Republic, p. 279.
- 53 James Breckinridge to John Breckinridge, June 13, 1788, Breckinridge Papers, DLC. See also Hugh B. Grigsby, History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788, ed. Robert A. Brock (Richmond Historical Society, 1891), II, 377.
- 54 Harrison, John Breckinridge, p. 25.
- 55 F. B. Kegley, Kegley's Virginia Frontier, The Beginning of the Southwest: The Roanoke of Colonial Days, 1740-1783 (Roanoke: The Southwest Historical Society, 1938). Hereinafter cited as Kegley, Kegley's Virginia Frontier, pp. 409-411.
- 56 George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Mar. 15, 1791, quoted in The Writings of George Washington, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (39 vols., Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), XXXI, 329.
- 57 Mary N. Standard, "James Breckinridge," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (22 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1958), III, 5.
- 58 Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church, II, 434, 450.
- 58-A Born Oct. 26, 1791, Mrs. English Showalter's Records; also Seldens of Virginia and Allied Families, Mary Selden Kennedy, pp. 96.
- 59 E. G. Swem and J. W. Williams, A Register of the General Assembly of Virginia; 1776-1918 (Richmond: Public Printing, 1918). Hereinafter cited as Swem, Register of the General Assembly, p. 30.
- 60 U. S. Department of Commerce, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1957). Hereinafter cited as Historical Statistics, p. 13.
- 61 Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957). Hereinafter cited as Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, pp. 249-250.
- 62 Harry Ammon, "The Jeffersonian Republicans in Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXIII (Apr., 1963), 153-167.
- 63 Journals of the Virginia House of Delegates, 1802, pp. 80-90.
- 64 Historical Statistics, pp. 13, 692-692.
- 65 *Ibid.*, XXI, 1931; XXV, 1151; XXVI, 1252.
- 66 Houston, "Early Days in Fincastle."
- 67 Stoner, A Seed-Bed of the Republic, p. 397.
- 68 Breckinridge Papers, Roanoke Historical Society.
- 69 Emma Breckinridge to Lucy W. Gilmer, May 21, 1833, Breckinridge Papers, RHI.
- 70 Stoner, A Seed-Bed of the Republic, p. 279.
- 71 Joseph A. Waddell, Annals of Augusta County Virginia (Richmond: William Ellis Jones, 1886), p. 141.
- 72 Botetourt County Records, Will Book E, p. 372.
- 73 Roanoke World-News, Apr. 7, 1962.

A Bonsack Election Story

A ludicrous election story arrived in Roanoke last night from Bonsack.

It is to the effect that a man in business in Vinton, but who votes at Bonsack, went to the latter place yesterday morning to vote. He inquired where the polls were and was directed from one place to another and finally to the depot but could not find the place.

Eventually, he ascertained that a big corn-shucking was in progress three miles across the mountain and suspecting that the judges of election were in attendance, went to see. Sure enough, he found them there and they had forgotten all about the election and their part in it until thus enjoined. —Roanoke Times, Nov. 5, 1890

Botetourt's Three Courthouses

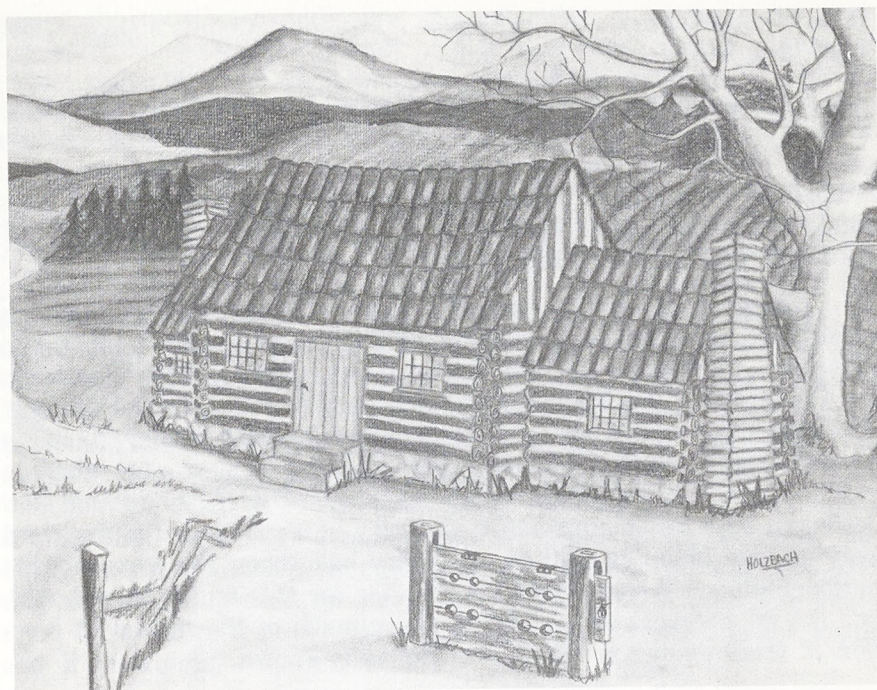
BY R. D. STONER

On the 13th day of February, 1770, thirteen men theretofore appointed as Justices of the new county of Botetourt, gathered together at the home of Robert Brackenridge located near the present village of Daleville.

These commissioners of the peace had been appointed at Williamsburg, on Dec. 22, 1769 under the seal of the Colony and Dominion of Virginia and were directed to keep or cause to be kept all ordinances and statutes of the Kingdom of Great Britain. After the Justices had qualified themselves, the county officers presented their commissions of appointment from Williamsburg and qualified before the Justices, giving bond when necessary and four attorneys produced their licenses from the examiners to practice law. Deeds were recorded, road surveyors appointed and general court business performed. Since the new county boundary ran from the Blue Ridge Mountain watershed westward to the waters of the Mississippi River and south to the Virginia-North Carolina boundary line, it seems fair to assume that many in the leadership of this vast territory were there.

It must have been a long and tiresome day for those prominent pioneers who saw it through at a private home without precedent as to proper procedure and with only a quill pen to record their proceedings. This was Botetourt's first day in a court which since has

Robert D. Stoner, author of "A Seed-Bed of the Republic" and Botetourt County's best-known historian, recalls the circumstances of his county's three courthouses in the aftermath of the fire which destroyed the third building on Dec. 15, in the last month of the county's bicentennial year.



sketch by Debbie Holzbach

A log building with clapboard roof and small jury rooms at each end was Botetourt's first courthouse in Fincastle.

convened through wars and all weather conditions for over two hundred years.

On the following day, Feb. 14, 1770 the Justices, taking into consideration the situation of a point to fix upon as a proper place to recommend to his Excellency, the Governor, for establishing the court house, were of the opinion that the most convenient place for that purpose was eastward from a spring near Miller's Mill. Resulting from this recommendation, a courthouse was later erected there at a place first known as Miller's Mill or Botetourt Court House and later as Fincastle.

Here on two and one-half acres of land donated by Israel Christian, a courthouse and a jail were erected, and workmen were employed to build stocks. It was upon this same acreage all three courthouses and many jails that followed were built. The three courthouses occupied what later became the northwest corner of Main and Roanoke streets in Fincastle.

The first was a log building twenty-four feet long and twenty feet wide with a clapboard roof, having two small sheds, one at each end, for jury rooms. An order entered on Aug. 12, 1773, shows a valuation on this building amounting to four hundred and thirty-five

pounds, ten shillings and nine pence, (Botetourt County's Order Book 1772-76 p. 248).

Sometime after July 13, 1796 (Order Book 1793-97, page 381) a clerk's office for the use of this county was authorized to be built on the courthouse common. The space where this office was built is now occupied by the north wing of the present Circuit Court clerk's office vault and there are those still living who remember the remains of this old stone building.

The erection of the second courthouse around 1818-1820 is established by itemized accounting of payments made for labor and materials. The plans for this building were mailed from Monticello on Oct. 6, 1818 by Thomas Jefferson to Gen. James Breckinridge. Jefferson enclosed a letter in which he stated, "I shall not despair in my annual rambles to the Natural bridge of being able at some time to extend them to Fincastle." The form of this letter shows that Mr. Jefferson used an amanuensis so this may be the reason for the word "bridge" not being capitalized, or it may have been the usage at that period. William Barton was the contractor for this second courthouse, and the minute book which should cover much of the details of erection of this building is missing, as far as is known.

The columns of the building were made of walnut logs, the ceiling of the portico of poplar boards, the floors were made of stone and the pipes and gutters were of copper and tin. The old first courthouse was sold.

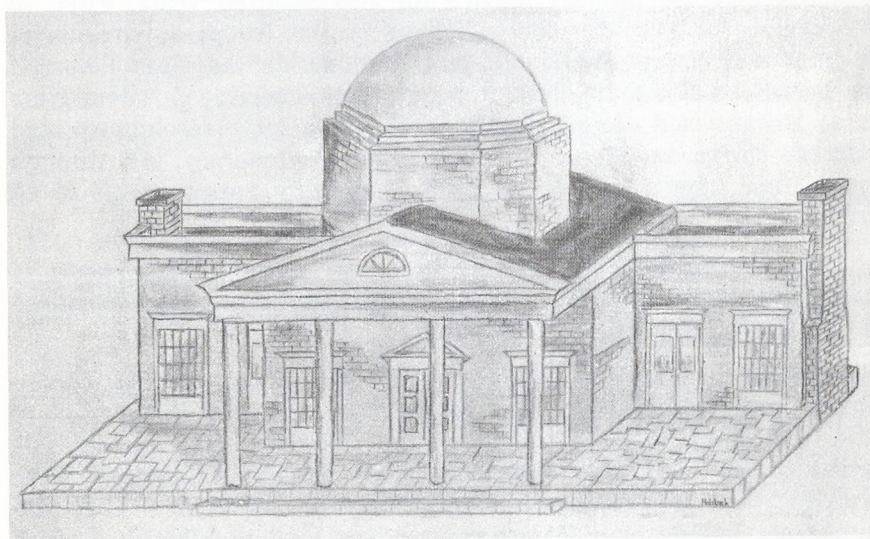
Since no mention is made in the description of a new bell purchased for this second courthouse and since the bell used here was replaced by a new one in the third building, it is possible that the bell from the first 1770 courthouse is the same used in the 1818-20 structure. This bell is now on display in the Botetourt County Museum on the Courthouse Square. The exterior of this structure is shown as a domed building with one-story offices at each side. The work sheets for payment of labor and materials lodged in the Circuit Court clerk's office show itemized expenses totaling \$8,382.56. The period for services for this sheet began in June, 1819 and ended Oct. 10, 1821. If no other accounting was made this would be the cost of this building. An interesting order entered June 11, 1821 shows that the stone clerk's office of 1796 was to be covered with copper or zinc or tin and to be paid for from any funds that may remain from the erection of the new courthouse.

An order dated Nov. 11, 1839 appointed a committee to ascertain whether a new (third) courthouse should be built, or the old one improved. The next year, 1840, we find commissioners appointed to

repair the courthouse indicating the committee considered its existing condition justified repairing rather than replacement. An interesting court order of 1843 provided permission to make a walk on the outside of the railing of the courthouse yard on the western side thereof "providing the same does not interfere with the hay scales."

However, on May 12, 1845, five years after the commissioners were appointed to repair the building, Benjamin Carper, Thomas Shanks, James McDowell, Benjamin Ammen and John T. Anderson were appointed to contract for the building of a new courthouse, and the proper authorities were directed to lay a levy to cover the cost of its construction. At the May, 1848 Court the committee made and filed their final accounting with the contractors, Smith and Stratton. The final cost was \$11,626.65. This report was signed by James McDowell, its secretary, and by Benjamin Ammen, its chairman. This report further shows that the newspapers, The Virginian and The Valley Whig were paid for advertising the contract. As completed late in 1847, the court room in the third courthouse occupied the center of the building between the clerk's office on the east side and the office recently used by the treasurer on the west side. The court room extended to the roof and was heated by a fireplace in the north end of the room.

While none of this committee of five was an architectural student, at least two of them were versed in construction work and all were outstanding men who appreciated the value of Jefferson's ideas and knowing the descendants of each it is my belief they would have



sketch by Debbie Holzbach

Brick one-story building with a dome was the second courthouse.



Tragic fire Dec. 15, 1970 swept through the 1847 courthouse.

used them whenever possible on their merits, as well as a matter of economy. The third courthouse which was gutted by fire on Dec. 15, 1970 had been changed by additional extensions on its north or back end and by two floors and additional offices placed in the center of the building.

The Courthouse Square in front of these three courthouses has resounded to the footsteps of the men of Botetourt who have gathered here for military service for two hundred years. First, in the summer of 1774 for the gathering of the troops at Greenbrier on their way to the Battle of Point Pleasant on the Ohio River. It has heard the Botetourt Resolutions read, proclaiming freedom from Great Britain, and almost one hundred years later resolutions read from the portico in defense of the Southern Confederacy; and through another one hundred years has bade its military personnel off to all our wars.

Roughly speaking, this two-hundred-year period of time could be placed into three divisions, corresponding with the physical existence of the three courthouses of Botetourt.

The first courthouse, a log structure with a shingle roof, corresponded in construction to most of our homes during this period of 1770-1818 since they were built of the same material. During this period of our birth, our Scotch-Irish and Germanic ancestors were as a child born in a wilderness. Besides the fight for existence, we also fought the Indians, the French and Indians and the British Empire twice. We were victorious, even without the then necessary military equipment, and we forged a republic, the envy of most of the world.

As we began to prosper, we desired and thought that we needed something finer to live in and to be governed from, other than log structures. This we did to our homes and Thomas Jefferson sent us his own plan for something better than logs to be governed from. This second courthouse, with the magic of Jefferson's architecture, surely stimulated us to build in a more fitting manner to match our prosperity, which then was beginning to show. Many of these structures are even now standing and have added to the history and dignity of our country. The Indians and the British departed and we were a peaceful farming community with the ambitions of most to clear more land and raise more produce. In doing this we needed more common labor and the New England Yankee ships supplied us with the Negro from Africa. This brought a division in our nation and as the battle lines began to form a new era was conceived and thus the old Jeffersonian courthouse and slave labor gave way to a more modern structure for both.

The bugles of 1861-1865 were stilled and a new courthouse, the third, was completed to represent a new mode of life. After the close of the Civil War the Indians and the British along with the Yankee had all departed but we were left with a devastated county. Many homes burned, others broken into and most all needed repair. Nothing in the granaries, stores or banks. But thanks to God, we had an unbroken spirit and with the labor of our hands we fought the overhanging poverty and repaired our buildings and once again our granaries, stores and banks were filled. Our sheer fortitude first was aided by the rebirth of the mining industry, and eventually by manufacturing plants which began to change the character of our county from agriculture to that of the suburbanite.

Now, the third courthouse is no more and it could be possible that our mode of existence could change. Maybe there are more important things now than full granaries, stores and banks. What price have we paid for material riches, as comforting and necessary as they are? The price of unclean water, polluted air and an unkept countryside. Under the pressures of the present we yearn for the call of the wild. Many now think our future struggle will be to advance ecology within a context of freedom and order. What price must we pay to have less smoke pouring from the stacks of industry in order to be able to breathe and drink? Perhaps the fourth courthouse will look down and judge this struggle and see its answer.



Century-old photograph shows rows of chimneys standing after devastating fire of May 6, 1870.

"A Disastrous Conflagration"

The shock and sorrow over the December 15, 1970 fire which destroyed the Botetourt County Courthouse—but mercifully spared irreplaceable records stored in a fireproof vault—revived memories of the disastrous Fincastle fire of Friday night, May 6, 1870.

Accounts of that fire a century ago say 60 homes were burned, leaving 400 people without shelter and destroying \$200,000 worth of property! The 1870 fire was blamed on arson. But no lives were lost.

James S. Walrond, an elderly resident of Fincastle who kept a daily record of the first frost, the date when corn was planted and other events of significance, wrote this the next day:¹

"Fincastle was burned the 6th day (or rather at night) of May, 1870 by an incendiary. Commenced in the stable of Western Hotel and burned both sides of Main Street as far down as Water Street and on Roanoke Street, destroying about 60 dwelling houses besides all of the out-dwellings belonging to them, with the greatest part of the furniture belonging to the citizens who lost their houses. The fire was set about half past 9 o'clock p.m."

The Richmond Daily Dispatch of May 10, 1970 took note of the fire as a "Terrible Calamity in Fincastle." The Richmond report, credited to the Lynchburg News:²

Fincastle, Va., May 7
Via Bonsack's, Va.

"Half of the town was burned last night. More than four hundred people are left homeless, about \$200,000 worth of property was destroyed. The county jail and the Fincastle Herald office were burned. There is great distress existing. T.H.D.

"In addition to the above we learned from a gentleman who came down on the Tennessee train Saturday afternoon that both of the hotels in the town, one kept by Mr. Price and the other by Mr. Luster, were consumed. The dwelling house of our friend, Col. W. E. M. Word, was also destroyed, together with a large number of other private residences.

"Fortunately, no lives were lost, but many of the best citizens of the town are rendered penniless by this disastrous conflagration, having, in addition to their houses, lost all they contained.

"The fire originated in a stable and is believed to have been the work of an incendiary. There is a fire engine in the town but owing to the scarcity of water it was of but little service and all efforts to stay the progress of the flames were wholly fruitless."

The peril of fire has long been of concern in the village of Fincastle. After two stables, the property of Messrs. Welsh and Patterson, were "found to be completely enveloped in flames," a letter from "One Interested" to J. F. Caldwell, editor of the Herald of the Valley, on Oct. 9, 1820, complained about the lack of fire-fighting equipment.³

"I was astonished to find neither hook, bucket and but one or two ladders which are so essentially necessary to check that devouring element.

"I have understood there has been from 120 to 140 dollars subscribed for the purpose of furnishing these articles; the ladders have been made but what has become of them, although I have paid my subscription, none has been delivered to me, neither can any be seen put up for the public use . . .

"Let those persons who have ladders in their possession either pay the real value of them or be compelled to put them in some public place where they may become accessible when necessary."

¹ Record in the possession of Mrs. K. B. Stoner of Eagle Rock, Va., a great-great-granddaughter of James S. Walrond.

² Microfilm in the possession of Virginia State Library.

³ Microfilm in the Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library.

"Fire Remedy" is 1,400 Years Old

George Washington Rader's 1837 "remedy against fire," published in the Summer, 1970 issue of the Journal, resurrected an old puzzle for Miss Frances Niederer, professor of art at Hollins College and a director of the Society. Miss Niederer's reaction:

This is a very old prophylactic charm dating back at least to the sixth century; versions of it exist in Greek, Latin, and Coptic (Early Christian in Egypt). I had no idea that it persisted so late in German, and had not heard of the fire-preventive value of it. Words of names of Christian martyrs were often repeated as charms against evil, and evidently somehow these five words became associated with the Children in the Fiery Furnace.

But by the 18th century the proper spelling was distorted. It should read in Latin:

SATOR (The sower)

AREPO (the plough, or I crawl)

TENET(holds)

OPERA (the labors, or the laborers)

ROTAS (the wheels)

Although the words appear to make sense their endings are such that it is impossible to get a grammatically correct sentence out of them. Suggested translations have been something like "The laborers hold the plough wheels, (I) the sower, crawl alongside," or "The sower holds the plough; the work engages the wheels." Anyway, it seems to have nothing about fire but rather, insures fertility to the land.

Roanoke's 300th Anniversary

by EDMUND P. GOODWIN

There are many who consider that the history of this area began when the Shenandoah Valley Railroad joined the Norfolk and Western; some date it from the formation of the Town of Big Lick while others go back to the creation of Roanoke County in 1838 or Botetourt County in 1770. It would be interesting to know how many realize we should be celebrating the 300th anniversary of the white man's coming into our valley.

From the earliest days of the colony, there was a strong desire to know more about the land distant from the coast. In 1608, when Capt. Christopher Newport returned to Virginia from England he brought instructions that the colonists should find the South Sea

Edmund P. Goodwin, a founder and first president of Roanoke Historical Society and a longtime student of Virginia history, spoke to the Society Nov. 18, 1970 on "The Roanoke Valley in the Colonial Period, 1608-1776." His talk appears here.

beyond the mountains or consider themselves banished men. History tells us for many years all explorations were limited to the land adjacent to water. The colonists were far too busy finding food and protecting themselves from the Indians to worry about the distant mountains.

William Berkeley was the first royal governor to show any real interest in the land to the west. In 1650, he encouraged Abraham Wood, Edward Bland and two others to form an expedition to explore that territory. They finally reached the falls on the Roanoke River near present day Clarksville in Mecklenburg County. This was the deepest penetration of the white man into this virgin land and they called it New Brittain.

Repeatedly, we find in history books that Abraham Wood came to our valley in 1654. But after a careful examination of his later writings it would appear this trip was a figment of the imagination of a later historian, Dr. Daniel Cox.

The first written record of an Englishman being in our valley is found in the Journal of the Batts and Fallam Expedition of 1671. These men, Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam, left the headquarters of Abraham Wood near the present city of Petersburg. Their course was again southwestward. Upon reaching the Roanoke River, which they called the Sapony after a tribe of Indians by that name who lived on its banks, they followed the water course until it broke through the Blue Ridge Mountains. After descending a steep incline they arrived at a Totora Indian village. It is thought the location was on the property of the Roanoke Industrial Center, formerly that of the American Viscose Corp. The trip had been difficult so they rested a few days with these friendly Indians. Their mission was to find the western waters running to the setting sun so they left their horses and walked westward. After crossing the mountains, they came to the New River which for many years after bore the name of Woods River. Its waters were followed nearly to the present-day West Virginia line in Giles County.

This was the first written account of the white man being in our valley, but strange as it may seem, their journal clearly shows they had been preceded by others. On Sept. 4, they engaged a Sapony Indian to show them a closer way than usual to the Totora Indian village. While on the New River they found the letters "MA" and "MANI" cut or burned into trees. Soon after returning to the Indian village they learned of Col. William Byrd and his great company's discoveries a few miles away from Totora town. History fails to tell about these discoveries so let us assume they had recognized the fine climate and beauty of our valley on that fall day.

These men were explorers backed by Wood, who like Byrd was an Indian trader. Their job included finding new Indian tribes and gaining their friendship because fur was a valuable commodity.

Unfortunately, a few years later the Indians became conscious of the English continually pushing their settlements westward. In order to stop this intrusion of their territory they went on the warpath. Many settlers were killed and their homes were burned. Nathaniel Bacon, without permission of the governor, gathered a sizable force and marched to Occoneechee on the Roanoke River where they killed hundreds of Indians. Bacon's Rebellion, as we know it today, set back western explorations by many years. This was augmented by Governor Berkeley's recall to England.

Apparently the governors who followed him had far less interest in the western lands until after the turn of the century when Alexander Spottswood arrived in Virginia. He realized the fortunes of the colony as well as his own lay to the west. In 1716, the Governor and his so-called Knights of the Golden Horseshoe started out to explore the mountains and the land on the other side. Finally having reached their goal, the wine was broken out, the King was toasted and all the land was claimed in his name. Today, history and verse tell about this glorious expedition. Obviously, Spottswood had better press agents than Batts and Fallam because they had claimed the western lands in the name of Charles II nearly 50 years earlier.

This expedition, along with the religious and economic conditions in Europe would have a marked effect on Virginia before many years. Families from New York and Pennsylvania began arriving in the lower valley. In the 1730's, land speculators such as William Beverley and Benjamin Borden obtained large grants on what today is Augusta, Rockbridge and Botetourt counties. In 1745, James Patton and his associates received a grant of 100,000 acres on the Woods River and two rivers to the west. In the files of the Society, we have his original prospectus showing how these lands could be purchased, as well as a receipt book used when money was paid.

In our valley there were no enormous grants so it just grew like Topsy. When the first settlers arrived, there was far more land than people. The procedure was to locate a likely piece of ground, clear it, plant it, build a log cabin and cut the new owner's initials into trees. This was called the Tomahawk Right and if the settler continued to live on it, he could get a good title in due course.

In 1734, Orange County was formed and a portion was designated as West Augusta but the General Assembly stated that it could not have a court of its own until there was sufficient population,

which did not occur until 1745. Probably the first official land record in this area occurred when George Robinson received three grants of 400 acres each in 1739. Court records then, as today, do not prove who was in an area or when they arrived. This is illustrated by the fact that the roster of Capt. Robinson's militia company in 1742 showed a substantial number of men living south of the James River and along Goose Creek, an early name of Roanoke River.

Actually, the best way to determine the earliest settlers in an area is to find out who claimed the most desirable land. For example, in our valley, Tasker Tosh settled on the rich river bottoms and Mark Evans' land included the fountain which we know today as Crystal Spring, as well as the Naked Land, a portion of which we call the Barrens, near Woodrum Airport. An appraisal of the Barrens in 1754 and 1755 gives a good picture of one of the better farms in our valley. Eighteen acres was cleared and well fenced under corn and 10 acres of clear meadow. A log house, 10 by 15 feet, a house 22½ by 12, a corn crib 15 by 4, and a spring house, 18 by 12, five head of horses, one breeding sow and 22 head of cattle, one wagon and gears, one axe, a grubbing hoe, two plows and gears were appraised here.

The early settlers who came into the valley followed the Indian Warriors Path from the north and the Traders Path from the east. It was not until 1745 that the court of Orange County directed a road be built from Roanoke to the top of the mountain adjoining Brunswick County, now Franklin. This would become a part of what was known for many years as the Great Road from the Yadkin River through Virginia to Philadelphia. Shortly after the court in Augusta was organized, a committee was appointed to advise the justices of Lunenburg, now Bedford, that a road had been built from the Roanoke to the crest of the Blue Ridge and to request that it be continued through their county. In 1746, a road from the Big Lick toward New River was authorized.

One of the early mills in this area was referred to by the Moravians, who in 1753 came through the valley on their way from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. It was originally built by Mark Evans but at that time was operated by his son, Daniel. It was located between Crystal Spring and the river. Another was run by John Robinson by the waters of Tinker Creek, then called Buffalo Creek on what would later become the plantation of Col. William Fleming. A trading post was operated by Erwin Patterson at the Stone House near present-day Cloverdale. In 1753 at a court held there, a warrant was issued against John Connally for maltreating the emperor of the Cherokees.

Soon after the outbreak of the French and Indian War, Gov,

Dinwiddie ordered George Washington, the commander of the 1st Virginia Regiment, to change his tactics from defensive to offensive. Washington placed Maj. Andrew Lewis in command of what today is known as the Sandy Creek Voyage. Many of the troops passed through our valley on their way to the rendezvous point at Dunkards Bottom on the New River.

In June, 1756, after the failure of that expedition against the Shawnees, a strong force of French and Indians captured and destroyed Fort Vaux near the present town of Shawsville. Our valley was wide open to attack. Hurriedly, a council of war was called and the construction of a chain of forts was decided upon to protect the frontier. Vaux was to be rebuilt and the plan called for Fort Mason and Fort Neil McNeil to be built in our valley but it is highly doubtful if either became a reality. Some say the latter would have been located in present-day Montgomery County but the court records of Augusta do not support that theory. Campbell's soon became known as Fort Lewis.

Many of us remember the remains of Fort Garst out near Kingstown (north of Roanoke). Instead of a fort, it was probably a fortified house as were many in those early days. An interesting story has been told about it but I assure you that I do not certify its veracity. Frederick Garst was splitting a log by means of driving a wedge into it when four Indians arrived with the intention of taking him into captivity. He is said to have prevailed upon them to help finish splitting the log. He placed two on each side with their fingers in the crack. They were to pull as he drove the wedge deeper. Suddenly, there was a change of plans and Garst knocked the wedge out, mashing their fingers. They began to holler bloody murder. There was only one humane thing to do—put them out of their misery. Hence four more redskins bit the dust.

No place was considered of any importance in those days unless it could be proved George Washington paid it a visit. I remember, as a small boy, seeing a sign in Massachusetts which read, "If George Washington had taken the other road he would have come by this spot!" In the fall of 1756, while he was making an inspection trip of the forts his account book shows he spent three shillings at Widow Evans, the relict of Daniel Evans, who of course, lived close to the place where we are tonight.

After the French were defeated, they ceded all of their claims in North America to the English, with the exception of two small islands off the coast of Canada. However, peace did not prevail because the Cherokee Nation had gone on the warpath from Georgia to Virginia. In the spring of 1760, Col. William Byrd, now in com-

mand of the 1st Regiment, was ordered to rendezvous his troops at Fort Lewis with the mission of relieving Fort Loudon on the Holston River. As a result of dilatory tactics he got no further than Sayers Mill where he built Fort Chiswell and put his regular companies into winter quarters. The following spring he received orders to rendezvous his new recruits at Fort Lewis where they were to be trained and equipped for the purpose of capturing Long Island on the Holston. Again, he got no further than Fort Chiswell and there he left the regiment. Lt. Col. Adam Stephens assumed command, hurriedly opened a wagon road to Long Island and moved the regiment there. This aggressive action caused the Cherokees to sue for peace. In early 1762, according to orders, he marched the regiment back to Fort Lewis where it was mustered out.

After the cessation of hostilities, there was a mass movement to the west. The road from the north and the one from the east met at the Big Lick. It is said, at times, there were hundreds of prospective settlers camped at a spring nearby, resting up before continuing the westward trip.

A few tidbits of our valley's early history:

Thomas Tosh acted as commissary and collected flour for the use of the troops and Indians in 1757. James Campbell and later Alexander Boyd maintained a trading post in the Fort Lewis area. Crime is no novelty because in 1765 two men were convicted for counterfeiting. Thomas Barnes operated an ordinary at his home near the Big Lick, as did William Christian at the Stone House. Archibald Campbell was also granted a license to operate an ordinary at his house which was the predecessor of the Ponce de Leon, now the Crystal Tower Hotel. The charges they could make were strictly regulated by the court. For example, West Indian rum was 10 shillings per gallon, whereas rum made on this continent was two shillings, six pence for a like amount. A warm diet with a small beer cost nine pence but if one would accept it cold, the price dropped a third. Lodging in clean sheets for one was a shilling, six pence; for two in the same bed, an additional charge could be made of three pence and three farthings, but nothing extra for three or more. Hemp was by far the biggest money crop and it had to be registered with the courthouse because England needed it for her Navy. For example, in the growing season of 1770-71, James Campbell reported 3,692 pounds and Nathaniel Evans, 4,500 pounds.

Even today, we use the names, possibly unknowingly, of some of our early settlers when we refer to Craven's Creek, Creely's Gap, Carvin's Creek, McAfee Knob, Peter's Creek, Fort Lewis and Mason's Creek.

Again in 1774 the Indians went on the war path, killing settlers, pillaging and burning their homes. It is true our valley was generally clear of Indians but obviously the effect on our people was considerable. Governor Dunmore directed Col. Andrew Lewis to raise a respectful body of men from the militia of Augusta, Botetourt and Fincastle counties. He should then proceed to the Ohio River and join up with the troops Dunmore would raise and lead from the northern counties. Lewis alerted the militia and called a council of war at his home, Richfield, which would be in the corporate limits of Salem, if it were still standing.

The commanders reported the conditions of their units and received the plan of operations. On Sept. 12, Col. William Fleming marched out at the head of his Botetourt Regiment, 453 strong. After reaching the rendezvous point at Camp Union, near present-day Lewisburg, W. Va., the troops rested before proceeding to Point Pleasant at the confluence of the Ohio and the Great Kanawha rivers. The astute Indian chieftain, Cornstalk, with his Shawnee, Mingo, Tawa and Wyandot warriors, realized it was imperative for him to attack before the two wings of the army joined.

During the night of Oct. 9, the Indians quietly crossed the Ohio and planned to attack Lewis' troops at daybreak. Fortunately, at first light, intelligence was received of the approaching enemy. Fleming was directed to take 150 of his men and form a line along the river bank and Col. Charles Lewis of Augusta, a brother of Andrew Lewis, was to form a similar line some 200 yards to the right. Almost immediately, the Indians attacked. Charles Lewis fell, mortally wounded, and Fleming was forced to leave the field after being wounded three times. The lines were reinforced and the battle continued furiously throughout the day but as darkness fell the Indians were forced to withdraw across the river.

Casualties were high but justified, according to Theodore Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*. He wrote, "If this victory had not been secured, the western boundary of the United States after the Revolutionary War probably would have been the Alleghany Mountains."

Many men of our valley received their baptism of fire in this engagement and others increased their military knowledge which would stand them in good stead in the bloody days that followed July 5, 1776 when Virginia declared itself a commonwealth.

Early Lighting Devices

by LEE WINBORNE

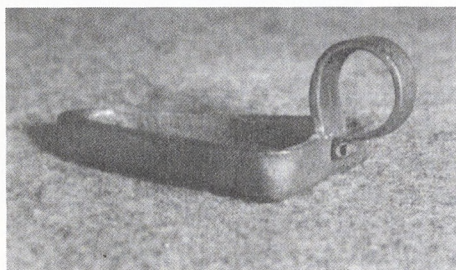
The story of artificial lighting began when man first made and used fire. From the open fire, he took burning sticks or torches and later he made holders for the burning wood. These torches were the earliest form of illumination, and continued in use until the 20th century.

Primitive man probably used natural things such as shells or stones for lamps. Shaped lamps were used during the Stone Age. A hollowed stone found in a French cave is said to be 15,000 years old. One stone lamp was found still containing grease and a vegetable fiber wick. In some places stone lamps were still being used at the beginning of the 20th century.

Later in history, man molded lamps of clay, then of ores. All these early lamps were of the same principle:

1. A hollow receptacle for oil (open or closed).
2. A handle for carrying on one side.
3. The opposite side had a gutter or trough for a wick rest.

Later lamps, such as those of the Greeks and Romans, were more artistic and ornamented, but similar in concept and archeologists have found many examples of this simple form.



pan lamp

Little is known about devices used for lighting during the Dark and Middle Ages, but probably they used pan lamps similar to those used during the 17th century and float lamps where the wick floated on a surface of oil in a bowl or saucer.

On this continent, the Indians are not known to have had any lamps; the only reports tell of their burning wood torches. One type of Eskimo had lamps of stone, clay and bone. They burned seal or whale oil and used moss wicks.

The first Pilgrim lamp, according to Arthur Hayward, was an iron "Betty" lamp purchased in Holland by Captain John Carver just before he sailed. This iron lamp was designed on the same principle as the earliest known form.

As this country was settled, many kinds of lamps were being

used during the same period, and the simpler forms were not always abandoned when improved lamps came into general use. Helen Hebard stated there were five categories of lighting used by the colonists:

1. Log fires, torches and splint lights
2. Grease lamps, pans, cruses and "Betty's"
3. Rushlights
4. Candles and candle-holders
5. Later oil fluid lamps, which includes whale oil, lard oil, burning fluid and Argand type lamps



splintholder

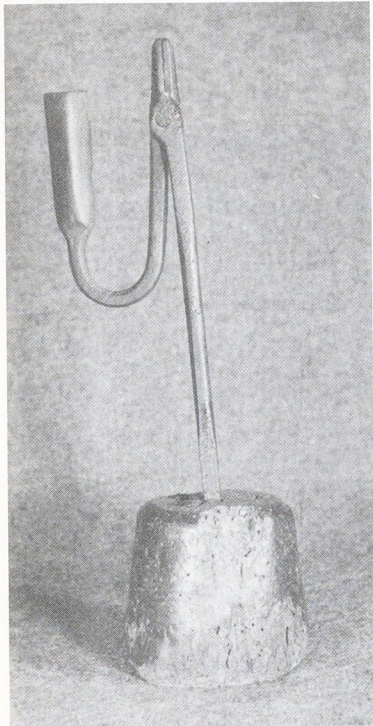
The first colonists, except for a few lamps they brought with them, had only log fires to light their rooms. They used branches for torches and they burned pine knots. As had been done in Europe for hundreds of years, and by observing the Indians, they used splint lights, which were slivers of resinous pine wood. In the North it was called "candlewood," in the South, "lightwood." These splints, cut 8-10 inches, were carried, stuck between the stones of the fireplace, or put in iron splint holders. All the colonists gathered these splints and this was popular, cheap and available form of lighting for a long time.

For centuries in Europe, the pan lamps, cruses and "Betty" lamps had been in use. The settlers made these of iron and burned grease or fish oil. The pan lamp was the simplest type of lamp, open, flat and shallow with the wick lying in the bottom. The cruse was a shallow lamp with the reservoir narrowed at one side to form a wick channel. It was suspended by a curved bail with an attached hook. The "Betty" lamp was like the cruse except it had a separate wick support fixed to the bottom near the wick channel and usually it was covered with a lid.

The origin of the name "Betty" is uncertain but most likely

it came from the German word "Besser," meaning better. This form of lamp was made until the time of the Civil War and for 300 years it was the best lamp commonly used in this country. These lamps were first made of iron, but were later of tin, a cheap durable material, and occasionally of brass or pewter.

Gradually, in order to overcome the smoking crusting wick, it was enclosed in a circular tube and eventually positioned upright. The fuel reservoir deepened to hold more grease or oil.



rushlight holder

In England, the meadowrush was gathered, peeled, and soaked in fat, then burned in a pincer like iron holder. It was questionable whether these rushes were used for lighting in America, but recently the Rushlight Bulletin reported the finding of a rushholder in a partition of a house in Massachusetts built about 1680.

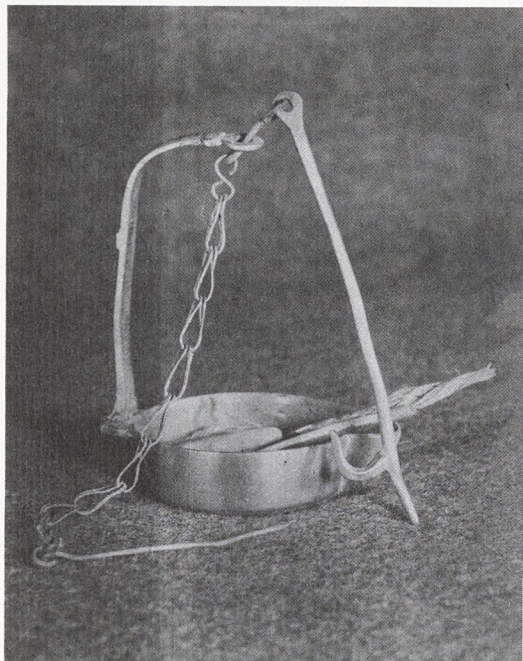
These rushlights were similar to the early candles, which were stalks of flax or rushes bundled together and soaked with grease or tallow. The Roman candles were ropes or twisted threads covered with wax.

Candles, as we know them today, are only about 1,000 years old, and were not widely used until the 18th century. Beeswax candles were expensive and used mainly by royalty and churches.

The tallow candles were most common, but the settlers had no cows or sheep at first to furnish good tallow, and expensive supplies had to come from England. Later, once a year after the slaughtering, the women made their own candles, but the supply was always limited. Candles were burned only for special guests.

Mrs. Roger M. Winborne Jr., a director of the Society, talked about "The History of Early Lighting with Emphasis on the Colonial Period" at a meeting of the Society on Jan. 26, 1971. Her talk is printed here and the pictures are of lighting devices in her collection. Mrs. Winborne is a member of the Rushlight Club, an organization of people interested in early lighting.

Bayberries gathered along the coast in the fall made clear burning, sweet smelling candles, but it took from 4 to 15 pounds of berries to make one pound of wax.



"Betty" lamp

From 1650 to 1750 the Right Whale was caught along the New England coast and the oil was used in the grease and "Betty" lamps.

From about 1750 until 1850, the sperm whale was hunted at sea. From the huge head of this species of whale came a light oil and a granular material called spermaceti. Candles of spermaceti produced a pure light and are still a standard measure of artificial light. From this we get the term "candle power".

Not until the 19th century was the smoky, smelly glycerin removed from tallow, leaving stearin, which burns clear and does not gutter. In this same century the wick was also perfected so it would be self-consuming, and snuffing was no longer required.

Candles were first made by hand-dipping, and this method continued to be used in some areas until the late 19th century. Candle-molds were used in France in the 15th century, but it was a long time before colonial families had their own molds, or could pay a candlemaker to do the job for them.

The first style of candlestick was the pricket or spike. Since the wax was soft and the candle size variable, it could be thrust on the spike. Later candleholders were hollow sockets on a support.

In the development of the holder, the drip pan gradually moved up, and by the 17th century it was one-half way up the stem.

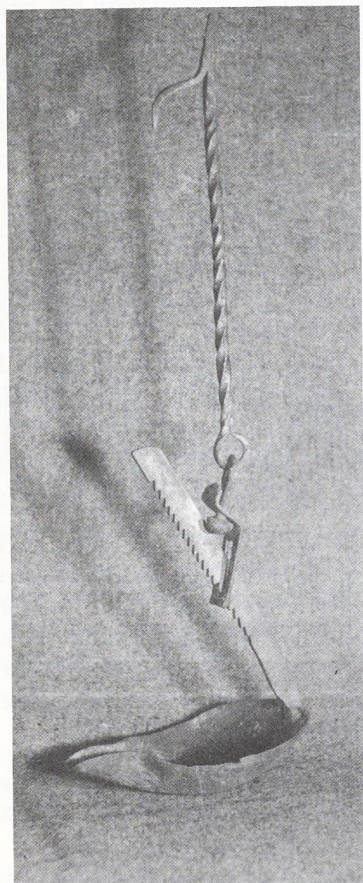
Solid brass and iron holders were replaced during the first quarter of the 18th century by hollowstem holders. These hollow ones had rods or thumb pieces to raise the candle.

Candleholders were brought over from Europe by the settlers, but little brass work was done here until after the Revolution.

In the 19th century, sheet iron candleholders were made. In 1845 William Palmer, an Englishman, patented a spring candleholder. He put springs in the hollow stems to keep the candle length constant.

Up until the Revolutionary War, less than 200 years ago, there were no real changes in the basic principles of artificial lighting. Artistically, lamps improved and they were cared for and handled more efficiently but the old lamps were usually kept for economic reasons.

Then several inventions greatly changed lighting. In 1783, a Frenchman invented a flat wick burner. That same year, a Swiss chemist, Ami Argand, patented the first lamp using scientific principles. He used a tubular wick with air currents inside and outside the wick to increase the combustion. He also used a chimney to increase the draft. These lamps were very expensive, and used 12 times the fuel of other lamps. At first they burned vegetable or whale oil, later they were adopted for kerosene. They were used in this country from 1820-1850, but only the wealthy could afford one.



cruse

In 1787, an earlier Englishman, John Miles, patented an "agi-

table" burner. This was an upright wick tube and a closed fuel reservoir. This burner at first had one or two short parallel metal wick tubes fastened in a cork. About 1830, the collar holding the wick was threaded. Today, when we speak of whale oil burners, we refer to these upright tubes which are short on top and extended down into the heavy oil. In the side of the tube there usually was a slot to adjust the wick.



lard oil lamp

As whale oil became more expensive in the first quarter of the 19th century, lard oil came into common use. Lard oil is a by-product of lard rendering. From 1833 to 1863, over 50 patents were taken out on lard oil burners, most of them using broad, flat wicks because the oil was thick and congealed.

In 1834, burning fluid, a combination of alcohol and turpentine, was used. It was very dangerous and highly combustible. At first this fluid was used with the old style burners, but in 1840

a new style burner was designed which was safer. This screw type burner consisted of one or more tall tapered brass tubes, all of which were above the fluid. They also had caps to prevent evaporation.

Coal oil and carbon oil are names used for what we now call kerosene, although the process of refining differed somewhat. Crude petroleum had been known for hundreds of years, but it was not commonly used until 1861 when the first oil well was drilled. In a short time the kerosene burner was developed with a flat wick, spur wick adjuster, dome-shaped deflector and a chimney. From this time on, all other lamp fuels quickly became obsolete.

After the Civil War, lighting was completely revolutionized. The old lamps were finally cast aside and new kerosene burners replaced earlier styles.

Gas lighting competed with Thomas Edison. Following his development of the light bulb in 1879, less than 100 years ago, electric lighting finally succeeded, and the kerosene and gas burners were gradually replaced by electric adapters.

The Metropolis of the Southwest

The President has signed the bill for a \$75,000 building (post office) at Roanoke. Hurrah for our sister city; nothing can stop her from becoming—by union with Salem—the great metropolis of the Southwest.

—Salem Times-Register, February, 1891

Montgomery Men in Mexico

BY FRANK R. LEVSTIK JR.

As the United States-Mexican crisis over Texas worsened in the summer of 1845, President James Knox Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to take the 1,500 troops comprising the Army of the Southern Department from Fort Jesup in Louisiana to Arkansas Bay in Texas.¹ When the Slidell mission failed to gain even a hearing of Polk's offer to settle claims and to purchase New Mexico and California in January of 1846, Taylor was ordered to encamp on the Rio Grande at whatever point he should consider most favorable. The cautious and methodical Taylor delayed advance on the excuse that torrential rains made the march impossible, but it is likely that he seized upon a pretext to perfect and fulfill his logistical plan.

In April, Taylor's force reached the Rio Grande and commenced the construction of Fort Brown on the north bank, opposite the small Mexican port of Matamoros. Later on April 24, 1846, General Mariano Arista's army of 1,600 Mexicans crossed the Rio Grande to harry Taylor's men.² Taylor, upon learning of this movement, dispatched to oppose Arista sixty-three dragoons under command of Captain S. B. Thornton.³ Surrounded by the Mexicans and only partially able to cut their way out, they suffered a loss of sixteen killed and wounded.⁴ "Old Rough and Ready" immediately sent word to Polk that hostilities had commenced.

When Polk received the dispatch from Taylor, he promptly declared that Mexico had begun hostilities and asked that Congress recognize that a state of war existed. Congress' response was a war

Frank R. Levstik, a 1968 graduate of Virginia Tech, explores the role of Montgomery County men in the Mexican War. He is a doctoral candidate in history at Ohio State University and a member of the staff of the Archives and Manuscript Division of the Ohio Historical Society.

bill authorizing the President to accept fifty thousand volunteers and appropriating ten million dollars for national defense.⁵

Although the regulars of the armed services were to provide the expertise of the Mexican War, other troops appeared needed. On November 16, Secretary of War William L. Marcy issued calls to nine states for nine volunteer regiments composed of 148 officers and 800 privates each.⁶

From the outset of the conflict, the Polk administration had to wrestle with ideological contradictions: how to balance the needs of a bellicose President with his party's historic suspicion of generals and standing armies. This dilemma was itself an American tradition and worked a response traditional since at least the days of George Washington: citizen-soldiers must save the republic.

The numerical strength of the regular army had stood at 7,194 officers and enlisted men at the end of 1844. By the end of hostilities, the regulars would number 24,033 and the volunteers 23,117.⁷

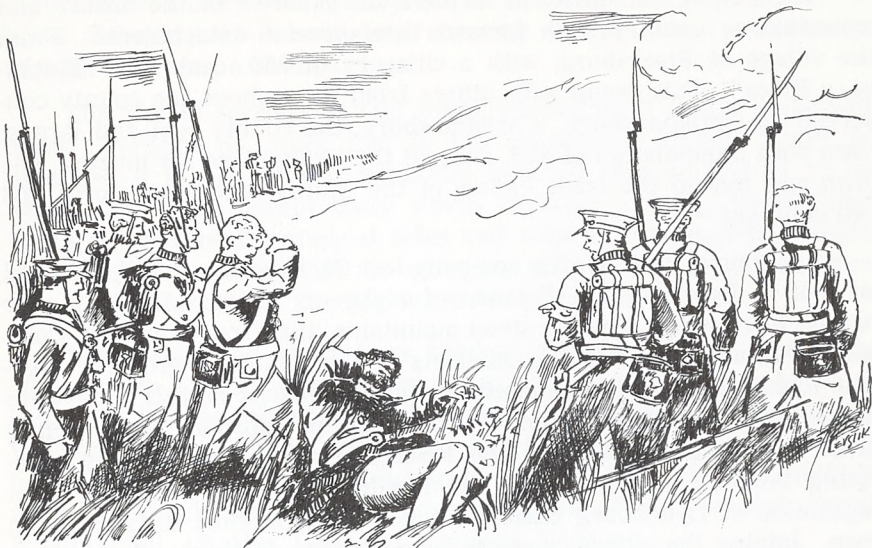
The regimental staff included a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, a major, an adjutant, a sergeant major, a quartermaster sergeant, and two musicians. Each of the nine regiments had ten companies who were to have a captain, a lieutenant, two second lieutenants, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, and eighty privates.

At once, Virginia's Governor William "Extra Billy" Smith issued a proclamation calling upon citizens of the Old Dominion to form a volunteer regiment. The Governor admonished the volunteers in electing their officers to discard personal preference and to select the best qualified leaders.⁸

Though Virginian troopers sang to the tune of Yankee Doodle:
I'll sling my knapsack on my back,
My rifle on my shoulder,
And to Mexico I'll go
to be a gallant soldier,⁹

the Virginia regiment organized so slowly that her recruiting officers extended their efforts to Maryland.¹⁰ Their task proved difficult, since volunteers were provided with no bounty, no clothing, and received less pay than regulars.¹¹ Furthermore, there existed no central training camp for enlistees, who often waited at local depots for an indefinite period of time until enough of the state's requirement was filled.¹²

The inadequate public subscription for uniforms and supplies was rectified when the Virginia General Assembly voted \$10,000 for the volunteer regiment until it became mustered into federal service.¹³



A sketch of fighting in the Mexican War was drawn by Frank Levstik Sr., of Columbus, Ohio, father of the writer.

Although the governor had issued his initial proclamation on November 18, 1846, it remained more than a month before the full text of his message reached Christiansburg, the county seat of Montgomery County. This county of 5,825 citizens exhibited pride in its martial tradition since the French and Indian War, and its citizens responded eagerly to the call to arms. Formation of Montgomery County's company began immediately under the title of First Grenadier Company of Virginia Volunteers.

In the election of officers, James Francis Preston was named captain. The choice of Preston appeared by no means unnatural, since his family dominated the area as its most prominent land magnates and office holders. Two had served as governor of the Commonwealth in the preceding thirty years. Among the mixed German-Scot-Irish folk there existed for the Prestons an awe and respect which begets hope of martial laurels. A Preston had led in such conflicts as the Tug River Indian campaign in the 1770's, as in Lord Dunmore's War, as in the Revolutionary Battle of Guilford Court House, as in the Battle of Chrysler's Farm in the War of 1812.

Other officers included Fleming Gardner, first lieutenant, Henry Stanger, second lieutenant, James M. Wade, third lieutenant, Robert G. Newlee, first sergeant, James R. Myers, second sergeant, Benjamin Linkous, third sergeant, and Charles Jackson, fourth sergeant. Chosen corporals were Patterson Bowers, George Keister, Joseph Miller, and James R. Davis.¹⁴

The largely self-sufficient farmers and laborers of the broken and mountainous country soon formed their special detachments. From the village of Blacksburg, with a citizenry of 250, came the "Blacksburg Blues". This group with others from throughout the county converged on Christiansburg. Christiansburg, the county seat and largest town with a population of 400, seemed the likely place for muster. The town was indeed the trade center of the county with four stores and two churches.¹⁵

On January 6, 1847, the company left Christiansburg and marched on foot to Lynchburg, a distance of eighty-six miles. Marching over rugged terrain and crossing steep mountains, the First Grenadier Company eventually reached the outskirts of Lynchburg, a growing, bustling young city of 8,000 inhabitants, whose citizens at this time were beginning to agitate in favor of a railroad in addition to the James River and Kanawha Canal.¹⁶ The Montgomery County company numbering between ninety-six and one hundred men were greeted by a deputation of Lynchburg citizens on horseback a short distance from town. Joining the citizens were three volunteer companies from other parts of southwestern Virginia.¹⁷

The Montgomery men marched into town amid a large civic and military procession. The company paraded down Main Street amidst strains of martial music and the loud huzzas of the onlookers. Arriving at the Washington Hotel, the contingent was received and welcomed in a patriotic address from William S. Reid.¹⁸

Scheduled to leave the following day at two o'clock, the First Grenadiers paraded in front of the Washington Hotel and were thence escorted to the wharf on the James River. Major James Garland, on behalf of the citizens addressed Captain Preston's company on the deck of a boat in a handsome and appropriate speech, "highly incentive to patriotism, discipline, and valor." At the conclusion of the speech, Garland shook hands with Preston. There followed repeated cheers by the citizens which the volunteers acknowledged and returned. As the old freight boat "Exit" burdened with volunteers, moved off toward Richmond, there followed a beautiful air from the band and loud peals of cannon and musketry.¹⁹

At Richmond on January 15, the company underwent the regular muster into service as part of the First Regiment Virginia Volunteers. Commanding the regiment was Colonel John F. Hamtramck of Jefferson County, a graduate of West Point and subordinate of General Zachary Taylor in the War of 1812. Assisting him were Lieutenant Colonel Beverly Randolph of Warren County, a veteran of the War of 1812, and Major Jubal A. Early of Franklin County, Seminole War veteran.²⁰ The regiment remained in Richmond for two weeks

before it was conveyed by steamer to Fortress Monroe, where it arrived February 1, immediately entering barracks and commencing regular drill for a month.²¹

The walled fortress at Old Point encompassed nearly sixty-three acres. Perhaps no other fort in the continental United States approached it in size. It was generally believed that no fort in all the world was larger except those which enclosed towns. The structure was a polygon of six unequal sides and with an awe-inspiring bastion at each of the corners and an extra one jutting out toward the channel. A moat encircled the graying stone walls.²²

While stationed at Fortress Monroe, Corporal James Davis from Montgomery County died of smallpox. Others succumbing to smallpox were Privates Stephen Lindsey and James Trump of the county. William Black and John Starr died of congestion of the brain before leaving Fortress Monroe. Discharged, before leaving, for disability were Crockett Linkous, Robert Lorton, Charles Elliot, Jeremiah Ferris, R. McDaniel, Charles Lee, and Crockett Roop.²³

At Fortress Monroe, the word came that the Virginia General Assembly gave verbal support to the war by declaring that it had been "most unrighteously provoked . . . by a long series of acts of injustice and outrage towards the United States."²⁴ On February 23, the General Assembly authorized the Governor to present to each company's officer a sword from the armory of the state.

Before boarding the ship for Mexico, the volunteers were outfitted with blue cloth fatigue caps, jackets and trousers. In addition, the officers wore single-breasted frock coats. Most of the infantry carried general-issue flintlock muskets, which normally could not be relied on for more than a hundred yards.²⁵

On March 1, the regiment went on board the sail ship "Sophia Walker," recently arrived from Boston, and now sixteen days later disembarked at Brazos, Santiago, Texas. While off the Florida reefs, William Yopp of the First Grenadiers succumbed to an unspecified disease.

The primary camp lay three or four miles at the north end of Brazos Island. The island consisted of low hills on the side toward the mainland, a swamp in the center, and in general, "three blades of grass to fifty square feet of sand," according to Lieutenant George B. McClellan.²⁶

From Brazos, the regiment proceeded on foot to the mouth of the Rio Grande, about nine miles away, where it re-embarked on board a steamboat and after a voyage up the narrow, muddy stream past

Matamoros, landed at Comargo on enemy soil, April 1. Subsequently, the unit marched up the San Juan River, by way of Caddareta and Chena through country covered with mesquite trees, canes, and cabbage trees. At Chena, Private William Linkous fell victim to brain fever, which may have been the consequence of sun-stroke. The contingent marched on to Walnut Springs outside Monterrey where they relieved the Second Ohio Company which had been stationed there for an extended period of time.²⁷ Monterrey, which had been taken before their arrival, was marked with pillage, almost exclusively inflicted by American troops.²⁸ Thus, the Montgomery Grenadiers and the other Virginia Volunteers saw very little action except for occasional skirmishes with small Mexican scouting parties.²⁹

Two weeks later, the Virginia Regiment again took up the line of march and advanced by way of Saltillo to Buena Vista, where it joined a portion of General Taylor's army commanded by General John E. Wool, two months after Taylor's greatest victory.³⁰

Although there was little military activity in northern Mexico after the Battle of Buena Vista, sometimes the Virginians would engage in scouting and patrol skirmishes.³¹ On one occasion, Early suggested a move involving a high degree of risk. When Major Early persisted, Hamtramck allowed him to take fifty volunteers and go on the expedition. As the adjutant prepared the needed orders, he remarked: "Jubal, I can testify that you are an Early who is never late, but I fear you will soon be known as the late Early."³² Jubal, however, returned unharmed from the expedition.

Meanwhile, the Montgomery Countians remained at Buena Vista until the middle of June 1848. During the Virginians' garrison duty, five men from Montgomery County died: Andrew Clifton of consumption and Pleasant Clingenpeel, John L. Manson, James A. Morehead and William Battles of fever.

After the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was ratified by Mexico on May 19, 1848, the volunteers began their homeward march overland by way of Saltillo, Monterrey, Seralvo, Mier, and Comargo, situated at the confluence of the San Juan and Rio Grande Rivers.³³ Down the latter the Virginians proceeded by steamboat and reached its mouth on July 3, celebrating the nation's birthday the following day. Soon afterwards, they marched to Brazos, and after a delay of a few days embarked on board the U.S.S. Ohio. The seventy-four-gun ship of the line, "Ohio" was long considered one of the finest vessels of her type in the world and by far the best in the American Navy.³⁴ By way of the Indies they returned to Fortress Monroe. On July 20, they disembarked and by August 1, the troop completed the muster out from the

service.³⁵ The citizens of Richmond feted the returning veterans by giving them a dinner on August 5.³⁶ After the celebration at Richmond, the First Grenadier Company began their journey to their mountain homes and a public dinner at Christiansburg.

The Montgomery Grenadiers did not join General Taylor's army in Northern Mexico until after the focus of war had shifted to General Scott's army in Central Mexico. Although they and other companies of Virginia volunteers did not see any battle action during their tour of duty in Mexico, their garrison duty at Monterrey and Buena Vista had served important and useful service which was by no means lacking in danger. There is no record of casualties among Taylor's army resulting from guerilla activities after the Battle of Buena Vista, but the twelve Montgomery Grenadiers who died of various diseases were no less heroes than those who had fallen in battle. It would be going too far to say that the men of Montgomery County derived anything from the Mexican War which aided the eleven known to have served in the Civil War some thirteen years later. At best, a former Montgomery Grenadier might in 1861 have related to gullible stay-at-homes how he had served not only with "Old Zach" at Buena Vista but with the gallant Colonel Jefferson Davis. In fact, however, the patriotic mythology of Montgomery County gives little or no place to our War with Mexico.

1 Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico* (Vol. I in *The War With Mexico*, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963; hereafter cited as *Smith, Mexico*), 142.

2 Glyndon Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 222.

3 Otis Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960; hereafter cited as *Singletary, War*), 13.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, 14.

6 *Smith, Mexico*, I, 537.

7 *Ibid.*, 512.

8 William Smith to General Assembly of Virginia; Richmond, November 18, 1846; *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, XI, 18-19.

9 Alfred Hoyt Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict: The War with Mexico 1846-1848* (New York: History Book Club, 1947), 240.

10 *Smith, Mexico*, I, 537. (See also R. A. Billington's *The Far Western Frontier* (New York, 1956), pp. 174-175; for regional response to the call to arms.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*, II, 431.

13 W. Asbury Christian, *Richmond: Her Past and Present* (Richmond: L. H. Perkins, 1912), 155-156.

14 Charles Wade Crush, *The Montgomery County Story, 1776-1957*; hereafter cited as *Crush, Montgomery*, 68.

15 Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston: William R. Babcock, 1852), 385.

16 Elizabeth D. Coleman, "Southwest Virginia's Railroad," *Virginia Cavalcade*, II, No. 4 (Spring, 1953), 20-28.

17 *Richmond Whig*, Jan. 19, 1847.

18 *Richmond Whig*, Jan. 19, 1847.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Millard K. Bushong, *Old Jube, A Biography of General Jubal A. Early* (Boyce: Carr Publishing Co., Inc., 1955; hereafter cited as *Bushong, Old Jube*, 22.

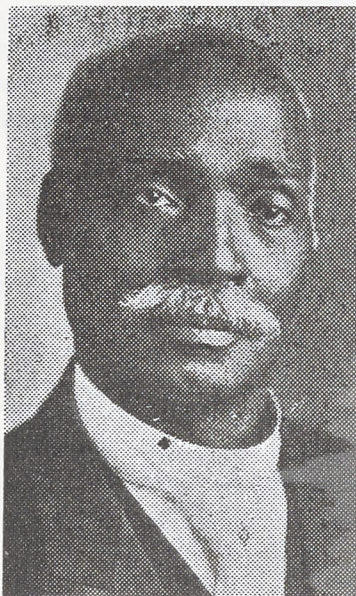
21 *Crush, Montgomery*, 69.

22 William M. E. Rachal, "Walled Fortress and Resort Hotels", *Virginia Cavalcade*, II, No. 1 (Summer, 1952), 20.

- 23 Crush, Montgomery, 69.
- 24 Resolution of General Assembly; Feb. 20, 1847; Richmond; Calendar of Virginia State Papers, XI, 19.
- 25 Smith, Mexico, I, 451.
- 26 Ibid., 205.
- 27 Crush, Montgomery, 69.
- 28 Singletary, War, 145.
- 29 Bushong, Old Jube, 23.
- 30 Crush, Montgomery, 69.
- 31 Bushong, Old Jube, 23.
- 32 Bushong, Old Jube, 23-24.
- 33 Crush, Montgomery, 70.
- 34 Howard I. Chapelle, The History of The American Sailing Navy (New York: Bonanza Books, 1949), 314.
- 35 Crush, Montgomery, 70.
- 36 Lyon G. Tyler, History of Virginia (Vol. II in History of Virginia, New York: American Historical Society, 1924), 479.

Rev. Peyton M. Lewis, Slave, Teacher, Preacher

Two weeks before his death at Waterloo, Iowa in December, 1934, the Rev. Peyton M. Lewis wrote back to Roanoke County: "I am thinking of the old home and old folks of years in Virginia. How Henry, David, Berry and I used to go over those fields in the snow, rabbit hunting Christmas day. How we used to drink eggnog and frolick."



Rev. Peyton M. Lewis

This was the last letter in the 85-year-old minister's correspondence over seven months with Mrs. L. E. Freeland of Roanoke County. His letters, held by Mrs. Freeland today, tell the story of a man who went from slavery on Benjamin Deyerle's plantation at Garst Mill to become valedictorian of his class at Hampton Institute, serve as the first Negro school teacher in Bedford County and then devote 50 years to ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in five states.

The letters began after the Waterloo Daily Courier published a story about the busy life of Mr. Lewis after his 85th birthday. Someone sent the newspaper story to Mrs. Freeland, who is a granddaughter of Benjamin Deyerle, master of Mr. Lewis from his birth in 1849 until his freedom at



Brick walk at the Benjamin Deyerle home dates from the mid-19th century.

the end of the Civil War in 1865. She wrote to him and this began a renewal of family memories of 70 years earlier.

"I have not been idle a week since I left that plantation," he wrote. "I worked on farms and made and laid bricks for years; went to schools when I could."

With the clear recollection often enjoyed by the elderly, Mr. Lewis wrote about Benjamin and Julia Deyerle and their nine children in the 19th century. Deyerle, remembered today as the builder of a number of fine old brick homes, "bought my father, Charles Lewis, and his brother, Peyton Lewis, on the auction block in Richmond. I was named after my uncle."

Charles Lewis was "a great distiller of whiskeys and great brick molder and layer. Father laid brick in front of the house you now live in (the Deyerle home now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Alan Fink on Grandin Road Extension, near the intersection of the Garst Mill Road), he laid the front of Mr. James Persinger's house, Mr. Benjamin Keagy's house and many others in Roanoke, Franklin and other counties around Roanoke. He and I made and laid the brick in Henry Deyerle's house in Franklin Co. after the Civil War closed.

"I cannot remember the building of the house you now live in, but I remember the building of rock and brick walls around the yards. Opposite the garden was a hewed log house that our master built for my father and family.

"At the west end of this house stood a large cherry tree. Cherries always got ripe on it in May, so we called it the May cherry tree. Is it still alive? The orchard west of the big mansion Old Master and myself set most of it out. I suppose it is a fine fruit orchard now.

"Yes, I remember also when we built the brick spring house and ash house. There used to stand a large sweet apple tree near the ash house."

Later, he recalled that catfish were caught at the old mill dam on the Deyerle place. "When I was on that farm, I drove a two-ox team. I hauled many barrels of flour and whisky from that old mill and a big distillery that stood near the creek south of your house to the Salem and Big Lick depots."

"I used to grease and blacken old Master Benjamin's and all of his children's shoes except Miss Susan's, she was married and gone before I was large enough, every Sunday morning. I used to carry Master George to the Salem College every Monday morning when he was attending that school. Uncle Dick, or Richard Taylor, he was the carriage driver, and carried Miss Eliza and Jenny to the Botetourt school Mondays. Henry, David, Berry, Miss Betty and Charles Chapman had not gotten into these schools when the Civil War closed."

Mr. Lewis recalled that "a teacher got me into Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute" in 1869, the year after the school was founded. He graduated as valedictorian of a class of 17 in 1873, the year after Booker T. Washington entered Hampton. His first wife, Mrs. Alice Ferribee Lewis of Elizabeth City, N. C., was a classmate of Washington.

After graduation at Hampton, the Lewises moved to Liberty, now Bedford, where he said he was the first of his race to teach in the public schools after the war. This was only three years after the start of Virginia's public school system.

During six years of teaching, he said he succeeded in opening 11 schools in Bedford County for his people. In those early days of public education, the school term for the state was from three to five months and average pay for Negro teachers was \$30 a month. But under a special Peabody Fund for public schools, a school showing an average daily attendance of 50 or more could get an appropriation to carry on its work three or four more months. Mr. Lewis took advantage of this opportunity and had eight or nine months of school in Bedford City.

In the beginning of Bedford teaching, he said in a letter to Hampton in 1911, "we had considerable difficulties in getting school homes and their proper outfits, but as far as possible, we always overcame these by using old log churches, cabins and building such school houses as we could. All of them being furnished with a table, a rough made and painted black board and slab benches. No writing desks, no maps or globes. As fast as possible we would get money together and send off—to friends, white—and supply our schools with maps and globes."

For an alumni publication at Hampton in 1893, Mr. Lewis wrote that in his teaching at Liberty, Thaxton Switch and Bunker Hill in Bedford County, he taught 600 children, 11 of whom became teachers.

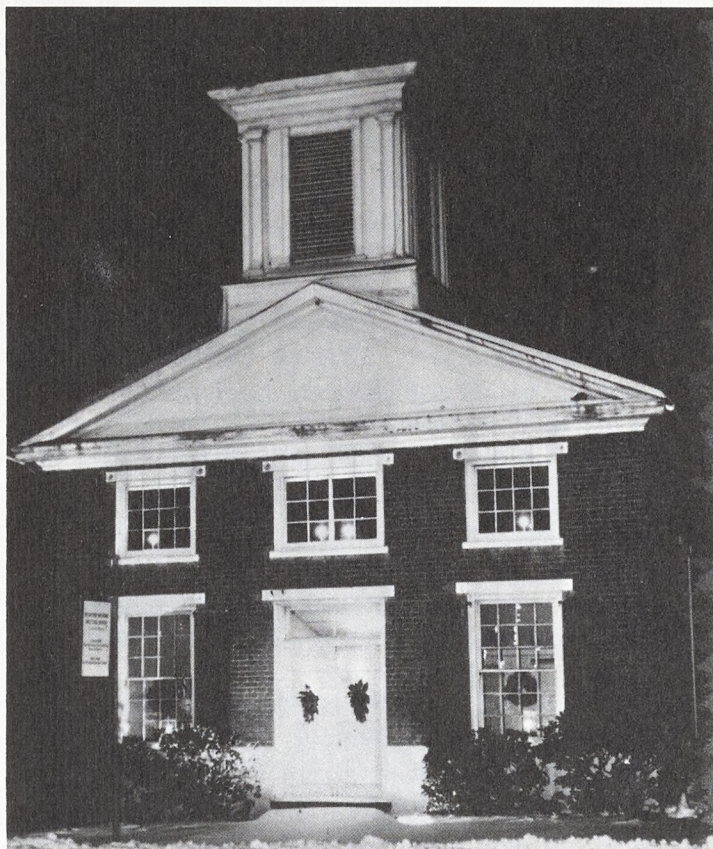
At this time, he also was busy organizing Sunday Schools "all over that county and getting friendly white people of the north to help supply these schools with suitable literature." Also at the same time he was active in general church work which he entered fulltime in 1879. Mr. Lewis reported in 1911—38 years after he left Hampton—that he had had no vacation or holiday.

He said he studied Latin, Greek, French and German at Wabash College in Indiana while serving as a pastor in the Indiana Methodist church. After he was ordained an elder in the A.M.E. church, he acquired a reputation for raising money for church indebtedness. He raised \$4,000 at Champaign, Ill., in two years and he paid a debt of \$2,000 at Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

In 1926, he received a silver loving cup commemorating 50 years of ministry in the A.M.E. church and he retired in 1930. He wrote that from age 11 until 80 "no one had to give me a meal or clothes to eat and wear."

Mr. Lewis told the Waterloo Daily Courier that he was once priced at \$600 by a slave trader but his master refused to sell. Deyerle had about 60 slaves, he said.

Bedford Saves an Old Church



Bedford's Historic Meeting House dressed for Christmas.

An early nineteenth century church building, believed to be the oldest still intact in Bedford County, is being preserved as a memorial and hopefully as a county museum and cultural center by the Bedford Historical Society.

It is a simple wooden structure on West Main Street, built either in 1838 or a few years earlier, as the home of the Methodist congregation in Liberty, by which name the present City of Bedford was known until the 1890s.

Late in the nineteenth century, Bedford Episcopalians bought the church from the Methodists and used it for two generations for the Negro communicants of the church. It was then known as St. Philip's Episcopal Church. Now, it has been renamed the Bedford Historic Meeting House.

However, its congregation gradually dwindled, many members transferring to the larger and more progressive Washington Street Baptist Church, all black, until in the last decade it had only about a dozen members.

Then St. John's Episcopal Church, yielding to pressures for desegregation, invited St. Philip's membership to join St. John's, which a few did. The old church was empty.

The Bedford Life Saving Crew was looking around for a site for a new headquarters and garage and finally purchased the church building and lot from the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, which held the title. The intention was either to remodel the structure as a crew headquarters and garage or raze it and erect a new building.

It was the threat that this relic of another age might disappear which inspired a Bedford group who revered landmarks of the county's past to form the Bedford Historical Society with salvation of old St. Philip's as its primary project.

This came about in the summer of 1970 and an agreement was reached with the Life Saving Crew to buy the church for \$18,000. The crew was promised a site gratis by Bedford City Council. The historical society began a fund raising drive and enough was collected or pledged to make the down payment on the property. A friendly bank helped with a loan for the remainder, but more funds still are needed.

Now marked by a new interdenominational "Meeting House" sign telling of its service as a place of worship for 130 years from 1838 to 1968, the old building has its original pews, hand-hewn woodwork, a balcony and an old bell in the belfry.

Bedecked with Christmas greens and candles, the meeting house was first opened to the public on a Tuesday afternoon in December, 1970. The century-old organ was played as more than 200 came for the open house. They were told the immediate objective of the society is to restore the original building and make it a landmark memorial, dedicated to Bedford citizens of yesterday and today.

In addition to contributions and pledges, money for the meeting house has been raised by a sale of Good Olde Favorite Foods in March and plans were made for an old fashioned country auction in June.

First president of the Bedford Historical Society was Lt. Col. John R. McCormick, U. S. Army, retired, who had come back to Bedford to live after his military career was over. Elected to succeed him is Mrs. R. Bolling Lambeth.

In the July 22 meeting in which the decision to buy the church was reached, Bolling Lambeth, chairman of the finance committee, declared:

"We have arrived at a point in the history of this county when we are about to enter upon an historic restoration, the first the county ever has undertaken. We hope we are at the stage of our culture where we are turning back the trend toward destruction of our landmarks." He told with regret of the disappearance of two covered bridges and the destruction of a building of the "Jeffersonian type of architecture" to make way for something new. "This is the moment of truth," Lambeth said, as the decision to take the \$18,000 plunge was taken.

Col. McCormick, in his president's report, wrote that the society in its first year of operation "accomplished a major historical achievement" in saving St. Philip's. "The acquisition of this old edifice, snatched literally from the paws of the building wrecker, became the rally point and cause celebre of our historical group," he wrote.

"We Boys Had a Lot of Fun"

Floyd County in the 1890s

by ROBERT GOODYKOONTZ

I was born in the old Goodykoontz home in Floyd County around midnight, June 6th, 1884. Mother said she heard the clock strike and I was born just after. Dr. Calvin M. Stigleman was my doctor and "Aunt" Sara Palmer, wife of "Uncle Thad," was my "Granny." (Uncle Thad was a slave belonging to my Grandfather David.) Dr. Stigleman was the first captain of my father's Company "A", 24th Virginia Regiment, Longstreet's Corps, Pickett's Division, Kemper's Brigade, C.S.A.

One of the first things I remember was attending the burial of a little boy named Elmer Harman, I think in 1889, in the old Goodykoontz graveyard near home. I told mother he looked very pale.

Later his father, Asa Harman, erected a tombstone with a lamb on top. We had a colored family named Scales who lived under a hill

Before Robert Goodykoontz, a director of the Society, died on Aug. 2, 1970, he had put on paper reflections on 86 years of life, beginning in Floyd County and continuing with his family, working on a railroad and with a hardware. Most of his life was spent in Roanoke but his earliest memories of boyhood in Floyd are narrated here in his own words.



Robert Goodykoontz, 7, in 1891.

from the graveyard. One of the boys broke the head off the lamb. Mother offered a reward of ten cents if the lamb's head would be returned.

A few days later we found the head on the grave but the reward was never collected. You will notice to this day the stone with a lamb, with its head broken off, in the old graveyard.

A few days, or months, later, probably in October, (we picked up chestnuts on the way) Aunt Nette Kirkner with her son Ed, brother Oakey and I, went up to the mill. Little Henry Spangler had died with "The Worms."

I do not remember too much about this except I had a red pair of mittens (yarn), connected with a string, and felt very much dressed up. (It was cold this day.)

I guess this same winter, 1889, my brothers, Wells, Emmett, Wilmer and Oakey, took me to school one day. (I was only past 5 years old.) Uriah Harman was the teacher (later a dentist in Richmond.) The most I remember was all the girls tried to kiss me. I crawled under the teacher's desk. There was Lillian Phlegar, Addie and Lula Hilton, Mandy Harman and more such. I did not choose kissin'.

The next year, 1890, I went to school. My first teacher, for two years, was Ellen Meaden.

"Too Big for My Britches"

My last term in school, under Miss Florence Harman, I guess I got too big for my britches.

I did not study much, but made spit balls and stuck 'em to the ceiling; made funny faces at the kids; put a mouse in Miss Florence's desk drawers; also put a pin in the seat of her chair. In general I raised hell. Miss Florence said she would whip me if I was as big as Buffalo Mountain (she didn't). Also, she said she would have me expelled. However, I stuck it out and graduated at the age of 16, under Miss Florence.

We had it pretty tough going to this country school, which was more than a mile away. Sometimes the snow would be two feet deep and then there would be the rainy and sleety days. We boys had to cut the wood for the pot bellied stove and carry it in and keep the fires up.

We had no buses, street cars or cafeterias. We carried a cold lunch basket. Mother would give us sausage, spare ribs, ham, apple butter—all with cold biscuits. We would also have some kind of pie and sometimes cakes or cookies, and always about a dozen apples and chestnuts. We lived good and were healthy.

Around Thanksgiving and after Christmas, we would have cold turkey or chicken with our biscuits. We got along fine. We boys had a lot of fun. We played "Auntie Over," that is the crowd would divide, half boys and girls. We would throw a ball over the school house, and the one catching the ball would chase around the corner and try to pop some fat gal in the rump. We used a soft ball for this, but I carried a hard baseball in my pocket, and sometimes I used it on fat Mary Jones' rump.

Johnny Houses and "God's Biscuits"

We also had a double johnnie house, one half for the boys and one half for the girls. We boys would go first and when the girls went in we would toss "God's biscuits" (rocks) against the johnnie house. The gals would come out screaming. The school marm could never prove who tossed the "God's biscuits."

Around Christmas there was a store about a half mile from school which sold firecrackers, which were "strictly forbidden" but somehow would slip in. We boys would tie fuses four or five feet long to about five or six cannon crackers and place them under the floor and light them when the bell rang. We were all inside when "BOOM" went the crackers. We boys were all innocent and never squealed.

After starting to school I had various chores to perform, among them was carrying water up the hill from the spring, carrying in wood, keeping the fires up and going after the cows. On frosty mornings, I, barefooted, would kick the cows up and stand on their warm spots to warm my feet.

Then I had to help milk and later would have to churn butter. Oakey, my brother, and I would have to dash 100 times each for about 2 hours. Mother would not give us hot water to warm the milk because she said it made the butter pale in color and not firm.

I also had other duties to perform. On Monday mornings, when the weather was good, I had to start a fire under two 20 or 30 gallon iron pots, fill them with water and have the water hot when the washer woman came.

However, Oakey and I changed jobs every other week. I would slop and feed the hogs, feed and curry the horses and harness them up, all before breakfast.

Then we would go to the fields. We had an old cow horn that mother or daddy would blow about 11:30. We would come in and not go to work until 1 o'clock.

It is true we did not have too hard a time. There were 1100 acres on the farm and when I was a small boy, up to about 10 or 12 years old, father had two or three tenants on the farm and they had large families. They did most of the work except around the home, such as the garden, yard, milling, churning, etc.

When I was 10 or 12 years old, I was permitted to use a gun. I would go hunting, killed rabbits, squirrels, quail, etc. I had a bunch of steel traps and caught muskrats, mink, pole cats, possums, rabbits.

Foot Washing and Camp Meetings

We were right religious these days and attended Sunday School, revivals and camp meetings. They were usually held in the woods on slab benches and everyone took their dinners.

Also, the old time Dunkards had kitchens built on to the church with big iron pots in them. They would cook a whole beef and have soup, beef, apple butter and bread and would set a regular meal, wash one another's feet, take the sacrament with homemade blackberry wine, usually four or five gallons. The men, all wearing long beards, would kiss one another and the women would do the same.

The Iron Side Baptists also took sacrament but washed only one foot. They did not have beards and the men did not kiss. They held their association once a year, usually in August.

There were such large crowds the church would not hold them and they preached outdoors in a grove or woods, with a stand and slab benches. We boys and girls would do considerable courting. We would make new paths through the woods and bushes. We did considerable kissin' and huggin' and the gals that would not

kiss and hug, we boys would not go with them anymore. We would soon bring them to our terms. Lots of fun.

Around the turn of the century, everybody helped the other fellow. We would have barn raisings, threshing, corn shuckings and hog killings.

When we had a corn shucking, there was placed somewhere in the middle of the pile of un-shucked corn a jug of apple brandy. Everybody shucked like hell to find the jug. Then everyone would take a "swig." After that if one found a speckled ear of corn he would be allowed to smell the jug stopper. If he shucked a red ear, he was allowed a good sized drink and if he shucked a "Sque Ball," an ear of corn with solid patches of red, which were seldom found, then the finder or shucker was permitted to take two drinks.

P. S. I carried a "Sque Ball" ear in my pocket.

The Great Temperance Movement

During the 1880s and 1890s there was a Great Temperance Movement, mostly by the women folks and preachers. Temperance societies were organized and lodges established, mostly in churches and school houses. I remember one in the Falling Branch School-house. There would be prayer, songs and a mumbo jumbo initiation. The joiner was given a red cloth collar to hang around his neck. The big Mogul, presiding, had a crown with tinsel on it. His collar had glittering stars and he also had a scepter with a battle axe at the top.

All new members took an oath "Never to take another drink



**Goodykoontz homestead in Floyd County, dating in part to 1820.
Robert Goodykoontz is standing on the porch.**

of liquor." They would sing Temperance songs such as "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?"

One of the biggest moonshiners in Floyd County (I will call him Albert) joined, took the oath and was elected the big Mogul (I do not remember his correct title). All the while Albert was making hundreds of gallons of moonshine whiskey. But finally the revenue agents caught poor Albert red handed. This was the last of the Temperance Society at Falling Branch.

Floyd "Not as Large Now"

Floyd, Virginia (Court House) is not as large now as when I was a boy. There were three hotels, the Jacksonville, run by Jordan Lee, the Central, run by Howard Spencer and the Jett House, run by Joe Jett. All three had bars and the Central had a pool room.

Also there were one or two other bars or saloons. One, I remember, was run by Bill Russell. These were all licensed places.

About 1893 or 1894 there was a big fire which wiped out everything around the Court House except the Jett House. None of the buildings that burned and were replaced were as good or substantial as the ones that burned. Some have never been replaced.

During the 1880's and 1890's the population of Floyd County must have been almost double what it is now. They sold out and moved to Western States by the hundreds. At one time good land sold for three to five dollars per acre.

"Afterthoughts and Things I Forgot To Put In"

We boys had snow ball battles and I remember one winter when snow stayed on the ground for months, wild turkeys in the foot hills of Wills Ridge near the school got so poor and weak they could not fly. We would run them down in the snow and turn them over to Nathan Hylton, who lived near the schoolhouse, he put them in a rail pen, fattened them up, killed and cooked them and would bring hot turkey to school for our lunch.

Father kept a good many cattle, hogs and sheep. I remember he sold his cattle at only 3 cents per pound in the early 1890's ("Hard Times"). We put up lots of hay for the livestock. We put up over 100 stacks one year. I remember we cut and put up hay from June to Sept. My job was driving the hay rake.

Another hard job was taking care of the lambs usually in Feb., snow on the ground, we built a big fire in an old log barn with dirt floor, along with a little brandy. Would make trips all over the sheep lot with lanterns and when we found a lamb that could

not get up after being born, we would take the lamb to the barn and thaw it out, pour some warm milk down it and return it to its Mother, they always lived.

Another hard job was shearing sheep. We had over 100 head one year, as we did not have electric clippers, it was all done with hand sheep shears, and our hands got good and greasy, the smart boys now call this sheep grease "lanolin."

We did the usual tricks of boys, Halloween, we set Uncle John Weddle's wagon on top of his barn.

We dragged Uncle Peter Harman's plow up in the top of a big Black Heart Cherry Tree. Uncle Pete did some tall "cussin." We also built fences across roads and lanes. Folks did not like this. The damned Goodykoontz boys were blamed whether we did it or not. Most of the time we did.

We had other fun, there was threshing, log rollings, barn or house raisings, corn huskings, hog killings, apple butter stirrings, most everyone helped one another and we had fun doing it, especially when we had a nice, fat girl to hug etc.

We also attended Wakes, where someone died, the young folks with a few elders would spend the night. We would do some singing, a lotta courting, etc. Usually hot coffee was served along with some kind of sandwiches, during the long night.

"About the Birds & the Bees"

There was a belled buzzard that flew over Floyd County for two or three years, everyone said the bell was gold, one could hear the bell tinkle and see it glitter in the sunshine, most everyone in Floyd County shot at this Poor Buzzard. I did many times but never heard of anyone killing it. (I guess the bell was brass.)

There was a whippoorwill that used to light on the ash hopper, about every night, he would start to "Whip Poor Will," just as he lighted, he kept Daddy awake. One evening just before dusk, Daddy took some hot ashes from the cook stove and poured them on top the ash hopper, Mr. Whip Poor Will lighted and said "Whip Poor"—he did not get the "Will" out, his feet were scorched, this was the last of Mr. Whip Poor Will.

Court Days

On court days we would sell lemonade, at first 5 cents per glass, later 2 glasses for a nickle and winding up at 1 cent per glass. I sometime would make as much as \$1.00. Melon time, I would take both water and musk melons to Floyd on Saturday afternoons in

the buggy on court days. In the Spring of the year there would be a lot of auction sales, people going West. I would sell apples at those sales, 5 cents per dozen, I managed to have a little change most of the time.

The Road to Christiansburg

Back in the 1880's and the 1890's, Floyd County was in a bad shape, from Floyd Court House to Christiansburg was 21 miles over a dirt road. Up hill, down hill and in the winter time, mud up to the axles of wagons and buggies. There was a hack line that carried the mail and three or four passengers daily. except in winter time, then the mail had to be carried horseback, part of the time.

From the old homeplace we had a near cut to Christiansburg, we could go through the Low Gap of Wills Ridge, mostly by horseback or light buggy, and I do not think it was more than 17 miles, but it was too steep to take a wagon over it, except in dry weather. We would take the light, empty wagon over and bring back the load by Floyd Court House, which was about 7 or 8 miles further, then we would camp at the foot of Pilot Mt., a few miles from Christiansburg, on what I remember as Ellett's Creek. There were always as many as a half doz. wagons, sometimes more, there would be a camp fire, and would fry our bacon, ham or dried sausage and with homemade apple butter, etc. So, we lived well. (We always made coffee.) One could smell this cooking and coffee a mile before one reached the campground.

There was always a gallon or so of corn licker or brandy in the crowd, also a (banger) banjo and fiddle. We would carouse all night, no place to sleep, also card games and a fight occasionally. We would holler, fight fair, fist and skull, no rocks?

(Robert Goodykoontz grew up in a time of great industrial change. In conclusion, he gave his first impression of inventions now taken for granted.)

The 19th and 20th Centuries

We of my generation have seen more changes in the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, than have occurred since the days of Adam and Eve.

Within my lifetime, I have almost seen the beginning, or the complete utilization of the following: the refrigerator, automobile, the aeroplane, the radio and television, moving and talking pictures,

the atomic age, and thousands of modern inventions such as deluxe trains, ocean steamers, giant ships and carriers, big guns, trucks, buses, wonderful farm machinery and tractors, electric heating and air conditioning. I could go on and on.

I remember the first telephone, (about 1890 or 92). It was a big thing that hung on the wall with a big box below holding jars of battery acid to create electricity. One had to holler loud to talk to Christiansburg 21 miles away.

The first phonograph had rubber tubes which one would place in each ear and hear a squeaky voice. I paid five cents to hear William Jennings Bryan speak in 1896.

I paid 25 cents to see the first automobile in a tent at the Radford Fair. It had high wheels like a buggy.

The first flying machine I saw was at the Roanoke Fair. It was a gas bag with a propeller, the operator hung in a basket under the bag and he went as high as Mill Mountain. We paid 25 cents to inspect this machine in a tent.

The first street car I saw was in Radford around 1890. It was a little doodlebug that would carry 12 or 15 passengers.

The first silent movie I saw was in Chicago around 1903. It was a pale blue flickering French film called The Path'e. It would run for about five minutes at the end of Vaudeville, and usually show a cop chasing some one who could run into a fruit peddler's cart and turn it over. A train would come rushing at you and you would almost jump out of your seat.

The first radio was a squally, squeaky thing that gradually improved. Television was just as bad at first. It would flick on and off, howl, screech, etc. It, too, gradually improved.

The Atomic Age I do not know much about but I do know it is the most powerful force every invented by man.

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