

A Guide to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Colonel William Preston Papers, 1774-1789

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1774-1789

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A Guide to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Colonel William Preston Papers, 1774-1789

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Language

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Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

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Alternative Form Available

Also available on microfilm (Misc. Reel 655).

Biographical Information

Colonel William Preston (1729-1783) was born in Limavady, Ireland, to Colonel John Preston and his wife Elizabeth Patton. The family immigrated to Augusta County, Virginia, in 1738. He served in the House of Burgesses from Augusta County from 1766 to 1768, and in 1769 served as a burgess from the newly formed Botetourt County. Preston married Susanna Smith on 17 January 1761 and together they had 12 children. The family lived at Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg, Virginia.

During the Revolution he was elected to the Committee of Safety for Fincastle County and was also responsible for military affairs in Montgomery County and the rest of southwestern Virginia. Colonel Preston was vital in preventing uprisings by the British loyalists in southwest Virginia. The General Assembly, during its session begun in October 1782, passed an act granting William Preston and others immunity from any prosecutions resulting from their suppressions of a Loyalist uprising in 1780.

Scope and Content

Papers, 1774-1789, including letters, orders, and statements of Col. William Preston, relating to the defense of southwestern Virginia from the British loyalists and Indian allies of the British during the American Revolution. The bulk of the collection are letters detailing various aspects of the Revolutionary War. Topics include rumors of attacks in Botetourt and Montgomery Counties, Virginia; the Battle of Kings Mountain, S.C.; Lord Cornwallis' movements towards Virginia; the Battle of Camden, NJ; and requests for troops from Montgomery County, Va. Correspondents include Col. Martin Armstrong, Col. Arthur Campbell, General William Campbell, Col. William Christian, Col. Elijah Clarke, Ben Cook, Walter Crockett, William Davies, Dudley Diggs, Col. William Fleming, Governor Benjamin Harrison V, Governor Thomas Jefferson, Col. Charles Lewis, Patrick Lockhart, General Lachlan McIntosh, James McGavock, James Montgomery, Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., General Andrew Perkins, Mayor Thomas Quirk, and Col. George Skillern, among others.

Included are several noteworthy letters: Letter, 30 October 1778, from General Lachlan McIntosh at Fort McIntosh, Beaver, Pa., to Col. Preston, regarding General McIntosh's efforts to secure peace treaties with Native American tribes and a request for troops from Virginia. Letter, 25 November 1778, from Col. Preston to Governor Patrick Henry detailing General McIntosh's letter and Col. Preston's difficulties in securing men to send to General McIntosh's aid. Letter, 7 April 1779, from Walter Crockett, warning Col. Preston of British plans to destroy lead mines and cause destruction in Montgomery County, Va. Letter, 15 April 1779, from James McGavock to Col. Preston naming soldiers who were accused of being Loyalists, listing their units and punishments. Also included is a deposition, 18 April 1779, by Michael Hennigan, an informer who told of the British plans to destroy lead mines and cause destruction in Montgomery County, Virginia.

Also of note are several letters detailing interactions with Native Americans loyal to the British, especially the Cherokee Nation. Included is an extract of Col. Elijah Clarke's letter, 1780, detailing attacks on the old and infirm after a battle in Georgia. Letters, 10 and 15 April 1780, from Martin Armstrong, Surry County, North Carolina, to Walter Crockett, warning of an upcoming attack by the Cherokee Nation along the frontiers from Georgia to Virginia. Letter, 7 June 1780, containing intel about Native Americans on the way to the Fort at Falls of Ohio (near Louisville, KY) and asking for military support. A deposition, 11 December 1780, of William Springstone, formerly a trader in the Cherokee town of Citico (Monroe County, TN), about the Raven chief of Cherokee, a treaty with a British agent in Georgia, a planned attack on the inhabitants of Virginia, and an attack around Chilhowee (Cherokee town in Blount and Monroe Counties, TN).

Additionally of note is a letter, 3 July 1780, about the defeat of the British at the Battle of Ramsour's Mill, Lincolnton, NC. An account, 10 October 1780, of the Battle of Kings Mountain, SC, and the death of British Major Patrick Ferguson. Letter, 15 February 1781, from Governor Thomas Jefferson to Col. Preston, regarding Lord Cornwallis' movement towards Virginia's boundary and asking Col. Preston to get troops together to send to Gen. Nathanael Greene. Letter, 12 June 1781, from Col. William Fleming to Col. Wm Preston, about the critical situation with Lord Cornwallis, discussing the raid at Charlottesville by Lord Tarlton, and

mentioning General Friedrich von Steuben's help in Virginia. Also included are the proceedings, 2 July 1782, of field officers of the militia of Montgomery and Washington Counties, Va., with a plan for the defense of the frontier. Included is a petition, undated, from the residents of Clynch River in Montgomery County, Virginia, as to why they didn't march on the late expedition against the British army in North Carolina due to attacks by Native Americans and fears for their families and homes. Also included is a letter, undated, from Col. Preston thanking the inhabitants of town of Salem, North Carolina, for their hospitable manner towards the militia of Montgomery County, Virginia. Also is an interesting letter, undated, from Col. Preston, to "Friends and Neighbors," about several rumors and complaints he's had lobbied at him and his hopes for a more peaceful relationship with his neighbors.

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