

# Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers

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1784-1881, n.d.



## Title Statement

Smithfield Preston Foundation PapersSmithfield Preston Foundation Papers, 1784-1881, n.d. Ms.1997.002

**Author:** Special Collections and University Archives Staff

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specref@vt.edu  
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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.1997.002

### Unit Date

1784-1881, n.d.

### Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

### Abstract

The Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers consist of 200 letters written almost exclusively by two generations of members of the Preston family of southwest Virginia, Kentucky, and South Carolina, to James and Sarah Preston McDowell of Rockbridge County, Virginia.

### Creator

Madison, Elizabeth Preston, 1762-1837

### Creator

Preston, Edmonia M. (Edmonia Madison Randolph), 1787-1847

### Creator

Preston, Francis, 1765-1835

**Creator**

Preston, John, 1764-1827

**Creator**

Preston, Thomas L. (Thomas Lewis), 1812-1903

**Creator**

Preston, William C. (William Campbell), 1794-1860

**Extent**

0.6 Cubic Feet 2 boxes

**Repository**

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Access**

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**Source of Acquisition**

The Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers were donated to Special Collections in May 1997.

**Processing Information**

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers commenced in 1997 and was completed in 1998. Additional description was completed in 2009. Minor updates to the finding aid were made in 2020.

**Preferred Citation**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers, Ms1997-002, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

## Biographical Note

Smithfield Plantation is the historic home of the Preston family, one of the founding families of Blacksburg and Montgomery County, Virginia. It was built by William Preston (1729-83), who emigrated from northern Ireland with his family in 1737. He married Susanna Smith in 1761 and settled at Greenfield in Botetourt County in 1769. Preston established himself as a leader in the Virginia frontier by serving in the militia in the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars, in the House of Burgesses representing Augusta County from 1766 to 1768 and Botetourt County in 1769, and as County Lieutenant of Fincastle and Montgomery. He was appointed surveyor of Fincastle County in 1772 and moved his family to that area. He built Smithfield, named in honor of his wife, in 1773. Smithfield was the birthplace and home of three Virginia governors, including James Patton Preston (son of William), and John Buchanan Floyd and John Floyd, Jr. (grandsons of William).

Smithfield Plantation remained in the family for generations and is currently maintained by the Montgomery County branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. Greenfield was a home in Botetourt County where William and Susanna Smith Preston resided in the 1760s.

See also the detailed list of correspondents in the collection, with some biographical information.

For more information about the Preston family, see John Frederick Dorman, *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* (Filson Club, Inc.; Louisville, Kentucky, 1982).

## Scope and Content

The Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers consist of 200 letters written almost exclusively by two

generations of members of the Preston family of southwest Virginia, Kentucky, and South Carolina, to James and Sarah Preston McDowell of Rockbridge County, Virginia. The collection also includes a will of William Campbell Preston, an obituary of John Smith Preston and his photograph, and a circular asking for funds for a memorial in honor of John Smith Preston.

Many of the correspondents are the children and grandchildren of William (1729-83) and Susanna Smith (1740-1825) Preston, settlers of Botetourt and then Montgomery County, Virginia. The letters were written by Sarah Preston McDowell's brothers and sisters, and their spouses. Other letters were written by the children of her brothers Francis Preston and James Patton Preston. Most of the letters are addressed to Sarah Preston McDowell and James McDowell or their son James McDowell and his wife Susanna Smith Preston McDowell.

## Related Archival Material

There are several collections in Special Collections related to the Smithfield Plantation and the Preston family in Special Collections and University Archives and the University Libraries. Links and descriptions can be found on the Preston Family Resources Research Guide.

## Keywords

Blacksburg (Va.)  
Local/Regional History and Appalachian South  
Montgomery County (Va.)  
Women -- History  
McDowell, James, 1770-1835  
McDowell, James, 1795-1851  
McDowell, Sarah Preston, 1767-1841  
McDowell, Susanna Smith Preston  
McDowell family (Rockbridge County, Va.)  
Preston family (Montgomery County, Va.)  
Smithfield Plantation House (Blacksburg, Va.)

## Existence and Location of Copies

Selected letters from this collection have been digitized and are available online (most with text transcripts).

## Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Smithfield Preston Foundation Papers by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged by correspondent.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### **Letter from Susanna Smith Madison [Peyton] to her uncle James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 8, 1802

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

### **Letter from J. Preston at Smithfield to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** April 15, 1795

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from J. Preston at Smithfield to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** July 21, 1799

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston in Greenfield to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 16, 1823

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Letter from William Preston from home to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** December 5, 1801

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to William Campbell Preston**

**Unit Date** July 3, 1838

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to Susanna Preston**

**Unit Date** October 20, 1838

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to William Campbell Preston**

**Unit Date** November 29, 1838

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to Susanna Preston**

**Unit Date** January 30, 1843

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to William Campbell Preston**

**Unit Date** June 23, 1845

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from Thomas Lewis Preston to Susanna Preston**

**Unit Date** October 4, 1847

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from William Campbell Preston to Susanna Smith Preston McDowell**

**Unit Date** August 9, 1816

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Letter from William Campbell Preston to Susanna Smith Preston McDowell**

**Unit Date** April 23, 1819

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Letters from William Campbell Preston to Susanna Smith Preston McDowell**

**Unit Date** n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Eight legal letters and documents of the McDowell and Preston families**

**Unit Date** 1816-1858

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Seven letters from William Campbell Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1819-1845

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Ten letters from William Campbell Preston to Susanna S. McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1819-1847

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Nine letters from Francis Preston to Susanna McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1819-1833

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 10 (folder)

**Eight letters from E.M. Preston to James McDowell (1795-1851), Sarah McDowell and Susanna Smith Preston McDowell (1800-1847)**

**Unit Date** 1820-1846

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 11 (folder)

**Two letters from Susanna Preston Hart to Sarah McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1821

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 12 (folder)

**Twelve letters from Sarah Ballard Preston to Susanna S. McDowell and Thomas L. Preston**

**Unit Date** 1821-1844

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 13 (folder)

**Nine letters from William Campbell Preston to Sally (Sarah B. Preston)**

**Unit Date** 1821-1854

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 14 (folder)

**Sixteen letters to and from members of the Preston and McDowell families**

**Unit Date** 1822-1859

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 15 (folder)

**Four letters from Eliza Preston Carrington to Susanna S. McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1824-1825

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 16 (folder)

**Thirteen letters from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1826-1833

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 17 (folder)

**Letter to Susanna McDowell from Ed. William Johnston**

**Unit Date** 1829

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 18 (folder)

**Two letters from Isaac T. Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1829, 1846

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 19 (folder)

**Six letters from John T. L. Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1830-1844

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 20 (folder)

**Two letters from William B. Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1833, 1847

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 21 (folder)

**Thirteen letters from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1834-1836

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 22 (folder)

**Thirteen letters to William C. Preston from Alexander McCall**

**Unit Date** 1840-1843

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 23 (folder)

**Three letters to William C. Preston from James Dellets(?)**

**Unit Date** 1840-1843

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 24 (folder)

**Eleven letters from William C. Preston to unidentified persons**

**Unit Date** 1841-1859

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 25 (folder)

**Letter from Rev. B.R. Smith to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1843

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 26 (folder)

**Three letters from Wade and Margaret Hampton to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** 1847-1851

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 27 (folder)

**Letter from Robert Jefferson Breckinridge to "my dear Sally"**

**Unit Date** 1848

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 28 (folder)

**Two letters from John Smith Preston to "my dear Sally"**

**Unit Date** 1853, n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 29 (folder)

**Manuscript will of William C. Preston**

**Unit Date** 1859

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 30 (folder)

**Obituary of John Smith Preston with photograph**

**Unit Date** 1881

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 31 (folder)

**Circular about John Smith Preston**

**Unit Date** n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 32 (folder)

**Letter from Mary Preston Lewis to James McDowell,**

**Unit Date** n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 33 (folder)

**Letter from Ann Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge to Sarah Preston McDowell**

**Unit Date** n.d.

**box-folder** 1 (box)

**Container** 34 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** June 17, 1798

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** October 5, 1798

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** May 27, 1804

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston in Abington to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 16, 1821

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 30, 1821

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** June 5, 1821

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** December 21, 1821

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston in Abington to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** March 10, 1822

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from Francis Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** n.d.

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston in Richmond, Virginia to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** May 5, 1804

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston in Richmond, Virginia to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** July 11, 1827

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston at Smithfield to Susanna McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** February 12, 1831

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston in Richmond, Virginia to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** July 16, 1831

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston in Richmond, Virginia to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** September 12, 1831

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston at Smithfield to Susanna McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** October 16, 1831

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston in Richmond, Virginia to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** June 8, 1832

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from James Patton Preston at Smithfield to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** March 9, 1835

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Letter from Eliza Preston Madison in Stafford, Virginia to her sister Sarah Preston McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** January 10, 1784

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Letter from Edmonia M. Preston in Stafford, Virginia to Sarah Preston McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** May 30, 1813

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Letter from George C. Thompson in Shawnee Springs, Kentucky to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** June 28, 1833

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Letter from William Preston from Fincastle to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 12, 1799

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Letter from William Preston from Fincastle to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** January 29, 1802

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Letter from Nathaniel Hart in Franklin, Kentucky to James McDowell in Fairfield, Virginia**

**Unit Date** June 15, 1805

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Letter from Nathaniel Hart in Spring Hill, Kentucky to James McDowell in Lexington, Virginia**

**Unit Date** November 23, 1834

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

**Letter from John Lewis in Covington to James McDowell in Rockbridge County, Virginia**

**Unit Date** August 5, 1804

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

**Letter from John Preston to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** August 29, 1794

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)

**Letter from John Preston at Greenfield to James McDowell**

**Unit Date** March 23, 1822

**box-folder** 2 (box)

**Container** 9 (folder)