

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Bristol Historical Association's efforts have saved the Robert Preston House from demolition. The Association is currently working to restore this historic and architecturally important site.

- Achieved inclusion into the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places



- Commissioned an extensive Historic Structure Report
- Conducted numerous surveys
- Purchased a one acre portion of Walnut Grove Plantation surrounding the house, December 2011
- Ordered extensive architectural plans
- Obtained access to the site from an adjoining property
- Obtained Washington County subdivision approval
- Removed a non-original rear kitchen and front porch
- Conducted an archeological dig on the property
- Installed electric service and security lighting
- Removed a vast colony of honey bees that had been residents for generations
- Cleared years of debris from the yard and the log building with assistance of Job Corps
- Stabilized the house by "jacking" up both ends



- Replaced rotted timbers under the foundation
- Repaired the stone foundation which had deteriorated



- Provided routine yard maintenance
- Received grants and gifts totaling \$177,000.00 in addition to many "in kind" gifts
- Invested over \$150,000.00 to date with future funds needed for completion
- Submitted applications for additional grants
- Highlighted project through coverage by local newspapers and television

BRISTOL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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The Robert Preston House At Walnut Grove (c. 1790-1815)



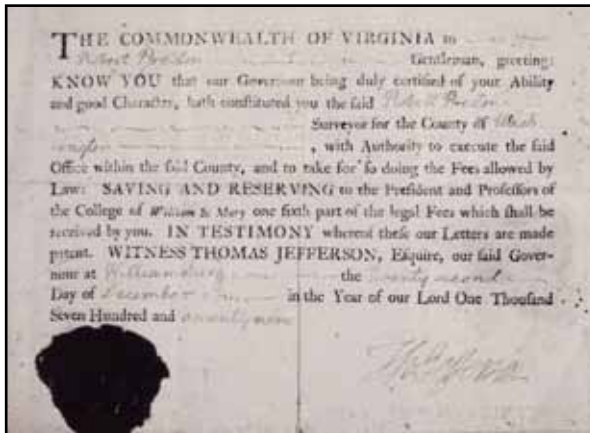
"...[T]he Preston House site is [one of] the most important historic period archaeological site[s] so far discovered in all Southwest Virginia."

~ Tom Klatka, State Regional Archaeologist for Southwest Virginia for over 22 years

ROBERT PRESTON'S SIGNIFICANCE

The Prestons were one of this frontier area's most prosperous and influential families during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Prestons and their descendants have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history as a country.

- Immigrated to Southwest Virginia from Londonderry, Ireland, in 1773 at age 23
- Apprenticed as a surveyor under the guidance of his cousin, William Preston, at Smithfield Plantation located on what is now the Virginia Tech Campus
- Served in 1774 as assistant surveyor in Fincastle County, Virginia (now Washington County)
- Fought in Lord Dunmore's War in 1774 which pitted the Colonial Virginians against Native Americans
- Granted a surveyor's bond and appointed first surveyor of Washington County in 1779 by Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson; Preston served in this capacity until his death in 1831



- Relocated his residence to Washington County about 1780 and later built his home at Walnut Grove

- Planned and designed the streets of Abingdon, Virginia, in 1780
- Served as Sheriff and Justice of the Peace of Washington County
- Donated land for and founded Walnut Grove Meeting House, now the Walnut Grove Presbyterian Church
- Mustered with the Overmountain Men in 1780 to join in the Battle of Kings Mountain
- Owned vast tracts of land including areas that would become the cities of Bristol, Tennessee, and Bristol, Virginia
- Served as one of the first Trustees of Abingdon, Virginia, and served on the Washington County Committee as a commissioner for supervising the Presidential election of 1800



"The staircase is an exceptional example of early... American architecture."

~ Paul Kapp, Architectural Institute of America, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESTON HOUSE

*"A notable example of early Southwestern Virginia architecture.... One of the only remaining 18th century wood-frame structures in the greater Bristol area."
~ Sonja Ingram, Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities*



- Wood frame construction instead of the usual log buildings of the period
- "Kicked roof profile", unique to early Southwest Virginia houses
- High style frontier design for a wealthy family
- One of the oldest surviving buildings in Washington County
- Retains a significant amount of its architectural integrity
- The staircase is an exceptional example of early 19th century American architecture
- Retains original recessed panel wainscoting
- Elaborate raised panel mantels
- Post and beam construction, mortised and tenoned with chestnut and hickory