

Lee Pendleton Notes

Excerpts from “Draper’s Meadow Massacre Retold” (Chapter one of Indian Massacres in Montgomery County 1755-1756 by Lee Pendleton – 1971...

[References to Dr. William Henry Foote, a Presbyterian clergyman “born in Connecticut in 1794,” and “locating in Romney, Hampshire County, West Virginia, he became an early church and secular historian.” Sketches of Virginia, published in 1856; And...Dr. John Peter Hale of Charleston, West Virginia – Trans-Alleghany Pioneers, published in 1886; And...Wadell’s Annals of Augusta County...publ. 1886And...Dr. Goodrich Wilson...Southwest Corner...June 1963; Letter from Letitia Preston Floyd - February 1843]

Preston’s Register:

“On July 3, 1755, twenty-two were killed, captured and wounded on New River, and July 12, William Wright and two soldiers were killed on Reed Creek. These must have sounded a warning to those in the Draper’s Meadows area. Col. Patton shared Dinwiddie’s view that the settlers should remain on their land, and this is probably the reason Draper and Ingles, close friends of Patton, continued to live at the Meadows.

The situation was tense, Patton as Augusta County representative made a plea for two ranger companies, which was granted on July 8th, and hastened back to commission his nephew, William Preston, as Captain of one of the companies. It is assumed Patton did all he could to interest men in joining the companies. Enlistments came slow. The fourth to enlist was Robert Elliott, twenty-seven years old, born in Ireland. A man by the same name came to the South Fork of the Roanoke in 1767, and purchased land on the creek that now bears his name.

It seems Governor Dinwiddie wanted Andrew Lewis to go to New River and Holston, but instead went to Greenbrier. On July 8th, Dinwiddie wrote Lewis, “You were ordered to Augusta to protect the frontier of that county. We have lately a messenger from thence giving an account of some barbarous murders on the Holston River. Col. Patton being here (July 8th, traditional date of the massacre) carries up blank commissions for officers to raise one company of rangers.”

It was not Dinwiddie’s intention that Patton go to the frontier, but he went anyway. It is not likely he would have gone without William Preston, and a wagon load of powder would need a driver and guard. There was a gap of seven days that Preston did not enlist any men, and it is very likely he was away with Patton. On July 16th, the Governor again wrote Patton “I am sorry to hear a further dismal account of murder in your county. I have sent some powder to Col. Stewart. Neighboring counties are directed to send men to your assistance upon application.” Again on August 1st, evidently thinking Patton was near Staunton, the Governor wrote “This day I have sent a cart load of ammunition to your court house.”

Patton was then in his grave. He had requested he be buried with his wife at Tinkling Spring, but like a sturdy oak, he was buried close to where he fell. Waddell says “An idle report arose

that a large amount of money was buried with the body and the grave was desecrated by vandals in search of the treasure.”

According to the “Preston Register” the following were killed and captured on July 30, 1755: Col. James PATTON, Caspar Barrier (Barger), Mrs. George Draper, child of John Draper, Killed; Mrs. English (Mary Draper Ingles) and two children, Mrs. John Draper, Henry Leonard, prisoners; James Cull, wounded.

It was August 11th before the news reached Dinwiddie. To Colonel Stewart he wrote he thought Patton was wrong to go so far back without a proper guard, and could not conceive what Patton was to do with ammunition so far from the inhabited part of the country. Two years later Dinwiddie was asking what became of the wagon... and if Indians confiscated the powder.

It is now accepted historical fact that Col. Patton rode ahead of the wagon carrying ammunition and off the road to visit Draper and Ingles families, and before he knew what was going on, he had ridden into the melee and Indians murdered him on the spot. This was reported in the Gentleman’s Magazine in England in September of that year. (See Freeman, Life of Washington, Vol. 2; also Tinkling Spring Church, by Dr. Howard M. Wilson.

Sandy Creek Punitive Expedition

Washington was appointed Colonel of Virginia troops on August 14, 1755, and made commander of all forces raised or to be raised in Virginia, with Winchester as headquarters. He found everything in confusion at that point and the people in panic. Soon he wrote Governor Dinwiddie that they resented his measures so much that they threatened to blow out his brains. (Bell, Old Free State) Several companies of rangers were formed in late 1755, Lunenburg, Hanover, and other counties one each. Augusta had Capt. Preston, Captain Hogg, Captain John Smith and maybe one or two others, making a total of nine companies of 350 men.

We quote Waddell, page 81: “During December, 1755, or earlier, Governor Dinwiddie planned an expedition against the Shawnee towns supposed to be on the Ohio, at or near the mouth of the Big Sandy River. Washington did not approve of it, but at the request of the Governor, appointed Major Andrew Lewis to command. As much doubt remains in regard to many facts connected with the famous expedition as surrounds the wars between the Greeks and Trojans...To Major Lewis the Governor wrote: “Take care that Capt. Pearis behaves well and keeps sober.” The distance the Governor thinks is 200 miles.”

A week was spent at Fort Frederick, and on February 19th they broke camp, Ingles, Draper and others wishing them Godspeed. A week later they camped in Burke’s Garden. Eighty seven years later, Letitia Preston Floyd wrote from Burke’s Garden a long history of the Preston-Floyd-Patton families, without mentioning this historic expedition which her father described so faithfully.

Three or four days later, the expedition that had set out with so much faith was hopelessly lost. Evidently they had intended to follow the dividing ridge between West Virginia and Virginia and

Kentucky, to which we have already referred to as an Indian route, but got off on a spur of the main ridge and found themselves going down on the Tug River side, then unnamed. The soldiers had seen mountains around Staunton, but never such mountains as along Tug River.....

The weather had turned cold and game was scarce, so poor as of little use as food. Supplies had been lost and the men almost starving. Some began to desert, and soon it was more or less every man for himself. Capt. Preston's company roster is published in Kegley's Virginia Frontier and shows he lost none. Some are known to have perished, but we don't think the loss of life was heavy. The irony of it, Indians made an attack on Reed Creek of New River in March, date not given, and had the expedition traveled the way it was intended, it might have headed them off. It might also have had some effect on the attack on Fort Vause on June 24, 1756.

The Ingles at Fort Vause

A small detachment under Capt. John Smith went there before the attack, and it is presumed they worked on it. No doubt it would have been sufficient in the attack at Drapers Meadows. No one anticipated a force of 20 French-Canadians marching from Canada in June 1756, picking up 206 Indians enroute. Most of the Indian forays had been, and continued, in smaller forces.

The fact there had been Indians in the area, killing hogs, spying, and bragging that they were going to wipe out the fort, was enough for the commander to end a SOS call to the county seat at Staunton for help, to which Capt. William Preston, later Colonel, was responding, making a forced march. This, we think, induced Mr. and Mrs. William Ingles to leave for another fort to the east. We have an idea others were with them, especially women and children. It didn't take a "presentment" to come to the conclusion that trouble was brewing. Evidently the commander knew little as to the force that was rapidly approaching, or he would have considered abandoning and going with the Ingles. However, the little outpost ("fort" is a misnomer) made a heroic defense, and Captain Smith received praise from the Governor and his Council.

In his report to the Governor, Capt. Preston says he met a Vause farm hand at present Elliston, who gave him the details as to the tragedy: John Robinson, John Smith, son of the commander, John Ingles, John Tracy, Mrs. Matthew Ingles and child killed; William Robinson, Thomas Robinson, Samuel Robinson and Matthew Ingles wounded; fourteen taken prisoners, including William Pepper and William Bratton, the latter escaping. Evidently Bratton was a member of the small force from near Staunton. As a man by the same name from that area was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, we think it very likely he was a son or grandson of this man. Pepper's people lived at that time at what became known as Pepper's Ferry. He was never heard from. The Northcross family of Elliston are relatives, John Pepper having married a daughter of James Robertson, an early settler at Elliston. (Robertson and Robinson families are sometimes confused.).....

Four or five of the prisoners escaped and the Commander was released. Matthew Ingles and William Robinson died soon afterwards. The widow of Robinson married John Draper in 1760. The title to the land was in the name of John Robinson, who was killed, leaving a wife and a

small daughter, and in 1774 it had not been settled. John's widow married John Montgomery in 1760 and Elizabeth, the daughter, married Alexander Montgomery in 1774.

Having laid siege for several hours, killed two and wounded several, Capt. De Belestre said he closed in and offered terms, which the small garrison accepted; that he had trouble restraining the Indians from maltreating the remaining twelve males and thirteen women and children. He put his losses as one Canadian killed, one Indian killed, and one officer wounded: also four Indians wounded. The Commander was also wounded, and may have been the officer just referred to. There is no question in his report, or that of the man Capt. Preston interviewed, of an Indian being shot out of a tree, or three being killed by Matthew Ingles, as has been told by traditional versions.

Neither the Dunkard nor the Calloways who visited the scene a few days later, mention any women or children being killed, although they told of bodies lying in a heap. Preston only mentions Mrs. Matthew Ingles and child. He lists no women taken prisoner other than Mrs. Vause and two daughters. We wonder why Preston did not make a personal investigation and bury the dead.