

Squeezing Water From a Stone: Extracting History From a Store Ledger  
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In the fall of 2002, as a graduate student in history, I came across a wonderful late eighteenth century ledger that had been donated to the Special Collections at Virginia Tech. Since the ledger had originally been owned by an ancestor of mine, and since it had been donated by a cousin of mine, I could hardly resist taking a good look at it to see what the contents might reveal. I soon discovered that its secrets could only be revealed through a long and careful process of analysis - of the names of customers and of the products they purchased. Extracting history from a ledger is rather like trying to squeeze water from a stone.

In the spring of 2003, I delivered a conference paper based on my findings, entitled "Women and Consumerism in Southwest Virginia, c. 1800." That has been my best attempt, to date, to translate the ledger's data into an historical abstract, showing how men, married women, widows and a few single women participated in an exchange of goods and services. It was a challenge, however, to write with authority about a subject which has received so little attention before. I could not show, for example, how consumerism developed, since there was no baseline of information established about consumerism at an earlier period.

Feeling thwarted in my efforts to become an authority on consumerism and market economies, I've decided to write a sort of companion piece, to supplement the paper on consumerism with biographical information about some of the key people mentioned in the ledger. This should help to orient those who wish to examine the Ferry

Hill ledger, saving them some time and effort, and providing them a baseline of information about the Ingles family and their closest neighbors and friends.

Ever since the 1840s, when Lyman Draper first started collecting documents from the families of colonial heroes and heroines,<sup>1</sup> many individuals have tried to piece together narratives of frontier history. These histories present a confusing mélange of conflicting stories and information, and it is a challenge to glean from them much verifiable “truth.” Even in recent years, as historians have applied more professional methodology, the results are mixed. As much as I would like to write a definitive “history” of some of Virginia’s frontier families, particularly of those who first settled at Drapers Meadows in the 1750s, I admit that the task is daunting. Perhaps the best I can do is to pass along what little “truth” I can find, and identify the questions that remain unanswered and, perhaps, unanswerable.

I’ve written a paper entitled “What Really Happened at Drapers Meadows: The Evolution of a Frontier Legend”<sup>2</sup> in which I compared the two earliest written sources of information about the Ingles family. Letitia Preston Floyd and John Ingles, writing in the early nineteenth century, were the first authors to record stories of the Drapers Meadows massacre. Their versions of the story are different in key respects, yet both have been adopted, merged, and amplified by subsequent writers, such as F.B. Kegley and John P. Hale. This problem becomes compounded as one reads further. Other historians, including Conway Howard Smith and Mary Kegley, have based their extensive volumes on a variety of reliable primary sources, including court records, wills, appraisals, and

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<sup>1</sup> Draper Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society. The letters and journals collected by Lyman Draper are available to researchers on microfilm at Virginia Tech library.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Apperson Brown, “What Really Happened at Drapers Meadows: The Evolution of a Frontier Legend,” *Smithfield Review* : Volume 7 ( 2003): 5-21.

marriage records, but they often interpret the facts differently. Sifting through all these different versions of history to arrive at a few kernels of truth is an arduous task. Instead of using the metaphor of “squeezing water from a stone,” perhaps one should call this the “search for a needle in a haystack,” or the “journey through a labyrinth.”

William Ingles deserves our attention as one of the most energetic and determined of the Scotch-Irish pioneers to settle in the New River area. Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1729, the son of Thomas Ingles, a merchant, William was imprisoned, along with his father and his brothers, following some sort of political struggle. Upon their release from prison, Thomas and his sons found passage to America, arriving in Philadelphia in the 1740s. In 1886, John P. Hale, in *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, wrote:

Thomas Ingles, according to family tradition, was descended from a Scotch family, was born in Dublin, Ireland, was a large importing wholesale merchant, owned his own ships and traded with foreign countries, chiefly to the East Indies... In some revolution or political trouble, occurring during the time of his residence in Dublin, Thomas Ingles took a prominent and active part, and happened not to be on the right, or rather, on the winning side, for the winning is not always the right side, nor the right side the winning side.... On the failure of the cause he had espoused, his property was confiscated, and he was lucky to escape with his life. He, with his three sons, William, Matthew, and John – he then being a widower – came to America, and located for a time in Pennsylvania, about Chambersburg.... Just when they came, and how long they remained there, is not accurately known; but in 1744, according to the tradition, Thomas Ingles and his oldest son, William, then a youth,

made an excursion to the wilds of Southwest Virginia, penetrating the wilderness as far as New River.<sup>3</sup>

F. B. Kegley, in his big volume entitled *Virginia Frontier*, states that, “Thomas and John Ingles settled at Burke’s Garden in 1749, and William Ingles built a cabin there, but did not live in it.”<sup>4</sup> In another section Kegley states, “William Ingles came to the Roanoke with his father and Uncle John before 1746. The land on which they lived seems to have belonged to William.”<sup>5</sup> Then in another passage, Kegley writes, “Thomas, John and William Ingles, of Ingles’ Mill Creek of the North Fork of the Roanoke, were among the most interesting of the early settlers. Thomas and John were brothers, William and Matthew, sons of Thomas.”

There is an interesting discrepancy in these two accounts. Hale thinks that Thomas Ingles came to Virginia with three sons (William, Matthew and John), but Kegley thinks that Thomas came with his brother, John, and with his two sons, William and Matthew. Just who was this John Ingles? Could there have been two men named John Ingles?

Someone named John Ingles was killed at Fort Vause in 1756. Historians disagree as to whether he was a bachelor or a married man. Kegley, who thinks that John was Thomas Ingles’ brother, says, “John was killed at Vause’s fort and his wife, Mary, was carried into captivity. When this Mary Ingles returned, she married John Miller and went to Carolina.”<sup>6</sup> John Hale tells a different story:

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<sup>3</sup> John P. Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers: Historical Sketches of the First White Settlements West of the Alleghenies, 1748 and After*, Third Edition (Raleigh: Derreth Printing Company, 1971), 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> F. B. Kegley, *Kegley’s Virginia Frontier: The Beginning of the Southwest; The Roanoke of Colonial Days, 1740-1783*, (Roanoke: Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938), 128.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* There is considerable lingering confusion about these two women named Mary Ingles. The more famous Mary Ingles was captured at Drapers Meadows in the summer of 1755, was taken as far as Kentucky, escaped, and walked home, arriving near Elliston, Va., in November of 1755. This other Mary, was the wife of John Ingles, and was captured in 1756, at Vause’s Fort.

John and Matthew Ingles, the younger brothers of William Ingles were at this Fort. John was a bachelor. Matthew had a wife and one child. ...Matthew Ingles was out hunting when the attack was made; hearing the firing, he hastened back, and tried to force his way into the Fort, to his wife and child; he shot one Indian with the load in his gun, then clubbed the others with the butt end until he broke the stock off; by this time the gun-barrel was wrenched from his hands, when he seized a frying pan that happened to be lying near... His bravery and desperate fighting had so excited the admiration of the Indians that they would not kill him, but carried him off as prisoner. He was either released or made his escape some time after, and returned to the settlement, but never entirely recovered from his wounds. He died at Ingles' Ferry a few months later. His wife and child were murdered in the Fort, as was his brother John.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps there were two Johns. If so, one might have been William's uncle, and the other his younger brother. Were both men killed at Fort Vause, or did one of them flee the frontier after the Drapers Meadows attack, in the summer of 1755? We don't know what happened to Thomas Ingles during this time. Perhaps Thomas and his brother John went back to Pennsylvania for several years, hoping that the danger of Indian attacks would eventually die down. As for the John Ingles at Fort Vause (either William's uncle or brother), it is hard to explain why some accounts say he was a bachelor and others say he was married. There are some documents referring to a Mary

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<sup>7</sup> Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, 93-94. Other accounts of the Fort Vause attack make no mention of Matthew's bravery. It is questionable whether Matthew returned to Ingles Ferry to recuperate. If he did, that would indicate that William Ingles built a cabin there as early as 1756. Other sources have suggested that he did not start operating his ferry there until a few years later.

Ingles (Mrs. John Ingles) who, upon her return from captivity petitioned the House of Burgesses for relief:

A petition of Mary Ingles setting forth that in the year 1756 she was with her husband in Fort Vaux [Vause] in Augusta, when he was killed and she was carried into captivity by the Indians, among whom she was barbarously treated, and on her return into the Colony, she found her home and whole effects burned, and thereby reduced to the utmost distress, since which she has been supported entirely by the charitable contributions of the well-disposed, and praying relief of the House, was read and rejected.<sup>8</sup>

If Mary had a legitimate claim for financial assistance as the spouse of John Ingles, why was it denied? If she was really John Ingles' wife, why did the Ingles family believe that John never married? Could there have been an attempt to discredit Mary's claims because of her time spent among the Indians? Eventually I hope to do further research on John Miller, the man who reportedly married Mary after her return.

Curious to know the whereabouts of Thomas Ingles, I tried to see if I could locate him in Pennsylvania, thinking he might have gone back to that state after the Indian wars made Virginia such a dangerous place to live. I did a search in the on-line data base for the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. I didn't find anyone named Ingles, but I found a number of listings for a John Inglis, a merchant in Philadelphia. Although I cannot prove that this man was related to Thomas Ingles, I am intrigued with the possibility. If Thomas Ingles had a brother living in Philadelphia, a merchant, he might well have turned to him for help. If Thomas's property had all been confiscated at the time of his imprisonment, how

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<sup>8</sup> F.B. Kegley, 232.

else could he have found enough money to get to America? In the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, dated June 2, 1743, John Inglis placed this advertisement:

JOHN INGLIS, intending to leave this city, for England, in three or four Months at Furthest, gives this Notice, to all who are indebted to him, to pay their respective Debts within the Time mentioned. The said Inglis having in Store a Variety of European and India Goods, will sell them reasonably for ready Money or three Months credit.<sup>9</sup>

Five months later, another advertisement appeared:

JOHN INGLIS has removed his STORE in Front Street, to Plumb Street, below the Draw Bridge, next door to the Ship, where may be had Choice of Kerseys, Plains, Broad Cloths, Rugs and Blankets, with Variety of other Goods for Ready Money or short Credit. November 10, 1743.<sup>10</sup>

Based on these two announcements, it appears that John Inglis made a trip to England, not knowing when or whether he would return. When he came back, he had to find a new address for his business. The spelling of the names (Ingles and Inglis) is different, but such variations in the spelling of names were very common during the eighteenth century. If there was a connection between these two families, it seems plausible that John Inglis would have brought his brother and his nephews to the New World and helped them start over. He might have loaned them enough money to buy land and whatever tools and equipment they would have needed to get started. It is not implausible that a Philadelphia merchant might have left his business for a period of months or years, and traveled to Virginia to investigate the opportunities there.

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<sup>9</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 2, 1743.

[http://srch.accessible.com/search?rfullhit.htw?CiWebHitsFile=/accessible/text/gaz1/00000057/\(... 9/3.02\)](http://srch.accessible.com/search?rfullhit.htw?CiWebHitsFile=/accessible/text/gaz1/00000057/(... 9/3.02))

<sup>10</sup> *Gazette*, November 10, 1743.

James Patton, a merchant and land speculator, was a key figure in the promotion of land in Virginia during this time, and he was busy recruiting families to move to Augusta County. Thomas Ingles (and perhaps John Inglis, too) could have seen this ad in the *Gazette*, on February 12, 1745:

To Be SOLD, By Colonel JAMES PATTON, SUNDRY Tracts of land, situate in Beverly Manor, and County of Augustus, in Virginia, viz. One tract on which the said Patton lives, containing 1497 Acres, on which there is a good Building and sundry Improvements, with several hundred Acres of good Meadow Land, and rich, low ground. Another tract near Capt. Cresty's, containing 450 Acres, on which there is a good Grist Mill and a large Still, with all manner of utensils, some good meadow and Bottom Ground. Another tract of very rich Up-Land, well Timbered, containing 479 Acres of rich Hazel Bottom Ground with a good grist mill... Four other tracts of very rich Land, near Robert Looney's, on James River....one of which is called the Cherry Tree Bottom, as rich as any land in Conestego Mannor, where there is an opportunity of keeping a ferry, having land on each side of the River, and no other persons to interfere; the River has plenty of Fish such as Rock and Carps, &c. For better encouragement of any persons to purchase all or any Part of such lands, the said Col Patton will give one, two, three, or four Year's Time, to pay the Money, such Purchaser or Purchasers, paying interest, at 51 cent. And giving good security...<sup>11</sup>

To these men, and scores of other Scotch-Irish families recently arrived in Pennsylvania, Patton's offer must have seemed tempting. William, like so many other eager young men, must have started dreaming about Virginia, the land of opportunity.

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<sup>11</sup> *Gazette*, February 12, 1745.



For a young man who had spent several years in prison, William Ingles was surprisingly determined and self-confident, as if he had inherited a spirit of enterprise from his merchant father and perhaps even financial support from a wealthy merchant uncle.

John Inglis, of Philadelphia, lived to be 67, as was recorded in an obituary on August 14, 1775:

On Sunday morning last, after a lingering and painful indisposition, which he supported with great equanimity, died JOHN INGLIS, Esq., of this city, in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of his age; a gentleman who early acquired, and maintained to the last, the character of a truly honest man. Possessing a liberal and independent spirit, despising every thing which he thought unbecoming a gentleman, attentive to business, frugal but yet elegant in his [oeconomy], he lived superior to the world, beloved and respected as a useful citizen, an agreeable companion, a sincere friend, and an excellent father of a family.<sup>12</sup>

I have often wondered about the possessions of the early settlers in the New River area. Some of the Ingles descendants believe that William and Mary Ingles had a clock in their possession at the time of the Drapers Meadows massacre, and that this clock was passed down in the family. John Hale, author of *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, mentioned this clock as he was writing his book, in 1886.

According to family tradition, the clock was constructed about 1738, and has been running since that time, and is now consequently, nearly a century and a half old. Its early history, before the time of William and Mary Ingles, is not now accurately known, but after this time it is quite clear, and is identified with the family history. It probably ticked for Thomas Ingles (the immigrant) and his children. It

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<sup>12</sup> *Gazette*, August 14, 1775.

certainly ticked for William and Mary Ingles and their children. It ticked for John Ingles and his children. It ticked for his daughter and her children.... The clock is a handsome piece of furniture, has a black walnut case, silvered face, brass works, is eight feet high, runs eight days, records the hours, minutes and seconds, the days of the month and changes of the moon, and bids fair to do duty for an indefinite time in the future as an accurate and reliable timekeeper. From the early date of the Ingles and Draper settlement west of the Alleghenies, I think is safe to assume that this remarkable old clock was the first that ever crossed the Alleghenies, and was the first in that vast territory between the Allegheny mountains and the Pacific Ocean to tick and tell of the passing moments which, hitherto, through all past time, had glided by unheeded, unmeasured and unrecorded.<sup>13</sup>

I wonder how such a clock could have survived the Indians' attack on Drapers Meadows. By most accounts, the Indians burned down all of the cabins in the settlement. I also question whether Thomas Ingles or his sons could have brought a clock with them on their journey to Virginia. Surely they did not buy a clock while they were in prison? Perhaps the Draper family bought the clock in Philadelphia and brought it with them to Virginia. If so, it seems likely that the clock would have been mentioned in George Draper's estate, at his death in 1748.

George Draper left his wife and two children considerable property, and most of these items probably remained with Eleanor Draper, the widow, or with her children, Mary or John. They were all living in the Drapers Meadows settlement at the time of the Indian attack in 1755. According to the appraisal for George Draper's estate, he owned:

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<sup>13</sup> Hale, 153-4.

... eight horses, thirteen cows, two old guns, carpenter's tools, 1 brand iron, 2 pair plow chains, 2 bells and collars, 3 old bridles, a saddle, box, iron, shot pouch, 1 pair steelyards, pot hooks, frying pan, crosscut saw, 3 old weeding hoes, 3 more old hoes, 3 old axes, maul ring, wedges and irons, iron and steel, 2 small looking glasses, 3 old sickles, books valued at three shillings, 3 [caggs], 2 stone bottles, glass bottles, iron skillet, candlestick, flax wheel, nails, old wool cards, 2 iron pots, 2 pair pot hooks, 1 cedar churn, pails, other wooden ware, washing tub, pewter and earthen ware, bed and bedding, 3 old [bags], old saddle and bridle, an old hat and a leather coat.<sup>14</sup>

Further information about George Draper comes from F.B. Kegley's *Virginia Frontier*:

George Draper lived on the frontier for five years, first in the draft above Looney's Ferry and afterward on the waters of New River; was a constable in the community and a worker on the roads, was dead and his estate settled before his family is mentioned in the land records. In February, 1748 his wife, Eleanor Draper, was made administratrix of his estate during the non age of his son, John. A deed to the land came later. His appraisement in 1749 shows that he owned eight horses, thirteen cows, bells and collars, two plow chains, two old guns, a set of carpenter's tools, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Surely if the Drapers had owned a clock it would have been listed in the appraisal. John Hale's claims about the provenance of the family clock seem doubtful. A similar and equally doubtful claim has been made about a bed that now is on display at the

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<sup>14</sup> Mary B. Kegley and F. B. Kegley, *Early Adventures on the Western Waters*, Volume I, (Orange, Virginia: Green Publishers, Inc., 1980), 213.

<sup>15</sup> F.B. Kegley, *Virginia Frontier*, 128.

Wilderness Museum, in Newbern, Virginia. One of the Ingles family descendants donated a beautiful four poster bed to the museum a few years ago, claiming that it had belonged to Mary Draper Ingles, and that she had brought it from Philadelphia. If the Drapers had such a bed, perhaps it was the one mentioned above, but how did it survive unscathed during the Indian attack?

Sometimes enthusiastic historians include details that are altogether implausible. There was an honorary society formed at Radford State Teachers' College in 1913, the Mary Draper Ingles Society, and they had a tradition of putting on a pageant every spring. It was considered a great honor for a student to be selected to play the part of Mary. For one of these pageants, the program described in detail the fabric and design of Mary's dress, donated by some of the local seamstresses. Imagine Mary escaping from the Shawnee village and walking about six hundred miles, wearing red silk!<sup>16</sup>

During the first five years that William and Mary were married, we cannot be sure just where they lived. William owned a mill on the North Fork of the Roanoke, and records show that he worked on roads there and collected tithes from his neighbors. In 1750, he suffered from both a fire and a flood. Thomas Walker stayed there with him in 1750, mentioning in his journal about the flood, as described by F.B. Kegley:

March, 1750. In his journal when on his trip to the Southwest in 1750, Dr. Thomas Walker wrote that he came to the Great Lick on March 15. In the afternoon they got to the Staunton where the houses of the Inhabitants had been carried off with their grain and fences by the Fresh last Summer, and lodged at James Robinson's, the only place where they had corn to spare.

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<sup>16</sup> *History of Radford State Teachers' College*, Radford University.

March 16. "We kept up the Staunton to William Englishe's. He lives on a small branch, and was not hurt much by the Fresh. He has a MILL, which is the furthest back except one lately built by the Sect of people, who call themselves of the Brotherhood of the Euphrates, and are commonly called the Duncards, who are the upper inhabitants of New River. In the spring of 1753, the inhabitants of the North Branch of Roanoke petitioned that they be relieved of road work on the road down Cottage Creek. Among those petitioners were Thomas Ingles, William Ingles, Tobias Bright, George Pearis, William Pepper and Jacob Brown.<sup>17</sup>

Some sources say that George Draper, his wife, and two children were living at Drapers Meadows when he disappeared. At his death, Eleanor and her children may have decided to return to Pattonsburg (Buchanan) where they had lived before. It is also possible, however, that when Mary and William Ingles got married, in 1750, they invited Widow Draper to move in with them, on Ingles Mill Creek., a branch of the North Fork of the Roanoke. Not too far away, on the South Fork of the Roanoke, was the Robinson family.

John Draper married Elizabeth Robinson at about the time her father, James Robinson, died, in 1753. By the time of the massacre in 1755, William and Mary Ingles had two children, Thomas and George, and John and Betty Draper had just had their first child. After the attack, on July 30, 1755, after the deaths of Eleanor Draper and her grandchild, and after Betty Draper, Mary Ingles and her sons were captured, no one in either family ever chose to live at Drapers Meadows again.

There was a creek named after Ingles (Ingles Mill Creek) that had its headwaters close to Drapers Meadows, but which flowed northeast and into the Roanoke. When

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<sup>17</sup> F.B. Kegley, 183.

William and his wife, Mary, decided to move to Drapers Meadows, they were only moving a few miles further west, but it put them on the other side of the continental divide. The waters of Stroubles Creek and Toms Creek flowed into the New River, and eventually, into the Mississippi. All the land on the western side of the divide became hotly disputed territory during the French and Indian War. After that war ended, the King of England issued a proclamation, in 1763, declaring the land of the western waters off limits to English settlement. William Ingles and John Draper were among the few determined settlers who persisted in staying in this dangerous border country throughout the most dangerous times, but the great majority of their neighbors retreated to the relative security of better populated areas, such as Bedford, the settlements along the Roanoke and James Rivers, and to North Carolina.

In 1756, about nine months after Mary's return from captivity, and shortly before the Indian attack at Fort Vause, Mary Ingles persuaded her husband, William, to take her to a safer place – to a Fort near the Peaks of Otter, in Bedford. The Ingles must have known some of the families in Bedford. In John Hale's version of the story:

Mrs. Ingles remained in the settlement below the Blue Ridge until there seemed a better prospect of peace and security on the frontier; she then returned to New River, where her husband and she permanently established themselves at "Ingles Ferry."<sup>18</sup>

According to records in the Bedford County History Museum, there is a cabin (still standing) in Bedford, known as Ingleside.<sup>19</sup> William Ingles may have built this home for his wife, leaving her there to recuperate from her grueling journey home

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<sup>18</sup> Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Ingles Archives in the Bedford County History Museum.

through the wilderness. (Many years later, in the 1790s, the house built by John Ingles, on the East side of the New River, also came to be known as Ingleside.)

Between 1756 and 1760, William Ingles stayed in the western waters, visiting former neighbors and friends, planting and harvesting corn, serving in the militia, and trying to protect his land claims, despite the constant threat of Indian attack. John Draper also stayed in the west, making several attempts to bargain with Indian tribes for the release of his wife Betty, who stayed in captivity until 1761. It was during this time that Ingles built a fort, calling it Fort Hope. When Betty Draper returned, she and her sister-in-law, Mary Ingles, may well have spent long hours together in Fort Hope, talking over their experiences among the Indians. Both women had a unique perspective on Indian culture that could have set them apart from other frontier women. The Drapers may have lived at Ingles Ferry for a time, since there was still the danger of Indian raids, but their whereabouts cannot be determined with any certainty. William Ingles' fort served a vital function for the community, as Indian parties were sighted frequently in the area.

In 1763, William Ingles, Henry Harman (who became a legendary Indian fighter), and a band of frontiersmen, went after a war party of Shawnee who had been seen traveling through their neighborhood. After routing the Indians and returning home to safety, William Ingles sat and penned a letter to Col. William Preston, at Greenfield. Ingles' penmanship and spelling demonstrate the deficiencies in his education, which is not altogether surprising, considering that he spent much of his youth in prison. His letter says much about the dangers of living in such an isolated place, and of the plucky determination necessary for survival.

I have the Plesher to inform you that I had the hapyness to falling in with a party of Indians in thire Return from Smiths River with sum prisoners and a great maney horses and after Exchanging about seventy shots we got possession of of the Ground and all the plunder we Kild two on the Ground and I Expect to find severl more to morrow as I am convinst that there is meney more Kild but as the Ground where they tuck Refuge in was so weddy and full of shrubs we did not search it we had two men wounded and one very mortal the men all behaved Like Good Soldiers and the Indians was as loath to give way the Battel lasted more than half an owor and the shouts of both parties could be hard I Dare say Neer two miles we are informed by one of the prisoners that there is a nother party of Indians Gon Down the meho River and the are to follow those and I think God willing to try my Corage wanst more with them If Providence would be so Kind as to Direct our steps in so friendly a maner up to there Camp Mr. Robinson can give you the particulers as he Came up just as we had Drove them of I sent you a shot pouch that we tuck in the plunder wich I belive was the Captain's it is but a small present and I Beg you will Except it as it is a small trophie of our Victory we Got 30 horses and abundance of small Plunder We are in Great wont of Sum Powder and Lead for we are just out I hope sir you will Indever To porswed Colo Lewes to cintinew me at this Post as I find I can be of Great Sarves to the settlements Both of hallafax and that of yours for I find that the go within a little ways of this place when the go to Smiths River and thataway and we ly as handy to the Narrows as of aney other place Colo Phelps refused to Cumply with your ordors and would Not Recave mr. Armstrong nor send anney of his men with mr. Cloyd But would go with his own men wheare he thought fit But at



Last I prevaild with him to Let a few of his men that Would Cum as Volenters with me and ten of them turned out wich I Left at the fort all but three and one of them was so unfortunate as to be shot Sir your instructions as often as you can conveniently send them will Give Great Sattesfaction to your obedient Sarvet

W Ingles                      Sept ye 13<sup>th</sup> 1763<sup>20</sup>

In 1766, William and Mary found someone who had news of their son, Thomas, who had been living among the Shawnee for over ten years. They had never given up hope of recovering their oldest child, so they were happy to learn about William Baker, a man who had been held prisoner in the same village with their son. John Hale told of what happened after that, saying:

... after many ineffectual efforts had been made to recover, or even hear from the elder boy, Thomas, they met with a man named Baker, who had recently returned from [a] captivity among the Shawanees, in the Scioto country.... It turned out that Baker had lived in the same village with the Indian who had last adopted the boy as his son, and knew them both. William Ingles at once bargained with Baker to go back to the Indian country and ransom his boy and bring him home.... Baker found the Indian and made known his mission. After much negotiation, he succeeded in purchasing the boy, and paid about one hundred dollars for his ransom; but the boy was not at all pleased with the arrangement; he knew nothing of the white parents they told him about, in the far-off country; he knew only his Indian father and

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<sup>20</sup> Conway Howard Smith, *The Land That is Pulaski County* (Pulaski, Virginia: Pulaski County Library Board, 1981), 42-43. Ingles' letter is in the Draper Collection at the Wisconsin State Historical Society

mother, brothers and sisters, and playmates, and, last but not least, his sweethearts, the pretty little squaws, and he did not want to be sent away from them.<sup>21</sup>

The boy escaped from Baker on the journey back to Virginia, and Baker had to return without him. William Ingles and William Baker went together on another trip the following year, but found the circumstances too dangerous. Finally, in 1768, they were able to succeed in bringing the seventeen year-old back to Virginia. His homecoming must have been a poignant event. Imagine how Mary felt, greeting her son for the first time in thirteen years, but seeing before her an Indian brave who could not even speak her language.

John Hale, in his usual romantic style, described what happened:

After weeks of tedious travel, they at last arrived safely at Ingles' Ferry, and the long-lost boy, his mother's first born, was again in her arms and smothered with a mother's loving kisses. This was in 1768. He found there, too, four other little relatives to give him affectionate greeting. Mrs. Ingles, since her return from captivity, had borne three daughters and one son. Thomas was absorbed into this family circle, and was a sharer of the family affections.

He was very much of a wild Indian in his habits and training when he first returned. He was now in his seventeenth year, and had been among the Indians thirteen years. He was dressed in Indian style., He changed his savage dress for that of civilized life with much reluctance; his bow and arrow he would not give up, but carried the with him wherever he went.

Notwithstanding he was petted, humored and caressed at home, a wild fit would overcome him now and then, and he would wander off alone in the

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<sup>21</sup> Hale, 115-6.

wilderness, with his bow and arrow, and stay for days at a time, and, when returned, would give no account of himself, nor explanation of his conduct.<sup>22</sup>

In trying to welcome their son back into a white man's world, the Ingles family faced a unique challenge. William Ingles spent years as a frontiersman, learning the arts of warfare, and protecting his home from raiding war parties. In his role as a father, however, he made several trips to the Indian nation to offer ransom money for his son's return. Like so many other frontiersmen, he was confronted by a complicated multicultural situation. He had to learn how to communicate and negotiate with the Shawnee, while, at the same time, he was learning how to imitate their guerrilla style of warfare.

Mary Ingles must have had mixed feelings about the Shawnee, too. She may have feared them and considered them savages, but she probably learned to respect certain aspects of their culture, too. Then, once her son arrived home, she had to learn how to communicate with him, and how to make him feel at home. The Ingles probably felt some ambivalence about teaching their son about European culture, and they must have understood, to some degree, his pain and frustration.

Thomas Ingles had a hard time adapting to his white parents' world. After a few years they sent him to Charlottesville to study with their good friend, Dr. Thomas Walker. He served in the company of William Christian during the Battle of Point Pleasant, in 1774, and soon afterwards married Eleanor Grills, from Charlottesville. Most accounts mention that he was restless, and never comfortable living in close proximity to others. Ironically, his family was attacked by Shawnee Indians, in Burke's Garden, in 1781. Although Thomas chased after the Indians with a rescue party, their

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<sup>22</sup> Hale, 119.

attempted ambush went awry, and two of the Ingles children were killed. His wife and infant survived, however, and they eventually moved further west. Thomas never had much interest in living at Ingles Ferry or in helping his father with operations of the ferry, the tavern, or the store.

William Ingles, although he never became a surveyor, played a key role in the promotion of the Loyal Land Company, and his home at Ingles Ferry served as the westernmost headquarters for the land office. William Preston and William Walker, both surveyors for the Company, met frequently at Ingles Ferry during the 1760s. As Paul Thomas Smith explained, in his thesis about land claims on the Western Waters, people faced many difficulties in establishing their claims to land:

The Proclamation of 1763... laid down the law regarding American settlement in the west. Under this royal dictate, land speculators and settlers were no longer permitted to make purchases or settlements on lands drained by the Mississippi River. All American settlement was to remain within the Atlantic watershed. Additionally, the Proclamation instructed settlers who had already seated themselves upon the westward flowing streams and rivers “to remove themselves from such settlements.” ... The Proclamation caused great confusion in those settlements west of the Atlantic watershed. Those who had purchased land before the war were not about to give up title to those lands. Yet to stay on their lands meant defying the royal order. The Proclamation also created havoc for those who desired to take up land on the westward flowing rivers, but who had not yet made the move. Settlers could defy the Proclamation easily enough and move to the frontier. But once they arrived there, they had no legal means to claim a tract of land.

Without title settlers could easily be forced off their land by land companies or other claimants when the Crown repealed the Proclamation and settlement beyond the mountains once again became legal. After the early 1750s, no land surveys for the New River Valley appear in county government records again until 1774.<sup>23</sup>

William Ingles certainly provided well for himself and family, having staked out prime land on both sides of the New River where he established his ferry. He raised cattle there and grew hemp, both of which were lucrative enterprises during a time of war. His ferry was situated along the Wilderness Road, a key artery of transportation, and a good source of revenue from tolls. Most travelers heading south through Augusta County would take this road, through Big Lick (Roanoke), Hans Meadows (Christiansburg), and then, after crossing the New River at Ingles Ferry, to New Dublin, or Dunkard's Bottom, and then on to Fort Chiswell, Evansham (Wytheville) and the Holston River.

Although records of William Ingles' land holdings are incomplete, the ones we know about were extensive. As Mary Kegley describes it:

William Ingles selected lands over a wide area of the Western Waters. He had two tracts in Burke's Garden, several on Clinch River, one in Abb's Valley, as well as lands on either side of the New River at the Ferry site. Exactly what year he received the claim to the lands at the New River is not clear from the records, except that he must have had some understanding about them at the time the ferry was established. ...He received a grant for 400 acres on the east side of the Wood's River (New River), the tract formerly granted on October 1, 1747 to Marquis Calmes who

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Thomas Smith, "The Virginia Land Bills of 1779," Masters Thesis in History (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech, 1989), 35-36.

failed to pay the quitrents. Ingles, as assignee of Doctor Thomas Walker, assignee of legal representatives of John Mercer deceased, trustee of William Calmes, obtained the lands by paying the necessary fees. The grant was issued to Ingles on November 10, 1782, more than twenty years after his arrival in the community.<sup>24</sup>

It is hard to piece together the relationships among the families who lived in the New River settlement. There were several German speaking families who had been in the area since about 1745, including Adam Harman, John Bingaman, John Miller, and Garrett Zinn. The story of these German settlements deserves further scrutiny, especially since their claims to the land were often brushed aside by the representatives of large land companies, including James Patton, John Buchanan, William Preston, and Thomas Walker. William Ingles may have felt close ties with some of these families, especially since they had endured so many hardships together. Adam Harman and his sons had found Mary Ingles near their cabin, at the end of her long journey, and, after a few days, had brought her to join the other families huddled in a fort at Dunkard's Bottom. Many German families waited out the war in North Carolina, in Bethabara, where the Moravians had a well established community.

Adam Harman [Heinrich Adam Hermann] "was believed to have had at least six brothers: Jacob, Valentine, Mathias, George, Daniel, and John," and he and his wife had eleven children. They first appeared in 1745, when "Orange County records on that date state that [a] road was to be viewed from the Frederick County line... to Adam Harman's on the New, or Wood's River."<sup>25</sup> Adam and his brothers were hunters, and they probably had explored far into the west, establishing claims in Wolf Creek, Draper's Valley,

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<sup>24</sup> Mary Kegley, *Western Waters*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 217-8.

Bluestone, and in Giles County, but Adam's primary claim was for a tract of 500 acres at the mouth of Tom's Creek, where there was a ford across the New River. His place on Tom's Creek "came into the possession of Colonel John Buchanan in 1762 and was thereafter known as Buchanan's Bottom." Adam may have continued to assert his claim on the land, however, since he "appears to have returned to the New River." A diary kept at Bethabara records, on March 2, 1767, "a visit from Captain English (William Ingles) of New River who 'told us that our friend Adam Herrman died there four weeks ago.'"<sup>26</sup>

John Miller and Garrett Zinn were among a group of German Seventh Day Baptists from the Ephrata Society of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, called Dunkers Dunkards, who settled on 900 acres of bottom land near Ingles Ferry, in 1745. According to Mary Kegley:

The Eckerlings returned to Ephrata in 1750 and the land holdings were transferred to Garrett Zinn who obtained the patent. In February 1754 George Hoopagh, one of the Dunkards then living on Sinking Creek, said that in the previous May sixty "Norward Indians" came to his house and burned it and the stable, and that before that the Indians threatened him, burned his corn and killed his best dogs. In May 1755 Henry Zinn was killed on New River, and this was probably one of the reasons for the sudden and premature dispersal of the remaining Dunkards. Garrett Zinn who had purchased the Dunkard Bottom land from Eckerling, moved to Carolina to keep from being murdered by the Indians. The Bethabara diary kept by the Moravians recorded his death there in 1765. In 1769 they recorded that William Ingles was at Bethabara en route to Georgia to obtain the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 223.

title to the New River lands from Valentine Zinn, his son. The deed of 1770 shows Valentine living in... South Carolina.<sup>27</sup>

William Ingles had many contacts with German families, and he would have probably have been sympathetic to their claims for New River land. John Buchanan and William Preston had less sympathy for the German claims to land, often arguing that the Germans had forfeited their ownership by not maintaining a presence on the New River area during the Indian wars. It may never be possible to learn about William Ingles' loyalties in this matter. Did he think that Adam Harman had a legitimate claim to his land at Adam's Ford? Did he think that John Buchanan and William Preston were taking unfair advantage of their German neighbors?

During the American Revolution, William Ingles was accused of being a Tory sympathizer, and fined £100,000. Up until that time, Col. Ingles had been a model citizen, serving as an officer of the militia and as a signer of the Fincastle Resolutions. Perhaps Ingles agreed with the complaints of some of his Tory (German) neighbors, who were unhappy with the patriotic leadership, and especially with William Preston. According to Emory Evans, writing about the disaffection in Southwest Virginia:

William Preston... believed there were still more Tories in his county 'than in any other... in Virginia.' As half the county militia was disaffected, in his estimation, he predicted he would be unable to raise the county's militia quota when the call came from the state. If he tried to punish offenders 'according to the law, they would either withdraw to the mountains, or embody and disturb the peace of the county... What is readily apparent about the unrest in southwest Virginia is that the disaffected were numerous and that they remained obdurate... The accused in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 287.



Montgomery County, most of whom appear to have been eligible for military service, constituted 22 percent of the militia roll for that county in 1781.<sup>28</sup>

Evans compares these disaffected with their patriotic neighbors and concludes that many Tories were more recent arrivals and “had come from outside Virginia”:

Most people in the area had, of course, arrived within the past fifteen years, but it may be that the disaffected were even more recent newcomers. The fact that, despite similar economic status, only William Ingles, who was not a newcomer, served on the Fincastle County Court would suggest that many of the disaffected were recent arrivals. Ingles was not subsequently a member of the Montgomery County Court, although he was appointed colonel of the militia and sheriff in 1777; James McCorkle, another of the disaffected, served on the court only during 1777.

Consequently, it can be argued that these people, arriving in the area in the middle years of the decade, found themselves not only disagreeing with the political position of the local leadership but also unable to influence that position. They may have continued to feel that they were outsiders.<sup>29</sup>

When William Ingles died, in 1782, his reputation was still under a cloud, even though he had never been convicted as a Tory. There is no evidence as to whether Ingles actually paid the £100,000 fine, or whether he even had that sort of cash available. Some might argue that William Preston and the other patriot leaders may have treated Ingles with some deference and respect, considering his long service to the community and his

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<sup>28</sup> Emory G. Evans, “Trouble in the Backcountry: Disaffection in Southwest Virginia During the American Revolution,” in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*, edited by Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate and Peter J. Albert, (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1985), 206-7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

high social standing. Preston and some of the other patriot leaders were sometimes rather harsh in their treatment of Tories, as Evans states:

Even Preston may have been implicated in excesses. Two years later the legislature ‘indemnified and exonerated’ both him and Lynch as well and Robert Adams, Jr., James Calloway, and other men of measures they had taken during the summer of 1780 that may not have been ‘strictly warranted by law.’... Even friends of long standing proved unreliable. William Preston must have been shocked when Col. William Ingles, a leading citizen and longtime resident of the area, was implicated in the conspiracy. Charges of treason were not ‘fully proven,’ but Ingles was placed on £100,000 bond. Perhaps only his standing in the community saved him.<sup>30</sup>

Others might argue that the fine was exorbitant, and an indication of generalized resentment among the elite against Ingles for his success and wealth. There is some evidence to suggest that the Preston and the Ingles families had never been on the friendliest of terms, or that there may have been an emerging perception of class differences between them. William Ingles did not have the same level of education, his home was more modest and plain, and he did not have as many slaves. What Ingles had, however, was a prime business location, and the support and goodwill of many of his neighbors. The rivalry between the Ingles and Preston families becomes more apparent in view of the events of 1793, when Francis Preston, son of William Preston, ran for Congress against Abram Trigg, William Ingles’ son-in-law.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 203

The election was controversial, as Francis Preston was “accused of obtaining a majority under unusual circumstances.”<sup>31</sup> Francis Preston’s brother, William Preston, brought his company of soldiers to the election, insisting that they should be allowed to vote for his brother. This is how Mary Kegley described it:

According to the petition of Abram Trigg, and a similar document from James McCorkle, Daniel Howe, and James Craig, on election day March 19, 1793 Captain William Preston, an officer of the federal army, brought a company of his soldiers to the Courthouse in Christiansburg, and interfered with the election process. Preston was accused of insisting that his soldiers should be polled, and should vote for his brother, Francis Preston. The soldiers conducted themselves in an ‘assuming, turbulent, insolent and riotous manner, assaulting, insulting, and threatening to beat those voters who’ ... favored Trigg. Trigg requested an opportunity to prove the allegations by legal testimony, in order that he could obtain the seat which he considered was lawfully his.<sup>32</sup>

When William Ingles wrote his will, on September 26, 1782, he named William Christian and Daniel Trigg as executors. His oldest son, Thomas, age 31, inherited land on Bluestone River, in Abb’s Valley, and, as far as we know, he and his wife never came back to Ingles Ferry to live. Of the three daughters, two were married. Susanna had married Abram Trigg, in 1791, and Rhoda had married Bird Smith the same year. Polly Ingles, the third daughter, did not marry until 1785, to John Grills, whose sister had married Thomas Ingles, ten years earlier. Polly did not live long thereafter, for records

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<sup>31</sup> Mary Kegley, *Western Waters*, 275.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

indicate that John Grills remarried in 1791. John Ingles, the youngest, was sixteen the year of his father's death, and he did not get married until 1794, to Margaret Crockett.

In 1797, when John Ingles decided to open a store, to be called the Ferry Hill store, his mother, Mary Ingles was still living in the same cabin William had built for her about forty years before. She was surrounded with grandchildren, since John and Margaret lived a few yards away, Susanna and Abram lived at Buchanan's Bottom (near Adam Harman's ford), and, even though her daughter Polly had died, her son-in-law, John Grills also lived close by. Rhoda and Bird Smith may have been living in Burke's Garden (Tazewell), but they came back frequently to visit and to do business with the store.

Many of Mary's contemporaries had died. By the end of the eighteenth century, William Preston, William Christian, Adam Harmon, Andrew Lewis, Daniel Trigg, James McCorkle, Betty Draper, and, of course, William Ingles were gone. John Draper, however, Mary's brother, still was alive, and his son, John Draper, Jr., was running the Ferry Hill Tavern. Abram Trigg, Mary's son-in-law, was one of the county's leading figures, as he and his brother, John Johns Trigg were both serving as Representatives in the U.S. Congress.

Mary had many blessings to rejoice over, especially for a woman who came so close to death during her wilderness ordeal. She apparently enjoyed spinning and other needlework. In *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, John Hale offers the following anecdote from the life of his great grandmother:

In her youth, Mrs. Ingles had learned to spin on the 'little wheel,' a most useful and valuable accomplishment in those days, and especially on the frontier, where the

pioneers raised their own flax and wool, and where most of their clothes were of home manufacture.

Stores then were very remote. And 'store clothes' almost unattainable. She kept up her habit of spinning to her latest years. Her temperament was so restless and active that she could not and would not be idle. When she found nothing else to do, instead of sewing or knitting, as most ladies do, she would get her wheel and put in her time at spinning, often despite the remonstrances of her family, who would have preferred to have her spend her declining years in restful quiet.

Once her wheel got out of order, and she had asked her son, more than once, to send it to a workman and have it repaired, He had neglected to do so, probably intentionally, in order to discourage her spinning efforts; but when he was away from home one day, she ordered her favorite 'Bonny' saddle, took the wheel in her lap, rode eight miles to a carpenter, or wheelwright, had it repaired and brought it home; after which the spinning went on as usual, though she was then over eighty years of age.<sup>33</sup>

The Ferry Hill ledger offers us a glimpse of Mary's everyday life, and of the bustling activity in her community. I hope that other historians will take the time to "squeeze" history from the ledger, and that their efforts will be aided somewhat by this paper here, telling of the family that owned the store, and of the accompanying work, "Women and Consumerism of the Southwest Virginia Frontier, c. 1800."

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<sup>33</sup> Hale, 145-6.