

Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors
February 2008



Welcome Neighbor!

First of all we must thank Ms. Elaine Yankey and Ms. Sandra Darlington for their generous support. It's really great to have neighbors like you. Over the past several years so many of you have contributed in so many different ways, all of which are equally important. We thank you all.

Now that the holidays are over it becomes time to concentrate on the objectives at hand. You will notice that this issue does not have a first-hand account of life in Brentsville. That is because after 28 issues the well is mostly dry. That is our fault. We had planned to visit a number of you to get your information and for reasons now unimportant, that didn't happen – yet. But it will soon so get your thinking cap on and wait for the call. However, there will be times when we provide information on people from the past who helped shape the history of Brentsville. Some less well known than others but all important to our past. If you have information on someone you would like featured, we would love to tell their story.

Make sure you check out page seven for Ron Turner's story on Agnes, the slave woman who was

hanged in Brentsville. You might be surprised at the difference between the facts and the stories.

There is a new activity still in the planning stage that might interest many of you. David Born, the Bristoe Site Manager, is leading an effort to produce “**Thunder Ridge American Music Festival** – A Preservation Effort Presented by the Prince William County Historic Preservation Division.” The date selected is Flag Day, Saturday, 14 June 2008 from 10am to 5pm. Tentative plans are to hold it on the PWC fairgrounds and the ticket price will include a plate of barbecue and beverage. Planned entertainment includes music, living history demonstrations and exhibits designed to promote PWC history, the use of Ordnance during the American Civil War and a comparison of the “Citizen Soldier at War” in the 19th century and the 21st century. Military bands, bluegrass, mountain music, and even choral performers and balladeers of inspirational and patriotic tunes would make up the music component. More information will be provided in future newsletters.

Very best wishes,
Nelson and Morgan

- This month: ➤ A Brentsville Building ----- pages 2 & 3
➤ Where Wild Things Live -- pages 4 & 6
➤ Edwin Nelson ----- pages 5 & 6
➤ A Look Back in History ----- page 7
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Featured Brentsville Building

Nelson & Roberta Nestor's Home

12214 Bristow Road

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

#76-273.

Recorded by Frances Jones
Architectural Historical Surveyor
September 1980

Historical significance:

This house was the residence of Edwin Nelson, Clerk of the Prince William County Court from 1887 to 1911. Nelson was clerk when the County Seat was moved from Brentsville to Manassas in 1893. After the Nelsons, the house's owners were a family named Woodyard. Woodyard sold to Del Wright, and Wright to H.H. James. The Paynes acquired the house in 1959 from James. Mrs. Payne sold the property in 1979 to the present owners.

This house is located in the town of Brentsville, as it was laid out in 1822. (House is said to have been a hospital during the Civil War.)

Architectural description:

This is a 2-story frame-constructed, 3-bay, side-passage house on a high stone basement to which has been added a 2-story addition, and, added to that, a smaller 2-story addition. There is a brick and stone exterior chimney on the west side having fireplaces at the basement, first, and second floor levels. The stone in the chimney is locally-quarried red sandstone rubble laid up with lime-sand mortar. The house's exterior is covered with simulated brick design tarpaper, laid atop weatherboard siding. There is a one-story porch running across the front of the house. It has square posts and is supported on cinder blocks. "Stepping stones," large slabs of red sandstone, lead from Bristow Road to the front entrance. A small, one-story, shed-roofed, screened porch fills in the el, and an enclosed, shed-roofed, one-story porch is attached to the second addition. The main house has a plain box cornice and plain box trim around the doors and windows. The windows in the oldest section are 6/6 and 2/2 sliding sash. The windows in both of the additions are predominately 2/2 sliding sash. The front door is a 4-panel moulded door with mortise lock and ceramic knob. There is a 3-light overhead above

the front door. Opposite the front door is an enclosed, steep, winding stair paneled with horizontally-laid narrow boards. The door and window trim in the older section is architrave molding. The mantels in the parlor and bedroom above it are similar; a moulded, cut-out shelf supported by pilasters with run-out stop chamfering, and a plain but slightly arched frieze. The floors in the older part are random-width pine. The doors are 4-panel moulded doors with box locks and ceramic knobs. Both riven and sawn lath can be found in the old, main part of the house. The walls and ceiling of the larger of the two rooms on the second floor are entirely covered with beaded tongue and groove boards. The attic's walls are partly finished with beaded boards, but traces of plaster and lath can also be seen. The common rafters of the roof are joined in a half-lap joint and pegged. Collar beams are fastened with square-headed nails. From the windows on the attic's west side, Nokesville, a few miles to the northwest, can be clearly seen. In the thick-walled basement there is a large fireplace, thought to have served as the cooking hearth. The floor in the basement is of brick.

The two story addition to the rear of the house has plain box trim. It is several steps below the level of the main section and is connected at both the first and second floors. This addition contains one room on each floor. Another addition, containing the kitchen, a rear stair, and upstairs a bedroom and a small bathroom, is attached to the end of the first addition. The additions date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There are 2 small frame-built sheds on the property. The site of a demolished barn may be located on the property.

This is an unpretentious house having several distinctive architectural features that make it valuable, namely, the side-passage plan; the paneled, steep, enclosed, winding stair; and the large stone and brick exterior chimney. The side-passage plan is seldom encountered in the Brentsville vicinity. Moreover, the house has had surprisingly few alterations, either exterior or interior.

Source: (Document from the Jan Cunard research)

Featured Brentsville Building

The Nestor's home



Front view showing the oldest section with modern improvements



Side view showing the first addition to the home. The second addition is behind the tree on the right

Edwin Nelson 1831 - 1911
Deputy Clerk 1871 - 1887
Clerk 1887 - 1911
Courts Prince William
County



Edwin Nelson purchased this home from Joseph Reid in October 1873 for \$520.00. On December 10, 1894, he sold it to Jacob Miller of Maryland for \$945.00. At this time he moved with the courthouse operations to Manassas where he resided until his death.

See page 5



Margaret Virginia Payne's family purchased the featured home during September 1950 from H.H. James. Her mother sold it to the Nestor's on 24 August 1979.

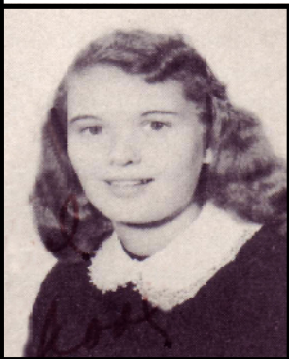
Below are Margaret's 11th grade classmates from Brentsville

Where WILD
things live..

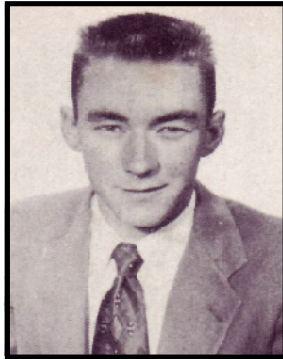


Polygonia interrogationis (Fabricius, 1798)
Question Mark

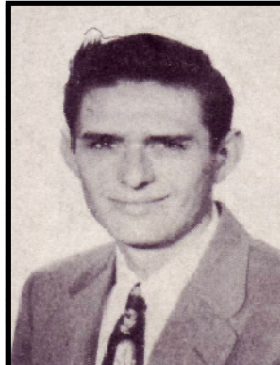
(See page 6)



Audrey Rebecca Fogle



Edward Lee Roy Croushorn



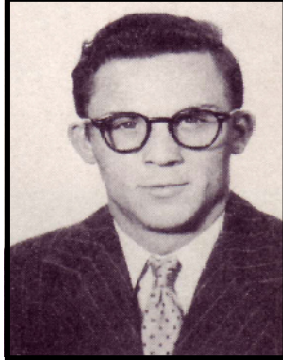
Lorenzo Dow Utterback



Mary Virginia Utterback



Betty Lee Liskey



Garland Butler Green



James Robert Shoemaker, Jr.



Rosa Lee Keys

Edwin Nelson, Clerk of Prince William County

Lieutenant Edwin Nelson is dead. Profound sorrow bowed anxious hearts, hoping against hope, when this sad message was borne to them on the Sabbath morn. With the dawn of the new day he departed, peacefully, without suffering, closing his eyes in sleep.

Gradually he had approached the end; with strength ebbing away, but retaining his faculties, preparing loved ones in home, in town and county throughout the end was marked by shadows of fleeting hours, then minutes, love overpowered with grief their fortitude in the moment of farewell. The grief is personal to every man, woman and child who knew and loved this noble, gentle, brave, kind man. All feel they are bereaved. He will be mourned long as memory recalls his service and sacrifices for his native land and his fellowmen.

Lieutenant Nelson died on the eve of his golden wedding anniversary, which was to have been celebrated on Sunday, March 26. Fifty years ago he was married to Miss Bettie Weedon. He was born in Grinstead, Prince William County, July 5, 1831. For more than forty years he has been in the county clerkship of Prince William County, an eloquent testimonial to his high efficiency and unquestioned integrity.

Death resulted from gradual weakening of heart action. Early in December Lieutenant Nelson contracted a severe cold, which his extreme age made critical. However he recovered partially and was able to appear in his office at intervals until late in January when, stricken by relapse, he was confined home till death. He was last down town three weeks ago, and then but for a few minutes. Then he began to weaken more rapidly and on Saturday the death visitation was apparent. Shortly after four o'clock Sunday morning he breathed his last.

Through the quiet aisles of the Confederate cemetery, where his comrades are sleeping, the body of Lieutenant Nelson was carried and laid to rest by the Confederate monument. Tender tribute was given his memory at funeral services in the little church he had built upon the grounds surrounding his home. There Elder Norton, of Washington, spoke of a life that had been filled with all that makes for

noble living with love and with charity. He quickened responsive emotions in the assemblage of mourners, few if any of whom, but had at some time in their lives felt the influence of Lieutenant Nelson's character. The Rev. T. D. D. Clarke directed the choir. The pallbearers were Judge C. E. Nicol, Alexandria; William G. Iden, Washington; Walter Shannon, Philadelphia; Captain Jas. E. Herrell, Judge J. B. T. Thornton, John R. Tillett, Thos. H. Lion, and George Maddox, Manassas. Many and beautiful were the floral tributes, remembrances from Manassas Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and from Judge and Mrs. J. B. T. Thornton, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Shannon, R. Walton Moore, W. J. Chapman, John C. Weedon, H. A. Robson, Mrs. Geo. W. and Miss Lillian Hixson, M. G. Metz, T. A. Weedon and sisters, and Mr. and Mrs. J. Lee Whitmore.

Lieutenant Nelson's official career covers a period reaching back before the war, when he was deputy sheriff under William E. Goodwin. During the first year of the struggle he served in that important capacity, which then administered the finances of the County. He was elected deputy county clerk with Lucian A. Davis, clerk in 1871, and was elected clerk in 1887, and had held the office since. He served in the legislature in the session of 1868 - 9. His entire official career was characterized by faithful service, great efficiency and the highest integrity.

Edwin Nelson was commissioned lieutenant in the company of cavalry organized by Captain W. G. Brawner at **Brentsville** in September, 1862, and was mustered into service at Orange Court House the following November. With conspicuous bravery he fought for the cause his conscience told him was right, to maintain the institutions and traditions of his native land, to protect its firesides from an invading foe. He was at the front in the line of battle, he endured awful hardships and intense suffering in the Yankee war prisons. The company moved and camped at Hixes Hill below Fredericksburg and again at Moss Neck Church, ten miles below Fredericksburg. At noon on December 29 the company broke camp, marched to the battlefield, spending the night there.

(Continued on page 6)

Where W I L D Things Live

Polygonia interrogationis (Fabricius, 1798) Question Mark

Polygonia interrogationis is a North American nymphalid butterfly called the Question Mark. They live in wooded areas and generally in areas which feature trees and free spaces. The adult butterfly has a wingspan of 2 to 3 inches.

Identification: The forewing upperside is red-orange with black spots. The upperside hindwing of the summer form is mostly black with a short tail; that of winter form has much orange and a longer, violet-tipped tail. The underside is light brown and the hindwing has a pearly white question mark in the center which gives it its name.

Life history: Males find females by perching on leaves or tree trunks in the afternoon, flying to chase other insects and even birds. Females lay eggs singly or stacked under leaves of plants that are usually not the hosts. Caterpillars must find a host plant; they then eat leaves and live alone. Adults of the winter form hibernate; some staying in the north, many migrating to the south.

Flight: Overwintered adults fly and lay eggs in the spring until the end of May. The summer form emerges and flies from May-September, laying eggs that develop into the winter form; these adults appear in late August and spend the winter in various shelters.

Caterpillar hosts: American elm (*Ulmus americanus*), red elm (*Ulmus rubra*), hackberry (*Celtis*), Japanese hop (*Humulus japonicus*), nettles (*Urtica*), and false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*).

Adult food: Rotting fruit, tree sap, dung, carrion. Only when these are unavailable do Question Marks visit flowers such as common milkweed, aster, and sweet pepperbush.

Range: Southern Canada and all of the eastern United States except peninsular Florida, west to the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, south to southern Arizona and Mexico.

Early in the morning of December 30 1862, the company was attached to the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry as Company H with Lieutenant Nelson in command, and lasted from six o'clock in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon, Company H holding the line and repulsing a vastly larger number of Yankees. Company H sustained a loss of eighteen men killed, wounded and missing. Lieutenant Nelson was also in the charge at Seneca, Md., on June 10, 1863, when Captain Brawner and Lieutenant Whitecarver were killed, and he took part in important raids.

While home on a furlough, June 21, 1863, he was captured and taken to Point Lookout Prison, transferred to the Old Capital Prison in Washington, then to a Philadelphia prison and subsequently to Officers Prison on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie, where he was held until the close of the war. His imprisonment covered a period of twenty-two months. At the close of the war and until he was elected deputy county clerk in 1871, Lieutenant Nelson engaged in farming.

On March 26 1861, Edwin Nelson married Miss Betty Weedon daughter of Judge John C. Weedon, of Prince William county. He is survived by his widow, three sons, John H., attorney for the Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington; Jas. E., Manassas; Paul, Charleston WV, and two daughters, Mrs. Austin O. Weedon, New Baltimore, and Mrs. Albert Spiden, Manassas. He also leaves a brother, Charles, and a sister, Jane Nelson, Fort Scott, Kans. A sister Mrs. Marshall Weedon, died recently.

Among those from abroad who attended the funeral were Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wroe, and W. J. Chapman, Baltimore, Walter Shannon, Philadelphia; John R. Turner, Warrenton; John C. Weedon, Washington; H. A. Robson, Charleston WV; Mrs. Nannie Weedon, Roanoke.

Telegrams and letters of condolence were received from the Hon. R. Walton Moore, Washington; Eppa Hunton, Richmond; Judge E. S. Turner, Warrenton; Hon. Jas. R. Caton, Alexandria; Dr. Churchman, Charleston WV; the Rev. D. L. Bartenstein, Warrenton; Warren E. Coons, Culpeper; John H. Marble, of the Interstate Commerce Commission; S. R. Donahue, auditor public accounts, Richmond, and others.

Source: *The Manassas Democrat*, 16 Feb 1911

Brentsville

A Look Back in History

by
Ronald Ray Turner

The Case of the Commonwealth vs Agnes

I'm sure most people associated with Brentsville have heard at least one of the accounts passed down through the generations about the slave Agnes killing Gerard Mason. The most common of these stories seem to be that she killed him because he held her baby over a pot of boiling oil, or some derivative of this story.

No one will dispute that Gerard Mason was a very ruthless man who was well known and disliked by many in the county. He had found himself on the inside of the Brentsville Jail on more than one occasion. In October 1845 he was confined there for beating with a stick and killing Katy, one of his very young slaves, without reason or provocation. If a list of Prince William County's most notorious people were put together, Gerard Mason would be near the top. But with all of this said I would like to set the record straight as to how he was killed. The following account was taken from court transcripts, pardon requests, and records from the Coroner's inquest.

It was about noon and Lewis Weston wanted to go to the mill, so he sent one of his sons over to Gerard Mason's house to borrow a canoe. On arriving there he saw that there was a fire in the house meaning someone should have been home, but the door was shut and locked. He went back for his father & Mr. Ragan and they knowing the custom of the place raised the mat at the door and retrieved the key. On entering they found Gerard Mason dead in his bed and there was no doubt it was murder. Dr. Saunders was called and came with Richard Stonnell & Henry Selecman & others who would immediately start an inquest. All would later testify at the trial.

As always there are two sides to every story and this was no exception. The Commonwealth, with Eppa Hunton as the prosecutor, charged that Agnes killed Gerard Mason with an axe, striking him on the head while he was asleep in the bed. There was also testimony that a few weeks before, her master (Gerard Mason) being disabled, had made Abram, a Negro foreman, whip her. She is reported to have stated that she would kill anyone who attempted to whip her again. Dr. Saunders testified that it was evident that Mr. Mason was killed in bed, because the only blood visible was on the wall at the head of the bed and on the bed itself.

Agnes' version of the story is that she was summoned to bring the axe into the house and that Gerard Mason was mad that she had not ground it. She said that

he "attempted to turn up her clothes" but she resisted. He then got mad and took a gun down and was going to shoot her. She managed to take the gun away from him and he got the axe. She took the axe away from him and struck him with it and did so much damage she decided she would finish the job and hit him again.

Agnes was convicted and sentenced to be hung 10 May 1850. It was during the trial that Agnes said she discovered she was with child about five weeks previous. The court did not believe her and ordered her examined by two of the local doctors. Both said she might be pregnant but they were not sure either way. Under great pressure from most of the county Preachers, Judges, Occoquan Business Owners, and some Justices' the Governor gave her a respite until July 16th. On July 10th 1850 it was reported by the jailor G. W. Clifford that Dr. Thornton had examined her and found "her not to be in that condition." The death sentence was carried out July 16th 1850 in Brentsville as were all County executions since 1823.

flashback

Mr. H. C. Woodyard, who was born and reared at Brentsville, but who for sometime past has been working in Washington, was found dead in his room at Washington last Saturday, death being due to asphyxiation. The remains were brought from the city Monday and funeral services were held at Valley View Church, the Rev. J. R. Cook officiating, Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

The deceased, who was forty-four years of age, was unmarried. He leaves a sister, Mrs. R. A. Cooper, of Brentsville. Mrs. Samuel Fogle, of Bristow, is a surviving niece. Mr. Woodyard's death was a great shock to his relatives and friends of the Brentsville and Bristow neighborhood.

Source: The Manassas Journal, February 11, 1916

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors
c/o Morgan Breeden
9721 Windy Hill Drive
Nokesville, VA 20181**

