

Brentsville Neighbors



Preserving Brentsville's History

April 2011



Welcome Neighbors!

Our newsletter this month contains three very interesting events that took place during the month of April but in different years. Many of us wondered what actually happened to the old tavern located in the "Breedon Lot." Now we know for sure (see page 2).

Thanks to Lester & Brenda Schumacher who alerted us to an auction taking place that included an old Brentsville letter, we were finally able to obtain the letter written by Mrs. Lucy A. Williams, a widow of less than a year of Robert Williams, second son of Jane Dawe Williams. It tells a very clear story of how hard times were for a widow left with very little. Lynn Churchill assisted in the transcription of this letter and offered the following:

"As there really was no proper punctuation, I have added spaces where I think there should be new sentences. I have also tried to spell things as she did in her letter (hopefully I caught all of the misspellings and didn't try to correct them!).

"Most of the people mentioned in the letter were her relatives — Mary may have been the wife of John Minor Thornton, also of Newport, Kentucky, as that is the only "Mary" I show in my current records, and they did have a son. Her brother James was probably James Bankhead Taylor Thornton, a judge in Prince William County. It appears she called Reuben by his middle name - Taylor. Sarah is one of Lucy's sisters, and Griffin is Sarah's husband. I have no idea who Jarret is, or the property name, which I could only guess at the name ["Hunters Hill" Caroline Co., VA. Lucy's former home which she inherited from her father]. I have no idea who Mol is, unless she is

related to the doctor. Where the letter is torn on the 3rd page, you can probably take a good guess as to the words; I left it blank. The brother E is probably Lucy's brother Edmund Taylor Thornton, and his wife's name is Charlotte.

"I do not have any information on Mrs. Mary Sinclair, but Mrs. Peggy Sinclair could be Margaret Louise Sinclair, daughter of Virginia Taylor Williams Sinclair, who married John Taylor Thornton and I believe lived in Newport, Kentucky." (See page 6.)

And lastly, Rob Orrison pointed us to the Virginia Secession Convention of 1861 and the detailed proceedings held in Brentsville. (See page 7.)

For your calendar, there are two events taking place on the courthouse grounds during the month. First, on April 16th from 11am until 2pm, join us for an old fashioned celebration to welcome spring at Historic Brentsville! Hunt for eggs and play the games enjoyed by children in days gone by. Then tour our historic buildings to discover the rich past of Brentsville. The cost is \$5.00 per child (those under 2 are free) with every child receiving a goody bag.

And then on April 30th, help us celebrate the Brentsville Civil War 150th Anniversary from 10am until 4pm. There will be a ton of stuff going on, all of which can be seen on <http://www.pwcgov.org/docLibrary/PDF/13512.pdf>. The program will conclude with a ceremonial cavalry ride from Brentsville to the Manassas Museum for the opening of the exhibit on the Prince William Cavalry.

Very best wishes,
Morgan

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FLASHBACK

BIG FIRE AT BRENTSVILLE Dr. Wine Burned Out—Old Reid Hotel No More—Family Barely Escape the Flames.

Mrs. Kincheloe's House Saved by hard Fighting—Fire Discovered by Colored Man—Originated in the Kitchen— Insurance \$2,000—Dr. Wine at Mr. Arey's.

On Saturday night last, about midnight, a colored man on his way for a doctor discovered that Dr. Wine's house at Brentsville was in flames. He at once aroused the family, who had a narrow escape, and an effort was made to save the household goods, but only those on the lower floor could be gotten out.

It was only by desperate fighting that Mrs. Kincheloe's house was saved. With wet blankets and every available bucket Dr. Wine and neighbors fought to stay the flames in the fierce heat of the old historic property.

The building was insured for \$2,000 but the insurance does not cover the loss.

This was the old Reid hotel property, which, in the days of the court-house at Brentsville, was frequently filled with guests, under the proprietorship of Mr. Reid. It was here that the nestors of law and politics talked it over in other days. Here stories and jokes were told galore. It was a real old Virginia hostelry with a well patronized bar (liquid refreshments,) when whiskey was cheap and not a vile compound and gentlemen sometimes go "half-seas-over."

It was then a valuable property, but the removal of the courthouse to Manassas wrought a change in the old Brentsville landmark.

Dr. Wine and family have moved to Mr. Arey's where they will remain until Dr. Wine can rebuild; or we understand he may move to Manassas.

Source: The Manassas Journal, April 27, 1910

Where WILD Things Live

Erythronium americanum Trout Lily

We all have signs that tell us spring is here. For some, it is the red-winged blackbird calling or the sweet smell of the thawing earth. The sight of trout lilies poking through last autumn's leaves is surely a sign for others.

This early bloomer appears briefly in the spring, often before all the snow and ice has left the ground. It is a common wildflower in deciduous — and sometimes mixed — woods but can adapt to partially shaded areas of many gardens.

This plant has a few common names, each pointing to some distinguishing characteristic. "Trout lily" is derived from the resemblance of its mottled leaves to the colouring on brook trout. "Adder's tongue" refers to the similarity between a snake's tongue and the sharply pointed, unopened purple leaves as they poke through the dense forest litter. "Dogtooth violet" is said to reflect the white, tooth-like shape of its corm, although it is not a violet at all.

Its latin name, *Erythronium americanum*, is partly from the Greek word *erythros*, meaning "red." This is a reference either to the red flower or the reddish blotching of some *Erythronium* species.

Trout lilies are low-growing plants that form colonies of plants of different ages. The youngsters are flowerless and have only one leaf, while older plants produce two leaves and a single flower. A plant's corm has to reach sufficient depths before it will devote energy to making the additional parts.

Despite being a low-growing plant that can easily blend in with its environment, the trout lily's fleshy green leaves with purple mottling make it easy to recognize. Its graceful yellow flower sits atop a solitary stem and droops towards the ground. Its petals, however, curl upwards, revealing the bright yellow of the inner petals. As a member of the lily family, the trout lily displays a common characteristic of having three petals and three petal-like sepals.

This is a plant that relies more on the spreading abilities of its underground root system (corms) than on seed production from its flowers. In fact, it takes a few years for a plant to be mature enough to produce a flower and seeds. Trout lilies have recruited the help of ants, who eat a nutritious appendage attached to each seed and leave the rest to germinate.

Source: http://www.wildaboutgardening.org/en/features/section5/trout_lily/trout_lily.htm



“Remembering You”

Where WILD things live..



Erythronium americanum
Trout Lily



The family of John White with the white oak tree planted in his memory, April 26, 2008



Mothers Day celebration at the Brentsville Courthouse Centre, April 10, 2009



John White
Champion of the Brentsville Historic Courthouse Centre



Jack Shoolbred



Mary Louise Keys, April 24, 1944, Manassas, Va.



Jimmy, Mary Lou and Mary Katherine Burdette at the Keys home in Brentsville. Home of Miff Keys is in the background left.



Jimmy, Mary Louise and Kay Burdette on the steps of the Ralph Burdette home in Kensington, Md. Taken March 1946.

Thank you, Howard and Brenda Counts, for your very generous support.

Remembering Mama

(Part Three)

by Kay Breeden

Unfortunately our time among family and friends in Hyattstown ended with my parents' separation in 1958. Their relationship had been a volatile one due to my dad's drinking. I'm sure my mother felt he didn't demonstrate enough responsibility for his wife and young daughter and she perhaps felt the isolation from her own family more and more during this time. There was a large blowup resulting in my mother leaving to return home to Brentsville and that included me of course. For the remainder of that school year—eighth grade—I lived with my grandparents, Joe and Ora Keys, and attended Brentsville District High School. I felt like such an outsider trying to fit in with classmates and teachers. It was a difficult year, but I did make some friends including Miss Partlow, the Guidance Counselor. During this time, my mother worked in Washington again and came home on weekends.

Somewhere along the way through this year, my parents reconciled and we ended up living in an apartment in Bethesda, across the street from Aunt Mimi and her second husband, Francis Strube. This was a return to the city life of my early school years. I walked to Leland Junior High School every day for my ninth grade classes. This was a large brick school two blocks off Wisconsin Avenue that had been built by my grandfather, Ralph Burdette. More new classmates and teachers for me, a large student population which was completely different from the small classes at Brentsville and it was scary. Mama worked during the day and didn't get home until 6:30 or after each evening. My dad worked evenings so he had gone to work by the time school was out each day. I had every afternoon on my own and would hang out with my friends at the Woolworth's in downtown Bethesda browsing and having a tulip sundae for a quarter. Sometimes we went to the movies or browsed through the other stores there along Wisconsin.

During a trip back to visit in Brentsville, my parents stopped to look at a new housing development off Route 28 called Loch Lomond. They found a house they liked and my dad used

his G.I. Bill entitlement to buy it. This meant another move for us in the middle of the school year and I was enrolled in classes at Osbourn High School in Manassas to finish ninth grade. My parents continued their work schedule, but now I rode a school bus home to an empty house each afternoon. There was an up side though—I could ride a different bus taking some of my classmates home that went down what is now Lucasville Road to the junction with Brentsville Road and from that stop it was a short walk around Uncle Miff's garden triangle to Nannie's house.

Unfortunately, again, the reconciliation didn't last and my parents divorced. I moved back to Brentsville to live with my grandparents and graduated from BDHS in 1963. My mother continued to work in DC and shared an apartment in Arlington with Mamie Golladay, coming home on the Trailways bus that stopped at Cocke's drug store in Manassas on Friday evenings. She would return to Arlington by bus on Sundays for the next work week. During this time, my dad remarried and I had a new baby sister. Sometimes on Saturday nights we went with Aunt Dinny and Uncle Shorty to the dance at Midway Hall in Calverton where Mama's friend Mamie worked as hostess. It was here she met John Bell whose older brother, Leo, she had previously known. They began seeing each other, going to the dance on Saturdays or the movies and John would sometimes take her back to the apartment on Sunday evenings. They had plans for marriage but it didn't happen until after John's mother had passed away. Morgan and I were married in June of 1963 and Mama and John finally tied the knot six months later in December.

While Morgan and I were adjusting to life as a young married couple in Lewes, Delaware, Mama moved into John's small brick house in Catlett which they would share with his sister Isabell. She became a full-time homemaker again although she assisted John with his business, kept track of his customers and their calls, did the taxes every year and was the real motivator for his success, I believe.

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A Letter From Brentsville

April 22nd 1849

My dear brother

I received your kind letter a few days since. I was pleased to hear you had reached Newport safe and well, the weather was so bad about the time you left I was fearful you would take cold. I was pleased to hear our relations were well, and particularly Mary and her dear little boy, they feel very dear to me, although I have not prov,d it by writing to her, but you must tell her it is not for the want of affection, but the dislike which I have for writing. It is seldom that my mind is at ease, enough so, to write a letter that would be interesting to her, my dear little Taylor is just recovering from a very severe spell of sickness, he is a very delicate child, I fear I shall not raise him, brother James was very attentive to him, I believe he is a favorite with all my relations, I think sometime it is the money, the rest of the children are well, I have suffered this winter with a caught and at times a pain in my breast. I am very thin but I try and keep up, you know my disposition is not to give up as long as I can go about. My dear Taylor I feel greatly obliged to you for the interest you feel for me, I have not had an opportunity since I received your letter to dispose of my servants. I would not like to sell them to a trader, I proposed to brother James to buy Tom, he say he could not raise the money at this time, it is my wish to go to Carolina

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to see Sarah and Griffin before they leave. I would not like for them to go away without seeing them, but I do not know that I can get away to go, it is hard to get a conveyance about here, and I have not the means to hire. If I can go I will try and sell the servants in Carolina. Tom is living with brother James, I believe he would give him up, I feel as if it was time I was trying to do some thing for myself, as times are very hard, the children staid at the Doctors during the winter to go to school for Toms hire. They could not walk from home on account of the run. I have to pay fifty dollars for Vir___

Twenty five to brother C___ for keeping Jarret out of my interest in Hunters Hill so you see I have but very little left, I am thus particular to let you see that I can not get along, without necessarily being at a good deal of expense for the advancement of my children, I will do my part and leave the rest for them to do, Mother has got the deed for h,er land, but has not given it to me yet, if she gives it to me, I expect it will have to go for her debts. She is pressed on all sides for money, her administring on her sisters estate will break her up entirely, she has managed the business badly, she depended on Mr. John Williams, and he helped himself and her property has to go to pay for it, The poor widows stand a bad chance in this part of the country, times are so hard I have to buy things at times for the use of the family, I do not write in this way to distress you, or for you to think that I am beging for help, I know it is not in your power to

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aid me, my relations have all been very kind to me, I know if they were able, I should not want for any of the comforts of this life, you must not think that I despond or fold my arms and do nothing, I feel now that all that I can make is my own, I have made me a rug carpet and I am making quilts of old dresses, I think the poor can help themselves in many litle ways, if they have industry and management, If I only had a home of my own, the children are runing about as happy as if they were worth a fortune. The doctors family are well. Sister and Mol left yesterday for the city, I expect Mol___ will have her frolick the first of June, she says she wishes you to be one of h,er waiters I wish you could plan it so as to have some business in Virginia about that time, The new church in Brentsville is finished at last, it is a very nice building for B___ V___ [it is to] be consecrated next Wednesday, the meeting will [last?] five days, William has returned

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BEFORE WAR Came to Brentsville

VIRGINIA SECESSION CONVENTION

Tuesday, April 9, 1861

Forty-Seventh Day of the Convention

Mr. Hunton, Mr. Scott and Mr. Goggin present resolutions of meetings in Prince William, Cumberland and Bedford counties, in favor of secession and the Confederacy. Discussion of the report of the Committee on Federal Relations is resumed. Mr. Conrad moves a change in the tenth resolution, empowering the Federal government to recognize the Confederacy. Mr. Bouldin objects, and Mr. Wise proposes a substitute, which is adopted. The eleventh resolution, favoring an appeal to Virginia's sister states, is read and adopted. The twelfth resolution, opposing Federal coercion of the seceded states, is taken up; several amendments are proposed.

PUBLIC MEETING IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY Mr. EPPA HUNTON, of Prince William—

I desire to call attention to the proceedings of a meeting held in the County of Prince William on the 1st of April. That constituency, sir, like myself, for a long time have thought that the only solution of our present difficulties was to be found in immediate secession, and had they not entertained those sentiments they never would have been represented on this floor by me. Being able to represent their sentiments in strict accordance with my own views, I feel justly proud of the noble and generous

constituency which I have the honor to represent, and I take great pleasure in laying before this Convention their sentiments upon the subject now agitating the country.

The proceedings of the meeting were then read as follows :

At a Southern Rights meeting of the people of the county of Prince William, held at the Court House on the 1st day of April, 1861, on motion, Capt. William W. Thornton was called to the Chair, and A. Nicol, Esq., appointed Secretary.

The object of the meeting was explained by B. E. Harrison, Esq., in a short and neat address, on whose motion it was—

Resolved, That the several election precincts in the county, be requested to appoint ten delegates each, to meet in county Convention at the Court House, on the first Monday in May next, to nominate a candidate to represent the county in the next Legislature of Virginia.

The meeting was then forcibly and ably addressed by General Hunton, delegate to the State Convention, and by Judge C. E. Sinclair, of Memphis, Tennessee, and was followed by Col. Basil Brawner, upon whose motion the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted :

Whereas, All honorable means for the preservation of the Union, consistent with the honor and equality of all the States, have been exhausted without avail; Therefore—

1. **Resolved**, That we, the people of Prince William county, in public meeting

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Mama was a good cook and enjoyed using fresh vegetables—how could she not, having grown up with the bounty from the Keys garden—so she and John had a garden plot every year. Her main concern with this was the occasional sighting of snakes—the one creature that terrified her. She also loved working in her flowers as she had when living in Hyattstown. I remember her flower pots flanking the back door and the hanging baskets filled with pink and white petunias. I have a large painting of petunias done by our talented artist friend Mickey Winslow that evokes such strong memories of Mama whenever I look at it. It was purchased at the art show just a few weeks after her funeral, as though fate was providing me with a tangible reminder.

The work week was long and busy, but Saturday night meant time for dancing. In the early years they went to Midway Hall or Hugo's, sometimes to Shipps' Park or Hunter's Lodge and Social Circle in Fairfax. Then during the 70's they alternated between Colvin Run, which was held in the old schoolhouse, and the fire department at Great Falls, which hosted the New Year's Eve dance. By this time Morgan and I were living in Manassas and went dancing every Saturday as well along with Carrie and Fred Dimsey, their friends from Herndon. The four of them went on vacation together during the summer and went out to celebrate birthdays. Eventually, Carrie and Fred purchased a building lot from Irene Colvin, John's aunt, and moved into a modular house just a short way down the road from Mama's. In later years this pattern was repeated with their friends Wilbur and Margaret Ann Burton.

During this time, Mama made the house hers with the addition of her furniture, doilies, collection of teapots and pitchers, and indeed her very presence. She welcomed members of John's family as well as all of us from the Keys clan for family celebrations, Easter dinner or a cookout on the Fourth of July followed by fireworks; but the holiday gathering that was the most special for my mother was Christmas. She always went overboard on gifts, especially those for her grandchildren. If one was good, six were even better. It was an ever-increasing task to complete all the necessary holiday purchases. The wrapping of said gifts was a long drawn-out process until the later years when large gift bags became the easier way to tackle this chore. The house needed cleaning, decorating and a furniture

re-arrangement to accommodate the addition of a good-sized tree surrounded by a mountain of presents. Remember, this was a small house with a tiny kitchen, small dining area and one bathroom. With all of us gathered for Christmas dinner and gift opening it was crowded. We were literally stepping over and around each other. I think Mama especially enjoyed her double-dipping—a birthday gift in addition to holiday gifts from everyone.

As time passed, she struggled to pull everything together for this kind of gathering, so we began celebrating Christmas and other holidays at our house in Windy Hill—more space to spread everyone out—more bathrooms—two kitchens to prepare the food. In 2004 my cousin Connie and I hosted a large party for Mama's 80th birthday. She seemed to really enjoy the day visiting with all her guests.

When Mama stopped driving, she became more dependent on John and the rest of us to continue with activities away from home—doctor visits, grocery shopping, visits to her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other family members. As health issues arose, she withdrew even more from visiting, attending holiday gatherings, sometimes even putting off medical appointments. She was put on oxygen to assist her lung function and this seemed to be the beginning of the real downhill slide. I took her for an appointment every month, but neither of the doctors she saw during the last year seemed overly concerned with her condition. I truly believe they weren't honest with us about her health and long term prognosis. Then in March 2007, while Morgan and I were on a vacation trip to the Dominican Republic, we received word that a bout with pneumonia had sent Mama to the critical care unit of Fauquier Hospital. By the time we returned home she was responding to treatment, improving to the point of leaving the CCU for a regular room, eating small meals and sitting up for visits with family. She was anxious to return home but, again, an unforeseen life-changing twist. She suffered a significant stroke during a medical procedure and then it became a time to assess her condition and then eventually remove the artificial life support, make her comfortable and manage the final hours. Release came the morning of April 2nd and she was laid to rest beside Granddaddy in the Keys cemetery on April 6th, four years ago this month.

Good bye, Mama. Love you.

assembled, are in favor of the State of Virginia seceding from the Union as soon as possible. And, Whereas, Seven States have already withdrawn from the Union, and organized themselves into a separate and distinct Confederacy, whose interests and social institutions are identical with our own, and whose Constitution we approve of-

2. **Resolved**, That in our opinion the welfare and prosperity of Virginia requires her to become a member of the Southern Confederacy at the earliest practical moment.

3. **Resolved**, That if the Convention now assembled shall pass an ordinance of secession, and thereby increased taxation becomes necessary, we are willing that all property shall be taxed ad valorem.

4. **Resolved**, That we cordially approve of the position taken by Gen. Hunton, our representative in the State Convention, and tender him our thanks for the faithful manner in which he has represented us ; and that a copy of the foregoing resolutions be forwarded to him with the request that he lay the same before the Convention.

The third resolution was debated by Judge S. Lynn and John T. Williams, Esq.

On motion of Mr. Fitzhugh,
Resolved, That the Alexandria and Richmond papers be requested to publish the proceedings of this meeting.

On motion, the meeting then adjourned.

WM. W. THORNTON, Chairman
A. NICOL, Secretary

Source: <http://collections.richmond.edu/secession/documents/>

F e e d b a c k

Hey there my friend. Really enjoyed the latest newsletter – great to see Martha in print! Here is a picture of Jack Schoolbred (on page 4) mentioned in your Civil War article. He and Sergeant Mickler were mentioned on several occasions in my original history of the CW. He is a fearsome looking customer – not the sort to run into in a badly lit alley on a dark and stormy night!

Paul Spencer, Australia

(Continued from page 6)

from Carolina with the servants he left them all well except Bettys oldest child that was very sick, Tommy is mending very fast, William says Virginia is very studious, brother E__ and Charlotte are very fond of her, I hope she may yet be a comfort to me, I expect you have heard of Mrs. Mary Sinclairs death before this, she left most of her property to Mrs. Peggy Sinclairs family, they are pressing those that were indebted to her, she has a small account against me, I had thought that I would ask you to name my situation to cousin James T__ if you think he would be willing to help a poor relation who has been reduced from the same cause that so many poor wives and children have been made to suffer, I will

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leave it to you, to say whether or not I shall name it to him I must conclude as I fear you will not take time to read such a lengthy letter, I will write to you as soon as I can find out, if I can dispose of the servants to the best advantage I have heard that servants were selling low at this time, the children are stranding around and all sending a message, but I have not room the children join me in love to Marg and her dear little boy and the rest my relations, you must write as soon as you get this, may heaven guard and protect you is the wish of your sincere sister.

Lucy A. Williams.

Letter from Brentsville to Mr. Reuben T. Thornton, Newport, Kentucky by the way of Washington City.

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

Contact us on:
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IN GOD WE TRUST

