

# Brentsville Neighbors



## Preserving Brentsville's History

June 2011



Welcome Neighbors,

Brentsville kicked off the Civil War Sesquicentennial celebrations with a boom – literally. On April 30<sup>th</sup> the reenactment of the Prince William Cavalry ride from Brentsville to Manassas (while not historically accurate) drew a large crowd to Brentsville to witness cavalry drills by the Black Horse Cavalry (who were representing the Prince William Cavalry), military drills by the 49<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Volunteers and artillery demonstrations as well as a number of other very interesting exhibits and displays. Not to mention the “presentation of a flag” to the Prince William Cavalry troop. Everyone I spoke with was very pleased with the events of the day.

One of the items that drew much attention was a notebook donated to our Brentsville collection by Mr. Jimmy Wilson (previously of Brentsville now living in Sutton, WV), “49<sup>th</sup> Regiment Virginia Volunteer Infantry, C. S. A., The Men” that includes an account of every man known to have served in the 49<sup>th</sup>. Thank you Jimmy!

Looking forward, Mike Riley, our site manager, will be hosting guest speakers at the site throughout the summer and possibly until the end of the season. So mark your calendar for the first guest speaker – Mr. Don Wilson, Virginiana Librarian, will be presenting “Tracing Land Titles”

on Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm in the Union Church. Everyone interested in learning more about their property will find this a most informative session with hot tips of where and how to look for information. The lecture is free but donations will be gladly accepted.

While looking back through old newspaper accounts for use in the “Flashback” column, I found this item written in 1910 that, had the date been missing, could have come from a current paper. Strange how much things change the more they stay the same.

Finally, how many of us remember Rev. Albert Curry Winn? He was pastor in Brentsville, Greenwich and other locations in the 1950's. Harry Visger's story and copy of his marriage certificate will bring back fond memories of Rev. Winn to many, I'm sure. So where is he now? Dr. Winn is Pastor Emeritus, North Decatur Presbyterian Church, Decatur, Georgia, and President Emeritus, Louisville Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of several books and quite well known. Just to think, we knew him “when.”

Very best wishes,  
Morgan

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# FLASHBACK

## SATURDAY NIGHT STORM

**Hail at Bristow, Hickory Grove and Other Points Riddle Gardens and Strip Corn.**

The storm of wind, rain and hail that visited this county on Saturday night last did considerable damage.

The wind was unusually heavy and blew down trees in almost every section of the county. Mr. J. H. Wheaton, of Canova, reports loss of fruit trees at his place and at Mr. George A. Bradfield's. At Mr. Arthur Raymond's, at Buckhall, a large tree was blown across the meat-house and well-house, demolishing both. The wind also blew the wagon-shed and corn-house off the foundation at Mr. Cooksey's, unroofing the buildings.

Greater damage, however, was done by a hail-storm that swept over a path about a mile wide from Hickory Grove to Orlando. Mr. Hutchison's crops, near the former place, was considerably damaged and Mr. Raymond Galleher's wheat field was especially hard hit. At Bristow the hail-stones were as large as walnuts and lay on the ground until the next day at noon.

At Brentsville the hail was especially destructive to growing vegetation of all kinds, the gardens being literally riddled.

In this and other sections of the hail-storm's path, considerable damage was done to wheat, corn and gardens.

Contrary to the sequel of most hail-storms, a torrid wave followed, indicating that the hail-storm area was wholly local. In other sections there was a veritable deluge, following as it did weeks of rain.

Winchester and other towns depending upon the Winchester and Washington City Power Company to furnish electricity for illuminating purposes were in darkness, the large plant along the Shenandoah river at Millville, W. Va., being under water. Many local industries were badly crippled and some suspended operations. The Shenandoah river was higher than it has been for years, and it is stated that the waters did not fall before night sufficiently for the company to furnish electricity. All streams tributary to the Shenandoah river have become raging torrents, the crops in lowlands being destroyed.

In Warren county, the Shenandoah river was about 25 feet above normal, all bottom lands were inundated and wheat and corn crops a total loss. The damage is estimated at several hundred thousand dollars.

Source: The Manassas Journal, June 24, 1910.

# Where WILD Things Live

## Common Whitetail

The **Common Whitetail** or **Long-tailed Skimmer** (*Libellula lydia*) is a common dragonfly across much of North America, with a striking and unusual appearance. The male's chunky white body, combined with the brownish-black bands on its otherwise translucent wings, give it a checkered look. Females have a brown body and a different pattern of wing spots, pictured on page three. Whitetail females can be distinguished by their smaller size, shorter bodies, and white zigzag abdominal stripes.

The Common Whitetail can be seen hawking for mosquitoes and other small flying insects over ponds, marshes, and slow-moving rivers in most regions except the higher mountain regions.

Like all perchers, Common Whitetails often rest on objects near the water, and sometimes on the ground. Males are territorial, holding a 10 to 30 metre stretch of the water's edge, and patrolling it to drive off other males. The white pruinescence on the abdomen, found only in mature males, is displayed to other males as a territorial threat. The nymphs are dark green or brown, but are usually found covered in algae. They feed on aquatic invertebrates such as mayfly larvae and small crayfish, and also on small aquatic vertebrates such as tadpoles and minnows. Because of their abundance, whitetail naiads are in turn an important food source for various fish, frogs, and birds, and also for other aquatic insects.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



The replica Prince William Cavalry flag on display

## Where WILD things live..



Adult male



Demonstrating a field piece



Adult female

*Libellula lydia*  
Common Whitetail Dragonfly



Supervisor Covington addressing the attendees



Ladies presenting the flag to the  
Prince William Cavalry

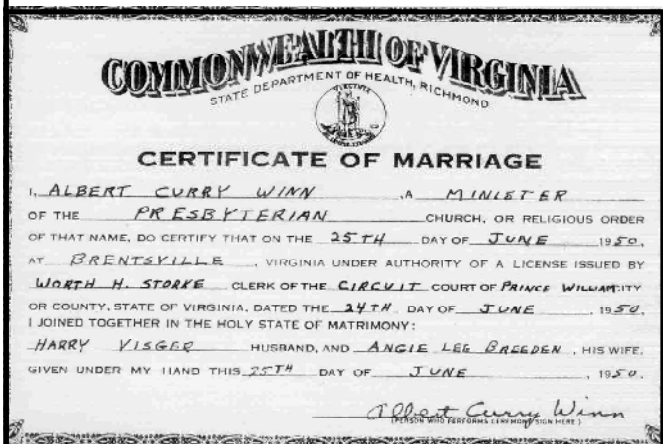


Harry Visger at his home in Florida, 2/27/2011



The home Harry Visger built in Brentsville

Certificate and pictures below courtesy of  
Harry Visger



Rev. Winn performed the wedding in the  
Brentsville Union Church



Harry and Angie Lee at their wedding reception,  
June 25, 1950



Ethel Burke and Bennie Breedon



Angie Lee's senior school picture

# Harry Visger Remembers Brentsville

I was born in Trego, Wisconsin, a small town of maybe 200 people, on July 1, 1927. My mother died when I was three and my father was working away from the area so my younger sister and I lived with our grandmother until I was about seven years old. After that we went to live with a single school teacher who was a neighbor from the homestead days. She adopted both of us. Caring for our education, she hired a tutor for our schoolwork, gave me violin lessons and dressed us up in city clothes. We all went up to Superior, Wisconsin, to live with her and go to school—the same school in which she taught. She was caring but very strict. During my sophomore year I got a job in a drugstore. The owner kept two large barrels of wine in the basement and when business was slow he would sometimes send me down to fill a gallon Coke jug with wine and deliver it to someone who lived in the area. After a while I would occasionally take a sip until it became habit forming. One day I took a bottle in a paper sack to a school ball game. Someone bumped against me causing the bottle to fall and break. I was expelled from the school and my adopted mother moved me to another school. Here the school officials tried to make me tell them where I got the wine but I refused to tell them. My adopted mother said that if I didn't cooperate she was going to send me back to my father. I told her that sounded like a pretty good idea so she sent both my sister and me back to our father.

Things went well with him. I had more freedom than I had ever known before. I had a job working weekends and sometimes I'd skip school on Friday to work an extra day. I managed to get my schoolwork finished and graduate from high school. By then the war had already broken out and my friends were joining the Navy. I tried to join as well but they wouldn't take me because I was too small and had to wear glasses. I joined the Merchant Marines instead.

I met Elmer Breeden on the USS Admiral Hugh Rodman, a troop transport ship. In the spring of 1946 I came home with him for a few days. A year later we were going into dry dock in Brooklyn, New York, and Elmer invited me to come back for a longer stay. Not long after we arrived in Brentsville, Elmer eloped with his girlfriend and left me with his family. I was going to leave and go back to New York to catch another ship but Bennie, Elmer's father, suggested I get a job at Vint Hill and work with him. We went into Washington, DC to get my discharge papers and I started at Vint Hill as a temporary working for a contractor building Quonset huts. After I got a security clearance I became an employee in the Utilities Division as a water plant operator and about a year later I was appointed as an assistant foreman in that division. During this time I was living with Bennie Breeden in Brentsville and riding to work with him and his brother, Morgan.

I took Angie to a school prom several years later (around 1949) and we were married in 1950 on the same day the Korea War started. We were married in the Union Church (it was being used by the Presbyterians) and had our reception in Bennie's house. We went to Wisconsin on a honeymoon to visit my grandparents, my father and step-mother. Bennie gave us an acre of land beside the church for our home and we continued to live with him until our house was built. I didn't know anything about building homes but had a lot of help from many people in the community.

After my house was finished, Bennie built his new house just beside ours. In 1960 Bennie and Ethel moved to Manassas and in 1963 we also moved to Longstreet Drive in Manassas. Angie and her mother were always very close. They did everything together—shop, attend club functions—and just about everything else. So when her mother and father moved it was only natural that we did also.

(Continued on page 9)

# *Brentsville*

## A Look Back in History

by

Ronald Ray Turner

Note from Ron: I only found a portion of the case Fewell vs Latimer, but you might find this deposition interesting. It seems like Fewell was the victor in the original case and Latimer was appealing the decision.

The deposition of M. J. Pardie taken before Aylett Nicol commissioner in Chancery of Prince William County Court, at his office in the Town of Brentsville, on the 26th May 1857, according to the annexed notice, at the instanced of Edwin W. Latimer, to be recorded evidence in the case at law now pending in the said County Court of Prince William County in which Thomas T. Fewell is appellant and the said Edwin W. Latimer is appellee. The witness being first sworn deposith and saith in answer to questions, as follows, to wit:

Question by E. W. Latimer

Have you or not ever taught school in the Village of Brentsville? When? And how long?

Answer – I have taught school in the Village of Brentsville. I do not recollect the number of months. I commenced teaching the second week in July 1856 I think, and ended the 17th April 1857.

Question by same – How many hours were you in the habit of teaching per day & what hour in the morning did you commence your school.

Answer – My system for teaching was to teach six hours per day, but I often taught longer as circumstances would indicate. I preferred to

commence at half past eight, but my actual time for commencing would vary according to circumstances. For the greater portion of the year I commenced about nine o'clock. I have always consulted the interest of my scholars and my boarding place also. If I would have got my breakfast in time and the children from the country had have come in time I would have commenced school at eight o'clock, but not being able to get my breakfast, and the children not coming in by that time I had to return to the old system of commencing at nine. Sometimes the scholars would come in by half past eight. My system would be if the time of getting my meals and the coming in of my scholars would admit of it, to commence school at half past eight o'clock in the summer months and at nine o'clock in the winter months.

Question by same – Did you give recess between morning & noon and & between noon & the close of your school?

Answer – I did give recess at the times mentioned in the question.

Question by same – During the spring & summer at what hour were you in the habit of closing your school?

(Continued on page 7)

Answer – I think four o'clock was my fixed hour for closing in the summer and five in the winter & spring months. The dinner hour here is later than it is at the North where I have formerly taught and in consequence the time of recess at noon was longer than I desired. I desired to give one hour recess at noon in the winter and 1 ½ hours in the summer. As this recess was lengthened by the lateness of the dinner hour, the hours for school in the evening was lengthened beyond my appointed hour for closing.

Question by same – Do I or not then understand you to say that when you were unable to keep your regular hours, from any interruptions, that you made up the regular session of six hours, during the day?

Answer – I may not at all times have made the regular session of six hours during the day. But it was my intention to do so, and I do not now remember of having been unable to do so.

Question by same – Did or did not Mr. Thos. T. Fewell send his children to you during the time you taught?

Answer – He did.

Question by same – Did he or not ever complain of the time you commenced or closed your school, or of the several periods of recess that you gave during the day?

Answer – Mr. Fewell never made any complaint to my knowledge.

Question by T. T. Fewell – Did you or did you not live in the State of Virginia in the year of 1855 or before that time?

Answer – I did not.

Question by same – Do you or do you not know how many hours teachers in Virginia usually teach and whether it is usual for them to give a recess between nine and twelve in the morning, and between two and half past four o'clock in the evening?

Answer – I know nothing of the Virginia system of teaching, or as it regards the giving of recess.

Question by E. W. Latimer – Do you or not consider from your experience in teaching that six hours is long enough for children to be in school?

Answer – My experience has confirmed me in my opinion that six hours is long enough for children to be in school.

Question by same – Were you or not in the habit of giving your pupils lessons to prepare at night?

Answer – I was in the habit of giving the larger ones lessons to prepare at night. I did not give the small ones lessons as six hours was sufficiently long for them to get the lessons that their capacity would allow them to get.

And further this deponent saith not.

M. Jennie Pardie

The forgoing deposition was taken, subscribed and sworn before me this 26th day of May 1857

A. Nicol, commissioner

## WOULD DEFEND THE FLAG

### Confederate Veterans Recall Wartimes and Pledge Loyalty to the United States.

Mr. John W. Davis, of Hoadley, responding to the call for information concerning the service of Confederate soldiers, writes, "I enlisted July 17, 1861, under Capt. W. W. Thornton, in the Prince William Cavalry, afterward Company A, Fourth Virginia Cavalry. I served under the following officers: Generals Fitzhugh Lee, Wickham and Payne; Captains Zip Williams and Lucian A. Davis and Lieutenants A. D. Wrote, James M. Barbee, George Colvin, A. T. Lynn and Robert Weedon.

"I was on picket duty near Buckhall at the first battle of Manassas, and was stationed near Bristow when the second great battle of Manassas was fought. I was actively engaged in the battle of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, The Wilderness, Sharpsburg and many other skirmishes and raids that I cannot call to mind just now.

"I followed General J. E. B. Stuart from the time the regiment was organized until I was wounded at Cannon's Landing in Charles City county, May 24, 1864, while on a detail under Fitz Lee to check Grant's advance on Richmond. I was wounded at ten o'clock in the morning and was removed from the field to a place of safety by my comrades, Levi Pridmore and Henry Carter. At sundown I was taken to a farmhouse and kept until the next morning when I was taken to Richmond to the receiving hospital where my wound was dressed about forty-eight hours after I was wounded.

"Five days later I transferred to the Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond, where I remained nine weeks. I came home on a furlough for sixty days, suffered a relapse and was not able to return for more than three months. When I got back to the regiment my company was on detached service, guarding feed, and Dr. Burns ordered me back home as unfit for service.

"I report again in the spring of '65 and was sent to the wagon train, not yet being fit for regular service. I was at Lynchburg when General Lee surrendered.

"I carried a lead bullet in my left thigh for four months and still have it in my possession, a grim reminder of the bitter strife of those days, which is fast fading into oblivion. I am truly glad we stand once more a reunited nation, ready to defend our country against the common foe."

Another letter comes from Mr. James R. Pearson, also, of Hoadley, seventy-six years old, who says he joined the army in 1861 at the age of twenty-one, serving under Capt. Nelson, 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Virginia Volunteers, Company B. Other officers were Col. Smith, First Lieut. Lindsley,

Second Lieut. Henry Ratcliffe, First Sergeant Red Davis and Corporal David Tyrrell.

"We went to Dumfries," writes Mr. Pearson, "and drilled about twelve months, after which we marched to Orange Courthouse.

"We were engaged in the first battle at Williamsburg. After this battle went to Seven Pines, marched to Cold Harbor, fought about one and one-half days, then marched to Malvern Hill, fought about two days and nights and then took up the march to Bristow Station.

"We lay there in readiness for the second battle of Manassas. There we burned the commissary. There were bombs in this building and they went off about midnight. Col. Smith called on us to turn out as the enemy was upon us. The next morning we went down to the old railroad cut. About three o'clock we charged the cut, took it and drove the enemy toward Alexandria. This was the hardest fight we had.

"Later we marched to Winchester, engaged in battle and put the enemy to rout, marched on Harpers Ferry, took the arsenal, opening fire about day with our artillery. We crossed the river on our way to Antietam. There we did fight and got whipped. We marched back across the river toward Fredericksburg; at Hamilton's Crossing we beat the enemy back across the Rappahannock river and went into breastworks that had been made for us on Maury's Heights. The enemy crossed the river above us and engaged us at Chancellorsville. I was not in this battle but could see the fighting. We then marched through the Valley on our way to Gettysburg.

"I fought at Little Roundtop and was shot on the chin. We were whipped and had to leave in the night. We went on to Williamsburg, crossed the river to Richmond and then to Petersburg. While we lay in the trenches there a bomb burst over my head, wounding me in the back. Lem Dudley was killed at my side.

"I was home twice during the four years and got shot in the hand on one of my trips. I was with Lee when he surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse. He gave me a roll of honor and a piece of the Confederate flag.

"If it were possible for me to call back my life again," Mr. Pearson concludes, "I would fight now just as hard for the Stars and Stripes as I fought for the Stars and Bars. But I am feeble now; my frame is tottering fast. I fought to help make this a great nation and I urge everyone to stand together with all their might to protect this, the greatest on earth."

Source: The Manassas Journal, May 18, 1917

I enjoyed having a garden in Brentsville and particularly enjoyed hunting and fishing. My favorite hunting event was whichever one I was doing at that time. During the middle of one winter I was hunting along Lake Jackson with Morgan Breeden and I heard one of my dogs barking loudly and then heard a strange noise. We found my two dogs had gone out on thin ice after a raccoon and fell through far enough away from the shore that I could not get to them. One of them got out but the other did not so I lost a good dog that night. About two weeks later Bennie Shoemaker was ice-skating in that area and brought the dog's collar back to me.

I fished behind the courthouse a lot, wading in the shallow water and caught a lot of small-mouth bass. Up near Kettle Run there was a big tree hanging over the run and I would drop a worm in there and catch about 15 big bluegills. Another time I was fishing when the water started to rise unexpectedly. I tried to cross but it was too deep so I had to take my clothes off to cross and everything got soaking wet. It had been raining upstream and a surge about two feet high just appeared. I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to get out of there okay but I did.

Another time I was upstream and as I rounded a little island I looked to the left and saw a wood duck. The duck didn't see me so I jumped at it to try catching it and the duck fell over dead. I suppose I scared it to death! I used to raise chickens and had chicks of a breed from South America in a box with a metal cover with a light bulb in it. Once the light fell over unexpectedly and three of the chicks keeled over dead from fright. I had a lot of different kinds of chicks, some that laid blue eggs and didn't have a tail—a lot of different kinds of bantams—some modern game hens. My favorite was probably the bantams.

One of my favorite pastimes became metal detecting. Initially one of the men on my staff asked me to go detecting with him but I refused. Then one day he took me over to Social Circle in Fairfax and we found bullets laying everywhere. After I found a Federal

## Feedback

Just wanted to congratulate you on the latest newsletter. I particularly enjoyed learning about some of the history of Brentsville's White House, which has been in our family now for 70 years, or about a third of its existence. Keep up the good work.

DeLancey (Lance) Webster

button I got hooked big time and bought a detector that had been home made by Joe Muddiman from a design in Popular Mechanics. It wasn't very effective but I found things. Later I bought a much better machine and one of my friends knew people around Catlett so we went up there and got into Yankee camps where we found so much stuff we couldn't carry it all home—canteens, bayonets, bullet molds and almost everything. Later I started researching documents to find where various regiments were camped and went looking there. Sometimes they were difficult to find but it was really worthwhile.

I spent the last three years at Vint Hill as a Contracting Officer's Representative after which we moved to Florida to live with Bennie and Ethel because Bennie had started to develop Parkinson's disease. We were to move down temporarily but after two years we made it permanent. After a while I developed a lot of friends who also liked to fish and we would have fish fries and life was good. One of my friends was a competitive fisherman and liked to be best or at least equal to everyone else so if I caught more fish than he, we stayed out until he caught the same number.

I'm enjoying life in Florida now. I do a lot of volunteer work with the church thrift shop and I work at the senior center on Fridays now as well. For the last seven years I have been the secretary for the National Association of Retired Federal Employees.

# Brentsville Neighbors

## Preserving Brentsville's History

Contact us on:  
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IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors  
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