

# Brentsville Neighbors



Preserving Brentsville's History



July 2012

July 8, 1835

July 23, 1904



Welcome Neighbors,

Let's start with a short quiz. But I give warning, this is a trick question. What's the difference between the two road signs above? Answer: The one on the left was taken in Prince William County, Va. while the one on the right was taken in Bourbon Co., Ky. While doing research on Brentsville with the Internet I would occasionally come across a location called Brentsville, KY. It turns out to be just a short drive from Lexington, KY and since we were going there for our 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I was determined to visit Brentsville, KY! As it turns out, there is no town, no store, no post office, only a road about six miles long called Brentsville Road and the people who live along this road are said to live in Brentsville, KY. And by the way, I have also found reference to Brentsville, Maryland but have not found it's location yet.

Not long ago while walking along the courthouse nature trail I encountered a young man with a camera. In the discussion that followed, Victor Rook identified himself as a nature photographer working on a new book that will be called "Calmness of Woods." The book is not released yet but he has a beautiful DVD with hundreds of images taken from over 50 hikes in

six of Prince William's parks, including the Brentsville Nature Trail. On our site he comments: "[It] has such a diverse array of flora and fauna in a small space. It's a treat to visit and take photos there." His pictures are grouped by *Pathways, Flora, Fauna, Water, Seasons* and more set to soothing music. I invite you to check out his website at [www.victorrook.com/woods](http://www.victorrook.com/woods).

Two items concerning schools in this issue. First, 1936 represented eight years of the one room school in operation. On page seven we have a list of all the students enrolled that year. See some familiar names? Second, another document was uncovered about the "Health School Desk" that we reported on last month. This may not be a complete letter but at least we know that someone representing the new company visited Prince William and met with Mr. G. C. Round, the Superintendent of Schools at that time. There is still no indication that any of these desks were actually bought for use within the county although the price seems very attractive.

Very best wishes,  
Kay and Morgan

## This month:

- |                          |             |                          |        |
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# Flashback

Where WILD  
things live...

## Brentsville

Mr. John Petty is in the Alexandria Hospital. He has had an operation and we sincerely hope that he has a speedy recovery.

Mr. Tom Trott spent the weekend in Richmond with his son, Richard, who has been in the hospital suffering from burns.

Miss Mildred Fogel was home over the weekend after spending some time with her grandmother.

Master C. W. Breeden is visiting his uncle, Herbert Breeden in Maryland.

The young people of the Presbyterian Church held their regular meeting Friday night. Rev. T. K. Mobrey was in charge of the program.

Miss Virginia Keys is visiting with relatives in Rectortown, Va.

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Anderson and family of Cherrydale spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Will Golliday.

Mrs. James Burdette is visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys.

Lt. and Mrs. John T. Counts are the proud parents of a baby daughter, born July 12. Lt. Counts has recently received an honorable discharge after serving five years in the Army Air Force.

Mr. and Mrs. L. F. Heflin and family of Rectortown, Va. were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys.

Mr. and Mrs. Ermine Wade and family and Mr. Lloyd Keys of Alexandria, Mr. Cash Keys and Mr. Kenneth Keys of Washington, D. C. were week-end guests at the home of Mrs. Myrtle Keys.

Mrs. Jim Shoemaker and children have the whooping cough.

Mr. Nicholas Webster has returned home after visiting different states while working on a soil conservation movie.

We are sorry to report that Mrs. Dewey Keys still continues to be very ill.

Mr. Herbert Breeden and family were Sunday guests of Mr. Benny Breeden and family and also of Mr. Morgan Breeden and family.

Mr. K. M. Bradshaw has sold his farm but is keeping his home.

Mr. and Mrs. Spicer Keys spent Sunday evening with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Egan.

Source: The Manassas Journal, Brentsville News, July 27, 1945.



## *Asarum canadense*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*Asarum canadense*, commonly known as Canada wild ginger, Canadian snakeroot and broad-leaved asarabaccais, is a herbaceous perennial native to deciduous forests in eastern North America, from the Great Plains east to the Atlantic Coast, and from southeastern Canada south to approximately the fall line in the southeastern United States.

Underground shoots are shallow-growing, fleshy rhizomes that branch to form a clump. Leaves are kidney-shaped and persistent.

Flowers are hairy and have three sepals, tan to purple on the outside and lighter inside, with tapered tips and bases fused into a cup. The reddish brown flowers probably attract flies or beetles as pollinating agents. The seeds attract ants because of the fleshy appendages; these insects help to disperse the seeds.

It is protected as a state threatened species in Maine.

The long rhizomes of *A. canadense* were used by Native Americans as a seasoning. It has similar aromatic properties to true ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), but should not be used as a substitute because it contains an unknown concentration of the carcinogen aristolochic acid. The distillate from the ground root is known as Canadian snakeroot oil. The odor and flavor are spicy. It has been used in many flavor preparations.

Native Americans used the plant as a medicinal herb to treat a number of ailments including dysentery, digestive problems, swollen breasts, coughs and colds, typhus, scarlet fever, nerves, sore throats, cramps, heaves, earaches, headaches, convulsions, asthma, tuberculosis, urinary disorders and venereal disease. In addition, they also used it as a stimulant, an appetite enhancer and a charm. It was also used as an admixture to strengthen other herbal preparations.



# Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



## COUNTY SCHOOLBOARD MEETING

Manassas, Va., May 4, 1927

The County School Board met as per adjournment on the above date with all members present. The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and approved.

Applications were presented for the following teachers and were acted on as follows: Miss Mary Haile reelected to Manassas High School for \$135.00, Miss Elizabeth Vaughn as principal of Occoquan District High School at \$150.00, W. Y. Ellicott elected to Goldridge School at \$80.00, Miss Mary Weber to Hayfield School \$80.00.

A letter was received from Mr. Davis Nolley re-applying for the position at Nokesville School. The Board after some discussion directed the clerk to write Mr. Nolley that in the opinion of the Board, it would be unwise for him to return to Nokesville School as it seemed to be a general desire and need for an entire change of faculty there.

On motion Dr. C. R. C. Johnson was re-elected as the County Text Book agent from July 1, 1927 to July 1, 1928. An amendment was offered by Mr. C. B. Allen that Dr. Johnson be notified that after this year the Text Books problem would be taken over and be operated by the County. This amendment was allowed to lay over until the June Meeting, and the clerk was ordered to investigate the matter and assure the Board whether it would be a practical move.

On motion the Board appropriated \$200.00 toward Home Demonstration Work in the County.

J. R. Cooke and R. C. Haydon were appointed a committee to go thoroughly into the condition as to the best course to pursue at Brentsville, Aden, Nokesville, Bristow and Greenwich.

Mr. Brockett, Mrs. Cline and R. C. Haydon were appointed a committee to recommend the necessary organization for transportation, etc., in that end made necessary by the consolidation of the Occoquan District High School.

A motion was made and second that Mrs. Nettie Wright be not employed to teach after her present contract expires. Recorded votes was aye: Mr. Allen, Mr. Arrington, Mr. Brockett, and Mrs. Cline. Nos: Mr. Russell. Not voting: Mr. Cooke.

On motion the Board ordered that the bill for the banners for County Night be presented and paid when due.

The following bills were presented, read and ordered paid:

### BRENTSVILLE DISTRICT

I. N. H. Beahm—janitor services, Nokes. For ses.	\$45.00
B. B. Hoffman—Gas, oil and storage, Green. Truck	42.86
W. R. Free, Jr.—chalk, broom at Brentsville	2.40
A. B. Tolson—final pay. Of wood for Aden	30.00
Shaeffer Cash Shop—floor oil, etc.	4.40
Clarence Mayhugh—driving Nokesville School truck	1.00
Mr. Squires—wood for Greenwich	38.80
Manassas Motor Co.—repairs for Green truck	8.05
S. G. Wetsel—floor oil, etc	2.62
J. R. Cooke—attendance	<u>5.00</u>
	180.12

There being no further business the Board adjourned to meet Wednesday, June 1.

[signed] J. R. Cooke CHAIRMAN

[signed] R. C. Haydon CLERK

# To Build a Jail

By Morgan Breeden

## Part 1 - Background

For several months I have become more and more fascinated with the construction of the Brentsville Jail. Details of the original construction lay hidden beneath the modernization that took place when I.N.H. Beahm had the jail converted into a dormitory for his lady students c1897. Now, as the “new” plaster and other additions are being stripped off many of those details are coming to light. Considering the tools with which they had to work, I am more and more impressed at the quality of workmanship that is evidenced here.

Being fortunate enough to see these things up close and personal, I started thinking that it would be nice to share some of these observations with you. Unfortunately, the Civil War left many records missing—including those concerning the construction of the jail<sup>(1)</sup>. So the story I propose to tell is not exactly what did happen but more what might have happened. To the extent possible, it will be technically correct but specific details concerning who, what, when, where and why may be expressed as speculation.

During 1759 the third courthouse to serve as the county seat of Prince William was established in Dumfries. The town enjoyed a busy seaport and was the center of both economic and political activity. It was home to the majority of Prince William citizens who relied on the waterways for their living.

In the years to follow things went well. Some people might have thought they went a

little too well. Taking advantage of their busy seaport the farmers worked to eke out every bit of produce possible from the soil with total disregard for crop rotation or other needed farming practices. As a result, not only did the soil stop supporting the crops, it started washing away. Each new storm sent more and more of the soil into the waterways, eventually making them so shallow that ships could no longer get to the wharfs.

By 1800 the county saw more and more of it's citizens trading in their living along the Potomac and moving westward toward the mountains to establish new homes. Following the Occoquan River upstream one would eventually come to a major split in the waterway. To the right flowed Broad Run which continued up to the vicinity of Front Royal and to the left flowed Cedar Run which eventually led to the area of Culpeper. The Broad Run junction seemed most favorable and farms continued to sprout up along its banks, all the way to Thoroughfare Gap and the mill created there by Jonathan Chapman and his son between 1737 – 1742. By 1820 there were at least seven mills along this stream which gives some indication of the number of farms present.<sup>(2)</sup>

Horse transportation was the norm during this time and with so many residents now on the western end of the county, complaints were being made concerning the time and distance needed to get to court.<sup>(3)</sup> These

complaints got loud enough until finally the Virginia General Assembly decided in 1820 to form a committee of impartial persons to determine a central location to be used as the fourth county seat of Prince William. This turned out to be almost a no-brainer because 1) the state already owned a very large tract of land that had been taken from Robert Bristoe and associates; 2) this land just happened to be located in the geographic center of the county and 3) there existed a major road running the length of the county<sup>(4)</sup> that would accommodate travel from both the East and the West.

With the location chosen, the next major step was to award contracts for the construction of the courthouse, clerk's office and the jail. With most records now missing for that time period, the complete process for awarding such a contract is not known for sure but we do know that construction of the jail was awarded to an Irish immigrant by the name of James Driscoll who was living in Dumfries. At some point shortly after that, Driscoll moved to Brentsville, possibly occupying the structure on the north-east corner of the Tavern Lot.<sup>(5)</sup> Records uncovered by Ron Turner show that "Driscoll rented the Robert Williams house, and was also a tenant for Williams for many years (at least past 1837)."

Next month we will start looking into the specific details of the jail construction, starting with the stone foundation.

Notes:

1. As a result of the American Civil War, Prince William County lost a very large volume of court records and has been officially designated a "burned records" county.
2. It is generally believed that it took a minimum of five productive farms to

support one mill. The smaller the farm, the larger the number needed to keep the mill in profitable production.

3. The distance traveled by horse varied according to type of horse and whether it was ridden or pulled a carriage. Most people would travel around 20 miles on horseback but in a carriage, it might be reduced to 10 or 15 miles per day. The distance from the western side of the county to Dumfries was approximately 35 miles so travel time would be from two to three days each way.
4. By the first quarter of the 1700s, revisions to the road laws in the colony mandated more convenient travel routes over land. In conjunction with new settlement pushing west through the Piedmont region to the Blue Ridge, a series of old Indian trails and new roadways slowly became interconnected and developed into a regional transportation system. Construction began about 1731, and by 1759 this road extended northwest through Prince William County from Dumfries and crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains via Ashby's Gap. Portions of this early route underlie sections of present-day Route 234 (Dumfries Road) and Route 619.
5. An old survey map that detailed the Warrenton to Dumfries Turnpike believed to have been made c1820-30 shows a substantial building on the north-east corner of the tavern lot but we have no records stating what the building was used for or by whom.

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

Note: The following is a portion of a letter written by Levi Fritz of Company A, 53<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, and appearing in the Montgomery Ledger of April 15, 1862.

On Monday, March 24th, several companies of our regiment, and a detachment of the Illinois cavalry, under command of Lieut. Col. McMichael, were sent on a reconnoitering excursion. They proceeded up the railroad to Broad Run, crossing which, they went down the stream as far as Brentsville, the county seat of Prince William county, without seeing the enemy in any force. At Brentsville Col. McMichael raised the national colors of the 53d over the Court House amid the cheers of the men. On the morning of Tuesday March 25th, the fresh and invigorating air brought to our ears martial notes, and soon there appeared in the direction of Centreville the advance of a truly long line of soldiers. As thousands following thousands marched by us over the broad plains of Manassas, with excellent bands gaily playing and the proud Union colors floating in the cheering breeze, it was well calculated to awaken the patriotism of even the most philosophic of soldiers. In our memories we shall long cherish this as a bright, grand, enabling scene. We were not long to be "lookers on in Venice." The shrill call of the bugle soon put us under arms and in ranks. We were marched to Headquarters and then, like a certain king, marched back again. In the evening we marched to the head of the column, and bivouacked for the night on the banks of Broad Run. The moving column was part of Gen. Sumner's Corps d'armee, consisting of the divisions of Generals Blenker and Richardson, and about 25,000 strong. In the morning at sunrise, the line of march was taken up, and crossing over Broad Run we proceeded southward. There was a strong body of rebel cavalry constantly playing in our front, and it

was uncertain when we might have a fight with the enemy, we could make but little headway. Whenever the ground would permit we marched in divisions closed in mass. We forded Cedar Creek about sundown on the other side of which we quartered for the night, our regiment being in a corn field. We made fires, and when the teams came up, cooked coffee, which together with pork and crackers, made our supper. After drying our stockings, pants, &c., at the fire, we bunked on the ground till morning. The 65th N.Y. regiment had a sergeant and two men captured during the night. The next day we marched into Warrenton Junction, the rebels had as usual just left, as squads of rebel cavalry were observed a distance down the railroad. A rifled cannon and several shots were thrown, killing, as we afterwards learned, six of them, and wounding as many more. Warrenton Junction is on the line of the Orange and Alexandria railroad, fifteen miles below Manassas. The following day, the 28th of March, a reconnoitering party consisting of Gen. Howard's brigade, a battery and the Illinois cavalry, proceeded in the direction of the Rappahannock river, distant twelve miles from Warrenton Junction. The rebel force consisting of two brigades of infantry with a proportionate amount of artillery and cavalry retreated across the river, destroying the bridge afterwards. They shelled Gen. Howard from their entrenchments on the other side of the river, but did no execution. Our troops got their battery in position and soon shelled the rebels from their entrenchments. The party returned on the 29<sup>th</sup> bringing in some five hundred head of cattle that the rebels had endeavored to drive across the river.

Brentsville One-Room School  
September 1936

Name	Grade	AgeY-M	Days Present	#Yrs in School
Best, Gordon	1 <sup>st</sup>	8-7	156	3
Hensley, Billy	1 <sup>st</sup>	7-1	103	2
Keys, Douglas	1 <sup>st</sup>	7-3	174	2
Melvin, John	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-4	140	1
Wolfe Jr., Clyde	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-1	168	1
Best, Nita	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-7	175	1
Breeden, Vivian	1 <sup>st</sup>	7-0	156	2
Golladay, Nancy	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-7	167	1
Hensley, Christine	1 <sup>st</sup>	8-0	106	2
Keys, Joyce	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-8	146	1
Lefever, Pearl	1 <sup>st</sup>	6-8	168	1
Breeden, Elmer	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8-6	168	2
Brown Jr., William	2 <sup>nd</sup>	7-3	104	2
Smith, Frank	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11-9	110	7
Wolfe, James	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10-6	176	5
Stephens, Doris	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8-0	169	2
Keys, Nelson	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10-5	174	5
Keys, Raymond	3 <sup>rd</sup>	9-5	167	4
Best, Ruth	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10-2	177	4
Golladay, Fay	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8-10	169	4
Keys, Jean	3 <sup>rd</sup>	9-0	160	4
Keys, Patsy Ann	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7-9	157	3
Whetzel, Mattie	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7-11	171	3
Wolfe, Gladys	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8-0	151	3
Best, Grace	4 <sup>th</sup>	11-5	177	5
Golladay, Mamie	4 <sup>th</sup>	10-7	161	5
Landis, David	5 <sup>th</sup>	14-1	147	8
Wolfe, George	5 <sup>th</sup>	13-2	139	8
Cornwell, Anna	5 <sup>th</sup>	13-2	153	8
Lefever, Virginia	5 <sup>th</sup>	10-3	176	5
Pettit, Maxine	5 <sup>th</sup>	12-11	97	8

# THE HEALTH SCHOOL DESK

PATENTED.



HIGHEST AWARD AT  
JAMESTOWN EXPOSITION

SIMPLE

HEALTHFUL



CAPACIOUS

INDIVIDUAL



HIGHEST AWARD AT  
JAMESTOWN EXPOSITION

*"How long will it take the world to learn the folly of habituating children to a manner of seating in school which would be considered monstrous in any other sphere of life?"*

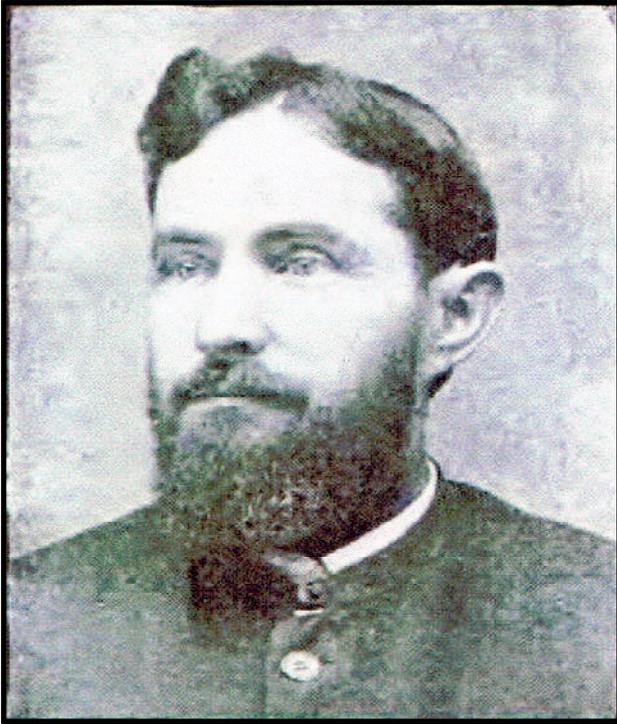
63 FIFTH AVENUE

Mr. G. C. Round, (2) NEW YORK, June 9th, 1909.

in your new school building. Of course, you know that the desks that you place in this building must be used by at least three generations of children that are to come, and therefore I should like to do all in my power to persuade you that every new desk that you buy should be a modern adaptation of the simple chair and table plan.

Of course, we shall be glad to furnish you with desks for two rooms at \$4.85, and ~~that~~ we will be furnishing ~~them~~ without profit. I shall try again, however, to see if the model for the lower classes cannot be produced at a figure that you can avail yourselves of.

Due to your kindness, I was able to get away on the afternoon train and saw a session of the Senate, which to me was an event of a lifetime.



J. Charles Beahm

During the session of '89 and '90, J. C. BEAHM, B. E., class of '90, was instructor in Geography and History. Prof. Beahm was born in Rockingham Co., Va., Dec. 20, 1864. After leaving Bridgewater, he taught successfully in the public schools of the State for a number of years. He then held a position as teacher in Botetourt Normal College, Daleville, Va., but in 1897 became a teacher in Prince William Academy, at Brentsville, Va., and two years later was elected its Principal, which position he held until the winter of 1904. He is now teaching in Maryland. Prof. Beahm is a preacher of recognized ability.

Source: BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE: ITS PAST AND PRESENT. A Tribute of the Alumni. 1905

## F e e d b a c k

Enjoyed reading your newsletter. The poems are wonderful. I have been reading and catching up on previous months, I am looking forward to next month.

Thank you so much, for everything you do for Brentsville and saving our History!

Nancy Lindgren

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Thank you Morgan for the newsletter, I always look forward to see what is new, and old, in Brentsville. We saw a lot of dutchman's britches this spring in the park. This was also the first year in many that we got to see "Lady Slippers" (yellow) growing in spring. Do you have this wild flower in the Brentsville area, or are they rare?

Ron Turner

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As always a great job. Thanks for all the work you do preserving Brentsville.

Howard Churchill

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I received my "Brentsville Newsletter" yesterday, and the school desks with history of them kept my interest.

And when I read the two poems: 1. At Harvest Time 2. Driving Home The Cows, there was a moment of going back in time for the two poems and tears were ready to flow with the emotion felt from reading them. Thank you very much for my copy!

Neighborly,  
Bobbie Ratliff  
Haysi, VA

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I was fascinated by this issue and its arrival was special to me as I realized that my grandmother [Tracie (Spitzer) Whetzel] not only attended the Brentsville School, but also had taught there. I just retired at the end of May after serving 30 years as a teacher. Although the last time I was in Brentsville must have been about 1967, I do remember the small building and my mother [Elizabeth (Keys) Whetzel] telling me she had attended school there. Your newsletters always are so full of living history from the many documents you find, I love to read them cover to cover straight away when your email comes.

Thanks so much for all of your hard work.

Sincerely,  
Sandra [Whetzel] Darlington  
Universal City, TX

# **Brentsville Neighbors**

## **Preserving Brentsville's History**

Contact us on:  
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**IN GOD WE TRUST**

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