

Brentsville Neighbors

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

September 2015

Welcome neighbors,

We have reached a milestone that was neither planned nor expected – our 120th issue which equates to 10 years of information about Brentsville—her people, buildings, events, and stories. As my brother JC would say, “Who would have thunk it!” Now the question is just how much more information could there possibly be about such a forgotten little place called Brentsville? I believe a lot! And to each and every one of you who either has or will contribute to this collection of history, I say thank you! Lets continue to work together to make this wonderful town even more special—a place where we don’t have to pretend events took place because history, although frequently twisted or forgotten, will make us what we are today.

We have been informed that the jail restoration is moving on schedule. The county carpenters are spending the summer working on the Barnes House and Bushy Park House, which both need to be finished for the library grand openings in October but during that time we are waiting on the blacksmith to finish the window bars (should be soon) so the contractor can install the windows (the county staff will put the bars in and the contractor will install the windows). The interior insulation was just completed and now work is progressing on the inside for the

HVAC. All the electrical work is done now too. Plans are still underway to open the building later this year to show the progress.

You may enjoy the lively sounds of local bluegrass bands at Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, September 19th from 1:00 until 5:00 p.m. Featured bands will include Skystone, Rattlesnake Hill, and Dark Hollow Bluegrass Band. The cost is \$10.00 per person with children under 6 free but everyone agrees this is a special event. Guided tours of the historic buildings will be available from 1-4 p.m. on the hour. Food and children’s activities will be available for purchase.

And finally, during the last weekend of September (Sept. 26 and 27) the Prince William County Farm Tour will include Brentsville. As in most years the focus of the activities will be down by the Haislip-Hall House. Come on by and bring the youngsters for an enjoyable day. For this and all events, additional information may be obtained by calling 703-365-7895.

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan

This month:

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|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| ➤ Letter From Brentsville | page 2 | ➤ Where Wild Things Live | page 5 |
| ➤ Greetings From Supv. Lawson | page 3 | ➤ We Are Indeed Neighbors | pages 6 & 7 |
| ➤ Who is Left to Sing my Song? | pages 4 & 5 | ➤ Ghosts of the Brentsville Jail | page 8 |
| | | ➤ A Brentsville Citizen | page 9 |



Ordinarily we do not go in much for Club Activities; for this lack of civic zeal we blame whoever is responsible for inventing the 24-hour day and failing to deduct time misspent with dishpans, dustpans, frying pans, laundry-bags, jelly bags, infants, livestock, and forage for the latter. At any rate, on Monday last somewhat to our surprise we found ourselves at a luncheon which also contained an admirable guest speaker, Mrs. Northington, of Fredericksburg. Mrs. Northington held forth on assorted topics, none of which shed much light on the personal problems with which we had wrestled all morning, such as how to wean a recalcitrant calf, induce the family to eat chicken hash for the second day in a row, restrain one's offspring from filling daddy's pipe with lightning bugs, and other such simple and rustic matters. SHE spoke of Large and Worldly things such as the Stratton Bill which seems to be designed to permit the entrance of 400,000 of Europe's Displaced Persons into this country over a period of four years, or, we triumphantly calculated, 100,000 in ONE year.

We were beginning to fidget a bit in our chair and look around speculatively at the other ladies' hats, when something she said caught our attention and started us off down a tortuous labyrinth of surmise whose ultimate possibilities should put every woman in the State squarely behind this dull-sounding piece of legislation. Surreptitiously we fished paper and pencil out of our handbag and did some rapid-fire mathematics: 100,000 evacuees divided by 48 States in the Union equals 2,083 $\frac{1}{3}$ per State. Virginia has 100 counties, and if these 2,083 $\frac{1}{3}$ misplaced people were distributed fairly amongst them it would give Prince William County exactly 20 $\frac{4}{5}$ per year. We will assume that these disarranged individuals are amiable, energetic, and reasonably muscular, with a basic working knowledge of the dishpan, dustpan, frying pan, and what-not, —we personally would prefer ours to be also stone-deaf so that inflationary salary offers would fall on unreceptive ears.

At this point we were so carried away by the enchanting vistas whither our statistics were leading us, that we commenced shedding hairpins wildly, and on turning to retrieve one in mid-air — a neat trick if you can do it, — encountered Mrs. Peter's steely glance. This hastily recalled us to a proper consideration of our surroundings, and we composed ourself to listen, with an air of judicial dignity, to Mrs. Northington, who just about then was saying

something important about our immigration quotas having been suspended all during the war years. A fact which might account for the dearth of hired help, hence our inability to attend meetings.

Well, 20 $\frac{4}{5}$ dislocated souls would be snapped up pretty fast in Manassas, we have no doubt, but then there would be 20 $\frac{4}{5}$ the next year and so on, and the only reason we are talking about it now is to make sure that Brentsville gets its fair share, which we suspect would be the $\frac{4}{5}$ ths. But that is better than none at all, so girls, take my advice and get behind the Stratton Bill: write complaining letters to Howard Smith, and when Mr. Byrd comes to dinner, make him wash the dishes ... that will show our legislators that the Women of Prince William are not to be trifled with. As for us, we have let all of the household chores go whilst we make plans for spending the leisure time that our $\frac{4}{5}$ ths of a displaced person will eventually allow us; we think we shall use it all up in assiduously attending every luncheon to which we are invited, in the hope that Mrs. Northington will come up with another brilliant idea like the Stratton Bill.

Mrs. Myrtle Keys' son, David Landis, is at home for a week's vacation.

Mr. and Mrs. Ermine Wade visited the Grady Shoemakers on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Echols, of Alexandria, were guests of Mrs. Myrtle Keys on Sunday.

Lee Molair and Morris Keys both celebrated birthdays last Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray Bradshaw, and Mrs. Slaybough, of Manassas, visited the Bradshaws on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Hariman returned on Sunday from a trip to Roanoke.

Mr. and Mrs. Troy Counts are back from Russell County; on the way home they stopped off with their daughter, Hazel Worsham, and her week-old son. Mr. Counts' cousin, Maggie Buckles, drove back with them, and spent the week-end with Mrs. Verona Bean.

Jim Keys and family spent Saturday sight-seeing at Mount Vernon.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Breeden, of Bull Run, visited his brother, Morgan, and family for supper on Sunday.

James Bean and Joe Redding were both slightly injured near Centreville on Saturday night when the motorcycle they were riding was sideswiped by a car.

In the baseball game last Sunday Brentsville lost to Manassas by a score of ten to seven. Better luck next week!

Best Regards,

Agnes Webster

September 19, 1947 The Manassas Messenger

THE HONORABLE JEANINE LAWSON

Board of County Supervisors

Brentsville District



Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We are not makers of history. We are made by history.” History can be a matter of perspective. For the young, history may be measured by weeks, while their elders see history in months and years. Knowing that individual lenses can see things differently, preserving history is an important element in our social fabric. Saving artifacts, photos, stories, and structures are all ways for us to connect with those that came before us and built the strong community we enjoy.

The Brentsville District is particularly fortunate to have many historic sites located here. From the colonial era buildings of Buckland, to the Civil War battlefield at Bristoe Station and our historic farm properties, preserving history has been a guiding force in many community decisions and traditions. For many, these preserved traditions and history have served as a bridge between longtime residents and those new to the district.

As we move to the future, my goal as supervisor is to do my best at protecting our historic treasures from encroachment and encourage all, citizens and visitors alike, to step back and honor the legacy that brought us to this day. Congratulations to the Brentsville Neighbors newsletter for ten years of sharing with us interesting vignettes of the life and lives of early Brentsville. We thank you for your efforts, a true labor of love, and wish you many more successful years.

Who is left to sing my song?

by Uncle Paulie

For the past ten years I've been trying to put into words and actions why I feel it is important to preserve the history of Brentsville. Not only the physical places but the people and events as well. I achieved small success but have never actually felt that there is a lot of heart in what I'm attempting by the general public. And the reason for the mixed success is probably my approach. I just didn't have the right message. Then on August 8th, I received an e-mail from Juliet Webster introducing me to an article written by "Uncle Paulie" (Paul E. Hunt) in "WHAT UP HOLLYWOOD," an on-line publication that covers "What's Happening in Hollywood." [See www.whatuphollywood.com] Normally I'd read something like this with mixed interest and then go on to something more about Brentsville but this one struck a chord that makes me want to share it with you. With his permission, I'm using much of his article verbatim and modifying a little of it to fit my cause. Read on.

"One of the strange things about American family culture is that most families spend almost no time talking about their relatives, even immediate family members. Everyone is so busy trying to survive, go to school, work, participate in sports, dating and social activities, that the history, disappointments, achievements, and life stories of other family members are never dealt with. When most kids are growing up, they might hear a few snippets, usually by accidental eavesdropping at the dinner table, about old grandpa Fred, who invented something or other, or old aunt Betty who was a famous high-school athlete.

Rarely does a family take the time to get together every so often and give updates on what other members of the family, sometimes living in distant locations, are doing with their lives. In some other cultures the dead family members are honored, as are the memories of what they did. Most Americans have lost this. Maybe

it's the result of the dis-integration of the so-called atomic family structure. Ask a lot of young folks today, and many just don't care about their past relatives, they are focused on themselves and immediate surroundings only.

Putting the family history in the trash.

"Over the years I have been to thousands of estate sales and yard sales. One thing that I began to notice is that family photo albums, documents, papers, history, and other memorabilia is frequently discarded—usually to be found in the trash cans. The typical scenario is that the old folks die, the "kids" zoom in from out of town and dump everything out in the trash or estate sale, sell the house and pocket the money and any other valuables like jewelry, cash, paintings, and then scoot back to where they came from. Save the family photo albums? Naw, just keep one or two photos of mom or pop, that's enough. It makes you think that our culture must be so shallow that it's not worth even giving it a second thought.

"A few of us, though, as we age, realize that it sure would have been nice to be able to talk to Grandma about her life, but she lived on the other side of the country and died 20 years ago. My friend Julie has recently had that "moment" when she unearthed some old boxes of photos and letters that she had rescued from the trash from one part of her family. Julie's family has a lot of Hollywood connections. It started with her Grandmother, Aileen Webster, whose husband died at an early age and left her with two children, Charleen and Nicholas. To make ends meet she somehow got a job as a script girl, and ended up working with director Tod Browning for 9 years. Her daughter Charleen also worked in Hollywood as a showgirl, and was a friend of many Hollywood folks, including William Saroyan.

"Her son, Nicholas, became a filmmaker, winning awards for documentary films. He

wrote an entertaining book on his life filming documentaries called "How To Sleep on a Camel". One of Nick's daughters, Cynthia Webster, owns a movie studio in Glendale, California. His daughter Julie, a teacher, helps out filming videos at WhatUpHollywood.

Who is left to sing my song?

"Looking through the box of old photos that Grandmother Aileen Webster had saved, brought up a mountain of questions. What stories she could have told. She worked on *Dracula*. She worked on *Freaks*. She was with Mr. Browning for years, and *his* life was *really* tumultuous. She was there with him at many of the key moments. Sadly, unless we can get someone to do a seance, we will never hear her stories- she died years ago. We don't have a diary. Both her children, Charleen and Nicholas are dead. Like some of the Native American Chiefs said after their defeat in the so-called Indian wars: "Who is left to sing my song?" Many of their stories were lost forever. So let this be a lesson to all who read this. Get the facts and photos from your relatives as soon as you can, because nobody lives forever. At least in this case we do have some pretty interesting old photos to share with our Hollywood fans."

And so the story goes. But it leaves a compelling question. Who is left to sing the song of Brentsville? If not you, then who? Morgan.



Juliet, Grandmother Aileen, & Lance Webster in Brentsville

Where WILD things live...



Confused eusarca

The Confused eusarca (*Eusarca confusaria*) is the only member of the *Eusarca* genus that inhabits the northern portion of the United States and Canada. Throughout its flight they can be found in the eastern portions of North America including Nova Scotia south to Florida. They are as far west as Texas and Saskatchewan. Throughout this range they can be found in meadows and fields with their host plants. This moth is very abundant in overgrown former farm fields

It has a wingspan of approximately 2.25 to 2.50 inches. The forewings and hindwings are a tan color with grayish-brown dusting. A brown postmedian line bisects the forewings and hindwings. The amount of brown shading is variable from pale to very dark. Most of these moths have a slight hook on the forewing. There are tiny black spots on all wings. There is one flight from April to October throughout its range. Larvae (commonly called "inchworms") feed on asters, clover, dandelions, and goldenrod.

Unlike the butterflies, moths are usually nocturnal. Many moths and their caterpillars are major agricultural pests in large parts of the world.

Source: Various Internet locations



We Are Indeed Neighbors

**By Rev. Ralph Benson
Brentsville Presbyterian Church**

“What’s it like being the Pastor of Brentsville Presbyterian church?” I was asked not too long ago when we were thinking about the Church’s Centennial. We are celebrating one hundred years of ministry in the Brentsville area. As I thought about it, I have been here for fourteen years now, so I am part of that history. I would have to say that “I love it”.

It is a blessing to be part of a faith community that has deep roots in a community. Many of our members have been here through several generations. They can remember meeting in the Union church with all the windows being open in the summer and the pot belly stove red hot in the winter. Several denominations met in the church and all the people were indeed Brentsville Neighbors. The church should be a family and in our church and community many people are related in one way or another and that is something that I cherish.

I spent thirty years serving as a Chaplain in the US Army. We have been assigned in many and varied places. We had to get used to meeting new people and new communities about every three to four years. The Army considers itself a family too with many traditions and history and that gave us stability and direction. So when we moved to the Brentsville area in 1996 we really liked the Brentsville Presbyterian Church. They were friendly and helped us get acquainted to the community. Lucy Hartman told us where to get fire wood, and Buddy Croushorn fixed things at our house. It was an anchor. The people had stories about living in a community for a life time and we felt at home in rural Virginia since we came from rural Iowa in our childhoods.

We attended the church just as members in the pews for over five years. I enjoyed the messages and the studies, but really enjoyed the fellowship hour with little sandwiches and good conversation. It was good to have people praying for you and interested in your family and activities. I was an ordained clergy person. I had served in very large and diverse congregations in the Army and even supervised large religious programs but Brentsville was different. I liked it.

I had supplied when the fulltime pastor was on vacation several times and when they needed a supply pastor I volunteered. So in 2001 I become the supply pastor and have been there ever since. I worked as the Pentagon Chaplain after 9/11 so I did services at the Pentagon and then came over to Brentsville and did worship again. It was a congregation of about fourteen then. Buzz Shoemaker and I would set up for services and clean up afterwards singing hymns as we worked together. Everyone just worked as a team.

The church started to grow and after I retired in 2006. We had about twenty eight coming to services. I just stayed on as a retired supply pastor. The worship is traditional because the group is traditional and has been worshiping there for years. Some of the old members came back and within the last years we have grown to an average attendance of over fifty. We have a choir and some very good music. More old members have come back and some new ones have also come and now we are larger but the same.

We still have little sandwiches and a very good music program. Many of the people are related and they can tell some stories about when they rode buggies to church or came across the swinging bridge. They remember gravel roads and know the good fishing holes. They tell stories about personal and community struggles and how God answered prayers. The bottom line is they have deep roots in the history and stories of the

community and when you worship you will know “we are all neighbors caring for one another and praying for one another because we were all created by God the Father trusting in the hope and truth we find in Jesus”. We may be of different backgrounds and families but in reality it is good to know we can count on our neighbors. That’s why I love being the Pastor of Brentsville Presbyterian Church.

Brief statement of the circumstances leading to the organization of the Brentsville Presbyterian Church

At the fall meeting of the Presbytery of Chesapeake held at Ashburn, Va. Sep. 13-15, 1910, White Hall Church near Nokesville, Va., was dissolved at the request of the remaining members of this organization and their membership was transferred to the Greenwich Church. Rev. J. R. Cooke, pastor of Greenwich Church, had already commenced holding occasional services at Brentsville as the most suitable point to reach a majority of these scattered members. Brentsville was now established as a regular mission point of Greenwich Church and a service held there the third Sabbath of each month. Special Evangelistic services were also held each year, which were blessed of God in a gradual increase of the membership and a large increase of interest in the work.

Finally during the Summer of 1915, conditions were such as to suggest the wisdom of undertaking an independent organization to better care for the growing needs of the work in that community. Consequently a petition containing about 30 names was sent in to the Presbytery of the Potomac meeting at Waterford, Va., Sep. 21-23, 1915, asking for the organization of a Presbyterian Church at Brentsville, Va. Presbytery acting on this petition appointed a commission to effect the organization if the way be clear.

This commission consisting of Rev. J. W. Hooper, Jr., Chairman, Revs L. F. Harper & D. J. Shopoff and Ruling Elder R. D. Cox met in the Union Church building at Brentsville on Sunday Oct. 31, 1915, and after a sermon by Rev. J. W. Hooper, Jr., agreed to

create the organization by receiving & ordering enrolled the following names of members on certificate from Greenwich Church. Viz: Dr. W. J. Bell, Mrs. M. A. Bell, Mrs. Mary Hedrick, Hugh Bell, D. E. Earhart, Mrs. Lucilla Earhart, Philip Cordes, John M. Hooe, Mrs. M. B. Hooe, Geo. B. McDonald, Mrs. Milza J. McDonald, R. L. Arey, Mrs. Mary Arey, Miss Murill Arey, R. A. Cooper, Mrs. R. A. Cooper, T. S. Bradshaw, James Keys, Harry J. Keller, Miss Nannie B. Keller Miss Alice Woodyard, Mrs. Virgil Woodyard, C. H. Earhart and Mrs. Effie Earhart.

Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Springer were also received on restatement of their faith – their certificate from the Presbyterian Church of Gainesville, Ga., not having arrived in time.

After a recess with dinner served on the ground, the organization was then completed by the election, ordination, and installation of the following officers: Ruling Elder, W. J. Bell, R. L. Grey, D. E. Earhart, & Geo. B. McDonald. Deacons – T.S. Bradshaw, Harey J. Miller, & C. H. Earhart. Rev L. F. Harper delivered a charge to the Elders, and Rev D. J. Shopoff a charge to the deacons.

Brentsville Presbyterian Church was thus Paunched upon its cause and may Gods Spirit dwell in it, and His richest blessing attend its course.

(Signed) J.R. Cooke

Ghosts of The Brentsville Jail

Brentsville, Virginia is a little village in Prince William County just south of Manassas. Both its courthouse and jail were built in 1822 and as such have a sordid past. The haunting at the jail is well documented but its origin is a bit clouded. We try to bring light to who, or what is haunting the Brentsville jail...

Neighbors of the jail swear that it's haunted and investigators have come far and wide to see the site at night. Those that do come have not been disappointed. Recordings of voices screaming "Get out!" and "Don't turn out the lights!" have been heard and dark figures dart in and out of the shadows and things are thrown at visitors. The site manager has been quoted as saying the jail "Is one of those buildings that gives you the creeps".

The who, or what is haunting the building is unknown, but a few stories rise to the top of the list.

In the Pre-Civil War era the jail was used to hold both slaves and free black men in an attempt to return them to their masters. In 1839 a slave held in the jail tried setting it on fire. He was, as the local paper put it, "Moved and seduced by instigation of the Devil". He was hanged for the offense [At one time this was thought to be true but Ron Turner has uncovered papers that show the court recommended Landon to the mercy of the Executive. Governor Campbell honored this recommendation and changed the sentence to transportation beyond the limits of the United States.]. Six years later a slave named Katy [Agnes] was convicted and executed at the jail for the murder of her master, Gerald Mason. In 1859, five slaves were convicted of the brutal slaying of their master with axes, shovels and sticks. The three adults were hanged, but two young twins were spared because of their "youth and feeble intellect".

However, the front runner in the haunting of The Brentsville jail is that of James F. Clark. Clark was an attorney in Prince William County who was accused of having an affair with Fannie Fewell, the sixteen year old daughter of a prominent citizen of Manassas. The trial gained massive media attention and has been called the O.J. Simpson trial of the 1800's. Clark told anyone who would listen that he was innocent, but it was of no use as in the public's mind at least, he was already convinced [convicted]. One reporter for the Alexandria Gazette wrote: "Excited interest in this case is on the increase and will undoubtedly continue until the trial and he (Clark) shall leave the county, or, what is feared by many, buried under the already blood stained sod - the victim of vengeance of a grief-crazed father or an enraged and desperate brother".

That quote proved prophetic as on August 30, 1872, Lucien Fewell, Fannie's brother walked into the jail and shot Clark dead as he sat in his cell. Lucien was brought to trial and charged with murder. Represented by two Civil War Generals, one defending Fewell's actions by saying "When a man's wife, or daughter (or sister) has been seduced, the laws of Virginia confer upon the injured party the privilege of taking the live [life] of the accuser". It took the jury less than five minutes to return a verdict of not guilty. When they did so, the courtroom erupted in applause.

That verdict, a travesty of justice if there ever was one, is the reason some claim that at least a few of the ghostly sightings at the Brentsville jail is that of James Clark, a man executed for a crime for which he was never allowed to have his day in court.

Source: <http://hauntedstories.net/ghost-stories/virginia/ghosts-brentsville-jail>

Confederate Veteran William E. Lipscomb

After an illness of two weeks, Judge William E. Lipscomb, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Prince William County, Va., died at his home in Manassas, May, 1911. He was born in Brentsville, Va., in 1833. He was educated at home, and at the age of fifteen entered the County Clerk's office, where, while pursuing his duties as Deputy Clerk, he studied and gained a practical knowledge of the law. In his ambition he was aided by the leading attorneys of the county and State who had cases in the Prince William County Court, and at the outbreak of the war



William Lipscomb was in full charge of both the County and Circuit Court offices. In the spring of 1861 he enlisted as a private in Company F, 49th Virginia Infantry, and was soon promoted to first lieutenant of the company. In 1862 he resigned from the service and resumed his official duties in the County Clerk's office until 1863, when he reenlisted as a private in Company H, 15th Virginia Cavalry, and served in the Army of Northern Virginia until his capture, in 1864. His prison life was in Fort Delaware, where he suffered many hardships and indignities from tyrannical prison officials. After this trying experience, and at the close of the war, he returned to his home and, until 1870, busied himself in agricultural pursuits. He then reentered the Clerk's office and served until 1876, when he removed to Manassas and engaged in law and the publication of the Manassas Gazette. He also conducted a mercantile business successfully. Having been admitted to the Prince William bar in 1870, he was in 1884 elected by the legislature as judge of the County Court, which he held by

successive elections until the County court system was abolished in 1904. He was then appointed Deputy Clerk of the Court under Capt. Edwin Nelson, on the death of whom he was appointed to fill out the unexpired term. He had been appointed one of the Commissioners in Chancery for the Circuit Court in 1869, and the confidence of the bench and bar in him was such that nearly all the Chancery causes were referred to him. His reputation as an able and fearless jurist during his long service on the bench is well known throughout his county

and State. For some time prior to his death he was Bail Commissioner. He served two terms as Mayor of Manassas and several successive terms as Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Town Council. Judge Lipscomb was the last county official who served in ante bellum days. As a man of great judicial ability and legal training he was capable of directing affairs wisely and well, and many times questions of importance were submitted to him on account of the confidence felt in his ability and his integrity. In September, 1859, Judge Lipscomb was married to Miss Henrietta Holland, and to them were born three sons and two daughters. He became a member of the Memorial Association of Manassas in its early history, 1875, and gave much of his time to the success of the work. His wife was the faithful and beloved President of the Association for many years.

Source: Confederate Veteran, Vol. 19, September 1911 p. 441

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All back issues on:

<http://www.historicprincewilliam.org/brentsvilleneighbors/index.html>

IN GOD WE TRUST

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