

Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors



April 2006

Welcome Neighbor,

April brings to mind two special events – Easter and cherry blossoms. Every year thousands of people flock to Washington, DC to see the blossoms in full bloom. But did you know that Brentsville also has flowering cherry blossoms? Anyone who drives down Izaak Walton Drive this time of year will be treated to beautiful trees in full bloom (see a picture on page 4). These trees are special because they are from the original stock sent to Washington from Japan.

The plantings of cherry trees originated in 1912 as a gift of friendship to the United States from the people of Japan. In Japan the flowering cherry tree or “Sakura”, as it is called by the Japanese people, is one of the most exalted flowering plants. The beauty of the cherry blossom is a potent symbol equated with evanescence of human life and epitomizes the transformations Japanese culture has undergone through the ages.

Morgan H. Breeden, who was living in Georgetown, Washington, DC, during the 1940’s, made a close friendship with one of the men responsible for tending the trees and was subsequently able to obtain a number of “cuttings” from the original trees shipped from Japan. He was able to successfully graft these to another type of cherry tree (using the trunks and roots only) which resulted in the growth of these beautiful trees. He transplanted them to his home on “Donovan Road” around 1943 and they started to grow quickly, thus, the genetic lineage of the original trees is preserved in Brentsville! People from miles around would drive down the road to see these trees and talk about them. The trees are now nearing the end of their useful life and have become broken with age. But for at least one more year, they are again in bloom in all their splendor!

There will be another special occasion in April. The PWC Historic Preservation Division will host “Prelude to War” on Saturday, April 29, and Sunday, April 30. The event will be held from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre.

The John Brown Raid in October of 1859 was the driving factor behind the organization of a cavalry unit in Prince William County. During the winter of 1860 Prince William County formed a company of militia cavalry and W.W. Thornton was elected captain. Beginning in April, the unit drilled once a month on the green at Brentsville. Attendees will watch costumed interpreters reenact a cavalry muster and encampment while learning about Civil War cavalry tactics and camp life. This event is free to the public.

Best wishes and
Happy Easter,

Nelson and Morgan



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Featured Brentsville Building Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church

Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church has a rich and colorful history. It is one of the oldest churches in Prince William County and has served God and the people of Northern Virginia in three different centuries.

Dettingen Parish was established by an Act of 1744 – a break-off from the old Hamilton Parish. At that time the population centered around Dumfries and that is where the first Episcopal Church was built.

In 1752 the old Dumfries church was sold and two new brick churches were authorized to be built in the parish – one to be in Dumfries and the other in the Brent Town Grant on Slater Run (sometimes called Slate or Slaty Run) not far from the present town of Brentsville.

The fate of the 1752 brick church on Slater Run is unknown, but apparently was no longer standing in 1822, for there is evidence that the Rev. Mr. Steele was able to have a small building erected in Brentsville in 1822, which was at that time the county seat. This was replaced in 1847 with the construction of the brown stone church called St. James. About this time, Prince William County had only one Baptist church that was located in Occoquan with a thriving congregation of 69 members.

The Episcopal parish used the stone church as a house of worship until 1872 when they moved to Manassas. Later, the Church of the Brethren in Brentsville obtained the sanctuary for a brief period.

During the War Between the States (1861 – 1865), the brown stone church was used as a hospital and barracks by both Confederate and Union troops at various times. By war's end, most of the church had been destroyed through misuse—except for the sturdy brown stone walls you still see today.

In 1866, during a post-war spiritual revival, a Baptist church was organized in Brentsville under the able leadership of Rev. B. P. Dulin of Greenwich, VA. According to the 1870 census, Prince William County boasted a population of 7,504 persons, a decline of almost a thousand over the 1860 census. It showed that the county contained 15 church organizations

with 13 buildings, 3,200 sittings, and \$18,500 in property. Of the church-going residents, the Methodists were the most numerous with 7 groups of 1,450 sittings; the Presbyterians followed with 4 groups of 900 sittings; then came the 2 Baptists with 650 sittings; and last, 2 Episcopalian groups with no recorded sittings.

Then, during June, 1871, the following was printed in the Alexandria Gazette:

You are requested to inform your readers that a delegation of ladies from this village will visit your city some day this week fully authorized to solicit contributions from your liberal people to aid in the erection of a church proposed to be built here. A festival will be held on the Court Green, here Monday next, by the ladies, the proceeds of which will be appropriated to the above named purpose. The Hotel proprietors in the place have very generously declined furnishing any dinner on that day, so that the ample repast spread by the ladies may be enjoyed by all. Every delicacy the season affords will be procured.

It is hoped your merchants and citizens generally will lend these ladies a helping hand and contribute liberally to the object they have in view. The church will be free for white ministers of the Methodist, Episcopal Church South, Presbyterian, Episcopal, the New and both branches of the old School Baptist churches. Signed: Tyrone – Brentsville, June 27, 1871.

The Union Church was built later that year and the building was first used by a Baptist congregation under the ministries of Rev. Burr Dulin and the Rev. Mr. Smoot.

The Brentsville Baptist Church (as it was then known) suffered a severe blow in 1893 when the county moved the Court House to the town of Manassas. A number of church members moved with the government to the new county seat and the church experienced a corresponding period of decline. Following this setback, the church at length experienced a time of

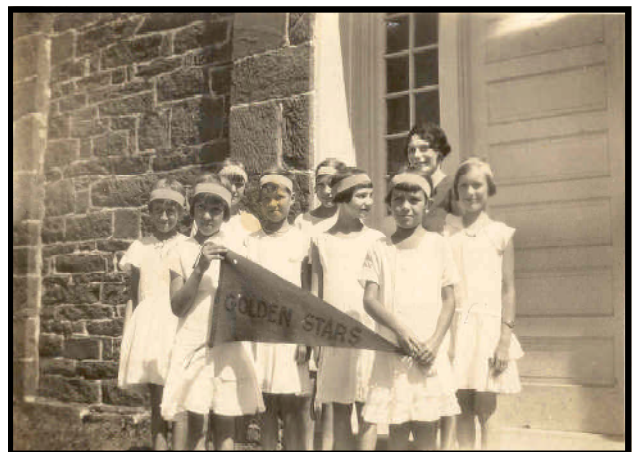
The Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church



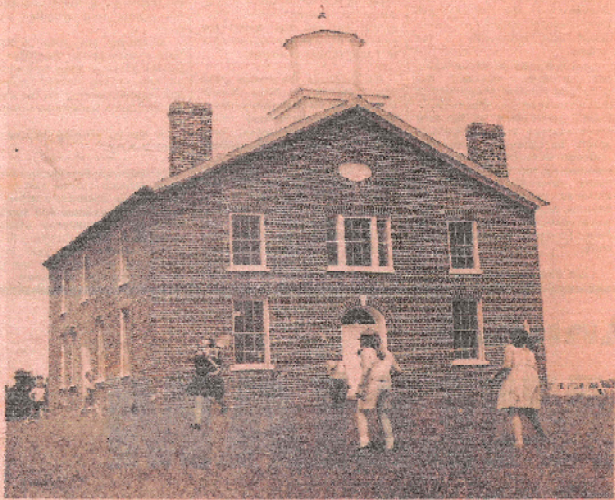
Hatcher's congregation - year unknown



Miss Minnie Smith with the Golden Stars



12-C— The Journal Messenger, Manassas, Va., August 3, 1967



A FUN DAY for the children of the Brentsville area was held last week by the Brentsville Lucky Clover 4-H Club. Above, a foursome of girls engage in a game of badminton. In the background is the old Brentsville Courthouse, which has been remodeled and now serves as a community center for the area.

News clip courtesy of Shirley Collins. In forefront are her daughters, Sandra Jane Collins (long hair/shorts) and Cindy Maria Collins. The 4-H leader was Mary Anna (Bull) Johnson of Clover Leaf Farm.

Where WILD things live..



Leptocoris trivittatus
Eastern Boxelder Bug



Flowering Cherry Trees on the Breeden property
along the old Donovan Road

George Melvin Remembers Brentsville

My name is George Arthur Melvin. I was born April 12, 1931, in Georgetown, Washington, DC to Foley Samuel and Audrey Virginia (Donovan) Melvin. I had one older brother, John Foley (better known as Johnny) and a younger sister, Edith Ann (better known as Sis).

In 1935 Johnny, Sis and I moved in with our grandparents, John and Florida Donovan (we called them Pap and Mom) who had a farm in Brentsville. I grew up there working on Pap's farm. He had 75 acres but only grew crops on 72 acres. The other three were woods which ran along Cedar Run. Pap raised corn, hay and wheat. We always milked three cows. That was my and Pap's job. I don't remember Johnny working much – he had hay fever and couldn't work in the hay. He said the corn cut him up. Since he was the first grandson, he was Mom's pet and didn't have to do much. Silas Bean used to help us thin corn. Clyde Bean would come over and thrash the wheat. He could put that machine just about anywhere you wanted it! Walter Flory would come down and bail the hay. He had a wire bailer. Junnie Brown used to help sometimes too. I remember Pap selling corn by the barrel. There were nine bags in a barrel and I would hold the bag open and count them while he shoveled the corn in. After the ninth bag he would tell me to open the bag again and I told him it was already nine bags. He said he would rather give them a little extra than to be short. That is the way he was. We would be cutting corn in the fall and around noon Pap would have us take a break. But his idea of taking a break was to go to the woods and saw trees for our winter firewood. We would load the logs on a wagon and take them up by the barn. There we used a two-man cross-cut saw to saw the logs into firewood.

Pap use to haul rails from Quantico to the Bristow rail yard with a team of Clydesdale horses. Pap was boarding in the Cooper's Hotel. Mom was sewing for Hilman Keys's wife and that is where Pap met her. They were married on the farm.



One of my first memories of Brentsville was going to the store. Johnny and I had been helping Pap work so he took us up to the store to buy us some candy. I was four or five years old. Hilman Keys owned the store and you could buy a Snickers bar for a nickel. If it had a star inside the wrapper you would get a free one. I had a star so I got two!

We went to church every Sunday at the old Union Church when the Presbyterians had it. I joined the church when I was 13 years old. Don't know if he helped me a lot but I did.

I started school in the Brentsville one room schoolhouse in 1937. I attended grades one through five there. We had to walk up the road to get to school. We would cut through the field because the road was so cut up and muddy it was as if we actually didn't have a road. When Mom went to town on Saturday they had to get back before the road thawed out or they wouldn't make it back.

After the fifth grade I went to Nokesville for a while but quit during the first year of high school to go in the Army. I was 17 at the time and Pap had to sign the papers for me. I enjoyed English and Math most of all. I'm not too good at either but liked them best. If we could have afforded it, I would have probably stayed in school. I played basketball and got pretty good at it. Other than that I played baseball but that was about all. I use to foul out a lot for some reason.

On the farm we had an old empty barrel that we use to get in and roll down a hill. That was a lot of fun. In Brentsville I use to run around with Junnie Wolfe and Fredrick Whetzel most of the time. We would catch a bus to go to DC – I would borrow 50 cents from Pap and Junnie would borrow the same from his dad and we would go to the ball game at Griffith Stadium. Mostly I would work on the farm but on Sunday we went to the courthouse to play baseball. But you had better be home by 5pm to do the work. We used to go to dances in the courthouse. David Keys called the figures for the dance. I

remember one Saturday night when Pap had to wear his gum boots because the road was so muddy. He had to carry his shoes in a bag.

Franky Beavers went in the Army with me. We went to Alexandria on the 27th of December in a jeep. That was a cold ride! When we went to be sworn in we had the option of two or three years. We chose the three years because you would get more benefits. By the time we got to Ft. Lewis Washington (around 1950) Franky got a discharge to take care of his mother and then shortly after he got home he joined the Air Force. During June 1950 we went to Korea and arrived there July 15th. We went over on ship which took 18 days. During the trip I ate like a hog but never did gain any weight.

I was wounded in Korea twice. The first time was no big deal but the second time the party was over. They sent me back to Japan and I was there for about five months in Tokyo General. I spent a little time in Hawaii on convalescent leave. While there, they sent us to an all-star football game. After that they sent me back to Bolling Field for a couple weeks and then to Lackland Air Base (San Antonio, Texas), then back to Camp Picket for a couple months. From there it was to Ft. Mead for a couple months and then finally to Indian Town Gap, PA where I was discharged on May 25, 1952. During combat I received the bronze star and two Purple Heart awards among others.

I think that in Brentsville Wynnet and Earle Wolfe made the greatest impression on me. They would take me fishing and since they were so much older than I was I looked up to them a lot. We would go down to Pete's cabin or down by the Cedar Run Bridge to fish mostly. I still think that where we lived on the farm was the most special place. I used to spend a lot of time in the Wolfe house because Junnie and I ran around a lot together, but my fondest memories are of the farm.

I now live in Deer Park in Manassas but Brentsville is my real home.

Many thanks to Shirley Collins for the 4-H newspaper clipping and to Mrs. Mary Anna Johnson for helping with the details.

Where WILD Things Live

Leptocoris trivittatus Eastern Boxelder Bug

The adult boxelder bug is about ½ inch in length and brownish-black in color with red stripes on the thorax and wing margins. The body is also bright red.

The boxelder bugs pass the winter in the adult stage in dry, sheltered places where they have accumulated in gregarious masses. They often choose buildings or houses as a protected place to overwinter. When weather warms up in the spring, the bugs leave their places of hibernation to fly to boxelder trees where they deposit their eggs. Eggs are usually deposited in bark crevices and hatch in 11 to 14 days. The nymphs feed by inserting their beaks into leaves, fruits or soft seeds and sucking the plant juices. Feeding continues throughout the summer and the nymphs gradually mature becoming adults as cold weather approaches in the fall. In some areas there may be two broods of this insect, one reaching maturity in mid-summer and the second one in early fall.

Since the presence of these bugs is associated with boxelder trees, replacement with other tree species is one method of eliminating the nuisance pest. If boxelder is grown, it may be best to keep only the male or staminate trees which would help to reduce its numbers. Or, if you are so inclined, mix a little liquid dish soap - any brand will do - with water. Just a small amount of soap is needed. Put this mixture in a spray bottle (a good one with a stream setting will help you reach bugs even on the second story) and just spray the little buggers where they sit (outdoors, of course, you nut). Just enough to get them wet - and they die. Boom. Kaput. Adios. Bye bye box elder bugs.

Source: <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/niagara/boxelderbug.html> and http://www.cirrusimage.com/bugs_box_elder.htm

renewal and decided to purchase the present stone sanctuary in 1897 at a price of \$350.

Dr. William E. Hatcher, the church namesake and a well-known Virginia Baptist minister of that era, presided over the meeting called to raise the funds to purchase the building. After two roll calls, members had pledged only \$220. A prominent layman, Mr. John Kincheloe, offered to give half of the remaining amount needed. Another layman, Mr. Harris Fields, matched the amount given by Mr. Kincheloe and the building was acquired. It has belonged to the successive congregations of Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church continuously since that time.

Church and denominational records for Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church are incomplete for many of the earlier years of its history. We do know that at some point after Dr. Hatcher's death in 1912, the church honored this man of God, who led the efforts to obtain the historic stone sanctuary, by re-naming the church in his honor.

Over the years, many gifted men served as pastors and leaders of this celebrated congregation. Each of them made worthy contributions toward making Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church what it is today. On July 20, 2003, the church voted unanimously to call its present pastor, Rev. C. Wesley (Wes) Conner, originally of Jacksonville, FL. In recent years, the church has experienced a steady influx of new members and added a number of innovative ministries through which to serve the Prince William County community.

The year 2006 has been designated "A Year of Jubilee," as the church celebrates the 140th anniversary of its founding in 1866. Plans are being formulated to construct a new worship, educational, and activities facility as well as renovate and (possibly) expand the existing historic structures.

On Easter, the church will host a community sunrise Easter service at 6:30 a.m., which will be held on historic Brentsville Courthouse's lawn, located directly across the street from the church. An Easter breakfast will complement the children's Easter egg hunt at 8 a.m. Sunday school will be held at 9; Easter service, which includes an Easter musical, will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Hatchers can be reached at 703-330-0156.

Source: "The History of Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church," The Alexandria Gazette; "Dettingen Parish 1744-1972" by L. Van Loan Naiswald, Editor; and "Our First Seventy-Five Years," History of Brentsville Presbyterian Church by Elder Ruth C. "Dean" Shoemaker.

Flashback

Brentsville District 4-H Club Organized

Manassas, Va., May 26.—Thirty-six boys and girls of the Brentsville district enrolled as members of the Nokesville 4-H Club at an organization meeting in the Nokesville School auditorium.

Officers elected are as follows: Ray Smith, president; Marie Kerlin, vice president; Mary Frances Flory, secretary-treasurer; Hubert Rowe, cheer leader; Barbara Thayer, song leader. Ernest C. Goff will be the leader for the boys' group and Mrs. George Thayer will lead the girls' group. Meetings will be held on the last Tuesday in each month at the Nokesville High School.

The Washington Post (1877-1954); May 27, 1944; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Washington Post (1877 - 1989) pg. 3

The Manassas Journal ***April 25, 1947***

The Brentsville Courthouse committee will sponsor a movie, "Home Life," with Mickey Rooney, and also cartoons and short subjects on Friday, February 28, at 8 p. m. at the courthouse. Refreshments will be served. The committee hopes to be able in the near future to buy a projector for use in the old courthouse.

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors
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Late Information: The History Channel production on the restoration of the Brentsville Union Church has been delayed until late May.
More information when known.

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