

# Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors  
November 2008



Welcome Neighbor!

October seems to be the month of greatest change. The grass is growing slower while the trees transform from their summer greens into autumn's brilliant colors. The days become noticeably shorter and the air takes on a hint of colder weather to come. It marks the final end to summer and many activities associated with the outdoors. It also marks the end of the season of our historic site when tours are no longer offered on weekends. But the grounds remain open every day for the growing number of neighbors who are learning to enjoy the quietness of a short walk along the trail.

This year we celebrated the end of October with a special Halloween event that featured the D.C. Metro Area Ghost Watchers who have declared the jail to be haunted and tours that allowed visitors to experience the danger of traveling between the lines of opposing armies, a soldier's burial and the horrors of a field hospital. We were very lucky to have a number of different newspapers feature the event as prominent stories. As luck would have it (and it seems to always work this way) we had heavy rain most of the day and into the evening. It's not that we didn't need the rain; it just seemed to come at an inopportune time. But what's a little rain when the opportunity to experience this first hand presents itself? It didn't seem to matter! While

we hoped to have a maximum of 135 visitors under the best conditions, they turned out in droves and by the time it was all over at 9:30pm, tours had been given to around 220 people with another 50 or more turned away! Kudos to the staff of the Historic Preservation Division and 15 volunteers (including members of the 33rd VA and 49th VA infantry) that made it happen.

And now on to November... A time of thanksgiving and reflection. Those of us in Brentsville have much to be thankful for, not the least of which is the dedication and devotion of the members of our military services, past and present, who ensure the many freedoms we may take for granted. So many of our men and women have served during the past 176 years of Brentsville's existence. Some still serve today. To you – all of you – our hats are off in your honor.

Very best wishes,  
Nelson and Morgan

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**Circulation: 147**

## Where W I L D Things Live

*Sciurus carolinensis* Gmelin, 1788

Eastern Gray Squirrel

The **eastern gray squirrel** is native to the eastern and midwestern United States. The specific epithet, *carolinensis*, refers to the Carolinas, where the species was first recorded and where the animal is still extremely common. It is a prolific and adaptable species.

**Description:** As the name suggests, its fur is predominantly gray but it can have a reddish tinge. The belly is white and it has a large bushy tail. Particularly in urban situations where the risk of predation is reduced, both white- and black-colored squirrels are quite often found. There are also genetic variations within these, including gray squirrels with black tails and black colored gray squirrels with white tails. The head and body length is from 9 to 11 inches, the tail from 7 to 9 inches and the adult weight varies between .8 and 1.3 pounds.

**Life cycle:** Gray squirrels are mammals, and hence have live babies. They breed twice a year. There are normally three or four babies in each litter. Their gestation period is about 45 days. The young are weaned at 10 weeks old and leave the nest between April and June. The second litters arrive in June and July, leaving the nest during August and September. Gray squirrels do not hibernate.

Baby gray squirrels don't know by instinct what is good to eat, and hence will eat all sorts of random things, leaving them broken and half-eaten. The young can start breeding as early as 5.5 months, but usually breed for the first time at a year old. The gray squirrel can live to be 20 years old in captivity, but usually in the wild only live to about 12 years old.

**Behavior:** The eastern gray squirrel is a scatter-hoarder; it hoards food in numerous small caches for later recovery. Some caches are quite temporary, especially those made near the site of a sudden abundance of food which can be retrieved within hours or days for re-burial in a more secure site. Others are more permanent and are not retrieved until months later. It has been estimated that each squirrel makes several thousand caches each season. The squirrels have very accurate spatial memory for the locations of these caches, and use distant and nearby landmarks to retrieve them. Smell is used once the squirrel is within a few centimeters of the cache.

Gray squirrels build a type of nest, known as a drey, in the forks of trees. The drey consists mainly of dry leaves and twigs. They may also build a nest in the attic or in the exterior walls of a house, often to the consternation of the homeowner. In addition, gray squirrels may inhabit a permanent tree den.

They will raid bird feeders for millet corn and sunflower seeds but they are reported to dislike the slight capsaicin content of safflower seeds. So-called anti-squirrel birdseed preparations are available; the seeds are coated with chili pepper. The birds are unaffected because they cannot taste the capsaicin. Mixing hot pepper flakes into regular birdseed works well as a squirrel deterrent.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## flashback

### DECLARES NOV. 11 A HOLIDAY

#### Governor of Virginia, by Proclamation, Asks Armistice Day Observance

Governor Westmoreland Davis, of Virginia, has issued the following proclamation to the people of this state:

**WHEREAS**, It is fitting that the people of Virginia, in accordance with the proclamation of the President of the United States, observe the third anniversary of the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, which brought the World War to an end, as a means of expressing our appreciation for the heroic services of those who fought overseas; and

**WHEREAS**, Under authority of an act of the General Assembly of Virginia, approved February 20, 1918, any day which is designated by the Governor as desirable to be observed as a holiday because of conditions incident to a state of war shall be considered a public holiday; now

**THEREFORE**, I, Westmoreland Davis, Governor of Virginia, do designate Friday, November 11, 1921, a public holiday to be observed as such as provided by law throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, and to be known as Armistice Day.

Given under my hand and under the lesser seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, at Richmond, this eighteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty one, and in the one hundred and forty-sixth year of the Commonwealth.

WESTMORELAND DAVIS,  
Governor

Source: The Prince William News, October 27, 1921



Patsy, Gary and Helen Keys, May 1943

Where WILD things live..



*Sciurus carolinensis* Gmelin, 1788

Eastern Gray Squirrel

(See page 2)

Pat Blake's Mother



Helen Elizabeth (Cookson) Keys  
Photo by Nick Webster, c1944



Pat holding her parents  
wedding certificate,  
December 6, 2006

Pat Blake's Father



Cassius Thomas Keys

**It is the VETERAN,  
not the preacher,  
who has given us freedom of religion.**

**It is the VETERAN,  
not the reporter,  
who has given us freedom of the press**

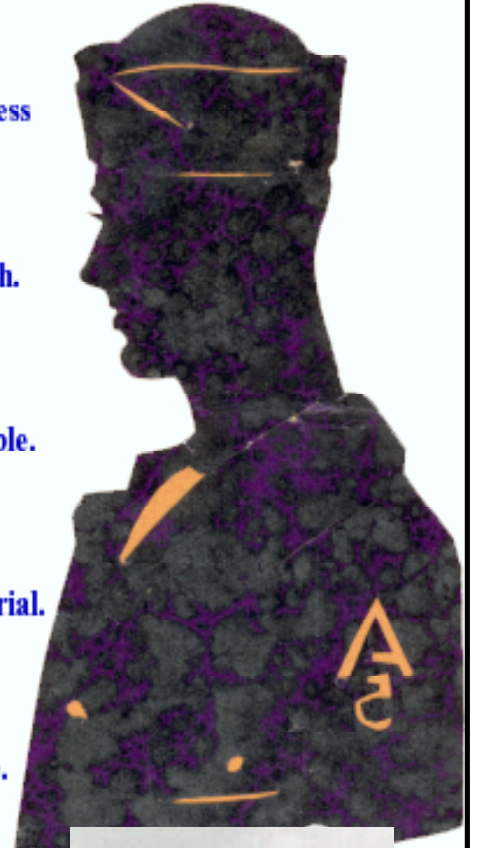
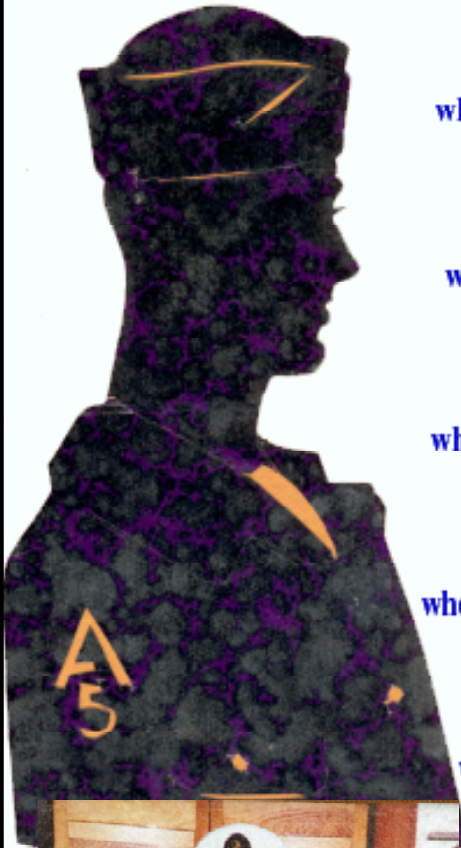
**It is the VETERAN,  
not the poet,  
who has given us freedom of speech.**

**It is the VETERAN,  
not the campus organizer,  
who has given us freedom to assemble.**

**It is the VETERAN,  
not the lawyer,  
who has given us the right to a fair trial.**

**It is the VETERAN,  
not the politician,  
who has given us the right to vote.**

**Our thanks to the Veterans  
of Brentsville!**



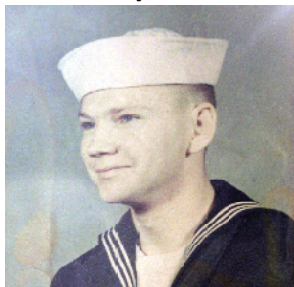
Jimmy Shoemaker



Howard Counts



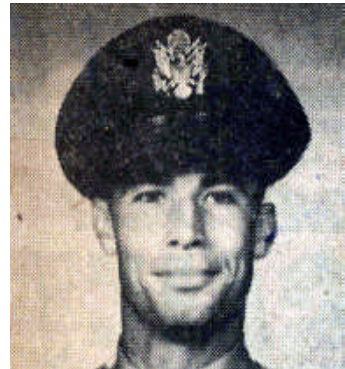
Benny Shoemaker



Danny Shoemaker



Bobby Stephens



Warren Wright

# Pat Blake Remembers Brentsville

## Electricity comes to Brentsville!!

These are my recollections and the dates are not necessarily correct to the year! My mother was Helen Elizabeth Cookson Keys. My father was Cassius Thomas Keys. The two children of this marriage were myself (Patricia Ann) born 12/19/1928 and Gary Stone, born 6/20/1933. This was a second marriage for my mother and her first was to Jesse Lankford and they had a son Jesse W. Lankford, Jr. I mention this because Jed as the family called him was in and out of Brentsville too.

My mother was a city girl, used to all the conveniences of the city. The two important ones being electricity and telephones. At one point in her life she had been a telephone operator and in fact, I believe that is how she met my father. When they were first married they lived in the very large old house on the corner across from the Molair Store I think it was called the Kincheloe House and across the road from the Union Church. The house was so big they only occupied a few rooms. Momma and Daddy were married in Oct 1925 and when I was born (in Washington) that was where we lived. I think I was about a year old when Daddy started building our house down the road across from Grandmother and Grandfather Keys' farm. I want to mention here that the fireplace was built of hand picked glazed bricks. My mother hand picked every one of them. I hope that the fireplace is still in the house since it has been drastically redone.

It was in the late thirties when my parents went to work to get electricity into Brentsville. This I do remember because Daddy drove us all over that part of the county getting the necessary papers signed by the residents giving right-of-ways to the electric company to bring in their lines. I remember someone made the comment that my mother could make friends with the meanest farm dog in the area. Some wondered how she managed to get to the door without being bitten.

The only residents that had power at that time were the Seymour and the Bean farms and that was only because they had Delco Systems.



## Remembrances of no Power

Our washing machine had a gas powered motor. Daddy brought ice from Manassas on his way home from work on the bumper of the car. The Courthouse had Aladdin Lamps for light – and they were bright. However most of us had the plain old kerosene lamps. Our radio was run on a large car battery - Kids no TV. When electricity arrived, it was a whole new world. Shortly after that we got a telephone and we were the only ones in Brentsville for a long while that had one. It

of course was a party line and if you listened in on other calls there was a whole world of gossip out there. The ladies on the switchboard at Central in Manassas said they always recognized my mothers ring when she had calls to go through them.

Our First Grade teacher, Dorothy Woodhouse, lived with us at least one school year, could have been two – long time ago. I remembered during that time I was sleeping on a daybed in what at that time was the dining room. We had to make room for teacher.

One night Uncle Walter's house burned down and it was on that side of the house and Momma was so concerned that I would wake up and see it so she managed to get the shades down so it wouldn't wake me. Then she worried about Aunt Nettie and Dorothy before she finally remembered they were not there.

My mother went with a committee of people to look over the possibility of putting a dam or something down on the run. This had to have been in 1933 just before Gary was born. That week when she went into the hospital for his birth they told her she should have been in the hospital for the Poison Ivy she had all over her from her little expedition to the run down that embankment. I don't know if this was when they were considering areas for the dam that was built at Lake Jackson.

I think I vaguely remember Daddy skating while pushing me on a sled all the way to Lake Jackson on the ice. We had real winters in those days.

Then came World War II! Prior to the War the Marines had maneuvers at least two years in a row. I know one was on the Bean's Farm – think Lucy already covered

Continued on Page 6

that. I remember a Saturday night in Manassas, Daddy found a Marine who had been beaten up and we took him back to the camp. He was very thankful and the time the camp was opened to us locals he looked out for us. Think maybe Daddy had recognized him.

Even though I was only twelve turning 13 on the 19<sup>th</sup>, I remember Pearl Harbor vividly. Momma had gone with the Beans to visit Lucy in Charlottesville that Sunday and Daddy was baby sitting us. I know I was reading comic books on Momma's bed when Daddy came in and told me that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. He told me that was where Johnny (Counts - my first cousin) and Archie (Bradshaw) was stationed. I told him Oh-no - they were at Hickham Field. I soon learned more about my geography. We listened to President Roosevelt's speech and declaration of war on the radio in the auditorium at what was then the Osbourn High School. At that time we were going to Manassas to school after we had finished the fifth grade at the one-room school. Jed had left college at that time and had joined the Army Air Corps. He was stationed in Texas learning to fly the Army way. He already had his pilots license. He flew B-24s and then when he went overseas he flew transports in the China-Burma area, known as the Hump.

The school bus came into Brentsville on one road which is now Lucasville Rd and looped around where all of our mailboxes were and returned to Manassas on the road that went by the Seymours. That has all been changed now. Hawkie Ayers was our bus driver. He joined the service and did not survive the war. One morning when we arrived at school, Mr Peters, the school principal met the bus and told us that those of us who lived in Brentsville would not be able to ride the bus to Manassas. That henceforth the bus would turn around at Uncle Troy Counts and go back around and go in the other road and turn around before the run on the Seymour road. I still can't imagine that I did this but I went right into the office and told Mr Peters that in the time of conserving gas this did not seem like a good thing, but in my case he could send my transcript to Washington to McKinley Tech - so that is where I ended up graduating in June 1945. Years later I still wonder how I got by with it and did not get the dickens from my mother. I lived with my grandparents in Washington. I came back to Brentsville on weekends with Daddy who was working there and commuting. I was very used to my grandparents. Over the years we had spent a lot of weekends there and my cousin Ione and I were very close. Ione spent a lot of the summers with us in Brentsville and I was in Washington a lot.

Momma was Air Raid Warden as well as the organizer of the Airplane Watching service. The

arrangement was that when drills were called that the Beans would ring their dinner bell and here I am foggy, think maybe the bell in the courthouse was rung or she went house to house to tell them to turn off the lights. I know one night that she fell going out the very dark driveway and sprained her ankle and I was the designated person to take over. - how old was I - probably 14 -huh? We all had to do our stint in the Aircraft watching building on the hill. Mrs Elizabeth Cox was also very active in this undertaking as well as many of the residents of Brentsville. I also remember a war bond rally held at the courthouse during "the war." I think Cookie and I sang "On a Bicycle Built for Two." I also remember Roswell Rounds came with his trumpet and did at least one bugle call - "Taps." Hey guys I am really telling my age - right! I remember Mr John Cox did a big painting that was hung in back of the stage. It was important at that time that it be finished before the Rally. (Please - where did this painting disappear to. I have a picture of it.) Mr Cox was an accomplished artist.

Of course there was not much for teenagers to do during this time, so we walked the road. Then someone - Momma or Daddy, decided to put flood lights out beside our house on a plot of pretty level ground and we played croquet and badminton. Never allowed to go too late.

So what has happened to this family.. My mother and father were divorced. Momma died January 16, 1948, one month before her 50th birthday of cancer. My father went on and had two more marriages. The last to Anna Ruth Weiss, who was loved and respected by all of us. The only Grandma that Gary and my children knew. She was 99 on Oct 31, 2007, and I am sorry to report here that she died within a few days of that date. She had broken her hip and was doing fine when she developed an infection. Gary passed away August 7, 2005. He had one short marriage and 1 boy. The mother of the 4 boys is Jehane Dellinger. These boys carry on the family name. My half brother Jed married a girl he went to high school with, Alice Joy Webster, and they had two girls. He and his wife are both 90. He flew for 34 years with Eastern Air Lines. Then there is me. I am still here at 79. I also was divorced after a thirty year marriage to Homer Blake and we had two children. Wendy lives in San Diego and Danny is in Virginia. Wendy has one daughter and Danny has a daughter and a son.

This is all that comes to mind and hopefully it is correct. I know dates are off and just remember it was a looo—ng time ago and I was very young.

HAPPINESS AND BLESSINGS TO ALL OF YOU SURVIVORS.

Stewardesses" is the longest word typed with only the left hand ..

And "lollipop" is the longest word typed with your right hand.

# Brentsville

## A Look Back in History

by  
Ronald Ray Turner

### The Burning of Cherry Hill School

Cherry Hill, similar to most rural sections of America, is rich in tradition. Old timers love to tell stories from the past; however, none caught my interest more than that of Minnie Keys. As the story goes, Minnie, the local school teacher, was unhappy with the dilapidated condition of the Cherry Hill school. Having led many unsuccessful attempts to persuade the politicians and the school board to build a new school, she became more and more frustrated with the county's refusal to replace the school and, thereby, decided to burn it. This version of the school's burning makes a good story and paints Minnie Keys as a local hero. However, as in many other cases, tradition doesn't correspond with fact.

In the early morning hours of April 14, 1917, the new Cherry Hill School was burned to the ground to the dismay of local residents who had worked so hard to have it built. The outrage was immediate, and everyone had his own list of suspects. All agreed that it must have been what they described as the undesirable elements that committed this cowardly act. The people of Cherry Hill and Dumfries began to donate money to fund a reward for the capture and conviction of those responsible. Among those giving money were G. E. Soutter, F. W. Walker, W. M. Sullivan, O. Carney, G. E. Shepherd, H. O. Russell, W. G. Bushey, J. F. Hicks, J. E. Morgan, J. G. Crane, R. A. Oertly, and John O'Neal. The \$75 raised in only a few days was a considerable reward since it had only cost \$1000 to build the school.

The burned school, built around 1915 or 1916, was a modern building within eye sight of the decaying first school. It had taken years for the school board to respond to the needs of this small community. Some of the parents also wanted a different teacher and had started to make it known. Minnie had worked as hard as anyone for the school and certainly had no intention of leaving without a fight.

In a few weeks, the police and investigators from Aetna Insurance Company began to focus on Minnie and a man by the name of Lawrence Harrison. At the time of the arson, Lawrence worked for Minnie's father and boarded at their house. In early October, Minnie and Lawrence were arrested and charged with arson. Minnie's father was charged with complicity. All were released on bail.

The evidence for the case of the Commonwealth was that Minnie and Lawrence Harrison waited until about 2:30 a.m. before they left the house. Then, they walked through the woods and crossed a small stream before reaching the school. They built a huge fire in and around the stove, located in the center of the one room school. After they were sure the fire was big enough, they retreated into the woods, close to the Keys' house, to watch the school burn. The evidence was mainly circumstantial until Lawrence decided to testify for the Commonwealth, implicating himself and Minnie.

As is the case in many circumstances, justice is never fast. After being charged by the grand jury with "a true bill" in October 1917, the trial was set to begin in December. Many continuances, granted the defendant for medical and other reasons, delayed the case until April 1919. In the two years between the burning of the school and the trial, the mood of the community had calmed. The third Cherry Hill School was built and was even better than the one Minnie was accused of burning. Even though some believed Minnie to be guilty, most just wanted an end and certainly none wanted to see her sentenced to what the state was asking. If she were found guilty, the minimum sentence was to be three to 10 years in the penitentiary, with up to a \$1000 fine.

The jury, after hearing the evidence presented by the state, deliberated only ten minutes before returning to the court with the verdict read by the foreman, T. S. Bradshaw. "We the Jury find the defendant Minnie Keys not guilty as indicted."

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors  
c/o Morgan Breeden  
9721 Windy Hill Drive  
Nokesville, VA 20181**

