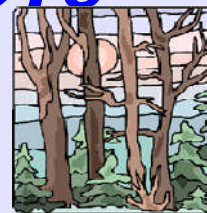


Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

April 2009



Welcome Neighbors,

Many special thanks to Mrs. Verona Craig for your wonderful support. What a grand lady you are! For those of you who have never had the pleasure of writing a letter to a beautiful neighbor who is 103 years young, now is a great opportunity and she would love to hear from you. Verona receives mail at 1100 Forest Avenue, Grottoes, VA 24441.

Consider this month's newsletter an exception for certainly it is just that. We have omitted some of the regular subjects to allow space for just one in the form of Mrs. Agnes Webster. A dedicated mother, historian, artist and lover of Brentsville was found in this one individual. She was well known both near and far and welcomed everyone into her home on an "almost" equal basis. What young boy didn't hear her stern direction, "No rough housing, now!" Who, me?

Many of the pictures found on pages 3 & 4 are taken from home movies filmed in the Webster household during the 1940's. We thank Lance and Julie for allowing us to share them with you. Next month we should be back to "normal."

Those of you who live in the area have two opportunities to participate in events this month.

In April of 1861, Prince William County citizens met in Brentsville and made the fateful decision to raise troops to fight the Union. On Saturday, April 18th, from 10am until 9pm reenactors will be at the courthouse to reflect on that historic event. Included will be a Mourning Display of original artifacts that will amaze you. The event is free of charge.

Just one week later on April 25th at 11am and 2pm the site is offering guided nature walks. Master Gardener and Professional Artist Jeannie Couch will lead the walking tours along the trail to discuss the plants found there. You can see her beautiful work at <http://jeanniecouchphotography.com>. The tour cost \$2.00 per person and reservations are not required. The tours are family friendly and pets on a leash are welcome as well.

Very best wishes,
Nelson & Morgan

This month:

- Flashback ----- page 2
- An Interview with Agnes ----- pages 5 & 6
- A Brentsville Home ----- pages 7, 8 & 9

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44 Electronic Delivery!

f l a s h b a c k

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 19??

Letter From Brentsville



The Bradshaws had their garden plowed last Wednesday, and I hung over the back fence watching the operation. There is something sort of fascinating about the big black horses, the shiny earth rolling back under the plow, chickens pecking busily along behind, and the cutting of a nice straight furrow. It always reminds me of slicing a chocolate cake. I was so carried away by the spectacle that I engaged to have my own done even though the ground is really a bit on the wet side. I remember how hard it was to get anything done last Spring, what with rainy weather and the last minute rush; Everybody who had a plow was using it on his own fields. The year before that I had to hire the services of two infants and a red rooster. Spring is certainly in the air; The nursery catalogues came last week, baby chicks are on order, and the neighborhood children out selling seeds already. I suppose by the time this appears we will be buried under a foot of snow, but it was nice while it lasted, wasn't it?

Oh the weather's not a topic
In the bright and sunny tropic,
For you always know just what you can expect;
In the winter-time, in Maine,
It will snow, or hail, or rain,
And the weather-man is treated with respect.
But in spite of our affection
For Prince William's north-east section
We would hereby like to register complaint:
You can make no calculation,
For the climate's variations
Are enough to try the patience of a saint.
If you plant in May, you're lost,
For there's apt to be a frost,
It's so hot in February you could fry;
In the midst of canning pears
You must stop and run upstairs
To drag woollens out of mothballs in July!
If the calendar's unseasonable
Don't say it is unreasonable,
Our local weather is a bit unique,
So don't pack up your galoshes
And dash out to plant the squashes,
For it's likely to be snowing in a week!



Agnes by the old apple tree



Gill watching Agnes feed DeLancey



Agnes with DeLancey



Gill with DeLancey and Juliet



Agnes and Nick with DeLancey, Juliet and their dog



Gill



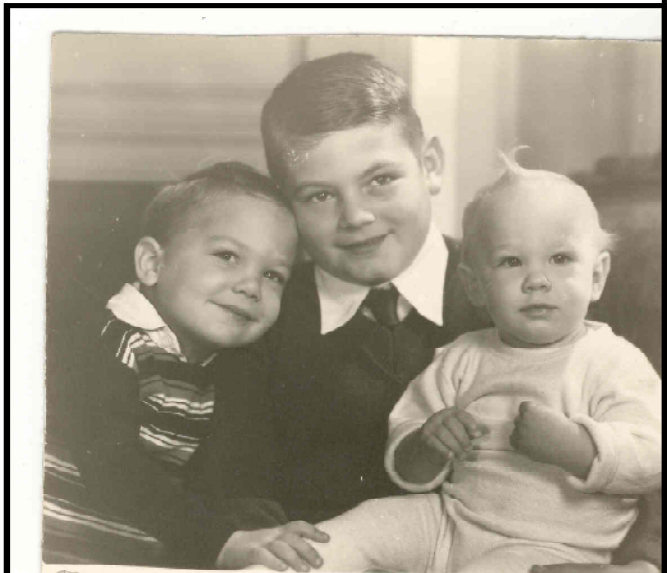
Gill and DeLancey crossing the dirt road to the courthouse



Nick with DeLancey and Juliet



Agnes, Juliet and DeLancey



Gill, DeLancey and Juliet



Juliet with her grandmother, MiMi



Nick holding DeLancey

**Interview with Agnes Webster
At The White House, Brentsville
On Sunday, April 24, 1988**

Mrs. Webster was a native of Washington, D.C. She and her husband lived in Alexandria just before World War II. They believed the U.S. would enter the war and wanted to move to the country before it happened. They bought the house when it was just a shell. She has pictures of it at that time.

The Websters worked on redoing the house all summer and moved in in the autumn just before Pearl Harbor in 1941. During the war he was working with the Army engineers at Ft. Belvoir, which was not as long a drive as other places, although it was a long way on dirt roads such as those in Prince William at the time.

The house was built in 1822 by the Clerk of the County Court when the Prince William county seat was moved to Brentsville from Cedar Run. It was never a farm house. John Williams was the Clerk. He did not live to finish the house; his wife had it done. She also took over his duties as Clerk of the Court for two years, rather an unusual thing for a woman to do in those days. Mrs. Webster has never seen a portrait of the Williams'.

Mrs. Webster doesn't know where the town square mentioned in the WPA Guide to Prince William was. It may have been in front of the court house.

As far as she knows there was nothing on the site of Brentsville when the Court relocated there. It was created out of nothing. It was a "built town" – created by the legislature as Mrs. W. understands it. She brought out a plat which showed where the square was to be

(from the County records). The land to be bought was laid out in lots. Public square was shown by the court house and the jail.

When the Websters moved to Brentsville, it was a little village. There was a post office and a country store. The other residents were farm people. In those days you didn't get little enclaves of city people who had retired together or near each other. The White House is on Lot 7 of the town plat: lot 9 is what she calls the old tumbledown house that Williams, Jr. built for his mother after he became the Clerk of the Court like his father. Called "The Cottage in the Yard" in the deeds. By the time

the Websters moved in the "cottage" had disintegrated past restoration.

Mrs. Webster believes Brentsville should be designated a Historic District. She has tried to interest the Historical Commission in getting this done, because it is "unique", the "only surviving complex" containing all the elements of a county seat as they were almost 100 years ago, the court house, jail and school, frozen in time.

The woodwork in The White House is all original. The kitchen is completely modern, however. Mrs. Webster designed it to be put into an outbuilding. Picture shows a cornfield almost to the back door. House had stood empty for about ten years when they bought it. (A neighbor planted the cornfield for the owner, a man from Arlington who had bought it, but whose wife refused to move to Brentsville.)

The bank officer who authorized the loan with which the Websters redid the house came

(Continued on page 6)



out to see it, but refused to allow his wife to come inside with him; he said it wasn't safe. One of the outer walls was sagging and shored up inside by wooden beams.

The Court House was in fairly good condition at that time. When the court moved to Manassas, the County sold the other court house. It went through several hands. Finally it was bought back by the County and given to the Brentsville citizens. When the developer built the dam that created Lake Jackson, the water backed up and flooded the area used by Brentsville as a swimming hole. It had been left to the citizens by Judge Thornton and called "Fairs Rock". VEPCO paid \$4,500 damages as a result of the suit which was put in a fund for upkeep of the court house, used as a community center. In the 1930s \$600 more was raised locally through bakesales, dances, etc. people would bring their babies to the dances and line them up on the floor on a blanket.

The Websters underestimated the amount of restoration needed; they wound up replastering the inside completely instead of patching. She has no pictures of the fundraisers at the court house. At one point a group made mattresses for those who had none in the court house.

Virginia Speiden Carper had spoken of Bristow as the railroad station for Brentsville, but Mrs. Webster said they did not use the railroad nor catch the train at Bristow. The people who lived there when they moved there were mostly still there in 1988; the Keys, Dolomys, Whetzels, Shoemakers. Mrs. Webster recommends James Cooke as a source of information about County history.

Mrs. Webster said for years the Historical Commission had no money, so mostly talked, but now can do something. After some years the upkeep and repair of the old court house was beyond the citizens' means. They turned to the Department of Parks and Recreation to use it for an office complex, which the department agreed to do. (Mrs. Webster brought out papers and speeches she had made as well as pictures.)

"In 1850" went some of the information, a slave named Agnes was convicted of murdering her master and hanged on a gallows behind the court house. The two most outstanding lawyers in Brentsville just prior to the Civil War were Eppa Hunton and Daniel Jasper. Hunton was the prosecutor and Jasper was the defense attorney. About 1898 the Court House building and three acres was sold to a man named Beahm for \$517. Four years later Beahm sold it for \$1600 to Prince William Academy, which had to default however. (See also story in Potomac News of Dec 26, 1973, page A-6 on court house restoration progress.)

The little one room school was still in operation when the Websters first moved there. Their son attended elementary school there. The older children taught the little ones while the teacher took care of the intermediates, then she had time for the older ones as well. The Webster son came home and told his mother: "Those first graders are so dumb!"

Actual interview ended at this point as daughter-in-law, Betty (a widow?), who had come down and found the pictures, had left to return upstairs to her apartment; and Evans and Webster repaired to terrace where latter tried to copy pictures of the house as the Websters found it. They had replaced the cornfield with a beautiful garden. Kitchen was cosy and modern, paneled and very much in keeping with the rest of the house, which was very lovely. Very comfortable, filled with antiques and examples of the striking needlepoint Mrs. Webster designed and executed herself. One was a series of scenes, about 8 x 10" called "The Four Seasons", which showed the family and/or parts of the house or yard all through the year. Mrs. Webster invited the interviewer to return and view the cemetery at the back of the property someday. The Sinclair family (Judge Arthur Sinclair's kin?) and others (Thorntons?) were buried there.

Source: D'Anne Evans interview with Agnes Webster, April 24, 1988.

A Brentsville Home

“The White House”

During June, 1988, William T. Frazier and George W. Polhill, Jr., Frazier Associates of 213 N. Augusta Street, Staunton, Va., prepared a National Register of Historic Places Registration Form on “The White House” located at 32320 Bristow Road in Brentsville. The following is a partial copy of that submission:

Summary Description

The White House is located on Bristow Road (State Route 619) across from the old courthouse at Brentsville, the fourth county seat of Prince William County. This two-story, painted-brick, Federal-style structure is sited on a slight rise and is surrounded by an attractive garden with mature trees. The house was constructed in 1822 and after sitting vacant for ten years it was purchased in 1941 by the Webster family and extensively remodeled. The house is a five-bay, gable-roofed dwelling with a central entrance hall, double-pile floor plan, and prominent double end chimneys that have a parapet wall connecting them. The interior retains much of its old Federal woodwork as well as its original staircase. Most of the original outbuildings including the kitchen and barn have been demolished.

Architectural Analysis

The brick pattern of the White House is Flemish bond on the facade and five-course American bond on the rear of the house. The house contains a brick dentil cornice and has jack arches over the openings. The exterior is partially covered with scored stucco to resemble stone. The standing-seam metal roof most likely replaced wood shingles. The front gutters are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

The six-over-six windows are replacements dating from the 1941 Webster restoration, because the original windows were missing. The undecorated entrance consists of a nine-panel door capped by a transom with five lights. Between the transom and door frame is a molded trim with a circular design similar to a rope motif. The door appears to be a late-nineteenth-century replacement due to its large molding and panel design.

Each gable of the house has a small attic casement window with four panes as well as tie rods that were added at some point to hold the wall together. These rods are bolted through large timbers that are rotting and in poor condition. The west elevation of the main house is almost completely covered with scored stucco. It contains a one-over-one replacement window that was installed at the first floor level. The east end of the house contains an exterior door to the basement although there are no basement windows or other foundation features visible from the exterior.

The rear (southern) elevation originally had a one-story, shed-roofed porch that has been removed. Today there is a pair of French glass doors opening off of the center hall onto a raised brick patio surrounded by red sandstone walls and plantings. In addition, both of the major first floor rooms also have doors opening out onto the rear patio.

The two-story frame kitchen wing added by the current owners during the 1941 restoration has a rear door that opens onto the back yard. It is clad with weatherboards and in recent years has been partially covered with aluminum siding. On the west elevation of this shed-roofed wing are two six-over-six windows as well as a brick exterior chimney added during the remodeling. There is also a frame one-story storage shed addition on the west side of the kitchen opening into the yard. The entire wing is approximately three feet below the grade of the house. Inside, the kitchen mantel has been stripped and stained to match the pine paneling and cabinets in the kitchen. In the northwest corner of the kitchen is a small single-flight stair with winders leading up to a workshop above. It has random-width floors and plaster walls and ceiling.

The central hall has a two-flight open-string stair raising on the west wall. The delicate newel is a slender, turned colonette with a slight bulge in the middle; it rests on a plain block. The round plain balusters tie into ornamental brackets.

The east side of the hall has a double parlor separated by a folding double door. The mantel in the northeast sitting room has a molded shelf with deeply cut bed moldings, an undecorated frieze, paneled end blocks, and fluted

pilasters. This fireplace is flanked by matching bookshelves and cupboards whose doors are paneled and attached with H-L hinges.

The southeast sitting room, which opens out to the rear patio, is very similar to the adjoining parlor to the north. Its mantel has a molded shelf, plain end blocks and frieze, and fluted pilasters. It is flanked by a cupboard to the north and a window to the south. The cupboard has a set of raised two-panel doors attached by H-L hinges.

The west side of the house contains the living room and adjoining dining room that opens onto the patio and ties into the kitchen wing. The wall between these rooms was removed when the house was used as a school in the late nineteenth century. The folding four-panel doors separating these rooms were found in the attic and reinstalled with the wall along with new bookshelves during the Webster's remodeling.

The living room fireplace has symmetrically molded pilasters supporting recessed paneled end blocks, an undecorated frieze, and a molded shelf of the period. The shelf to the north of the fireplace is original and contains two paneled doors to the cupboard below. There is an identical shelf on the south side added by the current owners. They also installed the bookshelves and cupboards on the east wall of this room and the dining room. Its mantel is identical in construction and design to that in the living room. A window to the north of the dining room fireplace was also added.

Upstairs, the bedchamber in the southeast corner has an original mantel with molded trim around the opening, a plain frieze, raised end blocks and a molded shelf. There are built-in linen presses on either side of the fireplace with two-panel double doors above and a single paneled door below. The mantel in the bedchamber in the northeast corner of the house has been removed and reused in the kitchen because the bedroom flue is used for the furnace. The linen press remains and is located on the north side of the chimney and is similar in design to the one in the southeast bedchamber except it has only one door instead of two.

The northwest bedchamber's mantel has diagonal reeding in the end blocks, horizontal reeding across the base of the undecorated frieze, and symmetrically molded pilasters. Again, there are linen presses next to the fireplace. To the west of the center hall upstairs there is a secondary hall that extends past a bathroom to a second-floor kitchen that has a mantel very similar in design to the one in the northwest bedchamber. At

the end of the center hall in the front of the house on the second floor is a small chamber containing an attic staircase. In the attic are handhewn rafters of mortise-and-tenon construction with Roman numerals on them.

The beaded chair rail and baseboard throughout the house is original and the picture molding was added by the current owner. Most of the interior doors are six-panel with rim locks and brass or ceramic knobs, much of which is replacement stock. The floors are random-width pine with the exception of those in the living room, which have been covered with random-width, stained oak by the current owner. On the main floor the blue colors in the west rooms, and grey in the east are based on scraping down to the original colors by the Websters during the remodeling. The H-L hinges on most of the cupboards downstairs were added by the current owners.

In the northeast corner of the house is a small one-room basement that contains evidence of a stone fireplace and a large wood lintel above. Unfortunately since it has been totally rebuilt and the flue closed up, it is difficult to tell if it was operable or not. The room is now used for the furnace and other mechanical systems but it is possible that it might have been a kitchen originally.

Large American boxwood surround the house and to the east there is a small driveway and lane which extends to other properties to the south of the house. The east side garden has several magnolia, fruit, and maple trees, as well as large shrubs and flowering bushes. The back yard contains several lilac bushes, additional fruit trees, and a large rolling lawn. There are remnants of a wooden fence on the southern boundary of the property. The south lawn rolls away from the house and to the west there are additional large oval and circular flower beds arranged around bushes and other trees. The west yard contains a large pine tree and several large elm, mulberry, and cedar trees. The front yard is dominated by a very old black gum tree.

In the rear yard near the kitchen addition is a small gable-roofed storage shed covered with vertical siding. There is a covered well in the backyard south of the house. On the east side under a crab apple tree is a small frame three-hole privy that is on the verge of collapse. There was also an ice house in the middle of the backyard near the present fence and an old barn in the field behind the fence, but both have been demolished by the present owner. The ruins of an overgrown one-and-one-half-story frame cottage

supposedly dating from the early nineteenth century remain on a lot to the west of the house.

The White House originally was laid out on Square no. 4, lot no. 9, on the Brentsville plat of 1820. The nominated parcel is one-and-three-fourths acre and the contributing buildings are the main house and the shed. The ruins of the cottage and the ruins of the privy are contributing sites, but are completely overgrown and were not photographed.

Statement of Significance

The White House is significant as being the finest example of Federal, residential architecture in Brentsville, Virginia. The house was built for Mrs. John Williams, the widow of the former clerk of the court, probably in 1822, the year the county seat was moved from Dumfries to Brentsville. The two-story, scored, stucco-over-brick residence is relatively unaltered, and is probably the oldest existing residence in the village. The interior features a central hall plan, and retains most of its original handcrafted woodwork. The house not only functioned as the home of a prominent widow, but also as a social gathering place for the political elite in the newly established county seat, thus explaining the high level of craftsmanship exhibited in the simple but well-appointed interiors.

Historical Information

The land on which the White House and the town of Brentsville were established was originally part of the Brent Town Tract, consisting of thirty thousand acres granted to George Brent, Nicholas Hayward, Robert Bristow, and Richard Foote, in 1687, in order to establish a religious sanctuary for all denominations. Prior to 1779, about seven thousand five hundred acres of this tract was owned by Robert Bristow, an Englishman and a descendant of the grantee, Robert Bristow. In 1779, under the authority of an act passed during the Revolution, the commonwealth seized Bristow's portion. The proceeds from the sale of the land went to the Literary Fund for educational purposes. In 1820, fifty acres of this property was laid out for the new county seat of Brentsville with a three-acre plot reserved for the courthouse and the jail.

The White House was built in 1822 on Square no. 4, lot no. 9, across from the public square, by Jane Williams, the widow of John Williams. The house's name is a local appellation, probably in reference to the structure's whitewashed, stuccoed walls. John Williams had served as the clerk of the Prince William Court at Dumfries from

1795 until his death in 1813. Mrs. Williams was the daughter of the prominent Dumfries silversmith, William Dawe. After her husband's death, her brother, Philip D. Dawe assumed the duties of clerk until his death in 1832. In that year John Williams's son, John Williams II, became the clerk of the court. Mrs. Williams relinquished the White House to her son at this time, moving to a neighboring, small, one-and-one-half-story frame cottage.

The last members of the Williams family to live at the White House were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Iardella. Mrs. Iardella, nee Annie Williams, was the daughter of John Williams II. She moved to the house with her family from Washington, D.C., just prior to the Civil War. Mr. Iardella served in the Geodetic Coast Survey of the United States, and was a Union sympathizer. The home was always open to Union officers during the war. Mrs. Iardella died from typhoid fever while her husband was away during the war, and then the house passed to a Mrs. Holland, a British citizen.

After the Civil War, the White House was purchased by Ezra Bauder (1824-1896), to be used as the new location for the Brentsville Seminary, a coeducational school offering engineering and college preparatory courses. The Bauders apparently removed a partition between the first floor rooms to the west of the hallway. This partition was restored for structural as well as aesthetic reasons by the current owners. Ezra Bauder and his wife, Julia, are buried in a nearby cemetery. The current owner, Agnes G. Webster, purchased the house with her late husband in 1941, carefully restoring the interiors that had been left vacant for about ten years, and adding a small kitchen wing to the back of the structure.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property occupies parcel 47 and the front half of parcel 48 which has been divided by a platted road on Prince William County Department of Public Works map #66N. Starting at the northwest corner of the property on Bristow Road proceed in a southwesterly direction along a line perpendicular to Bristow Road for 160 feet. Then proceed at a right angle in a southeasterly direction for 160 feet. Then proceed at a right angle in a southwesterly direction for 160 feet. Then proceed at a right angle in a southeasterly direction for 130 feet. Then proceed at a right angle in a northeasterly direction for 320 feet to Bristow Road. Then proceed along the south side of Bristow Road in a northwesterly direction for 290 feet to the point of origin.

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

Contact us on:
morganbreeden@aol.com

“Documenting Local History of Prince William County Families”

Prince William County Historical Commission is sponsoring a COMMUNITY EVENT at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, May 2, 2009, 10am – 2pm. Share your old family photos with us and they could appear in a future Historical Commission book. Contact John Lassiter at 703-792-7359 or jlassiter@pwcgov.org.

Please note: This is a project of the Historical Commission and is not associated with the collection effort of Brentsville Neighbors. Photos you have shared with Brentsville Neighbors **will not** be included in this project without your expressed written permission.

IN GOD WE TRUST

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

