

# Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors  
July 2009



Welcome Neighbors,

Obviously we are late getting this on the street and we offer our apologies. There have been so many things that have taken priority. Not the least of these was the passing of our friend and neighbor, Verona Bean Craig who left us for a better place on July 1, 2009, at a remarkable age of 103 years! In addition to being a loving wife, she was the mother to seven children, grandmother to 41, great-grandmother to 94, and great great-grandmother to 8. Quite a family we would say! She will be missed by all.

We also recently lost a Brentsville teacher, Ms. Helen B. Hammond. A note from her daughter is on page 8 of this issue.

Have you ever noticed how wonderful neighbors are? For instance, Mary Lou VanDerlaske who finds and donates books to the Brentsville school that would have been used during its operation. Or Lance Webster who donated the 1961 version of "*Prince William*" that belonged to his mother, Agnes Webster, to further the collection of the Brentsville Neighbors. Or perhaps Juliet Webster who sent us the original stencil used

for the "*Weekly Star*" newspaper published by DeLancey and Morgan so many years ago. And then there is Stanley Keys who responded so quickly to our plea for an article to be included in this issue. And the many people who have contributed pictures, stories, and support to make our effort so much easier. The list goes on and on and to each of you, we can only offer our sincerest Thank You!

By the way, someone must have a very green thumb. The Haislip-Hall kitchen garden is becoming the talk of the town. The corn is taller than your head with beans growing up the stalks and under it the cucumbers have gone absolutely crazy! The lettuce just doesn't seem to want to quit and the potatoes are starting to crack the ground as they mature. Green beans and sweet peas are ready for picking and we understand that Fred Wolfe walks over every day to ensure the dipper gourds are properly following their support. Volunteers are still needed so if you have the time, I'm sure Rob Orrison has a job for you. Give him a call on 703-365-7895.

Very best wishes,  
Nelson & Morgan

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## Where W I L D Things Live

BUFO AMERICANUS

AMERICAN TOAD

**Geographic Range** - American toads, *Bufo americanus*, are found throughout large portions of North America. These toads have an immense ability to adapt to their surroundings which has allowed them to successfully colonize suburban and agricultural areas.

**Habitat** - American toads require a semi-permanent freshwater pond or pool for their early development. They also require dense patches of vegetation, for cover and hunting grounds. Given these two things and a supply of insects for food, they can live almost everywhere, ranging from forests to backyards. They are common in gardens and agricultural fields. During daylight hours they seek cover beneath porches, under flat stones, boards, logs, wood piles, or other cover. When cold weather comes, these toads dig backwards into their summer homes or may choose another site in which to hibernate.

**Physical Description** - American toads have short legs, stout bodies, and thick skins with noticeable warts. These warts can be colored red and yellow. The warty skin contains many glands that produce a poisonous milky fluid, providing these toads with excellent protection from many of their predators. This poison is only harmful if it is swallowed or if it gets in the eyes, but it can make many animals very sick.

Their skin color is normally a shade of brown, but it can also be red with light patches, olive, or gray. The bellies are a white or yellow color. Males have dark colored throats, of black or brown, while females have white throats and are lighter overall. Also, females are larger than males.

The eggs of American toads are black on top and white on the bottom (countershaded), and embedded in long strings of clear sticky gel. The larvae that hatch from eggs are called "tadpoles." They are dark (almost black) with smooth skin, round bodies, and a somewhat rounded tail. Like

(Continued on page 6)

## flashback

### Brentsville

The Children's Day exercises of the union Sunday school, held Sunday evening, were attended by one of the largest audiences ever seen here, and an excellent program was rendered. A great deal of credit is due those in charge, who worked so faithfully.

Mr. K. N. Bradshaw and family motored to Occoquan, Tuesday of last week, and spent the day fishing.

Mr. Robert Simpson and son, Mr. French Simpson, of Hoadly, recently visited relatives here.

Mr. Allison, of Arcola, is visiting his daughter, Mrs. John Donovan.

Miss Essie Cornwell, of Washington, is spending her vacation with her aunt, Mrs. T. H. Cooksey.

Mr. and Mrs. Backfelder, of Washington, spent the Fourth with Mrs. Backfelder's parents, Mr. and Mrs. G. Shoemaker.

Mrs. Frank Ruffner, of Hoadly, visited her mother, Mrs. Smith, here recently.

Rev. Nolan is visiting old friends in the community.

The baseball game between Brentsville and Independent Hill, played at the "Hill" Saturday, resulted in a victory for our team, the score being 23 to 8.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Landes and children, of Washington, and Mr. John Weeks and family, of Fairfax, were recent visitors at the home of Mr. R. H. Keys.

Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Weeks, of Maryland, have rented the Woodyard property and are moving in.

The young peoples' social, held at the school house Saturday evening, was a success.

Source: The Prince William News – Brentsville News – July 7, 1921



Where WILD things live..

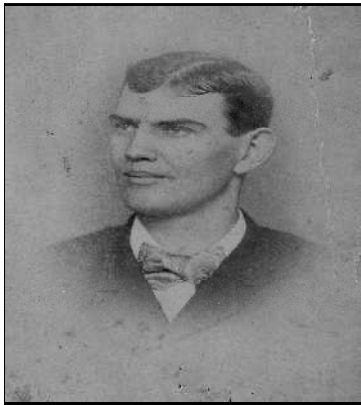


***Bufo americanus***

American toad

See page 2

Photos courtesy of Howard Churchill



**Top left** - Ada Davis, wife of French Davis is buried in the Williams Cemetery, Brentsville. **Bottom left** - French Jackson Davis, born in Brentsville in 1862, died in Brentsville Sept. 12, 1895. Buried in the Williams Cemetery.



Alex and his father, Christopher Neave of Sydney, Australia, visit Brentsville as part of their 3-week vacation in America

Photos this page courtesy of Janice Speakes



Women of the Presbyterian Church, Patsy (Keys) Blake, Jean (Keys) Dunn, Mattie (Whetzel) Speakes, Joyce (Keys) Smith and Gladys (Wolfe) Eanes



Mrs. Tracie (Spitzer) Whetzel



Elizabeth Keys and Mattie Whetzel

# Growing Up In Brentsville

## by Stanley Keys

I have some fond memories of my childhood in Brentsville. I remember when I was a small kid and Rt. 619 which is now Bristow Road was gravel and my mother along with other people had to keep the doors and windows closed during the day time because of the dust from the road, although the state would occasionally water the road to keep the dust down and for a short period you would be able to open the doors and windows. I remember when the road was first hard surface it was great because there was no dust except for the dust that came from what is now Izaak Walton Road which is in front of my home place. When Bristow Road or Rt.619 was first hard surfaced it was tar and gravel and not asphalt as it is today. I remember playing cowboys and Indians in the woods behind my house and also at the Court House, Jail House and school, which was not mowed, and there were blackberries in the back lot of the Court House, which we used to pick.

I was little, but I remember going to the Court House with my parents for dances and Jimmy Dean and Grandpa Jones and Minnie Pearl being there. We were one of the first families to have a phone and TV and people would come to our house to use the phone. If they made a long distance call they would ask the operator for time and charges. After you made the call you would call the operator back and she would give you the cost of the call and people would put the money in a jar that my mother kept on the table next to the phone book. (The phone was on the wall back in those days and you had to crank the phone to get the operator.) Also a lot of people in the community would come to our house to watch TV especially on Saturday nights.

When I was a teenager I worked during the summer on Thursday mornings in Shoemaker's Store (my Aunt Via's and Uncle Grady's Store) cleaning the soft drink boxes. You had to take all of the drinks out of the coolers, drain the water out of the drink boxes and then fill them up with water again and put the drinks back in the coolers. Those drink coolers really kept the drinks cold. The store didn't have a well so I would have to go over to my father's and Aunt Via's home place next door and pump water from a hand pump and carry the water back to the store to fill the coolers. After the coolers were finished it was then time to oil the



floor that was done every Thursday. This was to keep the dust down.

The store in the evenings was a gathering place for the community. People would sit around and eat ice cream, drinks and other snacks and catch up on the news and events of the day. In the summer everyone sat out on the porch of the store and in the winter they would sit around the wood burning stove inside which was later converted to an oil stove. On weekends in the fall and early winter my Uncle Grady would hold Turkey Shoots on Friday and Saturday nights. The store back then had no set hours or time for the store to close as long as there were people there the store stayed open. However, it did open at 7:00 AM in the morning. Another memory I have was sitting on the bank in front of my home place where a lot of kids would gather at

nights and sing songs and tell stories and sometimes we would get too loud and my mother or Rena Carter would holler at us for being too loud and keeping people awake. There were many days of enjoyment swimming down at the log, which was behind our house on Broad Run and above the swimming hole is where Bub Keys and many others would go upstream to catch minnows. There was a path and a drive way though the woods behind our house that went to the run and it was used a lot by those who were going to the swimming hole or fishing.

Also in the summer our front yard was a place where a lot of kids would gather to play croquet and other games. It was in our front yard while playing croquet that Benny Shoemaker got his front tooth broken when a croquet ball hit him in the mouth. Croquet was also played by the adults until midnight or later at my father's home place where they had lights strung across the yard. I was only about 3 or 4 years old at this time.

I also remember when we had snow we went to Snouffer's field to go sleigh riding and building a bonfire to keep warm.

My family used to go down on the run bottom at my Uncle Birdie's in the summer on Saturday and Sundays to go boating and have picnics. My Uncle Lloyd Keys and my Cousin Ernie Wade both had boats and we would swim and go boating to Lake Jackson.

These are some of my memories of growing up in Brentsville.

**Development** - Female toads lay their eggs in freshwater. Hatching occurs 3 to 12 days after laying, depending on the temperature of the water. The tadpoles group together and feed and grow for 40 to 70 days.

When the tadpoles hatch they have gills located on the sides of their heads just posterior to their mouths. During the first 20 days the tadpoles start to form their hind legs. The legs grow slowly, but continuously. After 30 to 40 days the front legs, which were previously covered by a layer of skin, appear. At the same time that the front legs emerge, the tadpoles' gills disappear, and the tadpoles start to breathe "atmospheric" air. Between the last two or three days of development, they complete their metamorphosis, resorbing their tails and strengthening their legs. They also stop eating plants in favor of animal matter.

American toads, while still growing, shed their external skin every couple of weeks or so. Older frogs lose their skin around four times yearly. The skin peels off in one piece, and is collected under its tongue, where it is then gulped down.

**Reproduction** - The females lay their eggs in long spiral tubes of jelly. They lay 4000 to 8000 eggs in two rows. When each row of eggs is stretched it generally measures between 20 to 66 feet long. They reach sexual maturity at around 2 to 3 years of age.

**Behavior** - American toads are mainly nocturnal. They are most active when the weather is warm and humid. They are solitary, congregating only at breeding ponds in the early summer and late spring. They have one of the most notable calls of all toads. They give off long trill sounds that each last between 4 and 20 seconds. They use this call as a way to attract females for breeding. Their calls become frantic, loud, and constant during mating season. Many young males continue to call late into the summer. When they call, their throats puff out like large, inflatable balloons. They also use body postures, touch, and chemical cues for communicating.

**Food Habits** - Adult American toads are carnivores, but toad tadpoles are considered herbivores, because they graze on aquatic vegetation (algae). Adult toads are generalists. They eat a wide variety of insects and other invertebrates, including snails, beetles, slugs, and earthworms. Unlike most toads, who wait for prey

to come along and pounce on it, they can shoot out their sticky tongues to catch prey. One toad can eat up to 1,000 insects every day. Toads do not drink water but soak it in, absorbing moisture through their skin.

**Predation** - The main predators of American toads are snakes. One species, eastern hognose snakes, specializes on eating toads. Some snakes, such as garter snakes, are immune to the poisonous glands of American toads. When these toads are faced with a predator that is immune to their poison they will sometimes urinate on themselves to become a less attractive meal. They also inflate their bodies with air to make themselves more difficult for a snake to swallow.

**Ecosystem Roles** - American toads are responsible for controlling the populations of many kinds of insects. The number of insects they eat makes them a crucial part of controlling these populations. They are widely considered friends to gardeners and farmers. The toxins produced by their skin may eventually prove useful in medical research.

**Other Comments** - American toads are the most widespread toad species in North America. Contrary to folk-belief, you will not get warts if you touch a toad. However, the defensive chemicals in toad skin are toxic to humans, so its important to wash one's hands carefully after handling one.

Source: [http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Bufo\\_americanus.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Bufo_americanus.html)

### OLD FRIENDS:

Two elderly ladies had been friends for many decades. Over the years, they had shared all kinds of activities and adventures. Lately, their activities had been limited to meeting a few times a week to play cards. One day, they were playing cards when one looked at the other and said, 'Now don't get mad at me .. I know we've been friends for a long time, but I just can't think of your name! I've thought and thought, but I can't remember it. Please tell me what your name is' Her friend glared at her. For at least three minutes she just stared and glared at her. Finally she said, 'How soon do you need to know?'

# Brentsville

A Look Back in History

by  
Ronald Ray Turner

## George Henderson

George Henderson and Fannie Jones were married on Tuesday, January 12, 1870. The day of the wedding, George and his good friend, William Nelson, made plans to commit a robbery. They decided they would wait a couple of days and meet on Friday to break into the Lansdown bar & store, known as Davis and Lynn Tavern. On Friday night, they broke into the bar and carried the loot to the Henderson house where it was later found by the sheriff. It is not known if good police work was used, or someone told on the pair; however two days after the robbery, the sheriff and deputy were at the Henderson house to make an arrest. Upon entering the house, they saw all the stolen items were laid out on the bed. According to the Alexandria Gazette, "Henderson's wife, who is of respectable parentage and possesses some beauty, is greatly horrified at the conduct of her husband."

In the 70 years the jail was in use, some prisoners came and left without a footnote in history, but Henderson was not one of them. As unusual as planning a robbery on the day of one's wedding might be, it's not the focus of this story.

If one were to accept in entirety the articles written in newspapers and court records, Henderson was surely a man of enormous strength and one of the strongest men ever to occupy the Brentsville jail. It is not known if all the cells were full, but Henderson and Nelson were housed together. After a few weeks, they decided they would break out of the jail. Henderson, as the records state, removed one of the bars with his hands and started removing the bricks with his bare hands.

The jailor, W. N. Tansill, heard an unusual noise and came in time to catch the pair just before their escape. He immediately put them in chains; but, to his amazement, Henderson "with his naked hands snapped one of the chains entirely in two pieces." Tansill, with the help of an unnamed constable, was able to find another chain for Henderson and secure him in another cell.

Was George Henderson a man strong enough to pull bars from his cell, remove bricks with his hands, and snap a chain into two pieces with his bare hands? Or were the bars loose, the bricks in need of repair, and his chains inferior? I would like to think the former is true.

## Once in many lifetimes

At five minutes and six seconds after 4 AM on the 8th of July  
this year, the time and date will be 04:05:06 07/08/09.

This will never happen again.

## The 8th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Cavalry

was a cavalry regiment that served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The regiment served the duration of the war, and was the only cavalry regiment to serve the entire war in the Army of the Potomac. They also aided in the hunt for John Wilkes Booth and served as President Lincoln's honor guard while he lay in state under the rotunda. Lincoln gave them the nickname of "Farnsworth's Abolitionist Regiment" when he watched them march past the White House. The battle cry of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry was "Tally-Ho," and their bugle call was the first 6 notes of "A Hunting We Will Go."

The regiment was commissioned on August 11, 1861 and was mustered into service in St. Charles, Illinois on September 18, 1861 at the site donated by Colonel Farnsworth called Camp Kane. They were mustered out on July 17, 1865 in Chicago, Illinois. During the Gettysburg Campaign, the 8th Illinois Cavalry was in the division of Brig. Gen. John Buford. They deployed west of Gettysburg on June 30, 1863 under the command of Colonel William Gamble, and waited for oncoming Confederates, they arrived early the following morning. The first shot of the subsequent battle was fired by Lieutenant Marcellus E. Jones of

Company E, who borrowed a carbine from Corporal Levi Shafer and fired at an unidentified officer on a gray horse over a half-mile away. The 8th, along with the rest of the brigade, performed a fighting withdrawal towards McPherson's Ridge, delaying the Confederate division of Henry Heth for several hours and allowing the Union I Corps to arrive. Later that same year they served in the Bristoe Campaign from October 9-22, 1863.

The regiment suffered 7 officers and 68 enlisted men who were killed in action or who died of their wounds and 1 officers and 174 enlisted men who died of disease, for a total of 250 fatalities. One of those killed in action was Sergeant Sewell Flagg who was shot in the head and instantly killed on October 14, 1863, in the skirmish at [Brentsville](#), Virginia. His loss was deeply regretted by all who knew him. He had served as Corporal and was severely wounded in the arm on September 15, 1862, in a running hand to hand fight in the battle of Boonesboro, Maryland. Since that incident he had a presentiment that he would not survive the war. He made a request that in case he should fall, regiments' first Chaplain, Lucis C. Matlack, would preach his funeral sermon from a text which he had carefully selected. His request was complied with and his funeral attended by a large concourse of friends at his home in Wheaton, Ill.

Source: Wikipeda.org

## Reader Feedback

Brentsville Neighbors,

I have sad news to send. My mother, Helen B. Hammond, died May 17, 2009, at Capital hospice Center in Arlington. As you know, mother taught in the one room schoolhouse in Brentsville. She was always glad to get your newsletters and often shared them with me. I am glad that you invited her to see the schoolhouse as it is today as she and I drove to one of your meetings held in the schoolhouse. Hearing her talk about her days as a schoolteacher was quite a treat for me. Thank you for keeping her informed about Brentsville. Best wishes as your group continues to protect Prince William history.

Sincerely,

Charlene Carey (daughter)

I thank you for using the pictures, Morgan Earle! People may think that it's easy to PAINT on the computer but it's not at all. It can be very time consuming; depending on the size and object. Eyes will get very tired looking at the screen, believe me! Plus the back aches afterwards. I love it, because I've painted on canvas and sketch paper with acrylic and water colors. I never tried oil painting though.

Neighborly Bobbie (Ratliff)

### Little Leaf

Little leaf blowing in the wind,  
Where will you go today?  
High in the sky like the birds fly,  
Low like the animal scamper along  
the ground.  
What will you see on your journey?  
People in their everyday lives,  
Children playing, maybe chasing you  
as you blow along.  
How far will you travel?  
Across the road or way across the land?  
Will you float down the stream as it  
winds along?  
At the end of your day where will your  
journey end?

Janice E. Speakes



## School Year 1924-25 Brentsville Graded

Mrs. Tracie I. Whetzel  
(grades 1-4)

Miss Charlotte Patten  
(grades 5-7)

Name	Age	Name	Age
Bradford, Russell	14	Bradshaw, Maury	9
Chinn, Alfred	10	Counts, Bill	16
Chinn, Herbert	12	Keys, Maurice	13
Cooksey, Paul N.	7	Keys, Spicer	18
Egan, Frankie	9	Kiser, Henry	16
James, Hubert	11	Hedrick, C.M.	17
James, Taylor	8	Maye, George	11
Jamison, Allen	7	Moss, Elvin (?)	11
Keys, Lloyd	5	Mowry, John	11
Keys, Lester	6	Pierson, Frank	13
Nicholson, Paul	10	Varner, Robert	13
Racer, Weldon	7		
Shoemaker, James	6		
Showalter, Raymond	8		
Wolfe, Earle	8		
Wolfe, Wynnett	9		
Beavers, Beulah	11	Holsinger, Clara	11
Collins, Ardis	10	James, Louise	15
Hoffman, Margaret	6	Lam, Vada	15
Landis, Thelma	6	Maye, Elsie	14
May, Kate	9	Pound, Vennesa	14
Shoemaker, Ann	8	Shumate, Mildred	15
Shoemaker, Daisy	9	Shaffer, Mary	11
Shoemaker, Marg	7	Shoemaker, M.....	10
Spitzer, Helen	8	Showalter, Sylvia	14
Varner, Anna	8		
Wolfe, Marye	6		

During 1924-25 the Brentsville courthouse was used as a "Graded School" serving grades 1 - 7 in two class rooms. Mrs. Tracie I. (Spitzer) Whetzel taught the Elementary grades of 1 - 4 while Miss Charlotte Patten taught the "Graded" classes 5 - 7. All of the students were from Brentsville and all walked to and from the school. The most distant family lived three miles away. The source of this information is from annual Term Reports found in the PWC School Archives, Independent Hill.

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

Contact us on:  
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IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors  
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