

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

January 2012



Welcome Neighbors,

And welcome to 2012! Depending on your personal belief, many things might happen during this year ranging from unusual natural disasters to the end of life as we now know it. I have also made a prediction for 2012 – more interesting information will be found about the history of Brentsville and shared with our neighbors! Actually, I like my outlook much better than some of the others.

I acknowledge with appreciation two wonderful families who have supported the newsletter over the past years—Nancy & David Shely and Frances & Hugh Duckett. Thank you!

In putting together the story of Rabbit Tobacco last month I completely failed to acknowledge that these beautiful plants were found by Fred Wolfe behind the courthouse and yes, he admits to having smoked the plant as a youngster. If we were honest, a lot of us would make the same confession. Something kids did back before everyone had a computer or two hanging from their belt.

During a recent holiday visit by my friend, Lance Webster, former Brentsville neighbor, he shared with me more of the computer paintings he has created along with a photograph or two that I had seen before (check out page 3).

The Christmas program at the Union Church was wonderful as always. This year we were treated to a brass quintet as well as a mixed choral group. Hot cider and ginger snaps outside by the fire was also a big hit as well as Santa in his Civil War attire in the courthouse.

With the help of Ms. Sonya Clark, PWC Public Schools Records, I have been permitted to copy the School Board Minutes covering the 75 year period 1872 through June 1947. These documents, while available to the public upon request, have never been transcribed. My newest project is to gain a better understanding of the schools in Brentsville so that information can be shared with you. During the past month I have completed one of the six books copied and am well on the way toward completion of the next. So during the next year I plan to shift the focus from Civil War history to Public School history as it applies to our town starting on page six of this edition. Many people do not know that both the County School Board and the Board of County Supervisors started in Brentsville during the time it was the county seat. I hope you find this new line of information both informative and interesting.

Very best wishes,

Morgan

This month:

Circulation: 266

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Flashback

BRENTSVILLE

(Mrs. Emma Wolfe, Cor.)

Mr. William Ramkey, a student at Richmond Theological Seminary, preached in the Union Church Sunday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Phil Spencer, of Washington, are the proud parents of a baby boy. Mrs. Spencer is the former Virginia Bradshaw, daughter of Mr. Kenny Bradshaw.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Niles, of Milwaukee, Wis., spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Webster.

Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Bradshaw and family spent Sunday with Mrs. Bradshaw's father in Alexandria.

Miss Doris Stephens is improving in Alexandria Hospital.

Mrs. Troy Counts spent several days last week with her daughter, Hazel, who lives near Lynchburg.

Mr. Henry Kaiser, who has been quite ill, is reported better. Mr. Henry Kaiser, Jr., has returned home and expects to farm the place. We are glad to have him back and wish him lots of good luck.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Counts were Washington, visitors recently.

Pfc. Sidney Spitzer, accompanied by a friend, spent Sunday at his home here.

Mr. Troy Counts is enjoying a trip to Ohio.

Mr. Newton and children have returned from California and report a very enjoyable trip.

Rev. Jesse Bell has been on the sick list, but is able to be back in the store this week.

Mr. Ray Hedrick is in the hospital receiving treatment for injuries suffered at his work. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hedrick spent Sunday with Mr. Hedrick's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hedrick.

Source: The Manassas Journal, January 30, 1947

Where WILD Things Live

Saxifraga virginensis

Early Saxifrage

Other Common Names: Bread-and-Butter, Everlasting, Lungwort, Rockfoil, St. Peter's Cabbage

Flower Color: White

Habitat: Rocky soil, shaded banks

General Bloom Dates: May-June

Saxifraga virginensis (Early saxifrage, Virginia saxifrage) is a wildflower native to eastern and central North America. It is a herbaceous plant, which can reach 12 inches. A **herbaceous plant** (in botanical use simply **herb**) is a plant that has leaves and stems that die down at the end of the growing season to the soil level. They have no persistent woody stem above ground. Herbaceous plants may be annuals, biennials or perennials.

This species flowers in the spring and is usually found growing on rocks, cliffs, or logs. The pubescent (covered with fine soft short hairs) stem is thought to deter ground insects from reaching its flowers, which would be less effective for pollination than flying insects.

Each long-lasting flower remains open until its 10 to 15 pollen-bearing stamens have matured, one at a time. Each stamen bends toward the center of the flower before releasing its pollen and

(Continued on page 9)



Dave and Avery Born with Santa in the Courthouse



Agnes with her dog
Courtesy of Lance Webster



Computer art by Lance Webster

**Where WILD things
live..**



Saxifraga virginensis
"Early Saxifrage"
See page 2



A Letter From Brentsville

Note: I was very fortunate to recently purchase an original letter written in Brentsville during January 1848 by W. W. Thornton to his Uncle, Reubin T. Thornton, Care of Addison Hotel, New Orleans, La. As I am still new in deciphering handwriting from that period, I have undoubtedly made mistakes in the transcription. You will note many sentences run together--typical for that period--and I didn't try to modify them with correct punctuation.

Morgan.

Brentsville Jany.

Dear Taylor

I have no doubt you think hard of my long ~~absence~~ silence but I assure you it is not for the want of feelings of affection that I have not written before, it is owing entirely to a kind of put off disposition I have which I must try & overcome also if the great aversion I have to letter writing. I must humbly beg pardon for past offenses & will try & do better hereafter, it is true I almost feel ashamed to write after my long silence but have come to the conclusion it is better to write now than not at all, & confess I have treated you very badly & feel condemned.

I am pleased to write we are all quite well. Aunt Ann & her children are here at this time & are quite well, I suppose you have heard that Aunt Ann lost her Baby with the hoping cough, it was only 2 months old it died about 2 weeks since, poor little thing it is better off. I have just returned from Caroline where I have been ever since before Christmas. I never enjoyed myself more in my life there were a great many parties, commenced at Hunters Hill but no dancing or my very little in the

neighborhood. I took your letter out of the office written to Grandmama the old Lady was much gratified at hearing from you. You wrote you had received a visit from Peyton Norville he is a fine Young man & I hope he may do well. He is a perfect gentleman & in saying that I can say no more. Grandmama received a letter from Uncle John's widow she wrote very feelingly & also a PS from Mrs. McKenney she wrote a most splendid letter. Geo. Conway & Betty spent this Christmas in Caroline they are quite well & have a very interesting child.

There is but little news about Brentsville that would be interesting to you. I suppose you have heard before this that Mr. Jasper is our present representative & I understand there will be some three or four Candidates this Spring. Mr. Hunton will be a candidate or it is thought so by a good many. I made a very fine crop of corn last year & have a good prospect for wheat. I sowed my wheat very early & it looks remarkably well best in the neighborhood. Pa has had a fine practice this winter better than usual at this season. His health is very good he has stopped drinking. He has not drunk anything

(Continued on page 8)



Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



Pursuant to notice, the annual meeting of the County School Board was held the 4th day of August 1883, Supt. Martyne presiding.

Members present, Messrs. Dulin, Leache, Heinekin, Taylor, Lipscomb & Merchant.

The Committee appointed to draft resolutions for the government of Public Schools, submitted the following report:

We the Trustees of Prince William County, Va., earnestly recommend that the following rules be strictly observed in the Public Schools of Prince William County, Va.:

1st That the Teacher shall see that the school house be kept in good order; that he shall prevent the pupils from defacing the school house & furniture; and shall, during the term, keep the key in his possession and at the close of the session, shall deliver the same to the Clerk of the District Board; & that the Teachers shall be at the school house at least one half an hour before the regular hour for opening the school; and that any Teacher who shall fail to deliver the key as herein directed shall forfeit five dollars (\$5.00) to be deducted from his monthly pay.

2nd All pupils, after their names are on the school register, are required to attend regularly,

unless prevented by sickness or some other good excuse be given to the Teacher.

3rd All pupils are required positively to obey their Teachers.

4th On entering school room every scholar should make a polite salutation to the Teacher.

5th No fire arms, nor any deadly weapons will be allowed to be brought to the school house, & if any pupil insists on doing so, after due notice, then the said pupil, or pupils, shall be expelled from school.

6th No pupil must use tobacco during school hours.

7th At recess, or at closing school for the day, Teachers shall see that only a certain number "go out at a time" so as to prevent confusion in the school room.

On motion it was resolved that the above rules be recommended to the several District School Boards for adoption & upon the adoption of the same, it shall be the duty of the District School Board to cause a printed copy of the same to be posted in each house.

School Board Minutes, Book 1, page 92-93

When WAR Came to Brentsville

THE TENTH REGIMENT MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY 1861-1864

(Page 225-226)

With the advent of the 3d came the sun once more and it cheered the Regiment as it marched towards Catlett's Station, where dinner was eaten, and the First Brigade with the Division General was left; again advancing, Bristoe Station was reached at sunset and glad were the men over the prospect of rest; they were too weary to even lay out a camp, deferring that task until the morrow. The 4th brought out the features of the camp, which was all the more easily made because of the excellent material left by the 32d Massachusetts, the regiment preceding ours. The boys from the Bay State were good housekeepers. Building was the order of the day and to help this along five wagons went to Manassas, on the 5th, for lumber to construct hospital and headquarters tents. Guerrillas were all about us, as was evident when a straggling member of the Tenth was

fired upon, warning him to keep closely in the ranks. Oct. 6th, a squad of men went over to Brentsville, shire town of Prince William County, to get bricks for the General's quarters. They secured them, but at the expense of the buildings themselves. Wanton destruction of property, public and private, is one of the sad features of war everywhere. The documentary accumulations of more than two hundred years had been torn out of their files and scattered over the floors of the buildings to the depth of several feet. Many of them were exceedingly curious as well as valuable, but all became sacrifices to the spirit of mischief inherent in the best of us. Some of the men carried off mementos with them. Only three or four families continued here, the remainder having gone further into Dixie.

like ardent spirits for some time & appears to enjoy himself much more than when he drank. He says he never intends drinking again. I sincerely hope he may not as I consider it one of the greatest evils in the world & has been productive of more unhappiness. I was at Mr. Alexanders Tuesday. He & his family desired to be respectfully remembered to you when I wrote & say they would be very much pleased to see you in Old Virginia. Miss Tip will be married in the spring to a Mr. Frank Slaughter of Fredericksburg. She is doing very well. He is very much of a gentleman & very well off. Dr. Gray has been discarded by a Miss Weir living near Brentsville it caused him to get in a terrible _____(?)

There is a railroad in contemplation which will pass very near Brentsville from Alexandria to Gordonsville, one route surveyed passes partly through our little farm comes down our flat & passes in 2 hundred yards of the house.

Since I commenced writing your namesake Taylor Williams has taken sick and is quite irritable but nothing serious I hope. Aunt Ann & her children are still here. Taylor is a very delicate child he has not been healthy since last Spring. Rob. Williams makes out the lasts exception for his family & they are entirely dependent on his & her relations for a supplant they stay here a great deal. Ma desires me to say to you that she answered your letter directly she received it the day after Aunt Ann desires me to say to you that she received your letter written last fall & also to expect her gratitude

for the money enclosed in it she says she has had many things to prevent her from answering it but will do so soon. There has been a good deal of sickness among her children one or the other of them is nearly always sick it takes up her whole exertion to wait on them as she has no nurse.

Sister returned from Caroline by public conveyance in the cars & steamboat to Alexandria & stage to Dr. Jones where she is at this time enjoying herself. We judge from a letter received from her yesterday Fairfax CH is very gay at this time & a good many dances I am invited over next Thursday to a dance I think I shall go. She mentioned that Clae Rowe called to see her on his way out to New Orleans & spent several days at the Court House his company awaited in Washington for him. Give my best respects to Peyton Norville if you see him & say I expect daily to receive that promised letter. I believe I have given you all the news I will therefore close my hastily written scrawl by begging you will excuse all mistakes. If you will answer this there shall not be a failure on my part again I will answer your letters directly I receive them. Aunt Ann,. Ma & Pa join in love to you. Pa says he would be very much pleased if you would pay us a visit before you return to NewPort do come if you possibly can I think it would improve your health very much to come early in the spring & stay a month or two

Believe me to be a sincere & devoted nephew.

Wm W. Thornton

then straightens, making room for the next.

General Characteristics:

Small white flowers with 5 petals, growing in a terminal cluster. The leaves are broadly toothed, egg-shaped, 1/2 - 3 inches long growing in a basal rosette. The sticky-hairy stem is one of the easy identification parts to this plant. Grows 4-10 inches high.

Plant Lore:

The name Saxifrage comes from saxum (a rock) and frangere (to break) since this species is seen growing in the rocks, it was once thought that it would break the rocks. Likewise the natural assumption is that this plant would also cure kidney and gall stones, with it's powerful medicine. There is no evidence that this plant does offer a cure.

The young leaves are occasionally harvested for use in salads. They are somewhat tasteless, so they offer a good addition when using plants with a bitter taste. The leaves are also high in Vitamin C, giving one a good reason to harvest them.

Source: North American Wildlife-Wildflowers and various Internet locations.

Light travels faster than sound. That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

F e e d b a c k

As always, a great newsletter. Loved the outhouse story. Perhaps it was Mr. Kincheloe himself who was inside the outhouse – picturing him, or anyone, turned upside down with the day's remains adorning him is too funny for words! Also enjoyed seeing the photo of Gladys Eanes and her family. What a great lady!

Jan Cunard

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Just wanted to say thanks for the great Dec / Christmas edition of the newsletter, and even more to say thanks for all the effort you put in all year — I have a pretty good idea of how much work it entails. Hope you have a joyous Christmas season and great success with the Brentsville special events.

All the best,
Mike Simpson
Germany

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The modern world is amazing - got the newsletter 10,000 miles away a few minutes after you posted it. Can talk and see (with about a two second delay, for free,) my other grandkids in Virginia, on skype. Its hard to imagine what life will be like in the future.

Ron Turner
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Thank you so much for taking the time to share such wonderful history. I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Look forward to your newsletter next year, keep up the GOOD work.

Linda Jones
Triangle, VA

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Thanks for all you do as Brentsville historian (official or not)!

I love the newsletter.

Sandy (Whetzel) Darlington
Universal City, TX

Brentsville Neighbors

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IN GOD WE TRUST

