

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

February 2012



Welcome Neighbors,

We wish to thank Mrs. Margaret Covington for her continued support. Your help is very much appreciated!

With February being Black History Month, Dennis Van Derlaske came up with the idea of a story about Rosenwald Schools and the possible connection with Brentsville's own one-room school. He has done extensive research on this subject and has made presentations to several groups in Brentsville that were very well received.

As I work to transcribe the School Board Minutes during the time public schools existed in Brentsville, I can not but help notice the many differences that existed in what was called an "equal but separate" education process. For example, the white schools were open for nine months in the year while the colored schools were only operational for seven. And the colored teachers could expect to be paid less than their white counterparts as well, in part to the shorter teaching term. This looks like it will make an interesting story for a future newsletter.

I feel it is finally time to acknowledge a resource that has heretofore remained very much in the background—my wife! While I work to compose the items in the newsletters, she reviews every one with an editor's eye that somehow keeps me from looking quite dumb most of the time. So, thank you, Kay—I could never do it without you!

I have also taken the liberty of playing with the layout of this month's newsletter. You will notice that pages 3 and 4 are not the normal pictures. Not because I've run out of pictures, but because I thought it time to try something different. Please do let me know your thoughts.

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan



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Flashback

Where WILD Things Live

Brentsville

Mr. John Petty has arrived home after undergoing two operations in the Alexandria Hospital. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

Charles Taylor, of Maryland, is visiting his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Bradford.

Mrs. Rosie Keys, wife of Mr. Dewey Keys and mother of Miss Elizabeth Keys, died July 25 at her home here.

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Loveless were week-end guests of Mrs. Myrtle Keys, together with Mrs. Alene Winters, Mr. Lloyd Keys, Kenneth Keys, Cash Keys and Mr. and Mrs. Morris Keys and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Mickall, of Buck Hall, Va., were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Spitzer.

Mr. George Wolfe of Vienna, Va., was a week-end guest of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Wolfe.

Mr. and Mrs. Troy Counts have recently visited their newly-arrived granddaughter at Madison Heights, Va.

Sunday services were held at the Presbyterian Church by Rev. T. K. Mobrey.

We are sorry to report that Master Richard Trott, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Trott is not improving from his burns and is under an oxygen tent.

Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Webster were visited Sunday evening by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Owens and family, of Manassas.

Miss Kathleen Compton has been in the Alexandria Hospital having her abscessed hand treated. She has now returned home and is doing very well.

Mrs. Annie Spitzer was bitten by a non-poisonous snake in her kitchen this week.

Master Bobbie Stephens, son of Mrs. and Mrs. W. R. Stephens has tonsillitis. We hope he soon gets well.

Mr. and Mrs. John Donovan had as their week-end guests their daughter, Audrey, and grandson, Johnnie Melvin.

Source: The Manassas Journal – Brentsville News – August 10, 1945.



Anas platyrhynchos.
Mallard Duck

Mallard ducks are the most common and recognizable wild ducks in the Northern Hemisphere. You'll find them near ponds, marshes, streams, and lakes, where they feed on plants, invertebrates, fish, and insects. Mallards are dabbling, or surface-feeding, ducks because they eat by tipping underwater for food—head down, feet and tail in the air—rather than diving. Mallards also forage and graze for food on land.

The male mallard duck, called a drake, sports a glossy green head, a white ring around its neck and a rich, chestnut-brown breast. The mottled brown female mallard looks downright dull next to the male's showy feathers. The mallard duck's outer feathers are waterproof, thanks to oil that's secreted from a gland near the tail. Beneath this tightly packed waterproof layer of feathers lies a soft, warm layer of feathers called down.

A female mallard lays up to a dozen eggs in nests on the ground near water, often in a small depression or tree hole. She lines the nest with warm down plucked from her undercoat. The female mallard quacks; the male mallard has a softer, rasping keep.

Source: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/mallard-ducks/>



Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



At a meeting of the County, School Board held in Brentsville Monday the 2nd day of March 1874.

Present W W Thornton Chairman, J W Chapman, B P Dulin, M Cornwall, G M Colvin, T. P. Hixson (?), E. Nelson & John H. Butler,

Whereas it appears Geo. C. Round, Esq., the Delegate from this county has presented a bill in the Legislature, having for its object the election of the School Trustees by the people, and whereas such legislation would at the present time be in the opinion of this Board destructive to the public School interests, and this Board actuated by a regard of the welfare of this County and the cause of Education and uninfluenced by any formal consideration, protesting against such action as it conceives such to be their duty is ready at any time to relinquish its power, so soon as other suitable and more efficient officer may be elected.

Be it therefore Resolved that Geo. C. Round, Esq. in presenting the above bill and urging its passage is in direct opposition to the views of the School Trustees of this county, Be it Resolved that the thanks of this Board be tendered to our county superintendent for the efficient manner in which he has performed his duties as such and for the valuable aid and services he has from time to time rendered this Board, and the Public school interest of this County.

Wm. W. Thornton President

Source: School Board Minutes Book #1, pages 18 & 19 (in part).

THE BRENTSVILLE SCHOOL

A Quest for a Connection

by
Dennis Van Derlaske

In 1869, in the post- Civil War era, Virginia adopted a new constitution, the so-called *Underwood Constitution*. Among other things, it provided for the establishment of universal public education for the children of the Commonwealth. Prior to the Civil War, any education for slaves was discouraged as “knowledge is power”. Although black children could now participate in the educational process, as in much of the south, it was far from equal in instruction, funding and infrastructure.

In the early twentieth century, this disparity came to the attention of a man named Julius Rosenwald. He had amassed significant wealth as the chief executive officer of Sears, Roebuck and Company, and as a result, had the means to engage in philanthropy.

The Emergence of Julius Rosenwald

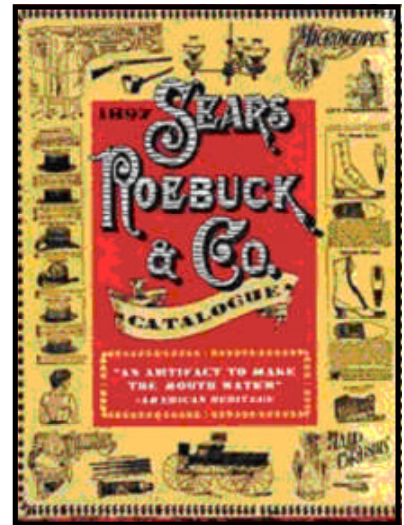
In 1886 an agent of the Minnesota and St. Louis Railroad, by the name of Richard Sears founded a watch company in Minneapolis. Earlier he had purchased a shipment of watches that had been misdirected to a client of the railroad. Sears had great success in marketing these along the railroad line giving him the confidence to start a business. He then moved his business to Chicago and hired Alvah C. Roebuck.

During this period, farms were beginning to multiply in the mid-west. Farmers frequently felt “squeezed” by local merchants in rural towns. The proliferation of railroad lines enabled a mail order form of merchandising to evolve. A number of such firms formed and prospered, including Sears’ company. In 1893 Sears and his partner formed Sears, Roebuck and Company, with a focus on general merchandising.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. became one of the dominant players in the field, thanks in part, to the very comprehensive catalogs they published. The

variety of goods offered not only met the needs of rural American families, but those who lived in more urban areas.

One of the product lines offered was the ‘mail order house’. Kit houses that could be assembled on-site were not an invention of this company, but Sears, Roebuck and Co. executed this business area



in a very successful manner. A customer could choose from standardized designs in varying sizes and price levels and have the house shipped in numbered pieces via rail to their home towns for assembly by local craftsmen.

Early in the company’s history, Richard Sears struck up a successful business relationship with Julius Rosenwald. Rosenwald supplied clothing for inclusion in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. The key feature of the clothing he supplied was standardized sizing. Standard sizes in clothes had not been altogether common in the 19th century. This concept obviously had advantages for mail order merchandising.

Roebuck decided to leave the management of the business and was bought out in 1895 for a relatively modest sum of money. He continued to serve in salaried positions with the company throughout the rest of his life and eventually became the historian of the organization.

(Continued on page 5)

In the early 1900's Richard Sears' health began to fail. He had sufficient confidence in Rosenwald to offer him an interest in Sears, Roebuck in 1905. In 1908 Sears retired due to poor health and Rosenwald took over operations. Rosenwald continued to run the company quite successfully. In a tough economy following World War I, he had to invest some of his own fortune into the company, effectively saving it.



Julius Rosenwald

Rosenwald the Philanthropist

As a Jew, Julius Rosenwald was sensitized to the plight of disenfranchised elements of society. In 1912 he met and formed a friendship with Booker T. Washington who eventually asked him to serve on the Board of the Tuskegee Institute. It was there that he learned of the needs of black students in the rural south.

One of these needs was infrastructure. Black children either were educated in substandard school buildings or lacked them altogether. Rosenwald, working with Tuskegee, established a prototype program for standardized modern school buildings aimed at this population. Six small schools were opened in 1914.

Using his own financial resources, he then established a fund with the goal of providing school buildings for rural black students across the entire southern United States. This was a significant task. Rosenwald, while quite wealthy, could not afford to

fully bankroll an enterprise of this size. The fund had to come up with an innovative approach.

The approach that was eventually adopted had four key elements:

Standardized Design: As in the mail order houses, standard designs were pursued, only these were not in kit form. Progressive plans capitalizing on a blend of Colonial Revival and Craftsman architecture were developed. Plans were detailed so that they could be faithfully executed by local builders. These included school sizes ranging from one to seven teachers with commensurate numbers of classrooms. In areas where teacher housing was required, comfortable residence designs for different numbers of teachers were also provided.

Quality Standards: Quality standards for everything ranging from lighting, painting, blackboard and seating orientation to privies were stipulated in detail.

Insurance: Localities were required to have insurance on the structures to ensure continuity of their existence in the event of fire, weather or activities of potential miscreants.

Funding Partnership: This was probably the most innovative element of the program. It encouraged both the black and white communities to be stakeholders in the schools. Money was required to be raised by both communities. Only when this was accomplished, did the Rosenwald Fund contribute a grant. Frequently it was smaller than the other contributions, but it allowed projects to proceed to fruition that otherwise would not have.

By 1932, the year that Julius Rosenwald died, over fifty-three-hundred buildings had been constructed under the program.

Is There a Brentsville Connection?

Based on research conducted to date, Prince William County had two Rosenwald Schools. These were the Manly School, a one-teacher school located in the Wellington area and the Brown School, a four-teacher plan located in the Grant Avenue area south of the center of Manassas.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

The school building currently standing at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Center dates to 1928 and was clearly built as a school for white students. It has a number of architectural characteristics that are strikingly similar to Rosenwald School designs, however.

- The basic design style is the Colonial Revival/ Craftsman blend
- It incorporates similar large windows with indications of center-hung window shades that could be pulled up and/or down
- The building was not electrified as was the case with most Rosenwald Schools and the orientation of the desks faced the west. This allowed the light to enter the room across the desks from left to right favoring right-handed students, who were more common, as mandated by Rosenwald specifications. (Left-handed students' arms would cast a shadow across writing surfaces.)

The first "colored" schooling in Brentsville was conducted in the home of the minister of the New Hope Baptist Church (near where Spicer Keys built his home). Around 1910 the courthouse was converted into a public school. Previous to this, white children had been using a school on Providence Street, near the Bradshaw home. This building was then moved to the general location of the church used by the African-American community and used as the school serving that community.

In researching this topic, a historic photo (c.1920's) of a Rosenwald School that once existed in King George County was discovered. The school was named Lamb's Creek School most likely due to its proximity to the historic Lamb's Creek Church in that county. The front elevation of this school bears an uncanny resemblance to the Brentsville School. Details including window placement, front entrance and even the turbine ventilation cap to the rear of the chimney are identical.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation acknowledges that the Rosenwald Fund did make their plans available to schools that were not necessarily black schools. The motivation for this was that these were considered to be progressive school designs for the time and that it was beneficial for the greatest number of students to capitalize on their attributes.



Lamb's Creek School—Photo Credit: Fisk University



Brentsville School Photo Credit: Morgan Breedon

As the Brentsville School was constructed during the Rosenwald School era and the designs are basically identical, two questions arise:

1. Was the Brentsville School based on a Rosenwald plan that was made available to white school districts?
2. Could the Lamb's Creek School have been based on a non-Rosenwald plan that met its standards—the plan that was used to build the Brentsville School?

This particular design does not show up in the archive of published Rosenwald Plans that are readily accessible.

There is continuing review and transcription of Prince William County School Board meeting records ongoing and contact with the King George County Historical Society to try to answer these questions.

Stay tuned.....

Prince William County Man, Cary Wolfe, Catches 74-Pound Striped Bass

By BETH PARKER/myfoxdc

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, Va. - Cary Wolfe knew he had something.

“It was just like dragging a big old heavy tire through the water,” says Wolfe.

I said, ‘You take care of it. I’ll watch,’” says Freddie.

He was out in the Atlantic Ocean Friday afternoon not far from Virginia Beach. Also on the boat, the man who taught him to fish growing up in Prince William County, his dad Freddie.

“When you talk to other fishermen, you like to stretch the story. It’s hard to stretch the fish, but you can stretch the story,” says Freddie.

But there was no need to stretch Friday’s story. The poles were all lined up on the back of the charter boat when one began to bend. Cary offered it to his dad first.

“Cary was calling for me to come and crank it in, but I had already saw the pole bent over like that.

10 or 15 minutes later, they landed a huge striped bass. They say it appears to be a new Virginia state record - 74 pounds. The old record was 73.

The fish was so big there was no cooler large enough, so they turned the back of Cary’s pickup truck into a cooler.

They are finding out this isn’t just a big fish. It is also an old fish.

“To age it, they go in and pull a specific bone out of the top of the head. They age it like a tree. It has rings. I got a call from them today. They said he was about 25 years old,” says Cary.

Back home in Brentsville, this record setter will soon be dinner and then some.



When WAR Came to Brentsville

MARCH 8, 1864—Scout from Bristow to Brentsville, Va.

Report of Capt. Andrew H. McHenry, Thirteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry.

CAMP NEAR BRISTOE STATION,
March 8, 1864.

I have the honor to report that in compliance with your order (verbal) I proceeded from this camp at 6.40, instant, with a detail of forty mounted cavalry from various companies of this (Thirteenth) regiment, with one sergeant from Company H. Proceeded about south by south-east to and through a part of improved country that is known as the Jersey Settlement; then moved eastward by private roads over plantations, crossing Kettle and Cedar Runs. The latter is a large stream. After crossing two or more roads, public, leading northward, at about nine miles by route came in a public road. At about ten miles came a place called Cole's Store. The improvements here are two dwellings, one small store-house, a shop, and small church contiguous. The country so far is comparatively open, but few if any places in which an ambushade could be formed or a surprise made by an enemy. The country has about 95 per cent of the whole area cleared and the greater part grown up with pine, red, and black oak. Searched the houses generally so far, but found nothing deemed contraband. Mr. Cole and one very aged man reside here. Mr. Cole informed me that some three days prior a number of rebel cavalry passed there in squads, the whole

amounting to 200 or 300. From this took the public road leading north-westward in the direction of Manassas. At about one mile on this road, at a house said to be occupied by a Union man, was informed that the rebels had maintained a picket-post for about one day and a half. Along this road to near Cedar Run bridge is skirted with small second-growth pines on either side, generally favorable for bushwhackers to carry out their mode of warfare. Approached the Cedar Run with caution, reconnoitered the position, then crossed by twos. Came to Brentsville, examined the place, found five houses occupied, including the jail. But two men reside in this town; the court-house has but a part of the roof remaining on; the houses are generally in ruins. The town stands on an elevation, said to be five miles from Cole's Store, nineteen miles to Potomac via Dumfries. From this came to the Jersey Settlement, from thence to camp, not having met or seen any enemy in arms.

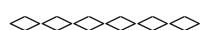
Respectfully submitted.

A. H. McHENRY,
*Captain company G, Thirteenth
Pennsylvania Cavalry.*

F e e d b a c k

What a great newsletter, thank you!

Dolores Elder
Occoquan Muesum

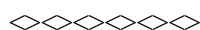


Thank you very much for the email. The plant study was my favorite.

I've been in the Lion's Club for several years. It is partly because of the decision I made to continue doing the volunteer work in that Club that I haven't pursued the idea of a path to becoming a docent.

I do like the results of the studies that you do. The articles are excellent. What do you think about having a nature snack in the Spring, Summer, and Fall, meaning that visitors would follow a well-trained leader who knows which items (which plants) to pick and eat on the property? If they were reminded to take a thermos or a similar container the edible plant could be eaten right there (after submitting the plant to the leader for the cautious inspection). Probably the edible plant expert would need to warn the freshmen that they should pick these plants under direct supervision for sometime. The follow-up would be another walk within days or weeks, over and over across the months.

Jim Harvey



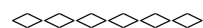
Just had time to read the latest Newsletter. What a fine job you do.

As an Aussie American Civil War historian I was taken by several of the stories. WW Thornton who wrote to his Uncle is, I would think, the WW Thornton who was leading the drill training of the local cavalry at the CourtHouse prior to the Civil War. He had been unanimously selected as Captain so was presumably a well known man of the community. Eppa Hunton, Commonwealth Attorney at Brentsville and later Brigadier general in the Army of Northern Virginia gets a mention in Thornton's story as well.

One of the references was to Catlett's Station, which I recall one of the Yankees, Brigadier General and Army of the Potomac Provost Marshall, referred to it as that "...vile, vile place."! Patrick was a ladies man, as many of the Generals thought they were, and Catlett's, certainly in those days wouldn't have had a great number of suitable ladies for the General to squire!!. Naturally he was a married man to boot!

I'm dribbling on as usual. Hope to see all of my friends in Brentsville later this year.

Paul Spencer
Australia



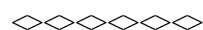
Happy New Year and thanks for including me on the newsletter list.

I have been indexing your work for the Photo collection at RELIC with the plan that researchers in the future will want to see the pictures.

For the January 2012 issue I would like to include "Agnes with her dog" but I will need her full name.

I really liked the school board minutes with the references to both guns and tobacco.

Margaret Binning



Great to see you and Kay again. Many thanks for your gracious and generous hospitality. And thanks for printing Agnes Webster's picture...it's one of my favorites. Her beloved dog was named Zeb Barbee, after her friend from Manassas who worked at one of the car dealerships. Mother's sense of humor was off beat at times. She wanted to be able to yell at the dog, "Zeb Barbee, stop peeing on my boxwoods!" Final note—the two paintings of mine were done with water colors and acrylic....and only transmitted via computer.

Warmly,
Lance Webster

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

Contact us on:
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IN GOD WE TRUST

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