

# Brentsville Neighbors



## Preserving Brentsville's History

May 2012



Welcome neighbors!

We wish to thank George Melvin for his support toward the preservation of Brentsville's history.

Spring is the time of year when many of us venture into the woodlands and meadows to enjoy the sights there. During one such walk, it dawned on me that I was wasting time. It wasn't that the location let my expectations down but rather that I, myself, was not doing the location the justice it so well deserved. I was out "looking around." What I should have been doing was "experiencing" the location. The five traditional methods of perception, or sense, are hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste. I wasn't using any of these. I was simply "looking around." So I've now tried to remember to use as many senses as practical while walking the trail behind the courthouse. It's important to slow down and actually **see** the things near us. Try it yourself. No matter where you are, stand (or sit) still and identify by name or description everything within ten feet of your location. That's how I found the tree frog in this edition. Then close your eyes for a short time and identify everything you **hear** while you are quiet. Take time to **touch** the objects near you. Feel their texture. Are they warm, cold, rough, smooth or something else? Take the time to **smell** "the roses" and while it's smart not to **taste** things you don't know, you can still enjoy them just as much. So my message is simple, when next you are visiting Brentsville's Historic Centre, take the time to experience your visit. You will enjoy it much more, I promise.

Restoration of our jail is moving along very nicely. Anyone visiting the site cannot help but notice the logs being sawn into timbers that will be used to line the jail cells. To that end, you will also have noticed a strange structure being built at the end of the parking lot. This will be used to cure (dry) the wood being sawn over the next year or perhaps two before it can be cut to the final size. At the end of that time it is slated to be removed. Consistent with the work we hope to have a number of related articles that will keep you informed and provide additional information. Carolyn Lynn has graciously contributed the first. Check it out on page 5.

**May is National Preservation Month and this year's theme is "Discover America's Hidden Gems."** Communities from coast to coast, including Brentsville, are filled with unexplored historic treasures—and May's the month to celebrate them! During National Preservation Month you can help ensure that Brentsville's treasures will be protected for future generations by promoting our historic places, and encouraging newcomers to learn more about our local preservation programs.

Very best wishes,  
Kay and Morgan

### This month:

- |                          |             |                        |           |
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# Flashback

Where WILD things live...

## NOTES FROM BRENTSVILLE

Elder Priest preached an interesting sermon here on Sunday evening.

Mr. Walter Keys spent Sunday afternoon with Miss Nettie Hensley.

Mr. Joseph Davis and Mrs. R. E. Simpson, of Hoadley, spent Sunday with friends here.

Miss Gladys Adkins was the guest of Miss Essie Cornwell Sunday afternoon.

Miss Essie Cornwell gave a party to a number of her friends last Saturday evening, which was enjoyed by all present. Among those present were – Misses Gladys Adkins, Ethel Nolan, Nettie Hensley, Myrtle Keys, Lillie and May Nolan and May Brost, and Messrs. Paul Cooksey, Owen Cornwell, Rosier Woodyard, James keys, Benjamin and Harvey Woodyard, Kermit, Judd and Winifred Adkins.

The farmers are busy getting ready to plant corn.

SCHOOL GIRL

Source: The Manassas Journal, May 3, 1912



*Hyla versicolor*  
**Gray Treefrog**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Gray Treefrog is a species of small arboreal frog native to much of the eastern United States and southeastern Canada. It is sometimes referred to as the Eastern Gray Treefrog, Common Gray Treefrog, or Tetraploid Gray Treefrog.

**Physical description:** As the scientific name implies, Gray treefrogs are variable in color owing to their ability to camouflage themselves from gray to green, depending on the substrate they are sitting on. The degree of mottling varies. They can change from nearly black to nearly white. They change color at a slower rate than a chameleon. Dead Gray Treefrogs and ones in unnatural surroundings are predominantly gray. They are relatively small compared to other North American frog species, typically attaining no more than 1.5 to 2 in. Their skin has a lumpy texture to it, giving them a warty appearance. It has a bright yellow patch on the hind legs, which distinguishes it from other treefrogs. The bright patches are normally only visible while the frog is jumping. Males have black or gray throats, while the throat of the female is lighter. Tadpoles have a rounded body (as opposed to the more elongated bodies of stream species) with a high, wide tail that can be colored red if predators are in the system. Metamorphosis can occur in as little as 2 months with optimal conditions. At metamorphosis, the new froglets will almost always turn

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**APPLICATION FOR MERIT BADGE**

(Name) Donald CARTER is a registered  
 Scout of Troop No. 671 of the FV  
 Explorer Type of Unit  
District, and is qualified to apply for the  
HOME REPAIRS Merit Badge  
3-2-56 W R Nelson  
DATE SCOUTMASTER OR ADVISOR  
This Applicant has personally appeared before me and demonstrated to my satisfaction that he has met every requirement for the above named Merit Badge  
1-27-57 W R Nelson  
DATE SIGNATURE OF COUNSELOR



# Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



County School Board Meeting

Manassas, Va., June 6, 1928

The County School Board met on the above date with all members present. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

The following resolution was adopted by the Board: "On and after June 6, 1928 the County School Board will not employ married woman teachers for teaching positions in the County. Women teachers who marry in a given school term will not be considered as applicants for positions at the expiration of the terms in which they marry. This resolution will not affect married women teachers who are now in service while they continue in service of this County but will apply to them should they discontinue teaching in this County. This resolution does not apply to widows."

Ayes: Arrington, Russell, Allen, Brockett, Cline.

Nos: Cooke

A petition was received from citizens of Nokesville, Va. asking that Mrs. Anna McMichael be re-elected to her position at the Nokesville school. The Board after considering the matter very carefully acted on the following resolution: "RESOLVED that the Board does not elect Mrs. Anna McMichael for a teaching position in Prince William County.

Ayes: Russell, Allen, Brockett, Cline.

Nos: Cooke.

Not voting: Arrington.

On motion, Dr. C. R. C. Johnson was elected text book agent for the County for session 1928-'29.

The resignation of Miss Margaret Pattie as teacher at the Wellington school was received and accepted.

The following bills were presented, read and ordered paid.

## BRENTSVILLE DISTRICT

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Nokesville Motor Co., gas, oil, etc, Aden truck   | \$42.73       |
| Trennis Dept. Store, floor oil                    | 5.05          |
| I. W. Liskey, load of wood                        | 3.50          |
| Mrs. R. R. Mason, cleaning Greenwich school house | 4.00          |
| A. Crummitt, floor oil                            | 2.50          |
| Carter Skiner, wood, kettle Run, 1925             | 12.50         |
| J. R. Cooke, attendance                           | 5.00          |
| Teachers payroll for May                          | <u>735.00</u> |
|   | 810.28        |

There being no further business the Board adjourned to meet Monday, July 2, 1928.

[signed] J. R. Cooke CHAIRMAN

[signed] R. C. Haydon CLERK

# A Brentsville Citizen of Note

## **DEATH OF ROBERT H. HOOE After Many Years of Usefulness He Laid Down Life's Burdens Sunday Night.**

Mr. Robert Howson Hooe, after several months illness of a complication of diseases, died in his home near New Baltimore, Fauquier county, Sunday [April 27, 1913] night, in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

The funeral took place from the home Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock, Rev V. H. Councill, of the Baptist Church of New Baltimore officiating, and interment was in the family lot in the Manassas cemetery, at 3 o'clock Wednesday afternoon.

The pall-bearers, honorary, were: Messrs. Westwood Hutchison, J. P. Manuel, Geo. W. Johnson, H. F. Lynn, W. T. Whorton and Capt. Jas. E. Herrell, of Ewell Camp, C. V., and the active pall-bearers, all of whom were sons and other near relatives, were: Messrs. John M., Robert V., Daniel P. and Howson B. Hooe, Thomas S. Meredith and Dr. J. Cabell Meredith.

The deceased is survived by three sons: John M. Hooe, Deputy sheriff for Prince William county, and Robert V. Hooe and Daniel P. Hooe, of near new Baltimore, and by four sisters: Mrs. Whitfield Nutt and Mrs. B. F. Iden, of Manassas, and Mrs. Thos. J. Smith and Mrs. W. G. Iden, of Washington,

and by two brothers: Messrs. Howson Hooe, of near Nokesville, and Peter Hooe, of Buckingham county, this State.

Besides his efficient services as Commissioner of the Revenue for upper Prince William county for a number of years, Mr. Hooe filled many other offices of public trust with marked ability, untiring energy and courtesy.

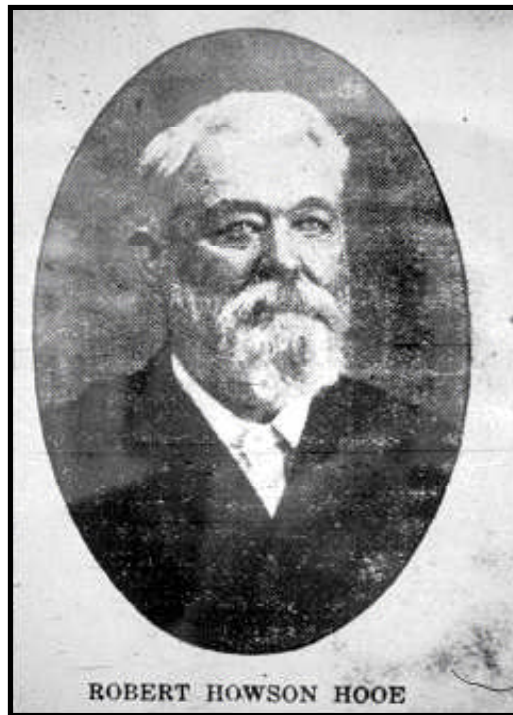
His uniform kindness and personal magnetism placed him in the position of a most formidable

competitor for any office within the gift of the voters of his native county, for everyone liked, and spoke in the highest commendation of "Bob" Hooe.

The Manassas Chapter, U. D. C., and Ewell Camp, Confederate Veterans, attended the obsequies in a body, and among the floral tributes laid upon the grave was a handsome wreath of Magnolio leaves, tied with ribbons of the Confederate colors—the tribute adopted by the Virginia Division of the U. D. C.—was tenderly placed thereon by the hands of Mrs.

A. W. Sinclair, president of the Manassas Chapter of the first named society.

When Company A, (Ewell Guards) commanded by Capt. J. B. Norville, was organized in Brentsville, in June, 1861, Mr. Hooe joined that company as a private for one year, at the expiration of which time he re-enlisted at Yorktown in the spring of 1862 for the remainder of the war and served with distinction in many bloody conflicts until he lost



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## An Afternoon in Jail

Brentsville Jail Visit — 04/14/2012

by Carolyn Lynn

In autumn of 2009, I attended a Halloween event at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre. Although I fancy myself a genealogist and an amateur historian, it was the spooky legends surrounding Brentsville's 19<sup>th</sup> century jail that lured me out on that chilly October night.

The seminar was my second visit to Brentsville but my first opportunity to tour the interior of the jail. Because the building was considered unsound, it had been closed to the general public while waiting for the revenue to begin its transformation. All of the proceeds from the seminar were donated to help fund a project to stabilize the structure and eventually restore it back to its heyday.

Although built as a jail to serve the Prince William County seat, the building has undergone several reincarnations — as a boarding house for female school teachers, as a private residence, and as an office building for the county Park Authority. By 2009, each had left its mark on the structure in a collage of styles visible in the differing types of wall paper, the paint peeling from the walls, widened interior doorways and windows cut into the brick walls. It took quite a bit of imagination to envision any of the rooms as jail cells meant to incarcerate prisoners.

Flash forward to April 2012. At long last, thanks to fundraising, grants, and donations, work has finally begun on the Brentsville Jail. When the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation offered a seminar on historic preservation and a “hard hat tour” of the

restabilization project, I jumped at the chance to see what was going on.

What a difference three years has made! As our tour group approached the jail, led by Dr. Robert Krause, the County Preservationist, and Mike Riley, the Brentsville Site Manager, I could already see changes in the exterior of the building.



Old timbers

A chain link fence now surrounds the site and there are clear signs of work in progress. Most of the white boards that had covered the windows have been removed, once more offering the building a clear view of Bristow Road and the Courthouse itself. Behind the jail the evidence is much more obvious, in the form of

tools and piles of brick and other construction materials.

As we prepared to go inside, Dr. Krause theorized that there may once have been a kitchen behind the building. The work on the jail could be an excellent opportunity to conduct an archeological dig in search of it. Whether there is any real intent to do so was left somewhat unclear.

Hard hats were handed out and we entered the building through the back door — which, we were told, probably didn't exist when the building was first built. The Brentsville Jail housed both minimum security prisoners, like the town drunk, to much more dangerous felons, like murderers awaiting their date with the hangman. Dr. Krause said that he doubted there was more than one door into the original building. More than one entrance to the jail would have offered additional opportunities for escape; therefore, it was likely that the jailor, visitors, and the

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prisoners themselves entered and exited through the door facing the main road.

Standing inside the hallway, just inside the back door, we were shown evidence of what was once a stairway leading to the second floor. The original stairs, now completely gone except for a few markings and shadows on the wall, had been replaced with the more modern, present-day stairway on the opposite wall.

Walking toward the front of the building, we entered the room to our right. It had no intersecting wall, so that we were able to see the length of the building and two additional doors leading out. The plaster on the walls had been removed, exposing the brick underneath and the wooden beams above. In the center of the room, a large section of the concrete floor had been removed to reveal the flooring and earthen foundation beneath. This pit was deep enough that, when one of the visitors stood on the edge to look down, they lost their hard hat which fell to the bottom with a splash. It wasn't ground water, as we supposed, but residue from the wet saw needed to cut through the thick concrete. Dr. Krause explained that there was speculation as to whether the building had a cellar, but cutting through the flooring in this room and the rooms across the hall led to the conclusion that there was never a cellar or any other chamber beneath the building.

An examination of this room reminded me of how much change and remodeling the building had endured in its lifetime. Looking down to where the wall met the floor (and another cut in the concrete), it was possible to get a sense of where the jail's original wooden flooring might have been. At least one (if not both) of the doorways in the outer wall were not original and the windows had clearly been widened, possibly more than once. In fact, we were told that most of the windows may not have existed at all when the jail was first built. Horizontal pieces of wood lodged within the brickwork beside the window frames gave a sense of how small the original windows may have been. It amazes me that many of these additions were made without any consideration for load-bearing walls, further undermining the structural integrity of the building. (Yikes!)

Dividing the room was an archway built of thick wooden beams which is now further supported by metal support poles. Looking up over the cross beam, the brick was a crumbling, sagging patchwork that spoke of an attempt to support the weight of the floor above! The wood used to create this brace showed cuts and indentations that implied that they had been removed from another part of the building — very possibly one of the higher security jail cells — to serve this new purpose. In fact, throughout our tour we saw evidence of wood that had been removed/replaced/rearranged to serve certain remodeling/structural needs. For instance, above a second floor door frame can be seen sections of wood with neat holes cut into them that may have once held hardware, such as a lock or a doorknob.

Walking into the cell across the hall on the first floor, we found another large chunk of cement flooring missing and similar signs of window additions and widening. Unlike the previous room, the wall to the inner corridor was not made of brick but heavy, 8 inch thick beams of white oak. This was one of the jail cells intended for high security prisoners. The entire interior of the cell would have been lined with these beams and covered with further wooden paneling. There would have been only one window — a much smaller affair than the two that now exist — and a heavy wooden door with a slot through which to pass food. In order to escape, a prisoner would have had to find a way to cut/tunnel through the wooden paneling, the underlying thick oak beams, and the exterior brickwork reinforced with more wooden beams. (As a side note, this particular cell is somewhat notorious. In 1872, James F. Clark, a Commonwealth attorney, was incarcerated there after being charged with “abducting and carrying away Miss Fannie Fewell.” Ms. Fewell's brother, Lucien “Rhoda” Fewell, entered the jail — the jailor having stepped away and conveniently leaving the door open — and shot Clark while in his cell, mortally wounding him. Fewell was later charged with the murder but acquitted.)

In the cell's current state, it wouldn't take much to escape its confines. The wood paneling is long gone and so, too, are most of

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the beams. The few that remain are shadows of their former selves — what little there is of them. The termite damage is extensive and devastating, leaving jagged holes large enough to see through. The bottom on several has been eaten away, leaving them literally hanging from the upper crossbeam and offering no support to the structure whatsoever. Each beam bears a square of paper with a number and a letter written in chalk. Dr. Krause explained that everything was being documented by an artist — placement and shape of the boards, especially cuttings and holes to indicate where hardware may have been — in order to aid in a more accurate restoration. The letters indicated what would happen to the original board itself. S = Save (for future examination but not necessarily for future use in the building) or D = Dumpster (i.e., it could not be saved and would have to be thrown out).

Equally disturbing was the condition of the brickwork. More than missing mortar and gaps between the masonry, many of the bricks are crumbling into dust. Thermal imaging conducted on the building just a few weeks ago showed gaps within the walls where the bricks had virtually disintegrated.

Climbing the stairs to the second floor, we walked somewhat gingerly into the rooms in spite of assurances that the flooring was sound enough to support us. Again, we found that the plaster had been removed to expose the bones of the building. The ceiling had also been removed, giving us a view up into the eaves and the framework that held the metal roof in place. A barred window at the rear of the building shows evidence of one prisoner's attempt to escape by setting fire to it. The wood on the window is charred and the ceiling beams show signs of smoke damage. This sort of escape attempt was not unusual in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Brentsville Jail, at least one prisoner is

rumored to have succeeded. The attempt probably destroyed the building's roof in the process.

I came away from my visit to the jail with a better understanding of the building's condition (and amazement that it has stood for so long) as well as an appreciation for the monumental task that lies ahead to restore this historic treasure. Brickwork throughout the



**Charred timber**

building will need to be replaced and repointed (i.e., new mortar placed to correct defective mortar joints in the masonry). Dr. Krause indicated that the masonry work is their first priority. Meanwhile, they intend to save as much of the remaining wood as possible but most likely the majority of

it will have to be replaced – preferably with white oak cut and cured and then hand hewn to approximate the originals. With that in mind, Brentsville has set up a working saw mill on site and is in the process of building a barn-like structure behind the parking lot where the new wood will need to cure (i.e., left to dry to ensure that dimensional changes through shrinkage are confined to the drying process). It could take up to two years before the wood will be ready for use.

When will the jail be fully restored and open to the public? Our guides confessed that it is too early to say. There are still too many factors that may help or hinder the work that needs to be done. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing how things progress and am looking forward to the day when the Brentsville Jail opens once more for “business.”

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

HEADQUARTERS SECOND DIVISION, TWENTIETH CORPS,  
Near Bladensburg, Md. , May 31, 1865.  
[Abridged for this publication]

COLONEL: I have the honor to submit the following report of the movements of my command since the date at which my last report closed:

May 16, my division in advance, marched at 4. 30 a.m. toward Brentsville. Passed Hartwood Church and encamped at Town Creek, near Bristerburg; weather very hot; water scarce and roads dusty, rendering the March exhausting to troops; distance, seventeen miles and three quarters. May 17, marched in advance of the corps at 4. 30 a.m., crossed Cedar Run, and encamped at Brentsville. The weather grows more oppressively hot; distance, sixteen miles. May 18, marched, being in the rear, at 10 a.m. ; crossed Broad Run and Bull Run at Woodward's Ford, and late in the evening encamped within two miles of Fairfax Station. The air was terribly hot until 4 p.m. ; when a severe thunder-storm arose. Roads to day hilly and bad generally; distance, fourteen miles. May 19, marched at 6 a.m., still in the rear. Passed Fairfax Station, and followed a small road which entered the Alexandria turnpike between Fairfax Court-House and Annandale; then marching on the turnpike, we encamped on Gregory's farm, three

miles and a half from Alexandria; distance, eighteen miles. May 24, marched in review through Washington City, and encamped between Fort Thayer and Bladensburg; distance marched, seventeen miles.

This report, including simply the movements and operations of my command since the date of the last report, is submitted for the information of the major-general commanding the corps. It is my purpose as soon as possible to forward a supplementary report embracing a retrospect of the organization of this division, its services and the principal changes which have taken place in it, with such statistics as may be valuable or interesting for future reference.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,  
your obedient servant,

JOHN W. GEARY,  
Brevet Major-General,  
Commanding.

Lieutenant Colonel H. W. PERKINS,  
Asst. Adjt. General,  
Twentieth Corps.



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his left arm in the second battle of Cold Harbor, where his company lost heavily in killed and wounded, on May 30, 1864.

After spending three months in Winder hospital, in Richmond, he was detailed as Quartermaster-Sergeant of his regiment, serving in that capacity until honorably discharged for disability, February 1, 1865. When his company went to the front it was assigned to the "bloody" 49<sup>th</sup> Virginia regiment, Pergram's Brigade and "Stonewall" Jackson's Corps. Besides numerous minor engagements he participated in the famous battles of First and Second Manassas, Williamsburg, Seven-days-fight around Richmond, Cedar Mountain, Antietam or Sharpsburg, the bloody engagement at Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg and the bloody conflict at Cold Harbor.

Soon after the close of the war Mr. Hooe married Miss Bettie Meredith, one of Prince William's most accomplished and popular young ladies, who was a daughter of the late Thos. S. Meredith and a sister of the late Congressman E. E. Meredith and of Dr. J. Cabell Meredith, of Manassas, Thos. S. Meredith, of near Gainesville, and Richard Meredith, of Texas.

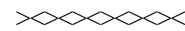
In the death of R. H. Hooe his sons have lost a kind, sympathetic and indulgent father, whose counsel was their guide; the community in which he resided a warm-hearted and faithful friend and neighbor, and the county a useful citizen who was alive to every important issue affecting public interest for weal or for woe. When the large concourse of admiring friends and relatives stood, with bared heads, around the open sepulcher and saw all that was mortal of their faithful friend and companion lowered to its last resting place, the thought was uppermost in the minds of all that a good man had gone to his last reward. May he rest in peace.

Source: The Journal Messenger, May 2, 1913

## F e e d b a c k

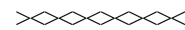
I read the Brentsville News on-line and this is a great thing! Thanks for sending it & you don't have to send the printable version anymore to me.....appreciate that you did send all the previous ones. I enjoyed reading about the sale of the Couthouse and the schools. The stories about the deaths and prisoners was surely interesting too. It was interesting in it's entirety!

Mickey Winslow



I really enjoy receiving your well-researched and presented history of the Brentsville area. As you know, my family roots are in Nokesville and the surrounding area and the news reconnects me to people and places I know and of which I have wonderful memories. It was a real blessing for me to be able to be there for the fiftieth anniversary for our high school. Keep up the valued work you are doing.

Tom Cowne



Dad and I both appreciate the quality and content of the Brentsville Neighbors Newsletter as well as the obvious effort and heart you put into it!

Thank you  
Charlotte Bear

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green for a day or two before changing to the more common gray. Young frogs will also sometimes maintain a light green color and turn gray or darker green after reaching adulthood.

**Gender identification:** The female does not croak and has a white throat. The male does croak and has a black/gray throat. And, the female is usually larger than the male.

**Mating:** Mating calls and chorusing is most frequent at night, but individuals often call during daytime in response to thunder or other loud noises.

**Habitat:** The gray tree frog is most common in forested areas, as it is highly arboreal. Their calls are often heard in rural residential areas of the east coast.

**Behavior:** These frogs rarely ever descend from high treetops except for breeding. They are strictly nocturnal. Male gray tree frogs rarely have large choruses as they are mostly solitary animals, but might vocalize competitively at the height of breeding periods.

# **Brentsville Neighbors**

## **Preserving Brentsville's History**

Contact us on:  
[morganbreeden@aol.com](mailto:morganbreeden@aol.com)

**IN GOD WE TRUST**

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

