

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

August 2012



Welcome Neighbors,

Mark your calendar—October 6, 2012, will be the reunion of those who have attended the one-room school in Brentsville. Full details will be published next month but for now, plans are underway to have a “grand event” that will celebrate the restoration of the school with guest speakers, a popular music group and ... well, full details next month. But for now we can say this will be a cooperative effort sponsored by the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation, Historic Prince William and the Historic Preservation Division. We believe there will be a lot of visitors so make sure you plan to attend.

Work has already started on the school restoration with the removal of the air conditioning equipment and enclosure that was built in the back of the school room. The modern electric lights are being removed and we hope to find desks and an appropriate stove to complete the process. If you know where desks or a stove might be available, please let us know as soon as possible.

Restoration work on the jail is progressing although not very quickly at the moment. Much

of the floor space has been excavated and the stairs removed. Now there must be a contract awarded to stabilize the bricks inside the structure. More on this as it become available. Gathering information for the series “To Build a Jail” has been a challenge but a rewarding one. We hope you find the information of interest.

On page three we find the schoolboard minutes are signed by B. B. Thornton, Clerk. A name not often seen, I wanted more information and found that he is Bickley Buckner Thornton, third child of Maj. William Willis Thornton. Born May 30, 1858, in Brentsville, he would have been barely three years old when his father helped organize and took command of the Prince William Cavalry on the grounds of the Brentsville Courthouse. Now, in 1885, he was an educated man of 27 although he may have often walked in the shadow of his older sibling, James Bankhead Taylor (better known as J. B. T.) Thornton who was but two years his senior.

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan

This month:

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|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| ➤ Flashback | page 2 | ➤ A Brentsville Citizen | pages 6 & 7 |
| ➤ Where Wild Things Live | pages 2 & 9 | ➤ “Calmness of Woods” | page 8 |
| ➤ Snippets | page 3 | ➤ Reader Feedback | page 9 |
| ➤ To Build a Jail | pages 4, 5 & 9 | | |

Flashback

Where WILD
things live...

Brentsville

Mr. and Mrs. Wister Stephens and family and Miss Mary Lou Lipscomb spent a day at Colonial Beach recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Breeden, and David and Daniel, of Maryland, have been the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Breeden.

Mrs. John Cox led the meeting of the Girl Scouts last week.

Mrs. James Burdette has been the guest of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hedrick had as their guests, Mr. and Mrs. James Arrington and daughter, Virginia Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hedrick, Water Ray Hedrick and Mr. and Mrs. James Rogers; also Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Rosenburger and their daughter and daughter-in-law, Mrs. Archie Thomasson, Jr. and Ruth.

Mr. and Mrs. John Petty had as recent guests, Mr. and Mrs. George Petty and family and Mr. Fred Petty of Washington, D. C.

Mr. and Mrs. John Donovan had for a recent week-end guest their daughter, Audrey, from Washington.

Mrs. Myrtle Keys went to Alexandria to attend her grand-daughter, Barbara Wade's birthday party. Barbara is five years old.

Miss Mary Stephens has returned home after completing her course in summer school at Warrenton.

Source: The Manassas Journal, August 17, 1945



Hackberry emperor *Asterocampa celtis*

The hackberry emperor, *Asterocampa celtis* (Boisduval & Leconte), is also known as the hackberry butterfly (Miller 1992) although the latter name is somewhat misleading because there are two other eastern United States butterflies – the American snout, *Libytheana carinenta* [Cramer], and the tawny emperor, *Asterocampa clyton* [Boisduval & Leconte]—and also a number of other *Asterocampa* species, in other areas, that use hackberries as their exclusive caterpillar host plants (Scott 1986).

The hackberry emperor is a common butterfly of river bottoms and other areas where its host plants are common, but it also may be found in upland areas.

Distribution: The hackberry emperor is found from northeastern Mexico northward into the southwestern U.S. and to Nebraska and throughout most of the eastern U.S. except for the northern half of Wisconsin, Michigan and New York and all of New England. It is common in northern and central Florida but is infrequent in southern Florida.

Description: The wing spread of adults is 2.0 to 2.6 inches. Adults are somewhat variable regionally and the variants (races) are sometimes given subspecific names. The upper surface of the wings is light brown with the distal half of the forewing darker. The



Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



The annual meeting of the County School Board was held at Brentsville on Aug. 10th, 1885, Supt. Martyne presiding.

On motion Present: Messrs. Jones, Barbee, Brawner, Merchant, Payne, King, Barbour, Wilkins, Lynn, Dayne, Brown, Powell and Gossom.

On motion it was resolved that the District Boards of this County can make contracts with teachers so much per month and any amount per capita that the said Boards may agree upon; and can enter into special covenant that the per capita shall not exceed the salary agreed upon per month.

Motion was made and carried that Christmas day, the 22nd day of February, Easter Monday and Thanksgiving day be regarded as legal holidays and that teachers shall receive pay for those days.

On motion it was resolved that the County Treasurer be allowed a commission of two per cent for disbursing the state funds of 1884 and 1883.

It was moved and carried that a committee of three be appointed by the Chairman to settle accounts with the Clerk and trustees. Messrs. J. J. Davies, Jno. M. Payne and S. E. Jones were appointed.

Motion was made and carried that the contract heretofore existing with the Manassas Gazette for the publication of school matters, be renewed.

A bill of four dollars was ordered to be paid to the clerk for services to date.

A motion was made and carried that the committee appointed to settle with the district clerks be requested, in reviewing the accounts of said clerks, not to make any erasures by reason of drafts having been issued and not presented for payments, but to charge such drafts as have not been presented for payment to the districts which issued them.

It was moved and carried that the clerks who take the census be allowed a compensation of two cents per capita extra.

It was moved and carried that the Superintendent be allowed fifteen dollars to cover expenses of stationary etc. The clerk drew an order for same.

On motion the meeting adjourned.

[signed] B B Thornton, Clerk.

To Build a Jail

By Morgan Breeden

Part 2 - The Foundation

James Driscoll must have been a very confident man. He was taking on the construction of a jail 36 feet wide by 30 feet deep that would contain four criminal cells, two debtor cells and two rooms for office/living. The building would have an outside shell of brick but the criminal cells would contain very large oak timbers that must be tied together to form a single unit, all of which means there would be an abnormally heavy load placed on the foundation. To support such a structure the specifications probably called for stone, 2 ½ feet wide by 2 feet deep. And not simply rocks placed in a trench but blocks of stone that would fit firmly together to bear such a load. Sandstone was the answer.

During recent excavations of the floor within the jail we have found that the foundation was not limited to the four outside walls but included all walls at the ground floor. Thus, three foundations of 36 feet each were needed across the width and four foundations of 30 feet each were needed vertically (see Figure 1). This results in a requirement of approximately 1,100 cubic feet of stone and at approximately 150 pounds per cubic foot amounts to roughly 83 tons. Taking into account some waste, probably 85 tons of sandstone blocks might have been ordered.

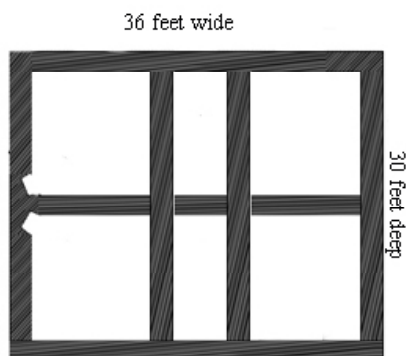


Figure 1

With the destruction of so many records during the great war, details of what was ordered, from whom, when, and at what cost have been lost. As Ron Turner pointed out, “I don’t have a clue where the stones were from and can’t think of a source to research. The only place the information would possibly be is in the 1820s court minutes, and they have been missing since the Civil War.” So lacking proof of information, I shall take the liberty of assuming a number of “possibilities” for the purpose of this article. For example, we know there was a sandstone quarry located near Brentsville in the junction of Cedar Run and Slate Run that was referred to as the Red Stone Quarry. But we don’t know exactly when that quarry was opened or by whom. Is it possible to determine if the stone in the foundation actually came from that quarry? Yes! Aaron Siegel, Minerals Specialist, DMME-Division of Mineral Mining, has suggested we contact Virginia Tech’s Department of Geosciences, which has equipment that could probably match our rock samples fairly conclusively. A note asking for assistance has been fired off to them but no reply has yet been received, possibly because of summer recess. Should we determine for sure the origin of this stone we will share this information in a future issue..

Let’s step to the side for a moment and consider the stone itself.

“Manassas sandstone for the most part is intercalated with Bull Run shales and extends in very broken belts from a few miles south of the Potomac River over all the areas to the Carolina border in the purely continental areas, and in the Farmville and Richmond areas it is quite often exposed.

Continued on page 5

"In the long Triassic basins, which were valleys, the sediments accumulated under residual conditions. On the sides and bottoms of these valleys accumulated the coarse deposits formed directly from the material on which the conglomerates rest. As the basin filled the order from the margin toward the center was coarse, medium, and fine; such is the arrangement we find today, and taking this order in connection with the fossil life, its structure and character of the sediments, we work back to the physical environments of the time when the Triassic sediments were accumulated.

"The sandstones occur on both sides of the basins in narrow belts and, where the natural sequence has not been disturbed by faulting and not covered by Recent material or soil, the conglomerates underlie the sandstones and the latter are, in turn, overlain by the Bull Run shales.

"The term Manassas is used for the Triassic sandstone, because around Manassas, Prince William County, the formation is exposed so well and here, too, the sandstone was first studied and quarried as far back as Civil War days. It is often referred to as the New Red sandstone, Triassic brownstone, and Newark sandstone. It is the same red sandstone found in the Connecticut Valley, in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

"Two varieties of Triassic rock have been used for building purposes, namely red (Manassas) sandstone and diabase. There is no record of the date at which the first quarries were opened in either of these stones or when the first shipments were made. Sandstone was the first worked and is found in buildings 150 years old or older around Aldie in Loudoun County and Manassas in Prince William County.

"The red sandstone has been quarried in a number of places but the main quarries are confined chiefly to the Potomac and Scottsville areas. The famous old home of President James Monroe near Aldie, Loudoun County, has red sandstone for walks, for some of the foundation stone, and also for some of the out buildings. The famous "Stone House", the only building in that section antedating the battle of Bull Run, is built of red sandstone, as is the old stone bridge 1 mile east of the "Stone House." Many of the older residences near the sandstone quarries have foundations of sandstone.

"The red sandstone is similar to the red sandstone of the Connecticut Valley, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland in general appearance. When quarried at the proper time of the year and placed in horizontal position in building, its length of service is as great as the ordinary sandstone. Its

bedding planes and habit of jointing often make it possible to quarry rectangular blocks with very little effort.

"The quarries of the Potomac area were the earliest opened in the Virginia Triassic. There are a number of smaller quarries around Manassas, but they have been abandoned so long that the people have no records of them. The Brentsville and Aldie quarries have not been operated for 45 years [about 1885]."¹

*"Quarrying stone during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was very labor intensive. Stone was cut and shipped with the use of simple machines and animal power. Various workers were needed to extract the stone. A **master-mason**, usually a European who was a master in all aspects of stone work, would oversee the entire quarrying operation. **Skilled Workers** included stone cutters and stone carvers who extracted and rough-cut the stone into desired sizes. Blacksmiths were constantly needed to make and sharpen the cutting tools, wedges, chisels, trimming hammers, sledge hammers, picks, mattocks and axes. Tool marks are still visible in the quarry faces today.*

*"Many **common laborers**, or unskilled laborers, worked at the site. Slaves were hired out by their owners who collected the slaves' wages.*

"First, all vegetation was removed from the top of the stone. Once the stone was exposed, a vertical stone face was picked away, creating a working area. Two vertical channels or side trenches were made 20-feet apart. These trenches were twenty inches wide - barely large enough for a man to squeeze through. A rear trench was made, creating a rectangular section. Grooves were chiseled along the stone face where wedges were inserted to remove a block from the larger stone mass. Once a block of stone was cut, it was hoisted out with a simple derrick and pulley system, placed on a skid, and hauled by oxen to the [destination]."²

Clearly sandstone has been mined since the days of ancient Egyptians. Why then, is it so difficult to find information on the methods of cutting and extracting the stone? That question has not yet been answered. Searching the library and hours on the Internet has not provided much.

In addition to those mentioned above, I am much indebted to Allen Bishop, DMME-Division of Mineral Mining and Florence C. Katrivanos, Geologist, National Minerals Information Center, U.S. Geological Survey,

(Continued on page 9)

A Brentsville Citizen of Note

Arthur Williams Sinclair, son of James Mordecai and Margaret (Williams) Sinclair, was born in Brentsville, Prince William county, Virginia, September 1,



Arthur Williams Sinclair

1851, and was there educated in the private schools. He began his business career as a clerk in a book store in Washington, D.C. After several years he returned to the place of his birth, and entered the law office of Judge C. E. Nicol, there remaining for seven years. Being admitted to the bar of Virginia in 1881, he subsequently became a partner of his former preceptor, an association continuing during the year 1893. From that time until 1903, when he received his son, Charles Armistead, into partnership, Mr. Sinclair practiced independently, the firm of Sinclair & Son continuing until

1913, when, receiving the appointment as postmaster at Manassas, he retired from his legal practice which had been continued with excellent active success



Eloise Armistead

for twenty-five years. For twenty-seven years he was commissioner in chancery for the circuit court of Prince William county, an office to which he was appointed by Judge James Keith, now president judge of the supreme court of Virginia, and was appointed by Judge C. E. Nicol examiner of records in the eighth judicial circuit of Virginia. Having received his appointment as postmaster from President Wilson, Mr. Sinclair entered upon the duties of his new office in June, 1913, and now, familiar with his office, fills it ably and competently. He was one of the organizers of the People's

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

National Bank of Manassas, and is at present its vice-president, having served in that capacity since its organization. He is a member of the Virginia Bar Association, and fraternizes with the Masonic Order and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, in the former society belonging to Manassas Lodge, No. 182, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, having at one time been secretary of that body. In religion a Baptist, his political faith is Democratic.

Mr. Sinclair married, June 28, 1876, Eloise, born in Front Royal, Warren county, Virginia, daughter of George Carter and Laura Virginia (Green) Armistead. The only other child of the family is Mary Landon, who married Dr. Robert Willett Leache, now deceased, three children were born to them, namely: Irene, Aline, and Eugene Hunton Leache. All are married and living in Texas. George Carter Armistead was a son of Colonel Robert Landon and Mary (Carter) Armistead, of near Upperville, Fauquier county, Virginia, descendants of Robert Carter (King) and Betty Landon, his second wife. Colonel Robert Landon Armistead was a son of Major John Baylor and Ann (Carter) Armistead. John Baylor Armistead was a son of John Armistead, colonel in revolutionary war, and Lucy Baylor, daughter of Colonel John Baylor, of Newmarket, Carolina county, Virginia, who was first aide-de-camp on the staff of General George Washington. One of the family who gave valiant service to the cause of the Confederacy, was General Lewis Addison Armistead who was conspicuously engaged at the battle of

Gettysburg and killed in Pickett's charge. Mrs. Sinclair is a direct descendant of Lord Baltimore, founder of Maryland, and is identified with the Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America, Daughters of the American Revolution, the National Society of the Daughters of the War of 1812, and Daughters of the Confederacy. Children of Arthur W. and Eloise (Armistead) Sinclair: 1. Laura Williams, born August 14, 1877; married Edgar Herbert Nash. 2. Charles Armistead, born in Brentsville, Prince William county, Virginia, August 3, 1880; was educated in the public schools, Manassas Institute, and Richmond College, being graduated from the last-named institution as B. L., June 12, 1902, and was admitted to the Virginia bar in the same month; he formed a partnership with his father which continued until 1913, when the elder Sinclair retired to accept the position of postmaster, since which time he has practiced alone; he married Edmonia, daughter of Thomas O. Taylor, of Prince William county, Virginia, and they have four children, Charles Armistead, Jr., Anna B., Elizabeth T. and Arthur Williams, Jr. 3. Kathleen Cook, born in Brentsville, Virginia, July 25, 1883; married Eugene B. Giddings, of Leesburg, Virginia, a merchant of Manassas, Virginia, and has children, Eloise Armistead and Mary Hempstone.

Source: Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume V, 1915, pages 841 & 842 (abridged)

Note: Photos courtesy of Catherine McRae Sinclair, Arthur's Great-Granddaughter.

Last month I introduced you to local photographer, Victor Rook. He has now completed his new DVD, "Calmness of Woods." Here are excerpts from a story he wrote on it:



Insects were a bit less skittish. Like this red-spotted purple butterfly resting on the Manassas Battlefield Stone Bridge marker.

Halfway through the Ellanor C. Lawrence trail off Route 28, out of breath and thinking I should just make my way back to the car, I spotted this wonderful nook inside a fallen tree. Its own little ecosystem of plant life, decaying matter, and probably lots of insects and small animals, it reminded me of the terrariums I kept at home. It was unlike other decaying logs strewn throughout the trails. It screamed, "Look at me, I'm nature's diorama!" The "oh cool" bulb flashed off in my head and I took several pictures from various angles. That moment, finite as it was, set me off on a two-year journey through six of Northern Virginia's most beautiful nature trails: Prince William Forest Park, Manassas Battlefield Park, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Conway Robinson State Forest, Brentsville Nature Trail, and the Bull Run-Occoquan Trail. Fifty long hikes and over two thousand pictures later, I would complete the "Calmness of Woods" DVD.

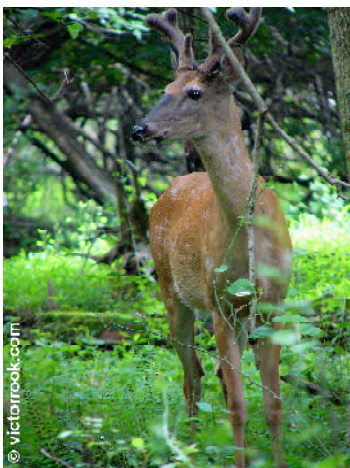
As you can imagine, every picture has a story. Like this one of a young male deer making its way across a pocket of ferns and brush. I was startled a few minutes earlier when a group of three deer jumped over the trail ahead. However, this little guy was a bit more curious. He stayed behind and made his way toward me, gnawing on a few branches, then looking back over at me with my camera.

I must have my own love affair with mushrooms and fungi. So much so that I dedicated an entire video piece to them on the DVD. From the bluebells of Bull Run to the bed of white flowers that covered the forest floors of Conway Robinson State Forest in the spring, I did my best to document the various flora in the parks. Water, pathways, and the changing seasons rounded out my camera's focus for the DVD.

Award-winning composer, Kevin MacLeod, added the soundtracks to the various videos on the DVD and uniquely captures the essence of the featured shots. The DVD also includes a Nature Photography tutorial called "10 Nature Photography Tips."

"Calmness of Woods" is currently available on his website, Amazon.com, the Manassas Museum, and Whimsical Galerie in Old Town Manassas. Though the six parks featured on the DVD have yet to carry it, Victor hopes that your encouragement, emails, and verbal requests at those parks will precipitate in many more people enjoying his work. Hopefully this Made in America product will replace some of those Made in Taiwan products currently on gift shop shelves.

Read more at <http://www.victorrook.com/woods>



(Continued from page 2)

hackberry emperor is readily distinguished from the closely related and similar tawny emperor by the white spots near the apex of the front wing and the sub-marginal black eyespot (also on the forewing), characters that are lacking in the tawny emperor. The ventral aspect of the hind wing is characterized by a row of post-median eyespots with powdery blue-green centers.

Life Cycle and Biology: There are two generations per year throughout most of the range. Adults have a very rapid flight. Males perch on foliage or other parts of the host plants to await females. Females tend to be less active than males and are seen less frequently, but both sexes can be attracted to fermenting fruit baits. Adults feed on tree sap, fermenting fruit, dung, carrion, and rarely flower nectar. They also sip moisture and minerals from mud and readily land on people to drink sweat for salts. Males are attracted to bright objects, and can be attracted from their perches to land on pieces of white paper held in the sun. Eggs are laid singly or in small groups on the undersides of leaves. Caterpillars rest on the undersides of leaves. They are particularly easy to see at night by shining a flashlight up into small trees.

Hosts: The larval hosts of the hackberry emperor are hackberry trees (*Celtis* spp.) in the family Celtidaceae. The two most common hackberries in the eastern U.S., the more northern hackberry, *Celtis occidentalis* Linnaeus, and the more southern sugarberry, *Celtis laevigata* Willd., can usually be recognized by the slightly to heavily warty appearance (or pronounced ridges on mature *C. occidentalis*) of the bark.

Economic Importance: Hackberry emperor larvae are rarely numerous enough to seriously affect host trees. Control measures are not required.

Source: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in820> Donald W. Hall and Jerry F. Butler (abridged)

F e e d b a c k

As always your newsletter is filled with history and wonderful remembrances of life in Brentsville. It would be so wonderful if every small town and village in America had citizens as dedicated as you and those others who work so hard to keep Brentsville vibrant. Thank you and all the “keepers of the knowledge” in the Brentsville area.

Jeri Brooks

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I really enjoyed this issue of the newsletter. Your mix of documents and recollections is special. Thanks

Charlene Carey
Vienna, VA

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Thank you for following up and adding me to your email list. I read a couple of these and found them to be very broad in scope and informative. Keep up the good work.

Dave Goetz
Warrenton

(Continued from page 5)

Reston, VA, for their generous time in helping with this section of the project.

Next month Part III will deal with moving supplies from the source to the building site.

Notes:

1. Virginia Geological Survey, Bulletin 29, Geology of the Virginia Triassic, by Joseph K. Roberts, University of Virginia, 1928
2. Government Island, Government Island Orientation

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

Contact us on:
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IN GOD WE TRUST

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