

# Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

May 2013



Mother's Day  
May 12, 2013

Virginia Gold Cup  
May 4, 2013



Welcome Neighbors,

We're having fun at Brentsville and learning something in the process! Last month there were two days filled with Civil War re-enactors during our Muster Days; we had an enlightening social event with the Certified Tourism Ambassadors; and a large turnout for the Wildflower and Nature Trail Walk conducted by Jeannie Couch. Maybe you're looking for something a little different? Well this month there are two events that might be of interest.

On May 11, 2013, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. there will be a preservation talk and hard-hat tour of the Brentsville Jail. You will learn why it is important to save the Brentsville jail, the scope of work, and why historic preservation is imperative to Prince William County's future. Reservations are a must and there is a \$15.00 charge to participate. This is not suitable for children under 16.

Want something more down to earth? How about a sheep shearing demonstration that will be conducted on May 18, 2013, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.? Hands on activities include modern sheep shearing, carding wool, and simple spinning demonstrations at the Haislip-Hall Farmhouse. There is a \$5.00 charge but children under six

are free. For more information about each of these programs you may call 703-365-7895.

There are three events scheduled for June so far including an old fashioned baseball game and BBQ that you will certainly not want to miss. More on that next month.

For Mother's Day, Dorothy Furrow has provided us with a moving story about her mother's red hat (page 4).

There is an interesting obituary on page 7 about Capt. John Woodbury Fewell. He was born in Brentsville although the article reports it as Prince William County--not incorrect but not completely accurate either. His sister, Laura R. Fewell was featured in our February 2010 newsletter showing that she was responsible for teaching her younger brother (John) during his early years.

And finally, page 9 features a new critter found on the courthouse grounds. We are most grateful to Mr. Mike Clifford of The Virginia Herpetological Society for identifying this elusive subject for us.

Very best wishes,  
Kay and Morgan

## This month:

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# Flashback

## Death of Walter F. Bowen

Died, at the home of his sister, Mrs. David H. Oertly, Washington, D. C., April 5, 1918, after a long and lingering illness, Walter F. Bowen, the only and idolized son of Mrs. M. H. Bowen, and the late Dr. Peter B. Bowen. The deceased was one of the gentlest and most chivalrous of men—loyal to his friends, generous to his foes, and faithful in all relations of life. To his heart-broken mother he was ever the most devoted son, and no society or pleasure drew him from her companionship. Into his short life was crowded untold suffering and pain, which he bore with uncomplaining heroism.

During the last weeks of his illness, he said to his mother, “Try and gain your consent, mama, to let me go. I am so tired of pain and suffering. I am not afraid to die. I am willing to trust to God’s mercy.” And in this spirit he passed into a world where suffering is unknown and where all tears are wiped away. “After life’s fitful fever, he sleeps well.” X

Source: The Manassas Journal, April 12, 1918

## SINCE YOU WENT AWAY

The sun no longer shines for me, the  
birds no longer sing,  
Except in cadences of grief which thru  
my sad heart ring;  
The flowers have lost their fragrance,  
and their hues no longer gay,  
All nature seems in mourning since  
the day you went away.

I creep into your room, my child, and  
hope to find you there,  
And oh! The anguish of my heart to  
see your vacant chair;  
I kneel before its shrine and pray  
that God will grace impart,  
To bear the heavy weight of woe that  
well-nigh breaks my heart.

I listen for your footsteps, but they  
come again no more,  
I long for just one look of love from  
eyes closed evermore;  
The sweet companionship which grew  
in strength from day to day—  
I’d give my life to have again, it was  
my life, my stay.

I know my Saviour leadeth me, my  
faith on him is stayed,  
And in my dark Gethsemane, I pray,  
as once he prayed—  
“Thy will be done,” but oh! My God,  
be near me lest I shrink—  
And fair to have the grace and  
strength this bitter cup to drink!

For in my bitterness of grief I cry as  
David cried,  
Oh, would to God my precious child I  
could for thee have died—  
But though you shall not come to me,  
I know that I shall go—  
And meet you in a better world, where  
sorrow comes no more.

Yes, I shall see you face to face upon  
that golden shore,  
Where sickness, sorrow, pain and  
death shall come again no more;  
I read this blest assurance, and it  
drives away my fears,  
In the rainbow of his promise, through  
the prism of my tears.

Margaret H. Bowen.  
Brentsville, Va.

Source: The Manassas Journal,  
January 17, 1919



# Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



Manassas Va. May 11-1925

## COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING.

The County School Board met as per adjournment on above date with all members present. Minutes of previous meeting read and approved.

On motion the appropriation of \$200 for the support of Home Demonstration work in Pr. William county; said appropriation to apply toward Miss Gilbert's salary as agent.

On motion Mr Cooke was authorized to rent the Brentsville school lot for pasture and to repair fence etc.

On motion Miss Grace B Moran was elected Rural Supervisor for next year at a salary of \$1800; said salary to include traveling expenses.

The Colored Church building in Quantico which is and has been used for school purposes and now being in need of repairs it was ordered that Mrs Cline have such repairs, painting etc. done at the expense of the County School Board.

In re: Haymarket High School.

Whereas the State Board of Education has refused to continue credit to the Haymarket Four Year High School for the session of 1924-25, and

Whereas the people and patrons are very much dissatisfied and feel that since the school was accredited last year and denied this year that great injustice has been done to both school and pupils and to the school spirit and school morale in that part of Prince William County, and

Whereas the pupils entering said school last fall with the expectation that its credit was assured are now disappointed so that great dissatisfaction now obtains among them and their parents, and

Whereas the County School Board is disappointed and feels that its efforts in trying to establish better educational facilities in convenient locations of the county have been hindered, and

Whereas the opinion of all concerned is that the State Board of Education has rendered a hardship upon certain of our student body if the school is not accredited this year, be it now

**RESOLVED** that the County School Board respectfully enters its protest against the action of the State Board of Education in any regulation whereby the Standardization of this school is disestablished.

**RESOLVED** that a copy of this resolution be handed to the committee at Haymarket for presentation to the State Board of Education.

# Mother's Red Hat

By Dorothy Bean Furrow

April 15, 2013

I remember Mother's hats from over the years. She had a small little black felt one that had a short black veil that came over the face to about the tip of her nose. Then there were many straw hats that were worn in the garden or as she would go into the fields of evenings to bring the cows home. These would have the brim soaked with sweat at the end of those sweltering summer days.

I can see her now sitting under the shade tree after being out in the garden for what seemed like hours as we pulled weeds, picked beans, tomatoes or did the chore of the day. Mother's hat was always near and often she'd pick it up and use it as a fan, either to cool herself or chase away the flies.

When going into the bottom, which we called the area down by the run, she'd use the hat to chase the cows by taking it off and 'swishing' it at them. More likely than not she'd have a hoe with her to chop down a cedar tree or some thistles and she'd lay her hat down on the ground to use the hoe. Sometimes she'd forget to pick it up when she'd finish and then we'd have to go back and search for it.

I don't recall Mother ever wearing a hat when she went to town, but then we didn't go to town very often. We had most everything we needed right there on the farm.

As the years went by Mother started going to the Counts Reunions. At one of these she got a baseball cap that had "Counts Reunion" stamped on it. I think she won it for being the oldest one there that year and was she ever proud. If I'm not mistaken she may have been 100 that year. It was the favorite she wore when she'd ride her scooter around the neighborhood.

My fondest memories of Mother wearing a hat was in her later years when she started wearing one quite often; most everywhere she went she'd be decked out with her hat. She liked to dress more nicely than she was able to while farming and I enjoyed helping her do so. Red was her very favorite color. I started buying lovely outfits for her, many items in red. One year around Christmas I found the perfect red felt hat with a semi wide brim. That became Mother's favorite hat. She would want to wear it year round with whatever she had on. Many people from store clerks and neighbors to her doctor became familiar with the little lady with the red hat. I wish I'd not played so much with



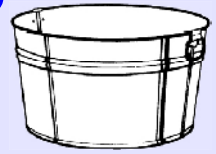
Verona Counts Bean Craig

that first felt hat of Mother's that I remember so well and it could be with all the others that I have which she wore. Now these days I'm thinking, as I become more of my mother, that I too may start wearing a hat but I know I'll never wear one as eloquently as the red one that Mother wore.

# The Rattle-Bang



By Morgan Breeden



While transcribing a copy of Agnes Webster's "Letter From Brentsville" that was published in the Manassas Messenger on May 14, 1948, I could not help but smile at the following item:

*"On Saturday night a shower was given for Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Keys at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys, and attended by practically every able-bodied citizen in the community with the exception of Mrs. Cox, whose pet goat took that precise moment to announce the arrival of twin babies. After the shower there was a wienie-roast out of doors, and a hilarious evening was concluded by what is known locally as a "rattle-bang" serenade to the young couple. This interesting musical form is distinguished by quantity, rather than quality, of sound, and the instruments used are a variety of metal utensils such as washtubs, kitchen spoons, up-ended buckets and such. Inasmuch as everyone in town was present, however, there were no complaints, and it was generally agreed that the party was a rousing success."*

Although I was not quite six years old, I remember this event that introduced me to a very old country custom—a "rattle-bang," sometimes referred to as a "shivaree" or "chivaree." Normally as I prepare a story about how things were done in the past I turn to my trusty computer and the Internet to conduct research. No different this time only sadly, I was not about to find a single item on the "rattle-bang" so it's now what I "think" I remember my mother telling me. Those of you who are much older than am I are encouraged to correct mistakes I'll no doubt make. So let me describe the process.

Young couples just married in a small town like Brentsville would normally start their life together with the barest essentials. Normally the

immediate family would sponsor a wedding shower, very often on the day of the wedding, where the newlyweds would receive useful but modest presents. Most of these were inexpensive—we were a poor community and could not afford expensive gifts. Many were hand-made such as quilts or crochet pieces. A simple meal might be included like the "wienie-roast out of doors." Sometimes there would be dancing and sometimes music but always there was a very enjoyable time had by all. The party would continue until bed time and then the guests would all say their good-nights and leave. At least they pretended to leave. Out of sight of the house they would wait with great anticipation until the lights in the bridal bedroom were extinguished. And then ever so quietly all of the guests would sneak back to the house and wait outside. When it was believed that the bride and groom were in bed and just becoming acquainted with each other, everyone would suddenly start banging on the pots and pans or just about anything that would make noise. Of course the couple had no choice but to get dressed and once again greet the guests (with the bride blushing a bright red).

What a cruel thing to do one might say. But all old customs had a practical side as well. When the guests left the second time, they would leave behind all of the instruments of noise. And while they were not new (maybe even dented and worn), the young couple would now have a greater collection of useful objects with which to start their life together.

I'm not sure when the last "rattle-bang" was conducted in Brentsville. I know it was a long time ago. Alas, the need has disappeared along with so many other customs. Now the young bride is "showered" with gifts from her "registry" and should there be duplicate items received, they can always be exchanged for something else. But I wonder, are we really so much better off now?

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

HEADQUARTERS,  
Manassas, May 28, 1862.

Brigadier-General McCALL, Falmouth:

Instruct General King to move his whole division early to-morrow morning to Catlett's, Warrenton and White Plains. Make arrangements to have that division of the pontoon train which is provided with horses and under Captain Swett, of the Third Maine Battery, to come with the wagons of Major Houston, for which one company of King's cavalry will serve as an escort. They are to move on to this point via Dumfries and Brentsville. Let 300 beef cattle, now at Falmouth, be driven with King's division to Catlett's. Acknowledge the receipt of this.

By order of General McDowell:

ED. SCHRIVER,  
Chief of Staff.

George Archibald McCall (March 16, 1802 – February 25, 1868) was a United States Army officer who became a Brigadier General and prisoner of war during the American Civil War. He was also a naturalist.

McCall was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was appointed from that state to the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1822. He was assigned to the 1st U.S. Infantry then the 4th U.S. Infantry before serving as aide-de-camp to Gen. Edmund P. Gaines into the beginning of the Second Seminole War. He distinguished himself during the Mexican-American War under Zachary Taylor, receiving brevet promotions to major for gallantry at Palo Alto and to lieutenant colonel for Resaca de la Palma. He retired with 31 years service as Colonel and Inspector General of the Army in 1853.



At the beginning of the Civil War, McCall helped organize Pennsylvania volunteers as major general of the state militia and was commissioned brigadier general of volunteers in May 1861. He helped organize and led the famous Pennsylvania Reserves Division, which served as the 2nd Division, I Corps, Army of the Potomac, and 3rd Division, V Corps. He was one of the oldest West Point graduates to serve in the war.

McCall served in the Peninsula Campaign and was wounded and captured at Frayser's Farm, Virginia, in June 1862. He was imprisoned in Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. Previous illness was aggravated by his confinement in prison, and after his exchange (for Simon Bolivar Buckner) in August, McCall resigned due to poor health in March 1863.

In retirement, McCall farmed in Pennsylvania. He died at his "Belair" estate in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and is buried in Christ Church Cemetery in his native Philadelphia.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

# A Citizen of Note

## John W. Fewell

From Dispatch, Meridian, Miss, Dec. 27, 1906 – There died at his home in the city yesterday afternoon, at 4:30 o'clock surrounded by his family and others near to him, one of Meridian's best known and most talented citizens Hon. John W. Fewell, familiarly known to all his acquaintances and friends as Captain Fewell, in the sixty-third year of his age. This announcement will be read with genuine sorrow by his hosts of acquaintances, friends and admirers, not alone in his home city and county, but throughout Mississippi and elsewhere in the south, for he was a man known personally and by character by man beyond the boundaries of his own state.

John Woodbury

Fewell, the subject of this sketch, was born in Prince William County, Virginia, October 18, 1844, and at the time of his death was 62 years, 2 months, and 8 days old. He lived on a farm in that county until 1861 when at the age of seventeen he enlisted in the Confederate service and through the historic four years of the Confederacy's life followed its fortunes as a private soldier in the camp, on the march, and

on the battle fields.

He was in the first battle of Manassas, and was with General J. E. B. Stuart from that battle to Yellow Tavern where his dashing cavalry

leader was killed, for a time acting as courier for General Stuart. He was captured at Falling Waters and was held a prisoner by the Federals in Fort Delaware prison about eight months when he was exchanged, and, returning to his command, served until he was disabled by a severe wound in the right leg, which occurred only thirty days before General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. It was at the time of his severe wound that he again fell into the hands of the Federals. The wound was of such a nature that



it became necessary to amputate his leg, which was done while he was held as a prisoner. He was carried to Petersburg and remained there in the Federal hospital until the surrender. He was a gallant soldier, did valiant service in many bloody battles for the cause he loved; and while he loved at times to sit and talk over with others the story and the deeds of those eventful years, he delighted more to dwell upon and magnify the

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

valor of others than to rehearse the part which he himself bore.

Returning to his Virginia home after the war had closed, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered from his wound he entered The University of Virginia to prepare of that career which he subsequently carved for himself with such eminent success in the state of Mississippi. He was graduated in law at that university and was a college-mate there of the late Samuel Spencer who was so recently killed in the unfortunate collision on the Southern Railway in Virginia.

He came to Meridian in 1868 at the age of twenty-four years where he has resided continuously since. He had been there but a short time when General Robert E. Lee died. Having in the short period of his residence here at that time impressed himself upon the community as a young man of unusual talent, he was selected to deliver a eulogy on the life and character of the South's great soldier. The South was in tears; her chieftain was dead. There are only a few of the Meridian citizens of that day left who heard the eloquent tribute which the boy veteran on crutches paid to the character of the great and lamented Lee whose standard he himself had so recently followed through the hot breath of many battles. This occasion will be remembered by the few who are left as Captain Fewell's first introduction to the Meridian public.

Captain Fewell was not long in establishing himself as a lawyer. He has always enjoyed a large and lucrative practice. In 1869 he was made the first local attorney for the Alabama and Chattanooga railroad, now known as the Alabama Great Southern, and has been the attorney for this company continuously a part of the Queen and Crescent system; also for the New Orleans and the North Eastern when it was

constructed in 1883 – all of which positions he retained until his death. For a time he was attorney for the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia and the Mobile and Ohio roads.

In 1875 he was elected to the state senate and served one or more terms with distinction in that body. He was a member of the state constitutional convention of 1890 from the state at large, and was appointed by Governor McLaurin as circuit judge of this district in the latter part of the 90's. After serving as circuit judge for only a comparatively short time, he tendered his resignation which was accepted, his practice demanding his time and attention. For the past fifteen months, on account of failing health, he has been unable to attend to business of any consequence. Since August last he has been confined to his home, after having returned from his old home in Virginia where he went, hoping that old home scenes and associations might prove of benefit to him. At the time of his death he was senior member of the law firm of Fewell, Hazeman and Fewell.

He married in Meridian in 1870 to Miss Olivia Gaines, who survives him. Their children who are living and grown to manhood and womanhood are William L., Thos. G. and James H. Fewell; Mrs. Nellie Austin and Misses Lucy and Ollie Fewell – all residing in this city, except the eldest daughter, Mrs. Austin, whose home is in Atlanta, Ga. Besides these, he leaves a sister, Miss Laura R. Fewell, and a brother, Mr. R. A. Fewell.

He was buried at Rose Hill cemetery.

Source: The Manassas Journal, January 11, 1907  
Photo courtesy of The Manassas Museum



# Where W I L D Things Live

## Northern Cricket Frog

*Acris crepitans*

This frog was identified by Mr. Mike Clifford, Education Committee Chairman, The Virginia Herpetological Society. He commented, "Sometimes they are plain mud-colored like this one, but they also frequently display beautiful greenish or reddish shapes & colors. The small size and warty skin are typical of our cricket frogs."



of leaping up to 6 ft in a single jump and are excellent swimmers.

**Reproduction:** Breeding generally occurs from May through July. The males call from emergent vegetation with a high-pitched, short, pebble-like call which is repeated at an increasing rate. The sound suggests pebbles being clicked together,

The northern cricket frog (*Acris crepitans*) is a species of small hylid frog native to the United States and northeastern Mexico. Despite being members of the tree frog family, they are not arboreal.

This is one of North America's two smallest vertebrates, ranging from 0.75 to 1.5 inches long. Its dorsal coloration varies widely, and includes greys, greens, and browns, often in irregular blotching patterns. Typically there is dark banding on the legs and a white bar from the eye to the base of the foreleg. The skin has a bumpy texture.

**Behavior and diet:** Northern cricket frogs are diurnal (active during the day) and generally active much of the year, except in midwinter in northern areas when the water is frozen. Their primary diet is small (0.5- to 1.5-in-long) insects, including mosquitos. They are, in turn, preyed upon by a number of species, including birds, fish, and other frogs. To escape predators, they are capable

much like a cricket, hence the name. One egg is laid at a time, generally attached to a piece of vegetation. The 0.5-in tadpoles hatch in only a few days, and undergo metamorphosis in early fall. Maturity is usually reached in less than a year.

**Habitat:** Cricket frogs prefer the edges of slow-moving, permanent bodies of water. Large groups of them can often be found together along the muddy banks of shallow streams, especially during premigratory clustering. The northern cricket frog has been observed to hibernate upland, often at considerable distances from water.

**Conservation status:** Frogs such as *A. crepitans* are important as an indicator of wetland health and general environmental quality in the areas they inhabit. *Acris crepitans* is listed as an endangered species in New York. Cricket frogs are also an endangered species in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

# **Brentsville Neighbors**

## **Preserving Brentsville's History**

Contact us on:

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All back issues on:

<http://www.historicprincewilliam.org/brentsvilleneighbors/index.html>

**IN GOD WE TRUST**

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