

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

**March 2015**

Welcome neighbors,

I sure wish I had a wood stove. I know the weather has been colder but I have a short memory for things like that. My heat exchanger has been running without stop for the past three weeks. Of course, having an all electric house does have it’s advantages—if you own the electric company. As I sit here writing this there is another storm starting to drop snow and the temperature has warmed up to a balmy 16 degrees. But they say it will warm up and all the snow should be gone. Maybe by June... Just for the fun of it I checked back 100 years ago and for the week ending March 17<sup>th</sup> the maximum temperature was 60 on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> while the minimum temperature was 25, also on Monday March 15<sup>th</sup>. There was no precipitation during the week. (The Manassas Journal, March 19, 1915)

But let’s switch to a more pleasant subject – an upcoming event – The Walking Tour of Brentsville on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Yes, we know that’s more than a month away but you will be reminded again next month and this is for planning purposes. The Site staff are busy making all sorts of arrangements

just for you. Little things like consent to trespass (a good thing) and finalizing the route and buildings to discuss. At the moment it will start and end at the one room school and cover an area from the corner of Old Church and Bristow Roads to the vicinity of the Superette. Locations will include historic cemeteries, historic buildings and the sites of long ago structures. While the town of Brentsville grew up around the Courthouse and Jail, the town was and still is much larger than the Historic Centre. Join local historians as we explore the rich heritage of Brentsville outside of the historic site. Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring something small to sit on along the way. No pets please. The cost is \$35.00 per person and the county will provide lunch. Get your reservations in early by calling 703-792-4754.

Have memories of Brentsville that you would be willing to share? We’d love to include them in the newsletter. You need not be a famous author, just a neighbor with a story to tell.

Very best wishes,  
Kay and Morgan

## **This month:**

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We have been going about all winter reporting on our neighbors' ailments in a superior sort of way. "So-and-so is down with the flu," we have said, "poor fellow." Adding condescendingly, "No constitution." We are now compelled to publicly admit that this desperate character, the "flu bug" will fearlessly attack the most hardy, and is no respecter of constitutions. What is more, he sneaks up on you in a despicable, underhanded way, so that the first thing you notice is general annoyance and irritation with the world at large, and your intimates in particular. It is so easy to blame this on other people that you don't pay much attention to it, although it does strike you that you are breaking more crockery than usual and have a tendency to say "Oh let the wash be until Thursday."

The next suspicious symptom is when you find yourself thinking, "The children are behaving worse than usual. If I had energy enough to hunt up the hairbrush I would give them all a spanking." Then your husband says, matter-of-factly, "There are no clean socks," and you burst into tears and sob, "I don't see why you have to say things like that to me!" The astonished man looks at you in alarm and inquires if you feel well, and it suddenly occurs to you that you DON'T. Whereupon you stick a thermometer into your mouth and the little black line mounts rapidly to 103 degrees. Then you KNOW you are dying of some rare, undiagnosed tropical malady, and crawl hastily into bed, demanding, in a weak voice, hot water bottles, ice packs and aspirin. For a whole day you are violently ill, with chills, with fever, with sneezing, with coughing, with headaches. The following morning, upon awakening, you decide after some deliberation that Fate must have much worse in store for you. This time you are slated for survival. If somebody will only give you something to EAT. You try to get up, stagger, catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror, and dive back into bed, terrified. Clutching the aspirin and exclaiming, "I didn't know I felt THAT badly!" The rest of the day is one of slow convalescence,

intermittent sneezing, and a bruised suspicion that you have lost a wrestling match with Man-Mountain Dean. You subsist on hot tea and cold tomato juice, and your conversation consists of moans and groans and instructions shouted down the steps about how long to let the beans cook, IS baby all right, has anybody watered the cow, and WHERE are the funny papers?

By the morning of the third day you are definitely bored with lying in bed and eating other peoples' nondescript cooking, so slowly and feebly you arise, discover that except for a few miscellaneous aches and pains you are feeling pretty good—considering that only recently you were writing your last will and testament. You decide to chalk the whole thing up to experience, hope it will give you immunity for the rest of the year, and while sorting out darning thread and your husband's socks resolve firmly never again to be supercilious about other people's constitution.

Johnny Melvin returned on Sunday from Florida, where he had been on a business trip.

Mrs. Anna Keyes is back from Greenwich, where she visited her brother who was recently hurt in an accident.

Miss Alice Speaks, of Manassas, was a weekend guest of the Bells. Mr. Louis Bell, of Washington, visited his father on Tuesday.

Mrs. Stephens was home, sick, several days last week.

There will be movies at the Courthouse this Friday night, March 14. It is hoped that there will be as good a crowd as there was last time. Refreshments will be sold afterwards.

We shouldn't feel too badly about our snowstorms here. A letter addressed to this column from Florida by Mr. Portmess, last of Clifton, Va., states that he has spent the past week setting bushel baskets over 20,000 young avocado and lime trees in expectation of frost. Yes, and then taking them all off again. What WOULD farmers find to complain about if it weren't for the weather!

Yours truly,  
Agnes Webster.

## Where WILD things live...

### Giant Stonefly (*Pteronarcys species*)



This large, impressive insect can often be found crawling around shorelines of streams and rivers, especially in rocky areas. Occasionally individuals will fly some distance from the water and turn up in people's yards, being attracted to lights at night.

Stoneflies are adapted to well oxygenated streams and rivers. The nymphs have fixed gills that can only extract oxygen in moving water. If trapped in still water they die quickly.

Several weeks before they hatch, stone fly nymphs will start to migrate to the banks of the stream or river where they live. No other occurrence in our rivers produces such an incredible feeding frenzy among trout and other fish as a migration of giant stone fly nymphs.

Adults can be up to 1-1/2 inches long, including the wings. The long lacy wings that overlap one another make this a rather distinctive-looking insect. Most are grey and black, some having orange areas between the thoracic plates.

Giant stoneflies are found throughout Canada and ALL of the United States near streams and rivers. Adults are generally out from

late May through early July, but some smaller species may emerge by early May and other species are primarily out in the fall. The larvae of some species live for up to three years and may remain active all year long.

All larvae are aquatic and are found primarily in streams and rivers. Many species are sensitive to a lack of dissolved oxygen in the water, and are good indicators of organic pollution.

They feed on plants, decaying leaves and detritus. Males of many species attract a mate by drumming their abdomens on the substrate, the females feeling the vibrations rather than hearing the sound.

As large as they are, these insects are incapable of inflicting any harm; in fact the largest ones, the giant stoneflies, have no mouthparts as adults. Since adult giant stoneflies do not feed, they usually live only for a week. They are an important part of stream and river fauna, providing food for fish and birds and their absence is often a good indicator that a stream is being polluted.

Source: [http://www.eduwebs.org/bugs/giant\\_stoneflies.htm](http://www.eduwebs.org/bugs/giant_stoneflies.htm)

# DIXIE

Who among us have not at some time shouted out the verses of that most popular southern song, “Dixie”?

*Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton,  
Old times there are not forgotten.  
Look away, look away, look away Dixie Land!*

*I wish I was in Dixie, Hooray! Hooray!  
In Dixie Land I'll take my stand  
to live and die in Dixie.  
Away, away, away down south in Dixie.  
Away, away, away down south in Dixie*

I never quite learned all of the right words to the song (and there are many versions) but that didn't seem to matter. And now I realize that I was singing the song with words that I really didn't understand. How many of you know why it's called “Dixie Land”? According to Wikipedia and a number of other Internet sites, the term is probably from one of three popular origins. Some believe the word preserves the name of a “Mr. Dixy”, a slave owner on Manhattan Island, where slavery was legal until 1827. His rule was so kind that “Dixy's Land” became famed far and wide as an elysium abounding in material comforts. Others believe it is derived from Jeremiah Dixon, a surveyor of the Mason-Dixon line which defined the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania, and, for the most part, free and slave states. But my favorite is one that was recently found in *The Manassas Democrat* from June 4, 1914:

## **ORIGIN OF THE WORD DIXIE**

The following account of the origin of the word “Dixie” is given:

The Wall Street Journal in reviewing the London Times' history of the Citizen's Bank of Louisiana at New Orleans, the bank that after

eighty years of honorable history was converted into the Citizens Bank & Trust Company in 1911, gives an interesting account of the origin of the word Dixie as applied to the South.

The citizens bank was so closely identified with the south that it gave it the name “Dixie Land,” since preserved in the famous Southern war song “Dixie.” It came about in this way: prior to the Civil War in the State, the Citizens' Bank had the power to issue paper money notes, just as the Bank of England does today. These bills were issued in denominations of ten dollars and twenty dollars, to the extent of a few million. The ten dollar bills were more common. They were well known and passed all over the country.

These ten dollar bills were engraved in French, and on the back they bore very prominently the French word Dix. The ignorant Americans living among the upper Mississippi river, not knowing how to pronounce the French word, called the bills “Dixie.” Finally the bank's money became so popular that Louisiana was referred to as “The Land of the Dixies,” or “Dixie Land.” Afterward the term was made to apply to all the southern States.

Who would have thunk it?

# A Brentsville Citizen of Note

## James Wesley Keys



Jimmie before  
entering the Army

whom died at birth.

James, or Jimmie as he was typically called, entered the U.S. Army in about 1917 at the age of 21. He, along with many others from this area, was sent to France where he fought on the front lines. There he was subjected to poison gas from the German soldiers. The letter below (printed in the Manassas Journal, January 3, 1919) seems to have been written while he was convalescing in Paris. After returning home, James lived about seven years until he was finally overcome from the results of poison gas received in France during WW-I. He died May 2, 1925, at the age of 29.

### LETTER OF JIMMIE KEYS

#### In the Fight at Verdun—Will Soon Be Home.

One of our Manassas boys, formerly clerk at the New Prince William Hotel, has sent this recently written letter to his mother, Mrs. John G. Keys. [Mrs. John Thomas Keys of Brentsville]

Paris, France

Dec. 5, 1818 [1918]

My dear Mother:—Have just received a couple of letters from Minnie and you yesterday, which I was

delighted to get, for I was uneasy about you having influenza, but so glad that you all got over it. I was delayed a couple of weeks in writing you, which was due to being on the front and traveling together.

When the war closed I was on the front at Verdun, a large city near German territory. After staying there about a week we came here to wait further orders when to sail for home, so you can look for me any time after June 1, 1919. I am safe and happy and have not gotten a scratch in the war. Some luck.

I have not seen Jim yet, but have heard from him several times. He was telling me about his narrow escape of getting killed. However, we are all safe now again. I have been within five miles of him, while enroute home, but haven't seen him. I guess he will get back a little while before I do, though. I am sure he will not beat me much.

I am not the slightest bit home sick, but, of course, I would be delighted to see you all and be home Christmas anyhow. I will arrive some time soon after Christmas. I am getting along nicely now, just loafing around, waiting to go home, so naturally, I am pretty happy, see?

Guess I will close for this time, with love and best wishes to all.

Devoted son,

JIMMIE.



Jimmie during WW-I

# SNOW!

by

Morgan Breeden

Snow! Just the prospect of it was sure to excite the children of our family. Snow! So many exciting things waiting to happen after all these long months. There would be sledding on the hills, building snowmen and of course the inevitable snow ball fights. Sometimes if it was deep enough we would try to build an igloo or find a bank where snow had drifted and dig a tunnel into it as our “secret” cave. But aside from all that, there was always the prospect of one very special treat—snow cream.

Growing up we didn’t have ice cream very often. Should we be lucky enough to earn a nickel we might run up to Shoemaker’s store and buy a cone but that was fairly rare. But come winter, one of the greatest joys we could look forward to was snow cream. With the advent of the first flakes we’d start pestering Mamma to let us make snow cream. Always the same answer, “No, not with the first snow. That’s the one that cleans the air.” (It wasn’t until much later that I really understood what that meant. Try it yourself—first snow, collect a glass full and let it melt. See what’s in the water that’s left. I was shocked at how much dirt there was in that glass.) We had to wait until there was at least three inches of snow and then, and only then, we were allowed to put the big bowl out to catch snow.

Once the bowl was sufficiently full (I think she knew we often cheated by adding some along the way), we would take it inside and Mamma would let us have a can of condensed milk. Add that and a cup or so of sugar, a little dash of vanilla, stir until it is smooth, and eat until you get a brain freeze!

Let me step out of the story for a moment and explain brain freeze as defined in [\[chemistry.about.com/od/howthingsworkfaqs/f/how-brain-freeze-works.htm\]\(http://chemistry.about.com/od/howthingsworkfaqs/f/how-brain-freeze-works.htm\).](http://</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

“If you’ve ever experienced a sudden stabbing pain in your forehead when eating ice cream or enjoying a cool drink then you know what brain freeze is. Do you know what causes brain freeze or how you can stop the pain?

Answer: Have you ever experienced a sudden headache when eating or drinking something very cold? This is brain freeze, sometimes called an ice cream headache. The medical term for this type of headache is sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia, which is a mouthful, so let’s just stick with brain freeze, okay?

When something cold touches the roof of your mouth (your palate), the sudden temperature change of the tissue stimulates nerves to cause rapid dilation and swelling of blood vessels. This is an attempt to direct blood to the area and warm it back up. The dilation of the blood vessels triggers pain receptors, which release pain-causing prostaglandins, increase sensitivity to further pain, and produce inflammation while sending signals through the trigeminal nerve to alert the brain to the problem. Because the trigeminal nerve also senses facial pain, the brain interprets the pain signal as coming from the forehead. This is called ‘referred pain’ since the cause of the pain is in a different location from where you feel it. Brain freeze typically hits about 10 seconds after chilling your palate and lasts about half a minute. Only a third of people experience brain freeze from eating something cold, though most people are susceptible to a related headache from sudden exposure to a very cold climate.”

Heck, everybody knows that. But now I have to wonder ... why haven’t I had snow cream yet this winter?

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

HEADQUARTERS AQUIA DISTRICT,

Fredericksburg, March 14, 1862.

General R. E. LEE, Commanding Army.

GENERAL: Since the withdrawal of Generals Whiting and French from Evansport and its vicinity the enemy have crossed the river in large force, and have also advanced from the direction of Manassas as far as Brentsville. This would seem to indicate that their efforts against Richmond will be via Fredericksburg. Last night I called Generals Whiting and French and Colonels Hampton and Pettigrew in consultation. These gentlemen had served all the fall and winter between Aquia and the Occoquan, and were thus perfectly conversant with the country and everything belonging to its defense. The unanimous result of the conference was-

1st. Fredericksburg per se is untenable; it can only be defended by a force strong enough to attack the enemy's advance north of the Rappahannock..

2nd. The present disposition of the enemy's forces would seem to indicate that his advance will be in three columns, i. e., from Manassas, Evansport, and from below Potomac Creek. The two first are most serious, and if they move simultaneously absolutely necessitates the assistance of our main body to the force now about Fredericksburg; and this assistance should be given as soon as it is ascertain there is no mistake in this programme. You are aware that at Fredericksburg there is a large depot, well supplied with everything necessary for troops, which, independently of the interests of its noble, zealous, and true hearted people, makes its preservation and defense a matter of much importance, and which can only be effected by winning a battle before the enemy arrive, the town being perfectly commanded by the heights on the opposite bank of the river..

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,.

TH. H. HOLMES,.

Major-General.



Theophilus Hunter Holmes (November 13, 1804 – June 21, 1880) was a career United States Army officer and a Confederate Lieutenant General in the American Civil War. A friend and protégé of the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, he was appointed commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, but failed in his key task, which was to defend the Confederacy's hold on the Mississippi.

Holmes was born in Sampson County, North Carolina, in 1804. His father, Gabriel Holmes, was a former Governor of North Carolina and U.S. Congressman. After a failed attempt at plantation managing, Holmes asked his father for an appointment to the United States Military Academy, from which he graduated in

(Continued from page 7)

1829. He was ranked 44 out of 46 in his class. Holmes was apparently quite deaf, and was almost never aware of loud gunfire.

After graduating, Holmes was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the 7th U.S. Infantry. In 1838, Holmes attained the rank of Captain. During his early services, Holmes served in Florida, the Indian Territory, and Texas. Holmes also served in the Second Seminole War, with distinction. During the Mexican-American War, he was brevetted to major for the Battle of Monterrey in September 1846. This promotion was due to Jefferson Davis witnessing his courageous actions there. He received a full promotion to major of the 8th U.S. Infantry in 1855.

Almost immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter, Holmes resigned his commission in the U.S. Army having accepted a commission as a Colonel in the Confederate States Army in March. He commanded the coastal defenses of the Department of North Carolina and then served as a brigadier general in the North Carolina Militia. He was appointed Brigadier General on June 5, 1861, commanding the Department of Fredericksburg. Holmes was assigned to P.G.T. Beauregard, for the First Battle of Bull Run. He was promoted to Major General on October 7, 1861.

During the Seven Days Battles of the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, Holmes was in charge of the Department of North Carolina, rather than under Robert E. Lee in the Army of Northern Virginia. His division consisted of the brigades of Brigadier Generals Junius Daniel, John G. Walker, Henry A. Wise, and the cavalry brigade of Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. On June 30, 1862, while the battle of Glendale was fought to the north, Holmes was ordered to cannonade retreating Federals near Malvern Hill. His force was repulsed at Turkey Bridge by artillery fire from Malvern Hill and by the Federal gunboats Galena and Aroostook on the James. During the battle of Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862, his force was in reserve.

After the Peninsula Campaign, Holmes

became the commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department. He was promoted to Lieutenant General, on October 10, 1862, by Jefferson Davis. During his time as commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, Holmes failed to perform his most important duty: defend the Confederacy's hold on the Mississippi River. He refused to send troops to relieve Vicksburg, during the Vicksburg Campaign, leading to the Union's victory. After numerous complaints were sent to Davis, Holmes was relieved as head of the Trans-Mississippi Department, in March 1863.

After Holmes was relieved as head of the Trans-Mississippi Department, General Kirby Smith made him head of the District of Arkansas. Holmes decided to attack the Union-held city of Helena, Arkansas. He planned a coordinated attack in conjunction with Sterling Price, John S. Marmaduke, James Fleming Fagan, and, Governor of Arkansas, Harris Flanagin. Despite miscommunication, the Confederates had some success. After hours of fighting, a general retreat was called, and the Confederates pulled back to Little Rock, Arkansas. After returning from his failed expedition, Holmes was confined to a sick bed. After months of sickness, he returned to his command, in November 1863. Kirby Smith reported that Holmes was losing his memory, and that he needed to be replaced. In March 1864, Holmes was relieved as head of the District of Arkansas.

In April 1864, Holmes commanded the Reserve Forces of North Carolina. Holmes saw little action after being appointed to this new position. He held this position until the end of the Civil War. He, along with General Joseph E. Johnston, surrendered to William Tecumseh Sherman on April 26, 1865.

He returned to North Carolina, where he spent the rest of his life as a farmer. Holmes died in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and is buried there in McPherson Presbyterian Church Cemetery.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



# Jail Restoration Progress



The restoration work at the Brentsville jail is progressing well. The two downstairs jail cells and two upstairs jail cells are currently framed and have a temporary floor installed. The electrical work and HVAC system will both be installed soon. The design for the museum exhibit has also been finished. After the electrical and HVAC systems are installed, the next step is to restore the interior of the jail cells to their 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance.



# Brentsville Neighbors

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

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All back issues on:

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

IN GOD WE TRUST

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