

Brentsville Neighbors

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

January 2016

Welcome neighbors,

With the holiday celebrations now in the past we have a lot to look forward to in 2016. For example, even though you might not see it while driving down the road, work really is progressing on the restoration of the jail. The heat and air system is now almost finished, bars for the windows are delivered (see picture) and work is ongoing on both the interior woodwork and finishing the windows. While it seems there is always something that disrupts this process we will continue to report as the restoration efforts continue.

Mr. Bill Backus, recently selected as the Brentsville-Bristow Site Manager, is lining up an impressive selection of programs for the coming year. You will be advised in advance of each so you can plan accordingly.

We are very grateful to David and Nancy Shely, Mrs. Margaret Covington and Bonnie Lee DeHart for your continued support. Thank you!

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan

Work on the jail continues!



Rob Orrison helps Chris Henkels of Henkels Forge and Tool, unload the bars which Chris made for the jail windows. He has also made the hinges needed on the inside cell doors and is in the process of making all of the nails to be used in the final construction of the cells.

This month:

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Well, the betting odds on the teacher's pay raise are dropping fast, so I have been studying up on the History of Chinese Literature, Aerodynamics, Anthropology, How to use a Hickory Switch, and other subjects proper to the development of the youthful mind, in anticipation of that not-far-distant day when I may have to know about these things. My motto is "Education Must Go On!" and what's more I have a sneaking fancy to show some of these urchins that Mama is NOT tottering on the brink of senility just because she can't tell a B-29 from a P-40, or a 12 gauge shotgun from a Colt Automatic. And speaking of education reminds me, I will thank the Messenger Staff to stick to their own jobs and leave the spelling of such words as RECIPE to the experts, Me for instance. Years ago in a spelling bee, with considerable personal chagrin, I learned that the word was NOT spelled RECIEPT, which as Webster (Noah) says, is the "act of receiving or state of being received;" what I was talking about was a "formula for mixing ingredients for medicine or cooking". In other words, RECIPE. My punctuation, dear messenger Staff, is open to criticism, I freely admit it, but my reputation as a speller of words was painfully acquired the hard way, and I will defend it unto the last ... bitter ... ditch!

But to get back to the Schools, which everybody else seems to have said his say about so why shouldn't I? It's more than merely a question of allotting pay raises to teachers, I think the whole system needs a reconditioning job. Public education is about as practical as the heart-backed chair in my living room; I can't throw it out because it's an antique, but it creaks and groans piteously when some unwary soul attempts to put it to the use for which it was originally intended. In short, it has outlived its usefulness and now serves strictly as a piece of decoration or adornment. And adornment, as the poet says, is also concealment; In the case of our schools, a concealment of ignorance. They haven't had a good thorough overhauling since the bustle went out of date, and two-thirds of what they teach is pure waste of time. And money.

Also this business of giving home-work to country children who leave the house at 7:30 A.M. and don't arrive back until four o'clock, or after, due to the shortage of school busses and then have chores to

do ... Well it seems to me that after having spent from eight and a half to nine hours from portal to portal, as it were, they would be benefited both in body and mind by healthy play and relaxation, rather than more yawning over fractions.

Speaking of schools, Doris Stephens is not attending due to an emergency operation for appendicitis. She was taken to the Alexandria hospital on Saturday night, and we hear that she is as well as can be expected.

Mrs. Bennie Breeden is still sick, we are sorry to learn.

Reverend Frank Griffith preached the sermon at the Brentsville Baptist church on Sunday.

Sidney Spitzer was home from North Carolina on furlough last week-end.

Corporal Newton, with little Ted and Patricia Newton, returned Monday from a brief trip to California.

Mrs. Carter's daughter, Mrs. Nellie Brown, spent Sunday with the Carters'.

Mr. and Mrs. John Olyair and their granddaughter visited Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys on Sunday.

Mrs. Myrtle Keys had company over the week-end; Morris Keys and his wife, from Alexandria, and Cash and Kenny Keys were out from Washington.

The Golliday girls, Fay and Mamie, spent Sunday at home.

On the whole, it was a very quiet week in Brentsville The ladies took naps and the gentlemen tinkered on their cars on Sunday, and nobody even complained about the rain!

Yours truly,
Agnes Webster

EDITOR'S NOTE:

What was a poor editor to do when the copy sent in read "RECEIPE"? Mrs. Webster's words "RECIEPT", "RECIEVING", and "RECIEVED" in this week's Letter from Brentsville, we can't find in the dictionary at all. For the word, "RECEIPT," however, Winston gives the following definition, "a direction for making something by mixing certain things together, especially in cookery." Next week I'll bet we get a comeback as to which is the preferred authority—Noah or John C.

Source: The Manassas Messenger, January 24, 1947

Where WILD things live...

Smilax bona-nox Linne

Greenbrier

Greenbrier (*Smilax bona-nox* L.) is a native woody vine or shrub. It is a member of the Smilacaceae family which includes approximately 12 to 15 species in the *Smilax* genus. Most of these species are woody, climbing vines armed with sharp spines or prickles. Other common names include catbrier, bullbrier, chinabrier, saw greenbrier and tramp's trouble. Its natural distribution ranges from eastern Mexico



to central Texas north to southeastern Nebraska, east to Maryland and south to Florida. It is common in woodland understories, open edges, fencerows and rangeland settings. When allowed to persist in open areas, it may form large, dense thickets or mottes.

Greenbrier is a warm-season perennial woody vine or shrub. The stems are climbing with tendrils and tend to form tangled masses. Within these tangled masses, or mottes, the individual vines may be more than 20 feet long. These mottes may become so intertwined and matted that they become virtually impenetrable to livestock. Greenbrier leaves are deltoid or heart-shaped, with new foliage emerging in the early spring. The new foliage is tender and succulent early, but soon toughens and develops a thick waxy cuticle. The young, tender shoots and stems make excellent forage for both wildlife and livestock with crude protein content as high as 40 percent. Perhaps the most notable characteristic is the sharp prickles or stiff spines that are scattered across the stems and branches. These prickles are typically short in length and capable of inflicting shallow cuts and scratches. Greenbrier flowers from spring through early summer and produces

clusters of small, shiny red or black berries when mature. These berries stay on the vine throughout the winter. Greenbrier reproduces from seed, tubers or rhizomes. Large rhizomes and ligneous tubers, up to 12 inches in diameter, capable of storing large carbohydrate reserves, may be produced.

Greenbrier management depends on the goals for the property. If livestock or

herbaceous forage production is the primary goal, then greenbrier is detrimental due to reduced herbaceous forage production and limited access to the forage that is produced. If wildlife management is the primary goal, greenbrier is highly valued as a food source and for cover. It is a highly preferred browse for white-tailed deer, while wild turkey, raccoons, squirrels and many song birds consume the fruit. The dense cover provided by greenbrier mottes provides excellent cover for bobwhite quail and many small mammals such as eastern cottontail. If managing for wildlife is a goal of the property, maintaining greenbrier as part of a diverse plant community can be very beneficial.

Summary: Greenbrier is a native vine that is a normal part of many landscapes. It can be a positive or a negative component, depending on the goals for the property. Each property manager must decide if, or how, greenbrier can fit into those goals. If it is determined that control is necessary, careful planning is required before initiating a management program.

Source: <http://www.noble.org/global/ag/soils/greenbrier/greenbrier.pdf>

Lucien Alexander Davis And Family 1838-1887

by Howard Littleton Churchill



Lucien Alexander Davis was born in Brentsville, VA on May 26, 1838 to William W “Billy” and Ann Frances “Nancy” (Calvert) Davis. He was an only child. His very early years were spent with his parents, however after the death of his mother, he went to live with Benjamin & Chloe (Calvert) Cooper (“Nancy’s” sister). In 1860 he was working as a clerk in a store, and spending time with both the Coopers and his father, “Billy” Davis.



Lucien Alexander Davis

Lucien enlisted in the Cavalry as a private (4/23/61) and remained so until Captain Thornton was promoted to the Quartermaster Corps, in the spring of 1862. P. D. Williams was then elected as Captain and Lucien was elected as 1st Lieutenant (4/2/62). Subsequent to P. D. Williams’ death at the Battle of Raccoon Ford (Sept 1863), Lucien was elected Captain on October 11, 1863.

This is a good time to give some background on the formation of the Prince William Militia/Prince William Cavalry. W.W. Thornton organized the Prince William Militia following John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. The Prince William Militia became the Prince William Cavalry, as Company A, of the 4th Virginia Cavalry, following Virginia’s secession from the Union, on April 17, 1861. W. W. Thornton was named as the first Captain (Lucien’s cousin by marriage). P. D. Williams was the unit’s 1st Lieutenant (later to become Lucien’s brother-in-law).

The 4th Virginia Cavalry, Company A, served with distinction from its inception until the end of the War. Prior to the First Battle of Manassas the Prince William Cavalry was doing reconnaissance duty from Fairfax Courthouse to the southern portion of the County. They served as reserves during the Battle. Company A was assigned to J.E.B. Stuart’s Cavalry and was with him in many of the major battles, including Gettysburg. Following Stuart’s death, the unit was assigned to Fitz Lee’s regiment. They were active in numerous battles throughout the War and were with the siege of Petersburg. They were part of the rear guard protecting the final retreat to Appomattox.

Lucien and some of the members of Company A did not surrender at Appomattox, but left on the night of April 9, 1865 to return to Brentsville. With him he took the Regimental Flag and his side arms. These men took several weeks to put their lives in order and finally surrendered on April 29, 1865 at Fairfax Court House. ("4th Virginia Cavalry," by Kenneth L. Stiles gives a complete, detailed history of all the different Companies that made up the 4th Regiment). From Lucien's Parole Records we learn that he was 5 foot 10 inches tall with a dark complexion, brown hair and gray eyes.



Emma Jackson (Williams) Davis

Lucien and Emma Jackson Williams (P. D. Williams' sister) were married during the war on March 10, 1863 at the home of Dr. Peter Thornton in Caroline County, Emma's uncle. They had three children: Philip R. Davis born April 2, 1864 in Caroline County, and he died June 27, 1864; Ada Davis was born February 11, 1867 in Alexandria, and died March 14, 1928; and Neva Minor Davis was born on March 6, 1872 in Brentsville, and died on December 19, 1954. Lucien, Emma, Ada, Neva

& Philip are all buried in the John Williams Family Cemetery in Brentsville.

The following is a quote by Viola D. Proffitt (Lucien and Emma's granddaughter and Ada's daughter) found in the history of the Reynaud/Reno families of Brentsville.

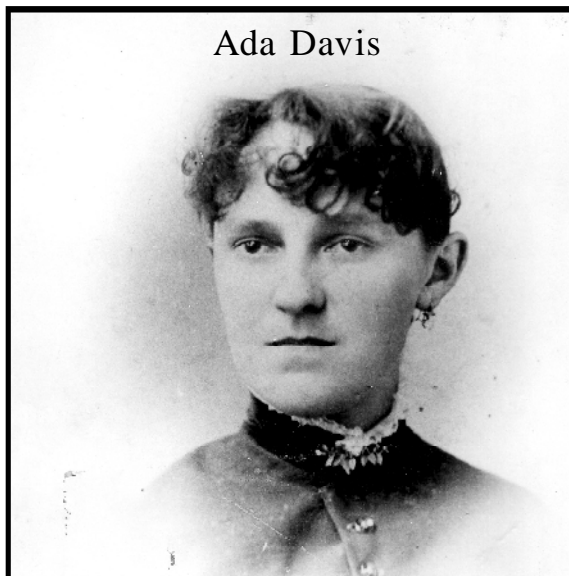
"Captain and Mrs. Davis were stopping momentarily at Moor Green when a slave reported that Yankee infantry men were fast approaching the estate.

Thinking the Union men were looking for him, Captain Davis escaped."

"Mrs. Davis was resting at the home before journeying to Bowling Green to be attended by her uncle, Dr. Thornton, who was a physician there. Believing her to be a Confederate spy, she was captured by the North and taken to

Alexandria. She was rescued by Mrs. Holland who moved under the cloak of British protection and taken to Mrs. Holland's house in Alexandria."

Because of Emma's treatment during her captivity (she was charged with "holding communications with the enemy") while in the



Ada Davis

(Continued from page 5)

custody of the Provost Marshal, she suffered with ill health and this probably was a contributing factor to the death of their son, Philip.

Emma was the only woman from Prince William County who was arrested and detained by the Union Forces!!

Not much has been recorded as to the activities related to Emma and Lucien following the War. In 1870 Lucien, Emma & Ada were living with his father, "Billy" Davis, and he was working as a railroad clerk. In 1871 Lucien was elected as the Clerk of the Court for Prince William County. He served as Clerk until his death on May 19, 1887. Our research thus far reflects that Lucien is the only member of Company A to be awarded the UDC Southern Cross of Honor, posthumously, in 1913.

Ada Davis married French Jackson Davis and had six children. French was Postmaster until his death in 1885. French and his brother Lucien ran the Davis Brothers General store. The General Store and Post Office was in the white two story home across Bristow Road from the school. (John Wolfe now lives in the house, Morgan Breeden's uncle.) French died of typhoid fever on September 9, 1885, that he contracted from drinking contaminated water while out hunting. Ada took over as Postmistress following French's death. She and her children moved to Manassas after the relocation of the county seat there. Their children became prominent businessmen and women in Manassas. Both Ada & French are buried in the John Williams Family Cemetery in Brentsville.

Neva married Pierce Browning Redd on July 7, 1895 and had two children. They lived in and around Manassas and the DC area until their deaths, and both are buried in the John Williams Family Cemetery in Brentsville.

There are some very interesting facts surrounding Lucien and his family. His mother was the 5th great granddaughter of Lord Baltimore, who was instrumental in the founding of Maryland. Lucien's descendents are the only family that is directly related to all three Captains of the Prince William Cavalry. In the fall and winter of 1859 Emma Williams and her cousin, Sommer Williams made the Prince William Militia Regimental Flag and it was presented to W. W. Thornton at a picnic at the farm of E. L. Kase, near Bristow Station. This was a US Flag with the standard red and white stripes, with the stars on a blue canton. In the summer of 1861, these two women were responsible for the remaking of the flag from a US Flag to the First National Flag of the Confederacy. Some 17 relatives of Lucien and Emma also served in Company A. Henrietta Holland, the daughter of Mrs. Mary Holland who was responsible for obtaining Emma's release from the Provost Marshal's system, married William Lipscomb, Emma's second cousin.



In Front of My House The Road Runs Straight

by Agnes Webster

In front of my house the road runs straight,
A small road, not an interstate.
From west to east – or east to west –
Depending upon which way you
Are coming from (or going to):
East to river, thence to the bay,
But if you choose the other way,
West, there are mountains, worn and old,
Blazing now with Autumn's gold,
Scarlet maple, chestnut brown,
Dark Green of Virginia pine,
And here and there a little town
With scattered homes and one main street,
(Mine was once the County Seat).
But small-scale farming doesn't pay
So most of the young folk have moved away
And the one-room schoolhouse was closed one day,
It's better to bus them. So they say.

The barns, eventually, tumbled down,
And woods grew up where fields had been,
Though an old, gnarled apple –
Half dead, half green –
And an indestructible Kieffer Pear
Continued to bear.
I still remember how each September
A neighbor came, always the same
And without fail
To gather the fruit in a battered pail.
“Ain't nothin' better,” she always said,
“On a winter morning' than nice cornbread
With homemade ginger pear preserve.
It's a real good way to start the day.”
And I observe
The squirrels and rabbits and chipmunks found
Those left rotting on the ground,
-However unripe and sour they tasted, -
So nothing at all was really wasted.

Across my road, on a rise of land,
The old brick jail and the Courthouse stand.
Designed for utility, not for show
A hundred and sixty years ago,
And the local people took great pride
In the fact that the buildings were *dignified*.
Clerks and lawyers, they came and went,
And judges listened to argument

And noted the legal complication
Of a young and turbulent population,
There were many complaints of the law's delay –
Much the same as we hear today;
Liens and taxes and property deeds,
And one eye watching the current needs,
And the difficulty of keeping track
Of resident sinners, white and black.

It was back around eighteen sixty four
That the trouble started, a civil war.
War between cousins, neighbors, brothers,
Poor men, rich men, children, mothers,
And many others.
It seems so senseless, looking back
What if they'd taken a different tack
And used a little commonsense?
It just might have made a difference
And four year's bloodletting been averted.
Why in the world wasn't God alerted?
I don't think He really gave a damn
Or tempered the wind to the shivering lamb.
Maybe He just looked down and said,
“To Hell with them all,” and went back to bed,
Figuring Vanity and Insanity
Are the common heritage of humanity.

But nevertheless, and be that as it may,
Inevitably there came a day
When the old brick Courthouse, and my house too,
(Although, at the time they were fairly new)
Looked sadly down as the troops marched through,
While small boys whistled and cheered with pride
And hound dogs trotted along beside.

The County records were thrown together
In haste and carried to just wherever
They might be safe from Enemy hands, -
Taxes and survey, plats and plans.
Hidden in attics and handy places,
In boxes and barrels, bags and cases.
No time for bureaucratic formality.
So, until life got back to normality,
They did their best, it was now or never,
But lots of them disappeared forever.
Documents never found again,
Shredded by mice or lost by men.

A Brentsville Citizen of Note

George Wiley Beahm

An individual who had a large influence on many of Brentsville's children was one of the teachers in the old courthouse, which was Brentsville District Public School #1, Mr. George Wiley Beahm (Miss Evelyn S. Shields was the other) during the 1927-28 school year. The information offered here was extracted from the Prince William County Term Report for those years.

Mr. Beahm, at 53 years of age, was an experienced teacher having taught nine years at different locations. He had a high school equivalent education with a first grade teachers certificate which was obtained in 1926. He was a member of the State Teachers' Association as was expected and subscribed to the VA Journal of Education to stay current in teacher administration duties.

The Brentsville School had a library of 85 books. Brentsville had a community league with about 18 members. During the year he visited two pupil homes to discuss student status and he also attended six formal teachers' meetings. During this year his class was visited twice by the Division Superintendent, once by members of the county school board and eight times by local supervisors.

During this period Mr. Beahm taught eight months or 160 days without missing a day. He had responsibility for the older children in grades 4 - 7 in which there were a total of 11 boys and 13 girls. On average there were only 8 boys and 11 girls present on any given day. Five boys and seven girls were promoted; two boys and three girls failed while two boys and two girls dropped from enrollment. For his work he was paid \$90.00 per month.

His male students were:

Murray Bradshaw, age 12
Paul Cooksey, Jr., age 10
Frankie Egan, age 12
Herbert James, age 14
Taylor James, age 11
Lloyd Keys, age 9
George Mays, age 13
George Sibert, age 12
Robert Varner, age 16
Earle Wolfe, age 11; and
Wynnett Wolfe, age 12.

Female students were:

Beulah Beavers, age 14
Edna Baley, age 19
Ethel Golladay, age 17
Margaret Golladay, age 13
Kate Mays, age 12
Anna B. Shoemaker, age 11
Daisy Shoemaker, age 12
Marie Shoemaker, age 13
Margarette Shoemaker, age 10
Helen Spitzer, age 11
Pauline Fox, age 12
Emma Varner, age 11 and
Marye Wolfe, age 9.

Instruction was given in reading, spelling, writing, English, mathematics, history, civics, geography, hygiene and physical education.

But wait! This is a two room school. What about grades 1 through 3? Watch for that next month.

When WAR Came to Brentsville

HDQRS. CAVALRY Brigadier, DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON,
January 1, 1863.

MAJOR: I have the honor, in accordance with instructions from headquarters, to make the following statement:
On December 16, in compliance with orders, I sent Major Stagg, with 156 men, to the neighborhood of Wolf Run Shoals, to establish a line of pickets from that point to Manassas Junction.

On the following morning I recalled from Lewinsville all of the Second Pennsylvania Cavalry. As soon as they returned to camp I ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Brinton to proceed with all the available force of his command and all those at Accotink, except one battalion (to be left there), to the vicinity of the Occoquan, for the purpose of covering the front of forces lying in that direction. Colonel Brinton established his line of pickets as per map forwarded to you, showing the different posts and patrols. He connected with Major Stagg's previously established, thus completing the line from the village of Occoquan to Manassas Junction, where the line connected with the pickets of Colonel Wyndham's command, extending from Manassas Junction through Centreville and Chantilly to Frying Pan, there connecting with Major Taggart, stationed at Dranesville.

I am certain, sir, there was no want of proper care and watchfulness on the part of the officers and men on duty on that part of the line where the enemy appeared. Major Stagg was constantly patrolling to the front, and Colonel Brinton, two or three days before, had made a circuit from Occoquan village, keeping 7 miles south of Occoquan Creek, to near Brentsville, returning by way of Wolf Run Shoals.

A detachment of the Seventeenth Pennsylvania Cavalry was intrusted with the picket line from Occoquan Village to Neabsco Creek, from which point to Dumfries, I am told, the line was guarded. This detachment of the Seventeenth patrolled from Occoquan village to a point about 3 miles south of Mills' Ford. This arrangement was continued until the night of the 27th, when the pickets of the Seventeenth were driven in by a small force of cavalry, which came into the village of Occoquan, and returned, after receiving a volley from this side of the creek. It was in search of this party that Captain Chauncey came upon the main force the next day (Sunday), and information was forwarded as rapidly as possible after the men had fought back to the ford.

Colonel Brinton was not expected to do anything but cover the front of the forces lying between Fairfax and Occoquan, which he did by his line from that village to Manassas via Wolf Run Shoals, continually patrolling and scouting.

I have the honor to be, major, very respectfully, yours,

R. BUTLER PRICE,
Colonel, Commanding Brigade.



Richard Butler Price

The commander of the 2nd Pennsylvania Cavalry at Gettysburg was Colonel Richard Butler Price.

Colonel Price enrolled in the 2nd Pennsylvania Cavalry on 23 June 1862 from Philadelphia, where he resided. He commanded the regiment for most of the remainder of the war until his discharge on 31 January 1865. On 13 March 1865, he was breveted Brigadier General.

Price died in Philadelphia on 15 July 1876 and the funeral was conducted from his sister's residence. He is buried in Woodlands Cemetery, Philadelphia.

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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