

Brentsville Neighbors

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

August 2016

Welcome neighbors,

After reading last month’s “Letter From Brentsville” Fred Wolfe informed us that he didn’t remember the Hatcher’s incident with Rev. Frank Griffith BUT he bet my daddy and mom had something to do with asking him to continue. He was never ordained by any denomination but he would preach anywhere he was invited. Lester Keys asked that he perform the marriage ceremony for him and Alice Fletcher but he told Lester that he couldn’t because he was never ordained. Fred does remember him being invited to speak at the Brentsville School. “I was present that day and remember it well. He was living on the Smith farm and would wade Cedar Run in his work clothes and shoes and when he came to Brentsville he would change his clothes in the back room of the Hatcher’s Church which was never locked when I was young.” Fred remembers Rev. Griffith was married to a Tolson lady [Lottie Irene Tolson, my father’s 2nd cousin once removed] and they cared for her dad and mom and a blind brother. His earliest memory of them was when they lived in the Janay house that was owned at that time by the Bradshaw’s.

For those of you with children who are interested in summer camp, there are three events taking place in Brentsville during August that might be of interest. During August 8 – 12 there will be a Civil War

Advanced Camp from 9 a.m. to noon for children ages 8 to 13. The cost is \$150 per participant. Then during August 15 – 19 there will be a History Explorer Camp for ages 8 – 12. It runs from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. each day and costs \$300 per camper. This includes van transportation to many of the different sites to experience Virginia’s local history through interactive tours and activities. And finally from August 19 – 21 “So You Want To Be A Civil War Soldier Camp” which runs from 4 p.m. on Friday to noon on Sunday and is appropriate for children ages 13 – 16. The cost is \$300 for parent and child who will be staying in shelter tents and performing camp duties. A sleeping bag or blankets are required. More information on Brentsville activities may be obtained by calling 703-365-7895.

And for the young at heart the 3rd Annual Brentsville Movie Night will be held on August 20 at 8 p.m. and best of all, it’s free! Enjoy an old movie the way they were meant to be seen! Movie starts at nightfall. We will be showing Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier. Bring chairs and/or blankets. Concessions will be available for purchase.

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan

This month:

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|---------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| ➤ Letter From Brentsville | page 2 | ➤ A Brentsville Citizen of Note | pages 5-7 |
| ➤ Where Wild Things Live | page 3 | ➤ Coins | page 7 |
| ➤ Clubbed Man to Death | page 4 | ➤ When War Came | pages 8-9 |
| | | ➤ School Board Snippets | page 9 |



Like most travelers but newly returned from voyages to far-distant lands, such as the Eastern Shore of Maryland, your correspondent is full of adventures and strange sights glimpsed in these distant parts, and needs only the slightest encouragement to hold forth verbally, ad nauseum. For instance, there was a man in Easton who had his feet on backwards. This is absolutely true. I didn't see it myself, but the reason I vouch for it's authenticity is that it was told to me by no less than three good respectable Baltimoreans, not one of whom had sufficient imagination to invent such a story. They said, and I firmly believe them, that his feet were no better and no worse than anyone else's, in fact, he purchases shoes out of the Sears-Roebuck catalogue, and the only odd thing was that you couldn't quite tell whether he was coming or going.

Well, the main topic of conversation down there is the Japanese Beetle, which has just arrived this year, in defiance of immigration laws and the intolerable race-prejudice of local insects. The farmers are frantically spraying with DDT, which doesn't seem to do much good, but I heard it said that when the grubs were turned up in the Spring plowing, great multitudes of sea-gulls and other birds descended on the fields to eat them. And speaking of sea-gulls reminds me to include the following:

Not for me are the mountains tall,
 With their forest deep, where the white snows fall,
 And the wind, they say, has a piney smell;
 It is not of these that I plan to tell,
 For they lie too far from the shore and sea,
 And that is the place that I long to be:
 Where, low at their moorings, the Skipjacks ride,
 And the mud flats steam in the ebbing tide.
 The tarry wharves, and the circling gull,
 Dune, and mosquito, and rotting hull;
 Where everything tastes of salt and sand,
 And the prowling Artist infests the land.
 And I even feel a nostalgic wish
 For the Fragrant scent of decaying fish.
 Oh Fame and Money are fine, I note,
 And the Rockies are nice – for a mountain goat,
 But just set ME down on the nearest pier,
 With a soft-shell crab, and a glass of beer!

Miss Nancy Ramsey, of Pelham, New York, is visiting Shirley Bradshaw this week.

Miss Fay Golladay was home from Washington for the week-end.

Mrs. Edward Carr and daughter, of Johnston City, Tenn., spent last week visiting the Jim Shoemakers, and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Cordell, of Falls Church, were out on Sunday. The Shoemakers recently returned from a trip to Tennessee, where they visited Mrs. Shoemaker's sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Rome Counts, of Washington, visited the Troy Counts last week.

Lt. Col. And Mrs. Frederic Behart, who have just returned from Germany, were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Webster last week.

The sudden storm, last Friday, developed into what was almost a twister at the western end of Brentsville. Benny Breeden's barn was badly damaged, when the wind moved the structure about thirteen inches off of it's foundations. One end was torn completely off, and it was badly buckled in the middle.

Mr. Jacobchik, of Herndon, has been visiting the Beards, and on Sunday Mr. Jacobchik, Boyd Beard, Mary Francis Flory, and Edna Diehl spent the day at Colonial Beach.

The Corbins entertained out-of-town guests over the week-end.

Best regards,

Agnes Webster

Source: The Manassas Messenger, August 22, 1947



Where WILD things live...

Plantanus occidentalis

American sycamore

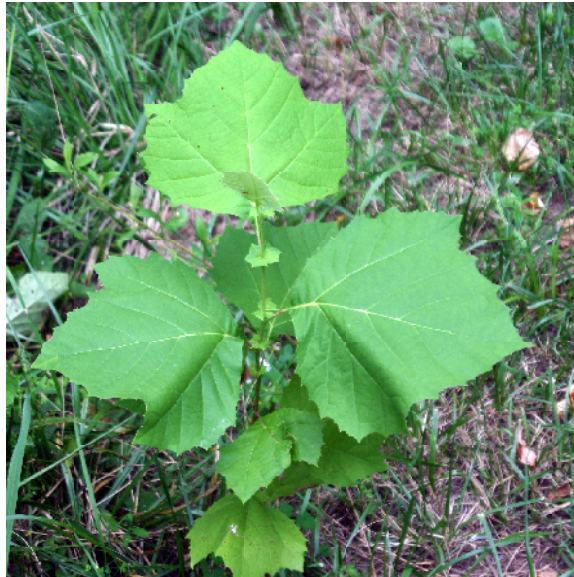
Plantanus occidentalis, also known as American sycamore, American planetree, occidental plane, and buttonwood, is one of the species of *Platanus* native to North America. It is usually called sycamore in North America, a name which can refer to other types of tree in other parts of the world.

An American sycamore tree can often be easily distinguished from other trees by its mottled exfoliating bark which flakes off in great irregular masses, leaving the surface mottled, and greenish-white, gray and brown. The bark of all trees has to yield to a growing trunk by stretching, splitting, or infilling; the sycamore shows the process more openly than many other trees. The explanation is found in the rigid texture of the bark tissue which lacks the elasticity of the bark of some other trees, so it is incapable of stretching to accommodate the growth of the wood underneath, so the tree sloughs it off.

A sycamore can grow to massive proportions, typically reaching up to 98 to 131 ft. high and 4.9 to 6.6 ft. in diameter when grown in deep soils. The largest of the species have been measured to 167 ft., and nearly 13 ft. in diameter. Larger specimens were recorded in historical times. In 1744, a Shenandoah Valley settler named Joseph Hampton and two sons lived for most of the year in a hollow sycamore in what is now Clarke County, Virginia. In 1770, at Point Pleasant, Virginia (now in West Virginia) near the junction of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers, George Washington recorded in his journal a sycamore measuring 44 ft. 10 in in circumference at 3 ft. from the ground.

The sycamore tree is often divided near the ground into several secondary trunks, very free from branches. Spreading limbs at the top make an irregular, open head. Roots are fibrous. The trunks of large trees are often hollow.

Bark: Dark reddish brown, broken into oblong plate-like scales; higher on the tree, it is smooth and light gray; separates freely into thin plates which peel off and leave the surface pale yellow, or white, or greenish.



Branchlets at first pale green, coated with thick pale tomentum, later dark green and smooth, finally become light gray or light reddish brown.

Wood: Light brown, tinged with red; heavy, weak, difficult to split. Largely used for furniture and interior finish of houses, butcher's blocks.

Winter, buds: Large, stinky, sticky, green, and three-scaled, they form in summer within the petiole of the full grown leaf. The inner scales enlarge with the growing shake. There is no terminal bud.

Leaves: Alternate, palmately nerved, broadly

ovate or orbicular, 4 to 9 in inches long, truncate or cordate or wedge-shaped at base, decurrent on the petiole. Three to five-lobed by broad shallow sinuses rounded in the bottom; lobes acuminate, toothed, or entire, or undulate. They come out of the bud plicate, pale green coated with pale tomentum; when full grown are bright yellow green above, paler beneath. In autumn they turn brown and wither before falling. Petioles long, abruptly enlarged at base and inclosing the buds. Stipules with spreading, toothed borders, conspicuous on young shoots, caducous.

In its native range it is often found in riparian and wetland areas. The range extends from Iowa to Ontario and Maine in the north, Nebraska in the west, and south to Texas and Florida. It is sometimes grown for timber, and has become naturalized in some areas outside its native range. The American sycamore is also well adapted to life in Argentina and Australia and is quite widespread across the Australian continent especially in the cooler southern states such as Victoria and New South Wales.

Its wood has been used extensively for butcher's blocks. It has been used for boxes and crates; although coarse-grained and difficult to work, it has also been used to make furniture, siding, and musical instruments.

The American sycamore is a favored food plant of the pest sycamore leaf beetle.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Clubbed Man to Death

A. J. Ramey Vindicated by Coroner's Jury at Manassas, Va.

Manassas, Va., Aug. 11.—A. J. Ramey, a farmer living near Brentsville, in this county, killed Lucien Beavers in self-defense yesterday evening. Beavers was making a savage attack on some old people near Ramey's home, when Ramey was sent for. Beavers pursued Ramey with a sword. Ramey discharged his gun once to frighten the man, and finally clubbed his gun, knocking Beavers on the head and killing him.

At the coroner's inquest held this afternoon the jury brought in a verdict of justifiable homicide. The Commonwealth was represented by J. B. T. Thornton and the defense by Robert A. Hutchinson.

Special to The Washington Post, August 11, 1905

RAMEY ACQUITTED.

Jury Declares Him to Be Not Guilty of Murder.

Special Dispatch to The Star

MANASSAS, Va., December 6.—Andrew Jackson Ramey, who has been on trial here for the past two days in the circuit court for Prince William county, charged with the murder of Lucian Beavers, was acquitted by the jury yesterday afternoon. The verdict of not guilty was returned after a brief deliberation in which, it is understood, the jurors were from the first unanimous in their opinion. The instructions delivered by judge Nicol to the jury were considered distinctly favorable to the accused. Several witness were examined, both for the prosecution and defense, and throughout the trial the court room contained many interested spectators. The case attracted much attention in the county.

Beavers was killed August 10 last in the yard of Ramey's home on his farm near Brentsville. It was testified that he was shot and clubbed to death with a gun by Ramey, acting in self-defense. The evidence showed that Beavers had attacked and terrorized the residents of a farm-house near Brentsville, and had announced his intention to "go over and clean up old man Ramey." This threat, it was stated, came to the ears of Ramey,

who kept himself in readiness for the expected assault.

Shortly thereafter Beavers appeared on Ramey's farm, approaching the house. Ramey took a shotgun and went to the gate, warning the visitor to keep out. To this the latter paid no attention, but continued to approach. He had a block of wood, which Ramey thought was a brick, in his hand and when a few paces intervened between the two men Ramey fired, the charge taking effect in Beaver's arm. It was stated that Ramey purposely aimed at the arm of his antagonist, in the hope of disabling but not killing him. But as the man continued to advance Ramey clubbed the gun, beating Beavers over the head and crushing his skull, from the effects of which he died within a short time.

Ramey was defended by Attorneys John M. Johnson of this city and Robert T. Hutchinson and Thomas H. Lyon of Manassas. Commonwealth Attorney J. B. T. Thornton was assisted in the prosecution by Attorneys Aylett B. Nicol and J. Jenkyn Davies.

Source: Evening Star-WashDC December 6, 1905

A Brentsville Citizen of Note

James Mifflin Keys, Sr.

From my earliest memories, he was always Uncle Miff. Without question to many of Brentsville's residents he really was their uncle but to everyone else it was simply a title of respect. Children were never allowed to call their elders by his or her first name but if they were familiar enough to address them as something other than Mr. and Mrs. then it was quite acceptable to refer to them as Uncle or Aunt. With James Mifflin Keys, Sr. being the oldest citizen in town it was understandable that he was called Uncle Miff by just about everyone.

Born July 7, 1867, on the Keys Tract, between Dumfries and Independent Hill, Prince William Co., VA James Mifflin Keys, Sr. was the second child (also second son) of Robert Allen Keys and Margaret C. Cornwell. His father died on February 6, 1902 at home in Brentsville and his mother January 8, 1923, at the home of her son, Lafayette Keys, also in Brentsville. Both are buried in the Robert Allen Keys Family Cemetery in Brentsville. The name James was believed to be in honor of his grandfather, James H. Keys, Sr. but his middle name, Mifflin, is somewhat of a mystery. Mifflin is a surname that originated in central Scotland where they were granted lands by Malcolm Canmore, King of Scotland, in 1069 in the Barony of Methven. We know that boys were frequently given their mother's maiden name as a middle name but that doesn't seem to be the case here. In research conducted by Nelson Keys, Uncle Miff's grandnephew, the name Mifflin does not appear in any of the family lines. That's not to say it doesn't exist—just not yet found.

While working in Washington, D.C., Uncle Miff, just 21 years of age, met and married Catherine

L. McCuen on December 27, 1888. This union produced seven children, four of whom died very young and a daughter, Martha Washington Keys who died at 16 years after she contracted measles and later pneumonia developed. Catherine passed away on March 22, 1936, having been an invalid for a number of years. She would have been 73 years old on her next birthday, July 4. The exact year that Uncle Miff moved to Brentsville with his family is unclear but we do know that he was living here in July, 1894, when his first child died and was buried in the Keys family cemetery. His home was located in the "V" formed where Brentsville Road split off from Bristow Road (the road configuration has since been changed). Five years later Uncle Miff married Isabell Spinks, a widow from two previous marriages, Will McIntosh and Eliphus Bigelow. There were no children produced from



Joey Braden playing in the snow
with Miff Keys' home in the
background

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

this union but Isabell's children from her previous marriage lived with them as part of the family.

He was always a member of the Brentsville Presbyterian Church and his son, James Jr., was identified as one of the founding members of this organization. As were most resident of the time, Uncle Miff was a small-scale farmer, growing much of the produce needed for the family in his garden which sat in the corner of the "V". But he was also employed with the State Highway Department for 27 years. In this capacity one of his jobs was the operation of a road grader and long before the roads through Brentsville were paved, he would find an opportunity to bring the grader to town making the roads as passable as possible under the circumstances. For approximately 20 years he was the Brentsville District registrar and for more than 30 years he was a Judge of Elections here. During any election he could be found at the courthouse where the votes were recorded and was very strict in ensuring that only those who were appropriately registered could cast a vote. In 1947 he was a candidate for the Prince William

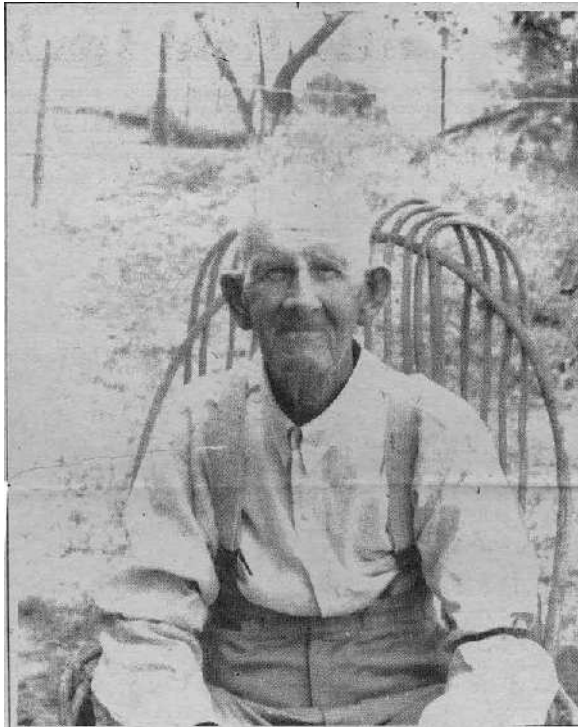
County Democratic Committee for the Brentsville District.

In 1960 he celebrated his 93rd birthday with family and friends from all over coming by to visit and enjoy cake and ice cream. Uncle Miff was the town historian. Although he didn't record anything on paper, he could remember virtually everything and loved to sit in his brother's store (Robert Hilman Keys) and talk about the good old days. He and his second wife, Isabell, just a youngster in her seventies, lived alone and Uncle Miff still tended to his chores and grew a beautiful garden which he worked by hand. He said his secret of longevity was to keep busy with plenty of hard work!

On March 30, 1962, Uncle Miff passed away in his Brentsville home. Funeral services were held in the Brentsville Presbyterian Church and he was laid to rest beside his first wife in the Keys family cemetery in Brentsville.



The Brentsville Presbyterian Church
back row: man on left is James Keys, Jr.,
with his father, Miff Keys to his right.



July 1960, Uncle Miff
turns 93



Uncle Miff and Isabell

Two Rare Old Coins.

To the Editor of the Post: There are in possession of B. B. Bell, Brentsville, Prince William county, Va., two old coins. The one is an English penny, having on one side the figure of a man's head covered by a hood something like a monk's hood. This is surrounded by a wreath, but there is not a word on this side. The other side has some unintelligible hieroglyphics in the center, above which is the date 1788. These are surrounded by the words, "We promise to the bearer one penny on demand in London, Liverpool or Anglessey." printed round the edge.

The other is a silver coin about the size of the twenty cent pieces now in use. It was plowed up in a field only a few rods from the ford where the French army crossed the Occoquan river, and it is supposed to have been lost by a French soldier. It has on one side the figure of a woman's head. To the right are the words, "Dei Gratia;" to the left, "Carolus III.;" below is the date 1776. On the other side is (to me) a strange coat of arms surmounted by a crown and surrounded by the words, "Hispan. Btind. Rex N. R. I. R. J. J." What is it?

Brentsville, Va., March 24. Subscriber
Source: The Washington Post, March 26, 1883



Letter to the Editor

To the Editor of The Post: your Brentsville subscriber has evidently had but little experience as a numismatist. The silver coin described by him is plainly a Spanish one, as the inscription shows: "Carolus III., Dei Gratia, Hispan ct Ind." That is, Charles the Third, by the grace of God King of Spain and the Indies. As customary, some words are necessarily abbreviated. This inscription can be seen on all of the Spanish coins that were in current use here until 1854. Most seem to have been struck with the die of Charles' reign. The particular piece of the size mentioned by your correspondent may be what was known as a pistareen, of the value of sixteen cents, and which was often passed on the unsuspecting as a Spanish twenty-five cent piece, the most noticeable difference being the absence of the pillars of Hercules that support the Spanish arms on the six and a quarter, twelve and a half, twenty-five, fifty and one dollar coins. The coin is more likely to have been lost by any field hand, white, black or yellow, any time during the last century than by any soldier of any nationality. As for the copper "token," it is undoubtedly an article of interest, though probably well known to collectors.

Cortez
Washington, March 27.
Source: The Washington Post, March 29, 1883

When WAR Came to Brentsville

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

August 1, 1863-10 p. m. {Received 11. 45 p. m. }

Major General H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief:

In compliance with your instructions to occupy the line of the Upper Rappahannock, this army has to-day been placed in position from Waterloo Crossing on the right to Ellis' Ford on the left. Warrenton, New Baltimore, Brentsville, and Morrisville are all occupied, and connected with the forces on the river by pickets and patrols. The cavalry on the right flank at Amissville, picketing to the mountains; on the left, from Ellis' to United States Ford on the river, thence to Aquia Creek. A brigade of cavalry is at White Plains, scouting between the Bull Run Mountains and the Blue Ridge, in our rear; another brigade scouts on my left, between the Rappahannock and Occoquan. Last night and this morning bridges were thrown over the river at the railroad crossing and at Kelly's Ford. Infantry was crossed at each place, and the necessary works to protect the bridges will be constructed. The railroad bridge will be immediately repaired. At 10 a. m. this morning, Buford's cavalry division crossed at the railroad crossing, and soon encountered the enemy's cavalry. The latest report from him, just received, dated 4. 30 p. m. , he had driven Jones and Hampton's brigades to within 1½ miles of Culpeper, where he reports A. P. Hill's corps to be in position. He has been ordered to fall back, and hold as advanced a position in front of the Rappahannock as he can do with security.

GEO. G. MEADE,
Major-General



George Gordon Meade (December 31, 1815 - November 6, 1872) was a career United States Army officer and civil engineer involved in the coastal construction of several lighthouses. He fought with distinction in the Second Seminole War and the Mexican-American War. During the American Civil War he served as a Union general, rising from command of a brigade to command of the Army of the Potomac. He is best known for defeating Confederate General Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863.

Meade's Civil War combat experience started as a brigade commander in the Peninsula Campaign and the Seven Days Battles, including the Battle of Glendale, where he was wounded severely. As a division commander, he had notable success at the Battle of South Mountain and assumed temporary corps command at the Battle of Antietam. His division was arguably the most successful during the assaults at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

During the Gettysburg Campaign, he was appointed to command the Army of the Potomac just three days before the Battle of Gettysburg, but was able to organize his forces to fight a successful defensive battle against Robert E. Lee.

This victory was marred by his ineffective pursuit during the Retreat from Gettysburg, by the inconclusive campaigns in the fall of 1863, and by intense political rivalries within the Army, notably with Daniel Sickles

In 1864-65, Meade continued to command the Army of the Potomac through the Overland Campaign, the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, and the Appomattox Campaign, but he was overshadowed by the direct supervision of the general in chief, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who accompanied him throughout these campaigns. He also suffered from a reputation as a man of short, violent temper who was hostile toward the press and received hostility in return. After the war, he commanded several important departments during Reconstruction.

George Gordon Meade was born in 1815 in Cádiz, Spain, the eighth of eleven children. His father, a wealthy Philadelphian merchant, was serving in Spain as a naval agent for the U.S. government. He was ruined financially because of his support of Spain in the Napoleonic Wars and died in 1828 when Meade was not yet a teenager. His family returned to the United States in 1817, in precarious financial straits. Young George attended the Mount Hope Institution in Baltimore and entered the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1831, primarily for financial reasons. He graduated 19th in his class of 56 cadets in 1835.

Meade's short temper earned him notoriety, and while he was respected by most of his peers, he was not well loved by his army. Some referred to him as "a damned old goggle-eyed snapping turtle."

Meade received an honorary doctorate in law (LL.D.) from Harvard University, and his scientific achievements were recognized by various institutions, including the American Philosophical Society and the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. Meade died in Philadelphia, while still on active duty, from complications of his old wounds, combined with pneumonia, on November 6, 1872. He was buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery.

There are statues memorializing Meade throughout Pennsylvania, including statues at Gettysburg National Military Park. The United States Army's Fort George G Meade in Fort Meade, Maryland, is named for him, as are Meade County, Kansas, and Meade County, South Dakota. In World War II, the United States liberty ship SS George G Meade was named in his honor.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



School Board Snippets

March 20, 1914

Hon. J. B. T. Thornton,
Judge of Circuit Court of Prince William Co. Va.

We the School Board of Brentsville District do hereby petition your Honor that an order of court be entered permitting us to advertise and sell at public auction that lot or parcel of ground at Brentsville, Va. From which the old public school building has been recently removed, since it is no longer needed for school purposes and the funds that will result from the sale thereof are very much needed in our school work at Brentsville.

Signed – The School Board of Brentsville District
No. 1 of Prince William County, State of Virginia.

By [signed] R. H. Davis
Chairman

[signed] J. R. Cooke
Clerk

We the undersigned citizens of Brentsville and Community do hereby endorse the above petition, and declare that to the best of our knowledge & belief the sale of the above named lot will be right and proper.

[signed] R. A. Cooper
R. H. Keys
S. B. Spitzer
T. S. Bradshaw
J. M. Keys
J. R. Woodyard

Brentsville Neighbors

“Preserving Brentsville’s History”

Contact us on:

morganbreeden@aol.com

All back issues on:

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

IN GOD WE TRUST

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

