

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

March 2006



Welcome Neighbor,

Let us start by saying **welcome** to the new members of our group. We are so glad to have you! We can only hope you enjoy receiving the newsletter as much as we enjoy putting it together and we look forward to your contributions.

It's March already! Robins have been spotted in the back yard – the red-winged blackbirds are back – and the crocus are blooming so can Spring be far away? Many of us will be celebrating St. Patrick's Day on March 17th but for the old timers, it was the day to plant potatoes—rain or shine, snow or no. I can remember seeing them out in the snow planting seed potatoes just because it was the “right time to do it.” I don't think many of us do that any more.

There will be another special occasion in March. Prince William County will be having her 275th Birthday Celebration around the county with events sponsored by the PWC Historic Preservation Division. There will be various activities at the Bristoe Battlefield, Rippon Lodge and Ben Lomond Manor House. On Saturday, March 25th, the Prince William Counthouse at Brentsville will be open for hardhat tours to see the renovation work in progress. The Union Church will also be open and everyone is invited to visit the fully restored building that will make your heart soar! And

to make it even better, Gladys Eanes will be there with a smile a yard wide to make you feel welcome. At the schoolhouse the county will provide light refreshments and Morgan and Nelson will be available to share all of the photographs and information we have been collecting for the past several years. It's getting to be quite a few binders so **please** stop by to say hello and look through the notebooks. The events will be simple but the welcome is sincere. While there, please take time to look at the information on volunteer opportunities with the PWC Historic Preservation Division at the Brentsville Centre or another historic site. Just one more way that **you** can make a difference.

In the February issue we promised to send you a guide to assist you in putting together your memories of Brentsville. Time got away and it was decided to include it in this issue to save on postage costs. You will find the information on the last two pages of this issue. Please do consider putting together your memories. It will add so much toward the preservation of our history and no one else can do it for you.

Best wishes,

Nelson and Morgan



This month:

- A Brentsville Building: -----pages 2-3
- Remembering Brentsville-----pages 5
- Flashback! - - - - - page 6
- Where Wild Things Live -pages 4-6
- A Call for Assistance -----pages 7-8-9

Featured Brentsville Building

The Brentsville Presbyterian Church

The present day Brentsville Presbyterian Church began at White Hall, near Aden, which was at one time the meeting place for Presbyterians in this region. In 1910, part of the congregation merged with Greenwich Presbyterian Church and the Greenwich Pastor, the Rev. J. Royal Cooke had already commenced holding occasional services in the Brentsville Union Church as the most suitable point to reach a majority of these scattered members. Services were held here the third Sabbath of each month. Finally in 1915, a petition containing about 30 names was sent in to the Presbytery of the Potomac Meeting at Waterford, Va., September 21-23, 1915, asking for the organization of a Presbyterian Church at Brentsville.

For thirty-seven years the Brentsville Presbyterian Church met in the Union Church building that had no plumbing or heating systems. At first there were thirty-eight members with the Rev. Mr. Harris and the pastor and D.E. Earhart, Dr. Bell and R.S. Frye the Elders. One of the subsequent pastors, the Rev. J. Royal Cook who served both Brentsville and Greenwich Presbyterian Churches, would travel on horseback when the roads were bad.

In September, 1948, the church became a member of the Larger Parish Plan in this area with the Rev. Albert Curry Winn as pastor. Rev. Winn also served as pastor of Greenwich, Catlett and Bealeton churches. Under this plan services were held each Sunday and the congregation began to grow. Soon the little Union Church was too small and had no room for expansion so a decision was made to build a new church.

Mr. Grady Shoemaker and his wife, Violet, donated the property for the new church on land adjacent to the home of Walter Hedrick which had one time been the Prince William County Jail. Construction started in March 1952. Although the members were relatively few, their faith and dedication combined with many long hours of hard work resulted in the completion in just four and one-half months. On July 27, 1952, the first service was held at 11 a.m. conducted by Curtis Harper, a student pastor, and then at 7:30 p.m. the new building was dedicated to the service of our Lord with many distinguished guests present.

By 1962 the church had a full-time pastor and soon the membership doubled. Under the ministry of Rev. Jones it was soon apparent the new church sanctuary could no longer accommodate the congregation. So in 1964 the back wall was removed for an addition that increased the seating capacity to 200 while adding a nursery, library, an additional Sunday School room and a study for the pastor as well as two rest rooms and a full basement to be used as a fellowship hall. An illuminated steeple with a large cross was added and the church bell was moved from the Union Church (not being used at the time) into the new addition.

The Brentsville Presbyterian Church is a member of the National Capital Presbytery and is currently being served by Col. Ralph G. Benson, Chaplain, U.S. Army. His primary job is the Pentagon Chaplain.

(Source: "Our First Seventy-Five Years" by Ruth C. Shoemaker, 1990, and "History, Brentsville Presbyterian Church" by Jean Keys Dunn.)

The Brentsville Presbyterian Church

The Union Church was used by the Presbyterians from 1910 - 1952



The Presbyterian Church, dedicated July 27, 1952



Pictured Below:

**At the Union Church Building in
Brentsville
The Presbyterian Congregation**

Front Row kneeling (L-R)

George Melvin, Thomas Whetzel, Unknown,
Bucky Golladay, Casper Whetzel, Gary Keys,
Carlton Bigelow, Johnnie Melvin, Unknown,
Mamie Golladay, Joyce Keys, Nancy Golladay

Standing Front Row (L-R)

Frances Keys, Patsy Keys, Mrs. Mamie Keys,
Mrs. Laura (Kent) Seymour, Gladys Wolfe,
Mrs. Tracy (Spitzer) Whetzel

Standing Back Row (L-R)

Mattie Whetzel, Jean Keys, Mary Lou
Lipscomb, Mr. James M. Keys, Jr., Mr.
James M. Keys, Sr.

**Where WILD things
live..**



Celtis occidentalis

See Story on page 6



Remembering Brentsville

By

Catherine (Counts) Corner

In Her Own Words

My name is Catherine Lorraine (Counts) Corner and I was born on the hill on Lucasville Road where my grandfather, John Baptist Riley Counts, lived on July 14, 1927. I am the fourth child of Troy Elgin Counts and Minnie Ann (Keys) Counts. After granddaddy died (April 22, 1932) Daddy had the house and we lived there. He got sick and had a lot of doctor bills and had to sell his home to pay the bills. We moved to property behind the Manassas racetrack and built a home there.

I went to school in Brentsville for grades 1 through 4. We had to walk to school. I remember one day it was so cold our breath froze on our clothes. Aunt Mamie Keys asked my mother why she was bringing us out in such cold weather and she said, well they have to go to school! Aunt Mamie said there was no school today. We had to walk across the swinging bridge to get there. My daddy's brother (Uncle Bill) helped build the bridge.

One of my first memories of Brentsville was the Hilman's store and a little barber shop just to the right of the house. I also remember going to the Molair store. My grandmother, John Keys' wife, (who owned the home the Snauffers now have) use to give us eggs to allow us to buy candy.

We attended church in the Union Church. We had bible school in the summer. It was the Presbyterian Church at the time. Our minister was Rev. Crabtree. I have attended the church all my life but officially joined in 1970. I was a Deacon at one time.

When I started school, we walked all four years. For the fifth grade, a bus came by the house and took us to Manassas for school. In Brentsville our teacher was Ms. Dorothy Woodhouse. She was a very sweet lady; very pretty. She lived with Mrs. Seamore and she would sometimes take us home with her to spend the night. We all liked her and thought she was a wonderful teacher.

For recreation we would go outside and play games – tag I remember most but there must have been more like ring around the roses. We all had to participate in the Christmas pageant that was held in the Union Church. I was in girl scouts and the Brentsville 4-H club.

When I owned the store, I use to get a band together and arrange dances in the courthouse. I

remember we had one group from Nashville (I don't remember how I got them) but they were pretty good!

My first job was at Quantico where I pressed the uniforms. They would wash them and bring them to us wet and we would press them dry. I only did this for the summer. It was good work but hot and hard! The iron was a commercial unit that was heated by steam. During the war I worked at the Torpedo Plant in Alexandria. I made the mechanism that detonated the torpedo when it made contact. The day the war ended, everyone strung toilet paper all over the street in Alexandria. I have never seen so much paper – it was strung everywhere! I've worked hard all my life.

Brentsville is special to me because it is my home town. I feel like I belong there. I moved around a lot but always came back home. We knew everyone and everyone knew us. We would always help each other. At hog killing time everyone would pitch in to make the lard and sausage.



Flashback

OLD COURT HOUSE IS DEDICATED

Brentsville Community Acts as Host at County Picnic

With several hundred farmers and their families present the Farmers Annual Picnic of Prince William County was held yesterday at the Old Court House at Brentsville.

The historic old building, which has stood since 1822 has been painted without and redecorated within and a part of the morning program was set aside for dedication of the building and grounds as a community centre. Hon. C. A. Sinclair made the dedication speech in which he traced the history of the town of Brentsville and recited many of the things which took place under the roof of the old court house.

The morning program was presided over by Mrs. C. F. Lewis, and consisted of short talks by Miss Sarah Pitts, county home demonstration agent, F. D. Cox county farm agent, a delightful skit by the Nokesville Home Demonstration Club, a rendition of "In the sticks" by the ladies of the Bethel Demonstration Club, a recitation by Miss Marjorie Middleton, and songs by Miss Celeste Ludwig.

One of the most entertaining features of the day was the Husband Calling Contest which developed a wide variety of calls and methods of summoning the men of the house to dinner. Mrs. M. M. Washington of Greenwich captured first place in this event, Mrs. W. L. Lloyd of Greenwich second, and Mrs. Frank Egan of Brentsville was third. The judges were D. E. Earhart, C. F. M. Lewis and R. C. Linton.

The address of the day was delivered by J. H. Quisenberry, district agent of the Eastern District of Virginia for the V. P. I. Extension Department. Mr. Quisenberry lauded the efforts of the farmers and dairy men to meet the problems brought about by the severe drought and urged upon them the necessity for complete cooperation of all units within the county in endeavors for betterment of conditions.

Mrs. John Seymour and her committee chairman functioned well and every comfort was provided for the host of guests, while a diversified program of entertainment planned for the grown-ups as well as for the young folks, was carried forward throughout the day.

(Courtesy of Ron Turner. Source: The Manassas Journal, August 1930)

Where WILD Things Live

Celtis occidentalis

(Common Hackberry or Sugarberry or Bird Cherry)

This unusual tree is native to North Dakota but because of the similar form (although smaller) and adaptability as the American Elm, it is becoming a substitute for that tree. It is also used as an ornamental plant. The Hackberry has a unique stucco-like bark and grows to 70 feet tall with a canopy spread of 62 feet (the largest tree in its native North Dakota). The flowers are small and unimpressive but it bears a rounded, ¼ inch pitted dark-purple fruit called a drupe. These are consumed intensively by birds and for this reason, the tree retains the nick-name "bird cherry." Native Americans used fruits to flavor meat in the same manner as black pepper.

Commercially the wood has little value however the bark when separated into its component fibers can yield thread suitable for use in rope and matting. Historically, moist Southern church pews were made of hackberry. It often is used for farm implements as well as crates and boxes. It is moderately hard, heavy and has medium bending strength, high shock resistance but is low in stiffness. The wood planes and turns well and is intermediate in its ability to hold nails and screws, and stains satisfactorily. Hackberry dries readily with minimal degrade but has a fairly high shrinkage and is most suitably used in small or short pieces.

(Source: Various internet locations found by Google search)

Brentsville

The People, Places and Memories

Your Chance to Make a Difference for Future Generations

A call for assistance from Nelson and Morgan

We very much need your help, and your help can make a difference for future generations!

It has occurred to us that volumes of information are being lost concerning the people, places and events of Brentsville that should be preserved. Remember all the stories Uncle Miff (or whoever it was) use to tell? If we had only jotted down that information! Now that we are getting a bit older, we are finally trying to do something to capture, record and preserve some of those memories of Brentsville. And we need your help to do it.

What's going on?

Nelson Keys and Morgan Breeden are attempting to put together a living history of "Our Town." Together, we envision this will be a long-term effort, continuing to grow over the years and will take form in (at least) three major parts:

- **First, a picture "scrapbook"** of the people—young and old, historical or recent—who have influenced, or were influenced by Brentsville. We hope everyone who ever passed through was influenced in some way so every picture is important and very welcome. There are special sections for those who served in the Military, those who attended school here, and special events that occurred in Brentsville.
- **Second, detailed information on the buildings** (present and past) within the town and events that took place in or around these buildings. Who owned them, how they were used, how they are now used, and other information of interest. This includes not only the "important" homes but ALL homes, churches, schools, stores, and any other building we can identify no matter how large or small.
- **And third, memories of people** who have been touched in some way by the community, shared "in their own words."

We want this information available in a living scrapbook format for the old and young alike to help us all remember Brentsville as the wonderful place it has been and always will be. This is NOT a commercial venture. We hope that the future development of a Brentsville Information and Visitors Center will serve as repository for this information and that those who follow will carry on the work for all to see and use.

(continued on page 8)

Many thanks to Mr. George Melvin for taking time to chat with us about his memories of Brentsville, his pictures and his support for which we are very grateful. Look for his story in April. Another special thanks to Edith "Sis" Melvin Turner for her memories and support for which we are equally grateful. Look for her memories in May. We know there is much more to be learned from George and Edith and look forward to receiving more from them in the future.

What can I do?

You can help—even if you were not born or raised here. Anyone who has ever passed through Brentsville can contribute. Simply by remembering why you were here and what you were doing would be a wonderful addition. For those who have lived here many years, your input is especially needed to give us a unique perspective that those of us living in Brentsville probably don't always see. Help us remember who was here – what they did – how they lived – and most importantly, information about yourself—**your** memories. What did you feel? Smell? Taste? Touch? Hear? Who did you spend time with? How did you spend your free time? Where did you go to school, or work? Don't worry about your writing ability ... just put your thoughts down on paper ... or on audio tape for us.

What is needed?

Here is what we really need:

- **Photographs** – Copies of photographs (old or new—**with identification**) that can be used in our scrapbook may be mailed to either of us at the address below. For those who are out of town or who have a computer / scanner, the photographs may be scanned and sent via e-mail to Morgan at morganbreeden@aol.com. Another option is to have your local Kinko's scan and e-mail them but it will cost you for the service. If you do either, please do not forget to include the identification information. Or, if you are near Brentsville, your photos can be copied by us and returned very quickly. They don't even have to be removed from your own album to do this!
- **Building Information** – Second, we need information on the buildings of Brentsville. A title search, for example, or copies of deeds, or any other creditable information, no matter how detailed or how small, that can be copied for use in our "Buildings" volume. Anything you have will be a great help.
- **Personal Information** – And last, but possibly the most important, information about yourself, in your own words, which can be used in our third volume dealing with people that is called, "We Remember." Just in case you don't think you have anything to say, a list of possible thoughts you may wish to include are provided on the following page.

Bottom Line

We need your help! And you, as well as all members of your family, **CAN** help. Even in cases where your husband or wife contributed (or will contribute), the things you and your children remember will be different and are very much needed. No one or two individuals can amass such a broad spectrum of information. It will take our collective effort. You will be recognized for your contribution and **IT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE**. To our knowledge, over the years NO one has compiled information specifically on Brentsville that covers this wide range of information. It is important to preserve our history just as we preserve our historic buildings.

So please, take the time to look over your photographs, old and new, and share them with your Brentsville friends. Please, take the time to sit down for just a few minutes and start jotting down your memories of Brentsville. Short or long, everything is welcome. We are even including some old letters that say a lot about our community.

Things to consider in your memories may include (but certainly should not be limited to):

Your name	Your first memories of Brentsville
Your Mother/Father's name	Who or what made a great impression
Something about them	Information on your home
When/Where you were born	Church activities
Brothers or sisters	Events at the Courthouse / One-Room School
Where you were raised	Other Brentsville activities (weddings, social, etc.)
Who were your friends	Summer recess activities
Where you went to school	How long you were in Brentsville
Your favorite studies	Where you are now
Sports you played	Current activities
Other activities	What happened to your old buddies
After school activities	Humorous events or activities
College / military activities	Favorite places

With very best wishes,

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