



Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville

Shared Among Neighbors

June 2008



Welcome Neighbor!

Ahhhh... Summer has finally arrived. The heavy rains are past (they are, aren't they?) and it's finally starting to get warm. Although we had a very mild winter, the summer sunshine always feels good. For a while anyhow. Then we start complaining about how hot it is.

The Children's Farm Day on May 17th was very well attended and enjoyed by children and adults alike. Page 4 has a few pictures of the event.

We are so fortunate to receive information on Brentsville from our friends and neighbors. For example, Howard Churchill has been busy researching information from his family files (Davis and Williams families of Brentsville) and is sharing with us a wealth of information. Included are many pictures and a copy of the original manuscript of "History of the Prince William Cavalry" by Mrs. Margaret Williams Barbour and Miss Laura Lion that was published in "Confederate Veteran" Vol. XV August 1907. Two of these pictures (see page 3) are members of his family and both were original members of the Prince William Cavalry. The document describes their uniform as follows: *"It was uniformed with gray cloth made at Kelly's Mills, in Culpeper County. The uniform consisted of a frock coat with one row of buttons up the front and one on each side, connecting at the top with a gold lace V. Pants with yellow stripes, black hats with black plumes on the left side held up with crossed sabers, and a shield with the letters 'P. W. C.' in front—a plain but neat uniform in which the most insignificant must look his best... ."* The uniform worn by John Williams is believed to have been an earlier version of this description according to David Born, the Bristoe Site Manager and a Civil War expert. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful photograph that is highly prized. The uniform worn by Capt. Thornton is believed to be a later version, possibly while serving as a Major in General Ewell's Command.

The Brentsville Site Manager, Rob Orrison, is fortunate to have Jenn Garrot working with him this

summer. She is studying history and has worked in other Virginia historic sites. Please make her feel welcome when you next visit the site.

Don't forget the Thunder Ridge American Bluegrass Festival being presented by the PWC Historic Preservation Division at the PWC Fairgrounds on Saturday, June 14th, from 10:00am until 5:00pm. It will feature music by Leon Morris, The Page County Ramblers, Skystone, and The Blueridge Travellers. There will also be military demonstrations and an artillery display by the local National Guard. Advance tickets: Adults \$15.00, Children 4-12, \$5.00. At the Gate: Adults \$20.00, children \$10.00. Age 3 and under are free. Admission includes a free lunch. Contact David Born at 703-257-5243 for your tickets right away.

On June 14, 2008, Prince William County will host a lunch and tour of the Brentsville Site as the afternoon portion of a Yellow Ribbon Tours program for a group of 30 severely injured soldiers from Walter Reed Hospital. Many of these soldiers have leg and arm amputations which they received while in Iraq and Afghanistan. This will be the first outing for many of these soldiers in many months. While the soldiers are certainly not able to leave the hospital as yet, this outing is pretty exciting for them. It's pretty exciting for us to host them in Brentsville as well. We are honored!

Very best wishes,
Nelson and Morgan

This month:

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- A Look Back in History ----- page 7

Where W I L D Things Live

Actias luna (Luna moth)

Geographic Range - The luna moth occurs widespread in the forested areas of North America. The species has been found in every state east of the Great Plains all the way south to northern Mexico. They seem to prefer deciduous woodlands, with trees such as the hickory, walnut, sumacs, and persimmon.

Physical Description - The luna moth is an easily distinguishable species with long sweeping hindwing tails and varying in color from yellowish green to pale bluish green. Both sexes are similar in size, but males have a more strongly feathered antennae. The wingspan ranges from 3.15 to 4.53 inches. In its early stages the luna moth is a green caterpillar that has hair, spiny tubercles, and a yellow stripe on each side.

Reproduction - The luna moth exhibits a pheromone mating system. This ability to attract distant males via chemical communication is found in all female saturniids. Undeterred by obstacles such as leaves and branches, the male moths will persistently follow the scent trail of a female. Then the female will typically mate with the first male to reach her. Since the luna moth is a nocturnal species, mating usually occurs in the first hours after midnight. A female luna moth will seek a host plant in which to oviposit. Some populations of luna moths complete more than one generation in a year.

Behavior - The luna moth is a nocturnal species, and is not often seen in the daytime. As do many saturniids, the Luna moth uses wing patterns as a defense against predators. The Luna moth can mimic living and dead leaves on the ground by remaining motionless when not involved in reproductive behavior. The moths will also dramatically flutter their wings when attacked.

Food Habits - The luna moth is an insect herbivore. As a caterpillar it feeds on the foliage of various species of hickory, walnut, sweet-gum, persimmon, and birch trees. It has been reported that it is particularly fond of the persimmon.

Economic Importance for Humans: Negative - There are no known negative effects contributed by Luna moths.

Economic Importance for Humans: Positive - Lunamoths have often been used in classrooms to help teach insect life cycles. They have also proven good subjects in ecology and evolutionary biology.

Source: Patlan, L. 2000. "Actias luna" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed May 04, 2008 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Actias_luna.html.

flashback

THE MANASSAS JOURNAL JUNE 10, 1910

FAIR, A.J. – M.J. – June 10, 1910 –
Capt. A. J. Fair, a native of Prince William County, died in Alexandria on Sunday night last. He had been a sufferer from cancerous affliction for many years.

The Alexandria Gazette says of him:

Captain Fair was born in Brentsville, Prince William County, about 76 years ago. In early life he was employed on sailing vessels on the Potomac and later on steamboats. He was one of the crew of the ferry steamer George Washington, which arrived and departed from the foot of Queen Street in the early fifties, and later of the steamer Alice Price, which ran on the lower river route. This steamer's wharf adjoined the Old Dominion Boat Club's house on the north. Captain Fair was at times commander of the steamers James Guy and Mystic and for a number of years was in charge of the ferry steamer City of Alexandria which ran on the route between this city and Washington. His active service extended for a period of twenty years during which time he was captain of the B. & O. transfer tugboat Brewerton which towed barges with cars from the foot of Wilkes street to Shepherds' on the opposite side of the river. Captain Fair has for many years been a member of Potomac Lodge of Odd Fellows.

Source: Death Notices, Obituaries & Memoriams from the Prince William County, VA Manassas Gazette & Manassas Journal, 1885 – 1910 by Carol Thompson Phillips



Douglas Keys and Gill Machen having
fun on Fair's Rock, 1943



John Thomas Williams
Co. 'A' 4th Va. Cavalry
C.S.A.

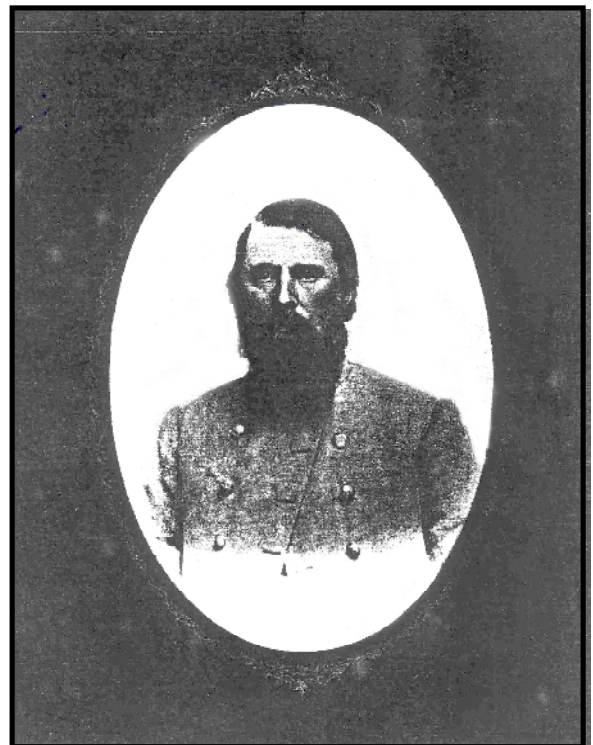
Both Photographs courtesy of Howard Churchill

(Right) Captain W. W. Thornton
Co. 'A' 4th Va. Cavalry
C.S.A.

Where WILD
things live..



Actias luna (Luna Moth)
See page 2



Children's Farm Day - May 17, 2008



Jenn Garrot prepares wax for
candle dipping



Darlene Jones spinning raw wool



Suzette Kapp and volunteers from the PWC Animal Control Office



Alanna and Aurora Breeden show the butter and candles
they made

Howard Elgin Counts II Remembers Brentsville

(Last month, Howard's story ended fishing with his father and friends. Now to continue his memories.)

I'm not sure any one person in Brentsville made a great impression on me during my youth. I do recall having such a pleasurable experience with everyone who lived in or around Brentsville. No matter where you went, everyone you saw knew you very well. They would ask how you were, where you were going, etc., and that sticks in my mind with everyone being so friendly and close. I can never recall having a bad experience. From as long as I can remember, my grandmother and grandfather's immediate family would always have Christmas at their house. All my Aunts and Uncles would go there and we always had a wonderful time. That continued up until my grandmother died in 1980. It would be very, very seldom that someone could not make it. We always got together at Christmas.

Up until I was a teenager, I went to the Presbyterian Church in Brentsville and there were so many members it was sometimes hard to find a seat. Bible School in the summer was so good that we often had to use the courthouse because there were so many of us attending. One special memory was a Bible School event at the courthouse where Mrs. Powell was the instructor. Everyone had a couple of projects that we were working on and she brought several old inner tubes that we cut to make bags to carry our bathing suits home when we went swimming at the log.

I got married in Tazewell, VA, on September 7, 1963, to Brenda Sue Wright. We

came back to Prince William and rented a small house from Mr. & Mrs. Mayhew on Lucasville Road (beside Steuart Bradford) for about 18 months until mom and dad moved to Florida. Then we bought their property and I began in construction work, working for Warren T. Coles, a masonry contractor, until I got my draft notice in 1965. I had started building our new house (footing dug only) when I got draft papers and having come from a Navy family, I joined the Navy.



I went to boot camp at Great Lakes, IL. While there they gave us a number of tests to determine what job would be best suited to each of us. My tests reflected that I would be best suited to construction work so I

was assigned to the Sea Bees and sent to Davisville, RI for my Class "A" school. After completing that school I was assigned to Gulfport, MS where I remained the rest of my enlistment. I got a lot of additional training there in Gulfport and was assigned to two tours of duty in Vietnam. The first tour was in 1967 to Phu Bai. I was at Camp Campbell adjacent to the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Air Cavalry. I was there during the TET Offensive in 1968 which started in February. For three weeks we were shelled and received rocket fire about every two hours, 24 hours a day, for three weeks. We had four casualties from my company during the first tour to combat operations. We did nine month tours because a 12 month tour in the Navy meant we could not be sent back for three years. So after nine months I went back to Gulfport for six months and then back again to Vietnam for the second tour. We were assigned to another camp about

1-1/2 miles from Phu Bai with the 101st Airborne at Camp Eagle. During that tour my assignment was off base where I got to see a lot more of the country. There was also a lot less military activity so it was more like peacetime work and it was actually enjoyable.

When I was in Vietnam on the second tour, one of my closest friends, James Kilpatrick who lives in Gulfport, wanted to learn to play the guitar. We went to special services, checked out a couple of guitars and started playing every evening. There was a guy in the hut next to us that had a jumbo Gibson guitar with a beautiful sound that I really wanted. I tried to buy it from him but he didn't want to sell. When the tour was over and we were getting ready to come home, he had smashed the guitar and it was sticking in the trash with nothing showing but the neck. I took the neck out, cleaned it up, and my buddy Jim asked me what I was going to do with it. I told him I was going to bring it home and make a guitar using that neck. That was in 1969 and in 1990 I had made a guitar with that neck and since then I've made 10 more. I still have the first one and one other. The others have been given away to friends.

The friends that I made in the military have kept in close touch with each other. One is in Harrisburg, PA. We visit at least once each month. Another is in Richmond, VA and we keep in touch with phone contact. My friend Jim Kilpatrick is still in Gulfport and I visit him at least once each year. We talk on the phone every week.

I got an early discharge from the Navy, came back and lived in Manassas Park with my wife's mother and father until we rented a house from Jake Conner on Hensley Road. We lived there until 1973 when I got my house completed on Brentsville Road where we are now. I was still working with Coles at this time. Then he decided to move to WVA so I went into business for myself. During this time I developed a bit of back trouble but then had an opportunity to go to work for the county as a building inspector in 1977. I worked as an inspector until 1979 when they

created a Plan Review Branch of the Inspections Office so I became the Plans Examiner for all commercial buildings in PWC – reviewing plans and specifications for compliance with building code prior to issuing building permit for the building. I remained there until I retired in September 2000. I remained idle for about a year when the Fire Marshal's office contacted me and encouraged me to go to work for them on a part-time basis which I did up until June 2007. I retired from that and my plans are to remain retired!

I have two favorite places. My most very favorite place ever is Brentsville during the 50's and 60's when it was still dirt roads, rural and farms all over the place. Since that has now disappeared, my next favorite place is Gulfport, Mississippi. The first time I ever went to Gulfport, my wife and I were arriving one morning shortly after daylight and we were looking for a place to rent. I ran out of gas. Gulfport was very rural then also. I saw a gas station about a mile up the road so I walked up and told the attendant that I had run out of gas. He gave me a can, filled it up with gas at no charge and apologized that he was the only one there or he would run me back down the road to put the gas in the car. That is the kind of people who made up the community of Gulfport. In addition, especially the winter climate is superb. It almost never freezes; fishing is always good and aside from a severe summer, very pleasurable climate.

My wife and I still live on Brentsville Road where we raised our two daughters, Roxanne (Darline) and Kimberley. They are both married now to wonderful sons-in-law and we have seven wonderful grandchildren. Roxanne is married to Bob Hettinger and they live in Howard County, MD, with their three children, Troy age 7, Megan 5 and Hope 3. Kim is married to John Sherman and they live in Winchester, VA, with Madison, age 13, Josh 10, Joel 7 and Samuel age 1. Who could ask for a more perfect family? God has really blessed us.

Brentsville

A Look Back in History

by
Ronald Ray Turner

William J. Sinclair

William Sinclair, a man about 30 to 35 years old, six feet tall and very strong, pleaded not guilty, but that appeared to be just a formality as everyone knew he would be convicted. Eppa Hunton, the prosecutor, was so sure of getting a guilty verdict that he charged Sinclair with first degree murder. The trial lasted two days and he was indeed found to be guilty. The defense attorney, assigned to Sinclair, immediately asked the sentence to be put aside and a new trial granted. The judge said he needed time to consider the request and said he would rule the next day. The next day the Judge ruled the verdict should be set aside and a new trial ordered. This was only one of the events that went into making William Sinclair's tenure in the Brentsville Jail perhaps the longest since it was built.

The 30th of January 1855 was a cold snow covered day. William Sinclair had been hunting and decided to stop at Triplett's Bar in Gainesville before he went home. Upon entering the bar, James Hewitt, his son William Hewitt and William Corum invited him to have a drink. After a few drinks it was suggested to Sinclair that he should buy for the group. He replied that he didn't have any money but he had a rabbit if Triplett would take it. Triplett agreed and gave him a ½ pint of whiskey. This group, the only customers, sat at a table for about an hour and talked about hunting with Sinclair who stated that his rifle was the only friend he needed.

Haywood Triplett, the owner operator of the tavern, with no one spending any money announced he was cold and wanted to close and go home for dinner. After some grumbling the group left the bar and Triplett closed the bar for the day. He left the group outside assuming they would leave and went to his residence about 50 yards away. After about an hour Triplett heard

voices and sent his children to look out and see what was happening. There was a shot and the children returned and said Mr. Hewitt had been shot. He went outside and observing the rifle in Sinclair's hand thought maybe they were pulling a ruse on him to come and reopen the bar. People were yelling "murder stop the murderer." As Triplett started towards the group, he saw Sinclair going across his fence running in the direction of Bull Run Mountains. There was some talk at the trial by the defense attorney that Hewitt could have been perceived as a threat because he was in possession of a club. This was countered by the knowledge of the community that Hewitt was an old man that walked with a cane.

It is not known the date that William Sinclair was captured but it was not immediate because the state issued wanted postings with a reward offered. We do know according to records that he was in the Brentsville Jail from sometime in the middle of 1856. In October 1856 he was scheduled for trial but it was postponed until the next term "for reasons appearing to the court." His first degree murder trial finally got under way 11 May 1857 and as stated before this conviction was overturned. He was scheduled to go to trial for second degree murder in October 1857 but as in his first trial "for reasons appearing to the court" this trial was continued until 10 May 1858 at which time he was convicted again. So it would appear he was incarcerated at Brentsville about two years before being sent to the State Penitentiary for 5 years after the second trial.

It must be noted that William Sinclair was somewhat of a notorious sort that would rival anyone in years to come. A few years previous William shot the husband of his sister in one of his arms, making him an invalid forever.

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IN GOD WE TRUST

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