



# Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors  
August 2008



Welcome Neighbor!

Wow! Is it August already? It seems we were just thinking how nice the warm weather felt for a change. Now we are thinking how nice it would feel for a cool day!

First of all we must thank Nelson Bradshaw for his generous support of our little newsletter. His photographs and other contributions go a long way to making this a success. In a recent note he said, "Thank you for the great job you did on my grandmother's diploma and also thanks for keeping me informed about Brentsville with your newsletter. Give my regards to Freddy Wolfe and Leonard Wright when you see them." Contributions have also been received from Verona Craig and Robert Beahm. A very special **"thank you"** to each of you!

Please also remember the Brentsville School Reunion to be held on September 6<sup>th</sup> from 11:00am until 1:00pm sponsored by the Prince William Historic Preservation Division. A special memento will be given to every former student in attendance as our way of saying Thank You for keeping the memory of your school alive. Light finger foods and refreshments will be served. Everyone is welcome to attend.

It is a sad situation that the Haislip/Hall house is now the target of vandals. The building

was forcibly entered twice on the same day during a recent week-end. Fortunately only minor damage was done since it is not yet fully furnished. A more secure lock system has now been installed that detracts from the original look but will, hopefully, prevent future malicious damage. The Prince William Police are conducting a thorough investigation.

Work with Janice Speakes continues. To date we have scanned nine photo albums and eight scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. Certainly all of this information is not directly related to Brentsville but a very large percentage of it is and we are very, very grateful to include this information in the Brentsville collection. Thank you Janice! We hope other photo albums and scrapbooks may be made available to expand the family representation in this effort.

Very best wishes,  
Nelson and Morgan

## This month:

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## Where W I L D Things Live

The **rosy maple moth** is a North American moth in the Saturniidae family. Males have a wingspan of 32-44 mm; females of 40-50 mm. They have reddish-to-pink legs and antennae, yellow bodies and hindwings, and pink forewings with a triangular yellow band across the middle although the color may be very variable. Males have bushier antennae than females. As the name implies, rosy maple moths mainly feed on Maples, particularly Red Maple, Silver Maple, and Sugar Maple. Sometimes these moths become pests on maple trees.

### Life cycle

Adults emerge in the late afternoon and mate in the late evening. Females begin laying pale yellow eggs at dusk the next day in groups of 10-30 on leaves of the host plant, normally maples. After about two weeks, small gregarious caterpillars hatch. They will remain gregarious through the third instar, but the final two are solitary. The mature larvae are light green with black lateral lines, red heads, and two filaments behind the head, and reach lengths of about 55 mm. When they are ready, they climb to the bottom of the host tree and pupate in shallow underground chambers. The pupae are very dark, elongated, and have small spines. The pupa ends in a small forked point. When the imago (adult) ecloses, it has small wings which it has to pump full of fluid in order for them to expand and allow for flight.

There is typically one brood in the north from May-August, two broods in the south from April-September, and possibly three broods in the Deep South and Florida from March-October.

Adult moths are generally nocturnal; they preferentially fly throughout the first third of the night. The females emit pheromones at night and attract males, which have bushier antennae in order to smell the females' scent. Adult moths do not feed although caterpillars can become pests by defoliating trees during occasional population explosions.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dryocampa\\_rubicunda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dryocampa_rubicunda)  
<http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species?l=3351>

## FLASHBACK

Little Miss Elaine Visgar celebrated her third birthday at her home on Thursday when a large number of her little friends came to her home for a party. Among those enjoying the fun and birthday cake and ice cream were Dewana and Paul Burke of Bradley Forest, Judy Wine of Manassas, Linda, Dorene, Stevie, and Chuckie McIntosh of Longview, Pamela and Daryll Powell, Carolyn and Bennie Payne, Janet and Allen Weaver, Karen Vickie Dunn, Hazel Breeden and Joe Griffin all of Brentsville. Elaine's great great-grandmother, Mrs. Mamie Burke, and her grand-mother Mrs. Bennie Breeden, were also present to help her celebrate.

Source: The Journal Messenger, July 1954

### KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

Mrs. J. J. Whetzel arrived in this community 50 years ago from Rockingham as baby Tracie in the arms of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Spitzer. After completing her education, Tracie embarked on a seven year teaching career in the schools of Prince William, two of which were spent at Brentsville.

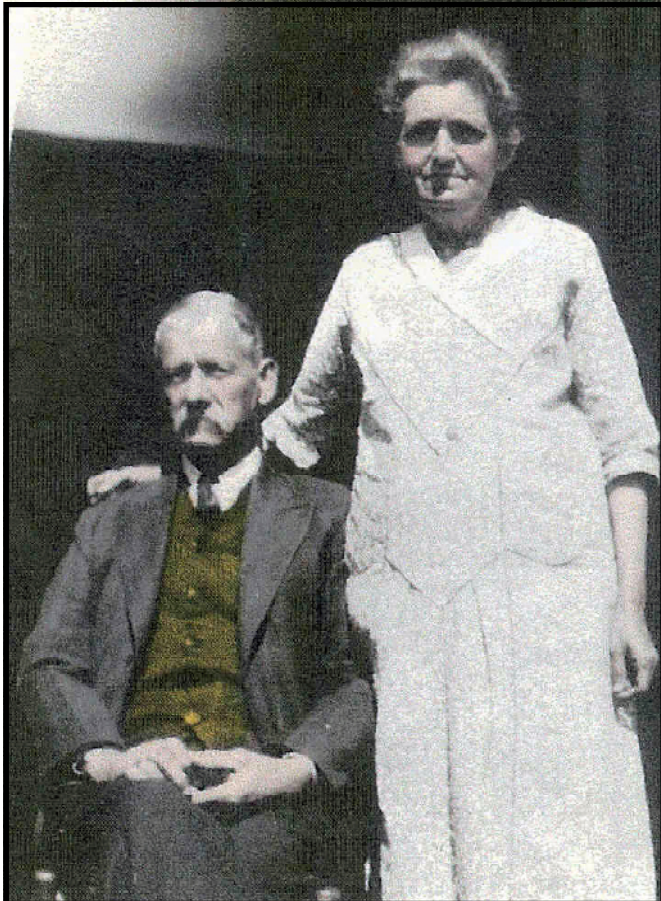
While teaching, she met her husband, Jesse J. Whetzel, who had come to Prince William with his parents in 1911. and was laboring as a farm hand. At the age of 18, he entered the service and saw action in France during World War I, where he suffered a severe leg wound. While still handicapped by his injury, Mr. Whetzel. keeps busy maintaining a big garden annually and doing odd jobs about their neatly kept home.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Whetzel are active workers in the Brentsville Union Church. Mrs. Whetzel is president of the Home Demonstration Club.

They have five children, which include four sons, Casper and Ira, at home, and Thomas and Frederick in the service of their country, the former in the army and the later in the navy. Their daughter is Mrs. Mattie Speakes, who resides in Washington, D. C.

Source: The Journal Messenger, 1951





Robert Hilman Keys and Susan Emma (Beavers) Keys

Where WILD  
things live..



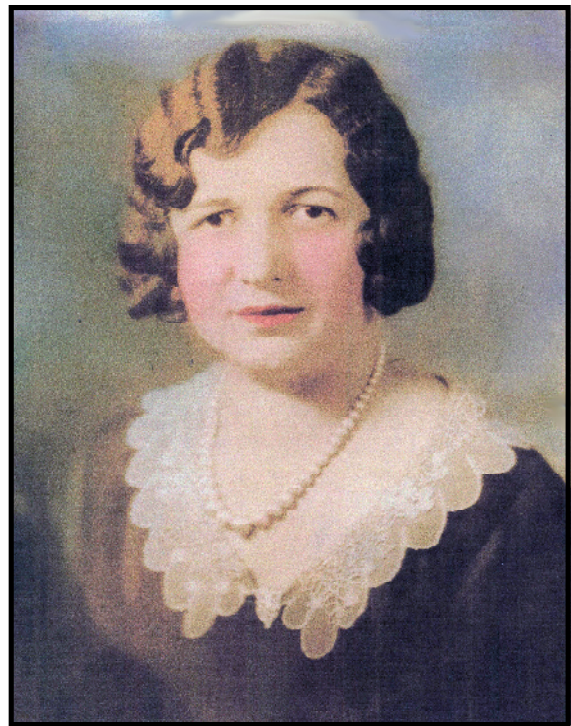
*Dryocampa rubicunda* (Fabricius, 1793)

Rosy maple moth

(See page 2)



Laura Seymore



Violet Louellen Keys

Photos courtesy Bill Wade





Above - Emma Wolfe watches construction of the Brentsville Presbyterian Church



Photos courtesy of Janice Speakes

## Mike Simpson Reflects on His Young Life in Brentsville

Hello. My name is Mike Simpson, and I lived in Brentsville from 1962 to 1969, when I graduated from Osbourn High School and left to join the Navy. I'll give a brief biography of who I am, and then relate some memories of those years.

My family moved to Brentsville in 1962, to the house just across the bridge over Broad Run on Brentsville Rd; the house is still there, (Before that we lived on the other side of Manassas off Wellington Rd.) My Dad was Leonard Simpson and stepmother Mildred. I attended Baldwin elementary school for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, then Marsteller junior high for 2 years, then Osbourn for 3; I graduated in June of 1969 and left to attend the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

I graduated from the Academy in 1973, and spent the next 30 years in the Navy. Duty assignments included Norfolk, Great Lakes, IL, Newport RI, Concord, CA, Monterey, CA, Long Beach CA, Washington DC (twice), San Diego CA (twice), Boston MA, and Corpus Christi, TX. My last assignment was Commanding Officer of the NROTC Unit in San Diego, and I still live in San Diego. I retired from the Navy in 2003.

The first time I visited Manassas and Brentsville was in the late 80's (my parents had moved to OR while I was at the Academy.) Recently, I have been back several times, including early May of this year.

I have many memories of those years growing up near Brentsville. We had 10 acres

of land, most of which was garden. I made my spending money (and bought my first car) from the profits of selling vegetables to the local store, especially the A&P in Manassas.

I noticed last week that the field where we grew tomatoes is now home to a couple of

horses. My dislike of garden work as a teenager was probably the main factor in my determination to go to college somehow; since my parents didn't have money to pay for college, the Naval Academy was a great opportunity for me.

I used to fish in Broad Run quite a bit, both with a pole, and by setting out a small trotline. Mostly I caught perch

and catfish, which made good eating. I wonder if kids are still fishing at my old spot, near the bridge. In the summer, we would also swim in the Run, in a wide spot about 1/2 mile behind the house. In the Spring most years, the Run flooded the nearby fields. Our neighbors across the street were Al and Ruth Johnson, and his big field would turn into a lake for a week or two.

In late summers I would work for Mr. Johnson for several days helping him bring in hay; they had several horses. I don't remember what he paid me, but I thought at the time it was an immense amount of money. Their brick house across the road from us still looks exactly the same, but I don't know who lives there now.

I started attending the Presbyterian Church in Brentsville when I was about 13 or 14, with the main reason being the social



(Continued on page 6)

contact with other kids. Living on a small farm while too young to drive yet didn't provide much social activity and the church was within walking distance so I normally walked or rode my bike to church. I remember that at one point a new, young pastor took over the church. His name was Larry Miles and he led a pretty active youth group. I think I attended right up to when I finished high school and left the area. It was a nice congregation, and provided most of my social life until I was old enough to drive.

When I first saw the reconstructed courthouse and jail and all the historical information about Brentsville, I was amazed — none of that was there when I was attending the church. I never knew that Brentsville had been the county seat at one time. When I came back for the first time after many years to look at the church I attended (this was during the time when the court house was being re-built, in 2003), my girl friend discovered the blackberry bushes along the back fence row. This would have been August or September I think, and the bushes were just full of delicious ripe berries. We must have spent at least an hour eating blackberries! The berries were of much greater interest to her than either my old church or the historic site.

The small general store in Brentsville was the only local place to buy anything. The daughter of the owners was named Cheryl I think; she used to work in the store after school. I think she was a couple of years ahead of me in school. I remember going up to the store just to see if she were there; I had quite a crush on her.

One of the highlights then, and probably still today, was the Prince William county fair every August. That was about the only annual event I remember. Like for most kids, my life revolved around school and Little League, and except for our close neighbors, I never knew that many people around Brentsville.

## **A Call for Help**

The Brentsville Presbyterian Church began at White Hall, near Aden, Virginia, 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 in 1915, when the White Hall building was condemned because of old age, the remnant congregation moved to the Union Church in Brentsville. The congregation remained there for thirty-seven years until they moved once again, into their current location.

The history of the church from 1915 until now is scattered with the wind. But they are determined to document as much information as possible to better understand their migration from the past to the present. To do this they ask your help. If you have any document, picture, or anything else, no matter what, that can help with this search, we would love to borrow it just long enough to copy and return to you. Or, if you prefer, copy it yourself and send us the copy.

This includes your personal memories of events that may have happened along the way. Remember the picnic at Ben Shoemakers along Broad Run? I bet many attended parties and a wagon ride on the Croushorn farm back to Cedar Run for a swim and social activities. How wonderful it would be to document these events as you remember them!

We have offered our help in this effort as just one more way to collect and preserve the history of Brentsville. Please send anything you have to Morgan and we assure you full recognition will be given to you as the source. Won't you please help?

# *Brentsville*

## A Look Back in History

by  
Ronald Ray Turner

### **Landon**

“There is one man 35 years old, said to be a blacksmith, he is whipped in a horrid manner which is a great eyesore and renders him less unsalable. I value him at eight hundred dollars.” This was the valuation by R. H. Dickinson, an auctioneer in the firm of Templeman & Dickinson, setting prices for the 29 inmates in the Virginia Penitentiary who were sentenced to transportation outside the limits of the United States.

Landon, a runaway Slave the property of William Bowers of Fauquier County, was arrested in the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> day of February 1839 and confined in the Brentsville, Virginia jail. The next morning being Sunday about “one half hour by sun” Overton, a Slave who was working in the jail, said he passed by the cell door and the prisoner asked for a coal to light his pipe. Overton asked him if he could wait until after breakfast and Landon said yes. After breakfast and with the permission of George Clifford, the jailor, he was given a hot coal.

About a half hour later William Fewell, J. A. Evans, and James Purcell arrived at the jail with the intent of questioning the prisoner. Fewell reported that he got to the head of the stairway and called to Landon who replied that the house was on fire. When asked where, he said he didn’t know. They sent Overton to get the key to get into the cell. The fire seemed to have been confined to the Landon’s cell and the ceiling of the adjoining one but the fire originated in the room of the accused.

John Gibson was the attorney for the Commonwealth and William T. French Esq. was assigned counsel for the prisoner Landon. Gibson read the following: “that he wanted the court to understand and be informed that a certain Negro man Slave named Landon, late of the County aforesaid, the property of one William Bowers of the County of Fauquier, on the tenth day of February, not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil, with force and arms, and within the jurisdiction of this court did feloniously, willfully and maliciously, set fire to the jail of the County of Prince William, situated in the town of Brentsville against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth.” Gibson further charged that Landon set the fire by stuffing a piece of cloth into a hole and used the hot coal to ignite the cloth. The cell adjacent to his was empty making him the only person who could have started the fire.

The court was unanimous in the opinion that Landon was guilty of setting fire to the jail. He was remanded back to jail where he was to remain until the day of his execution. The hanging was to take place on the fourth Friday in April 1839 between the hours of 10 o’clock in the morning and 4 o’clock in the afternoon. The court also recommended Landon to the mercy of the Executive. Governor Campbell honored this recommendation and changed the sentence to transportation beyond the limits of the United States.



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IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors  
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