

Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors
May 2009



Welcome Neighbors,

There are so many wonderful things going on in Brentsville it is now a challenge to keep track of them. During March we were happy to host the Fewell family who are direct descendants of John Woodbury Fewell who was born in Brentsville on October 18, 1844. He enlisted in the Confederate service at the Brentsville Court House. Through the historic four years of the Confederacy's life, he followed its fortunes as a private soldier in the camp, on the march, and on the battle fields. See their picture on page 4.

On April 18th our Civil War event featured 12 cavalry, 20 infantry and 12 civilian re-enactors. The civilians were able to use the Haislip House and set up a 19th century family scenario which was really nice. All in all we had 60 individuals participate totaling 471 hours of volunteer time! This also included 18 members of Boy Scout Troop 850 from Stafford who were completing an Eagle Scout project – the construction of an authentic 1850's pig pen.

April 25th featured a nature walk guided by Ms. Jeannie Couch, a well known master gardener and photographer. Turnout was not as expected but everyone had a wonderful time identifying many of the wildflowers found on the courthouse grounds.

Very best wishes,
Nelson & Morgan

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A New Beginning

In the spring,
My thoughts turn to a new beginning.
Mother Earth is again pregnant.
Birds and animals that sought
Warmer conditions are now returning.

Crocus peek their heads
Through remnant of melting snow.
Daffodils appear over night
Filling my heart with warmth.

The lawn is starting to green.
Pear trees and forsythia bushes,
Aglow with bloom,
Dwarf the still leafless woodland.

Daily, Mother Earth releases new life.
Flowers appear where none were before
And a small cedar tree claims a part of the lawn.

When will I see the first blue tailed lizard,
Or gardener snake, protecting the azaleas
From insects not yet hatched?
When will the deep-bass bullfrog proclaim
His superiority in the small pond?

It is also time for tourists and mosquitoes
To seriously plan their summer invasion.
And I eagerly await each new day.

J.C. Breeden
Keysville, VA

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Where WILD Things Live

Black Rat Snake *Scotophis alleghaniensis*

Description: The common rat snake is medium-sized, averaging 42 to 72 inches in length. At the widest point of the snake's body, its average diameter is 1.5 inches. The rat snake is covered with keeled scales, and has a powerful slender body with a wedge-shaped head. The anal plate of the common rat snake is divided. A variety of subspecies is found across the United States.

The black rat snake, as the name implies, is completely black except for a white chin. Hatchlings of the black rat snake have a pale grey background with black blotches along the back. As the snake matures, the color becomes darker until the snake reaches its adult phase. Hatchlings are often mistaken for copperheads because their skin patterns are similar.

Common rat snakes tend to be shy and, if possible, will avoid being confronted. If these snakes are seen and confronted by danger, they tend to freeze and remain motionless. Some adults attempt to protect themselves. They coil their body and vibrate their tails in dead leaves to simulate a rattle. If the snakes continue to be provoked, they will strike.

Rat snakes produce a foul-smelling musk and release it on the predator if they are picked up, spreading the musk around with their tail. The musk acts as a deterrent. A few of the rat snake subspecies tend to be more aggressive. They are excellent swimmers.

Distribution and Habitat: The black rat snake is the most widely distributed common rat snake with a range from New England south through Georgia and west across the northern parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and north through Oklahoma to southern Wisconsin.

Common rat snakes live in a variety of habitats with each subspecies preferring a slightly different one. Some of these habitats overlap with one another. Common rat snakes are excellent climbers and spend a lot of time in trees. Black rat snakes live at elevations from sea level to high altitudes in the Appalachian Mountains. Black rat snakes live in habitats ranging from a rocky hillside to flat farmland.

Diet in the Wild: Rat snakes are primarily known as rodent eaters, however other food preferences do exist. As juveniles, rat snakes eat small lizards, baby mice, and an occasional small frog. Adult rat snakes have a diet mainly consisting of mice and rats, but also include chipmunks, moles, and other small rodents. Adults also eat bird eggs and young. Rat snakes kill their prey by constriction.

Reproduction: Like most snakes, rat snakes are egg layers. Between March and May, snakes begin to emerge from their winter hibernation. After a few weeks, they begin to seek out a mate, typically in late April, May, and early June. Males tend to wait for the females to pass through their territory, and, by using pheromones, communicate and initiate the mating process with the female. The male snake approaches the female, lines up with her, and attempts to wrap his tail around hers with their vents nearly touching. Some males grasp the female with the mouth, to hold her in place and prevent her from moving away. The male then erects his hemipenes and inserts it into the female's cloaca while several small spines anchor the hemipenes firmly. Mating may last only a few minutes or span a few hours.

Five weeks later, the female lays 12 to 20 eggs. The eggs are laid in a hidden area, under hollow logs or leaves, or in abandoned burrows. The eggs hatch 65 to 70 days later. The hatchlings of common rat snakes are vigorous eaters and double their size rather quickly. If conditions are good, females sometimes produce two clutches of eggs a year.

Life Span: Unknown.

Fun Facts: Rat snakes are very useful around barns and in farming communities because they help control pest populations. Their habitat is slowly being reduced due to land development and the cutting of trees. However, they continue to maintain a healthy population. Due to people's lack of knowledge and fear of snakes, rat snakes continue to be the victim of human persecution.

Source of Information: All or part of this information was provided by the Animal Diversity Web and Museum of Zoology of the University of Michigan.



Lucy Bean, August 1941



Lucy Bean with her dog, Shep, 1943

Where WILD
things live..



Black Rat Snake
Scrophis alleghaniensis



Charles and Lucy Bean,
1930

We are so grateful for having the opportunity to tour the Brentsville site - it was a very special day for all of us!

Attached is a photo taken during our visit. From left to right, shown are:

Morgan Breeden, Jane Patton (John Fewell's granddaughter), John Fewell Patton (John Fewell's great-grandson), Jack Hatcher held by his grandmother Jere Byington (John Fewell's great-granddaughter), Olivia Hatcher held by her father Sid Hatcher (John Fewell's great-great-great grandson). With the presence of Jack and Olivia Hatcher, there are four generations of John Fewell's descendants pictured. The Fewell descendants who visited Brentsville now live in Alexandria, VA; Lexington, VA; Greenville, SC; and Des Moines, IA.

Again, our deepest thanks for welcoming us to that beautiful and special place,

John Fewell Patton
Des Moines, Iowa



During the first week of April, TAPS and the entire crew of Ghost Hunters were at Brentsville exploring for evidence of the supernatural. Their program will be aired during the first week of July. Watch for it then!

Saturday, April 18, 2009
Capt. Tony Meadows displays a Virginia flag that he had commissioned. It is accurate in every detail and is completely hand painted / stiched.

I GREW UP DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

by Lucy May (Bean) Hartman
Part One

I was born Lucy May Bean on April 9, 1924, in Prince William County Virginia. I grew up on a farm with my brothers Charles and James. I am the oldest of my parents' seven children. The last child was born in 1943.

When it was time for me to start school I went to a one-room school in Brentsville, VA. My teacher was Miss Dorothy Woodhouse. This was her first year of teaching. Her home was in the Norfolk area. While she was here to teach, she boarded with John and Laura Seymour. Everyone walked to school. I lived a mile from school.

At that time the road had two tracks where wheels had worn the grass away with grass growing in between. Broad Run was not very large and there was a swinging bridge we used to cross over it. About 12-15 steps brought us up to the three boards that were nailed to support us. A cable was on each side for us to hold onto as we walked across. Sometimes the boys would make the bridge sway as we were going over it. The bridge had to be that high so it would come out at a level place on the other side. There were a lot of big rocks on the Brentsville side. The bridge was below or east of where the car bridge is now located. If you drove to Brentsville, the road forded the stream west of the bridge location we have now. It came around the Keys and Black property up the fencerow and between where Johnny Keys lived and where the Shoemaker garage is now.

There were not many houses on Lucasville Road then. Archie Bradford's house was the last residence that children came from for our school. Jim and Ben Shoemaker lived with Mr. and Mrs. Jim Fletcher on what is now known as the Moor Green farm. They would come across the field then cross the line fence by way of a stile to pass the James Bean property to accompany me to school. We got back into the road at the first curve below the driveway.



Hazel Counts' grandmother, Mrs. Johnny Keys, lived on the way and in the afternoons she would stop there for something to snack on. It was usually crackers and peanut butter. I stopped with her and after our snack we would go on home.

There were two rows of desks for 1st and 2nd grades. I remember there were only 5 or 6 rows of desks total. We had a large wood-burning stove near the middle back of the room for heat. Everyone brought their lunches and placed them on a shelf in the cloakroom. A table was also there where the bigger boys would place the bucket of water they pumped each morning. We each had a collapsible cup to drink from. The well was down near the road. There were two outhouses behind the school building. I remember I was very bashful and would not tell the teacher when I needed to go. I remember I sat at my desk and wet my pants. After that the teacher asked my cousin, Hazel Counts, to take me with her when she went to the toilet.

At recess we played games until the teacher rang the bell. Then we lined up to march back into the school. The lower grades went in front. I don't remember how long it took us to get to school. My family had a Model T Ford car but I don't remember being taken to school.

I remember I was quite fond of biscuits and one day I packed my lunch filling the box with buttered biscuits and apple butter. It so happened Mama checked my lunch so I didn't get to take them all to school. That was while going to Brentsville.

In the winter Miss Woodhouse would sometimes ask some of us to bring vegetables to school. She would bring some kind of meat and we would have a pot of soup ready for lunch. That way we had a hot lunch. We would have

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our own bowl and spoon at school. It smelled so good. We were all hungry when lunchtime arrived.

There was one thing I didn't like in getting ready for school in the fall. I didn't have many store-bought dresses. My grandfather's sister, Aunt Cora, or Grandma made all my dresses, slips and underwear. Of course I had to wear long stockings that were kept up with garters above my knees. I would have liked a store-bought dress but they were careful to make colorful ones for me.

At this time most everyone used coal oil lamps for light and lanterns to see to travel outside. Early in the 1930's we were one of the families that secured a Delco power plant. This was powered by a bank of batteries. I remember the water for the batteries was replenished with spring water that was collected in a glass jar. We had a nice spring beside the road about a half a mile from the house. It was cleaned out and protected so the cattle could not get in it. We also grew watercress in the spring. For some reason the water for the batteries could not be collected in a metal container. An area was dug out like a cellar under the chicken house to house this equipment. The current traveled thru two wires that were run across the ceilings and there was a pull chain hanging from the bulb in the center of the rooms.

It is funny when I think back on those days. My brother, James, was born in March of 1930. The yard was fenced in so he was relatively safe while in the yard. My Mom found he was afraid of chicken feathers. I don't mean the wing feathers but the other ones that were soft and fluttery. So they would close the yard gates and fasten a feather in the latch knowing that James would not open the gate while the feather was there. He was still a toddler at that time.

Another happening that occurred when he was about that age was not so good. We tried to attend Sunday evening church services at the Methodist Church in Manassas. The time I am remembering we were getting ready to go to church and James had already been dressed. Everyone was getting ready also but the gate that was between the barnyard and the front of the house had to be closed to keep the farm animals secure. I think I was the one that was to go close it. I left the yard gate open and James followed a little way out into the barnyard. I closed the gate.

We had recently gotten a new horse named Dick that wore horseshoes. He was a long-legged dark brown horse and was coming toward the gate. I threw up my arms to scare him back and he whirled around running the other way. James had gotten to the end of the walk by then. Dick threw up his heels and kicked toward James. It was

just a glancing kick but the three horseshoe nails caught James in the top of his head knocking him unconscious. I screamed, Papa came running and picked James up and carried him into the house. They called Dr. McBride who came right away. It was decided to take James to Children's Hospital in Washington, D C. Mama and Papa wrapped him warmly and rushed him to the hospital. I don't remember how long he had to be in hospital but he carried the three scars on the top of his head the rest of his life.

After I passed the 5th grade I had to go to school in Manassas. I went to the old Bennett school building. The Broad Run was the dividing line for the school districts. There was a lot of contention when my Dad insisted we should ride the bus to Manassas schools. The School Board thought we should walk to Brentsville to catch a bus to take us to Nokesville. As it was we had to walk up to where Moor Green Road is now to catch the bus.

We rode in a very small school bus we called the 'Cheese Box'. Frank Harris was our bus driver for several years. He lived down near Canova. The roads were not very good and the bus often mired down in the mud making us late for school.

My first teacher in Manassas was Miss Helen Dunkley. Charles' first teacher was Mrs. Hite. It took a while for us to get accustomed to so many children. James started school in Manassas.

When we started going to school in Manassas white loaf bread was bought for our lunches or we carried homemade loaf bread. Grandma baked six loaves of bread each week for the home to use. By the latter part of the week the homemade bread would be a little dried out but Grandma would mix up a couple of eggs and milk, dip the bread in and fry it for supper. Not many items were needed from the grocery store. Cheese was purchased to be put into a macaroni and cheese casserole for Sunday dinners. Our meals were breakfast, dinner, and supper. The evening meal was never called 'dinner'. If we went to an evening function it was called an Oyster Supper or whatever group was giving it. We did our shopping in Manassas.

On Sunday nights during the winter they would cook a large iron pot of cornmeal mush which we would eat with butter and milk in our bowls. Good eating for hungry children!

In the evenings feeding the pigs was one of our chores. Wood had to be carried in for the cook stove and the other stoves. Coal was used in the living room. During the summer the wood was split then we racked the wood

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against the yard fence to try to get all the wood off the ground.

We had chores to do before we went to school and when we got home in the afternoons. We got up early to help milk cows and turn the cream separator to get the cream for butter making. Grandma made butter and sold it to a grocery store in town. This is how we had money for groceries and other items. Grandma put aside a little money as she was able and one day she asked Granddaddy to go by the hardware store to pick up fencing. He was surprised that she had saved enough to buy enough fencing to enclose the yard!

I don't remember what kind of toilet tissue was used at school but at home we had an outhouse and like everyone else the Sears or Montgomery Ward catalogs was the mainstay for tissue. Of course the less glossy pages were preferred.

Since we lived on a farm we had more food than some who lived in towns and cities. For that reason we often had relatives come live with us to help work the farm. My grandparents both came from large families who also had lots of children. Most of the time there was an extra person or two in the house. This was a help to their parents since we grew large gardens, had plenty of milk and eggs plus pork. It was a blessing for both sides. My Aunt Cora had 10 children including two sets of twins. The odd thing about these twins was that one of each set resembled one of the other set.

I remember another cousin from my grandfather's side of the family who came to spend the summer on the farm. One night there was a severe electrical storm. Lightning struck the house and woke us all up. We all rushed downstairs, there were no lights upstairs. Papa called out to this cousin, "Doc, are you awake?" "Hell, yes," he answered. The next morning we found all the light bulbs upstairs had exploded with glass all over the stairs and floors but no one had gotten a cut in our mad dash down during the night. Soon after that lightning rods were put on the roof. Granddaddy said there must be a lot of iron in the ground on that hill as the trees in the yard were often struck.

Grandma also had nieces from Beaver Dam come for weeks at a time. They would help in the house and gardens. We had two large gardens and did a lot of canning. One time one of the nieces named Frances was staying. She was running around the house one day and fell down getting mud on her knee. She bent over to smell her knee thinking maybe it was black chicken

manure. If you are familiar with chickens you would know the black kind had a stronger odor than other colors. She was teased for a long time for smelling her knee.

At haying time everyone would have a job. I spent many a day raking hay into windrows with the horse and a dump rake. Then I would help load the wagon and lead the horse to pull a fork full of hay into the barn loft. I remember when the metal silo was built so we could make ensilage for storing corn mixed with molasses for winter feed for the cattle. The corn was cut green when the ears were mature, hauled up to the silo and cut and blown into the silo. Several persons would be inside the silo to pack it down. When it filled to near the top I didn't like to be in it as I didn't care for climbing out onto the enclosed ladder to get to ground level.

We lived with my grandparents since the other house on the farm was used for tenants who helped work the farm. My grandparents went to the United Methodist Church in Manassas but my Mom and Dad took us with them to the Union Church in Brentsville. My father taught a men's class. I remember my teacher was Mrs. Egan. She had a daughter named Jean and a girl named Anna Diehl who lived with them. I don't know the circumstances about Anna's family. Both these girls were in school with me. Mr. Egan was very crippled and didn't get out much. After a while my family started going to the Presbyterian Church in Manassas. Then we came back to the Brentsville church. The earliest minister I remember was Rev. Crabtree. He lived in Fauquier County and had three churches that he served. That meant we did not have a minister every Sunday. When the minister was due to be at our church some family would invite him to have dinner with them. One Sunday he was to have a meal with us so he and his son, Donald, came home with us. As we were all gathered around the table Donald accidentally dropped one of his utensils. His dad said, "Donald, are you asleep?" About that time Rev. Crabtree dropped one of his utensils. No one said a word!

One family of cousins who came to spend a week had a daughter, an only child. They wanted her to be very lady-like at all times which was hard for a five year old to do. One day at mealtime she didn't want to eat all of her food so they told her she would have to sit at the table until she did eat it. Grandma used a round butter dish that had a glass dome lid that was removed during mealtime. After Joanne had sat for awhile and everyone was gone from the table, Joanne quietly removed the food and placed it under the dome of the butter dish then left the table.

Part two will continue next month.

Brentsville

A Look Back in History

by

Ronald Ray Turner

“Brentsville - The First Five Years”

This is not intended to be a history of the first five years of Brentsville and should not be considered one. It is only an attempt to show a few interesting occurrences out of the hundreds of court cases and transactions.

It had been previously thought that the court house and jail both opened in March of 1823; however, with records now available, we know it was as early as February. The last known court case in Dumfries was December 1822 when John P. Harrison was fined for contempt of court. The first known transaction of the court in Brentsville was the fine imposed on William King on February 3, 1823.

When the court opened in Brentsville it became clear that swearing would no longer be tolerated. Profane swearing or swearing was not acceptable and would be dealt with the same as in the old court house. The fine would be 83 cents per occasion. This fine was seldom enforced in the past, or maybe the people in Dumfries just didn't swear much. William King, while on trial or maybe just in the presence of the court, was to be the first fined but not the last. He was fined \$19.92 and ordered jailed for profane swearing. This fine using the 83 cents as a guideline equates to 25 occasions. We don't know if he was finished after the twenty-fifth time or was still swearing when deputy sheriff William Cundiff removed him.

William G. Alexander was a town doctor and followed the practices of the time. Basically, he thought almost anything from consumption to yellow fever could be cured by one of four actions. Blistering consisted of applying caustic agents to create blisters on the skin that would then be drained to draw out the infection. Bleeding was the cutting of veins or the use of leeches in cleansing of the body. The third and fourth, purging and puking, will go unexplained. In one year alone Dr. Alexander made over 20 visits to the jail to treat prisoners and give advice to the court. In August 1823 he sent a bill to the court for performing 12 purges at a cost of four dollars. He was paid well, and a large percent of his income was provided by the county. There were at least two jailors in the first five years.

Abraham Millam was the first. The second, around 1825, was John Merchant. There is no record of either one receiving a lot of money from the county. We do know, however, that any action performed by them was compensated even if he were unlocking the court house or providing wood for the stove.

Selecting a court case to cite is not easy, as there was a very diverse group. Some of the ones considered were: The cases of Hord vs Claytor and Helm vs Claytor for the non-payment of slaves used in building of the court house complex; the Sukey Gray murder trial; the Commonwealth against Bob, a slave; Manassa Russell for a list of felonies; Alfred Arrington & Thomas Arrington for attempted murder, gambling, and selling whiskey; Samuel Davis for racing a horse on the public highway; Commonwealth vs Joseph Burgess for murder; the commitment in 1826 of Betsy Cole for professing to be a free person of color without a copy of her certificate of registry. But, in the end, it had to be Manassa Russell.

Manassa Russell occupied the court in the early 1820s the same way that Lucien "Rhoda" Fewell did in the 1870s. He was definitely a boost to the Brentsville economy as many people benefited from his incarcerations. In an 1824 felony charge, a magistrate, constable, deputy sheriff, sheriff, and jailor were all paid. Walter Keys, acting as a guard transporting him to jail, the rental of a horse and cart to transport Russell, a jury, witness payment to attend court, overnight accommodations for the jury, as well as meals from the tavern for Manassa and the jury all received payment. This was just one of many cases against Russell that would undoubtedly draw a huge crowd on court day.

The first five years saw a building boom that gave economic prosperity to a few. To some of the residents living in the area before the town, one can only imagine what they thought of the invasion. With all the conveniences, also came more than one tavern and unaccustomed problems. These problems, however, only trigger our imaginations.

Reader Comments

Boy! The April issue is quite comprehensive. The narrative about Websters' house reads like a nomination for "Historic Register." The description of the White House's patio brought back memories of the parties we attended there when we were teenagers. I thought that patio was the most romantic place I had ever seen, and I was determined to have one like it some day. Sure enough, when we built our house here in Greenwich, the lot slopes in such a way that I realized that dream. It is an ideal place for children to play on cold, windy days—a lot less romantic than I had once dreamed!

Although I knew DeLancey and Julie and only knew Mrs. Webster as "DeLancey's mother," I don't think I ever even saw Mr. Webster or Gill Machen, just heard them mentioned. It was really neat to see their pictures and to read about them.

You and Nelson do a terrific job of finding interesting subjects to fill the newsletter. Keep up the good work!!

Elaine Yankey

Thank you, Morgan Earl. I know how special Agnes ("Mrs. Webster") was to you, and I know how well she thought of your Father (who saved her life on many frozen pipe occasions) and of you. Mother sincerely appreciated people, and especially the 'folks' of Brentsville. The community and The White House were her life. She would be /is most pleased with your beautiful and thoughtful tribute. As are Julie and I! Terrific group of pics!!! Except Julie noticed that the one labeled "Agnes with DeLancey" on page 3 is really "Agnes with Julie." Hey....all babies look pretty much alike to me! LOL Some of those I've seen before, but others were new....must have been from the film. I wish you had included the one of you and your brothers that Dad took. Maybe in a future edition. (Or maybe you have already used that one. Can't remember.) But we will cherish this edition just as it is.

DeLancey Webster

Absolutely fascinating! I knew that a Mrs. Hollands had been in the White House during the latter part of the war - somewhere in my records she was shown - and as being a Confederate sympathiser! So earlier in the war it was quite obviously home to a Union sympathiser!! Lots of other points of interest for me as well - I didn't understand previously that the John Williams, Clerk of the Court, had died before coming to Brentsville, and that it was his son presumably later mentioned. There are reports that after the enlistment for the Confederate forces began at the Courthouse that a Miss Sarah (?) Somerville (?) Williams, (writing from memory and not certain of Christian names) - daughter of the owner of the White House and some female friends made up a Flag for the enlistees using one of her dresses. So it would appear that not everyone in the White House was a Union sympathiser. Thanks so much for the update. Always eagerly awaited around the other side of the world!!

Best wishes to all, Paul Spencer (Australia)

Enjoyed reading your daughter's article on her memories on growing up in Brentsville – nicely done!

Jan Cunard

What a surprise!!!! You did a WONDERFUL job!!! I feel guilty for your devoting the ENTIRE newsletter to US!!!! Even pictures of MiMi. And BEAUTIFUL photos of Agnes. You have now made us FAMOUS!!! BLESS YOU!!! The only thing missing was a photo of the "White House." (However if you are a true Brentsvillian you will KNOW what it looks like) Many many thanks for such a special tribute to our family. Lance and I are both very touched!

Julie Webster

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

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IN GOD WE TRUST

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