



Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors
February 2010



Welcome Neighbors,

No doubt the most frequently heard comment from visitors to Brentsville is something like, "I didn't even know this place was here." But in 1862 the President of the United States knew where it was and it's significance. See page 8.

Now it's February again, the shortest month of our year. We recently saw a flock of robins so does that mean spring is almost here? Maybe not. But when we think about it, February is actually a pretty neat month. Have plans made yet? For some of us there will be the Super Bowl, the Daytona 500 or the Westminster Dog Show. Or if you feel like a celebration there is Mardi Gras or Carnival if you prefer. Perhaps a shopping trip on Presidents Day. But the one thing we almost all think of first is Valentine's Day. So we decided to find out more about it.

"Originally the word Valentine meant the person whose name was picked from a box to be chosen as your sweetheart up until the 1500's. Then around 1533, it meant the folded piece of paper with the sweetheart's name on it. By 1610 it then became the gift given to this special someone and by 1824 it then became a poem, letter or verse to a sweetheart.

"Although Valentine's Day is celebrated on February 14 every year, it originates from the Roman celebration called *Lupercalia*, which was held on February 15, a fertility festival.

"Roman armies invaded countries physically as well as socially. When the Romans invaded France, they introduced this festival in which Roman boys drew names of Roman girls out of an urn (to determine their partners) and then the couple exchanged gifts on the festival's day. This was considered a pagan celebration, so in 469 C.E., Pope Gelasius decided to put a Christian spin on this celebration by declaring that it was now to honor St. Valentine (A young Roman who was martyred by Emperor Claudius II who was said to have died on February 14, 270 C.E. for refusing to give up Christianity). (Source: www.brownielocks.com/valentinehistory.html)

Well, regardless of your plans for the month, we hope your experience is pleasant. We expect to spend time trying to find out more about Brentsville. Now there's a happy thought!

Very best wishes,
Nelson & Morgan

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FLASHBACK

BRENTSVILLE

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys had a party for their son, Nelson, on his 21st birthday last Friday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Montague Bradshaw, of Rockville, Md., recently visited his father, Mr. K. M. Bradshaw.

Mr. and Mrs. James Burdett and daughter, Kay, of Washington, spent the week-end with Mrs. Burdett's parents Mr. and Mrs. Joe Keys.

Mrs. Lillie Newton, of Gastonia, N. C., is spending some time with her son, Corp. T. L. Newton.

Sunday visitors of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Spitzer were Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Michael, of Manassas, and Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Richie and son, of Bealton.

Miss Faye Golliday, of Washington, spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Golliday.

Recent visitors of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Fogal were Mr. and Mrs. Nick Breeden, of Washington, and Mr. Herman Ruby, of Pittsburg, Pa.

Mr. Herbert Breeden, of Clarksburg, Md., visited his two brothers, Benny and Morgan Breeden, Sunday evening.

Elmer Breeden, a Merchant marine visited his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Benny Breeden, over the weekend.

David Landis, of Alexandria, spent the week-end with his mother, Myrtle Keys.

Mrs. Hugh James is spending a few days with friends and relative in Washington.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hedrick and family, of Arlington, spent Sunday with Mr. Hedrick's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Hedrick.

Mrs. Alice Speakes spent the week-end with her uncle, Rev. Jesse Bell.

Two new families have moved into our village—Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, who have bought the Seymour Place, and Mr. and Mrs. Gallyhan and family, who have rented the Walter keys house. We extend to them a very sincere welcome and hope they will like Brentsville.

Source: The Manassas Journal, February 6, 1947

Where W I L D Things Live

The **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*) is a wild goose belonging to the genus *Branta*, which is native to Arctic and temperate regions of North America, having a black head and neck, white patches on the face, and a brownish-gray body. It is often called the **Canadian Goose**, but that name is not the ornithological standard, or the most common name.

The Canada Goose was one of the many species described by Linnaeus in his 18th-century work *Systema Naturae*. It belongs to the *Branta* genus of geese, which contains species with largely black plumage, distinguishing them from the grey species of the *Anser* genus. The specific epithet *canadensis* is a New Latin word meaning "from Canada". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first citation for the 'Canada Goose' dates back to 1772.

The black head and neck with white "chinstrap" distinguish the Canada Goose from all other goose species, with the exception of the Barnacle Goose, but the latter has a black breast, and also grey, rather than brownish, body plumage. There are seven subspecies of this bird, of varying sizes and plumage details, but all are recognizable as Canada Geese.

This species is 30–43 in long with a 50–71 in wingspan. The male usually weighs 7–14 pounds, and can be very aggressive in defending territory. The female looks virtually identical but is slightly lighter at 5.5–12 pounds, generally 10% smaller than its male counterpart, and has a different honk. The life span in the wild is 10–24 years.

This species is native to North America. It breeds in Canada and the northern United States in a variety of habitats. Its nest is usually located in an elevated area near water such as streams, lakes, ponds and sometimes on a beaver lodge. Its eggs are laid in a shallow depression lined with plant material and down.

By the early 20th century, over-hunting and loss of habitat in the late 1800s and early 1900s had resulted in a serious decline in the numbers of this bird in its native range. With improved game laws and habitat recreation and preservation programs, their populations have recovered in most of their range.

In recent years, Canada Geese populations in some areas have grown substantially, so much so that many consider them pests (for their droppings, the bacteria in their droppings, noise and confrontational behavior). This problem is partially due to the removal of natural predators and an abundance of safe, man-made bodies of

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Grady Shoemaker holding his puppies, date unknown. Photo courtesy Harry Visger

Where WILD things live..



The **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*)



(Back L-R) Georgie & Nelson Keys, Douglas & Charlotte Keys, Virginia Braden, Joe & Ora Keys, Kay Burdette and Raymond & Alice Keys.

(Front L-R) Louise Burdette, "Shorty" Braden holding George Braden, Jr., Joseph Braden and James Burdette. Taken June 8, 1957, following the wedding of Douglas and Charlotte Keys. Photo courtesy of Douglas Keys.



Temporary home where Grady & Violet lived while
their new home was built



Front of the Shoemaker Home



Back of the Shoemaker Home

These three photos were taken in May, 1989, by N. Born

Skating on Webster's Pond

by Morgan Breeden

While driving through Brentsville recently I happened to notice several children on a small pond of water that had frozen. They had sticks and something (I didn't make out what it was) engaged in a game of ice hockey. Oh the memories that revived!

As one of four boys growing up in an environment where we had to make do with what we had and be grateful for that, we would, as I'm sure all boys did, let our imagination run wild at times. I'm not sure exactly how old I really was, but I judge the time as "before Webster's built their pond." In the summer the field was always wet, fed by springs that kept the little streams of water running. Since it was just across the road from where we lived on Donovan's road, you could count on us being somewhere in the area. Summers were spent looking for crawdads and frogs or catching tadpoles and keeping them in a jar to watch their hind legs develop. It's hard to say how many frogs we actually "raised" but the number was probably small. There were lots of blackberries and scrub pines growing in the area that provided ideal locations for make-believe forts. We saved Brentsville from sneak Indian attacks more than once! Mom knew exactly where we were from the condition of our clothes when we got home. Wet and muddy equaled playing in the water in Webster's field. Or purple around our mouth and scratches all over our arms and legs equaled picking blackberries.

As summer passed into autumn and finally winter, the little stream of water eventually froze over hard enough to walk on. Daddy loved visiting Grandma Tuttle's place in Independent Hill and all kinds of strange things would be brought home from time to time. Once he even got a box that had an assortment of ice skates! Not the shoe type, but the ones where you had to have a square key to clamp them to your shoes. Wow! Now the fun took on a new level. With skates in hand, off we would go to the frozen branch and suddenly

we became stars of the skating world. The little frozen stream was riddled with honeysuckle vines and sticks embedded in the ice but we didn't let that stop us. Round and round we went on any patch of ice that was big enough to allow movement of just a few feet, falling frequently, getting soaked most of the time but almost never actually hurt. Although I must say the bramble briars were mean—I mean really, really mean! If you fell down on a patch of them you knew it by the instant pain that came from those barbs. And it didn't stop at that, the stupid barbs would break off in your clothes and continue to jab you until you finally took everything off and removed them one by one.

One summer we got word that Mr. Webster intended to have a large pond built in the field as a conservation measure. He was working for the government and knew all kinds of things about that. He also got a huge package of baby pine trees and they planted them all over the place as another measure of conservation. But back to the field. We soon heard the roar of bull dozers and ran across the road to watch from the safety of several apple trees that grew on the hill. Day after day they worked digging out the field and stacking the dirt to one end that would become the retaining dam. When it was finally finished, a small stream of water started to fill the bottom but we thought it would never completely fill with water. Eventually after a few hard rains, it did and there in all its glory was a huge pond of water. Nick built a small pier on the deep end where the overflow pipe was located and it became a ready-made swimming hole and favorite fishing spot in the summer.

And then came winter. We could hardly wait for the pond to freeze over enough to skate on. Mom warned us about getting on thin ice and falling in and I suppose her story was convincing because we would only test the ice on the shallow part so if it broke, we would get wet, but that is

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Brentsville

A Citizen of Note

The Living Female Writers of the South by Mary T. Tardy

LAURA R. FEWELL

MISS FEWELL was born in Brentsville, Prince William County, Virginia, and has spent the greater portion of her life there. Her father died when she was sixteen years of age, and immediately after she commenced teaching, and by her exertions in that way she has educated a younger brother and sister.

She commenced writing during her school-days, when she was chief contributor to a school paper published in the institution where she was educated. She has written a great deal, occasionally publishing in various journals — contributing to Godeys “Lady’s Book” under the *nom de plume* of “Parke Richards.”

During the war she wrote a novel, “Neria,” which has not been published. In 1866, she came to Clark County, Georgia, and established a school, and contributed to “Scott’s Magazine” and other journals.

A VIRGINIA VILLAGE—1861

Who does not distinctly remember the spring of 1861? Not for the beauty of the season, though that was as lovely as smiling skies, balmy winds, and odorous flower-cups could make it; but for the cloud, at first scarcely larger than a man’s hand, that began to loom up in the political horizon, and the distant mutterings of the storm so soon to burst upon the land..... Then came the call for troops, and soon the earth resounded with the tramp of armed men..... There was a glory and enthusiasm about the whole thing—in the waving banners, the glittering uniforms, and nodding plumes—that led captive the imagination and silenced reason. In every town where troops were quartered the ladies were affected with “button on the brain;” and seemed to think life was only made to be spent in walking, riding, dancing, and flirting with the young officers. Youth and gayety were everywhere uppermost, unappalled by the spectacle of national distraction.

To a little village situated in the lovely valley lying between the Bull Run and Blue Ridge Mountains, only a faint echo of the din of war had, penetrated. Not a single company of soldiers had ever passed through or been camped in its vicinity; and more than one of its young belles read with envious feelings the accounts of the brilliant conquests achieved over the hearts of the Carolinians and other Southern troops by their correspondents in more fortunate towns, and sighed over the hard fate which condemned them to “waste their sweetness on the desert air,” for in that light they regarded the members of the county companies, most of whom they had known from their childhood.

This little village merits a description: — It figured in more than one official bulletin during the war. It consisted of one long street, through the middle of which ran the

turnpike, and on either side of this the houses—some very pretentious-looking structures of stucco and brick, others frame buildings, stained and weather-beaten—stretched for nearly a mile. Some few houses were situated on side streets crossing the main one at right angles, and there was a pleasant tradition among the people that their town had once rejoiced in back streets, but these, by common consent, were now given up to the hogs and nettles. In spite of these drawbacks, it was a quiet, cozy-looking place, especially when the trees that shaded it were in full foliage, and every garden and door-yard was flushed with flowers whose fragrance filled the air.

A stranger would have thought that this little village, lying in the lap of verdant meadows, encircled by the Briarean arms of the mountains, and as remote from all busy thoroughfares of trade, would have escaped the corruptions of larger towns, and its inhabitants, if not retaining the simplicity of country manners, would, at least, be free from the pride and exclusiveness of city life. But a short residence there would have taught him the fallacy of this opinion. Not in Washington, that modern Gomorrah of pride and vanity, did the strife for fashion and pre-eminence rage higher than in the little village of which we write. It might justly be called the town of cliques, for it boasted as many as any fashionable city extant.

First, forming the *élite* of the place, were the families of the military and professional men, and those of the large landed proprietors residing on estates, and a few aspirants after aristocracy, who kept up an uncertain footing upon the outer bounds, but were not allowed to enter the arena of this charmed circle, from which all new-comers, whatever their personal merits, were rigorously excluded, unless they could exhibit a long list of illustrious ancestors.

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A Brentsville Building

The Home Grady Shoemaker Built

Grady Benjamin Shoemaker was born November 30, 1891, in Lebanon, Russell Co., Va. While still a child, his family moved to Texas where they lived until he was grown. They moved to Prince William and lived on the farm known as Moor Green.

Mr. Shoemaker married Ellie Armentrout on September 25, 1912, and five children were born of this union. After the death of his wife on July 10, 1923, he moved to Washington. He married Violet Keys in 1925 and they lived in Washington where he served on the police force for twenty years. He retired in 1944.

On June 7, 1939, he and his wife purchased two tracts of land from his father-in-law, Robert H. Keys and his wife, located between the Keys store and the old jail in

Brentsville. (DB103PG394) Here he first built a small dwelling in which they would live while he completed the larger, permanent home.

Grady and Violet lived the remainder of their lives here, operating the Brentsville Grocery. On April 14, 1952, they donated 12,600 square feet of property to Charles W. Croushorn, A.V. Eanes and Violet L. Shoemaker, Trustees for The Presbyterial Congregation of Brentsville upon which the new Brentsville Presbyterian Church was built and remains today. (DB333PG645)

Grady passed away on July 31, 1964, after years of ill health. Violet followed some fifteen years later on March 21, 1979. Then on October 6, 1980, their heirs sold all of the remaining property to the Presbyterian Church. (DB1145PG1969)

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water (such as on golf courses, public parks and beaches, and in planned communities).

Contrary to its normal migration routine, large flocks of Canada Geese have established permanent residence in the Chesapeake Bay and in Virginia's James River regions, and in the Triangle area of North Carolina (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill), and nearby Hillsborough.

Like most geese, the Canada Goose is naturally migratory with the wintering range being most of the United States. The calls overhead from large groups of Canada Geese flying in V-shaped formation signal the transitions into spring and autumn. In some areas, migration routes have changed due to changes in habitat and food sources. In mild climates due to a lack of former predators, some of the population has become non-migratory.

Canada Geese are herbivores although they sometimes eat small insects and fish. Their diet includes green vegetation and grains. The Canada Goose eats a variety of grasses when on land. It feeds by grasping a blade of grass with the bill, then tearing it with a jerk of the

head. The Canada Goose also eats grains such as wheat, beans, rice, and corn when they are available. In the water, it feeds from silt at the bottom of the body of water. It also feeds on aquatic plants, such as seaweeds.

During the second year of their lives, Canada Geese find a mate. They are monogamous, and most couples stay together all of their lives. If one is killed, the other may find a new mate. The female lays 3–8 eggs and both parents protect the nest while the eggs incubate, but the female spends more time at the nest than the male. Known egg predators include Northern Raccoons, Red Foxes, American Crows and bears. During this incubation period, the adults lose their flight feathers, so they cannot fly until their eggs hatch after 25–28 days.

Adult geese are often seen leading their goslings in a line, usually with one parent at the front, and the other at the back. While protecting their goslings, parents often violently chase away nearby creatures, from small blackbirds to humans that approach, after warning them by giving off a hissing sound. Most of the species that prey on eggs will also take a gosling.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada_Goose

When WAR Came to Brentsville

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 5

By Abraham Lincoln

February 3, 1862 (in part)

“The crossing of the Occoquan should be made at all the fords from Wolf’s Run to the mouth, the points of crossing not being necessarily confined to the fords themselves. Should the enemy occupy this line in force we must, with what assistance the flotilla can afford, endeavor to force the passage near the mouth, thus forcing the enemy to abandon the whole line or be taken in flank himself.

“Having gained the line of the Occoquan, it would be necessary to throw a column by, the shortest route to Dumfries, partly to force the enemy to abandon his batteries on the Potomac, partly to cover our left flank against an attack from the direction of Acquia, & lastly to establish our communication with the river by the best roads, & thus give us new depots.

“The enemy would by this time have occupied the line of the Occoquan above Bulls Run, holding Brentsville in force & perhaps extending his lines somewhat further to the S.W.

“Our next step would be to prevent the enemy from crossing the Occoquan between Bull Run & Broad Run, to fall upon our right flank while moving on Brentsville; this might be effective by occupying Bacon [?] Church & the cross roads near the mouth of Bull Run, or still more effectually by moving to the fords themselves & preventing him from debouching on our side. These operations would probably be resisted, & would require some time to effect them. As nearly at the same time as possible we should gain the fords necessary to our purposes above Broad Run.

“Having secured our right flank it would become necessary to carry Brentsville at any cost, for we would not leave it between our right flank & main body. The final movement on the Railroad must be determined by circumstances existing at the time.

“This brief sketch brings out in bold relief the great advantage possessed by the enemy in the strong central position he occupies, with roads diverging in every direction, & a strong line of defense enabling him to remain on the defensive with a small force on one flank, while he concentrates everything on the other for a decisive action.

“Should we place a portion of our force in front of Centreville while the rest crosses the Occoquan we commit the error of dividing our Army by a very difficult obstacle & by a distance too great to enable the two portions to support each other, should either be attacked by the masses of the enemy while the other is held in check.

“I should perhaps have dwelled more decidedly on the fact that the force left near Sangster’s must be allowed to remain somewhere on that side of the Occoquan, until the decisive battle is over, to cover our retreat in the event of disaster, unless it should be decided to select & entrench a new base somewhere near Dumfries--a proceeding involving much time.

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about all. Finally it was considered hard enough to be on and with skates in hand off we would go to spend most of the days and many of the evening hours on the ice. Somewhere along the line we came up with hockey skates. Real honest to goodness skates attached to shoes and everything! Our uncle Wynnet said they had to be sharpened (skates sharpened?) so he sat down in front of the grinder to flatten the bottom of the skates to perfection. With these we would race around and around seeing just how fast we could go before the inevitable fall that would result in our sliding on our backsides or worse. We took some pretty good falls at first but eventually got the hang of it enough to impress ourselves if no one else. Sometimes we played our version of hockey and sometimes we tried to jump a barrel. Sometimes we tried to do the fancy spins or leaps or go backwards but always we had fun. Lots of times the big boys would show up toward evening and bring an old tire or two to burn for heat and light and the skating would go on for hours into the night.

As we grew older and got married, we would still frequent the pond in winter. I remember once when I was going to teach my wife to skate. I put on my skates and helped her with hers and then, ever so cautiously we started out across the ice. As we moved out from the bank you could hear the ice cracking under our combined weight and that scared her beyond words. She just knew the ice was going to break and she would drown in the frigid water. But we were told that ice that didn't "talk" to you might not be as safe so it was a fun experience for one and maybe not so much fun for the other. But skate we did. Not so well, perhaps, but fun is not always measured by degrees of skill.

I wonder why we don't do that anymore. Of course the weather seems to have changed a lot so the ice doesn't really get hard enough to skate on much anymore. And then there are other issues of safety and liability and such. I guess it's just evolution. Now I wonder what memories of winter my children and grandchildren will have?

Reader Feedback

Thanks again for a trip down memory lane. I didn't recognize the Minor Home, but after reading the history I remember some of the residents. There was an older gentleman who lived in the house with Miss Bessie, I thought it was her dad. He would walk to our house to get a ride into town with my dad. One thing that stands out in my memory was how very polite he was. I can see him sitting in the kitchen, holding his hat while he talked with Mom & Dad. Once when we kids went Christmas caroling from Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church, we stopped by Miss Bessie's house; they were so happy to see us.

I also remember Mr. Diaz living in the house. Also remember the story about the goats and chickens. Not sure how we heard about him doing the diplomas but my brothers and I often wondered how in the world he could keep the chickens off while he did them.

It's too bad that throughout life we don't take the time to find out more about the people around us rather than make assumptions. I'm sure that I have missed out on getting to know a lot of wonderful people. Keep the stories coming.

Mary Pearson Pumphrey

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From this apex—this *creme de la creme*—society descended, in graduating circles, to the lowest phase of social life, which, strangely enough, was found in a *castle*; for so the inhabitant, who had aspirations above her station, termed the mud walls which formed her home. Except a few loiterers, mere lookers-on at life, all the inhabitants of the village belonged to some one of these circles, which were entirely separate and distinct, never infringing on each other's privileges, save in the manner of scandal and backbiting—those time-honored adjuncts of village-life—except when some stray cow or pig trespassed on neighboring property, when there was apt to be an outbreak between the plebeians and patricians, sometimes coming to blows.

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

Contact us on:
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IN GOD WE TRUST

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