

# Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

April 2010



Welcome Neighbors,

Rob Orrison, the Brentsville Site Manager, would like you to know that The Brentsville Historic Site will again host nature walks to be held on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. The cost is \$2.00 per person. Follow along with master gardener and nature photographer Jeannie Couch as she points out flowers, plants and wildlife that can be seen along Brentsville's Nature Trail. Adults and children alike will learn about this area's great natural resources. No pets please.

Also mark your calendar for the weekend of May 1st & 2nd opening the season at Brentsville with a Civil War Weekend event which is free to the public. More information on this and upcoming events is available at 703-365-7895.

And, The Brentsville Historic Site is now on Facebook! For everyone who is now part of the new internet craze of Facebook, you can become a "Fan of Brentsville." You will find weekly updates on programs, pictures and inside information on what is going on in Brentsville and at the historic site. Just search for "Brentsville" in your Facebook search window and when you get to the Brentsville page, click on "Become a Fan". It's that simple. Updates will be made regularly and please feel free to make comments as well.

## Reader Feedback

I enjoyed your article "Keeping Brentsville Under a Basket". You are fighting a losing battle trying to keep history correct especially with reporters. I'm glad these things bug more people than me and hats off for your effort.  
Ron Turner

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It is with anticipation that I open each issue of "Brentsville Neighbors." The March issue was especially interesting with the article about The Prince William Cavalry and the images of the appointment of a guardian for Hattie L. Jones and the Ladies Invitation. Keep up the good work.

Roxann Adams

Curator, The Manassas Museum System

For those who did not notice we had the wrong date on the March issue (March 2009), whew! For those who did, thank you for being kind. That's what happens when you use "cut and paste" techniques in putting one of these things together. We will try to make sure THAT doesn't happen again.

Very best wishes,  
Nelson & Morgan

## This month:

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# FLASHBACK

## DEATH OF MRS. BREEDEN

Mrs. Eliza Breeden, wife of Mr. Wm. H. Breeden, of Olando; departed this life last Sunday evening, in the 59<sup>th</sup> year of her age.

Sister Breeden was taken ill one week before her death and suffered much until released by death. She became a christian when twelve years old and lived a consistent christian life for nearly forty-seven years.

She leaves a husband, ten children, a number of grand children and a host of friends to mourn. The funeral was preached at Aden U. B. Church by her pastor, Rev. J. W. Brill, and the body was laid to rest in the Hazelwood burying ground.

Our dear Brother Breeden has been much afflicted in years gone by and several times been brought to grief, having buried four children. Last fall he lost his home by fire and through the help of friends had rebuilt, having just moved in a short time since, when came the awful stroke in being bereft of his dear companion. As our dear brother has been so sorely bereft, I am sure that it is befitting that we all extend to him as well as the children and grand children, our most heartfelt sympathy.

The christian hope is such that we may look through our tears to the home of the blessed and know that all is well to those who die trusting in the Lord and if we are faithful to the grace already given, we shall meet in a fairer clime than this, where our dear Lord will wipe all tears from our eyes.

*If we could hear our sister speak,  
She thus to us would say,  
Look up dear ones and do not weep,  
But onward press your way.*

*Oh! Husband dear its not in vain  
To serve the blessed Lord,  
Come on to me and Heaven gain,  
And share the great reward.*

*Oh! Children you need not be sad,  
For you may come to me,  
And here forever may be glad,  
And from all sorrow free.*

W.

Source: Journal Messenger, April 7, 1911

# Where W I L D Things Live

## ***Brassica nigra*** **Black Mustard**

*Brassica nigra* (black mustard) is an annual weedy plant cultivated for its seeds, which are commonly used as a spice.

The plant is believed to be native to the southern Mediterranean region of Europe, and has been cultivated for thousands of years.

The spice is generally made from ground seeds of the plant, with the seed coats removed. The small (1 mm) seeds are hard and vary in color from dark brown to black. They are flavorful, although they have almost no aroma. The seeds are commonly used in Indian cuisine, for example in curry, where it is known as 'rai'. The seeds are usually thrown into hot oil or ghee after which they pop, releasing a characteristic 'nutty' flavor. The seeds have a significant amount of fatty oil. This oil is used often as cooking oil in India.

In Ethiopia, where it is cultivated as a vegetable in Gondar, Harar and Shewa, the shoots and leaves are consumed cooked and the seeds used as a spice. Its Amharic name is *Senafitch*.

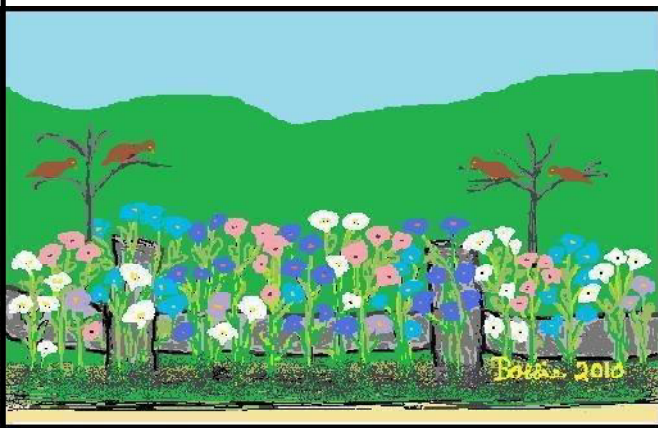
Ground seeds of the plant mixed with honey are widely used in eastern Europe as cough suppressant. In Eastern Canada, the use of "mouche de moutarde" to treat respiratory infections was popular before the advent of modern medicine. It consisted in mixing ground mustard seeds with flour and water, and creating a cataplasm with the paste. This cataplasm was put on the chest or the back and left until the person felt a stinging sensation.

The plant itself can grow from 2 to 8 feet tall with racemes of small yellow flowers. These flowers are usually up to 1/3" across, with 4 petals each. Its leaves are covered in small hairs. The leaves can wilt on hot days, but recover at night.

Since the 1950s, black mustard has become less popular as compared to India mustard because some cultivars of India mustard have seeds that can be mechanically harvested in a more efficient manner.

It is theorized that black mustard is the seed mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 13:31-32.

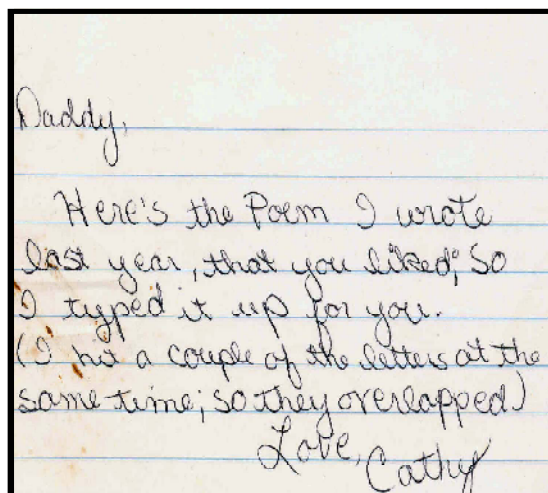
Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brassica\\_nigra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brassica_nigra)



"Birds and Bloom" by Bobby Ratliff, 2010



Mr. John Donovan with his great-granddaughter, Brenda Melvin, on the porch of their home (previously the Dawson home), on what is now Izaak Walton Drive, Brentsville.



## Where WILD things live..



### *Brassica nigra*

Black Mustard  
(See page 2)

#### GOD'S TEARS

The rain is really tear drops  
Coming from God's eyes.  
For he knows we're doing things  
That just aren't wise.  
We break the Ten Commandments  
And sin just every day.  
Some days the tears come heavily  
And then they fade away.  
They run down God's holy cheek  
Then splatter when they hit his feet.  
Maybe when our sins run dry.  
God will not have to cry:  
Cathy Wolfe



The Virginia Seal as it appeared on the Prince William Cavalry Flag

Courtesy of Howard Churchill



Left: Mr. Solomon B. Spitzer, born February 8, 1857, in Rockingham Co., VA, died March 12, 1929, at his home in Brentsville with his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, Martha Mattie Jones, born August 14, 1858 and died July 8, 1941, at her home in Brentsville. Solomon was one of the large property owners in Brentsville after he moved here from Rockingham Co. in the late 1800's. Picture courtesy of Janice Speakes.

# Spring Greens

Morgan Breeden

While driving down the road on one of many trips to Charlottesville to watch our granddaughter involved in her sport activity, we happened to notice someone in an old corn field. The question just seemed to pop out—I wonder if they are picking field cress? This led to a lively discussion between my wife, Kay, and I about when we were kids in Brentsville and the types of wild greens that would appear on the table.

There were specific times to plant various garden items, garden peas were always in March and potatoes were always planted on St. Patty's day, but picking the wild greens was based more on a feeling than a specific time. Just when it started to "feel" like spring, Mom or Dad would suggest we look for field cress. Dad always had permission from a farmer to cut the cress before the fields were worked for planting. We would take a basket and a sharp knife and into the old corn field we would go, sometimes sloshing through mud to get there. The cress would be found growing flat against the ground with the leaves branching out into a circle around the stem. To "pick" them you fold back the leaves and cut the stem off just at ground level. This way all of the leaves remain attached to the stalk.

When enough were found we would head back home where Mom would draw water in the wash tub to soak the cress and wash them. You actually had to wash them several times to get the sand off but I honestly believe that it is impossible to get it all off because no matter how many times it is washed, you still bite into grit as you eat the cooked greens. Mom would cook them in a large pot, normally with a hunk of fat belly or a piece of cured ham. They are somewhat tart when you eat the first batch but you get use to it quickly. I liked mine with a little vinegar.

I remembered reading something about them in Euell Gibbons book, *Stalking the Healthful Herbs*, so I checked it out and sure enough, he claims it has twice as much vitamin "A" as does raw broccoli and three times more vitamin "C" than an orange! Who would have thunk it?

Anyhow, Kay remembers Nannie (Ora) Keys telling her about going out in the early spring to collect an assortment of young greens including cress, mustard, dandelion, plantain and lambsquarter, also known as pigweed, to put together to make a large enough amount to feed everyone. Mr. Snouffer from across the road would frequently bring her a batch of field cress to enjoy. Every time we talk about Nannie Keys we have to smile and comment about her way with food. Once she cooked something, it would be reheated and appear on the table for almost every meal until it was gone. We especially remember the fried apples served repeatedly down to the last tablespoonful. The ultimate application of leftovers! My Uncle Earle would harvest dandelion blooms but he had a different use for them.... Early spring is also the time when some of the locals would walk the roads looking for wild asparagus.

Thinking back on the field cress, I wonder if they still grow in the corn fields. Back then all the farmers would plow their corn to keep the weeds down. Today they use chemicals to kill off all the plants except the corn. Most likely there would be no cress in those fields.

Does anyone still go out in the spring looking for cress and other edibles? I honestly don't know. I know we don't but I don't know WHY we don't.

# Brentsville

A Look Back in History  
by  
Ronald Ray Turner

## The Controversial Daniel Whiting

Since there had not been a newspaper published in the county since the 1790s, the residents of Prince William County relied on newspapers published in Alexandria and Warrenton for local news. It was rare for a town that was a county seat not to have a newspaper, because many of the legal documents needed to be publicized in print, according to the law. In 1858, Brentsville was a booming town and was thought large enough to sustain a paper. The exact date for the start-up is not known, but a copy of *The Prince William Democrat* was published in Brentsville July 30, 1858. William R. Murrell was the editor and overseer of the operation; however, it is thought that F. C. Williams, late of the *Blue Ridge Republican*, was a part owner. Nothing is mentioned of this paper after April 1859; therefore, publishing may have stopped that year.

Daniel Whiting, the focus of this story, was the next to try his hand at opening a paper in Brentsville. He was able to find used printing equipment in Alexandria and have it shipped to Bristow Station by rail and then to Brentsville in wagons. The printing equipment was moved into a tenement on the tavern lot "parallel with the public square." The location of the printing office may, or may not, have been the tavern built in 1822-23 as part of the county court complex. It might have been in one of the buildings directly behind or even attached to the tavern. The only record that might shine a light on the location was a court action, filed in 1870 by George M. Goodwin, stating that Daniel Whiting occupied his dwelling on Tavern

Square as a residence and printing office and that he wanted him evicted from the property.

Whiting's Brentsville newspaper, *The Prince William Advocate*, was only in operation a few years. This was mainly due to the fact that as soon as he got it up and running, he decided to open a larger paper in Manassas. This weekly Manassas paper, the *Manassas Gazette*, started in 1869 and was in operation until it was absorbed by the *Manassas Journal* in 1896. The successor to this newspaper is still published today. Whiting was the original publisher and editor until probably 1876 when his numerous court battles forced his removal. Whiting's editorials were often very personal. Being his enemy was not a good idea since he did not hesitate to use the power of the press. Most who responded to his written attacks would do so in the *Alexandria Gazette*.

Besides being the editor and publisher of two newspapers, in two different towns, at the same time, he was much more. He was a justice of the peace, one of the first members of the Manassas town council, the mayor of Manassas, and an eloquent public speaker; he was both for and against temperance.

Everything the flamboyant Whiting did in 1876 had its detractors, however, in most cases, the disputes were of his own making. He involved himself in so many controversies that they seem to run together. The *Alexandria Gazette*, after weeks of covering all the squabbles, labeled it "The Manassas Imbroglio."

(Continued on page 9)

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

## HISTORY OF THE PRINCE WILLIAM CAVALRY

### Part Two

By Mrs. Margaret Williams Barbour and Miss Laura Lion

The remainder of the year 1861 was spent by the Cavalry at various places in Fairfax and lower Prince William. It wintered at a place called Round Top in the latter county, and the following is a description of their life there written by one who was afterwards a member of the company, and who paid them a visit before joining.

"The merry fellows that I found in camp at Round Top are merry fellows indeed. They have not yet felt the pinch of hunger, and but few of the other ills consequent upon the life of the soldier. Within an easy distance of their own homes with plentiful rations for man and beast, they spent their days in hard riding, and their nights in games and revelry and doubtless think was a fine thing. But they will awaken ere long to its stern realities I very much fear."

That the stern reality came only too soon we may judge from another extract dated only two years later, which reads as follows:

"It was broad day light when we reached the edge of the woods, and paused to take a view of what was beyond. There was an open space, the enemy's line stretching along the opposite wood, while an occasional picket ensconced behind a log pen, and protected by an India rubber cloth converted into a temporary tent, were evidently taking matters as easily and comfortably as if we had been a hundred miles away. Still further to the rear we would catch occasional glimpses of bodies of Cavalry and Infantry posted along the rising ground; the former with their sleek, well fed horses picketed to tree or fence, pawing the ground in their impatience, while their riders reclined upon warm blankets and India rubber tents sleeping away the dreary hours, or perchance watching the cooks as they moved about the fires in their proof over-coats, evidently preparing for their comrades a warm breakfast from the well filled stores of the Yankee commissariat. I could but contrast their position with that of our men, many

of whom had been reared in luxury, while few among them had ever known a real want – now without blankets, without over-coats, many barefooted and half naked cowering down behind trees or stumps for a shelter against chilling storms, and only too happy if they chanced to possess a slice of bacon or beef, a single hard cracker a hand full of hay or corn to assuage the hunger of themselves or their half starved horses."

In Sept. of 1861, while the Cavalry were camped at Sangster's Cross Roads in Fairfax County it was chosen by Col. Beverley H. Roberson to constitute a portion of his regiment of Cavalry just organizing and became a portion of the Fourth Regiment of Virginia Cavalry ranking as Company "A" and with the Goochland Guards formed a squadron. It continued to act with this company until after the seven days fight around Richmond, when it was put with the Hanover Troop – Capt. Newton commanding – thus forming a second squadron, and so acted the remainder of the war.

After the Army fell back from Manassas in 1862, the Prince William Cavalry were camped for a short time at Stafford Court House and it was there that the re-organization of the company took place under an act of the Virginia Legislature, allowing all volunteer companies the privilege of electing their own officers. An election took place resulting as follows:

Captain	P. D. Williams
First Lieutenant	L. A. Davis
Second "	B. D. Merchant
Third "	George Colvin
Orderly Sergeant	P. T. Weedon
Second "	J. Taylor Williams
Third "	Robt. Towles

Soon after this George Colvin died and each one of the officers under him were advanced a step and some others elected among them Absolam Lynn and Vivian Towles as non-commissioned officers. The next year  
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(Continued from page 7)

J. Taylor Williams was made Sergeant Major of the regiment by Col. Wickham and served in that capacity through the Gettysburg campaign and until the old Sergeant Major who had been captured at Stevensburg, June 9 1863, was released from prison.

Captain Thornton was made Major in the Commissary Department of Ewells forces and acted in that capacity until the close of the war.

The Cavalry went from Stafford Court House to the Peninsula. It took part in the battle of Williamsburg where Col. Wickham and the Major of their regiment were badly wounded. From that time to the close of the fighting around Richmond it formed a part of Stuart's Cavalry force in the immediate front of the enemy. An extract from a letter says: —

“My company did nobly all through the fights, it captured one day one hundred and ten prisoners. One man — W. Scott George — captured eighteen or twenty of them by himself. I was slightly wounded on the left hand and arm the second day of the fight, by pieces of shell, which have deprived me of the use of them ever since, but now I am rapidly recovering, and will soon be fit for duty again.”

The wounds mentioned were received in the battle of Cold Harbor on June 27 1862, while the company was supporting Capt. John Pelham's battery of Stuart's Horse Artillery, and the same shell had just killed Corporal Warwick of the Governor's guard of the same squadron by striking his sabre and cutting him in two, one of the fragments striking Capt. P.D. Williams on the hand inflicting a painful but not serious wound. He was the only man in the company injured. Four months later in what is known as the Mine Run Campaign in history he was killed. The following is the account as was written by his brother, J. Taylor Williams, a few days later.

“Our brigade of cavalry commenced the advance by way of Raccoon Ford, Culpeper county, on Sunday morning the 11 of October. Found the enemy there in strong force and soon after crossing the river we were attacked by a large body of cavalry, we fought them some time when our regiment, the Fourth, was ordered to charge the body of Sharp Shooters. The regiment commanded by Capt. Newton of the Hanover Troop and our squadron by my brother P.D. Williams, and his squadron being in front of ours of course had to bear the brunt of the fight. Capt. Newton was instantly killed and my brother

fell mortally wounded. He received a ball in his left arm just below the shoulder which shattered the bone and entered the breast. His horse was killed and fell upon him but had been removed by the enemy before his friends reached him as another charge had to be made before the Yankees were put to flight. He was taken to Mr. Stringfellow's in the neighborhood, and died a short time afterwards in my arms while I was in the act of giving him some brandy which had been sent in by the chief surgeon.”

Thus passed away in the prime of life — he had barely reached his twenty fifth birth day — one who in the words of a fellow soldier “Was as brave a soldier as ever drew a sabre or fired a gun.” With all due kindly deference to the soldier of to-day we don't think they rank with Capt. P.D. Williams and Newton.

The Fourth Regiment of Cavalry was in most of the battles and raids which made Stuart's Cavalry so famous during the war, and the Prince William Cavalry fully sustained the reputation which had made it company “A” of the Regiment. Its hardest campaign was that with Stuart in the Gettysburg campaign when it was for fifteen days between Meade's Army and Washington travelling day and night and scarcely taking time to eat their meals, and towards the close the men were so worn out by the loss of sleep and rest that they would frequently go to sleep while riding and fall off their horses. During the retreat from Petersburg it protected the rear of the army and had to fight day and night for a week. On the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> of April says a correspondent, our Brigade was ordered to report to Gen Lee at the front, and by him ordered to go around Sheridan's command and get possession of the Lynchburg road. Our squadron — the second — dismounted and was fighting on foot when the flag of truce came through the lines at 9:30 o'clock with the news of the surrender. Gen. Munford, who was in command sent word back to know upon what terms the Cavalry were to surrender, and after waiting some time, and no answer coming, he took the brigade except our squadron, which was still on the firing line, back to Lynchburg. Our squadron remained until night and then joined the regiment at Lynchburg, the next morning, April 10, the whole command was disbanded.”

(The final section will conclude in May.)

Many of the Manassas townspeople were not happy with the way the county controlled the issuing of liquor licenses. This was 1876, and the temperance movement had a lot of local support. The town council wanted to have full control as to who could sell liquor within the town limits or to eliminate the sale completely, if that were the will of the town. Petitions, with the support of the council and mayor, were circulated and sent to Richmond to be presented to the Committee on Counties, Cities, and Towns. However, unbeknown to anyone, Daniel Whiting, the mayor at the time, traveled to Richmond to speak against the petitions. This was the beginning volley of one-upmanship that made everyone choose a side.

George C. Round, the Manassas town clerk and a somewhat respected carpetbagger, found himself on the bad side of Whiting. At a meeting held at Hixon Hall, where the object was to gain support to remove Whiting as mayor, Round was the main speaker. Many of the men on the town council were at the meeting and promised to help. Whiting, upon hearing about the meeting, reacted in true form and ordered the town sergeant to arrest Round and charge him with inciting a riot. Charges and countercharges played out in newspapers, however, as most of the residents thought, Round was found not guilty.

Col. Robert Tansill brought charges against Mayor Whiting to the Common Council of the Town of Manassas. The charges included: making an illegal and false arrest of George Round and fined him twenty-five dollars; using threatening, insulting and indecent language on the public streets of Manassas; and being drunk while performing his official duties as mayor. After many motions, objections, and legal talk, it was agreed that the council had no right to act on the charges and that the proper place should be the county court.

No one was surprised that Whiting's next move would be to challenge Tansill to a duel. He delivered the following, using his very young son as the messenger: "Col. Robert Tansill: Sir: You have made false and slanderous charges against me and had them published in the public press, and you have refused to have them investigated. Now, sir, I ask you to retract them, or I shall ask a settlement in a manner in accordance with the code of honor, and allow you to name a time and place and arms to be used. I send this message by my son, and please answer through him." Not getting the response he wanted, Whiting sent a second note to Tansill, stating that he had indeed offered a challenge and asked to meet on the commons, where they could fight with no one else around.

Tansill published his very long and detailed response in the *Alexandria Gazette* along with copies of both letters from Whiting. He started by saying that the communications were delivered by the five or six year old son of Whiting, with the request that the answer be given to the boy. "This act shows that you do not have the slightest knowledge of the code of honor. Also, I have been told that you were drunk when both notes were written." After a long drawn out letter, Tansill ended with "The foregoing reasons preclude the possibility of my meeting you as a gentleman in the manner indicated by you as the code of honor requires equality in all things."

As the result of these many controversies Whiting resigned as the mayor of Manassas and editor and publisher of the *Manassas Gazette*.

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

Contact us on:  
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IN GOD WE TRUST

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