

Brentsville Neighbors



Preserving Brentsville's History

April 2012



Welcome Neighbors!

We wish to express our thanks to Bill Golladay for his continued support. He, and friends like him, have certainly helped in our effort to preserve Brentsville's history.

As we continue to dig through school records more information is coming to light that we believe is quite interesting. So in this month's newsletter there are several references to school related issues. These include the sale of the courthouse to be used for a school, a bit of information about the Brentsville Normal School or the Prince William Academy as it was often called, some information from the county School Board and finally information about the earliest schools that was written in 1885 during what might be called the birth of free public education in Virginia.

As more information is uncovered so are the names of people who helped shape the events that made Brentsville an important place. Uncovering information about these people is sometimes very difficult but we were able to find a bit about Samuel Martyne who presided over the School Board during the 1880's.

Samuel Martyne lived in Occoquan and was chairman of the Conservative wing of the Coalition

party. During 1882 he and I. P. Baldwin, chairman of the Republican wing, met in Brentsville and agreed to unite. That same year there was an election in the 1st Congressional district of Virginia where Robert M. Mayo, of Westmoreland, was declared the victor. However, George T. Garrison, of Accomack, filed suit claiming voter fraud and Martyne was caught up as a supporter of Mayo and perhaps involved with the voter fraud. The suit claimed that at Brentsville precinct nineteen illegal votes were cast and a list of many other places and numbers were cited. That story takes a life of its own and is not addressed further here. However, from the account on page three it can be seen that he was supervisor of the Prince William School Board from 1883 until 1887.

Also in this edition is a wonderful article written by Andrew Banks, a previous contributor and descendent of the Brentsville Williams family. His research has uncovered a lot of information about the Jesse Fouks case that may become the subject of a future issue.

Very best wishes,
Kay and Morgan

This month:

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Flashback

PUBLIC SALE
OF
COURTHOUSE, JAIL, and LOT
AT
BRENTSVILLE, VA.

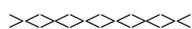
The undersigned committee appointed by Board of Supervisors of Prince William County, will offer for sale, at public Auction, in Brentsville, on **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1897** The public lot, situated in the town of Brentsville, containing Three acres of land. This lot has on it the Old Courthouse, 46 X 36, and 20 feet high, and the Jail, 36 X 30 feet, and 18 feet high, with eight rooms, both buildings of brick and covered with tin.

Terms – One fourth cash and the Balance in one, two, and three years, the Title to be retained until the terms of Sale are complied with.

W. W. Kincheloe

E. Nelson

February 1, 1897



27 February 1897

Sale of Brentsville Courthouse

We the undersigned appointed by the Board of Supervisors at their July meeting 1896 to make sale of the Old Court, Jail and three acres of land at Brentsville beg to make the following report. We advertised the said property by hand bills and in the Manassas Journal to be sold on the 5th day of Sept. 1896. At which time no bid or bids were made for said property. We again advertised the said property to be sold 30 days after date, at which time no bid was made. We again adjourned the sale of the said property to be sold on the 27th day of Feb. 1897. At which time I. N. H. [Beahm] for the sum of \$517.00 upon the following terms ¼ cash, the balance in one, two & three years. The title to said property to be retained until the whole of purchase price has been paid and we recommend the confirmation of said sale.

Respectfully Submitted,

E. Nelson

W. W. Kincheloe

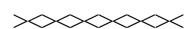
Prince William Normal
School,
BRENTSVILLE, VA.
—FOR—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Strong faculty. Full courses of instruction. Prepares for teaching, practical life or for a broad and liberal education. Lively and thorough. Educative, home-like. Best methods. Careful discipline. Beautiful and healthful. Well equipped buildings. Good society. Terms low. Opens Sept, 20th. Runs nine months. Send for catalogue.

Correspondence Solicited.

I. N. H. Beahm, Principal.



Normal School Commencement.
Special to the Post.

Manassas, Va., May 26—The Prince William Normal School at Brentsville began its commencement exercises last night, and will conclude to-morrow. The Nicol debaters' medal, given by Hon. C. E. Nicol, has been awarded Mr. E. C. Crumpacker, of Botetourt County, Va., and was presented by Mr. W. H. W. Moran at the close of the exercises to-night. Mr. Lewis H. Machen, of Fairfax County, will deliver the annual address to-morrow morning at 11 o'clock.

Source: The Washington Post, May 27, 1898



Snippets from the County School Board Minutes



1884-5

At the annual meeting of the County School Board held at Brentsville on the 4th day of Aug. 1884.

Saml. Martyne presiding.

Present, Messrs. Payne, Sinclair, Dulin, Heineken, Merchant, Barbee, Lipscomb, Brown, Buckley, Thomas & Brawner.

Minutes were read & approved.

On motion of Mr. Heineken it was resolved that the County Treasurer be allowed a commission of one per cent, for disbursing all of the state school funds excepting those under the Henkle Bill. To this motion Mr. Lipscomb offered an amendment allowing the Co. Tr. two percent instead of one, but it was defeated.

Mr. John L. Sinclair, who was appointed at last meeting to ascertain whether or not the Co. Tr. had accounted for the penalty of five per cent on the County & district taxes for the years 1879, '80, '81 & '82, made a report claiming that the Co. Tr. was due upon the district funds for the four said years \$144.27 & upon the County funds for the same time \$222.47.

Whereupon a motion was made & carried that the said County Tr. retain the amount due by him for penalties on County & district funds in lieu of any commission due him for disbursing the amounts for the said years 1879, '80, '81 & '82 under the Henkle Bill.

On motion of Mr. Barbee it was resolved that the schools of this County start on the first Monday in Sept. or as early as possible thereafter.

A motion was made & carried that the chair appoint a committee of three to adjust accounts with the County Tr. where upon the following appointments were made Messrs. Wm. Lipscomb, Jas. M. Barbee & Jno. A. Brawner.

On Motion it was resolved that each district of this County pay the Manassas Gazette the sum of five dollars per year for the publication of school matters.

The following resolution was offered by Mr. Heineken & unanimously adopted by the Board.

"Whereas it is the sense of this Board that the ruling of the State Board of Education requiring the Teachers to be paid per capita when the average is under twenty scholars, has resulted to the great detriment of the schools of this County, and that the salary of Teachers should be left to the Dist. School Board wherefore be it resolved that the State Board of Education be respectfully petitioned to except this County from the operation of the said ruling & that the County Supt. of schools be requested to transmit this resolution to the Hon. R. R. Farr, State Supt. of Education, with the request that he lay it before the said Board."

On motion it was resolved that the County Tr. be allowed a commission of one per cent for disbursing the school funds under the Henkle Bill.

On motion the meeting adjourned.

[signed] Saml. Martyne
Chairman

[signed] R. E. Thornton,
Clerk

Public Free Schools in Virginia, 1885

In 1885 the public free school system of Virginia was a part of the State constitution which was framed by the convention of 1867, and ratified by the people July 6, 1869. The principal and essential features of the system were clearly and emphatically defined by Article 8, Education, of the constitution. Included, but not limited to this Article were the following (in part):

- ... shall provide by law ... a uniform system of public free schools, and for its gradual, equal, and full introduction into all the counties of the State, by the year 1876, or as much earlier as practicable.
- ... to make such laws as shall not permit parents and guardians to allow their children to grow up in ignorance and vagrancy.
- ... shall provide for uniformity of text-books and the furnishing of school-houses with such apparatus and library as may be necessary
- ... Provisions shall be made to supply children attending the public free schools with necessary text-books in cases where the parent or guardian is unable, by reason of poverty, to furnish them.

These laws were both very full and explicit, and provided that the schools should be free to all the children of the commonwealth between the ages of five and twenty-one ...

Whilst there is nothing in the constitution of the State which prohibits white and colored children from being taught in the same schools, the original law, which gave force to the constitution, provides that "white and colored children shall not be taught in the same school, but in separate schools, under the same general regulations as to management, usefulness, and efficiency."

Every county and city in the State—and some of the towns—has a superintendent of schools.

Superintendents of schools have a general supervision over all the schools in their respective counties, cities, and towns, and are required to do all in their power to promote the efficiency of the same. They examine and license all teachers, apportion the State and county school money among the several school districts, and exercise a general supervision over the finance of the schools. The Superintendent of Prince William County is Samuel Martyne of Occoquan whose term begins July 1, 1883

and ends 1887. His annual salary is \$270.00. In Prince William there are 7 school districts and 21 trustees.

All persons who desire to teach in the public schools are required to be examined by and obtain from the superintendent of the county or city, where they intend to teach, a written certificate of qualification. They are elected by the Boards of trustees of the respective districts, and are required by law to enter into a written contract to faithfully discharge their duties. During the school year ending the 31st day of July, 1884, there were employed in the State 2,362 white male teachers, 2,421 white female teachers; 885 colored male teaches, and 703 colored female teachers—making a total of 6,371 employed. The average salary, per month, paid teachers was: White males, \$30.25; females, \$26.18. Colored males, \$25.77; colored females, \$23.52.

In every public free school there was taught orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography, and by common consent history.

A list of text-books is prescribed by the board of education, from which the county boards adopt such books as they may think proper. No book not found on the state list can be used in any of the public free schools, nor can any book, when adopted, be changed for any other on the same subject until the expiration of the four years.

In each county there is a county school board, composed of the county superintendent, who is ex-officio, its chairman, and the district trustees of all the districts in the county. This board recommends to the board of supervisors the amount of money necessary for the county and district school fund for the ensuing year. It is also charged with the duty of seeing that the treasurer's accounts and the accounts of the district clerks are correct, and of instituting suits against all defaulters.

The first public free schools under this system were opened about the middle of November, 1870. For the year ending July 31, 1884, Prince William County had 35 white and 11 colored schools. Total enrollment for white schools was 1,419 and colored schools was 545 students. The daily average attendance at white schools was 731 and 274 at colored schools.

Source: Extracted from an account written by Dr. R. R. Farr, Superintendent of Public Instruction for use in the *HAND-BOOK OF VIRGINIA*, by the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1885.

A Shocking Death!

By
Andrew C. Banks

“A SHOCKING DEATH,” the papers reported, took place about a half mile from Brentsville late in the Month of February, 1875. Early one morning a servant on the Sexsmith farm sent to gather kindling came upon the body of 35 year old attorney James E. Williams lying on the path leading from the field gate to the house. He lay in a supine position, arms extended with fists clenched and with a face depicting “intense suffering” at the time of death. He was only partially clothed and drag marks stretched some 400 yards behind him to the public road. George W. Sexsmith, one of two occupants of the farm, later stated he had heard cries for help in the night but no one had gone to investigate. He said that the “noise kept up at short intervals until after midnight when it stopped.” Williams, of a prominent family, was a native of Brentsville and his death would become a bizarre footnote in another case, that of Jesse Fouks, whom Mr. Williams had defended.

The son of John Williams, former Clerk of the Prince William Court, James moved with his father to Washington in his youth and in the family tradition studied the law. When War came he went home and served alongside his brothers and other family as a Private in the 4th Virginia Cavalry, Company A . He was captured and held at Point Lookout, Maryland, where having become very impaired in his health he took the oath of allegiance in order to gain his freedom. He was subsequently given the honorary rank of Captain for his services. He resided with his father at Alexandria finding work as a journalist with the Sentinel amongst other publications. He resumed his studies and

was admitted to the bar in 1868, the year his father died. He clerked for Judge Palmer of Frederick, Maryland, marrying his daughter Eliza. He was last employed as a Deputy Clerk of Wills at Alexandria before returning to Brentsville to defend Fouks.

Jesse Fouks, a former slave and worker for 70 year old Jeremiah Herndon, a wealthy land owner near Cedar Run, was subsequently tried for the triple homicide of Herndon and his wife, and Addison Russell their live-in servant, which occurred on December 3rd 1874. The case against Fouks was that he was said to have argued with Herndon over a piece of meat that Herndon claimed he stole. The family was found by the son the next morning having been brutally attacked with an axe and bloody finger prints were found on the Herndons money box which was empty. The Herndon's who were mortally wounded in the attack later regained consciousness, both stating that they did not know who attacked them, but Mr Herndon, who had been found lying in the field, later remembered that Jesse had been in an altercation with him. There are some who believe that Herndon's son may have committed the crime and that Jesse was falsely accused. Evidence was largely circumstantial except for the death bed testimony. The missing money, in the amount of \$235.00, was supposedly found at the home of Fouks' sister. James Williams and his partner, a man named Meredith, were said to have ably defended Fouks though he was found guilty of 1st Degree Murder on January 14th 1875. His sentencing was held on January 15th, and he was

(Continued on page 6)

sentenced to be hanged on the 19th of March 1875. On January 30th Jesse made an escape from the Brentsville Jail but was found on February 1st hiding in a straw rick near the home of his sister and again taken into custody. Jesse made claims that he did not commit the crime but that a man named Willis Tibbs had. Around that time rumours were supposedly being circulated that a group in the African-American community had made plans to storm the jail and free Fouks although nothing came of this. James Williams had been in the process of writing Fouks' appeal when he was found dead on February 25th. On March 8th 1875, Jesse made a "confession" of his crimes from his cell facing the gallows which he then reiterated to Major W.W Thornton on the 12th. His execution, the last that took place at Brentsville, was carried out on the 19th. Fouks defense attorney did not live to see it.

On the evening of February 24th , James Williams had left his lodgings and ventured to the village to obtain his mail and conclude some business at the Court House. He retired to the nearby tavern and spent the better part of the evening there "in the company of some friends." As it grew late, Clerk of the Court Lucien Davis, a family member, "urgently protested that Williams stay the night," but around 8 pm he departed, supposedly toward the residence of his brother in law Mr Lipscomb some distance away, and was last seen alive holding onto a fence rail on the edge of town in a seeming "bewildered condition."



What happened after can only be speculated upon. From the marks on the ground and his missing clothing, the inquest deemed that it appeared he attempted to drag himself toward the farm house from the road. Sexsmith stated Williams' intermittent cries that Monday evening had sounded like "Hallowing." His death was deemed due to "intemperance" and "exposure." It was said that he was a "man of many fine talents," but had "lately taken to drinking too much," perhaps implying a result of his experiences in the war or some other

aspect of his life. Yet others have speculated he may have been set upon on the road. It was certainly suspicious that the event occurred so shortly after Fouks escape and so soon before the execution. Or perhaps someone took issue with Williams regarding

his military services, thinking him a Yankee turncoat? The front page of South Carolina's Anderson Intelligencer ran a full length article on March 11th regarding Mr. Williams death stating that from the time of his release from prison and "not daring to return home" [to Brentsville], Williams had "gone to Washington" and that he had not returned until choosing to defend Fouks, which was his first case of any prominence, and further stated that "he had only recently removed with his family to his native place for the purpose of identifying himself with the people, and continuing to practice his profession." James Williams left a widow and several young children at his death, as well as many relatives in Brentsville and elsewhere.

Where WILD things live...

Trametes versicolor The Turkey Tail

One of the most common fungi to be found in the woods is *Trametes versicolor*, the turkey tail fungus. The common name comes from the banding pattern on the fruiting bodies that resembles (in miniature, of course) the tail of a strutting turkey. The colors of the bands can be quite variable, depending on the genetics of the organism and its environment. Most of the bands are dark to light brown in color, alternating with light colored bands of white to tan, with still more bands of blue, orange, maroon, and others. They can be strikingly beautiful and are among the most easily found fungi. The species has a widespread distribution, having been found in nearly every state in the United States and in most other countries.

Trametes versicolor is a polypore, a member of the Polyporaceae. There are about 100 genera in this family. All of them have pores of some sort on their underside. These pores can be very small, 10 per millimeter, or much larger, up to 2 mm per pore. In all cases the pores serve to increase the surface area for bearing the spores. Polypores can be easily distinguished by their typically hard exterior, their usual “non-mushroom” shape, and growth on wood as wood decomposers.

The polypores (and corticioid fungi—those flat crusty fungi you find on the underside

of logs and sticks) are important in natural ecosystems as decomposers of wood, recycling the nutrients and minerals in the wood and releasing them over a long period of time—sometimes several hundred years from a single large down tree—where they can be used by other forest organisms. In addition to their scientific and ecological interest, many polypore species can be used as natural dyes for wool.

There are many other species of *Trametes*, some of which are very common, but *T. versicolor* is the only one with those distinctive brightly colored banding patterns.

There is also another very common, similar fungus *Stereum ostrea*, the false turkey tail. From the top the fruiting bodies may appear similar, with a similar banding pattern, but when you turn it over you will see only a flat surface with no pores. This is also called the “leather fungus” because of its tough texture.

They are not perennial, but persist for a long period of time, even overwintering in some cases, so they can be found in almost any season of the year. They can be really beautiful when they’re fresh, so check out all the different colors when you’re traveling. You’ll probably find something you like!

http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/aug97.html (abridged)



When WAR Came to Brentsville

Numbers 115. Report of Brigadier General T. H. Holmes, C. S. Army, commanding Reserve Brigade.

HEADQUARTERS BROOKE'S STATION, July 26, 1861.

GENERAL: On Wednesday, the 18th [*sic*] of July, I received orders from the headquarters of the Army to hold my brigade in readiness to support your army if called on by you. I proceeded with two regiments (the Second Tennessee and First Arkansas Volunteers) and Walker's battery that afternoon towards Manassas, and on my arrival at Camp Chopawamsic sent an officer to communicate with you. Soon after the officer left I received your telegram to Lieutenant-Colonel Green urging me forward. The march was resumed, and I encamped near Brentsville.

On reporting to you in person on Friday morning I was ordered to Camp Wigfall as a support to Ewell's brigade, charged with the defense of Union Mills and its neighborhood. My brigade rested on Saturday.

About 9 o'clock on Sunday, the 21st, I received a copy of your note to General Ewell, directing him to hold himself in readiness to take the offensive at a moment's notice, to be supported by my brigade. This order caused me to move nearer to Ewell's position, where, after waiting about two hours, another order was received through Ewell to resume our former places. Up to this time the firing was comparatively slow. About 12 o'clock m., or a few minutes sooner, the firing on our left became very heavy. About 2 o'clock p. m. I received a copy of a note from you to General Jones, dated at a point one mile south of Union

Mills, directing me, among other movements, to repair to you.

I immediately marched in the direction of the firing, and on my arrival at Camp Walker received the first order directed to myself. This was a verbal one, requiring me to hasten forward as soon as possible. The march from thence to Lewis' house was made in good time. The brigade was halted there by order of General Johnston, and did not participate in the fight, as the enemy commenced to retreat within a few moments after my arrival. I ordered Walker's rifled guns to fire at the retreating enemy, and Scott's cavalry to join in the pursuit. The fire of the former was exceedingly accurate, and did much execution, and the pursuit of the latter was very effective, taking many prisoners and capturing much property.

I cannot speak too highly of the spirit and enthusiasm of my brigade.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

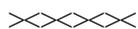
T. H. HOLMES,
Brigadier-General, Commanding Brigade.

General G. T. BEAUREGARD, Camp
Manassas.

F e e d b a c k

Another great newsletter. I do love reading about local history. The school board meeting minutes reinforced for me what I always note - "the more things change, the more they stay the same" - has there ever been a time when teachers salaries and community support of our schools were not items of discussion and concern? Also loved the article on Presbyterian evangelist George W. Crabtree - the Presbyterian Church did a great deal to provide educational opportunities for Black youth in the old days with the founding of several of the now "historically Black colleges", but it's great to learn of other important outreach done by the church. Thanks for all your work.

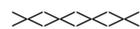
Jeri Brooks



I have kept all electronic versions of "Brentsville Neighbors" that I received. Unfortunately, the motherboard of my last computer burned out and took my "BN" file with it. So glad you are making an electronic library available. (Just think—when we were in high school, BDHS was in the process of converting manual typewriters to electric ones. Now, we geezers are figuring out how to manage the printed word electronically!!) Progress!) I loved the article about Brother Crabtree! I had never heard of him until you asked me. It would really be fun to get in touch with churches in areas that he preached (such

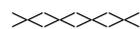
as Dallas) to find out what, if any, stories still are told about him. Crabtree's story is such a fascinating, unusual one, it should be published and preserved. I'd like to work on that.

Elaine Yankey



My name is Larry Miles, former pastor of Brentsville Presbyterian Church 67-74. You might be able to find better historical pieces by getting in touch with National Capital Presbytery, of which Brentsville is a member or when in touch with them you might ask for the address of our Historical Records Department in Montreat N.C. hope this helps. I am sorry I do not have those addresses or telephone numbers but you can call a neighboring presbyterian church for those addresses, etc. Thanks for the very interesting work you do there.

Larry



Morgan I found the school article of great interest. Since the site is next to the house I grew up in and My Great grandfather sold the property to the county it is part of our family history. It is interesting that several sites were considered. At least I had the advantage of walking to school because of their decision. Keep up the good work. You seem to be having a lot of fun.

John McMichael

As seen in "The Weekly Star" April 19, 1955

"LIGHTENING STRIKES"

On Sunday afternoon a very large old cedar tree in the Brentsville Courthouse was struck by a heavy bolt of lightening that split the dear old tree down the middle. "I didn't know that lightening had that much power" exclaimed the Editor of the Weekly Star. The tree was "more or less hollowed out on the inside" observed the Editor. The tree stood next to the boundary of Mr. Hedrick's barnyard & pigpen; The Hedrick's pigs, being close, were undoubtedly frightened tremendously. Pieces of the tree were scattered as far as 150 yards away. The Editor, DeLancey Webster, recovered a huge piece for himself.

CHURCH NEWS

The Women of the Presbyterian, Church will meet Tuesday night at 7:30 at the home of Mrs. Wolfe, in Bradley Forest.

There will be Communion Services at the Presbyterian Church next Sunday at 11 o'clock. Mr. Bloomer will hold the Service.

Frederick Whetzel and his new bride dropped in to visit his parents on Thurs. aft. They had spent their honeymoon on a trip through Skyline Drive, visiting Charlottesville and Washington.

Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History

Contact us on:
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IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors
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