

The Bell Ringer

A Publication from the Education and Research Committee
of the Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc.

Volume 1, Issue 2

www.brentsville.org

November 2005

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III

The October issue of the *Bell Ringer* continued the second part of an account of the murder of James F. Clark, former Commonwealth's Attorney for Prince William County, by Rhoda Fewell. Supposed motive for the violence was the disappearance of Fewell's young sister, Fannie, aided by Clark, resulting in the sullyng of her reputation. Clark was apprehended and incarcerated in the jail at Brentsville. He clearly stated to news reporters covering the incident that he was not guilty of any crime against Fannie Fewell. The ensuing trial played out in a circus-like atmosphere with extensive coverage in the *Alexandria Gazette* and other local papers. It became evident, as facts were gathered and testimony collected, that Clark felt there was a chance he would be assassinated by Fannie's brother, right there in the Brentsville jail, where he awaited his day in court. As the interviews and depositions continued, tensions mounted.

Alexandria Gazette 29 Aug 1872

JAMES F. CLARK.

At Manassas an interview would have been held with Miss Fewell, but for the extreme nervous condition in which she has been ever since her return, and which her physician, Dr. Emlyn Marsteller, said, was marked by violent headache, great prostration and frequent convulsions. She will see no gentleman but her physician and her counsel, Judge Sinclair, preferring death, she says, to the sight of her father.

Her father is nearly overcome with grief, and says that his daughter has been the victim of a deep laid and hellish plot; that he promised the Recorder in Fredericksburg he would not interfere with Clark while his trial was in progress, but that if he had known then what he does now so far from making that promise, he would have blown Clark's brains out

though in the sight of Judge and Jury; for that after enticing his daughter away from home by promising to marry her, he had, when tired of her, robbed and basely deserted her hundreds of miles away from home, and that she had to beg her way back to Washington, and leave her trunk to pay for a hotel bill of \$30, which Clark had contracted in Missouri. He is astonished, he says, at the conduct of Mrs. Hynson, who is said to have assisted Clark in the abduction with which he is charged, by telling Miss Fewell that he was divorced from his wife, urging her to go to him, and giving her \$50 with which to pay her expenses until she met him. Mrs. Hynson, he says, he has always heretofore, looked upon as a friend of his family, and as a lady in every respect, and well worthy of the society of her connections, who are among the best people of the county.

Judge Sinclair, who was appointed Commonwealth's Attorney for the county when Clark resigned that office, and who is conducting the prosecuting of this case with his usual ability and efficiency, also says that he is thoroughly convinced that Miss Fewell has been villainously treated, and that Clark will not be permitted to go unpunished. He says, however, that he will not press for an early trial of the case, but will give Clark ample time to procure counsel. He has in his possession the following letter received by Miss Fewell from Clark, while she was concealed in Boyle's Hotel, Washington, after her return from the West:

Continued on page 5

In This Issue

Page 1 -- The Infamous Fewell Trial Part III

Page 2 - Take Note!

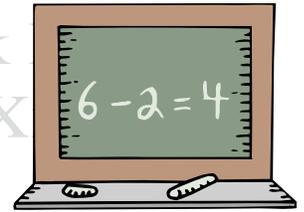
Page 3 - Featured Primary Source

Page 4 - Analysis of Primary Sources

Page 10 - Updates - Holiday open House!

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww X

Take Note!



This second issue of the *Bell Ringer*, continues the trial *Clark v. Fewell*, a notorious case from the late 19th century. The attorneys in this trial, famous in their own right, brought national attention to Brentsville. In fact, the trial was serialized in many newspapers of the day. Several additional installments of the trial remain for inclusion in future newsletters. With the final installment, a lesson plan format for a mock trial for use by teachers will be included. Mock trials are an excellent means of conveying to students the process and procedures of the courts. And, a case as exciting as this one is sure to maintain student interest.

The inclusion of a primary source on page 3 of this issue provides us with insight into the character of Rhoda Fewell, noted for his repeated incarcerations and trials. The document included in this issue was found in Loose Papers for 1868 in the Circuit Court Archives for Prince William County. Fewell was on trial for assault, confirming his violent nature. In fact, he was involved in numerous cases of assault prior to shooting James F. Clark. Primary source analysis is a critical skill for students to master. It is included at all levels in the Virginia Standards of Learning and provides a true hands-on opportunity for students in historical interpretation. A sample primary source analysis guide is included in this issue on page 4.

The Education and Research Committee welcomes input from the community. We have begun training docents to assist in the presentation of the program for first grade students at the one room school. Please let us know if you are interested in taking part in this exciting opportunity.

With the holidays upon us, we wish everyone a happy and healthy season.

The Education and Research Committee



Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc.

A nonprofit, 501(c)3 volunteer organization
Established in 1996 to support the
restoration and preservation of the
Brentsville Historic Centre.

Annual Membership Fees:

Individual: \$20
High School Student: Free
Corporate: \$125

2005 Executive Officers

Kay Breeden -- Chairman
Laura Wyatt-- Vice Chairman
Fran Hibbs -- Treasurer
Becky Noonan -- Secretary
Ron Turner -- Membership Chair

2005 Board of Directors

Brenda Counts Betty Machen
Keith Machen Robin Meyering
Pamela Sackett Vacancy



On Record...

Primary Sources documenting Brentsville

8 February 1868

Commonwealth of Virginia vs Lucien Fewell

Assault on George B. Jones

State of Virginia, Prince William County

On the eighth day of February 1868, personally appeared before me, A.F. Dunn, a Justice of the Peace in and for said County, George B. Jones of said State and County. Personally known to me who being duly sworn according to law say that on or about the 30th day of January 1868, I was assaulted by one Lucien Fewell of Manassas, Va. The said Fewell striking and kicking me in the face in a violent and angry manner to the effusion of my blood that left wounds that were painful and seriously interfering with my business to my loss. He also threatened to skin me and my father, "And all the Damned Yankees about," and from his threats and known character I have reason to fear that he will assassinate me.

George B. Jones

Subscribed and sworn this 8th day of February 1868 before me

A.F. Dunn J.P

Prince William County to Wit:

In the County Court of said County, Be it remembered that I, Aylett Nicol, attorney for the Commonwealth in the county Court of Prince William County, and who in this behalf prosecutor for the said Commonwealth in his proper person, comes into the said court to understand and to be informed, that Lucien N. Fewell on the 30th day of January in 1868 in the county aforesaid, in and upon one George B. Jones an assault did make and him the said George B. Jones, did then and there unlawfully beat, wound and ill treat, and other wrongs to him then and there did, to the great damage of him the said George B. Jones and against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Upon complaint in writing of George B. Jones of the County of Prince William.

A. Nicol, attorney

For the Commonwealth

In said County

Note: According to the Prince William County Census of 1870, George B. Jones was a 26 year old farmer, born in New Jersey, and living in Manassas.

Interrogating a Primary Source (Who, What, When, Where, Why)

WHO? =

1. Who is the author?
2. What is the author's background?
(e.g., farmer, court clerk, merchant)
 - a. What is the author's socioeconomic status or education?
 - b. What is the author's perspective?
(e.g., religious, political)
3. Who was the audience?

WHAT? = What type of source is it? (e.g., letter, census, photo)
What were its uses?

WHEN? = When was the material created?
What clues help determine the historical era?

WHERE? = Where did it appear?

WHY? = Why did the author write the document?
What were the political or cultural contexts and environment in which it was written? (e.g., political climate, time of war, time of change, dominant group, status quo for the era, roles of men/women, assumptions about race)

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL - I got here this morning about a half hour ago and shall go out to Mr. Wroe's to-day to see if papa is out in that country anywhere. I am immensely warm and know you are almost melted without thin clothes to wear. You do not know darling how much I have missed you, and how much more I shall miss you before we again meet, which I hope is not far distant. Everything looks dreary here. I've only met one man I knew and he was a mere passing acquaintance. You must try my precious little girl to be contented while I am gone and keep as quiet as possible. I will be back in a day or two, perhaps before the time I appointed. I can't tell yet whether I will take the train here or come up through Prince William. It depends upon what I hear from papa and others, I don't apprehend any difficulty though and you must not be uneasy in the least. I shall expect you to write to me so I can get the letter Saturday without fail, and a long letter, for I shall be anxious to hear from you, and whether short absence has made you forget one who like yourself, has made sacrifice of the past. Don't make any exposure of yourself in any way for fear some one will find out where you are and get you away from me. I am writing this letter very badly I know, but I but I can't help it. My hands are wet with perspiration and I can't put them on the paper without soiling it. I hope your clothes will have come by the time I get back, and that you will be a little more comfortable. You need not be afraid I will forget you darling while I am gone, for you are too dearly impressed upon my heart in the most solemn and deep manner for me to lose sight of you. Bless your dear little heart, don't forget me and be sure to write. I declare I am nearly melted. It is scandalously warm now, and everybody is just sweating away. I shall write again so it will leave here by Saturday's mail. Don't fail to write, and don't forget me and be a good little girl in every way. As bad a little flirt as you are I am not afraid to trust you. God bless you darling and preserve you in quiet and safety for me.

*Ever and fondly yours, James
Fredericksburg, August 22, 1872*

Judge Sinclair came into possession of Clark's missive to Fannie, reinforcing the young girl's damning description of her travails and further persuading him to believe in Clark's guilt. While

it does appear that Clark wished to remain secretive about her whereabouts, the letter itself could be considered convincing of his loving feelings towards her. He also recognized her as a flirt, evidence of a reputation that may not have been so sterling prior to her accompanying him out of Manassas. Further questions in the case arise when considering the role of Mrs. Hynson. Why would this pillar of the community aid Clark in luring the girl away? Until the trial took place, the lack of complete evidence and testimony left many speculating. And in the time it took to commence the trial, Rhoda Fewell felt compelled to take the matter into his own hands.

Alexandria Gazette 31 Aug 1872

The Clark Affair -- Clark Shot By Miss Fewell's Brother

As anticipated, the Clark affair has come to a terrible and bloody conclusion. About half past ten o'clock this morning Dr. Lewis, of this city received the following telegram from Dr. Barber of Brentsville:

Manassas, Aug. 31. - Come to Brentsville at once, if possible; Mr. Jas. F. Clark, was shot this morning dangerously. Bring instruments.

The train for Manassas had started at eight o'clock, so the Doctor could not go. He, however, told a few persons that he had received the dispatch, and the news soon spread throughout the whole city.

At a few minutes after 11 o'clock the following dispatch was received at the Gazette office, and its substance having been posted on the bulletin board, was eagerly read by the crowd that soon collected around it, and by which it was surrounded till the issue of the paper this afternoon.

Manassas, Va., Aug. 31 - Jas. F. Clark, the seducer of Miss Fannie Fewell, was shot, and probably killed, in the jail at Brentsville, this morning at about eight o'clock by her brother, Rhoda Fewell. Mr. Fewell came up on the night train from Lynchburg and got off at Bristoe Station, and walked over to Brentsville, and on going to the jail found the front door open. A black boy, the only person present, told him in which cell Clark was, and on going there, he found Clark lying on his bed. Seven shots were fired through the grating of the cell door, one of them taking effect in Clark's left breast, just below the heart. Mr. Fewell returned to

Continued on page 6

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

Manassas and has surrendered himself into the hands of the authorities. It is thought Clark is dead by this time - eleven o'clock a.m.

The brother of the wronged girl has the undoubted sympathies of the public with him, wondering why he did not kill her seducer before.

Editor of Manassas Gazette

Rev. John Clark, father of the man who has been shot, called at the *Gazette* office at half past two o'clock and read the telegram that had been received. He arrived here on this morning's train, went on to Washington; and first heard of the shooting on his return to this city. He saw his son yesterday, at which time he was well and was making preparations for his trial, which was set for Monday next. His son had been removed from the debtor's room, in which he had been confined, to a cell off the lower floor, and it was through the iron grating at the door of this cell, that he was shot.

At half past three o'clock this afternoon, the following dispatch was received.

MANASSAS, Aug. 31 - A messenger who left Brentsville at two o'clock, reports Clark living, but his physicians say he must die. Two shots took effect, one in the heart and one in the side.

D. Whiting

Rev. Mr. Clark called at the *Gazette* office again after the reception of this last dispatch, and upon being informed of its contents, seemed nearly overcome with grief. He will leave for Brentsville on this evening's train.

By today's standards, it seems surprising that no one was shocked by Rhoda Fewell's violent attack on Clark. In fact, the newspapers even predicted it. Questions surrounding the removal of Clark from an upper cell in the Brentsville jail to one on the ground floor can be asked. On whose authority was he moved? Was there a conspiracy to make it easier for Fewell to carry out his attack? Why was a jailor or guard not present at the time of the incident, especially in light of the heavy security surrounding his earlier transport from Fredericksburg? How was Fewell able to fire so many shots, seven in all, before aid arrived? Further reports by the *Gazette* detailed the aftermath of the shooting.

Alexandria Gazette 02 Sep 1872

The Clark - Fewell Tragedy - Rhoda Fewell Shoots Clark in Prison - Reports of the Physicians - Clark's Dying Declaration - Fewell in Jail - Special to the *Alexandria Gazette*

Brentsville, Aug. 31 - The citizens of our peaceful and quiet village were greatly alarmed about 9 o'clock this morning by hearing firing and cries of murder proceeding from the jail. It appears that Rhoda Fewell, after Clark was brought to Brentsville, left Manassas and went up the Orange road for the purpose of putting up lightning rods. This morning however, he returned on the 5 a.m. down train, got off at Bristoe and walked to Brentsville unperceived by anyone except the ticket agent at that place. It is supposed that he concealed himself in the woods at the back of the jail. About five minutes before the firing commenced a man was discovered by persons sitting on Mr. Kincheloe's porch, stealing cautiously towards the front door of the jail and observed to enter. These persons paid no attention, supposing him to be the brother of the jailer. In a few minutes the firing and cries were heard, and Major Thornton and Mr. Lipscomb, Deputy Clerk, both hurried to the spot, and on entering the door, the Major, who was the first to get there, saw Fewell with a pistol in each hand in the act of firing through the iron grating door at Clark, who had been taken from the debtor's room, in the upper story of the jail, and placed in a cell on the ground floor, the door of which opens on the right as you enter from the front door. Fewell states that he went direct to the debtor's room and not finding him there, examined all the cells up stairs, then came down and found Clark lying on the bed in that cell. Fewell had shot three times before any one arrived, and was in the act of firing his last shot when Major Thornton seized him and attempted to take him away but did not succeed, owing to the fact that Fewell had his left arm bent on the inside of the door, and with his left hand fired the last shot. He then walked to the door and escaped in the direction he came. On opening the door of the cell there was great confusion; Clark evidently had used every means at his disposal to defend himself; a pitcher, ink stand and a heavy glass salt cellar were all in numberless fragments about the door, and he had used a table as a shield, but to no effect. Clark, after he was shot, got on the side of the bed, was perfectly rational, and requested that somebody would stand outside and guard the window, as he was afraid Rhoda would come back and shoot him, said he was shot in the breast, and on an examination of the

Continued on page 7

www.brentsville.org

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

wound it was discovered that the ball had passed on the left side of the heart and in close proximity to it and lodged in the back bone. Upon a subsequent examination the physicians found another wound in the back, the second ball having penetrated a short distance into the flesh. This Dr. Simpson extracted, and it proved to be a navy ball. A warrant was immediately issued for Fewell's arrest, but before it was drawn up by the Magistrate, Fewell appeared in our village, jumped into his father's carriage and drove off to Manassas with Mr. Varnes, who, at the solicitations of Rhoda's father, who had heard from the conductor on the morning train that he had gotten off at Bristoe, came over to Brentsville to stop any attempt that Rhoda might wish to make, but arrived here ten minutes too late. When they reached there Rhoda gave himself up to Mr. Butler, J. P. Clark's condition at one time was supposed to be extremely critical

About 5 o'clock this evening Rhoda Fewell was brought over here in custody of the Sheriff, aided by other officers. He desired to obtain bail by a writ of habeas corpus, but his friends advised him to go to jail and await the result of Clark's wounds. Judge Sinclair, Commonwealth's Attorney, had a guard of eight men placed around the jail. Fewell's examination will probably take place on Monday next.

SUNDAY, 12 O'clock, Sept. 1

Clark is still living but thought to be worse. Five physicians have seen him and report variously upon his condition, whilst all concede that it is a dangerous wound and that symptoms of a varied character may develop themselves at any time in the course of a few days.

Dr. Lewis did not come upon the night train as was expected here. Clark was removed yesterday to the debtor's cell and every assistance rendered him. Fewell is confined in the same cell he shot Clark in. The father of Jas. F. Clark, came here from Brentsville yesterday evening, but returned again on this morning train with a supply of medicines, and accompanied by Dr. Bedford Brown of this city. Mr. Clark entertained some hopes of his son's recovery.

THE LATEST

Manassas, Sept. 2-4 p.m. - Information just from Brentsville reports that Clarke is sinking rapidly. Judge Thomas, Mr. Fewell's counsel, made a strong effort today to have Fewell released on bail under a writ of habeas corpus, and Judge Nicol has the case under consideration.

Kincheloe's Store was just across the street from the jail and it was from this position that Fewell was seen "stealing cautiously towards the front door of the jail." When the witnesses claimed to have thought this person to be the jailor's brother, it becomes more difficult to explain the contradiction between the posture and gait described as related to a regular visitor to the jail. So, why didn't any of these witnesses investigate prior to hearing the shots fired, particularly when considering that Clark was an extremely high profile prisoner? Fewell was well known to the court system at Brentsville for previous attacks on sundry persons, and Fewell had already made threats against Clark. Thornton and Lipscomb were the first to respond to the sound of the shots. Were these men included in the "persons sitting on Mr. Kincheloe's porch?" If not, from where did they come in response to the altercation?

Just imagine the murderer incarcerated in the very same jail cell in which said murder was committed! The facts in the case of supposed seduction remained elusive; yet young Fannie's brother took the law into his own hands and, finding Clark guilty, administered justice as he saw fit. As Clark's life force ebbed, the newspapers continued to report on the incredible circumstances. The very words describing the two incidents, first the abduction of Fannie and then the subsequent murder of Clark, are most almost humorous in comparison to modern reporting.

Alexandria Gazette 03 Sep 1872

The Clark-Fewell Tragedy — DEATH OF JAMES F. CLARK

Brentsville, Sept. 3, 1872 - Clark is dead! And whether the enormity of his guilt was as great as it is now generally beloved to have been, is only known to the unfortunate survivor of the elopement in which he was implicated, for, so far as is known, he never breathed a word about the part the young lady took in that affair, except to say that he had not taken her away, and had not seduced her. Soon after he was shot he was removed to the debtor's room on the second floor of the jail, the same in which he had been confined when first incarcerated. The iron bed-

Continued on page 8

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

stead and shuck mattress, upon which he had laid when in there before, were removed, and the room furnished with a wooden bed-stead and feather bed, upon which he was propped up, for his wounds would not allow him to lie down. Here he received the assiduous attention of his physicians, Drs. Leary and Barbour, and the constant and unremitting care of numerous residents of the village, who vied with each other in anticipating and supplying his every requirement. His brother-in-law, J. Milton Weedon, was with him on Saturday and Sunday, returned to him again on Monday, and his mother also reached here a few minutes before he died. Mr. Weedon and Dr. Leary came to Brentsville last Saturday morning to be present at Clark's examination, which had been set for that time, and both expected that blood would be shed that day, but not until after the trial. They reached here a half an hour after the shooting had occurred.

Clark commenced sinking Sunday morning and life gradually wasted away. When Dr. Bedford Brown, of Alexandria, who had been brought up here by the wounded man's father, arrived yesterday morning, a consultation was held by him and the two attending physicians, and when Dr. Brown, in response to a question by Clark, told him that his injuries were of a very serious character, he replied: "Yes, but I don't intend to give up until long after you do." Until yesterday the wound in his breast did not hurt him, but yesterday morning he commenced to complain of the wound. He also spit blood, and was attacked with spasmodic hiccup and intense vomiting, and for some time before he died made a constant noise like that of a groan and cough. About three p.m. his mind began to wander, and though rational, when roused up to 4 p.m., he became insensible after that hour, and grew rapidly weaker until 7 p.m., when he breathed his last.

Yesterday was court day, and an unusually large crowd was present, drawn by the interest in the Clark affair, and though a guard was around the jail, and had been since Saturday, no hindrance was offered the many whose curiosity or sympathy induced them to visit the dying man. Soon after he died a coroner's jury was summoned and an inquest held upon the body. Justice James R. Purcell, acting Coroner, and the jury, of which A. F. Woodyard was foreman, returned as their verdict that the deceased came to his death from the effects of a wound received from a pistol shot in the hands of L. M. Fewell, The shot that caused his death was the one in his breast. The ball entered about an inch and a quarter to the left of the left nipple and inclined nearly horizontally to the right,

passing directly over, if not wounding the heart, and as he did not die from hemorrhage, it is supposed that death ensued from a lesion of the great sympathetic nerve. A post mortem examination, conducted by Drs. Barbour and Leary, was held in the room in which he died, but up to half past three o'clock this evening they had been unable to find the ball and that hour they were about to relinquish the effort as hopeless.

Mr. J. J. Davies, a young lawyer of the village, left there this morning for Alexandria for a surgeon to assist in the endeavor to find the ball which caused death, but returned without one. Clark will be buried tomorrow at Chappawamsic. Fewell is confined in the same cell in which he shot Clark, and yesterday, seemed very anxious about Clark's fate, and when told that he must certainly die, asked if they would let the corpse stay up there all night. He will not be admitted to bail but will remain in jail until his trial.

Clark's death became merely the opening chapter in yet another story, the trial of Rhoda Fewell. Public opinion was certainly on Fewell's side, as most people believed Fewell was reacting to the horror of his sister's trauma. Fewell's desire to know the location of Clark's corpse is notable. Either he wished to be in close proximity to what he believed to be the meting out of justice or, alternatively, he feared the possible hovering spirit of the man whose life he had taken. Either way, Fewell remained incarcerated until his trial. Meanwhile, the crowds interested in Clark remained, even as he was laid to rest at his childhood home.

Alexandria Gazette 07 Sep 1872

THE CLARK AFFAIR - Correspondence of the *Fredericksburg Star*

Manassas, Va., Sept. 5, 1872. - The remains of James F. Clark were carried to Bellfair Mills, his childhood home, on yesterday, and interred. A large concourse of friends and acquaintances followed them to their last resting place. The parting with the corpse at the grave by the parents of the deceased, is described as being very affecting; causing nearly every one present to shed tears. The parents of the unfortunate man have the heartfelt sympathy of this community.

Doctors Leary and Barbour made a post mortem examination of Clark soon after he died, but were unable to discover the ball that caused his death.

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

They were unable to trace its course but a short distance, though they were satisfied from the course it took that it lodged somewhere in the bowels. From the quantity of blood taken from him during the examination it is thought that an internal hemorrhage commenced from the time he was shot and continued up to his death. Mortification took place the day he died.

Ex-Governor Henry A. Wise has been engaged by Clark's father to assist in the prosecution of Fewell. Fewell is still in jail. He is in good spirits and has no fear of conviction by a jury. It is thought a jury in this case cannot be gotten in this county, most every one having disqualified himself as a juror by expression of opinion.

The old man of carpet-bag notoriety, who assisted Miss Fewell in the elopement with Clark, was formerly a porter at Boyle's Hotel, Washington DC, but had been discharged a short time previous to the elopement, and was employed by Clark to come to Manassas. Since Clark was arrested, it is stated that this old man had left Washington for parts unknown, fearing his arrest would soon follow that of Clark.

I have understood that rumors are afloat charging Miss Fewell with impurity prior to her elopement with Clark, for which there is no foundation and they are not believed in this community.

The public sentiment in regard to the shooting of Clark while within the pale of the law, seems to be much divided; the people above the run justifying Fewell, and the people below the run entertaining very bitter feelings against him. [Editor's note – "above the run" and "below the run" refer to Cedar Run, a stream naturally dividing Prince William County and which was used to delineate two geographic areas for the purposes of population counts, taxation, etc.]

Miss Fewell continues weak and nervous. She has not been informed of the shooting as her attending physician thinks the revelation of such shocking news would probably result fatally.

The complicity of those of this place in this disgraceful affair will be punished at some future day, probably not far distant. Judge Nicol has not yet decided as to bail for Fewell.

The editor of the *Warren Sentinel*, the father of Clark, in yesterday's issue of his paper, concludes his account of the late distressing affair, as follows: "Never before have we so fully realized the full import of the words of King David when suffering under a similar affliction: 'my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for three, O Absalom, my son, my son?'"

We received the kind and heart-felt sympathies of a great many of our citizens of the county, and many who were at Court from other counties, on the sad and mournful occasion, and we must especially name one noble spirit like the rose in the wilderness, a green spot in the desert, Mr. James Davies, an Englishman by birth, who kindly tendered to us his purse and his services in any way we might command them. He cheerfully volunteered to go to Alexandria for the coffin, &c. though he was threatened with chills. Such a gentleman will live while he lives, and after death will speak. May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be with him. And we take pleasure, also in making honorable mention of Major Thornton in tendering to us any money we might need, and other acts of courtesy and kindness, which we shall cherish in grateful reimburse."

Clark's murder left his father suspicious of the Prince William County court system. The apparent lack of objectivity motivated him to hire very prominent attorneys to prosecute Rhoda Fewell. Ex-Governor Henry A. Wise was a charismatic speaker, well known and revered as the Commonwealth's Governor prior to the Civil War. Wise was intended to neutralize the prominent status of Rhoda Fewell's representation in the form of General Eppa Hunton and General William H. Payne, local Civil War heroes. Clark's other attorneys included Brentsville Judge Charles E. Sinclair and A. Y. Meniffee. While these men were considered capable, Rev. Clark felt the need to solicit the aid of Wise, his longtime friend.

Alexandria Gazette 21 Sep 1872

Judge C. E. Sinclair publishes a card in reply to an editorial in the *Warren Sentinel*, written by Rev. John Clark, father of J. F. Clark, in which he says: "No heart is penetrated with deeper grief than mine at the

The Infamous Fewell Trial -- Part III continued

unfortunate position in which two respectable families have been placed. I had no idea of any attack from Fewell upon Clark, nor did I deem it necessary to call at that time for a guard around the jail. Public opinion was not aroused against Clark, in my judgment, though greatly excited, as to endanger his safety or the fairness of his trial while in prison, and I deemed him secure in prison. I wrote a brief and hasty order of arrest, such as in my judgment would have protected the officer in the capture and arrest of Fewell. I know of no concert in this case whatever; I have taken a rule against the sheriff of this county, the design of which is to bring out all the facts of this case. That rule will be put on trial. Until then let public judgment wait. This is no time for crimination or recrimination. With a saddened heart I write these lines, but I intend to do my duty fearless of the consequences."

Rhoda Fewell in jail for killing Clark, has been quite sick for the last few days. He is suffering with the chills and fevers, and is looking badly.

Sinclair's denial of concern for Clark's safety is almost laughable in light of the comments made by the family and the numerous newspaper reports intimating threats to Clark's person. It hardly seems fair to implicate the Sheriff in the case. It further verges on humor that a report of Fewell's health and his "looking badly" appeared. Were the Fewell's behind a semi-secret effort to garner sympathy for Rhoda?

Alexandria Gazette 30 Sep 1872

Letter from Prince William - Brentsville, Sept. 28 - The newspapers of the State and country have kept alive the recollections of the people in regard to the fatal Clark affair, and communications have emanated from different sources purporting to give expression to the public sentiment. There have been criminations and recriminations, and it had, indeed, been better for the country if but little had been published in connection with this most unfortunate tragedy. It would have been still better if neither of the parties had ever met.

The County and Circuit Courts of this county meet, the one on the 1st Monday and the other on the following Monday in October. There are two cases where it is presumed the grand jury will return true bills of murder, one against Elijah Cole for killing John O'Brien, which will come up for trial in the

County Court, and the other against L. N. Fewell for shooting J. F. Clark. Whether Fewell will elect to be tried in Circuit Court is not yet known; in deed, the case may not come up for trial at either of the approaching Courts. The array of legal learning and ability on both sides, together with the unusual character of the case, is well calculated to make it one of the most important events in the history of this country.

Alexandria Gazette 01 Oct 1872

Prince William County Items - The Manassas correspondent of the *Fredericksburg Star* writes: Judge Thomas, of Fairfax, and General William H. Payne were in our village today looking up evidence in the Clark-Fewell case. The trial will, as I am told, come off at the next (October) term of our County Court. Fewell has had a slight attack of the fever and ague. He seems lively and does not fear the result of his trial. Miss Fewell is somewhat better, though is still in a nervous condition. She has not been informed of the shooting of Clark. I have no doubt there will be some startling revelations at the trial of Fewell.

Startling revelations indeed! The cast of attorneys hired for the Clark-Fewell trial was enough to make news without the murder itself. Representing Clark was Ex-Governor Henry A. Wise, Judge Charles E. Sinclair and A. Y. Menefee. Representing Fewell was General Eppa Hunton, General William H. Payne and Henry W. Thomas. Aside from the depth of legal talent engaged for the case, the other drama remaining to be played out was the informing of Fannie Fewell of Clark's death at the hands of her own brother. The December issue of the *Bell Ringer* is sure to be an exciting one!

~UPDATES~

Join the Friends of Brentsville
Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc. for a
Holiday Open House
Saturday, December 10
from noon to 3pm
at the Brentsville Courthouse
12239 Bristow Road



Bring a dish to share and also
canned goods and non-perishables
for The Friend's annual donation to SERVE.

Election of Officers and Board of Directors
at 11:45am
in the One Room School House
Immediately preceding the holiday celebration.

The goal of the Education and Research Committee of the Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc. is the preservation and accurate sharing of the history of the Town of Brentsville. The Committee is comprised of volunteers who work together to create this newsletter, *The Bell Ringer*, and provide interpretation to visitors to the site. Anyone who is a member of the Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc., is invited to join us in our efforts. Current committee members include: Becky Cumins, Dot Lane, Betty Machen, Keith Machen, Robin Meyering, Pam Sackett, Ron Turner, Jim Wyatt and Laura Wyatt.

