

# The Bell Ringer

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

Volume 2, Issue 3

[www.brentsville.org](http://www.brentsville.org)

March 2006

## Getting Down to Business in Brentsville

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“The verdict was greeted with vociferous and long continued applause by the large number of spectators, who had assembled in the court room to await the closing scenes of this famous trial. After his acquittal the accused came out of the prisoner’s box and received the congratulations of many friends, who immediately hastened towards him. These formed an escort of honor and conducted him to Reid’s Hotel, where he supped, and was afterwards driven to Manassas.”  
(*Alexandria Gazette* 15 Nov 1872)

The infamous Rhoda Fewell trial for the murder of James F. Clark was featured in the past several issues of the *Bell Ringer*. When you read the above description of the trial’s conclusion, did you wonder about Reid’s Hotel? Was this the tavern on “Tavern Square” or another establishment nearby? It appears, based on a document from the Clerk of the Court’s Loose Papers (1870) that Reid’s was across the street from the court house. This document dealt with a fence and stated, “...Public Square fence to be the same height and like the fence between Joseph Reid’s bar room and Kincheloe’s Store...” Since Kincheloe’s was across the street from the court house, so too must have been Reid’s.

Confirming this location is additional information supplied by the *Alexandria Gazette* as related to the trial and Fewell’s actual shooting of James F. Clark. It read, “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 grated door at Clark...” (*Alexandria Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1872)

The examination of records related to businesses can provide a great deal of information about life in the past. References to businesses in and around the Town of Brentsville are numerous. Many sources are available to the researcher to provide clues. Some of these sources are obvious, while others are somewhat obscure. The objective of this article is to help a researcher to learn how to research the history and records of a business using many different sources. For the purposes of this article, data that can be gleaned

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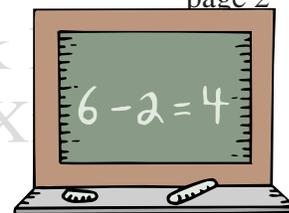
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# Take Note!



The March *Bell Ringer* includes some excellent information on “doing history.” The “Getting Down to Business in Brentsville” article includes many tips and strategies on how to do research. Such research is essential for the Town of Brentsville, as the events and people that created the town are long gone. It is only through the documents that we can accurately interpret the past and place the town in local, state and national contexts. The importance of scholarly research is reinforced in “The Garden Wall” article on page 3. Related to the topic of research is the importance of respecting copyright. See an article on this important subject on page 12.

As we gear up for the Chili Cook-off on May 6, we are working to provide the latest and most accurate research to include on tours of the public lot and tavern square. Many recent, groundbreaking finds in the court records are forcing researchers and historians to take a new look at Brentsville’s past and revise the previous “stories” that have traditionally been told. If you are interested in joining our dynamic research team, contact us through the web site. And, of course, if you are able to come out and help at the event, please let us know.

The Chili Cook-off is an important fund raiser for the Friends. It has enabled the group to make much needed contributions to the restoration of the public buildings. Please consider entering a pot of your own special chili or even just stopping by the site to enjoy a bowl on May 6.

## *The Education and Research Committee*

### **Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc.**

A nonprofit, 501(c)3 volunteer organization  
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## The Garden Wall

### *Primary Sources as a Critical Element in the Interpretation of the Town of Brentsville*

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My Dad was born in London, England a few years before the outbreak of World War II. In those days and in that place, a “nurse” or nanny was generally engaged to look after children. My father’s memories of that time in his life include days spent with the nurse and his brother and sister, playing outside in the garden located behind their house. His recollections of these happy times often focused on the garden walls. They were very high, in fact too tall to scale in spite of repeated attempts. During ball games, the ball never went out of the garden because of the towering walls.

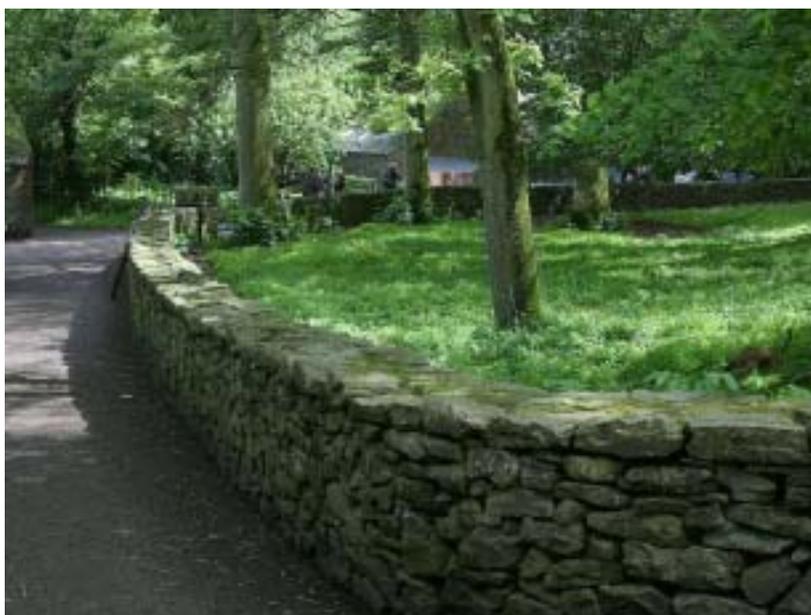
With the eruption of World War II, my father’s family immigrated to the United States. The remainder of his childhood was spent in New York City. He then went on to college, was drafted for the Korean War, attended graduate school, and went to work in the City. Later, he attended medical school. It was as a resident at a hospital in Cleveland that he met my mother. He often reminisced of his days as a child in London. And, of course, he told her the stories of games in the garden, surrounded by those towering walls. In 1966, the newly-married couple traveled back to England. While there, they visited the house in which my father’s family lived, the house with the garden enclosed by very tall walls. Much to my father’s chagrin and of great humor to my mother, the walls were only about 3 feet high. My knowledge of the walls, my father’s recollection of them, and their actual height became family lore, a story told over and over through the years.

The recent loss of my father has moved me to spend a great deal of time reflecting on the past. I sorely

miss Dad, and it has been my goal to firmly cement in my mind those memories which are happy rather than those sad ones of his final moments. When I consider my father’s garden walls, it certainly brings a smile to my face and the thought that, while not terribly accurate, it is a story I will never forget because it is important for historians to validate the importance of memories. It is, however, of critical significance to accurately research and interpret documentary evidence of the past.

Population studies indicate that people live much longer today. We have the opportunity to enjoy a great many of their memories of the twentieth century, those modern recollections that support the continued survival of places and the storytelling used as a means of acculturation. Such glowing and praiseworthy stories are often deliberately sprinkled with tales of “bad boys and girls,” to add lessons in morality and provide instruction in proper behavior. Oral history is important as it can provide clues to initiate the study of documentary evidence. This can be true when considering the Town of Brentsville in Prince William County.

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## The Garden Wall continued from page 3

Brentsville was created by “*An act changing the place of holding courts for the county of Prince William ...for the purpose of erecting thereon a court-house, jail and clerk’s office...*” (Act of the general Assembly, Chapter LXXXVII, January 20, 1820). Brentsville became Prince William County’s political, economic, and social center in the nineteenth century. It is the historian’s job to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations, all the while considering multiple perspectives. It is only through documentary evidence that historians can accurately interpret the past events and activities that took place in the town at the height of its significance on not only a local, but also a national scale. The Research and Education Committee of the Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc. views such scholarly study as a critical need at this point in the site’s development.

Recent research has revealed a startling lack of information and knowledge of Brentsville’s founding families, those that had a profound impact on events in the town and Prince William County’s place in the national picture. Some of these families included Purcell, Williams, Reid, Hooe, Sinclair, Fewell, Ward, Harrison, Evans, and Foster. Very few relatives may even remain in the area today, and no published sources exist. Since the era of Brentsville’s greatest historical significance is long past, oral history provides scant clues. Thus, we must make a clear distinction between primary sources and oral history when providing historical interpretation for the town.

Primary sources are written at the time an event occurs, an original, fundamental and authoritative document pertaining to an event or subject of inquiry, a firsthand or eyewitness account of an event. These may include legislation, deed records, tax records, court records, letters, diaries, and maps. Primary sources are not entirely without bias but certainly

reflect existing sentiments for the time they were written, if for no one other than their authors. Alternatively, oral history represents the memories of living individuals which are derived from interviews. These may include the person’s memories and also stories that have been handed down over time. Like my father’s story of the garden walls, they are subject to revision over time. This is not to say that oral history is unimportant. In fact, data collected in an interview might even provide clues from which a historian can plan a research strategy.

So, there is quite a difference between oral history and primary sources. It is this distinction that is extremely important to bear in mind when examining a town like Brentsville. Without a clear understanding of the people and events of the nineteenth century, there is no basis for the more modern, oral history that is recorded today. Without knowledge of the town’s creation, life in its early days, and the subsequent removal of the county seat to Manassas, the twentieth century history has no foundation or framework. Since oral history participants for the nineteenth century are not available, we can rely only on the documents. Again, identifying multiple perspectives is a concern for historians, but documents rarely erect garden walls, around which their stories are spun.



*An excellent example of a highly instructive primary source is this surveyor’s sketch for the Warrenton to Occoquan Turnpike map produced by Peter Scales in 1834 as part of a Board of Public Works project (Library of Virginia).*

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from such sources will focus on the Town of Brentsville.

A first step is to interview some longtime residents of the area who might remember a business. There is a good possibility that even if they can't personally recall the business, they may have information that was passed down from others. Pertinent information such as names, possible dates of operation, location, and type of business should be noted.

Local library research should be the second step. The excellent librarians at RELIC in the Bull Run Regional Library, Tish Como, Beverly Vaness and Don Wilson, may be able to provide records that will expand the search and verify information from the interview. They also may provide advice on strategies to proceed that may not have been considered. These librarians may even know of other researchers exploring the same topic or who could contribute additional knowledge.

Primary source documents should be the principle focus of one's research. A primary source is any document written during the time under study. It is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of bias and inaccuracy present in the source and also be aware of diverse perceptions of the author. Additionally, it is critical to record a complete citation for each source. For more information on proper citations, see the accompanying article, *Academic Research and Copyright* in this issue of the *Bell Ringer* on page 12.

Below are some examples of primary sources available for use in historical analysis and interpretation. Wills and deeds have been omitted as there are simply too many examples for these common sources. Rather, some of the more unusual sources have been featured. When using sources such as those described, the best, most accurate historic interpretation is achieved

when making use of a variety of documents to verify facts and create a well documented study.

### Original business licenses

The Virginia State Library has the original business licenses starting with 1806 and continuing to 1928. These were supplied by the Commissioners of Revenue for each county. Local, Virginia court houses may have these records but not necessarily for all years. One example includes a document at the Library of Virginia recording a license issued to Joseph B. Reid in the Town of Brentsville in 1892 for the "Summit House." (Turner, Ronald Ray, *Prince William County, Virginia 1805 – 1955 Businesses*, Manassas, VA, 1999, p. 193). Business license records help to bracket the years during which a business was in operation. However, a license was not required by law for all businesses. Businesses that did require a license may be found using the Code of Virginia, as it changed over time. Some examples of businesses requiring a license included ordinary, bar room, physician, merchant, retail liquor, store, and bowling saloon while some that did not include shoemakers, mills, and blacksmiths.

### Virginia Business Directories

Directories for the years 1851, 1877-1878, 1880-1881, 1893-1894, 1898, 1906, and 1917 may also be viewed at the Virginia State Library. These directories are generally arranged by county and then by location within the county such as Brentsville, Bristow, &c. These are rarely referenced, but provide valuable information including the business operator, nature of the business and years of operation. One example is that of Joseph B. Reid, who in the 1877-78, 1880-81, 1884-85 business directories is listed as operating a hotel and saloon in Brentsville. In the 1897/98 directory he is listed as selling lumber and shingles in Brentsville. (Turner, Ronald Ray, *Prince William County, Virginia 1805 – 1955 Businesses*, Manassas, VA, 1999, p. 193). Today,

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libraries may also have town directories comprised of residents, their occupations and other related data.

### The Record of Partnerships and Certificates of Ownership

The Record of Partnerships, archived at the Prince William County Courthouse, contains information about business partnerships for 1922 to present. These include documentation of ownership, location, and details of the specific venture. One example is that of the Nokesville Coal and Lumber Company (Book 1, p. 135). Certificates of ownership may also be found in some county archives, including Prince William's.

### Charter Books

The Charter Books are also at the Prince William County Circuit Court Archives. Businesses such as the Brentsville, Bristow and Manassas Telephone Company are included. The entry for this business states that the Brentsville, Bristow and Manassas Telephone Company – Brentsville, Va. included telephone lines between Brentsville and Manassas via Bristow. The office was at Brentsville and the president was Charles E. Nicol of Brentsville. The treasurer was John A. Brawner of Bristow, the secretary was J.B.T. Thornton of Brentsville, and the superintendent was G.F. Akers of Brentsville. The entry is dated March 26, 1885 and appears on page 12.

### Obituaries

Newspapers regularly published death notices that often included the deceased's occupation or business. One good example of such an obituary is that of J. T. J. Davis dated April 10, 1914 in the *Manassas Journal*. It stated that "he was engaged in the mercantile business at Brentsville and Bristow" and that interment will be made in the Davis-Purcell Cemetery at Brentsville.

### Census Records

Census records may be a useful source of information as they often give the occupation of household members such as retail merchant, store clerk, store manager, hotel, etc. RELIC is one repository for many of the census records for Prince William County, including some published in an annotated version.

### Newspapers

In the nineteenth century, newspapers were the only media available for widespread distribution of information. Newspapers such as the *Alexandria Gazette* published news related to the entire region, not just the town in which it was published. A Warrenton newspaper, *The Palladian of Liberty* published an advertisement seeking builders for the public buildings in Prince William's newly established county seat. Dated June 23, 1820 and July 21, 1820, the ads read, "...Commissioners will attend at the tavern of John Maddox." By January 30, 1826, the *Alexandria Gazette* published an advertisement for "...the tavern of William Clayton (an alternative or erroneous spelling for Claytor) in the Town of Brentsville." The tavern remained on the market as of November 22, 1828 when the "Brentsville Hotel" was offered for sale by Thomas R. Hampton. This establishment was mentioned under yet another proprietorship in December 1, 1834, as occupied by Peyton Norville (LR, p. 75). Norville's son-in-law, Benoni E. Harrison later advertised "my public house and lot in Brentsville..." in the September 17, 1849 issue of the *Alexandria Gazette*.

Newspaper searches are also valuable tools for tracing not only the business but observing local economic trends for a given time. The *Alexandria Gazette* for January 4, 1873 (and taken from the *Manassas Gazette*), included, "Mr. Goodwin has moved into the 'White House' Hotel, and we learn he will open it some time during the coming spring. We learn that another hotel is to be opened in Brentsville. If it is to be

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the equal of that of Mr. J.B. Reid's, Brentsville will be able to boast two excellent hotels. We learn that one or two of our citizens contemplate making a business of butchering hereafter." The Reconstruction era appears to have been well under way when the *Alexandria Gazette* published this statement on May 1, 1875, "Bristow Station is growing in business activity and attractiveness. Several families from the north and west are settling in that immediate vicinity." Of course, Bristow Station, a mere two miles from Brentsville, had the benefit of the railroad depot.

Dr. William B. Leary, a physician in Brentsville, advertised his "Washington Hotel" in Brentsville, fancying it as a summer resort in the local newspapers (*Manassas Weekly Gazette*, January 5, 1869). In 1897, advertised was the "Prince William Normal School – Brentsville, VA – For Ladies & Gentlemen – Strong faculty. Full course of instruction. Preparedness for teaching, Practical life or for a broad and liberal education. Lively & thorough. Educative homelike. Best methods. Careful discussion. Beautiful & healthful. Well equipped buildings. Good Society. Terms low. Opens Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>. Runs 9 mo. Send for a catalog. Correspondence solicited. INH Beahm" (Turner, Ronald Ray, *Newspaper Transcripts 1876 – 1899*, Manassas, VA, 2001)

Brentsville had its own newspaper. A summons filed at the Circuit Court Archives, in Judgments for 1871 stated, "The Commonwealth of Virginia To the Sheriff of Prince William County – Greetings - We command you to summon Daniel Whiting to appear before the Judge of our County Court of Prince William County, at the Court House of said County, on the first day of February Court being the 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 1871, to answer the complaint of George M. Goodwin that the said Daniel W. Whiting is in possession of, and unlawfully withholds from the said plaintiff, a certain tenement in the town of Brentsville in the said county, consisting of a three

acre lot designated as the Tavern Lot and running parallel with the Public Square north to south which said tenement the said Daniel W. Whiting has been using and still uses as a dwelling and printing office. And have then and there this writ: Witness, Lucien A. Davis clerk of the County Court, at the Court House aforesaid, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 1871 and in the 95<sup>th</sup> year of the Commonwealth. L. A. Davis"

### School Year Books

Advertisements in school year books may also prove to be helpful. RELIC is a repository for many Prince William County school year books.

### Fee Books

The Fee Books are a bit obscure for most researchers, but can readily be used to supply clues about business licenses, deaths, law suits, and even land transactions. With a bit of decoding, ordinary licenses can be verified. One example is that of William Claytor, builder and initial proprietor of the ordinary on "Tavern Square." The Fee Book dated 1823 – 1824 noted his \$1.26 payment for an ordinary license in April of 1823. The Fee Book for 1870 - 1873 indicates that Joseph B. Reid, proprietor of a large hotel across the street from the court house, paid for ordinary licenses each year from 1870 through 1872 (pp. 50, 177, 269). Another example of data garnered from the Fee Books comes from the recording of fees owed for judgments and rulings in law suits. The Fee Book for 1828 included fees owed by Thomas R. Hampton, second proprietor of the ordinary on "Tavern Square," for an execution in the suit Wm. B. Crosen v. T.R. Hampton & Co. in March and June. Various records indicate Hampton was in business alone and with his father, James, throughout the 1820s.

### Civil and Criminal Court Records

The Clerk's Loose Papers archived for Prince William County are numerous, but hardly complete.

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They are comprised of an endless number of slips and bits of paper, some of which were “recycled” when paper was scarce. This re-use of paper as well as the great loss of records during the Civil War leave this collection largely incomplete. However, the bits and pieces remaining can be quite instructive. Judgments are a gold mine for researchers studying businesses because they detail the court cases of businesses taking individuals or other businesses to court seeking judgments for non-payment or non-delivery of items promised. In many cases, when times were economically challenging, the business itself was sued by various wholesale suppliers of goods.

One example of a criminal record shedding light on the presence of a business is that of “5 September 1895 - Commonwealth vs George Posey - George Posey who stands convicted for a felony was led to the bar in custody of the Sheriff, and the prisoner by counsel made a further motion to set aside the verdict and grant a new trial because of the misconduct of one of the jurors and in support of said motion introduced the affidavit of E. W. Cornwell as follows. ‘I heard Robert A. Keys, one of the jurors in case of Commonwealth vs George Posey, offer to bet that both of the Posey’s would go to the Penitentiary - this was before the trial, Viz: last night in the store of W. W. Kincheloe and in the presence of W. W. Kincheloe and W. W. Buckley,’ and W. W. Kincheloe testified that there was a party of Gentlemen in his store the day before George Posey was tried and the question was asked as to the verdict in the Fred Posey case, the reply was that the jury had not agreed as to his term of imprisonment. Robert A. Keys, one of the jurors remarked that he would bet a dollar that George Posey would go to the penitentiary for five years, no person took the bet. My clerk Mr. Buckley said to Keys that he was a juror and ought not to talk that way and he would report him. Mr. Keys was then under the influence of liquor to some extent. Robert A. Keys the juror, testified that he does not remember that he

offered to bet on the result of the verdict in the George Posey case, or saying anything about the case in Mr. Kincheloe’s Store, that he had made up no opinion as to the guilt or innocence of George Posey, knew nothing about the case & had no prejudice whatever for or against the prisoner he was in favor of the lowest term, when in the jury room and those for a longer term came down to the term he favored. The attorney for the prisoner asked to protest against the jurors speaking about anything that took place in the jury room. The officiate states that he has known George Posey since he was a boy. That during the war, John Posey, the father of George Posey and Manassa Russell, had two horses taken from them and that they followed on after the Confederate Army to Gordonsville to arrest my brother and myself whom they charged with taking the horses. His brother took Posey’s horse and he took Russell’s horse, they took the horses to ride them, and were not arrested. Russell and Posey received the value of the horses from the Confederate Government. And the Court after considering the said motions doth order that the said verdict be set aside and a new trial granted because of the conduct of the juror Robert A. Keys.”

In addition to this document, one from December 1836 included the suit Commonwealth vs. Abraham, a slave. According to the court records and depositions, a young woman visiting Brentsville “... went down the main street by Mr. Waggener’s Tavern...” Just beyond this, at the outskirts of the town, she was allegedly attacked by the slave who was later arrested at “The House of Robert Williams near Brentsville.” Recall, that a “House” refers to an ordinary or tavern. It is interesting to note that no record for a Mr. Waggener for a tavern was located. However, a Margaret Waggener was listed in the Land Tax Book for 1837, having been assessed for two lots in Brentsville, including part of Lot 12, at a value of \$500 for buildings or improvements and \$100 for land. This same lot was also held, in part, by various other known tavern

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keepers through the 1820s and 1830s including the Williams family, James Fewell and Wiggenton & Millan.

Grand Jury Presentments are yet another source of information on businesses. They can also be quite humorous, somewhat akin to modern-day, supermarket tabloids in their details of crimes and the accusers of the alleged illegal actions. These cases, once presented to the Grand Jury, were ruled to be a “True bill,” or “Not a true bill,” indicating whether or not enough evidence was available to proceed to trial. The May 19, 1840 Grand Jury Presentments included one for “...for playing an unlawful game with cards in the Town of Brentsville at the ordinary then kept by Thomas J. Shaw...” and another, similar presentment for unlawful gaming at the “...ordinary if James Fewell and son in the Town of Brentsville.” Grand Jury Presentments on March 2, 1843 included “...William Dickinson for keeping a house of entertainment in the Town of Brentsville without a license within twelve months past... We also present John Williams and Philip D. Lipscomb for breech of the peace by engaging in an affray at the tavern of William Payne in the Town of Brentsville on the day of February 7 last past.” Dickinson was earlier presented on August 2, 1841 for the same charge, while on November 3, 1845, Grand Jury Presentments were made for several citizens unlawfully “gaming at a game called sweatcloth and cards at the Kitchen on James A. Evans’ lot in the Town of Brentsville, The same being a place of public report...” Later, on November 6, 1849, “On the motion of Henry A. Barron, the court certifies that his store in Brentsville in this county is a place fit and convenient to the neighborhood for the retail sale of ardent spirits.”

Clerk’s papers often contained details for the taking of depositions. For instance, on September 26, 1834, depositions were to be taken “...at the tavern of Robert Williams,” and on October 18, 1836 “at the tavern of Wesley D. Wheeler in the Town of Brentsville, Prince William County.” A record

extant for a Chancery Suit, *Hooe v. Evans & Barton*, dated May 2, 1842 stated that depositions would be taken at the “...Tavern now occupied by ~~Thomas Shaw~~ Mary Ann Shaw in the Town of Brentsville.” Another locates the taking of depositions at the Tavern of Farrow & Payne in the Town of Brentsville in 1843.

The September 1870 List of Delinquent Taxes for Prince William County was published in the *Prince William Advocate*, a commercial newspaper printed in Brentsville by Daniel W. Whiting.

Various law suits for non-payment of goods or services are also seen. In *Wilkins v. Osmun* (August 6, 1860) an L.C. Osmun & Co. of Bristoe Station is mentioned. Another loose paper records transaction for a guardian account - that John W. Wilcoxon, in Account with Richard M. Weir his Guardian, 10 July 1869 – To cash paid C.C. Latimer for making clothes, \$4.50.

Notices of sales can also contain mentions of businesses. On April 20, 1854 there was a notice for sale of Charles Hunton’s Bristoe Farm of 800 acres which was to be sold in four parcels including “...the Depot on this farm, Store House, Tavern and outhouses...”

The acquisition of business licenses may be recorded in some cases. One example includes, “1 May 1866 - Prince William County, to wit: I hereby certify that the tax imposed by law upon Charles Wright is thirty-eight dollars, and when he shall have paid the same to the Sheriff for said County, will be entitled to the privilege of keeping a hotel at his house at Brentsville in this county from the 11<sup>th</sup> day of May 1866 until the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1867, according to the Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia in such cases made and provided. Given under my hand this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May 1866. W. Charles Merchant Comm. of Revenue” A tax was imposed on W.W. Kincheloe on June 7, 1869 so that he was “...entitled to the privilege of selling by retail from 7<sup>th</sup> day of June

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1869 until 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1870.” Kincheloe’s store, just across the street from the jail, provided the lock-up with supplies such as blankets and a stove pipe, as seen in papers dated March 8, 1870 and January 25, 1871. Another paper, dated May 4, 1896, included a “Brentsville Petition & Liquor Application to the State of VA,” for applicant R.H. Keys for the Keys Building at Brentsville.

### Chancery Records

Chancery Suit files often make mention of businesses to which money is owed. One example is the case of Philips vs. Williams. In the final months of her life, Jane Williams purchased sundry goods from several creditors including Philips, Camper, and Gray. She died intestate, and her estate was then sued by these establishments. What is most interesting about the information contained in these records is the items purchased and at what cost. Most of the accounts record purchases from 1860 – 1861. Some of the purchases included 3 lbs sugar (.30), soda crackers (.10), cheese (.30), dozen eggs (.20), candles (.20) ½ gallon molasses (.23), 12 yards blue cotton (1.68), vinegar (.20), 1 bottle of Cannon’s Bitters (.38) soap (.15) and a ½ pound of tobacco (.37). These prices are amazing when compared with those of today. In addition to Chancery Loose Papers, some Chancery order books for the county are extant. In the suit Thomas M. Farrow vs. William S. Fewell & others, dated October 19, 1842 and recorded on page 168 of the Chancery Order book for 1837 – 1852 stated, “...the court doth further adjudge, order and decree that the report of Commissioner Reid be recommitted with instructions that they state, settle and adjust the partnership accounts between said Farrow and Fewell so as to show the present condition of said accounts and report the same to this court...” Another mention of a business appears on page 185 of this same book. It was for a restraining order for John Williams and Ferdinand A. Weedon, “...late joint merchants and partners trading under the firm

Weedon & Williams and Berkley Ward from selling the goods and wares...”

### Maps

A variety of maps are available to the researcher including the Plat Books, Map Books, Land Causes, and sundry plats appended to the deed books. Long before the Town of Brentsville was established, a 30,000 acre tract of land was granted in 1687 to Giles Brent, Richard Foote, Robert Bristow and Nicholas Hayward by James II. Robert Bristow’s 7500 acres surrounded what later became the Town of Brentsville. Very few documents are extant that verify tenants’ leases for specific lots. Particularly instructive is a map created by A.P. Williams in 1823 (PWC Map Book 1, p. 2, A.P. Williams 1823). Deed Book 19 contains descriptions of Bristow lots appearing on this map. It mentions a Dunnington’s shop on a road with a stone bridge that also led to Lot 7. The description for Lot 4 also mentions “Dunnington’s B.S. Shop.” (PWC Deed Book 19.p. 399). Additionally, Strother Renoe leased Lot 1 in 1823. Renoe’s blacksmith shop is mentioned in the Deed Book 19 description of Lot 1. (PWC Deed Book 19, p. 398)

Another pre-Brentsville business is the tavern of John Maddox, who leased many Bristow lots. It was at Maddox’s tavern that the committee met to create the town. An Act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia passed on January 25, 1820 stated, “1. *Be it therefore enacted*, That Robert T. Thompson, Thomas Moss and James Triplett, of the County of Fairfax, John P. Smith and Thomas Hunter, of the county of Fauquier, and Benjamin Ficklin, Alexander F. Rose and William Moncure of the county of Stafford, shall be, and they are hereby appointed commissioners, who, or a majority of them, are hereby authorized and required to meet at the house of John Mattox, in the said county of Prince William, in the fifth day of May next... to fix

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[www.brentsville.org](http://www.brentsville.org)

## Getting Down to Business in Brentsville continued from page 10

on and ascertain the most central position in the said county... to lay off, and assess the value of six acres of land ... for the purpose of erecting there-on a court-house, jail and clerk's office... (Acts of the General Assembly, 1820, Ch. 87, p. 76). Mattox's "house" meant tavern.

A map of the "Plan of the Prison Bounds," dated March 11, 1825 appears on page 25 of Deed Book 10. "Hampton's" is labeled on the plat, indicating Thomas R. Hampton was proprietor of the tavern on "Tavern Square" by this date.

One more important map is a survey for a route between Warrenton and Occoquan. This "engineer's survey summary," drawn by Peter Scales, was ordered to be created in 1834 as part of a Board of Public Works project that included sections of road that passed right through the Town of Brentsville. While the map is difficult to read, the courthouse, jail and Clerk's office are easily identifiable, as is the L-shaped tavern on the adjacent lot. This map confirms the location of many other Brentsville buildings that previously had been theorized only based on documents uncovered at the archives. In fact, it includes at least 23 buildings along Main Street alone for the year 1834.

### Land Tax Books

The Land Tax Books for Prince William County record assessments for town lots in Brentsville beginning in 1824. The listings consist of the lot's owner (not always by the specific lot number), the value of any buildings or improvements, the combined value of land and any improvements, and sometimes, a note as related to the purchase or condition of the lot. Some examples include:

"1830 – Dawe, Philip D. – No. 11, 12 – 2 lots - \$2800/\$3000 – Tavern lot included, purchase of Millan & Wiggenton."

"1831 – Hampton, Thomas R. of Claytor – 1 lot - \$5000/\$6000 – Tavern lot containing 3 acres."

### Personal Property Tax Books

Prince William's residents were taxed on personal property including slaves, livestock, wheeled conveyances and stud services. Bristow tenant Strother Reno, whose blacksmith shop is mentioned above, also provided stud services in 1811 at \$4 per cover. In addition to this tax data, many years include lists of retail licenses granted.

### Induction Records

Induction records for conflicts such as the Civil War and World War I may also lend clues to businesses. One example, taken from the records at the Circuit Court Archives includes the World War I Draft Registration data for "Davis, Eugene - born 2 May 1891 Brentsville VA, residence Manassas, employed as a clerk in the clothing store of Hibbs and Giddings at Manassas, dependents listed as mother and sister, Caucasian, single, tall, slim build, brown eyes & hair, registered by W. F. Merchant 5 Jun 1917."

### The Minute Books and Loose Papers of the Board of Supervisor

The Minute Books of the Board of Supervisor and the Supervisors Loose Papers consist of accounts billed and accounts paid for general stores doing business with the overseers of the poor and also physicians providing medical care for the indigent. The records also contain the county road accounts which conducted business with a variety of enterprises such as garages and other like companies. Additionally, when the tavern lot was to be sold, an advertisement for its sale was to be made. According to the Supervisor's Minute Book entry for May 17, 1860 an advertisement had to be placed thirty days prior to the sale in the *Prince William Democrat*, a newspaper published by businessman Daniel W. Whiting in Brentsville.

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## Academic Research & Copyright

Jordan Landes, Assistant Librarian – Laban Library & Archive  
(Printed with Permission, 2006)

Have you noticed the warning that runs before your DVDs and videos? Have you ever read the notice posted over the photocopier at your public library? These are reminders that you are obligated to respect the copyright of the creators of the work you are using.

Copyright protects the products of creators through various laws. This protection refers to the rights of the creator, and a consumer or user of the product has permission for limited use of the products, not any right over the product. For example, the author of a book owns the copyright to the writing, while the reader has permission to read the book, photocopy a very limited amount of the book under the fair use doctrine, and accurately cite and acknowledge the author when using information obtained from the book.

As a creator of work, you become the copyright owner. You have the right to object to derivative use of your work, to be acknowledged by users,

and to prevent illegal copying of your work.

When a user does not acknowledge you, then you have the right to bring infringement action against that person. Therefore, as a user, keep in mind that infringement action may be brought against you for any unauthorized or unacknowledged use of copyright work not your own.

As a user of copyright works, to protect yourself from infringement actions, always acknowledge your sources. This means using a recognized bibliographic citation system, such as Chicago or APA, both recommended for use in the social sciences. All sources, including oral histories, emails, interviews, unpublished papers, are indeed covered by copyright laws. This protects you as a creator, but also governs your use as a researcher.

For further guidance, the Copyright Office has a very useful web page:  
<http://www.copyright.gov/>

## Getting Down to Business in Brentsville continued from page 11

The possibilities for tying together a combination of these types of sources is mind boggling. It can be time consuming and require a great deal of analysis, but it is only in this way that we can weave a clear picture of the past.

Due to technical limitations, the images that go with this story have been provided in a separate version, along with the text. See the link for the article and alternative format which includes the INCREDIBLE primary source illustrations by going to the link on the Publications web page at [www.brentsville.org](http://www.brentsville.org).

*Special thanks are extended to Van E. Turner of Manassas for contributions and technical support.*

## ~UPDATES~

### Friends of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Inc. Calendar 2006

#### General Membership Meetings

Saturday, April 1 at 10:00am  
 Saturday, July 15 at 5pm – Picnic potluck  
 Thursday, Sept. 28 at 7:30pm  
 Saturday, November 4 at 10am –  
**Annual Meeting**

#### Board Meetings

Thursday, June 15 at 7:30  
 Thursday, August 17 at 7:30  
 Thursday, September 14 at 7:30

#### Upcoming Events

Saturday, May 6 – **Chili Cook-Off**  
 from 11:00– 3pm  
 Saturday, September 9 - **One Room  
 School Reunion**  
 Saturday, October 14 – **Court Day &  
 FBCHC, Inc. 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
 Celebration**  
 Saturday, December 9 at 12pm – 3pm  
**Holiday Open House**

**For more information on meetings,  
 events and volunteering visit our web  
 site at [www.brentsville.org](http://www.brentsville.org)**

#### IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS:

Due to technical limitations, the images that go with our feature article “Getting Down to Business in Brentsville” have been provided in a separate version, along with the text. See the link for the article and alternative format which includes the INCREDIBLE primary source illustrations by going to the Friends’ Publications web page at [www.brentsville.org](http://www.brentsville.org).

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.

