

# Preservation Day—a step in reclaiming county's historic past at Brentsville

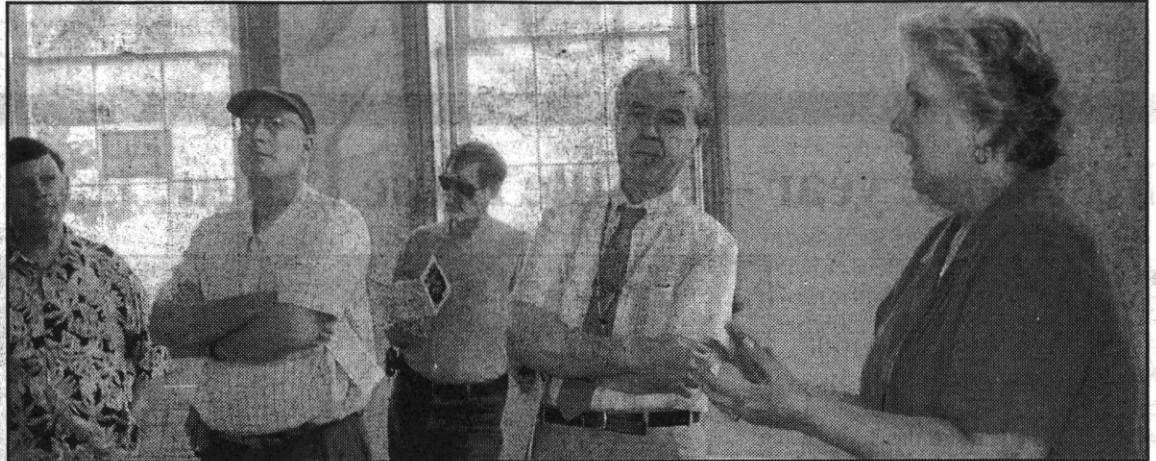
By JENN BASHAM  
Observer staff

Standing outside the historic Brentsville Courthouse on June 12, we found it difficult to picture confederate soldiers setting up camp and children walking to school barefoot. Instead, planes flew overhead; SUV's sped by on the busy VA 619; and two police units sat at the end of a street nearby. Inside the courthouse, however, one began to feel transported by looking into the jury rooms and imagining the deliberation for one

tor at Hylton High School in Woodbridge, planned the day so that the community could experience the research her classes have been doing in the area.

"The whole point is making them see that this is their history here at home, and we have to take care of it," Meyering said. "This is about preserving what's here in our community and taking pride in it."

The day was sponsored by a partnership between Prince William County Public Schools, the Friends of the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, Historic Prince William, the Brentsville



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Pam Sackett, Chairman of the Brentsville Historic Centre Trust, gives a tour of the Brentsville Courthouse



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Gladys Eanes recalls her wedding at Brentsville Union Church

of the many murders tried there. One could almost hear the judge's gavel, ordering the busy courtroom to quiet down. It was possible to feel all of the history that the groups behind Prince William County's first Preservation Awareness Day are trying to save.

A modest crowd gathered at

Community, Hatcher's Baptist Church and RELIC. Gillian Kane-Mobley, administrative co-coordinator for Business Partnerships with Prince William County Public Schools, believes partnerships such as these give students a valuable education beyond their curriculum, as well as hands-on

ber of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Brentsville, started the tour in the One Room School with the request that students please call her Ms. Leith and that they sit in the correct rows for each grade.

"They taught first through fifth grade in this room," she explained. "Each grade sat in a separate row."

The school was built in 1928, after the Office of the Clerk of the Court was destroyed in the Civil War. Brentsville resident Gladys Eanes started first grade at the school in 1932, and remembers going to class barefoot in the spring.

"It was a great learning experience," she said. "We did it all; we just weren't a big school."

The Brentsville Courthouse, the next stop on the tour, is the Friends of Brentsville's current restoration project. Built in 1820, it survived the war due to its use as barracks for soldiers and is the old-



Gladys Eanes, Fran Hibbs and Chairperson Gary Moody, of the Friends of the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

Jennifer Basham / the Bull Run Observer

the Brentsville Courthouse for the free event, bringing picnic lunches and an appreciation for Prince William County's history. Robin Meyering, an archaeology instruc-

experience. After a "box-social," the event featured a walking-tour of eight historic buildings in the former town. Wilkie Smith Leith, a mem-

est standing courthouse in Prince William County, according to Pamela M. Sackett, chairman of the Brentsville Historic Centre Trust.

"People always say there isn't any history in our area because it was all burned during the war. With research we can pay for, we can reclaim that history," she said.

More than \$1 million has been put into the courthouse already, and the restoration has been projected across 20 years in \$250,000 phases.

The restoration will bring the courthouse back to its 1830's appearance, which Sackett says is very unique. Drawings of the courthouse show the jury box directly in front of the judge's seat, facing the public, which is an 18th Century design. They also show tables for the defense and prosecution on separate sides of the room, which is a 19th Century design according to Sackett.

The tour continued with trips to the Brentsville Jail, which is also under restoration, the "White House" formerly owned by Philip D. Dawe, clerk of the court, Hatcher's Baptist Church, the Eanes' House, Brentsville Union Church and the "Tavern Lot" on Providence Street.

A team from Mary Washing-

ton College is excavating the "Tavern Lot".

Sackett said towns were encouraged to build a tavern near the courthouse, and she hopes they will be able to rebuild the tavern someday.

Leith said this site is valuable for the state and area for education.

"When we do tours and take children through mock classes in the One Room School they love it. They just can't believe it."

The challenging part of the project, for Leith, is the lengthy process. "You want all of the buildings to be historically restored in an accurate fashion, but you want it done yesterday."

The groups will celebrate Preservation Awareness Day again next year, but Meyering is not sure when the day will be held. National Preservation Awareness day is in May, and she hopes to have it then, as long as they can schedule it around the Friends of Brentsville chili cook-off.

For more information on the Friends of Brentsville, visit [www.Brentsville.org](http://www.Brentsville.org) or contact Leith at 703-361-2318.

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