

Archaeology at Brentsville

A tavern at Brentsville was constructed prior to, or concurrent with, the courthouse complex. Taverns were an integral part of a 19th century courthouse town. Extensive archaeological work has recently been completed of the tavern site, and it was determined that the building was very typical of rural 19th century taverns. Like the courthouse complex, it was constructed of brick, measured approximately 30 feet by 47 feet, with a rectangular façade facing the



main road, with a porch spanning the entire front, and possibly several entrances. Archaeologists determined that the building had a dining room/ballroom, tap room, central hall, store, two cellars, and a frame rear wing addition (1828-34 period), giving the building an "L" shape. The building also had private guest rooms. The tavern site contained several outbuildings serving various functions associated with tavern operation.

Contact us:

For further information concerning Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre or to volunteer, contact the site at 703-365-7895 or rorrison@pwcgov.org.

For other sites administered by the Prince William County Historic Preservation Division, contact 703-792-4754 or historicpreservation@pwcgov.org



PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

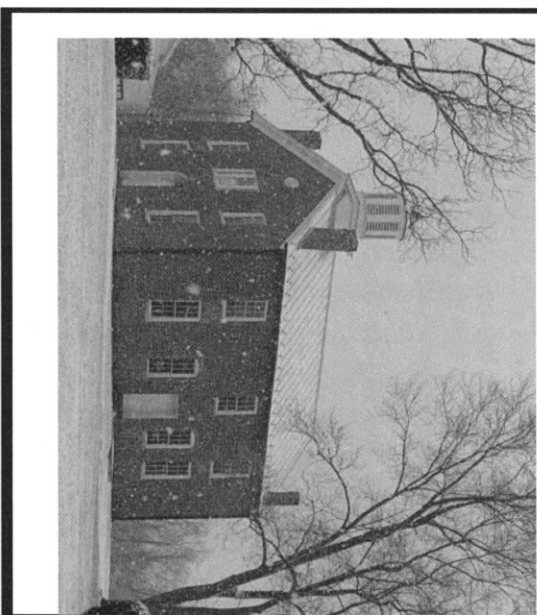
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HISTORIC SITE FILE: *BRENTSVILLE HISTORIC*
PRINCE WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM DISTRICT
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Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre: A Brief History

Prince William County
Historic Preservation Division



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Brentsville History and Buildings

The land that Brentsville now encompasses was originally part of the Brent Town Grant of 1686, made by King James II of England. George Brent and three others obtained a Proclamation from James II granting 'free exercise of their religion' on the 30,000-acre plot known then as Brent Town Tract. These settlers were some of the first English Catholic settlers in Virginia.

In 1820 The Town of Brentsville was created by an Act of the Virginia General Assembly. The town was originally laid out on in a grid pattern on 50 acres. As residents moved farther west for better farm land, the people were spread over a greater distance from the colonial county seat at Dumfries than ever before. In 1820, the county seat was moved from Dumfries to Brentsville in an effort to geographically centralize the county seat.

In 1835, the Virginia Gazetteer describes the town:

"Brentsville was located around the new courthouse in 1822...The Courthouse, clerk's office and jail are handsomely situated on the main street, in a public square of three acres. Besides them, the village contains 19 dwelling houses, 3 miscellaneous stores, 2 handsome taverns built of brick and stocked, 1 house of entertainment, 1 house of public worship, free for all denominations, a bible society, a Sunday school, a temperance and a tract society...There is in the vicinity a common school in which the rudiments of English education are taught...Population 130 persons, of whom 3 are attorneys and 3 regular physicians."

The town suffered heavily during the Civil War with the County Clerk's Office destroyed and the Courthouse heavily damaged. In 1894, the

county seat was moved to nearby Manassas. Due to the location of the railroad, Manassas was becoming the commercial center of the county.

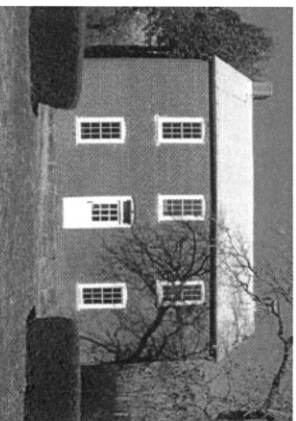
Today The Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre features six structures: the courthouse, jail, a one-room schoolhouse built in 1928, the Brentsville Union Church ca. 1870, a wood cabin ca. 1815, and a wood-framed smokehouse. Prince William County, through a broad partnership, is actively restoring these buildings. In the future, Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre will become a museum open to the public focusing on the history of Prince William County and Brentsville.

Prince William County Courthouse

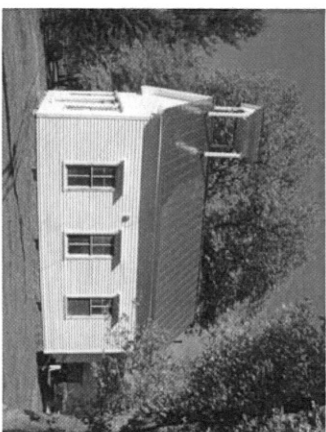
The Brentsville Courthouse was Prince William County's fourth courthouse from 1822 until 1894. Prior to 1822, the courthouse and jail were located in the town of Dumfries. In 1820, County justices decided to locate the courthouse in Brentsville. Accordingly, the General Assembly created Brentsville as the County seat. The Town of Brentsville was originally created on 50 acres. The courthouse was built circa 1822 on three of the 50 acres. The Courthouse is currently being restored to its 1830s appearance.

Prince William County Jail

The Brentsville Jail was also built circa 1822, when the County seat was moved from Dumfries to Brentsville. The jail was built next to the courthouse. The building is a two-story gable roof structure that has undergone some remodeling over the years. Besides being used as a jail, it was used as a residence, and an attorney's office. Future plans call for the restoration of the jail as interpretative and visitor services space.



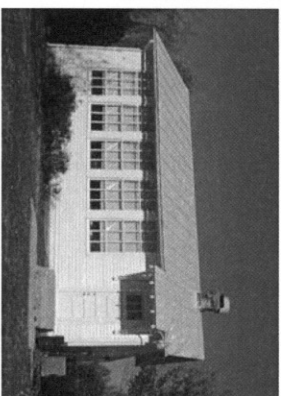
Brentsville Union Church
The Brentsville Union Church was built circa 1874. When operational, the church was available for use by any religious denomination. The restoration of the structure is nearing completion and will be available for special services and rentals.



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One Room Schoolhouse

The One-Room Schoolhouse, built in 1928, is one of the few remaining in the County. The current structure occupies the site of the clerk of court office building which was built concurrently with the courthouse and the jail, but destroyed during the Civil War.



Log Cabin

A circa 1810 log cabin, formerly owned by John William Hall, body guard to Robert E. Lee, was moved to the property to prevent its demolition for a housing development. Hall was born in the cabin, formerly located on Vint Hill Road. After the Civil War, Hall leased the cabin and was often a visitor there. He died in 1931 at the age of 91. The cabin will be furnished as a home of that period might have been. The area immediately surrounding the cabin will be developed to reflect site elements associated with a rural cabin of that period.