



**VIRGINIA**  
**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION**  
**SURVEY FORM**

File no. 76-231
Negative no(s). 4371

Historic name <b>Brentsville Jail</b>	Common name
County/Town/City <b>Brentsville, Prince William County</b>	
Street address or route number <b>12249 Bristow Road, Bristow, VA 22013</b>	
USGS Quad <b>Nokesville</b>	Date or period <b>c1820</b>
Original owner <b>Prince William County</b>	Architect/builder/craftsmen <b>"James Driscoe Masson"</b>
Original use <b>Jail</b>	inscribed in stone tablet <sup>in</sup> <b>gable.</b>
Present owner <b>Prince William Co. Park Authority</b>	Source of name
Present owner address <b>12249 Bristow Rd. Bristow, VA 22013</b>	Source of date <b>Architectural evidence; public record.</b>
Present use <b>Offices</b>	Stories <b>2 stories</b>
Acreage previously <b>c1 acre, but now included in Courthouse parcel of c3 acres.</b>	Foundation and wall const'n <b>Stone foundation; brick walls.</b>
Roof type <b>Metal-covered gable roof.</b>	
State condition of structure and environs <b>Building and environs in good condition.</b>	

State potential threats to structure

Note any archaeological interest Could be trash piles, foundations of other buildings, especially in area now used as parking lot. Civil War fortifications behind jail and courthouse overlooking Broad Run.

Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes x no — With Courthouse.

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

This simple, sturdily-constructed, two-story gable-roofed structure was built as a jail in about 1820-22. A three-bay, double-pile, central passage, I-plan building, it once had a 1 1/2-2-story frame addition on the rear, the jail sits on the parcel designated in the 1820 plan of Brentsville as the public square. To the northwest about 30 yards away is the Courthouse, built at the same time.

The complex, which is operated by the Prince William County Park Authority as a historical recreational area, and serves as Park Authority headquarters, contains about 3 acres, its northern boundary being Broad Run which flows behind the complex. Between Broad Run and the two main buildings is a parking lot and a ball field. A board fence encloses the park-like complex on the south or Bristow Road side. The fence continues along the southeast edge of the jail grounds and stops at the jail. Between the front of the jail and the road are barely visible landscape features, including a submerged stone wall and a (stone?) path leading to the courthouse. A few trees shade the front of the jail.

This building is laid up in 5-course American bond. It has both round and flat brick arches over the windows. Along the base of the building, just above the stone foundation, are the broken remains of a moulded brick water table. There is a moulded brick cornice beneath the gable roof. The windows are, for the most part, 2/2 sliding sash, though two small, rear, 2nd floor windows are new 1/1 sliding sash with vertical steel bars. The doors and most of the door frames are replacements. The one exception is a doorway on the northwest, or courthouse side, that may retain its early, pegged-together, single-beaded door frame.

The exterior walls are 2 feet thick, while the interior bearing walls are 9 1/2 and 11-inches thick.

There are two chimneys projecting from the roof, one large interior chimney on the north-

Interior inspected? yes.

(Continued)

Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

The Brentsville jail was probably built at the same time as the Courthouse, beside which the jail sits. The architecture though is plainer than the courthouse, and it is not known whether William Claytor, credited as the architect of the Courthouse also designed the jail.

Since 1892, when the County seat was moved to Manassas, thus making the Brentsville government complex obsolete, this house has been used as a residence and as offices. It is now owned by the Prince William County Park Authority which acquired it in 1979 from the Prince William County Board of Supervisors. The Board had purchased it in 1964 from Walter

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ARCHITECTURE (Cont.)

BRENTSVILLE JAIL  
(Cont.)

west side for fireplaces and a smaller stove chimney on the opposite side.

The interior has replacement trim around windows and doors, carpeted floors, and replacement doors. Remodeled for offices in 1967-68, there is little, if any, older woodwork left. The room arrangement on the first floor consists of a pair of equally-sized rooms on either side of the stair hall. The 35"-wide, single-flight, open-string stair has a turned newel, moulded rail, and turned balusters. There is a late-19th, early 20th century mantel in the front room on the northwest side.

The walls were rejointed and repaired, probably in 1967-68 when the building was renovated for offices. The repairs and rejointing would not meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitating old buildings. An inappropriate rear door surround was installed at that time; while the front doorway, fortunately, was left intact. A new doorway appears to have been created from a former window on the rear. Altogether, the building is probably in fairly good condition, and the recent changes and additions could be corrected to return the exterior to a more authentic appearance.

PRIMARY SOURCES (Cont.)

Burton, Tommye S., "Brentsville Courthouse Has New Role in County," in Manassas Journal-Messenger, 26 July 1974.

Martin, Joseph, Gazeteer (1835) describes Brentsville and mentions jail.

Manassas Journal, 27 July 1967, photo and paragraph about jail being restored.

# Sources and bibliography

Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

Ratcliffe, R.J., This Was Prince William (c1978), pp. 8, 12, 73-74.

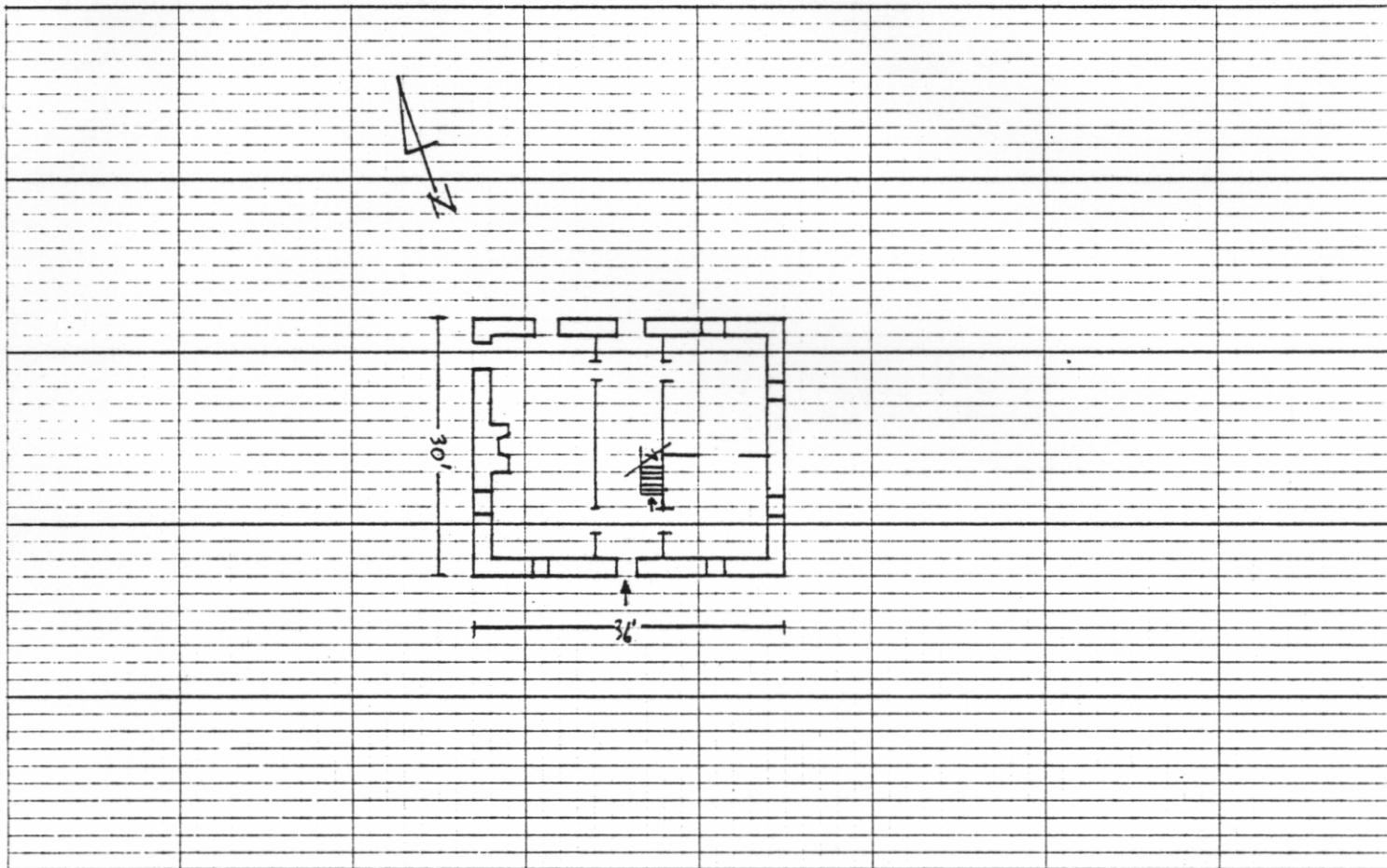
W.P.A., Writer's Project, Prince William, the Story of Its People and Its Places (c1941), p.114.

Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

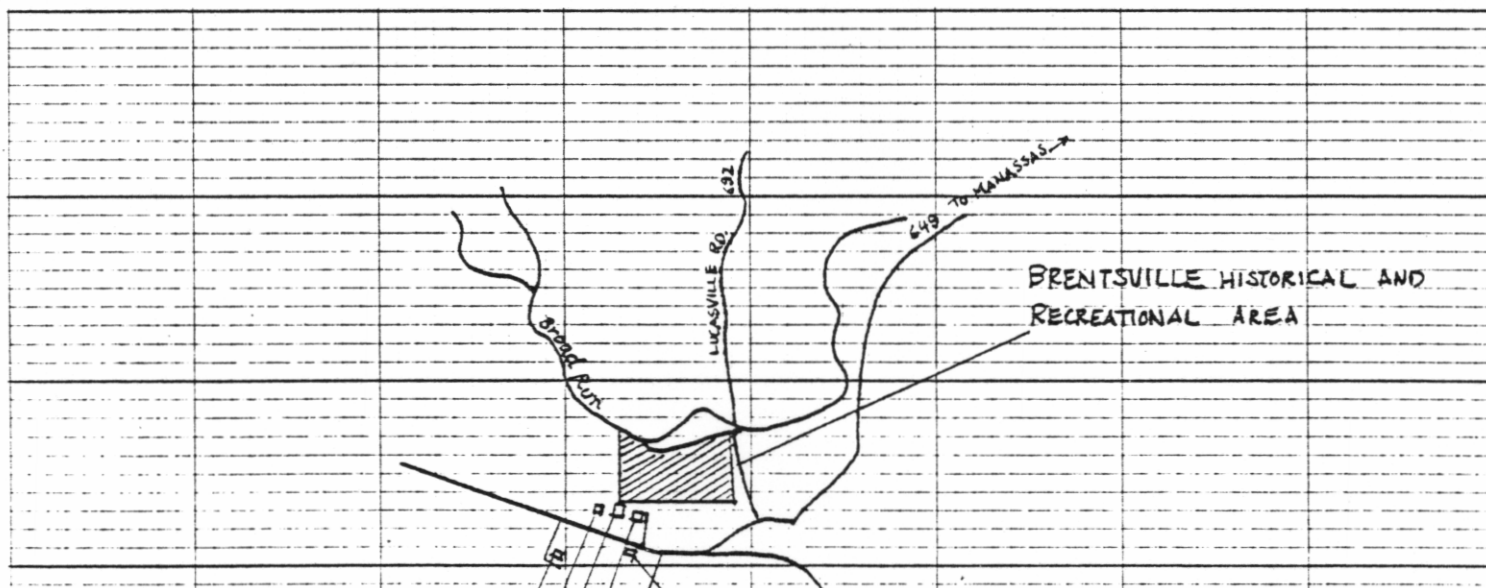
See photo of jail, as a residence, taken by Cleveland Fisher in 1959. Photo in scrapbook compiled by Fisher and in possession of Manassas Museum; (Continued, page two)

Names and addresses of persons interviewed

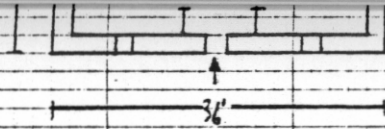
Plan (Indicate locations of rooms, doorways, windows, alterations, etc.)



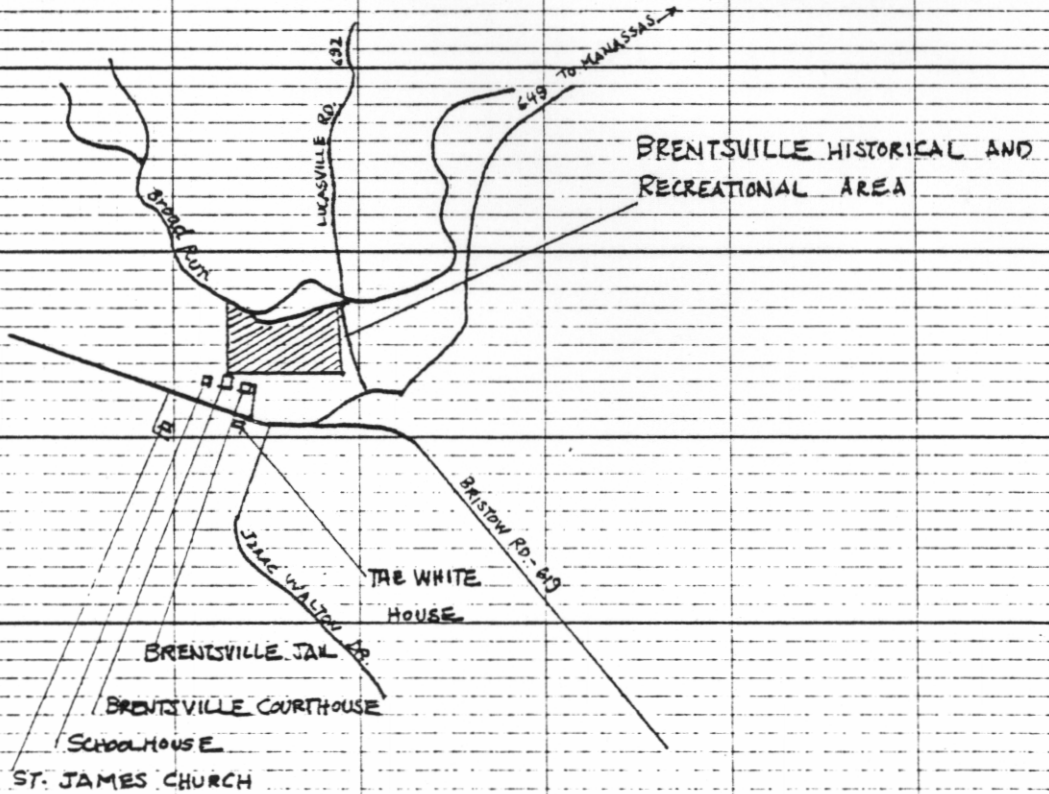
Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)







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Name, address and title of recorder

Frances Jones, Architectural  
Historian - Surveyor, NYPDC

Date

JUN

1990

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NOKESVILLE QUAD.

4286

BRENTSVILLE JAIL

76-231

INDEPENDENT HILL  
5561 III NW

4284

4283

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