

Brentsville History and Buildings

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More information has been found. This info is not current. Brochure is 2007 or earlier

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 1822, 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 1893, 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, and a wood cabin ca. 1830. Prince William County, through a broad partnership, is actively restoring these buildings. In the future, the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre will be open to the public and will focus 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 relocate the courthouse to Brentsville. The Courthouse construction was directed by William Claytor. In this building, appointed County justices oversaw all functions of county government. It was the centerpiece of the new town. The Courthouse was restored in 2006 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 an interpretative space.



Brentsville Union Church

The Brentsville Union Church was built circa 1874. When in use, the church was available to any Protestant religious denomination. The restoration of



the structure is complete and it is available for special services and rentals.

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 1830 log cabin, formerly owned by John William Hall, courier to Robert E. Lee, was moved to the property to prevent its demolition during the development of a residential neighborhood. 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.

Archaeology at Brentsville

Professional archaeologists have been instrumental in telling the story of a 19th-century tavern once located in Brentsville. Extensive archaeology has determined that the building was very typical of rural taverns of that time. It was constructed of brick, measured 30 feet by 47 feet, and had architectural features including a rectangular facade facing the main road, 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 tavern site contained several outbuildings serving various functions associated with tavern operation.



Nature Trail

Wildlife, typical of the Virginia Piedmont, is still abundant in Brentsville. A network of trails, approximately one-mile in length, traverse over 20 acres of the site's natural habitat. The trail also runs along Broad Run, a part of the Occoquan/Bull Run watershed. A self-guided brochure is available for visitors to walk the trail and learn about the extensive cultural and natural resources the site has to offer.

Contact us:

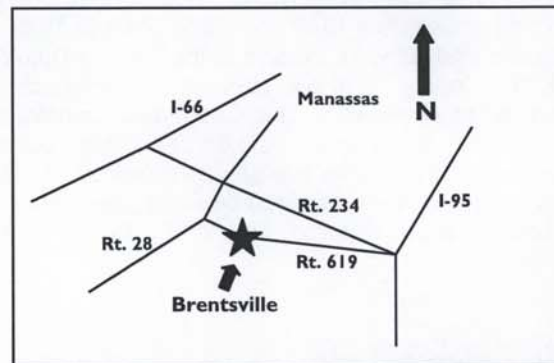
For further information about the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre or to volunteer, contact the site at 703-365-7895 or rorrison@pwcgov.org.

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

Directions:

From Interstate 95: Rt. 234 North (Exit 152B), travel 7 miles and make a left onto Rt. 619 (Bristow Rd.), Brentsville is 6 miles on the right.

From Interstate 66: Rt. 234 South (Exit 44), travel 4.5 miles and turn right onto Rt. 28 south (Nokesville Rd.), travel 1.5 miles and make a left onto Rt. 619 (Bristow Rd.), Brentsville is 4 miles on the left.



PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

4092 Merchant Plaza
Suite B

Pr. William, Virginia 22192

Phone: 703-792-4754

Fax: 703-580-7654

historicpreservation@pwcgov.org

www.pwcgov.org



Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

Prince William County Department of Public Works Historic Preservation Division



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12229 Bristow Road

Bristow, Virginia 20136

(703)365-7895

www.pwcgov.org

historicpreservation@pwcgov.org