



A Heritage to Remember, A Future to Mold

The Town of North Brentwood . Prince George's County's First African-American Settlement . Incorporated 1924

TOWN HISTORY

North Brentwood was the first African-American incorporated Town in Prince George's County (incorporation occurred in 1924). Its 72 acres is situated six miles northeast of the ellipse between Mt. Rainier and Hyattsville, Maryland.

North Brentwood was originally part of the "Castle Tract," later known as the "Highlands" and then "Randall Town."

In 1887, Captain Wallace Bartlett, a white commander during the Civil War, formed Holladay Land and Improvement Division. He sold plots of land in the low area (which is subject to flooding) to African-Americans. Bartlett dedicated this land in memory of the Black regiment which served under him, and designated some of the land for churches and a school.

In 1898, the trolley line of the Columbia and Maryland Railway Company was completed through Randall Town (named after first-settlers, The Randall Family).

In 1902, the first school opened in Randall Town with Henry and Peter Randall as trustees.

In 1904, The Holladay Land Company expanded and re-plotted 40 additional acres as a subdivision. The subdivision was named "Brentwood" after the Brent Estate in northeast Washington, DC.

In 1905, the First Baptist Church was organized under Rev. James L. Jasper's leadership. The same year, Jeremiah Hawkins moved to the town, purchased several lots, built a house and became politically active.

In 1907, Mr. William Conway organized "The Brentwood Colored Citizens Association" to provide opportunities for educational, scientific, literary, musical, social and other beneficial endeavors.

In 1920, Jeremiah Hawkins was elected as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Kansas City. North Brentwood was incorporated under the leadership of Mr. Hawkins in 1924 and he became the first mayor. His cabinet members were Peter Randall and Madison Brown, Councilmen; Squire Garland, Police Justice; William Norton, Town Clerk; and John Gilmore, Treasurer.

In 1924, Randall Town was officially renamed North Brentwood, Inc.

In 1946, the "Flashes" (for the first and last time under the qualified management of Donald Smith) became the first sandlot team to play in Griffith Stadium, Washington, DC.

In 1952, the North Brentwood Municipal Building was constructed through citizens' volunteer labor under the leadership of Mayor William D. Bellows.

In the 1950s and 1960s, North Brentwood was known as a destination for national jazz greats and local talent, who played at Sis's Tavern. After being vacant for years, it operated as Baby Dee's Guest Club from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. (Renovations are currently underway.)

In 1975, the North Brentwood Community Center, operated by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, was opened.

In 1985, the North Brentwood flag was designed by Mrs. Victoria Welborne and Mr. Perry Wheaton.

In 1991, the Town's Historical Society was organized by Lillian K. Beverly; the Society collected data to verify the historical significance of North Brentwood. The project committee, under Mrs. Ruth Wilson's leadership, and attorney Orlando C. Hobbs, developed "Footsteps from North Brentwood," an oral, pictorial and artifact collection of life in North Brentwood from the 1900s to 1930.

After completion, the collection was displayed at Anacostia Smithsonian Museum from July 1996 to January 1997. Part of the exhibit was then moved to the North Brentwood Community Center, where it hung until May 1997 before transferring to the State House in Annapolis. The collection was placed in storage at the Anacostia Smithsonian Museum in December 1997 after the Annapolis viewing.

In 2003, the National Register of Historic Places was expanded to include North Brentwood. As well, North Brentwood AME Zion Church and the Peter Randall House were designated as historic sites.

In 2004, the North Brentwood Historical Society published "Minding Our Own Business." The book is an oral history of North Brentwood's entrepreneurs. As quoted by previous mayor Lillian K. Beverly, "A time to remember those businesses that provided service, shelter and food – including food for the soul."

In 2005, the Town office moved to the old First Baptist Church building at 4009 Wallace Road. The North Brentwood Municipal Center also houses the Gwendolyn Britt Senior Activity Center (named after Senator Britt, 47th district, 2002-2008).

In 2009, the Mayor, Council and citizens welcomed the opening of the [Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center at North Brentwood](#) (on Rhode Island Avenue). The vision of this museum, and its educational programming, is to enable all visitors to gain a sense of identity regarding local history, while broadening cultural understanding.

Since the 2010s, the Town has worked diligently to become a Green community, through sustainability grants and formation of The Green Team. The team procures equipment (such as recycling containers for public locations in the Town) and citizen education about storm water management, community gardens, recycling, and more.

In 2019, the Town celebrated its 95th anniversary, with a year-long slate of events. This included announcing the final phase of the Mayor's effort to revive the historic Sis' Tavern, which drew iconic artists, such as Duke Ellington and Pearl Bailey.

Working with the Mapping Racism Project, the Mayor had the tavern designated as a historic property and secured funding from the Maryland Heritage Areas Program. The renovation (and the addition of an outdoor pavilion) is nearly complete with hopes of reopening, as a community space and performance arts venue, by mid-2022.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, in early 2020, the Mayor and citizens of North Brentwood rallied together. The Mayor took every opportunity to remind everyone to follow safety protocols. She was an early adopter of closing municipal offices for the safety of staff and citizens, and to continue government works through online meetings. Once vaccines became available, the Mayor and Town Council created free vaccine clinics.

Amid the pandemic, in 2020, citizens continued to do their part: the Town's response to the US Census was even higher than the state average. The outreach plan to gain citizens' participation was comprehensive, from website, Facebook and community channel promos, to brochures and video campaigns by Mayor Robinson and other local mayors.

In 2022, and beyond... the Town of North Brentwood – *which continues to grow and bring in a more diverse community* – remains a group of dedicated, civic-minded citizens who organize, persevere and strive for improvement.

Thirteen Mayors have served the town since its incorporation. They are listed according to the term of office, namely: Jeremiah Hawkins, William T. Allen, George Lucas, Julius Wheeler, John Gilmore, Sandy P. Baker, William D. Bellows, LaBarre P. Thornton, Raymond A. Hall, William D. Bellows, Raymond A. Hall, Sandy P. Johnson, Arthur Dock, Lillian K. Beverly, and Petrella Robinson.

Historical data excerpts are from "Footsteps from North Brentwood," a Maryland Humanities Funded Project, by the North Brentwood Historical Society.