

The Family of Perez Barnum Buell, Jr.

The Proprietor of Herndon's First Real Estate Agency

By Barbara Glakas

Perez Barnum Buell, Jr. – commonly known as P.B. Buell – started a real estate agency in the Town of Herndon in the 1890s. He advertised his business as “The oldest established real estate agency in Northern Virginia.” His story, however, started in Lowell, Ohio.

Shortly after the War of 1812, Perez Barnum Buell Sr. and his brother Salmon, moved westward from New York in 1816, looking for new opportunities in the newly opened land of Ohio. He laid out a plan for a village that became known as Buell's Lowell. He started a trading center for agricultural products. The two brothers became influential on the economic development of the community, which became prosperous. The village later became known simply as Lowell.

Buell's son, P.B. Buell Jr., was born in 1833 in Lowell. He was one of nine children. In 1863 Buell registered for the Civil War while in Ohio. He was a 28 year old farmer at the time. His participation in the Civil War was described in one of his obituaries, which stated,

“At the outbreak of the Civil War Mr. Buell took an active part in the organization of volunteers and received the commission of Major. He was prevented from taking part in the war through the death of two brothers and both his father and mother at that time within a period of 15 months.”

Two of Buell's relatives were known to have actively participated in the Civil War. One of his brothers, Captain Franklin Buell, served in Ohio's 18th Infantry Regiment in the Union Army. He was in Fauquier County, Virginia, at the age of 25. One of Buell's older cousins – Don Carlos Buell – was a graduate of West Point and rose to the rank of Major General in the Union Army. He trained the Army of the Potomac, commanded an Infantry division under George McClellan, and distinguished himself at the Battle of Shiloh.

At one point, P.B. Buell took an active part in Ohio politics. He represented both houses in the Ohio General Assembly as a Democrat. In 1869 he married Ellen Mather Hyde. In 1870 the newly married couple was listed as living in the Adams Township, in Lowell, Ohio and Buell continued to work as a farmer. By 1880, the Buell's had three children – Arthur, Mary and George. Buell was listed in that year's census document as an “ex-Senator.”

Soon after, the Buell's moved to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, where they had one more child, Thomas. In 1886, at the age of 53, Buell and his family moved to Herndon, just seven years after the Town had been incorporated.

Buell founded his real estate agency in Herndon. Historic pictures of Herndon show his small wood frame business office, located on the northeast corner of Lynn and Station Streets, now the

location of a small parking lot. The sign above his door said “P.B. Buell, Real Estate Broker.” The roof was flat and had a slanted tin awning propped over the front door and two windows. The sidewalk and streets at that time were still dirt. A wooden horse hitching post was positioned in front of the building.

Advertisements for his business regularly appeared in the *Fairfax Herald* newspaper. He also advertised in the *Southern Planter Journal*, boasting “Farms for Sale. We make farms and country homes in Northern Virginia a specialty.”

P.B.’s son, Arthur Hyde Buell, born in 1871, served in the Spanish-American War in 1898 as a Sergeant in the District of Columbia Volunteer Regiment, with service in Cuba. He later joined his father’s real estate business.

By 1907 local newspaper ads started referring to the family business as “P.B. Buell & Son.” By 1908 the ads changed over to say “A.H. Buell Real Estate.” Historic pictures also show the transition from father to son. The sign on top of the building later changed to say, “A.H. Buell, Virginia Farms and Village Homes, Fairfax and Loudoun Farms a Specialty.”

Arthur’s wife, Mabel Buell, was very active in Herndon as well. She was a leader in helping to establish the first Catholic Church in Herndon, was the President of the Herndon Fortnightly Club for over twenty years, and was active in other school and community affairs.

Eventually, a slight change occurred to the location of the Buell real estate building. Later pictures show that the Buell building was no longer on the corner lot of Lynn and Station Streets, but had been re-positioned a few yards east of its original location, closer to the building next door, the Nachman building. The Schneider Hardware Store was built at the corner of Lynn and Station Streets in about 1909. This must have caused the Buell’s building to have been moved, to make way for the new hardware store.

An undated pamphlet entitled “Virginia Farms and Country Homes” from “P.B. Buell & Son” said in its introduction:

“We beg to present this revised catalogue of farm and county homes which includes only part of the large amount of property that we have in hand, including truck, dairy, grain, fruit and blue grass farms of every class, elegant modern country places and colonial estates. Where can the home-seeker find more advantages combined than in Virginia, near the National Capitol? Here those who have broken their health and wasted their energies in confined city life may find rest, pleasure and restored health. Here, the farmer, tired of the long rigid winters of the North and Northwest, may find an equable climate, cheap and productive lands, and the best home market in the country.”

The pamphlet went on to describe Loudoun County as being “one of the best agricultural counties in Virginia.” It described Fairfax County as “advancing rapidly” with an “excellent

class of people.” About Herndon it said it was “a new and thriving town of over 1,000 inhabitants, 27 miles from and 400 feet above Washington D.C., on the Washington and Bluemont Division of the Southern Railway.” The pamphlet listed 84 different properties for sale in these three geographic areas.

In the Herndon area, some lots that were already improved with a house, well, fencing and already farmed land, advertised at \$30 per acre. Other lot prices were set in full. One 22 acre lot in Herndon that was “a complete small farm, with a six-room frame house, good associated farm buildings, with running water, rail fencing and an abundance of fruit of all kinds,” was offered at \$2,000. Another 11 acre lot that was “right at station, with a 5-room cottage, surrounded by beautiful grove, small barn, poultry quarters, ample fruit of all kinds and good water,” was being offered at \$2,500.

Later, a similar pamphlet was published by A.H. Buell. It said, “Buyers are coming here from all parts of the country to invest in our cheap lands.” Arthur Buell went on to list sixteen reasons why prospective buyers should buy in Northern Virginia. Some of those reasons included being 20 miles from Washington, good transportation facilities, excellent schools and churches, pure water, productive soil, mild climates, short winters, and very hospitable people. Arthur encouraged buyers coming to Washington and to then come to Herndon, saying he would be glad to show people around at his expense while there and noting his office was right across from the railroad station.

Herndon’s 1900 and 1910 census documents show P.B. Buell living in Herndon, with one census placing him on Elden Street. In 1900, three of Buell’s children -- Arthur, Mary and Thomas -- were living with their parents, along with an African American servant, Frank Wallace. By 1910 Mr. Wallace was still with the Buell’s, as well as their daughter Mary.

Perez Barnum Buell died in 1912. An obituary for him indicated that he had come to Virginia through “the strongest ties that bind men of the Order of Husbandry.” Another said,

“Mr. Buell moved to Herndon in 1886 and engaged in the real estate business. He has been an influential factor in the steady growth and development of this part of Virginia during the past 20 years. He was a man of wonderful vitality, strong character, and indomitable will, with strong likes and dislikes, but the soul of honor in all his dealings... his Domine brings to a close a long and honorable career in politics and business.”

Arthur and his brother George carried on the real estate business until the time of their deaths.

Arthur’s home was at the corner of Elden and Monroe Streets on a lot which is now 701 Elden Street, the current location of Anita’s Restaurant. George lived in Washington, D.C., for a while but by 1920 was back in Herndon, living on Elden Street in a different home than Arthur’s.

Long time Herndon residents remember George Buell living at 911 Elden Street, which is now the home of Herndon Mayor, Lisa Merkel. Mayor Merkel's records of the house indicate that in 1936 – the year P.B. Buell's wife Ellen died -- Arthur, George and Thomas Buell, executors for Ellen Buell, conveyed the property to George Buell and his wife Emma. We infer from this that George had lived in a house that had previously belonged to his parents.

George Buell was elected to the Herndon Town Council in 1937, but died that same year. George's wife, Emma Buell, continued to live in the Elden Street house and was active in Herndon. She was a member of the Fortnightly Club, the Corbin Club and hosted Bridge Club meetings at her home.

Arthur Buell continued to be active in the real estate business until he died in 1954.

Perez and Ellen Buell, and their children, made their mark in Herndon and now rest in Herndon's Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

About this column: "Remembering Herndon's History" is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon's past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of "Remembering Herndon's History" columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society's website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.