



POWNAL GATEWAY

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

April 2007

Vol. 5, No. 3

Upcoming Meetings:

April 15: PHS Business meeting, 1 p.m., Pownal Public Library.

April 15: 2 p.m. Joe Manning describes his search to find out what happened to the children of the mills. Pownal Public Library.

May 19: Opening event of Vermont Reads. Bennington Museum.

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Websites:

Pownal Historical Society:
www.pownal.org

Bennington Museum:
www.benningtonmuseum.org

Joe Manning:
www.morningsonmaplestreet.com



Steve Perkins Discusses the History of Postcards

On March 9, 2007, Steve Perkins (pictured above), the Director of the Bennington Museum, talked to the Pownal Historical Society about the history of postcards, using examples from the Museum collection and from the broader Bennington Area.

He noted that originally no stamps were used on mail, with the recipient asked to pay the postage. The first U.S. postcard was created in 1893 to advertise the Columbian World's Fair. The best quality postcards were printed in Germany, up until World War I destroyed the industry. Later, people took their own photos and had them printed on postcard formats. Postcards reached a peak of popularity in 1908 when over 677 million were printed. People used them just as people use e-mail or text-messaging today, only not quite so fast.

In Pownal Center, C. H. Myers was an early creator and seller of postcards.

Help Restore the Pownal Center Community Church Steeple

Please consider helping the people of Pownal restore the church's deteriorating steeple, a historic Pownal landmark, by sending a donation to Pownal Center Community Church, Steeple Fund, c/o Charlotte Comar, 813 South Stream Road, Bennington, VT 05201. A brief history of the church is on page 3.



President's Message -- Ken Held

It's spring and along with spring comes the thoughts of renewing. Renewing our love of gardening and getting out there to till the soil. Renewing our love for long walks and watching the mountains turn green once again. I hope that this spring you will all include renewing your love of community history and come join up at our open meetings to learn and share the history of Pownal. Our Annual Meeting will be held on April 15th at 1PM at the Solomon Wright Library. Following our members meeting and election of officers we will hear from Joe Manning on his search for more of the Mill Children of Pownal. We have Joe to thank for putting the right name to our Pownal mystery girl, Addie Card. Joe's presentation is at 2PM and I encourage you all to come out and join us and renew some old friendships and allow Joe to renew your love of history!

Joe Hall and the Trolley Line in Pownal

On February 11, 2007, Joe Hall, of the Bennington Historical Society, talked about his explorations of the trolley line that extended from Pittsfield and from North Adams through Pownal and Bennington and on into Hoosic Falls. He traced the history of the companies back to the Bennington and Woodford Electric Company that operated from 1895-1898, noting that the start of it was delayed because 6 residents of Pownal were unwilling to settle right-of-way negotiations. Part of it served a casino that used to operate in Glastenbury.

In 1898, the Bennington and Hoosic Valley Railroad Company began, extending coverage from Bennington through North Bennington to Hoosick and Walloomsac. The full trip took one and one-half hours at an average speed of 10 miles per hour and a ticket charge of 30 cents. The flood of 1927 ended that venture.

The Bennington and North Adams Street Railway Company began in 1906, with a line through Pownal. Six areas in Pownal had first to be taken over through condemnation and eminent domain procedures. The first car through Pownal arrived in 1907, and the former power station may still be seen along Route 7 in Pownal Center.

The Berkshire Street Railway, which incorporated the previous two rail companies, then took over, until the Bennington to Williamstown leg stopped in 1929. Many Pownal residents rode it to get to high school in Bennington. One car, the Berkshire Hills Car, ran from 1903 to 1915, became a diner in 1932 in Pittsfield, was damaged by a fire in 1994, and now is being restored at the trolley museum in Kennebunkport, Maine.

(Continued on page 4)

Welcome New Members!

Joseph Hall, Bennington, VT

Barbara Jackson, Manahawkin, NJ

Unfortunate News from the Past

Contributed by Joyce Held

Fitchburg Sentinel, April 23, 1891-Terrible Death of Pownal Man. Aaron Worthington 22, of North Pownal Vermont, who is employed by John Whipple of Pownal was drawing barrel staves from North Adams to Pownal Thursday, and while descending Furnace Hill about 5 o'clock with a large load the front tier gave way. He fell between the horses who kicked him terribly and his head was caught between the dashboard and electric pole by the side of the road. His eyes were caused to protrude, his nose was smashed and blood flowed in streams from his ears. He was taken to the hospital but died shortly afterwards.

The Oldest Church in Pownal

The meetinghouse for the settlement that became known as Pownal was first built of logs at Pownal Center. With the Hoosick River bottomland being swampy, all homes were built on the higher ground. These first settlers crudely put the meetinghouse together for a place of worship. When it became necessary for the Freeman to meet to conduct business of the settlement, the same one-room log building was used. It stood on the highest plot of ground set apart in the charter of the town of Pownal granted in 1762, to be used for public purposes.

In 1847, the church people decided it was unfitting to conduct the religious services in the same room where secular meetings were held and began a series of activities to raise subscriptions to build a church. A school for boys was conducted in the meetinghouse irregularly during the winter and spring months. Soon a committee to give every possible help for the new church approached the head of every household. Some days 60 men appeared for work and on other days there might be only two. In one instance, a farmer on the far west side of town, with the help of his sons and his team of horses, cut and hauled all the necessary logs the six miles from his woodlot to the Bushnell and Barber sawmill at the outlet of "Perch Pond" (now known as "Barber Pond") in East Pownal, and then hauled the rough lumber back to the town green.

It was agreed that the new church should be erected over the little log meetinghouse and that it should be known as the "Union Church", open to every denomination of Pownal in the true spirit of "freedom of worship". As schoolhouses were built throughout Pownal, the lower part of the building saw less use but was continued by the Freeman as their meeting place. The women of the church used the downstairs for social gatherings and church suppers, where for a quarter all comers could enjoy the bounty provided by the farms on the surrounding hills and valleys.

Church members added the steeple to the structure in the late 1880's.

One hundred years after the Union Church was erected at a cost of \$2,875, it was renamed "Pownal Center Community Church". It remains open to every denomination to the present day.

Trolleys (continued)

Joe showed slides of the remaining traces of the lines. He has walked most of them, including the line that ran through Pownal Center and Pownal. Anson Mason talked about where the track areas could be easily accessed today. Some of us agreed that turning the line into a bike and walking trail would be ideal, but most of it currently is on private property. Nevertheless, if any individuals are interested in working on a community project to create a walking and bike trail, it might be a great project to contribute to the Pownal planning efforts (for more information on current planning efforts, go to: [HTTP://pownal.pbwiki.com](http://pownal.pbwiki.com))

Finally, the Bennington Historical Society has invited the Pownal Historical Society to join them in presenting a display at the Tunbridge History Fair this summer. Charles Dewey will do the construction of the display, and Pownal Historical Society members may volunteer their time to assist at the Fair by contacting President Ken Held.

Upcoming Meetings:

April 15, 1 p.m.: Annual business meeting of the Pownal Historical Society. The agenda includes a summary of the past year's events and future plans, the Treasurer's report, and the election of new Board members. All are welcome.

April 15, 2 p.m.: Immediately following the annual business meeting, Joe Manning, historian of North Adams and the person who worked with Elizabeth Winthrop to determine the true identity of Addie Card, will describe his research to determine what happened to the children who worked in local mills after Lewis Hine took their pictures. Inspired by his success at tracing the life of Addie Card and finding her descendants, Manning has embarked upon a quest to trace the lives of as many mill children as he can.

If you would like to learn more about his work before the meeting, you can go to his website at: <http://www.morningsonmaplestreet.com/addiesearch1.html> Joe Manning would welcome anyone from Pownal who had relatives who worked in the mills of Pownal to talk to him and give him specific information about those relatives.

May 19: The Bennington Museum will host the Statewide opening event for the Vermont Reads program, with a variety of events related to Elizabeth Winthrop's book, *Counting on Grace*. Schedule? Call the Museum at 802-447-1571 or go to: www.benningtonmuseum.com .

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