



Pownal Gateway

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

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Walking Tour – July 15th

Join your friends and neighbors as the Pownal Historical Society takes a walking tour of the church, cemetery, school, garage, and homes that surround the original main street of Pownal Center.

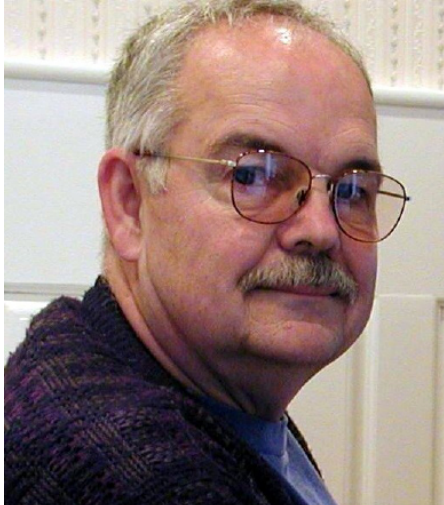
The tour, free to both members and non-members, begins at 2 p.m. in the Community Church and wends its way around Pownal Center, with owners and members of the Historical Society discussing the histories of the buildings, both recent and past. The walking tour ends in the Carriage Barn of the Community Church, where the Society will treat everyone to free refreshments.

This is a chance to experience Pownal Center and take part in the initial stages of creating a State historic district, the original Pownal Center. Learn why some want to preserve the Bartels property. Hear anecdotes of life in Pownal Center during the first half of the 20th Century.

If you know people who would like to participate in various projects of the Historical Society, invite them to join you. If your friends and neighbors might be interested in joining the Society, invite them. And if they simply want to learn more about the community they live in, welcome them to the event.

For more details, go to either the Pownal wiki, <http://pownal.pbwiki.com> or call Charlotte Comar. (802-447-7217).

President's Message



Hello all,

As you have been reading, I'm sure, in the newspaper, we are supporting the investigation of the Bartel Lodge's preservation. We are encouraged by the Selectmen voting to have a study done on the lodge. We hope that the study will give the Selectmen second thoughts on tearing down the building before all avenues are explored. The town does not have the money to build a new town hall right now, so it shouldn't be urgent for them to take away a piece of the town history. If they indeed do decide that the lodge isn't conducive for a town hall, we would hope that they would still think about other uses for the building. As the *Bennington Banner* Editorial of June 23rd states, there is

room on the lot to build a town hall and still keep the old lodge standing. We encourage you to speak up about this issue and to let the Selectmen know your thoughts

Historical buildings and homes should not be taken down without careful thought. Once they are gone we have lost that piece of our history.

-- Ken Held

Efforts to Preserve the Bartels Property

Eve Pearce requested that the Pownal Historical Society Board support her efforts to preserve the Bartels property, known by a variety of names, including the Benoni Thompson home and the Peckham House or Mountain View Inn. The Board endorsed the effort.

As newspaper reports have indicated, the Select Board purchased the house for the town with one intent being to build a rescue squad building on the location. That building is no longer needed, but Select Board members are concerned about the liability associated with the building. It has suffered some damage from a small fire and roof leakage, but an official assessment of the condition has yet to be conducted. The Select Board has authorized bidding to tear the house down so that the town will know how much that will cost, and at least one Board member is urging that the house be dismantled or torn down as soon as possible.

Eve Pearce has secured a small grant to enable the Vermont Preservation Trust to conduct an assessment of the house. The Select Board has contributed \$250 in support of that effort. This assessment will be completed by the end of August. When we know how much it may take to preserve the house, then the town will need to make a decision about the future of the building.

In the early 20th Century, the building housed artists from the Art Students League. Students worked in the nearby barn and carriage house, both of which have subsequently been torn down. Paintings by these artists appear on the internet and local museums on occasion.

Several old buildings have been torn down in Pownal in recent years without any attempt to preserve them. As we lose these buildings, we also lose part of our heritage, part of the charm of Pownal, and concrete reasons for more people to visit Pownal, to move to Pownal, and to contribute to the economy of Pownal. Individuals who would like to be part of the effort to preserve the Bartels house as part of historic Pownal Center should notify either Eve Pearce or Ken Held.



Architect Patterson's Statement on Bartels

Roger Patterson, an architect living in Pownal, presented this assessment of the Bartels House exterior to the Select Board:

If we are to promote Pownal, as our various committees are working hard to do, every effort must be made to retain as much of the original community as possible.

This building is essential to the historical fabric of the Pownal.

It is the building that establishes the historical significance, not just the location and the possible reuse of some structural members, as some have suggested.

I made a preliminary examination of the exterior of the building and find only one major defect. The foundations under the masonry pier in the NW corner must be removed and replaced. The wall broke away because it was attached to the adjacent retaining wall with an apparently insufficient footing. The walls of the building are plumb, the roof has no sags except a slight dip in the front on the left of the front door, this may have happened years ago. Clapboards near the ground need replacing, all other clapboards appear in good condition and only need to be scraped and painted. Wood trim needs to be scraped and painted. In historic building restoration only the loose paint is removed before repainting, it is not scraped bare. Window sills have no rot with the possible exception of the north side. Window replacement in an historic building must be done carefully. Chimney caps need rebuilding. Foundation walls at rear need reparging. Obviously a more thorough inspection will determine other work that needs to be repaired.

I have not had the opportunity to see the interior of the building. Most likely the plumbing, heating and electrical systems need to be replaced. Since there are reports of roof leaks, the roofing probably needs to be replaced. If the building is remodeled for use for the Town Offices and Rescue Squad, the interior partitions would be changed so present conditions may not be of great consequence.

I remember working with a historic church in Auburn, CA. The Trustees, who wanted to tear the church down, told me "If the termites stopped holding hands the building would fall down". They told me the wood sills and the walls were all rotted. After a thorough investigation it was determined that there was no rot just an extensive amount of maintenance.



Preserving the Mooar-Wright/ DeVoet House

Many of our members have asked about what they could do to help save and restore the Mooar-Wright-DeVoet House. Here is a brief history of the Historical Society's efforts to do just that.

When the Society was formed, one of the initial motivations was to preserve the house, which some believe may be the oldest house in Vermont. As a major contribution to this effort, Margaret Lillie bought the house in the hope that the Society would be able to purchase it, restore it, and use it as the historical museum in Pownal. In the years following its purchase, Society members held bake sales, sold coffee mugs, and sought donations from community members. Unfortunately, the total amount of money raised was far from enough to purchase and restore the house. Donors were offered back their contributions, and happily most told the Society to keep the funds. The Society still preserves those funds in its budget for some important future use, still to be determined. At a recent Board meeting, the Board members reaffirmed their desire to see the house preserved, but did not believe they could secure enough funds if they were to try again. Still, the Board encouraged others to try.

Two assessments were conducted of the physical condition of the house. Wade I. Treadway completed an "Historic Architectural Survey" in September 1994. His study discusses both strengths and weaknesses of the structure and may be read at the Solomon Wright Public Library. Keefe & Wesner Architects also conducted a structural study, completed in May 2000, estimated repair costs at that time, and reiterated the importance of the house as an historic structure. Margaret Lillie maintains a copy of this report.

Two different histories of the house reveal some of the questions about it. Some believe it was the original tavern of Charles Wright, who settled in Pownal in 1762. One report of travelers spending the night at Wright's tavern in 1765 has been identified. Recently, Terry DeVoet, a descendent of John Ernst DeVoet (or Dafoe), produced a history that indicates this is the house of his ancestor, who moved to Pownal in the 1750's. DeVoet was a Loyalist who was imprisoned during the Revolution, escaped, fought as a Tory at the Battle of Bennington, was captured, escaped again, and went to Canada as a member of the United Empire Loyalists. (Go to: <http://www.genealogwiki.com/bin/view.cgi/Dafoe/WebHome>) The Bleeker map shows a Dutch house near or on that spot. (Go to: www.Pownal.org/PHS/index.html and click on maps.) Whichever is the correct history, this is an important house in Vermont.

One way of ascertaining the exact date of the house is through dendrochronology, or tree-ring dating of the beams. Assuming that enough beams with outer rings or bark remain, this would be an expensive project, with costs beginning at \$2,000. Complicating this is the possibility that beams may have been cut for an earlier house and then incorporated in a newer house. But if this is the oldest house in Vermont . . .



Build Your Genealogy

Charles Clark would like to help you build your genealogy and connect your genealogical records with others from families in Pownal. He will work with you to add your genealogy to the database in our library. The intent is to enable people in Pownal to share their genealogies with each other. If you would like to work with him, call him at 442-5823 or e-mail him at cclark2440@yahoo.com

The Historical Society has installed a number of databases in the library computer for your use.

Joe Manning Tracks Descendants of Child Laborers

Joe Manning, the historian who helped Elizabeth Winthrop identify and track the life of Addie Card, spoke to the Pownal Historical Society in April about much that he has learned in trying to find out what happened to child laborers from the early 20th Century. Manning treats an interstate area—Northern Berkshire County, Columbia County, and Southwestern Vermont—as one area of study, for the working and living conditions in the towns were much alike. He is committed to “dignifying the lives of ordinary people.”

Inspired by the success of his work with Addie Card, he noted that he began with the approximately 5000 Lewis Hine photos that are available on the Library of Congress website. (See, e.g.: www.historyplace.com/united states/ childlabor/) Lewis Hine showed us “kids as normal people, people we could fall in love with, not people who are different from us.” “Every story of what happened to these people is the story of our history.”

Manning has managed to track down descendents of many of the “street urchins” and mill workers whom Hine photographed. The reactions of the descendents have ranged from joy at finally learning something about their grandparent to rejection of any memory of the person based on how that person behaved toward their parents. One photo of boy selling newspapers led to the discovery that he had slipped into a life of crime, been imprisoned, and finally disappeared into California. Another boy selling newspapers became very successful and wealthy in later life. A girl working a seaport in Maine later became a much beloved grandmother whose art satisfied her and her relatives.

Manning did not talk about children from Pownal since he is working on another project that may lead to another story about children growing up in Pownal, and he did not want to reveal what the author might be writing about.



News from Pownal Past

Warren and Mary Louise Mason have shared the following obituary from 1892. We have deleted the name of the deceased out of respect for any descendents still living in Pownal. Despite opinions about modern journalists, today's newspapers do maintain a bit of decorum.

A Terrible Death

About 10 o'clock, Wednesday morning the neighborhood was startled by “Uncle Jim” rushing from the house and shouting for help, and saying his wife was dead. The neighbors made a prompt response, and on entering the house discovered a startling sight.

.....b`h`Ya]XXYcZh`Y`Uccf`g`hcX`U`dcf`_`VuffY`ž`ci`hcZk`\\`JW`dfclfi`XX`h`Y`ZY`hcZh`Y` aged woman. She was wedged in the barrel, head downward, as if caught in a vice, and was dead when removed. In a few minutes the report of her death had spread throughout the village and the premises were soon thronged by excited men and women who made an unsuccessful attempt at resuscitation.

The barrel was about one-third full of water, and beside it stood a low stool. It was concluded that Mrs. X had stood on the stool and bent over to wash out the barrel.

She was remarkably active for her age, and always did her own work, and Wednesday morning she was getting ready to do the family washing. She was a very short woman, only a few inches above the top


Mrs. X was well known at North Pownal where she resided a number of years, winning the love and esteem of all by her many acts of kindness towards her neighbors, her womanly qualities and christian character. The matter is being investigated.

We hope so.

On a lighter note, this also from 1892:

Daniel Haley got a lecture from his wife for wasting his household stuff for liquor. He said he should die and on Thursday drank the good part of an ounce of laudanum, but Dr. Barber was summoned and Daniel still lives, a wiser and weaker man.



<p>Officers</p> <p>Ken Held, President Fran Lampman, Vice President Charlotte Comar, Treasurer Wendy Hopkins, Secretary</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>Ted Atkinson, Programs Charles Clark Joyce Held Margaret Lillie Jeanne Overstreet Raymond Rodrgues, Newsletter Editor</p> <p>Website: www.pownal.org E-mail: pownal@comcast.net</p>	<p>Pownal Historical Society, inc. P.O. Box 313 Pownal, VT 05261</p> 	<p>Our Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise public awareness of Pownal's history: its founding fathers and its early inhabitants. • Stimulate our children's interest in the history of Pownal. • Gather and preserve historical data and artifacts. • Share with other communities data relevant to their history.
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