

Speculating How the First Meeting House in Pownal Centre Appeared

by Ted Atkinson

An authority on early New England meetinghouses was Edmund W. Sinnott, who taught at Yale. He wrote that they had a “cookie cutter” look, meaning sameness, I suppose. They tended to be “squarish” or oblong, with the main door on the south long wall, a high pulpit opposite with a sounding board to reflect the preacher’s voice, galleries on three sides, box pews, no spire, and windows upstairs and down. (Some nicknamed them “barn churches” or just plain “barns.”)

As for “colour,” white paint was expensive and difficult to make. Brown was common, or light yellow, even red. In New Haven, CT there was a famous “Blue Meetinghouse.” Shakes might have two colors, red on one side, yellow on the other.


Pew seats were hinged for additional standing room during prayers. At the end of a long extemporaneous prayer, the children would energetically slam down the seats, sounding like rifle fire a mile away. (Church goers typically stood to pray, perhaps sat to sing, unlike the Anglicans from whom they had split. They seldom faced east.)

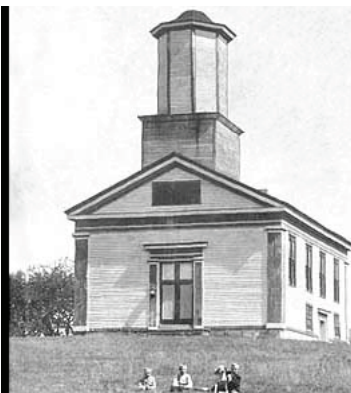
Here is a reminiscence by lawyer Thomas Eldred Brownell of the church at Pownal Center (Joe Park’s Pownal, p. 57. It may have come from a county history.) “The church at the Center was a large square building standing in the middle of the ‘green.’ It had old fashioned pews and a gallery that extended around three of its sides. Its pulpit was reached by a flight of stairs, and over the preacher’s head was suspended a soundingboard which resembled a wooden bowl.”

Tradition has it that Elder Benjamin Gardner served a log meetinghouse on Mount Anthony Road about 1771, but soon was dismissed, being very fond of the fairer sex.

The history of the first church in Pownal Centre, found on its website, describes it also as a log church: <http://pownalcenterchurch.tripod.com/id17.htm>

Save this date: 2010 -- Pownal’s 250th Anniversary

Officers	Pownal Historical Society, inc. P.O. Box 313 Pownal, VT 05261	Our Goals
Ken Held, President Fran Lampman, Vice President Charlotte Comar, Treasurer Wendy Hopkins, Secretary		<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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History of Pownal Available

Ken and Joyce Held introduced the 4th grade class of Mrs. Holcomb to the history of Pownal this school year. The children learned all about Pownal's many schools and wrote a book on them. The book is available (limited number) at the Solomon Wright Public Library for \$10. The proceeds from the book goes towards printing next year's book.



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Barn Census is Coming

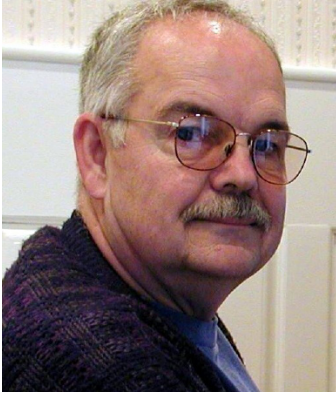
by Eve Pearce

A statewide "Barn Census" is being funded by a grant from the National Park Service and organized by a consortium of state and private organizations dedicated to the well-being of these icons of our landscape. Volunteers across Vermont will be collecting information on local barns this August 2nd and 3rd and on three additional weekends over the coming year. The submitted data will be compiled by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation the University of Vermont and made available on the web for people to learn about barns in their communities and across the state.

In Pownal, we're hoping to find as many barns as possible and learn some of the wonderful stories they have to tell. You can share in this fun inquiry either by joining us in the field for any part of the August 2-3 weekend count or by calling and sharing barn stories. Contact Eve Pearce at 823-5580 or eve@sover.net or leave a message with Pete Spencer at 823-5360. Check out the Vermont Barn Census website: uvm.edu/~barn for more information about the census and links to some excellent background information.

President's Message

by Ken Held



Last time I wrote, I asked you to look at the old homes, farms and buildings in Pownal and think of the history they represent. I spoke of preserving the past for the future. In 2010, Pownal will be celebrating its 250th Anniversary. The town has seen many changes over the centuries. Some, I am sure would make our forefathers proud, while others would probably make them want to cry. We've lost our covered bridges, some fine old schools, churches and mills. Large general stores are now just a thing of the past. Wouldn't it be nice to still have the trolley, what with the price of gas today? I know we must move forward but there are times when I feel going back would not be a bad idea.

There is an area in Pownal that whenever Joyce and I visit we can't help but feel that we have taken a step back. That's Center Street in Pownal Center. Whenever we go up to the Town Office or to visit friends we can't help but comment on how that section of Center Street looks and feels like you have taken a step back in time.

When I last wrote I spoke about the Historical Society looking into a State Historic District. We feel that this section of Pownal would be perfect for a State Historic District. A Committee was formed to investigate what it would entail. We had a telephone meeting with Sue Jamele, Register Specialist at the VT Division for Historic Preservation. Of course, we had many questions and Sue was great about taking the time to explain everything to us. This is a brief summary of what we learned.

- ☐ An area designated a state historic district does not have to be on the federal register.
- ☐ There are no restrictions for property owners in a Historic District unless federal or state money is used or if they apply for a state or federal permit (act 250).
- ☐ Although we seek town and property owners support, the application for a Historic District does not have to be approved by the town or the property owners. The listing is based on the historic architecture. It is recognition of the historic character of the area.
- ☐ Historic District is defined largely on the concentration of buildings that relate to each other as a district.

With all of this in mind, the Board decided to continue with this project. We will have a meeting this fall, inviting all the property owners, the town fathers, and the public. Maybe we can't go back in time when we visit Center Street, but we can honor the past by designating it a "Historic District."

The Mason Farm

by Charles E. Dewey (submitted by Ann Bugbee)

In 1949 my father built a camp at Vermont Outing Club in Pownal, and the family spent summers there afterwards, swimming, fishing, and investigating the surrounding area. Sometimes, my brothers and I would amuse ourselves by going to the Mason farm, which abutted the club. We would "help" bring the cows in from the pasture in the late afternoon for milking or just go over and see what was going on.



Peter Hopkins Reveals Secrets from Crane's Archives

At our April meeting, Peter Hopkins talked about some of the discoveries that he has made while working with the archives of the Crane Paper Company of Dalton, Massachusetts and summarized the history of the company.



The Crane paper company's roots date back to before the American Revolution when, in 1769, Stephen Crane became a partner of Daniel Vose in Milton, Massachusetts, and a man named Lewis. Together, they created the Liberty Paper Mill which, among other things, traded with Paul Revere and made paper cartridges for the Patriot armies. Stephen died during the Revolution, and we next learn that his son Zenas was probably apprenticed to Abijah Burbank in his mill. In 1799, Zenas went west, to the Housatonic River and the town of Dalton.

Hopkins showed examples of the ledger pages that contain, he demonstrated, many hints of what life was like in the early 1800's, with historic figures having accounts established from time to time and various items of barter used in lieu of cash.

He showed how even a document seemingly as cold as an account book could help historians learn more of their past.

Drew Gibson: Politics in 1860

Norman Judd, Illinois State Senator, spoke to us in 1860 about why he had decided to nominate Abraham Lincoln for President after casting a key vote against him for U.S. senator from Illinois a few years earlier. Drew Gibson, portraying Judd, both educated and entertained his audience at our May 18, 2008, meeting. Judd noted that one of the reasons he opposed Lincoln was because Lincoln was a Whig, Judd a Democrat.



Judd left the Democratic Party to join the newly formed Republican Party, which wanted to restrict slavery to the current slave states. He grew to respect Lincoln, who understood the constitutionality of slavery, even though he personally opposed slavery. After portraying and answering questions as Judd, Gibson answered questions as himself. He noted that slaves represented a huge economic investment in the South, their total value worth more than industries in the North, so to expect the South to willingly

abandon slavery was naïve. Lincoln, like other moderate politicians of the time, hoped slavery would simply wither away. As a Presidential candidate, Lincoln was more acceptable than politicians like Seward, who opposed slavery, because he was less likely to antagonize the South.



