

# Pownal Gateway

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

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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

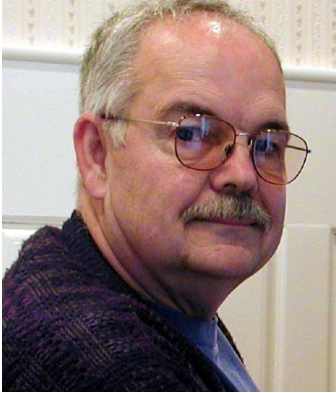
by Eve Pearce

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 stories. Contact Eve Pearce at 823-5580 or [eve@sover.net](mailto:eve@sover.net) or leave a message with Pete Spencer at 823-5360. Check out the Vermont Barn Census website: [uvm.edu/~barn](http://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,

## 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.



## **The Mason Farm, cont'd from page 2**

John Mason, who was about eighty, had been a teamster before he bought the farm. His wife, Maud, was about half his age, and they had one son, who was a teenager. John was a small, thin man with a gaunt, rough shaven face and a large Adam's apple. He had a raspy voice, and he cussed often saying "Judas" or "Judas Priest." He was unable to do much of the farm work, but he had a strong voice.

The farm was a true hill farm, which had about ninety-eight acres encompassing a large hill. The house and a cluster of small, unpainted, weathered, gray barns and sheds were located at the foot of the hill on a dirt road. On the other side of the road from the house there was a brook, which is where the Mason's bull was led with a small pole connected to a ring in its nose to get a drink.

The Guernsey bull was tethered by the ring in its nose to a large iron gear in the farm yard. Not long after I had seen the bull for the first time it was taken away, and the Masons began to use artificial insemination. Maud Mason, one day, was excited about the prospect of getting a Brown Swiss calf from one of the Guernsey cows. I couldn't understand how that could happen, but it did, and Maud named the calf Dotti.

There were twenty or thirty cows, which we followed down the hill from the pasture at milking time. They would gather near the barn gate and wait to be let in. As the cows entered the barn each one went to its assigned wooden stanchion. If one went into the wrong stanchion it would be addressed by its name and made to move into the correct stanchion. Then the udders were washed, and the cows were milked by a machine. Afterwards, the Masons would finish milking them by hand in order to get any remaining milk. The milk was put into cans and taken to the milk house where they were placed in a tank of cold water.

When we first went to the farm the Masons didn't have a tractor, and they were using horses. They had a mismatched pair made up of a short dark gelding with big feet and a tall roan mare.

The horses were used for haying, and they were hitched to machines which cut, tedded, and raked the hay into wind rows. Then, they were hitched to a hay wagon with a hay loader hitched to the back of the wagon, and driven over the wind rows. The hay loader dumped the hay into the wagon and the hay was spread with pitch forks until the wagon was filled. The loader was disconnected, and the hay was taken to the barn.

The hay wagon was drawn into the barn, and the horse were unhitched and taken outside where they were hitched to the hay fork tow rope. The hay fork, which had two long prongs was pushed into the hay on the wagon, and the clamps on the ends of the prongs were locked. Then, the horses would pull a huge pile of hay up with pulleys attached to the fork as the barn timbers creaked and groaned. The hay fork would lock into a trolley, which was on a track mounted on the barn's ridge pole. The load of hay would be pulled along the ridge pole track and released into the mow by a quick jerk on the release rope. Pitch forks were used to spread the hay in the mow.

The Masons had a large vegetable garden on the south side of their house, a potato field and apple trees across the road from the house, and they kept some chickens. They bought their first pickup truck, which they called a car, in 1952. Soon afterwards they gave up their horses after the hay wagon tipped over on the hillside when returning with a load of hay, and they bought a Massey-Ferguson tractor.



From the: *Bennington Banner*, Monday, June 28, 1976.

## The Past Lives in Pownal

By Pam Blakeman

POWNAL - Pownal celebrated the nation's 200th birthday Saturday with a variety of activities on the village green in Pownal Center. The Pownal Center Community Church held their annual Strawberry Festival, a flea market and a buffet supper, pony rides and antique car rides were given and there were games for the children and exhibitions of square dancing.

In the Town Office were exhibitions of glass and pewter, quilts, stone artifacts and pictures and articles about Pownal. The highlight of the day was the historical program and the dedication of the new addition to the Town Office and the unveiling of the portrait of Thomas Pownall, for whom the town was named. The "town crier" for the day was William Hayes.

Gary Lampman as Thomas Pownall was the master of ceremonies for the program. The flag salute was led by Lt. Col. Robert Jarvis, Fletcher Hall and David Ricker, Sr. followed by the "Star Spangled Banner" played by the Bicentennial Band and "America the Beautiful", a trumpet solo, by Fred Farnum. The original town charter was read by Bennington Wentworth played by A. Coleman Mason. Charles Palmer as Seth Hudson, Harold Hicks as Sam Robinson and Dan Mason Sr. as Issac VanEanum gave excerpts from early town meetings. The arrival of early families to the town was portrayed by Bernard Bison, Henry Montgomery and Samuel Cottrell and their families. Thomas Pownall, alias Gary Lampman, told the story of the Rev. Nathan Perkins' description of the town in 1789.

Joan Snyder sang "Faith of our Fathers" accompanied on the organ by Robert Thompson. An early school scene was depicted by April Haley, Cindy Garrison, Kim Held, Ken Held, Dennis Horan, Tammy Smith and Todd Smith followed by a summary of transportation by Bernard Bison as James Fisk. "The Ride of Paul Revere" was read by Nicholas Fersen followed by selection by the band. Members of the band are Edwin Bourgault, Fred Farnum, Cindy Garrison, Nicky Gile, Fletcher Hall, Terri Mason, David Ricker Sr., Ellen Strohmaier, Lori Taylor and Pam Taylor.

The senior citizens, including Audrea Bowen, Yvette DuBois, Elva Montgomery and Margaret Rhodes, reenacted a quilting party while Robert Thompson played selections on the organ. The recognition of veterans followed. Joan Snyder sang, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "God Bless America" accompanied by Robert Thompson, followed by a short story by Nicholas Fersen. "The Old Gray Mare" and "Camp Town Races" were played on the organ by Thompson to mark the coming of Green Mountain Park Race Track to Pownal in 1960.

Charles Mason dedicated the addition to the Town Office and Mrs. Rachel Mason unveiled the portrait of Thomas Pownall, painted by Mrs. Mildred Gray of Pownal. Mrs. Gladys Mason read a poem and Miss Ellen Lillie read President Gerald Ford's message to the town. Then Charles Palmer presented a basket of flowers to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mason to mark their 54th wedding anniversary which they observed recently and Joan Snyder sang a song which Mrs. Mason had requested her to sing on the occasion of their golden anniversary. After "America" was sung by all those present, the flag was retired.

Later in the evening square dancing was held to the music of the Cortland Cottrell Band.

NOTE: In the church scrap book there are pictures of Mildred Gray & Rachel Mason unveiling the picture of Thomas Pownall; Bill Hayes as the Town Crier; the group "How to Change a Flat Tire" providing Irish folk music; the flea market on the church lawn; the Carriage Barn ready for the buffet supper; and Conrad Chaffee giving rides.



## 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.



# 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
<b>Ken Held, President</b> <b>Fran Lampman, Vice President</b> <b>Charlotte Comar, Treasurer</b> <b>Wendy Hopkins, Secretary</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise public awareness of Pownal’s history: its founding fathers and its early inhabitants.</li><li>• Stimulate our children’s interest in the history of Pownal.</li><li>• Gather and preserve historical data and artifacts.</li><li>• Share with other communities data relevant to their history.</li></ul>
<b>Board Members</b> <b>Ted Atkinson, Programs</b> <b>Charles Clark</b> <b>Joyce Held</b> <b>Margaret Lillie</b> <b>Jeanne Overstreet, Membership</b> <b>Raymond Rodrigues, Newsletter</b> <b>Sue Sweeney</b>	<b>Thomas Pownall</b>	
<b>Website: <a href="http://www.pownal.org">www.pownal.org</a></b> <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:pownal@comcast.net">pownal@comcast.net</a></b> <b>Wiki: <a href="http://pownal.pbwiki.com">http://pownal.pbwiki.com</a></b>		

