



# Pownal Gateway

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 21, 2 p.m.**  
**PHS Open Meeting**  
**Grace Greylock Niles**  
**Pownal Library**

**June 20 9 am. to 5 p.m.**  
**Ethan Allen Days**  
**Bennington**

## Steve Kauppi: Ancient Roads Identified

At our March 22 meeting, Selectman Steve Kauppi talked about the ancient roads that the Pownal ancient roads committee investigated. The

State charged all communities with determining which old and possibly abandoned roads should be officially designated as town roads and which should be allowed to remain unofficial trails. Many roads were originally farm roads moving from field to field, logging

roads, or even well travelled roads used up until recent years. Over time, trees have grown up in the roads, ATVers have used them, or the roads have been absorbed into more recent constructions.



The committee proposed that 5 ancient roads be converted into official town roads: Woods Road, Tubs Road, Pearl Hill Road, Dummy Noble Road, and Montgomery Road. Woods road begins on the west side of the Hoosic River in North Pownal, is partially washed away, passes through some private properties, and may be converted into a hiking trail. (Cont'd on p. 2)

## Anson Mason: Pownal--Historic Crossroad

Following the April business meeting of the Historical Society, Anson Mason presented some of his observations on Pownal's history based upon its

geographic location. Anson began by discussing his ancestor, English naval captain, John Mason, who is considered the founder of New Hampshire. In 1622, Mason and Ferdinando Gorges were granted all the territory between the Merrimac and Kennebec Rivers. In 1629, they were given the Laconia Grant, designed to interfere with the French fur trade. This may have extended their property as far as Lake Champlain,


though no exact maps existed at that time. Anson believes his ancestor established trade routes as far as Albany and that a route passed through Pownal. John Mason died in 1635, leaving his descendants to carry on an almost century-long fight in the courts to establish their rights.

(Cont'd on p. 2)



## Who Was Thomas Pownall?

- At the time *Pownal's* charter was signed by Benning Wentworth, who was the Governor of New Hampshire, Thomas Pownall was the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Wentworth's designating a place named after Pownall was typical of Wentworth's naming places after the powerful and the rich, a political patronage effort designed to pay off in the future. Pownall never saw Pownal, but his accomplishments were many.
- Pownall came to America in 1753 to serve as the Secretary to the royal Governor of New York. He became Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1757. In that role, he became very active in pursuing the war against the French and, in the process, learned much about the geography of the English colonies and Canada. In 1759 he was appointed Governor of South Carolina. After the French and Indian War, in 1764 he published *The Administration of the Colonies*, in which he argued that Americans were loyal Englishmen and that Britain should treat them as equals.
- In 1776 he published *A Topographical Description of Such parts of North America as are Contained in the (Annexed) Map of the Middle British Colonies*, an extremely detailed description of seacoasts and inland areas of New England and the middle Atlantic states. He writes of our area in his 1784 revision of *The Topography*: "It consists of One high Range only with hilly Lands and not Ridges on each Side, suited for very fine Settlements. This is The Tract of Country now settled & called *Vermont*." Pownall did not travel through our area, but he made use of Captain Humphrey Hobbs' journal to learn about it.
- Although he returned to England before the Revolution, he continued to remain a friend of people in the English colonies and to argue that they be treated equally. So we should honor his memory as a friend of the American people, a political philosopher, a naturalist, a geographer, and a prolific researcher and writer.  
--RJR

<p><b>Officers</b></p> <p>Ken Held, President  Fran Lampman, Vice President  Charlotte Comar, Treasurer  Wendy Hopkins, Secretary</p> <p><b>Board Members</b>  Ted Atkinson, Programs  Charles Clark  Joyce Held  Margaret Lillie  Jeanne Overstreet, Membership  Sue Sweeney</p> <hr/> <p>Newsletter: Raymond Rodrigues  Website: <a href="http://www.pownal.org">www.pownal.org</a>  E-mail: <a href="mailto:pownal@comcast.net">pownal@comcast.net</a>  Wiki: <a href="http://pownal.pbworks.com">http://pownal.pbworks.com</a></p>	<p><b>Pownal Historical Society, inc.</b>  P.O. Box 313  Pownal, VT 05261</p>  <p>Thomas Pownall</p>	<p><b>Our Goals</b></p> <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>
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## Ancient Roads (from p. 1)

Tubs Road begins in North Pownal and continues to the New York State line, where it may continue. Dummy Noble Road leads off Old Military Road. The fifth road, Montgomery Road, starts near the racetrack, drops behind Pearl Hill, and goes to Massachusetts.

One Historical Society member objected to the designation “dummy,” since it carries such a negative connotation about persons with disabilities. The name referred to a man who lived along the road, but was a mute. Steve indicated that he would take the request to the Select Board.

[Note: In a recent action, the Select Board changed the name of Dummy Noble Road to Noble

## Historic Crossroad (from p. 1)

Anson noted that the Mohawks passed through the Pownal valley on their way to and from raids in Massachusetts, including the raid on Fort Massachusetts, which was in East Hoosick, today known as North Adams. He pointed out that patriot soldiers marched through Pownal on the way to the Battle of Bennington. And finally, he discussed the airport that used to exist in North Pownal and that was funded by the Roosevelt administration when Bennington did not accept the idea of the airport being established there.

[Note: The photograph on page one was taken by Frank Giorandino, one of our members.]

## Mooar-Wright-Devoet House Update

Gary and Jean Dickson, both Pownal Historical Society members, are in the process of purchasing and renovating the Mooar-Wright-Devoet house, which many PHS members believe may be the oldest house in Pownal and possibly the oldest house in Vermont.



Margaret Lillie, PHS Board member, purchased the house in 1994 in the hopes that the PHS could buy the house and use it as a museum and PHS visitors' center. Fund-raising efforts did not raise the necessary amount.

The Dicksons plan to restore the home over five years. The first phase, restoring the chimney and the roof, is almost done.

This photograph, by Frank Giorandino, shows the house's roof being repaired.



## What Loads They Drew!      provided by Joe Towslee

This letter was written by Lauriston Wilcox to Ned Towslee, Joe's father, in 1959. Wilcox's farm, now owned by Eve Pearce, was the farm on the northwest corner of Carpenter Hill Road and "Dark Woods Road," or the North Pownal Road from Pownal Center.

July 2, 1959

Ned,

Your wife referred about your Uncle Albert's horses burning to Myrtle when they were ballot clerks.

It takes me back a lot of years and it is not much work for me to sit here and go over with a pen what happened 64 years ago.

I do not remember what year the horses burned. The barn stood about where Ladd Brook gas pumps are. [Here Mr. Wilcox provides a drawing of the barn and open shed west of route 7 and across route 7 from the John Maximilian house and the Barsen's house.]

You remember when Win Proud was there there was a cellar hole on the corner. It burned several years before the shed and barn burned.

I believe that the report was at the time that some tramp spent the night on the hay in the barn and he was the cause of the fire.

Back in 1895 my father sold a timber lot to Arthur Parker's grandfather. There were a lot of big heavy hardwood logs.

I well remember Jake and Jerry, a bay and a chestnut. Your uncle Linus told me they never weighed more than 2200 lbs for the pair. The other teams were grays and must have weighed better than 2400. Your Uncle Al drew those logs from the farm down to McCumber's sawmill which stood on the lot where the Pownal fire house now stands.

What loads they drew! I remember particularly Jake and Jerry. When you touched those lines you wanted to be ready to go. They did not care anymore about a 2 inch white oak evener than as if it were made of pie crust. One day I saw them hitched to a log and one end of it was frozen down. When Uncle Al touched those lines, pop went that evener. All I heard was "I wish someone would make us some whiffle trees they could not break!"

All this is so vivid to me after all these years. If it happened now I would forget it in two days.

Lauriston Wilcox

[Note: For us flatlanders—an "evener" is a pivoted horizontal crossbar for attaching horses to plows or other farm implements in a way that distributes the load evenly between each of the horses. Some of us know them as "doubletrees." Eveners have even been made for three or more horses. Mr. Wilcox uses "whiffle tree" as a synonym for evener. RJR]



## Upcoming Meetings

### **Sunday, June 21, 2 PM: Our June Meeting: “Who Was Grace Greylock Niles?”**

Allison Bell and Maida Goodwin are working on a book about Pownal's own Grace Greylock Niles, author of “Bog-Trotting for Orchids” and “Hoosac Valley: Its Legends and History.” Come spend the afternoon with us hearing about their progress on this project--how they got interested in Grace and the various places the research has taken them. Share your thoughts and memories and see if you can help them fill some of the gaps in Grace's story. Sunday, June 21st at 2PM at the Solomon Wright Library, Main St, Pownal. For more information contact Ken & Joyce Held at 802-823-5536 or email at [pownal@comcast.net](mailto:pownal@comcast.net)

### **Saturday to Sunday, June 20-21: Ethan Allen Days**

Bennington will host Ethan Allen Days in the large field west of town, by the antique and craft complex. The Ethan Allen Colonial Fair will bring together historical societies, places, and crafts to create a family atmosphere and experience. Exhibitions and demonstrations will entertain children of all ages. Period song and dance, musical instruments, games, and farm and home crafts will be presented. The 25th Continental Regiment will be encamped on the grounds for the weekend and will present a two-day battle. The stories of Mathew Lyon, Anthony Haswell, and the Alien and Sedition Acts will be told. Ray Rodrigues, editor of this newsletter, will talk about the Ethan Allen few of us know. Route 9 West in Bennington, Vermont. June 20th & 21st of 2009. 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. both days. For more information: (518) 526-3400.

### **Saturday, May 30, 2009, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM: Hike Grace Greylock Niles Trail**

Location: Mountain Meadow Preserve

Join The Trustees of Reservations to explore the newly designated Grace Greylock Niles Trail on a 2 mile guided hike from lower Mountain Meadow to a scenic overlook near the Vermont state line. This ruggedly beautiful landscape was home to former author and botanist Grace Greylock Niles. Hike leaders Pam Weatherbee and other Trustees volunteers and staff will point out the unique plants and landforms found along the way and will share brief quotations from Niles 1904 book, Bog Trotting for Orchids. Free. Please meet at Lower Mountain Meadow (Mason Street entrance). For more information, Telephone: 413-298-3239 x3003 or e-mail: [westregion@ttor.org](mailto:westregion@ttor.org)

## Help Find and Identify Old Photographs

We're looking for old photographs to be included in a photo book of Pownal in the past. If you or your friends or neighbors have such old photos, please let Charlotte Comar ([charcomar@comcast.net](mailto:charcomar@comcast.net)), Wendy Hopkins ([whopkins1@gmail.com](mailto:whopkins1@gmail.com)), or Ray Rodrigues ([raymond\\_rodrigues@msn.com](mailto:raymond_rodrigues@msn.com)) know. And if you know that lady standing in front of the Community Church, let one of us know, too.





## Volunteers Plan 250th Anniversary Events

At a meeting held at the American Legion, twenty-eight people showed up to volunteer their time and ideas for celebrating the 250th anniversary of Pownal during the year 2010. The enthusiasm of the participants soon took over, and now we have a list of approximately 50 projects and ideas that people will be working on. We are still looking for more volunteers to either lead projects or to join those who have volunteered to lead projects open to the entire town.

The projects that people are working on include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Barbara Luscia will sell squares of cloth to any of us who will then add our names and designs to them. She will then sew them all into a quilt to be held by the PHS for posterity.
- The Library will create a map showing where we all hail from, plant a commemorative tree, and hold a bonfire.
- Randy and Sandy Monhollen will hold a "one-pitch softball tournament" & create a town-wide garage sale.
- Jimmy Winchester will serve as contact for anniversary events at the Pownal Valley Fair.
- T.J. Norris and master gardeners will hold a wildflower walk.
- Ken Norris will gather Pownal writers to publish a book of short stories, poems, and essays.
- HOORWA will open a trail to the Taconic Crest and sponsor Hoosic River Appreciation Day.
- The Rescue Squad will hold their 50th anniversary event.
- The PHS will hold an event to celebrate Pownal Center as a new State historic district.
- The Dicksons will host a Mooar-Wright-Devoet house opening.
- Ken and Joyce Held will write another Pownal history book with the elementary school 4th graders.
- Diane Lamb will pull together a "Sugar-on-Snow" party in the summer.
- Gary Dickson will work with local churches to compile their histories.
- Sue Sweeney will develop a paper calendar to be sold before Christmas arrives to raise funds for the events.
- Kathy Gaffney will put together an auction to raise funds for the year's events.
- Pauline Guntlow will arrange for a 250th anniversary table at the Pownal Valley Fair and work on a scavenger hunt.
- The Swinging Seniors will provide an inexpensive lunch for everyone who votes in March.
- The Pownal Valley Fair will open once again.
- Bagpipers will play at one or more key events.
- The Elementary School will bring the Bread and Puppet Theatre to town for all to see during school hours.
- The Elementary School classes will display their Pownal History projects at their annual history day.
- Walt Klinger will explore providing period broadsheets and a "Jim Fisk Weekend."
- Frank Giorandino will investigate reproduction rights for famous paintings and photos of Pownal.
- Charlotte Comar, Wendy Hopkins, and Ray Rodrigues will collect photos for a book of old Pownal photos.

Other people are still exploring possible events or souvenirs to be created and sold, so this list is not intended to be final. **And we need more volunteers to either create and carry out events or to join any one of the people listed above to work with them on the projects they've proposed.** Feel free to call or write any of them or: charcomar@comcast.net, whopkins1@gmail.com, or raymond\_rodrigues@msn.com.

And mark your calendars now: January 8th, at 7 p.m. the opening event of the anniversary year will be held in the Elementary School gymnasium.

