



Pownal Gateway

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 19 PHS Meeting
Bronck Museum
Meet at 9 a.m.
Pownal Library

January 8th, 6 p.m.
Pownal's 250th
Anniversary kicks off
Elementary School
Gymnasium

Grace Greylock Niles

On June 21st, Allison Bell and Maida Goodwin presented their current research findings on the life of Grace Greylock Niles, author of *Bog-Trotting for Orchids* and *The Hoosac Valley—Its Legends and History*. Bell and Goodwin both discovered Niles as a result of their being volunteers in the New England Wildlife Society. They have been searching for the same orchid sites that Niles writes of in her bog-trotting book, but have had some difficulty since Niles assigned her own place names to those sites and the environment has changed somewhat since she wrote about it.

Below, Allison Bell (left) and Maida Goodwin (right) show what they believe may be photographs of Niles to Pownal Historical Society members Walt Klinger, Gary and Jean Dixon, plus others outside the photo. (Photo by Joyce Held)



They recounted how one of the earliest things they learned about Niles was that she had burned down her house on property that is now part of the Land Conservancy and had suffered some kind of mental collapse. That information only piqued their interest.

Niles was born Grace Stoddard Niles in Pownal, may have taught in Pownal, and attended Cooper Union in New York City, where she may have learned her photographic skills, but did not graduate. In 1894 she enrolled in the Orange Training School for Nurses, but was denied graduation after two years because she wrote verses and "was eccentric." Though she filed a lawsuit to graduate, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled against her in a precedent-setting case.

She began renting in 1915 and sued Vanderpool Adriance, the owner of the property, for damages caused by a fire. She bought the property in 1920 and apparently set fire to her house in September 1927. The foundation that currently exists along upper White Oaks Road may be that of her house, but whether it is has yet to be confirmed, and some believe it was across the road from this site.

(cont'd on p. 3)

Images of America Book: Pownal

Charlotte Comar, Wendy Hopkins, and Ray Rodrigues are pleased to tell you that your contributions of old photos of Pownal have enabled them to approach their deadline for publishing a collection of old Pownal photos with good feelings. Many members and non-members have allowed them to scan their photos. If you still have a photo or two or more that you think would be a good contribution to the book, you need to let them know immediately. E-mail charcomar@comcast.net, whopkins1@gmail.com, or Raymond_rodrigues@msn.com.


They are looking for photos that go back before World War II, that show people engaged in some activity of the day, and that have a story behind them that can be captured in a brief caption of a few sentences. Certain subjects are missing in their collection, such as workers at the quarry in North Pownal, Mexican War or Civil War or Spanish American War soldiers or nurses from Pownal, and early sawmills. But other subjects are welcome. Since their final deadline is rapidly approaching, if you have old, clear photos that you want in this collection, let them know as soon as possible. [Mystery photo: Who is the lady in front of the Community Church in the page one, upper left photo?]

Pownal Facebook

Sue Sweeney has created a Facebook page for Pownal's 250th anniversary celebration. Go to: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pownal-2010/75908934709>

January 8, 2010

Save this date for the opening event of Pownal's 250th Anniversary celebration: 6 p.m. at the Elementary School gymnasium.

Officers Ken Held, President Fran Lampman, Vice President Charlotte Comar, Treasurer Wendy Hopkins, Secretary Board Members Ted Atkinson, Programs Joyce Held Margaret Lillie Jeanne Overstreet, Membership Sue Sweeney <hr/> Newsletter: Raymond Rodrigues Website: www.pownal.org E-mail: pownal@comcast.net Wiki: http://pownal.pbworks.com	Pownal Historical Society, inc. P.O. Box 313 Pownal, VT 05261  Thomas Pownall	Our Goals <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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A Brooklyn Boy Moves to Vermont

by Henry W. Bassen

It was August 1945 and the end of World War II, and the family decided it was time for a vacation trip to Manchester, Vt. We hadn't been there since before the war.

On the way, we stopped in Pownal, a small town just north of the Massachusetts border, to eat the lunch we had brought along. We pulled off the road at the site of a dairy bar with cabins around it. But everything was boarded up. My father had always dreamed of owning a dairy bar and cabins. After we ate, he and I explored the property. Then we went across the brook to the general store and asked why the place was boarded up.

We learned that the business was owned by an elderly couple, Winfield and Emma Proud, who lived in the big house across the road. After my father got their telephone number, we went on our way. While we were vacationing that week, Dad called the Prouds. When he learned that their dairy bar and cabins were for sale, he got excited and told them he was interested in buying it.

Back in Brooklyn, he asked his mother and step-father if they would like to go in business together. They bought the place for \$23,000. It consisted of eight cabins, a dairy bar with Shell gas pumps, a 15-room, two-family house and 23 acres.

When we told our friends we were moving to the country, everyone thought we were crazy. "You can't take a boy from the city and raise him in the country," they'd say. Well, we were about to prove them wrong.

We moved in on March 26, 1946. Our caravan included a semitruck with two households of furniture, two cars (a 1931 Pontiac and a 1940 Nash), the five of us, two cats and a dog. . . .

I had a lot to learn: how to pump gas, check oil, water and batteries, and wash windshields; how to scoop ice cream, was dishes and wait on customers; and how to wash sheets and towels, and hang them out to dry. The prices on our menus take me back to simpler times: coffee, 10 cents a cup; juice, 10 cents a glass; two eggs and toast, 40 cents; bacon, two eggs and toast, 50 cents; bacon, tomato and lettuce sandwich, 30 cents; Western sandwich, 30 cents; hot dog, 15 cents; hamburgers, 20 cents.

We had eight flavors of Borden's ice cream at a time when that many varieties were unheard of. We sold hand-packed quarts for 75 cents. Our six booths could seat 24 people for breakfast, lunch and dinner. My mother made all the pies from scratch. When things were slow in the dairy bar, she went home and ironed the linens for the cabins. Grandma did all the grilling and helped with the ice cream. She and Pop Bassen had once owned their own ice-cream parlor in Woodhaven, N.Y.

In 1947, I raised chickens for eggs and was making \$15 per week. My future wife worked summers for us as a waitress during her college years. We married in 1953.

Many people had said that you can't take a city boy and move him to the country, but I proved them wrong. Those were the best times of my life, and they gave this "city boy" lots to remember from the Good Old Days.

The above article was copied with permission of the author: Bassen, Henry W. "A Brooklyn Boy Moves to Vermont," *Good Old Days Looking Back*. June/July 2009. V. 36. N. 4, pp. 58-59, 68.



Upcoming Meeting

Bronck Museum Trip, September 19, 2009

Join us for a car trip to the Bronck Museum on Saturday, September 19. We will meet at 9 a.m. in front of the Solomon Wright Library to car pool to the Museum, so we also welcome anyone who will volunteer to drive. We suggest that folks bring a picnic lunch along with them.

Many of us in Pownal know that tenant farmers occupied farms that were part of the patroonship of Rensselaerwyck in the mid 1700s. That makes Pownal one of the earliest places settled in Vermont by Europeans. We also believe that there still remain houses or parts of houses that were built by these “Dutch” settlers. So a visit to the Bronck can help all of us understand those early settlers better.

The Bronck is an amazing place. Here is what their website says: “More than 300 years of Upper Hudson Valley history are reflected in the cluster of architecturally significant buildings which comprise the Bronck Museum. After eight generations of Broncks had maintained the homestead as a working farm, it came to the Greene County Historical Society under the will of Leonard Bronk Lampman. This legacy is a permanent memorial to his mother Adelaide Ely Bronk Lampman, a lineal descendant of Pieter Bronck, original grantee and first builder on the land in 1663. The Greene County Historical Society maintains the Bronck Farmstead as its headquarters and as a museum to house valuable historical collections which reflect the region’s history.” A member of their Historical Society will give us a personal tour. Please join us for what should be a wonderful experience.

If you plan to go, please let Ray Rodrigues know so that he can coordinate car poolers: 802.823.0198 or raymond_rodrigues@msn.com

Grace Niles, cont’d

After her home burned, Niles appeared soon after at the Sand Springs Hotel in Williamstown and was then assigned to an institution for “dementia praecox,” an all-inclusive diagnosis in those days. She died there in 1943 and is buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery.

Bell and Goodwin have been trying to find photos of Niles and may have found two or three in which a young woman appears who resembles the one confirmed photo of her. They admire Niles for her pioneering work in botany and for the passion and detail of her writing.

They hope to publish a biography of Niles by the time of the Historical Society’s annual meeting in 2010, but, in the meantime, are seeking any and all information that people can provide them about this early historian, botanist, and writer from Pownal.

