

Pownal Gateway

Pownal Historical Society, Inc.

September 2008

Vol. 6 No. 6

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Barn Census Off to a Good Start

by Eve Pearce

The Barn Census got off to a great start here in Pownal on August 2nd when our group of twelve terrific volunteers set off by foot, car and bicycle to collect notes, photographs and stories of Pownal's barns. The participants--Pete Spencer, Sue Sweeney, Rose-Marie Pelletier, T.J. Norris, Ken Norris, Dawn Rodrigues, Ray Rodrigues, Jane Radocchia, Julius Rosenwald, Jordan Schell-Lambert, and Pauline Guntlow--split up into six working groups, each of which chose a different area to cover. Despite some rain, we were still all cheerful when we reconvened late in the afternoon to share our experiences and some excellent food.

The Barn Census is a first of its kind statewide survey funded by a grant from the National Parks Service, administered by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, and conducted by volunteers in each of Vermont's towns. The information and photographs we gathered are being submitted to a statewide data bank which is housed at UVM and which will be accessible to everyone. We are also considering ways in which we might share the information we gather in Pownal with the rest of our community. Suggestions are welcome.

We found that surveying takes some time but is very rewarding. We've also realized that Pownal is definitely a community rich in barns, so our work will be ongoing. There are three more officially designated survey weekends in the coming year, the next of which is October 18th and 19th. Some of us will also be following up on leads in the meantime.

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Conflict between the English of Pownal and the Tenant Farmers on the Manor of Rensselaerwyck

Occasionally we come across historical bits of information that give us insights into life in the past that never appear in our common knowledge or conventional wisdom. So it was that the following entry in *The History of Rensselaer County, New York*, by Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, 1880, caught our attention:


“At and near the junction of the Little Hoosick with the Hoosick was the settlement known in colonial records as Hosack. . . . This settlement in part was *within* the limits of the town of Petersburg, and in the manor of Rensselaerswyck. An old map of the Rensselaer Manor gives the names of seventeen householders; three of these, Hans Creiger, Peter Voss, and Bastiane Deil, in a complaint made in 1764, with reference to being driven off by men of Pownal, stated that they had been in peaceable possession of their farms for several years, which carries the *date of these settlements* back to quite an early date.”

Today, as the conflicts between ethnic groups across the world seem to be in the news every day, it helps us understand our own past by realizing that even Pownal seems to have had its own conflicts. The tenant farmers within the borders of present-day Pownal were descendents of the early Dutch settlers of New York, and it *appears* that conflicts between ethnic groups took place even here in Pownal.

The “Bleeker Map,” showing the northeast corner of Rensselaerwyck in 1767, shows a number of farms owned by these tenant farmers. You can view the map on our Historical Society website, www.pownal.org.

Pownal Genealogies

Charlie Clark continues to gather genealogies of families that have lived in Pownal and to work on integrating them so that we can have a more extensive record of people who once lived in Pownal, as well as those who still live here. If you would like to contribute to these genealogies, or if you have questions about your family, contact Charlie at: ccclark2440@yahoo.com.

<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, Membership Raymond Rodrigues, Newsletter Sue Sweeney</p> <p>Website: www.pownal.org E-mail: pownal@comcast.net Wiki: http://pownal.pbwiki.com</p>	<p>Pownal Historical Society, inc. P.O. Box 313 Pownal, VT 05261</p> <div>  </div> <p>Thomas Pownall</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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Select Board Endorses 250th Anniversary Preparations

The Pownal Select Board has begun the official preparations for Pownal to celebrate its 250th anniversary during the year 2010. Select Board Chair Nelson Brownell said, “The Pownal Select Board supports 250th anniversary planning and hopes that the entire community contributes to the process. We have asked that those who wish to volunteer let the town administrative assistants know that they wish to serve on a committee of interest to them. All ideas for activities that might occur on 250th anniversary are welcome and encouraged. The more group or single one person activities the better.” Call 823-7757 to let the Town Clerk know you’re interested in planning an event or more.

The Select Board hopes that existing organizations in town will each take charge of at least one activity during the year, but encourages individuals to volunteer to lead activities. Musical events, historical events, picnics, group presentations, existing events such as the Pownal Fair and the Taste of Pownal—all and any ideas are welcome. The Select Board will announce an organizing meeting in the future.

Historical Society member Bill Botzow notes that Pownal’s anniversary falls one year before those of many other towns that were chartered in 1761, and so Pownal has the chance to lead the State by its example.

A General Research Tool: The Boston Evening Transcript

By Ted Atkinson

The *Boston Evening Transcript* published wonderful genealogical articles two and three times a week from 1900 to 1940. They contained lists of gravestones, births, deaths, and marriages, and even some biographical material (e.g., the Niles family of Pownal). Submitters were known by their initials or nicknames, such as “Shawhin” and “Tacitus.”

A prominent contributor was William Bradford Browne (“WBBN”), who professionally was a recorder of deeds in Adams, as well as a keen antiquarian and genealogist. He copied data from all over New England and was especially enamored of Rhode Island families in Pownal and Cheshire, having Rhode Island roots himself.

Here is one published quote of his, which appeared in the *New England Register* in 1911:

Pownal, VT, which is geographically among the Berkshire Hills and easily surpasses most of the towns in Berkshire, MA, in beauty, is an extremely interesting town genealogically. It is really a portion of East and West Greenwich and Kingston, RI, transplanted intact to Vermont. As the Bates, Sherman, Gardner, Myers, Niles, Matteson, Barber, Pratt, and other families intermarried in RI until they were practically all related, so did these same families upon removal to Pownal continue the same practice, and have continued it ever since. A comparison of the town records with those of East and West Greenwich shows curious results—the similarity of names and the combination of names being astonishing.

All of these *Transcript* data are indexed in the many (247) volumes of the *American Bibliographical and Genealogical Index*. For a number of years, the articles were cut out and pasted in out-dated large magazine-size books, like the size of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Some repositories had very good sets: Boston Public Library, Connecticut Historical Society (Hartford), the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester) and a rural town in Maine, all of which required a lot of driving. But eventually a complete set was filmed, and today most genealogical libraries, like the Bennington Museum Library, have all the articles on microfilm.

This unique newspaper—no ads—was immortalized by the poet T. S. Eliot in a short poem of the same name, in which he contrasted its dry intellectualism with the excitement of many as the evening hours descended on Boston. Be that as it may, the *Transcript* had three long genealogical articles per week, and they had no equal for forty years.

To summarize, all you need is the index (at the Bennington Museum), the microfiche cards (at the Museum), a viewer (at the Museum) and a little time. What could be simpler or more rewarding?!

Continued from page 1.

We would love to have your help with this project. You could help prepare survey routes or join a survey “team” or help us put our findings together. Perhaps you’re a member of a group that would like to get involved or maybe you teach a class of interested students? Do you have a barn you’d like us to know about? Please call. You can survey on your own or join in with the group we’ve started up. We’d love to hear from you. In Pownal you can contact Eve Pearce at 823-5580 or eve@sover.net. To check out the statewide effort and for interesting educational material, go to www.uvm.edu/~barns. An excellent (but optional) training session is being offered this fall in Cornwall. Phone 802-674-6752.



Jim Gilbert allowed us to copy this photo of his farm taken around 1900 from the hill across from the farm. We can see three barns that no longer exist on the property, the largest barn in the center dating from the 1740s. The gradual disappearance of barns across Vermont (and the rest of the country) is one of the primary reasons why the barn census was conceived: so that we can have a record of barns for the future.



The way that the corner post and beam comes together with the roof rafter can tell us a great deal about the possible age of a barn or house.

History of Pownal Schools Available

Copies of the book that Ken and Joyce Held worked on with Pownal's Fourth Grade students are available in the library for \$10.00

Upcoming Events

Sunday, September 14, 2 p.m., Bagpipes: Their Music and Lore at the Solomon Wright Public Library

Pownal resident Doreen Forney discusses the history of bagpipes and plays some pieces to illustrate her talk. Doreen has played her bagpipes at events ranging from graduations to marriages to funerals and brings her enthusiasm to us at the Library. For more information, call **823-5400**.

Thursday, September 18, 7 p.m.: *Memoir of a Green Mountain Boy* Author Speaks at the Northshire Bookstore in Manchester.

Beginning and ending in Pownal, this novel traces the adventures of a young man who follows Ethan Allen into adventure after adventure as they capture Fort Ticonderoga, attack Canada and fail, lobby the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, avoid gangs in New York City, and attack Canada again and fail yet again. The climax at the Battle of Bennington changes him forever.

Sunday, September 21: Pownal Historical Society meeting at the Museum of Black World War II History, 2 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Bruce Bird will give us an orientation to the museum and talk about the accomplishments of black military during World War II. Located in the old Oak Hill School at 179 Oak Hill School Road, between Route 7 and Route 349 in the village of Pownal, the museum was created by Bruce Bird to honor the memory of those African Americans who served in the military during World War II. For more information, go to: www.blackww2history.org

Sunday, September 28th: Mark Twain Speaks at 2 p.m.

The Pownal Library sponsors actor Bern Budd of Marshfield, MA, as Twain musing on “that damned human race!” Linda Hall brings Budd to Pownal through a Vermont Humanities Council grant that she secured. A member of the National Storytelling Network, Budd has performed in a variety of plays and has presented his portrayal of Twain across New England. For more information, call Linda at: **823-5400**.

October 12th: The Third Annual Taste of Pownal

Buy a pie at the Historical Society’s booth and foods created by your neighbors at the elementary school gym/auditorium. We’re looking for folks willing to bake and donate a pie and/or to help at the booth. To volunteer, e-mail Charlotte Comar: charcomar@comcast.net.

Future events: Do you have suggestions for programs you’d like to see or take part in yourself? Let Ted Atkinson, our program chair, know: tedanne@verizon.net



Mt. Anthony Road Barn



Quarry Hill Barn



Barn in North Pownal