

POULTNEY

**Rutland County,
Vermont**

A COMMUNITY PROFILE

**Prepared for the
Vermont Council on Rural Development**



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**Prepared for the
Vermont Council on Rural Development
Community Visit
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**By
The Center for Rural Studies
207 Morrill Hall
University of Vermont**



A Note to the Reader

Just as a community is never finished modifying, adapting, and organizing its natural, political, and social environments, an attempt to profile those dynamic processes must be a work in progress. Materials below are organized to reflect community characteristics and resources. Please join us in this profiling effort and call attention to major omissions, inaccuracies, and errors of fact.

Thank you,

Fred Schmidt, Co-Director
Chip Sawyer, Research Data Specialist
Meaghan Murphy, Research Associate
James Lovinsky, Student Intern

The Center for Rural Studies
University of Vermont
Website: <http://crs.uvm.edu>
Phone: (802) 656-3021
Email: crs@uvm.edu

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Section 1.

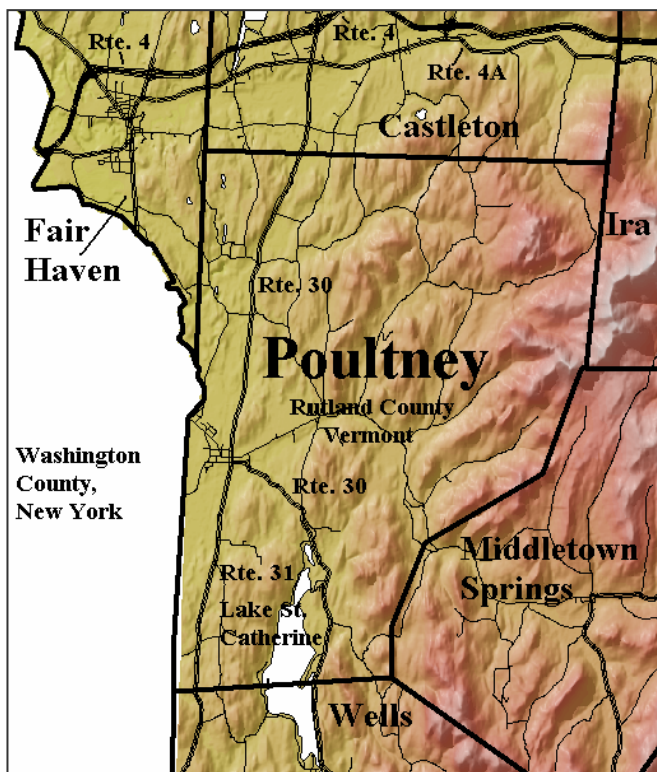
Town Organization

Where is Poultney?

Poultney Town is located in Rutland County, west and slightly south of Rutland City; the town's western border abuts New York State's Washington County. The Vermont towns of Fair Haven and Castleton lie to Poultney's northwest and west, Ira and Middletown Springs lie to the east and south and on the very southern border lies the town of Wells. Significant New York places to Poultney's west include Hampton, Granville and Whitehall, among others.

What's in A Name?

It is almost certain that N.H. Gov. Benning Wentworth chose this town's name to honor one of England's richest and most powerful families (Swift, 1977:413). William Pulteney (1684-1764), or Poultney, was the first Earl of Bath. Educated at Christ Church, Oxford, he was considered a brilliant scholar and eloquent orator. A member of Parliament by the age of twenty, he served there for more than 50 years. For a time the Earl was secretary of war. His son, also William, raised a regiment, the Royal Volunteers, at family expense. Though he died young, predeceasing his father in 1763, the Viscount furthered the family reputation with charm and military service. One of the Count's most determined opponents, Sir Robert Walpole, once said he feared Pulteney's tongue more than another man's sword, confirming the diversity of this wealthy family's recognized talents and strengthening the reputation of Poultney Town's namesake.



Five or six names used by Wentworth for towns in Vermont and New Hampshire are linked to this family or their friend Charles Wyndham, but there is no evidence that any of these communities were visited or honored in any way by these British gentry. But honor Pulteney Wentworth did and the town became one of the earliest settled on the western border, attaining a base population of over a thousand (1,120) when the first census was taken in 1791 and making it the 21st largest place in the state (Swift, 1977:413).

Brief Chronology

September 21, 1761- Town chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth.

1790- first Vermont library founded in Poultney.

1830s- Ripley Female College is established and is later renamed Green Mountain College.

1851- The first slate quarry in Poultney is opened on the farm owned by Daniel Hooker.

1886 - Village of Poultney chartered on November 22nd.

1875- *A History of the Town of Poultney, Vermont* by Frisbee & Joslin is published.

1936- First classes begin at Poultney High School.

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Government and Civic Structure

As Poultney grew, a number of small population clusters emerged. Four areas in particular have Poultney in their designation. Poultney Village, the largest and contemporary commercial core, has been referred to as West Poultney. Then there are North, East and South Poultney, obvious references to neighborhoods differentiating one from another by their approximate location in areas of the town. Other neighborhoods include Gorhamtown and Clark, Fennel, Hampshire and Moss Hollows (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 – General Town Characteristics

Town Name	Poultney
County	Rutland
Date of Town Charter	September 21, 1761
Incorporated Village(s)	Poultney Village
Other Villages and Neighborhoods (past and present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North, South, and East Poultney; • Gorhamtown; • the Hollows: Clark, Fennel, Hampshire, and Moss

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*.
<http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>

The Village of Poultney maintains a Village government, which is separate from that of the Town. Poultney Village houses the Town and Village government offices, Town Clerk's Office, Public Library, Post Office, High School, Green Mountain College, Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal and Welsh Presbyterian churches. It is the hub of the community with the majority of businesses located on its Main Street. Commerce is stimulated by the presence of Green Mountain College in the western portion of the Village. A notable historic corridor is represented by an area that begins one mile from the traffic light at the intersection of Main Street and Route 30 and continues to the steps of East Poultney's historic Eagle Tavern (Poultney Historical Society, 2002). Not surprisingly, The Vermont Forum on Sprawl recognizes this historic village center and has designated the area a “Traditional Center” (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2– Poultney General Planning Characteristics

<i>Vermont Forum on Sprawl</i> Category	1 -“Traditional Center”
Town Plan	October, 2000
Zoning Ordinance	Yes
Subdivision Ordinance	Yes
Septic Approval Process	None

Source: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*.
<http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>

Section 2.

Human Resources

Poultney’s 3.9% growth rate is below the state average and reflects a slow but steady increase, certainly manageable. At 3,633 inhabitants, it is in the top quintile of Vermont’s communities. The fact that Poultney’s population is larger than 2,500 would earn town an urban designation by some US Census definitions, but the community’s independence from any adjacent larger place in excess of 50,000 enables it to be considered rural. At 43.9 square miles, Poultney is one of the larger Vermont towns in land area. Table 2.1 shows that just over a third of the town’s population may be considered “dependent” in 2000, a manageable demographic distribution. Small changes toward greater ethnic diversity are indicated by the data near the bottom of Table 2.1. The decline in French and French Canadian ancestry is probably influenced by an increase in Census categories available to respondents in 2000 than any real changes in the size of this ethnic group.

Table 2.1 – Poultney Population Characteristics

Total Population, 2000	3,633
Total Population, 1990	3,498
Absolute Population Change, 1990 – 2000	135 inhabitants
Percent Population Change, 1990 – 2000	3.86%
Persons per Square Mile, 2000	82.8
Persons per Square Mile, 1990	79.7
Area in Square Miles	43.9
Percent Dependent, 2000 (under 18 and over 65)	37.1%
Percent Rural, 2000	100%
Percent Rural Farm, 2000	0.8% (from 1.3% in 1990)
Percent Native Born (United States), 2000	97.7% (from 100% in 1990)
Percent Reporting Welsh Ancestry, 2000	8.5% (from 11.4% in 1990)
Percent Reporting French/French Canadian Ancestry, 2000	14.4% (from 20.8% in 1990)

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>
 US Census Bureau. 1990, 2000. *American FactFinder*. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

A Brief Aside on Poultney’s Ethnic Diversity: Slate and the Welsh...

From the 1850s through the 1950s, the slate industry brought an influx of Welsh, Italian, Polish, Slovakian and Irish immigrants to the area, who have all contributed to the culture and life of the community. The history and achievements of Poultney’s citizens of Welsh heritage as well as the beauty of the region is widely recognized. In an early account dated 1883 and published in Wales in *Dros Gynanfo A Chyfanidir* by William Davies Evans, Mr. Evans wrote of Poultney, "... I saw one of the cleanest and healthiest of villages. By the great width and straight lines of its streets, the splendor of its buildings and the order in the growth of its shady trees, I could believe that this would be a paradise in summer. ..." (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

A strong Welsh history prevails in Poultney and is actively explored by the Poultney Area St. David’s Society. Founded in 1988 by Poultney residents Eleanor (Evans) McMorrow and Helen (Thomas) Jones, the St. David’s Society is actively recording Welsh history, which at one time included a performing Welsh male choir. Poultney is also home to another prominent Welsh organization, the Welsh-American Genealogical Society (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

As Table 2.1 has shown, the Welsh population in this town is slowly declining as a percentage of the total. We have no evidence of any significant immigration of Welsh, although local folks may prove that wrong. Undoubtedly the Welsh

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population of Poultney, like the rest of the population is continuing to age, and the next section takes us to some information on age distributions.

Age and Gender of Poultney’s Citizens

Table 2.2 shows that Poultney reflects state trends toward a graying of the population. The effect of the baby boom is shown in the movement from the young middle aged to the older middle aged between 1990 and 2000. Similarly, the increases in numbers of people 65 and over mirror state and national trends. Town officials will want to look carefully at changes in the under-five-year-old cohort, an age range that is not growing nearly as rapidly as it has in previous decades.

Table 2.2 – Age and Gender Demographic Comparisons

	Poultney		Rutland County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Population	3,498	3,633	62,142	63,400
Percent 0-17 Years Old	20.9	21.1	24.1	23.2
Percent 18-24 Years Old	21.5	17.6	10.8	8.3
Percent 25-44 Years Old	27.7	25.0	32.3	27.7
Percent 45-64 Years Old	16.9	20.3	19.1	25.8
Percent 65+ Years Old	13.0	16.0	13.7	15.0
Median Age	N.A.	35.9	N.A.	39.5
Percent Male	48.7	49	48.5	48.6
Percent Female	51.3	51	51.5	51.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1990, 2000. *American FactFinder*.
<http://factfinder.census.gov>

Some Famous Citizens

Every community has some citizens that it is particularly fond of discussing and, frankly, using as a marker of great events, of ties between this place and larger places, or as a way of acknowledging and setting a standard for desirable behavior and contributions from subsequent generations. As a small community, Poultney has many residents to be proud of. Due to space constraints, we present only a few here to draw attention to the human capital a community may draw upon and celebrate. Source materials for this information were stated in the present tense. That tense is preserved here, albeit the citizens listed may have sadly passed on since.

George Jones is one of Poultney's most famous native citizens. A writer, he was co-founder of *The New York Times* daily newspaper. He is also known for his breaking up of the Tweed Ring; his role in the building of the second Times Building when he was 75 years old; and the raising of the Fund which assured General U.S. Grant an income during the last years of the General's life. He was friends with another famous writer who came to Poultney and learned the printing trade in East Poultney's *Northern Spectator* – Horace Greeley, founder of the *New York Tribune* (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

Jones and Greeley remained friends throughout life and at one time worked jointly on the *Tribune*. Both are most likely to be credited with another young writer having been educated in Poultney - famous mystery writer Anna Katharine Green of Brooklyn, New York is an 1866 graduate of Ripley Female College (Green Mountain College's predecessor institution). The

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Literary Society of that institution is credited with having brought Ralph Waldo Emerson into Poultney's Joslin Hall in 1865 and having given him a tour of Poultney (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

Richard H. Owens, retired Director of Program Control for NASA's (North American Aviation's) Saturn Rocket is a native of Poultney. Mr. Owens is also retired Director of Logistics at NASA's sites in California, Mississippi and the launch site at Cape Canaveral, Florida. He was also founder and President of the Ordrich Gold Mining Company located in central Nevada. He graduated from Green Mountain College in 1934 and the University of Michigan in 1936 and comes from one of the Welsh families drawn to the area (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

Poultney Housing and Family Information

Table 2.3 depicts housing and family characteristics and shows that Poultney is following state trends in terms of family household size continuing to contract, while home values increase. Community leaders concerned with the quality and affordability of the community's housing will find more useful information currently being released in the more detailed Census 2000 materials.

Table 2.3 – Poultney Housing and Family Characteristics

	1990	2000
Number of Families	824	846
Number of Households	1,181	1,287
Average Family Size	N.A.	2.92
Average Household Size	2.51	2.39
Single-Mother Households	100	123
Total Children in Single-Parent Families	N.A.	118 (16.7%)
Total Housing Units	1,624	1,673
Number of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	851	924
Number of Renter-Occupied Housing Units	330	363
Median Housing Unit Value	\$80,600	\$83,400
Median Gross Rent	\$413	\$497
Median Gross Rent as Percent of Income	29.9%	27%
Percent Increase in Households (1990-2000)		9%
Percent Increase in Housing Units (1990-2000)		3%

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*.
<http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>
 U.S. Census Bureau. 1990, 2000. *American FactFinder*.
<http://factfinder.census.gov>

Table 2.4 (next page) gives some insight into income data for Poultney, Rutland County and the State. Poultney lags consistently on all income figures indicators, but is slightly above county figures in most of the poverty measures. Table 2.5

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suggests that Poultney’s proportions of those who have been to college and/or received associate’s or bachelor’s degrees are slightly lower than the county’s numbers. However Poultney has a higher percentage of residents with master’s and doctoral degrees, buoyed no doubt by the faculty and staff at Green Mountain College.

Table 2.4– Town, County, and State Income & Poverty Comparisons

	Poultney	Rutland County	Vermont
Annual Average Wage, 2001	\$23,688	\$27,858	\$30,239
Per Capita Income, 1999	\$14,963	\$18,874	\$20,625
Median Family Income, 1999	\$40,556	\$44,742	\$48,625
Median Household Income, 1999	\$31,711	\$36,743	\$40,856
Persons for whom Poverty Status was determined	3,127	61,399	588,053
Poverty Rate, 1999	9.3%	10.9%	9.4%
Child Poverty Rate (persons under 18 years), 1999	1.8%	3.3%	2.8%
Elderly Poverty Rate (persons 65 years or over), 1999	1.1%	1.3%	1.1%
Percentage of Households with Public Assistance Income, 1999	5.1%	5.6%	4.8%

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>
 U.S. Census Bureau. 1990, 2000. *American FactFinder*. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Table 2.5 – Poultney Town Educational Attainment, 2000 (percent persons 25 years and older)

	Poultney	Rutland County
Less than High School	19.5%	15.7%
High School Diploma	38.5%	35.8%
Some College	13.3%	18.1%
Bachelor’s / Associate’s Degree	19.8%	22.4%
Graduate / Professional / PhD Degree	8.9%	7.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1990. *American FactFinder*. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Section 3.

Business and Infrastructure Resources

History of Business and Employment in Poultney

The first slate quarry in Poultney was opened on the farm of Daniel Hooker in North Poultney in 1851. The land is located about three miles north of Poultney village and a mile or so south of the historic "Eagle Quarry" site. The slate was described in 1875 as being of "Number one" quality, often finding a market in England. Marbleizing of slate, a chemical process involving polish, converted the slate into an exact semblance of the most beautiful of the foreign and domestic marbles and was also made to imitate rosewood, mahogany and ash. Eagle Slate Company was the first to create this process within the Poultney town limits. In 1875, when the History of Poultney was published, there were a number of quarries in operation in addition to Hooker's Eagle Quarry, including the quarries of L.C. Spaulding, Griffith R. Jones, Gardner Parker, Globe Slate Company, Robert Jones Quarry, William E. Williams, Lloyd & Co., Lloyd, Owens & Co., Williams, Jones & Co., and John M. Jones (Poultney Historical Society, 2002).

The region once had a trolley that connected it to the village of Poultney, which was known as West Poultney, where slate was exported through the Delaware & Hudson railway to regions throughout the world. Several variations of slate colors can be found in North Poultney including shades of gray, green and purple.

In the mid-19th century, cheese production in Vermont was transformed from a cottage industry to a factory-based industry, and Poultney was quick to follow this trend. In 1854, shortly after Vermont's first cheese factory opened in nearby Wells, a factory was opened in Poultney. The town's cheese industry thrived, yet was never as prominent as its current apple production, which is one of the largest in the state. Despite these agricultural efforts, employment in Poultney has moved away from agriculture, as depicted in Table. 3.1.

Table 3.1–Poultney Employment Characteristics

Top Five Industries, 2000 (employed persons 16 years and over)		
Educational Services	24.5%	
Manufacturing	16.1%	
Retail Trade	12.4%	
Health Care and Social Assistance	10.0%	
Construction	7.2%	
	Poultney Town	Rutland County
Unemployment Rate, 2001	3.6%	4.1%
Annual Average Employment, 2001	1,184	29,186

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*.

<http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>

U.S. Census Bureau. 1990, 2000. *American FactFinder*.

<http://factfinder.census.gov>

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Property Values

Table 3.2 shows average residential value, the Grand List and the Effective Property Tax Rate. These data are not strictly comparable with other census indicators here and are collected by the state Tax Department.

Table 3.2– Poultney Property Valuation & Taxation

Average Residential Value (on less than 6 acres), 1999	\$85,477
Total Value of Grand List, 2000	
Effective Property Tax Rate (rate per \$100), 1998	1.86%

Source: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>
Vermont Department of Taxes, Division of Property Valuation and Review. 1998-2000

Transportation

Poultney lies on VT Route 30, south of Route 4, and about 20 miles southwest of Rutland. Poultney is also roughly two-thirds of the way between Interstate 91, which runs down the eastern side of Vermont, and Interstate 87, which runs through New York parallel to the border with Vermont.

Table 3.3 depicts several indicators reflecting transportation in Poultney, but strictly comparable data is only now in the process of being released by Census 2000 and/or assimilated into the Center for Rural Studies databases. We will be eager to see the changes in these indicators over the decade.

Table 3.3– Poultney Town Local Transportation Behavior

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) for State Highways, 2000	30,401
Total Number of Accidents, 1997	2
Number of Accidents involving fatalities, 1997	0
Percent Population who Work in Town of Residence, 1990	37.1%
Commuters who Drive Alone, 2000	1,193
Commuters who Carpool, 1990	106
Commuters who use Public Transit, 1990	5

Source: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*.
<http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>

Section 4. Social Capital

Schools

A school is not just an education resource, but also a great social networking hub for the community. Poultney’s school system, which includes the Elementary school and the High school, ranks well on many indicators for Vermont schools (see *Vermont School Report* at <http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt/>).

Poultney Elementary School’s total school enrollment is 260, having decreased every year since 1998-99 (see Table 4.1). The average class size in 2000-01 shows that Poultney Elementary has smaller classes by 3 children, an important asset to the students and staff at Poultney Elementary.

Table 4.1 – Poultney Elementary School (K-6): General School Information

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	State 2001-02
Total School Enrollment	308	301	281	260	102,409
Attendance Rate	95.4%	95.6%	94.5%	N/A	94.7%*
Retention Rate	N/A	0%	0.4%	N/A	2.3%*
Average Class Size	15.8	13.3	13.6	N/A	16.6%*
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.3	13.3	13.6	12.6	12.0
Eligible Special Education	12.7%	12.6%	10.3%	N/A	13.6%*

Note: *=2001 data.

Source: Center for Rural Studies and VT Department of Education. 2002. *VT School Report*.
<http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt>

Table 4.2 shows that Poultney Elementary and High School enrollment by gender data for these public schools closely mirrors statewide total trends. There is a higher percentage of males than females in both the elementary and secondary schools. In FY 2002, Poultney Elementary’s female enrollment (47.7%) was a slightly higher percent of total enrollment than the statewide elementary percentage (45.7%) of females. Poultney High School has the same female and male percentages of total enrollment as the statewide secondary totals (48.5% females, 51.5% males).



Table 4.2 – Poultney and Statewide 2002 Elementary and Secondary Public School Enrollment by Gender

	Female	Male	Total Enrollments
Poultney Elementary	47.7%	52.3%	260
<i>Statewide Elementary Total</i>	45.7%	54.3%	53,167
Poultney High School	48.5%	51.5%	385
<i>Statewide Secondary Total</i>	48.5%	51.5%	47,660

Source: VT Department of Education. 2002. *Public School Enrollment Report FY02*.

Poultney High School has always had outstanding football teams and celebrated the 65th anniversary of its first game in the fall of 2001. The High School Principal is Jeffrey Taylor.

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Founded in 1834, **Green Mountain College** is a 4-year, coeducational, private college, accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. As an environmental liberal arts college, Green Mountain offers students a special opportunity to integrate modern environmental thought into a traditional liberal arts or pre-professional course of study, regardless of major. Students may earn a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, or Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in one of the College's 25 majors and academic programs.

Town Activities

Recreation

As an environmentally excellent community¹, Poultney abounds with activities within the natural environment such as camping, hunting, fishing, boating, walking, biking, horse back riding, snow-mobiling, cross country skiing, swimming, golf (an 18 hole course), rock climbing and tennis. Recreational areas of interest include Lake St. Catherine State Park, on the northern arm of the lake, and Buczek March Wildlife Management Area.

Websites and Communication

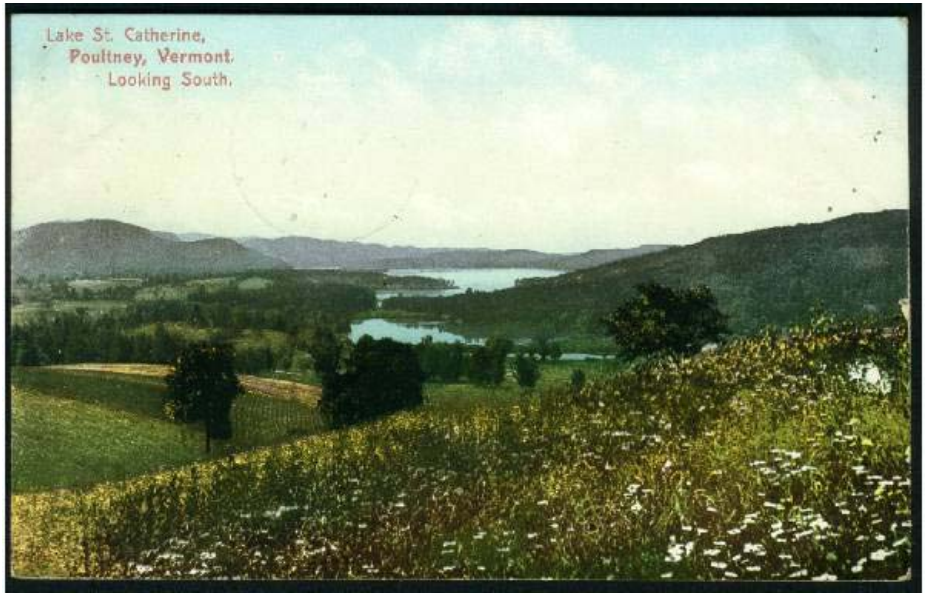
Poultney has a small town website at <http://www.vermontel.net/~poultney/>, and there are several other great sites which contain even more information about Poultney as well. The Poultney Historical Society maintains an excellent website at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~vtphs/>, which contains information about Welsh heritage, the slate industry and the general history of the town as well. The Poultney Chamber of Commerce website at <http://www.poultney-vermont.com/> is full of recreational and business information.

¹ Recognized by the State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Poultney was commended in 2000 for being a first re-mediated community through the State of Vermont Redevelopment of Contaminated Properties Program. It is now an archived community in the EPA's CERCLIS database.

Section 5. Natural Resources

Lakes and Rivers

Lake St. Catherine is situated in the southern section of the town. Formed by glaciers, it is fed by both springs and small streams, retaining beautifully clear water. The northern section of the lake offers a State owned park providing public access for camping, swimming, boating and all forms of recreation. A favorite spot all seasons of the year, it hosts an annual ice-fishing derby in the "Big Lake" off the State Park beach. In recent years, it has been reported that a growing number of retired persons have moved to the Lake St. Catherine neighborhood. This recent trend merely follows a pattern established just after the turn of the last century when a popular resort drew many outsiders to the area.



Esther Swift (1977: 414) notes that place names are “footprints of history” and gives St. Catherine as a prime example. For many colonists coming to the New World from England, the last sight of home was St. Catherine’s Point at the tip of the Isle of Wight. Thus, Swift suggests, “St. Catherine” is a common name throughout the former British Empire, and, in short, a memory of home. In fact, in 1771 New York patented a town for the Wells-Poultney area and named it St. Catherine’s. New York issued patents were ignored by Poultney’s New Hampshire grantees, but when the Green Mountain Boys chased the Yorkers completely out of the area, “Poultneyites” and their neighbors kept the name and applied it to this lake. Lake St. Catherine extends over the Poultney line and into Wells Town to the south. A companion to the lake, a 1,227-foot high mountain was also blessed with the British name (Swift, p. 415), and now this “St. Catherine Mountain” sits astride the Poultney-Wells line. It clearly enhances the lake vista (see left hand side of the picture above).

Poultney River also runs through the town, fed by its tributary, Lewis Brook.

Mountains and Hills

Spruce Knob is the town’s highest peak, followed by Town Hill, Old Knob and Spaulding hill. Table 5. 1 concisely presents critical natural resource information for Poultney. As noted earlier, this town is among the larger Vermont towns in land area. Twenty-year trend data show a shift toward development of lands in this town.

Table 5.1– Poultney Town Selected Natural and Geographical Information

Land Area (square miles)	43.9
Water Area (square miles)	0.9
Percent Conserved Lands, 1999	2.0%
Change in Forest Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	14.0
Change in Forest Land to Non-Forested Land, 1970-90 (acres)	32.9
Change in Non-Forested Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	13.3

Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>

Section 6.

Sources

This Community Profile is an attempt to bring together information from many different sources.

The internet resources used include:

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The Center for Rural Studies. 2002. *Vermont Indicators Online*. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators/>
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