

POWNAL

-Bennington County-Vermont

A Community Profile

Prepared for the
Vermont Council on Rural Development
Community Visit
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By
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A Note to the Reader

This profile is an exercise in secondary research, gathering together existing data and information from various sources. It is meant to facilitate further on-the-ground exploration into the particular community, which will likely result in much more detailed and actionable information than could ever be obtained from any text or website.

Just as a community never finishes adapting to and organizing its natural, political and social environments, an attempt to profile these dynamic processes must be considered a work in progress. Materials below are organized to reflect community characteristics and resources and draw heavily upon easily accessible information at the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) website. Please join us in this profiling effort by calling our attention to major omissions, inaccuracies and errors of fact.

Thank you,

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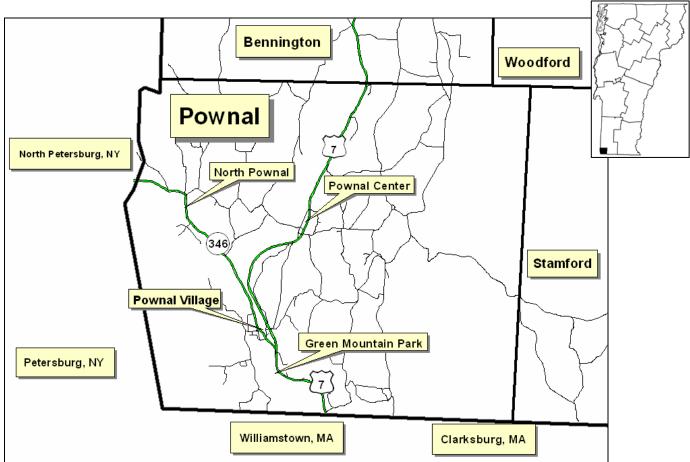
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Section 1. Town Organization

Where is Pownal?

The town of Pownal is located in Bennington County, in the very southwest corner of Vermont. The Vermont towns of Bennington and Woodford lie to the north and northeast, respectively, while the town of Stamford lies directly east. Pownal shares its southern border with the state of Massachusetts and its western border with New York State.



What's in a Name?

New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth chartered Pownal, Vermont in 1760. The name of the town comes from Thomas and John Pownall, brothers who are listed in the charter. In the document, Governor Wentworth left off the final '1' from their names, and did likewise with the town's name.

Thomas Pownall, the younger of the two, usually went by the name Governor Pownall, because he had spent time as the lieutenant governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and governor of South Carolina. An accomplished author, Thomas Pownall spent much of his time devising plans and leading expeditions to drive the French out of North America. The elder Pownall, John, served as undersecretary of state for the American colonies, where he helped to form policies for the colonies. Both brothers ended up supporting Lord North's ministry in 1775, which was greatly involved with hastening the American Revolution.

Source: Swift, 1977:94

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Brief Chronology

On January 8, 1760 New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth charters the Town.

1813 – First post office opens in the village of Pownal.

1850's - U.S. Presidents, Chester A. Arthur and James A. Garfield taught at Oak Grove Seminary in Pownal.

1963 - Green Mountain Race Track opens.

1977 – Greyhound racing replaces horse racing at the Green Mountain Race Track.

1991 - Green Mountain Race Track closes for good.

2004 – Progress Partners buys the track, now called "Green Mountain Park."

2005 - Planning begins on an effort to redevelop Green Mountain Park into a mix-use village setting.

Government and Civic Structure

As Pownal grew, a number of small population clusters emerged. Three areas in particular remain as distinct neighborhoods within the Town. These include: Pownal Village, North Pownal, and Pownal Center.

Table 1.1 – Pownal General Town Characteristics		
Town Name	Pownal	
County	Bennington	
Year of Town Charter	1760	
Incorporated Villages	None	
Other Villages and Neighborhoods (past and present)	Pownal Village, North Pownal, Pownal Center	
Source: Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.		

The main settlement is Pownal Village, located near the Massachusetts border.

The Town of Pownal is governed by a fivemember Board of Selectpersons. There are two operating post offices in Pownal, one in the Village of Pownal and the other in North Pownal (Swift, 1977: 94).

Pownal has adopted a town plan, which has also been approved by the Bennington County Regional Commission. While Pownal does have zoning and subdivision ordinances, the town has not followed the statewide trend of combining its zoning board of adjustment and portions of its planning commission's duties into a development review board.

Prevailing development patterns in Pownal make it similar to other new growth towns in the state (see Table 1.2.).

Table 1.2– Pownal General Planning & Development Characteristics		
Town Plan	Yes	
Zoning Ordinance	Yes	
Subdivision Ordinance	Yes	
Development Review Board	No	
Development Type ¹	New Growth Town	
Persons per Square Mile, 2000	76.3	
Persons per Square Mile, 1990	74.7	
Area in Square Miles	46.6	
Source: Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.		

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¹ Classified by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl.

Section 2. <u>Human Capital</u>

Pownal's growth rate in the last decade—around 2.2% -- is well below the state average. With a Census 2000 total of 3,560 inhabitants, it is in the top quintile of Vermont's communities. Table 2.1 below shows that Pownal's population density only grew slightly between 1990 and 2000. Conversely the Census Bureau's 2004 updated population estimate for Pownal shows the population dropping by 15 residents since 2000. About 37% of the town's population may be considered "age dependent" (under age 18 and over age 65) in 2000. Among those of European ancestry, Irish and French Canadian descendants form distinctive groups.

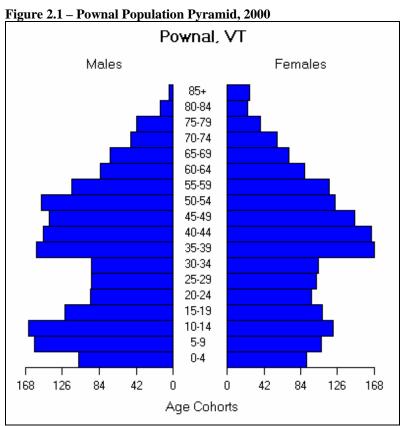
Table 2.1 – Pownal Population Characteristics		
Population Estimate, 2004	3,545	
Total Population, 2000	3,560	
Total Population, 1990	3,485	
Absolute Population Change, 1990 – 2000	75 inhabitants	
Percent Population Change, 1990 – 2000	2.2%	
Percent Age Dependent, 2000 (Under 18 and over 65)	36.5%	
Percent of 2000 Population in the North Adams, MA Urban Cluster	14.0%	
Percent Rural, 2000	86.0%	
Percent Rural Farm, 2000	0.9% (from 0.7% in 1990)	
Percent Native Born (United States), 2000	95.5% (from 96.5% in 1990)	
Percent Reporting Irish Ancestry, 2000	11.4% (from 9.8% in 1990)	
Percent Reporting French Canadian Ancestry, 2000	9.8% (from 6.4% in 1990)	
Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *Vermont Indicators Online.* retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators. *American FactFinder.* retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov.		

Age and Gender of Pownal's Residents

Table 2.2 below shows that Pownal reflects state and national trends toward a graying of the population. The effect of the "baby boomer" age cohort is shown in the decrease in the percentages of younger and middle-aged populations and corresponding increases in the 45+ populations between 1990 and 2000. However, the median age in Pownal is younger than in Bennington County as a whole. Following, Figure 2.1 shows the gender and age proportions visually in the form of a population pyramid.

Table 2.2 – Pownal Age and Gender Demographic Comparisons				
	Pownal		Bennington County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Population	3,485	3,560	35,854	36,994
Percent 0-17 Years Old	27.4	25.4	25.1	23.7
Percent 18-24 Years Old	7.7	7.6	9.7	7.7
Percent 25-44 Years Old	34.3	28.9	30.5	26.2
Percent 45-64 Years Old	20.8	27.0	19.8	25.7
Percent 65+ Years Old	9.8	11.1	14.9	16.7
Median Age		38.5		40.3
Percent Male	50.4	50.8	48.4	48.0
Percent Female	49.6	49.2	51.6	52.0

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *American FactFinder*. retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov.



Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

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Table 2.3 below clearly shows that Pownal's proportion of those who have received associate or bachelor's degrees as well as graduate, professional, or PhD degrees are below the county's rates. Similarly, Pownal's percentages of those attaining some college or less are higher than the county's percentages.

Table 2.3 – Pownal Town Educational Attainment (highest level achieved), 2000 (percent persons 25 years and older)			
	Pownal	Bennington County	
Less than High School/No Diploma	19.8%	15.1%	
High School Diploma	39.3%	33.1%	
Some College	19.6%	18.0%	
Bachelor's / Associate's Degree	17.1%	23.6%	
Graduate / Professional / PhD Degree	4.2%	10.2%	

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *American FactFinder*. retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov.

Section 3. **Income and Employment**

Income Measurements and Issues

Table 3.1 below compares income and poverty data for Pownal, Bennington County, and the state. Pownal lags behind the county and state in annual average wage, per capita income, and median family income. The median household income for Pownal is also below county and state levels. Pownal's poverty indicators are fairly consistent with county and state levels; however, the town does have a higher child poverty rate than Bennington County and Vermont.

Table 3.1- Pownal Town, County, and State Income & Poverty Comparisons			
	Pownal	Bennington County	Vermont
Annual Average Wage, 2004 ²	\$27,552	\$30,174	\$33,276
Per Capita Income, 1999	\$17,669	\$21,193	\$20,625
Median Family Income, 1999	\$41,006	\$46,565	\$48,625
Median Household Income, 1999	\$39,149	\$39,926	\$40,856
Poverty Rate, 1999	9.6%	10.0%	9.4%
Child Poverty Rate (persons under 18 years), 1999	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%
Elderly Poverty Rate (persons 65 years or over), 1999	0.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Percentage of Households with Public Assistance Income, 1999	4.3%	4.9%	4.8%

Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.

Table 3.2 below takes a different look at participation of local school children in food assistance programs. For the 2004-2005 school year, the percentage of children at Pownal Elementary who are enrolled in the State's food stamp program is higher than the Vermont state proportion for all school children, K-12. However it is lower than Mount Anthony school, which is located in Bennington and serves children from surrounding towns.

The situation is bleaker in terms of participation in the free and reduced lunch program, in which Pownal has a higher proportion across the table. In fact the table shows a majority of Pownal elementary students enrolled.

Table 3.2 – Food Assistance Participation Among School Children, 2004-2005 School Year				
	Pownal Elementary (K-6)	Mt. Anthony Mid. School (7-8)	Mt. Anthony High School (9-12)	Vermont Total (K-12)
Children on Food Stamps	13.7%	17.1%	17.1%	10.2%
In Free and Reduced Lunch Program	67%	36%	23%	27%
Source: VT Dept. of Education. Vermont School Report. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt.				

² Readers should be aware that annual average wage is measured for jobs in Pownal, not for Pownal residents. The other income measurements in the table are for Pownal residents, wherever they may work.

Employment and Unemployment

Table 3.3 – Pownal Employment Characteristics			
Top Five Industries, 2000 (employed per	rsons 16 years a	nd over)	
Educational, health, and social services	20	5.0%	
Manufacturing	2:	1.8%	
Construction	11.2%		
Retail Trade	9.3%		
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	/ 3%		
Labor Force and Unemployment	Pownal	Bennington County	
Civilian Labor Force, 2005	1,960	20,150	
Unemployment Rate, 2005	3.2	3.6	

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

American FactFinder. retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov.

Vermont Dept. of Labor. Labor Force & Unemployment. retrieved 2006. http://www.vtlmi.info/labforce.cfm.

Table 3.3 above reveals that the plurality of Pownal residents work in the fields of education, health and social services, with manufacturing close behind. Unemployment (3.2%) is lower than the county average, as well as the state average of 3.7%. Figure 3.1 below shows that Pownal's unemployment rate has closely resembled the county's over time, and was at a promising low for 2005.

Figure 3.1 Unemployment Rate, 1990-2005

Source: Vermont Dept. of Labor. Labor Force & Unemployment. retrieved 2006. http://www.vtlmi.info/labforce.cfm.

Table 3.4 – Pownal In-Town Job Opportunities, 2004		
Total Jobs in Town ³	223	
Wholesale/Retail Trade and Transportation	29.1%	
Local School(s)	18.8%	
Construction	12.6%	
Manufacturing	9.9%	
Professional Services	6.7%	

Source: VT Dept. of Labor. *Covered Employment & Wages (QCEW)*. retrieved 2006. http://www.vtlmi.info/indtownnaics.cfm.

Job opportunities are few and far between in Pownal, as illustrated by table 3.4 above, which is further broken out by the top five industries. Table 3.5 below shows that, consequently, nearly the majority of working Pownal residents commute to Bennington.

Table 3.5 – Top Five Places of Work, 2000			
Total Working Pownal Residents, 16+	1,828		
Working in Bennington	46.6%		
Pownal	12.1%		
Williamstown, MA	11.9%		
North Adams, MA	7.4%		
Hoosick, NY	3.1%		

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *American FactFinder*. retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov.

²

³ Limited to firms covered under Vermont/Federal Unemployment Compensation Laws, which would logically be the vast majority of workplaces in town.

Section 4. <u>Housing Demand and Affordability</u>

Table 4.1 depicts housing and family characteristics in Pownal. Although the numbers of families and households are increasing slowly, the relative size of families is decreasing and the relative size of households is remaining steady, mirroring national trends. Home values and rents are increasing.

Table 4.1 – Pownal Household and Family Characteristics			
	1990	2000	
Number of Households	1,281	1,373	
Number of Families	941	1,010	
Average Household Size	2.59	2.59	
Average Family Size	3.03	2.95	
Total Housing Units 1,457		1,563	
Owner-Occupied 996		1,099	
Renter-Occupied	285	274	
Vacant 176		190	
Percent Increase in Households	6.7%		
Percent Increase in Housing Units	7.2%		

Sources: US Census Bureau. 1990 & 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *Vermont Housing Data*. retrieved 2006. http://www.housingdata.org.

Table 4.2 – Housing Costs	Pownal	Bennington County	Vermont
Median Price of Primary Homes Sold in 2004	\$132,450	\$150,000	\$160,000
Single Family Homes	\$140,000	\$156,000	\$171,000
Median Monthly Ownership Costs (with mortgage), 2000	\$882	\$1,022	\$1,021
as Percentage of Household Income, 1999	22.4	22.9	24.1
Median Gross Rent, 2000 ⁴	\$534	\$538	\$553
as Percentage of Household Income, 1999	27.9	27.3	26.2
Percentage of households with ownership costs at or above 30% of household income, 1999	22.2	24.8	23.2
Percentage of households with rental costs at or above 30% of household income, 1999	44.3	43.5	40.3

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *Vermont Housing Data*. retrieved 2006. http://www.housingdata.org.

⁴ Includes contract rent plus utilities.

Table 4.2 above shows that Pownal housing prices and costs are consistently lower than county and state average. Figure 4.1 below illustrates how the town's prices have followed prevailing trends and normally been slightly lower over the past 16 years.

However Table 4.2 also shows that Pownal residents seem to be in comparable, if not worse, situations of affordability, especially with the high number (44%) of rental households with costs at or above 30% of household income.

\$180,000 \$160,000 \$140,000 \$120,000 \$100,000 \$80,000 \$60,000 \$40,000 \$20,000 \$20,000 \$0,000 \$0,000 \$0,000 \$100,

Figure 4.1 - Median Price of Primary Homes Sold, 1988-2004

Source: Vermont Housing Data. retrieved 2006. http://www.housingdata.org.

Property Taxation

Property taxes are also a piece of the local affordability formula. Table 4.3 shows that a recent reappraisal, has had the effect of lowering tax rates between 2004 and 2005.

Table 4.3 – Pownal Property Taxation	2004	2005		
Municipal Tax Rate (per \$100)	0.7599	0.5221		
Educational Tax Rate for Homesteads (per \$100)	1.7141	1.2385		
Educational Tax Rate for Non – Residential (per \$100)	1.8959	1.3312		
Common Level of Appraisal Ratio	0.8123	1.1343		
Sources: Vermont Dept. of Taxes. 2006 Property Valuation and Review Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.				

Section 5. Infrastructure and Its Use

Transportation

Pownal contains the intersection of routes 7 and 346. The town is approximately 35 miles northeast of Albany, New York, the major transportation center for this region. Interstates 87 and 90 intersect in Albany, and the Albany International Airport serves as a major transportation hub. Pownal's proximity to these major transportation corridors and the business base of the greater Albany region has undoubtedly affected economic growth and development.

Table 5.1 below elaborates on road mileage by type in Pownal.

Table 5.2 – Pownal Road Mileage by Class and Type, 2004				
Class 1 Highway	0.0			
Class 2 Highway	11.85			
Class 3 Highway	50.41			
Class 4 Highway	9.08			
State Highway	12.68			
Lane Highway	0.0			
Sources: Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). 2004. <i>Vermont Indicators Online</i> . retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.				

Table 5.2 depicts several personal use of transportation infrastructure in Pownal. Residents rely primarily on their autos to drive to work (typically alone).

Table 5.2 – Pownal Local Transportation Behavior	
Total Number of Workers 16 Years of Age and Older, 2000	1,828
who Drove to Work Alone	1,499
who Carpooled to Work	222
who Walked to Work	38
who Commuted via Public Transportation	7
who Worked at Home	55
Total Number of Accidents, 2001	17
Number of Accidents Involving Fatalities, 2001	2
Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and I Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). 2001. Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators.	Housing.

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Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Pownal has a public water and sewer system, which, in 2002, was in need of upgrading, as explained by the Bennington County Regional Commission's 2002 Regional Plan:

The Town of Pownal has designed a new system to serve the concentrated areas of Pownal, Pownal Center, North Pownal, and some areas with serious sewage problems. The town ranks among the highest in the State's priority list. The town has retained a consultant to address the effect of the system on the land use pattern, and particularly to avoid sprawl and the conversion-impact to natural resources.

Green Mountain Park

Located along Route 7 in southern Pownal, the 144-acre Green Mountain Track site was opened in Green Mountain Park was opened for horse racing in 1963. In 1977, it switched to greyhound racing, and in 1992 it closed for business. Since then the site had been used for various gatherings, including bingo, concerts and community fairs.

In December of 2004, a group of investors under the name of Progress Partners bought the site and renamed it Green Mountain Park. In 2005 discussions began on the prospects of redeveloping the site with mixed commercial, residential and community uses. The Town's new sewage system and the Park's proximity to Pownal Village could only add to what might be one of the biggest areas of potential for Pownal. Plans and press on this effort are available at the Progress Partners website, www.progresspartnersvt.com.

Section 6. Social Capital

Schools

A school is not just an educational resource, but serves also as a networking hub for the community. Pownal's school system includes Pownal Elementary, which is located in Pownal, and Mt. Anthony Union Middle School and High School (USHD #14), which are both located in Bennington and serve the towns of Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford, and any other sending towns. School indicators and comparisons to other Vermont schools can be found in the *Vermont School Report* at http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt. Fluctuations in school enrollments challenge many community school boards in Vermont and the leaders of Pownal and Bennington County struggle with these changes as well.

Pownal Elementary School's total school enrollment is 279, having fluctuated from a peak of 308 in the 2001-2002 school year to its current low (see Table 6.1.). The student/teacher ratio in 2004-2005 shows that Pownal Elementary has smaller classes by about 1 child when compared to the 2000-2001 data, an important asset to the students and staff at Pownal Elementary.

Mt. Anthony Union Middle School's total school enrollment has decreased in recent years. In 2004-2005, Mt. Anthony Union Middle School saw its lowest enrollment of the past four years (568 students). During the same period, the Student/Teacher ratio has seen an increase and is well above the state level. However, it is good to note that the attendance rate has risen in recent years.

Mt. Anthony High School UHSD #14's enrollment has remained fairly steady during the past four years. However, a large decrease in has occurred in the past year and Mt. Anthony High School is now seeing its lowest enrollment level. In 2004-2005, the total enrollment was 1,193, almost 50 students less than in 2003-2004. Like the Middle School, the Student/Teacher ratio is considerably higher than the state average. However, the graduation rate has risen in recent years.

Table 6.1 – Pownal Elementary School (K-6)					
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
Total School Enrollment	308	290	286	279	98,361
Attendance Rate	94.6%	93.2%	94.3%	N/A	N/A
Retention Rate	0.0%	0.4%	7.8%	N/A	N/A
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.4	14.8	15.4	14.2	11.6
Eligible Special Education	16.6%	17.6%	20.6%	N/A	N/A

^{*}All Vermont students K-12.

Source: VT Dept. of Education. Vermont School Report. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt.

Table 6.2 – Mt. Anthony Union Middle School (7-8)					
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
Total School Enrollment	631	604	579	568	98,361
Attendance Rate	92.8%	93.0%	93.6%	N/A	N/A
Retention Rate	1.3%	1.0%	0.5%	N/A	N/A
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.3	13.5	13.3	14	11.6
Eligible Special Education	18.4%	19.0%	20%	N/A	N/A

^{*}All Vermont students K-12.

Source: VT Dept. of Education. Vermont School Report. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt.

Table 6.3 – Mt. Anthony High School (UHSD #14) (9-12)					
	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
Total School Enrollment	1,231	1,232	1,238	1,193	98,361
Attendance Rate	93.7%	93.0%	94.2%	N/A	N/A
Retention Rate	2.3%	3.1%	6.4%	N/A	N.A
Estimated HS Cohort Graduation Rate	76%	74.3%	77.5%	N/A	N/A
Student/Teacher Ratio	18.0	17.5	17.3	17.2	11.6
Eligible Special Education	15.2%	14.2%	14.1%	N/A	N/A

^{*}All Vermont students K-12.

Source: VT Dept. of Education. Vermont School Report. retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt.

Websites and Communication

The Town of Pownal maintains a website at *www.pownal.org* that contains information regarding the Pownal Town Office. It also includes links to websites for the Pownal Historical Society and the Soloman Wright Public Library.

The Pownal Historical Society maintains a website at www.pownal.org/PHS, including images and information about town cemeteries, churches, historic individuals and families, and much more.

The town also includes the Soloman Wright Public Library, which has a website at www.pownal.lib.vt.us.

Section 7. **Natural Resources**

Lakes and Rivers

The most significant river running through Pownal is the Hoosic River. The two bodies of water in town are known as Barber Pond and Thompson Pond

Mountains and Hills

The most well known mountain in Pownal is the Dome, the first significant peak of the Green Mountains, which rises 2, 748 feet high and is located in the southeastern part of town.

Table 7.1 presents some natural resource information for Pownal.

Table 7.1 – Pownal Selected Natural and Geographic Information		
Land Area (acres)	29,856	
Water Area (acres)	51.2	
Total Private & Public Conserved Lands, Acres, 2000	1,902	
Percent Private % Public Conserved Lands, 2000	6.4%	
Federal Administered Conserved Lands, Acres, 2000	376.9	
State Administered Conserved Lands, Acres, 2000 516.		
Sources: Center for Rural Studies / VCGI. 2005. Vermont Indicators Online. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators		

Section 8. Profile Information Sources

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

The Internet resources used include:

For data:

Center for Rural Studies & Vermont Center for Geographic Information. retrieved 2006. *Vermont Indicators Online*. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators

Vermont Housing Financy Agency & Center for Rural Studies. retrieved 2006. *Vermont Housing Data*. http://www.housingdata.org

US Census Bureau. retrieved 2006 *American FactFinder*. http://factfinder.census.gov Vermont Dept. of Education. retrieved 2006. *Vermont School Report*. http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt

For text:

Town of Pownal, VT. retrieved 2006. http://www.pownal.org Pownal Historical Society. retrieved 2006. http://www.pownal.org/PHS Bennington County Regional Commission. retrieved 2006. http://www.rpc.bennington.vt.us

The written sources used were:

Bearse, Ray - editor

1966 <u>Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State</u>, The New American Guide Series, Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged. Boston, Massachusetts. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Swift, Esther Munroe

1977 Vermont Place-Names: Footprints of History. Brattleboro, Vermont. The Stephen Greene Press.

The National Survey

2000. Vermont Year Book: 2000-2001. Chester, Vermont. The National Survey.

Center for Rural Studies files.