



Pawlett Historical Society  
P.O. Box 113  
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Pages from the  
**PAWLET  
SCRAPBOOK**



Pawlett Historical Society

February 2018

**OFFICERS**

Barry Meinert  
*President*

Rose Smith  
*Treasurer*

John Malcolm  
*Secretary*

**TRUSTEES**

Judy Coolidge

Theresa Jones

Ken Major

Keith Mason

Marlee Mason

Sarah Rath

Stephen Williams

**HISTORIAN**

Martha Schoenemann

**President's Message from Barry Meinert**

The Board thanks all who contributed to last fall's annual appeal, one of our most successful. This indicates that you share our enthusiasm for continued work on our Town Hall's second floor. It's always interesting to see the restoration progress in the auditorium each year when we hold some of our programs there. We'll continue to provide updates as work progresses.

At our November board meeting, local farmer Fred Stone proposed that the PHS conduct a study on farming in Pawlet and the Mettowee Valley from 1950 to the present. Board members unanimously agreed that this was a major opportunity for the Society to engage with the community. John Malcolm, Sarah Rath and Ken Major are leading this initiative. A first step will be to interview local residents who recall the changes that occurred during this period. You'll read more about this in future newsletters. We are excited about this project!

We are very grateful to our historian Martha Schoenemann for her continued support. Her commitment to keeping our archives in proper order is a monumental task. We continually receive donated items. Sorting, identifying, and cataloging them is often a difficult, and always time-consuming task. Without Martha's capabilities, we'd be adrift. When you see Martha, please thank her for all she does.

In closing I would like to recognize outgoing board members and welcome new ones. Sue DiChiara leaves us after almost 10 years of service, while Jerry Mason served just one year less. Both brought good spirits and hard work to all our board meetings and events. Marcia Russo has also resigned as secretary (her second stint on the Board) after too brief a stay. Many thanks to all of you!

We extend a warm welcome to new members Ken Major, Keith Mason, and Marlee Mason.

**Linda Radtke presents  
"Vermont's Musical Ladies"**  
Tuesday, May 1, 2018, 7 PM, Pawlet Town Hall



*Linda Radtke was a Vermont high school teacher for 31 years and now produces the VPR Choral Hour on Vermont Public Radio. She enjoys doing research on each town she visits with her programs. A classically trained singer, Linda is a member of Vermont's professional vocal ensemble, Counterpoint, the Oriana Singers, and the Arioso Chamber Ensemble. She also sings with a vocal quartet, Ah! Capella, sponsored by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, which brings music to Vermont schools.*

Singer and researcher Linda Radtke, joined by pianist Arthur Zorn, explores the contributions of Vermont women to the traditions of parlor songs, women's club music contests, and social reform efforts. Oceana Judah, Diane Martin, Edwina Flint, and Helen Hartness Flanders represent the richness and invention of female composers included in the sheet music collection of the Vermont Historical Society.

Abolition, child welfare, temperance, the patriotism of war heroes, and the concerns of those left at home during times of war captured the hearts of these women who sometimes disguised their gender for publication. Though they were often published in the local print shop, they have sometimes been ignored by musicologists since.

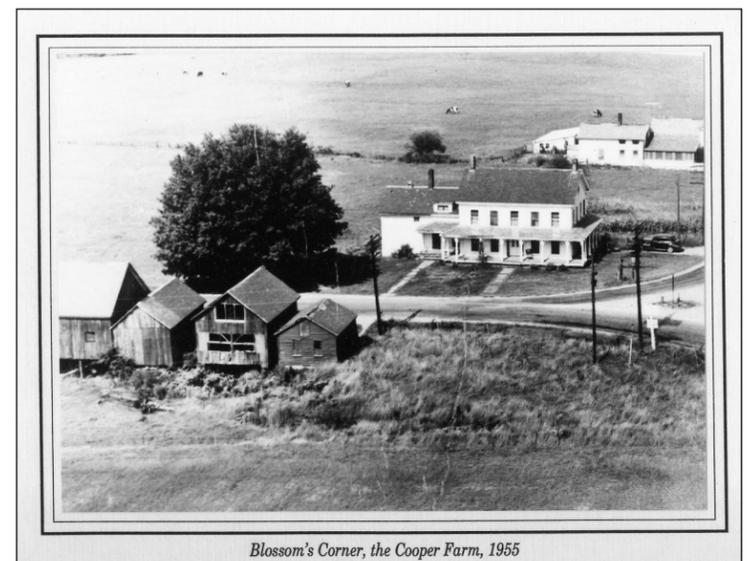
This free program is open to the public and accessible to those with disabilities. It is sponsored by the Vermont Humanities Council and the Pawlett Historical Society.



**SAVE THE DATE FOR THIS  
UPCOMING EVENT!**

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Blossom's Corner, the Cooper Farm, 1955

## The Man Who Refused to be King

by Ken Major

My most meaningful discovery of the 2017 metal detecting season was a George Washington Inaugural button made in 1789, recovered just outside Pawlet. Like many excavated objects from that period, it had much to teach me about the early history of our country.

As we celebrate Washington's birthday this month, it is fitting to reflect on the complex man who inspired this button and other objects celebrating his presidency and the new nation.

Washington had served as commander-in-chief of the continental army for eight years without pay when he retired back to his home in rural Virginia, hoping to live out his days quietly. But the citizens and their representatives had different plans for a man beloved throughout America. After months of persuasion he agreed to become a candidate for president. The nation's first presidential election resulted in his unanimous victory, with all 69 Electoral College votes. The country has never again given its unified support of a president. Washington's journey to be inaugurated in New York City, at the time the Nation's capital, was reportedly much more like a rolling parade through the states, as throngs gathered to celebrate their passing hero.

At his inauguration on April 30th 1789, Washington wore a simple coat with six large buttons engraved with what had become the Arms (or Great Seal) of the United States: an eagle with a shielded breast, clutching an olive branch in one talon and arrows in the other, with six stars above its head. The button found near Pawlet was based on this design (the only significant difference being a six-pointed star instead of separate stars) and was sold contemporaneously. Not much is known about the 30 or so varieties of these George Washington Inaugural buttons. Apparently only a few hundred excavated examples exist today. Language on some varieties of these buttons and related mementos such as "Long Live the President" and "The Majesty of the People" gives us a glimpse into the public sentiment about Washington, and how much the population struggled for new ways to express support of their leader without using mottos historically reserved for monarchs.

Amazingly, during his presidency Washington consistently resisted celebrity. At nearly every



GW Inaugural Button, 1789, 35mm, Copper  
Depicts variation of America's Great Seal

turn, he attempted to downplay his personal accomplishments and avoid the trappings of power. His humility and reluctant sense of duty stood in stark contrast to the centuries of monarchs which America had rejected. Few circulating items with Washington's portrait were produced at the time (none of it approved by the government), due to his own efforts to prevent himself from becoming a figurehead. Not only did Washington oppose draft legislation in 1791 to have his image put on the coinage of the new Nation (a practice as old as coined money itself) but by all accounts actually gave the nascent U.S. Mint some of his and Martha's own silverware to create the first coins it produced in 1792: a run of approximately 2,000 silver half-dimes, their faces depicting the profile of Lady Liberty.

Washington was private and humble even in preparing for his death in 1799, just 30 months after retiring from the presidency. His will forbade "parade, or funeral Oration" involving his interment. While he was buried quietly in a small ceremony, the nation held an array of its own funerals and services in his honor. So great was the respect held for him worldwide that even the British Navy lowered its flags to half-mast in his honor.

George Washington's stature only grew in the years after his death. A powerful visual example of this is "The Apotheosis of Washington," a fresco which covers the interior of the Capitol Building's dome in Washington, D.C. In it Washington appears as a god-like figure, surrounded by a captivating assortment of people and symbols. Completed sixty-six years after his death, it is arguably at odds with his comportment and wishes as a servant of his country, but does reflect the lasting sentiment of the people.

(continued on page 3)

## News from the Pawlett Historical Society

### Report on the PHS Annual Appeal Letter

Our annual appeal letter has raised an impressive \$6145 earmarked for work on the auditorium ceiling in our historic Town Hall. It will go towards the \$8500 to be raised by the community to match the \$8500 grant awarded by the VT Division for Historic Preservation. Anyone wishing to add to this total may still forward funds to the Pawlett Historical Society. We are always grateful to our supporters for their thoughtful donations.

### Up Home Exhibit: Hand-Colored Photographs by Susanne and Neil Rappaport

Don't miss this display through March 31 at the Vermont Folklife Center, 88 Main Street, Middlebury. Neil and Susanne made this documentary photographic study of Pawlet resident Minnie Griswold's home 30 years after her death in 1952. The Folklife Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM.

### Other News

- ♦ The Pawlett Historical Society sends birthday greetings to Eileen Stouter who will turn 102 on March 20, 2018!
- ♦ Tobie Coolidge was the winner of the beautiful table made and donated to the PHS by Ray Finan. Congratulations to Tobie and continued thanks to Ray for his generous donation each year!
- ♦ Visit us online for interesting articles, updates, upcoming events, and Board of Trustee meeting minutes. See our website [pawletthisitoricalsociety.org/](http://pawletthisitoricalsociety.org/) or Facebook Pawlett Historical Society.

### New PHS Trustees

We extend a warm welcome to our new PHS Trustees Keith Mason, Marlee Mason and Ken Major. Keith grew up in Pawlet and works for the Town of Pawlet. He is an avid outdoorsman and loves to hunt and fish. Keith has taught hunter safety classes for the past 20 years. Marlee has lived in Pawlet for 30 years and works for the Visiting Nurse Association. Her hobbies include knitting, reading, and gardening. They both enjoy the outdoors, camping, and hiking. They also love to travel and spend time with their family. Both are eager to get involved with PHS projects.

Ken Major moved to Pawlet with his wife and daughters in 2011 after living in Texas. He is a clinical psychologist who has worked with veterans since 2003. Beyond work he enjoys learning new things, going on outdoor adventures, traveling, and spending time with friends and family. After years of various hobbies ranging from chess to the martial arts, he found metal detecting in 2014, and he's enjoyed it since. He deeply appreciates connecting others with the past and contributing to our knowledge of local history by sharing what he learns and donating most of what he finds.



Keith & Marlee Mason



Ken Major

### Washington (continued from page 2)

While Washington's history and personality are far more complex than this treatment allows, his legacy remains central to America's story. As this button taught me, it was Washington's dedicated service and conscious rejection of personal power as president that may represent his greatest gift to America: a definitive example of selfless leadership, so different than monarchy, against which all future presidents of the republic would be compared.

Albert, Alphaeus Homer. *Record of American Uniform and Historical Buttons ... 1775-1976*. Bicentennial ed. Hightstown, N.J.: Albert, 1977. Print.

Crutchfield, James A. *George Washington: First in War, First in Peace*. Macmillan, 2005. Print.

Durant, John & Alice. *The Presidents of the United States*. Miami: A. A. Gaché, 1976. Print

Lee, Henry. *A Funeral Oration in Honor of the Memory of George Washington*. New Haven, CT: Read and Morse, 1800.

Washington, George. *Last Will and Testament*. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-04-02-0404-0001> Digital