



Putney Mountain Association

A volunteer non-profit conservation organization

P.O. Box 953, Putney, VT 05346

Newsletter, Spring-Summer 2002

Where is the Windmill on Windmill Ridge?

By Kristin Dawley

Putney Mountain sits along a ridge stretching from Dummerston's Prospect Hill to Cambridgeport. Recently, members of the Putney Mountain Association (PMA) and the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA) decided to call this ridge "Windmill Ridge" in honor of the broad topped Windmill Hill that lies between Putney Mountain and the Pinnacle.

While there are no windmills on the ridge today, the name Windmill Hill likely refers to a lone windmill once located near the intersection of Banning Road and the Holden Trail (see the map on page 2). Even though this windmill was an unusual feature of the landscape, there is little known about it.

In the late 1700's the Holden family settled just north of the Putney border in Westminster, on what is now known as Windmill Hill. While the Holden's lowland neighbors had access to streams for power, there was precious little wa-

ter available on the ridgeline. Sometime before 1776, Charles Holden decided to harness a more plentiful upland resource and built a windmill on the ridge.

The windmill was in operation for roughly twenty-five years. Probably it was used to power a mortar and pestle system for grinding grain. Dozens of farms were settled in the uplands during this period of major grain production in Vermont. By the end of the 18th century, however, grain production shifted west and the Holden's windmill came to the end of its career.

According to Holden descendants, the windmill ceased to function around 1800, when Charles went to repair the windmill and was injured. The windmill did not survive far past its retirement. In disrepair and without a breaking system, it simply blew apart in a strong gust of wind sometime after 1810.

Today, there is little trace or

record of the windmill's presence on the ridgeline. What we have are its namesakes, Windmill Hill and now the larger Windmill Ridge. While we watch so many of the places around us become renamed for a natural world that used to be, with streets and housing developments edging out trees and streams, it is heartening to know that in our own backyard nature is taking on the name of a bygone manmade structure.

The next time you are walking out Banning Road and come to the Holden Trail, stop and imagine the world of over two hundred years past: Charles and his windmill, up on the ridge grinding grain.



This windmill is typical of those found in New England around 1800.

Member Hike and Picnic!

In celebration of the new peak-to-peak trail from the Pinnacle to Putney Mountain Summit, PMA is sponsoring a member hike and picnic on Sunday, June 9, 2002. We will meet at the Putney Mountain South Trailhead at 10:00 am. Park your cars here, and PMA members will drive hikers to the Pinnacle's Windmill Hill Road Kiosk. Pack a lunch. A picnic will follow on Putney Mountain Summit. PMA will provide lemonade and music.

Hiking in the Reserve

By Steve Anderson

Several recently built trails give those interested in hiking on Windmill Ridge a number of options. For the most ambitious, there is the Ridge Trail itself, which now reaches from the South Trailhead on Putney Mountain Road to the North Kiosk (not shown on map) on Old Athens Road in Westminster, a distance of about 6¾ miles. This trail, which soon will be identified with round white markers, includes short stretches of class 3 town roads and unmaintained town trails, but is mostly a wilderness footpath through beautiful landscapes with several extraordinary vistas.

For those looking for an easy stroll to a magnificent outlook there is the Putney Mountain Trail, which also begins at the South Trailhead and rises gently to the 1640 foot "summit" of Putney Mountain (actually one of numerous knolls along the ridge). In the fall, hikers can participate in the annual Putney Mountain Hawk Watch.

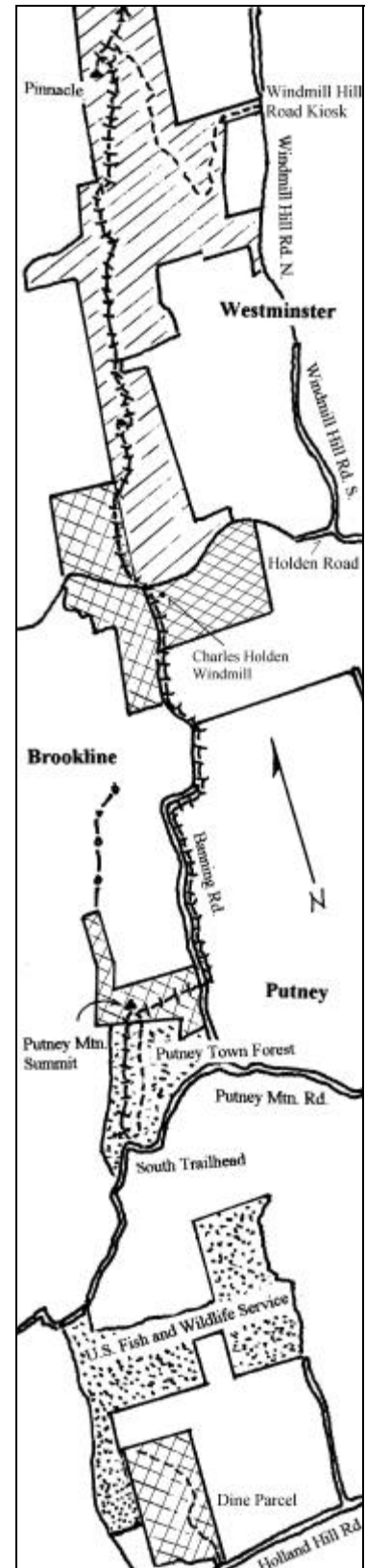
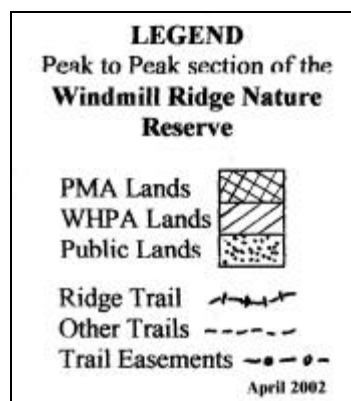
A somewhat longer and steeper trail leads from the Windmill Hill Road Kiosk ("South Kiosk") to the Pinnacle, and its equally striking panoramic view. From this point hikers can proceed north or south on the Ridge Trail.

Hikers who want to access the Ridge Trail at a mid point can drive up Windmill Hill South Road to Holden Road, park where that road ends, and hike up the town trail to its intersection with the Banning Road town trail.

From there, hikers can proceed south to the South Trailhead or north to the Pinnacle and beyond to the North Kiosk.

There is also a short trail running north-south in the PMA's southern-most section, the Dine Parcel. Accessed from Holland Hill Road, the trail runs about half a mile through an old hardwood forest. PMA hopes to eventually extend this trail north to the Putney Mountain's South Trailhead.

Guidelines for the use of all trails are simple: stay on the trails, leave no trash, and keep dogs fully under your control at all times (they must not chase or harass wildlife in the Reserve—this includes vernal pools). In general, motorized vehicles are not permitted in the Reserve. Mountain bikes are allowed, but only when trails are dry, and only when used in a manner that does not threaten the safety or comfort of hikers. The three-sided shelter on the Pinnacle is available for overnight use by prior arrangement with the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (802-387-5737). No fires are allowed in the Reserve without prior permission from the local Fire Warden.



Vernal Pool Watch

By Jacquie Walker

This year the vernal pool monitors expanded to include Big Night sightings of salamanders and frogs crossing the roads to get to their breeding pools at various spots in Putney. The effort to save the amphibians from being squashed as they made their way across the roads took place on a warm rainy night around the 13th of April. Teams of PMA and WHPA members and friends stood in the rain, slowing traffic and picking up the salamanders and frogs and placing them in the nearest vernal pool. Without the help of these folks and others who were organized by Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center (BEEC), many of the animals would have been crushed by passing cars before they reached safety, because it takes them as long as five minutes to reach the other side. The participants included Cathy Abbott and her students from Putney School, Phil

Hamilton and Tim Allen, Bev and Randy Major, Carol Westing, Ruth Sessions, Claire Wilson and Mary Zabriskie, Jacquie Walker and Steve Anderson, Marilyn Bookwalter and her children, and Margot Torrey. Stationed at various places on West Hill Road, River Road, Westminster West Road and Patch Road, they saved upwards of 60 salamanders.

In addition, for the second year, six teams of volunteers are studying vernal pools in the Windham Ridge Nature Reserve and Trail. Wood Frog eggs, Yellow Spotted Salamanders, and even the rare Jefferson Salamander already have been sighted. Mary Zabriskie, who is coordinating the effort this year, reports that eight vernal pools will be monitored over the next few weeks for temperature, PH quality, numbers of egg masses, and the supporting aquatic life that the hatching eggs need to survive. For more information about the program, call Mary at 387-5051.

Remembering Wally

By Jacquie Walker

Waldo "Wally" Beals and his wife Alma were regular visitors to the Putney Mountain summit since 1990. Every Fall, they came to monitor and count the hawks, eagles and other birds of prey on their migration south. Wally died this year, and will be sorely missed by the other hawk watchers who learned so much from him over the years. Each year, Wally sent data about the migrations to the Hawk Migration Association of North America, and so kept Putney Mountain's special position as a premier site. This coming fall, Marshall Wheelock will help the hawk watchers on the mountain and John Anderson will record the data. If you have questions about the hawk watch, please call Eric Slayton at 802-464-3586.

Member Survey

1. What year did you become a member of PMA?

2. Why did you become a member? (circle all that apply)

- A. To support the land acquisition
- B. In appreciation of hiking trail
- C. In appreciation of nature reserve
- D. Other (please fill in)

3. What PMA activities do you participate in? (circle all that apply)

- A. Annual meeting
- B. Spring/Fall clean-ups
- C. Hawk watch
- D. PMA sponsored talks
- E. PMA sponsored hikes

4. I would like to be notified of upcoming PMA activities and events:

- A. Yes
- B. No

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Comments: _____

Mail to: Claire Wilson, PMA Membership; 26 Spring Hill Road; Putney, VT 05346

Please let us know if your address changes.

Address Service Requested

The Putney Mountain Association
P.O. Box 953
Putney, VT 05346

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Putney Mountain Association Membership Form

Date: _____

Name #1: _____ Name #2: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____ fax: _____

_____ I enclose \$20 per person lifetime membership fee, payable to Putney Mountain Association.

_____ I am making an additional contribution of \$ _____ for on-going projects.
Any amount over the membership fee is a tax deductible gift and very welcome.

_____ I am enclosing \$20 each for the following gift memberships:

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