

Dave Pilla to Lead Woodlands Snowshoe Hike

An easy walk on
February 13

Press release

An easy winter-wonderland snowshoe walk through the fields and forest of Proctor Academy, led by Proctor's Dave Pilla, will be offered under the auspices of the Andover Conservation Commission (ACC) on Saturday morning, February 13, between 10 AM and noon. Participation is free and open to the public.

The walk begins at the Proctor Woodlands Office, located on North Road on the school's campus. It should be attractive to first-time snowshoers and veterans alike, says ACC chair Mary Anne Broshek: "The route will not be strenuous, and Dave's long interest in local wildlife and natural resources should make for some fascinating observations along the way."

For those who don't own snowshoes, Pilla can make several pairs available for the walk. To reserve a pair, call the Proctor Woodlands Office at 735-6225.

A member of the Proctor Academy faculty since 1980, Dave manages the

school's 2,500-acre woodlands and teaches forestry and wildlife science. He holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife management and a master's in forest resources, both from the University of New Hampshire.

In addition to his duties on Proctor's campus, he also directs the school's Ocean Classroom, which offers experiential learning aboard a sailing vessel as it travels along the eastern seaboard of the United States. (He's also the lead singer with Nick's Other Band, a highly-regarded local classic-rock group, but that's another story.)

Co-sponsored by Proctor Academy, the snowshoe walk is a part of the Conservation Commission's ongoing "Taking Action for Wildlife" project, aimed at creating more public understanding of the ways in which a healthy natural environment supports a rich variety of wildlife. Other ACC-sponsored activities associated with the project have included a variety of expert-led nature walks and workshops and a library exhibit featuring the work of local wildlife photographers.



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Andover Snowmobile Club Italian Buffet and Raffle

January 30 at AE/MS
from 5 to 6:30 PM

Press release

The Andover Snowmobile Club is having its annual Italian Buffet on Saturday, January 30, at the Andover Elementary/Middle School. The dinner runs from 5 to 6:30 PM. The costs are

\$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 6 to 12, and free for ages 5 and under.

After the dinner, a multi-item raffle (over 100 items) will take place, and proceeds will be donated to Easter Seals Camp Sno Mo in Gilmanton. Camp Sno Mo provides camping for handicapped and special needs children and young adults.



Potter from page 14

there, he met a Scottish magician and ventriloquist named John Rannie, and he was captivated," according to The Root article. "For years they performed in Europe, but in 1800 they traveled to America, joining a traveling circus and crisscrossing the North and South. (As Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson explain in their book *Conjure Times*, Potter was able to travel safely in the South because, in his assistant's role, he was perceived as Rannie's servant.)

"In 1806 Rannie introduced live drama into their show, with Rannie and Potter performing most of the parts. The following year, Potter and Rannie took their act to Boston. In 1811 Rannie retired and Potter went solo. Self-promoted as "An Evening's Brush to Sweep Dull Care Away" on broadsides that displayed the Masonic insignia (he was a member of the first African Masonic lodge in Boston), Potter's shows were a huge hit, and he sometimes earned as much as \$250 a performance (more than \$3,000 in today's money).

"His illusions never ceased to amaze. In one trick he climbed up a rope or an unraveled ball of yarn — outdoors and in front of onlookers — and appeared to vanish into the heavens. In another, he crawled through a log that appeared hollow; on closer inspection, spectators found that it was solid. Although Potter and his wife, the dancer Sally Harris, built a mansion on 175 acres of land for themselves and their three children (one of whom, in a happy coincidence, was named Harry, like that other famous Potter magician) in Andover, New Hampshire, he was an itinerant performer.

"From 1818 until 1831 he dazzled audiences up and down the East Coast. By the time he was 50 years old, in 1833, he had stopped performing magic, focusing on ventriloquism. He died shortly afterward in 1835. Although his house no longer stands, Richard and Sally Potter's graves remain in Andover, and the town maintains a commemorative plaque in a part of town still known as Potter Place."

The article concludes by noting that in 2014, Kenrick "Ice" McDonald was elected the first African-American president of the Society of American Magicians, an organization founded in 1902 by Harry Houdini, who was reportedly a Richard Potter fan.

As a ventriloquist, "Potter could skillfully throw his voice, especially using bird sounds," according to the African American Registry. "Whether he was the first to use a ventriloquist's doll or dummy isn't known.

"Potter's prestidigitation with eggs, money, and cards was considered of scientific interest, and he often performed at the Columbian Museum in Boston. He could throw knives and touch a hot iron to his tongue, walk on flames, and dance on eggs without breaking them. He performed in New York and all over New England."

Potter purchased the aforementioned mansion in 1814. "The Potter estate consisted of several rooms on the first floor; the second floor was said to be one big room," the registry site continues. "The Potters would have lavish dinner parties at their home, where he would entertain."

After their deaths, the couple was buried in the front yard of their es-

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