

ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

Israel Putnam Visits: “It’s the way of things”

Reprinted from Putnam Town Crier and Northeast Ledger, Linda Lemmon, Editor

PRE-PUTNAM — Ole Put - Israel Putnam’s voice: “My wife says I might be talking so much I could talk the hide off a mule — but I don’t see any mules today so ... “I was born Jan. 7, 1718, in Salem Village (Danvers, Mass.) and I was born on a farm. “As a child I was relatively large young child and could carry my own weight. I frequently would find people I thought were being put down or such and — what you call an underdog — I would stand up for that.” After learning that there was land being sold in the Connecticut County and “I bought (a little over 500 acres of) land in Mortlake (later Brooklyn), planted crops, had sheep and ox and cattle and fruit trees.” “I planted apple trees along the road so poorer people in the area could go and pick them — at least have some food.”

Workarounds/Fighting for Underdogs

Getting an obstinate bull into the barn, “I learned how to get my way with otherwise obstinate creatures which I think served me well when I became a commander in the Army.”

That trait served him well when he killed the she wolf that had been killing sheep and goats. Smoking the wolf out, sending sulfur smoke in next didn’t work. Workaround. He scooted into the wolf den, twice, and succeeded in killing the wolf. “I became quite famous for that.”

French (and Indian) War

“I joined and I was made a second lieutenant because I was famous and people respected me.” As a Ranger (like Special Forces) fighting the French, “We were doing non-conventional sorts of things. Captured in one battle and tied to a tree, “a French fellow came up and put a musket to my head and pulled the trigger. It misfired.” “On the move, as a prisoner, I was stripped down naked and they tied me to a tree and put brush all around it and lit it on fire. It started to rain. They put new brush and started the fire up again.” It was stopped. “It’s the way of things.” Captive for quite a while and a rich man, Peter Schuyler, collected enough money to pay off the French and some 200 to 300 of us were released.” The war ended.

Battle of Havana

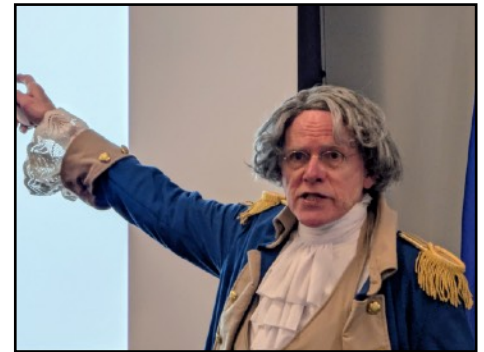
“After the battle was over I came across a man who was beating his young slave with a bamboo stick. I always was for the underdog and I worked my way around to the front of the crowd, grabbed the bamboo stick. Faced with an unruly crowd, I headed back to the ship and on the way there was the young man who had been beaten and he asked if I would take him back. I did. I called him Dick. He worked for me my entire life and the bamboo stick was turned into my cane.” He also traveled to Detroit and Mississippi.

The American Revolution

“After the battle of Lexington and Concord, I led about 125 sheep from this area up to Boston for them to eat because they didn’t have food supplies. British friends there were trying to convince me to join them and I said no.” Instead he joined the rebel Americans. In the battle of Breeds and Bunker hills his experience with the French war came in handy was he could build forts and redoubts. I said “Shoot for the fancy coats’. Later Washington was named commander in chief and I was one of four major generals appointed.” Then came stints in New York and Philadelphia. “So we had some very good times, however, in May 1790 I

fell ill and passed away.”

Kenneth Knoll transformed himself into Israel Putnam in a program on May 16 presented by the Putnam Public Library, the Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam and under a grant by PBS “The American Revolution” by Ken Burns.



Connecticut Old Churches Houses
Bridges and Mills photo



It started with some messages through the Aspinock Facebook platform wanting to know if we would like a donation of some General Israel Putnam memorabilia. Of course the answer is a huge yes. This is how we met Frank Racette.

Frank walked into the museum with a large box and a big smile. One by one the contents came out with ooh's and ah's over each piece. You can see the great treasures here or in person at our museum. Books, postcards, art and even a pin from a cracker jacks box. If you have an interest in General Putnam you need to check these out. The museum is located upstairs in the Putnam Municipal complex and can be viewed from 10am to 2pm Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursdays.

**Mike Bogdanski, Chair Aspinock Historical Society
Public Relations**

In the photo-left to right -Frank Racette, Bill Pearsall, town historian.

Putnam Submariner Hero Henry Breault Updates

Connecticut now recognizes March 8, the anniversary of his Medal of Honor, as Henry Breault Day. For the first time, the only enlisted submariner to receive the Medal of Honor has a permanent place in his birth state's calendar and in our public memory.

Following the lead of Putnam, CT, the State Senate advanced SB 458, which established: "The Governor shall proclaim March eighth of each year as Henry Breault Day, to remember the late Medal of Honor recipient from Putnam who was the first submariner to be presented the Medal of Honor on March 8, 1924, for his actions aboard a United States submarine that was sinking, when he returned to the torpedo room to the rescue of a shipmate and remained trapped in the submarine for thirty-one hours."

Henry Breault's courage was quiet, instinctive, and rooted in loyalty. When his boat was sinking, he turned back for a trapped shipmate. That single decision defined the character of the Silent Service for generations.



Connecticut's Role in The Declaration of Independence

Researched and written by Jeanne Benoit

Did Connecticut play an important role in forming the Declaration of Independence? The answer is yes. When the delegates decided to write a declaration, they formed a committee of five men. The oldest was Ben Franklin at 70, a representative from Pennsylvania. He was placed on the committee for his wisdom and ability to make everyone see the common sense in his messages. Then it was Thomas Jefferson, 33, from Virginia, the most populous state. Everyone knew he was a talented writer, but he was very quiet and wouldn't cause a disruption in the meetings so he wouldn't fight for the Declaration. At 29, New York had the youngest representative Robert Livingston but New York just kept abstaining from the vote. Massachusetts had John Adams, who at 40 thought he could do a better job than Jefferson but also knew he was obnoxious to many of the delegates and if he wrote it, they wouldn't vote for it just because it was his. He was also the member who stood up and fought for independence the most. That leaves one more person, the delegate from CT. Roger Sherman. He was a 55-year-old lawyer and merchant but he too was very quiet.

Thomas Jefferson will write the initial draft. It will be edited twice by Franklin and Adams. Jefferson will change a few minor things and Livingston and Sherman will agree to all of it before it goes to congress.

Roger Sherman has one other notable accomplishment. He is the only man in history that signed the four documents of freedom, The Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, so Connecticut did have an important role in the new nation.

Henry Breault Medal of Honor Golf Tournament American Legion Post 13 will take place Monday, August 17. 9:00 AM Shotgun Start at the Connecticut National Golf Club, Putnam, CT

Let's Take A Look Back at Bicentennial Celebration 1976

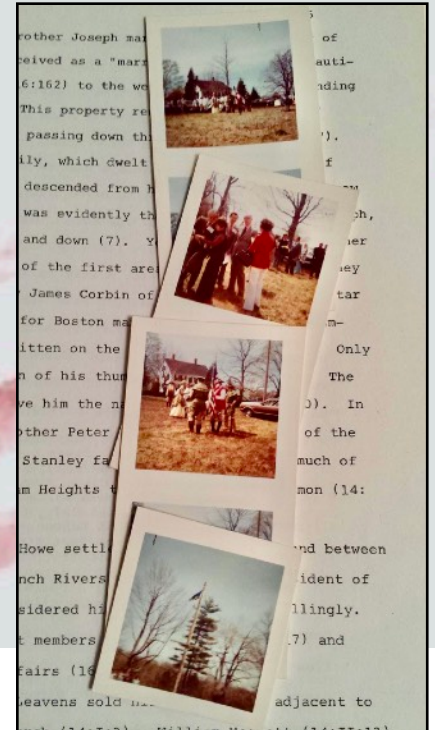
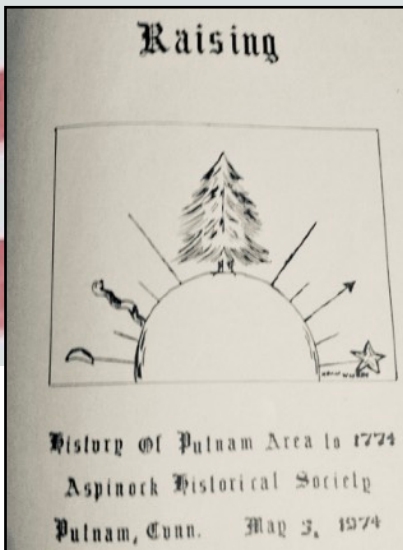
By Ken A. Evans

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and our nation's birthday. The date, July 4, 1776, has traditionally marked the day of that celebration. On this special day I thought it would be nice to take a look back 50 years to see how Putnam celebrated its history leading up to that special Bicentennial year 1976. The following passage is extracted from local historian Margaret Weaver's 1980 edition of "Perspectives of Putnam."

As our nation prepared for its Bicentennial celebration, so also did Putnam. The Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam was one of the first organizations in Northeastern Connecticut to present a commemorative Bicentennial program. On May 5, 1974, the society celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the raising of a liberty pole on Killingly Hill, the present Putnam Heights common Master of ceremonies for the program was John D. Woodfall of Putnam. Speakers included United States Senator Abraham Ribicoff, State Senator Louise Berry, State Representatives Bernard Auger and John Savage, and Putnam's First Selectman Robert Miller. Dr. Louise Cutler Pempek, designer of the symbolic liberty flag which featured a rising sun and 13 rays to denote the new nation and its 13 original states, and her son J. Scott, helped raise the flag. Society president Margaret Weaver prepared a "History of Putnam to 1774" which was included in a souvenir program. Music, including an original composition by Marjorie Morse and Dominic LaCasse, was provided by the Putnam High School Band and the Foster-Killingly Drum Corps.

Putnam town officials appointed a town Bicentennial Committee which was chaired by Dr. Louise Pempek. Projects sponsored by the committee included a reprinting of Ellen Larned's "History of Windham County Connecticut," an Ethnic Festival, and a Arbor Day memorial tree planted in Rotary Park. Putnam's Fourth of July Bicentennial Parade featured numerous floats.

Among the various projects sponsored by local organizations during the Bicentennial was the compilation of the pictorial "Souvenirs of Putnam" by the Aspinock Historical Society.



Celebrating Literacy and Local History with Putnam 3rd Graders!

Text and photo attributed to Jewett City Savings Bank



Jewett City Savings Bank teamed up with the Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Children Museum for a special two-day event on May 18 and 19. Third graders from Putnam Elementary School toured the museum and Putnam Town Hall to learn about local heritage.

To keep the [adventure](#) going, JCSB gifted each student a classic Boxcar Children book to take home. We love seeing the smiles and excitement from the students when they receive their very own book.

Thank you to the teachers, staff and museum volunteers who made this special educational trip possible. A thank you also to Roger Franklin, a former student of Gertrude Warner and AHS member, who signed the 95 gifted books.



A Great Day for the Boxcar

Lots of visitors came to the Gertrude C. Warner Boxcar Childrens Museum during Putnam's Fairy and Magic Festival on May 16. Some had come to Putnam specifically for the festival and some had come just to visit the museum and were surprised to find themselves in the middle of a festival.

The Boxcar Museum is open on Saturday and Sunday, 11 AM to 4 PM, weekdays by appointment.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

FOR OUR 2026 SEASON

Can you spare 2 1/2 hours once a month from May thru October? The Gertrude Warner Boxcar Museum is looking for people to volunteer one shift per month from 11 AM to 1:30 PM or 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM on Saturday or Sunday. It's easy and training will be provided. If you are interested in volunteering as a docent at the Boxcar Museum contact Barbara Scalise at 860-974-1832 or email her at quassett@gmail.com

We are also looking for volunteers to help staff the Aspinock Historical Museum. Can you spare a few hours each month? If you are interested call the museum at 860-963-6800

In Other News

On social media Aspinock Historical Society has 910 followers on Facebook, 235 on Instagram, and our website had 35,000 viewers during the past year. Many are interested in YouTube videos of The Flood of 1955, others for Ghost story, and for the Clare LaPorte presentation of Belding Heminway history and the "great payroll robbery." AHS has 41 followers on YouTube.

Cady Copp Updates: Bill Pearsall reported on the progress at the site, including parking area upgrade by the Town Highway Dept. Milling taken from town roads was recycled and spread at Cady Copp driveway and parking area which resulted in a smooth surface. Security cameras were purchased and ready for installation. On July 11, 2026, there will be shuttle buses from Municipal Bldg. to Cady Copp for visitors during an open house 11am to 2pm. Interior walls are ready for painting. The fireplace has been patched and wildlife will no longer be able to have access.

When Sid Caesar Redefined American Comedy is the title of an article appearing in the latest issue of *AARP Magazine*. The article outlines how the comedian's brief reign in television helped define what made America laugh. Author of the article and related book is Putnam native **David Margolick**, son of Dr. Moses and Mrs. Margolick and longtime contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* and a former reporter at the *New York Times*. Margolick also wrote an article, *A Predator Priest*, about a local family's long quest to bring a pedophile priest from Putnam to justice.

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si=VZDkriZozo9zWCF5](https://youtube.com/@AspinockHistoricalSociety?si=VZDkriZozo9zWCF5)



Come Visit Us

The **Aspinock Historical Society Museum and Research Center** is located on the 2nd floor of the Putnam Municipal Complex at 200 School St., Putnam, CT. It is open Tue, Wed, Thur, 10 AM to 2 PM; and Saturdays by appointment. The **Gertrude Warner Boxcar Museum** is located on South Main St., Putnam, across the tracks from Union Square. It is open Saturdays and Sundays, May thru October.

Both museums are handicap accessible.

Visit us to learn about Putnam's history through our displays and archives.

Submitting News - Ken A. Evans, Newsletter Editor

I encourage Aspinock Historical Society members to submit news and information to be included in our quarterly newsletter. You can email me at kaevans1969@sbcglobal.net or leave material for me at the Aspinock Historical Society facility at 200 School St., Putnam.