

ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Putnam Celebrates



Members of the Aspinock Historical Society on July 4

The Town of Putnam celebrated the United States's 250th anniversary with the unveiling of a new commemorative plaque in Rotary Park on the 4th of July, acknowledging the town's place in history and the legacy of its namesake, General Israel Putnam, who was an essential leader in several famous conflicts during the Revolutionary War, including the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Spearheaded by the town's American 250 Committee, the unveiling included a short ceremony celebrating the patriotism and colonial legacy of Northeastern Connecticut.

Both local and state leaders turned out to speak at the event with most statements drawing from one simple idea: that together we as a people created this nation, and together we can continue to move it forward. The message engraved on the plaque follows"

"Many colonists living in this area, now known as Putnam, actively resisted British rule. When the British closed the port of Boston in 1774 following the Boston Tea Party, men from northeastern Connecticut, including the town's namesake, Israel Putnam, helped supply the city by walking sheep to Boston. At the time, present-day Putnam was part of the towns of Killingly and Pomfret. In 1774, local patriots erected a Liberty Pole on Killingly Hill, now Putnam Heights. In January 1775, they purchased the nearby common as a training ground for their militia. After the Lexington Alarm on April 19, 1775, local militia members marched to Massachusetts in defense of colonial rights. At the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775, Israel Putnam is traditionally credited with urging the troops, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes." Following the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, residents here proudly supported the new nation. Some served in the militia and the Colonial army; others supplied food, weapons and materials; women made clothing and knit socks for the soldiers. From this community came determined patriots who helped secure the birth of a new nation, The United States of America." *Courtesy Villager Newspapers*

Boxcar Children Museum Volunteers Honored



A Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon was hosted Thursday afternoon for the volunteers at the [Gertrude C. Warner Boxcar Children Museum](#) "Once a year, we do a thank you luncheon for all the volunteers, and they're from all of Northeast Connecticut, not just Putnam. We have people from Plainfield, Brooklyn, Woodstock, Massachusetts," museum curator Patricia Hendenburg explains. "We do a thank you luncheon, and then we will do some recognition for the Putnam Area Foundation for the new walkway that we have. Tom Borner and Dick Loomis were here representing the foundation."

Hendenburg also highlights her sincere gratitude towards the Putnam Highway Crew and Highway Superintendent Travis Sirrine, who she says completed landscaping for the event last minute. *Continued on page 3 Volunteers Honored*

Cady-Copp Cottage Tour Brings Local History to Life



Thirty plus people visited Putnam Heights' Cady Copp Cottage on July 11 during an America 250 open house event sponsored by the Aspinock Historical Society. At least a dozen visitors took advantage of a shuttle bus service from the Municipal Complex. This was one of the few opportunities the public has to go inside this historic dwelling.

The cottage was tastefully curated with period furniture, clothing, colonial implements and tools, and artifacts from archeological digs around the site. Local historians Margaret Weaver, Bill and Terri Pearsall provided historical context to the visitors.

The Cady Copp cottage was built circa 1745 and occupied until possibly the 1920's. It was never electrified or had indoor plumbing. The dwelling's history is well documented and information is available at the Aspinock Historical Society museum.

Connecticut's Role in The Declaration of Independence

Researched and written by Jeanne Benoit

To celebrate the 250th birthday of our Nation the Town of Putnam held a program on July 4, 2026 to commemorate that event. Although the town of Putnam did not exist at that time, the land belonged to Killingly and Pomfret, people living here were still involved in the Revolution. Background information was given and then a plaque was placed in the park for future generations to realize what happened here.

250 years ago, someone might have been standing at the river and admiring the falls. He might have been thinking of what had happened in the area since 1770. He might even have participated in some of it.

In 1770, there was the Boston Massacre where five colonists died in the streets of Boston, at the hands of the British army. Then in 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place. Thousands of dollars' worth of British tea was thrown into Boston harbor and the King closed the port of Boston until the colonists paid for it. He may have been someone who walked sheep from Killingly Hill/Putnam Heights, to Boston to feed the people after the port was closed. He might have taken up arms in 1775 and fought at Lexington and Concord or followed Israel Putnam as his leader at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

But would he have known what Connecticut's representatives were doing in Philadelphia during this time? They were composing the document that finally told the King the colonies were free and independent. It starts with In Congress, July 4, 1776 and continues with "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them to one another". A little further down..." We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." It goes on to say that when this is not happening "the people have a right to alter or abolish it."

Next there are then 27 complaints about the King and what he has not done. The document then goes on the "declare, That these United Colonies are and of right ought to be Free and Independent States"

The last sentence states "We mutually pledge our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." It was then signed by 56 representatives. There were five from CT. including the only man, Roger Sherman who signed the four documents of freedom, The Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Did the man standing at the river's edge 250 years ago, have any knowledge of this? No. Once signed, the document had to be carried by horseback to every city and town. When it reached them, it was read aloud, hand copied and sent on the next town. That probably took at least a week.

Continued on page 3 Connecticut's Role



**Putnam Mayor Barney Seney and Gertrude Warner
Boxcar Museum Director Pat Hedenberg**

Volunteers Honored from page 1

“The Highway Crew, Travis Sirrine. I called him on Tuesday, our grass was a foot high. I said, ‘I have a group coming on Thursday.’ Next morning, [it was] done,” Hedenburg says. “They are always here for us, the whole town. So many people have given so much time, money, and effort. I’m so grateful.”



According to Hedenburg, the luncheon is a yearly event that occurs to commemorate and highlight the volunteers of the Foundation, and to further recognize the entire Putnam community who often come together to help local residents, businesses, and foundations in times of need.

The Gertrude C. Warner Boxcar Children Museum, opened in 2004, honors local author Gertrude Chandler Warner and her famous Boxcar Children book series. ***Courtesy Radio Station WINY***

Connecticut's Role from page 2

It would take at least 6 weeks for a ship to sail to England and for the King to realize we had declared our freedom. It would take until 1781 to defeat the largest army and navy in the world and to make the words that were written unite a group of colonies. It took sacrifice, leadership, and determination.

As you celebrate the semi quincentennial, think back on what it took to gain our Independence and remember to preserve it by honoring that freedom and voting.

Let's Take A Look Back to September 11, 2001

Story and Photos by Ken A. Evans

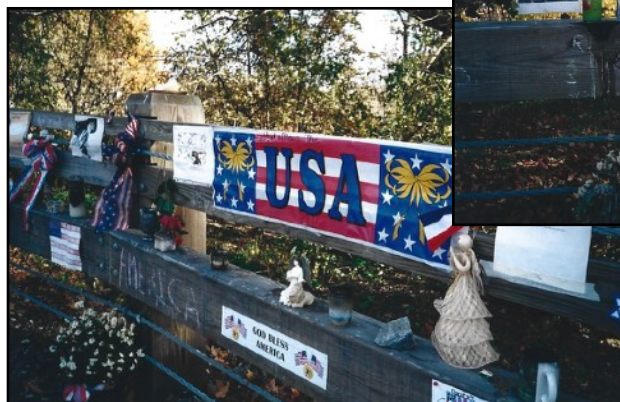
Let's take a look back to September 11, 2001, a day that changed America forever. Many people of a certain age have vivid memories of that day. The question is often asked, where were you on 9/11, when 4 hijacked planes flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and later a field in Pennsylvania.

I was at my Dad's house in Putnam. I had stopped there on my way to work to talk about how to arrange for home help for him and my mother, who had been diagnosed with lymphoma earlier that year. She had been in and out of hospital with adverse reactions to the chemotherapy.

On September 11 she was a patient at Day Kimball Hospital, but was subsequently discharged, along with other non-critical patients in hospitals throughout Connecticut, to make room for an anticipated influx of many thousand of injured and transferred patients due to the attacks in New York City. The influx did not happen.

It seemed within hours following the terrorist attacks that a memorial sprang up in Putnam along the wooden barrier lining the Riverside Trail parking lot near the footbridge. It grew and grew over time and lasted into the winter, when the elements took their toll and it was removed.

These are photos I took of Putnam's memorial to 9/11 right after it happened.



What Exactly is a Summer Beam?

During the July 11 Cady Copp open house the topic of summer beams as it relates to colonial dwellings came up. I had heard of the term but wanted to do some research as to what a summer beam actually is.

A summer beam in colonial building construction is a heavy primary beam running through the middle of a ceiling to break the span of shorter floor joists and carry the weight of the floor above.

The term summer beam does not refer to the season of summer; it derives from the old French word *sommier* or archaic English *sumpter*, meaning a packhorse or beast of burden that carries a heavy load.

Common in 17th- and 18th-century colonial architecture and barns, these large timbers were often hewn by hand from oak, pine, or other sturdy local woods before modern framing and drywall techniques became standard. So there you have it. You can see summer beams in the ground floor rooms of Cady Copp.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

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

Shoutout to Paul Desautels: Let's give a shoutout to Aspinock Historical Society photographer Paul Desautels. Paul can often be seen roaming around Putnam with his camera photographing various Aspinock sponsored events as well as community wide events with historical significance. This past summer was a busy one for Paul. Among others he documented Baseballs Own Civil War, the Boxcar volunteers appreciation luncheon, The Wall That Heals veterans event at Murphy Recreation Park in Putnam, and Margaret Weaver's presentation Revolutionary War Families of New England. Paul's photographs have been downloaded to the digital archives at the Aspinock Historical Society Museum at the Putnam Municipal Complex.

On social media Aspinock Historical Society has 929 followers on Facebook, 237 on Instagram, and our website had 3,000 hits so far this 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. Be sure to check out the WINY videos on The Wall That Heals ceremonies on the Aspinock Historical Society Facebook page.

The Aspinock Historical Society Museum had 26 visitors in June, 37 visitors in July, 29 visitors in August, and 19 visitors through Sept. 19th. There were 138 volunteer hours in June, 126 hours in July, 85 hours in August, and 120 hours in September.

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putnamaspinockhistsoc.com



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.