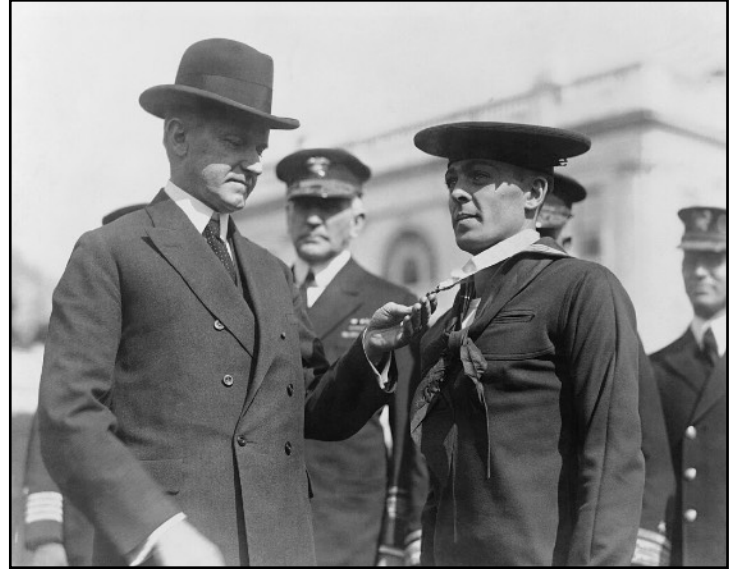


ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Medal of Honor Recipient Henry Breault Remembered on Award Anniversary



On Saturday, March 9, members of the Aspinock Historical Society and the public attended a special talk on Putnam native Henry Breault at the Putnam Municipal Complex. The talk was presented by Ryan C. Walker, a Navy veteran and PhD candidate at the University of Portsmouth, UK (Above left).

Henry Breault was in service with the United States Navy in the Panama Canal Zone aboard the submarine USS O-5. On October 28, 1923, the O-5 collided with the United Fruit Company freighter "Abangarez," became disabled and sank.

In the process of abandoning ship Breault realized one of his shipmates, Lawrence T. Brown, was left behind in the torpedo room. Breault went back to get Brown and then closed the hatch to prevent further flooding as the sub sank in 40 feet of water. The two remained in the sealed off torpedo room for 31 hours before finally being rescued.

Breault was awarded the Medal of Honor for his selfless act of heroism in saving Brown's life by President Calvin Coolidge on March 8, 1924 (Above right). Breault continued to serve in the Navy until his death in 1941. He is buried in St. Mary's cemetery, Putnam, CT. The Aspinock program marked the 100th anniversary of the Medal of Honor award ceremony.



Do you recognize this large brass relief plaque now on display at the Aspinock Historical Society? Find out more in "Recent Museum Acquisitions" on page 4.

Remembering John Noel Dempsey



Display of John N. Dempsey artifacts and documents at the Aspinock Historical Society Museum during the winter months.

On December 9, 2023, Father Edward Dempsey gave a talk on his recent book, "Remembering John Noel Dempsey: A Man Who Did Good," at the Putnam Public Library. Father Dempsey is the son of former Putnam mayor and later governor of Connecticut John Dempsey. The Aspinock Historical hosted an open house in conjunction with author's talk.

Born in Ireland in 1915, Dempsey and his family moved to Putnam, CT in 1925. He worked in the textile mills and later began a political career, which took him through six terms as Putnam's mayor, state representative, lieutenant governor and ultimately governor of Connecticut. His hands-on work following the flood of 1955 and redevelopment is legendary.

Just to paraphrase from the publisher's release of the book, "At a time when so many Americans are cynical and disgusted about the entire political process...it may come as a comfort to some and dubious to others to read about a politician who personified the adage 'what you see is what you get,' a person who believed that life was about giving and not about getting."

Dempsey spoke of his father, "That's the kind of man I grew up knowing, the kind of politician who would no longer fit the current mold, the person I am honored to call my father."

EVERY BIT HELPS!

In the "spirit" of the Christmas Carol, the Putnam Rotary Club raised money for several non-profit organizations. Among them was the Aspinock Historical Society, which received a Ghost of Christmas Past \$40.00 present.

A Doll With a Story to Tell



A family in the Quiet Corner of Connecticut took in a boy from the Ile de Sein in France during World War II. The family did this to save the boy's life during the bombings and subsequent invasion. As a gesture of gratitude his mother, who was poor, created this doll. The doll is dressed in black because of the men of the island were fishermen and most of the women were widowed very young. The doll is a thank you for saving her son's life. Does anyone remember this story? Is there a local family that can be connected to it?

The doll is part of Jeannie Benoit's collection and can be seen along with several other dolls on display in the Aspinock museum.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR OUR 2024 SEASON

Can you spare 2 1/2 hours once a month from May to 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

Or call Pat Hedenberg at 860-207-6044

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Navy Gabardine Ski Suit
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With or without hoods, in red, tan and blue.

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KAY'S Clothes Shop

NEXT TO POST OFFICE

207-209 Main Street

Putnam, Conn.

A Look Back - Way Back

Although Christmas is now in the rear view mirror and we look forward to warmer spring weather, I thought our readers might enjoy taking a look back at some holiday advertising in the Putnam Patriot newspaper from an earlier time.

The full page spread above is from the December 18, 1925, issue. The ads are almost exclusively of an automotive nature, even though car ownership was not all that widespread at that time. Imagine putting non-skid chains, automatic windshield wipers or a new five tube Radiodyne on your Christmas list.

The two ads on the right are from 1946. World War II is over and America was looking forward to more leisure time activities, including skiing. How about a stylish ski suit or ski jacket for her at Kay's Clothes Shop.

Need some last minute food items to round out the Christmas dinner? Pop corn, mixed nuts, pineapple juice, and the ever-popular fruit cake were on sale at the Red & White Store. Does anyone remember where that store was located?

GOOD THINGS FOR Christmas
AT RED & WHITE

RED & WHITE FANCY HAWAIIAN Pineapple 17c JUICE
No. 2 can
Made from pressed whole ripe fruit
FANCY LARGE WALNUTS pound 49c
LARGE YELLOW—10-oz. pkg. 14c
POP CORN
FANCY PITTED—7½-oz. pkg. 27c
DATES, Red & White
EXTRA FANCY MIXED NUTS pound 49c
Citron, Lemon or Orange—3-oz. tins
PEELS Dromedary Diced 2 for 25c
VERY FINE—quart bottle
APPLE JUICE 25c
LITTLE GEM—5-lb. bag
PASTRY FLOUR 35c
STUFFED QUEEN—8½-oz. jar
OLIVES, Bizet 69c

RED & WHITE GRAPEFRUIT SECTIONS
Sweetened fancy whole sections, new pack. No. 2 can **23c**

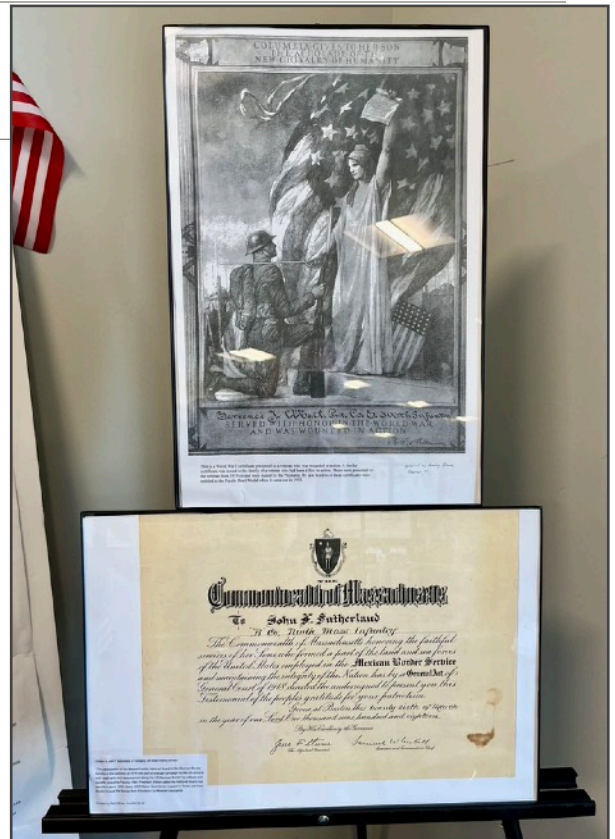
RED & WHITE

RECENT MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS



Here are some items that were recently donated to the Aspinock Society Museum and are on display. Above is a scale (working) model of a water powered grist mill built by Bill Pearsall.

The documents at right were donated by Garry Brown of Pomfret Center. They are a Citation to John F. Sutherland for his participation with the Massachusetts National Guard for service on the US Mexican border in a 1916 campaign against raids by outlaws and bandits including Pancho Villa. Above it is a WW I certificate awarded to a veteran who was wounded in action, signed by President Woodrow Wilson.



The large plaque pictured on page 1 once hung in the Israel Putnam Room of the former Berris Motor Inn on Route 6 in Brooklyn, CT. It is, of course, a likeness of Putnam namesake and Revolutionary War patriot General Israel Putnam.

New Members Joining the Aspinock Historical Society

Philip Desautels of Woonsocket, RI
Mary Tomeo of Pomfret Center, CT
Henry (Hank) R. Graff of Moosup, CT

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

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<https://www.instagram.com/aspinockhistorical>

[https://youtube.com/@AspinockHistoricalSociety?
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 mid-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.