

ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Check out these new exhibits at the Aspinock Historical Museum. Now on display are memorabilia of Putnam High School athletics from the past, St. Mary's Boy Scout Troop 23, and the the mayors of Putnam from 1890 to the present. See page 4 for another exhibit featuring artifacts from the first inhabitants of the Quiet Corner.



A history making event took place at the Aspinock Historical Museum on March 18. According to curator Terri Pearsall, "When we came in today, we never expected what was about to happen. Paul Aldrich came in with a couple and asked if he could perform a marriage ceremony for them. We said "of course" and immediately a wedding began." Congratulations go out to James and Maria Hansen, who were married by Paul Aldrich, Justice of the Peace, at the museum on School Street in Putnam. This wedding has to be a first for the Aspinock Historical Society.

Aspinock Society Icon Passes

Fabiola M. (DuBois) Cutler 96, of East Putnam passed away on March 10. A charter member of the Aspinock Historical Society since its beginning in 1972, "Fab", as she was known, served as recording secretary and later as president. She later transitioned into the role of archivist, a position she continued to hold until her death. Fab is the author of "The Mayors of Putnam 1985-2004," and co-authored with Sandra Ames "A Stroll Thru Putnam" and "Manhasset Village, Gone but Not Forgotten."



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America's Quest For Freedom July 4, 1776?

Researched and written by Jeanne Benoit



What if I told you that the picture of the signers of the Declaration of Independence never took place? It didn't. As a matter of fact, the correct date for the vote to become free took place on July 2nd. At six o'clock that Tuesday

morning in Philadelphia, Thomas Jefferson checked the thermometer in the ground floor meeting room. It read 70 degrees. The windows were shut to keep out the thunderstorms that were forming and horse flies from the neighborhood stable as well as anyone who might be spying on the discussions from outside. The day before, Richard Henry Lee from Virginia, the most populous state, presented a resolve for independence. At the time nine colonies were in favor, South Carolina and Pennsylvania opposed, New York abstained and Delaware was deadlocked. To break away from the British Empire Congress hoped for a unanimous vote. Anything else might show disunity.

The delegates filed in. The rumor that day was that Pennsylvania would come over and South Carolina would also vote for independence. New York awaited instructions from home but did not descent.

The meeting was called to order and they began reading the Declaration. The door opened to a soaking wet, mud splattered face, grey with fatigue. Delaware's third delegate had arrived. He wore a green silk handkerchief, now nearly black with road dirt, to cover the lower part of his face which was affected by cancer. His only comment, "The thunder and rain delayed me."

The vote passed to cut the 169-year ties to the mother country proclaiming the colonies "are and a right ought to be free and independent states." Boston's John Adams was already proclaiming, "The second day of July 1776 will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America."

On July 4th, the Congress endorsed an extraordinary document that states the colonies numerous reasons for leaving. Only John Hancock sign the document on the 4th. It was then sent to a printer. Then it was sent out to the other colonies. The men in that meeting realized if they signed it, they could be hung for treason.

It was July 9th when the document made it to George Washington and his troops and it is estimated that it could have been August before George got it's copy.

So that beautiful picture that we all grew up with is just an artist drawing of what he thought happened.



This Bicentennial quilt is part of the Aspinock Historical Society's America 250 display at the museum. It was won by Sophie Cutler in 1976, as part of Putnam's commemoration of our nation's 200th birthday. Her daughters, Louise Cutler Pempek, Sandra Cutler Ames, and Carol Cutler Luters, are now returning it to the Aspinock Historical Society for the enjoyment of others. Visit our museum in the Putnam Municipal Complex at 200 Providence Street to see the America 250 display and other new exhibits.



Upcoming America 250 Programs at the Putnam Public Library with Aspinock Historical Society

**The Sons of Liberty in Windham County -
Saturday, April 11 • 1:00 to 2:30 PM**

**Revolutionary Connecticut-
with Natalie Belanger,**

Connecticut Museum of Culture and History
Wednesday, April 22 • 6:00 to 7:30 PM

Let's Take A Look Back at Presidents Day Sales

By Ken A. Evans

PUTNAM AREA MERCHANTS
ARE
CHOPPING PRICES
 during
THEIR SPECTACULAR FIVE-DAY
WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY SALE
THURSDAY-FRIDAY-SATURDAY-MONDAY-TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 17-18-19-21-22

Still a few good seats left for our Washington's Birthday celebration.



FISHER PONTIAC BUICK
 ROUTE 44 500 SCHOOL STREET, PUTNAM, CONN. 928-2781

In fact, they're the best seats—the ones inside the Pontiac tigers we have all lined up to help you live it up on your day off. Economy tigers like our Tempests. Luxury tigers like our Bonneville and Buicks. Swirling tigers like our Grand Prix, our GTO and our Sport. And lots of other great ones. Or, if you're more in a used car frame of mind, we have some great seats in that department, too. All kinds of nifty one-owner, late-model buxettes we were able to persuade their owners to part with. (Thanks to the popularity of our great '66 Pontiac.) It'll be the Washington's Birthday Open House to end all Washington's Birthday Open Houses. So we hope you'll be there. Time? Whenever you get there, to whenever you've picked out your favorite. See you!

COME IN AND TAKE ON A TIGER AT YOUR PONTIAC DEALER'S—A GOOD PLACE TO BUY USED CARS, TOO.

SANDYS
 WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
SALE
CRAZY PRICES!
 SALE STARTS AT 9:45
 THURSDAY MORNING

1 LOT OF Values to \$4.95
Blouses
 CRAZY CLOSEOUT PRICE **87¢**

1 LOT OF Values to \$19.95
Dresses
 CRAZY CLOSEOUT PRICE **2 for \$5.99**

1 LOT OF Values to \$45.00
Winter Coats
 CRAZY CLOSEOUT PRICE **\$17.00**

1 LOT OF Values to \$8.95
 Nylon Night Gowns and Pajamas
 CRAZY CLOSEOUT PRICE **\$1.99**

1 LOT OF
 Maternity Dresses and Separates
AT CRAZY CLOSEOUT PRICES!
 All Sales Final, No Exchanges, No Refunds

SANDYS
 156 Main Street Putnam, Conn.

PUTNAM AREA AUTO DEALERS
WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
OPEN HOUSE!
 FIVE BIG DAYS! Thurs. to Tues. Feb. 17-18-19-21-22
FREE COFFEE AND CHERRY PIES!
FREE CASH PRIZES!!
 Nothing to buy! Just register at any Putnam Area Auto Dealer's Showroom during the 5-Day Open House. Drawing will be held on Tues., Feb. 22nd at 4:30 PM at Radio Station WJNY.

FIRST PRIZE- **\$100.** SECOND PRIZE- **\$50.** THIRD PRIZE- **\$25.**


BIG CAR DEALS!
BIG TRADE-IN ALLOWANCES!

Presidents' Day, officially Washington's Birthday at the federal governmental level, is a holiday in the United States celebrated on the third Monday of February. It is often celebrated to honor all those who served as presidents of the United States and, since 1879, has been the federal holiday honoring George Washington, who served as the first U.S. president from 1789 to 1797.

As the first federal holiday to honor an American president, the holiday was celebrated on Washington's birthday February 22. On January 1, 1971, the federal holiday was shifted to the third Monday in February by the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. This places it between February 15 and 21, which makes "Washington's Birthday" something of a misnomer, since it never occurs on Washington's actual birthday, February 22.

By the mid 20th century retail sales events became associated with Washington's Birthday. Here are some examples printed in local newspapers "Putnam Patriot" and "Windham County Observer" from the early 1960's. None of these advertisers are still in business; perhaps you remember patronizing them. Local car dealers held Washington's birthday open houses. I recall visiting some with my Dad on these occasions, more out of curiosity than shopping for a new car, which we couldn't afford. Eventually we scored one at those open houses and drove away with our "new to us", actually used 1957 Ford Country Squire station wagon. Feel free to share your Washington's Birthday sales stories here.

it's FLASH picture time!



time for a new Kodak FLASH camera

CELEBRATING
Washington's Birthday

M2 - No. 5 - No. 25
FLASH BULBS

99¢ DOZEN
 REGULAR \$1.68

Three Days Only
Feb. 18-19-20

Grube Camera Shop
 55 Front Street Putnam, Conn.



While visiting the AHS Museum be sure to check out Putnam Municipal Historian Bill Pearsall's collection of Native American arrowheads and stone tools. In his younger days Bill farmed land in southern Connecticut and found these artifacts while working in his fields. They predate the use of metal by the original inhabitants of present day Connecticut.

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

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Fab was most recently honored as a recipient of The Putnam History Maker Award which recognizes contributions from any resident or non-resident of Putnam, living or deceased, whose impact is felt locally or globally, in the spotlight or quietly behind the scenes. Burial will be held in Munyan Cemetery, Munyan Road, Putnam, CT at a later date.

In Other News

There is now a link on our website where electronic payments for membership dues and donations can be made. The website address is

<https://putnamaspinockhistsoc.com/>

On social media our Facebook page has 882 followers, Instagram has 234 followers, and our AHS website has had more than 2,000 hits. Also check out our videos on our AHS Youtube channel. Several more "Voices of the Flood" interviews have been uploaded.

Putnam's Fire and Ice event February 28 brought thousands of visitors to the downtown area. Upwards of 200 of those people spent time visiting the Gertrude C. Warner Boxcar Museum! The museum will officially open for the 2026 season on the weekend of May 2 and 3. Museum hours will be Saturdays and Sundays 11:00-4:00. Weekday visits are available by appointment.

Check out the AHS museum store for a wide selection of local publications, Boxcar Children books and more. Prices on many items have been reduced.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

<https://www.facebook.com/AspinockHistoricalSociety>

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

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

[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.