

# ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

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Eryn Boyce, architectural historian, explains the history of the School Street/Providence Street neighborhood. Linda Lemmon photo/Putnam Town Crier



An 1887 pictorial map of Putnam, CT. The School Street/Providence Street neighborhood is labelled 6.

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## Aspinock Historical Society Marks 50th Anniversary

A special presentation marking the 50th anniversary of Putnam's Aspinock Historical Society took place on September 24 at their museum and research center in the Putnam Municipal Complex. Architectural historical Eryn Boyce from Public Archeology Laboratory of Pawtucket, RI gave a detailed presentation on Putnam's School Street and Providence Street neighborhood, its history and growth.

Boyce framed her talk around a number of themes which characterized development in the neighborhood from the 1830's to the present. These include transportation, demographics, retail businesses, industry, architectural styles and education

The detailed survey was required by the state as "mitigation" for the former red Aspinock Historical Society headquarters on School Street. It was torn down to make way for the entrance/exit of the new Municipal Complex.

Prior to Boyce's talk Aspinock Society President John Miller thanked all the volunteers who research, archive, greet and work hard to keep our mission alive. Putnam Mayor Barney Seen also praised the work of the Society.

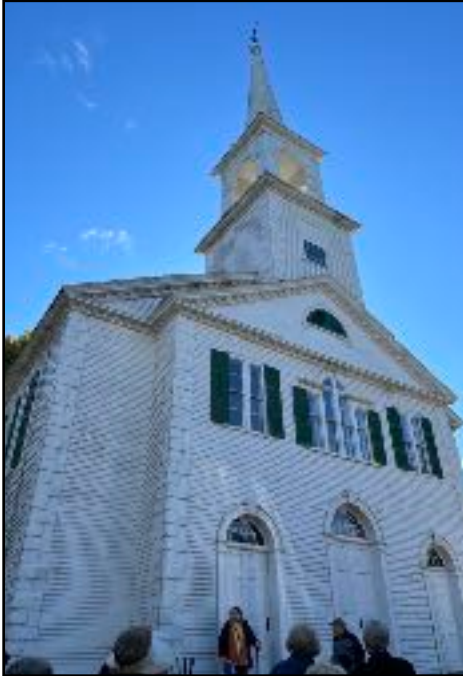


Attendees at the September 24 presentation view display of documents and maps.

### The African Church

The building, labeled on a late 19th map of Putnam as the African Church, was built in 1889 at 212 School Street. Its congregation was established in 1895 as the Calvary Baptist Church. The church was short lived and closed in 1896, when the building was sold and converted into a dwelling, now demolished. Here is an opportunity for additional research.

# Aspinock and Killingly Historical Societies Host Joint Walktober 2022 Event



It was a perfect Fall day, the bright blue sky, a chill in the air, and near peak foliage, a great day for a Walktober event. That's just what about 60 people did on October 8 for the Cady-Copp Anniversary Walk. Celebrating the 50th anniversaries of both Putnam's Aspinock Historical Society and the Killingly Historical and Genealogical Society, the walk highlighted the history of the Route 21 Putnam Heights area, formerly Killingly Hill pre-1855, dating back to the 1730's.

Attendees of the walk learned that this particular area was not lacking for a colorful cast of characters and noteworthy events. Here are a few: the pastor, whose quest for a spiritual existence in heaven was offset by his passion for imbibing liquid spirits here on earth, much to his congregation's dismay. The stone lookout tower which toppled over after a top-heavy addition. A visionary "pioneer" whose efforts and persistence helped a fledgling nation expand westward into new territory for settlement. How about the world's deepest well, or a church destroying hurricane before hurricanes were named? A woman whose passion for exotic plants can still be seen, patriots answering the Lexington Alarm in 1775, artists and government officials are among the interesting personages associated with Putnam Heights.

Killingly Municipal Historian Margaret Weaver, speaking from the steps of Congregational Meetinghouse built in 1818, talked about the rich history of Killingly Hill, its people and their homes and businesses. The group then

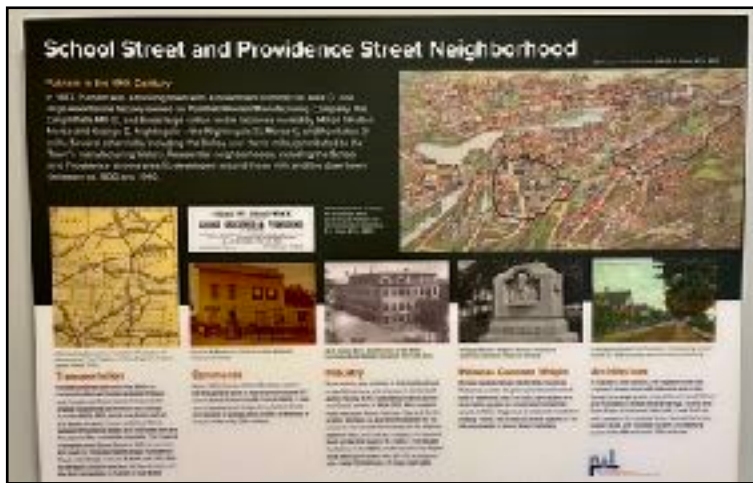
walked down the length of the common where colonial militia trained for Revolutionary War service. Lifelong Putnam Heights resident Linden Whipple provided more history of his family's association with the area. After the September "hurricane" of 1815 destroyed the second meetinghouse, its timbers were used in the construction of Mr. Whipple's house. He spoke of the beams in his attic which show evidence of cuts and angles from the repurposed church building's lumber.

The walk ended with a stop at the historic Cady-Copp Cottage, circa 1745/46. According to Bill Pearsall, Putnam Municipal Historian, the structure is extremely rare because it has a central chimney with four rooms on the first floor, each with a fireplace set at a 45 degree angle. Rev. Perley Howe and his wife Damaris (Cady) were the first residents. Pearsall said Rev. Howe was dismissed by his previous congregation in Dudley, MA for drunkenness, but it seems his intemperate behavior continued on Killingly Hill.

Rev. Howe died several years later, and his widow Damaris subsequently married Aaron Brown, also a Congregational minister. Rev. Brown, used the upstairs room at the cottage for tutoring young men destined for higher education. His most famous student was Manasseh Cutler, a locally born Yale graduate who went on to become a minister, physician and scientist. He is perhaps most remembered as co-author of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which opened up the Northwest Territory for settlement. This vast area became the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. A key provision of the Ordinance was that no slavery would be allowed in the future states of the territory. The Cady-Copp Cottage is now owned by the Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Top: Killingly's Margaret Weaver speaks from the steps of the 1818 Congregational Meetinghouse. Above left: Attendees learn about the the Putnam Heights training field and adjoining residents. Above center: Putnam's Bill Pearsall talks about the history and restoration of the Cady-Copp Cottage. Above right: The dwelling's very rare center chimney's four fireplaces angled 45 degrees.



**New installed plaques** showcasing the history, culture, architecture and education of Putnam’s School Street and Providence Street neighborhoods. The plaques were produced by Public Archeology Laboratory of Pawtucket, RI and are on view in the corridor leading to the Aspinock Historical Society’s center in the municipal building.



### Boxcar Meet and Greet

A nice get-together took place at the Putnam Municipal Complex October 26 to show appreciation to the docents who staffed the Boxcar Museum during the 2022 season. A special thank you to Pat Hedenberg and Renee Boutin-Tsanjures for their efforts in maintaining the museum and coordinating the volunteer staff. Aspinock Historical president John Miller thanked the Boxcar volunteers for their service and reported that plans are in the works for dealing with the excessive summer heat in the boxcar.

### New Members Joining April 30 to October 31, 2022

We welcome Raymond Bourque, Susan J. Calaman, and William and Hillary Walsh to the Aspinock Historical Society.

### A Message from John Miller President, Aspinock Historical Society

The Aspinock Historical Society is a local keeper of our history, but just like our history AHS is about People, Volunteers, Members and Generous Givers. I thank every one of you who donate your time and treasure to help us meet our mission of “Protecting the Future by Preserving our Past”. Please stop by our museum on the second floor of Putnam’s Municipal Complex to see our displays, or ask our Curator Terri Pearsall or Town Historian Bill Pearsall questions about your home, neighborhood or ancestors. Do you know about “The Great Putnam Bank Robbery”? Interested in history? Stop by and explore your history and ask about volunteering opportunities.

**DURING THE OFF -SEASON**

Sales of the Gertrude C. Warner Boxcar Museum shop, including her books, keychains, ornaments, etc. will be available at the Aspinock Museum and Research Center located in the Putnam Municipal Complex, 200 School Street. Stop in for some Holiday gift shopping.



The newly repainted Coca Cola sign on the side of the Bradley Playhouse building was dedicated in a ceremony during downtown Putnam's annual Great Pumpkin Festival October 15. The iconic Putnam landmark was originally painted around 1910 and had gradually faded over many years. The sign was restored to Coca-Cola Company specs by Gagnon Signs and project co-ordinator Jennifer Brytowski.



Photos by Terri Pearsall, Aspinock Historical Society

### **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 the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month 10 AM To Noon. Visit us to learn about Putnam's history through our displays and archives.

### **Submitting News**

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](mailto:kaevans1969@sbcglobal.net) or leave material for me at the Aspinock Historical Society facility at 200 Providence St., Putnam.

