

ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

What Bob Miller Meant to Putnam - In Mural Form

By Linda Lemmon, Town Crier Editor



PUTNAM — The Robert Miller Park is transformed from a tangle of weed trees and weeds to a shining representation of Miller's transformative effect on the community. And that transformation continued July 10 with the installation of two murals by local artist Elaine Turner. Town officials, family and friends and park contributors gathered to watch the unveiling.

It began at an Aspinock Historical Society meeting when President John Miller and board members asked out loud, what else can we do for the park. The large "whiteboard" kiosk had two blank spots — perfect for two murals that told Robert Miller's story, honored him. Turner, a board member, said she looked through photos and memorabilia and tried connect with what Robert Miller was all about, how much he did for the community.

One mural, called "Connecticut Home Guard," noted his service to the scouts, family and the U.S. Army (WWII). The second mural noted Miller as VP of National Chromium as a beacon of customer service, quality and also community service as the town historian and so much more.

The two murals join the garden, a map of the River Trail, a plaque honoring Miller, a replica of the Putnam High School Wall of Honor plaque honoring Miller, and a plaque honoring all those who have helped transform the park including: the Putnam Economic and Community Development Department, Chace Building Supply, Centreville Bank, the Putnam Recreation Department, National Chromium, the Aspinock Historical Society and the Miller and extended family. There are also commemorations for Kenneth Gunsalas, Scout leader, and the Putnam Industrial Corporation.

Mayor Barney Seney said Miller helped save the history of Putnam through the Aspinock Historical Society. "If you don't have that history, you don't have anything," he said. Turner said she delved into Bob Miller. "I wanted to depict how hard he worked; how joyful he was to represent the military. He was dedicated to service."

The murals are on a material called Polytab and the paintings are sealed. That is adhered to an aluminum sheet, so if the wood underneath begins to rot, the mural can be removed, the wood replaced and the mural put back up. She likened it to a collage of someone's life. "I gather information and stories and pictures and then I close my eyes, and I just try to envision what that story would look like in an art form. And that vision slowly becomes the reality." He did so many important things she couldn't even fit it all. Turner said doing the murals was an honor.

Memories of The '55 Flood Come Alive

Putnam historians Jeanne Benoit and Mike Bogdanski created a compelling video series titled "Voices of the Flood" to preserve the firsthand accounts of local residents who endured the catastrophic 1955 flood. This natural disaster, caused by heavy rainfall from Hurricanes Connie and Diane, left a lasting impact on the town of Putnam, and the series serves as a vital historical record. The videos feature interviews with Putnam residents, each sharing their personal stories and memories. They recount the rising waters, the destruction of homes and businesses, and the community's incredible resilience. One interviewee describes the terrifying moment the water surged through their home, while another remembers the sense of unity as neighbors helped each other salvage what they could.

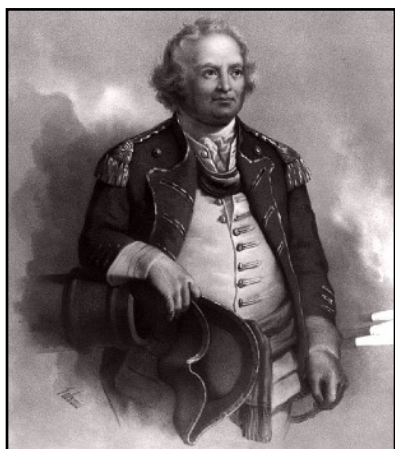
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Putnam resident Roger Franklin is flanked by AHS member s Mike Bogdanski and Jeanne Benoit at his "Voices of the Flood" interview.

Israel Putnam Strikes Early Blow for America's Independence

Researched and written by Jeanne Benoit



On the 18th of April in 1775, Paul Revere, William Dawes and Dr. Samuel Prescott sent out the word that the British were marching to get the colonial leaders and the illegal guns that the colonists were storing in Concord, MA.

When word reached Putnam Heights, the militias in Northeastern CT left this area to join the fight. Israel Putnam is said to have left his work in the field of his farm in the Pomfret/Brooklyn area.

At the Battle of Bunker Hill June 16, 1775, Israel Putnam was in charge and he is credited with saying, "Don't fire 'till you see the whites of their eyes". The reason for this was the guns were not accurate and it took at least three minutes to reload so the first shot had to be on the mark. You usually didn't get a second one. The militias also did not have a lot of gunpowder so they could not waste any.

The American Revolution had begun and the colonists from Northeastern Connecticut were very important in its success.

More on Israel Putnam by the Editor

Michael Rocchetti, author of the series "Hometown Heroes" in the Putnam Town Crier and Northeast Ledger, has written an article about Israel Putnam, which appears on the AHS Facebook page. He writes, "Israel Putnam (1718-1790) was a military veteran of both the French & Indian War (1754-1763) and the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). In this article, we are going to focus on one notable incident during his service in the French & Indian War – because it reveals a lot about his character, his fortitude, and his inner strengths."

In his book "Bunker Hill" author Nathaniel Philbrick presents a somewhat less flattering portrait of General Putnam. He writes, "All agreed that Putnam was as brave and inspiring as fighter as you could find, but focus and strategic thinking had never been his strong suits. The Battle of Bunker Hill was not to be his finest hour," Philbrick writes. The book is a good read and worth checking out.

Did You Know?

Hello. My address is 115 Liberty Highway in Putnam, Connecticut. I am at the edge of the woods, barely visible from the road. However, I do have a new driveway. I've had some much needed repairs, but more work needs to be done before I can open my doors to welcome guests.

A bit about my history. In 1992 I was given to the Aspinock Historical Society, and in 2001 put on the National Register of Historic Places. I am known as Cady Copp Cottage. Built in 1745, I served both as a home for my original owner's (Joseph Cady) daughter Damaris, as well as a location for tutoring students seeking higher education. One such local resident, Manasseh Cutler, studied for his Yale University entrance exam here.

I was lived in continuously until the 1930's without much modification, and without such amenities as electricity and running water. One of my unique features is a four fireplace configuration connected to a central chimney. Very few structures with this configuration remain today. Cady Copp Cottage is a work in progress. I invite you to help with its restoration and completion!

Researched and written by Sandra Cutler Ames



About 50 people gathered to share their memories of Joy Lizotte June 12 at a Strawberry Shortcake Social, held in her memory. The event took place

at the new Fred Hedenberg Pavilion, adjacent to the Gertrude Warner Boxcar Children Museum on South Main Street. The children's craft area inside the museum was named after Joy, reflecting her former home business, "Aunt Joy's Crafts". Mrs. Lizotte was a longtime volunteer at the Aspinock Historical Society and at the Boxcar Museum, who passed away in March.

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IN HIGH PLACES: Mr. and Mrs. William H. Kimball of Grove Street are re-shingling their three-stall garage—all of 40 feet high with a 60-degree pitched roof. Mrs. Kimball is 71 and her husband is 90 years old. Activity is one of Mrs. Kimball's recipes for longevity. (Photo by Shu)

Let's Take A Look Back at the Summer of '65

By Ken A. Evans

I graduated from Putnam High School, a member of the Class of 1965. So I thought it fitting that we take a look back at the Putnam of 60 years ago during the Summer of '65.

I had just completed one phase of my life and was about to enter a new one as a freshman at Clark University in Worcester, MA. We 112 graduates were starting to find our way in a nation involved in a rapidly escalating conflict in Southeast Asia and embroiled in a battle for civil rights at home. Today around 70 members of that class survive.

Back in 1965 Super Saver Market on Grove St. advertised Super Food Buys for a Fantastic 4th. Hamburger or hotdog rolls were 29¢ for a pkg. of 12. Colonial franks were 2 lbs. for \$1.29 and hamburg was 2 lbs. for 78¢.

A 6 room, 1 1/2 bath colonial in Putnam was listed for \$15,900 by the Desaulniers Realty Company.

A ribbon cutting ceremony marked the opening of the 3.3 mile 4 lane Putnam to Thompson segment of the CT Turnpike Connector, later Rt. 52 and now I-395.

Putnam Chief of Police Henry Mathurin reported 28 arrests for the month of July. Putnam had 140 parking meters in operation generating revenue of \$793.31 for July.

A headline read: "Breaking Into Bank." An authorized entrance to the former Citizens National Bank building on Main Street was made by workmen who were readying the building for the Church Clothing Company. It's now home to the Saw Dust Cafe.

On a Sunday morning in early August a 15 foot chimney on top of the Union Block in Putnam collapsed and the bricks fell three stories to the street, demolishing a car owned by Joseph Toolan and narrowly missing Joe. Just over a year later, in December 1966, the Union Block and several other buildings were destroyed in a disastrous fire.

Connecticut Senator Thomas Dodd in an article claimed that press coverage of the Vietnam War "outlandishly exaggerated" persecution of Buddhists in that country. In a letter to the Observer editor a "mother with sons" urged Congress to end the "slaughter" in Vietnam.

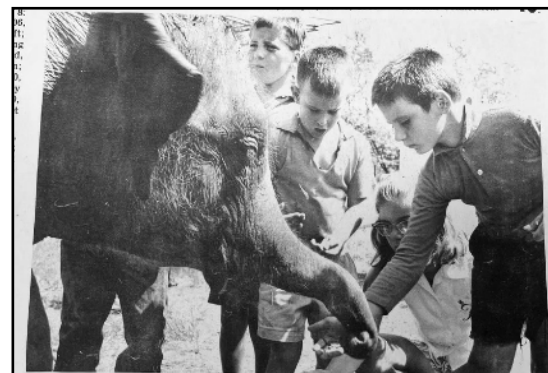
Putnam marked the 10th anniversary of the 1955 flood with a 10 day celebration of the city's revival. Events included sidewalk sales, drawings for cash prizes, a concert by the Newport News Naval Band, and a square dance.

These news snippets and images are from the 1965 Windham County Observer newspaper.



Bugbee's Summertime Sales Continue...
Further Reductions!! More Items Added!!
BIG Selection! BIG Savings! In Every Department...

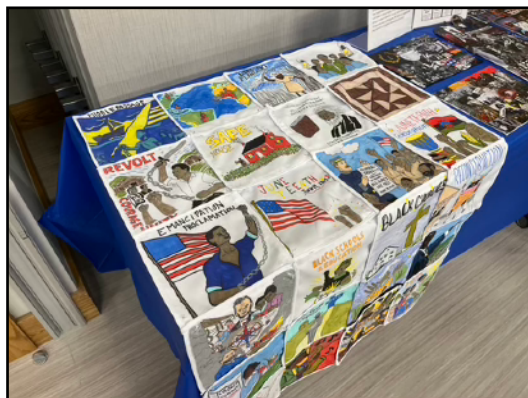
Misses' and Women's SUMMER DRESSES Sizes 8 to 18 • 8 to 20 • 14½ to 20½ Reg. 5.98 to 10.98 NOW 4.00 Reg. 11.98 to 13.00 NOW 6.98 Reg. 14.98 to 17.98 NOW 7.98 Reg. 19.98 NOW 10.98	Summer Dresses, Shifts, Skimmers, Tennis Dresses Sizes 8 to 18 Reg. 2.98 NOW 1.99 Reg. 4.00 to 6.00 NOW 2.99 Reg. 7.00 to 9.00 NOW 3.99
Misses' and Women's SHIRTS Trimmed with necking All Sizes Special 3.98	Boys' JAC-SHIRTS Sizes 8 to 14 Reg. 1.98 and 2.98 NOW 1.00 Reg. 3.98 NOW 1.69
Men's and Prep's SWIM TRUNKS Sizes 8-M-L-XL and 14 to 18 Reg. 2.98 NOW 1.99 Reg. 4.00 NOW 2.99 Reg. 5.00 NOW 3.99 Reg. 7.95 NOW 5.99	Men's and Prep's WALKING SHORTS Sizes 28 to 42 and 34 to 38 Reg. 4.00 to 5.00 Now 3.59
SPECIAL GROUP SWIM TRUNKS for Men and Prep's Reg. 1.98 and 2.98 Now 1.00	Men's Short Sleeve DRESS SHIRTS Reg. 2.99 to 4.00 NOW 1.00 OFF Reg. 5.00 to 7.95 NOW 2.00 OFF Prep JAC-SHIRTS



AT ELKS CIRCUS: This elephant gets all the attention of some of the many wide-eyed youngsters who attended the Jungland Safari held recently by Putnam Lodge of Elks. (Photo by Shu)

Aspinock Helps Celebrates Juneteenth

Students of Putnam High School joined with local leaders in the town to mark Juneteenth holiday, June 19, at the Municipal Complex. Juneteenth is an annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States in 1865. African Americans have celebrated this day since the late 1800's. Municipal Historian Bill Pearsall gave a talk on Rufus Malbone, an African American farmer and trader in Putnam, who owned extensive land along the present Rt. 44 near the Pomfret town line. Both he and his beloved horse Dolly are buried in a small plot enclosed by stone walls, visible today on the right side of the highway. Shown at left is some student Juneteenth artwork.



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Benoit and Bogdanski meticulously documented these testimonials to ensure future generations understand the gravity of the event. The series doesn't just focus on the devastation; it also highlights the human spirit and the way the community came together to rebuild. By giving a platform to these "voices," the historians have created a powerful and emotional tribute to the town's past. The series is a poignant reminder of the power of nature and the enduring strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity. It's a valuable resource for anyone interested in local history or the history of natural disasters. Around 12 local individuals were interviewed for this project. Their memories can be found by going to the Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam Youtube channel: "Voices of the Flood."



Check out Paul Desautel's antique camera collection on display at the Aspinock Historical Society Museum, 200 School St.

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

Upcoming Walktober Events - thelastgreenvally.org

On Saturday, October 11 there will be two Walktober events beginning at 1:00 PM at the Putnam Municipal Complex.

Killingly Historian Maggie Weaver will give a talk *Abolition and the Underground Railroad in Northeast Connecticut* followed by a walking tour of *Underground Railroad Houses* by Putnam Municipal Historian Bill Pearsall.

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

<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 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.