

FALL 1999

1999 ANNUAL MEETING
and **EXTRA SPECIAL
PROGRAM**

SUNDAY OCTOBER 17
PUTNEY TOWN HALL

3 P.M. OLD VEHICLES DISPLAY

4 P.M. A GLIMPSE AT THE
LIFE & TIMES OF DWIGHT
SMITH, A TRULY COLORFUL
PUTNEY CHARACTER

PLEASE DON'T MISS IT!

Dwight Smith came to Putney around 1910 at the age of 21. For the next 50 years until his death in 1960, he wore many hats both in his private business ventures and in town affairs. He ran, at different times, a blacksmith shop, a sawmill, a factory, a garage, a basket stand, and a combination store and filling station. He was fire chief, selectman, road commissioner, truant officer and holder of several other town offices over the years. He was a member of Putney Historical Society and served on the boards of Putney Community Center and Putney Credit Union.

PHS has copies of nearly 60 newsletters sent out periodically by Dwight Smith between 1947 and 1958. They contain political commentary, advertisements for his and other businesses, local gossip and items of general interest. He couldn't spell, his typing left a lot

to be desired, but his heart was in Putney. Reading them is a nostalgic experience even if you didn't know Mr. Smith and lived somewhere else at the time.

The following is taken from his September 6, 1952 issue under the heading "Putney News" (spelling copied exactly):
"The heavy folage along PUTNEY'S main highways are becoming a serious hasard to the average driver. In the last few weeks vison ahead has shortened to a dangerous limit. Ten miles an hour is a maxum safe speed on some of our side roads and then be sure your brakes are in no. 1 condition. Until Good old nature "JACK FROST" comes into action to harvest this heavy folage and clear the right of way rembember the road bed is exceptionally naro and the ditches on either side are aceptenially deep and covered with an extra crop of growth that only "JACK FROST" will remide in due time unless some artifical remedy comes along before hand. (He must have looked up "exceptionally" in the dictionary and then forgotten how to spell it before he finished his sentence.)

From the same issue:

"Our local Post Office is coming out of hiding. Work has begun in remodeling the Town Hall so when visiting the Office you will enter at the front of the building. Mo more sneaking up the back steps to say HELLO to UNCLE SAM."

From the March 14, 1953 issue:

"You will find another five cents added to your taxes this year to buty fie our town square and not a word mentioned or money raised for the protection and safty of the fifty children crossing and recrossing the bridge at the corner store and paper mill. (see page 2)

PHS IS ON THE WWW

Sharing local treasures with each other and the world is easier now thanks to the World Wide Web.

Last spring the enthusiasm of students in the Apprenticeship Program came together with 5 years of local research by Laurel Ellis and the technology skills of Fern Tavalin and Beth Hughes to build the first section of a web site for the Putney Historical Society. Laurel began the technology venture with a guided tour of a few mills along the Sackett's Brook so that students Dee, Billy, and AJ could explore the territory and take electronic images.

Along with images taken by a camera, old photos were scanned from the PHS collection to complement the land records Laurel has been assembling. Laurel's search began when she and her husband Doug purchased a home on Putney's Main Street. "Research on our house was so extensive that I learned names of all the original settlers of this section of town. I felt like I knew them and traced back many houses to find out who had settled where, who built the houses still standing and when. It became like a giant puzzle with the extra dimension of time. The mills along the brook were a section of that puzzle." Placing information online gives Laurel the chance to publish her information. "As I have now invested five years worth of my spare time, I am happy to be able to share my findings with others."

The web site development was funded by the WEB Project, a U.S. Department of Education Innovation grant to help improve student learning in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The Sackett's Brook site investigation raised lots of questions for the students. "Should we touch the objects we see?" "How can we protect the area?" "Is this an artifact or a natural stone?" Dee presented these questions to the Historical Society and board members explained that they were really

good questions and not so easy to answer without additional information. In fact, the students have brought up some of the essential issues in amateur archaeology and history. Hopefully, their "need to know" will inspire some of the future work of the web site.

You can visit the current site at <http://www.putneyvt.org/history>. If you don't have access to a computer from home, the Putney Public Library and the Putney Central School are online.

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Dwight Smith.....continued from page 1

We maybe able to pick flowers from the comon in the square in memory of the child that is rooled under trying to cross this bridge in heavey trafic. SAFTY IS THE WATCH WORD."

Under "PUTNEY COMMUNITY CENTER NEWS":

The three younge men Lawerence Wade, Bill Graham, Harrison Combs that have been responsable for the sucessfull program at the Center this year are planing a limited program for the summer actives for those youngestor that are left to go adrift during the summer months with schools closed and nothing to do without some planing and leadership. Those boys have grown with benefits of the Center and realise the Center is needed during the summer months as well as in the winter. Childern left to go adrift while thier parents are trying to make a better home are becoming one of the greatest dangers of modern times. Ninety nine present of our younge people that have grown up under leadership make good citizens."

A personal ad in the April 15, 1950 issue reads: "Wanted A few fresh fowls for our freezer....D. H. Smith"

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Observations on Former Location of County Road Through Putney Village Prior to 1800

by Laurel Ellis

On July 26, 1999 the Sackett's Brook dam near U. S. Route 5 was drained for cleaning and repairs. Much silt was scooped out, rocks were placed on the northern bank to prevent further erosion near the fire station, and a new layer of cement was added to the face of the dam to prolong its life. As usual, many artifacts and relics of the past were found in the stream bed while the pond was empty. Normal stuff except for an easily overlooked spot on the north bank just below the fire station.

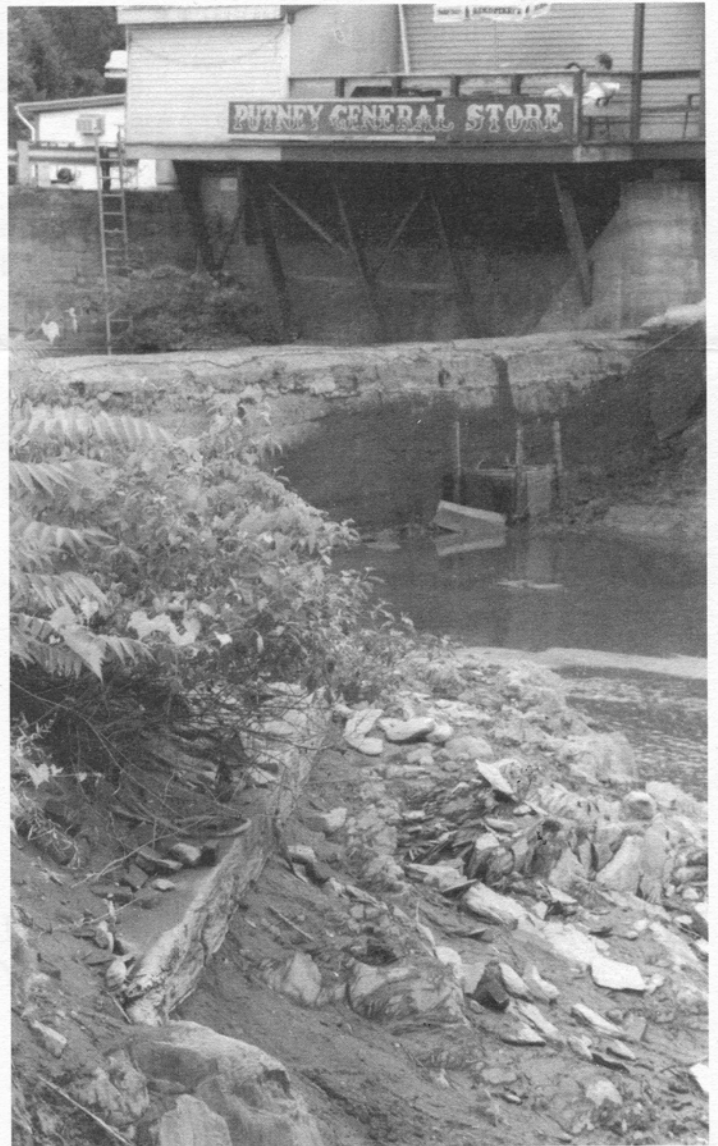
To some who saw it, it was just a couple of old timbers stuck in the ledge - probably part of the foundation for an old mill. To others, who get excited about such things, it was a new discovery! Briefly exposed while the dam repairs took place were the probable remains of a bridge abutment that was abandoned at least 202 years ago and built at some unknown time well before that!

As I had read in some old deeds that the road prior to 1800 had crossed Sackett's Brook about 120' west of the current route 5 bridge, I had been anxiously awaiting the draining of the pond to see if there was any visible evidence remaining from that early bridge. There was nothing visible from the current bridge but when I walked out onto the porch of the General Store, there it was! The photographs I took came out quite clearly but, regretfully, I neglected to measure them. I would estimate that the timbers are about 12 - 14 inches square and that the two together are about 10 - 14 feet long.

Other knowledgeable persons who also examined the site are Craig Stead and Tom Jamison. Craig pointed out that the ledge outcrop would have been the logical place to build a bridge and that it lines up with the gap between the old Co-op building and the house owned by Jon Hendricks. Tom, of Hartgen Archaeological Associates, Inc. examined the timbers and photographs. His comments were: "Yes, it does look like a bridge abutment. It consists of a modified bedrock ledge cut to accommodate two timbers placed end to end and dry laid cut

stone masonry laid up above and behind the timber to create the bulk of the abutment. The timbers probably were the primary beam on which the end of the bridge rested. They may be pinned to the ledge underneath. It is impossible to say from this evidence what the bridge looked like. It certainly could have been a covered bridge, but may also have been open."

Copies of the photographs and details from various deeds dated from 1791 to 1819 which refer to the former location of the road are on file at Putney Historical Society's museum in the Town Hall.



Please note:

The Fall issue is the only newsletter that we can mail to *everyone* in the Putney Post Office delivery area due to our limited budget. If you'd like to make sure you receive all of our newsletters (usually 3 or 4 per year), please consider becoming a member and you will be placed on our mailing list.

Please take a moment to join or renew your membership in the Putney Historical Society

Putney Historical Society Membership Form

Please PRINT name and address:

Name _____ Date: _____

Address _____

Individual \$5.00 Sustaining \$25.00 Patron \$100.00
 Family \$10.00 Benefactor \$50.00

Additional donations beyond membership are appreciated. Any amount over the membership fee is tax deductible, as are gifts.

Yes, I will volunteer. Please phone me at: _____

Make checks payable to: *Treasurer, Putney Historical Society*. Mail to: Putney Historical Society, C/o Putney Town Hall, P. O. Box 233, Putney, VT 05346, or leave at the Town Hall

Putney Historical Society
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**ANNUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 17**

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PUTNEY, VT 05346