



www.putneyhistory.org
 P 802-387-5862
 E putneyhs@sover.net

Location
 Putney Town Hall, Rt. 5
 Box 233
 Putney, Vermont 05346

Research Hours
 Wednesdays 2-4 pm
 or by appointment

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Newsletter Items Assembled and Written by:

Fern Tavalin
 Laurel Ellis
 Stuart Strothman
 Beth Muskat
 Elaine Dixon
 Lyssa Papazian

PUTNEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The Putney Historical Society Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, October 24, 2004 from 3-5 pm at the Putney Cares Barn. It has been an exciting year for us! We are looking forward to changing our location within the Town Hall and improving our collection display and accessibility. We have been planning and preparing for this opportunity—Ruth Barton, Laura Heller, and Elaine Dixon have worked together to spearhead the move of our physical objects. After the roof is fixed and renovations are complete, we plan to have a display area upstairs and an easily accessible records collection and office in what is now the "cold room."

Historic Preservation at Annual Meeting

After an architectural overview of the downtown historic district, Chris Cochran from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation will speak about tax credits for repair of historic homes and he'll also give some tips for old house restoration.

Chris's talk is a timely one for Putney. With several old buildings in need of major repair, representatives from Town Hall, the Putney Historical Society, the Community Center, and the United Church of Putney have been planning together so that we can think of our town as a whole, rather than looking at repairs, building by building.

At the invitation of the Historic Trust of Vermont, Lyssa Papazian (Selectboard), Susan McMahon (Windham Regional Commission) Leon Cooper (Community Center), Susan Taroli (United Church of Putney), and Fern Tavalin (PHS) attended a retreat at their Grand Isle Lakehouse to discuss a collaborative approach to reparation and restoration of the historic buildings in town.

The idea floated and discussed at the retreat was to develop some means for the non-profit and municipal groups who own historic public buildings in Putney to coordinate fundraising, assessment, maintenance, programming, and construction needs for these structures - so as not to compete with one another and to realize some more effective project planning. Several ideas were mentioned at the retreat including the formation of a separate non-profit entity, such as a "Historic Putney" group, that would raise private and government funds and help all buildings prioritize and pay for needed improvements, repairs, and accessibility solutions.

Joined by Beth Muskat (PHS) and Pip Bannister (Putney Planning Commission), the group has been following up on ideas generated at the Lakehouse retreat.

An idea that has surfaced is to investigate whether Putney should become a Certified Local Government (CLG). This would enable the Town to compete for special grants. At the Annual Meeting, Chris Cochran will speak to the pros and cons of CLG status.

Quips from the 2003 PHS Annual Meeting

The following quips and quotes are excerpted from Stuart Strothman's annual meeting notes. The membership gathered at the Putney Cares Barn last October to hear about farm life in Putney.

Farmers present: Bob Goodell, Bill Darrow Jr., Don Harlow, Ed Cassidy

Ed Cassidy offered a story which Don Aplin had told him, about his father's new Model T Ford. They were popular items, as the reader can imagine, and farmer George Aplin went out and bought himself one. He drove it home, but hadn't got a strong handle on how to slow it down. As the story goes, he was rolling toward his barn at a good clip, hollering "Whoa! Whoa!" as if he were trying to stop a team of horses. The new Model T, stubborn as you please, refused to respond until it hit an 8x8 beam in the barn. Having a good spring steel bumper, it bounced right back into the yard. Mr. Aplin for his part didn't get hurt any, unless maybe his ego was bruised a little.

Bob Goodell was reminded of a time he purchased a number of cows, and agreed to pay the note off regularly, to the Walpole Bank. A cattle dealer came along and threatened to take the cows away, telling Bob, "how about that note?" He thought Bob was behind on his payments. As it happened, Bob had just paid up, and he replied, "Paid it yesterday." The man

was forced to go away. Ed joked at that point, "Quickest way to make spring come is to sign a 90-day note in the fall!"

Ed Cassidy's next story was about his father, who had a note (debt) for some cows he purchased from Frank Howard. His father Robert brought the note to the bank on the corner of Elliot and Main in Brattleboro, and spoke to Clarence Stickney, who said he could renew it. A bank manager, Mr. Brown, wrinkled his nose and shifted his pencil, and made to overrule Mr. Stickney's decision. "The cows are ours," said Mr. Brown. "Fine," said Mr. Cassidy, heading for the door. "Tomorrow morning there'll be 14 cows tied up outside." Mr. Brown thought quickly and said "Come on back in and we'll work out something." The result was that Mr. Brown agreed to renew the note, which they did, and Mr. Cassidy returned home.

Don Harlow spoke of the era of farms, back in the 1930s and before; Hugh Goodell, George Braley, Bill Darrow, Rob

Cassidy -a super group of people who kept potato bins to feed hungry people during the Depression. Hugh was always ready to put people to work if they needed it. George would give grain and Rob offered sugaring work to itinerant people.

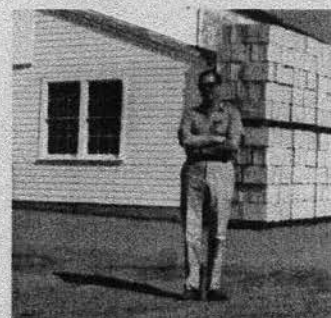
Ed added that he would hay on the ten-acre mowing (now I-91) owned by the brothers from the novitiate of St. Edmunds (now the Putney Inn). He would put enough in their barn to feed their one cow for the winter and could keep the rest for the Cassidy farm.

Bill Darrow remembered that when he walked home from the old central school, he walked by the Hannum's. He had to behave well, or the 'grapevine' would send word to his parents, and he'd catch it.

Bob went on to talk about George Aiken and Alice Holway. When Congress appropriated money for the Merrit Parkway in CT, Alice got the idea to submit a bid for landscaping it. They won the contract and dug up thousands of maple saplings from Putney Mountain.



Farm Survey 1963:
State of Vermont



Bill Darrow, Jr. (above), Ed Cassidy (left), and Bob Goodell (right) pose in front of their farms in 1963 for a state survey of farms. Other farm photos are on record at the Putney Historical Society.

Bring Us Your Photos

A Request from Laurel Ellis

Photographs are a wonderful way to preserve history. How I wish that photography had been invented when the first settlers came to this area so that we could see what Putney looked like in its untouched state and then glimpses of its progress over the first century and a half.

Now perhaps photography is taken too much for granted. We don't necessarily make it a point to take good documentary photographs because we just assume that someone else is probably doing it.

As a historical society we treasure our old photos but don't actively collect current ones. This became quite evident when we were searching for photos for our recent book (Putney - World's Best Known Small Town). Contrary to my personal supposi-

tion that our local newspaper had a wonderful stash of "file" photos from the last 50 years or more, the reality is they do not.

Good photos in private collections will not be available for all of us in the future unless someone takes the initiative to acquire, organize and preserve them.

Grafton Historical Society does just that. People donate copies of their photos of special occasions which are kept chronologically in albums for each year. They are

accumulating a wonderful record of everyday life which will someday be as treasured as our old glass plate photos.

This seems like a good time for Putney to begin. Bring us copies of your special photos - old and new - clearly labeled with names, dates, places etc. and we will place them in a series of town albums to be preserved as a visual record of our history. If you don't have an extra copy, please consider allowing us to scan and return your original.

Julie Rosegrant Turns 100



Longtime Putney resident, Julie Rosegrant, celebrates her 100th birthday on October 6. With her family she came to Putney in 1942 to teach at The Putney School, and for more than five decades gave dedicated service to the Town.

Julie was one of the original founders of the Putney Credit Union (now the River Valley Credit Union) and the Putney Coop; for many years she was the Collector of Delinquent Taxes (having insisted that the name be changed from the Delinquent Tax Collector), a Town auditor, and supporter of many causes including an effort to change the American national anthem to "America the Beautiful."

Until she stopped driving at the age of 96 (with an unblemished record), she volunteered regularly in the Transportation Office of the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. In 1999 she was chosen Putney Citizen of the Year. Still very alert, she continues to point out grammatical errors, both verbal and written.

iPutney Brings Electronic News

Conversations begun on the porch of the Tavern have shifted to a new online portal located at <http://www.iputney.com> Join in and become a citizen journalist!

In the winter of 2004, Paul Levasseur wanted to revive the idea of a community newsletter. So, he called Fern Tavalin to ask her how she got the Putney Pamphleteer started. By the time the two met, months had gone by and a third person, Bob Lawson, was added to the group. Bob's background in technology made him wonder why Fern and Paul were considering a paper-based newsletter that would take so much time, money, and energy. Having spent years teaching people to use online conferencing systems, Fern was reluctant to go that route because of all of the access and training issues. Luckily, iBrattleboro was up and running as a model for citizen journalism. The group contacted Chris Grotke and iPutney was born.

The Putney's Talking series initiated over the summer by Paul LeVasseur and Eva Mondon turned out to be the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the relationship between meeting on-line and in-person.

From www.iputney.com

Theater Curtains Restored

Wednesday, September 01 2004 @ 11:29 AM

Contributed by: Fern

It's hard to imagine now, but at one time Town Hall was a center for plays and silent movies. In the entry way downstairs, hidden from plain view, is the old ticket booth where movie and theater goers would purchase their entrance to an evening's entertainment. Also hidden from view for many years were two remaining theater curtains used from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Our curtains are part of a larger collection held by towns throughout Vermont. Identified as a national treasure, the Vermont Painted theater Curtains Project, has secured funding to restore or stabilize the remaining curtains. Putney's turn for restoration has come this week. The public is welcomed to help or just stop by and watch as Chris Hadsel, Michelle Pagan, Peter Isles, and the many volunteers assembled work on the curtains. Once stabilization has been achieved, the curtains will be rolled up again and stored until Town Hall becomes restored enough to safely place them on display.


Early Church Records on Microfilm

Sunday, September 26 2004 @ 05:52 PM

Contributed by: Elaine Dixon and Laurel Ellis

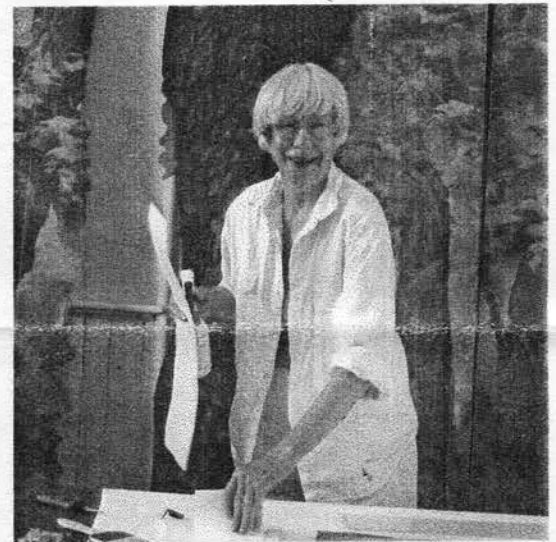
With permission of the pastor of the United Church of Putney, the early church records kept in the Putney Town Vault were taken this year by Joann Nichols, genealogist of the Brattleboro Historical Society, to be put on microfilm by the Genealogy Society of Vermont. The records and microfilm were returned to the vault on September 22, 2004. Putney Historical Society would like to thank Joann for accomplishing this task and for the wonderful index she made for the records.

iPutney: What use can you envision for a community news site like iPutney?

i putney.com
from Porch to Portal 

Laurel Ellis: I am so excited about this because we can print the web site news articles every month and be able to create a really good file of modern Putney history. This will be fantastic for the Historical Society.

Paul LeVasseur: iPutney helps me get news out about the library and other community events. We don't want to lose our practice of holding meetings in-person, though. So, this is just one more way to communicate.



Mal Herbet is shown above as she works on a curtain. Behind her are painted "ears," otherwise known as side panels.