

PUTNEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2002

Celebration Committee to Form

In 1953, Inez Harlow used the motto "Many hands make light work" to convene a committee on behalf of the Selectmen to organize a town-wide 200th anniversary celebration. With the same notion in mind, representatives of the Putney Historical Society Board asked the current Town Selectboard to follow suit. On Thursday morning, August 22, 2002, the Select Board voted to be the lead sponsor of the 250th anniversary celebration, making the suggestion that the Historical Society look to the Town Picnic Committee as a good starting place for forming a committee. The Town also asked the PHS to rough out a plan for the celebration and return to the Selectboard with that plan.

The Historical Society will use its annual meeting as a jumping off point, reviewing the history of what was done 50 years ago and making plans for how we would like to celebrate in 2003. The annual meeting is open to anyone who would like to attend -- the more the merrier! We are also looking for people who attended the parade and pageant in 1953 to come and share their first-hand accounts.

If you would like to serve on the Celebration 2003 Committee or you would like to offer suggestions about interesting activities, please come to the Community Center on Sunday, October 6th from 4-6 pm. If you cannot attend the annual meeting, but would like to participate on a committee, contact the PHS. (putneyhs@sover.net or 387-5862). ♦♦

Join the Celebration 2003 Committee !

Excerpts from 1953 Press Release

Complete version on file at the Putney Historical Society

FROM: Charles Burns, Putney, Vermont. Tel, Putney 48-2
RE: PUTNEY BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, August 2, 1953

PUTNEY, VT. — This New England town of 1116 persons, chartered by the English King George II, is celebrating its two hundredth birthday next week-end. The Town Charter, a parchment document signed in 1753 with a regal flourish (the original is preserved in the New Hampshire state archives in Concord, N.H.) is the center of interest of a historical exhibit that will include a confirmatory charter, dated 1766 and signed by George III. Other exhibits will record snatches of the history of this community which has been the birthplace of such diverse reforms as a successful remaking of the American dairy industry and an unsuccessful attempt to establish communism and an exotic multiple-marriage system as basic practices in a Christian church.

Lying along the west bank of the placid Connecticut River above Brattleboro and below the big falls—now Bellows Falls-- which barred up-river traffic, Putney is roughly 200 miles from New York and 100 from Boston by auto.

A measure of Putney's peculiar character is evidenced in the almost casual recognition the Bicentennial will accord the town's penchant for fostering individual and social experiments.

Putney is today a strangely intellectual-experimental vs. non intellectual-standpat town. (The "vs." in this case does not signify open antagonism so much as a deep inability to understand, expressed only infrequently in puzzled or bitter comment.) Generally this division follows the line suggested by the two types of residents - the native, colonial-stock New Englanders on one side and, on the other, outlanders from the cities and the West - writers, pedagogues, painters, publishers.

Though it has not always been a haven for the bookish, residents who have been studying the town's origins and character are of the opinion that it has been, from the beginning, a spot where individualists could and often did insist on their right to do as they "durned pleased." ♦♦

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A Sound Gift

By Laurel Ellis

Over the past 50 years, a few forward-thinking interviewers have taken the trouble to make voice recordings of people, some of whom are no longer with us, or events they felt would be interesting to review in the future. Some recordings were originally done on reel-to-reel tape and later transferred to cassettes but, as everyone knows in this age of rapidly changing technology, the current trend is the compact disc and the future trend is anyone's guess.

About a year ago I received a call from William "Billy" Shaw, owner of Sound Design in Brattleboro, with an offer too good to refuse. Billy enjoys listening to stories of times past and had heard of our collection of audio tapes. He also has the equipment necessary to transfer cassettes onto compact disc (CD) format and thought perhaps he could listen to each tape while he made the transfer and so offered to put our entire collection on CDs! It's his way of "giving something back" to the town that has been there for him during difficult personal times.

Well, nothing is exactly that simple. Some of the tapes had rather annoying background clatter on them. Billy used his expertise to filter out much of the noise. Some of the material was a little boring. Billy listened to it anyway. One or two at a time, he kept on plugging away until this spring when he presented us with a 20 CD set, all indexed and labeled, with a professional looking jackets, displaying an historical photo chosen by the PHS board.

In a sample of this collection you can relive the 1955 graduation ceremony at Putney Central School; listen to Eleanor Carey interview former teacher, principal, town clerk, and founder of the Putney Historical Society, Inez Harlow; hear Ed Gray on sugaring; catch interviews with historian Cliff Cory and various PHS programs of interest such as the one on World War II presented in 1994. There is much more and we hope to add many new people and events to the collection on an ongoing basis. ♦♦

Thank you Billy! We sure appreciate it.

Oral Interviewing and Student Learning

By Fern Tavalin

Thanks to the efforts of area teachers and students, the oral history interviews begun in 1953 are continuing. Last spring Landmark College combined the interviewing of Putney community members with student learning goals for several of their courses. Janie Duncan asked her Cross Cultural Communications class to talk to people in town who came from other countries to get an idea of what living in American is like for them. Christina Nova taught faculty and students how to handle video cameras to achieve good audio/visual results. Chris Grele took students on a stroll through Putney past as they interviewed Windham College alumni during a walking tour through town. Writing teacher Jan Thompson has conducted several interviews of her own in preparation for student projects in the fall.

Eighth grade students at the Grammar School under the guidance of Laurie Fichter have been busy collecting stories of their own from the West Hill Shop, Sandglass Theater, and Green Mountain Orchards. Their interviewing has been both an act of community service for the Historical Society and a learning experience connected to their social studies class. Laurie plans to continue this fall with more interviewing as well as using information on file at Town Hall to build student skills in primary research. An ESL class at the Putney School contributed an interview of Toshiko Phipps and Greenwood students of Alan Owens interviewed the owner of Recollections.

Interviewing has been supported in part by the Vermont Council on the Humanities under grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by the WEB Project under grant from the Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation. Writers will use interview summaries as they prepare the updated town history. Finished summaries by students in Putney schools, as well as those by adult volunteers, can be read at <http://www.putneyvt.org/history>. Click on the word "Book" to find out more! ♦♦

Twentieth Century Memories: Putney, VT

Vol. 1 -- Putney Central School Graduation
June 8, 1955

Vol. 2 -- Beginning of the PHS, Rocks and
Minerals, John Humphrey Noyes

Vol. 3 -- Continuation of Vol. 2 with Inez Harlow

Vol. 4 -- Ed Gray on Sugaring and Allen House Coop

Vol. 5 -- George Aiken and Ethel Page on Life in Putney

Vol. 6 -- Ed and Mabel Gray

Vol. 7 -- Cornelia and Steffa Gerassi

Vol. 8 -- Mrs. Joseph Montville's Music Box

Vol. 9 -- Dave Hannum, Sr.

Vol. 10 -- Houses of Putney

Vol. 11 -- Indians and Archaeology of the CT River

Vol. 12 -- Archaeology Dig at Fort Hill

Vol. 13 -- *Volume 12 continued*

Vol. 14 -- Indians of Vermont and their Stories

Vol. 15 -- *Volume 14 continued with Joseph Bruchac*

Vol. 16 -- Putney as an Early Mill Town

Vol. 17 -- Putney Mt. Memories w/G. Aiken and R. Goodell

Vol. 18 -- Don Harlow on Farming

Vol. 19 -- World War II Memories

Vol. 20 -- Wayne Austin and Don Harlow

PUTNEY QUEST

By Fern Tavalin

Have you ever wondered what treasures lie hidden in the landscape or stored in files at Town Hall? Communities in the Upper Valley have explored their special places by looking at old records and reading the landscape for messages from the past. Inspired by the letterboxing tradition begun in Dartmoor, England in the mid-1800s and brought to the United States by David Sobel of Antioch New England, Valley Quest treasure mapping has become a regional phenomenon.

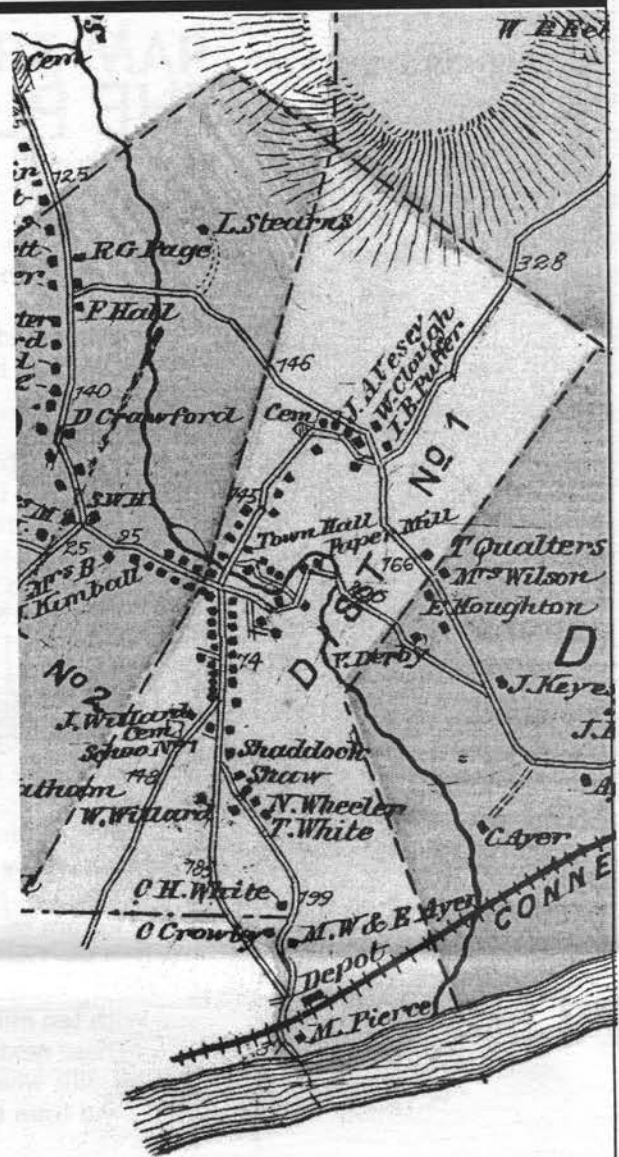
On August 12, 2002 Steve Glazer, the coordinator of Valley Quest in White River Junction brought this tradition to Putney and trained 7 people to lead quest making groups of their own. The first quest, the Millers' Quest, is ready for everyone to explore. The rules are simple: follow a rhyming couplet verse through a guided tour that eventually leads to a treasure box. Inside the box you will find some cool stuff and a stamp to mark your journey. The Putney Quest is printed on the next several pages. All you have to do is read the clues and follow the trail.

Workshop attendees have plenty of future plans for quest building and adventuring. Laurie Fichter from the Grammar School will lead her upper grade students on the Millers' Quest before designing one of their own. Chris Grele, an instructor at Landmark College plans to do the same. Her daughter Zoe wants to tell friends in Westminster West how much fun it is to do. Paul Levasseur plans to make a quest with his neighbors to share some of the treasures of their community with the town-at-large.

Donna Allen, a member of the Kathan clan that originally settled the town, is already preparing quests for the large family reunion that will hold to coincide with the town's 250th anniversary celebrations. Jacquie Walker wants to lead the Conservation Commission through a quest to show members how much fun it is to learn and design at the same time. Fern Tavalin from the Historical Society board hopes to sponsor more workshops so that other schools, civic organizations, and neighborhoods can learn about town history while creating treasure hints that others can share.

The Putney Quest workshop was sponsored thanks to a grant from the Vermont Council on the Humanities to gather information about town history and to raise interest in local history.

We invite you to try the Putney Quest provided in this issue. To learn how to create one of your own or to attend the next scheduled workshop, contact Fern Tavalin (tavalin@sover.net or 387.4277) ♦♦



Putney Circa 1869

Old maps raise lots of questions. Look at this 1869 map detail, showing the current center of Putney. Knowing what you do, what are some of the things that you wonder about then versus now? Here are some questions that others have asked:

1. What are the districts about?
2. Is that really where Town Hall is?
3. What happened to the railroad depot?
4. Is that the same paper mill?
5. Did the town center shift?
6. Are those the same roads?

Vermont was the first state in the US to make a Quest. To find out more, visit <http://www.letterboxing.org>.

THE PUTNEY QUEST

Enter Town Hall and a guide you will find
That lists all the treasures this hunt has in mind

With your guide in hand, look cross the street
You'll see two buildings that offer plenty to eat

In days long ago
This was not always so
Look at your guide
To see what history can hide

Move down the steps, cross the road to the right
Christian Square will be in plain sight

Follow this road to a building truncated
Where plenty of services here are related
This High Victorian Gothic style
Has served the community for a long, long while

Moving along to a home of Perfection
Remodeled by a miller to change its direction

Return to the corner and take a right
To see the Lower Mill owner's home on this site

With ten mills grinding on Sacketts Brook
These next few houses let millers look
At the mills where they worked by night and day
And from their toil received their pay

The oldest house stands at the next junction
Home to millers and American Legion functions

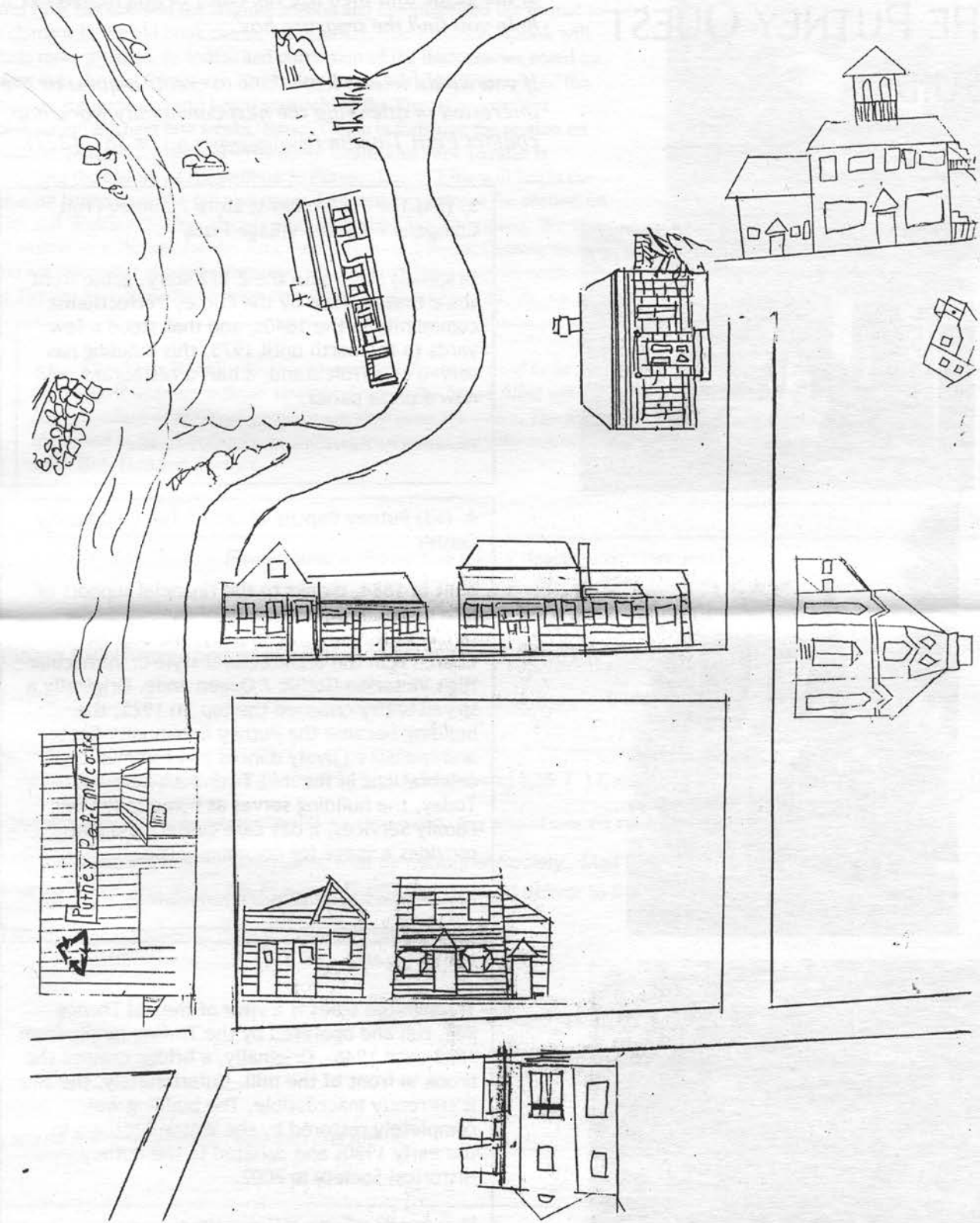
Continue down Mill Street past the Dead End sign
Peek past the brook for an old mill to find

A bridge once let people cross the water
To grind their grain into animal fodder
(Someday soon a new bridge we'll offer
If we have money filled in our coffer)

Keep walking and look left for a Sacketts Brook Conservation sign
This area of our Quest contains the secret mine
The treasure is here in a safe spot we've selected
Where Vermont liquid gold is often collected

Quest prepared by Donna Allen, Laurie Fichter, Chris Grele, Zoe, Paul Levasseur, Fern Tavalin, and Jacquie Walker with wonderful guidance from Steve Glazer of Valley Quest.

ZOE'S TREASURE MAP



EXCERPTS FROM THE PUTNEY QUEST GUIDE

The Putney Quest was built to provide an example of questing. Stop by Town Hall to pick up the full version of the guide and then use the clues in this newsletter to help you find the treasure box.

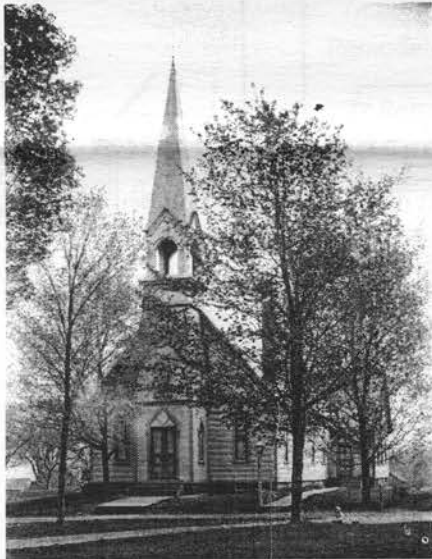
If you would like to learn how to create a quest or are interested in attending the next community workshop, contact Fern Tavalin (tavalin@sover.net or 387-4277).



2. (54) The Perfectionist Store / Putney Fruit Company / Putney Village Pizza

Originally built onto the 2 1/2 story, gable front store that was run by the Putney Perfectionist community in the 1840s, and that stood a few yards to the north until 1975, this building has served as a fruit stand, a bar, a restaurant, and now a pizza parlor.

Photo from the Putney Historical Society collection.



4. (63) Putney Baptist Church / The Community Center

Built in 1884, thanks to the financial support of Deacon Jacob Estey, owner of the nationally renown Estey Organ Company, the Baptist Church is in the architectural style of vernacular High Victorian Gothic / Queen Anne. Originally a spired belfry crowned the top. In 1925, the building became the Putney Community Center and sponsored lively dances and community celebrations in the mid-Twentieth Century. Today, the building serves as home to Putney Family Services, a day care center, and still provides a space for community use.

Photo from the Putney Historical Society collection.



8. Thwing Mill

Through the trees is a view of the old Thwing Mill, run and operated by the Thwing family from 1888 until 1946. Originally, a bridge crossed the brook in front of the mill. Unfortunately, the site is currently inaccessible. The building was completely restored by the Wilson brothers in the early 1980s and donated to the Putney Historical Society in 2002.

Photo from the collection of Frances Manix.

History Book Update

Writing for the updated town history is progressing, slowly but surely. Laurel Ellis has scanned the original edition and computerized the format so that changes to the old book can be made easily. The 1753-1953 book will include more pictures, an index, and correction of the inaccuracies noted by readers over the last fifty years. Stuart Strothman has a draft version of the section on Religion and will begin researching the Town Government section within the next few weeks. Nancy Olson is finishing the section on Education. Margot Torrey will write about Crafts and Fern Tavalin is researching the history of Agriculture in Putney. Laurel Ellis will begin the section on Business in the fall and Peggy Leo will supplement the section on Health and Welfare that has already been started by Jan Thompson. We still need writers to volunteer for the Arts, Recreation, and Social Organizations. If you are interested in conducting research or in writing a section, contact Fern Tavalin by e-mail (tavalin@sover.net) or by phone (387-4277). ♦♦



Bob, Rowena, Clayton, Jill Goodell in 1963
From Putney Historical Society File

About Sacketts Brook: *When we were kids the water used to be 2-3 feet deep, with a nice sandy bottom. There were wide-open fields straight down to the brook filled with sheep pastures that at the water run off. Now, because of the trees growing up, they grab the water. The fogs in the morning are a lot more now than they used to be. The leaves grab the moisture and then the sun takes it right into the air. Interview 5/2002 with Bob Goodell, farmer.*

Please take a moment to join or renew your membership.

PUTNEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please PRINT name and address:

Name _____ Date: _____

Address _____

Senior \$5 Individual \$15 Sustaining \$25 Benefactor \$50 Patron \$100

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

Make checks payable to: *Treasurer, Putney Historical Society*. Mail to: Putney Historical Society, c/o Putney Town Hall, Box 233, Putney, VT 05346. Or hand deliver to the Putney Town Hall.

I would like to make an additional contribution to support:

- _____ Restoration of the Thwing Mill
- _____ Publication of the History Book
- _____ 2003 Celebration Activities
- _____ Veterans' Memorial

I would like to volunteer. You can call me at: _____

Putney Historical Society

BULK RATE

C/O Putney Town Hall
Box 233
Putney, VT 05346

US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 17
PUTNEY, VT

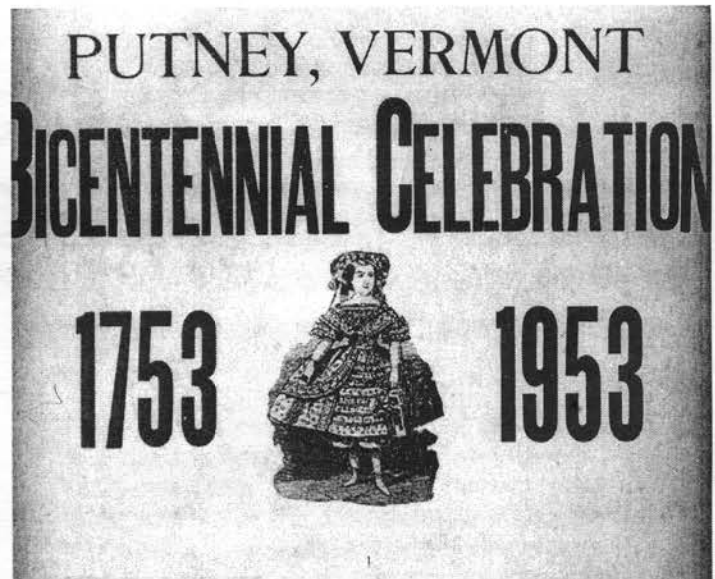
BOX HOLDER
PUTNEY, VT 05346

ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6TH. PLEASE COME!

IT'S TIME AGAIN FOR THE PUTNEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING. THIS YEAR, WE ARE HOLDING AN EXCITING PROGRAM AND PLANNING SESSION FOR OUR 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE TOWN CHARTER. FIND OUT WHAT A TOWN CHARTER IS AND HOW WE GOT OURS. LEARN HOW PUTNEY CITIZENS PARTIED IN 1953 FOR OUR 200TH ANNIVERSARY. AND BEST YET -- HELP TO PLAN THE CELEBRATION 2003.

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE PUTNEY COMMUNITY CENTER ON CHRISTIAN SQUARE FROM 4-6PM. THE PROGRAM INCLUDES A PHOTO EXHIBIT OF PUTNEY DURING THE LAST 50 YEARS, ARTIFACTS FROM THE 1953 CELEBRATIONS, AND SOME SHARED MEMORIES FROM THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE PARADE AND PAGEANT.

AS ALWAYS, THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE A LIGHT DINNER OF SOUP AND CORN BREAD.



HELP PLAN THE 2003 EVENTS!!