

The Sutton Historical Society Bulletin

Dedicated to preserving our historical inheritance for future generations.

Founded December 8, 1969

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Gen. Rufus Putnam Museum

Mile Marker

Volunteer Help Needed

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GENERAL RUFUS PUTNAM MUSEUM

THE HISTORY

The building now known as the General Rufus Putnam Museum, was built in 1823 by the joint efforts of the Town and the Masons. The Olive Branch Lodge of Master Masons moved from the Samuel Waters Tavern in West Sutton (650 Central Turnpike) to the Jacob March Hall in Sutton Center about 1822. Since the Town needed a school building and the Masons a meeting place, the building was shared as a school during the day and a Masonic Hall during some evenings. This building, later known as the General Rufus Putnam Hall, was completed around 1823 at a cost of \$714.92. The Masonic Lodge occupied their new quarters on January 1st 1824, where they stayed until moving to Wilkinsonville in 1844. The Lodge sold its portion of the building to the town in 1851.

In 1872/3 the upper floor became a high school for the Center and the first floor for grades one through eight. The first graduating class of five was in 1876 and classes continued for 30 years. A new school on Singletary Avenue was built in 1908. It housed the high school and the lower grades from the Center district.

At the town meeting in March, 1910, the General Rufus Putnam building was leased to the newly organized Daughters of the American Revolution for one dollar a year. But in 1934, school growth necessitated the resumption of the building as a school facility. In the 1930's the second floor was used for basketball practice.

The building was utilized as a school until the Sutton Memorial High School opened in 1950, housing all 12 grades. It was again opened for grades 1 & 2 from fall 1951 - June 1954.

In September 1954 it was used to display historical artifacts for the Sutton 250th anniversary. The DAR continued to meet on the second floor. At this point, the library moved from the old Town Hall to the first floor of the General Rufus Putnam Building and remained there until moving into the new quarters in the new municipal center in 1983. The General Rufus Putnam Hall remained empty until 1986 when the Town authorized its usage by the Sutton Historical Society.

ESTABLISHING THE MUSEUM

During August / September 1986 activity had been intense to prepare a presentable museum for participation in the Blackstone Valley Heritage Homecoming weekend of October 4, and 5.

An energetic work group was recruited from the personnel of the Historical Society. They invaded the old library floor of the building and with determination completed its mission prior to the October 4 date. First the old bookshelves were dismantled and the wood salvaged. Next, the floor was oxalic acid washed and varnished, then the walls were scrubbed and painted, windows cleaned and, finally, the displays were arranged.

During this period an office area 10' X 12' had been built in the corner, well insulated with a strip electric heater to keep the office warm in the winter months.

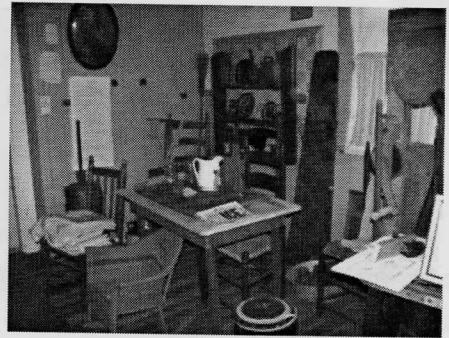
Several projects had to be completed before the building could be considered operational. The barrel ceiling on the second floor was repaired and painted. The old heating system was replaced with a new forced hot air system. The basement was cleared of old toilets and material, porch roof supports were re-established on a new floor and the outside of the building was painted.

The Daughters of the American Revolution held meetings in the upper hall for a period of time, but their numbers declined with the aging of the membership. The DAR graciously relinquished their collection of heirlooms and artifacts to the Sutton Historical Society. These items are now an important part of the museum collection.

THE PRESENT/FUTURE

The museum has not been open in a few years due to building maintenance requirements. The Sutton Historical Society is responsible for building maintenance. There are some immediate repairs that need to be completed before we can open the museum again:

- 1) Install a new forced hot-air furnace and add a new heat-pump / AC unit
- 2) Floors, walls and ceilings need to be scrubbed down and painted
- 3) Cellar is damp, need to add gutters and two dehumidifiers
- 4) Upgrade electrical system/panel, install new interior and exterior lighting
- 5) Upgrade bathroom facilities



Collections Corner

We have exciting news concerning the collections of the Sutton Historical Society.

The Sutton Historical Society has received a no cost grant from the Massachusetts State Historical Records Board (SHRAB). This grant consists of a strategic assessment by an Archivist concerning the importance of collection policies, disaster planning and reviewing the condition of the collections.

The Archivist will prepare a report of recommendations and a list of resources customized to the our needs within 30 days. The site visit has not been done because of a lack of heat in the Gen Rufus Putnam building but will be accomplished in the near future.

As part of the collections process the Society will be getting a computer, printer and the Past Perfect museum software program. This program is designed to manage inventory and contact management for museums. It is currently in use at over 9000 museums. As part of this process we will be asking for assistance from Society members and the general community for help to convert our materials to the electronic world.

VOLUNTEER...

WE WELCOME ALL VOLUNTEER HELP. IF YOU HAVE A TALENT, A SKILL OR A TRADE, LET US KNOW WHAT YOUR AREA OF INTEREST IS. PLEASE CONTACT BRIAN AT 508-865-2122. THANK YOU.

**REMEMBER THE DATE! SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2015, 2:00PM
RE-DEDICATION OF THE EIGHT LOTS SCHOOL HOUSE
MORE INFORMATION TO COME AS PLANS ARE FINALIZED**



General Rufus Putnam-Sutton's Native Son

by Joyce Smith

Driving west on Boston Road beyond the schools leads to a fork in the road where the road turns toward West Sutton. There, among large evergreens, is a retaining wall below a large stone monument. Some may know what this monument is, but most no longer do. When reporting on damage from the ice storm a few years ago, the Millbury Sutton Chronicle reported that it was the grave of General Rufus Putnam. The monument may look like a grave marker, but it marks the birthplace of General Rufus Putnam.

The house is no longer there, but you may be familiar with it, since it is depicted on the Town Seal. You may see it as red on colored renditions of the seal, but that may be artistic license. I'm not sure anyone alive knows the color. There is also a well sweep on the left hand side. A reproduction was placed in the field in 1976 for the bicentennial. (A former owner thought that it was original.)

Depending on your interest in the Revolutionary War, Sutton history, or the history of Ohio, you may not be aware of the accomplishments of one of our most famous native sons. Sutton was settled in 1716, with the early settlers mostly coming from Salem. John Putnam was the first Putnam in Salem and produced 3 sons. Three generations later there were 82 male descendants, some of whom came to Sutton. All Putnams in New England were John's descendants.

Elisha Putnam and Susanna Fuller Putnam, came to Sutton in May of 1725, as did other members of the Putnam and Fuller families. Rufus was born April 9, 1738. He is one of the 38 Revolutionary War soldiers that have supposedly attended the Eight Lots School, less than a mile from his home. His father died when he was 7 and he went to live with his Fuller grandparents in Salem, where he enjoyed 2 more years of school. His mother married Capt. John Sadler, an innkeeper of Upton, who was illiterate and did not allow Rufus to go to school. Rufus bought and studied textbooks with money earned from serving at the tavern and by hunting small game to sell.

At age 16, he was apprenticed to Daniel Matthews of Brookfield to learn the trade of millwright. He continued his self taught education, as Mr. Matthews had no objections to his studying at night on his own time. At age 19 he enlisted in colonial service, serving in 4 campaigns in the French and Indian War in the Lake George area of New York. While in the area of Fort William Henry he met a relative, Israel Putnam. Israel's father and Rufus's grandfather were half brothers. Both Putnams would have important roles in the Revolution. America's military ability in the future Revolution was mostly from the training and experiences gained in the French and Indian War. Rufus gained experience in engineering and the construction of defenses.

He served his 4th campaign in place of Moses Leland of Sutton, for the pay of 14 pounds, 13 shillings. He returned to Sutton for a time in 1759. He started a business as a millwright in Brookfield in 1761. His first wife and son died but in 1765 he married Persis Rice, with whom he would produce nine children. He is listed as being from Brookfield for his Revolutionary War service.

2015 DUES

Please mail to:

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
4 UXBRIDGE ROAD, SUTTON, MA 01590

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

\$15.00 INDIVIDUAL _____ \$25.00 FAMILY (INCLUDING CHILDREN 18 AND UNDER) _____

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL DONATION FOR GEN. RUFUS PUTNAM MUSEUM PROJECT _____

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP? _____

A FEW HOURS, MATERIALS OR MONEY APPRECIATED!

PLEASE CONTACT sutton1704@gmail.com OR BRIAN STEVENSON 508-865-2122 WITH ANY QUESTIONS

WE ARE A NON PROFIT CORPORATION, ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTABLE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Now through April 11		Spring Bulb Sale-Contact	Joyce @ 508-865-5502
April 7	7:00PM	Christy Higginbottom/Bruce Craven "William Lewis 1800's Journals"	First Congregational Church
May 5	7:00PM	Jason Newton "Old Connecticut Path"	Simonian Center 409 Boston Road
June 2	6:30PM	Cookout/Pot Luck Manchaug Baptist Church	439 Putnam Hill Rd
July 7	6:30PM	Annual Pot Luck Supper	Eight Lots School House
August 4	6:30PM	Annual Pot Luck Supper	Sherman Blacksmith Shop
Sept. 20	2:00PM	Eight Lots School Re-dedication	Eight Lots School
Oct. 6	7:00PM	Annual Meeting	First Congregational Church
Nov. 3	7:00PM	A look back at 2015/ a look forward to 2016	First Congregational Church
Dec. 1	6:30PM	Annual Christmas Pot Luck Supper	First Congregational Church

As always, anyone interested in any of these events is welcome to join us. Upcoming meetings are listed in The Millbury-Sutton Chronicle, Towns section of the Worcester Telegram, The Uxbridge Times and our Facebook page Sutton Historical Society Inc.. Coming Soon SHS web page www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org

He entered service in the Revolution shortly after Lexington and Concord as a Lt. Colonel. He was stationed in Roxbury, and as he was the only officer with experience in construction fortifications, he was in charge of defenses. In December 1775 he laid out an artillery battery to protect the harbor in Newport. In January 1776, General Washington asked Putnam to devise a plan to fortify Dorchester Heights, which was an ideal position from which to bombard the city. With the British occupying the city and because of frozen ground, standard earthworks couldn't be erected. By chance, Rufus stopped by the tent of a friend and noticed a copy of *Mullers Field Engineer* where he found a device called a chandelier. It is a pre-constructed wall in sections. These were built under cover of darkness, placed on top of Dorchester Heights. General Gage was stunned in the morning to see the fortifications, assuming many reinforcements had arrived, he decided to abandon Boston and go to New York. March 17th is celebrated in Boston as Evacuation Day. Had Rufus not seen his friend's book, the British would have crushed the Revolution at its start.

Following his success in Boston, General Rufus Putnam went on to construct defenses in New York City and the first artillery battery at West Point. He was appointed engineer and full colonel in August 1776. He also negotiated settlements with Congress regarding soldiers pay and food allowances. He wanted to retire in 1782 but at General Washington's request, stayed until the war was over in 1783. He wrote a report to Congress on how to protect the most important sites on the East Coast from attack. In 1796 he was commissioned Surveyor General of the United States.

Land was awarded to many Revolutionary War Veterans for their service. He and a group of officers had received a large grant of land in the Northwest Territory. From his house in Rutland in 1787, Putnam called for a convention of representative soldiers from different Massachusetts counties to meet at the "Bunch of Grapes Tavern" in Boston, where they formed the Ohio Company, with Rufus elected as Superintendent. The government was anxious to have that area settled to protect western New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Putnam's plan called for the exclusion of slavery.

Rufus Putnam and others from Rutland and Massachusetts founded Ohio on April 7, 1888. Thomas Jefferson had a competing plan that would allow slavery until 1800. Many Virginians settled in Ohio and in 1802 when a state constitution was being drawn up, exclusion of slavery passed by only 1 vote. The Ohio territory eventually became 3 states that could have been slave states. This would have tipped the balance to the Confederates in the Civil War.

Rufus Putnam moved his family to Ohio in 1790 and with his two sons founded Marietta Ohio. In 1796 he set out many apple trees called the Putnam Russett apple. The variety was developed in Salem by the Putnam family and was the most popular in the first century of colonial living. Ohio has the Putnam Russett and Sutton has the Sutton Beauty, developed by the Waters Family to make the two month journey to England.

General Rufus Putnam is buried in Marietta, Ohio. He founded the first church in Marietta, founded Marietta College, served several judgeships, and was elected to the First Ohio Constitutional Convention. He died May 4, 1824. Most of his correspondence, journals, maps, charts, and his memoirs were bequeathed to Marietta College.

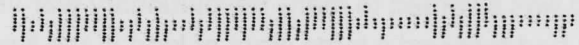
The next time you pass the monument on Boston Road or see the Town Seal, I hope you will take a minute to be proud of the accomplishments of a native son of Sutton.

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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SUTTON, MA 01590



Wally & Patricia A. Baker
4C Herbert Drive
Sutton, MA 01590

0159033878 R004



**MILE MARKER CORNER OF BOSTON ROAD AND BURBANK ROAD
MAINTAINED BY THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



Fred L. Batcheller of the Milestone Farm tells this story about Postmaster General Benjamin Franklin, who laid out the Post Road from New York to Boston through Sutton in 1771. "It seems he spent the night at this farm (435 Boston Rd, Gerald Page's now) on his stay here and the family gave him a fine turkey supper, lodging and breakfast. As he was to continue on his journey, he asked what his bill was for the good service. 'There is no bill. It has been a great pleasure, Mr. Franklin, a great pleasure, and come again.' The Postmaster General was so overcome, his only answer was, 'Well! Well! You are a most beautiful lady! May I kiss your hand.' As he walked away, he commented, 'This event caps my whole work. I never in my life got so much for so little expense. Thank you and good-bye.' "

"The new Town History page 172"