



The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park



“Connecticut’s Valley Forge”

March 2008 NewsLetter

Bethel/Redding CT

10 Years of Dedicated Service By Herman and Payne



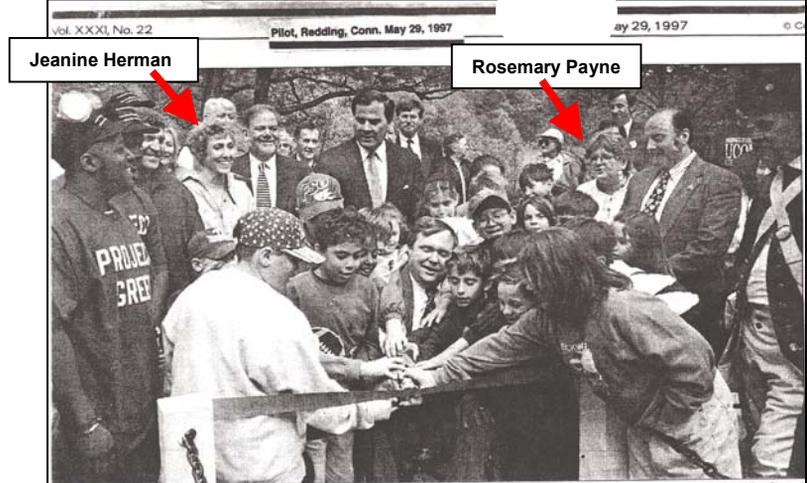
New FANs president Steve Levine presents retired president Jeanine Herman with a recognition plaque for 10 years in office.



Recognition plaques contained Old Put riding his horse down the stone steps at Horseneck.



New FANs president Steve Levine presents retired Treasurer Rosemary Payne with a recognition plaque for 10 years in office.



Jeanine Herman

Rosemary Payne

OFFICIAL — Putnam Park was officially reopened last Thursday. Gov. John Rowland, in back, was on hand for the ceremony as was Sidney J. Holbrook, state Department of Environmental Protection commissioner. Mr. Holbrook was as-

sisted in the ribbon-cutting ceremony by members of Rosemary Payne's third grade class at Rockwell School in Bethel. The ceremony took place in front of the park's museum, which is once again filled with artifacts.

Governor helps reopen Putnam Park

General's fist moved state offic

by DONNA BERTOLI
Putnam Park was the place to be last Thursday. Who of state Gov. John reopening Parks Day. In an of events that reopening, Sidney J. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) commissioner, said



Putnam Memorial State Park REOPENING STATE PARKS DAY Thursday, May 29, 1997
Wayne J. Shepperd, President and Publisher
Robert W. Parks, General Manager
Edward W. Frede, Executive Editor
Mary T. Connolly, Editorial Page Editor

Putnam Park
DEP finally listens and proposes a good plan

Jeanine Herman (Nimmo at that time) was one of the actual neighbors who volunteered park maintenance duty when the park was closed. Rosemary Payne, a third grade teacher, and her class wrote letters to the Governor ... “to open the park!”



May 22, 1997

The recommissioning of Putnam Park on May 22, 1997. DEP Commissioner Sidney Holbrook (in wheel chair). Governor John Rowland in dark suit. Col. Carlton Kline, to the governor's right, was the official military representative for the opening..

Friends of Putnam Memorial State Park
*****ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING*****
with Lisa Johnson, Friends of CT State Parks
Linda Levine, CT State Parks

Historic and Recreational Park Sections

The History of Putnam Memorial State Park contains the following information which was taken from: *"The Winter Campaign of Starving" Archaeological Investigations at Putnam Memorial State Park in Redding and Bethel Connecticut.* By Ricardo J. Elia and Brendan J. McDermott."

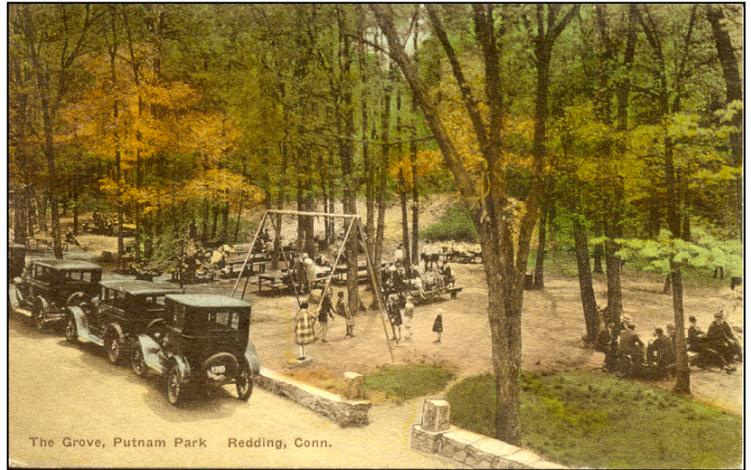
The movement to preserve and memorialize the site of the winter quarters of 1778-1779 in Redding began in the late 19th century. Although the details of this movement are not recorded, it is likely that the initial efforts were made by local citizens of Redding, especially Charles B. Todd, the local historian, and Aaron Treadwell, the landowner who donated the first tract of land that would become the Israel Putnam Memorial Camp Ground.

From the beginning, the purpose of preserving the site of the encampment was to commemorate the winter quarters, **not to create an area for recreation**. In a plan presented to the legislative committee that visited the site, Charles B. Todd explained the rationale behind the park **It is not proposed to erect a pleasure park, but a memorial**. The men it is designed to commemorate were strong, rugged, simple. [from all three camps] Its leading features, therefore, should be of similar character and of such an historical and antiquarian cast as to direct the thought to the men and times it commemorates.. (Todd 1913: 7).

Todd proposed adding some new features to the site, while preserving intact the main line marking the remains of the encampment. It was also recommended to erect a monument on the parcel to commemorate Putnam and his troops.



In the early 1900's, the historic section of the park was the only land the park had. Visitors came for picnics and to have fun with their families. "Recreation" became a driving force at the park. Outside the entrance were swings and picnic areas, yet the supervision did their best to keep the recreation on the "outside" of the memorial camp area.



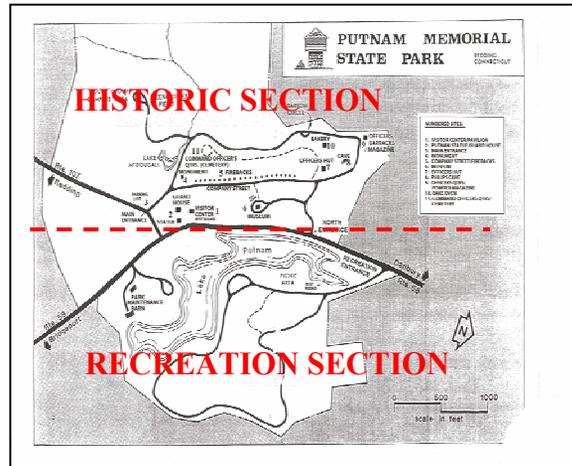
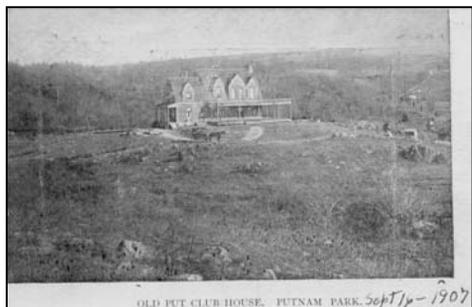
These swing sets are now on the other side, east, of Rt. 58 on today's "Recreation Section" of the park.



Old Put Club

The Old Put Club was founded around the same time as the memorial camp ground. It was a private men's club organized by some well-to-do gentlemen living in the area. It was a place where they good go to hunt, fish or just play poker. The club dammed up the Little River which created today's Lake Putnam.

The club existed for almost three decades, but then the membership decreased by attrition and the club was sold to the Rogers Peet Company of New York City. Around three years after that, in 1923, the state of Conn. purchased the property which would become the "Recreational Section" of the park. The Old Put club house is at the left.



Today, the park has two distinct sections, the Historic and the Recreational. The Park Supervisors home is on the site of the old club house. The barn serves as a perfect maintenance and workshop area. It is hard to imagine that in the first half century of the 1900's hundreds and even thousands of visitors came to the park on weekends.

Good Things Planned For the Rec' Side

Pretty Soon We'll Be Able To Walk Across Lake Putnam.

When a visitor stands at the stone terrace in front of the Park Museum and looks out over Lake Putnam on the Recreational side of the park, all that can be seen by July is the huge mass of lily pads and milfoil which is choking the lake. Not only is it unsightly, but it is unhealthy for the lake. The process of eutrophication is when the oxygen in the water decreases, creating the growth of algae, lilies and milfoil. At the end of each season the mass of growth dies and settles on the bottom of the pond. Each year the pond adds layers of decayed matter and builds up yet another layer. Eventually the pond will "die". This coming spring, the state will apply retardant on the lake to minimize the growth. Next year, however, the lake will be dredged to remove the layers of decayed matter. This will be a huge and very costly project.



It has gotten very difficult to fish in Lake Putnam ... but help is on the way!

New Picnic Pavilion is on the way this summer...

If you take a nice hike around the perimeter road on the Recreation Side, you will see traces of clearings where dozens of picnic areas were carved out of the woods and beside the lake. We can't imagine, today, the literally hundreds and sometimes thousands of people who would ascend on the park prior to the 1950's. Back in those days there were no TVs or computer games or text messaging to capture American families and make them sit idle at home. The families back then got the whole crew packed up in the family Hudson or Studebaker and headed for the beaches or state parks. Picnics were part of these family outings. In fact, families have been coming to our park when they arrived in carriages and wagons.. The stone wall across the road from the main entrance is the only remains of the old carriage sheds from the late 1800's.

Only old timers will remember the picnic pavilion that sat high up on the hill near the road turnaround. The level area and a few remnants are all that is left today. Well, this summer, a brand new pavilion will be erected on the footprint of the old one. The 30' X 36' structure will provide for more picnics and fun in the future.



New pavilion location



One of the first major projects taken on by Park Supervisor Nathan Hale, when he was assigned to Putnam Park, was to clear out debris from the woods on the Recreation side of the park. Forest management is one of Nate's specialties. The opening up of the woods has created a sight line from the new pavilion location to the lake. So the picnickers at the new facility will have a nice view.

New rustic wooden posts on the roadways ...

Nate and his crew will be getting new pressure-treated wooden posts to replace all of the old guard rails along the parks roadways. The overall maintenance of the park just keeps getting better and better. Can you remember what the park looked like only ten or eleven years ago?





To contact us: friendsofputnampark@comcast.net



From President Steve Levine ...

For those that were present, and those that weren't, I just wanted to recap the FANs meeting, where some exciting things were discussed.

1. Awards

First ... the FANs group awarded Jeanine Herman a plaque thanking her for her years of service as president. We are also pleased to award Rosemary Payne a plaque for her service as Treasurer. She will receive her plaque in a special "ceremony" on Saturday, March 15 at 9:00am at the park. Their hard work and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the FANs group from its inception, and keeping it moving forward. Thanks again!

2. Membership

TG presented a great idea for providing "Membership Cards" to members. He showed us samples that he developed that looked great. When people make their yearly donation, they will receive the card indicating their level of membership that they can keep in their wallets. In addition to giving something back to people (who currently don't even know that their donation was received except for a canceled check), it's a great way to build member loyalty. Other ideas included discounts on gifts and entrance fees to park events when they use the card. We also discussed the need to broaden our member base as only 54 people have donated this year, only 2 new people.

3. Website

Brent Colley has generously offered to set up a FANs website for the park. We discussed numerous possibilities of how the website could further the FANs mission. Everything from park history, directions, info on upcoming events to area links and a way to communicate timely news with members and the public. I can't wait to see how it develops.

4. Nate's Park Update

Nate said that they will be putting in herbicide in the pond to kill the growth that chokes the pond in the summer. I think he said it's a yearly effort as a more permanent solution has not been funded. Also, Nate had requested funds to replace the flags. New flags are now flying in front of the Visitor Center, thanks to our FANs donation and TG's effort in procuring them.

5. Visitor Center

Harry updated us on plans for the Visitor Center displays, park signage and handouts. Nicole and Al, representing the State will, supposedly, be getting back to us on what kind of displays can fit inside the building. Harry also presented a mock up of a visitor brochure that includes a map with points of interest as well as history info. He's waiting on more feedback before he finalizes. In the interim, Nate will post number signs in the park and Harry will put together a shortened handout with a map and points of interest.

6. Upcoming Events:

School Days: Nancy was not able to attend the meeting but left info on what schools will be coming. The program will be Monday – Wednesday, 5/19-5/21 (Thursday rain date) with Cranbury School-Norwalk, Sherman School, Brookfield Middle School and John Reed School-Redding on board. Hats off to Nancy for putting this together!

Fall "230th Anniversary" event: Previously Tom of the 5th CT Regiment had offered to have his group do a Halloween weekend "Ghost Tour" event followed by a re-enactment the next day. There was wide interest in this, but the group felt that the events should begin on November 1. There was concern about holding the Ghost tour on Halloween (10/31) as it was felt most people would want to remain at home. Jim Freebairn offered to act as the "FANs re-enactor liaison" to insure that the re-enactor groups are well represented and get what they need for them and the park to have a great event. We would charge a donation to attend.

Winter Walk: The group felt that the Winter Walk should remain an annual event and be held on the first Saturday in December (12/6). This would be a free event.

Finally, I asked for input on new ideas for the group, developing committees to oversee the various projects, ways to attract new group members, and any other ideas to enhance the mission of what the FANs group does or could do, etc. I look forward to hearing from you all on this!



The next FAN's Meeting will be on **Tuesday, April 8th, 2008**
at **7:00PM** at the **Visitor Center** at Putnam Park.