

8 Putney Village Historic District

US Route 5, Putney, Vermont

Situated in the southern Connecticut River Valley, Putney Village was first chartered in 1753. However, achieving the charter was quite challenging due to ongoing clashes with Native Americans, who already claimed the land as their own. Massachusetts colonists built Putney's first fort in the clearing on the "Great Meadows," with 10 men sent to accompany the colonists for the purposes of scouting and guarding. This fort and others like it served as outpost stations for British exploration, conquest, and colonization of the Connecticut River Valley. Following the climax of the French and Indian war, Putney's population began to grow, and today is a village with a uniquely rich history.



Putney is located in an ideal area for farming and industrialization. The nearby river makes the land extremely fertile and allows Putney to be a successful agricultural town. Situated next to the Falls of Sackett Brook, Putney was able to harness the water power to grow the town into a major industrial center in Vermont, and is a successful example of Vermont's transition between farming to a more small industry-based community.

By 1791, the population grew to 1,848 residents making it Vermont's fourth largest town. In the next twenty years, six sawmills, four grist mills, one carding mill, two fulling mills, a brick yard, a slate quarry, two tanneries, at least two inns, and five stores would add to the size and services within the village. In addition, three lawyers, four physicians and two ministers provided services to community members.

Nearly one hundred years later, John Humphrey Noyes moved to Putney and established a utopian religious experiment, under the purpose where everyone must strive for perfection on Earth. With this, he stressed spiritual equality among everyone. The perfectionist society included communal land and marriage; however, it eventually ended in protest and the fleeing of Noyes. Although his perfect society did not succeed, he left behind numerous buildings that are still intact today.

With thirty percent of the Village buildings dating circa 1830, Putney has an incomparable historic charm and has been preserved over the years to provide a wonderful window into New England's heritage. Putney Village was listed in the National Historic Register in 1986.

Sources:

Putney Village Historic District. (May 1985) *National Registration Nomination Information*. Accessed November 25, 2013, from <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V04-1.htm>

Putney Historical Society. Putney Municipal Site. Accessed 25 November 2013 from http://www.putneyvt.org/history_time.php