

Putnam History Museum

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I. Description of Agency

For over 118 years, the Putnam History Museum (PHM) has served residents, visitors, and historical researchers of Putnam County in a multitude of ways. Putnam County's generous funding, along with the support of our members, friends, and visitors, has enabled the PHM to establish a world-class special collections library and archive, to preserve the West Point Foundry schoolhouse as the museum headquarters, and to create hundreds of public programs, exhibitions, and publications.

II. Services Provided

• Exhibitions & Collections Management

At the heart of our institution lies a commitment to preserving and highlighting Putnam County's robust history. We maintain an extensive collection of artifacts and documents, spanning hundreds of years. Our team focuses on the care and accessibility of the collections, in both physical and digital formats. We consistently plan for the long-term management of our collections.

Additionally, the PHM creates rotating exhibitions, both indoors and outdoors, to provide visitors with an accessible and relevant historical experience. Our permanent Foundry exhibition serves as a gateway to the West Point Foundry and Preserve, a National Historic Landmark. In 2025, we opened the exhibition "The American Revolution in the Hudson Highlands: Part One" as the beginning of our two-part series exploring this pivotal area during the Revolutionary War. We also curated two temporary exhibitions, "A Spotlight on Ships" and "General Putnam: Behind the County's Revolutionary Namesake," the later of which will travel to the Southeast Museum in the spring. We also developed two travelling exhibitions that are available for local schools, libraries, and groups to borrow and display: "Indigenous Peoples in Putnam County" and "The American Revolution in the Hudson Highlands."

• Education Outreach

Our educational programs aim to engage and inspire the community about Putnam County's local history and heritage. We organize an array of

programs that evolve and expand annually. Key themes for our educational offerings include Native Americans, Colonial Period, American Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Civil War, BIPOC Histories, Women's History, Environmental History, and local history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In 2025, we expanded our availability to share exhibitions by developing two new travelling exhibitions. "Indigenous Peoples in Putnam County" went on display at the Austin Road Elementary School in Mahopac to help education 4th and 5th graders on local Indigenous history. "The American Revolution in the Hudson Highlands" travelling exhibition is scheduled to travel to a few different locations in the new year.

- **Lecture Series**

Our long-running lecture series encompasses a diverse range of subjects, including art, architecture, maritime history, military history, and genealogy. Since 2020, we have adapted the series into various formats, offering virtual, hybrid, and in-person lectures to accommodate diverse audiences. In 2025, we hosted nine lectures, including a new twist on the lecture format we are calling a Talk & Tasting. This lecture format allows attendees to taste history by sampling historic recipes while learning about the history surrounding the item.

- **Field Trips**

We collaborate with Putnam County schools and homeschool groups to design field trips that align with curricula standards and provide students with engaging experiences. These field trips often involve guided tours of the museum and the West Point Foundry and Foundry Cove. We also provide materials and field trips for homeschool groups and other youth-focused groups.

- **History Hikes & Group Tours**

We offer tours for groups, which may include curator-led tours of exhibitions or guided tours of historical sites located all throughout Putnam County. These popular hikes, which began during the pandemic, are now an annual offering at the PHM. We offered seven hikes this year, with topics ranging from Putnam County's historic iron mines to the path Benedict Arnold took to flee during the American Revolution.

- **Research**

The PHM provides comprehensive research services, catering to a diverse range of inquiries related to Putnam County's history and culture. Our research team covers a range of topics, including genealogy, house histories,

local landmarks, historical events, and cultural heritage. In 2025, we responded to over fifty public research queries, dedicating more than 400 hours to research activities and facilitating the use of our historical collection for local authors, genealogists, and interested residents.

- **Other Services & Activities**

Beyond our core signature services, the PHM actively engages with the community through special events, collaborations, publications, and social media platforms. In 2025, we hosted and participated in various community events, fostering a sense of historical appreciation and connection within Putnam County. In total, we hosted, co-hosted, or collaborated on over forty public programs in 2025.

Furthermore, we continued to create a range of print publications, many of which are now [available digitally](#), further to promote the exploration and discovery of local history. These resources cater to diverse interests and age groups, making historical information accessible to a wide range of audiences.

III. **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Putnam History Museum is to collect, preserve, interpret, and present the history of Putnam County, Philipstown, the West Point Foundry, and the Hudson Highlands. Through exhibitions, programs, and events, the museum uses its collections to engage the community with the vibrant history of our region and to foster greater understanding of the role it has played in the growth of our nation.

IV. **Population Served**

The Putnam History Museum serves a socioeconomically diverse audience of students, adults, and seniors. Our **primary audience resides in Putnam County and throughout the Mid-Hudson Valley region**. Our secondary audience includes weekend visitors from New York City, Westchester, Connecticut, and beyond. Our weekend visitors represent a large urban population.

V. **Significant Events and Accomplishments in 2025**

Recently completed projects/programs:

| PHM Programming for 2025 | |
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| Date | Event |
| 1/16 | Lecture - Union General Daniel Butterfield Lecture |

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| 2/28 | Lecture - Historical Agriculture in the 19th Century |
| 3/13 | Lecture - Women of the Hudson River School |
| 4/6 | PHM Annual Meeting |
| 4/26 | Talk & Tasting: Juniper: A Curated History of Gin and Educational Tasting |
| 5/23 | Rev250 Exhibition Opening |
| 5/31 | Iron Mining History Hike - Denny Mine |
| 6/12 | Lecture: Sachem Daniel Nimham - Dr. Lillis |
| 6/28 | PHM Annual Lawn Party |
| 7/4 | Mekeel's Chapel Celebration |
| 7/12 | Lecture: Sermons in Stone with Susan Allport |
| 7/13 | Stone Chambers at Mead Farm (Two Hikes) |
| 7/18 | West Point Redoubts - Kayak Tour |
| 7/26 & 7/27 | PHM at Putnam County Fair – Rev250 |
| 8/2 | Little Stony Point- Kayak Tour |
| 9/6 | Talk & Tasting: Forgotten Drinks of Colonial America - Corin Hirsh |
| 9/13 & 9/27 | Arnold's Flight (Two Hikes) |
| 9/26 | General Putnam Exhibition Opening |
| 10/9 | Lecture: History in our Backyard – Hubbard Lodge area, and the evolution of Fahnestock State Park |
| 10/11 & 10/24 | Mountain Avenue and Nelsonville Cemetery Tours |
| 10/17 | Mappy Hour |
| 10/31 | Indigenous History school field trips |
| 11/2 | PHM Annual Gala |
| 11/16 | Lecture: Loyalty and Zeal: Algonkians of the Revolution |
| 12/12 | End-of-year Open House |

- Points of pride:
 - The New York Council for the Arts (NYSCA) awarded us an operations grant for 2025.
 - Greater Hudson Heritage Network awarded us with a grant to conserve the PHM's famous painting by John Ferguson Weir, "The Gun Foundry."

- We had great turnout at our events this year, multiple of which sold out.
- The PHM has been a leading group in local commemoration of the American Revolution 250th Anniversary and we are excited to continue our commemoration in 2026 with multiple exhibitions, collaborative talks and events, and more!

Notable savings: The PHM's expenses are kept as slim as possible. In 2025 due to soliciting sponsors and donations from local businesses, the PHM has been able to cut back on the net costs of hosting lectures and other events by a few thousand dollars.

Matters of known interest to the County Executive's Office:

- The PHM seeks to digitize the museum's entire holdings of the *Cold Spring Recorder* and *Putnam County News and Recorder* for the long-term preservation of these historic resources.
- The PHM Board recognizes the importance of appointing the PHM Educational Manager as a permanent staff member and understands the essential role this position holds within both the museum and the wider community. Further, PHM recognizes the limits of its current staffing levels and the need for additional funding to support the manpower necessary for the growth and expansion of PHM's programming within Putnam County.
- The PHM Board recognizes the importance of preserving the historic Putnam History Museum building. As such, the Board has recognized the need to make repairs to the building's roof in the near future. Several repairs were done in 2025 including repointing brickwork and installing better drainage around the building to improve the longevity of this historic site.

VI. Staffing

The PHM bid farewell to Executive Director Kevin Price in December of 2025. The Interim Executive Director is Kara Mattsen, who has served Education & Public Programming Manager and Interim Executive Director previously. PHM currently employs one full-time staff member and five part-time staff members, though this will increase to two full-time staff members when the next director is hired.

Current Staff:

- Interim Executive Director, Education & Public Programming Manager, Kara Mattsen (Full-time)
- Collections Manager, John Duncan
- Finance Manager, Cristina Bally
- Administrative Assistant, Bernadette Knox
- Research Librarian, Arman Safa
- Front Desk Associate, Josephine Bach

VII. Sources of Revenue

- 2025 Income: \$246,854
- 2025 Expenses: \$282,981
- 2025 Investments (end-of-year balance): \$1,308,441
- *Income and expense figures are tentative, and our accounts have not been adjusted to reflect depreciation and investments. Final figures will be reported on PHM's 2025 Form 990 and are available upon request.*

Current Trends in Cost of Service:

- Utilities and general operating expenses continue to rise and are expected to rise further in 2026.

VIII. Goals in 2026

a. Financial Sustainability

Continue to develop revenue streams to ensure the museum's financial stability and sustainability. These will include donations, fundraising initiatives, sponsorships, grant applications, program and event income, and other income-generating opportunities within the scope of the PHM Mission. Putnam County funding is essential and one of the most stable sources of revenue for the Putnam History Museum.

b. 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution

Through exhibitions, programming, and community collaborations, our goal is to commemorate this milestone in history and to showcase the significant role that what is now Putnam County played in the events associated with the American Revolution.

Part two of the American Revolution in the Hudson Highlands exhibition will be developed and launched in the Spring of 2026. Additionally, the PHM, in keeping with its tradition of community partnerships, is planning several lectures related to the Revolutionary War. These lectures will be hosted in two locations within Putnam County, the PHM and other locations including the Reed Library, Southeast Museum, and more.

c. Museum and History Programming

Continue to offer exceptional museum exhibits and a diverse calendar of history lectures, hikes, and other engaging events. PHM seeks to expand programming within Putnam County and will build on past efforts to further establish alliances and partnerships to make history more accessible to audiences throughout the County.

2026 Programming This schedule of events will continue to evolve.

| PHM Programming for 2026 | |
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| Date | Event |
| 1/29 | Lecture: Unfriendly to Liberty: Loyalist Networks and the Coming of the Revolution in NYC |
| February | Lecture: Slavery and Antislavery in New York with the Midhudson Antislavery Project |
| 2/6 | Jean Saunders History Contest: Rev250 themed submission due |
| March | Lecture - TBA |
| 4/11 | Jean Saunders History Contest: Awards Ceremony and Reception |
| April | PHM Annual Meeting |
| 4/24 & 4/25 | Lecture on Sybil Ludington – Vincent Dacquino. <i>Lectures will be held at PHM and the Reed Memorial Library in collaboration with the Carmel Historical Society.</i> |
| April | The General Putnam Exhibition will travel to the Southeast Museum |
| May | The American Revolution in the Hudson Highlands: Part Two Exhibition Opening. <i>This exhibition will cover the latter half of the Revolutionary War and events in Putnam County.</i> |
| May | Lecture – TBA History Hike - TBA |
| May | PHM's Annual Lawn Party |
| 6/6 & 6/7 | PHM at Putnam County Heroes Battle the Redcoats |
| June | Reading of "Dirt" Play (location TBD) |
| 6/25 & 6/27 | Lecture on Enoch Crosby – Libby Baker. <i>Lectures will be held at PHM and the Brewster Library in collaboration with the Southeast Museum.</i> |
| 7/4 | Mekeel's Chapel Celebration |
| July | Lecture – TBA History Hike - TBA |
| July | PHM at Putnam County Fair – Rev250 |
| August | Lecture: Sachem Daniel Nimham – Michael Keropian. <i>Lectures will be held at PHM and the Kent Library with the Kent Historical Society.</i> |
| August | History Hike – TBA Kayak Tours |

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| September | Exhibition on George Washington opens |
| September | Lecture: The Traitor's Wife, Peggy Shippen's role in the escape of Benedict Arnold – Allison Pataki. <i>Lectures will be held at PHM and the Brewster Library in collaboration with the Southeast Museum.</i> |
| October | Lecture – TBA Cemetery Tours |
| November | PHM's Annual Gala |



Components of Part I of the PHM 2025 Revolutionary War Exhibit. Part II of the exhibit will be in 2026.



Components of the PHM 2025 Revolutionary War Exhibit included a small-scale replica of a chevaux-de-frise built by the PHM.



History Hikers in the 2025 Stone Chambers Hike.



Attendees at the sold-out Mekeel's Corners Chapel Independence Day Celebration, a collaboration between the PHM and the Mekeel's Corners Chapel.