

Putnam Public Library Timeline

The library had its humble beginnings in a jewelry store in 1884 as the Citizen's Library Association, and after 140 years has grown into the present day Putnam Public Library in the new Municipal Complex. The library has cultivated and inspired young readers, nurtured student success, championed literacy and lifelong learning and strengthened community connections. Our history is your history!

1884



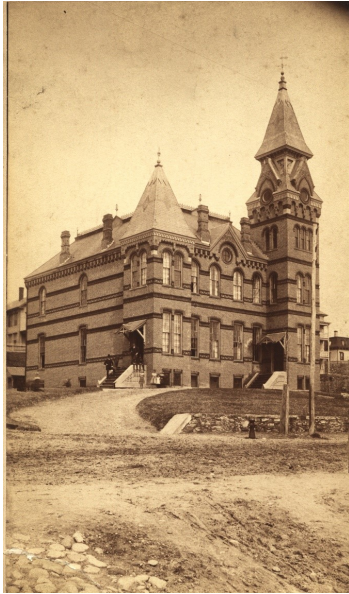
- Mr. R.S. Hillman from the Empire Library of New York suggested that some of the citizens plan to start a library in Putnam. 140 members subscribed \$1.50 each to start the library with 270 books and the Citizen's Library Association had its start.
- The first home of the library would be in the Edward G. Wright jewelry store in a building which stood where the present day Montgomery Ward building is.
- One of the Wright brothers acted as librarian at first, and then was succeeded by W.B. Ferguson.

1888-1904



- The library directors made arrangements with the ladies of the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) to have the library located in their room in the Union Block. Miss Alice Johnson was appointed librarian.
- In 1889 the question of placing the Citizen's Library Association under the proposed State Charter was discussed. It was voted that the Citizen's Library Association transfer all its property to the Putnam Library Association.
- At a town election in October of 1894 a vote to accept the library was successful and the Putnam Library Association became the Putnam Free Public Library.
- The library was recataloged in the Dewey-Cutter system with Emma J. Kinney as librarian.
- The library moved again in 1904 to the Court House Block and added a reading room shared by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

1912-1932



- For economic reasons the town voted in 1912 to change the location of the library from the Court House Block to the Municipal Building on Church Street.
- In a town meeting on October 7, 1912 after much discussion and by a close vote the motion was carried to appropriate \$1,000, the entire sum to be used in the municipal building, rent free.
- After many faithful years of service Miss Kinney retired in 1932 and Miss Abbie F. Scott was appointed librarian.

1945-1948



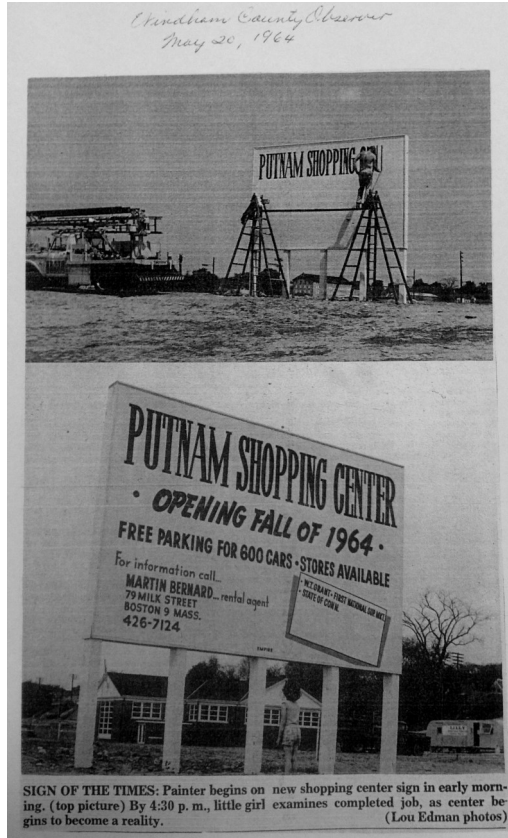
- In 1945 the library began to make a more extensive use of the Inter-library Loan Service, borrowing frequently from Hartford, Boston and Providence .
- In 1950 the library began its own Inter-library service, known as the "Swap-group" to exchange books with many libraries in the area.
- Miss Scott received her degree in library science at Simmons College in 1947 and became Putnam's first trained librarian.
- In July of 1948 the Board approved the purchase of the Bosworth property for a new library and on August 12 the Town Meeting voted the purchase.

1953-1956



- On December 15, 1953 an appropriation was made for the new library building. Mr Henry Schrab Kelly was engaged as architect and on September 1, 1954 the contract for the construction was signed with the Coleman Construction Company.
- It seemed to be a happy coincidence that the building was to be completed in 1955, which was the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the township of Putnam.
- The building suffered severe damage in the Flood in August of 1955, which delayed the dedication until December 2, 1956.

1962-1979



- Abbie Scott was the librarian from 1932 to 1962 and was succeeded by Millicent Beausoleil, who retired in 1979.
- A new children's wing was dedicated on December 2, 1979 and coincided with the appointment of Mary Brumbaugh as Library Director.

2006-2024



- Priscilla Colwell took over as director in 2006 when Mary Brumbaugh retired after a long period of service to the library.
- The library moved into the Putnam Municipal Complex in September of 2021.
- A children's playscape was added to the complex in the spring of 2023.