

1243

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name: PUTNAM HIGH SCHOOL

other name/site number: Putnam Town Hall

2. Location

street & number: 126 Church Street

city/town: Putnam

not for publication: N/A
vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Windham

code: 015 zip code: 06260

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See cont. sheet.

Signature of certifying official: [Handwritten Signature] Date: 10/22/93
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

[Handwritten Signature] 12-10-93

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: EDUCATION Sub: school

Current: GOVERNMENT Sub: city hall

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Gothic

Other Description: N/A_____

Materials: foundation STONE roof ASPHALT
walls BRICK other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: state.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: EDUCATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1874-1911 _____

Significant Dates: 1874

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A_____

Architect/Builder: Carlos C. Buck (architect)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office Connecticut Historical Commission
- Other state agency 59 South Prospect Street
- Federal agency Hartford, Connecticut 06106
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property: approx. one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>19</u>	<u>258430</u>	<u>4644620</u>	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.
 The nominated property is the Town Hall parcel known as 126 Church Street.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.
 The nominated property is identical to the parcel acquired for the high school in 1873.

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11. Form Prepared By - Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

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Name/Title: Bruce Clouette and Maura Cronin

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants Date: April 20, 1993

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford State: CT Zip: 06106

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description Putnam High School (Putnam Town Hall) 7-1
 Putnam, Windham County, CT

Putnam High School (Photographs 1 through 3) is a large High Victorian Gothic-style brick school built in 1874. Used now as offices for the City and Town of Putnam, Connecticut, the hip-roofed building is rectangular in plan, measuring 47 x 58 feet, and 2 1/2 stories tall. The building's principal elevation faces Church Street, a shady residential street that parallels the west bank of the Quinebaug River. Two towers dominate the corners of the facade. The larger one stands at the northeast corner, three stories tall, with a gabled clock stage (no clock was ever installed), belfry, and steeply pitched, flaring hip roof surmounted by a weathervane finial. The tower at the southeast corner is two stories tall with a steep pyramidal roof. Each tower has an entry on its west side, an arrangement that probably provided separate entrances for male and female students. The entries both have shed roofs on Gothic braces, with side panels cut-out in a trefoil design and small gabled peaks centered over the doorways.

The school's windows present a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Four windows are spaced evenly across the facade at each level, with narrower, paired windows in the towers. Those on the first story have the shape of shallow segmental arches, while those on the second story have round-arched heads. The attic-story window in the large gabled wall dormer on the facade is circular, while the southeast elevation features a Palladian window in the center of the second story. The window heads are outlined in raised brick, with alternating recessed headers in the course above each window opening (Photograph 5). False muntins in the modern metal windows suggest the appearance of divided sash.

Putnam High School's chief decorative effect comes from the bands of ornamental brickwork that encircle the building (Photographs 5 and 6): a band of light and dark herringbone brickwork just above the level of the window sills on each story, soldier courses with the bricks set diagonally between horizontal courses of raised brick at the level of the springing point of the arched window heads, and soldier courses of alternating raised and recessed bricks demarcating the building's stories. The main cornice includes an elaborate corbel table of light and dark bricks, with arches below the clock stage of the larger tower and the front and rear wall dormers. Crosses in dark brick decorate the corners and recesses of the corbelling. On the towers, the corner corbelling terminates in rough-surfaced granite blocks set into the brickwork.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Putnam High School (Putnam Town Hall) Putnam, Windham County, CT	7-2
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Other decorative effects are of wood and include two sizes of intricately sawn brackets along the cornice of the larger tower's roof; panels with cut-out floral designs on the belfry stage of the larger tower, between the steep gabled dormers over the blank clock faces (Photograph 4); sawtooth decoration with incised fleur-de-lis designs above the corbelling on the main tower (Photograph 4); and cusp-like ornaments on the smaller tower's sawtooth cornice detail (Photograph 5). A low wooden parapet runs along the crest of the hip roof.

Alterations to the exterior of the school have been relatively minor and mostly confined to secondary elevations. On the northeast side of the building, a plain one-story flat-roofed addition was constructed as a vault to house the town's records (Photograph 2), and there is a small enclosed stairway for the basement story added to the southwest elevation (Photograph 3). A modern elevator tower, ramp, and stairway are appended to the northwest rear corner. Changes to the interior of the building have been more extensive, with the original corridors and classrooms replaced by new partitions for various municipal departmental offices. With its plaster walls, narrow-board wainscot, and molded window frames (Photograph 6), the front stairway, located in the larger tower, offers an indication of the original appearance of the school's interior. Elsewhere modern materials predominate (Photograph 7).

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance Putnam High School, (Putnam Town Hall) 8-1
 Putnam, Windham County, CT

Summary

As one of the oldest remaining high school structures in Connecticut, Putnam High School represents an important chapter in the state's history (Criterion A), the development of public high school education. In the second half of the 19th century, citizens in many of the state's cities and large towns perceived a need for a higher level of education for their children beyond that offered by the district schools, and Putnam, a prosperous manufacturing and commercial center, was no exception. The building also has architectural significance as a well-preserved example of the High Victorian Gothic style of architecture (Criterion C). The school's complex form, ornamental brickwork, and use of polychrome effects epitomize the dense, colorful detailing that was at the heart of the style. The elaborate architecture and impressive size of Putnam High School complemented the building's serious educational purpose and symbolized the prosperity and aesthetic taste of the community that built it.

Educational Significance

The completion of Putnam High School in 1874 exemplified the slow but steady development of public secondary education in Connecticut. In the early 19th century, educational reformers advocated educational systems that would go beyond the one and two-room elementary schools that constituted public education in nearly all the state's towns. The reformers felt that the district school was merely a stepping stone in a child's education and by establishing high schools, the child's future as a citizen and worker would be more assured. Middletown established the first permanent high school in 1840, and Hartford followed in 1847, but overall, progress was slow until after the Civil War. By that time, Connecticut had developed a number of towns with strong commercial and industrial economies, and therefore increasing numbers of business owners and professionals who saw the value of advanced education for their children. The movement for public high schools had a democratic appeal, since they were thought to provide both poor and rich the same advanced educational opportunities, and high schools were also valued for their role in promoting citizenship and discipline. Although some critics argued that high schools were a waste of public money, given the existence of private academies for the more affluent and the small proportion of children whose families could afford to have them attend the high schools, more and more of the

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance Putnam High School, (Putnam Town Hall) 8-2
Putnam, Windham County, CT

latter were built and attendance increased throughout the second half of the 19th century.

At a town meeting on August 2, 1873, the citizens of Putnam approved the construction of a high school by a vote of 72 to 60. Land was purchased that same year and work progressed during 1874, with the formal dedication of the school, which cost a total of \$20,000, on December 1, 1874. In its first year, Putnam High School welcomed 39 pupils, taught by two recent college graduates, Latham Fitch (Brown, '71), the school's principal, and Ellen Elizabeth Osgood (Mount Holyoke, '73), the assistant principal. The school offered a broad curriculum of science, mathematics, history, and literature, though few appear to have finished the entire course; only three students graduated at the school's first commencement ceremony on June 3, 1876. Enrollment increased steadily over the years. By 1911, the school had become overcrowded and a new high school building (no longer extant) was started. The new school, which opened with 131 students, had more room and provided facilities for additional programs, such as manual arts and physical education. The old high school was immediately put to use as a town library and offices for Putnam's city and town governments; the library moved to a new building in 1956, but the municipal offices remain.

Although no longer used for its original purpose, Putnam High School remains an important landmark for the state and for Putnam. Few, if any, high school buildings of its age survive to document this important part of Connecticut's educational history. In its four decades of operation, Putnam High School educated hundreds of residents over several generations, including many local business and civic leaders and such notables as early film critic Alice E. Fuller, who wrote under the name Prunella Hall.

Architectural Significance

Putnam High School embodies all the key characteristics of the High Victorian Gothic style of architecture. Architects who worked in this style, influenced by the writings of John Ruskin, sought to imbue their buildings with colorful exteriors through the use of variegated materials. Known as "constructional coloration," this essential principle is well illustrated by Putnam High School's combination of contrasting light and dark brick, painted woodwork, and granite trim.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance Putnam High School, (Putnam Town Hall) 8-3
 Putnam, Windham County, CT

The building also reflects the style's emphasis on complexity of form in its intersecting hip and gable roofs and asymmetric corner towers. The solidity or "character" sought by the style's proponents is evident in the building's heavy massing and in the overhanging upper parts of its towers, a feature that is especially characteristic of the style. Finally, Putnam High School demonstrates the greater eclecticism in sources of inspiration that distinguished the High Victorian Gothic style from earlier Gothic modes. In fact, Putnam High School even goes beyond Gothic to include Italianate or Renaissance features, such as the Palladian window and round-arched openings; overall, however, the steeply pitched roofs and medieval ornament (such as the trefoil, cusp, and fleur-de-lis motifs) establish a distinctly Gothic tone.

Putnam High School is especially notable in that it conveys much of the spirit of the style even though it relies almost entirely on brickwork effects. Either from limitations on the community's resources or the preferences of the school's somewhat obscure architect, the building lacks the contrasting cut stone and terra cotta that were used to create polychrome effects in more sophisticated examples of the style. Instead, darker brick, contrasting patterns, and strong shadows created by raised and recessed bricks were called upon. Particularly striking is the use of alternating recessed headers above the windows to suggest the appearance of banded arches.

The architect of Putnam High School was Carlos C. Buck of Middletown, Connecticut. In an advertisement in the Connecticut Business Directory for 1874, Buck stated that churches and public buildings were his specialty, and he gave several references from New Haven, Middletown, and Hartford, Connecticut, as well as Worcester, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia. Around the time Putnam High School was completed, he relocated to Hartford, where he lived for a few years. Little could be learned of Buck's subsequent career.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Bibliography Putnam High School (Putnam Town Hall) 9-1
 Putnam, Windham County, CT

Architectural and Historical Survey of Putnam Redevelopment Target Area. Putnam Redevelopment Agency and Connecticut Historical Commission, 1987.

Bayles, Richard M. (ed). History of Windham County, Connecticut. New York: W. W. Preston, 1889.

Connecticut Business Directory, 1874, p. 111.

Kaestle, Carl F. Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860. New York: Hill and Way, 1983.

Putnam, Town of. Annual Report, 1874-1875.

View of Putnam, Conn., 1877. Boston: O. H. Bailey, 1877.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photographs Putnam High School (Putnam Town Hall) Photos-1
 Putnam, Windham, County, CT

All photographs:

1. Putnam High School, (Putnam Town Hall)
2. Putnam, Windham County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. April, 1993
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission
 Hartford, CT

Captions:

South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 7

East and north elevations, camera facing southwest
Photograph 2 of 7

Rear (west) and south elevations, camera facing northeast
Photograph 3 of 7

Detail of north tower, camera facing north
Photograph 4 of 7

Detail of windows, south elevation, camera facing north
Photograph 5 of 7

Detail of stairway within north tower, camera facing east
Photograph 6 of 7

Detail of hallway, third floor, camera facing west
Photograph 7 of 7

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 93001343 Date Listed: 12/10/93

Putnam High School Windham CT
Property Name County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

12/10/93
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

10. Geographical Data: VBD

The verbal boundary description is clarified by the additional reference of map 18, lot 88, Putnam Tax Assessment records.

This information has been confirmed with John Herzan, National Register Coordinator, CTSHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without attachment)