

Famous Putnam Cousins – Massachusetts Accomplishments

On a recent visit to Boston, Jamie Lynn enjoyed learning more about the McKellogg's famous Putnam relatives. Rufus Putnam, Grandpa Bob's 7th great grandfather, was the architect of the [fortification at Dorchester Heights](#) south of Boston. Putnam's plan involved using prefabricated chandeliers -- heavy timbers and brush -- to fortify defenses of the Heights. They were so effective, the British abandoned their siege of Boston. George Washington subsequently promoted Rufus Putnam to Chief of Engineers of the Continental Army.

To the north of Boston, Rufus' older cousin, Israel Putnam was one of the primary figures in the Battle for Bunker Hill. Israel was a veteran of the French and Indian wars. He was elected to the Connecticut chapter of the Sons of Liberty, opposing British taxation of the colonies. At the time of the Revolution, he was a prominent Connecticut land and tavern owner. As the story goes, the day he heard of the British attack on Lexington and Concord, he left his farm, riding eight hours to join the Colonies' cause. General George Washington appointed the experienced Israel Putnam as one of his three Major Generals under his command.

In Boston, General Israel Putnam helped plan and lead the Battle of Bunker Hill in June of 1775. "Old Put, as he was nicknamed, is credited with reinforcing nearby Breed's Hill. Some historical accounts believe he told William Prescott to entreat the troops, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes." Others ascribe these famous words to Prescott himself.

Israel and Rufus Putnam were both descendants of the famous Putnams of Salem Massachusetts. While Rufus Putnam was Grandpa Bob's 5th great grandfather, Israel Putnam was a first cousin 8 times removed. Israel's grandfather was Joseph Putnam (1669-1725). Joseph was the half-brother to Thomas Putnam (1652-1699), the most notorious perpetrator of the Salem Witch Trials.

Joseph Putnam married Elizabeth Porter (1673-1746). The Putnams and the Porters were the two powerful families competing for economic and political control of the Salem area. The website for the [Joseph Putnam/General Israel Putnam House](#) describes Joseph as an early and outspoken opponent of the witch hunt, pointing out that,

He reportedly stormed over to Thomas Putnam's house and confronted Ann Putnam Sr., "If you dare to touch with your foul lies anyone belonging to my household,' he told her, "you shall answer for it."

Joseph Putnam was one of just a few who stood against the mass hysteria and fanatical belief in the Devil's arrival in Salem Village. According to Charles Upham in his book Salem Witchcraft, Joseph Putnam showed "a degree of courage, spirit, and resolution, which cannot but be held in honor."

A visit to Boston is a chance to learn first-hand the accomplishments of cousins Rufus and Israel Putnam during the American Revolution. A trip to Salem, an hour's drive or ferry ride north, an

opportunity for McKelloggs to meet Putnam relatives including the infamous Thomas Putnam and courageous Joseph Putnam of the Witch Trials. There's lots of family drama in the Salem, can't wait to visit and learn all about it!

Dave Forrest

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