

Danvers Historical Society and General Israel Putnam Homestead Trust Complete Sale of National Register Historic Home

Danvers, MA— The Danvers Historical Society has completed the long-awaited sale of the General Israel Putnam Homestead, the birthplace of the American Revolutionary War commander, to the General Israel Putnam Homestead Trust (GIPHT), a nonprofit organization established by descendants of Putnam and led by businessman Eric Emerson of Putnam Pantry Candies. The closing occurred Tuesday, September 7, allowing for the GIPHT to begin an adaptive re-use strategy to restore the structure and property.

Danvers Historical Society President Thomas Page said, “We are pleased to convey this important piece of Danvers history back to the family of General Putnam. We have worked closely with the Emersons and other Putnam descendants to ensure the continued preservation and re-use of this significant architectural resource in our community.”

Adaptive re-use is a preservation practice that encourages the updating of historic buildings to modern codes and functionality, while keeping as much as possible of the character and materials that represent a bygone era. The plan for such adaptation is currently being developed by the GIPHT.

Eric Emerson said, “The Putnam House has stood for some 373 years as a reminder of our country's history and the hardships and sacrifices necessary to prevail in the great experiment that is our country. Today through the efforts of those in the Society and the Putnam family, the family is again able to provide the stewardship that will continue to both make that history relevant and to ensure that the Putnam House—the birthplace of one of America's true heroes—remains a treasure that the community and the country can continue to enjoy and benefit from for the next 373 years and beyond.”

The Israel Putnam Homestead is a First Period home, dating to the 1640s, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Located at 431 Maple Street near Route 1, the home was owned by successive generations of the Putnam and Emerson families from this early period until the 1990s, when the property was gifted to the Danvers Historical Society for their historic architectural portfolio. The Society made several attempts to restore and reuse the Homestead, but was unable to raise sufficient funds to undertake the substantial amount of work involved. In January 2020, the Society Membership voted to approve the sale of the property back to the GIPHT with permanent deed restrictions intended to preserve significant historic features of the structure.

Society Vice President David McKenna said, “The Society made a noble effort in accepting the house 30 years ago, based on a belief that funding to support their efforts would be obtainable. But, unfortunately said funding never materialized and the Society found itself with more property than their fundraising efforts could generate. So, the Membership made the emotionally difficult—but realistic—decision to transfer the stewardship of the Homestead back to the Putnam Trust with ironclad restrictions to protect the historic integrity of the house and ensuring its long-term protection.”

The Massachusetts Historical Commission, the state historic preservation authority, approved the permanent deed restrictions. The restrictions will be maintained by the Danvers' Preservation Commission at the local level going forward. These restrictions

will support the GIPHT's plan to update the property, while preserving in perpetuity the significant features of the house in their original, historic form.

In reflecting on the finalization of the sale, McKenna said, "The Homestead is now in a more secure place within a family Trust set up to maintain the house with a plan for sustainable funding. The Danvers Historical Society thanks Eric Emerson for his partnership during the transfer process and will continue to offer our support in any way that we can be helpful. We sincerely wish him and the Putnam family descendants success with this endeavor."



The Danvers Historical Society (DHS) completes the sale of the General Israel Putnam Homestead on Maple Street in Danvers to the General Israel Putnam Homestead Trust (GIPHT) and hands over the keys. From left to right: Wendy Emerson, Eric Emerson, and Galo Emerson of GIPHT, Tom Page, David McKenna, and Bob Young of DHS.