

## Putnam Phalanx

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### Issue

Provide information on the history of the Putnam Phalanx and its connection to the military.

### Summary

The Putnam Phalanx was formed in Hartford in 1858 and was primarily a ceremonial and social organization aimed at preserving historic military traditions. Before and after the Civil War, organizations like the Putnam Phalanx (and other members of the [Centennial Legion of Historic Military Commands](#)) sought to foster patriotism, in part by coordinating joint trips to historically significant sites, participating in parades, and engaging in military drills. The “Puts” adopted their own song and march (see [Attachment](#)).



Source: New York Public Library, [“Flag of Putnam Phalanx”](#)

During wartime periods the group often took on more active roles supporting the military. Most notably, a segment of the Putnam Phalanx merged into the National Guard before World War II and the remaining members established the Putnam Phalanx Veteran Corps.

At various points in time, the Puts had headquarters and armories around Hartford: the Union Hall building on Main Street, two places on Central Row, 265 Main Street, a building at Pearl and Haynes streets, and, lastly, 314 Washington Street. The group collected artifacts including Revolutionary era guns, flags from the original 13 states, World War I machine guns, General Israel Putnam’s plow, and a letter signed by George Washington (*Putnam Phalanx Enters a New Era*, Hartford Courant Magazine, Nov. 11, 1945).

We found no indication that the organization still exists. According to a 2007 Hartford Courant article, the Putnam Phalanx was essentially defunct by that time.

With the research assistance of the Legislative Library, below we provide additional information on the group's formation, relationship to the military, and legislation adopted regarding the group. We based this information on historic newspapers, publications, and legislative acts.

## Origin

Although the Putnam Phalanx was officially incorporated by a special act of the legislature in 1877 (see *Legislation* below), it originally formed in 1858 as a voluntary military association to welcome home, and participate in a parade for, former governor Thomas H. Seymour (who had been serving as the United States minister to Russia). Publications of the era described the group of 145 men as composed from among the most influential men in the state and “unsurpassed in imposing effect.”

The group adopted its name to honor Israel Putnam, a celebrated high-ranking military officer from Brooklyn, Connecticut who fought in the Revolutionary War under General George Washington. (A “phalanx” is a body of troops in close array and associated with an ancient Grecian infantry formation.) The Putnam Phalanx's uniform, shown in Image 1 below, was replicated from General Washington's army uniform, which was loaned to the group by a government historical department. Muskets were provided by member and notable Hartford industrialist Samuel Colt.

**Image 1: Putnam Phalanx Uniforms**



Source: [Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division](#)

*The group's original purpose was broadened, becoming:*

*To perpetuate the memories and customs and traditions of the American Revolution, to commemorate the events and heroes of that period and thereby in other ways to encourage patriotism among the people (Putnam Phalanx Enters a New Era).*

In its earlier years, the Putnam Phalanx, along with similar organizations of the time, made excursions to Bunker Hill, Boston, Providence, and Mount Vernon, among other places. They memorialized some of these trips, along with the speeches and fanfare in [Excursions of Putnam Phalanx](#) (1859). They also successfully urged the legislature to appropriate funds for a monument to be erected over Israel Putnam's grave in Brooklyn, which was [dedicated in 1888](#).

**Image 2: Putnam Phalanx at the Tomb of General Putnam, Brooklyn, 1860**



Source: [Connecticut Historical Society](#)

*Sources:*

- Thos. M. Day, *The Reception of Col. Thos. H. Seymour*, Hartford Courant, Aug. 31, 1859
- James Hammond Trumbull, [The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884](#), pp. 193-94 (1886)
- Frank E. Perley, *Putnam Phalanx Enters a New Era*, Hartford Courant, Nov. 11, 1945, pp. 3 & 15
- Emory B. Giddings, [Historical Sketch of the Putnam Phalanx](#), The Connecticut Magazine, July-Aug. 1900, pp. 335-347

## Wartime Periods and Military Association

### *Civil War*

According to Emory B. Giddings' historical account of the organization (see above), after President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for support for Civil War efforts, the Putnam Phalanx in 1861 "voted to put the Battalion on a war basis, by supplying the members with the most approved fire-arms, fatigue uniforms and such other articles as are required to make the Battalion efficient for active service." The account states that, although many members enlisted in the army, the Putnam Phalanx's active service was limited to escorting all organizations of volunteers leaving the city (p. 340).

Following the war, the Putnam Phalanx also participated in the [1879 Battle Flag Day](#), during which (pursuant to [Resolution no. 141](#)) the Civil War battle flags were delivered to the newly built state capitol building. Some of these flags are still on display in the [Hall of Flags](#).

## ***World War I***

In response to the federalization of the Connecticut National Guard, which removed the state militia from the governor's control, the legislature established the Home Guard in 1917 ([SA 32](#)). In the National Guard's absence, the Home Guard assumed responsibilities for responding to state emergencies, protecting property (such as manufacturing plants and infrastructure), and suppressing civil disorder.

Approximately 65 of the Putnam Phalanx members enlisted in the Connecticut Home Guard, creating companies No. 5 and No. 6 of the Hartford division.

### *Sources:*

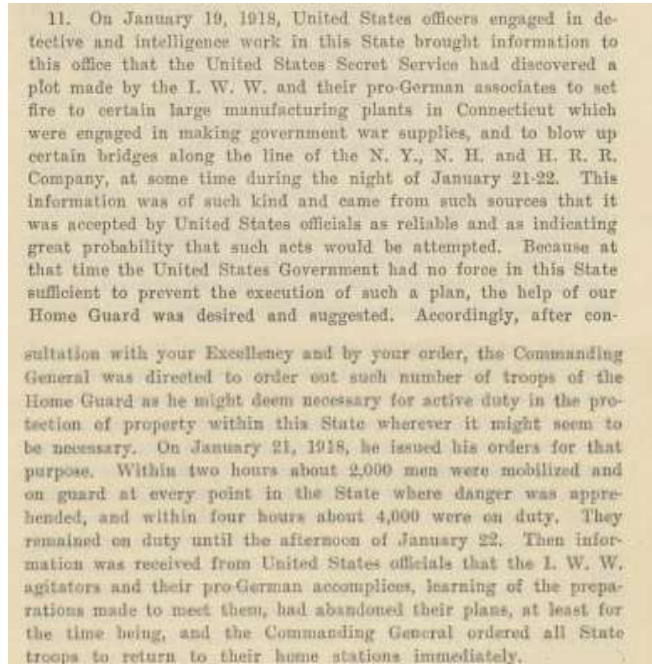
- *Putnam Phalanx Plan Home Guard Battalion*, The Meriden Daily Journal, April 10, 1917
- *Putnam Phalanx Does its Part in War Work Preparation*, Hartford Courant, Jan. 20, 1918

## ***World War II Era***

In 1931, prior to the outbreak of World War II, a portion of the Putnam Phalanx merged with two National Guard companies: the 43rd Division Headquarters Detachment (an administrative unit) and the State Detachment (described as "a composite unit representing a skeleton organization of trained men along the lines represented by officers on the state, staff, i.e., executive, quartermaster, ordnance, etc.," see March 6, 1931, article below) and became a part of the state's military forces. The remaining Putnam Phalanx members were renamed the Putnam Phalanx Veterans Corps and elected their own major commandant. In 1947, the legislature appropriated funds for uniforms for the "combat unit" of the Putnam Phalanx (see *Legislation* below).

Although portions of the Putnam Phalanx's membership had been absorbed into the National Guard, the organization itself appears to have remained separate from the established military. In 1949, the state's adjutant general (when asked to respond to complaints about a Putnam Phalanx commandant wearing a brigadier general's star) stated that the Putnam Phalanx was not a part of the state military or National Guard; rather it was a purely civilian organization "no more connected with the state or national military establishment than are the Boy Scouts."

### **Image 3: Excerpt of Memo From Military Emergency Board to Governor, Nov. 1, 1918**



11. On January 19, 1918, United States officers engaged in detective and intelligence work in this State brought information to this office that the United States Secret Service had discovered a plot made by the I. W. W. and their pro-German associates to set fire to certain large manufacturing plants in Connecticut which were engaged in making government war supplies, and to blow up certain bridges along the line of the N. Y., N. H. and H. R. R. Company, at some time during the night of January 21-22. This information was of such kind and came from such sources that it was accepted by United States officials as reliable and as indicating great probability that such acts would be attempted. Because at that time the United States Government had no force in this State sufficient to prevent the execution of such a plan, the help of our Home Guard was desired and suggested. Accordingly, after consultation with your Excellency and by your order, the Commanding General was directed to order out such number of troops of the Home Guard as he might deem necessary for active duty in the protection of property within this State wherever it might seem to be necessary. On January 21, 1918, he issued his orders for that purpose. Within two hours about 2,000 men were mobilized and on guard at every point in the State where danger was apprehended, and within four hours about 4,000 were on duty. They remained on duty until the afternoon of January 22. Then information was received from United States officials that the I. W. W. agitators and their pro-German accomplices, learning of the preparations made to meet them, had abandoned their plans, at least for the time being, and the Commanding General ordered all State troops to return to their home stations immediately.

Source: [Connecticut State Library](#), pp. 3-4

### *Sources:*

- *Putnam Phalanx 72 Years As Honorary Organization*, The New London Evening Day, March 6, 1931
- *Two Active Guard Units Join Phalanx*, Hartford Courant, Feb. 24, 1931
- *The Putnam Phalanx Encounters a Crises*, The Hartford Daily Courant, Jan. 15, 1933
- *Wearing of General's Star by Docket Draws Protests*, Hartford Courant, Oct. 19, 1949

## **After World War II**

It appears the Putnam Phalanx continued holding meetings and events throughout the 1950s, including a goodwill trip to Europe with the Centennial Legion of Historic Military Commands that echoed a 1926 trip to Paris (see [Mock-Invasion in Dress Uniforms](#), Centennial Legion, Summer-1949, pp. 2-4). In 1950, they admitted their first woman (Muriel McCormick Hubbard, a World War II sergeant) and required she wear the regulation historic uniform, with the exception of a specially designed skirt.

In 1969, the legislature authorized the state adjutant general to allow the Putnam Phalanx to use the Hartford Armory for drills and to store their historic equipment (see *Legislation* below). This may have been due to the foreclosure of the group's final headquarters, on Washington Street (*Hartford-Connecticut Trust Co. v. Putnam Phalanx*, 138 Conn. 695 (1952)).

In 1981, the organization tried to recruit 60 to 80 new members in advance of its 125th anniversary (held at the Marco Polo Restaurant in East Hartford). The final contemporaneous news article we found was written in 1990, when the Putnam Phalanx donated Israel Putnam's saddle to a cavalry museum the Governor's Horse Guard organized in Avon. According to a Hartford Courant article, in 2007, the officials at the Hartford Armory said the group was essentially defunct by that time.

### *Sources:*

- *Woman is Admitted to Putnam Phalanx*, New London Evening Day, Jan. 6, 1951
- *Putnam Phalanx Seeks New Members*, Hartford Courant, April 23, 1981
- *Around Town*, Hartford Courant, Oct. 19, 1983
- *State Cavalry Unit Plans a Museum*, The Record-Journal, Aug. 19, 1990
- *A Ceremonial Quasi-Military Unit with a Colorful History*, Hartford Courant, Oct. 17, 2007



# Legislation on the Putnam Phalanx


Table 1: Legislation Adopted Regarding the Putnam Phalanx

Year	Act Summary and Number
1859	Authorized the quarter-master-general to provide the Putnam Phalanx of Hartford with up to 200 muskets, cartridge-boxes, and bayonets sheaths to be used in parades ( <a href="#">1859 SA 186</a> )
1877	Incorporated the Putnam Phalanx of Hartford as a body politic and corporate having the powers to, among other things, sue and be sued, adopt a constitution and by-laws, impose assessments on its members, and hold real estate properties valued at up to \$10,000 and personal property ( <a href="#">1877 SA 73</a> )
1889	Increased the maximum value of real property the Putnam Phalanx could hold to \$75,000 and authorized it to issue up to \$60,000 in tax exempt bonds to build an armory in Hartford ( <a href="#">1889 SA 240</a> )
1897	Authorized active members to continue to carry state arms under the control of a commanding officer authorized by the governor and in compliance with bonding requirements ( <a href="#">1897 SA 69</a> )
1923	Increased maximum value of real property the Putnam Phalanx could hold to \$150,000 ( <a href="#">1923 SA 12</a> )
1931	Appropriated up to \$100 to the Putnam Phalanx of the Connecticut National Guard for the purchase of a United States flag and one Connecticut state flag with the Putnam Phalanx insignia ( <a href="#">1931 SA 489</a> )
1937	Exempted from taxation real and personal property owned by the Putnam Phalanx used for the organization’s purpose ( <a href="#">1937 SA 281</a> )
1947	Appropriated \$5,000 to the Putnam Phalanx combat unit for, in part, uniforms for 200 active-duty members ( <a href="#">1947 SA 508</a> )
1969	Authorized the adjutant general, with approval from the attorney general, to let the Putnam Phalanx use a portion of the Hartford armory for drills and storing colonial military equipment and historic equipment ( <a href="#">1969 SA 22</a> )

# Attachment 1: The Putnam Phalanx Song and March

C786.4  
# C76  
no. 203  
Connecticut sheet music

THE  
**PUTNAM PHALANX**  
(HARTFORD, CONN.)  
Song and March



MAJOR GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM  
Beloved by Washington

Words and Air By  
**FELIX J. O'NEILL**  
Medium Key

AT MUSIC STORES  
25 cents  
Copyright 1933 by Felix J. O'Neill  
CONN. STATE LIBRARY  
DEC 12 1945

# The Putnam Phalanx

Song and March

(Of Hartford, Conn.)

[WITH MILITARY SNAP]

Words and Air by  
REV. FELIX J. O'NEILL

### Introduction

Musical notation for the Introduction, consisting of a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The music is in a march-like style with a 'military snap'.

Musical notation for the first two lines of the song, including lyrics for two different versions. The piano accompaniment continues. The lyrics are:

1. Hail, the march - ing sons of "Brave Old Put," As they  
2. How they bring old days up close to view, With the

Musical notation for the third line of the song with lyrics. The piano accompaniment continues. The lyrics are:

tread his trail in the same old rut, How it stirs our blood when we  
same old togs of the buff and blue. With the same old boots and the

Musical notation for the fourth line of the song with lyrics. The piano accompaniment continues. The lyrics are:

see them come With the same old fife and the same old drum. 'Tis the same old Flag a -  
same old hat And the same old leve for a red hot spat. 'Tis the same old Flag a -

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bove their head, Tis the same old swing and the same old tread. Tis the  
 bove their head, Tis the same old swing and the same old tread. Tis the

same old bay - o - net and gun That won the war for Wash - ing - ton.  
 same old bay - o - net and gun That won the war for Wash - ing - ton.

CHORUS

March on, O Put - nam Pha - lanx, down the a - ges, Your

march - ing men en - act his - tor - ic pa - ges. Hand down from sire to son. The

way our land was won By val - iant men whose deeds are sung by sa - ges.

The Putnam Phalanx 2

## DEDICATED

To The Putnam Phalanx and kindred organizations designed to keep uncovered the rough trails trod by our Forefathers of Colonial Days. Patriotic societies keep the past ever present. They keep the ancient path from being overgrown and hidden by the weeds of modern ease. They teach the son that if he will step in the footprints of the sire, from time to time, no weed can thrive in those sacred traces.

Especially is this true if the son adopts the very uniform and the tactics and the music used by both sides in our struggle for nationhood. The trail George Washington trod, to win our liberty, will never be overgrown by the weeds and briars and brush of forgetfulness, while such patriotic units as The Putnam Phalanx and The Governor's Foot Guard and The Mattatuck Fife and Drum Corps can swing a scythe.

FELIX J. O'NEILL