

CT Trust Resource ID: 2127

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Children Museum

Other Name(s) (Historic): Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Children Museum

Street Address or Location: 10 South Main Street, Putnam

Town/City: Putnam

Village:

County: Windham

Designation(s):

Owner(s): Aspinock Historical Society

Public/Private: Non-Profit

Latitude: 41.9149 Longitude: -71.9078

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: RECREATION & CULTURE: Museum

Historic Use: Transportation: railroad car

Accessibility to public: Yes Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: During museum hours

Style of building: Railroad car Date of Construction: Moved 2004

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate)

Structural Systems(s): Structural iron or steel

Roof(Type): Flat (Material): Steel rail car

Number of Stories: 1 Approximate Dimensions: 10' x 40'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: Moved Moved, When: 2004

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Door and steps for pedestrian access, electric service

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

Surrounding Environment: High building density, High building density, High building density

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The Boxcar Children Museum is a historic boxcar, located on a short section of track installed in a lawn area between active railroad tracks and South Main Street north of the historic Putnam Railroad Station. The museum sits on an area of public right-of-way of South Main Street, owned by the municipality, and has an assigned street address of 55 Main Street (although it is accessed at approximately 10 South Main Street). A parking lot to the south is also town-owned and serves both the museum.

Other notable features of building or site:

The freight boxcar that forms the museum is a c. 1929 10' x 40' outside braced wood boxcar. This was a standard type constructed and utilized for transporting freight by rail from the early 1900s through the 1950s. The steel frame consists of L- and Z-channels and is exposed on the exterior. The wood enclosure consists of horizontal planks secured on the interior. Sliding doors at the center of each of the two long sides provide access for loading. The standard two-truck (each with two axles) under carriage supports the boxcar frame and the entire car sits on a short length of track installed purposely for it. The car is painted a traditional dark red. A small deck and steps installed at the east side doorway provide public access. An entry door and sidelight are installed within the east side door for visitor access to the museum. The interior has been fitted with exhibits and memorabilia relating to the 'Boxcar Children' books written by Gertrude Chandler Warner, in which the fictional main characters lived temporarily in a boxcar.

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

Gertrude Chandler Warner (1890-1979) grew up on South Main Street observing the rail traffic and the new (now historic) railroad station. She taught the children of Putnam at the Israel Putnam School for 32 years, walking to work at the new (now historic) Israel Putnam School. She wrote the Boxcar Children stories initially to provide stimulating reading material for the students she taught.

The choice by the Aspinock Historical Society to re-purpose an actual period boxcar for the museum, dramatizes the literature that is its

subject matter, while preserving an artifact of the area's early 20th-century history.

Sources:

Interview by C. Hitchcock with Barbara Scalese and Fred Hedenberg, 5/28/2014, at the site. Background and photographs courtesy of Aspinock Historical Society.

Interview with Nathan Nietering, Executive Director of the Shoreline Trolley Museum, East Haven CT, 6/03/2014, via email, regarding rail car stock.

Aspinock Historical Society Exhibits at the Boxcar Museum web site. <http://aspinockhs-putnam.weebly.com/page2.html> Warner, Gertrude Chandler. "Putnam in the early 20th century," unpublished, 1972.

Clouette, Bruce and Roth, Matthew. Historic and Architectural Survey of Central Putnam. Connecticut Historical Commission, 1987. Israel Putnam School National Register Nomination No. 84000788. National Park Service, 1984. Putnam Railroad Station National Register Nomination No. 07000742. National Park Service, 2007.

Karr, Ronald Dale. Lost Railroads of New England, Third Edition. Branch Line Press, Pepperell MA, 2010. Warner, Gertrude Chandler, The Boxcar Children. Chicago, A. Whitman, 1942.

Albert Whitman & Co. publishers web site. <http://www.albertwhitman.com/> <http://www.boxcarchildren.com/content.cfm/about-the-boxcar-children-series>

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 5/28/2014

View: Southeast view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** June 1, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Southeast view - Boxcar Museum photograph

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ **Site#** _____ **UTM** _____
District ☐ S ☐ NR **If NR, specify:** ☐ Actual ☐ Potential