

Putney: past, present, and future, as seen in the architecture

By Anne Stephens, *trustee and former director of the Mountain School*

<above> **MAIN ENTRANCE TO CAMPUS, APRIL 2010.**
<opposite, top two> **STUDENTS CONSTRUCTING THE ART BUILDING.** <next> **JEFFREY CAMPBELL (DOORWAY) DIRECTS LIBRARY CABIN CONSTRUCTION.** <bottom> **A WORK DAY STUDENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECT.**

My husband, David Stephens '54, was very upset by the new art building when it first appeared five years ago. He felt strongly that it forever altered the landscape of Putney in an unfitting manner. He wanted everything to stay the way it was when he was there, though he wouldn't admit to being such a conservative. I sort of went along with him: Currier did seem an out-of-place attachment and took getting used to seeing when I came up the drive. Dave was very impressed by the inside of the building, and what the spaces allowed in term of art, music, dance, school meetings and performances. It was just the external that bothered him.

Now driving up to the campus I see a different configuration, one that would have pleased

him. The line of buildings is balanced and harmonious, like a well-organized bookshelf. The architectural line captures the history of Putney exceptionally well, pulls together past and present, traditional and experimental. As the eye goes from right to left the viewer sees first the spectacular magnificently refurbished barn—a grand, beautifully proportioned red and white Vermont cow barn.

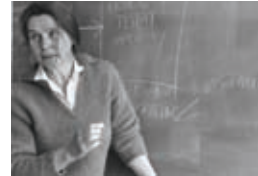
Moving north there is the gap of the pond with the stunning student-created eagle sculpture watching over. Then the eye is surprised, but not shocked, by the Currier Center, which has settled into the landscape well. It speaks loudly for the school's commitment to the arts, a

1976

Steven Jobs and Stephen Wozniak start Apple Computer with \$1,300 in a garage.
Bill Koch '73 captures silver at Innsbruck, Austria becoming first American cross-country skier ever to win an Olympic medal.
Class of '76 builds sauna by the Puddle for their senior gift. Sauna, gift of the Class of '76, burns.

1977

Television adaptation of *Roots*, chronicling seven generations of Alex Haley's family beginning in 1750 in Africa, attracts more than 51% of all viewers.
President Carter pardons all Vietnam draft evaders.
TransAlaska Pipeline System, completed May 30 for \$8 billion, delivers first North Slope oil.



Putney teacher Libby Mills goes to jail with 1,413 others for occupying Seabrook Nuclear power plant.
Bob Woodward, Watergate investigative journalist, is graduation speaker.
Art Building burns; new one to be built by professional crew by opening of '78-'79 school year.

1978

President Carter signs Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, restricting export of fissionable materials.
Rev. Jim Jones and 900 followers commit suicide in Jonestown, Guyana.
Trucks, long the staple of student transportation, are replaced by school buses with certified drivers.

1979

Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Menachem Begin of Israel sign peace treaty in Washington.
Faulty cooling system at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island plant causes worst U.S. nuclear accident.
Mob of 500 Iranian students seize U.S. Embassy in Teheran, taking 90 hostages.
Students call all-student meeting on East Lawn after in-dorms "to discuss generally negative atmosphere."

commitment that has, along with the barn, been there since the school's inception.

The center of the continuum are the old traditional white clapboard 19th century buildings, the centerpiece of the original hill top farm. Next come the KDU and the little bump of the new yet traditional brick bread oven. The viewer gets to take a breather and then there is the Field House, completely untraditional looking, except for the color, the color always of the Putney elm logo. The building shouts sustainability, balance and harmony, and the school's ability to continue to look forward while keeping the past current and vital.

The last piece of the view is a bit of a futuristic shocker, the collection of sun trackers installed to create energy for the net zero field house. I'm sure they too will take a while to get used to, but we will. As Sabra Field said, "People in Vermont used to be upset about silos."



We often hear alumni talk in a paradoxical, yet affectionate, way about the campus. We hear how much it has changed, and in the same breath we hear that the KDU is the same, except that the Calder mobile was "right. . . over. . . there."

"Did you know that—had you been one of the first Putney students—you would not have had the KDU or the current library. Students attending before the 1950s took science classes in what is now the Arts and Crafts Building. The Faculty Room was not added to the KDU until the 1980s. Of the 1940s dormitories, none of the following still houses students: Allen House, Angell House, Arcade, Hinton House, Kelley House, Rogers House, Prefab, or Tower. Of the buildings currently in use for academic or residential purposes, seven were original to the school, six were built between 1940 and 1960, and seven have been built since 1960.

While our face may be slowly changing, we hope that the spirit inside this body of architecture and open space remains true to the school's mission and principles.

1980

78 members of the Putney Community join the March on Washington anti-nuclear rally.

Amanda "Katie" Geer '79 completes research on progressive origins of The Putney School, publishes monograph with guidance from Sven Huseby.

Putney Elm, nearly dead after years of medical intervention, evades the axe one more time in close vote.

Military expedition designed to free hostages in Iran fails, killing eight Americans.

Former movie and television star and California governor, Ronald Reagan, elected president at age 69.

Pacifist and former Beatle John Lennon is shot and killed outside his New York apartment by a fan, Mark David Chapman.

Tom Wicker, *New York Times* editor and stepfather of Chris Hill '80, is graduation speaker.

1981

52 American former hostages depart Iran a few minutes after Ronald Reagan is sworn in as 40th president.

IBM unveils personal computer, promises to revolutionize office environment.

B. F. Skinner, founder of Behavioral Psychology and father of Julie '56, is graduation speaker.

The Elm is cut down, the last of the big elms to fall to Dutch Elm Disease.

1982

Equal Rights Amendment falls three states short of ratification.

Black granite wall monument to veterans of Vietnam War designed by Yale Architecture student Maya Lin, is dedicated in Washington.

Trustees set up Study Committee to assess the condition of Putney and set a direction for the next 50 years.

Four "history taping sessions" engaged 94 participants for research in History Book.

Sue Lloyd receives 380 letters and questionnaires for research on Putney book.

