

*History of the Putnam-Balch House
Now known as "Gneymoon" at 329 Essex Street, Salem*

*As presented in Architecture in Salem, (p. 176) by Bryant F. Tolles, Jr.
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Welcome to the majestic Victorian eclectic mansion which was the former headquarters of Post 23 of the American Legion and was painstakingly restored by Donald Costin in 1979/81. ...The most ambitious and outstanding residence of its era in Salem, it was erected for James S. Putnam in 1871/72 on the site of the Benjamin Marston house, which Putnam had demolished. Frank Balch acquired the property in 1881 and held it until 1921 when it was purchased by the Legion.

Two stories high with a truncated hipped roof, the Putnam-Balch house



illustrates dramatically the possibilities of wooden ornamentation in the immediate post-Civil War period. Reflecting the French Academic as well as the High Victorian Italianate styles are a wide variety of decorative details which predominate on the front rusticated board facade but are also present on the other elevations. Tall molded window frames are capped by heavy

segmental-arch and flat supported by eight square modeled columns (two of which are attached) and is embellished by a bracketed cornice. Paired square pilasters set atop paneled bases are present at the front corners. A rounded facade gable and a heavy bracketed cornice, surely Salem's most elaborate, complete the ornamentation.

