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Groton Gazette

The Newsletter of the Winthrop Papers Projects Number 3, Spring 1999

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March 26 of this year marks the 350th anniversary of the death of John Winthrop (1588-1649). The occasion has spurred a number of events to commemorate Winthrop and to reflect upon his values and their meaning for our time. This issue focuses upon some of those events as well as informing you of other Winthrop happenings.

The Worlds of John Winthrop

On September 17 and 18 Millersville University of Pennsylvania will be the host for a major international conference on The Worlds of John Winthrop: England and New England, 1588-1649. The Massachusetts Historical Society is the principal sponsor of the event. This conference has been designed to review the state of the fields of colonial New England studies and Tudor-Stuart England studies at the close of the millennium. Sessions feature a look at a particular subject from the perspectives of England and America in Winthrop's lifetime. Among the topics to be examined will be religious practice, the marketplace, local government, women's experiences, the law, witchcraft, medical practices, and the treatment of dissent. Over fifty noted scholars, including many from the United Kingdom, will present an abstract of pre-distributed papers and engage in discussion. Of particular interest will be a session focusing on the choices faced by English Puritans in 1630. Dr. John Morrill of Cambridge University will discuss the decision made by many, such as Oliver Cromwell, to stay in England. Winthrop Editor Dr. Francis Bremer will offer new insights into Winthrop's choice to migrate. And Dr. Alan Ford of the University of Durham will discuss Puritan consideration of the alternative choice of migration to Ireland. For further information on the conference you can contact Dr. Bremer at Millersville University or visit the Winthrop Papers web site for more information: muweb.millersville.edu/~winthrop.

Groton Remembers Winthrop

The Suffolk home of the Winthrops will commemorate its most famous citizen with a one day local history conference on June 26. Organized by Mr. Martin Wood, a member of the Winthrop Papers Editorial Board and a resident of Groton, the event will take place in the Boxford Village Hall. The program will be chaired by David Dymond, formerly Director of Studies in Local and Regional History at the University of Cambridge and will include presentations by Roger Thompson (University of East Anglia), John Walter (University of Essex), John Morrill (Cambridge University), Amanda Flather (University of Essex), Frank Grace, Mr. Wood, and Francis Bremer. The conference will be graced by the presence of the United States Ambassador to Great Britain, the Ambassador to Great Britain of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Mr. John Winthrop of Charleston, South Carolina. Proceeds will go to the maintenance and repair of John Winthrop's church at Groton, Suffolk. Details are available at the Winthrop Papers web site.

An Academic Remembrance

This year also marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of Oliver Cromwell, like Winthrop a member of the east Anglian gentry. But whereas Winthrop migrated to create a new England, Cromwell remained home to play a key role in the reshaping of Old England. A comparative approach to the two great Puritan leaders is the basis of a program of two three credit courses which Millersville University will offer at Cambridge, England in July of this year. Labeled "Two Faces of Puritanism", the program includes a course taught by Cambridge University's John Morrill on "Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Revolution in England" and a course taught by Dr. Francis Bremer on "John Winthrop and the Puritan Experiment in New England." Students will reside in the Cambridge where both Winthrop and Cromwell studies, and the courses will be enriched by three day trips to places of significance in the lives of the two leaders, including tours of the Stour River region surrounding Groton and tours of battlefields of the English Civil Wars. For more information contact Dr. Bremer at Millersville or visit the Winthrop papers web site.

Liberty Fund Colloquium
Next Spring Drs. John Morrill and Francis Bremer will be co-directing a multi-disciplinary academic colloquium on "Exemplars of Liberty in Early Modern New and Old England: Winthrop and Cromwell." The program is part of a series of such events sponsored by the Liberty Fund and it will focus on the writings of the two Puritan leaders as dealing with issues of human liberty and responsibility and the meaning of those writings for today. It will be held March 30 - April 2 in Lavenham, Suffolk.

**Reared in a Greenhouse**

Dorothy Bradford Wexler has just published *Reared in a Greenhouse: The Stories and Story of Dorothy Winthrop Bradford*. Published by Garland Press, this richly illustrated volume provides valuable insights into the family earlier in this century. Look for it in your local bookstore or on the web at www.amazon.com or a similar site.

**The R. C. Winthrop Project**

In 1903 Ulrich B. Phillips proclaimed that "the history of the United States has been written by Boston and largely written wrong." If this is a felony, to borrow from historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., then Boston is the scene of the crime and Robert C. Winthrop is a chief culprit. In his research for the Robert C. Winthrop project, Dr. Donald Yacovone associate editor at the MHS is tracing Winthrop's efforts to forge a shared, national historical memory by sacralizing the legacy of the American Revolution and the memory of the Founding Fathers, especially George Washington. Robert C. Winthrop (1809-1894), statesman, orator, historian, and philanthropist, was one of the most influential leaders of the nineteenth century. A protegee of Daniel Webster and the chief rival of Charles Sumner, Winthrop played a critical role in every major national political event from 1840 through the Civil War. As head of the Peabody Education Fund from its founding in 1867 until his death in 1894, Winthrop played a pivotal role in the development of public education for African Americans and whites in the South and in the post-war process of national re-unification. A seventh-generation descendant of Massachusetts Bay's first governor, Winthrop held a privileged position in New England society and stood at the center of his era's efforts to forge a common American identity. As an orator and author of countless addresses and pamphlets, he labored mightily to instill a shared view of this nation's history focusing on the achievements of George Washington. As a historian and documentary editor, he endeavored to ensure that his family's history remained as it surely was--bound up with American history and his compelling--though racially exclusive vision of the past largely endured until recent times. *One of the most exciting new trends in the writing of history is the burgeoning interest in "historical memory." How the past is remembered and who determines what is remembered has become an enormously popular area of historical inquiry on both sides of the Atlantic. The recent controversy at the Smithsonian Institution over the exhibit focusing on the Enola Gay and the dropping of the atomic bomb to end World War II is a good illustration of what historians mean by "historical memory" and how contentious such debates over public commemorations of the past have become. In his own day, Winthrop and Boston witnessed a divisive debate over the erection of the monument to Crispus Attucks and the martyrs of the Boston Massacre. Like the Enola Gay controve ray, the late nineteenth century debate over whether to honor the "saucy rabble" gunned down by his majesty's regulars reveals how public renderings of the past are contested ground, a struggle to determine not only who would gain a place in the nation's historical memory but the very function of that memory in American culture. Winthrop venerated George Washington as the idealized new American, the self-made man educated in common schools, not private academies; trained in war, but dedicated to peace. In all of world history, Winthrop maintained, only two birthdays should command public attention: December 25th and February 22nd; the Winthrop house hold was at its fullest in February. Emblematic of Winthrop's place in nineteenth-century society, Congress chose him in 1848 to deliver the oration at the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument and, in 1885, to deliver the oration at its completion. To Winthrop, the unfinished monument in Washington, D. C., to the Founding Father was, sadly, a fitting "emblem of a divided and ruined country." He saw its slow rise to completion accomplished largely because of his efforts and influence as a metaphor for the painful ordeal of national reunification after Reconstruction. This process also attracting the attention of historians today is traced in Winthrop's Peabody Education Fund correspondence where, for twenty-seven years, he led the Fund and worked intimately with former Confederates to advance public education, uplift blacks, and promote fraternal reconciliation. Through Winthrop, we can trace how the legacy of George Washington and the Revolution reverberated throughout American history.

**Ongoing Projects**

Work continues on the volume of *Religious Manuscripts* being prepared by Dr. Bremer and the John Winthrop Jr. *Medical Notebooks* being prepared by Robert Charles Anderson. Those projects were described in the previous issue of the Groton Gazette, which can be consulted at the Winthrop Papers web page. *Margaret Byard is preparing a pamphlet on John Winthrop Jr.’s library for the New York Society Library. Many of Winthrop’s books ended up in that Library’s collection. Ms. Byard has also gathered information on volumes that ended up in other collections as well. We will post a notice when the work is available.*