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Groton Gazette

The Journal of John Winthrop

Harvard University Press has just published The Journal of John Winthrop, prepared by Richard Dunn of the University of Pennsylvania and Laetitia Yeandle of the Folger Library. This new and definitive edition is the first since its original publication in the nineteenth century by James Savage. Editors Dunn and Yeandle corrected errors in the first edition and added new materials from the manuscript notebooks of John Winthrop. In size and appearance, this new volume is designed to be compatible with previously published volumes of the Winthrop Papers. Harvard University Press also has printed an abridged, modernized version of the text in hardcover and paperback for a general audience and for classroom use. To order any version of the Journal contact Harvard University Press at: 1-800-448-2242.

The Massachusetts Historical Society

Also of note is the recent publication of Louis L. Tucker's The Massachusetts Historical Society, A Bicentennial History, 1791-1991, which is available from the Society's distributor, Northeastern University Press, Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851. This attractive and entertaining book by the Society's director is an unvarnished history of the country's oldest historical society. It has much to say about the Winthrop family's role in shaping the M.H.S., especially that of Robert C. Winthrop. Harvard Professor Bernard Bailyn judged the book a "fascinating, witty, droll, at times hilarious account."

New Winthrop Materials

On his most recent excursion to England in November 1996, Frank Bremer continued his search for long-forgotten Winthrop materials. In the Public Record Office he found rare documents-notation of William Winthrop's (1529-1582) support of Puritan clergy in Elizabethan England. At the Suffolk Record Office in Ipswich, Frank uncovered documents relating to Adam Winthrop's (1548-1629) donation of land in Boxford in 1602 where the Boxford school was erected. And at the Suffolk Record Office in Bury St. Edmund's, he found deeds and other legal documents dealing with the property holdings of the Winthrops in Edwardstone, the village next to Groton where John Winthrop (1588-1649) was born.

Groton Place and Groton Hall

Frank also continued to investigate the mysterious question of where "Groton Manor," the ancestral home of the Winthrops, actually stood. Adam Winthrop (1498-1562) had purchased the estate from Henry VIII in 1544. But the "manor house" (Groton Hall)-the estate's principal house-was already occupied under the terms of a previous lease. With Groton Hall unavailable, Winthrop entered into a ninety-nine year lease to the rectory and glebe land. He enlarged the rectory, turning it into what he called his "mansion house," what became known as "Groton Place." That became the principal residence of the family for as long as they owned the manor. Groton Hall continued to be leased and occasionally occupied by other members of the family. Thus, John Winthrop, the future governor of Massachusetts, lived in Groton Place as lord of the manor, while his father and mother occupied Groton Hall. Groton Hall, later expanded, still stands. The Winthrop "manor house," long believed to have been torn down, also still stands, and is known locally as "Groton Place." If this was not confusing enough, later changes made to the structure, specifically a Georgian facade, had been placed on the old structure disguising its true antiquity. During his last English sojourn, Frank gained permission from current residents to have the interior of the house photographed. Much original carved woodworking, brickwork, and wall paintings from the time of the early Winthrops survives.

Groton Church

While visiting Groton, Frank was privileged to read the lesson during the Remembrance Sunday service. The lectern and a table that served as the altar were located in the nave. The chancel area was covered by large plastic sheets as repair work on the chancel roof proceeds. The service was accompanied by the melodious sound of water dripping from the roof onto plastic. Like many historic church buildings, St. Bartholomew's Church at Groton is expensive to maintain. Over the years members of the Winthrop family have done much to aid the small congregation of the parish to bear the costs of historic preservation. Members of the congregation speak with great gratitude for the assistance Winthrop family members have provided.

The church's roof repairs remain a major challenge and any assistance from readers of this newsletter will be much appreciated. Contributions can be sent to "The Winthrop Family in America Fund for Groton Church", New York Community Trust, 2 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016, and are tax deductible.

The Letters of Robert C. Winthrop
Work continues on the preparation of a new volume in the M.H.S. Winthrop Papers series titled Winthrop Papers, Series II: Religious Manuscripts. This collection of sixteenth and seventeenth century Winthrop manuscripts will include the sermon notebook kept by John Winthrop in 1628, which never has been published. Other items in the proposed volume will be newly edited with more complete versions of published manuscripts. Updates on this project, which is projected to be completed in the Fall of 1998, can be found on the Winthrop Papers home page on the world wide web (see below).

Winthrop Medical Notebooks: Under the editorial direction of Robert Anderson of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the M.H.S. has begun work on publishing the medical notebooks of John Winthrop, Jr., the son of Massachusetts's illustrious founder and a governor of colonial Connecticut. This volume will also appear in Series II of the Winthrop Papers. These medical notebooks are the largest single record of individuals’ symptoms and their treatment in the colonial period. The book will be thoroughly annotated and promises to be a major contribution to the social and medical history of early America.

Winthrop Papers on the Web

The Winthrop Papers project has a home page and all readers of this newsletter are invited to visit. The site includes copies of the newsletter and a web archive which includes drafts of manuscripts which have been edited and are awaiting publication. You can visit the Winthrop Papers home page at: http://muweb.millersville.edu/~winthrop