**The Colonial Society of Massachusetts**

Minutes of the 125th Annual Meeting of the Membership

Held at the Harvard Club

374 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

9 November 2017

President Donald R. Friary called the meeting to order at 6.10 P.M.

The reading of the minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting was waived.

**1 . Report of the Membership Committee.** Celeste Walker, chair of the committee, said the membership of the Society stands at 331 members: 185 resident members, 132 non-resident members, and 14 honorary members. During the past year, the changes in membership are as follows:

* Jack Brandt, a member since 1990, died on September 24.
* Abbott Lowell Cummings, a member since 1957, and an honorary member since 2007, died on May 29.
* Jack Grinold, a member since 1993, died April 21.
* Kay Menand, a member since 2006, died on October 6.
* Albert T. Klyberg, a member since 1971, died on January 9.
* Daniel Vickers, a member since 2009, died February 28.

Members stood for a moment of silence.

Michael Feldman resigned his membership.

In April, the following four members were transferred to Honorary Membership:

David Hall, Jonathan Fairbanks, Karen Kupperman, and Neil Salisbury.

The Society welcomed the following new members:

***Resident Members***

* Margaret Burke, of Concord, Director of the Concord Museum
* Tara Cederholm, of Salem, NH, curator of The Crosby Company
* Elizabeth M. Covart, of Boston, history blogger and producer of Ben Franklin’s World podcast
* Geoffrey McCullough, of Hingham, an attorney in Boston
* Thomas Michie, of Boston, Russel B. and Andree Beauchamp Stearns Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts
* Christine Thomson, of Salem, conservator
* Alexander (Toby) Webb, of Boston, Chief Compliance Officer and Director of S & Co., Inc., Boston

***Non-Resident Members:***

* Andrea Cremer, of California, writer of historical fiction and former Associate Professor at Macalester College
* Emily Blanck, of Glassboro, New Jersey, Associate Professor of History at Rowan University
* Eileen Cheng, Professor of History, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York
* Ruma Chopra, of San Jose, California, Professor of History at San Jose State
* Jared Hardesty, Assistant Professor of History, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington
* Jonathan Den Hartog, of St. Paul, Minnesota, Associate Professor of History at the University of Northwestern at St. Paul
* Cassandra Good, of Charlottesville, VA, Associate Editor, Papers of James Monroe
* Eliga Gould, Chair of the History Department at the University of New

Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire

* Ann Little, Associate Professor of History at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

The following nominations, approved at the June and September Council meetings, will be voted upon at the Society’s December Stated Meeting.

**For resident membership**:

* Jessie Little Doe Baird, Vice-chair of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe.
* Neil Safier, Director and Librarian, John Carter Brown Library
* RyanWoods, Senior Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society

**For Non-Resident membership:**

* William C. diGiacomantonio, Chief Historian at the U.S. Capitol Historical Society
* Jason Mancini, Director, the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research

Center

* Margaret Newell, Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University
* Jean M. O’Brien, Professor of History, University of Minnesota
* John Winthrop, of Charleston, South Carolina

According to our by-laws, Article IV, Sect. 12: No nomination shall be acted upon by the Society at the same meeting to which it is reported, but the Society, by a vote of three-fourths of the Resident Members present, may suspend this requirement.

I am asking for two votes. One to suspend the requirement, and the second, to transfer Robert A. Gross from Resident to Honorary Membership.

**Voted:** To suspend Article IV, Sect. 12. Approved unanimously.

**Voted:** To elect Robert A. Gross to Honorary Membership. Approved unanimously.

**3. Report of the Treasurer.**

President Friary then yielded the chair to Alan Rogers for the election of officers. Alan invited Cornelia Dayton, chair of the Nominating Committee, to take the podium.

**4. Report of the Nominating Committee.** Cornelia Dayton, chair of the Nominating Committee, thanked the other members of the committee, and read the slate of nominees:

President Donald R. Friary

Vice Presidents Robert Allison, Dan Coquillette, Susan Lively, Celeste Walker

Recording Secretary Leslie A. Morris

Corresponding Secretary Martha J. McNamara

Treasurer Thomas R. Appleton

Member of Council,

3-year term Robert A. Gross (2020)

Continuing members of

Council Beth Anne Bower (2018), Nathaniel Sheidley (2019)

There were no nominations from the floor. Alan moved the slate of officers and councilor.

**VOTED:** To approve the slate as read. Approved unanimously.

President Friary resumed the chair, and thanked the membership.

**5. Report of the Curator.** Richard Nylander, chair of the House Committee, reported for Elton Hall, whose report is appended.

**6. Report of the Editor of Publications.** John Tyler’s report is appended.

**7. Report of the President.** Don Friary’s report is appended.

The meeting adjourned at 7.05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie A. Morris

Recording Secretary

**Report of the Curator, Elton W. Hall**

In most of my reports to the Annual Meeting over the years I have spoken about things: the house, its condition, maintenance, the collections of paintings, furniture, and sundry other pieces. This year I’m going to take a slightly different approach and talk about people, members, a particular group of members. After all, our Mission Statement declares that among the ways we accomplish our mission is “by preserving the historic fabric of it headquarters at 87 Mount Vernon Street, and by inspiring in its members a spirit of fellowship based on our common appreciation of history.” The House Committee accomplishes the first part of this through the application of the second. And so tonight I’m going to introduce you to the members of the House Committee. But first I want to mention how the House Committee accomplishes its work as a committee. Following the tradition if not established by Walter Muir Whitehill faithfully followed by him, we meet over lunch. Walter used to say that if someone had managed to get Saint Augustine together with Pelagius over a good lunch, the whole history of Christendom would have run much more smoothly than it has. But since the House Committee has become the biggest spender in the Society (and let me hasten to add that we also earn a great deal through our rental properties) we feel it our duty to lunch modestly, so Don orders in sandwiches, and we drink only water. We meet at the house two or three times a year to report on the status of the various projects in various stages of progress and to discuss the problems and opportunities that lie ahead. Between those meetings the practical work of the Committee is carried out principally by the individual members, keeping in touch with one another quite frequently by email. We all serve as consultants to each other. Many of you know some or all of the committee members quite well or are at least acquainted with them, others may not know them or know that they are members of the House Committee, so I want to identify them all.

Richard Nylander, who joined the Society in 1994, is our Chairman. He has had a long and distinguished career as a curator of what was known as The Society for The Preservation of New England Antiquities when we were all young, but some years ago was shortened to Historic New England for the convenience of those writing checks. In due course he became Chief Curator, with responsibility for a vast collection comprising most every durable thing that might have been found in a house from the first period well into the 20th century. During that career he developed connoisseurship of a great breadth and depth of which he is very modest, although he does confess to a special interest in historic wallpaper, New England interiors, and currently mirrors and picture frames. He is now Curator Emeritus of Historic New England, and serves on the Board of the Warner House in Portsmouth. Naturally his services are in demand by many, but thanks to Don Friary’s persuasive recruiting skill, he agreed to chair the committee, which made the rest of us very happy.

Robert Mussey, a member since 2010, brings to the Committee two departments of knowledge not often found in one person. First he is a master craftsman, skilled in the use of traditional tools, materials, and methods of 18th and 19th century cabinetmaking as well as the finishes and fabrics used in furniture. Robert had been Chief Furniture Conservator of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities before founding Mussey Associates in 1989, his own conservation firm which continues today although he is now retired. He is also an e HHaccomplished scholar in the area of furniture and the cultural context in which it was produced. That is exemplified by his book *The Furniture Masterworks of John & Thomas Seymour*, published by the Peabody Essex Museum in 2003 to accompany their great exhibition. Robert’s advent to the committee came at a propitious time, for Brock Jobe was already planning the 400 Years of Massachusetts Furniture project and when he came to scout the Society’s holdings of Massachusetts made furniture, he identified a number of pieces of potential interest, for which Robert was just the right person to take in hand. Robert undertook a survey of our entire furniture collection, noting the condition of each piece and assigning priorities for their treatment. He has since shepherded three of our most spectacular pieces of Boston made furniture through conservation and continues with unabated enthusiasm to move that part of the program along.

Lynn Spencer, a member since 2014, is a principal in the architectural preservation firm of Spencer and Vogt and has been deeply involved in the preservation and restoration of historic structures from small frame houses to large stone public buildings. Prior to establishing her firm, she served for a decade as director of properties for the SPNEA. Do you begin to notice how the SPNEA has been a nursery for today’s leaders in the field of historic preservation? I believe we can thank our highly esteemed, late fellow member Abbott Lowell Cummings for that. Lynn had hardly had a chance to read her membership certificate before being put to work on our most prized possession, the house itself. Beginning with climate control on the first two floors, she was right at hand when the house was so badly damaged by the snow storm a couple of years ago. She kept right on that until it was completed, and has most recently planned repairs to the roof. She has skillfully navigated us through some tortuous decisions on matters for which the best practice is not always clear. The amount of time Lynn has so generously devoted to our house has surely bitten into her duties at the firm, but she has never allowed us to know that.

Charlie Sullivan has been a member since 1990. As Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, he is the leading proponent of historic preservation, restoration of historic buildings, and conservation of neighborhoods in Cambridge. His office provides advice and counsel to property owners and research assistance in virtually every aspect of the built environment. Thus armed, he is a great resource for the House Committee on any number of issues that come before us.

Barbara Ward, elected in 2010, has had a varied career in material culture. My first contact with her was when she was Director of the Winterthur Program back in 1985. I’d just written an article about being a museum curator, and she wrote to express her approval of it. Then about 1991 she came and gave a talk at a Stated Meeting of the Society. We sat together at the Council Meeting, and I remember the occasion because it was the day I resigned from the Council, which brought a fleeting look of dismay to her face until she learned it was to allow me to accept the newly established position of Curator. And now she is Director/Curator of the wonderful, Georgian, Moffat-Ladd House & Garden in Portsmouth. To adapt the current Farmer’s Insurance Company ad, “She knows a thing or two because she’s seen a thing or two.” Her experience with every detail of managing an important historic house and its contents makes her a much valued member of the Committee.

I’ll say nothing about the two *ex officio* members of the Committee, Don Friary and myself except that we are both very happy to have this team and most appreciative of all they contribute to accomplish our portion of the Society’s mission.

One thing that I have found very pleasing in working with the House Committee members is the way the house and its contents have fed back into their own work. Robert has been studying 19th century Boston furniture for a long time, and through his involvement with our furniture he has made discoveries that might have otherwise gone unnoticed indefinitely. Two of these will appear in his Vose exhibit at the MHS next year. Charlie and our fellow member Susan Maycock were at work on their great book *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development*, for which they needed a likeness of Stephen Higginson, Jr. We have one that had not been prominently hung because of its sad condition. Charlie’s need for a publishable image prompted us to send it out for conservation, for which David Burnham kindly provided. So through his involvement with the Committee, Charlie derived a benefit, as did the portrait and the house. Some of us came in early for the October House Committee meeting to receive Lorraine Bigrigg, a wallpaper conservator who came to advise us on our deteriorating Psyche wallpaper. When she left, Richard and Robert immediately sat down at Admiral Morison’s dining table, pulled out their files, and made the final decisions on illustrations for an article on which they are collaborating. Included among the illustrations are three pieces from our collection, two pieces of furniture and an engraved portrait of Lafayette in its original frame with the framer’s label still affixed to the back, an object of particular delight to Richard. So life on the high road of the House Committee is a two-way street, and all I can say is how lucky we all are that it is so.

**Report of the Editor of Publications, John W. Tyler**

Twenty-five years ago, so many people were interested in celebrating the Colonial Society's 100th anniversary that we needed to find larger than usual accommodations at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Since that time the community of persons who follow the activities of this organization and its publications has multiplied far beyond what anyone in that room would have thought imaginable. Thanks to the new website, we now have approximately 1,200 people a week checking in with us. We have no precise way of knowing how many libraries carry a complete run of our publications, but I doubt the number is much more than a hundred and I doubt that the number of users per week at any of those collections is more than ten. That was, of course, the only way our publications could be consulted in 1992. Given the small number of scientists in our ranks probably no one in the room in 1992 had even heard the word "website."

Then, of course, there is Facebook. 1,876 viewers watched a film featuring Historic Deerfield's collections on our page this past week, while nearly a thousand watched, also on our page, a video made by Revolution 250 of a reenactment of the traditional parading of images on Pope's Day, the 5th of November. So we are now reaching new audiences in ways our forebearers never would have anticipated.

Many of you are aware, I'm sure, that *Boston Furniture, 1700-1900* is now available online. What you may not know is that I can keep track of which articles in the volume are the most consulted. Tonight I can tell you that Ned Cooke's essay on case furniture has now surpassed Brock Jobe's on turret-top tea tables. But, of course, we have no way of knowing whether Ned has been cooking the books by assigning his essay to his students!

2017 may be the first year in the Colonial Society’s history when its publications have been entirely digital. For over a year and half, the Society had been working closely with Scribe Inc. of Philadelphia to scan and digitize all 88 volumes of its publications. This was a heroic undertaking, since over the course of 125 years, our books have been printed in variety of formats and fonts. The accuracy of the optical character recognition needed to be checked carefully, and new functions added.

Just one search can turn up references in all 88 volumes: no more searching different indices for different years, or volume by volume! Hovering over the number for a footnote will instantly bring up the reference; no more checking the end of the essay or the back of the book! And perhaps best of all, the content of our books is now available for free to anyone in the world at any time.

The new website, which went live in early May. When we announced on Facebook the availability of all our publications online that news reached 7,734 persons. Most visitors to the website go directly to the publications page and its search function, suggesting that, for the moment at least, the new website is primarily a research tool. Most visits are the result of an “organic search,” meaning that someone typed words into a search engine that led them there. About a quarter of visits come from a “direct search,” i.e. with no intervening website or search engine. Not surprisingly, the heaviest use comes from the Anglophone world: 78% from the United States, 5% from Great Britain, 2.9% from Canada, 2.4% from India, and 1.2% from Australia, but we have also had visitors from Germany, South Korea, France, Italy, and Brazil. Somewhat of a surprise to me, a quarter of visitors use their mobile phones to visit the site, and the site is most heavily used just before noon and between two and four, although use does not seem to be limited particularly to weekdays. Historians don't seem to take the weekend off!

Meanwhile, the Colonial Society continues to print handsome, hardbound books in the way it has always done; the only difference is that prior to printing, the digital files are coded so that the ebook version of a new volume can appear at the same time as the printed edition or shortly thereafter.

Forthcoming publications include Fellow Members James Bell and James Mooney’s *King’s College Chapel Records*, which differ from the usual church records since the founding of King’s Chapel in Puritan Boston was part of a larger late Stuart design to bring Massachusetts under closer imperial control during the period of the Dominion of New England. The intrusion of the Church of England into the heart of New England Puritanism was hardly welcomed by the locals, but King’s Chapel soon became the preferred place of worship for royal officials and members of the military. The *King’s Chapel Records* also contain important information on the poorhouse, smallpox, and the marriage of free blacks.

William diGiacomantonio will be submitting a completed manuscript later this fall for *The Correspondence of George Thatcher.* Thatcher was a lawyer, judge, and member of the first Federal Congress representing the District of Maine. A staunch Federalist, Thatcher was the last original member of Congress still serving in 1800 when he chose not to run for reelection. Thereafter, he was an associate justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. He helped to write the Maine state constitution when it achieved statehood in 1820. A leading figure promoting Unitarianism in the United States and a founder of Bowdoin College, he died in Biddeford, Maine.

He was Douglas Winiarski continues his work on *The Memoirs of Josiah Cotton & Allied Documents*. Cotton retreated to his study annually on New Year’s Day to write the history of the past year within his family, the Plymouth Colony, and the wider world. Cotton was also an active missionary to the surrounding Native American community. The second volume of *The Correspondence of Thomas Hutchinson, 1767 – 1768* is now being proofread. Hutchinson’s letters for this period reveal the impact on Massachusetts of political paralysis in England, where the white-hot party animosity caused by John Wilkes's antics prevented the ministry from making any concerted response to the nonimportation agreement and the challenges to imperial authority posed by the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Thomas Knoles has made remarkable progress in just a few short years editing the *The Diary of the Rev. William Bentley.* Bentley (1759 - 1819) was pastor of the East Church in Salem and a remarkable polymath. His library of over 4,000 volumes was reportedly second only in size to Thomas Jefferson's. Many of you know that Bentley's diary was previously published by the Essex Institute in 1905-1914 in four volumes, no less! Knoles estimates that edition printed only a third of the available material, suppressing political and religious commentary in favor of Salem's social history.

Further ahead are: -*The Papers of Sir Francis Bernard,* vol. 6, edited by Colin Nicolson; *The Samuel Phillips Diary* (of Rowley) edited by James F. Cooper and Kenneth Minkema; and *The Account Books of John Hull,*edited by David Hancock and Mark Peterson. In conjunction with the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, several members of the Colonial Society are forming an international and intercultural team to undertake a new edition of William Bradford’s *Of Plimoth Plantation.*

In his acknowledgements to his recently published book, *Friends Divided: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson,* our honorary member Gordon Wood paid tribute to documentary editors everywhere, and especially to the editors of the Adams and Jefferson Papers (many of the former we are proud to number among our members), "All these documentary editors," Wood writes, " seldom receive the recognition and acclaim they deserve. We historians, indeed, the entire country are deeply indebted to them for making available to us in print, whether online or in letterpress editions, the many documents of America's past. Because the coming generation of students no longer read cursive handwriting, the documentary collections like those of Adams and Jefferson will become all the more important. For most scholars and students in the future the original handwritten documents of American history will remain more or less inacessible, expressed in a foreign language not easily deciphered." Summing things up neatly, Wood concludes, "Historians write monographs and books that are inevitably ephemeral, but the editors of . . .papers. . .are producing work for the ages." And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the work of the Colonial Society!

**Report of the President, Donald F. Friary**

Thank you, John and Richard and Amory for reports that are so encouraging. And special thanks to the 125th anniversary committee chaired by Beth Bauer that has planned this evening of celebration for the Society’s 125 past years and a very productive current year.

Publications remain our principal mission and activity and offered landmarks this year in the release of *Boston Furniture, 1700-1900* and in the unveiling of our new website that makes all Colonial Society publications available and searchable for a wide public. On March 22 *Boston Furniture* was launched at the Society’s house, when 75-80 people gathered to celebrate this thoroughly researched and splendidly illustrated book. Among them were Colonial Society members, 17 of the 22 authors of articles in the volume, representatives of the Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture committee, and donors to the project.

As John Tyler has reported our new website has many “hits” every day and enjoys a worldwide audience. The website was made possible by a campaign to match a $20,000 challenge gift. A total of $52,330 was raised to finance the website and digitization of our publications. 115 donors participated, a remarkable 30% of our membership. This highly successful fundraising effort confirms the loyalty and commitment of the Society’s members.

Although publication, including digital publication, remains the central mission of the society, we foster investigation and understanding of early American history through a number of vehicles--our annual Graduate Student Forum, the Colonial Society fellowship awarded each year by the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium, the Walter Muir Whitehill Prize in Early American History, and a yearly subvention to the *New England Quarterly*. We also bring history to a broad public via our website, through Revolution 250, a consortium of Boston historical organizations that was initiated several years ago by the Colonial Society and is chaired by our Vice-President Robert Allison, and in our collaboration with New England Beginnings, a partnership of New England historical organizations and participating scholars to commemorate the cultures that shaped New England, and New England’s Hidden Histories: Colonial-Era Church Records, a program based at the Congregational Library in Boston.

Our commitment to history is expressed also in the preservation of our 1806 Charles Bulfinch-designed house at 87 Mount Vernon Street and the fine and decorative arts within. The house serves as the society’s headquarters, but is also made available to kindred organizations for meetings, events, and seminars. Last March the University of Pennsylvania Libraries had an event there for more than 80 of its Boston-area constituency. In October the house was the site of a reception following a memorial service for Abbott Lowell Cummings, a 60-year member of the Colonial Society and an Honorary Member since 2007.

Our House Committee, certainly a working committee, has had a very active year, assisting Curator Toby Hall in the care of the building and its furnishings. The granite wall and iron fence in front of 87 Mount Vernon Street have been restored to their 19th century appearance and strength. Our security system to protect house and furnishings against fire, smoke, and intrusion has been evaluated and will soon be updated and expanded. On the conservation front, we have had a survey of our works on paper by the Williamstown Art Conservation Center and will soon begin treatment, the very fine Archbold and Emmons pier table has been treated and restored and placed in the drawing room, one of the massive looking glasses in the that room has had extensive treatment, and two paintings are currently in conservation labs. French scenic wallpaper in one of our rental apartments that was originally installed by Ogden Codman is currently being stabilized. The furnishings of the house, those castoffs gathered by Walter Whitehill in the 1950s, have now attracted the interest of scholars and curators. Two pieces by the leading Boston cabinetmaker of the 1820s, Isaac Vose, will be shown in an exhibition at the Massachusetts Historical Society next summer. A special tour of the exhibition has been arranged for Colonial Society members on May 31 that will be led by guest curators Robert Mussey and Clark Pearce.

At last year’s Annual Meeting we voted to change our bylaws to separate the Treasurer from the Chair of the Finance Committee in order to clarify the “arms-length” relationship between the Society and Loring, Wolcott and Coolidge, the firm that continues to give us excellent service as fiscal agent and investment manager, as demonstrated in the increase this year of our endowment fund past the $10,000,000 mark. Michael Yogg was appointed Chair of the Finance Committee by the Council, joining Lionel Spiro and Thomas Wilcox on the committee.

Our endowment gives us confidence and the financial resources to carry on the Society’s publications and programs. We should remember, as reminded in an article in this year’s Colonial Society newsletter, that our endowment has been built by gifts, especially bequests, from our members. We cannot lose sight of the need to continue to build our endowment. Our Development Committee, chaired by Vice-President Susan Lindsay Lively, has had extensive discussion of the future of the endowment and will contact all members in the spring to encourage bequests, both large and small, that will continue to increase the endowment principal and the consequent income that enables the Society to carry on the publications and programs that advance our core mission. I ask you to consider participation in securing the future of the Colonial Society by making some provision in your estate plan.

A very important feature of the Society’s nurturing of historical understanding and scholarship has been the creation of settings for the exchange of information and ideas. Our Annual Meetings especially have fostered the kind of interchange that expands and sharpens our scholarship. These gatherings present an opportunity to meet and to learn from a wide range of colleagues. In this anniversary year we have added promising young scholars to our membership rolls and brought our Honorary Members to full complement of 15. I invite all to adjourn for drinks and hors d’oeuvres and stimulating conversation with your Colonial Society colleagues.