

Historical Sketch of
The Colonial Society of Massachusetts

1892-1952

Handbook
of
The Colonial Society of Massachusetts

Historical Sketch of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts,
1892-1952, *by* WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL

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1952-1992, *by* FREDERICK SCOULLER ALLIS, JR. and
JOHN W. TYLER

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EARLY in December 1892 Benjamin Apthorp Gould, John Chester Inches, and Henry Herbert Edes invited eighteen acquaintances to meet at the St. Botolph Club, 4 Newbury Street, Boston, on Saturday evening, the tenth, "to consider a proposal to form a Society to be composed exclusively of gentlemen whose ancestors were residents of the Colonies of Plymouth or the Massachusetts Bay." Only four of the eighteen turned up, but they, with Messrs. Gould, Inches, and Edes—who was the real instigator of the conference—voted unanimously "that it is expedient to organize a Society to commemorate the Founders of the Colonies of Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay and their deeds." A committee to draft by-laws worked so expeditiously that on 29 December 1892—less than three weeks after the initial meeting—the Secretary of the Commonwealth issued a Certificate of Incorporation to "The Massachusetts Society," which held its first stated meeting on 18 January 1893. The title chosen was an unfortunate one, for members of the Massachusetts Historical Society intimated to such purpose that it was "liable to introduce confusion" that on 20 January 1893 "The Massachusetts Society" voted to change its name to The Colonial Society of Massachusetts.

The by-laws called for stated meetings on 21 November and on the third Wednesdays of December, January, February, March, and April. The annual meeting and dinner in November, followed by a liberal ration of speeches and toasts, was held at the Algonquin, Exchange or University Clubs, while the afternoon meetings from December to March were, from February 1893 to April 1899, held without exception in the hall of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in the Boston Athe-

næum, 10½ Beacon Street. This "hall"—now the Newspaper Reading Room of the Athenæum—was, during the half-century of the Academy's occupancy, rammed full of an incredible quantity of books, furniture and apparatus, yet in spite of the restricted space the Academy made the new Colonial Society welcome as it had the American Antiquarian Society and other learned groups that lacked quarters of their own in Boston. This hospitality was accepted as a temporary expedient, for at the December 1893 meeting President Gould made it clear "that a fire-proof building, a library, and cabinet were among the possessions to which the Society aspired in the not too distant future." The Council report at the 1893 annual meeting indicated that the Society's "first and most pressing want" was a publication fund and its second a habitation. "Until this can be accomplished there can be no feeling that the Society is a permanent institution, nor can its members take a just and proper pride in its work."

Even in borrowed quarters the monthly meetings during the first two years of the Society's existence produced a sufficient number of scholarly contributions on colonial subjects to fill 525 pages of Volume I of the *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*. This substantial royal octavo volume set a pattern that, with no other change than an improvement in the type faces used, has been followed since. The Committee on Publication recommended that all publications of the Society be uniform in size and style; that those which contained the proceedings of the meetings be given the subtitle of *Transactions*, and that volume-length groups of documents be designated as *Collections*. All publications, whether *Transactions* or *Collections*, were to be numbered consecutively in a single series. This recommendation was intended to avoid the confusion in citation that comes from separately numbered parallel series, such as the *Collections* and *Proceedings* of the Massachusetts Historical Society. It led to confusion of quite another kind, however, for although Volume I (*Transactions*, 1892-1894) appeared in 1895, Volume II (*Collections*, *Massachusetts Royal Commissions*, 1681-1774) lurked in proof

until 1913, during which time Volumes III (*Transactions*, 1895-1897), V (*Transactions*, 1897-1898), VI (*Transactions*, 1899-1900), VII (*Transactions*, 1900-1902), VIII (*Transactions*, 1902-1904), IX (*Collections*, *Check-list of Boston Newspapers*, 1704-1780), X (*Transactions*, 1904-1906), IV (*Collections*, *Land Bank Papers*, *Bibliography of Massachusetts Laws*, 1641-1776, and *House Journals*, 1715-1776), XI (*Transactions*, 1906-1907), XII (*Transactions*, 1908-1909), and XIII (*Transactions*, 1910-1911) had already been published.

The earliest volumes were somewhat laden with memoirs of deceased members, invariably accompanied by photogravure portraits, portentously labelled "Engraved for the Colonial Society of Massachusetts from a photograph from life." In that era any gentleman who joined the Society might reasonably expect an elegant obituary, but with the passage of years the space given to such personal memoirs has gradually been reduced almost to the vanishing point. With this change the Society's commemorative activities moved back into the colonial period. In 1917 it installed a Thomas Hutchinson Memorial Doorway—designed by R. Clipston Sturgis—in the First Church in Boston, and in 1933, in fulfillment of a bequest of Horace Everett Ware, placed in the same church a memorial of Mr. Sturgis's design to the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay to commemorate the transfer of the Company's charter to New England. The dedication of the Thomas Hutchinson Memorial Doorway on 5 November 1917, at which James Kendall Hosmer, Chief Justice Rugg, and Samuel Eliot Morison spoke, was the first time that the old governor had ever been publicly recognized since Independence.

For the first twelve years, editorial work was done by a volunteer committee, but in 1904 Albert Matthews became Editor and continued to have responsibility for the Society's publications until 1924. To this learned, modest and meticulous scholar the Society owes no less than 141 contributions, as well as the editing of nineteen volumes of its *Publications*. Of Albert Matthews,

George Lyman Kittredge wrote: "The Society . . . has received many gifts from its members, but no gift that equals in value the prodigal expenditure of time, of learning, and of exact scholarship that the Editor has bestowed upon our publications. His wonderfully extensive knowledge of English and American history and literature, his accuracy, his independence in judgment, his sureness of touch, his good taste and sense of style, and his almost miraculous keenness on the track of truant details and elusive evidence are equalled only by the modesty and tact that he has always shown, with no lack of firmness, in dealing with the contributions that have passed under his editorial eye and through his editorial hands. 'Here was a Caesar. When comes such another?' " Matthews's stooped and spare figure was a familiar one in the Boston Athenæum, and his presence there, given away by the inevitable brown derby on the hatrack, led to his being besieged by questioners. He would always drop what he was doing to help others, and almost invariably gave them a clue.

To Albert Matthews and his successors as Editor, Kenneth Ballard Murdock (1931-1932) and Allyn Bailey Forbes (1932-1946), and to the philologists and historians that have adorned the office of President—George Lyman Kittredge (1900-1907), Henry Lefavour (1907-1914), Frederick Jackson Turner (1914-1916), Fred Norris Robinson (1916-1925), Samuel Eliot Morison (1925-1938) and Kenneth Ballard Murdock (1938-1945) is due a substantial share of the credit for the solid scholarly accomplishment of a society that upon its foundation was not entirely innocent of ancestral self-congratulation.

Although the chief resources of the Society were almost from the beginning devoted to publication, the hope of substantial premises died hard. In November 1895, when Volume I was in the press, the Council somewhat plaintively noted that "it would be an easy matter for us to arrange exchanges with a great number of Societies . . . but we deem it inadvisable to do this, because of our having no place to receive and store them." Three years later on 21 November 1898, Charles Francis Adams, Pres-

ident of the Massachusetts Historical Society, who was present as a guest at the Colonial Society annual dinner "proceeded to point out a sphere of labor to which this Society seems to be called by its very title of 'Colonial,' in rescuing from oblivion and threatened destruction important documents relating to our colonial history, and closed his remarks by making an eloquent plea for the liberal endowment of this Society, which, he said, was essential to the attainment of the best results in carrying on its work." At the next meeting Mr. Edes reported the gift of one hundred dollars and urged members to make similar contributions to the General Fund "while awaiting patiently the coming of the Mæcnas to whom Mr. Adams had alluded." In November 1899 President Wheelwright observed that "the man with \$300,000, who our friend President Adams assured us at our Dinner last year would eventually come to our aid, has not yet appeared, in the meantime we are learning to rely upon ourselves."

In 1899 when the American Academy of Arts and Sciences removed from the Athenæum to the Massachusetts Historical Society building, the Colonial Society took refuge with the American Unitarian Association at 25 Beacon Street, and all stated meetings, save for the annual dinners, were held there from December 1899 to March 1912. In November 1900 the Council stated that "a most pressing need of the Society is a permanent, convenient and comfortable abiding place." Two years later the desire was for "a permanent home of its own, however modest and plain," although in 1905 the Council sensibly concluded that until the permanent publication funds reached fifty thousand dollars "it was inexpedient to take any steps toward the attainment of that desirable end." In 1910 when the publication funds *had* reached \$50,000 it was recognized that they were "just about one-half as large as they should be." The Council pathetically described the Society as "a homeless body, having no where to lay our head, but dependent on the indulgence of friends for a place of meeting."

The "indulgence" of William Coolidge Lane, Librarian of Harvard College, afforded a pleasing variety in the spring of 1910, for the stated meeting on 28 April was held in the evening in the newly organized Treasure Room of Gore Hall. This evening visit to the Harvard College Library was repeated in April 1911 and 1912, while in April 1913 Mr. Edes, who had always had a Council dinner at his Cambridge home in the spring, invited the Society to meet at 62 Buckingham Street. This tradition of a spring meeting in Cambridge was followed for a number of years. In April 1915, 1917, 1918, 1920, 1921 and 1922 the Society met at Mr. Edes's house; in 1916 at Professor Edward Channing's; in 1919 at President F. N. Robinson's; in 1926 and 1933 at Professor Edward Caldwell Moore's; in 1927 at Mr. Edward M. Pickman's; in 1929 at Professor R. B. Merriam's; in 1930 and 1934 at Professor A. M. Tozzer's; in 1931 at Professor James Hardy Ropes's; in 1937 at Allyn B. Forbes's; in 1940 at Dr. R. M. Gummere's and in certain other years at the Signet Club as guests of Professor Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Hon. Robert Walcott or Mr. Philip P. Chase.

The March 1912 meeting was the last to be held at the American Unitarian Association, for in that year the American Academy of Arts and Sciences moved into its present building at 28 Newbury Street and once more offered generous hospitality to the Colonial Society. This was refuge for the homeless, for the Council report of 1913 indicates that "in the quiet and comfort of the American Academy's house there is to be found everything that may conduce to a full enjoyment of the occasion, without distracting noises or physical discomforts or interruptions." From this point onward there is no further mention in the records of a building for the Colonial Society. Although Mr. Edes was elected to the Massachusetts Historical Society in January 1911 he never abandoned the hope that the society he had founded in 1892 might have an extensive library and cabinet of its own, and to that end accumulated not only books but paintings and furniture. The conviction was not generally shared, and one of Sam-

uel Eliot Morison's first chores on becoming President in 1925 was to clean out the storage warehouse room where these things were kept. The more valuable books, after twenty years in a seminar room in the Harvard College Library, were eventually deposited in the library of Boston University.

In 1914 the Colonial Society endowment stood at seventy thousand dollars; in 1917 it had almost reached one hundred thousand, while today it is approaching two hundred and fifty thousand. Such an increase was necessary to keep pace with the expanding plans for publications. As early as 1902 Frederick Lewis Gay had offered to assist the Society in publishing the early records of Harvard College. This plan came to completion with the publication of Volumes XV and XVI (Collections—*Harvard College Records*) in 1925 as a memorial to Mr. Gay. A third volume of *Harvard College Records* (Volume XXXI) appeared in 1935 in commemoration of the approaching tercentenary through the anonymous generosity of Albert Matthews, who contributed the entire cost of publication. Volumes XXII and XXIII (Collections—*Plymouth Church Records, 1620-1859*) were published in 1920 and 1923 in observance of the Plymouth tercentenary, while Volumes XXIX and XXX (Collections—*Records of the Suffolk County Court, 1671-1680*) which appeared in 1933 were transcribed and edited by Messrs. Morison and Chafee from a Boston Athenæum manuscript as a contribution to the legal and social history of the American colonies.

In November 1927 the report of the Council stated that "at present one of our principal functions is that of a publication society." In January 1928, the *New England Quarterly* "made its appearance under the initiative of our President [Morison] and Editor [Allyn B. Forbes], ably seconded by an editorial board composed of members of this Society at Cambridge and New Haven." By 1932 the Colonial Society had "become the principal supporter of the *New England Quarterly*" and the Council observed that "the Society is very fortunate in having no building to maintain, and but one small salary to pay; it can therefore de-

vote almost its entire means to publication." Since 1945 the Colonial Society of Massachusetts has appeared in the imprint of the review as joint publisher.

Until his death on 13 October 1922 the Society's founder, Henry H. Edes, continued as its Treasurer and ruling elder. At the annual dinners he was in his element, as the Reverend Charles E. Park, who was the Society's Recording Secretary from 1909 to 1927, recently recalled in a letter to me:

The Annual meetings, as I remember them, were exceedingly pleasant, jovial, and interesting occasions. Their chief attraction was the annual dinner at the Algonquin Club. These were engineered by the Treasurer, Henry Herbert Edes, and he was a dear friend and a rare parishioner. He was an enthusiastic antiquarian, exceedingly well-informed as to the details and minutiae, so that his chief aim in life was to perpetuate the type: A Gentleman of Old Boston. The high silk hat, the immaculate standing collar and white necktie, the correct cut-away coat, pearl gloves and cane were his habitual weekday attire. Needless to say, he was always accompanied by a chorus of small-boy hoots and jeers, which he seemed rather to like. You can imagine how he let himself go over the dinners: elaborate, impeccable, eleven-course affairs, beginning at about seven, and ending along towards midnight. There was much typical after-dinner speaking, and toast-drinking, until many of us were reduced to a state of groaning repletion, both physical and mental.

Samuel Eliot Morison, although convinced that Dr. Park has taken poetic license in regard to the number of courses, recalls that there were rarely less than five after-dinner speeches!

At the 1917 dinner the speakers were Winslow Warren, Kirsopp Lake, Dr. Fred Shattuck, Professor Charles Cestre, and President MacLaurin of M. I. T. My diary records only silly jingoism from the American speakers, but that Lake and Cestre were prophetic. It must have been at the 1916 dinner that Brooks Adams, speaking against his own desire and almost hoisted to his feet by Lefavour and Edes, cast a damp on the assembly by predicting that the war would go on for thirty years, that we would all be involved, that Germany would win, and that civilization would be extinguished.

Pleasant as the dinners were—and still are—they somewhat overshadowed the other five stated meetings. Dr. Park in the 1925 Council report observed: "To say that these meetings are well attended would be to strain the truth. On each November twenty-first comes the dinner, when, like hardy annuals, a large proportion of members exercise their prerogative and blossom into actuality."

Samuel Eliot Morison was elected President in November 1925, and during the thirteen years of his presidency the Society was "fortified and extended by his powers of direction." His most important innovation was to have the Council, which used to meet every month at Mr. Edes's office on State Street, and seldom had enough business to justify the time spent, lunch at the St. Botolph Club or at a member's house before the meeting of the Society, thus saving time and providing a nucleus of attendants for the subsequent Society meeting. The success of the spring meetings in Cambridge suggested to him the wisdom of gathering more generally at members' houses; the January 1927 meeting was the last to be held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In March 1927 Frederic Winthrop was the host at 299 Berkeley Street. In 1928 the January and March meetings were omitted, while William C. Endicott entertained the Society at 163 Marlborough Street in February, and Charles R. Rackemann at 186 Marlborough Street in April. This change proved so successful that the present schedule of the November dinner, with afternoon meetings in December and February and an evening meeting in April was adopted. The Council reported in November 1928 that "the attendance at these meetings has shown a gratifying increase over former years. Whether this has been due to the excellent intellectual fare supplied by our Editor [the late Allyn B. Forbes], or the more mundane gastronomic entertainment supplied by our hosts cannot be affirmed with exactness. At all events the result promises well for the future." Messrs. Winthrop and Endicott entertained the Society on several occasions; President Morison did so annually, and in Feb-

ruary 1931 Mrs. Bayard Thayer invited the Society to meet at 84 Beacon Street. In December 1932 a meeting was held at the Club of Odd Volumes, then at 50 Mount Vernon Street, by invitation of Alfred Johnson, and in later years Stephen W. Phillips, Hermann F. Clarke, and James M. Hunnewell often entertained the Society there.

The problems of prohibition increased the labors of the Society's officers. As the President of the period has written me:

You might care to note that fairly desperate expedients were resorted to for the alcoholic part of the dinners during the Long Drought, and it is Morison's proud boast that no annual dinner subsequent to his election to the presidency was completely dry. One member discovered a shop on Thames Street, Newport, where English gin could be bought right off the shelves at \$10.00 a bottle; three of these, compounded into Martinis with Vermouth from Hanover Street, started the dinners off right; but there was nothing to follow. Morison subsequently ascertained that a barrel of New York State grapejuice laid down in his cellar and properly treated turned into a fairly palatable table wine, and it became one of the duties of President and Secretary before each dinner to siphon off a suitable amount of this questionable beverage into decanters, which they transported to the Algonquin Club. On one occasion a worm which had lived, thrived and subsequently died in the Morison barrel was accidentally siphoned off with the wine, and lay undetected on the bottom of one of the decanters. Fortunately Morison, who was the last to be served, received the worm in his glass. He hurriedly shifted it under the table, and nobody was the wiser.

Augustus Peabody Loring, Jr., was elected a Resident Member of the Colonial Society in December 1931; he became its Recording Secretary in 1934 and President in 1946. In February 1933 the Society first experienced the delight of meeting as his guests in the spacious library at 2 Gloucester Street, and from 1933 to 1941 the December meeting was regularly held there, as were the April meetings in 1944, 1946 and all the remaining years of his life. In April 1951, although too grievously ill to be present, President Loring gave the Society their last opportunity to gather in that happiest of rooms. He died on 1 October 1951,

and when April 1952 came around it seemed appropriate to assemble at the Peabody Museum of Salem in East India Marine Hall which had been restored to its original beauty so largely through his efforts.

Although the Society was in April 1945 the guest of the Most Reverend Richard J. Cushing at the Archbishop's House, Lake Street, the disappearance of large houses in Boston has limited its recent meeting places, and the Club of Odd Volumes, now at 77 Mount Vernon Street, is increasingly used for the afternoon meetings.

From time to time, under the genial impetus of President Loring, the Society has made expeditions to the country in search of sites of historic interest. In 1942 and again in 1948 it visited Dr. James L. Huntington at the Porter-Phelps-Huntington house in Hadley, and in June 1950 travelled to Middleborough to lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Peter Oliver in the house built by Chief Justice Peter Oliver for his son in 1762. In September 1951, by invitation of Mr. Ellis W. Brewster, a day was spent in Plymouth.

As originally organized the Society consisted of not more than 100 Resident Members and not more than 20 Honorary Members, all of whom were required to prove their "lineal descent from an ancestor who was a resident of the Colonies of Plymouth or the Massachusetts Bay." In 1898 the by-laws were amended to allow not more than 50 Corresponding Members with a similar ancestral requirement. This pure New England harmony was broken in 1926 by the establishment of a new class of Associate Members, to whom the ancestral requirement did not apply. By virtue of this change the Society was able to elect to membership such eminent scholars as Sir George Otto Trevelyan, Charles H. McIlwain, Arthur M. Schlesinger, George Macaulay Trevelyan, Lawrence C. Wroth, and others whose sole disqualification was the lack of a Massachusetts grandmother at the required place and time. In 1934 the ancestral qualifications were waived for Corresponding and Honorary Membership, but a Registrar

continued to scrutinize—often with wry comments—the pedigrees of candidates for Resident Membership. This seemed to the Registrar, and indeed to all the members of the Council in the late 1940s, an absurdity that required correction. Whatever the original ancestral homogeneity may have been worth, it had been lost in 1926 when Associate Membership was created; there existed in its place an agreeable social and scholarly homogeneity that was eminently pleasing to all except a few deeply conservative natives of Essex County. In consequence the Council recommended in November 1949 a revised set of by-laws which created a new class of Non-Resident Members and, among other changes, abolished all ancestral qualifications for any class of membership. When these by-laws were adopted in November 1950 all Associate Members were automatically transferred to Resident, Non-Resident or Corresponding Membership.

Anyone with a taste for reading lists and attempting to draw conclusions from them will readily see that the Society often catches its members young. Although Mr. Edes during his lifetime pretty much dictated elections to membership, he was always open to suggestions and looking for new talent. For instance, Samuel Eliot Morison was elected in 1912 at the age of twenty-five before he had published anything. In fact his very first publication, "The Property of Harrison Gray, Loyalist," appeared in Volume XIV of the Society's *Publications*. Similarly in 1913 Samuel C. Clough, a modest and unassuming employee of the Boston Edison Company was elected because Mr. Edes knew of his deep knowledge of Boston land titles. This tradition has continued. The Colonial Society of Massachusetts has given first recognition to many young scholars, and so retained their interest and loyalty through life.

WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL

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THAT Walter Whitehill chose to end his sketch of the early history of the Colonial Society with an account of the abolition of the ancestral requirement for Resident Members in 1950 was perhaps a portent of things to come. Certainly, no change in the by-laws has had a more significant impact on the character of the Society during its last four decades than this decision, transforming it, in the words of Edmund Morgan, from an "elitist organization of gentleman scholars" to one of the principal sponsors of research and publication in early American history. Previous efforts to draw in new talent through the category of Associate Membership had been rightly belittled by Samuel Eliot Morison as "admitting the unbaptized to a Halfway Covenant." Now at last the Society was free to gather together all who shared its enthusiasm for the early history of Massachusetts without regard to accidents of ancestry.

The quiet decision during the mid-1970s to admit women as resident members of the Society also appropriately enlarged the reservoir of talent which the Society could tap. Although admitting women as full members has been a vexed issue for many Boston clubs, the step occurred at the Colonial Society in a characteristic way: Walter Whitehill made the nominations, and no one dared oppose him. It should also be said the qualifications of the nominees were so clearly manifest that any objection on the basis of lack of merit would have seemed silly.

Though some might be tempted to describe the Colonial Society during the last forty years as increasingly professional, the group has somehow been able to preserve "the agreeable social and scholarly homogeneity" which Walter Whitehill described

in 1952. Its members value the informal, but dignified, atmosphere in which they have always conducted their proceedings, free from the ideology and nit-picking so characteristic of many contemporary professional organizations. Civilized demeanor has been no obstacle to productive scholarship, however. As Edmund Morgan writes,

My colleagues among professional historians are sometimes surprised when I point out to them that the Colonial Society . . . has done more for the profession than either of the two major professional associations. The publications of the two professional associations are more voluminous, and their membership astronomically larger; but the enduring usefulness of the Colonial Society's publications far outweighs that of the volumes published by either.

"Anyone who works seriously on early American history," Morgan concludes, "has to be familiar with Colonial Society publications."

Throughout his term as Editor from 1946 to his death in 1978, no single individual was more responsible for the character of the Colonial Society and its publications than Walter Whitehill. Indeed, he *was* the Colonial Society, and his word was law on all important matters. Walter sincerely believed that the best way to run an organization was to have a carefully chosen group of congenial spirits who would hold the various offices and act together in the best interests of the Society. To accomplish such an administration, there needed to be someone directing the enterprise—checking on nominations for office and membership in the Society—and once he became editor Walter quietly assumed that position. He himself never held an office within the Society, preferring to have willing friends in key positions. And it soon became clear that when Walter made a suggestion, the Council would be well advised to approve it. All this was done in a very gracious and urbane way, and it was only very rarely that the iron hand within the velvet glove actually appeared.

Fritz Allis remembers one of the few occasions when Walter lost his temper at a Council meeting. He cannot remember the

precise topic under discussion but it was some broad policy matter. Fritz suggested that the matter be presented to the Society as a whole at their next meeting. Walter exploded at this idea; to adopt such a policy would be practicing "togetherness," one of the deadliest sins in Walter's book. And the matter was dropped without further discussion. Fritz also reports that in fairness to Walter it should be added that he sent Fritz a two-page handwritten apology shortly after this episode.

Others recall the incident when the American Society of Interior Design, who made 87 Mount Vernon Street their temporary headquarters for a time as guests of the Society, offered to foot the bill for the redecoration of the dining room if the Colonial Society would commission the weaving of the present Wilton carpet to replace an aging and threadbare Aubusson. In his Yankee way, Walter thought the Aubusson just fine, but one hapless councillor had the temerity to say that the room was looking a little shabby and managed to sway the Council to vote in favor of the ASID proposal. Walter approached the councillor in question after the meeting was over, thanked him for his services on behalf of the Colonial Society, and noted that it was too bad his term on the Council had expired.

One might think from all of this that Walter was a snob, but such was not the case. While he may have had snobbish attitudes in some cultural areas, and while he often seemed to be a male chauvinist, he at heart liked all kinds of people and worked effectively with them. He had many friends among Boston politicians and the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and he could usually enlist the support of his friend Monsignor Francis Lally, editor of *The Pilot*, in causes they both believed in the best interests of Boston. One episode in particular illustrates Walter's broad interest in all sorts and conditions of men. He had come out on the train to Andover one night in a blizzard and learned on his arrival that his wife Jane would be delayed by the weather in picking him up. He walked up the street to a rather unsavory bar near the station. According to all reports, the local rum-dums welcomed

him with open arms, and he soon became the life of the party.

Whatever one may think of Walter's dictatorial methods, there is no question that he made a ten-strike in solving one of the Society's most long-standing problems. Throughout the first sixty years of the Colonial Society's existence, its "most pressing need" had been the lack of a permanent headquarters. Somewhat like a maiden aunt in "reduced circumstances," the Society's members and files had come to rest, at various times and for prolonged stays, first with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences at the Boston Athenæum, then with the American Unitarian Association at 25 Beacon Street, and then back again with the Academy when it moved into new headquarters at 28 Newbury Street in 1913. In the words of an early Councillor, the Colonial Society was truly "a homeless body having no where to lay our head, but dependent on friends for a place of meeting."

Perhaps it was the claustrophobic conditions of the "hall" (now the Newspaper Reading Room) at the Boston Athenæum, crammed full of books, files and apparatus, which first gave rise to the pleasant custom of holding the April meeting at a member's house, often in Cambridge, where at least in the early years of the century, it was still possible to savor more of the delights of the season. The last such meeting was held in April 1976 at the invitation of Peter Gomes at the Jared Sparks House adjacent to the Harvard campus, which Gomes occupied in his capacity as minister of the Memorial Church. The venue seemed especially fitting since Gomes read a paper that day honoring President Sparks.

During the 1950s, however, the exigencies of the Boston real estate market were such that few members had homes large enough to accommodate the twenty-five members or so who usually attended, let alone provide refreshments for those who came. One member who was admirably equipped to host the Society and did so generously on a number of occasions was the Society's Recording Secretary and later President, Augustus Peabody Loring, who used to entertain the membership on the

top floor of his home on the "water side" of Gloucester Street between Beacon and the Charles. It was a delightful place to hold a meeting.

Gus's living room commanded a splendid view of the river and the downtown Boston skyline. The room was spacious, its furniture unfashionable. There was an extra dividend when meetings were held at Gus's house. Both he and his wife Rose loved good food, as was evidenced by their girths. As a result, the refreshments were memorable. More often, however, members found themselves at three o'clock in the afternoon at the Club of Odd Volumes, 77 Mount Vernon Street, which after the war came increasingly to be the Society's regular meeting place.

Given the Society's long search for a permanent home, it seems remarkable in retrospect that Mrs. Llewellyn Howland's offer in 1954 of her elegant Bulfinch townhouse at 87 Mount Vernon Street proved as controversial as it did, but there were those who thought that the expenses of maintaining such a property would divert funds away from the society's chief purpose of publishing colonial records and historical research. The promise from Mrs. Howland of a \$100,000 maintenance endowment, paid in five annual installments of \$20,000, sweetened the deal considerably, and the Council, "enthusiastically convinced of the possibility of putting the house to good use," decided in mid-October to survey the opinions of the 120 living Resident Members. When 101 of the 107 members replying expressed approval, the Council voiced its thanks to Mrs. Howland and accepted the gift. The transfer of the deed for the house to the Society was recorded on 14 December 1954.

The Society's first meeting in its new quarters was held on the third Thursday in February 1955. According to Walter Whitehill, the Editor, "Workmen were still banging about. Above the second floor stepladders and paint pots were much in evidence, but fifty Harvard freshman chairs had arrived," and "The handsome second-floor front rooms of 87 Mount Vernon Street were ready to accommodate us after a fashion." Miss Evelyn

Sears, a neighbor, had sent flowers to mark the occasion, and Fellow Member Charles D. Childs had lent a number of oils to decorate the walls. "There was a credible illusion that the Society was at last settled in its own house," and Vice-President Samuel Eliot Morison was heard to remark that the ghost of H. H. Edes, the Society's founder, was probably "leaping for joy in its grave." On 25 May 1955, the Society held a reception so that members' spouses, friends, and neighbors might see the house.

During the next two or three years, the Editor's time was much taken up with securing appropriate furniture and other fittings for such a house, a task Whitehill took up with characteristic energy and persuasive talent. Miss Mary Otis led the way with the first gifts of a Venetian mirror, an Empire sofa, and an Oriental rug. Mrs. Augustus V. Tack of Deerfield gave a piano which had belonged to Stephen Higginson, Jr., who had lived at the house from 1807 to 1811. Other gifts soon followed: eighteenth century engravings, Buhle commodes, a silver punch bowl, table cloths, and even cocktail glasses from Henry Beston decorated with the insignia of his alma mater Bowdoin College (a few of which still survive even to this day).

By far the most significant gifts of furnishings came in 1955 from the grandchildren of Francis Parkman, who had been seeking a new location for the contents of the great historian's attic study since the death of his niece necessitated the sale of the Parkman family home at 50 Chestnut Street. Although the contents of the study had first been offered to the Massachusetts Historical Society, its Director and our Fellow Member Stewart Mitchell suggested that since there was no room at 1154 Boylston Street perhaps the fourth floor of the Colonial Society's new house might prove an acceptable substitute. The arrangement of Parkman's books and Indian trophies was carefully photographed, and measured drawings made of the room itself before the contents were transferred to 87 Mount Vernon Street in late October. Two false walls were built within a larger room in order

to maintain the proper scale of the original study, and when the reconstruction was complete, Sam Morison pronounced that the new installation even "smelled just like the original." Within a year, the descendants of William Ellery Channing set about creating a similar memorial on the third floor.

Together with the contents of his study, Parkman's grandchildren also gave his sideboard, serving table, and China cabinet filled with Canton for the dining room, a console table and sofa for the front hall, and a mammoth secretary bookcase for the second floor meeting room. Though other gifts have trickled in over the years, the furnishings of the house were more or less complete in 1958 with another lavish influx of mirrors, chairs, china, clocks and chandeliers from the estate of Mrs. William Crowninshield Endicott, selected from both her Boston house and Glen Magna Farms in Danvers.

In 1955 when the American Academy of Arts and Sciences sold its house at 28 Newbury Street, the Council of the Colonial Society, mindful of the Academy's earlier hospitality from 1893-1899 and 1913-1927, offered it the use of the third floor of 87 Mount Vernon Street. This proposal proved impractical, but the Academy gladly accepted the free storage of its furniture which came to rest amidst the French Cupid and Psyche wallpaper of the second floor Music Room. This disposition whereby an otherwise empty room was made habitable was described by the Council as "one of those characteristic arrangements that occur when Bostonians do business with themselves in different capacities."

In happier days when hosts worried less about insurance and their legal liabilities, the League of Women Voters and the Women's City Club both toured the house, the Harvard history department held several receptions there, and the executive committee of the Beacon Hill Association met in the dining room from time to time. For awhile during the 1970s, the American Society of Interior Design used the building, in exchange for

their expertise in the redecoration of the interior. Reflecting the Colonial Society's long-standing relationship with the *New England Quarterly*, that journal's executive board met from time to time at the house, and Mrs. Lovell Thompson, the *Quarterly's* book review editor during the late 1950s, used the library as her office. Finally and most appropriately, when Frederick S. Allis, Jr., became Editor in 1979, he began to use the library as the Editor's office, and so it has remained.

To return more properly to the subject of the Society's publications, which did indeed go on during the 1950s despite an understandable preoccupation of the officers with fitting out the new house, the first major publications after the distribution of the sixtieth anniversary handbook in 1953 were Volumes XXXVI and XXXVII on Maine land grants edited by Fritz Allis. These volumes, which appeared in 1954 and ran over 1,300 pages, sprang from a bequest by George Nixon Black of a group of the papers of General David Cobb, his great-grandfather. Cobb had been land agent for William Bingham of Philadelphia, a principal speculator in Maine lands. At the instigation of Sam Morison, the Council had commissioned Allis to begin work on the papers in 1938, but service in the naval reserve during the war had delayed his research. Just as Allis was completing his research in 1953, he discovered microfilms at the Library of Congress of pertinent papers from the British banking firm of Baring Brothers, who had been deeply involved in Maine lands, and it was decided to delay publication just a little longer until this new material could be incorporated.

Although Volume XXXVIII, the *Transactions* of the Society during the early 1950s, was delayed during the flurry of construction at the house, work on Volumes XXXIX-XLI, the First Church Records edited by the Rev. Richard D. Pierce, went forward until they appeared in print in 1961. Lest members should be inclined to regard this as dull fare, Walter Whitehill noted in his Editor's Report at the Annual Meeting in 1961 that they

might find such headings in the index under "Discipline" as "Ale-house hunting," "Disorderly singing," "Disorderly walking," "Drowning of children," "Irregular propheysing," "Joining Quakers," and "Sporting at quoytes." Volumes XLII and XLIII, the last of the old-style *Transactions*, which printed papers read before the Society in their entirety, appeared in 1964 and 1966 respectively. Since that time, those papers read to the Society which seemed worthy of publication tended to find their way into the pages of the *New England Quarterly*.

One of the innovations of the second half of the Whitehill era was that the Colonial Society began to travel further and further afield from its new headquarters at 87 Mount Vernon Street. It had long been a tradition to venture to Cambridge for the spring meeting, but the invitation from William Greenough Wendell to meet at his house in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in June 1956 marked a new departure.

In June 1960, a few members journeyed as far as the Connecticut Valley to visit the home of Corresponding Secretary James L. Huntington in Hadley, but 1959 had produced an excursion of even grander dimensions: a visit to Charlottesville on 11-13 April to join in Founder's Day celebrations at the University of Virginia and Monticello. The members made a convenient stop *en route* for luncheon at Winterthur, the home of Honorary Member Henry F. DuPont, which had recently opened as a museum of early American decorative arts. Despite an unseasonal snowstorm, the members gathered for tea at the Alderman Library on the afternoon of 12 April, followed by a cocktail party at Pavilion VI, East Lawn, the home of Non-Resident Member Charles C. Abbott, the Dean of the Graduate School of Architecture of the University of Virginia, before going on to a dinner given by the President of the University. On the next day, there was a guided tour of the University buildings, the Founder's Day Address, luncheon given by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, and graveside exercises and yet another address at

Monticello, leading exhausted Society members to conclude that Jefferson's birthday had been "strenuously celebrated" in the best tradition of Virginia hospitality.

By far the greatest Colonial Society boondoggle of this sort was the Bermuda Conference. Sinclair Hitchings, Keeper of Prints at the Boston Public Library, and Lawrence Geller, Director of the Pilgrim Society, first suggested the idea of a conference exploring relations between Bermuda and colonial Massachusetts in 1974, but it was put off until twelve members, their wives, children, and babysitters could make the trek in March 1976. The food was good, the weather excellent, the architecture interesting, and the hospitality profuse, but with the exception of a talk on William Browne (a Massachusetts Loyalist) by Herwald Watlington, a Bermudian Fellow Member, the quality of the papers given by the Bermudians was not up to the standards of the Boston contributions, so any thought of publishing the proceedings had to be abandoned, although Boston Fellow Member Andrew Oliver's essay on the painter Joseph Blackburn later appeared in *Sibley's Heir*.

Without perhaps entirely intending it, Walter Whitehill had begun to chart a new course for the Society's publications in 1955 when he and Lawrence Henry Gipson had begun to plan the first Conference on Early American History, which Walter had described as a "highly unbureaucratic" attempt to assess the state of scholarship in the field. The second of these conferences was held at the Society's house on 31 March 1956 with Sam Morison as the chief speaker. The job of hosting these conferences was gradually taken over by the Institute for the Study of Early American History and Culture (IEAHC) in Williamsburg, Virginia, and their findings were eventually published in the highly respected "Needs and Opportunities for Study" series. Walter himself edited one volume concerning the arts in early America, in collaboration with Wendell and Jane Garrett. Thus, when Fellow Member Sinclair Hitchings first proposed in 1970

the idea that the Colonial Society itself could play a useful role in convening gatherings of scholars in a particular field who could not only summarize the present state of knowledge on that topic, but who could also chart new directions for future research, Walter was predisposed to agree.

During the 1970s and early '80s, the Colonial Society assembled a number of such symposia which greatly enhanced its reputation as one of the three major sponsors of research in early American studies (together with the American Antiquarian Society and the IEAHC). The first such conference on Boston prints (Sinclair Hitchings's special field of expertise) convened on 1 April 1971. There followed in relatively quick succession further meetings on Boston furniture in 1972 (Jonathan Fairbanks, editor), music in colonial Massachusetts in 1973 (Barbara Lambert, editor), architecture in colonial Massachusetts in 1974 (Abbott Lowell Cummings, editor), seafaring in colonial Massachusetts in 1975 (Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, editor), medicine in 1978 (Richard Wolfe, editor), law in 1981 (Daniel Coquillette, editor), seventeenth century New England in 1982 (David D. Hall and David Grayson Allen, editors), and Daniel Shays's Rebellion in 1986 (Robert Gross, editor).

Each conference was marked by a new volume of *Collections* containing most of the papers given. The proceedings of the symposium on music in colonial Massachusetts grew so voluminous that they eventually expanded into two volumes. As a rule the conference volumes sold well and won great scholarly acclaim. The conference on Shays's Rebellion brought together many of the same scholars who later spoke on the same topic in Deerfield. This circumstance led to a cooperative venture in publishing the combined papers of both meetings together with Historic Deerfield, Inc. The timeliness and appeal of the topic was so great, together with the high level of scholarship it represented, that the Society was successful in persuading the University Press of Virginia to publish the volume as a commercial

venture, thus eluding the burden of expenses usually associated with its own privately arranged printings.

At the same time the Society was giving such attention to its conferences, it continued important colonial documents as part of its *Collections* series. It published *The Journals of Ashley Bowen* (Volumes XLIV and XLV), *The Notebook of the Rev. John Fiske* (Volume XLVII), further *Harvard College Records* (Volumes XLIX and L), the *Records of Trinity Church, Boston* (Volumes LV and LVI), *The Confessions of Thomas Shepard* (Volume LVIII)—a particularly hot seller, perhaps because of its title—*The Pyncheon Papers* (Volumes LX and LXI), and *The Glorious Revolution in Massachusetts: Selected Documents* (Volume LXIV). Several volumes that appeared during the 1970s did not fall neatly into either of the categories “documents” or “conferences.” One was Volume LIX, *Sibley’s Heir*, a memorial volume in honor of the Society’s one-time president Clifford Shipton. And then there was the four-volume set of the complete works of the Boston composer and *litterateur* William Billings, which was published outside the regular series of numbered CSM volumes. This joint venture with the American Musicological Society began rather casually when Walter in an expansive moment made an offer to the Musicological Society that if they would do the editing, the Colonial Society would publish the work. As costs began to escalate beyond anyone’s expectations, delicate negotiations were necessary to secure an agreement to split the costs of printing fifty-fifty. Though surely an expensive project, *The Complete Works of William Billings* met with rave reviews from musicologists.

The wide-ranging interests and characteristic enthusiasm of “The Man with the Vellum Valise” (to borrow poet and Fellow Member David McCord’s phrase) led the Colonial Society into one of its greatest eras during his thirty-two years as editor from 1946 until 1978. In 1962, Walter observed that the Colonial Society had maintained a rate of publication of one volume every other year during his first fifteen years as editor, although this

figure was merely an average. Colonial Society publications, Walter had long maintained, “came in bunches, like bananas.” After his retirement as librarian of the Boston Athenæum in 1974, Walter had begun to travel more widely than had been possible previously. In December 1974, he missed his first Council meeting in over twenty years, an event so extraordinary that the councillors sent him a special telegram wishing him a happy Christmas. During the last years of Walter’s life, Sinclair Hitchings acted increasingly as liaison between the editors of various individual projects and the Council. But despite Hitching’s best efforts, there were no less than eleven separate volumes pending at the time Fritz Allis became editor in 1979 after Walter’s death the previous year. Nothing had been published since 1975.

Fritz briskly set about the task of reducing the backlog. He established an office at 87 Mount Vernon Street and began gathering Colonial Society manuscripts and records which had long been dispersed: some at the Athenæum, some at Walter’s house in North Andover. From 1979 until 1985, a new blue and gold Colonial Society volume appeared every year, and during several years there was more than one. The tempo of publication put considerable strain on the Society’s treasury. There was no longer any talk, as there had been in 1971, of how the Society might spend 85 percent of its annual income in order to comply with new tax laws concerning charitable foundations. In fact, the Council was forced to resort to that most un-Bostonian expedient of dipping into principal as the volumes came out and attempting to reimburse the treasury after 1986 when the pace slowed once again. Treasurer Lawrence Coolidge kept careful track of this “publication overdraft,” habitually referring to it in his reports to the Council as “the deficit,” a term that prompted some good-natured sparring from Editor Allis. In his report to the Annual Meeting in 1987, Fritz observed that members “with any degree of financial sophistication will realize that analogy to the federal government is faulty. For while the government is attempting to reduce an *annual* deficit, we are in effect reducing our

national debt—something I am sure that no one in the federal government could in his wildest dreams consider trying.”

Since Fritz Allis had been President of the Society before assuming the position of Editor, the Presidency was now open, and Andrew Oliver, who had been a Vice-President hitherto, was chosen for the position. Oliver marked a sharp departure from his predecessors who had served during the Whitehill period. The only other President who could equal him was Samuel Eliot Morison. First of all, Andrew Oliver was truly elegant in all that he did. He was a graceful and urbane presiding officer and a speaker of rare talents. Among other things he could recite “The Star Spangled Banner” backwards at high speed. On another special occasion he delivered a tribute to Herbert Brown, Editor of the *New England Quarterly*, at his retirement that combined wit and appreciation so as to produce a rare statement. It soon became clear that he was indeed the leader of the Society.

But Andy’s contribution to the Society went well beyond his abilities as presiding officer and speaker. Like Morison, he took an active part in the basic work of the Society. When he became President, *The Records of Trinity Church, Boston* was nearing completion. The early editorial work had been done by James Bishop Peabody, who had unfortunately died before the project had been completed. Andy Oliver took a leading role in getting what proved to be two volumes of these records published. He read a great deal of proof. More important, his counsel was invaluable to the editor in arriving at some fairly sticky editorial decisions which had to be made. In short, his contribution to those volumes was substantial. In addition, he provided real leadership and wise counsel in the reorganization of the *New England Quarterly*, as will be discussed in more detail below. The Society suffered a tremendous loss when Andy was cut off while still in his prime.

When Fritz Allis took over as Editor in 1979, he soon found that one of his concerns was the *New England Quarterly*. This magazine, devoted to New England “life and letters,” had been founded in 1928 by Samuel Eliot Morison and some of his Har-

vard associates and was, for all intents and purposes, published out of Widener Library. In the early days, the various editors took turns at getting out the magazine, and the same was true of the position of Book Review Editor. In 1944 Herbert Brown, Professor of English at Bowdoin College, took over as Managing Editor (Sam Morison said that the Managing Editor *was* the magazine), and he was still in this position in 1979.

Despite (or perhaps because of) his watchword: “There is too much *publishing* and too little *perishing*,” the magazine thrived under Professor Brown. He developed a very cordial relationship with the Editorial Board of the magazine through a series of “pastoral letters” he would write them. He managed to hold his own when it came to handling subscription matters, but the publication was always in financial difficulties. When first started the enterprise was apparently financed by friends of Sam Morison. But this could never provide a permanent solution to the magazine’s financial needs. Even so, for one brief period, the *Quarterly* had a surplus which those in charge decided to spend by *reducing* the subscription price for the coming year, certainly a rare, if not unique, action in American magazine history. In the early 1930s, Sam Morison, unwilling to tap his friends any further for support of the *Quarterly*, arranged to have the Colonial Society provide a modest subvention to support the publication. Thus, the Colonial Society became, in effect, the sponsor of the magazine, for it was unthinkable that the subvention, once undertaken, should not become an annual affair. As might have been expected, the subvention not only became an annual charge on the Society, but it gradually increased from a very modest sum at the start to \$7,000 a year by the time Allis took over.

As Allis reviewed the situation, he discovered that Herbert Brown, though still doing the splendid job that he had always done, was in his late 70s and that his assistant, who was in charge of subscriptions, was 83. To be sure, there was a Board of Editors, but they never met as a group, and they had no responsibility for policy. It also became clear that the magazine had no *legal* exist-

ence at all. It had never been incorporated, it had never made any reports to the Commonwealth, it had never paid any taxes, though it had never taken the trouble to establish its tax-exempt status. With what can only be described as magnificent disregard for normal, established procedures, it had simply concentrated on getting the magazine out four times a year.

What to do? Time was more or less of the essence, since if anything should happen to Herbert Brown, there was no one in a position to replace him—particularly someone who would do the work for free, as Herbert had done for so many years, in an office in Hubbard Hall generously contributed by Bowdoin College, which allowed Herbert to keep his old study after he had retired. Allis went to President Oliver and together they decided to invite a group of interested parties to a luncheon meeting at the Colonial Society's house to decide what should be done in the future. A number of people were present, but a kind of committee developed consisting of Professors Oscar Handlin and Bernard Bailyn of Harvard, Lyman Butterfield, Editor of the Adams Papers, Jason Aisner, a member of the Society with broad legal experience, and the President and Editor of the Colonial Society.

The details of how this committee got the *NEQ* on an even keel need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that a corporation was established to own and make policy for the magazine, with a complete set of the necessary officers; that a certificate was secured giving the magazine tax-exempt status; and that various reports were made to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In its search for a successor to Herbert Brown, who agreed that the time had come for him to retire, the committee finally settled on William M. Fowler, Jr., Professor of History at Northeastern University and biographer of John Hancock. Professor Fowler was eager to edit the magazine if satisfactory arrangements could be made with his boss, President Kenneth Ryder of Northeastern. Fortunately for all concerned with the *Quarterly's* future, President Ryder had recently been asked by his Board of Trustees

to broaden the public image of Northeastern. What better way to move toward the accomplishment of this purpose than to become a cosponsor of the *NEQ*?

President Ryder was exceedingly generous in carrying out the specific terms of the sponsorship. He agreed to lighten Professor Fowler's teaching load so as to give him time to edit the *Quarterly*, and he agreed to provide office space for the enterprise and to pay the salary for an associate editor to assist Professor Fowler. Even though much of this support did not necessitate out-of-pocket cash expenditures, still in the years since it was set up, Northeastern has contributed a substantial six-figure amount to the magazine.

The *Quarterly* has flourished under this new arrangement. Editor Fowler made the happy choice of Linda Rhoads as his associate, who balances his knowledge of New England history with hers of the region's literature, and so the magazine has grown both in number of subscriptions and in number of articles submitted for possible publication. Members of the Colonial Society who so wish it may receive the *NEQ* free of charge. As they look through one outstanding issue after another, they should take great satisfaction from the fact that the publication's present health is due in large measure to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts.

Aside from the *Quarterly* and its publications, the other great strain on the Colonial Society's treasury has been the expense of the Annual Dinner, it being a long tradition not to stint on this occasion. An early report of the Council observed that, "To say that the stated meetings were well attended would strain the truth. But on each November twenty-first comes the dinner, when, like hardy annuals, a large proportion of the members exercise their prerogative and blossom into actuality," a statement that is just as true in 1992 as it was in 1925. During the years before the Society had its own quarters, the Annual Dinner was held in a Boston club, usually the Algonquin Club, although

sometimes the St. Botolph or Tavern Clubs might be frequented.

Fritz Allis recalled the first annual meeting he ever attended as a guest of Sam Morison:

When the time came to go into the dining room for dinner, I trailed along with the rest and was not sure where I should sit. I finally saw an empty chair and sat down in it. When I turned to my left, I found myself face-to-face with George Lyman Kittredge. A friend whispered to me not to try to talk Shakespeare, but I need not have worried. Before dinner we talked about a favorite professor of mine at Amherst, who had been a pupil of Kittredge's. After dinner when the speeches started, I looked over and saw that the renowned professor was taking a little nap, which actually continued through the rest of the evening.

Everyone seemed to take these incidents in stride, and they caused no serious interruption in the meetings.

On another occasion, the dignified President of the Society, Judge Robert Walcott, rose to introduce the speaker of the evening Professor Myron Gilmore, a specialist in Renaissance history from Harvard. Judge Walcott explained to those present that when he had to introduce someone he found the easiest thing to do was to look them up in *Who's Who*. But he said he was puzzled in the case of Professor Gilmore, because he couldn't find his name anywhere in *Who's Who*. A number of members were outraged by this treatment of their friend Myron, but nothing was done about the Judge's gaffe at the time.

On 20 November 1976, the Society held its first annual dinner in its own house, although the occasion was saddened by the death of President Walcott earlier in the month. Sam Morison, the senior vice-president took the chair and the Society ate off leftover china purchased from the Somerset Club. Although the Society has attempted annual dinners at 87 Mount Vernon Street once or twice since, the popularity of the occasion led to overcrowding, and we now make do with drinks and *hors d'oeuvres* at the Society's house before toddling up Mount Vernon Street to the more commodious dining room of the Club of Odd Volumes.

Certain problems developed from the practice of serving din-

ner *before* the annual business meeting. At the Algonquin Club, for example, the members were served cocktails, then wine at dinner, and sometimes liqueurs afterwards. Attempts to hold serious business meetings under such conditions often brought disastrous results. On one occasion, an attempt was made to ignore the Nominating Committee's slate of officers for the coming year and substitute a wild collection of unqualified people. At other times, there were attempts made to amend the by-laws in bizarre ways, and after-dinner speakers were heckled unmercifully.

In 1959, the members of the Audit Committee took to giving their report in doggerel verse, and in 1960, they followed up their initial success with a sung version, entitled "The Treasurer Carleton Richmond Blues." This bit of poetasting charged the annual deficit to "your Bacchanalian orgies./ It's the wine and food you choose./ It wouldn't cost near so much,/ If you didn't like to booze." Piqued by the charge, Walter Whitehill, the head of the Dinner Committee, replied that the menu (beef consommé, coquilles St. Jacques, roast squab and meringue glacé, accompanied by Chablis Grand Cru Moutonne 1955 and Remy Chambolle Musigny 1953) was nothing remarkable. "If there is a problem in the cost of dinners," he retorted, "it is the number of members who eat them, rather than 'the wine and food you choose.'"

Eventually, it became clear that some basic change in procedure was necessary, and so it was decided to have the business meeting *first* before the cocktails. This meant that thirsty members would conduct business promptly and avoid the donnybrooks that too often characterized the after-dinner proceedings in the past. This system has worked well for some years now, and while there are still problems to be dealt with at annual meetings, they are handled in a much more genteel fashion.

The Council usually meets for lunch before the afternoon meetings in order to transact its business amicably around the dining room table. These repasts were sometimes only slightly less Lucullan than the Annual Dinner, since Walter Whitehill

had long maintained that since Council members were volunteering their valuable time, they should at least be well fed. Fritz Allis recalls one luncheon before the December meeting soon after the Society had taken up residence in its new headquarters:

The beautiful Bulfinch house on Mount Vernon Street had been decorated for Christmas—wreaths in the windows and on the front door, greens on the mantels, etc. It was snowing gently outside. Candles on the luncheon table had been lit. At the appropriate moment, the caterer appeared with a roast pig that Walter had been able to acquire somewhere. It had an apple in its mouth and parsley over its ears in the best English tradition. To make the scene perfect, Admiral Samuel Morison rose to carve the animal and did so with great grace. I had never had roast pig before and on comparing notes with others found that none of us thought the roast pig was particularly tasty—much too fatty, we thought. But as a cosmetic treat it was unforgettable.

Suckling pig has not returned on the Council's menu since that occasion, but guests at the luncheons are usually not disappointed.

The serious business of the Council is to authorize expenditures from the treasury on behalf of the members and chart the course for future conferences, publications, and other activities of the Society. From time to time, the Council has given generous support to a variety of scholarly enterprises (the *American Neptune*, *Early American Literature*, the Essex Institute, the John Carter Brown Library, and Massachusetts Broad-sides of the American Revolution, just to name a few), but the *New England Quarterly* has remained the apple of its eye with the boards and officers of both organizations interlocked in a peculiarly Bostonian embrace. When the Council's charitable instincts strayed further afield to support the restoration of the fifteenth-century structure of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam (the Pilgrim Fathers being among the early English-speaking worshippers there), the impulse brought a sharp reprimand from the eagle-eyed treasurer who reminded Council members that gifts to foreign organizations brought no tax advantage to the Society.

In recent years, one of the most important initiatives of the Council has been conversion of the Bulfinch carriage house at 87 Mount Vernon Street into an income-producing asset, the profits of which would help to maintain the house itself. During the last century or so, the carriage house had remained largely unused, except as a place for miscellaneous storage and as a home for itinerant carpenter ants. The plans drawn up in 1987-1988 by the House Committee (Elton W. Hall, chairman; Vice-President Daniel Coquillette; and Council Member Donald Wing) not only created an attractive residence on the back of the property, but actually restored the exterior appearance of the carriage house much closer to its original appearance as designed by Bulfinch. The legal talents of the Vice-President steered the Society's application through the terrors of the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission, while Don Wing's keen eye and knowledge of the construction business won the awe of contractors and tradesmen. By late summer 1990, the new carriage house apartment was ready for occupancy, and the Colonial Society, in sound financial health, looked forward to a second hundred years of publishing and scholarship.

FREDERICK S. ALLIS, JR.
JOHN W. TYLER
1992