**The Colonial Society of Massachusetts**

Minutes of the 129th Annual Meeting of the Membership

Held at

87 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston

18 November 2021

President Robert Allison called the meeting to order at 6.05 P.M. He welcomed members back to the House for the first in-person meeting since February 2020, and welcomed those members who were joining via live streaming.

The reading of the minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting was waived.

**1 . Report of the Membership Committee.** Susan Lively, chair of the committee, opened her report by extending a particularly warm welcome to members joining the annual meeting for the first time. She reported the deaths of the following members:

Rodney Armstrong

Peter Benes

David Greene

William Joyce

Benjamin Labaree

Robert Middlekauff

Christopher Monkhouse

June Namias

John Newhall

William Tyler

Members stood for a moment of silence.

She then introduced the changes to the bylaws approved by Council, and included in the annual meeting mailing. These were:

**Article IV, section 1:**

Current version: Persons nominated by the Council for any class of Membership will be voted upon by the Resident Members present at any meeting of the Society’s Members and approved by a majority vote thereof.

Proposed revision: Persons nominated by the Council for any class of Membership will be voted upon by the Resident Members and approved by a majority vote of ballots cast.

**Article IV, section 7:**

Current version: Only Resident Members shall be eligible to be an Officer or non-Officer member of the Council and to vote at meetings of the Society.

Proposed revision: Only Resident Members shall be eligible to be an Officer or non-Officer member of the Council and to vote.

**Article XI, section 6:**

Current version: Resident Members may vote at any meeting of the Society only if present in person, except when they are voting on proposed amendments to the Society’s Articles of Incorporation, in which case they may vote in person or by proxy.

Proposed revision,: When Resident Members are voting on proposed amendments to the Society’s Articles of Incorporation, they may vote in person or by proxy.

These minor changes would allow votes on membership to take place via email instead of in person at meetings of the Society. The advantages of the changes will be twofold:

1) They will allow for the more timely election of new members, and

2) They will preserve the privacy of our candidates since our stated meetings are now open to the public and are streamed online.

**Voted:** To approve the revisions to the Bylaws. Approved unanimously.

Finally, she recognized members who have been part of the Colonial Society for fifty years or more:

Richard Bushman

Cary Carson

Lawrence Coolidge

Jonathan Fairbanks

Peter Haack

David Hall

Roger Stoddard

Norman Tucker

Gordon Wood

Kinvin Wroth

Hiller Zobel

**2. Report of the Treasurer.**

**Voted:** To accept the Treasurer’s Report. Approved unanimously.

**3. Report of the Curator.**  Meghan Holmes asked members to take a look at the new exhibition installed in the kitchen, which focuses on “behind the scenes” at the House over its history, derived from Toby Hall’s history of the House and Paine family history. She noted that there will be monthly Open Houses, and urged members to bring friends.

The House Committee has been active throughout the pandemic, . The Hiram Powers marble bust of Faith has been cleaned and restored, and she thanked Robert Mussey, the chair of the committee, for helping her learn more about the House and its furnishings. She spoke briefly about the oral history project she is coordinating with UMass Amherst, to capture the non-written memories of the Society..

She also spoke warmly of how helpful Toby Hall has been in helping her settle in to her new position, and in introducing her to members. Meghan asked Toby to come forward. In recognition of his long years of sterling service, he was presented with a group of three historic photographs of 87 Mt. Vernon Street, matted and mounted with the signatures of all the living presidents of the Colonial Society. Toby expressed his thanks, and there was a long round of applause from the members. Bob Allison then presented a second gift, a copy of a book by Hannah Farnham Lee, written at 87 Mt. Vernon.

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

**5. John Winthrop Award in Early New England History.** Bob Allison announced that the winner of the inaugural Award had been selected, and he thanked Francis J. Bremer for his leadership on the committee. The winner is Lisa Blee, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit*. The Award itself will be a specially commissioned portrait of John Winthrop. The other two finalists will also be acknowledged (although with no cash award): Mark Peterson*, The City-State of Boston: The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Power, 1630–1865*; and David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*. He invited John Winthrop, who has made the Award possible, to take the podium.

John Winthrop thanked the Society for electing him to membership. He said he was the oldest member of the 13th generation of Winthrops, and that his father had told him he was *not* named for his distinguished ancestor. He reminisced about his life, and said how pleased he was to inaugurate this Award. Bob Allison then presented him with his own copy of the John Winthrop portrait commissioned as the Award.

**6. Report of the President.** Robert Allison’s report is appended.

**7. Report of the Nominating Committee.** J. Ritchie Garrison, chair, thanked the members of the committee, Catherine Allgor and Danielle Legros Georges. The nominees are:

President Robert Allison

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

Secretary Leslie A. Morris

Treasurer Amory Loring Logan

Member of Council,

3-year term Katheryn Viens (2024)

Continuing members of

Council Martha J. McNamara (2022); Raushaun Martin (2023)

Ritchie thanked Nonie Gadsden for her 3-year service on the Council.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 7.05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie A. Morris

Secretary

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

After the turn of the calendar year. some new volumes will begin to appear in your mailboxes of series that will be quite familiar to you: a fourth volume of Thomas Hutchinson's *Correspondence* and sixth and final volume of *The Papers of Francis Bernard*. The Hutchinson volume covers twenty months extending from the acquittal in November 1770 of the soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre through the return of the General Court in June 1772 from Cambridge to its traditional meeting place at the Town House in Boston. A number of historians refer to this as the "quiet period" in the events leading up to the Revolution, but you would have had trouble convincing Thomas Hutchinson of the accuracy of that phrase. Although he was elated by the soldiers acquittal and believed he had played a helpful role in delaying the trial for seven months, he continued to butt heads with Samuel Adam; even though Hutchinson believed the issues raised by Adams and his friends were becoming less and less substantive, the vilification of Hutchinson in the newspapers continued unabated. In one under told story, Hutchinson strove to drive a wedge between John Hancock and Adams, by dangling the prospect of a seat on the Council to the young merchant, even though Hancock eventually refused to take up the office. Hutchinson also did what he could to stir suspicion and resentment between Boston patriots and the newly-chosen agent for the House, Benjamin Franklin. In some ways, becoming governor in his own right in March 1771, instead of enlarging his field of action had left him struggling with the same frustrations, despite the grander title, larger salary, and increased powers of patronage.

Since the sixth volume of Colin Nicolson's series begins with Bernard's departure from the province August 1, 1769 and continues through his death in 1779, it covers many of the same events from the opposite side of the Atlantic. Bernard and Hutchinson were in constant correspondence throughout the time when Bernard remained governor-in-chief. Even in the years following, Bernard was a frequent source of informal advice and advocacy in ministerial circles. What CSM readers may find new in this volume is how integrally involved Bernard was in laying the groundwork for the Massachusetts Government Act of 1774. The measures the colonists found so punitive and "coercive" were all "reforms" Bernard had long sought to make in the constitution of the province. Several useful appendices appear at the end of Nicolson's volume, including Bernard's answer to charges brought against him before the Privy Council by the Massachusetts House in February 1770, a list of papers he helped compile pertaining riots and tumults in America since 1764 that was put before the House of Commons in March 1774 as they began contemplating a appropriate response to the Boston Tea Party, and a list of mandamus councilors he suggested that would cause no end of grief to the individuals so honored.

Boston in the 1770s is familiar ground for me, but I have spent much of the past year learning about Quakers in Bristol County, entirely new territory. Several years back, the Dartmouth (MA) Historical and Arts Society was given for safe-keeping the comprehensive records of the Allen's Neck Society of Friends, but instead of doing what most local historical societies would do, which is squirreling them away in a vault somewhere, they industriously set about creating digital images of the records and then set up an elaborate protocol for transcribing them, with multiple layers of checking and rechecking each other's work. Our Fellow Member and former Curator Toby Hall first made us aware of this project, and the Publications Committee agreed to take on publishing the minutes of the Men's and Women's Meetings from their founding in 1699 through the American Revolution. All previous church records published by the Colonial Society had been either Congregational or Anglican, so this was a venture in an entirely new direction.

The amount of material involved is huge, and I have spent much of the fall trying to compress it into two volumes. Every project involves some regrets, items that are left unpublished: for me, in the Dartmouth Records, it was there Book of Discipline, a compilation of the rules and practices that governed their communal life. Each meeting maintained its own copy, although they often copied materials from one another, especially the Philadelphia or London meetings. Therefore, we couldn't claim that the Dartmouth Book of Discipline was unique, but I recommend it to you as a short introduction to Quaker practices. You can read it online at dartmouthhas.org. The handwriting is quite easy. But the minutes of the Men's and Women's Meetings needed considerable explication, so we asked Thomas Hamm of Earlham College, a noted scholar in the field, to provide an introduction. In that essay, he highlights some of the most interesting material in the collection, concerning refusal to take oaths or bear arms in the militia, as well slaveholding and investments in privateering.

Members of the meeting could only marry other Quakers, and if they failed to do so, they were disowned. The number of such disownments far outweighs the number of requests to become new members, so I wondered whether this preference for endogamy would eventually result in no Quakers at all, but they seemed to prosper and spread throughout the entire region from Buzzard's Bay to the Rhode Island border. Another practice that caught my attention was the appointment of overseers whose job it was to visit every family that belonged to the meeting and examine their conduct. Almost all the visitors reported the same laconic formula: " in some famlyes they find things pretty well and in some famlyes some things not very well." Presumably there had been admonitions to some to mend their ways, but the visitors certainly weren't giving any details!

Before going on to discuss the our web publications, perhaps you will indulge an aging editor's reflections on how much the business of printing has changed during the three decades I've worked on the Colonial Society's publications. In 1988, typewritten manuscripts were marked up with an arcane variety of symbols and sent off to the printer hoping someone there could make sense out of it. Not only was the process long and involved, there were unanticipated hazards, as when in 1970, a fire at the fabled Anthoesen Press in Portland, Maine consumed the manuscript versions of most of the essays intended for a volume of *Transactions* intended cover all the papers delivered at the Society's meetings from 1963 to 1970. A few of the essays, whose authors were able to reconstruct what they had first written made it into Volume 59, known as *Sibley's Heir*, which began life as a festschrift in honor of Ted Shipton, but became an omnium gatherum of leftover essays found in Walter Whitehill's desk at the time of his death. When I became editor in 1993, rather than assistant editor, files were at least beginning to be kept on floppy disks. The earliest device that I had that approximated a computer was a cross between an IBM Selectric and a desktop that I inherited as a cast-off from the Groton School development office; by using it one had the distinct advantage of being able to make revisions without resorting to White-Out or those little pieces of white tape one inserted between the keys and paper that never quite did the job. (Late in my teaching career, I could always count on bemused incredulity from my students, when I tried to explain what was necessary to place a footnote at the bottom of the page in the olden days of typewriters, or even worse, if you happened to misnumber them.) But when someone in the Math Department first demonstrated word-processing for me, I needed no convincing. I had to learn. Before too long, I was sending files to printers on thumb drives, and now, of course, manuscripts and page proofs flow back and forth as email attachments, saving forests of trees.

Beginning in 2015, the Colonial Society committed itself to a regimen whereby each new volume would appear simultaneously in both traditional print and digital formats, and by June 2017 we scanned our entire backlist and made the content of every volume available for free around the world at any time.

Although CSM members treasure their finely printed and bound copies of our publications, that is not the format in which most researchers consult them. Since June 2017, over 715,000 people have visited our website, and traffic has been steadily growing with peaks and valleys that reflect the advent of a new publication or the seasons of the academic year. Over 600,000 of those visitors consulted something in the publications section of the site, and 40,000 used our search function to find something within it. Other busy pages of the site include activities, membership, and our new documents section each with roughly 5,000 page views.

Our conference volumes are our most frequently consulted publications with *Boston Furniture, 1700-1900* easily leading the way with 51,000 views. *Seventeenth-Century New England* follows in second place with 37,000 views, and *Medicine in Colonial Massachusetts* with 34,000. Conference volumes generally outpace documentary collections, but it should be noted that *The Correspondence of John Cotton Jr.* places seventh on the overall list with 16,000 views (perhaps because of its Native American content), and *The Eighteenth-Century Records of the Boston Overseers of the Poor* is ninth (13,000). I hope that news brings some satisfaction to those who labored so hard on the *Overseers* volume, which was easily the most complex project of my term as editor. Other top documentary collections are *The Records of the First Church in Boston, The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris,* and the initial volumes of both the Francis Bernard and Thomas Hutchinson Papers. It should be noted, however, that although the top five volumes (which are all conference proceedings) account for 30 percent of all page views, there is a long tail of 90 plus volumes contributing the other 70 percent.

The users of the website divide almost equally between men and women. Our viewers are predominantly 55 and older, but over 30 percent of the readership is between 18 through 34, suggesting an important student component. Not surprisingly, 82 percent of viewers come from the United States, with the United Kingdom and Canada adding another 7 percent. Visitors from non-anglophone countries are relatively few, but we have had page views originating as far afield as Tajikistan, Togo, and Chad. Massachusetts leads all other states with 18 percent of viewers, with California second with 8.5. Boston itself accounts for 17 percent of the traffic, and New York follows with 7 percent.

How viewers arrive at the website is another important question. Eighty-five percent arrive "organically" via a search engine. Only 11 percent come directly to our website without a search engine involved. A further 3 percent are referred from some other source. At the moment 79 percent are first-time visitors, but the number of repeat visitors should grow as people become more familiar with the website. Overall usage seems quite healthy for a relatively young site.

There is no doubt that the Society has broadened its audience by making its publications available online. Seven hundred eighteen thousand visitors in four years seems a mighty number, especially when one reflects that probably fewer than 100 libraries maintain complete sets of our publications. Such outreach is an accomplishment Henry H. Edes and the other founders could never have imagined. If the Dartmouth, MA Quaker overseers were here tonight, I hope they would say they find things "pretty well."

**Report of the President, Robert Allison**

The Colonial Society’s mission—publishing and preserving documentary history, supporting the work of younger scholars in telling the story of early American history, and fostering collegial bonds among those of us who care about history—has never been more important. The generosity of our Members, the wise stewardship of our Treasurer, the time and energy of our volunteers, the work of our editor and curator, make it possible for us to continue doing our mission.

**Publications.**

Just yesterday we received a note from the chamber-music duet Lyracle, telling us about their 17th-century concert program for voice and viol, thanking us for our **“publication, *Music in Colonial Massachusetts 1630-1820: Music in Homes and Churches***” which “formed the backbone of our curatorial research. Free, online access to this excellent resource allowed us to conduct this research amidst a global pandemic; and for that, we are very grateful!”

We are all grateful for the work of our Editor, and for the books we have received this year, and those we can expect in the coming year, and the coming years.

The Colonial Society is one of *New England Quarterly’s* leading sponsors. Every year we award the Walter Muir Whitehill Prize in memory of our late Editor and driving force in all things Boston and historic. An all-star panel of Society members—Fred Anderson, David Hall, and Mary Beth Norton—chooses the winning essay from among those submitted to the *Quarterly*. This year’s prize was awarded to our Member Cornelia Dayton, for her extraordinary article “Lost Years Recovered: John Peters and Phillis Wheatley Peters in Middleton,” on the Essex County years of poet Phillis Wheatley. Nina Dayton’s essay inspires us to dig more deeply into previously over-looked records—in this case, in the town of Middleton and the Essex County Court of Common Pleas---where she found a new story to tell of one of New England’s best-known and most-studied figures. For more, pick up your issue of the *Quarterly, and* join us at our February 17 Stated Meeting.

The Society is also supporting the Early American Court Records Project, spearheaded by member Sally Hadden, to digitize and transcribe the records of the Massachusetts Superior Court of Judicature. The 22,000 pages of records cover nearly a century of proceedings in the highest court in Massachusetts. What new stories will be revealed, and what old stories will these help us or force us to rewrite?

As our Members seek out new stories to tell, they also seek new audiences for them. Our Education Committee, led by veteran teacher Charlie Newhall, and with members including other gifted and inspiring teachers and educators, is planning ways to get our primary sources into classrooms and into the hands of students.

**PROGRAMS**

**W**e missed this room’s elegant intimacy this year, but thanks to ZOOM our programs reached a wider audience.

On a cold December day in Boston, Carla Gardina Pestana spoke to us and a global audience from sunny Los Angeles about her work on Colonial New England from a global perspective. Later in the winter Peter Mancall joined us from the West Coast to talk about the fascinatingly litigious Thomas Morton. We have ventured away from New England, with Dane Morrison bringing us *Eastward of Good Hope,* and the New England encounter with the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Ned Cooke, author of *Inventing Boston,*  conversed from his New Haven home about 17th-century material culture with Barbara and Gerry Ward in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and with Members across New England as well as in Puerto Rico, Panama, New Zealand and points between and beyond. From the Berkshires Nancy Seasholes showed us her magnificent *Atlas of Boston History,* which features contributions from nine Society Members, who participated in the program virtually. City Archaeologist and Society Member Joe Bagley brought his book on Boston’s oldest houses and where to find them.

And we went ventured to a historic place in Canton, with Members Nina Zannieri, Executive Director of the Paul Revere House, and Rob Martello, Graduate Forum alum and author of *Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn* traveling to Paul Revere’s recently-restored copper mill, for a discussion with Canton historian George Comeau about Revere, copper, and historic preservation.

Our first Donald Friary Lecture, an engaged conversation on witch-craft with Mary Beth Norton, Ben Ray, and Tad Baker drew hundreds of people from four hemispheres—North and South, East and West. Mark your calendars for May 19, for the second Friary Lecture, focusing on new perspectives on the American Revolution.

The success of on-line programs spurred us to install a camera in this room—fitting unobtrusively on top of the bookcase—so that as we return to 87 Mount Vernon Street, our programs will continue to stream to distant members and friends, and recorded will live on through our web-site and social media platforms. Thanks to Anne Cecere, Celeste Walker and the rest of the Events and Programming Committee, and technical guru Bob Mack, we look forward to more events in the coming year, here at 87 Mount Vernon and at other historic venues.

**Graduate Student Forum**

Our Graduate Student Forum after twenty years is one of the premier gathering places for emerging scholars of early American history. In the next room you will see some of the books produced by the Forum’s 156 alumni, who continue to reshape our understanding of early American history. This year’s Forum, organized by Marla Miller, was not just a day but was nearly a week of programs—including a virtual tour of 87 Mount Vernon Street with curator Meghan Holmes, and conversations among the nine students—representing nine universities in eight states, from Maine to California—on topics ranging from building forts to the emotions and concepts of well-being. Thanks to the Society Members who joined these conversations, and especially Marla Miller and the committee: Anne Little, Bob Gross, Susan Lively, and Alice Nash, and Moderator Linda Kerber. We hope to see these rising scholars in person at 87 Mount Vernon to continue these discussions and look forward to adding their books to our collection.

In addition to the Graduate Forum, the Colonial Society is also a member of the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium. Vice President Susan Lively is our representative to the Consortium. Though unlike other member organizations, we do not have an archive, every year we support the work of one Fellow focusing on early New England history. This is a significant way to support new scholarship, and an essential part of our mission.

**The House and its History**

This Fall students in the University of Massachusetts oral and public history program have been interviewing some of our long-time members and officers, to get a fuller picture of the Society’s history and life. We have also created an Archive committee, chaired by Beth Bower, to get a better understanding of what we have in our records. If we know where we have been, a wise man once said, we will know whither we are tending. As we probe the 17th and 18th centuries, we also come to understand the Colonial Society’s history and its role in preserving and interpreting its history.

All here this evening should visit the kitchen, where Meghan Holmes has prepared a remarkable exhibit on the history of this house, and some of the people who have lived and worked in it. Those attending remotely can come to one of our open houses—on the first Sunday of every month. At our last open house earlier this month, Member Tom Paine, a grandson of the family who lived here from 1816 until 1954, brought along three dozen relatives, many of them seeing the ancestral home for the first time. 87 Mount Vernon Street was not a stranger—they had heard so many stories the House seemed to be part of the family. One guest’s grandfather had been born in the El. All felt fortunate to return, as we do now, to this elegant and storied place.

At our last Annual Meeting in this room, his final meeting as our Curator, Toby Hall pointed to Faith, who has looked on our gatherings here for as long as any of us can remember. Faith emerged from Seravezza marble in Hiram Powers’ Florence studio just after the Civil War. She spent the next decades in the Boston mansion of Frances and Henry Greenough. Years of smoke and soot, attempts to clean her and patch her few small blemishes left Faith blotched and yellowed. Earlier this year, Robert Mussey entrusted Faith to conservator Jessica Chloros. A few weeks ago a cleaned and restored Faith returned, more pristine than at any time since she left Hiram Powers’ studio to cross the Mediterranean and Atlantic during those tumultuous years in Italy and America.

With Faith we are back at 87 Mount Vernon Street to continue together exploring our history.