**The Colonial Society of Massachusetts**

Minutes of the 130th Annual Meeting of the Membership

Held at

87 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston

17 November 2022

President Robert Allison called the meeting to order at 6.15 P.M. He welcomed members present, and explained that technical problems prevented the meeting from being live-streamed to absent members.

The reading of the minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting was waived.

**1 . Report of the Membership Committee.** Susan Lively, chair of the committee, opened her report by asking members to stand for a moment of silence to mark the deaths of the following members:

Robert Dalzell (1984) (died June 2022)

Crawford Lincoln (1992) (died February 2022)

David McCullough (2002) (died August 2022)

Neal Salisbury (2008) (died May 2022)

On behalf of the Membership Committee, herself, Nonie Gadsden, John Tyler, and JonPaul McBride, she extended a particularly warm welcome to members who were joining the Society’s annual meeting for the first time:

Michael Bavaro

Eric Jay Dolin

Gregory Hazelwood

Brian MacQuarrie

Jessica Parr

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

Richard Bushman (1969)

Cary Carson (1968)

Lawrence Coolidge (1968)

Jonathan Fairbanks (1971)

Peter Haack (1965)

David Hall (1971)

Roger Stoddard (1966)

Bryant Tolles (1972)

Norman Tucker (1970)

Gordon Wood (1966)

L Kinvin Wroth (1963)

Hiller Zobel (1970)

**2. Report of the Treasurer.** [Redacted]

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

**3. Report of the Curator.**  Meghan Holmes began her second report as Curator by relating some of her “finds”, discovered as she has gone through the drawers and closets in the house. She showed one such find, the cards that were used in the vote on whether or not to accept the gift of the house at 87 Mt. Vernon Street. She speculated that Walter Whitehill had done some canvassing to get support for accepting the gift, and quoted Lyman Butterfield’s comment on his ballot that for eating and drinking he liked lots of elbow-room.

She said that the house collections should be seen in a dual context: in the original time period and context of the house, and in objects’ relationship to the house and to the Society. She noted she has spent time on the Channing Collection and gave a brief history of it. She has prepared a brochure about the collection, highlighting important pieces in the collection. Most of her time has been spent on a furnishings plan for the house. Such a plan will help the House Committee in prioritizing conservation. She noted that this year three prints had been conserved and rehung (of Lafayette, William Ellery Channing, and James Monroe) and, as part of a two-year project to restore the mirrors, the John Doggett mirror and the pier table in the front hall.

She concluded by thanking Toby Hall for his continued help and support as she learns the collections, particularly in providing historical context. Working with Robert Mussey, chair of the House Committee, also has been an amazing learning experience.

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

Following John’s report, Bob Allison expounded on John’s remarkable contributions to the historical profession, noting his long tenure at Groton School and his impact on the history curriculum there, and including serving as the Davison Chair of History and director of the de Menil Gallery. In his service to the Society, Bob noted that John is only its sixth Editor, and that a third of the Society’s publications have appeared under John’s editorship. John took the Society in new directions, with the publication of the Silver volume, and with conferences on New England slavery and Native American contributions to New England history. He has been exemplary in keeping editors of volumes on task, and has taken the Society into the world of electronic publication.

Bob then presented the Society’s retirement gift, a captain’s chair engraved with the seal of the Society. Additionally, the Council had voted that John be recommended for Honorary Membership. As the Bylaws note that Honorary members must be approved by positive votes at two successive meetings, he moved that this be waived.

**Voted:** To waive the requirement that an Honorary member be approved at two successive meetings of the membership. Approved unanimously.

It was then

**Voted:** To elect John Tyler to Honorary Membership in the Society. Approved unanimously.

John thanked members for both the chair, and election to Honorary status.

**5. Introduction of Sally Hadden.** Bob then welcomed the new Editor of Publications, Sally Hadden, commenting that it had taken two years to find her. He summarized her qualifications: Director of Graduate Studies and Professor of History at the University of Washington, JD and PhD from Harvard, project leader for the Early Massachusetts Court Records digitization project (of which the Society is a co-sponsor). She serves on several editorial boards. He asked Sally to stand and be recognized.

In response, Sally said that succeeding John Tyler in the position of Editor was a hard act to follow, but she was excited by the challenge.

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

**7. Report of the Nominating Committee.** Danielle Legros Georges, chair, presented the committees’ slate:

President Robert Allison

Vice Presidents Dan Coquillette, Susan Lively, Rashaun Martin, Celeste Walker

Secretary Leslie A. Morris

Treasurer Amory Loring Logan

Member of Council,

3-year term Jessica Parr (2025)

Member of Council,

1-year term

(replacing Rashaun Martin) Gorman Lee (2023)

Continuing member of

Council Katheryn Viens (2024)

Danielle thanked Robert Hall and Martha McNamara for their service on the Council.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 7.10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie A. Morris

Secretary

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

Your library shelves at home have received two new volumes during the past year: the sixth and final volume of Colin Nicolson’s magisterial The Papers of Francis Bernard, Colonial Governor of Massachusetts and the fourth volume The Correspondence of Thomas Hutchinson covering the time period from November 1770 through June 1772. Within weeks, you will soon receive another weighty addition in the form of The Minutes of the Dartmouth (MA) Monthly Meeting of Friends, 1699—1785, in two volumes, each about 700 pages! Local historical societies usually keep their treasures under lock and key in some venerable building on the town green open for a few hours on alternate Wednesdays or whenever some aging volunteer can be persuaded to come and sit there alone for a time. Not so the Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society! Though still an all-volunteer organization with no professional staff, they have embarked on an ambitious campaign of web publishing, Their first undertaking was to transcribe and post on the Internet the records of their local Quaker meeting, a religious group with a much greater presence in southeastern Massachusetts than elsewhere in the Commonwealth. The records, in excellent condition, date from 1699 and continue on well into the twentieth century, covering a region from the Rhode Island border to New Bedford. They include the usual documentation of births, deaths, and marriages, but the monthly meeting was also charged with responsibility for the discipline of wayward members and accounting for the community’s receipts and expenditures.

Toby Hall first made us aware of the efforts of the DHAS and suggested we assist them in making this remarkable series of intact records better known by publishing the eighteenth-century section of the whole. After all, the Colonial Society, although it has published many Congregational and Anglican records, had never undertaken anything to do with Quakers, a willful neglect that may extend back to the unfortunate---but persistent--- Mary Dyer. Nor had we paid much attention to southeastern Massachusetts, taking the usual Bostonian point of view that the region was all pine barrens and cranberry bogs. It would seem an easy business to take someone else’s transcriptions, annotate them, and stick on an introduction, but the process proved far more complicated than this editor assumed. There were considerable difficulties in taking what the DHAS had already posted on the Net and turning it into a file our printers could use, and in particular, there was a pesky column on the side of the page whose headings absolutely refused to align with the appropriate material alongside. (I hope when the books arrive you take a moment to admire that column; it is the end result of many tears and much swearing by our talented book designer, Paul Hoffman, and me. I always thought Paul, with whom I have worked since the Silver volume, was unflappable, but this Quaker project, seems to have driven him into a well deserved retirement!)

Nevertheless, I think you will enjoy dipping into these two volumes. You will find plenty instances of drunkenness, fornication, and bastardy, offenses against "plainness," complaints of sharp business practice, and the slander of fellow Friends. The Quakers’ pacifist beliefs also meant that they were forbidden to serve in the militia or profit from war-making in any way, either by repairing guns for soldiers, owning or serving aboard privateers, or even purchasing goods that had been seized from enemy ships. The Records of the Dartmouth Monthly Meeting are a remarkable treasure trove for both social historians and genealogists alike and provide a privileged view into the daily lives of these hardy settlers eking out a subsistence on rocky soils (if you don’t believe me just make an excursion to Dartmouth to admire the miles of stone walls that line the town’s roads) while still trying to imitate, in their own way and time, the practices of earliest primitive Christian churches.

When I first became editor in 1993, my predecessor Fritz Allis left me a remarkably clear desk. He had committed the Society to only one volume yet unprinted. Thus, I had the enviable opportunity of casting about for worthy projects for the Colonial Society to undertake. Bernard Bailyn was among the attendees of a meeting we convened to brainstorm for ideas, and I remember saying to him that although Malcolm Frieberg had transcribed most of the material from the letter books at the Massachusetts Archives, he had never taken the next step to annotate and publish them. Wasn’t it a shame that although scholars could consult the transcripts at the MHS---and many did---such a rich historical source wasn’t more readily available? Maybe I should complete the project? Bailyn leaned back from the table, regarding me with his characteristic his quizzical gaze: “Did I want to spend the rest of my professional career working on Thomas Hutchinson?” And so I have, but I can report that the work is just about complete. The fifth and final volume of Hutchinson’s American correspondence will appear probably in the early spring of 2023, just under thirty years later. I should also add that at that point I will have actually caught up with the 250th anniversary of the events his letters describe. So if you would like to read a letter a day at the breakfast table, you can read exactly what Hutchinson was thinking as he careened his way toward the disaster of the Boston Tea Party.

Volume 5 is full of drama and incident. The proliferation of committees of correspondence throughout the province prompted Hutchinson to make a major speech at the opening of the General Court in January,1773, laying out his understanding of the relationship between the colonies and Parliament. (A bad idea!) The speech prompted a series of rejoinders and counter rejoinders that dragged on throughout the winter, exasperating his mild-mannered superior Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state, who rebuked Hutchinson for initiating the controversy. No sooner had that matter died down, then Samuel Adams announced he had in his possession “letters of an extraordinary nature” written by Hutchinson and others who sought to undermine the Massachusetts constitution. When eventually published, the letters, which appeared to have been stolen from the files of a highly-placed English official after his death, did not support the wild rumors Adams and others had propagated, yet the damage was done and the legislature petitioned the crown for his removal. Hutchinson asked for leave to go to England to defend himself, but before permission arrived, news of the Tea Act reached Boston precipitating a new crisis. Hutchinson’s refusal to allow the tea to be returned to England led directly to dumping it in the harbor, and, in turn, to the passage of Coercive Acts by Parliament. Hutchinson felt powerless before the storm of controversy he had aroused and left Massachusetts on June 1, 1774, ostensibly to report on American affairs in London, but in reality never to return.

I am afraid I have not done so well at clearing off my desk for Sally Hadden as Fritz Allis did for me. There are at least six projects under way in various states of completion. First up will be The Writings of Daniel Gookin edited by David Hall and Adrian Weimer. Gookin was Superintendent of the Praying Indians both during and after King Phillip’s War. He traveled extensively among Native American villages and wrote some of our best descriptions and most sympathetic accounts of what he saw there. Ken Minkema has put together a team comprised of Francis Bremer, Kathryn Grey, and David Lupher that will capitalize on the success of 400th Anniversary edition of Of Plimoth Plantation by bringing out an additional volume: William Bradford: His Correspondence, Dialogues, and Other Writings. Tom Knoles continues to work away industriously transcribing that rich trove of Salem local history and the intellectual life of the early Republic, The Diary of William Bentley, Unitarian minister and polymath, a work so extensive that it will only be published digitally. Chris Jedrey is finding time away from his legal duties to produce, together with Ken Minkema, a revised and annotated edition of William Hubbard's A General History of New England, a work probably written around 1689, but not published until 1815, and now quite hard to find. You will have to wait longer for the last two titles, The Memoirs of Josiah Cotton & Allied Documents edited by Douglas Winiarski and The Account Books of John Hull edited by David Hancock and Mark Peterson. Those editors are currently submerged by other responsibilities, but have reassured us that they intend to return to the work eventually, in Mark Peterson’s case, perhaps as early as next year.

The Colonial Society has existed for 130 years, and I have been your editor for 30 of those years. During that time, we have brought out 33 volumes, and I emphasize we, because this has been a corporate, and not a personal, endeavor. It would not have been possible without a background of increasingly strong financial support, thanks to the prudent financial management of our officers and Loring, Wolcott & Coolidge. But I also want to stress the time and expertise volunteered so generously by many of you seated here in this room (as well as other good friends now deceased, especially Pauline Maier, a great supporter of the Society’s publications, who particularly enjoyed occasions like tonight). The Colonial Society brings out its unrivaled series of publications on a shoe-string budget with a staff of one. Other comparable societies, have many more personnel dedicated exclusively to publication, yet produce fewer books of less enduring usefulness. Although our policy may well warrant review, during my time at the Society, no volume editor was been paid for the endless hours they have spent on our behalf. (We assumed the glory was enough!) Our achievements are only possible because so many of you over the years have said “yes,” when I have called asking you to review a manuscript for free, or speak before one of our gatherings, or serve on a committee. And perhaps because of this, it is one of the most collegial scholarly organizations I know, free of jealousies and back-biting. A safe harbor of good fellowship and good manners in a cantankerous world.

In addition to printing 33 well designed and handsomely printed books during my time as editor, we have greatly expanded out readership, by making all our publications available through our website (No one had heard of doing such a thing in 1993 when I took on the job!) In the not so distant past, the only way you could read our volumes, if you did not own a copy yourself, was to visit one of the few academic libraries (perhaps under 100?) that maintained a complete run of our publications. I salute the Council’s decision to publish on the Internet for free, and not to place materials behind a pay-wall. It was the right thing to do in terms of access, and more and more of the scholarly organizations that do charge, I predict, will remove those paywalls in the near future. Requiring readers to pay to consult our works would have severely reduced the tremendous growth of our readership that now numbers close to a million page views coming from all around the world.

Sally Hadden seems to me just the right person to carry on our traditions into a new age, especially given her extensive contacts in the world of early American history and hands-on experience in historical editing. Particularly relevant is the technological expertise that she has developed in our joint publishing project with the Ames Foundation of the online publication of the records of the Massachusetts Superior Court of Judicature, one of the fullest collections of colonial court documents in North America, covering the entirety of the eighteenth century. Although I hope the Colonial Society will continue to publish fine books of archival quality, we are undoubtedly at a juncture where digital publications will become an increasingly important part of our future, but whether our publications appear digitally or in print matters less than that we stay true to our mission making the documentary record of early Massachusetts widely available to all readers in pains-takingly accurate transcriptions complete with scholarly annotation.

I am not given to rabble-rousing speeches, but I beg your indulgence tonight, since this is my last opportunity to appear before you: please stay true to our historic mission. We are fortunate to have a narrow one. Despite the vagaries of the stock market, the Society has undoubtedly grown richer during my time here, and those riches make it tempting to branch out in our endeavors. We must be on guard against “mission creep.” I watch with some alarm as similar institutions stray into activities far from their founding purposes. Libraries become coffee shops. Fine arts museums, not wanting to seem elitist, are reluctant to make distinctions between the fashionably ephemeral and works of enduring value. Respected universities seek to create sanitized versions their histories, by removing names that remind people of ancient wrongs. The Colonial Society will not be able to reform history education in this country single-handedly. “Civic discourse” will go on without our two-cents worth, even if the discourse at the moment seems remarkably uncivil. Nor should we become the “go-to” funding source for other less prosperous organizations with allied, but fundamentally different, purposes. If we are embarrassed by a positive bank balance, let’s redouble our publication efforts.

We live in an era when “history” is often employed for polemical effect with scant regard to evidence. Our documentary editions are the building blocks of a good history. Our mission isn’t particularly sexy, but it is, nonetheless, essential to maintaining high standards in academic research and preventing the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the past.

I see no signs that in our work since 1892 we have exhausted the supply of documents worthy of publication. In vaults, in file cabinets, in attics and, alas, even in basements, throughout the Commonwealth, there are ledgers, diaries, church records, and stacks of folded letters carefully tied with ribbon awaiting inspection by someone knowledgeable enough to understand the secrets they contain and the value they might have to other historians.

Let me also say a word in favor of complete annotation. Every day we see examples of words from the past misused or misunderstood by politicians, by the news media, or online sources that purport to be authoritative. Establishing and disseminating a correct text is a valuable service, but it is less than half the job, as any documentary editor will tell you. Some publishers regard footnotes as a distraction for the reader. I believe they can restore lost meaning and are absolutely crucial to understanding proper context. Too many organizations in a rush to get information out there, print or post materials without explanatory materials. Don’t succumb to the temptation to publish texts without annotation!

Documentary editing is slow, painstaking work that must be done with attention to the most minute detail. Even when the labor is finally complete, the prospects of sales for documentary editions are so tiny that even university presses won’t take them on. We are the publisher of last resort, and how fortunate we are that a few well-to-do, scholarly gentlemen, sitting around a dinner table in 1892, saw the value in such a purpose.

So I welcome a new era and a new editor. After tonight I will try to keep my comments to myself, step back from an active role in the Society’s affairs, but I hope we will remain true to goals are founders set out for us (and here I quote freely from our charter): “to propagate knowledge of the lives and deeds of the early residents of Massachusetts by the publication of ancient documents and records; to cultivate an interest in the history of our country, especially of the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay; to encourage individual research and to promote intelligent discussion of events in which the people of our Commonwealth have been concerned in order that justice may be done to participants and false claims silenced [language I particularly like!], and to inspire among our members a spirit of fellowship based upon proper appreciation of our common past.”

Thank you. It has been a great privilege to be your editor for the last thirty years.

**Report of the President, Robert Allison**

Welcome new Members, welcome back long-term Members, to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts’ 130th Annual Meeting. Our mission to preserve and publish early American history, particularly the history of New England, to encourage scholarship in early American history, and to foster collegial bonds among those who care about history, has never been more important. Thanks to our Members’ generous support, the Colonial Society has never been more able to continue this work.

We have heard tonight about the exciting range of publications to expect in the coming year. We have heard about the work of our curator and the House Committee, to preserve 87 Mount Vernon Street and its furnishings, and to tell the story of the House and its inhabitants. All of this is made possible by the generosity of our Members, both by financial support and by volunteering to do the Society’s work.

Thanks to Anne Cecere and our Events Committee we have hosted an impressive range of programs this year, a parade of books and ideas, beginning most recently with Jane Nylander’s new book, *The Best Ever,* on New England’s parades. Fellow-Member Robert Bellinger shared his research into African-American and African foodways—“Gardens of the Enslaved.” Cornelia Dayton shed new light on Phillis Wheatley, whose book of poetry arrived in Boston 249 years ago this month, on one of the ships bringing the ill-fated East India tea to market here. Bob Gross joined us to talk about his new *Transcendentalists and their World.* In this room Susan Lively sat down to talk with Mary Bilder about *Female Genius,* and the unlikely connection between Eliza Harriot and George Washington. Betsy Klimasmith’s discussion of her *Urban Rehearsals and Novel Plots* led to a proposal to stage, or at least read, some of the dramas popular in the early American city here at 87 Mount Vernon Street.

Dramatic readings will be very much in tune with our April meeting, when the early-music duet Lyracle, performed a concert of love and drinking songs, to a sublime setting of the 23rd Psalm, with brief commentary by Barbara Lambert, editor of our two volumes on *Music in Colonial Massachusetts.*  Lyracle had thanked the Colonial Society for making these books available free and on-line, which allowed them to create this early-music program, which they performed in this room, singing and playing tunes first heard when the timbers framing this house were still growing.

Our second Donald Friary Conversation (a title more appropriate than “lecture”) featured Jane Kamensky, Chernoh Sesay, and Sarah Pearsall discussed changing views of the American Revolution. Join us on May 18, 2023 for our third Friary Conversation, with Joyce Chaplin, Asheesh Siddique from the University of Massachusetts, and Jane Hooper from George Mason University discussing the global reach of early New England.

We look forward to more imaginative programs—on food and music, parades and poetry, drama and politics and philosophy, and subjects unthought of, in the coming years.

This Fall we presented our first John Winthrop Prize, created through the generosity of Member John Winthrop, as a way to recognize and encourage scholarship on the 17th-century. Frank Bremer has artfully chaired the committee, along with Peter Mancall, Heather Miyano Kopelson, Lisa Wilson, Tad Baker—in any given year, any of them a candidate for the award. The first recipients, Lisa Blee and Jean O’Brien’s *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit,* received an original painting of Osamequin, (also known as Massasoit), as well as a bust of Governor Winthrop, which will be duplicated for subsequent winners of the Winthrop Prize.

Last year’s Walter Muir Whitehill Prize was awarded to Nina Dayton for her essay on Phillis Wheatley, and this year’s was awarded to Erik Nordbye from Harvard Divinity School for his article on the Great Awakening in Canterbury, Connecticut. The Colonial Society awards the Whitehill Prize in honor of our fourth editor of publications (1946-1978). Thanks to the members of that committee: Mary Beth Norton, David Hall, and Fred Anderson, for their work in selecting the recipient, and Jonathan Chu, the NEQ editor, for prescreening the best essays. And thank you to Joyce Chaplin, who will be succeeding Fred Anderson on the Whitehill Prize Committee.

Eric Nordbye’s work on the Great Awakening first came to our notice when he presented it at our 2020 Graduate Student Forum. The Forum is our premiere way of supporting the work of rising scholars, and it has become a tremendous showcase for new scholarly directions in early American history. Erik Nordbye’s Whitehill Prize is one indication. The July issue of *William and Mary Quarterly,* was another. Graduate Forum alumni wrote the lead article, two of the book reviews, and three of the books being reviewed. Two graduate forum alums will present at our Stated Meetings this next year, including fellow-member Ted Andrews, who is also our 2022 New England Regional Consortium Fellow. If conversation lags when we adjourn to the next room, visit the growing collection of books by Graduate Forum alumni.

Thanks to Ann Little, who will be succeeding Marla Miller as Graduate Forum organizer, and to Marla, Alice Nash, Susan Lively, and Bob Gross for their work on the Forum. This year the highlights were dinner in the courtyard with the graduate students and Society Members, and a day of conversation and discussion moderated by Jonathan Chu. We look forward to next year’s Forum, which Annette Gordon-Reed will moderate on May 25 and 26. And in January 2023 the organizers have partnered with the NEQ to offer a workshop for graduate students, “Grad School Confidential,” on publishing your first journal article.

An unexpected sign of our scholarly outreach came last December, when we received a very generous donation from Jeffrey Griffith, a recent Ph.D. from the Claremont Graduate School in California. He told us that our digitized publications made possible his research into Massachusetts history, which culminated in his dissertation, “God Save the Commonwealth: Massachusetts Election Sermons and a Revolutionary World.” His generous donation was a way to thank us for our support. I am pleased to report that Jeffrey Griffith is now a life-member of the Society.

To ensure that more young scholars discover early American history, Charlie Newhall, Gorman Lee, Rashaun Martin, and the K-12 committee are planning a teaching institute next summer, to have teachers prepare lesson plans to get our publications into the curriculum. Alice Nash and our education committee have met to begin planning a Colonial Society teachers institute, recognizing that we have the primary sources and the scholarly heft to support it.

Nina Howland generously gave the Colonial Society this house with the hope that it would facilitate our scholarly work, and that the House itself could become a locus of inquiry. This year from October to June we have opened the House to visitors on the first Sunday of every month. Thanks to Robert Mussey and the House Committee for keeping 87 Mount Vernon so presentable, and to our Members and other volunteers who help show it to our guests. More than three hundred visitors from across the globe, and from across the street, have come inside to learn about the House, its residents, about William Ellery Channing, and about the work of the Colonial Society.

Our Members do the Society’s work. The editors of our books (though not the Editor of Publications), the organizers of our Graduate Forum, our speaking programs, the Friary Conversation, the awarding of prizes, our minute-taker, the planners of preservation of the House and its furnishings, the managers our finances, are all members as volunteers. Thank you all for your generous contributions of time, and generous contributions to the Annual Fund, which sustain the Colonial Society’s continuing mission to share the history of early New England, America, and the world.

