

Proceedings of the Semi-annual Meeting

APRIL 18, 1951

AT THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES, BOSTON

THE semi-annual meeting of the American Antiquarian Society was held at the Club of Odd Volumes, 77 Mount Vernon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, April 18, 1951, at 10.45 o'clock. Samuel Eliot Morison, President of the Society, presided at the meeting. The following members were present:

John McKinstry Merriam, George Parker Winship, Clarence Saunders Brigham, Samuel Eliot Morison, Daniel Waldo Lincoln, Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe, Russell Sturgis Paine, James Melville Hunnewell, Stephen Willard Phillips, Stewart Mitchell, Edward Larocque Tinker, Claude Moore Fuess, Foster Stearns, Clifford Kenyon Shipton, Theron Johnson Damon, Keyes DeWitt Metcalf, Albert White Rice, Hamilton Vaughan Bail, William Greene Roelker, Henry Rouse Viets, Walter Muir Whitehill, Samuel Foster Damon, William Alexander Jackson, Roger Wolcott, Ernest Caulfield, George Russell Stobbs, Arthur Adams, Richard LeBaron Bowen, Bertram Kimball Little, Carleton Rubira Richmond, Philip Howard Cook, Theodore Bolton, I. Bernard Cohen, Harris Dunscombe Colt, Jr., Elmer Tindall Hutchinson.

The Secretary read the call for the meeting, and it was voted to dispense with the reading of the records of the Annual Meeting of October, 1950.

The Director read the report of the Council. It was voted to accept the report and refer it to the Committee on Publications.

The election of new members being in order, the President announced the following recommendations by the Council for membership in the Society:

Lyman Henry Butterfield, Princeton, N. J.

Arthur Harrison Cole, Cambridge, Mass.

George Talbot Goodspeed, Boston, Mass.

William Hutchinson Putnam, Hartford, Conn.

Raymond Phineas Stearns, Urbana, Ill.

The President appointed Messrs. Jackson, Bail, and Colt a committee of three to distribute and collect ballots. The committee reported that a majority of the ballots cast were in favor of the nominees and they were declared elected.

Papers were read by I. Bernard Cohen, of Cambridge, on "Ethan Allen Hitchcock of Vermont, Soldier, Humanitarian, and Scholar," and by Theodore Bolton, of New York, on "The Book Illustrations of F. O. C. Darley."

Mr. John M. Merriam then read the following communication:

The first era of our constitutional government was under the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony brought here by John Winthrop in the *Arbella* in 1630, and annulled by writ of quo warranto in London in 1684. In the record of this period of prime importance in our early history there are two outstanding personalities.

The first is Thomas Danforth, one of the six orphaned children of Nicholas Danforth from Framlingham, Suffolk, England, brought to Newe Towne in 1634. Josiah Quincy, President of Harvard, refers to him as "the earliest, most steadfast and faithful of all its friends" serving for many years as Treasurer. Thomas Hutchinson, a royal governor, and also historian of the Bay Colony, says of him, he had "a great share in managing the public affairs in the most difficult times." And John G. Palfrey in his *History of New England* refers to "the task of steering the straining vessel in those stormy times" and adds "more than any

other man then living in Massachusetts Thomas Danforth was competent to the stern occasion."

And we find in Palfrey the text of a statement signed "Phileroy Philopatris" of which Danforth is quoted, as the author:

Our civil government is as the cabinet to keep and preserve the precious jewel of religion, which is our life; therefore we cannot consent to part with it, whatever we may suffer; it is better to suffer than to sin and suffer too. But we hope that God will incline the heart of our gracious King to have pity and compassion upon us . . . if not, to give us courage, faith, and patience to suffer what God in his holy will shall bring upon us. Some wise men and faithful subjects in this land . . . say that this charter is the principal bond and ligament whereby this people are obliged to him [the King] and his successors, as subjects; and if the patent be once dissolved by his Majesty, against this people's will, and without their fault, what other bond remain to oblige them to him as subjects?

This last sentence expressing the conviction of earnest men in 1682 is pregnant it seems to me with the Declaration of Independence which came in 1776.

The other personality to whom I refer is Edward Randolph, described by Justin Winsor as "the evil genius of New England who appeared on the scene prepared for mischief." Here is his record compiled from Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*:

The British government sent him to the New England colonies in 1675 to ascertain their condition. He arrived in June, 1676 . . . and at once began to menace the trade and the charter of Massachusetts, demanding of Gov. Leverett that the letter he bore from the king should "be read with all convenient speed to the magistrates." . . . Randolph returned to England after six weeks' stay in the colonies, and by exaggerating their population fourfold, and their wealth to a still greater extent, induced the English government to retain him in its employment. In the course of nine years he made eight voyages to this country, each time taking back false reports of its condition and presenting stronger reasons for the taxation and opporession of the colonies. He was enrolled as collector of customs in December, 1679, and twice within the next three years visited England to assist in directing measures against Massachusetts. A writ of quo warranto was issued in July, 1683, Massachusetts was arraigned before an English tribunal, and in October Randolph arrived in Boston with the writ. In June, 1684, the charter was adjudged to be conditionally forfeited.

He is particularly bitter in his report of the position of Danforth. He sends back a paper entitled "Articles of High Misdemeanor exhibited against a Faction in the General Court sitting in Boston 15th February

1682, namely against Thomas Danforth, Daniel Gookin" and other magistrates and deputies.

He writes "I will readily pass the seas to attend at Whitehall, especially if Danforth, Gookin and Nowell, Magistrates, and Cooke, Hutchinson and Fisher, Members of the General Court, and great opposers of the honest Governor and Magistrates, be sent for to appear before his Majesty," and he writes that by "extraordinary feats and cozenage" Danforth has got "great estate in land" which might be forfeited by sufficient fine. This refers to the 17000 acre grant, "Danforth Farms," later included in the area of Framingham.

Here is an extract from another letter. "His Majesty's quo warranto against this charter, sending for Thomas Danforth, Samuel Nowell and others to appear and answer the articles of high misdemeanor, I have now exhibited against them . . . will make the whole faction tremble."

Palfrey says, referring to Randolph, "His impatience became every day more uncontrollable." He writes "Now his Majesty's letters are no more regarded than Gazettes. . . . It's not in the power of the Governor and those few honest gentlemen in the government to give his Majesty satisfaction, being overvoted and run down by Mr. Danforth and his party."

With this introduction let me now read the letter from Danforth to Randolph as quoted in a footnote in Palfrey's *New England*, and there referred to as "characteristic." It is dated 2-2-83 (April 2, 1683, new style).

Sir:—You are now committing yourself to God's protection upon the mighty seas. I shall only commend and leave with you this one word of counsel. If God doth give you like visit as he did to Laban (Gen. XXXI. 24), be not worse than he appears to be (verse 29). God hath made you an eye and ear witness of the sincere desire of this poor people, with whom you have sojourned some years, to serve God and honor the King. Resolve not, therefore, to be an enemy to them who have done you no wrong (lest the Lord say of you as is expressed Exod. IX. 16), I beg of you to read the nine first verses of the ninth of Acts, and muse seriously thereon in the night season, when you feel God's Holy Spirit communing with your soul. Excuse me, I beg your pardon.

I have found the original of this letter in our Archives. In this original there is this introduction omitted by Palfrey:

Our honored Governor not coming to court on Saturday last, I had not opportunity to mention to him that matter you spake to me off; but being well assured of his Readiness, I do therefore give you this account.

Palfrey intimates that this letter may not have been sent. But the wrapper is on file with the letter in our Archives. It is addressed "Hon. Edw Randolph, Esq." and bears an endorsement "Prsent." There is a filing memorandum on the margin "Letter to Ed. Randolph 1683 from Mr. Danforth" and there are the pencilled words "Found in Attick." The connection of the omitted paragraph with what follows is a matter of conjecture. The Governor referred to is Simon Bradstreet, who was willing to consent to the annulment of the charter being satisfied that nothing could prevent it. Possibly the connection may be that the Governor would join in the message which follows. But whatever conclusions we may draw from these additional sources it surely is "characteristic" of the writer Thomas Danforth and of the times.

I had the pleasure this last summer in my fifth visit to Framlingham to present photostatic copies of these originals to the Parish Council to be preserved in the Museum of Antiquities in Ipswich, and I now have the pleasure of presenting them to our own library with this memorandum.

At the close of the meeting, the Society was invited to luncheon by Mr. Richard LeBaron Bowen at the Club of Odd Volumes.

DANIEL W. LINCOLN,
Recording Secretary

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