

HISTORY
of the
DEANE WINTHROP HOUSE

WINTHROP, MASSACHUSETTS



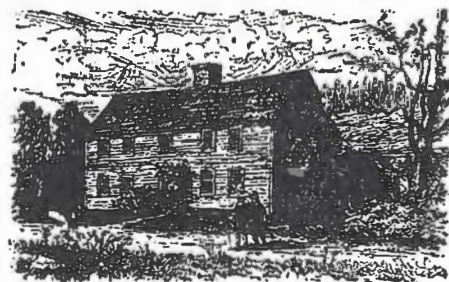
Built in 1637



WINTHROP IMPROVEMENT
AND HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

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JOHN WINTHROP
Our first Governor - 1630

The Deane Winthrop House

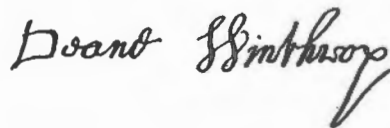
The Deane Winthrop House was built by Captain William Peirce, at least in part, probably in 1637, the oldest house now standing in what was the old Boston and one of the very oldest houses in New England. A most excellent farm house of its day, it never pretended to be a mansion but we may doubt if another house can be found in this country whose owners during nearly three centuries present a more splendid galaxy of names.

Captain William Peirce was "one of the most esteemed and accomplished navigators of his

day." He commanded three of the ships which brought over the Puritans and was master of the Mayflower on her voyage from England to Salem in 1629. On intimate terms with Governors Braford and Winslow of the Plymouth Colony, he was also entrusted with most important commissions by Governors Winthrop and Endicott of the Bay Colony. Among the celebrated people who crossed the Atlantic with him were Governor Winthrop's wife and son John, Myles Standish, John Eliot, Roger Williams, Rev. John Wilson and Sir Richard Saltonstall. The Captain prepared the copy for the first book published in the Colonies: "An Almanack for the year 1639 calculated for New England by William Peirce, Mariner." He was one of the first Selectmen of Boston, Governor Winthrop's name leading the list of ten, chosen in 1634. Captain Peirce had a house on the north side of State Street, Boston, at the corner of Change Avenue, then Peirce's Alley, and in 1637 was one of the fifteen men to whom the portion of Boston known as "Pullin Point" now Winthrop, was allotted by the new town of Boston. The buildings were probably built at this time. The house was set facing exactly south and placed on the aboriginal track or trail, now represented by Shirley Street. The allotment consisted of the easterly, central, and southerly portions of the present Winthrop Highlands extending some 1000 feet south of the old house well into what is now the Golf Club grounds, containing about 100 acres. The Captain was killed by the Spaniards in the

West Indies in 1641, and his widow, Bridget and son, William conveyed the farm and buildings to Deane Winthrop in 1647.

Deane Winthrop was born in Groton Manor England, in 1623, the sixth and youngest son of our first Governor, the illustrious John Winthrop by his third wife, Margaret Tyndall. The young Deane was named for his mother's half brother, Sir John Deane.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deane Winthrop". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

His signature -- His picture is not extant

It would seem that Governor Winthrop did not bring his family over with him on the first trip, his wife and oldest son John (afterward Governor of Connecticut), coming in November, 1631, with Captain Peirce, and Deane, who had remained at school, coming on the "Abigail" in 1635, with his brother John, on his second voyage.

In 1647, then twenty-four years of age, Deane became the owner of Great Head, Point Shirley and the beaches, which had been allotted to his father ten years before, making his holdings more than two miles in length. (Note the sign on Shirley Street at Great Head erected

by the Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary Commission in 1930 saying —

“Governor Winthrop House:

“Site of house erected by Governor Winthrop about 1634 and occupied for a time previous to 1647 by his son Deane, who established on the near-by hill a ship signalling station by hoisting a bush on the top of a pole.”)

He was married, probably during the year of the transfer of the two farms, to Sarah, daughter of Rev. Jose Glover, step-daughter of President Dunster of Harvard College. Nine children were born to them, four of whom died in infancy. Deane and his son, Jose, were members of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company and each served the Town of Boston on committees and as officials. His daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth, Priscilla and Mercy became the wives respectively of Jotham Grover, Samuel Kent, Elisha Adams and Atherton Haugh. All of the children died before 1704, the date of Deane Winthrop's death.

Judge Sewall writes fully of his attending the wedding of Mercy Winthrop in the west room of the old house in 1699, when other notables of that day were present.

Deane Winthrop's children were baptized in the First Church of Boston, its meeting house then being where is now 209 Washington Street, near the head of State Street. His

daughters, Margaret and Mercy, were married by pastor Willard of the Old South Church.

Deane Winthrop made Pullin Point his home, but was absent occasionally on various enterprises. He was with his brother, John, at Ipswich, Mass., in 1637, in 1646 at New London, Connecticut, and in 1655 he was one of the founders of the Town of Groton, Mass., although there is no record of his ever living there. He was also active in the settlement of the Town of Lancaster, Mass. He was chairman of a committee appointed by the Selectmen of Boston in 1698 to lay out a road, from what is now “Church Square” in Revere, to and through “Pullin Point,” our first official road following the locus of the old Nanepashemet Indian trail.

Jose Winthrop was constable and once served on a committee to define the Boston town lines, which then ran as far as Reading.

On his 81st birthday, March 16, 1704, Deane Winthrop died. Judge Sewall and many other notables attended the funeral, the burial being in the old graveyard of 1675 (not far from the present Masonic Building in Revere), where his headstone may still be seen. (There is a record that Madam Paige (daughter of the famous Capt. Kayne—and of fame also in her own right) came to Deane Winthrop's funeral from her residence at North Revere “in her coach,” this being the first record of a carriage coming down our peninsula.)

Judge Sewall, a most useful, devout and notable citizen of Boston, in his day won undying fame and credit as a diarist, and to him we are indebted for the record of a thousand things and much information of our locality, geographical, descriptive and personal. He owned as a country estate or farm what we now call Orient Heights, including the great area from Noddle's Island and Chelsea Creek to Beachmont and Winthrop, so was our near neighbor. He then called it Belle Isle—its earliest name was "Susannah" and its later, Breed's Island. It may not be digressing too far to make note of this famous location and this more famous man as Deane Winthrop's friend and neighbor. And we should also notice Deane's other neighbors to the north, also of fame, the Aspinwall, Penn, Townsend, Sale families and their farm—what we now know as Beachmont—and his principal other neighbor family and farms, that of the Bill's, running southwesterly of Deane's holdings, to the Harbor.

Deane Winthrop had married, second, in 1699, the widow, Martha Mellow, who survived and lived in the house with her slave woman, Moreah, until 1716. (Just to make a record of a fact not known to a half dozen people now living, let us note down that the slaves were buried—and their remains now happily repose—in the "Negro Burying Ground" not far from the northerly end of Winthrop Street on a bit of rising ground now fenced in by Fort Banks.) Deane Winthrop's will was dated 29 December,

1702. Wait Winthrop and Adam Winthrop, his nephew and grandnephew, respectively, were named as executors. By his will, three slaves, oxen, sheep, guns, furniture, etc., and the farm were left to his grandchildren, John Grover and Deane Grover, sons of Jotham and Margaret Grover; Priscilla Haugh, daughter of Atherton and Mercy Haugh; and Priscilla Adams, daughter of Elishah and Priscilla Adams. The house and farm were leased until these children were grown up and married, and then John Grover, who we believe now lived in the old house, bought the shares of his brother, Deane Grover, and of his cousin, Priscilla Haugh, who had become the wife of Hezekiah Butler. The one-fourth part owned by Priscilla Adams was conveyed by her and her husband, Samuel Royal, to Joseph Belcher. (It is fair to note here the "arrival" of the well known and prolific Belcher family, who, with the Tewksburys who came about that time also, and the Floyds who came about a century later, have had a notable and honorable part in Winthrop's history to the present moment.)

On the 2nd day of December, 1720 "and in the seventh year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George, King of Great Britain," John Grover and Joseph Belcher made a division of the Deane Winthrop farm, Grover taking the three hills towards the north and the marsh west of the beach, and Belcher, Point Shirley, Great Head, and the beach up to the old "Beach Bars" near where the present Locust Street joins

the Metropolitan Boulevard; also they made some agreement as to apple trees and wood and rights of way.

Later, John Grover bought other land but he died in 1747, leaving a daughter, Mary, who married Stephen Whiting, of Boston, a japanner. (Our Grover's Avenue perpetuates the name of the Grover family, as Sewall Avenue does that of Judge "Sam" Sewall.) Stephen and Mary Whiting, July 30, 1753, borrowed of James Bowdoin of Boston, then considered the richest man in the colony, 1800 pounds and conveyed by deed, as security, the entire Winthrop farm left by John Grover, on condition that if in one year a payment was made to said Bowdoin of 5,400 ounces Troy weight, coin silver alloy, the farm should be reconveyed to Mary Whiting. The silver was never paid, and thus the land and buildings which for 107 years had been owned by Deane Winthrop, his four grandchildren and his great-granddaughter, together with the addition made by John Grover, passed out of the possession of the Winthrop family.

James Bowdoin was Governor of Massachusetts in 1785 and 1786, being the second governor under the Constitution. John Hancock, the well known first governor, who at one time owned and lived in a house at Point Shirley, built on land first allotted to Governor John Winthrop, preceded and followed Governor Bowdoin as Massachusetts' chief executive.

Governor Bowdoin's only daughter, Eliza-

beth, had married Sir John Temple and when the Governor died in 1790, his large estate was divided between his son James and Lady Elizabeth, the latter becoming the owner of the farm at Pullin Point.

Sir John and Lady Elizabeth Temple's daughter, Elizabeth Bowdoin Temple married, in 1786, Lieut. Governor Thomas Lindall Winthrop, a descendant of Governor John Jr. of Connecticut, the farm thus coming back again to the Winthrop family.

Lady Temple owned the farm until her death in 1809, whereupon it became the property of her favorite granddaughter, Eliza Bowdoin Temple Winthrop who married Rev. Benjamin Tappan, D.D., of Augusta, Maine, and the title of the Winthrop farm remained in her name until 1854 when she and her husband conveyed the property to Robert C. Winthrop, et al., as Trustees. In 1866 the part of the farm called Winthrop Highlands was conveyed to the City of Boston for an insane hospital but was never used as such.

The house and some 30 acres of land were sold to Deacon David Floyd in 1854, the house and the present area to Charles S. Teel in 1864, and then to H. O. Floyd in 1870, and in 1905 his heirs leased the house and lot to the Winthrop Improvement Association, which was incorporated in 1908 under the name of the Winthrop Improvement and Historical Asso-

ciation, which then bought the house and land and since have held it.

"Captain Mugford's battle," fought at Point Shirley during the Revolutionary War, May 19, 1776, was at the Winthrop farm; there was a Revolutionary fort on this farm at Point Shirley, also an Indian fort not very far from this house. The British foraged on this farm for sheep, cattle and supplies during the siege of Boston, and in this connection the Battle of Chelsea Creek, May 27, 1775, was witnessed from here. Governor Shirley and other notable people, about 1753, built houses at Point Shirley, on this farm—and a church, the first in Winthrop. This was in connection with the considerable — although short-lived — fishing enterprise established here at that time. John Hancock, with his wife Dorothy Q. and others of note, summered here a bit later on what is now Siren Street. The battle between the Chesapeake and Shannon was witnessed from this farm on June 1, 1813, in the "war of 1812."

The house has, no doubt, in its long life and use and its varied history, been added to, and perhaps subtracted from, changed, repaired and improved, but it is the same old house and locus and it adds much interest that we can trace fairly accurately, the owners and tenants, its occupants and visitors from nobility to slaves. If its walls could speak, they would tell still more wondrous tales. Its history is the Old

New England history with the lapse of time and the enchantment that attaches to few buildings and surroundings in America.

Its great oak timbers, walls filled with brick and clay, great chimney with five fireplaces and two brick ovens, wide floor boards, ancient door hinges, wooden gun brackets and now the valuable collection of pictures, relics and records contained within the old house, together with its notable history, only touched on above, make it an invaluable asset of our community of which we may justly be proud.

May its glory never grow dim.

CHANNING HOWARD.



THE DEAN WINTHROP HOUSE

Shirley Street, Winthrop - 1942

