TURNING POINT

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

"Then, thenceforward, and forever free." The Emancipation Proclamation uses this bold phrase to describe slaves in rebel-held areas of the United States. The 1863 document, which Abraham Lincoln considered his greatest achievement, is a turning point in American history. The pen he used to sign it made its way into the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and it is just one of the 15 iconic items on view in our current exhibition, Turning Points in American History.

Pres. Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation in summer 1862 and announced in September that it would go into effect on January 1, 1863. Though its immediate impact on the practice of slavery was somewhat limited, the document made a decisive change in the country's direction. It redefined the focus of the Civil War: where the North had previously aimed to preserve the Union, now it aimed also to end slavery. The Proclamation itself did not achieve the total abolition of slavery (two years later, the 13th Amendment did), but it set the country down a just path, and there was no turning back.

It also encouraged the recruitment of black soldiers: "And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service." Massachusetts responded by raising the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the first black military unit in the North. The Society holds a great many photographs and manuscripts relating to the illustrious 54th Regiment.

Shortly before the signing, George Livermore, a Member of the MHS and an ardent abolitionist, wrote to Sen. Charles Sumner, asking him to procure the pen Lincoln would use to authorize this order. Sumner did, and Lincoln assented. On January 9, 1863, the senator wrote to his Boston correspondent,

My dear Livermore,

I read to the Prest. your letter on the Pen, & then handed it to him. He said he would accept it as yr answer, & that you need not trouble yourself to write again.

The Proclamation was not signed till after three hours of hand-shaking on New Year's Day, when the Prest. found that his hand shook trembled so that he held the pen with difficulty. The enemy would say—naturally enough, in signing such a doc't. But it is done, & the act will be firm throughout time.

The last sentence [of the Proclamation] was actually framed by [Secretary of Treasury Salmon P.] Chase, although I believe that I first suggested it both to him & to the Prest. I urged that he should close with "something about justice & God." Those words must be introduced.
Come see the very pen that signed the Emancipation Proclamation on display at 1154 Boylston Street, the headquarters of the Massachusetts Historical Society. As mentioned above, Lincoln’s fabled pen is one of 15 items that illustrate crucial moments in our nation’s story highlighted in our current exhibition, *Turning Points in American History*. The exhibition, which looks backwards through time, begins with the September 11, 2001, attacks and ends with the 1630 launch of the *Arbella*, the ship that brought John Winthrop from the shores of Old England to New England. These events, and those in between, are described in eyewitness accounts and personal records, or commemorated by “dumb witnesses”—artifacts found in the Society’s enormous collections—that tell the history of our country. It is free and open to the public Monday through Saturday, 10 AM to 4 PM, now through February 25, 2017. *Turning Points in American History* celebrates the Society’s 225th year. You can find special anniversary features on the MHS website such as a gallery of 225 treasures from our collections, which you can explore at www.masshist.org/225th/collections.

The Massachusetts Historical Society is a center of research and learning dedicated to a deeper understanding of the American experience. Through its collections, scholarly pursuits, and public programs, the Society seeks to nurture a greater appreciation for American history and for the ideas, values, successes, and failures that bind us together as a nation.
Words of Women
Living through Revolutionary Events

Two friends communicating, sharing comments and questions about their husbands, their health, their homes, and their world—timeless activities, right? Today, friends text or talk on the phone or use social media. Two hundred years ago, the handwritten letter was the main vehicle for communicating across geographic distances.

The collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society include 57 letters exchanged between Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop between 1757 and 1789. These two women not only commented upon their own personal lives but also bore witness in writing to pivotal events taking place in Massachusetts before, during, and after the American Revolution. Thanks to funding from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, the MHS has digitized their correspondence and made the materials available on our website. That access makes further activities possible, such as a recent MHS workshop at which teachers from a variety of schools explored the letters to learn about women and the American Revolution.

Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814) grew up in Barnstable, Mass., and became a noted writer of poetry, plays, and a multivolume history of the Revolution. She was the sister of James Otis, Jr., who was active and outspoken regarding the rights of the colonists. Her husband, James Warren, became a member of the Massachusetts legislature. Hannah Winthrop (ca. 1727–1790) was a widow when she married John Winthrop in 1756. Hannah and John Winthrop lived for many years in Cambridge, where John was professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Harvard College. Toward the end of his life, John Winthrop served in the Massachusetts Provincial Congress.

Throughout the letters, Mercy and Hannah acknowledge and appreciate their friendship—“that Blessed Priviledge of Conveying our thoughts by pen & ink,” as Winthrop wrote to Warren (January 20, 1776), or “our fond attachments to friends, whose . . . affection, we have no reason to think will terminate with time,” as Warren wrote to Winthrop (January 30, 1774). But they also observe the impact of the conflict between the colonists and the British troops, as when Winthrop wrote to her friend that “the destruction in Boston, The devastation in Charlestown & Cambridge, the ruin brought on many Families formerly blest with domestic happiness, can’t but Excite our commiseration” (April 2, 1776).

Correspondence documents the fact that women like Hannah Winthrop and Mercy Otis Warren were vital consumers (and boycotters) of imported goods and functioned as heads of household while their male family members served in the military or participated in government affairs. They recorded important events of the day and, in Warren’s case, interpreted those events for a public audience. Of interest to a wide audience—really anyone fascinated by the Revolution—the letters are especially useful to educators, as we saw this past summer when more than 40 came from across New England to attend a workshop at the MHS. Using documents and artifacts from the Society’s collections, as well as the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, teachers explored the daily lives of these extraordinary women and developed classroom resources that will integrate women’s history into the traditional narrative of the American Revolution.

We invite you to explore the interesting and informative letters exchanged between Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop: www.masshist.org/features/warren-winthrop.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Turning Points in American History, our current exhibition, is a wonderful introduction to the breadth of the Massachusetts Historical Society’s collection and the many stories it holds. At a gathering in celebration of this exhibition, Peter Drummey, Stephen T. Riley Librarian, presented another dozen items with equally fascinating histories. He ended his talk by remarking on the several dozen more turning points we could illustrate. American history is right here at 1154 Boylston Street.

While the Society is well known as a repository of the earliest history of America’s British settlement, it is actually 19th-century material that makes up the bulk of our holdings. A particular strength lies in our manuscripts and artifacts from the Civil War. As you can imagine, these holdings, which illustrate the conflict’s human toll, contain some of our most poignant stories. Turning Points exhibits one of our greatest artifacts from the time of that grave struggle: the pen used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

In an upcoming exhibition titled Yankees in the West, we will feature an aspect of our collections rarely seen or expected. It looks at 19th-century New Englanders’ fascination with lands and cultures west of the Mississippi, then still new to the people of the United States. Materials will include Francis Parkman’s diaries recounting life on the plains, medallic portraits of Native Americans by Edward Warren Sawyer, and accounts of visits by Native Americans from the West to Boston.

In breadth of collections that illuminate the American experience, the Society is second only to the Library of Congress. Look to us to bring you more of our little-known riches in projects to come.

NEH RENEWS LONGTERM FELLOWSHIP SUPPORT

Newcomers can be invigorating. Add an affable new face to an established institution and watch friendships sprout. Add a newcomer’s fresh insights and see how innovative ideas begin to germinate.

Every year since 2002, the Society has benefited from the arrival of scholars with fellowship support through grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Some years we have hosted as many as four MHS-NEH Fellows, although in a typical year we have welcomed two or three such guests on awards of four to twelve months. Provided studies adjacent to our reference area, they spend most of their days quietly conducting research and writing. But at dozens of brown-bag lunches, seminars, conferences, and social gatherings, they add vitality to the intellectual and social life of the Society. More often than not, they become friends of the MHS, the sorts of people we turn to in order to help us develop our own programs and publications.

We were pleased to learn this spring that the NEH has renewed its support for longterm fellowships at the Society. Each year between July 2017 and June 2020, we will host at least two fellows on MHS-NEH grants. We look forward to the opportunity to get to know them as they are taking advantage of the collections and programs they will find here. In the meantime, we are now getting to know our current fellows: Christine Desan (Harvard Law School), Manisha Sinha (University of Connecticut), and Kara Swanson (Northeastern University Law School).

SEMINARS CHANGE TO REFLECT NEW TRENDS

To shift our focus as historians’ questions change. To follow meaningful trends without becoming “trendy.” To develop programs that will be of enduring value to scholars in the region. These are the goals of the Research Department for our five seminar series, and they have led to some of the most significant alterations we have made to the program in recent years.

The renovation begins with a name change: in 2016–2017, two of the series will carry new titles. The seminar on the history of women and gender, co-sponsored with the Schlesinger Library of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, is now the Boston Seminar on the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Just as the pathbreaking field of “women’s history” grew to encompass studies of femininity, masculinity, and LGBTQ history, the seminar’s new name indicates the importance of the study of sexuality to this interrelated set of questions and methodologies for understanding the past.

Likewise, the Boston Seminar on Modern American Society and Culture is the new name of the immigration and urban history seminar. In this case, the name change acknowledges not so much a new field of inquiry as a redefinition of time-honored areas of research. Many of the questions are the same, concerning race, ethnicity, and global migration, for example. However, as scholars have increasingly contemplated the role of the suburbs, the exurbs, nationhood, citizenship, and diasporic migrations, the categories of “immigration” and “urban” have proven to be too confining.

Moreover, these categories may suggest that the seminar focuses on particular periods of American history such as the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, intense periods of
industrialization, urbanization, and European immigration. Its scholarly reach is wider, pushing on the inception of “modern” America and extending forward to the 21st century.

In truth, the seminar sessions we have offered in previous years already fit comfortably into the wider scope of these two series. The current year’s schedule is no exception. In these two series as well as our other series, the Boston Area Early American History Seminar, the Boston Environmental History Seminar, and the New England Biography Seminar, we will be presenting up to 28 sessions. These will feature essays on slavery and slave law in early Massachusetts, Irish famine relief, the transcontinental telegraph, 19th- and 20th-century industrial capitalism in the northern forest, and women and global poverty in the 1970s.

The seminars will also include an unprecedented number of new formats in response to how scholars are engaging with content and with their colleagues today: in addition to sessions that will consider a single essay or involve a moderated conversation, we will present panel discussions on topics as varied as Revolutionary War–era Loyalism; native peoples, livestock, and the environment; black feminisms; the history of sexuality; regional planning; and the digital frontier of urban history. Many of these panels will embody the state of the field as we are joined by leading scholars.

We invite you to be among the local faculty members, graduate students, and members of the public who read the precirculated essays and join us for in-depth conversations and the refreshments that follow. View our complete series at www.masshist.org/research/seminars. There is no charge to attend a session, but subscriptions are available for those who would like to receive advance online access to the papers that will be discussed.


**Illuminating Manuscripts**

In May of this year, as I retrieved an item from the Charles Edward French autograph collection, the opening date on the box struck me: 1337.

Inside the first folder resides a small vellum document with a handwriting style far more antiquated than what we usually see here at the MHS. The only clue as to its content or time period appears on the back of the document, likely added in the late 18th or 19th century: “2d Edward III. May 29, 1337.” Finding no further information, I wrote a blog post about the document for the Beehive, hoping that a reader might shed some light on it.

When MHS staff tweeted a link to the post, several medievalists—part of an active community on the platform—noticed, responded, and retweeted. Soon I received a surprise phone call on my day off; a reporter at the Boston Globe wanted to do a write-up on the document. As a result, over the next couple of days more than 30 comments appeared on the piece, many of which came in the first 24 hours! Before we knew it, we had a transcription and translation of the 1337 document. The comments told us it is a quitclaim, or land transaction, from 14th-century England, written in Latin in a Middle English script. Comments from British readers living in the area in question also provided some local context.

One commenter with knowledge of medieval manuscripts offered to come in and try to identify three pieces described in our online catalog, ABIGAIL, simply as unidentified manuscript fragments, part of a bequest given by William Sumner Appleton in 1864. After spending a couple of hours with the items in our reading room, our visitor identified two of the three fragments as pieces of two different Arthurian romances, “Yvain” and “Percival,” originally written in the 12th century. Our fragments likely come from around 1550.
Returning to the C. E. French autograph collection, I tried my hand at transcribing a Spanish-language document in the collection, dated 1474. I transcribed the piece as best I could to publish another post on the Beehive, but my blog-comment luck had run out and it received no responses. However, my new contact in the medieval-manuscript world connected me with a few medieval Spanish scholars who provided more information. We now know that the document is a letter from Queen Isabella of Castile to her cousin Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan.

The captain of the Castilian navy, Juan de Lezcano, captured two of the duke’s squires and held them as prisoners. In retaliation, Sforza seized the merchant captain Sancho Yuanes de Laris and his ship in Genoa. Pedro Ochoa de Beçi, co-owner of the ship, petitioned Isabella to intercede on de Laris’s behalf. This letter from Isabella asks Sforza to free the merchants, return all of their possessions, and provide compensation for losses they incurred. Whether he complied remains unknown.

It is amazing how quickly social media and networking can combine to illuminate stories from a distant and darkening past.

—Daniel Hinchen, MHS

CULINARY HISTORY SERIES TELLS TASTY TALES

Ask someone what foods they associate with Boston and, chances are, baked beans will rank high on their list. The city is known as Beantown, after all. Local tradition purports that baked beans were a favorite of colonial Bostonians and that the addition of molasses to the dish was a byproduct of the city’s role in the triangle trade. But the truth may be a bit more complicated—and Boston’s culinary history may have a larger national impact—than you would expect.

Before the American Revolution, Boston printers began reprinting British cookbooks. Early works by authors such as Lydia Maria Child and Mrs. Bliss offered 19th-century Americans a chance to bring refinement to their homes. But the Boston baked bean as we know it today is a Victorian invention. It wasn’t until the Colonial Revival movement in the end of the 19th century that, as Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald wrote,

Boston cooking was in essence “historicized” so that it became identified not with refinement and French-English elegance (if on a moderate scale) but with the rustic conditions of settlement, now reinterpreted through the Victorian sensibility (calling for large quantities of sweetener, primarily molasses, to be added to the “old” standard recipes, such as “Boston” baked beans and “Boston” brown bread).

Luckily, Boston’s contribution to our nation’s diet does not end here. In the first half of the 20th century, this area was
a tremendous producer of candy—by 1946, Cambridge boasted over 60 candy manufacturing companies. In the second half of the 20th century, Boston became a key center for the importation of culinary ideas from around the world. Most famously, Julia Child, a longtime Cambridge resident, brought French cooking into American living rooms by way of WGBH Boston, but she was not alone in pushing the envelope: Design Research imported northern European cookware, Joyce Chen convinced Americans they could cook Mandarin cuisine, conscientious objector Steve Herrell turned his hobby into a small store in Somerville that redefined how we think about ice cream, and Jim Koch kicked off the micro-brewery revolution.

In 2017, the MHS will host a series of programs that explore significant changes to the American diet that can be traced to Boston. No beans will be served.

**NHPRC 4 RTP**

NHPRC. It isn’t an initialism that most readers will recognize. But it is an important one in the halls of the MHS, and especially around the editorial offices on the third floor, where the Adams Papers editorial team and the editors in the Publications Department work on documentary editions. That’s because the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the funding agency of the National Archives, is one of the key supporters of many documentary editing projects in the country. NHPRC grants have supported the Adams Papers for decades, and as of this past July, a new grant to the MHS will help us complete and digitize our edition of the papers of lawyer and jurist Robert Treat Paine (1731–1814).

Another not entirely familiar entity? Mr. Paine, known here as RTP, tends to be crowded off the stage by his fellow delegates to the Continental Congress—a few Adamses in particular. Nonetheless, when the Paine family began donating papers to the MHS in the 1940s, the significance of the material was immediately apparent. The idea for an edition drawing from those collections sprang up soon thereafter.

Spanning almost seven decades, the papers collected in RTP’s name constitute a critical record of events leading up to American independence and the formation of new national laws and policy in the years following. A signer of the Declaration, RTP also served in the Provincial Congresses of Massachusetts, and after 1777 he became the first attorney general in Massachusetts and, later, an associate judge on the Supreme Judicial Court. During that quarter-century of his career he worked on the development of economic policy, the state’s constitution and code of laws, the treatment of loyalist property, and the aftermath of Shays’s Rebellion, the first armed opposition the new republic faced from within. While these topics have had the most magnetic pull on researchers in the last half-century, in more recent years scholars have also been mining his papers for evidence of 18th-century social culture and American notions of identity, including how those concepts situate women and African Americans vis-à-vis political authority.

The new support from the NHPRC will allow the MHS to complete the only modern edition of these papers—an edition that was already underway, with three of five volumes in print as of 2005. Thanks to this vote of confidence and extra funding, we have been able to dedicate an editor to this project and will complete the printed edition and create a freely accessible online edition as well. If you would like to follow our progress, check for updates on the project’s Twitter account (@RTPaine_MHS) and the Beehive, the MHS blog.
Presidents and Politics Series

This fall, while our country is in the midst of a presidential election that has defied all expectations, the MHS invites you to explore past elections with us and—we hope—achieve a better understanding of the current political moment. Our Presidents and Politics series, which started in the summer, continues with several new events. Jon Grinspan looks back at when voting turnouts reached unprecedented heights thanks to the political culture among boisterous young men and women. Alex Keyssar will ask a question that comes up every four years: “Why do we still have the Electoral College?” We will host a panel discussion led by Ted Widmer that will look at four elections during periods of crisis in America, from Lincoln’s election in a divided nation to the 1968 election that was marred by assassinations, protests, and war. Authors Robert McDonald, James Traub, Jacqueline Berger, and Richard Alan Ryerson will explore the personal experiences of presidents and first ladies. As all historians know, nothing happens in a vacuum—and it is our greatest pleasure to share the rich history that informs how we arrived at the current state of our political landscape.

Jefferson Exhibition Wins AASLH Award

Our exhibition The Private Jefferson: From the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society has been selected as an Award of Merit winner by the Leadership in History awards committee at the American Association for State and Local History. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards competition is the nation’s most prestigious for the recognition of achievements in state and local history. We are glad to thank the sponsors of the show, including Microsoft, whose technology sponsorship helped us provide rich digital content and offer guided virtual tours of the show to classrooms across America.

MHS Publication Honored

The Society received a coveted honor when Choice, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries, rated an MHS title “Highly Recommended” in its August issue. Massachusetts and the Civil War: The Commonwealth and National Disunion, published in 2015 by the University of Massachusetts Press in association with the Society, comprises 10 essays first presented at a 2013 conference at the MHS. The volume’s editors are Matthew Mason of Brigham Young University and Katheryn P. Viens and Conrad Edick Wright of the Society’s staff. Choice’s commendation brings the volume to the attention of libraries and librarians across the United States. The volume is available through the University of Massachusetts Press and can be ordered from their website: www.umass.edu/umpress.
In a sold-out event on January 28, 138 MHS Fellows and Members enjoyed remarks by Peter S. Onuf, guest curator and Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Professor, Emeritus, University of Virginia, followed by the exhibition preview and reception for *The Private Jefferson: From the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*. Due to the overwhelming popularity of the event, the MHS added a special breakfast preview on January 29 for those unable to attend the night before. Galleries opened at 9 AM and 30 MHS Fellows and Members strolled through the galleries, talked to MHS Stephen T. Riley Librarian Peter Drummey, and enjoyed breakfast treats before the doors opened to the public.

On May 12, the Society welcomed more than 270 guests to the sixth Cocktails with Clio. Hosted at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, guests enjoyed a cocktail reception followed by a seated dinner and speaking program. In a fascinating conversation, featured guests the 71st Governor of Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, and Boston radio and television personality Jim Braude delighted all in attendance with stories and experiences from Gov. Patrick’s life.

*Photographs on this page by Ilene Perlman.*
The Society’s annual business meeting took place on June 22. The Fellows of the MHS, in their role as its governing body, unanimously approved the proposed slate of Officers, including a new Chair of the Board of Trustees, Paul W. Sandman, and three new Trustees, Anne Craige McNay, John F. O’Leary, and G. Nathaniel Jeppson. The Society honored retiring Board Chair Charles C. Ames for his years of service and leadership. Retiring Trustees William C. Clendaniel and J. Peter Spang, along with former Trustees Lia G. Poorev and L. Dennis Shapiro, were elected as Trustees Emeriti. Dean Atkins, René F. Jones, and Robert G. Ripley, Jr., were elected to the Council of Overseers. The Fellows also approved the election of 13 new Fellows.

As part of the meeting, Amalie M. Kass was presented with the Jeremy Belknap Award of the Massachusetts Historical Society. In his remarks, MHS President Dennis Fiori stated, “Some years ago, the Society established the Belknap Award to recognize extraordinary contributions to its cause. It has only been presented three times. Our former Chair, Amalie Kass, embodies all of these characteristics and more. Our renaissance—a renewal of our commitment to bringing history to life for the widest possible public—began and is sustained by her enduring spirit.”

Following the meeting, guests enjoyed a reception and chance to view Turning Points in American History.

Welcome, New Trustees!

We are delighted to welcome our new trustees, Anne Craige McNay, John F. O’Leary, and G. Nathaniel Jeppson. All three bring valuable knowledge, energy, and experience in leadership and philanthropy. Former MHS Overseers Messrs. Jeppson and O’Leary, both from the world of finance, sit on the Society’s Investment and Development Committees, respectively. Ms. McNay has been trustee or director of several fine schools as well as a charitable trust.
Coming soon, a special volume of the *Massachusetts Historical Review*

**Massachusetts and the Origins of American Historical Thought**

Free for Fellows and Members
$30 for individuals
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