



THE LAND

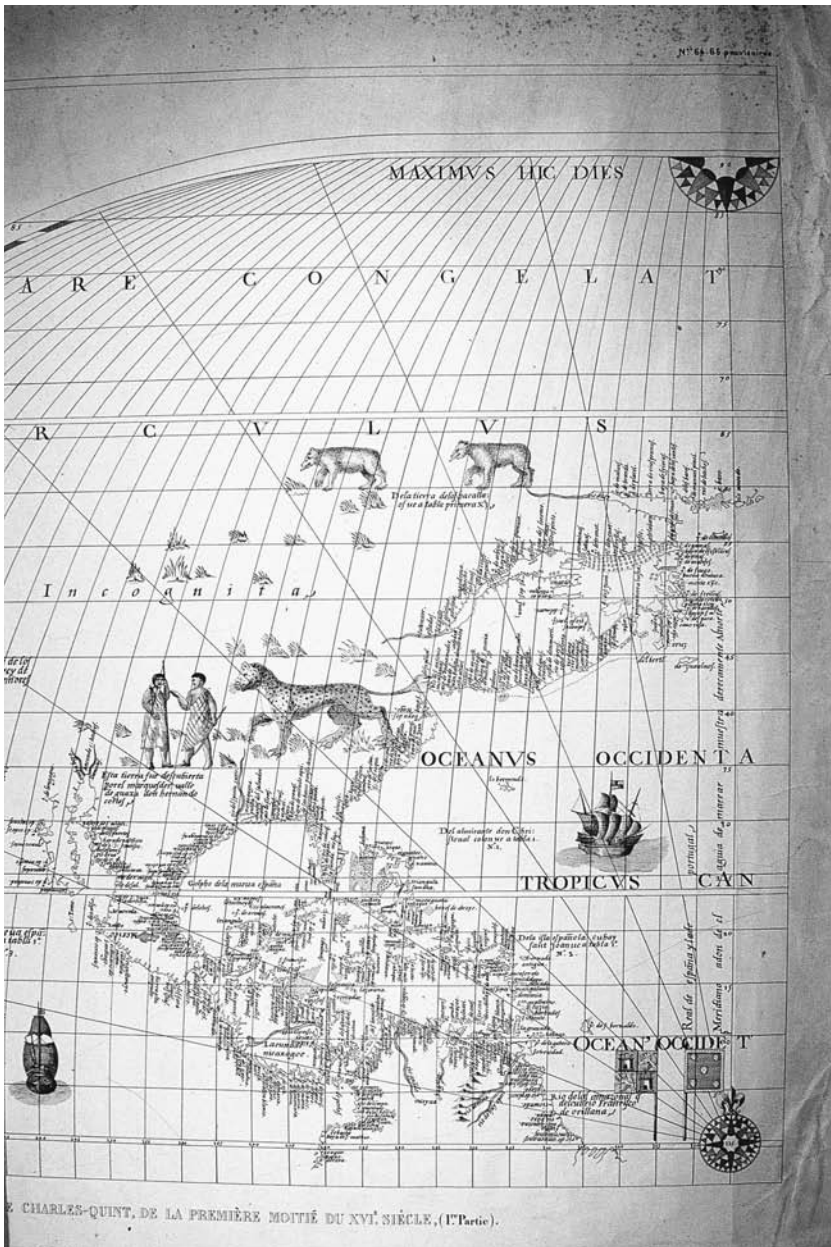
On this ground a thousand years ago, the woods embraced a people called the Massachusett. They made no books, no maps, no monuments to their achievements, no lasting record of defeats. No history of these people was described in stone or set on silk or sheepskin for posterity. No library preserved their lore. Instead, season by season, year by year, long nights around great bonfires glowed with the legends of the place, the battles won, the heroes honored. But these were only stories, as ephemeral as the flowing waters of the nearby Mystic River. With the coming of white explorers, that record started burning in the fevers of disease. Then came the crack of musket shot and the stifling language of a distant court. In a blink of geologic time, a population withered. What had been saved and shared so long was lost, the people of those legends broken. By the time the Puritans and their stern, committed few arrived to stake their claim, an eerie silence was already spread across the ground. A veil of illness lingered. More tragedy would come.

Until the 1400s, literate, seafaring civilizations understood the space beyond their knowing as but a cipher and a dream, a nightmare, really, made of falling over the earth's edge. Ancient mariners who ventured into the New World spoke of brown-skinned men and gray-blue waters full of fish. But were they to be believed? Elegant maps with whale spouts and huge monsters at their edges showed just a frightening void beyond the boundary of what they

had explored. By the 1500s it was filled. Yet even then Europeans knew more about the Caribbean and Mexico than vast territories stretching north of Florida. The famous cartographer Sebastian Cabot in 1544 showed New England and everything to the north of it as a literal *terra incognita*, filled only with grasses, bears, a mountain lion, and several Indians with sticks. While royal records in their spindly hubris and self-interest described man's greedy sweeps across the arc of Asia, Africa, and Europe, neither scholars nor explorers bothered yet to mark North America's lush acres in dark ink or fine gold leaf.

Then came fishermen, laborers, ministers, and warriors. And finally the region's history, already well advanced upon the land itself and written in the hearts and memories of a people who had made their lives upon that ground for a millennium, began to twist into another form, a form best suited to the egos and the interests of white tellers, newcomers all, armed with the great power of the pen. Almost imperceptibly, a complex history was casually erased, as though the god of memory had simply closed his eyes.

These newcomers would spin a tale of bold adventurers, men of honor and deep principle who came to settle a "new" land. Among them was a forty-two-year-old chronicler whose journals would frame and define our knowledge of this land for centuries to come. "For 350 years Governor John Winthrop's journal has been recognized as the central source for the history of Massachusetts" in its first decades, wrote Richard S. Dunn in an introduction to the Harvard University Press edition of those journals printed in 1996. Sweeping as the statement is, Dunn might have minimized the impact. For it was not just Massachusetts that the leader of the Puritans helped to define, but America's very understanding of itself. Almost inevitably, much of that understanding came from Winthrop, whom Dunn rightfully acknowledges as "both the chief actor and the chief recorder" of the Puritans' bold experiment. He left behind a body of observations and a manifesto of intention that is quoted even now, across the span of centuries. In that sense, Winthrop's writings were both a gift and the seed of a conundrum posed to later generations struggling for a broader view.



CHARLES-QUINT, DE LA PREMIÈRE MOITIÉ DU XVI. SIÈCLE, (1^{re} Partie).

1.1 Detail of World Map, 1544, showing North America as “Terra Incognita.” Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Winthrop's journal, or those parts of it that have survived the years and the vicissitudes of weather and poor treatment, opens on March 29, "*Anno domini 1630*," an Easter Monday. The new governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company was aboard the 350-ton *Arbella* in Southampton along England's southern coast in preparation for his sailing then. He had been on the ship more than a week when he sat to write his opening words and he felt a keen impatience. As he settled at a table to make that first entry, the vessel rode heavy at anchor off the Isle of Wight not far from England's shore, her hold jammed with provisions for the journey ahead and the hard, lean months to follow. Within earshot on that day, three other ships, the *Ambrose*, *Jewel*, and *Talbot*, their sails furled tight and stately masts spiking in the harbor air, also bobbed uneasily at their waterlines, ready and at rest.

All four vessels would leave that sheltered sanctuary within days, wrenching their anchors out of harbor mud before rolling out of sight in a roar of musket shot and flapping canvas. Again and again throughout that year, one heaving schooner after another would head west, splashing across the Atlantic until a thousand souls were dumped as strangers on a strange and distant shore. Within two decades twenty thousand immigrants would uproot to make that journey. Even as Winthrop dipped his pen and tapped a drop of excess ink that day, the *Charles*, the *Mayflower* (not of Pilgrim fame), the *William and Francis*, the *Hopewell*, the *Whale*, the *Sucsesse*, and the *Tryall* were being readied under the bark and whistle of ship's captains elsewhere. The governor noted each with a delicate hand. In brown ink on the first page of a small notebook lashed with leather, he started his great story. What he did not say, perhaps what he did not yet clearly see, was that history was shifting, and he would shape it in his image.

The first order of business was to establish a clear line of mastery and control. As governor of the new colony, he would need it. "Upon conference it was agreed that these 4 shippes should consort together," Winthrop wrote. Now and for the duration of the voyage, a strict hierarchy would hold. Governor Winthrop's ship, the *Arbella*, was selected for the lead. It would sail as "admiral." The larger *Talbot* would be "vice admiral." The *Ambrose*, "rear

admiral,” and the *Jewel*, “captain,” would round out the fleet. Together, they would push history before them like a wave.

With that decided, Winthrop organized himself and paced the decks. In the last days before the fleet embarked, the new governor observed the *Arbella*’s captain, Peter Milborne, with all his many preparations for the sailing. A crew of fifty-two was hard at work, heaving barrels, mending sails, and stowing last-minute provisions. Twice that number of passengers shuffled aboard and found their way to cramped and musty spaces down below. By slow degrees as these last hours clicked by, Winthrop gently turned away from the rolling hills of England and all that he had ever known to point his will and energy toward his new life in a new land.



A country gentleman and an accomplished lawyer who served as justice of the peace in Suffolk County, John Winthrop was new to thoughts of a vast social experiment in a distant hemisphere. Having been raised in a prominent family amid a flow of titled visitors and important guests, he was “lord of the manor” in a literal sense, hardly the sort whom fate might pluck for great adventure. On the contrary, his path seemed set, and comfortable. His boyhood home at Groton Manor with its great fireplaces and yawning mastiffs was a picture of English stability. His choice to serve as a magistrate showed nothing of a taste for thrill. Even John Winthrop’s life as a father and a family man was accompanied more by the drumbeat of responsibility than the cymbal clash of risk.

When the Pilgrims sailed, Winthrop hardly made a note of it. Instead, he left the chaos of new colonies to others, including his second son, Henry, who in December 1626 (well before these thoughts of Massachusetts crossed his father’s mind) sailed away with Captain Henry Powell to help establish a colony in Barbados. The ship arrived at its sandy and unkempt destination February 17, 1627. Henry was not yet in his twenties then, a young man full of promise, blessed with means. He loved the place, and for two years he had a great adventure. Yet Barbados was a young colony and dogged with problems, and he could not make a go of

it. By the time his father packed his bags and walked on board the *Arbella*, Henry was back home again (though hardly chastened), preparing for another gamble, this time with the great John Winthrop, off to try a new experiment.

As the chisel-faced Puritan gazed out across England's gray shoreline in that spring of 1630, perhaps he understood Henry's urgent impulses as never before. Surely, he knew the risk. Henry had already fumbled. But just like his son, John Winthrop also knew the promise: life on his own terms in a world that he could fashion.

The tales of the two men's voyages echo eerily.

It was two years after the English established a foothold in Barbados that eighteen-year-old Henry crossed the Atlantic to start a tobacco plantation and assist with the island's administration. It was two years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony was conceived and John Endecott planted England's flag in Salem that John Winthrop would arrive, settle a farm, and manage the colony's administration.

Inflated family accounts of Henry's achievements identify him as "chief proprietor and commander-in-chief of Barbadoes." Court records and histories identify his father as chief magistrate and governor of Massachusetts. Though they stood at different stations in the hierarchies they helped create, each well understood the lure of leadership in a colony just taking shape.

In Barbados, Henry found sandy ground inhabited by a handful of Englishmen and slaves. He immediately pronounced the place "the pleasantest island in all the West Indies." Yet he would not prosper. John Winthrop discovered a colder, richer landscape inhabited by a greater number of Englishmen living beside Indian tribes already decimated by disease. Like Henry he spoke movingly of the region's beauty and extolled its boundless possibility. But there the echoes end. John Winthrop thrived where Henry failed. But of course it did not start that way.

In the first few months of Henry's adventure in the Caribbean, the young man was mentioned fondly and often in family letters. "We are very glad to hear so good news of our son Henry," Margaret Winthrop wrote optimistically after receiving news of her stepson in the summer of 1627. Doting family members ap-

plauded his gumption and wondered how to send him shoes and other goods. But shoes were hardly what young Henry needed. Henry urgently needed men. And in a raw and unsettled island culture that would soon become notorious for the sadistic abuse of workers, “men” meant either indentured servants or, more often, African and Indian slaves.

“I have found two sturdy youths that would go to him,” John Winthrop wrote in a letter from that period. Henry wanted more, and shipped some rough tobacco as a preliminary payment in exchange. His father rejected it, complaining in uncharacteristically florid language that the leaf was so “ill-conditioned, foul, and full of stalks, and evil colored” that no English grocer would deign touch it. Even Henry’s uncles would not buy. Nor was John Winthrop in any position to provide additional help. “I have no money,” the Puritan said sharply in a letter to his son that has survived the years, “and I am so far in debt already, to both your uncles, as I am ashamed to borrow any more.” The reason for his penury was perfectly clear. Even so, John Winthrop spelled it out, sparing Henry nothing in the telling: “I have disbursed a great deal of money for you,” he chided, “more than my estate will bear.” The ten men Henry asked for would not come. Henry’s life as master of a new plantation would be short. “I can supply you no further,” announced the father. Though he had generously backed the Barbados venture for some time, young Henry’s demands had strained John Winthrop’s personal finances to the limit. Nothing more would flow.

Back in England, enthusiasm for the experiment cooled. Tobacco use was out of favor among the Puritans. In any case, the crop Henry produced was bad stuff hardly worthy of the name. John Winthrop, his third wife, Margaret, and eldest son John Jr. (later the governor of Connecticut) now pinned their hopes instead on the North American mainland. Two months after the Puritan cut his son Henry off from further subsidies, the Massachusetts Bay Company was formed with a wealthy London merchant and family associate, Mathew Cradock, named as governor. John Endecott and scores of settlers embarked at once. Though they were part of a broad land grab in a time of growing empire, their settlement would be an experiment unlike any other. According to

the Massachusetts Bay Company's charter, the wheels and cogs of governance would be given to the colony itself, not controlled at a distance from counting houses and stuffy courtrooms back in London. These men "were not . . . adventurers or traffickers," explained the Puritan's descendant Robert C. Winthrop, a long-time president of the Massachusetts Historical Society (and great-great-grandfather of Massachusetts senator John Kerry), in his "Life and Letters of John Winthrop." Nor were they going "for the profits of a voyage . . . [or] the pleasure of a visit; but to 'inhabit and continue' there" and build a world. Self-governance on a distant shore represented a structural shift many historians would read in hindsight as of profound, and finally revolutionary, consequence. These men would rule themselves.

John Winthrop was originally called into the project merely to mediate differences between several bickering New England officers and John Endecott, the Salem-based official who had set up camp in Massachusetts while Henry struggled in Barbados. Yet Winthrop's role quickly expanded. Over a series of meetings held in London, it was Winthrop who emerged as a clear leader. For him the venture came at a good time. His finances were a mess. He had just left (or was pushed from) a position as attorney at the Court of Wards, the body charged with overseeing the estates of wealthy orphans who might otherwise fall prey to guardians inclined to put their own self-interest first. He feared for his religious freedoms. A beloved brother-in-law, Thomas Fones, and his mother (who had always lived beside her son at Groton Manor) died within days of each other. The family estate seemed suddenly bleak and lifeless. Winthrop fell into a severe depression.

"We see how frail and vain all earthly good things are," he wrote his wife while shaking off the deaths of those he loved. "Only the fruition of Jesus Christ and the hope of heaven can give us true comfort and rest."

Why, then, not leave England for a new life in His service? When the Massachusetts Bay Company called on the forty-two-year-old magistrate to join in that adventure he was prepared in more ways than his associates could have guessed. His needs were great. His standing commitments were frayed or severed. The thought of

relocation must have seemed less daunting after Henry's recent travels. And surely where the wayward son had failed, the father might succeed. In any case, freedom, opportunity, and a fresh start clearly lay offshore.

By mid-October of 1629 John Winthrop, then staying in London with his sister Lucy and her family, was so engrossed in the Massachusetts Bay Company's business—and so entranced by its potential—he could find “not one quarter of an hour's time to write,” he told his wife. Settling a new territory with a charter from the king was an enormous task. Recruiting investors and “adventurers” willing to take the gamble, calculating stores of goods and livestock, arranging for a cross-Atlantic passage, and luring families to join the exodus consumed all of his time. And yet the work bore fruit. “We are now agreed with the merchants,” the Puritan told Margaret in a scribbled note, “and stay only to settle our affairs.” By the time the matter of leadership came to a vote, he had consolidated his position and settled his intention. On October 20, 1629, John Winthrop—with a show of hands—came out first among four candidates for governor. He started his duties the same day.

That night the newly appointed governor retreated to his sister's elegant house at Peterborough Court, just off Fleet Street. There, in a cramped and musty space that had once served as the residence of a prince of the church John Winthrop had come to hate, Lucy and Emmanuel Downing embraced the plan and offered whatever help they could provide. Theirs was no empty promise. For three decades the couple would house and feed the Winthrops as they stopped in London in their wanderings. They would advise the men on business matters, tweak distant levers of power, and cheer the Massachusetts Bay Colony's success. The Puritan's brother-in-law Emmanuel, a committed Puritan himself and a colleague at the Court of Wards, proved shrewd and indefatigable. He would guide the governor's business enterprises in England and help John Winthrop's sons as they ventured near and far. But that was all for later. For now, the family merely reveled in the news and looked with awe upon its meaning.

John himself was clearly humbled, and at least a bit afraid. Settling by candlelight after others went to bed, he dipped his pen and

bent his head to inform Margaret of the unexpected news. “So it is,” he wrote, “that it hath pleased the Lorde to call me to a further trust in this business of the Plantation than either I expected or find myselfe fitt for.” Over the span of only thirty days his life—and that of his entire family—had turned abruptly on its head.

Henry was just back from Barbados then and looking for some new adventures. Among them was romance. He married his cousin (a liaison, some wags joked, that precipitated her father’s death). He immersed himself in the London party scene. He made it clear he was available. With his parents and older brother now dismissing the tobacco operation in Barbados as a hasty rush to riches in a place of sin, Henry was counseled instead to stay in England as his father prepared for a rather holier experiment. “I have conferred with him,” the governor said in a letter written in October 1629. “What he will do, I know not yet.”

If Henry wrestled with that decision, events in the Caribbean must have helped to sway his mind. News out of those waters at the time was news of war. The island of St. Christopher (now St. Kitts) “is taken by the Spaniard,” John Winthrop wrote his wife. Barbados seemed headed for a similar fate. European powers were tearing at each others’ fragile, distant borders. Perhaps Massachusetts might prove as vulnerable. The new governor gambled everything that it would not. “Some would discourage us with this news,” John Winthrop wrote, “but there is no cause. . . .” Henry, meanwhile, made himself busy in his father’s service, acting as a middleman in the provisioning of the company’s ships and doing his father’s bidding when he was not distracted by the many seductions London offered. Soon his days in Barbados would fade as a new set of thrills and challenges emerged. His wife, Elizabeth Fones, was pregnant. A novel set of expectations and responsibilities held his attention and sharpened his focus. He poured himself into his new task. And so while his father sat aboard the *Arbella* writing in his journal, Henry was ashore, racing to finish final tasks, rounding up an ox and ten sheep to fill out the store of livestock. Yet while the governor’s second son was gone, a vicious storm blew up. It kept Henry from returning to his ship.

On board the *Arbella* at that time, John Winthrop wrote and paced. For him setting off meant steering a new colony in a wilderness barely scratched by what he knew as human culture. But it also meant—and here was the sweet song of it—preserving and spreading the work of God as he understood it. Throughout that winter and spring John Winthrop encouraged friends and fellow Puritans to make the trip. Here was a chance to build a refuge for the religiously oppressed, escape England's corrupt and teeming population, and take and settle a new land. Here was God's experiment, a worthy challenge with a clear reward.

As the Puritan prepared himself to face this new frontier, words to shape a nation were then churning. The image that he held was one of liberty, justice, and godliness, an image that would abide across the centuries. "We shall be as a city upon a hill," the governor said in a sermon likely delivered just days before the fleet embarked. "The eyes of all people are upon us." Thrive or starve, win or lose, the group's extraordinary undertaking, he said prophetically, would be "a story and a by-word throughout the world."

Those words would echo over history. He was, the scholar Richard Dunn would write in 1962, "the first keeper of the New England conscience." And in that sermon he made clear the stakes.

In the last few days of waiting, John Winthrop said his final goodbyes. Mathew Cradock, the company's first governor and owner of two of the four ships sailing, came on board. A wealthy merchant and member of the East India and Virginia companies, Cradock had a keen interest in every aspect of the voyage. Though he would never cross the Atlantic himself, he stayed close until the ships embarked. Visit by the "late governor," Winthrop noted dryly in his journal's opening entry. A volley of gunshots marked Cradock's farewell, but a week later the old man was back, full of news and worries. As he left, John Winthrop wrote, the captain gave him "three shots out of the steerage for a farewell." With the dying sound of musket fire, the fate and fortune of the voyage shifted. Now the Puritan more securely took the reins. He would be the spiritual and administrative leader of the enterprise. Two days later they sailed off.

In the dim light before dawn on April 8, a fine chop shivered at the *Arbella's* hull. Henry had not made it back on board. Though he tried to cross the choppy water with his servants, the governor noted, "the winde was so strong against them as they were forced on shore." Now, as the *Arbella's* crewmen hoisted anchor, Henry Winthrop and his servants were left to scramble for another passage. "We have left them behind and suppose they will come after," the governor wrote. "We were very sorry they had put themselves upon such inconvenience," he mused, "when they were so well accommodated in our ship."

Henry, though, was just the sort to take that sudden change of plans in stride. Indeed, he had been so anxious for another voyage that John Jr. had to talk him out of making a "quick" round-trip to Barbados before the *Arbella* set her sails. Henry agreed and stayed in London for those months of preparation, drinking in his last days in high society by outfitting himself as a bit of a fop in a bold scarlet suit and cloak. As the moment of departure neared, however, he must have felt a spike of pure adrenaline. He would not be left behind. Instead, he scrambled hard to catch another ship. Meanwhile, someone else took up his berth on board the admiral of the fleet. "We have many young gentlemen," John Winthrop advised proudly, "who behave themselves well, and are comformable to all good orders." The young man's bed would not go empty. As the last checks were made, Henry found his way aboard another ship, the *Talbot*, sailing as "vice admiral" of the fleet.

In that last morning well before the sun was up, with all hands at last accounted for, there was a rise of energy within the fleet and a bustle in the captains' quarters. The wind was running fine and steady. A line was yanked. A great expanse of canvas filled. It flapped open in a flash of white, then paused, then billowed in the tug of a light breeze. Up on the *Arbella's* decks there was a heave and push, an almost imperceptible advance, and then the crew and passengers were freed from life ashore. The ordered chaos of departure was repeated through the fleet.

Winthrop kept good records of the voyage, and an almost childish thrill emerges in the opening pages of his famous journal. Yet there were frustrations, too, and they began before the first day's

sail was done. As the governor described it, the wind would be a tease in that first day. It moved from an inviting breeze to dead calm to violent storm and back to calm again. When the sun came up the wind died down. By 10 a.m. all four ships slowed to a trot, then wobbled on their keels, lurching like great stallions confined behind a stable door, restless, going nowhere. The gurgle of water gave way to the sickening creak of ships becalmed. Nothing to be done for it. Frustrated passengers watched as the *Arbella's* sails deflated and her lines hung limp, dragging useless in the water. The great wood rudder wagged listlessly beneath. The day passed. They waited. At last, some time after dusk, John Winthrop wrote, the wind rose briskly from the north, and flying in a "merry gale" they left the gentle hills of England in their wake.

Back on shore it was a busy time for Cradock and other men with interests in the colony. Seventeen ships would cross the Atlantic bound for the Massachusetts Bay in that first year. Seventeen holds would release their pale, disoriented cargo—pouring one thousand settlers into a strange and largely unexplored "New World." As those ships came, a time of discovery would fast become a time of conquest and control.

Winthrop would eventually christen and bury more children on that soil, lose his wife, marry for a fourth time, die at the age of sixty-one, and lie forever in that ground. For now, though, the challenge was immediate and simple to the point of crudeness: Get to that far shore. Survive the gales. Use the sun and stars as guides. Keep your eye on the other vessels in the fleet. Conserve rations. Tend to the sick and women in childbirth. Keep steady on the rolling deck and make it safely to the other side.

On the *Arbella*, the deck was crowded, and the hold beneath it full. Among the passengers were men like William Vassall, a son of wealth and power, who had signed up with his wife and their four children for the voyage. Men of polish and sophistication and servants without means moved side by side, pacing with the shared concerns of those at sea. Each felt the lurch and lull of that long journey, ate and slept, and felt their fates entwined. As they studied the weather and the waves, each waited for fresh shoreline far from land they knew.

The new governor, bearded, stern, and leathered by life's losses, was father to seven sons and a daughter by then, yet he left most of his family behind. His third wife, Margaret Tyndal, and his nineteen-year-old daughter, Mary, would travel later, on another ship, with John Winthrop Jr. as their chaperone. With Henry bunking elsewhere, the Puritan had only two of his seven boys, eleven-year-old Adam and twelve-year-old Stephen, for company. Still, the governor was hardly alone. And if he missed Henry's companionship he did not say so in his journal. Nor did he show that he suffered from the loss of Henry's help. And why would he? Eight servants traveled with him, tending to his needs. Charles Edward Banks, in his book *The Winthrop Fleet of 1630*, showed them on the passenger list with his best approximation of a void, the stark notation of a dash for everyone who went ———, ——— and then the briefest note: "Eight servants of Gov. Winthrop, names unknown."

As the *Arbella* pushed ahead, the larger *Talbot* struggled to keep up. The lead ship's fleetness and the *Talbot's* lumbering splash were not a match. From the first day out, the fleet's admiral had to struggle just to keep the *Talbot* within view. "Towards night," John Winthrop wrote on the Wednesday after sailing, "we were forced to take in some sail . . . for the vice admiral . . . was near a league to the stern of us." One day later, the admiral of the fleet would lose its clumsier companion in a storm.

On the morning of April 15, Winthrop's ship bobbed in nearly windless air while the *Talbot* idled far downwind. Passengers and crew aboard the two vessels eyed each other at a distance. So far to go and getting nowhere! The tedium of morning gave way to the tedium of afternoon. Then a wind caught the sails in a clap and the *Talbot* and *Arbella* maneuvered almost close enough to touch—a hazardous operation that had already led to one hair-raising collision in the open water. "We bore up towards her and having fetched her up and spoken with her . . . we tacked about and steered our course west, northwest, lying as near the wind as we could," Winthrop wrote of the encounter. Did Captain Milborne warn them of a storm ahead or say the slower ship should fall behind? Did he speak of whales or flying fish or what they'd had for

dinner? Did they trade gossip or establish orders? Winthrop made no note of it beyond the simple fact of meeting.

With the wind freshening, her sails tight and the captain steering close into the growing breeze, the *Arbella* made good time. But as night drew on, the wind strengthened and the makings of a storm were clear. Rain began to pelt the ship. Some time before midnight Captain Milborne barked an order to his crew. The topsail fell. The mainsail and foresail came down next. The ship steadied under less canvas, but a furious sea slammed at her sides. While she struggled through the water, a giant wave rose overhead and then crashed across the deck, tossing passengers about and costing the *Arbella* one of her dinghies, which went overboard, wrote Winthrop, along with some fresh fish. "The storm still grew," he said, "and it was dark with clouds."

Captain Milborne ordered a light hung from the shrouds lest the *Arbella* lose the other ships or ram them in the dark confusion of the storm. Even so, reported the Puritan, "before midnight we lost sight of our vice admiral."

The wind stayed high all night, screaming through every crack it found. At first light it finally slackened, but the waves did not lose strength. High and dark, they "tossed us more than before," wrote Winthrop. Captain Milborne assessed the churning water and ordered only the mainsail kept aloft. Progress was slow and the passengers were quiet. "Yet our ship steered well with it," the governor observed with pride, "which few such ships could have done."

Once the air cleared, passengers and crew stumbled to the deck to review the storm's damage. Aside from the lost dinghy everything was secure aboard the *Arbella*. She had made it through the weather beautifully. Nearby, the *Ambrose* and the *Jewel* held close. They appeared undamaged, too. Henry's ship, however, was nowhere to be seen. Water stretched to the horizon at all sides without her reassuring spike of white. As the little fleet moved forward through a second gale-whipped night, the *Arbella*, the *Ambrose*, and the *Jewel* held close in a watery triangle. They would hold that loose formation for the duration of the trip. There was no further sign of the vice admiral.



The last days of the crossing were spent in a thick fog. Sensing land, the crew called to their captain for a sounding. Nothing but water. Even so, everyone could feel a shift. Suddenly it seemed that rock, sand, and vegetation—the far side of the ocean—lay somewhere near. “The fog continued very thick and some rain withall,” wrote Winthrop. “We sounded in the morning and again at noon and had no ground.” At last they hit “a fine gray sand” and shifted course. That night another gale came up, but even so, the fog remained. On Friday, June 4, 1630, the governor reported air so dense “we could not see a stone’s cast from us, yet the sunne shone verye bright.” Now the crew was sounding every two hours. Only water met the weights. Again and again they tried until the drill became a new form of monotony. Then suddenly a shout went up: *sand at 80 fathoms!* The mist dissipated and the passengers and crew saw a line of green off in the distance. Land. Over the next few days the fleet bumped unsteadily on a southerly course, making its way down the coast of Maine, sounding all the way.

Monday, June 7, almost two months to the day from setting out, Winthrop reported the landing of a great fish, a cod that he described—incredibly—as stretching four and a half feet from tail to snout, a signal of great bounty. That evening the weather turned raw and a woman aboard gave birth to a dead child. Then on Tuesday, the air changed again. In “fair sunshine” they approached their destination and the governor made note of a new quality in the air he breathed: “a sweet ether . . . like the smell of a garden” met those weary travelers. A wild pigeon and another bird the governor did not identify landed on the ship and stared about with curiosity. Salem lay before them.

On Saturday, June 12, John Endecott, who had settled in Salem several years before and served as governor on site, boarded the *Arbella* with a small welcoming party. While Endecott and Winthrop met, some passengers climbed into bobbing skiffs and rowed ashore to stand on solid ground and eat fresh food for the first time in several months. John Winthrop did not join them. After meeting with John Endecott he stayed aboard to spend the holy day in

prayer. Great hardship lay ahead, he knew. Endecott had shared disturbing news. Of the three hundred settlers who had ventured to the Massachusetts Bay so far, more than a quarter—eighty men, women, and children—were already rotting in the ground. Many others were sick or running out of patience, or they lacked the will to make it through another winter. The planting season had begun, but harvests were still far away. More people arriving now meant more mouths to feed. This was no time to celebrate. Monday morning the *Arbella* emptied with a salute. And so the journey ended and the work began.

Nothing was heard of the *Talbot* for several weeks. Then at last on July 1 a sail broke the horizon line. Theirs had been a difficult passage. Water and wind had battered the ship. Sickness had dogged their days. Fourteen of the *Talbot's* passengers were dead. The vessel's rigging, sails, and fittings showed the price of a hard journey. Yet Henry was in high spirits and he was anxious to explore. On the morning after landing the Puritan's second son went for a walk with several officers. The day was hot. Fresh water sparkled invitingly after so long spent at sea. The group spotted an Indian canoe on the other side of a swift river. Henry offered to swim for it. It was a long way to the nearest point where they could cross on foot, he argued, and Henry was the only man among them who could swim. Impulsively, he stripped off his shoes and dove into the river. But as he made his way across, a riptide caught him. Then a leg cramp yanked him down.

Two weeks later, John Winthrop wrote a letter to Margaret, Henry's stepmother. "We had a long and troublesome passage," he began. "The Lord's hand hath been heavy upon myself in some very near to me. My son Henry! My son Henry! Ah, poor child!"

In his journal the Puritan scratched only the stark message: "My sone H. was drowned at Salem."



Historians and Winthrop buffs have tended to paint John Winthrop's second son as an irresponsible playboy, a rough cut of the more sober and religious father. There is some truth in that. Yet

Henry's adventure in Barbados and John Winthrop's in New England were two cuts of the same cloth. As members of the gentry, they embodied the great hubris—as well as all the tangible and intangible benefits—of their time and birth. Each felt entitled to a life of intellectual independence and material success. Each had the means and the confidence to try to build a colony. Over many generations, others would extend the family's reach. John Winthrop Jr., the eldest, would be governor of Connecticut, as would his son (the Puritan's grandson), Fitz-John. Samuel Winthrop, who was only three when the *Arbella* sailed, would explore the Caribbean, settle in Antigua, rise to the post of deputy governor, and buy a fine plantation he named Groton Hall in homage to his boyhood home in England. Samuel would marry well by the standards of the time, joining the ranks of slave owners who enjoyed a world of wealth and leisure on that island. In Antigua he would leave behind a bay and town bearing the family name, each of them spelled Winthorpe.

In New England, meanwhile, a prosperous new world was born. John Winthrop helped to make it thrive. Had Henry lived, his story and his fate might well have been the same. As it was, what the father helped create, surviving sons would turn to their advantage.