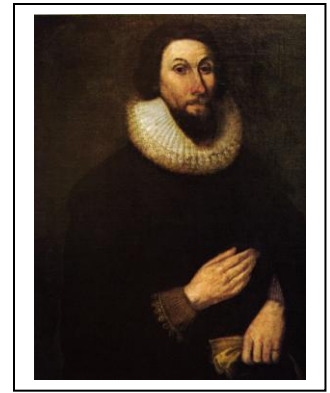


John Winthrop (1588-1649)

Key Designation:

- ◆ The Father of American Puritanism
- ◆ The First Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, (the first major settlement after the Plymouth Colony)



Key Background Info: Winthrop was a wealthy Puritan lawyer, who was born to a wealthy, well-respected, land-owning family in Suffolk, England. He became interested in religious questions at an early age, having often heard such discussions among his father with his friends. Eventually, he enrolled at Trinity College. Winthrop said that he battled “lusts” which may explain why he fell in love and was married at a very early age. The Winthrops had 5 children before his first wife died. Not long after he remarried. He said that she was more “pious” than his first wife, and she had a noticeable impact on him.

Key Ideas: Winthrop believed that Divine Providence had led his group to the new land to be a light to the nations, “A City Set Upon a Hill. The New Holy Commonwealth would be an example of a Christian community, and later a Christian theocracy. However, he wasn’t as strict as some of the other Puritans such as John Cotton, nor was he as open to religious diversity as Roger Williams, the father of Baptists in America.

Key Events: In 1630, Winthrop rejected a plea by Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, to join the Presbyterian reform of the Anglican Church. He set sail with 700 people in 11 ships to help establish The Holy Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This was a pivotal event that led to 20,000 more Puritans and other non-conformist to come to the new world over the next 15 years. Eventually, he’ll serve 12 terms as governor of the colony.

Key Works: In 1630, Winthrop wrote what essentially became a handbook for the new colony. *A Model of Christian Charity* provided not only the standards for the colonists, but also a vision for God’s direction of his people. It was in this work that Winthrop originated the phrase “A City Set Upon a Hill” to describe the Puritan’s vision in the new world. Winthrop said, “... if we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken

and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.”

Key Achievements: In 1643, Winthrop led in adopting the *Constitution of the New England Confederation*, which stated: “Whereas we all came to these parts of America with the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdome of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to injoy the liberties of the Gospell thereof with purities and peace, and for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the gospel.”