



Spring 2-22-2016

Feb. 22 Lecture Recounts 'Defining Moment in Winthrop History'

Winthrop University

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Winthrop University, "Feb. 22 Lecture Recounts 'Defining Moment in Winthrop History'" (2016). *Winthrop News 2016*. 58.

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Quick Facts

- John Winthrop is a direct descendant of Winthrop's earliest benefactor, Robert Charles Winthrop.
- A \$1,500 donation from Robert C. Winthrop and the Peabody Board helped establish Winthrop.

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John D. Winthrop

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – The day Winthrop's first president, **D.B. Johnson**, met Boston lawyer and philanthropist **Robert Charles Winthrop** was “the defining moment in Winthrop's history.”

Associate Professor of History Eddie Lee '83, mayor of York, South Carolina, offered details of that fateful meeting in a **Feb. 22 talk** entitled “Robert Charles Winthrop: The Kindness of Strangers.” **John Winthrop**, a direct-line descendant of benefactor **Robert Charles Winthrop**, also discussed his family's ties to the university in a lecture in **Tuttle Dining Room**.

John Winthrop, a Charleston, South Carolina, resident, said he believed the university's earliest benefactor – who provided \$1,500 from the Peabody Education Fund and \$50 from his own bank account – would be “enormously

proud” of the institution Winthrop has become.

As permanent chairman of the **Peabody Fund**, **Robert Charles Winthrop** “understood the importance of restoring the South's shattered education system after the Civil War,” according to Lee. The Massachusetts statesman was impressed with Johnson's visionary plan to establish a teacher training institution. The **\$1,550 investment** gave Johnson the seed money he needed to turn his dream into a reality.

John Winthrop, who runs his own financial services firm in Charleston, praised Johnson for his “courage, wisdom, great foresight and great vision,” noting that his family connection to Winthrop University is “a very proud connection for me.”

During the **Feb. 22 talk**, **Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections** provided an exhibit of **historical items** related to Robert Charles Winthrop – including documents, a portrait, books and more. Archives will host an exhibit on early Winthrop University history through April 8.

Robert Charles Winthrop, a Massachusetts native, was the 18th speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and later became an orator, speaking at the ceremony that opened the Washington Monument.

Like a number of his ancestors, **John Winthrop** was born in Boston. The Harvard University graduate joined the U.S. Navy and worked as a journalist. He went on to earn his M.B.A. at Columbia

University and continued his journalism career – first at The Atlantic Monthly in Washington, D.C., during the Kennedy administration, and later at The Boston Globe. Today he lives in Charleston with his wife, Libby, and runs John Winthrop & Company, Inc. He has served on a number of for-profit and not-for-profit boards, including the American Farmland Trust in Washington, the Fresh Air Fund in New York and the Board of Overseers at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston.

For more information, contact Meredith Carter, communications coordinator, at 803/323-2236 or carterm@winthrop.edu.

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