



Nathaniel T. Winthrop
1912 - 1980

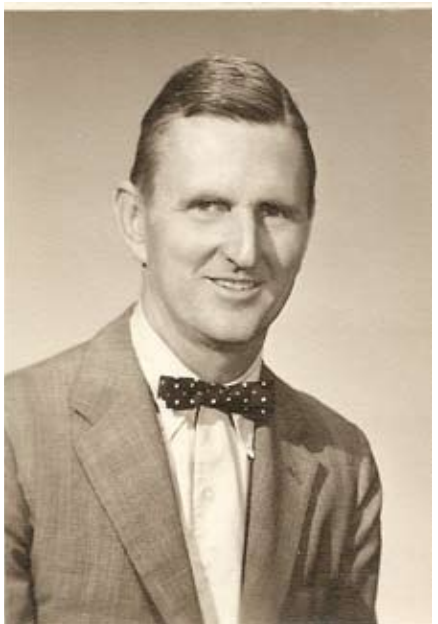
Founder of the LION AND HARE FUND in
The New York Community Trust

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST



Nathaniel Thayer Winthrop was not a man easily categorized. A liberal and original thinker born to one of America's distinguished (and conservative) founding families, he was "a man of many contradictions," according to his son, John. He was old-fashioned and also ahead of his time. He was a homebody and also a great traveler. He relished the excitement of New York City, where he lived most of his adult life, but he loved being close to the land, especially on the large plantation his family owned in South Carolina. He was also a man of "boundless generosity," though during his lifetime, he insisted that much of his charity be given anonymously. Unsurprisingly, John describes his father as a man of "profound modesty and selflessness" to whom praise and applause had no meaning.

Mr. Winthrop was born May 20, 1912, in Hamilton, Massachusetts, to Frederic and Sarah Thayer Winthrop. He was a member of the tenth generation of Winthrops in America, and a direct descendant of colonial-era Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop. Mr. Winthrop was educated at St. Mark's School in Southborough, Massachusetts, and at Harvard University, from which he graduated in 1934. After attending law school at the University of Virginia, he went back to Boston and nine years later moved to New York City, where he hoped "some of the excitement of business enterprise and enthusiasm for public improvement" might brush off on him, according to an account of his life published in the journal of



Nathaniel as a young man.

the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Indeed it must have, for he embarked promptly upon a long and successful career in trust and estate law—initially with the firm Mitchell, Capron, Marsh, Angulo & Cooney and then with Sherman & Sterling—and became deeply involved with a wide range of civic causes and community organizations.

With his six-plus-foot frame, pale blue eyes, and wide smile, Mr. Winthrop was a family man. In 1935, he married Serita Bartlett, with whom he had four children: John, Matthew Bartlett, Beekman, and Serita. Four more children—Nathaniel Thayer, Jr., Katharine, Cornelia Thayer, and Stephen Van Rensselaer—arrived following his marriage to Eleanor R. Beane in 1950. Mr. Winthrop took true pleasure in fatherhood. In son John's words, he had "an enormous sense of joy" about his family.

In annual Christmas letters to family and friends, he shared the accomplishments and activities of his brood. And throughout his life, John notes, wherever and whenever the family gathered, it was clear that he “drew strength” from the warmth of the occasion.

Mr. Winthrop was an attentive and compassionate adviser to his children, generous not only in material terms, but in emotional and spiritual ones as well. As John attests, “When we pondered the heavy questions, he didn’t expect us to come up with the same answers; he even encouraged diversity of thought among us.” He always did things his own way, John says, and was always determined that others, his children included, should do the same.

All his life, Mr. Winthrop was a passionate and intrepid traveler. His wanderlust dated, perhaps, to his World War II naval service, when he served on a number of destroyer vessels during four invasions. Whatever their impetus, however, the Winthrops traveled “widely, intelligently, and well.” Their stays in locales as exotic and diverse as China, India, and South America inspired and were inspired by their mutual interest in foreign peoples and cultures. During several months in Beirut in 1954 and 1955, Nathaniel and Eleanor studied the people and history of the Middle East. After returning home from a two-month stay in sub-Saharan Africa in 1966, they undertook to raise funds to support the founding of interracial schools in Swaziland and Botswana.

Though Mr. Winthrop wasn’t himself a regular churchgoer, he pursued religious studies as a key



Nathaniel Winthrop with his second wife, Eleanor,
and his eight children.

to understanding local history and customs. He eventually became involved with the Laymen's Movement for a Christian World and the Council of Religion in International Affairs, and joined the American Institute of Buddhist Studies and the Center for Study of World Religions, which is affiliated with the Harvard Divinity School.

Mr. Winthrop was deeply involved with many other institutions as well. He served as a director of the Solebury School in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and of the Child Study Association of America, and was a member of the Visiting Committees of Harvard's Fogg Art Museum and the Harvard Divinity School. For 10 years he was a trustee of the Experiment in International Living, a program



Winthrop with his daughter Katie in 1960.

started during the Great Depression to promote student exchanges as a means of improving relations and understanding among nations. He served on the Experiment's executive committee for three years, and on its National Advisory Council from 1972 until his death in 1980. During that time he was instrumental in helping to develop its first program in China, and also in promoting its ultimately successful merger with the American Field Service. He also supported many other organizations financially, though often anonymously. And despite his many engagements, Mr. Winthrop never simply wrote a check, but actively monitored the use and effectiveness of his gifts.



In 1970, Nathaniel Thayer Winthrop set up the Lion & Hare Fund in The New York Community Trust to support his philanthropic interests. Today, his eight children advise the fund. For a man not readily pigeonholed in his own life, this seems an apt tribute. As one of his sons said during a memorial service for him, “He was a good man, a kind man, a generous man, a man of integrity, a man of ideas. He had a great love of life in all its splendid diversity. He enjoyed people, and people enjoyed him. He loved to travel, and he welcomed guests into his home from all walks of life and from all over the world.”

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909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
T: 212-686-0010
F: 212-532-8528
www.nycommunitytrust.org