

In the years following his retirement, the VHS continued to benefit from generous bequests that grew from the many friendships he had cultivated. The VHS's ongoing success today rests in good measure on the sound legacy bequeathed by its good and true friend John Melville Jennings.

Charles F. Bryan

JOHN M. WOOLSEY, JR.

John Munro Woolsey, Jr., a member of the American Antiquarian Society since 1978, and a former member of the Council and the finance committee, died on January 8, 2005, after a brief illness. He was eighty-eight years old.

John Woolsey's involvement with AAS began, appropriately enough, through his connection to Petersham, Massachusetts, a small town in northwestern Worcester County that was dear to him throughout his life. His mother, Alice Bradford Bacon, had purchased a farm house and former tannery there in 1905, and after her marriage to John Munro Woolsey, a lawyer and later a federal judge in New York City, Petersham became their summer retreat. Although John Woolsey, Jr., was born in New York, attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, Yale College and Yale Law School in New Haven, practiced law in Boston, and lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Petersham remained a place of respite for him, the place where he spent weekends and holidays, the place he felt most at home. In 1977, Marcus McCorison, AAS director and librarian at the time, approached John, whose father had been a Society member, about a rare broadside issued in Petersham in 1775, in which the town meeting denounced the 'traiterous paricides [*sic*]' who remained loyal to the crown. John happily contributed money toward the cost of its purchase for the Society's collections. So began an active

quarter-century, during which John made frequent gifts of books, pamphlets, maps, images, and family papers to the Society, most notably, the diaries and correspondence of Edward Woolsey Bacon, his maternal grandfather, who served in the United States Navy during the Civil War and later became a Congregational minister in Michigan and Connecticut. The range and diversity of the materials John hunted down or found in attics and gave to AAS, reveals the variety of his interests: a print of 'The Wishing Females,' issued by a British army officer stationed in Philadelphia in 1777-78; two 1823 views of New York City, by John Hill; 'a good copy of Isaiah Thomas's "Narrative of the Excursions and Ravages of the King's Troops," Worcester, 1775'; and 'two 1847 letters from a school teacher in Petersham. . . , one of them with amusing comments on the activities of the Millerites.'

As a member of the Council and of the finance committee, John turned his lawyerly skills toward the stability and improvement of AAS. Most significant in this respect was his intervention in the late 1980s in the Society's policies for maintaining and improving the endowment. John recommended, based on his experience as a trustee for schools and other nonprofit organizations, that the Society's spending practices be limited to a fixed percentage of the endowment's average value over a period of years. This policy served as a hedge against inflation, and gave prospective donors confidence that their contributions would promote the Society's interests for many years to come—just the confidence needed for the major fund-raising campaigns that have strengthened and sustained AAS in subsequent years.

In his professional career, John Woolsey graduated from Yale Law School in the class of 1941, and soon thereafter entered the Navy, where he served in the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington during the Second World War. After the war, he was sent to Nuremburg, Germany, to join the staff of Justice Robert H. Jackson in prosecuting the Nazi leaders for war crimes. He

later described these experiences in the *Harvard Law Review*, and in a chapter of *Legal Chowder: Lawyering and Judging in Massachusetts*, edited by Rudolph Kass. After his discharge from the Navy, he joined the Boston law firm of Herrick and Smith, where he remained until 1986, when he moved to Palmer & Dodge. During this time, he was a member of the planning board for the City of Cambridge, and president of the board of Shady Hill School in Cambridge.

John's service to the American Antiquarian Society, his love of books and learning, and his abiding interest in the local history of Petersham, and of Massachusetts, Connecticut (where many of his Woolsey and Bacon ancestors had lived), and New England in general, were consistent with a long career of public service and preservation of the region's natural and historical resources. He served for many years as a member of the Trustees of Reservations, the Massachusetts organization dedicated to the preservation of the Commonwealth's landscape, and was its president from 1977 to 1980. Here, his connection to Petersham and central Massachusetts served him well, as he convinced many private landowners in the area to protect woods, streams, wetlands, and historic sites. As a result, the towns around Petersham are now blessed with a number of reservations, perfect places for walks in the woods and meadows. In later years, he was a guiding member of the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, a central Massachusetts organization dedicated to protecting the natural landscape of the region. In 1997 the Massachusetts Audubon Society awarded him the Allen Morgan Prize for lifetime achievement in land conservation.

For John, the natural landscape was a human landscape and a historical one as well. He cared as much for the old barns, the cellar holes of long-forgotten houses, the graveyards and town halls and stone walls that mark the passage of time in New England, as he did for the birches and hemlocks in the woods, or the high fields on a hillside still sown with corn or grazed by cattle. This love and commitment became a natural part of the Woolsey fam-

ily as well. In 1948, he met Ledlie Laughlin of Concord, Massachusetts. They were married soon thereafter, and their four children, two step-children, and in subsequent years, their nine grandchildren came to know and love Petersham and the lands around it. A weekend in Petersham with John often meant a drive along seldom-travelled back roads, picnic lunch tucked in the back of the car, to a destination sometimes known only to him until the point of arrival. Then, everyone would tumble out of the car and follow John into the woods. It was a challenge to keep up with him on a woodland path. He had a distinctive gait when out in the countryside—leaning slightly forward, like a bird dog following a scent, armed with his tree-saw (or *'baum-schnitt'*), with which he flicked away obstructions along the trail, barely slowing down, even when dispatching a remarkably stout branch. Along the way, John might find the first ladyslipper of the season, if it was spring, or later, wood lilies, cardinal flowers, and gentians. He might stop to pick blueberries in the summer, or to point out the remains of an abandoned farm, barely visible in what now are dense forests. But in the end, invariably, we would arrive at a place of quiet beauty, often beside a rocky brook or waterfall, where we could sit and have our picnic in peace, and the children could build dams and bridges in the water with stones.

John M. Woolsey, Jr., is survived by his wife, Ledlie Laughlin, by four children, John, of Providence, Rhode Island; Alice Godfrey, of Oak Park, Illinois; Henry, of Petersham; and Mary, of Iowa City, Iowa; as well as two step-children, Hilary Loring, of Andover, Massachusetts, and David Rodd, of Brookline, Massachusetts, and by nine grandchildren. They and their families are beneficiaries of a legacy of protection and conservation rooted in John's deep love of place, a legacy in which the American Antiquarian Society shares as well.

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