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GLOUCESTER'S 350th ANNIVERSARY, PAPERS OF MAYOR ROBERT L. FRENCH COLLECTION

Creator:	Mayor Robert L. French
Dates:	1971-1994
Quantity:	3.0 linear feet (3 document boxes)
Acquisition:	Accession #: 1994.68 ; Donated by: Mayor Robert L. French
Identification:	A11 ; Archive Collection #11
Citation:	[Document Title]. The Gloucester's 350 th Anniversary, Papers of Mayor Robert L. French Collection, [Box #, Folder #, Item #], Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives, Gloucester, MA.
Copyright:	Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Librarian/Archivist.
Language:	English
Finding Aid:	Processed in 1994.

Biographical Note

In 1623 a fishing vessel out of Dorchester, England came upon an abundance of cod in the waters off Cape Ann. When the vessel departed, fourteen hardy seamen were left behind to establish a base and await the return of the vessel the following year. In the summer of 1624 they were joined by a band of Pilgrims from Plymouth, 40 miles across Massachusetts Bay. Together they built a fish stage at the site of what is now Stage Fort Park, in hopes of establishing a fishing settlement. However, after a poor summer with little or no cod the Pilgrims returned to Plymouth, while the determined men from the Dorchester Company

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stayed behind. In 1625, another season of poor fishing spelled the end of both the Dorchester Company's and the Pilgrims' attempts to establish a permanent fishing settlement. The few remaining men moved on to Naumkeag, now Salem.

Cape Ann went through a period of dormancy until 1631 when a small group of people settled at Planter's Neck, now Annisquam. By 1640 immigration to the Northeast colonies had increased and many colonists who had settled in Naumkeag fanned out to the surrounding communities including Cape Ann. In 1642 the Town of Gloucester was incorporated. It was named after a town in England. The first town meeting was held in 1643.

The original inhabitants were farmers who settled in the area of the "Commons". Some settlers soon realized that there were better economic opportunities in the Harbor area where fishing and boat building were possible. In the 1700s the building of larger vessels such as sloops and brigantines revolutionized the fishing and seafaring industries. The area around Gloucester Harbor burgeoned as did the population.

As foreign trade prospered, the British King sought to impose heavy taxes. This tactic eventually led to active rebellion in the early 1770s, both in Gloucester and in Boston. When the Revolution reached full tilt, every major industry in Gloucester ground to a halt and unemployment and poverty were rampant. After the Revolution it took many years for Gloucester's economy to recover. It was not until about 1820 that Gloucester regained its pride and prosperity.

By 1823, a demand for fine quality granite was growing and Cape Ann had an almost limitless supply. Cape Ann's first quarry was opened at Pigeon Cove and a vital new industry was established. Up until about 1850 the population of Gloucester had been almost entirely English, but lured by opportunities in the quarries and the fishing industry, people of other nationalities began to migrate to the area.

Another landmark event took place in 1847 with the establishment of the railroad between Boston and Gloucester. With this new easy access to Cape Ann, tourists and artists began to discover the beauty and pleasures of the area. By the 1890s, catering to tourists had become a major industry.

Gloucester's economic life continued to be based on the fishing industry, quarrying, and tourism. The rapid and sweeping technological advances brought about by World War I, resulted in the decline of most of Gloucester's basic industry.

In 1973, at the time of the 350th Anniversary Celebration, Gloucester's economy was becoming more dependent on tourism. At this writing in 1994, the fishing industry as we have know it in Gloucester is no longer prosperous and its future is uncertain. Tourism however continues to be a very important part of Gloucester's economy.

Scope and Content of the Collection

This collection was donated by Robert L. French, who was the mayor of Gloucester from 1972 to 1973. It is comprised of his files relating to the 350th Anniversary Celebration of Gloucester which was held in 1973. The collection includes correspondence to and from the Mayor, organizational and financial information, and handwritten notes.

There are invitations, program books and catalogs both for events sponsored by the city and/or by the Official Committee and for events sponsored by other community groups. Printed material relative to the celebration is included.

There is a significant amount of material relating to contacts with other Gloucesters, so-called sister-cities, both in the United States and in other countries.

Series Description

The Robert L. French papers have been divided into eight series:

- I. Mayor's Papers
- II. Events
- III. Printed Material
- IV. Other Gloucesters
- V. Media Coverage
- VI. Miscellaneous
- VII. Photographs
- VIII. Artifacts

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Mayor's Papers:

This series consists of letters to and from the Mayor, notes and remarks; and introductions and forwards to publications. The material dates from April 1971 to July 1994. There is also a letter concerning an appropriation of funds, and a budget for the celebration. A copy of the incorporation document for the "Gloucester 350th Anniversary Celebration, Inc." from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is also included.

II. Events:

This series consists of invitations and program books for events sponsored by the Mayor and

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City Council and/or the 350th Anniversary Committee. It also includes invitations, program books, and catalogs of other community events held in conjunction with the celebration.

III. Printed Material:

This series is made up of printed material relative to the celebration including newspaper guides, official program and calendar.

IV. Other Gloucesters:

This series consists of material relating to other cities (so-called "Sister Cities") and towns named Gloucester, both in the United States and in other countries. Included are official guides, maps, postcards, newspapers, and historical material. There is also information relating to visits to Gloucester, Mass. by some of the other Gloucesters' Mayors, and a visit by Mayor French to Gloucester, England.

V. Media Coverage:

This series consists of press releases, newspaper and magazine articles relating to the celebration.

VI. Miscellaneous:

This series consists of other printed material. It includes material relevant to Gloucester and Cape Ann; including City Annual Reports, information on the U.S. Coast Guard, lighthouses, sailing ships, war ships, and other miscellaneous publications.

VII. Photographs:

This series consists of photographs taken during visits by the Mayor to other Gloucesters, and of visits to Gloucester Mass. made by the mayors of the sister-cities during the Anniversary celebrations.

VIII. Artifacts:

This series consists of material comprised of commemorative souvenirs and small pennants relating to the celebration.

Container List

Box #1

Series I: Papers

- Folder 1: Outgoing correspondence
- Folder 2: Incoming correspondence
- Folder 3: Organizational Records
- Folder 4: Speech and writing drafts.

Series II: Events

- Folder 5: Invitations and programs of organizations taking part
- Folder 6: Organization programs and related correspondence

Series III: Printed Material

- Folder 7: Programs – official city
- Folder 8: Cape Ann Summer Guide (newspaper)

Box #2

Series IV: Other Gloucesters

- Folder 1: Gloucester England
- Folder 2: Gloucester New South Wales
- Folder 3: Gloucester Maine & New Hampshire

Series V: Media Coverage

- Folder 4: Newspaper and Magazine articles

Box #3

Series VI: Miscellaneous

- Folder 1: School Committee Annual Reports 1972, 1973
- Folder 2: Other publications

Series VII: Photographs

- Folder 3: Misc. photographs of politicians and dignitaries

Series VIII: Artifacts

- Folder 4: Flags, plaque, key chain