One of the greatest things about The House of the Seven Gables is the variety of entry points for engagement. If you are passionate about history, literature, architecture, decorative arts, philanthropy, immigration, gardening, and/or preservation, you will find something to get excited about at The Gables. Each of these areas of interest has its own, more specific disciplines. Here, too, The Gables does not disappoint. If we just consider history, we know that since its construction in 1668, the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion has witnessed 350 years of stories.

On a tour of the site you will learn about life in colonial Salem, the Great Age of Sail and the Progressive Era. You’ll also hear compelling stories about the lives of wealthy ship captains, indentured servants, enslaved people, and many others who lived and worked in the home. And, of course we share stories about Nathaniel Hawthorne, the most famous visitor to The House of the Seven Gables.

I will admit, the stories I am most passionate about are those that highlight the women of The Gables. In honor of Salem Women’s History Day, we have dedicated this issue of “Views from The Gables” to stories about these strong women. I hope you find them as inspiring as I do.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ellen F. Dunn
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We are only two months into the year and our 350th anniversary is already a celebration to remember!

So far, we’ve hosted four anniversary events (The House of the Seven Gables: A Staged Reading, The Bay State: A Multicultural Landscape Exhibit Opening and Community Conversation, Dearest Dove: The Love Letters of Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne, and Family Movie Night: An American Tail), and many other community related events.

The celebration won’t be slowing down anytime soon, and we are especially looking forward to Salem Women’s History Day on March 25. The stories of the past 350 years at The House of the Seven Gables would not be possible without the women involved. Too often, the stories of the past highlight the accomplishments of men, particularly men of privilege. But to fully understand our history we must tell a complete story.

We hope that you enjoy the following articles about some of the remarkable women of The Gables, and ask you to join us on March 25 for Salem Women’s History Day.

Thank you for helping to support and sustain the dual mission of The House of the Seven Gables.

Enjoy,
Since Salem’s founding the city has produced a remarkable variety of women who have made history; famous and infamous. Over the past few years I have been very privileged to speak about the strong women who called The House of the Seven Gables home. There is an old Hollywood quip that is often touted when describing the difficulty of women’s roles, which is, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, only backwards and in high heels. Except for the obvious differences, the same could be said about the Turner and Ingersoll women.

Three hundred and fifty years ago in 1668, when twenty-four year old John Turner built this house, he had standing beside him his young wife Elizabeth Roberts Turner. When seven years later John left home to go fight Wampanoag Indians in the conflict known as King Phillips War, he left Elizabeth behind to protect the hearth and home as best she could. Under duress and constant fear of attacks and stress of losing her husband, Elizabeth safe-guarded the home, maintained the gardens and livestock, kept up with the chores, supervised the servants, and carefully watched over her four year old and two year old; all while she was four months pregnant. In 1704, when John Turner II was away from home with a group that had set out to capture a notorious pirate, his wife Mary Kitchen Turner, who along with all of the concerns and stresses Elizabeth had, was giving birth to their daughter. She and John had lost their first child less than a year before. No doubt that the Turner women were strong and courageous.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the property belonged to the very astute, business-minded, and successful Susanna Ingersoll (1785-1858,) the only woman to have been born and die in the mansion. Susanna lived through an extraordinary period of history. She was a witness to the birth of democracy, the women’s suffragette movement, the anti-slavery movement, as well as the polarization of the country as heated debates between free and slave-holding states hurled the nation toward the devastation of the American Civil War.

In 1804, Susanna’s mother inherited the property when her husband, Samuel, and son, Ebenezer, both died of yellow fever during a return voyage from the West Indies. Three other siblings had already perished when the mother, Susanna Hathorne Ingersoll, died in 1811.
Although vigorously contested by her uncle, John Hathorne, the courts awarded the property to Susanna who remarked to Rev. William Bentley after that harrowing ordeal that split the family that she was now “sick in her prison.”

Prison, or not, when war was declared in 1812, Susanna, 26 years old, was certainly alone in the sea-side mansion. This was an intense and very dangerous time and for the first time in her life Susanna would have to face these events on her own. Thankfully, Susanna’s mother had been a good steward of the inheritance money and shortly before her death had begun to purchase real estate. Alone and wealthy, and most likely able to see the British Naval ships that patrolled and blockaded the New England coast from her second story bedroom window, she had at her disposal the means to escape Salem. Many families who were able did flee inland away from the navy’s shelling of the coastal areas. Susanna did not. She chose to stay in her home. Although we can never really be sure why she did not leave, she actually began assisting others who did decide to leave. Susanna began buying many of the properties of families who fled the coast to safer inland towns. She also offered mortgages to help others who did not wish to sell but needed money to escape.

Was Susanna a shrewd business woman or a bleeding heart? The records indicate that during the war years Susanna purchased an unprecedented seventeen properties. From 1812 until the year before her death she bought and sold more than 62 properties making her the wealthiest land rich woman in New England in an era when women rarely entered the male dominated business world.

Whether she was shrewd or compassionate, and I tend to believe that she was both, Susanna Ingersoll clearly belongs in the annals of strong women of history.
There are numerous examples of strong women in the history of The House of the Seven Gables, including Mary Kitchen Turner, Susanna Ingersoll, and Caroline Emmerton. Their lives provide rich and rewarding stories for those visitors and researchers looking for the experience of women in relation to the property. One woman with an impressive life who does not often get mentioned on tours was Henrietta Farrington Upton, the daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Upton.

Henrietta was born in Salem in 1874. When she was 9, her mother purchased the old Turner House on Turner Street. Their home was to soon be known worldwide as The House of the Seven Gables, thanks in part to the efforts of her parents, who opened up the house to visitors beginning around 1890.

Henrietta attended Salem High School. When she was 16, Henry Upton took ill for three months and Henrietta took over teaching his dancing students. In 1892, she entered the Emerson College of Oratory. Emerson College (as it is known today) was founded as an oratory school in 1880 in response to the shuttering of Boston University’s oratory department. At the time that Henrietta attended, it was headquartered at the Wesleyan Building on Bromfield Street in Boston. Her application survives in Emerson’s archives, listing her address as 34 Turner Street and marking her intention to keep living in Salem while attending college.

Her transcript shows that it was a three-year course of study and that Henrietta was a bright student. She excelled at gesture, physical culture, English literature, and literary analysis. She also did quite well in anatomy, voice, psychology, and voice physiology. The college was coeducational, though the majority of the attendees were women. Most students came from Massachusetts, but some came from as far away as Michigan, Ohio, and Colorado. Henrietta graduated with honors on May 4th, 1895. Her diploma was given out by Charles Wesley Emerson, the college’s president and founder. The same year as her graduation she began giving private oratory classes in Salem. Henrietta also continued to assist with her father’s dancing lessons and, as he grew older, she took over the family’s Upton School of Dancing.

Henrietta Upton used her physiology training to assist her dancing pupils’ physicality. She understood French and used her knowledge to translate the dance instructions from the International Association of Dancing in Paris. She trained hundreds of students over a period of 50 years and retired in the spring of 1938.

Akin to Caroline Emmerton’s philanthropic efforts, Henrietta Upton opened a girl’s camp in 1910 in Middleton. According to The Salem News, “Her camp preceded the Girl Scouts organization and was for many local women the only girhood experience at camping.” Later, she opened a second camp for boys.

The 1897 Illustrated History of Salem and Environs by C.B. Gillespie sang her praises saying she “is most favorably known in Salem, having spent her entire life here, and coming of a gifted family.” Seemingly not content with the expectations of young women in her day, Henrietta became a pillar of the community for the majority of her life.

HENRIETTA UPTON: AN INSPIRED LIFE

David Moffat
SENIOR TOUR GUIDE AND LEAD RESEARCHER
Henrietta Upton, c. 1900 standing in the gardens on the west side of the house. She was the youngest of Henry and Elizabeth’s five children and taught oratory in the house and took over her father’s school of dancing as he grew older.
As the city celebrates Salem Women’s History Day, I am once again reminded and inspired by the visionary, entrepreneurial and philanthropic spirit of our founder Caroline Emmerton. A woman long ago referred by the Salem Evening News as “one of Salem’s Best Beloved Citizens” and whose legacy continues to impact and change lives today.

After 100 years, the Settlement Programs at The House of The Seven Gables continue to bravely support the integration and growth of our immigrant community, much like Caroline did at the beginning of the twentieth century.

We launched the 2018 Community Conversation on Immigration with two inspiring speakers whose stories weave the immigration experience from their past to the present day. We were grateful to have received Photographer Mark Chester and Diane Portnoy, founder of The Immigrant Learning Center of Malden.

Through March 4 we have on display an exhibit from photographer Mark Chester: *Photographs of New Americans*. The photographs have been compiled in the book *The Bay State: A Multicultural Landscape, Photographs of New Americans* that will be used for educational purposes. This collection celebrates the stories of more than 400 newly naturalized US citizens who immigrated from over 190 countries and territories around the globe. As Doga Sonmez Keith, naturalized citizen and new American from Turkey featured in the book so eloquently describes:

“What can you fit in two suitcases? We arrived in the middle of the night. We arrived at the crack of dawn. We arrived for love. We arrived for education, for a better life. We arrived for a different life. In this book, Mark Chester fits our pasts and our hopeful futures in his frame; which is much more than what you can fit in two suitcases.”

Diane Portnoy arrived to the U.S through Ellis Island as a refugee on a converted American battleship after World War II with her parents, Polish Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Much like Caroline Emmerton, Diane used her visionary and entrepreneurial spirit combined with the survivor spirit of her family to found the Immigrant Learning Center (ILC, Inc), nearly 80 years after Caroline Emmerton opened The House of the Seven Gables. The Immigrant Learning Center provides English classes to new immigrants, as well as research and education around the social and economic contributions of immigrants through their Public Education and Immigration Research institute.

Immigration stories continue to weave the fabric of American life with their resiliency and expressions of gratitude of a new beginning. We are very excited to continue to explore and share with you many more stories, past and present of new Americans. For upcoming events please visit our website at 7gables.org.
STORIES FROM
THE SETTLEMENT

The Bay State:
A Multicultural Landscape
Photographs of New Americans
Mark Chester
An old chair brought to the shores of New England in the early-seventeenth century and tales of its subsequent owners is the theme of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Grandfather’s Chair*.

*Grandfather’s Chair* is a series of short stories about a large and heavily carved wooden chair that casts a vision of a burgeoning New England in the mind of the reader. The stories follow the succession of each of the chair’s owners, who play a part in weaving a chronicle about early New England history. The inspiration for this collection of stories came from a visit in 1840 that Nathaniel Hawthorne made to his older cousin, Susanna Ingersoll. According to a letter from Nathaniel dated May 1840 and addressed to Horace Connolly, during his visit to the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion, Susanna suggested that he write something. When Hawthorne complained that he had no subject to write about, the “Duchess” as he referred to his cousin, suggested an old chair that occupied a place in her home. As quoted in the letter, “it is an old Puritan relict and you can make a biographical sketch of each old Puritan who became in succession the owner of the chair.”

He may have also had the same chair in mind when he later described the judge’s chair in the parlor of The House of the Seven Gables in the famous novel. 

*Grandfather’s Chair* was written as a work for children, but is enjoyed by readers and Hawthorne fans of all ages. This collection is available today in our Museum Store.
For Salem Women’s History Day we have chosen to highlight a seemingly innocuous object: a bulletin board. This bulletin board, however, displayed notices for the Salem Unit of the Massachusetts Division of the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense. During World War One, President Woodrow Wilson called upon Dr. Anna Howard Shaw of Michigan, a well-known and respected suffragette, to establish an all-female domestic committee dedicated to the aid and preservation of the home front. Established in April 1917, The Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense was the first governmental organization exclusively comprised of and run by women.

It should come as no surprise that The House of the Seven Gables became involved in this aspect of the war effort. The House of the Seven Gables was founded to help support the settlement work done by Caroline Emmerton to benefit the immigrant population of Salem and later the community at large. Shaw’s Women’s Committee and its chapters focused on Americanization, child welfare, food administration and production, foreign and allied relief, health and recreation, voter registration, women in industry, and education. This list reads as though it were written by Emmerton herself to describe the mission of her settlement, further bolstering the role of women in the success and well-being of Salem and its citizens even in dark and difficult times.