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EVER since I was a child, summer has always been my favorite season. I love the warmth, the light, and the feel of the ocean breeze through open windows. When I was young, summer was a much-anticipated vacation. And while my family did not travel much, vacation was synonymous with fun.

Summer continues to be my favorite season here at The Gables. It’s when our historic site truly comes alive after the cold days of winter and the rainy days of spring. The gardens are in full bloom and people come to visit from all over. On all but the most sweltering days, my office windows are open. Through them, I not only feel the sea-breeze, I also hear the sounds of the birds, the boats, and, most importantly, our guests. Frequently, this is the sound of distant applause from the garden areas, as visitors complete the guided portion of their tour through the mansion. Since the window next to my desk is above the rear door of the museum store, I can hear conversations as guests exit Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Birthplace. One day, I decided to write down a few of these overheard comments, the most common of which is, undoubtedly, an amused “Oh look, the museum store, what a surprise!” Below is a smattering of other responses:

“That was really interesting.” “Yes, it was.”

“I want to live here…this was lovely.”

“I learned a lot today.”

For me, the best part about overhearing these remarks is that I receive honest feedback from our visitors: feedback that is genuinely and overwhelmingly positive; feedback that is a testament, not only to the historical significance and natural beauty of our site, but also to the efforts and dedication of our talented employees. It makes me both happy and proud to know that The Gables is contributing to the edification and enjoyment of so many people who chose to visit this region for what was likely their much-anticipated vacations.

KARA MCLAUGHLIN

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

Kara McLaughlin
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Greetings,

As we near the end of summer we look forward to the most vibrant time of year at The House of the Seven Gables. The colors of autumn in New England will radiate across the museum grounds as thousands of visitors from around the world journey through 350 years of history and culture.

In 2016, The House of the Seven Gables welcomed more than 100,000 guests from all 50 states and 59 countries for tours and programs. Almost one third of our guests visited in October alone. Our legend attracts, our stories stir and our historic preservation along with our charitable work leave their mark on all who visit. No matter where you are traveling from, you will find a story that captivates you at The House of the Seven Gables.

I invite you to join us at our signature fundraising event on Sunday, September 17 at 5:00 for the Taste of The Gables for an evening full of local flavors, beautiful art work, and both silent and live auctions.

Cheers,

Ellen F. Dunn
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve our National Historic Landmark District and leverage its power as an icon of American culture to engage diverse audiences and provide educational opportunities for our local immigrant community.

VISION STATEMENT

To be a sustainable historical, architectural and literary site dedicated to continuing the philanthropic “Settlement” tradition of educating our immigrant population.
At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans were experiencing the largest growth in transportation our young nation had ever seen. This newfound ease of access allowed people to enjoy travel and participate in leisure activities more often. Traveling to local cities for vacations became a hobby of many families; regardless of social status. Salem was no exception to this growing trend. In 1880 the first ever Visitors Guide to Salem was published which allowed tourists to get a glimpse of what the area had to offer. With more people coming to the historic city the need for transportation increased. Many of Salem’s visitors came from Boston to spend their summer holiday at The Willows or experience our rich history. Established in 1835, visitors could choose to ride the Boston to Maine Railroad which provided unrivaled facilities for the public’s travel convenience. Another option to get from Boston to Salem was the steam ship, New Brunswick. The steamer took passengers directly to the Salem Willows where they could enjoy a stay at the luxurious Ocean View House. The town of Salem was also connected by an advanced electric trolley system beginning at the train station. It allowed tourists to get to any location in the city in under fifteen minutes.

At this time The House of the Seven Gables was owned by the Upton family. They were the first residents of the house to open it up to visitors interested in the connection to Nathaniel Hawthorne. Eventually the demand for tours became so great that the Upton’s charged a small admission fee. In 1908 the house was purchased by Caroline Emmerton whose family had a long history of charity and philanthropy in Salem. She sought to transform The Gables into a settlement house and fund her programming by operating a museum on-site. As the number of visitors to the house grew so did the size of the museum, eventually leading to the addition of two more historic homes. In a few years The Gables introduced amenities for visitors travelling to the site from far distances. They included a sophisticated tea room which served refreshments in the gardens as well as a bed and breakfast in the Hooper-Hathaway House. Visitors were encouraged to tour the six furnished rooms in the house and climb the novel secret staircase. Admission was kept at an affordable price of $.25 per guest (about $6.00 today) and the money was used to fund Emmerton’s settlement programs. These innovative developments established Salem as an essential stop for those looking to explore New England history.

It is understandable that Americans were becoming increasingly intrigued with our history and wanted to share that information with others. Many visitors to Salem came because of their growing fascination with The Salem Witch Trials. A popular activity for tourists in the nineteenth century was souvenir shopping. This is where we begin to see the introduction of the souvenir spoon movement in
the United States. Salem souvenir spoons often depicted witches on a broom stick, proving that our allure with the Witch Trials is long-standing. Similar to today’s tourists there was also an overwhelming fascination with antique shopping where individuals were looking to purchase items of historical value such as furniture to showcase in their homes.

As the twentieth century moved forward society began to experience a superior access to disposable income generated by increased wages. This resulted in the vast growth of the automobile industry in the United States. The cost of purchasing an automobile became more attainable with Henry Ford’s invention of the assembly line which brought production costs to a feasible price for many families. This new consumer-driven economy allowed for over 20 million cars to be on American roads by 1929. Our society was now on the move. For Salem residents this meant the end of the electric trolley system. A new city bus system was introduced as well as free parking lots across town. Tourists that came off the train could now hire a taxi service and request that the driver act as a tour guide for them while driving through town. The Willows also began to lose its appeal as the steam ships from Boston were replaced with residential sail boat and motor boat docking.

A change in pace also meant that families were no longer looking for summer-long vacations at local areas like The Willows. In 1956 Eisenhower introduced the plans for an Interstate Highway System that would connect Americans from coast to coast. Families now desired to travel greater distances during leisure time. To this day The Gables has continued to be a top attraction for people coming to the Salem area. In 2016 we had visitors to our historic house museum from all 50 states and 59 different countries. This was truly a great accomplishment as we continue to uphold Emmerton’s mission of preserving the iconic house for future generations and providing educational opportunities to the public.
1891: THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY VISITS THE GABLES

David Moffat
LEAD TOUR GUIDE AND RESEARCHER

A visit by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1891 is one of the earliest visits to the The House of the Seven Gables about which we know anything specific. Over a hundred “members and friends of the society” visited the city of Salem from their headquarters in Providence on June 3, 1891. James Burdick, the chairman of the society’s Field Day Committee reported as such in the Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Their visit included a trip to the Essex Institute, a historical and scientific society formed in 1848, and which consisted in 1891 of a library and lecture space in Plummer Hall. Across Essex Street, they visited the Peabody Academy of Science which had a museum housed in the East India Marine Hall consisting of the collection of the East India Marine Society. The group also met with Robert Rantoul, the Mayor of Salem from 1890 to 1893.

One of their guides in Salem was George B. Loring, a former U.S. Representative and recently resigned U.S. Ambassador to Portugal.

In A Visit of the Rhode Island Historical Society to Salem, published by the Essex Institute, it notes that they visited the “Turner House, 32 Turner Street, built in 1680, and a favorite haunt of Hawthorne.” The mistaken building date of 1680 corresponds with the year that John Turner I died, and may have come from mention of the property in his probate records. At other times in the late nineteenth century the house was thought to have been built in 1662, based on the date inscribed on the iron fireback found within it.

The account of their trip continues: “This is called ‘The House of the Seven Gables.’ It is the only ancient house which Hawthorne was known to visit and here he frequently took tea with the owner and occupant, Miss Susan Ingersoll.” The House of the Seven Gables in 1891 was owned by the Upton Family, who had purchased the house in 1883. In 1889, Henry Upton removed an earlier central chimney and replaced it with a skinny “spindly stack,” allegedly discovering the “secret staircase” in the process. By the early 1890s, the Upton family offered tours of the home for a quarter. No record survives of their reaction when over a hundred Ocean Staters appeared on their doorstep in June of 1891.
The most memorable experiences are often found in our own backyards. Many of us tend to bypass attractions, museums, and natural sites in our own towns and cities. Sometimes these places are out of reach. When we are able to experience our community’s cultural and natural resources, we develop a better understanding and appreciation for where we live, and most of the time we have fun!

This was the case for students who participated in the Caribbean Connections program this summer. Travel was a large part of their itinerary this year, consisting of six field trips. Most field trips took place within the boundaries of Salem, including a visit to The House of the Seven Gables, where students, ages 5 to 11, engaged in the thrilling experience of the Worldwide Trading Game.

Guided by tour guides and teachers, students took on the roles of seafaring merchants who traversed the Atlantic world in the 17th and 18th centuries in search of profit. As students experienced the excitement of winning, they also learned the history of the Atlantic trade and discovered the realities of an economic system that relied on the unfree labor of enslaved people to produce and distribute goods throughout the Atlantic region.

Most of the students who participated in the program were first- or second generation Dominican immigrants whose families travelled to Salem in search of work or to join other family members. The interwoven histories of Salem and the Caribbean became very real for them as they learned about the introduction of slavery in the Caribbean; the vast change or destruction of island environments resulting from the first arrival of Europeans in the New World; the demand for slave labor in the Caribbean’s sugar plantations; the prosperity generated in New England by the Triangle Trade; the role that immigrants played in powering New England’s economy during the Industrial Era. The program’s “big picture” approach to history afforded all students an opportunity to explore the reasons why people have moved across continents – sometimes against their will – since colonial times to the present.

As students explored Salem’s early history, they quickly understood that the Puritans were immigrants, too, escaping religious persecution in England. Notable children’s trade books were also part of the curriculum, and they helped students understand that people sometimes must emigrate, or travel far from their homes, to escape natural disasters, famine, or war.

The capstone experience for students was a field trip to Baker’s Island, located in Massachusetts Bay just off the coast of Salem. The exhilarating journey was made possible through the Gables’ partnership with Essex Heritage. On the morning of August 9th, students embarked from the dock at nearby Blaney Street for a memorable voyage to the island.

Upon arrival, children were struck by the silence that enveloped the island. Only seagulls’ cries, buzzing insects, and lapping waves could be heard. “I’ve never done this!” one student exclaimed as the group climbed up from the shore through a wooded area. “Tranquilo,” another boy commented.

Together, they summarized the whole point of travel – most of the time, we have fun!
During the late 19th century, The House of the Seven Gables became the subject of a variety of local landmark postcards, due to its acclaim as the inspiration for the classic novel by Salem author, Nathaniel Hawthorne. The ancient house at the foot of Turner Street was regarded even then, as somewhat of a local curiosity.

Looking at those vintage postcards today, we realize that the house has changed greatly in its overall appearance. Early images taken reveal it as a private residence, and that its roof line had been diminished from seven to only three gables. This did not halt the interest of visitors seeking it out, or even from knocking on its front door to inquire about the architecture of its interior.

Postcards became a popular way of sending short messages to friends and relatives, and were saved as reminders of their past travels and correspondences. The Gables has a long history of postcards that continue into our own lifetime, and collectors search them out for their uniqueness and current values.

The tradition of featuring postcards of The House of the Seven Gables continues to this day. Currently, we have an extensive variety of vintage and contemporary images of the site for sale. Stop by the Museum Store to select your favorites to send to friends of family.
This image shows the western side of the house shortly after the restoration of 1908-1910. Note the Counting House in one of its previous locations, this one where the Retire Beckett House currently stands.

A photograph of the parlor taken by Caroline Emmerton was used in this postcard to highlight the northeast corner of the room. The open door reveals the shellback cupboard and the furnishings reflect a variety of early-American styles.

Another view of the parlor showcasing the southeast corner. Here we see a portrait of Eunice Turner Balston, the daughter of John Turner II, the second owner of the mansion. This portrait hangs today in the Holyoke Room in the Seamans’ Visitor Center at The House of the Seven Gables.

The attic is one of the best preserved areas of the house. Here we see the original floorboards, plaster wall, and timber frame as they have looked for 350 years.
One of the rarest postcards of the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion shows the northern side of the house prior to restoration. Note the address of the house listed as 34 Turner Street. Also in the photo to the right of the mansion is a late-Victorian house that today stands on Hardy Street.
115 Derby Street
Salem, MA 01970