The House of the Seven Gables

To preserve, share and continue the American story
A Message from our Leadership

Dear Friends,

We hope this letter finds you safe and well as we approach the end of 2021.

This year has been one of change. The ongoing pandemic has required us to operate with a high level of flexibility while maintaining some sense of consistency and stability for our staff, students, and visitors. Though maintaining this balance has not been an easy task, our exceptional team is up to the challenge.

The House of the Seven Gables reopened to the public in April with reduced tour capacity and limited staff. As public health guidelines evolved, we increased our capacity levels and welcomed more visitors to our site. This October we saw over 19,000 visitors at The Gables. While less than the 30,000+ visitors we normally see at that time of year, we take the return of visitors as a sign of better things to come in the new year.

We spent this year celebrating our founder Caroline Emmerton's vision to preserve our site while serving the community. We were able to resume our English as a Secondary Language and Citizenship classes in person with COVID-19 precautions in place. Despite the struggles caused by the pandemic, 17 of our students have taken the oath of allegiance and are now naturalized citizens.

This edition of the newsletter highlights many of our accomplishments in areas such as preservation, public programming, Settlement work, membership, and more. It also provides a glimpse at some projects and initiatives we have planned for next year. In 2022 we will explore, via a series of special programs and events, what it means to build community. No matter what community you are from, you share a sense of place or identity with those in your circle. The House of the Seven Gables Settlement Association has been a center of Salem’s community for over a century - sharing a rich history with visitors from around the globe and providing educational resources for people living in the greater Salem area.

We are grateful for the continued generous support of our community and especially that of you, our members. Your support has carried us through this uncertain time, and we look forward to continuing to engage with you through meaningful experiences in the coming years.

With appreciation,

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Executive Director

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This Year in Photos

Top Left: ESL class at the PEM; Top Right: Summer tour group; Middle Left: The Gables in November 2021; Middle Right: A conversation circle November 2021; Bottom Left: The Gables Visitor’s Center during the spring 2021 reopening; Bottom Right: Wild Sea Wellness Yoga partnership September 2021.
Resurrecting
“Young Goodman Brown”
to Find Timely Relevance

By Rae Padilla Francoeur, Writer/Editor

Until recently, the only time I read anything by Nathaniel Hawthorne was when I had to. My class read “The Scarlet Letter” in seventh-grade in Santa Barbara, California. Mostly, I felt sorry for Hester Prynne. Now I see our teacher’s motives. The novel was a cautionary tale for seventh-graders. Sex education disguised as literature. Heartache disguised as romance.

Years later, a work colleague recommended “Young Goodman Brown.” He made a copy of the Hawthorne short story for me and, feeling obligated, I read it. I loved the lush depiction of the woods — alive with movement and evil intent. From my summers backpacking in the High Sierras I shared this view. Sometimes the woods are like that. Scary. Instead of Native Americans and colonists raiding each other’s encampments, there were bear raids on our food caches.

I’ve recently reread “Young Goodman Brown,” this time with a short story study group I joined via Zoom back in March 2020 right after the COVID-19 lockdown. I facilitated our discussion of this classic story, said to be one of Hawthorne’s best.

In a nutshell, Young Goodman Brown leaves his home in Salem Village at dusk. His bride of three months, Faith, implores him to stay. But Brown had promised to meet a man in the woods. Oddly, it took the man only 15 minutes to journey from Boston to Salem on foot. The man’s cane has a carved snake that appears to writhe. He possesses devilish powers. Brown then encounters fellow villagers — the pious and the reprobates and everybody in between. It’s as if society has relocated to this uncivilized and forbidding place — including his beloved Faith. Brown then comes to, either from shock or a nightmare, forever changed into a mistrusting, bitter man. He has lost his faith in people and society.

It helps to read “Young Goodman Brown” with some historical perspective. Hawthorne set the story in Salem Village (then, Danvers) shortly before the witchcraft hysteria of 1692. If ever there was a time on the North Shore when one might conjure witches, it was then. Property issues were among the more tangible problems. Surrounding the village of 1692 were dark woods where all manner of danger lurked. As my colleague said, woods could easily represent the absence of civilization. Goodman Brown saw that firsthand. So did the settlers.

Residents had relocated from Maine, where they had brutal encounters with the Native Americans and probably suffered from PTSD. In Sebastian Junger’s new book “Freedom,” he writes that the torture was so prolonged and terrifying, culminating in death, that the colonists preferred to fight to the death rather than be taken prisoner.

Most people know that Nathaniel Hawthorne was a native son of Salem. He was complex, committed to his writing, precocious and funny and creative as a boy, and a devoted father and husband. There are so many parts to him that I wonder if anyone, so many years later, can ever fully comprehend him. He was not a recluse, as many believe. He was not bound solely to Massachusetts but traveled and lived abroad. He was a talented diarist and is now accessible online at Project Guttenberg and elsewhere. As a boy he loved the woods.

Hawthorne is not easy. Our group has a guideline that most of us have adopted — a short story needs to be read three times to be understood. Fortunately, “Young Goodman Brown” is under 10 pages. The more times we read it, the easier it became to feel at home with the language.

...continued on page 11
This year has seen many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to resume in-person ESL and citizenship classes in April 2021. More than 60 students participated in the April-through-August session. We are grateful for our partnership with the Peabody Essex Museum for hosting our classes. Funding for the spring 2021 courses was provided by the Van Otterloo Family Foundation.

More than 20 people took their oaths to become U.S. citizens at this September’s Naturalization Ceremony on the lawn at The Gables. These individuals came from over 12 countries. More than 60 students are enrolled in the fall 2021 session. We have hired two new teachers to support the growing number of students, and hope to be able to add an additional citizenship class in January 2022. In order to afford more students the opportunity to take classes, we are working with the PEM Pals early art education program to offer a childcare enrichment program on site during our adult courses.

Funding for the fall 2021 session was provided by a Sustaining the Humanities grant from Mass Humanities’ SHARP program. Funding from Mass Humanities has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) through the American Rescue Plan, legislated by Congress to support the response and recovery of the cultural sector from the ongoing impacts of the coronavirus. We are grateful to have received additional support from the Salem Education Fund.

In conjunction with our regular classes, we are starting conversation circles, which bring people from the Salem community together to help ESL students practice English while practicing their Spanish. A volunteer description is up on our website for anyone interested in learning more about the program or signing up.

In 2022, we plan to run ESL and citizenship classes from January to June, an eight-week summer session, and a fall semester starting in September. To encourage our ESL students to engage at The Gables, we will offer family memberships to students who complete the program. They will be able to take tours, which will be offered in Spanish, and participate in other family-friendly programming throughout the year.
Your membership supports our efforts in preserving our historic campus and providing educational opportunities to newly arrived immigrants.

This Year in Development
By Geneva Cann, Development Associate

500-Members Milestone
The Gables has a lot to celebrate this year, including a milestone for our membership program. This fall, we officially surpassed 500 current members - a first in Gables’ history. In February, due to the pandemic, we dipped to 227 members, and now we have the most we’ve ever had at 530 and counting! Thank you to our staff for advocating and mentioning the membership program. And thank you to our beloved members. We look forward to the future as we continue to grow and make our membership program the best it can be.

2021 Member Events Spotlight
This was another year of pivoting and changing with the times. The Development team was able to host some cancelled 2020 events and our members had a great time! In September, members gathered in Gloucester for a tour of the Cape Ann Museum. A special exhibition of Fitz Henry Lane’s works was on display, but members were especially intrigued by a large model of Gloucester’s fishing port. In October, members and Development staff were treated to a behind-the-scenes factory tour of Harbor Sweets—and, of course, sampled some chocolate. Thank you to these generous partners for their time, expertise, and warm welcome.

Member Holiday Event
December 10, 5:30 — 7:30pm
Join us this year at The Gables to celebrate the festive season. This member holiday event will include caroling led by some of our musically inclined staff members, a photo op in front of the Uptons’ Christmas tree in the parlor of The Gables, ornament making, a hot cocoa bar and cookies, and 25% off for all membership levels in the Museum Store. You are welcome to drop in for part of the event or stay for the entire time. We are excited to welcome members onto our historic site!

2022 Member Events

Saturday, April 30
10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.
John Proctor House Tour

Friday, June 24
6 p.m.
Family Fun Night

Monday, July 4
5 p.m.
Celebrate the Fourth

Wednesday, November 9
6:30 p.m.
Special Night Tour of The Gables
Patron level or higher

Wednesday, November 16
6 p.m.
Furniture and Design Tour of The Gables

Friday, December 9
5:30 p.m.
Holiday Shopping Event

Our mission is to be a welcoming, thriving, historic site and community resource that engages people of all backgrounds in our inclusive American story.
I cherished the opportunity to write “A Short Biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne” published in October 2021 by Banna Books, an imprint of Applewood Books. Previous American writers honored with “Short Biographies” include Washington Irving, Henry David Thoreau, and Ernest Hemingway. The books are very short (under 30 pages!), making them an ideal overview of the subject’s life for students or tourists.

I have long been a fan of Hawthorne’s work. I had read all his novels and many of his short stories but the project allowed me an excuse to complete the run, discovering lesser-known gems such as his insightful and funny collection of essays on England, “Our Old Home.” As a through line, I looked to Hawthorne’s significance as one of the first modern fiction writers in the United States and the importance of history in his imagination.

I had already written over 7,000 words on each topic. I struggled over every sentence, trying to retain as much meaning as possible while keeping things brief! I hope the resulting work will serve students and visitors well for years to come. Signed copies of the book are now available in the Museum Store.

The biggest challenge in writing the book was covering all the major events of his life and the context of his times, while keeping to the strict 4000-word limit. In my time working at The House of the Seven Gables, I had worked on projects studying the life of his father and his views on Utopia in reference to his time at Brook Farm and visits to Shaker communities. I struggled over every sentence, trying to retain as much meaning as possible while keeping things brief! I hope the resulting work will serve students and visitors well for years to come. Signed copies of the book are now available in the Museum Store.

The House of the Seven Gables Museum Store

The Museum Store offers a charming holiday experience with items that have a timeless quality. We promote our local history, the celebrity of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the generous legacy of our founder, Miss Caroline Emmerton. Come on by and feel the past come to life in our gift shop, located within the Retire Becket House (c.1655), the oldest house on our historic site. Bring your family and friends, and shop locally this season. You are sure to find unique offerings, and enjoy the festive atmosphere of an old New England Christmas.
This Year in Preservation

By Holly Watson, Assistant Visitor Services Manager

Preservation is one of the backbones of our institution. This year the department has undertaken several important projects to protect our historic buildings and site, and ensure the comfort and safety of our guests and staff.

This August the basement at the Nathaniel Hawthorne Birthplace flooded due to the abundance of heavy rain. The preservation and collections team cleaned the basement, treated the collections pieces for mold, sealed the bulkhead and window sills, and installed an industrial-strength dehumidifier. Plans are in place for the basement to be sprayed with a mold killer to arrest mold growth.

Another historic structure, The Phippen house (c. 1792), needed its two original chimneys repointed. Repointing is the process of grinding down the mortar between the bricks and replacing it with fresh mortar to stabilize the chimney. Fabio Bardini of Florentine Renaissance Masonry worked with lime mortar, a more traditional and softer building material than cement. Bardini used the original bricks in the restoration project. Funding for this project was provided in part by the Methuen Festival of Trees Preservation Grant program.

Gary Clark and his team of masons from Clark Masonry & Restoration LLC spent many days in August employing their expertise throughout the property to level the brick walkways, thanks to a 2021 Health and Safety Grant from Independent Schools Compensation Corporation (ISCC). Clark’s team repointed a small section of the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion’s foundation in October to prevent mice from entering.” They are scheduled to come back in 2022 to repoint the sea wall. Climate change and rising sea levels have made maintaining our sea wall a high priority for our historic seaside site.

We are working to manage flooding on site by maximizing the drainage efficiency. Many of the underground drains at the base of the gutter downspouts were partially or fully blocked, contributing to the water buildup throughout the site. Nelson’s Plumbing of Peabody has been systematically working to unclog drains to help prevent flooding. The next stage of the project involves using a water jet system to clear the downspouts and gutters.

The patio furniture in the gardens and grounds – 65 tables, chairs, and benches – is being blasted and repainted by Cassidy Brothers Forge in Rowley, Massachusetts. The furniture will be repainted using marine paint, which will withstand the harsh seaside conditions for years to come.

Looking forward to 2022, we are hoping to direct some of our preservation focus to the Hooper-Hathaway (c. 1682) and Retire Becket (c. 1655) Houses. Both of these buildings were moved to our site in the early 1900s by Caroline Emmerton from elsewhere in Salem when scheduled for demolition. Follow our preservation efforts in the coming year in our monthly E-views from The Gables, and on our blog.
What do you do to celebrate the holiday season? Enjoying time with family and friends, playing games, listening to music, and indulging in food and drink are probably part of your answer. Our collections have many objects that represent these holiday pastimes, including items displayed on the game table in our parlor. One of our favorite collection objects is an early 20th-century mah-jongg set.

Mah-jongg started as a card game in 18th- and 19th-century China. No one knows when the game started using tiles instead of cards, but the game spread widely in China and eventually to the West. Mah-jongg became popularized in the United States in the 1920s. Similar to the Western card game Rummy, mah-jongg is a game of skill, strategy, and luck.

This set consists of carved and stamped bone playing tiles, counting sticks, and coins, all stored in a beautiful custom mahogany and brass-bound box. If you have sharp eyes and know the game, you’ll realize the layout of the game as displayed in the photo is completely inaccurate - no one on our staff had any idea how to play mah-jongg! Some helpful visitors pointed out our errors and helped us to correct the display. When we revised our interpretive plan, we set the parlor interpretation date to the 1840s and replaced the mah-jongg game with a more suitable card game.

Come see the house beautifully decorated for Christmas. You’ll see the new layout of the game table as well as many more of The Gables’ wonderful collection pieces.
This Year in Programming

By Kaylee Redard, Assistant Visitor Services Manager

With constantly changing COVID-19 restrictions, The House of the Seven Gables had to get creative with our programming this year. With some trial and error, we were able to provide over 12 unique virtual experiences.

2021 began with the launch of Colonial Classics: A Food Demonstration with The House of the Seven Gables. Once a month between January and June, The Gables café kitchen was used to bring colonial recipes into the 21st century. These demonstrations were live over Zoom and Facebook so the audience could ask questions during the cooking. We are excited that this program has returned and will continue into March 2022.

The Gables hosted two virtual lectures this year. In February, internationally acclaimed author Brunonia Barry’s presentation Salem as Inspiration sold out with over 90 Zoom attendees. In November, author Mary Pilon spoke on her book, “The Monopolist,” which focuses on the true origins of the family favorite game MONOPOLY.

In March, we launched our new Virtual Naumkeag Settlers to Salem Shippers education program for grades two through five. An adaptation of our most popular in-person education program, it includes a 3D tour of The Gables, at-home activities, discussions and videos to engage students remotely. We were thankful to receive a Mass Humanities Digital Capacity Grant, enabling us to offer this virtual program free to Massachusetts teachers in 2021.

In April we invited folks to join us for a few rounds of Ancestry Bingo. Designed by Gables staff, Ancestry Bingo was a fun way for players to explore their family’s history, and a chance to win some prizes from our Museum Store.

Our June program, Singular Characters, explored the relationship between Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne through the written words of these American authors and their contemporaries. This living history program, performed by Richard Smith and Rob Velella, brings Thoreau and Hawthorne alive to a modern audience.

The House of the Seven Gables started offering two off-site audio tours in August. Passages of the Past and Hawthorne’s Shadow audio tours were the result of a collaboration between The Gables and a local creative theatrical organization called Intramersive. Passages of the Past takes visitors around the Derby Street neighborhood, describing its diverse history, while Hawthorne’s Shadow is a tour through Salem led by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

In partnership with Musae and Intramersive, we are now offering an Immersive 360 Tour, which virtually follows one of our Senior Historical interpreters on a guided tour of The House of the Seven Gables. It is designed to provide greater access to visitors who have difficulty navigating our 353-year-old mansion.

These virtual programs have been an amazing learning experience here at The Gables and a great way for us to connect with visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to offer more virtual programs in 2022 and hopefully bring back some in-person ones too.
Weddings at The Gables

By Deb Costa, Manager of Special Events

The House of the Seven Gables has been host to hundreds of weddings during my 12-year tenure as The Special Events Manager. I have hosted very small elopements to events with 170 guests. Some are bittersweet, with family members being ill or having passed on, and there are always remembrances of the losses. We have also had many interesting themed weddings such as Alice in Wonderland, Star Wars, along with weddings officiated by Borah, one of Salem's famous witches and, of course, the more traditional nautical theme. Some of my favorites have also incorporated the family dog that, for the most part, is well behaved and just loves to be with its owners and part of the fun during picture-taking. I want the day to go as perfectly as possible and make sure that the couple are glad to have chosen The House of the Seven Gables for their wedding venue.

Resurrecting “Young Goodman Brown” to find timely relevance

...continued from page 4

We saw “Young Goodman Brown” as Hawthorne’s way of thinking about the paranoia that overtook Salem Village. His interest was personal, and he had become learned in colonial history. His great-great-grandfather, John Hathorne, was one of the judges presiding over the witchcraft trials.

Some group members thought the story was about evil. Others connected it to mistrust. Still others saw the prescience of the story, with its relevance to contemporary times and a deeply divided nation where life is tragically lost because of a lack of trust and collaboration. And, of course, facts of witchlike behaviors presented at trials were not facts at all.

An artful story means different things to different people, with some overall agreement on key matters like quality of writing, themes and, yes, entertainment value. “Young Goodman Brown” has all of those, delivered to us in 1835 by one of America’s great and searching writers.
Views From the Gables

What's Inside?
Looking ahead to 2022
A Year in Photos
Collections Corner
Member-Exclusive Events
...and more!

Holiday Member Caroling and Shopping Event
December 10, 5:30 – 7:30pm

Enjoy caroling, a photo op in front of the Uptons’ Christmas tree, ornament making, a hot cocoa bar and cookies, and 25% off for all membership levels in the Museum Store.

ESL and Citizenship Classes

The House of the Seven Gables is offering:
FREE English as a Second Language and Citizenship test prep classes for adults.

¡REGISTRESE YA!
¡INSCREVA-SE AGORA!
ENSKRI KOUNYE A!
¡REGISTRESE YA!
¡INSCREVA-SE AGORA!
ENSKRI KOUNYE A!

Schedule/Horario/Horário/Ore A:
Winter/Spring: 1/25/2022 — 6/30/2022
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6:00 — 8:00 PM

Location Ubicación/Localização/Kote:
The Peabody Essex Museum (PEM)
161 Essex Street Salem, MA 01970

For more information, contact: The House of the Seven Gables
978-306-7001 • kdulmage@7gables.org