

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES



WINTER 2025

A Message from our Leadership



Dakota Russell
Executive Director



José Nieto
Board President

This winter, we will be changing some paint colors and wallpaper inside The House of the Seven Gables. If reading that sentence made your shoulders tense up a little, you are not alone. There is a small, urgent voice inside many of us that whispers: *Our favorite places should never change.*

The truth is that change is always happening around us. Our view of the past constantly shifts because of our vantage point in the ever-changing present. Our knowledge of how the house once looked has evolved, but so have the stories we tell in it. These updates help us to be more accurate in our depiction of history; but they also help us expand our view, bringing in new voices and new characters. You can read more about our plans on page 6.

Often, change is outside of our control. We know that the growing impacts of sea level rise and storm surge, for instance, will dramatically reshape our historic site over the next 50 years. Rather than wait for catastrophic change, we have chosen to be proactive, embracing necessary changes that make our campus more sustainable and resilient. You can read about an early project we are implementing on page 9.

The House of the Seven Gables is a special place partly because we have never tried to freeze it in time. When you visit here, you wander through all 350+ years of our history. That span of time includes a lot of change, and more will come. But our desire to tell stories that connect us to the past—and to each other—endures.

Thank you,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Dakota Russell' and the second is 'José Nieto'.

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THE AWTHORNE IRCLE

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Central Michigan University

hen we think about celebrated authors, what often comes to mind is what we could refer to as the “myth of the solitary artist.” This is the familiar idea that works of genius are the product of sensitive, solitary souls. Perhaps we imagine Edgar Allan Poe toiling away, weak and weary, by candlelight or Virginia Woolf cloistered in room of her own. After all, as Hawthorne’s contemporary and friend Emerson famously claimed in *Self-Reliance*, “To be great is to be misunderstood—and to be misunderstood leads to alienation and scorn.”

The reality, however, is almost always something very different. While artistic creation may indeed be solitary process, its realization inevitably requires support in various forms. Where authorship is concerned, one in the first place needs shelter, sustenance, and supplies; publishing one’s work then involves the author in a network of publishers, editors, and critics. And, of course,

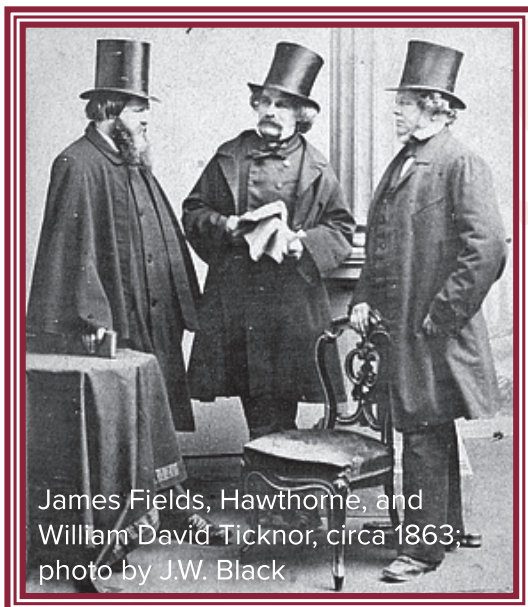
moral support can be every bit as important as material supplies and conditions; this is where family, friends, and colleagues enter into the picture, allowing the author the time and space to create, providing feedback, and bolstering spirits. Rather than reaffirming the myth of the solitary artist, it is thus more appropriate to reconceive of the author as the central node in a network of family and friends, patrons and colleagues, professional contacts and production managers.

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s artistic career is illustrative in this respect as it was facilitated and shaped by many people, including college friends who later opened doors for him, publisher-advocates who championed his work, and a supportive home environment chiefly in the form of his loving wife Sophia. This article will briefly introduce a few members of the “Hawthorne Circle” whose contributions, both material and intangible, allowed Hawthorne’s genius to flourish.

— Cordial Collegiate Colleagues —

Hawthorne attended Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine from 1821 to 1825, which, at that time, catered to the wealthy, conservative elite. Hawthorne was in good company and formed close friendships with future President Franklin Pierce and a Mainer named Horatio Bridge who, after graduating, rose to the rank of Commodore in the U.S. Navy. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was also a member of his matriculating class of 38 freshmen. All three men played important roles in Hawthorne's artistic development.

Hawthorne's bond with Franklin Pierce lasted throughout their lives and Pierce repeatedly used his political connections to assist Hawthorne with "making ends meet." As Pierce's political star was on the rise, he helped Hawthorne secure his position as Surveyor of the Port of Salem under the Polk administration. Hawthorne published a campaign biography of Pierce in 1852 and, after he became President, Pierce repaid the favor by appointing Hawthorne as U.S. Consul to Liverpool, which was a lucrative diplomatic post that allowed Hawthorne to pay off his debts. Pierce was by Hawthorne's side when he died in his sleep in 1864 (Miller 518).



James Fields, Hawthorne, and William David Ticknor, circa 1863; photo by J.W. Black

What Hawthorne's fortunes would have been without the role played by Pierce is uncertain and it's equally hard to know what would have become of Hawthorne had it not been for the moral and financial support provided by Horatio Bridge, especially in the years after college when Hawthorne was struggling. Significantly, Bridge financed the publication of Hawthorne's first collection of short stories, *Twice-Told Tales*, by guaranteeing the publisher against loss. He also was an important source of encouragement for Hawthorne in their correspondence—so much so that Hawthorne dedicated his collection of stories, *The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales*, to Bridge, writing "If anybody is responsible for my being at this day an author, it is yourself" (qtd. in Mellow 28).

Hawthorne's friendship with Longfellow wasn't quite as deep as those with Pierce and Bridge; however, the two maintained a mutual respect and, significantly, Longfellow penned a lengthy review of *Twice-Told Tales* that was full of generous praise and focused favorable attention on the young author. (Hawthorne, in a tongue-in-cheek letter to Longfellow, suggested that at least five people would agree with Longfellow's assessment: his mother, his two sisters, his aunt, and himself! [Mellow 80]).

— Publisher Proponents —



Even staggering works of genius make no impact if never presented to the public, nor can an artist subsist on the pleasures of creation alone; as Poe appreciated in his letter to the owner of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, to be appreciated, one must be read—and being read in the nineteenth-century entailed forming connections with publishers. While Hawthorne worked with a number of different publishers across his career, his most important ally was James T. Fields, a partner in Boston's leading publishing house, Ticknor and Fields.

The well-connected Fields quickly became Hawthorne's champion, encouraging him to publish *The Scarlet Letter* as a stand-alone work and going on to publish all of his major novels. Instrumental in establishing Hawthorne's reputation, Fields was also among Hawthorne's most devoted admirers. Hawthorne, although famously withdrawn, came to trust Fields deeply. After Hawthorne's death, Fields helped shape his posthumous legacy by portraying him in his memoirs, *Yesterdays with Authors*, as a shy but noble genius.

— Solace and Support —



ublishing authors are forced to negotiate two occasionally intersecting worlds: the professional world of the literary marketplace and the personal world of home and family. While figures such as Pierce, Bridge, Longfellow, and Fields helped support and sustain Hawthorne's professional aspirations, he was nurtured as well in his private life by his adoring wife, Sophia. As described in his *Notebooks*, depicted in their correspondence, and characterized in several very detailed biographies of Hawthorne (see bibliography), his relationship with Sophia combined romantic devotion with intellectual sympathy.

Importantly, Sophia's roles included not only the domestic duties that typically fell to women in the nineteenth century; she also was his first and most-trusted reader of his work. She offered feedback on his manuscripts and neatly copied them for publication. Hawthorne saw her as his muse and used her as a sounding board for his ideas.

This portrait of the Hawthorne Circle of course could be expanded greatly to include many other influences, supporters, colleagues, and professional acquaintances. What it shows us, however, is that, while creation may occur alone, publication is always collaborative. Hawthorne's genius depended on the contributions of many others to take flight.



Sophia Peabody Hawthorne,
portrait by Chester Harding



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A Fresh Coat of Paint

By Susan Baker, Curator of Collections

Thinking of refreshing your home with new wallpaper and paint? So is The House of the Seven Gables! Thanks to our generous supporters, this winter, we're launching Phase I of our Refurnishing Plan for three rooms in the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion: the Dining Room, Parlor, and Great Chamber. Updating a museum is quite different from redecorating at home. Every change must honor historic precedent, authenticity, and the latest historical research. Each decision supports our interpretive goals and ensures visitors experience fact-based, engaging stories. The appearance of these exhibit rooms is key to fulfilling our promise of well-researched, accurate interpretation.

Why refurnish now? The current décor no longer reflects the historical periods we aim to interpret. In 2019, The Gables adopted a

new Interpretive Plan that assigned specific date ranges to each room in the Mansion. For instance, the Dining Room showcases life in a prosperous maritime household during Salem's Great Age of Sail, from approximately 1790 to 1807. Although charming, the existing wallpaper and green-painted woodwork aren't accurate for this era. Careful paint analysis revealed that a yellow-cream shade was historically correct. While no original wallpaper remains, our Refurnishing Team spent months researching comparable New England homes from the period and identifying authentic patterns. Fortunately, a producer still hand-block prints historic wallpaper designs, allowing us to select one that's true to the Dining Room's story.

Step into the Parlor and experience the refined leisure and vibrant social life

of a wealthy Salem woman—Susannah Ingersoll—and her circle in the 1840s. This room highlights the deep family connection to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ingersoll’s cousin, and his artist wife Sophia Peabody. The Parlor’s story is told through three remarkable paintings: a large landscape by Sophia Peabody, her portrait by Joseph Alexander Ames, and a youthful portrait of Hawthorne. These pieces illuminate the inspiration Hawthorne drew from the house for his famous novel, “The House of the Seven Gables.”

Currently, the Parlor’s wallpaper features a pattern from 1720-1750; not the 1840s we aim to showcase. Our new wallpaper will capture the style of the era and make the artwork truly stand out, enriching the story of the Ingersoll-Hawthorne connection. The existing verdigris green walls are also historically inaccurate;

paint analysis reveals a dark cream color was popular in the 1840s, and we’ll be restoring this authentic look as part of Phase I.

The Great Chamber transports you to the 1740s and the world of the affluent Turner family. In Colonial America, wallpaper was typically imported from England—and sometimes France—before the Revolutionary War. The Turner family likely adorned their bedroom with luxurious imported wallpaper and ornate bed hangings. For our restoration, we’ll install a replica of a flocked flowering vine with a diaper pattern, closely matching a fashionable look of the time.

Visit us this spring to experience the “new” rooms at The House of the Seven Gables. Stay tuned—next winter, Phase II will focus on new floor coverings and textiles as we continue our commitment to historical authenticity.



*Victorians at Home
Susan Ladner*

Hampshire 1843



Design board for the new parlor, with new wallpaper and the planned yellow-cream paint color.

Inspiration is being drawn from this painting for the proposed parlor window treatment.

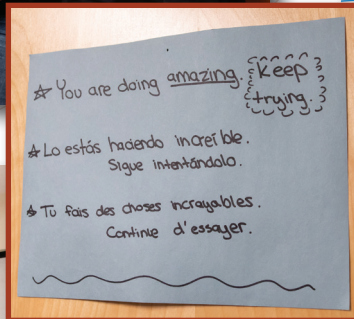
Celebrating One Year at the Immigration and Education Center

On November 26, 2024, The House of the Seven Gables held a grand opening and ribbon-cutting for our Immigration and Education Center. We are excited to celebrate the fact that we have now been in this space for over a year!

Located in Shetland Park Building 1, Suite 109, 27 Congress Street in Salem, the Immigration and Education Center serves as a home for our Settlement Program. The Center

provides classrooms and meeting spaces for our English and Citizenship Preparation classes, making it easier for participants to find and take advantage of these programs.

The opening of the Center was possible due to a 10-year grant from the Cummings Foundation. Thank you to the Cummings Foundation and all our donors for your support in this achievement!



SUSTAINABILITY AT THE GABLES

*By Paul Wright,
Director of Preservation and Maintenance*

Sustainability continues to be a major theme of our preservation work here at The Gables. Our Climate Adaptation Plan, which has been featured in a recent article on Inside Climate News, is continuing to advance, thanks to another grant from the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management. This grant, which totals to \$176,190, will fund final design and permitting for floodproofing and stormwater control measures at the Hooper-Hathaway House and relocating the Counting House out of the flood zone. This work is expected to take up the first half of 2026, and will hopefully prepare us to undertake construction in late 2026 into 2027. This work focuses on some of our most vulnerable areas to climate change and coastal flooding, and sets us up to be able to do more important work down the line, like improving our seawall with a concrete stem wall and drainage system.

Meanwhile, we have kept up steadily working to improve the efficiency of our buildings without compromising historic character. This has mostly taken the form of new energy efficient storm windows on both the Retire Beckett House as well as the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion. On Retire Beckett, we used the same exterior storm window design as Hooper-Hathaway, which uses true divided panes that mirror the existing historic windows and have a low emissivity coating. This coating cuts down the amount of infrared heat that passes through the window, reducing heat from the summer sunlight, saving on cooling costs.



Maintenance staff carrying new storm windows into the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion.

On the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion, we took a slightly different approach. The existing exterior storm windows all have failing UV film, and the bulky exterior storm window frames detract from the visual appearance of The Gables. Instead, to highlight the historic charm of the original windows, we opted for interior storm windows. These storm windows are compression fit to reduce air leakage, and also have low-E coating as well as UV film for protecting collections.

Lastly, two rooms in the upper level of the 1924 barn built by Joseph Chandler had been serviced by an old and defective gas furnace, and an old window AC unit. We recently replaced those systems with a high efficiency heat pump which will heat and cool both rooms without the use of fossil fuels. Through energy reduction efforts like improved storm windows and electrification of our heating and cooling, we are making steps towards decarbonizing our beloved historic site.

THIS YEAR IN MEMBERSHIP

by Geneva Cann,
Membership and Gifts Manager

As 2025 comes to an end, The House of the Seven Gables is reflecting on how important our members are more than ever. Your support and advocacy is vital to the continuation of the organization. Whether it's joining, renewing, visiting, donating, shopping, or attending an event, you are supporting our work of preserving our historic buildings and providing free ESL and Citizenship classes to newly arrived immigrants. Thank you for all you do for The Gables.

2025 Membership Highlights

This year, our membership program grew and diversified. Our members represent 43 USA states and 11 countries.

There was a popular array of member events. Here is a spotlight:

- In the spring, we toured the Harbor Sweets factory in Salem – from large refrigerators, to the conveyor belts, to the copper pots! We learned about their process of creating chocolates, the history of the company, and enjoyed a sweet treat at the end.
- We had another fun Celebrate the Fourth. Members enjoyed the new addition of Crowninshield Punch, a sea shanty band, whose performance was jolly and humorous.
- In September, we toured The Sargent House Museum in Gloucester. Many of us had not heard of it before, but it's an incredible historic house with very welcoming staff.



We look forward to spending more time with our members in 2026!



Looking for a meaningful holiday gift? Consider sharing your joy of being a member and giving the gift of The Gables this holiday!

The House of the Seven Gables offers gift memberships! Scan the QR code, select the level, and check off "this membership is a gift."



HAWTHORNE'S HALLOWEEN BASH

On October 18th, Nathaniel Hawthorne hosted his second annual Bash at The House of the Seven Gables. We had both out-of-town and local guests attend in fantastic costumes! Shoutout to the actors that portrayed Hawthorne's characters: Josie Wacker (Mistress Hibbins), Luke Spencer (Professor Westervelt), Isabella Walsh (Dr. Heidegger), Aidan Cheetah (Mr. Holgrave), and Colin Lamusta (Feathertop). Our guests enjoyed tarot readings, spooky stories by the campfire, potion-making, magic card tricks, spooky tales by the campfire, and photos taken in front of the mansion's garden door. And we can't forget the dancing, mac and cheese, and competitive spirit of the best costume winners!



Feel like you missed out on the fun?
Save these dates for next year's fundraisers

Sips by the Sea – May 30, 2026
Hawthorne's Halloween Bash – October 17, 2026

Donate to the Annual Fund

2025 has been different than years past. The Gables' legacy, for more than a century, has been one of helping our neighbors—specifically our local immigrant communities. The challenges they have faced this year have been truly unprecedented. But at The Gables, we have always believed that the change you make locally ripples outward and can have an incredible impact. Even as the world gets darker, we can still make Salem and the North Shore a safer and more welcoming place for immigrant families.

Our capacity has been diminished by cuts to the federal grant programs that support both our education and preservation work. Tourism to Salem and The Gables was down this year, mostly from foreign travelers. The threats of climate change mean we need to implement the first stage of our adaptation plan now. At the same time, demand for our English Language and Citizenship Preparation classes has grown, as immigrant communities seek out safe and welcoming places.

We ask you to join us in ensuring that our historic site remains a place of peace, learning, and community. Please make a gift to keep our programs thriving and our doors open to all. **Every contribution, large or small, helps. Now is the time.**





115 Derby Street
Salem, MA 01970

VIEWS FROM THE GABLES

What's Inside?

Hawthorne's Circle
Mansion Renovations
Membership Recap
...and more!

About the image on the cover: Holiday decorations in the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion. Photo by Jason Baker Photography.



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ENDOWMENT
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