WHITTIER'S HOME AT AMESBURY

A detailed account of souvenirs of the poet it contains

FOR THE USE OF VISITORS, TO WHOM THE HOUSE IS FREELY OPEN

BY

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THE AMESBURY HOME OF WHITTIER

In 1836, Whittier had several reasons for selling his birthplace at East Haverhill, the home of his ancestors from Colonial times, and removing to the small cottage at Amesbury, which was to be his residence for the remainder of his life — a period of fifty-six years. His father had died six years previously, and he had not the strength for heavy farm work, nor the means to hire suitable assistance. He had been obliged to give up his position as editor of the Essex "Gazette" because a candidate of his party antagonized the anti-slavery movement with which he was identified. His brother, who had assisted him in farm work, had gone into other business. His mother, his sister Elizabeth, and his Aunt Mercy, members of the Society of Friends, were nine miles from the nearest Quaker meeting, which was at Amesbury. He had accepted an agency of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which required considerable absence from home. When he was away it would be difficult for the women of the family to attend the meetings which meant very much to them. So he bought the little one-story cottage on Friend Street, Amesbury, which was nearly opposite the Friends' meeting-house of that time.

There were only four rooms in this cottage, including an attic. To accommodate his Aunt Mercy, he built a small ell. From 1836 to 1840, although frequently coming home because of illness, or to help in some political campaign, he was most of the time in New York and Philadelphia. In 1841, Joseph Sturge, the English philanthropist, came to this country, and Whittier accompanied him on several of his missions, to Newport, Philadelphia, and Washington. Sturge came to Amesbury, and noticed how the poet was cramped for room. Upon his return to England he sent Whittier one thousand dollars, to be used in the enlargement of his house. In 1847 this money was spent in adding a second story to the eastern end of the building, and Aunt Mercy's room was lengthened, and became what has since been known as the "Garden Room." The new chamber over this room was taken by his sister, and after her death

in 1864, it became the poet's chamber. The second story was added to the Western half of the house in 1884. Up to this time the house had been painted white. The present yellow color was selected by Whittier himself, who though entirely color-blind as to red and green, was always partial to yellow. The cottage had been built several years before it was bought by Whittier.

At Whittier's death, in 1892, by his will the house and its contents came into the possession of his niece, who after the death of his sister, had been at the head of his household until her marriage in 1876. She was the daughter of his younger brother, and had lived with her uncle from early childhood. After 1876, the poet spent part of each year with his cousins at Oak Knoll, Danvers, but retained his home here and his citizenship of Amesbury. Hon. George W. Cate and wife had charge of the house after 1876, making a pleasant home for the poet, and after his death occupied the house for several years. Mrs. Pickard then leased it to the Whittier Home Association, and Mrs. Smith, President of the Association, hospitably kept it open to an ever-increasing number of visitors. Since the termination of the lease, Mrs. Pickard having in the meantime passed away, her husband and her married son, the grandnephew of the poet (to whom in his infancy the poem "A Name" was inscribed), have occupied the house. Several of the original rooms, at all times during their occupancy, have been freely open to the public, and each year thousands come here from all parts of the world. In order to keep these rooms for visitors, an ell has been added for the convenience of the family, without noticeably changing the appearance of the house. So much for the history of the building. In answer to the call of many visitors, some account is here given of the contents of the rooms open to the public.

RECEPTION ROOM

This room, during most of the fifty-six years Whittier lived here, was his dining-room. But when he bought this one-story cottage, in 1836, this was the kitchen, and here are the old fireplace with its crane, and the brick oven that were in use until 1847, when the house was enlarged. The screen that hid this fireplace for more than half a century, while this was the dining-room, has been recently removed to show its original appearance. The tongs that were in use in the Birthplace kitchen at Haverhill, by the ancestors of the poet, are here to be seen. The bookcase in this room is filled with Whittier's books, his library overflowing into every room in the house. There are half a dozen cases now in the house filled with his books.

The portrait of Lincoln over the mantel is an artist's proof, and has occupied this place for forty years. The picture representing the statue of Hampden in London was sent to Whittier by James T. Fields. The watercolor over the table was a favorite of Whittier's, and he called it "The October Carpet." It represents the marshes at Absecorn, N. J., and was given to him by an aged Philadelphia friend, who was with him when the mob destroyed his office in 1838. The ancient looking-glass, with the eagle ornament, was broken by the lightning stroke which prostrated and stunned the poet, Sept. 13, 1872. The gilt border at the left upper corner shows the blackening caused by the lightning. Whittier was standing in the doorway leading to the "Garden Room," at the time. The painting under this glass, representing hazel blossoms, was painted by Lucy Larcom at the time when Whittier wrote the poem, "Hazel Blossoms," in 1874. In one corner of this room is the framed certificate, signed by Governor Andrew, of Whittier's election as one of the Presidential electors, in 1865. He also voted for Lincoln in the same capacity in 1861, and used to say that he had voted oftener for Lincoln than any other man in the country, — twice in the Amesbury town house, and twice in the State Capitol in Boston.

THE "GARDEN ROOM"

This room remains, in all respects, exactly as when it was occupied by Whittier. The books, the pictures, the furniture, the carpet, the desk, the stove, the lounge, etc., are kept as when in use by the poet. The desk is one he bought about forty years ago to replace the old "Secretary" on which he wrote "Snow-Bound," now to be seen in another room. There are several articles that suggested poems:

The cane made of oak from a beam of his office, destroyed by a Philadelphia mob, in 1838, which he carried all the rest of his life in preference to the more valuable canes given him by friends, and which called out his poem, "The Relic;" his poem, "The Pressed Gentian," was suggested by the fringed gentians pressed between glass plates, that have been hanging in the north window since 1872; the picture of a great rock in the Arabian desert, south of the Dead Sea, was given to Whittier by Bayard Taylor, almost a half century ago, and called out his poem, "The Rock in El Ghor." Another picture given by Bayard Taylor, hangs in this room; it was painted by Mr. Taylor himself, and represents the most northern church in the world, at Vadso, Norway, within the Arctic Circle. The portraits, hung by Whittier in this room, are of Longfellow, Beecher, Emerson, Garrison, Thomas Starr King, "Chinese" Gordon, Gamaliel Bailey, M. F. Whittier, Joseph Sturge, H. O. Houghton, and the Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Antoninus. To Joseph Sturge, the English philanthropist, Whittier was indebted for the money with which the second story was added to this cottage, in 1847, and this room, originally built for Aunt Mercy, after Whittier purchased the place in 1836, was enlarged after Aunt Mercy's death. In this room, and in the closet, are many of the personal belongings of the poet, — his shawl, Quaker coat, hats, etc. The ceiling of this room is much lower than that in any other room, and might well be higher, as there is a large air space between it and the poet's bed-room above. The reason probably is that this was the height of Aunt Mercy's room, and when it was enlarged, as a matter of economy, the old ceiling was retained. This was Whittier's work-room, but he never called it his study or library. His books are to be found all over the house. This was the family sitting-room, and here he received his guests. The mirror is a family heirloom, and is at least two hundred years old. The table under it is also ancient; on it Whittier often wrote, instead of at his desk, and his ink stains upon it are plentiful. The old desk of his great-grandfather, which he brought here in 1836, is now to be seen at his birthplace, it having been sent there by Mrs. Pickard, with other ancient furniture, when the Haverhill homestead was acquired by a board of trustees for the benefit of the public.

THE PARLOR

In this room, which was originally the parlor, are many Whittier souvenirs. Over the mantel is the portrait of the poet's mother which has occupied this place for half a century; and on the opposite wall a crayon likeness of his sister Elizabeth, placed here soon after her death in 1864. The desk between the windows is the one upon which "Snow-Bound" was written, also the "Tent on the Beach" and other poems of that period. When in use it was in the "Garden Room." The portrait over the radiator was painted by Hoit in 1846, when Whittier was thirty-nine years of age. The portrait on the wall opposite the desk is of Matthew Franklin Whittier, the only brother of the poet. The portrait over the desk is of his daughter, who from childhood lived with her uncle in this house until her marriage. After the death of her Aunt Elizabeth, in 1864, she was at the head of her uncle's household, and the house and its contents were left to her by his will.

On the wall next the door, is the first rough draft of the last poem Whittier wrote, containing lines not found in the finished poem. This was written only a few weeks before his death. Over this is the manuscript of his poem, "A Name," inscribed to his grand-nephew, who is now living in this house. With this manuscript is the proof-sheet of the poem, cut apart with extra verses inserted; also the note to the boy's mother that accompanied the poem. The lad was then three years old.

On the same wall is a foolscap sheet containing the two earliest poems of his composition now extant, written at the age of seventeen, the eulogies of Lafayette and Alexander I. These were never published. On the mahogany table, which has been in this room for seventy years, is the album given him by the Essex Club, at the suggestion of Senator Hoar. It contains the autographs of every member of Congress, and every U. S. Senator; also, of the members of the U. S. Supreme Court, State officials, and many distinguished citizens. The autographs were obtained by the member of Congress from this district, General Cogswell. The day he received this he wrote to his niece, "The testimonial got up for my birthday has just come to hand in the shape of a book full of great names." On this table, also, is the Latin

dictionary Whittier studied when at the Academy, and the beautiful album of "The Golden Vase," which was a birthday present when he reached the age of eighty-two.

The post of the little stand in the corner was part of his mother's spinning wheel, and the top a section of one of the great limbs of the old elm in Boston Common, sent Whittier by the Mayor because he said "the Quakers were hung on that limb!" In the opposite corner is the Rogers group representing Garrison, Beecher, and Whittier listening to the story of a fugitive slave girl. Bound volumes of papers Whittier edited in Hartford, Philadelphia, and Washington are in this corner. Also, the reclining and reading chair presented by George Peabody.

On the mantel is a plaster cast of Whittier's right hand; also the first daguerreotype ever taken of him. On the wall next his brother's portrait is his diploma from Harvard as Doctor of Laws, and on its receipt he wrote to his niece, "I suppose thee have seen I got the nickname of Doctor of Laws." Under this several photographs of the poet at different ages, with a small likeness of his older sister, a silhouette of "Aunt Mercy," a photograph of his old schoolmaster and lifelong friend, Joshua Coffin, and others.

On top of the Snow-Bound desk are the miniatures of Whittier, at the age of twenty-two, and of Evelina Bray, at the age of seventeen, both painted by the same artist. Also a photograph of Barbara Frietchie, sent to Whittier by Dorothea Dix, together with pieces of her dress sent by her grandniece. A piece of linen spun and woven by Barbara is in the desk. Near is a cane made of wood from Barbara's house, sent by a relative of hers. On the desk are the eagle quills which called out his fine poem, "On Receiving an Eagle's Quill from Lake Superior." The desk contains many books sent Whittier with inscriptions of authors, and first editions of his own poems. There is a handsome volume of Burns that came to him from Scotland, with a sprig of heather inclosed, upon receipt of which he wrote his famous Burns poem. The heather, with its delicate blossoms, is well preserved.

The drawers of this old desk are filled with souvenirs of more or less interest. Here is the little green box containing a piece of honey-comb, that called out his poem, "The Hive of Gettysburg." In the battle a bullet pierced a drumhead, and bees filled the drum with honey. A lady found it and sent this bit of comb to Whittier. Here is the scrapbook kept by his older sister, when he first began to publish his verses. It contains fifty of his earliest poems, most of them never collected. His mother's Bible is here, with the pathetic needle pricks that guided her hand to the 25th Psalm, as she became blind in the last months of her life; also several photograph albums, daguerreotypes and ambrotypes. Here also is the account book kept by his grandfather and his father from 1786 to 1800, containing many curious items, illustrative of household and farm affairs.

In the vestibule is a crayon representing Whittier at the age of forty-nine, a likeness of Harriet Beecher Stowe, an engraving of Dante and Beatrice, a bas-relief of Homer, a bronze figure of Neptune, and a little weather indicator which Whittier used to consult each morning. If rain was indicated a manikin came out, and if fair weather a woman. It was controlled by a fibre that was affected by atmospheric moisture. It is now "out of commission."

OTHER OBJECTS OF INTEREST IN AMESBURY AND VICINITY

The Friends' Meeting-House where Whittier worshiped is but a short distance from his house. The pew in which he usually sat is now marked with a silver plate.

Whittier's grave in the Union Cemetery is about ten minutes' walk from the Whittier Home, and in the same vicinity are the "Captain's Well," and the Macy House, built in 1654 by Thomas Macy, who in 1660, because of harboring Quakers, was forced into exile, as described in the poem, "The Exiles." A trolley line to Newburyport passes these places every half hour. The same line passes the "Hawkswood Pines," and over the ancient chain bridge across the Merrimac. Deer Island, the home of Harriet Prescott Spofford, divides the river at this point. Another trolley line passes the Rocky Hill meeting-house, built in 1785, which still retains its ancient pews and sounding-board.

The Whittier birthplace at East Haverhill is about nine

miles from Amesbury, and a line of electric cars passes it. This fine specimen of colonial farmhouse, built in 1688 by the poet's great-great-grandfather, Thomas Whittier, retains all its old features, and contains many articles of furniture and other souvenirs, dating further back than the time of Whittier's birth. Most of these ancient articles were sent back to the birthplace from Amesbury, by Mrs. Pickard, after the death of her uncle. The birthplace is kept open to the public, under the care of a board of trustees, and is well worth visiting.

"Whittier-Land" is the title of a profusely illustrated guide-book to the picturesque region of the valley of the lower Merrimac, published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston. It contains many anecdotes of and poems by Whittier, never before collected. With every copy of this work sold at the Whittier home in Amesbury, a genuine specimen of Whittier's handwriting is given, and also a copy of this pamphlet. It will be sent by mail to any address, on receipt of its price, one dollar, and ten cents for postage on book and pamphlet. Address S. T. Pickard, Amesbury, Mass.

When "Hawthorne's First Diary," also published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., was withdrawn from circulation a few years ago, and the plates destroyed, about fifty copies remained unsold. These are now in possession of the editor of the work, and can be had, so long as they last, on receipt of one dollar, and eight cents postage, when sent by mail. This curiosity of literature was withdrawn from circulation, when it was found that one item of the alleged Diary could hardly have been written by Hawthorne in his youth. No reason has yet been found for doubting the authenticity of the other items. Orders for the book can be addressed as above.

WHITTIER'S EARLIEST POEMS

1825-1826

Never before published

[In the last year of his life, Mr. Whittier gave me, as a specimen of his handwriting when a boy, a foolscap sheet, containing these two poems. Both were written before he had enjoyed any educational advantage other than the district school, and before anything of his had ever appeared in print. There can be no doubt that one reason why he never gave these lines to the printer was that his Quaker conscience was awakened to the fact that both poems were eulogies of warriors. The Lafayette poem was written during the last visit of Lafayette to this country, when Whittier was seventeen years of age. — S. T. P.]

LAFAYETTE

The battle thunders loudly pealed,
    The appalling scenes of war begun
And many an hero took the field
    Led by the dauntless Washington.
And when proud foes our land assailed,
    When hostile fleets our shores beset,
Then with what joy the patriots hailed
    The youthful soldier, Lafayette.

Forever be thy name revered,
    Thou who for us so much hast done,
When thou thy service volunteered,
    In Freedom's cause, with Washington.
Unmatched in strife, in might arrayed,
    Thou wast where fierce combatants met,
Where shrinking foes gave way dismayed
    Before the approach of Lafayette.

Full many of them who with thee led
    The veteran bands of freedom on
To war, are with the silent dead
    Like Putnam, Stark and Washington.
And thou art left — far be the day
    When thy resplendent star shall set,
And millions their last tribute pay
    To Freedom's friend — to Lafayette.

But when at last death shrouds thy frame —
    Thy well-spent life serenely done —
The world shall then enroll thy name
    On glory's list, with Washington.
Fair Freedom, then, shall o'er thy tomb
    Shed tears of deep and sad regret
Whilst in perennial beauties bloom
    The immortal part of Lafayette.

1825.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER I EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

[This eulogy of Alexander I was written by Whittier three months after the death of that monarch, and is to be found in no collection of his works. This is the Czar who abolished serfdom in the Baltic Provinces, and encouraged the introduction of Western civilization in his empire. His part in curbing the ambition of Napoleon was probably uppermost in the Quaker boy's mind when he wrote these lines, which were never in print until they appeared in "The Independent," December 7, 1905. — S. T. P.]

The pride of the North to the tomb has descended,
The glory of Russia has sunk in decay;
For departed is he whose dominion extended
O'er Tartar and Cossack with absolute sway!

Cold and still is the heart of the princely commander,
The star of his glory is set in death's gloom;
The clods of the valley enshroud Alexander,
And Azof's tide washes the base of his tomb!

As a tyrant and despot the world may upbraid him,
And vilely with infamy his memory brand,
Unlike to the time when with awe it surveyed him,
The wonder of Europe, the pride of his land.

But look to the records of grandeur and glory
Of absolute monarch and despotic chief.
How few can be found within history's story
More worthy than he of the tribute of grief?

Long ages may pass, and the distant sun fling out
Its cold beams on many an Emperor's tomb,
And the bells of St. Petersburg merrily ring out
A welcome to others to rise in their room;

And there may not be found when the long record closes,
Of those who have sat upon Russia's high throne,
A prince more deserving than he who reposes
Where Azof's tide washes his monument stone!

8th of 3d mo., 1826.