

THE WHITTIER NEWSLETTER



Number 39

Winter 2011

The Trustees of the Whittier Birthplace, the Haverhill Whittier Club, and the Amesbury Whittier Home Association annually publish The Whittier Newsletter, jointly edited by Elinor Curtin Cameron, Tim Coco, Dianne Cole, Cynthia Costello and Arthur H. Veasey III. Items concerning Whittier and Whittier manuscripts, news of Whittier collections and organizations, and queries about future material inclusions in the Newsletter should be addressed to Arthur H. Veasey III at svz@comcast.net.

A Whittier Perspective

By Arthur Hale Veasey III

An obituary that was published on the occasion of John Greenleaf Whittier's death included the following observation, which poses an interesting dichotomy to our poet's life:

"Mr. Whittier never married and with his departure comes an end of all that would stand as the record of the tenderest of human relations. In all he has written, he has only shadowed by hints of an early romance, simply indicating the existence of affections early thwarted and never rekindled. Bearing in that direction, friendly endearments were observable, pointing to an anticipated but unrealized union, which held his affections by strongest cords through a long life, possibly to be realized in that future toward which he looked with a sense of overwhelming assurance."

Who were the women in Whittier's life? While he was counted among the great intellectuals in a male dominated era, the distaff were also sources of understanding in social, cultural and personal contexts throughout his lifetime. And what of love?

Whittier adored his two sisters who were as different as siblings could be. Elizabeth, his dearest companion, was shy and insecure yet she revealed to Whittier an inner soul of intense feelings of beauty and intimacy that he admired greatly. Older sister Mary was of a determined nature and encouraged his early writing and pushed him to publish them in the local newspapers. She sent his best poem, at the time, "The Exile's Departure," to William Lloyd Garrison the editor of the Newburyport Free Press, who published it in June of 1826.

Less is known about his relationship with his dear friend Lucy Hooper. In her own writings she spoke of some one whom she loved but who did not reciprocate. Since this was at a time when she was close to Whittier he may have unwittingly won her affection. He reportedly felt obliged to explain, one summer day, why he could not marry her as they strolled along the banks of the Merrimack.

Whittier's later association with William Lloyd Garrison and the anti-slavery movement led to his only true romantic interest. In 1838 he accepted a position in Philadelphia as editor of *The Pennsylvania Freeman*. While he was there he became close friends with a beautiful Quakeress by the name of Elizabeth Lloyd who was most certainly the object of affections previously mentioned. She was an abolitionist as well as an amateur artist and poet. Whittier was so taken by her that he considered proposing marriage before poor health forced his return to Amesbury. She eventually married Edward Howell who was not a member of the Society of Friends, which caused several attempts to expel her from the Society. Her protests and resistance were so compelling that Whittier wrote: "I cannot tell thee how rejoiced I am to hear of thy success in maintaining thy place in the Society."

Edward Howell died three years later and after a passage of time Elizabeth's sister Hannah, wrote to Whittier and urged him to visit Elizabeth in Philadelphia to commiserate, as each had endured the loss of someone close (Whittier had earlier suffered the loss of Lucy Hooper). Whittier accepted and the embers of romance were fanned. After returning to Amesbury he continued a correspondence so intense that of the 58 known letters that he wrote in 1859, twenty-three were addressed to Elizabeth Lloyd Howell. He ardently declares in one of his letters, "What the world suffers from is the lack of love, not the excess of it." Although deeply attracted to one another, Whittier and Howell were temperamentally very different, according to one observer, and the romance never culminated. Wherever the truth may lie, it marked an emotionally expressive time for Whittier. Earlier in this romantic period he wrote in a longing voice: "For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: it might have been."

Cogito, ergo sum

Aside from his intimate writings, one letter to Elizabeth Lloyd Howell dated July 9, 1859 reveals a rare glance into Whittier's impressive standing as one of the founders of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The *Atlantic* was a literary and cultural magazine that had rapidly gained national attention. Among its contributors were the leading intellectuals of the day and its writings often included commentary on politics and reform.

"We have just got through with an Atlantic dinner at the Revere House (1). Let me give thee the names of our company: Dr. Holmes (2) sits one side of me, Prof. Stowe on the other; next to him, Wyman, one of the editors; next Edwin P. Whipple, the essayist; next, Underwood, another editor; then comes Mrs. Stowe (3); by her side is Lowell; opposite her is Longfellow (4), next him is Stillman (5), the artist and poet; then comes Wentworth Higginson (6); and opposite me sits Miss Prescott (7), etc., etc. Holmes has been in the autocratic vein. Mrs. Stowe has come out wonderfully. We have discussed literature, manners, races, and national characteristics—not omitting theology, for we are Yankees. It was a pleasant gathering, lasting from

3 to 6. When I left, Longfellow, Holmes, Quincy, Lowell (8) and Whipple were lingering over their claret and cigars. Emerson (9) wrote us that he had sprained his ankle on Wachuset Mountain, and was on two sticks like the hero of Le Sage's novel. For myself, I don't much like those dinners. At such times when I break through my natural reserve I am liable to say more than I mean—to be extravagant and overstrong my assertions. I dare say that I have said a good deal today that I ought to be sorry for, but luckily my conscience does not bring any specific charge against me."

Whittier's self-effacing character and perhaps some sense of insufficiency are revealed here, even in the face of his status among this pantheon of literary and artistic colleagues.

1. This was not The Paul Revere House that survives as a museum today, but a prominent Boston hotel that was host to numerous influential gatherings.
2. Oliver Wendell Holmes the poet, physician and essayist. His son Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. became an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court.
3. Mrs. Stowe is Harriet Beecher Stowe, American writer and author of the anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom's Cabin.
4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was America's renowned lyric poet and author of "Paul Revere's Ride."
5. William James Stillman was an artist noted for his landscape paintings.
6. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was a Unitarian Minister and abolitionist who later became a Colonel in the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, a Union Army regiment composed of escaped slaves from South Carolina and Florida.
7. Harriet Prescott, a Newburyport writer and novelist.
8. James Russell Lowell was the founding editor of Atlantic and a prominent Bostonian.
9. Conspicuously celebrated on this occasion by his absence, Ralph Waldo Emerson was the most revered poet and essayist of his day.

Did Mary Baker Eddy ever meet John Greenleaf Whittier?



Mary Baker Eddy was a lifelong admirer of the work of influential nineteenth-century poet John Greenleaf Whittier. An avid scrapbooker, she clipped his poems out of literary magazines, and later quoted his words in her own published writings. The archives also contain an unpublished poem she wrote sometime before 1877 titled "Lines On Reading Whittier's Snow-Bound."

In 1868, Eddy was living in Amesbury with her student Sarah Bagley, a family friend of Whittier's. In July of that year, they paid a call on the poet, who was suffering from a variety

of ailments, as he had throughout most of his life. In previous months, he had written frequently to friends complaining of his precarious health, canceling engagements and apologizing for not returning their letters sooner. In fact, when Sarah Bagley proposed the visit to Whittier, she did so with the warning that he might not live much longer.

The two women arrived to find Whittier in a frail state, coughing constantly and shivering despite a roaring fire in midsummer. Mary Baker Eddy commented that it was likely a much more comfortable atmosphere outside than in, to which Whittier replied, "If Jesus Christ was in Amesbury, he would have to have brass-lined lungs to live here."

Mary Baker Eddy spoke with him for some time, "in the line of Science," and by the end of their conversation he seemed much improved. As she left, Whittier called to her and said, "I thank you Mary, for your call; it has done me much good." She received word the next day that he had left his sickbed to walk down to the village.

In 1872, Mary Baker Eddy sent an early manuscript of "Questions and Answers in Moral Science" (which would later become the chapter "Recapitulation" in *Science and Health*) to Whittier via Sarah Bagley. Though we do not have his exact words, correspondence with Bagley indicates he thought very highly of it and praised some sections. Later in 1875, Mary Baker Eddy sent him an inscribed copy of *Science and Health*. Whittier remarked that he found it to be a work that would require a lifetime's worth of study. That same copy of *Science and Health* was found among his belongings after his death.

Written by Amanda Gustin, Researcher. © The Mary Baker Eddy Library, Boston, MA.
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Hist of 1. 11063

When I was in Amesbury Mass. whether I had gone for retirement & prepare - V. H. my student Sarah Bagley requested - asked me if I would not like to go & see John G. Whittier the poet. I said, No I have no particular desire to see him. She said everybody that comes here always to see him and if you want to see him you must see him soon for he is ill and will probably not live long.

Will said I if that is his condition I will go and see him and help him. Upon arriving at his house I found him sitting before a fire in a grate (in July) coughing incessantly with hectic flush on his cheeks and scarce able to speak about a whisper. A

Telling of the Bees in 3D

The Stereopticon came into favor in the late 19th century as a way to enjoy a 3D view of scenic photographs. This stereopticon card from the Haverhill Public Library Special Collections was taken at the Fernside Brook and the notation on the back states that it is the spot referred to in the poem entitled "Telling of the Bees."



Here is the place; right over the hill
Runs the path I took;
You can see the gap in the old wall still,
And the stepping-stones in the shallow brook.

There is the house, with the gate red-barred,
And the poplars tall;
And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-yard,
And the white horns tossing above the wall.

There are the beehives ranged in the sun;
And down by the brink
Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed-o'errun,
Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink.

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,
Heavy and slow;
And the same rose blows, and the same sun glows,
And the same brook sings of a year ago.

There 's the same sweet clover-smell in the breeze;
And the June sun warm
Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,
Setting, as then, over Fernside farm.

I mind me how with a lover's care
From my Sunday coat
I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,
And cooled at the brookside my brow and throat.

Since we parted, a month had passed, --
To love, a year;
Down through the beeches I looked at last
On the little red gate and the well-sweep near.

I can see it all now, --the slantwise rain
Of light through the leaves,
The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,
The bloom of her roses under the eaves.

Just the same as a month before, --
The house and the trees,
The barn's brown gable, the vine by the door, --
Nothing changed but the hives of bees.

Before them, under the garden wall,
Forward and back,
Went drearily singing the chore-girl small,
Draping each hive with a shred of black.

Trembling, I listened: the summer sun
Had the chill of snow;
For I knew she was telling the bees of one
Gone on the journey we all must go!

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps
For the dead to-day:
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps
The fret and the pain of his age away."

But her dog whined low; on the doorway sill,
With his cane to his chin,
The old man sat; and the chore-girl still
Sung to the bees stealing out and in.

And the song she was singing ever since
In my ear sounds on: --
"Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence!
Mistress Mary is dead and gone!"

Greetings from the Birthplace

On behalf of the Trustees of the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace, I am pleased to welcome readers to this 2011 edition of The Whittier Newsletter. To us and his other admirers, John Greenleaf Whittier, whose two hundredth anniversary we celebrated just four years ago, remains a wellspring of inspiration. Many would agree that today more than ever the world could use his clear vision and strong voice as it tries to deal with issues such as family values, human rights, peace, and sustainability.

The nine members of the Board of Trustees have continued to play an active role in perpetuating the legacy of Whittier in Haverhill and beyond by overseeing the 69 acre farm, with its home, barn, and shed, and providing support for activities that sustain his memory. This year, for example, the Trustees have actively supported such activities as "Treasures of Haverhill" and "Snow-Bound Weekend," and are taking steps, through various Haverhill and state offices, to assure accessibility to the Birthplace after rain and a spring freshet damaged the bridge making passage from that end of Whittier Road impossible. In addition, we have initiated an ambitious capital campaign for which we encourage all of you to lend support.

I hope all of you "Greenleaf" enthusiasts enjoy reading the selections in this 2011 newsletter and continue your support the Birthplace through donations and participation. We are all convinced, I know, that the memory of John Greenleaf Whittier is well worth preserving.

Raymond F. Comeau, Ph.D.
President, Board of Trustees

Press Release from the WHA: 1000 Great Places in Massachusetts

House of Representatives,
7th Essex Salem: John D. Keenan, Chairman of the Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development congratulated the members of the Whittier Home Association at the Whittier Home Museum recently in a letter stating that they were named one of the "1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts".



He also thanked them for making it a special place to live, work and visit.

For over 100 years the Whittier Home Association has been steward of the Whittier Home Museum & Gift Shop on 86 Friend Street in Amesbury, maintaining the property and collections, and striving to educate others about John G. Whittier. It is the house where John Greenleaf Whittier lived from 1836 until his death in 1892. As a Quaker, creative thinker, environmentalist and freedom lover, Whittier published poetry most of his life and is famed for "Snow-Bound" in addition to his anti-slavery activism. It has been a resource for researchers and students from the local schools for many years. Visit the home to see the family furnishings, artifacts and memorabilia, along with the Gift Shop's publications of Whittier's works and history.

Whittier Home Museum (Amesbury) hours of operation:

Our regular season and hours are listed below. If you are interested in conducting research, an interview, or any other activity that is time-sensitive, please contact us and someone from the Home will make every effort to accommodate you.

Hours: Open June 5th through October 31st. Guided tours Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (last tour begins at 3:30 p.m.) - otherwise by appointment by calling 978-388-1337 or 978-465-5964.

Admission: Adults \$6.00 Students (age 7-17) and Seniors \$5.00 Children (under 7) free. Group rates on request.

Although the Whittier Home closes its museum doors to the public during the winter, our amply stocked gift shop on-line is now "open" year round. www.whittierhome.org Please feel free to browse our selection, and use us as a resource for your cultural and historic research. The items for sale include books of Whittier verse, biographical works, pictorials, unique publishings and illustrated notecards. The shipping cost is inclusive in the price. Massachusetts tax calculates for residents separately.

John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace (Haverhill) hours of operation:

Hours: Open April 7 through November 30

Wednesday, Friday: 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: Closed

Additional tours may be scheduled by prior arrangement; please provide two weeks notice. Groups larger than five are asked to make a reservation. The property is closed on all major holidays and during winter months, with the exception of special events.

Admission: Adults: \$5.00 Seniors (62 and over): \$3.00 Students (18 and over): \$3.00 Students (under 18): \$2.00 Youth Groups: \$1.00 (per person) Whittier Club Members: Free

To learn more about the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace go to: www.johngreenleafwhittier.com for news and events and click on *Gift Shop* to select from our collection of authentic Staffordshire China, as well as books, artwork and postcards commemorating the Quaker Poet.

Historic Arch Bridge set for repairs in January

The stone arch bridge on Whittier Road, near the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace, was closed several months ago due to unsafe conditions caused by floodwaters last spring. Repairs, which are slated to take place in early January 2011, are expected to retain the bridge's historic character and charm.

With the present closing, those who are coming from the east to visit the birthplace must detour past it for about ½ mile on Route 110, then take a hairpin right turn onto Whittier Road, and drive back in the opposite direction to arrive at the Whittier home.

School Spirit, Whittier Style

This mascot named John Poet, as the college it represents, is named after John Greenleaf Whittier, poet and abolitionist. If mascots are used to scare the opposition and entertain the fans, this choice is highly unusual. Compared to lions and kings, John Poet seems very gentle, although he looks a wee bit angered.



2011 Events and Announcements

Whittier Home Museum

86 Friend St. Amesbury, MA 01913

No meeting in February

Annual Meeting is Thursday, April 7, 2011 at 2 p.m. at the Home.

The Second Annual "CELEBRATING WHITTIER", fundraiser will be held on Sunday, June 26, 2011 at 2 p.m. at the Maudslay Arts Center in the State Park, Newburyport during the blooming of the Laurels. Whittier and friends met at this site for their annual June celebration and picnic. He wrote, "June on the Merrimac," for the occasion. Visit our website www.whittierhome.org for more information in April.

The June Garden Party is in the Victorian Garden on Thursday, June 2, at 2 p.m. with special program and tea party. Members are free and guests are \$5.00

John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace
305 Whittier Road Haverhill, MA 01830

In observance of Black History Month, the Whittier Birthplace, in cooperation with Calvary Baptist Church, will sponsor a musical interpretation, conducted by Marie Rawlings, of the children's book Priscilla and the Hollyhocks by Anne Broyles. It is the story of a young slave girl who is sold away from her mother. In spite of many heart-wrenching scenes, the story has a happy ending as the Priscilla's eventually gains her freedom. The production will be held at the Calvary Baptist Church, 13 Ashland Street, Haverhill, on a date to be announced in February and again in the late spring on the grounds of the Birthplace.

Last August 7, 2010 Marie Rawlings performed an interpretation of Little House on the Prairie at the Birthplace to rave reviews from both children and adults.



Our Broadening Newsletter Circulation

In addition to the 266 friends of John Greenleaf Whittier who are subscribers to this newsletter, 174 institutions nationwide receive a copy, including colleges, universities, high schools, libraries, and historical societies, even the Library of Congress. We are continually broadening our outreach to organizations near and far with excellent results. This year, for example, we have renewed our long association with The Boston Athenaeum and established a new correspondence with the American Friends Service Committee in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Recently we initiated a friendly exchange of ideas with the Mary Baker Eddy Library, which resulted in the very interesting article they contributed to this edition. If you know of a school, library or other organization that would appreciate a subscription to our newsletter please let us know by sending their contact information to: svz@comcast.net.

Whittier Land In 2010





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