

woodlands:

*"In the fields with bean or clover gay,
The woodchuck like a hermit gray,
Peers from the doorway of his cell."*

Station 10

Again from S.T. Pickard's "Whittier-Land," we learn that

"not far from the house, ... is the small lot inclosed by a stone wall, ... the burying place of the family. Here lie the remains of Thomas Whittier and those of his descendants who were the ancestors of the poet."

Station 11

The Whittier poem quoted at Station 5 of the Freeman Memorial Trail mentions "bees" and "beehives." But, it also notes "the red apples fell from orchard trees," back in the days when the farm was younger. Many of those older trees have totally disappeared now, and the ones which have survived don't bear well; so the Whittier Trustees are replacing them with the new trees being nurtured here at Station 11.

Station 12

Another site clearly identified in Whittier's "Snow-Bound" is the barn built by his father and uncle Moses when the poet was 13 years old.

*"A hard, dull bitterness of cold, ...
The coming of the snow-storm told.
The wind blew east; we heard the roar
Of ocean on his wintry shore, ...
Meanwhile we did out nightly chores, -
Brought in the wood from out of doors,
Littered the stalls, and from the mows
Raked down the herd's grass for the cows."*

Station 13

When the Whittiers lived here, there was a combination blacksmith/shoe shop at Station 13, the site of the present carriage shed. Roland Woodwell, in his book "John Greenleaf Whittier; A Biography," reveals how young Whittier was able to utilize the facilities of that shop to further

his education:

"Leonard Johnson ... who worked on the farm ... offered to teach Whittier how to make a plain turned slipper. The work was done in the small shop across the street from the house."

So that is how and where Whittier earned enough money to attend Haverhill Academy when it first opened on April 30, 1827.

In 1836, six years after John Greenleaf Whittier's father died, Whittier and his mother decided to sell the Haverhill homestead and move to Amesbury, the town in which they lived comfortably for the rest of their lives. But toward the end of his life, when his tremendous popularity had made him financially able to do so, Whittier did seriously consider buying and returning to his birthplace. However, before he could make the necessary arrangements to accomplish this, he suffered a massive stroke and died on September 7, 1892.



**WHITTIER
BIRTHPLACE**

305 Whittier Road • Haverhill, MA 01830-1738



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Freeman Memorial Trail



Dedicated in fond memory of
Donald C. Freeman (1901-2001),
legendary former trustee and
Haverhill Public School teacher,
principal and superintendent.

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The Donald C. Freeman Memorial Trail

As in the famous Underground Railroad, there are a series of stations along the Freeman Memorial Trail, identified by numbered signs. Participants in the walking tour are asked to focus attention upon 13 sights specifically cited in passages from either Whittier's own poetry or from the prose of one of his many biographers. This brochure provides clearly accredited direct quotations from the poetry or the prose relating to all but one of the numbered "stations" along the Freeman Trail.

Station 1

Many of the sites along this trail are mentioned in Whittier's most famous poem "Snow-Bound," and this is one of them. Here he imagines the hitching post and mounting stone at the entrance to the birthplace, where he and his siblings first learned to ride horses, have been transformed by the drifting snow of the Great Blizzard of 1818 to take on a quite startling new appearance:

*"So all night long the storm roared on: ...
And, when the second morning shone,
We looked upon a "world unknown,
On nothing we could call our own.
The old familiar sights of ours
Took marvelous shapes; strange domes and towers...
The bridle-post an old man sat
with loose-flung coat and high cocked hat."*

Station 2

Samuel T. Pickard, Whittier's friend and biographer, wrote the following in his book Whittier-Land after he and the poet had shared a trip to the Haverhill homestead:

"At his last visit to his birthplace in 1882, Whittier called my attention to the millstone . . . at the door of the eastern porch. . . . It was soon after this that he wrote his fine poem "Birchbrook Mill," one stanza of which was evidently inspired by noticing this doorstep of his ancestors:

"The timbers of that mill have fed

*Long since a farmers fires;
His doorsteps are the stones that ground
The harvest of his sires."*

Station 3

The autobiographical poem, "The Barefoot Boy," explained how his enjoying even the humblest of evening meals—bread and milk—at sunset, on the back doorstep, made the young Whittier feel rich as royalty:

*"Still as my horizon grew,
Larger grew my riches too,...
O for festal dainties spread,
Like my bowl of milk and bread, -
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood.
On the door-stone, gray and rude!
O'er me, like a regal tent
Cloud-ribbed, the sunset bent,
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,
Looped in many a wind-swung fold."*

Station 4

Here are two further illusions from "Snow-Bound" in which Whittier likens the appearance of the drifted well-curb to a Chinese roof and the slanting well-sweep to the world-famous Leaning Tower of Pisa:

*"The well-curb had a Chinese roof;
And even the long sweep, high aloof
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
Of Pisa's leaning miracle."*

Station 5

Again, it is in "Snow-Bound" that Whittier identifies the source of the countless hickory nuts littering the homestead grounds in the fall, pleasing squirrels, chipmunks, and humans alike: "And from the shagbark [hickory] overhead the grizzled squirrel dropped his shell."

Station 6

In an unfinished poem discovered among Whittier's papers, the poet envisions the first homecoming of his grandmother, the former Sarah

Greenleaf, as the beautiful eighteen-year-old bride of the poet's grandfather, Joseph Whittier. He imagines her first looking down at the homestead from a hill, then moving closer to enjoy the pleasing sights and sounds of the old farm even more:

*"The great oaks seemed on Job's Hill crown
To wave in welcome their branches strong,...
And lo! in the midst of a clearing stood
The rough-built farmhouse, low and lone,
While all about it the unhewn wood
Seemed drawing closer to claim its own.
"But the red apples dropped from orchard trees.
The red cock crowed on the low fence rail,
From the garden hives came the sounds of bees
On the barn floor pealed the smiting flail."*

Station 7

There don't seem to be any references to the turnstile here at Station 7 in either Whittier's or his biographer's works. However, it's quite obvious that the function of this simple but effective device was to allow humans access to the dam and millpond, and to deny the animals pastured in the field above the forbidden privilege of foraging in the back yard and gardens of the farmhouse below.

Station 8

Here we have another direct quote from Whittier's biographer S.T. Pickard's book "Whittier-Land:"

"Thomas Whittier found in the smaller stream [Fernside Brook] on his own estate a fairly good water power...Probably this decided the selection of the site for a house which was to be a home for generation after generation of his descendants. The dam, recently restored, is at the same spot where stood the Whittier Mill...Parts of the original walls of the dam are now to be seen on each side of the brook, but the mill had disappeared long before [J.G.] Whittier was born."

Station 9

"Snow-Bound" also supplies us with this candid portrait of a shy inhabitant of nearby fields and