

THE WHITTIER NEWSLETTER



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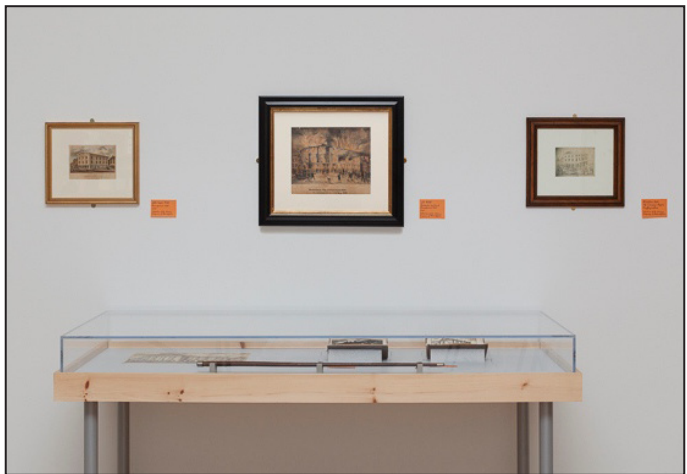
The Trustees of the Whittier Birthplace, the Haverhill Whittier Club, and the Amesbury Whittier Home Association annually publish The Whittier Newsletter, jointly edited by Cynthia Costello, Pam Johnson Murphy, and Arthur H. Veasey III. Items concerning Whittier and Whittier manuscripts, news of Whittier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

Whittier's Pennsylvania Hall Cane Featured in Philadelphia Exhibit

By *Cynthia Costello*

A walking cane owned by John Greenleaf Whittier was loaned for a special exhibit at Temple University in Pennsylvania this past spring marking the 175th anniversary of the burning of historic Pennsylvania Hall. What makes this cane special is that it is made from salvaged wood of the torched ruins of the Hall, which was built as a forum for anti-slavery and progressive social movements in the 19th century. The cane, inscribed with Whittier's name on its silver handle, was gifted to him after the destruction of the hall as a token of appreciation for his involvement with the abolitionist movement.

Whittier wrote the dedicatory poem for Pennsylvania Hall, a headquarters for the abolition movement, where he worked as an editor at the office of The Pennsylvania Freeman newspaper. Shortly after its opening, the hall was broken into and burned to the ground by a pro-slavery mob in May of 1838. Whittier, William Lloyd Garrison, Angelina Grimke and other prominent abolitionists were present and had to flee the "City of Brotherly Love"



fearing for their safety. Whittier was able to escape the blaze and blend in with the protesters who originally chanted "Kill Whittier" by joining in with the chant. He made it through, but he and the others were severely set back physically and emotionally. Whittier later wrote a poem "The Relic" about the cane and the incident, considered one of the most significant clashes between anti-slavery and pro-slavery forces in the 19th century.

Considering Whittier's role at Pennsylvania Hall and the idea of temporarily obtaining the cane on loan made perfect sense to the Temple University Museum exhibit organizers.

Distinguished lecturer Kenneth Finkel of Temple University said of the loan of Whittier's cane: "As you know, original objects related to this story are few and far between. I was delighted to hear that the John Greenleaf Whittier Home Association owns a cane made from salvaged ruins and doubly delighted to hear that it was being lent for exhibition. The presence of this artifact (see exhibit picture) will drive home the point that the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall was a momentous occasion at the time and in the life of the nation since."

"On the 175th anniversary of the burning of Pennsylvania Hall it is no longer a question as to whether this difficult and conflicted chapter in the history of the city and the nation deserves to be acknowledged. In 2013, the mostly forgotten story of Pennsylvania Hall is being told more and more, and I believe that this year of its 175th anniversary marks a real turning point in the recognition of an event that re-defined Philadelphia," said Finkel.

Finkel noted that beyond Temple University, Bryn Mawr College and the Masterman High School are developing a program for high school teachers to learn more about the incident and bring it into history classrooms.

This will complement the educational component offered free to teachers, students and public on the Whittier website (whittier-home.org), created through monies from a prestigious IMLS (Institute of Museum Library Sciences) received by the museum in 2007.

Whittier Home museum members are excited that Whittier is at long last getting more recognition for his heroic abolitionist past (Yankee Quill Award 2013, see story) in addition to poetic accomplishments such as "Snowbound," which thrust him into the international spotlight, says WHA President, Cynthia C. Costello.

2013 Yankee Quill
John Greenleaf Whittier
19th Century Poet and Editor

“ A poet being honored as a journalist?”

A poet, yes, but one who first became famous as a newspaper editor, and not for his poetry, although that became an important, anti-slavery asset.

Whittier is tied to William Lloyd Garrison, who was similarly honored with the Yankee Quill in 2005. Garrison published in the Newbury-Newburyport area of Massachusetts and would come to know a young man, John Greenleaf Whittier, of nearby Haverhill with whom his significant role as editor-publisher would be linked in historic ways. A poem by Whittier, a shoemaker son of a former, had been submitted to Garrison’s newspaper and the two discovered each other. Whittier, sorely needing income, was encouraged by Garrison to further his education, and, finally, to work for a newspaper.

What followed were their roles in the effort to end slavery in what ultimately became the United States.

Whittier would become a major, end-of-life poet, but he supported himself as a writer and newspaper editor – first with *The American Manufacturer*, a Boston political weekly, and later, the *Haverhill Essex Gazette* in 1836, followed by the *Hartford, Connecticut, New England Review*.

In 1838, Whittier was editor of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, where he could have lost his life. On May 17, the new, but ill-fated Pennsylvania Hall was destroyed by anti-abolitionists, and there are accounts of Whittier, wearing a disguise, entering the building to recover his galleys.

That led to writing and editing at other journals, and he became a parallel force to Garrison’s even more turbulent anti-slavery efforts.

From all accounts, Garrison and Whittier were opposite types of personalities. They dressed differently. Garrison’s style was anything but conservative. Whittier’s was.

Garrison was, by his own assessment, “On fire.”

Their differences fractured the bond because Garrison had added women's rights to his anti-slavery agenda, and Whittier, together with other anti-slavery leaders, feared it would erode support for ending slavery.

Whittier then became editor of *The National Era* which many regarded as the foremost anti-slavery publication of its time and a founder of the anti-slavery Liberty Party.

Whittier's poems often used slavery to symbolize all kinds of oppression (physical, spiritual, economic), and his poems stirred up popular response because they appealed to feelings rather than logic.

Whittier produced two collections of anti-slavery poetry, "Poems Written during the Progress of the Abolition Question in the United States" and "Voices of Freedom." He was an elector in the presidential elections of 1860 and 1864, voting for Abraham Lincoln both times.

The passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 ended both slavery and his public cause, so Whittier turned to other forms of poetry for the remainder of his life.

His poem, "Snowbound," was his most quoted work, but it was his anti-slavery poetry reeking of undeniable injustice that fueled the cause both Whittier and Garrison enflamed.

*William Plante,
Academy of New England Journalists
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The Relic by J.G. Whittier (abridged)

That Temple now in ruin lies,
The fire-stain on its shattered wall
And open to the changing skies
Its black and roofless hall,
It stands before a Nation's sight
A grave-stone over buried Right!
But from that ruin, as of old,
The fire-scorched stones themselves are crying,
And from their ashes white and cold
Its timbers are replying!
A voice, which Slavery cannot kill
Speaks from its crumbling arches still!
And even this relic from thy shrine

Oh, holy Freedom! —hath to me
A potent power of voice and sign,
To testify of thee.
And as I grasp it now I feel
A stronger faith a warmer zeal.
Nor all unlike that mystic rod
Of old stretched o'er the Egyptian wave,
Which opened in the strength of God
A pathway for the slave,
It yet may point the bondmen's way
And turn the spoiler from his prey.

Isaac Merrill's Diary

J.G. Whittier (1807-1892) was only 21 years old when diarist, Isaac Merrill, himself 26 years old, visited the young poet on his family farm. Whittier had financed his tuition partially by teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in nearby Merrimac, MA and had graduated from the new Haverhill Academy in 1828. His first poem had been printed in June of 1826, so Isaac knew him from the very start of his long career as one of our greatest poets.

"1829 Nov. 4th- Cloudy and windy the principal part of the day. Evening is very still and beautiful. Went down to John Whittier's in the East Parish - an hour and ten minutes walk for me. J. G. Whittier, the poet, was at home. He does not express his ideas very fluently on any subject, but he can wield a pen like four hundred men."

Students Assist at the Birthplace

By Jay Cleary

In the fall of 2013, a group of students from the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School under the direction of their carpentry teacher, Earl Corr, took on a major project to improve the Birthplace. They embarked on the conversion of the blacksmith shed to a new visitor's center. The shed, located across the street from the Birthplace, was a shell of a building that consisted of unfinished 2 by 4's framing the interior. The Whittier carpentry students enclosed the unfinished stud walls with sheet rock on the upper portion. On the lower portion of the walls, they matched existing wooden boards, which were previously installed in the entryway of the shed. Electrical outlets were installed along the walls where the sheetrock was installed. The ceiling, which had been open and

exposed was also covered over with sheetrock by the students. Two windows were removed and covered over for security purposes with new clapboards installed on the exterior where they were removed. Lighting will be installed in the ceiling. The work has ceased temporarily for the cold weather months but the students will complete the project in the springtime. Once it is finished, the shed will become a visitor's center and a small bookstore for the purchase of Whittier related items, which had



previously been kept in the Birthplace. A flat screen television will be installed on the wall for a video introduction to the Birthplace to be shown to those visiting the Birthplace. Wall display panels will be created for the shed. The shed will be able to accommodate small groups for meetings and get together.

Students from Northern Essex Community College were at the Birthplace on Saturday, November 23, 2013 for a day of community service. Under the direction of Trustee Glen Hamilton, they grabbed rakes and lawn tools and removed huge piles of leaves that had fallen on the grounds of the Birthplace as well as along Whittier Road. The students have been enthusiastic in their support of the Birthplace for a number of years and make a great impact on the appearance of the Birthplace and the road in front of the Birthplace. The volunteer efforts of both groups of students are a tremendous contribution to the John Greenleaf Whittier birthplace and are greatly appreciated by the Trustees.

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The Curator's Corner

By Gus Reusch

For years there has been a small, old wooden shingle at the Birthplace that has been somewhat of a mystery. Drawn on the front are a little girl and a little boy. In the background is part of a one-room school house. The drawing itself is very well done. At the bottom of the drawing is one line that is the clue that explains the scene. That line reads: "I hate to go above you."

It is a line from one of John Greenleaf Whittier's famous poems, "In School Days." The little boy is young Greenleaf and the little girl is Lydia Ayer, Greenleaf's childhood sweetheart.

Written on the back of the wood shingle are the words "Drawn on a wood shingle from the Amesbury Home in which Whittier wrote "In School Days." The illustration did not include the artist's name, nor did it include the year it was done.

It was this past summer when an answer to the mystery became a possibility. Included in the many books and other Whittier memorabilia that were donated to the museum by Martha Sawyer Lockard and Allan W. Sawyer (the daughter and son of Aldrich and Victoria Sawyer, collectors of Whittier material), was a book titled *Winter Poems by Favorite American Poets* published in 1871 by Fields, Osgood and Co. in Boston.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote "The Pageant" expressly for the first poem in the volume. Also in this same volume was Whittier's "In School Days" and there were three illustrations with the poem. One of the illustrations is of Greenleaf and Lydia Ayer outside the school house but it lacked the artist's name. However, following the Table of Contents was a list of illustrations with the artist's name: S. Eytinge, Jr. The shingle illustration was identical to the one in the book.

Solomon Eytinge, Jr. began his career as an illustrator for the publishing house of Harper and Brothers before moving on to Fields and Osgood in Boston. When Charles Dickens came to America after the Civil War, Eytinge painted his portrait and later became renowned as America's greatest Dickens illustrator. He also became the favored illustrator for Louisa May Alcott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Washington Irving, Edgar Allen Poe, Whittier and many others.

Is the mystery of the drawing on the wood shingle solved? We hope so- but how did that artifact wind up at the Birthplace in Haverhill? That is another mystery for another day.

Research contributed by Mary Reusch

Ode to Whittier

By Sam Given

Mankind sits in his shelter of comfort
As evolution glazes over him
enclosing him

in a musk of laziness as “don’ts” evolve from “dos”

Watching his watch tick by
counting every moment;
he’s wasting them,
throwing away their possibilities
like last weeks trash.

As his mind gains unneeded knowledge,
his body bares the burden of a hollow soul.

Mind embarking upon landfills
of destruction
leading him down the wrong path of
“Synthetic Trees!” and “Neon Organics!”
He doesn’t realize that we are nature
and destroying it
is like destroying ourselves,
our fuel,
everything we’re made of.

Don’t you see?!
Our trees
are angry!
Evolution of comforts distills
our evolution of soul.

We are scared.
Mankind encloses itself in a trance
of isolation
dying captivation
and Industrialization

I can’t hear what the world’s trying to say
cities and cars overpower the Earths melody
with their ever-evolving destruction

And I can’t breathe
In a barren world excluding trees
feelings
of my own suppressed between fields of lonesome tree
stumps
and pesticides suffocating life.

We are not pixels.
We are the mystery of the spectrum!

The unexplainable blue sky-
the light
gliding in through the open window
enlightening every dust particle
carrying its very own internal world.

John Greenleaf Whittier,
our mingling souls are listening
to the rhythm of the river
bubbling by
to the soft breeze disassembling
the mounds of mahogany leaves
sprinkling their species at the change of season

But, John your smile would falter at the sight of today
Romanticism replaced by rationalism

I wish I could see New Hampshire through your eyes!
Hear the Merrimack river through your ears
After all these years,
at least I can still deem a portion beautiful
Like my feet tracing the same path as you had
through Maudslay
Leaving me in awe

For you, for me, for all who remember the earth when it
was free;
let it be
and start to breathe.

Sam Given is a sophomore at Newburyport High School. Her poem was selected to be read at the Fourth Celebrating J.G. Whittier held this past September in the Concert Barn of Maudslay Arts Center. She received a standing ovation.

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 May 3 through October 25, 2014. Guided tours Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. – otherwise by appointment: 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 is open year round: www.whittierhome.org Please feel free to browse our selections and use us as a resource for your cultural and historic research.



*Past WHA Presidents carry on the JGW legacy:
Harriett Gould (70 year member) Sally Lavery,
Pam Fenner, Janet Howell and Cynthia Costello.*

John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace (Haverhill) hours of operation:

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

The Birthplace is open from the third Wednesday in April through the last Sunday in October. With the exception of special events, the Birthplace is closed during the winter.

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

Admission: Adults \$5.00, Seniors (62 and over) \$3.00, Students (18 and over) \$3.00, (under 18) \$2.00, Youth groups \$1.00 per person, Whittier Club members and members of the armed forces free.

To learn more about the 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. Also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com and type in to the search browser "Friends of the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace."

A New Whittier Book by Eleanor Becotte

John Greenleaf Whittier in Hampton, Poems from a Place of Beautiful Pines published by the Hampton Historical Society 2011 is now available at the Whittier Home Museum gift shop for \$8.00 each. More copies can be purchase for the same price at The Hampton Historical Society/Tuck Museum Gift Shop located at 40 Park Ave, Hampton NH or through their web site: www.hamptonhistorical-society.org plus shipping costs.

Eleanor Becotte is a former Whittier Home Association member and volunteer docent, where in period costume she would give tours to school children and teach them about the poet's life. Currently, she is a tour guide in the Tuck Museum. Realizing that little had been written about Whittier's love of the New Hampshire sea-coast, she accepted the challenge of writing a book about his time in the area and the poems he wrote while there.

The sixty page softcover book includes the poems: "The Changingling", "The New Wife & the Old", "The Tent on the Beach", "Wreck of Rivermouth", "Hampton Beach", "A Sea Dream", "How the Women Went from Dover" and "To Oliver Wendell Holmes".



The Haverhill Whittier Club
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