

Commencement Thesis,

Subject: Nathaniel Hawthorne: Life and Works.
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Nathaniel Hawthorne.

I. Birth and early life.

- (a.) Time and place of birth.
- (b.) Parentage. Ancestry.

II. Education.

III. Career

- (a.) Events in Public Life.
- (b.) Works.

IV. Death.

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Nathaniel Hawthorne: His Life and Works.

The head of the American branch of the Hawthorne family, Wm. Hathorne of Wilton, Wiltshire, England, emigrated with Winthrop and arrived at Salem Bay, Mass. June 12, 1630.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Mass. July 4th, 1804. His immediate ancestors were seafaring men, trading with the East Indies. A more remote progenitor was a judge and had been concerned in the trials of the witches in the 17th Century. Others had commanded troops against the Indians.

The race had the characteristics of Puritans and were held to be even more stern and conciliating than the average Puritan.

The mother of Nathaniel Hawthorne was a woman of beauty, dignity, and unusual intellect. Nathaniel was left fatherless at the age of four. His education was under the superintendence of his maternal uncle, but he was not an assiduous student. He liked desultory reading and out-door play, hunting and skating. He was very fond of taking long walks alone and he often declared to his mother that he would sometime go to sea and never return. He had an arch love for mischief, a

consciousness of power and a healthy independence of character.

While a child he read, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Thomson, the *Castle of Indolence* being an especial favorite.

In 1818 his mother removed to Haymond, Me. to his uncle's farm, and he here resumed his long walks. He had by this time acquired a taste for writing and he wrote of his adventures in a little note-book. These notes were remarkable for minute observation and nice perception of nature.

Hawthorne was an observer of small things and indeed thought nothing too trivial to be suggestive. This is shown in his Note Books which were published in six volumes some years after his death. The mental clearness, the sharpness of vision and the competence of the language in his early note books are remarkable for a youth. There is one sketch of a "solemn faced old horse" at the grist-mill which exhibits a delightful boyish humor with a dash of pathos in it, and it is the first instance on record of an approach to the writing of fiction.

After a years residence at Haywood, Me., Hawthorne returned to Salem in order to prepare for college. He amused himself by publishing a manuscript periodical called the Spectator. He published only three numbers. He also tried to decide what profession he should follow. He wrote to his mother, "I do not want to be a Doctor and live by mens' diseases, nor a minister to live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels, so I don't see that there is anything left for me but to be an author." He said, "How would you like some-day to see a whole shelf full of books written by your son with 'Hawthorne's Works' written on the backs?"

He entered Bowdoin College in 1821. He was an excellent classical scholar; he wrote Latin and Greek and also made translations from the Roman poets and wrote English poems. He entered the Athenian Society while at college. This society had a library of 800 volumes and while here Hawthorne tried to read "Humes' History of England," but found it dull and postponed the attempt. Two of his intimate college friends were H. W. Longfellow and Franklin Pierce.

After three years study at Bowdoin College, he graduated and returned to Salem to a life of isolation. He lived here with his mother and sisters for twelve years. None of the family either went into or received society. Nathaniel was of a friendly and sociable nature but did not depend on others happiness, and living thus the habit of seclusion grew on him. He devoted his mornings to study, his afternoons to writing and his evenings to long walks along the coast.

If these years of solitude were dull it was not all the fault of Hawthorne. His situation was intrinsically poor. When we think of what the conditions of intellectual life, of taste, must have been in a small New England village fifty years ago, and when we think of him, a young man of beautiful genius, with a love of literature and romance, of the picturesque of style and form and color, trying to make a career for himself in the midst of them, we cannot but feel great compassion for him.

It was possibly a blessing to Hawthorne that he was not expansive and inquisitive and that he lived much to himself. Though these years were not his happiest years they had their uses, they were the period of incubation

of the admirable compositions which eventually brought him reputation and prosperity. He was poor and solitary and he undertook to devote himself to literature in a community in which the interest in literature was as yet of the smallest. Only a powerful and finely balanced organization could have endured the strain and emerged the stronger.

He wrote largely but destroyed many manuscripts. He was his own critic and was the severest of critics for from his twelve years work he had only some forty five short sketches to show, the others he had burned unprinted.

In his works some of the characters doubtless refer to himself as in the "Ambitious Guest", we find this allusion to the hero of the tale, "A glory was to beam upon his path or way though not perhaps while he was treading it. But posterity should confess that a gifted one had passed from the cradle to the tomb, with none to recognize him". In this we get a glimpse of one of his moods during that long solitary period of twelve years in Salem.

Lawthorne did not originally intend to devote himself exclusively to works of imagination or fiction but he soon found that he

could utter himself fully in no other way. His resolve was to be true not original.

Though by training exclusive Hawthorne was deeply conscious of the universal brotherhood of man. In the "Procession of Life", he considers the various ties which unite men together.

Some of his early articles appeared in periodicals but were not met with much success. People did not know who wrote the articles as he signed no name to his first works. He was resolved not to declare himself until the curiosity and enthusiasm aroused by his writings had reached the point where concealment was no longer possible. He was left undisturbed for a long time. The vein and style of his writings were not and have never been popular.

He was at last identified, as the author of "The Gentle Boy", published in the "Token", by the sister of his future wife. His apprenticeship practically came to an end at about his twenty-seventh year.

In 1828, three years after he graduated, "Fanshawe" was published. It was probably written after he graduated. The scene of the tale is at Bowdoin College. This tale is considered unworthy of even his immature powers.

In 1837 "The Twice Told Tales" were published. The great body of reading public ignored it but it was generously reviewed in the North American Review by Longfellow who said it was the work of a genius.

All his stories have their moral, he writes of man but is not a mere painter of external life, of manners or of appearance but shows the character of the person.

For want of pecuniary success he accepted a position as weigher in the Custom-house at Boston with a salary of \$1000 a year. He held this office two years and returned to Salem and remained there until 1841. While here he wrote, "Grandfather's Chair".

He married Miss Sophia Peabody in 1842. This was the happiest event of his life as they lived the most happy life together. They made their new home in an old Manse at Concord Mass., situated on historic ground in sight of the Revolutionary battle-field. The first few years of his married life were spent here and the mosses he gathered here since enriched the substance of many minds in all parts of the civilized globe. The archaic seclusion of the place was more conducive to meditation than to

composition or creation which often seems to be promoted by some external stimulus.

Going northward from the village common a delightful stroll along a shaded highway less secluded now than when Hawthorne went daily over it to the post-office or trundled the carriage of baby Anna, brings us to the "Old Manse" about which he selected his "Mosses". This was a delightful place for an imaginative mind such as Hawthorne's. In his works he tells us of the pleasures of a kitchen garden and of the beauty of summer squashes and of the mysteries of apple raising.

In 1845 Hawthorne published a second volume of "Twice Told Tales".

After four years at Concord he went to Salem as Surveyor of the Custom House. In 1850 the "Scarlet Letter" was published. The prologue entitled, "The Custom House", tells of the impressions he gathered at Salem. This is one of the most perfect of Hawthorne's compositions and is one of his most graceful and humorous autobiographical writings.

Hawthorne afterward removed to Lenox and wrote the "House of Seven Gables" and the "Wonder Book" in 1857. From Lenox he removed to West

Newton and wrote the "Blithedale Romance". This was the result of his life at Brookfarm which was an experiment tried for the betterment of society. Wordsworth spoke of it as a society for "plain living and high thinking." In 1852 "The Snow Image" and other "Twice Told Tales" were published.

In this year he removed back to Concord where he purchased an old house which he called the Wayside. It is on Lexington road a little way beyond the orchard house and is a curious, wide straggling and irregular structure of varying ages, heights, and styles. When he returned from England he enlarged the house and made a little square study on the third story which overtops the rambling roofs like an observatory. It resembled the "Villa Montauto" at Italy where he wrote his "Marble Faun." In this tower he wrote "Our Old Home," "Grimshawes Secret," "Septimius Felton," and the "Dolliver Romance" which was only a fragment.

Along the hillside is the famous "Acacia path" of Mrs. Hawthorne and other walks planned by Mr. Hawthorne. One path leads up the steep ascent among the locusts to the Mount of Vision, as Mrs. Hawthorne called it, where Hawthorne

daily resorted for study and meditation.

Hawthorne was more than other writers influenced by environment. The situation and circumstances under which his work was produced often determined its tone and color and the persons, localities, and occurrences observed by him were skillfully wrought into his romances.

In 1852 he wrote the life of Franklin Pierce which at first he was unwilling to do but because of their life-long friendship he finally consented. In 1853 the "Tanglewood Tales" were published. When Franklin Pierce was made President, Hawthorne accepted the consulate at Liverpool. He departed for Europe in 1853 and returned in 1860. He spent five years in attending to duties as consul and making short visits to Scotland, the lakes, and elsewhere. The other two years he spent in Italy and France. His most elaborate work, "The Marble Faun", was published in 1860. He returned home for the purpose of cherishing American loyalty in his children. He had hoped for quietude and the inimitable flavor of home.

In his "Celestial Railroad", he records his condemnation of the spiritual renaissance by

substituting the terrible giant Transcendentalist in place of the Pope and Pagan in Bunyan's allegory. In the Old Manse in the same room, Emerson's volume which inaugurated the great transcendental movement in the Western world, was written. The surroundings of the Old Manse, its air of antiquity, its traditional associations, its seclusion, and all its peaceful environment were pleasing to the shy and susceptible nature of Hawthorne and accorded well with his introspective habit.

In 1863 he dedicated a charming series of English sketches, "Our Old Home," to Franklin Pierce who was not in good favor with many because of his ideas on slavery. The immediate friends of Hawthorne tried to induce him to give his book to the world under more popular auspices, but he refused.

Hawthorne died at Plymouth New Hampshire, May 19, 1864 while on a journey in company with Franklin Pierce, in search of health.

After his death the following works were published, "Septimius", "American Note Books", "English Note Books", "French and Italian Note Books", "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret", and "Dolliver Romance" which was not completed.

The beauty of Hawthorne's character was the result of a high and abstracted ambition. He could have borne to live an undistinguished life but not to be forgotten in the grave. He did not covet a quick and cheap success. He was a great dreamer and his writings are marked by subtle imagination, a curious power of analysis and exquisite purity of diction. He had a literary quality, a grace, a charm, a perfection of language which no other American writer has.