

Driven2Teach Boston 2014

Nathaniel Hawthorne/Old Manse

### **Big Ideas:**

Simple, often solitary, an American author, transcendentalist--these are some ways others have described the author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Perhaps best known as the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Twice Told Tales*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, born after the Revolution and before the War of 1812, made his living as a writer supporting his wife, Sophia, and his children Una, Julian, and Rose. His writings include fiction, descriptive sketches or essays, journal entries and articles for newspapers. His list of friends is a who's who of the American Literary world. He is known for creating strong female characters who remain relevant today. He and Sophia called the Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts home for the earliest years of their marriage. Mosses from an Old Manse, a collection of descriptive separate writings, includes *Old Manse* which describes the home, the library in the home, and the outside area specifically as he saw it during his time. Towards the end of his life, he lived in Europe with his family, assigned as consul in Liverpool, England by friend, President Franklin Pierce. He said this about his consul experience:

"the duties of the office carried me to prisons, police-courts, hospitals, lunatic asylums, coroner's inquests, death-beds, funerals, and brought me in contact with insane people, criminals, ruined speculators, wild adventurers, diplomatists, brother-consuls, and all manner of simpletons and unfortunates, in greater number and variety than I had ever dreamed of as pertaining to America, in addition to whom there was an equivalent multitude of English rogues, dexterously counterfeiting the genuine yankee article."

-from his biography written by Milton Meltzer

His family spent around 7 years in Europe when in 1863 he became ill and they headed back to the United States for him to recover and become stronger. He didn't recover and died in 1864 while on a trip with Franklin Pierce. He is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, near the Old Manse, near his wife Sophia and daughter Una.

### **People to Remember:**

As I mentioned earlier, Hawthorne's list of associates and friends, is a who's who in the world of literature. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horatio Bridge, and Franklin Pierce were college friends at Bowdoin College. Later his circle of friends enlarges to include Horace Mann (brother-in-law), Herman Melville (*Moby Dick*), Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott (father of Louisa May Alcott), and Henry David Thoreau. Edgar Allen Poe reviewed his work favorably, but I'm not sure if they were friends or associates.

## Interesting Tidbits:

Nathaniel Hawthorne's great-great grandfather John Hathorne was a judge during the Salem Witch Trials. He is remembered for his extra harsh treatment and large number of judgments against young women in the area. The character in the *Crucible* playing the judge is based on John Hathorne. Nathaniel adds the "w" later in life to distance himself from his relation.

His pieces include strong female characters so many still identify with today.

Hawthorne and Herman Melville had a close relationship. Some suggest Melville, based on the writings between the 2, wanted to take the relationship to a different level. Hawthorne distances himself from Melville.

Hawthorne tried communal living at a place called Brook Farm. It was hard work where each person was required to work to earn their keep. The work and the profits from Brook Farm were to be shared equally. They were to work for the good of the community. He invested \$1,000 in the farm. After one year he was exhausted and finished with communal living. He met many good friends there that would remain lifelong friends.

During his lifetime only 8,000 copies of *Scarlet Letter* were sold.

At his funeral his pall bearers were Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Henry David Thoreau, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Bronson Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. His wife and daughter both died in England. In 2006 their bodies were re-interred near N. Hawthorne in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

## Words to Remember:

**Transcendentalist.** Nathaniel H. and his friends were a big part of the transcendental and abolition movements. Transcendentalists question the state of spirituality and organized religion. They believe organized religion corrupts people. They believe people are at their best when they rely on themselves and become independent. The movement or club began after Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote "Nature" a piece about people having a personal relationship with God and nature. People should have their own experiences with and in nature and with God. The group started a newspaper called *The Dial* to discuss their ideas with each other and citizens of the area.

. Abolitionists believed it was their job to help bring the end of slavery to the United States. They raised funds, wrote articles, and held meetings to discuss the best way to end slavery and give equal rights to all citizens.

