

# THE WHITTIER NEWSLETTER

Number 32

Fall 2000

The Whittier Newsletter, jointly edited by Shirley Osgood-Bailey, Gregory Laing, Donald C. Freeman, Charles A. Jarvis, John B. Pickard, and Scott Pike, is published annually by the Trustees of the Whittier Birthplace and the Whittier Clubs of both Amesbury and Haverhill. Items concerning Whittier and Whittier manuscripts, news of Whittier Collections and organizations, queries about future material inclusion in the Newsletter should be sent to John B. Pickard, 406 NE 7th Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32602.



**BAREFOOT BOY, BROOK & BRIDGE AT WHITTER BIRTHPLACE IN 1890**

## WHITTIER BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR 2000

During the past year Whittier was the subject of an entire book and featured in another biography. The book, William Jolliff's The Poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier (Friends United Press, Richmond, Indiana), offers a balanced and judicious selection of Whittier's best poems, some fifty-five in all. Jolliff's literate and graceful introduction to the poet's life highlights the aesthetic and moral values that make Whittier's poetry still worthwhile reading, while his evocative headnotes lure the reader into the poems themselves.

Jolliff's opening essay on Whittier is the best short introduction to Whittier as a man and artist that readers have had in many decades. His sensitive and thoughtful essay on Whittier's life, which opens this volume of poetic selections, focuses on internal paradoxes that make Whittier so interesting for the biographer and historian.

Unlike Robert Penn Warren, an earlier editor who presented a Whittier tortured by lost loves, Jolliff sees Whittier as a man inhabited by a dominant Quaker religious bent. This moral center pulled him in one direction, while his creative instincts and passionate

ambition drove him after poetic and political fame. Jolliff explores the tensions that resulted from these conflicts and places his interpretation solidly within historical and biographical realities. He finds that Whittier's dedication to abolitionism put him "in the refining fire that his poetry needed" and that "by his sacrificial commitment [to the abolitionist cause] he gained purpose, and that purpose could be integrated with the religious fabric of his psyche."

Jolliff has organized his selections in four thematic groupings: the crusading political prophet, the nostalgic recorder of a vanished rural past, the hardy balladeer of New England history, and the contemplative Quaker mystic. All the sections have sensitive introductions, while a suggestive headnote introduces each poem. These headnotes offer persuasive comments on why Whittier's poems remain valuable for present-day readers.

Of "Mary Garvin" Jolliff remarks: "It seems at first glance to be a pleasant but unlikely interweaving of legend and soap opera.... What sets this story apart is the theological tension in which Whittier situates the adventure.... Some critics might argue that this is a romance spoiled by a theological conclusion, but such a claim ignores the very center of Whittier's being: that deeply religious core that came to inform all of his mature work."

Of the often ridiculed "In School Days" Jolliff remarks: "Read as a reflection of nineteenth-century gender rules – or even old fashioned educational practice – this poem is a little unsettling. But if we forgive the poet his era ... and hear what the poem says about innocence and love and self-sacrifice, something within it strikes at our core." Suggestive and thoughtful remarks like these characterize all the headnotes and serve as an engaging, but still critical introduction to the poems themselves.

Finally, Jolliff writes with a gift for an apt and evocative phrase and has the ability to present the essence of a poem or an idea succinctly. This volume not only makes Whittier accessible to both the general reader and the literary scholar, but also offers sound critical and often intriguing, reasons why he should be read.

The other book, Henry Mayer's *All on Fire* (St. Martins Press, New York City, New York), a full-length biography of William Lloyd Garrison, includes Whittier as a minor but significant participant in the drama of Garrison's fight for the abolition of slavery. Garrison, of course, first published Whittier's poems in the Newburyport *Free Press*; and they were strongly connected in the early days of the abolitionist fight, even sharing a room together in Boston during 1829. Eventually, however, Whittier's belief in the need for political action and Garrison's intransigent, difficult personality and his campaign for other reforms led to a bitter quarrel between the two men. Viewing the events from Garrison's perspective Mayer characterizes Whittier's personality as at best "nervous and shy" and at the worst "morose" and "depressed." Such analyses show little insight into Whittier's real character, while Mayer's speculations about a possible homosexual relationship between the two men is just absurd. Mayer's account of their final estrangement, however, is more balanced as he focuses on the hurt and frustrations endured by them both. Mayer sadly notes that Garrison had lost both a "friend and brother" when Whittier repudiated Garrison's abolitionist stance. In their old age the men were reconciled and resumed their "rich and soulful friendship." When Garrison died Whittier wrote:

*From lips that Sinai's trumpet blew  
We heard a tenderer undersong;  
The very wrath from pity grew,  
From love of man thy hate of wrong.*

## THE HAVERHILL WHITTIER CLUB

The club held two meetings last year. At the December 12, 1999, meeting the club voted to renew the current slate of officers for the year 2000. And so Mariana Morse will continue as President; Raymond Comeau as Vice-President; Alberta Andrewartha as Secretary; and Richard Seaman as Treasurer. The other members of the board are Timothy Coco, Elinor Curtin-Cameron, Shirley Osgood-Bailey, Augustine Reusch, Jr., and Olga Veckys. The speaker for this occasion was Edward Mair, a member of the Amesbury Friends Meeting who spoke on "The Faith of Whittier and Quakerism: Then and Now."

The summer meeting was held on June 4, 2000, at the Birthplace and, after awards to two Haverhill High students, Michelle Dozios and Sarah Bourden, for essays on Whittier, Augustine Reusch read his wonderfully whimsical paper entitled "Snow-Bound in Springtime" describing a visit he had made to the Whittier farm some thirty years before and during which he envisioned the Whittier family and friends gathered around the historic Homestead's kitchen hearth.

This December 2nd and 3rd the Club again presented its Snow-Bound Weekend, a dramatic recreation of life on the Whittier farm as depicted in "Snow-Bound." Inside the house and before a blazing fireplace, a veteran cast in full period dress enacted scenes from Whittier's most famous poem. Outside more than 350 weekend guests enjoyed horse-drawn hayrides and close encounters with a variety of other farm animals. The heated shop across the road from the Birthplace proved to be a cozy spot on two extremely cold days. Here, visitors were offered hot cider or coffee and donuts and an opportu-



**PARADE FLOAT - 1999**

*Portrayal of the Fireplace Scene in "Snowbound" by Whittier Club Members*

nity to shop for Whittier books or souvenirs. The visitors could also join in group singing or listen to a lively costumed fiddler and readings of Whittier's poetry - one of these read by Haverhill's Mayor, James Rurak.

Last year the club also sponsored a float in the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars Christmas parade. The float, which depicted the Whittier kitchen along with a scene from "Snow-Bound," won a first place prize for originality. During the fall the club participated in two productions of the television show "Around Town." Larry Seaman, a club member who also portrays Uncle Moses in the Snow-Bound weekend, produced and hosted both shows. The first one, shown throughout October, featured a guided tour of the birthplace and its grounds by curator Betty Pike. The second show entitled "The Haverhill Whittier Club - Past, Present and Future" featured club President Mariana Morse and Treasurer Richard Seaman talking about the history of the club and its present activities. Included in this segment was a tribute to Donald C. Freeman for his championship of the Whittier heritage for the past sixty years.

Below is yet another Freeman tribute - this time to both Donald and Isabelle - and first published in the Spring 2000 Colby College alumni magazine. Gerry Boyle, managing editor of the magazine and author of the profile, has most generously given us permission to reprint his fine article in this newsletter.

## **DONALD C. FREEMAN '26: THE OBJECTS OF HIS AFFECTION BY GERRY BOYLE '78**

When Donald C. Freeman '26 was courting his wife-to-be, Isabelle Brown of Unity, he would take a train from Waterville to Burnham Junction, then walk eight miles to Brown's home. When the evening visit ended, Freeman would hike 17 miles back to Colby. "A good many a night," Freeman said.

Freeman, 98, recalled those long-ago treks last winter at his apartment in Haverhill, Mass. Mrs. Freeman, 92, listened and smiled. "If I hadn't met her I would have been a medical missionary," Freeman said with a grin. "She diverted me."

In a life marked by unswaying devotion to education, to his community, to the Quaker abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier and to Mrs. Freeman, those detours have been few and far between. Freeman grew up on a farm in Sidney, the oldest of eight children. He graduated from the Oak Grove Seminary, a Friends school in Vassalboro, in 1919 and entered Colby the same year. Freeman graduated cum laude but not until 1926. "I took time off to teach," he said. "Appleton, Maine, for two years and Unity, Maine, for one. To save, get money."

It was at Unity High School - three teachers, 100 students - that he met Isabelle, then a senior. Freeman went on to teach in Pennsylvania, but the school told him his bride could not live with him in the dormitory. He quit. A teaching job was available in Haverhill, in eastern Massachusetts, and the couple went to check it out. This was 1928, just before the Depression, and it was a job. It also was home of Freeman's hero. "He saw that this was where Whittier was and he decided that he wanted to stay," Mrs. Freeman said.

And stay he did. For 44 years, Freeman was involved in education in Haverhill, as a teacher, principal and superintendent. He was active in dozens of civic and professional

organizations, from the Massachusetts Teachers Association to drug-awareness and mental-health groups. Raised as a Quaker he was on the board of the Whittier Club for 60 years, the last 20 years as president. He retired from the board last year at 97. "When he was walking down the street, anyone over 50 said, 'Hello, Mr. Freeman,'" said Betty Pike, curator of the Whittier Family Homestead. "Not, 'Hello, Donald.'"

Freeman has written or edited many educational and historical pamphlets, including The Whittier Trail and Haverhill in World War II. He wrote the script for the pageant held for the city's 325th anniversary, and in 1993 wrote an addendum to the history of Sidney, Maine. In it he said: "Life in Sidney was – shall I say – bland. It was a quiet town and we were in a super-quiet area. Only one neighbor within miles had children, two sons. One, Carlton Hammond, was my chum, at home, school, and at Oak Grove Seminary. (His brother, Elwood, married my youngest sister.) ... I worked on our farm and Howard Hammond's, read, roamed the woods, fished, went to school, played games like backgammon and checkers."

Now the Freemans live in an apartment in an elderly-housing complex. The living room is lined with bookshelves; the bookshelves are packed with volumes by Whittier, Edward Arlington Robinson, Kenneth Roberts and others. The couple is visited by their two sons, Donald Jr. and Harris, their grandchildren and great grandchildren. Sitting by a window in the sun, Donald Freeman summed up his career in a sentence: "I enjoyed meeting people and feeling I was doing some good in the world." As he spoke of the long-ago past, Mrs. Freeman watched and listened, the object of his affections then and now.

## THE WHITTIER BIRTHPLACE

Resident curators Betty and Scott Pike report the following activities in and around the Birthplace during the past year:

One night last winter, a Snow-Bound sort of "north-wind raved" wildly enough around these premises to bring down the large Birthplace sign at the intersection of Route 110 and Whittier Road. But now a new sign, supported by a steel post set in a cement base, gives very dependable directions to the Whittier Homestead nearby. Also the roofs over the eastern entry to the house and the northern entry to the newer cellar have been carefully reshingled with authentic cedar shakes.

We enjoy explaining to school groups (and to other visitors curious enough to ask) why the eastern and southern exterior clapboarded sides of the house had been painted white long before Whittier's birth here in 1807. The answer is conspicuous consumption, a fancy term for showing off. White paint was far more expensive than red in colonial times, and the earlier Whittiers were not above advertising their relative prosperity by applying white paint to those sides of the house most visible to passersby on Whittier Road. This spring the less visible sections of the house (and the shop across the road) were given warm new coats of barn red paint; and next year, we're told, the customary white paint on the house's eastern and southern exposures will be due for renewal as well.

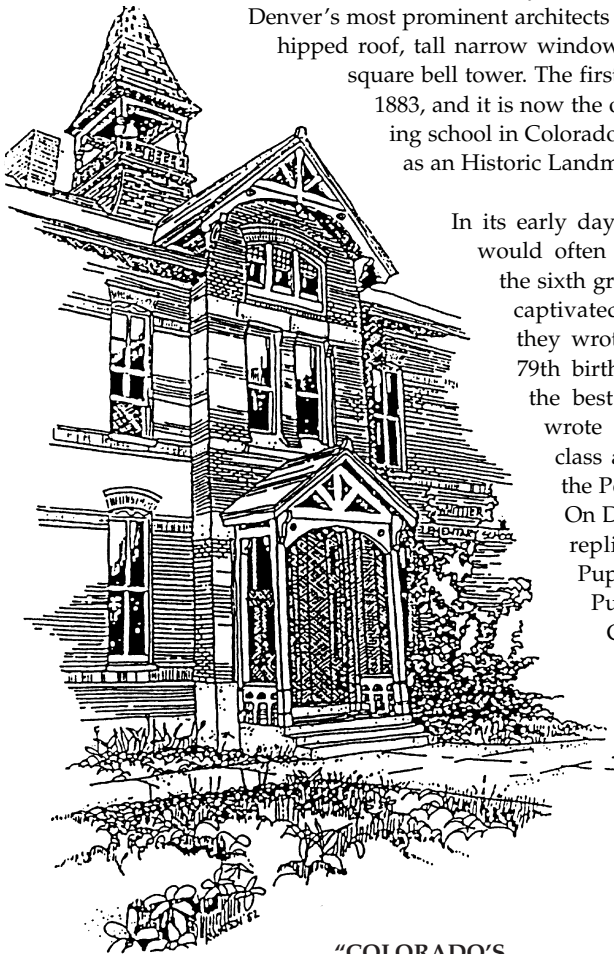
In May and early June we welcomed thirty-two Haverhill fifth-grade classes (533 children), their teachers and chaperones to tour the house and grounds. And once again two fourth grade classes from the Portsmouth Christian Academy came. A particularly



enthusiastic group, they ended their visit with a picnic lunch and some vigorous outdoor games before starting the hour-long drive back to school. The latter group wrote to say they had made several other history-based trips, but easily decided the visit to the Haverhill Birthplace "couldn't be beat."

This past year has seen visitors from nine countries, including such disparate places as Taiwan and Switzerland, Belgium and Brazil. Among the visitors from afar was a group of fourteen high-school students from Karlsruhe, Germany, accompanied by two teachers. We also saw people from thirty-three of our own United States. After Massachusetts and New Hampshire, California provided us with the greatest number of guests, many of them from the city of Whittier.

During the summer of 1999 two teachers from the Whittier Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado, visited the Birthplace and began sharing with Betty and Scott the history of the school and its Whittier connection. Built in 1882 as the Pine Street School, this Italianate Style building was designed by one of Denver's most prominent architects and features a low-pitched hipped roof, tall narrow windows, gable projections and a square bell tower. The first classes started in January, 1883, and it is now the oldest continuously operating school in Colorado. In 1997 it was designated as an Historic Landmark.



In its early days principal William Casey would often read Whittier's poems to the sixth grade class and they were so captivated by "Snow-Bound" that they wrote Whittier a letter on his 79th birthday. Effie Titus who had the best penmanship in the class wrote the note, and the whole class accompanied Mr. Casey to the Post Office to mail the letter. On December 29, 1886, Whittier replied as follows: "To the Pupils of the 6th grade of the Public School, Boulder, Colorado. Dear Young Friends: Take my heartiest thanks for your kind letter of congratulation and my very best wishes for your health, scholarship, and success in life. (Signed) John G. Whittier."

**"COLORADO'S  
OLDEST SCHOOL IN  
CONTINUOUS OPERATION"  
1882 - Present**

This letter and the continued enthusiasm of the students for the poetry of Whittier led in 1903 to the renaming of

the school as the Whittier Elementary. Through its long history it has continued to keep alive and foster its Whittier connections. The fourth grade there often does a special project on Whittier's life, while Whittier photographs and books are featured in a special display case. A pencil sketch of the poet by a Whittier Elementary art teacher has been framed and mounted outside the main office along with a photograph of his Amesbury home. In addition, a painted mural of the school history has a portrait of Whittier with lines from "Snow-Bound" as one of its main panels.

Finally, as observant readers will have noticed in our masthead, Scott Pike, one of the curators at the Birthplace, is now serving as an editor for the Newsletter. With his long background in the publishing business he is a welcome addition.

## THE HAVERHILL PUBLIC LIBRARY

In January the Haverhill Public Library hired a new director, Joseph R. Dionne. With nearly thirty years of library experience in our region, he also possesses a B.A. in Humanities from the New School for Social Research, a master's degree in Library Science from Simmons College and an MBA from Boston University. For the past sixteen years he functioned as the Library Director for the Lawrence Public Library, so he brings to his new position an understanding and appreciation for the rich history and diverse culture of Haverhill itself. And he also brings an affection for John Greenleaf Whittier. This December he was the featured speaker at the Haverhill Whittier Club meeting and he has enthusiastically endorsed proposals to raise sufficient funds to relocate and properly shelve the precious Whittier Collection. (See the special section on the Whittier Collection for more information about this project.)

Currently Dianne Dostie Cole, a former Amesbury Public Library staff member, has spent the past year working on the large collection of Whittier Photographs housed in the Haverhill Library. Mrs. Cole has relabelled each photograph, rearranged them for easier access and placed them in protective Mylar sleeves. She is now working on the Whittier postcard collection, arranging them to supplement the photographs.

The library has a three-drawer file cabinet filled with hundreds of photographs of Whittier, his family and friends, his homes, and illustrations of his work. The pictures of the poet himself are arranged by age, beginning with the earliest miniature from his Haverhill Academy days to the last photograph of Whittier on a balcony at Hampton Falls taken by his nephew a few days before his death. The pictures of the homestead date from 1867 and include photographs and paintings along with scores of interior pictures.

During the past year the special collections staff gathered a group of illustrations featuring Whittier's "The Barefoot Boy" for a display. Included in the collection was a recently purchased hand-tinted photograph on a sheet with a few lines from the poem in ornamental calligraphy. While not of great value, the photo demonstrates the continuing popularity of the poem for decades after its original publication in 1855, and even today it remains one of the best remembered of Whittier's works.

"The Barefoot Boy" also features in another Library event. In June 1940 as part of the 300th anniversary of the founding of Haverhill, a contest was held to select the most authentic looking barefoot boy with the winner posing for a statue to be sculpted by

Constantine Sgouros from the Massachusetts College of Art. Over forty-one contestants participated and were judged before spectators in the Haverhill Stadium. The winner, Herbert Bradley, posed for the artist who made a plaster mold which was then cast in bronze. The resulting statue, some 19 inches tall, was presented to Haverhill High by the Class of 1940 and remained in its library until 1963 when it disappeared during the move to a new school.



**BAREFOOT BOY HERBERT BRADLEY**  
Age 10, Portland Street  
Grade 5, St. James School

*Photo by Alfredo A. Pallette / Courtesy of S.M. Pallette*

Nearly 60 years later one of those 1940 contestants, L. Paul Sinotte, now of North Wales, Pennsylvania, visited the Haverhill Public Library, inquiring about the contest and the bronze statue. Since the library had in its possession the original plaster mold (donated by the artist in 1989), Mr. Sinotte generously donated the funds to have two new bronze statues made, one for the library and one to be given to Haverhill High School. The bronzes are now being cast and will be presented in a special ceremony this spring.

## **THE WHITTIER COLLECTION AT THE HAVERHILL PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Whittier Collection of the Haverhill Public Library began with the founding of the Haverhill Whittier Club. One of the club's main purposes was to preserve the poet's fame by collecting books by and about him. And in this regard it has succeeded admirably. As probably the finest collection of Whittier materials in the country, it contains all first Whittier editions, subsequent reprintings and duplicate copies with textual differences. Apart from these primary materials, the library has attempted to purchase every known Whittier biography and critical analysis along with all books that contain sections on Whittier or significant references to him.

In addition, the collection has hundreds of articles published in scholarly journals, popular magazines and newspapers, copies of masters' theses and doctoral dissertations written about Whittier; catalogues for sales of Whittier manuscripts and editions; and even foreign editions of Whittier's poems. The library owns the only complete file of the



Haverhill Gazette that Whittier twice edited and to which he contributed over a hundred poems and numerous prose articles.

Supplementing all this is the local history collection that has listings on thousands of Haverhill residents, hundreds of whom have Whittier associations. Also the library has a hundred or more Whittier letters that have a particular Haverhill association, over 2,000 pictures and photographs of Whittier, his family and friends, and extensive newspaper clippings on every aspect of his life. Collection memorabilia includes busts of the poet, ninety pieces of sheet music for Whittier's hymns, a Republican electoral ticket for 1860, the hammer he used as a shoemaker, the cap he wore as a baby and a clam shell on which he wrote some doggerel verses about a mermaid.

For years this collection was housed in a small red brick fireproof building at the rear of the old library. When the present library was erected in 1969, the Whittier Collection and the Historical Archives were located in a special area on the second floor adjacent to the administrative section. This room became quite crowded and, as more materials were stored there, very difficult for research work. In 1997, when the library was completely remodeled and enlarged, the Whittier collection was reunited with the Special Collections on the new third floor. Unfortunately, the space allotted for these collections was severely cut down and the Whittier materials jammed into a small side room. Though the collection was finally unboxed and reshelved, the area remained so cramped and cluttered with other materials that it was impossible to use it for research or for display.

And so for the past three years the "gem" of the entire Haverhill Library Collection has remained hidden, truly inaccessible to scholars, students or readers wanting to explore or study the Whittier world. All the library staff and administration agree that it is a deplorable situation and they desire to have the collection properly displayed and available for public use. The rarely used Trustee's Room on the second floor offers a good possibility for shelving the collection, but at present there are no funds for such a relocation. To insure sufficient protection for the collection, special shelving with grill or glass partitions would have to be installed along the walls in the room and the cost for such work could run to over \$15,000. An appeal for funds has been made to the Trustees of the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace, while the editors of the Newsletter have secured a private pledge of \$1,000 to assist in this project. We hope that all admirers of the poet and Newsletter recipients might consider contributing to this project. Donations should be made to the Whittier Birthplace Trustees, 305 Whittier Road, Haverhill, MA 01830, and earmarked for "the Whittier Collection Relocation."

## **THE ELIZABETH H. WHITTIER CLUB**

The Elizabeth H. Whittier Club holds eight meetings a year on the first Monday of each month from October to May in the vestry of the Amesbury United Methodist Church. In keeping with its aims to encourage women in all fields of endeavor and benefit the Amesbury community at large, its meetings this year will feature talks on medicine, local history, education (with a speaker from the Sparhawk School), travel to Tahiti, flower arrangement, and a report on his day-to-day activities by a naturalist from the Parker River Preserve. Members will also hear the Amesbury High School Choral Singers. Each year the club donates toys to poor children for Christmas, gives donations to the Veterans' Hospital and awards a \$1,000 scholarship to an outstanding Amesbury High senior.

## THE AMESBURY WHITTIER HOUSE

The past year was a busy and productive one for the Amesbury Whittier Home. Outside, the summer kitchen underwent major renovations. Some of its supporting pillars, clapboards and lower boards were replaced, and the entire building was painted. The home itself was painted on three sides. This September the bulkhead was replaced, and the front entry has been repaired.

On the inside of the house, the woodwork in the parlor was repainted and its ceiling repaired and painted. This restoration saved the original plaster on lath ceiling and left the old wallpaper intact as well as the gold leafed crown molding. Then the Whittier



**WHITTIER HOME, AMESBURY / MEETING ROOM MURAL by Jon P. Mooers  
DEDICATED JUNE 1, 2000, "THE BIRTHPLACE IN WINTER"**

*The Meeting Room was also painted and rewallpapered*

Home Association meeting room, untouched since 1962, was redecorated. New wallpaper was installed and the woodwork repainted. But the finishing touch was a wall-sized mural depicting the Haverhill Birthplace as described in Snow-Bound. Jon P. Mooers, an Amesbury native who has painted a downtown Amesbury mural which features Whittier, executed this painting as well. Though Mooers graduated from college with a business degree, he decided instead to pursue an art career. He worked for the Disney studio in Florida and in California where he painted giant backdrops for movie sets. Two years ago he moved back to Amesbury and since then has painted murals in schools and other locations in the area. When the mural was dedicated on June 1, 2000, over seventy guests, including the mayor of Amesbury, attended the festivities. Refreshments were served in the backyard gardens, and an impersonator of Ralph Waldo Emerson's grandmother speaking about the Revolutionary War provided dramatic, eyewitness history.

Other Whittier Association meetings this year included a Christmas meeting during which carols were sung in the meeting room and tea served in the parlor. An open house for all Amesbury residents was held on the first Saturday of December. A harpist was featured in the meeting room and refreshments were served in the parlor. Over 125 guests attended, many seeing the home for the first time. In February, at the annual meeting, new officers were elected; while in April, there was a slide presentation. This past August the home had the "Stone Soup Poets" from Cambridge for a poetry reading session. They read from Whittier's poems as well as their own and even sang some of Whittier's better-known hymns. Despite the inclement weather, which drove everyone indoors, it proved to be a wonderful day, filled with poetry and song. After the reading, refreshments were served in the kitchen.

Finally the Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded matching funds for the preservation of the framed documents in the home. The acidic backings were removed from twenty documents and new acid-free mats were added. This winter two more paintings in the home will be cleaned and restored.

## WHITTIER MISCELLANY

During the past year, The Eagle-Tribune ran a series called "Masters of the Millennium" which selected fifty of the most outstanding people in the history of the Merrimack Valley. Whittier was listed as number six and given an accompanying write-up in which he was called "a major worker in the fight to abolish slavery and, in later life, a world-famous poet whose name still resonates across the country."

Whittier also continues to be quoted or referred to in books and articles. A recently published group of humorous essays entitled, The Kids are Gone; The Dog is Depressed & Mom's On the Loose, had a vignette about the beauty of sunsets in Florida. And there the author noted "the poet John Greenleaf Whittier wrote that 'beauty seen is never lost. That God's colors are all fast.'" Whittier fans may recognize these remarks as lines from the poem, "Sunset on the Bearcamp." Finally an article in the New York Times Magazine this past July, which humorously described the unending preoccupation with what might have happened in former sporting events, opened appropriately with this quote from Whittier's "Maud Muller":

*For of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"*



**BIRTHPLACE TRUSTEE KING DAVIS & CLUB MEMBER ARTHUR BAILEY  
READY TO WELCOME "SNOW-BOUND WEEKEND" VISITORS.**