

**THE WHOLE HISTORY OF
GRANDFATHER'S CHAIR; OR,
TRUE STORIES FROM NEW
ENGLAND HISTORY, 1620-1803**

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The whole history of grandfather's chair; or, True stories from New England history, 1620-1803
by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The Riverside Literature Series

THE WHOLE HISTORY OF
GRANDFATHER'S CHAIR

OR

TRUE STORIES FROM NEW ENGLAND
HISTORY, 1620-1803

BY :

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS



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CONTENTS.

PART I.

	PAGE
A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE	v
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	xv
I. GRANDFATHER AND THE CHILDREN AND THE CHAIR	1
II. THE PURITANS AND THE LADY ARBELLER	5
III. A RAINY DAY	15
IV. TROUBLOUS TIMES	18
V. THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW ENGLAND	24
VI. THE PINE-TREE SHILLINGS	29
VII. THE QUAKERS AND THE INDIANS	35
VIII. THE INDIAN BIBLE	41
IX. ENGLAND AND NEW ENGLAND	48
X. THE SUNKEN TREASURE	54
XI. WHAT THE CHAIR HAD KNOWN	62
APPENDIX. EXTRACTS FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN ELIOT	66

PART II.

I. THE CHAIR IN THE FIRELIGHT	71
II. THE SALEM WITCHES	74
III. THE OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL	80
IV. COTTON MATHER	86
V. THE REJECTED BLESSING	93
VI. POMPS AND VANITIES	104
VII. THE PROVINCIAL MUSTER	109
VIII. THE OLD FRENCH WAR AND THE ACADIAN EXILES	118
IX. THE END OF THE WAR	130
X. THOMAS HUTCHINSON	136
APPENDIX. ACCOUNT OF THE DEPORTATION OF THE ACADIAN DIANS	142

PART III.

I. A NEW YEAR'S DAY	149
II. THE STAMP ACT	152

100
110

III. THE HUTCHINSON MOB	158
IV. THE BRITISH TROOPS IN BOSTON	168
V. THE BOSTON MASSACRE	174
VI. A COLLECTION OF PORTRAITS	182
VII. THE TEA-PARTY AND LEXINGTON	189
VIII. THE SIEGE OF BOSTON	195
IX. THE TOBY'S FAREWELL	202
X. THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE	209
XI. GRANDFATHER'S DREAM	217
APPENDIX. A LETTER FROM GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON	223

- ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
PORTRAIT OF HAWTHORNE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
KING'S CHAPEL BURYING-GROUND, BOSTON	<i>Facing</i> 14
EARLY VIEW OF HARVARD COLLEGE	" 26
A PINE-TREE SHILLING	" 34
FACSIMILE OF TITLE-PAGE OF ELIOT'S INDIAN BIBLE	" 44
ROGER WILLIAMS HOUSE, SALEM	<i>Facing</i> 76
PROVINCE HOUSE, BOSTON	" 110
MAP OF ACADIA	123
QUEBEC, 1732	<i>Facing</i> 130
PORTRAIT OF GOVERNOR SHIRLEY	" 150
LIBERTY TREE, BOSTON	<i>Facing</i> 156
THE ROYAL SEAL	157
FANEUIL HALL, BOSTON	<i>Facing</i> 184
CRAIGIE HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE	" 208

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

I.

EARLY DAYS.

THE old town of Salem, in Massachusetts, was once a famous seaport, and ships sailed out of its harbor to the ends of the world. In the East Indies so many merchant vessels bore the word "Salem" on the stern that people there supposed that to be the name of some powerful country, and "Mass.," which was sometimes added, to be the name of a village in Salem. As Boston and New York grew more important, they drew away trade from the smaller towns, and Salem became less busy. It still has wharves, and large, roomy houses where its rich merchants lived, and shows in many streets the signs of its old prosperity; but one living in Salem is constantly reminded how famous the old town once was, rather than how busy it now is.

It is doubtful if any town in America has been more affectionately set forth in literature than the old Salem of the middle of this century. A delightful volume of sketches entitled *Old Salem*, by "Eleanor Putnam," keeps its fragrance, and other writers have loved to dwell upon its quaint flavor; one, in particular, has preserved its charm in a multitude of sketches, like *Main Street*, *Little Annie's Ramble*, *A Rill from the Town Pump*; in many of his stories also, but most of all in the background of *The House of the Seven Gables*, where Hepzibah Pyncheon in her old shop recalls with the precision of fact and the light of rosy imagination more than one actual old Salem reduced gentlewoman.

All this is intelligible enough, for in an old house in Union Street, in Salem, was born, July 4, 1804, the author of these sketches and stories, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and in one near by, in Herbert Street, he spent his boyhood. The town had already begun to decline when he was a boy there; and as he walked about the streets and listened to the talk of people, he seemed always to be in the company of old men, hearing about old times, and watching the signs of decay. There were strange stories of what had happened in former days, especially since Salem was the place where, more than a hundred years before, there had been a terrible outbreak of superstition; men and women had been charged with witchcraft, and had been put to death for it. One of Hawthorne's own ancestors had been a judge who had condemned innocent people to death because he believed them guilty of witchcraft. A visitor to Salem court house is shown now a bottle containing some large coarse pins, such as were made a couple of hundred years ago, and is told that these pins were found sticking into children's bodies, and some old woman was accused of being a witch and sticking them in, though no one saw her do it. It seems foolish enough to us who look at the old bottle of pins to-day, and hear the steam trains and electric cars go whizzing by outside, but it was a very serious matter in the Salem of witchcraft times.

Hawthorne was the second in a family of three children. Elizabeth was two years older and Louisa four years younger. His father was a sea-captain, as was also his grandfather, who was a privateersman in the Revolutionary War. Nathaniel was four years old when his father died, but his mother lived until he was forty-six years old; his elder sister outlived him, his younger died two years after their mother. Whatever character Nathaniel Hawthorne received from his father, came, therefore, by inheritance, and not much from direct influence; his mother had more to do with shaping his life. She was but twenty-eight years

old when her husband died, but in those days, more than now, a widow in New England was likely to lead a secluded life, and Madam Hawthorne was almost a hermit the rest of her days. She was a woman of fine mind, and very striking in appearance, looking, as has been said, "as if she had walked out of an old picture, with her antique costume, and a face of lovely sensibility and great brightness." She was left with very little property, so that she could not give and receive much company, even if she had not been as reserved as she was. Nathaniel's elder sister, Elizabeth, writing after his death, to his daughter, says : —

"I remember, that one morning, my mother called my brother into her room, next to the one where we slept, and told him that his father was dead. He left very little property, and my grandfather Manning [Madam Hawthorne's father], took us home. All through our childhood we were indulged in all convenient ways, and were under very little control, except that of circumstances. There were aunts and uncles, and they were all as fond of your father, and as careful of his welfare, as if he had been their own child. He was both beautiful and bright, and, perhaps his training was as good as any other could have been. We always had plenty of books. He never wanted money, except to spend; and once, in the country, where there were no shops, he refused to take some that was offered to him, because he could not spend it immediately. Another time, old Mr. Forrester offered him a five-dollar bill, which he also refused; which was uncivil, for Mr. Forrester always noticed him very kindly when he met him."

When Hawthorne was a boy of fourteen, he went with his mother and sisters to live for a year in a lonely place in Maine. He spent much of his time by himself in the open air. In summer he took his rod or his gun and roamed for hours through the woods. On winter nights he would skate by moonlight, all alone, upon the ice of Sebago Pond, and sometimes rest till morning by a great camp-fire which he