

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **New England: Antiquity and Charm**

Yesterday we made the delightful journey to Salem. A visit to this old city puts the visitor back a few hundred years, for the streets, the homes and the atmosphere certainly have not changed greatly since it was founded in the early 1600's.

We traveled the North Shore Drive, passing Revere Beach, the famous Coney Island of New England, through the City of Lynn, where most of the shoes made in America are manufactured, to Swampscott, originally an Indian winter retreat and named by them.

Swampscott had natural beauty and it is here that artists come from all over the country to paint pictures of the "stern and rockbound coast."

In Marblehead we saw a typical old New England town with its narrow streets winding around like cow paths of old. Here were interesting old houses and doorways and the rustic cottages of the fishermen which also attract artists from all over the world. The streets seem to have no rhyme or reason. Very narrow and extremely crooked, they wind around the houses and gardens in fascinating manner. Authorities would have a difficult time trying to put straight and modern streets through these New England villages. The residents are proud of their heritage, proud of their communities and also realize that the charm of quaintness attracts the artists and the tourists.

We visited the Old Witch House in Salem, which is said to have been the home of Roger Williams as early as 1635 and is the oldest house in the city. A tour down Chestnut street was all too short. This street was chosen by the old sea captains for their home sites. They had made money and with it built the most handsome homes of colonial architecture in America today. The hand-carved doorways, the highly polished brass knockers, the old bull's-eye glass in many of the windows, the third story dormer windows – all these delightful features had to be passed much too quickly in our hurried tour of New England.

After having the birthplace of Nathaniel Hawthorne pointed out to us, we proceeded on to the House of Seven Gables which is located on a street bordering the shore. Restored to its original condition, it has a secret stairway to the attic and a lovely old garden. As a

special treat visitors may also go through the Hooper Hathaway cottage, once known as the old bakery.

We have read that Hawthorne worked for eight years during his early life in the Old Custom House in Salem. He became interested in writing and published his "House of Seven Gables" and "The Scarlet Letter" there, but the residents of Salem, thinking that he was poking fun at them, almost ran him out of town. He moved to Concord, a nearby colonial community, where he was happily received and where he spent the remainder of his life. After he became famous the people of Salem began to honor their native son and in later years his birthplace and the "House of Seven Gables" were restored and marked in his memory.

We must tell you that before we left Boston we visited "Old Ironsides," the Constitution, where it lies in the Boston Navy Yard. The sight of it was not nearly so impressive as when we met it coming out of the fog in the bay on its way to Monterey a number of years ago. The famous U.S. Frigate was paying a visit to the West Coast and had been in Santa Cruz for a number of days. A group of friends boarded a fishing boat and made the trip out upon the water to welcome her. The sight of the famous sailing ship being towed through the fog made a great impression upon all who were privileged to enjoy the sight.

The copper bolts and fittings of the Constitution were made by Paul Revere. Her first commander, Capt. Samuel Nicholson, is buried in a tomb under Boston's Christ Church.