



Principle Approach® Education

AN ANNOTATED *GRANDFATHER'S CHAIR* BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

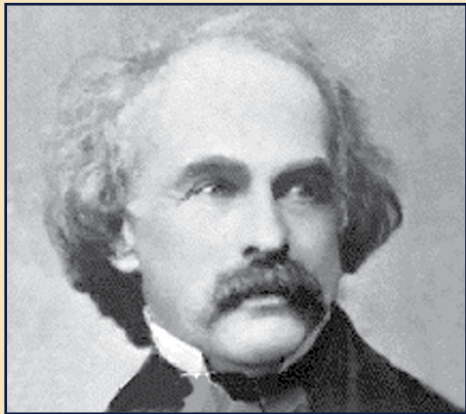
FROM *CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN AMERICA* (UNPUBLISHED)

BY ROSALIE J. SLATER

excerpted and compiled by Peggy Coven

The first writer of literary genius to devote his talents to children was Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American writer descended from the Puritans themselves. In his book *Grandfather's Chair*, we are given a loving example of a grandfather slowed by advancing years, but retaining an active mind and playing an important part in the life of his family. Grandfather was asked by his grandchildren about the old chair he was sitting in. He took that as an opportunity to tell them about the history of liberty that lead to American Independence. It was the story of God's new beginnings on this North American Continent and the record of both civil and religious liberty. He endeavored to make history an inspiration, not a drudgery. As American Christians, we do not want to become separated from the keystone of our national structure, our Christian heritage in the founding of our country.

In the preface to *Grandfather's Chair* it is written, "the author's desire has been to describe the eminent characters and remarkable events of our early annals in such a form and style that the young might make acquaintance with them of their own accord . . . he has endeavored to keep a distinct and unbroken



thread of authentic history . . . to make a lively and entertaining narrative for children, with such unmalleable material as is presented by the somber, stern and rigid characteristics of the Puritans and their descendents, is quite as difficult an attempt as to manufacture delicate playthings of the granite rocks of which New England is founded."

Nathaniel Hawthorne did not think it necessary to write downward in order to meet the comprehension of children. His goal in writing *Grandfather's Chair* was to tell the story of America's early days in a straight-forward manner to inspire children. He used the voice of a wise loving grandfather.



Grandfather brings tears to his listeners' eyes more often than he brings laughter to their lips. His whole purpose is to inspire them with a love of liberty and of what their forefathers and mothers did to bring them the "blessings of liberty" which they now enjoy. He wants to inspire the children with an interest in history and a love for those stirring events, which were part of their heritage. Sometimes the children are indignant, sometimes tearful, but, as the story seems to come close to their own time, they are eager to follow the path, which Hawthorne has sprinkled with little gems of truth.

Hawthorne's children could be your own family, for they represent a variety of ages and dispositions. There are four children, two boys and two girls. We are introduced to them in Chapter One as we meet Grandfather, who is sitting in his chair, watching the children play out-of-doors in the garden. As the children finish their play they come into the room and cluster around Grandfather and his chair. We learn their ages and dispositions.

The oldest is Cousin Laurence, "a boy of twelve, a bright scholar, in whom an early thoughtfulness and sensibility began to show themselves." Cousin Clara is the oldest girl, busy, and enthusiastic. She is ten. Charley is a big boy—and a noisy one. He is older than Alice, but there is a world of disposition and interest between Charley and Cousin Laurence.²

It is "little Alice" who charms us all. As we read Hawthorne's words we picture her immediately:

"Though Grandfather was old and gray-haired, yet his heart leaped with joy, whenever little Alice came fluttering like a butterfly into the room. She had made each of the children her playmate in turn, and now made Grandfather her playmate too, and thought him the merriest of them all." Hardly five, Alice "took the privilege of the youngest" and climbed up into Grandfather's lap. We see the picture through Hawthorne's words: "It was a pleasant thing to behold that fair and golden-haired child in the lap of the old man, and to think that, different as they were, the hearts of both could be gladdened with the same joys."³

Again our charming writer sets the stage:

"Grandfather," said little Alice, laying her head back upon his arm, "I am very tired now. You must tell me a story to make me go to sleep."

"That is not what story-tellers like," answered Grandfather, smiling. "They are better satisfied when they can keep their auditors awake."

Hawthorne explains that the children have watched Grandfather sitting in his chair—"ever since they could remember anything. Perhaps the younger of them supposed that he and the chair had come into the world together, and that both had always been as old as they were now . . .

"Do, Grandfather, talk to us about this chair."

That is all that Grandfather was waiting for. And he responded.⁴



“Well, child,” said Grandfather, patting his cheek, “I can tell you a great many stories of my chair. Perhaps your cousin Laurence would like to hear them too. They will teach him something about the history and distinguished people of his country, which he has never read in any of his school books.”

Of course, Cousin Laurence responded. In Hawthorne’s words, “He looked eagerly in Grandfather’s face; and even Charley, a bold, brisk, restless little fellow of nine, sat himself down on the carpet and resolved to be quiet for at least ten minutes, should the story last so long.”

Hawthorne’s first description of the chair was, “Now, the chair in which Grandfather sat was made of oak, which had grown dark with age, but had been rubbed and polished until it shone as bright as mahogany. It was very large and heavy, and had a back that rose high above Grandfather’s white head. This back was curiously carved in open work, so as to represent flowers, and foliage, and other devices, which the children often gazed at, but could never understand what they meant. On the very tiptop of the chair, over the head of Grandfather himself, was a likeness of a lion’s head, which had such a savage grin that you would almost expect to hear it growl and snarl.”⁵

LADY ARBELLA

There are a number of individuals who are featured in this little history pictured in the chair. Lady Arbella, the original owner, whom we can imagine looking at the dreary New England landscape from her “chamber in Mr. Endicott’s house” in Salem. In Hawthorne’s words, “Poor Lady Arbella watches all these sights, and feels that this New World is fit only for rough and hardy people.” She thinks “mournfully of far-off England.” And she faded away “like a pale English flower, in the shade of the forest.”⁶

But there are other owners pictured—much harder Puritans—who become temporary users of the chair. John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians, the Adventurer Governor William Phipps, who discovered pirate treasure in the West Indies, and our own brave George Washington, gazing into the fire at Craigie House in Cambridge, where he sat, considering and pondering “how to capture the British Army.” All of these and many more grace or disgrace the chair and enable our skillful writer, Hawthorne, to intrigue us with our history of Liberty.

In Chapter Two, entitled “The Puritans: Story of Lady Arbella,” Grandfather reviews Puritan history to prepare the children.

“These Puritans suffered so much persecution in England, that, in 1607, many of them went over to Holland, and lived ten or twelve years at Amsterdam and Leyden. But they feared that, if they continued there much longer, they should cease to be English, and should adopt all the manners, and ideas, and feelings of the Dutch. For this and other reasons, in the year 1620 they embarked on board the ship *Mayflower*, and crossed the ocean, to the shores of Cape Cod. There they made a settlement, and called it Plymouth, which, though now a part of Massachusetts, was for a long time a colony by itself. And thus was formed the earliest settlement of the Puritans in America.”⁷



Also in Chapter Two of *Grandfather's Chair* is recorded the arrival of the first Puritan fleet. According to modern scholarship there were four hundred men, women, and children on the *Arbella*, the flagship which carried Winthrop and Lady Arbella and her husband, and on the three ships that accompanied them. Six hundred more Puritans were on their way. Of these one thousand Puritans, two hundred died that first winter, and as many returned home in the spring. Yet, as we know, during the next decade with the persecutions in England, twenty thousand Puritans arrived and stayed in the New World.

We are introduced to Lady Arbella, the first owner of the chair, which had been made of English oak from her ancestral park at her home as the daughter of the Earl of Lincoln. Lady Arbella was married to a Mr. Johnson, a “gentleman of great wealth, who agreed with the Puritans in their religious opinions.” Both he and his wife had come to the New World to build a new home.⁸

Hawthorne introduces us briefly to John Winthrop and others aboard the vessel and we endeavor to see through the author's words what life was like during their long voyage of ten weeks. Another eminent name was that of Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the founders and promoters of the colony.

“The Lady Arbella died in one short month from her arrival . . . Grandfather had supposed that little Alice was asleep, but, towards the close of the story, happening to look down upon her, he saw that her blue eyes were wide open, and fixed earnestly upon his face. The tears had gathered in them, like dew upon a delicate blue flower; but when Grandfather ceased to speak, the sunshine of her smile broke forth again.

“Oh, the lady must have been so glad to get to heaven!’ exclaimed little Alice.

“How sad is the thought,’ observed Clara, ‘that one of the first things which the settlers had to do, when they came to the new world, was to set apart a burial ground.’

“Perhaps,’ said Laurence, ‘if they had found no need of burial grounds here, they would have been glad, after a few years, to go back to England.’

“Grandfather looked at Laurence, to discover whether he knew how profound and true a thing he had said.”⁹

JOHN ELIOT

As Grandfather introduces John Eliot, let us hear some of the things he told Laurence, Charley, Clara, and little Alice about this man who desired to spread the love of Christ into the American wilderness and to teach God's laws and principles to those American Indians who would accept His way of life.

First, Grandfather discussed the conflicts between the white and the red men and the concern which had the colonists “always on their guard” and with “their weapons ready for the conflict.”

“I have sometimes doubted,’ said Grandfather, when he had told these things to the children, ‘I have sometimes doubted whether there was more than a single man, among our forefathers, who realized that an Indian possesses a mind, and a heart and an immortal soul. That single man was John Eliot. All



the rest of the early settlers seemed to think that the Indians were an inferior race of beings, whom the Creator had merely allowed to keep possession of this beautiful country, till the white men should be in want of it.’

“‘Did the pious men of those days never try to make Christians of them?’ asked Laurence.

“‘Sometimes, it is true,’ answered Grandfather, ‘the magistrates and ministers would talk about civilizing and converting the red people. But, at the bottom of their hearts, they would have had almost as much expectation of civilizing a wild bear of the woods, and making him fit for paradise. They felt no faith in the success of any such attempts, because they had no love for the poor Indians. Now Eliot was full of love for them, and therefore so full of faith and hope, that he spent the labor of a lifetime in their behalf.’

“‘I would have conquered them first, and then converted them,’ said Charley.

“‘Ah, Charley, there spoke the very spirit of our forefathers!’ replied Grandfather. ‘But Mr. Eliot had a better spirit. He looked upon them as his brethren. He persuaded as many of them as he could, to leave off their idle and wandering habits, and to build houses, and cultivate the earth, as the English did. He established schools among them, and taught many of the Indians how to read. He taught them, likewise, how to pray. Hence, they were called “praying Indians.” Finally, having spent the best years of his life for their good, Mr. Eliot resolved to spend the remainder in doing them a yet greater benefit.’

“‘I know what that was!’ cried Laurence.

“‘He sat down in his study,’ continued Grandfather, ‘and began a translation of the Bible into the Indian tongue. It was while he was engaged in this pious work, that the mint-master gave him our great chair. His toil needed it, and deserved it.’

“‘Oh, Grandfather, tell us all about that Indian Bible!’ exclaimed Laurence. ‘I have seen it in the library of the Athenaeum; and the tears came into my eyes to think that there were no Indians left to read it.’¹⁰

Grandfather’s account of the Indian Bible is encouraging to us in our day. He concluded his account with these words to the children:

“‘There is no impiety in believing that, when his long life was over, the apostle of the Indians was welcomed to the celestial abodes by the prophets of ancient days, and by those earliest apostles and evangelists, who had drawn their inspiration from the immediate presence of the Saviour. They first had preached truth and salvation to the world. And Eliot, separated from them by many centuries, yet full of the same spirit, had borne the like message to the new world of the West. Since the first days of Christianity, there has been no man more worthy to be numbered in the brotherhood of the apostles, than Eliot.

“‘My heart is not satisfied to think,’ observed Laurence, ‘that Mr. Eliot’s labors have done no good, except to a few Indians of his own time. Doubtless, he would not have regretted his toil, if it were the means of saving but a single soul. But it is a grievous thing to me that he should have toiled so hard to



translate the Bible, and now the language and the people are gone! The Indian Bible itself is almost the only relic of both.’

“‘Laurence,’ said Grandfather, ‘if ever you should doubt that man is capable of disinterested zeal for his brother’s good; then remember how the Apostle Eliot toiled. And if you should feel your own self-interest pressing upon your heart too closely, then think of Eliot’s Bible. It is good for the world that such man has lived, and left this emblem of his life.’

“The tears gushed into the eyes of Laurence, and he acknowledged that Eliot had not toiled in vain. Little Alice put up her arms to Grandfather, and drew down his white head beside her own golden locks.

“‘Grandfather,’ whispered she, ‘I want to kiss good Mr. Eliot!’

“And doubtless, good Mr. Eliot would gladly receive the kiss of so sweet a child as Little Alice, and would think it a portion of his reward in heaven.

“Grandfather now observed, that Dr. Francis had written a beautiful *Life of Eliot*, which he advised Laurence to peruse.”¹¹

Hawthorne wanted to give his youthful readers an opportunity to connect the history of New England with the history of Liberty appearing as each of the colonies were established. He tells of the founding of Harvard college and mentioned he believed that President Dunster sat in the chair at the first commencement . . . His chair becomes the “chair of state” as several successive governors of Massachusetts sit in it at the council board: Winthrop, Bellingham, Dudley and Endicott.

Here Grandfather began to speak “about the nature and forms of government that established themselves, almost spontaneously, in Massachusetts and the other New England colonies.” The democratic form of the people choosing their own representatives and taking on the responsibility of government was unique. As Hawthorne wrote, putting his words into the mouth of Grandfather: “As to Massachusetts, it was at first intended that the colony should be governed by a council in London. But in a little while, the people had the whole power in their own hands, and chose annually the governor, the councilors, and the representatives.”

Only a people who had been raised in the Congregational form of church government could, like the Pilgrims, so spontaneously extend that polity to the government of their towns and colony. Thus, what was begun so long ago, in the first century of Christianity in the early Christian churches, called “little republics,” began to take shape and form in the New World, in North America, and especially in the churches and towns of New England.

New England had therefore some unique documents of our unfolding republic to contribute to the history of Liberty. The Pilgrims, trained in the principles of civil government by their pastor John Robinson in Holland, wrote the Mayflower Compact before they landed. This is considered our first document of self-government. Then, in 1638, Connecticut’s pastor, Thomas Hooker, preached the sermon which led



to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, considered America's first Constitution; this to be followed in 1639 by the Massachusetts' Body of Liberties, written by a minister of the Gospel.

GOVERNOR BRADSTREET

"Governor Bradstreet was a venerable old man, nearly ninety years of age,' said Grandfather. 'He came over with the first settlers, and had been the intimate companion of all those excellent and famous men who laid the foundations of our country. They were all gone before him to the grave; and Bradstreet was the last of the Puritans.'

"Grandfather paused a moment and smiled, as if he had something very interesting to tell his auditors. He then proceeded:

"And now, Laurence,—now, Clara,—now Charley,—now, my dear little Alice,—what chair do you think had been placed in the council chamber, for old Governor Bradstreet to take his seat in? Would you believe that it was this very chair in which grandfather now sits, and of which he is telling you the history?'

"I am glad to hear it, with all my heart!' cried Charley, after a shout of delight. 'I thought Grandfather had quite forgotten the chair.'

"It was a solemn and affecting sight,' said Grandfather, 'when this venerable patriarch, with his white beard flowing down upon his breast, took his seat in his chair of state. Within his remembrance, and even since his mature age, the site where now stood the populous town had been a wild and forest-covered peninsula. The province, now so fertile and spotted with thriving villages, had been a desert wilderness. He was surrounded by a shouting multitude, most of whom had been born in the country which he had helped to found. They were of one generation, and he of another. As the old man looked upon them, and beheld new faces everywhere, he must have felt that it was now time for him to go whither his brethren had gone before him.'

"Were the former governors all dead and gone?' asked Laurence.

"All of them,' replied Grandfather. 'Winthrop had been dead forty years. Endicott died, a very old man, in 1665. Sir Henry Vane was beheaded in London, at the beginning of the reign of Charles II. And Haynes, Dudley, Bellingham and Leverett, who had all been governors of Massachusetts, were now likewise in their graves. Old Simon Bradstreet was the sole representative of that departed brotherhood. There was no other public man remaining to connect the ancient system of government and manners with the new system, which was about to take its place.'"¹²



CAPTAIN WILLIAM PHIPPS

In order to pick up all the strands of this first section of *Grandfather's Chair*, Hawthorne picks up one missing link—the background of Captain William Phipps. Perhaps, this was one of the first American “rags to riches” tales. And, like the true spirit of our nation, this story of William Phipps was due to “his own energy and spirit of enterprise.”

William Phipps was born a poor man's son in Maine. After tending sheep, he became a ship's carpenter, married a rich widow, lost her fortune, and became poor again. But Phipps was a man of resolution. He determined to find and recover the wealth of a Spanish treasure ship wrecked near the West Indies. For many years he pursued this goal, until finally, he discovered and recovered one of the richest treasure ships ever sunk in this hemisphere. “The whole value of the recovered treasure, plate, bullion, precious stones, and all, was estimated at more than two million dollars.” With his share of the treasure, “enough to make him comfortable for the rest of his days,” he launched his political career. King James knighted him, “so that, instead of the obscure ship-carpenter who had formerly dwelt among them, the inhabitants of Boston welcomed him on his return, as the rich and famous Sir William Phipps.”¹³

Grandfather told the story of Sir William Phipps in a few short paragraphs to his interested listeners. For, in truth, Phipps was very much like the pirates whose treasure he had so much admired and acquired. “In the year 1690, he went on a military expedition against the French colonies in America, conquered the whole province of Acadie, and returned to Boston with a great deal of plunder. In the same year he took command of an expedition against Quebec, but did not succeed in capturing the city. In 1692, being then in London, King William III appointed him governor of Massachusetts. And now, my dear children, having followed Sir William Phipps through all his adventures and hardships, till we find him comfortably seated in Grandfather's chair. We will bid him farewell. May he be as happy in ruling a people, as he was while he tended sheep!”¹⁴

At this point in his narrative, Nathaniel Hawthorne concludes his first section of New England history. The age of the Puritans is over and now a new time for the colony will bring forth other qualities of American character. But before he leaves this most important early period, through his narrator, Grandfather, he reviews the events in which the chair played its part.

“Here stood the chair, with the old Lincoln coat of arms, and the oaken flowers and foliage, and the fierce lion's head at the summit, the whole, apparently, as in perfect preservation as when it had first been placed in the Earl of Lincoln's Hall. And what vast changes of society and of nations had been wrought, by sudden convulsions or by slow degrees, since that era!

“‘This chair has stood firm when the thrones of kings were overturned!’ thought Laurence. ‘Its oaken frame has proved stronger than many frames of government!’¹⁵



EZEKIEL CHEEVER

The first person to receive the old chair after Sir William Phipps was New England's most famous schoolmaster, Ezekiel Cheever. Grandfather endeavored to give the children a picture of Master Cheever, sitting in the old chair, with his flowing white beard as he taught Latin, and administered discipline with a birch rod. Almost every important man in Boston received some of his education from this Christian classical scholar.

Among the famous statesmen, writers, and historians who attended the Boston Latin School both before and during Cheever's teaching were: Benjamin Franklin, Cotton Mather, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Edward Everett, Robert C. Winthrop, John Lothrop Motley, Francis Parkman, Phillips Brooks, and Edward Everett Hale.

THANKSGIVING

"In the early twilight of Thanksgiving Eve came Laurence, and Clara, and Charley, and little Alice hand in hand, and stood in a semi-circle round Grandfather's chair. They had been joyous throughout that day of festivity, mingling together in all kinds of play, so that the house had echoed with their airy mirth.

"Grandfather, too, had been happy though not mirthful. He felt that this was to be set down as one of the good Thanksgivings of his life. In truth, all his former Thanksgivings had borne their part in the present one; for his years of infancy, and youth, and manhood, with their blessings and their griefs, had flitted before him while he sat silently in the great chair. Vanished scenes had been pictured in the air. The forms of departed friends had visited him. Voices to be heard no more on earth had sent an echo from the infinite and the eternal. These shadows, if such they were, seemed almost as real to him as what was actually present,—as the merry shouts and laughter of the children,—as their figures, dancing like sunshine before his eyes.

"He felt that the past was not taken from him. The happiness of former days was a possession forever. And there was something in the mingled sorrow of his lifetime that became akin to happiness, after being long treasured in the depths of his heart. There it underwent a change, and grew more precious than pure gold." ¹⁶

One of the lessons that Nathaniel Hawthorne sought to teach his young readers and listeners in his recital of New England's past was a lesson of the purpose of government. Even as the Christian idea of man and government brought a new view of man into the world and his relationship to the state, so the purpose for government was "that the State ought to exist for Man; that justice, protection and the common good, ought to be the aim of government." As we know, in the history of the world it took many centuries before a form of government appeared in these United States that carried out that aim. However, as the recital of Grandfather's chair continued, this depended both on the philosophy of government—where the power of government came from—and upon the character of the individual ruler, a governor of Massachusetts in this case. England was endeavoring to hold more and more of the power of government



at the same time as the colonists were enjoying more and more responsibility for conducting their own affairs. As Hawthorne put it: “the people of old England had never enjoyed anything like the liberties and privileges, which the settlers of New England now possessed.”

Grandfather also knew one of the great lessons of history was repeating itself in Massachusetts colony. When the colony began, it was under the influence of the Puritans, whose simplicity of manners and ideals, though stern, had kept government on a path of morality. Now “the simplicity of the good old Puritan times was fast disappearing. This was partly owing to the increasing number and wealth of the inhabitants.” This led to a pompous and artificial mode of life. As the American colonists enjoyed the wealth of their trade and productivity, they changed their lifestyle.

Grandfather proceeds with the history of the chair by telling the children of the Louisbourg Expeditions, the Acadian exiles, the French and Indian War, and the death of General Wolfe on the battlefield.

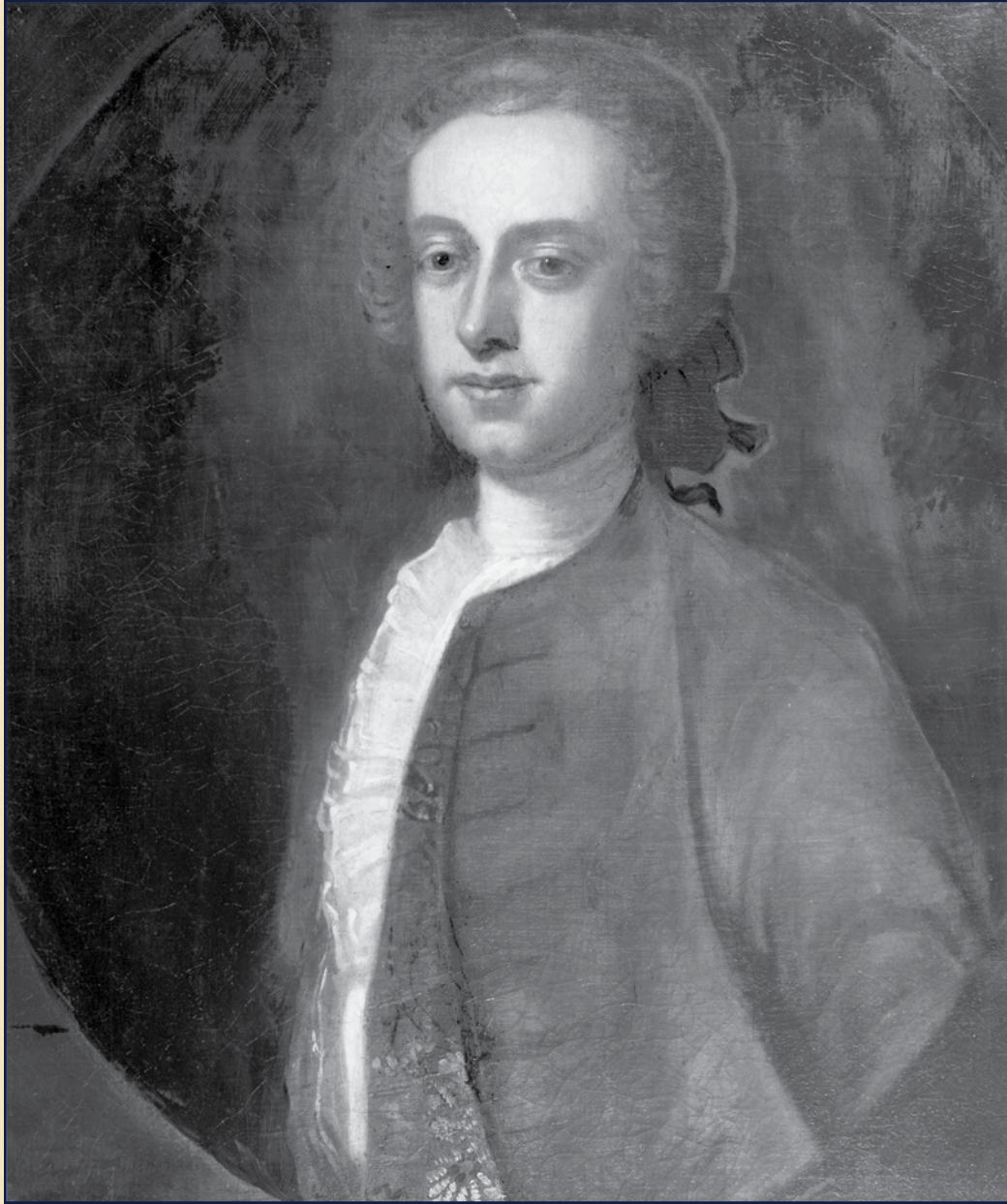
THOMAS HUTCHINSON

One of the most interesting aspects of Hawthorne’s writing about Grandfather’s chair is its relationship to the philosophy and form of government that was unfolding in Massachusetts. As the various governors sat in the chair, they exemplified the degree to which the colonists were being called by the Lord to make a final separation from monarchical government. The Pilgrims and Puritans came to these shores for both civil and religious liberty. They knew that one cannot enjoy one without the other. And during the first fifty years, progress was made as the New England colonies practiced degrees of self-government. Then, with the change in the charters whereby the governors were selected by the king rather than by the people, it became apparent that England desired to transplant aristocratic government rather than seeds of the original republican government brought here by the Pilgrims and Puritans.

The temporary owners of Grandfather’s chair reflected the changing attitudes towards government. In 1760, as Hawthorne reported, Sir Francis Bernard, “who had been governor of New Jersey, was appointed to the same office in Massachusetts.” To Bernard, the chair was too old and “shabby to keep company with a new set of mahogany chairs, and an aristocratic sofa, which had just arrived from London. He therefore ordered it to be put away in the garret.”¹⁷

The children were indignant at the treatment of Grandfather’s chair, even though he reminded them that the chair had indeed lost its gilding, and had “suffered a fracture in one of its rungs” when an aristocrat, in a fit of rage had kicked it. But its next owner, Thomas Hutchinson, was to restore it “as much as possible to its original aspect.”

Governor Thomas Hutchinson is one of the most controversial figures in Massachusetts history. The controversy arose perhaps from the fact that he was a native-born colonist—but at the same time a dedicated monarchist or believer in government from the top down. As Hawthorne presents him, “Hutchinson would heave no sigh for the subversion of the original republican government, the purest that the world had seen, with which the colony began its existence. While reverencing the grim and



THOMAS HUTCHINSON

Royal Governor of Massachusetts 1771–1774

John Singleton Copley, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston



stern old Puritans as the founders of his native land, he would not wish to recall them from their graves, not to awaken again that king-resisting spirit, which he imagined to be laid asleep with them forever. Winthrop, Dudley, Bellingham, Endicott, Leverett, and Bradstreet! All these had had their day. Ages might come and go, but never again would the people's suffrages place a republican governor in their ancient chair of state!"¹⁸

But now it was the turn of Hutchinson to sit in the seat of Grandfather's chair—as he sat in the seat of government in Massachusetts colony. Governor Hutchinson had the chair restored as much as possible to its original aspect. It was “scoured with soap and sand and polished with wax, and then provided with a substantial leather cushion.”¹⁹

Gone were the gilt and the gold. Gone were the blue damask cushions with rich golden fringe. It is interesting to note that when the new governor Hutchinson sat down in the chair to write his history of Massachusetts, the chair had assumed an almost republican simplicity and fitness. Was this a previewing of the ultimate character and philosophy of government to be restored in the new England colonies? Governor Hutchinson had a different vision as he sat in the historic chair. “He saw colonists. He saw the fertile fields of New England, portioned out among the new great land-holders, and descending by entail from generation to generation. He saw the people a race of tenantry, dependent on their lords. He saw stars, garters, coronets, and castles.”²⁰

No wonder Thomas Hutchinson was to be awakened by a rude shock from his misconception of the nature and character of the people among whom he had grown up! Not imbued with the Pilgrim and Puritan obligation to the Sovereignty of God in all matters of life, most especially in the matter of authority, Thomas Hutchinson represented an external commitment to the church of the founders without a real appreciation of the Biblical truths which brought about their original flight to New England. Perhaps it was one of the most interesting pieces in the design of Liberty that a man, born and bred among New Englanders, yet totally devoid of their deepest convictions, was to symbolize the insensitivity of the mother country to the aspirations of her American offspring. Providentially, God brought a people to this continent who had accepted the basic conceptions of Englishmen in regard to government. But the peculiar people who came on their own volition to the New England shores based the rights of Englishmen on the firmer foundation of the rock of Christian Liberty—on “that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” (Galatians 5:1) They saw the inseparability between conscience and personal property, between self-government and union. While the original tie of each colony was with the mother country—externally—eventually, the inner links of liberty with law and individual choice in the pursuit of happiness prevailed and the cause of one, became the cause of all.

Thomas Hutchinson, in the words of his most recent biographer, Dr. Bernard Bailyn, “was one of the most hated men on earth” at the time of the American revolution. He was “more hated than Lord North, more hated than George III (both of whom, it was believed he had secretly influenced).”²¹ Called “traitor” and a “tool of tyrants,” Thomas Hutchinson left his native land forever in 1774—a man totally dishonored—and totally misunderstanding the Christian idea of man and government.



Nathaniel Hawthorne concludes his second part of the trilogy comprising *Grandfather's Chair* with Hutchinson in 1765 musing in his seat of government, writing his history, and not at all prepared for the events which were to catapult him into the dissolution of England's colonial empire in America. No man helped God more to sever the ties that bound the Old World to the New than monarchical governor Thomas Hutchinson.

LIBERTY TREE

As King George sought to establish a “tyranny over our fathers,” trusting in the arm of flesh, or armies and navies, our fathers gathered round the Liberty Tree. Its roots were deep in the Word of God, and sprouted in every colony. Though cut down by British axes, it could not be separated from its ultimate flowering and spreading. This testing time of principled action—as opposed to unprincipled mob action—would be a most important chapter in world history.

It is an amazing fact that the people of New England “so loved and revered the King of England” that no one could have conceived the idea of separation. As Hawthorne reminds us, and as Grandfather related to the children, the idea of independence came very slowly. The recent old French War had brought soldiers of Old England to sit side by side with the American colonists. “Nearly thirty thousand young men had laid down their lives for the honor of King George. And the survivors loved him the better, because they had done and suffered so much for his sake.”

But God in His wisdom hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and the king of England agreed to go against the most basic principles of the English nation. He allowed the British Parliament to pass a Stamp Act. This Stamp or tax was levied on deeds, bonds, and all other kinds of legal papers. The sum of the “sheet of paper, with the king’s stamp upon it” was “three pence more than the actual value of the paper.” It was in effect a tax—a tax to which the colonists had not consented.

Grandfather now tells the children of the steps the British took to inaugurate a system of internal taxation, which “was the assertion by parliament of the right to tax the colonies by a body in which they were not represented.” The consequences were directly the result of the colonists’ clear understanding of the principles of *representation*, *property* and *rights* and of the degree to which these principles were being infringed and usurped by the British ministry.

Our chair is next seen under the Liberty Tree occupied by Mr. Richard Dana, a justice of the peace, leading Andrew Oliver in an oath that he would have nothing to do with distributing the stamps.

“Grandfather went on to tell the proceedings of the despotic king and ministry of England after the repeal of the Stamp Act. They could not bear to think that their right to tax America should be disputed by the people. In the year 1767, therefore, they caused Parliament to pass an act for laying a duty on tea and some other articles that were in general use. Nobody could now buy a pound of tea without paying a tax to King George . . . in order to compel their obedience, two regiments, consisting of more than seven hundred British soldiers, were sent to Boston. Thence they marched to the Common with



loaded muskets, fixed bayonets, and great pomp and parade . . . the free town of Boston was guarded and overawed by the redcoats.

“Grandfather,’ cried Charley, impatiently, ‘the people did not go to fighting half soon enough! These British red-coats ought to have been driven back to their vessels the very moment they landed on Long Wharf.’

“Many a hot-headed young man said the same as you do, Charley,’ answered Grandfather. But the elder and wiser people saw that the time was not yet come. ²²

“Now, children,’ said Grandfather, ‘I wish to make you comprehend the position of the British troops in King Street. This is the same, which we now call State Street. On the south side of the townhouse, or Old State House, was what military men call a court of guard, defended by two brass cannons, which pointed directly at one of the doors of the above edifice. A large party of soldiers were always stationed in the court of guard . . . a sentinel was continually pacing before its front.’

“I shall remember this tomorrow,’ said Charley; ‘and I will go to State Street, so as to see exactly where the British troops were stationed.’

“And before long,’ observed Grandfather, ‘I shall have to relate an event which made King Street sadly famous on both sides of the Atlantic. The history of our chair will soon bring us to this melancholy business. ²³

Here Grandfather described the state of things, which arose from the ill will that existed between the inhabitants and the redcoats. The old and somber part of the townspeople were very angry at the government for sending soldiers to overawe them. But those gray-headed men were cautious, and kept their thoughts and feelings in their own breasts, without putting themselves in the way of the British bayonets.

The younger people, however, could hardly be kept within such prudent limits. They reddened with wrath at the very sight of a soldier, and would have been willing to come to blows with them at any moment.

“It was sometimes the case,’ continued Grandfather, ‘that affrays happened between such wild young men as these and small parties of the soldiers . . . but when men have loaded muskets in their hands, it is easy to foretell that they will soon be turned against the bosoms of those who provoke their anger.’

“Grandfather,’ said little Alice, looking fearfully into his face, ‘your voice sounds as though you were going to tell us something awful!’ ²⁴

THE BOSTON MASSACRE

“[Grandfather] had given the above description of the enmity between the townspeople and the soldiers in order to prepare the minds of his auditors for a very terrible event.” ²⁵



He related the awful events of a date that lived in infamy in the annals of the city—the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770. During the evening of this date, the soldiers had been loudly accosted by “small parties of young men.” The remarks were provocative; from calling the British soldiers “lobsterbacks,” the young men began to throw “snowballs and lumps of ice” and the surge of a crowd swirled around those at their post outside the state house. There was tension in the air and the soldiers’ fears began to kindle. Many voices were challenging the redcoats to fire. Summoned to the frantic scene, Captain Preston “ordered eight soldiers of the main guard to take their muskets and follow him.” As they forced their way through the crowd, “pricking the townspeople with their bayonets,” passions kindled to the boiling point. Captain Preston, with his men holding the muzzles of their muskets with bayonets stood holding the crown at bay.

“A gentleman caught Captain Preston’s arm. ‘For Heaven’s sake, sir,’ exclaimed he, ‘take heed what you do, or here will be bloodshed.’

“‘Stand aside!’ answered Captain Preston, haughtily. ‘Do not interfere, sir. Leave me to manage the affair.’”

But Captain Preston’s “threatening position” and the rage of the provocateurs were working up to a crisis. Voices in the crowd even dared the troops to fire on them. A rush by the people—Captain Preston brandished his sword—shouts from “a hundred throats”—in the confusion the soldiers believed that Captain Preston had given the “fatal mandate, ‘Fire!’”

“The flash of their muskets lighted up the street, and the report rang loudly between the edifices.”²⁶

As the cloud of smoke from the gunpowder slowly rose “as if it were loath to reveal the dreadful spectacle beneath it. Eleven of the sons of New England lay stretched upon the street.” Some were wounded. Some were never to rise again. But “that purple stain in the midst of King Street, though it melted away in the next day’s sun, was never forgotten nor forgiven by the people.”

Of course, little Alice was distressed. Her sobs were violent. “‘I ought to have remembered our dear little Alice,’ said Grandfather reproachfully to himself. ‘Oh, what a pity! Her heavenly nature has now received its first impression of earthly sin and violence.’”

Clara carried Alice off to bed, but Grandfather and the boys continued to discuss the consequences of this fatal act.²⁷

John Adams and Josiah Quincy represented the British soldiers during the trial with the following results: the captain and six of the men were acquitted. Two were brought in guilty of manslaughter. It appeared in the trial that the soldiers were abused, insulted, threatened, and pelted before they fired. It was also proved that only seven guns were fired by the eight prisoners. These circumstances induced the jury to give a favourable verdict. The results of the trial reflected great honour on John Adams and Josiah Quincy, the counsel for the prisoners; and also, on the integrity of the jury, who ventured to give them an upright verdict, in defiance of popular opinions . . .



Only a people brought up by their pastors on the importance of observing God's rule of law could have brought in a verdict of self-defense for the foreign soldiers who were quartered and stationed in our land of liberty.

PORTRAITS OF PATRIOTS

Laurence was sharing his "collection of portraits, which had been his New-Year's gift from Grandfather." Little Alice was sitting in Grandfather's lap.

Laurence, turning over the pages of his volume, "came to the portrait of a stern, grim-looking man, in plain attire, of much more modern fashion than that of the old Puritans. But the face might have befitted one of those iron-hearted men. Beneath the portrait was the name of Samuel Adams."²⁸

Here Grandfather waxed eloquent as he described this man that many historians have called "the Father of the American Revolution." John Singleton Copley, 1738–1815, an American artist, has caught the image evoked by Hawthorne's words in his portrait of Samuel Adams. "He was a man of great note in all the doings that brought about the Revolution. His character was such, that it seemed as if one of the ancient Puritans had been sent back to earth, to animate the people's hearts with the same abhorrence of tyranny that had distinguished the earliest settlers. He was as religious as they, as stern and inflexible, and as deeply imbued with democratic principles."²⁹

Samuel Adams was a Christian Constitutionalist uniting his own colony by the vital force of distinctive ideas and principles. His essays indicate that the subject of Liberty had to be treated internally first, before it could be realized *externally*—governmentally. In other words, without the virtue of the people, there could be no true political liberty for the American individual. The art of self-government had to be learned by practice in both public and private life.

There were other portraits that Grandfather discussed with the children; for example, the contrast between Samuel Adams and John Hancock. All of us perhaps can remember the bold signature of John Hancock on the Declaration of Independence—signed large enough so that the king of England, George III, did not need his spectacles to read it. But perhaps we did not realize that he was one of the wealthiest men in New England. While the tastes and habits of John Hancock were aristocratic as compared to the Spartan simplicity of the Puritan-like Samuel Adams, nevertheless, he was a patriot through and through. Asked one time if he wanted to spare from the flame the Hancock wharves in Boston, he replied, "Burn them!" so that the enemy could not have their benefit. And we remember that both he and Samuel Adams had been singled out by the British crown to be captured and carried to England to be tried in a court where they would not have a jury of their peers.

But above all, Grandfather reminded the children that "there was an overruling Providence guiding [America]." "It is marvelous," said Grandfather, "to see how many powerful writers, orators, and soldiers, started up, just at the time when they were wanted. There was a man for every kind of work. It is equally wonderful, that men of such different characters were all made to united in one object of establishing the freedom and independence of America."³⁰



Grandfather also pointed out that there were “friends of America” in Parliament. These were men like Mr. Pitt, later the Earl of Chatham. “There was Edmund Burke, one of the wisest and greatest orators that ever the world produced.

“‘It is very remarkable to observe how many of the ablest orators in the British Parliament were favorable to America,’ said Grandfather. ‘We ought to remember these great Englishmen with gratitude; for their speeches encouraged our fathers, almost as much as those of our own orators, in Faneuil Hall and under Liberty Tree.’”³¹

The children listened as Grandfather named the names of some of the most infamous Tories” and loyalists as they called themselves: Governor Thomas Hutchinson, Chief Justice Oliver, Judge Auchmuty, and the Reverend Mather Byles.

“‘I wish the people had tarred and feathered every man of them!’ cried Charley.

“‘That wish is very wrong, Charley,’ said Grandfather. ‘You must not think that there was no integrity and honor except among those who stood up for the freedom of America . . . Can you not respect that principle of loyalty, which made the royalists give up country, friends, fortune, everything, rather than be false to their king? It was a mistaken principle; but many of them cherished it honorably, and were martyrs to it.’”

Charley admitted his mistake and Grandfather reminded his young listeners, “‘The time is now come, when we may judge fairly of them,’ continued Grandfather. ‘Be the good and true men among them honored; thank Heaven! Our country need not be ashamed of her sons—of most of them, at least—whatever side they took in the revolutionary contest.’”

As the children considered the portrait of King George III, Grandfather reminded them that his last years were passed in insanity and blindness, after the Revolution had been concluded and the colonies were lost to the Mother Country forever.³²

GEORGE WASHINGTON OF VIRGINIA SITS IN THE CHAIR

But, meanwhile, where was the old chair during all these critical events taking place in and around Boston? Grandfather related to the children that the chair “was conveyed away, under cover of the night, and committed to the care of a skillful joiner.”

The children entreated Grandfather not to keep them in suspense about the fate of his chair! On June 17, 1775, the same date as the memorable Battle of Bunker Hill, the Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia appointed George Washington of Virginia as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Armies. For many years, God had been preparing this man for such a position. While there were a number of military men who might have been elevated to this position, there was no one individual of both the experience and character of George Washington.



We do know that God had been forging the Christian principle of American political union through the leadership of pastors and statesmen. While New England represented the independent churches, and the south, generally, the Anglican church, still the exchange of election sermons from the north, and the political writings both southerners and northerners had done much to awaken a bond of union. Above all, the role of the Bible in colonial life, which has for so long been underestimated by our contemporary historians, was a primary source of reaffirmation of those cherished rights of Englishmen—life, liberty, and property—and the importance of representation.

Immediately after appointing George Washington to Commander-in-Chief and petitioning the king once again to consider a peaceful redress of grievances, Congress proclaimed a Fast Day to be observed in the several colonies on July 20, 1775. This was picked up and proclaimed by the individual colonial assemblies and the outpouring of sermons in all sections of the country indicated their unanimity of principle and purpose.

When George Washington arrived in Cambridge to take command of the American Army, he made his headquarters in Craigie House, a home later to be purchased and enjoyed by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, our American poet of the hearthside, who wrote many patriotic poems of this period. Here, according the Hawthorne's literary device, "he sat down in a large chair which was the most conspicuous object in the room. The noble figure of Washington would have done honor to a throne. As he sat there, with his hand resting on the hilt of his sheathed sword, which was placed between his knees, his whole aspect well befitted the chosen man on whom his country leaned for the defense of her dearest rights. America seemed safe, under his protection. His face was grander than any sculptor had ever wrought in marble' none could behold him without awe and reverence. Never before had the lion's head, at the summit of the chair, looked down upon such a face and form as Washington's!

Grandfather emphasized the Providence of God during the Revolutionary War. He traced the colonists' love of liberty from Britain herself, from their religious tenets and their education in the principles of government.

After General George Washington left Cambridge and his headquarters in what would become the Longfellow House, the chair which was soon to become Grandfather's chair, had some public years—years when it was right at the center of events in a barber shop!

The children's comments were interesting—a reflection upon their renewed interests in the characters of history. Lawrence said, "After it had held Washington in its arms, it ought not to have been compelled to receive all the world. It should have been put into the pulpit of Old South Church, or some other consecrated place."³³

But Grandfather did not agree with Laurence. He believed that this chair, which had been present with so much New England history, would have been lonely by itself in the pulpit of Old South. So, "Grandfather amused himself and the children by imagining some of the individuals who might have occupied the chair while they awaited the leisure of the barber."



SAMUEL ADAMS AND GRANDFATHER'S CHAIR

Nathaniel Hawthorne closes his account of the chair, and the historic personages associated with it, with the passing of Samuel Adams in 1803. His last decade was spent in the highest seat of government his state could confer upon him—as Lieutenant Governor and Governor. During this time Grandfather recounted the fact that Samuel Adams retrieved the imaginary chair from the barber's shop and brought that “remarkable piece of furniture” to the Governor's mansion where it continued its role as the “ancient chair of state” and where Samuel Adams “filled it worthily for three years as Governor.”

Hawthorne, through the voice of Grandfather, identifies Samuel Adams as “a distinguished patriot” who resembled “the stern old Puritans.” He was a man “of severe religious principles” and when he perceived that the heart of the King of England, like Pharaoh of old, had “hardened” towards his colonies, then Samuel began to teach the consequences of the loss of liberty. His method of education was to reaffirm the “distinctive ideas and principles” which had always been the position of the colonists—even the rights of Englishmen—rights dating from Magna Charta and before. These Biblical Principles Samuel Adams wrote about and discussed with individuals from all walks of life. His goal was that each Massachusetts man or woman be both internally and externally governed. He wrote:

While the people are virtuous, they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue, they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader . . . If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security.³⁴

THE STORY'S END

As Grandfather finished his account of the imaginary chair, which had supposedly enjoyed the occupancy of so many real historic characters of Massachusetts history, Laurence cried out:

“Oh, how I wish the chair could speak. After its long intercourse with mankind—after looking upon the world for ages—what lessons of golden wisdom it might utter! It might teach a private person how to lead a good and happy life—or a statesman how to make his country prosperous!”³⁵

Thus the first literary book written for children in America was written by young Nathaniel Hawthorne and published during the years of 1841 and 1842. The complete volume in three parts, under the title of *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, joined with *Biographical Stories*, appeared in 1851. Later resetting the volume, it was called *True Stories from History and Biography*. It included the childhood of Benjamin West, Sir Isaac Newton, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Cromwell, Benjamin Franklin, and Queen Christina of Sweden.



¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Grandfather's Chair: A History for Youth*. NY: United States Book Company, 1840, 4.

² *Ibid.*, 5–7.

³ *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 16, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 50, 51.

¹² *Ibid.*, 56–58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66, 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁷ <http://www.eldritchpress.org/nn/gc210.html>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Bernard Bailyn. *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

²² *Ibid.*, 171.

²³ *Ibid.*, 173, 174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 179, 180.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 184–186.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

³² *Ibid.*, 188, 189.

³³ *Ibid.*, 188, 189.

³⁴ Samuel Adams, February 12, 1779 letter to James Warren. Henry Alonzo Cushing, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Vol. IV. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905, 124.

³⁵ Hawthorne, 219.