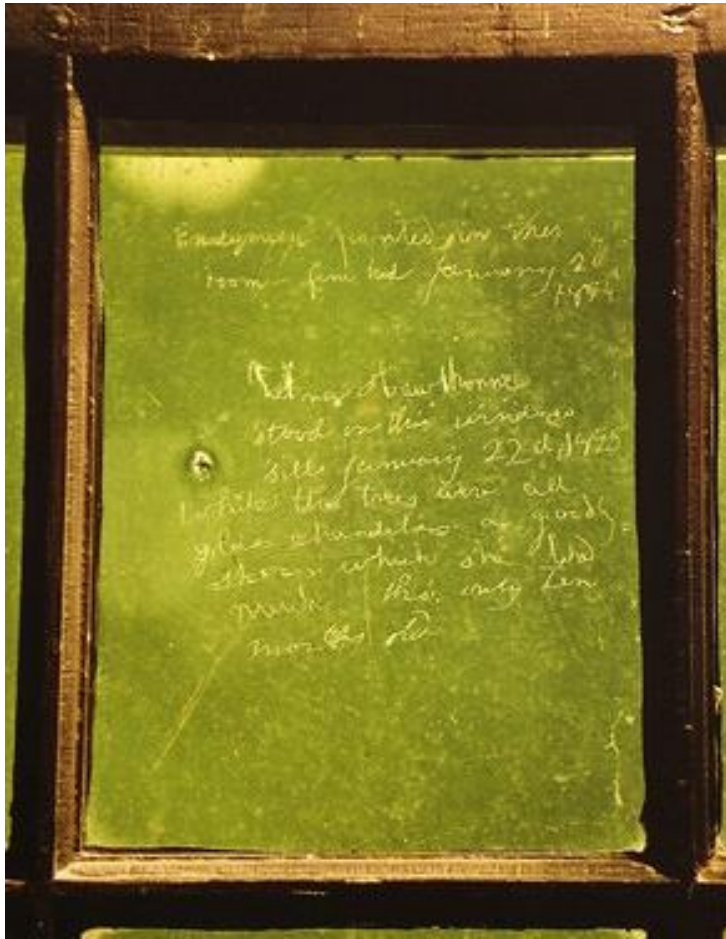


# SOPHIA PEABODY HAWTHORNE

## Lessons from an Old Manse #4

Sophia Hawthorne's window etching in her studio at The Old Manse:

**"Endymion painted in this room - finished January 20, 1844."**



## HISTORY

On the morning of July 7, 1842, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia Peabody were married in Boston. That afternoon, they rode out to Concord to begin their married life at The Old Manse.

The Hawthornes were eager to begin this new chapter of their lives because they shared a vision of what their married life. Nathaniel was a writer, Sophia was an artist, and together they had planned to each develop their respective crafts while inspiring the other. The Old Manse was an ideal home for the Hawthornes with its shared and individual spaces. Sophia promptly transformed the dining room into her painting studio.

By 1842, Sophia was a respected painter in the prime of her career. Current research shows her to be the first female American painter who was paid for her work, thus

paving the way for others of her gender. In 1844 Sophia marked the completion of *Endymion*, the painting she considered her masterpiece, by using her diamond ring to etch the note above into her studio window.

As her notes in this glass also show, Sophia's life changed in 1844 when she gave birth to her first child, Una. The transition to motherhood was accompanied by an end to Sophia's painting career. However, her diaries and letters show that she loved being a mother. And, in the second inscription on the window, Sophia expressed her daughter's joy in seeing the shimmering icicles on maple trees in the yard after a winter storm:

"Una Hawthorne stood on this window sill January 22'd 1845 while the trees were all glass chandeliers – a goodly show which she like much tho only ten months old"

## FOR CONTEMPLATION OR DISCUSSION

### Gender Roles

- In the three years that the Hawthornes lived at The Old Manse, Sophia's artistic career peaked and ended while Nathaniel's grew to great acclaim. How does this fit with your understanding of gender roles in 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
- Sophia was a pioneer for aspiring artists of her gender, instigating change by example. How does this compare and contrast with the first wave of American feminists in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century who sought change through social and political reform?

### Marking Events

- Sophia marked special events in her life in a variety of ways, from letter writing and journal entries to expressive painting, sculpture, and window etching. How do you mark events in your life? What evidence of events will you leave for future family members or historians?

## CREATIVE PROMPTS

- Sophia painted some original works but gained the most attention by reproducing paintings for eager art collectors when owning a copy was as valuable as owning the original. Copy a piece of art you enjoy in a way that is expressive of your own style and ideas.
- Try writing on glass! We do not recommend that you write on your windows unless you have full permission, but you can use a recycled glass jar. If you do not have an etching tool at home, you can use permanent markers to make notes or drawings to mark a special event on glass.

## CONNECTIONS

- Curious about *Endymion*? Follow [this link](#) to learn about the mythology behind the image, then check out John Keats' poem [Endymion](#).
- Explore Sophia's art; [these paintings](#) were gifted to Nathaniel to mark the anniversary of the couple's engagement.
- Sophia's sisters were also exceptional women! Learn about [Elizabeth Peabody](#) and [Mary Peabody Mann](#) and the roles they played in 19<sup>th</sup> century America or read Megan Marshall's amazing book, [The Peabody Sisters](#).

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