

= Arrowhead (Herman Melville House) =

Arrowhead , also known as the Herman Melville House , was the home of American author Herman Melville during his most productive years , 1850 ? 1863 . In this Pittsfield , Massachusetts house , Melville wrote some of his major work : the novels Moby @-@ Dick , Pierre (dedicated to nearby Mount Greylock) , The Confidence @-@ Man , and Israel Potter ; The Piazza Tales (a short story collection named for Arrowhead 's porch) ; and magazine stories such as " I and My Chimney " .

The house , located at 780 Holmes Road in Pittsfield , was built in the 1780s as a farmhouse and inn . It was adjacent to a property owned by Melville 's uncle Thomas , where Melville had developed an attachment to the area through repeated visits . He purchased the property in 1850 with borrowed money and spent the next twelve years farming and writing there . Financial considerations prompted his family 's return to New York City in 1863 , and Melville sold the property to his brother .

The house remained in private hands until 1975 , when the Berkshire County Historical Society acquired the house and a portion of the original 160 @-@ acre (65 ha) property . The Society restored most of the house to Melville 's period and operates it as a house museum ; it is open to the public during warmer months . It has been designated a National Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places .

= = Construction and early history = =

Construction of the oldest portions of the house known as Arrowhead took place in the 1780s . Built by Captain David Bush , the wood frame and clapboard house was apparently used as an inn . The Bush family sold the property to Pittsfield doctor John Brewster in 1844 , who in 1850 sold the 160 acres (65 ha) property to the writer Herman Melville . The house at that time consisted of a simple rectangular structure with five window bays across and two deep , with a large central chimney . There is some evidence that the house may originally have had three stories , but at the time of the Melville purchase in 1850 , it only had two and a half .

= = Melville in Pittsfield = =

Herman Melville was born in New York City in 1819 . His maternal grandparents lived in Albany , New York , where his parents took their family in 1830 after a series of financial setbacks . His uncle Thomas Melvill owned property in Pittsfield that the family had visited a few times when Melville was younger . The first significant visit Melville made to his uncle was a brief one in August 1831 . After his father died in January 1832 , Melville 's mother took the family to Pittsfield to escape an outbreak of cholera in July 1832 . It is from the time of this brief stay that Melville 's interest in the Berkshires developed . In 1837 he ran his uncle 's farm while the latter traveled to Illinois to pursue business opportunities . According to Melville 's cousin Priscilla , during this time his attachment to the area deepened considerably .

In the summer of 1850 , Melville , his wife Lizzie , and their son Malcolm vacationed in Pittsfield . The visit to his uncle 's farm was bittersweet , for his uncle had agreed to sell the property , and it would be the family 's last visit there . On August 5 , 1850 , Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne for the first time , having only recently read his short story collection Mosses from an Old Manse . The two were among several invited to a picnic on Monument Mountain south of Pittsfield with a group that also included Evert Augustus Duyckinck and Oliver Wendell Holmes , Sr. Melville and Hawthorne struck up an instant friendship . Attracted by the Hawthornes , and apparently unwilling to abandon the Berkshires , Melville decided on impulse to purchase the Brewster farm , which abutted his uncle 's property . According to a news report of his purchase , the property " commands one of the most extensive and splended views in Berkshire . " He secured a \$ 3 @,@ 000 loan from his father @-@ in @-@ law Lemuel Shaw (a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice who was in Lenox for a court session at the time) , received a \$ 1 @,@ 500 mortgage from Brewster , and promised to pay the rest of the \$ 6 @,@ 500 purchase price when his New York lease was sold .

The sale was finalized on September 14 , 1850 . To raise funds , Melville sold off 80 acres (32 ha) in the 1850s . Shaw assumed the mortgage in 1856 , took title to the property in 1857 , and transferred it to Melville 's wife in 1860 .

= = Melville at Arrowhead = =

Melville called his new home Arrowhead because of the arrowheads that were dug up around the property during planting season . New York publisher Evert Augustus Duyckinck wrote that its " grounds would satisfy an English nobleman ? for the noble maples and elms and various seclusions and outlooks " .

It was at Arrowhead that Melville finished his novel Moby @-@ Dick ; though the work was not recognized during the author 's lifetime , it has since become known as one of the greatest American literary masterpieces . Hawthorne 's influence on Melville while writing the book is significant . Melville wrote a review of Mosses from an Old Manse , published by Duyckinck , and in it he believed that these stories revealed a dark side to Hawthorne , " shrouded in blackness , ten times black " . Moby @-@ Dick was dedicated to Hawthorne : " In token of my admiration for his genius , this book is inscribed to Nathaniel Hawthorne . " Hawthorne , in turn , referenced Melville in his book A Wonder @-@ Book for Girls and Boys : " On the higher side of Pittsfield , sits Herman Melville , shaping out the gigantic conception of his ' White Wale ' while the gigantic shape of Graylock [sic] looms upon him from his study @-@ window . "

Melville incorporated domestic features of Arrowhead into several stories . The piazza (or porch) , after which The Piazza Tales were named , was added to the north side of Arrowhead shortly after Melville purchased the property . Unlike the more typical Berkshires properties that located the porch facing south , Melville chose to face it toward Mount Greylock , to which he dedicated Pierre . Of the piazza he wrote :

Now , for a house , so situated in such a country , to have no piazza for the convenience of those who might desire to feast upon the view , and take their time and ease about it , seemed as much of an omission as if a picture @-@ gallery should have no bench ; for what but picture @-@ galleries are the marble halls of these same limestone hills ? ? galleries hung , month after month anew , with pictures ever fading into pictures ever fresh .

In " I and My Chimney " , published in Putnam 's Monthly Magazine in 1856 , he described Arrowhead 's large chimney :

It need hardly be said , that the walls of my house are entirely free from fire @-@ places . These all congregate in the middle ? in the one grand central chimney , upon all four sides of which are hearths ? two tiers of hearths ? so that when , in the various chambers , my family and guests are warming themselves of a cold winter ? s night , just before retiring , then , though at the time they may not be thinking so , all their faces mutually look towards each other , yea , all their feet point to one centre ; and when they go to sleep in their beds , they all sleep round one warm chimney .

Melville lived , farmed , and wrote at Arrowhead for 13 years , receiving visitors including Hawthorne , Holmes , and Catharine Maria Sedgwick . Other well @-@ known works that he wrote there include the novels Israel Potter and The Confidence @-@ Man , and the stories " Bartleby , the Scrivener " and " Benito Cereno " (which were collected in The Piazza Tales) . During that time , however , his writing was not providing him much income . In order to improve the family finances , the Melvilles moved into Pittsfield in 1862 , and sold Arrowhead the following year to his brother Allan . The Melvilles then returned to New York City , where Herman eventually found work as a customs inspector .

= = After Herman Melville = =

Melville continued to visit Arrowhead occasionally during his brother 's ownership of the property . Members of the Melville family owned the house until 1927 . It remained in private hands until 1975 , when the Berkshire County Historical Society purchased the house . In the years between Melville 's ownership and the historical society acquisition , major portions of the property were sold off until

only 14 @. @ 2 acres (5 @. @ 7 ha) remained , although a significant amount of it remains open land ; the society later acquired another 30 @. @ 7 acres (12 @. @ 4 ha) . Owners after Herman Melville made substantial additions to the house , principally two ells . The piazza was removed in the 20th century , but a large window was added on the north side of the house to maintain the view of Mount Greylock . Arrowhead was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962 .

= = Museum = =

The Historical Society , after acquiring the property , worked to restore it to the condition it was in Melville 's time . Numerous interior alterations were undone , windows that had been changed were restored to their original size and configuration , and the piazza was restored . The Society also restored the upstairs study in which Melville did his writing to its original state .

Arrowhead is now a non @-@ profit historic house museum operated by the Berkshire County Historical Society , which uses a portion of the house as office space . The remainder is open to the public for guided tours during the warmer months of the year . It is located at 780 Holmes Road , and is open from Memorial Day to Columbus Day .