



Section 1. Map: the House and Barns

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**SELF-GUIDED
GROUNDS TOUR**

On the hither side of Pittsfield sits Herman Melville, shaping out the gigantic conception of his white whale, while the gigantic shape of Greylock looms upon him from his study window.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Wonder Book for Boys and Girls*, 1851

On September 14, 1850, Herman Melville purchased an old farmhouse and 160 acres of land. He named it Arrowhead after the Native American artifacts he discovered while plowing his fields. The Melvilles lived there for the next twelve years.

Melville spent his most productive literary years at Arrowhead, writing *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, *Israel Potter*, *The Confidence-Man*, and *The Piazza Tales*. The house, the property, and the view all figured prominently in Melville's writings.

Please use this guide to explore the same places that inspired Melville:

- **Section 1** begins on the northern piazza (porch), and covers the area immediately surrounding the house and barns.
- **Sections 2 and 3** take a walk on the Arrowhead Nature Trail, which starts on the west side of the parking lot and includes the Arrowhead Farm.
- **Section 2** goes through the meadow to the top of the hill; **Section 3** goes through Melville's woods. Sections 2 and 3 total about a mile, round trip, and involve some uphill walking.

Please enjoy your visit! Trail use is at your own risk. Please be aware that deer ticks may live in the tall grass.

Section 1: the House and Barn (see map, page 8)

Stop 1: the Piazza, the View, the Farm

When I removed to the country, it was to occupy an old-fashioned farmhouse, which had no piazza—a deficiency the more regretted, because not only did I like piazzas, as somehow combining the coziness of in-doors with the freedom of out-doors, ... but the country round about was such a picture...

Melville added the piazza to the original house in 1851. He was frequently spotted relaxing here, in his rocking chair. In 1856, he published a collection of short stories he wrote at Arrowhead, called *The Piazza Tales*. The above quotation is from his short story, "The Piazza," set at Arrowhead.

Melville had been visiting the Berkshires since he was a child. Most summers, he stayed at the home of his Uncle Thomas Melvill (now the Pittsfield Country Club). From Uncle Thomas' house, Melville enjoyed a magnificent view of Mount Greylock - the highest point in Massachusetts. When Melville decided to move his family to the Berkshires, he chose a property which commanded a similar view.

Greylock inspired Melville all his life. In 1852, Melville dedicated his novel *Pierre* to Mount Greylock:

To Greylock's Most Excellent Majesty: In old times authors were proud of the privilege of dedicating their works to Majesty. A right noble custom, which we of Berkshire must revive. For whether we will or no, Majesty is all around us here in Berkshire... Forasmuch as I, dwelling with my loyal neighbors, the Maples and the Beeches, in the amphitheatre over which his central majesty presides, have received his most bounteous and unstinted fertilizations, it is but meet, that I here devoutly kneel and render up my gratitude, whether, thereto, the Most Excellent Purple Majesty of Greylock benignantly incline his hoary crown or no.

Melville spent summers as a youth helping his Uncle Thomas on his Pittsfield farm. At Arrowhead, with the help of his Irish farmhand, Melville grew corn, hay, turnips, pumpkins, potatoes and other crops.



Arrowhead, c. 1870

Stop 2: the Back Addition

The back addition to the house has changed dramatically since the c. 1870 photograph above. When Melville purchased the farm, it consisted of the

Wildflowers

- White Baneberry (*Actaea pachhypoda*)
- Rosybell (*Streptopus roseus*)
- Purple Trillium (*Trillium erectum*)
- Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*)
- Wood Anemone (*A. quinquefolia*)
- Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*)
- Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*)
- Starflower (*Trientalis borealis*)
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)
- Cypress Spurge (*Eurphorbia syparissias*)
- Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)
- Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)
- False Solomon's Seal (*Smilacina racemosa*)
- Early Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*)

Birds

- Wood Thrush (*Hylocichia mustelina*)
- Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)
- Oven Bird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*)
- Veery (*Catharus fuscenscens*)
- Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)
- American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)
- Gray Catbird (*Dumatella carolinensis*)
- Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)
- Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*)
- Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*)
- Eastern Wood Pewee (*Contopus virens*)
- American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticulla*)

Mammals

- Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)
- Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*)
- Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilauis floridanus*)
- Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)
- White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
- Eastern Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
- Canada Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)
- North American Black Bear (*Euarctos americanus*)
- Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans*)
- North American Red Fox (*V. fulva*)

Section 3: the Woods

It has been a most glowing & Byzantine day—the heavens reflecting the hues of the October apples in the orchard—nay, the heavens themselves looking so ripe & ruddy, that it must be harvest-home with the angels... You should see the maples—you should see the young perennial pines—the red blazings of one contrasting with the painted green of the other... I tell you that sunrises and sunsets grow side by side in these woods, & momentarily moult in the falling leaves.

Melville to Duyckinck, October 6, 1850

As you enter the woods, you find a completely different ecosystem from that of the meadow. These woods are a habitat for several uniquely adapted species of plants, birds, fungi, insects, and animals, wholly unfit for the open expanse of the adjacent field. Here, at the edge of the woods, there are smaller trees and bushes that cannot survive in either forest or open meadow. Since the edge of the woods is dense, and easily accessible from both forest and field, it is teeming with animal life.

Melville spent a great deal of time in these woods; the firewood he chopped was necessary for heating as well as cooking. At the time he wrote about the beauty of these woods, they were actually in the midst of a revival. Over 70 percent of Berkshire County's woodlands had been forested for local foundries and charcoal pits; this extensive clearing peaked in the early 19th century. During Melville's years at Arrowhead, the wooded landscape was re-establishing itself. Westward expansion lessened agricultural demands on the coastal states, allowing reforestation in what had previously been the farmland of western Massachusetts.

Enjoy your hike through these woods, the same Melville took when he traveled from Arrowhead to the adjacent property, once belonging to his Uncle Thomas. Note that part of the trail extends into a gas-line easement that shares its boundary with the Pittsfield Country Club, formerly the property of Thomas Melvill. Once you reach the easement, turn left and walk up the hill about fifty feet, to pick up the trail again into the woods. The following is a list of trees, wildflowers, and animals which you might see during your hike:

Trees

Common Buck Thorn (<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> L.)	Beech (<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>)
Black Cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>)	Hawthorne (<i>Crataegus</i> spp.)
Hemlock (<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>)	Hop Hornbeam (<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>)
Red Oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i>)	Sugar Maple (<i>Acer saccharum</i>)
White Ash (<i>Fraxinus americana</i>)	White Birch (<i>B. papyrifera</i>)
(<i>Pinus strobus</i>)	White Pine
	Yellow Birch (<i>Betula lutea</i>)

main section of the house, and the barn. Melville constructed an addition at the back, and several new outbuildings.

I have been building some shanties of houses (connected with the old one) and likewise some shanties of chapters & essays. I have been ploughing & sowing & raising & painting & printing & praying[.]

Melville to Hawthorne, June 29, 1851

Arrowhead was inhabited and altered by Melville family members until 1927; Melville's niece began the current back addition in the early 20th century. This addition was then modified by other owners, before the Berkshire Historical Society purchased Arrowhead in 1976.

Stop 3: the Front of the House

The front of the house shows the Federal architecture of the 1790s, when the house was built. Greek Revival elements were added in the 1840s. In a short story entitled, "I and My Chimney," set at Arrowhead and published in 1856, Melville wrote:

Within thirty feet of the turf-sided road, my chimney—a huge, corpulent old Harry VIII of a chimney—rises full in front of me and all my possessions. Standing well up a hillside, my chimney... Is the first object to greet the approaching traveler's eye... From the exact middle of the mansion it soars from the cellar, right up through each successive floor, till four feet square, it breaks water from the ridgepole of the roof, like an anvil-headed whale, through the crest of a billow.

Stop 4: the Lawn and Trees

Some of these trees were said to have been planted by Melville's brother, Allan, who purchased the property in 1863. Herman and his family continued to visit Arrowhead throughout their lives.

Melville had an orchard on the south side of the property, where a few fruit trees remain. He produced his own cider every fall. Melville described the orchard in his story, "The Piazza."

Well, the south side. Apple-trees are there. Pleasant, of a balmy morning, in the month of May, to sit and see that orchard, white-budded, as for a bridal; and, in October, one green arsenal yard, such piles of ruddy shot.

Twentieth-century owners added some interesting trees to the yard, such as the Chinese Chestnut tree with its spiky nuts and the Smoke Tree with its long, hairy clusters of pink flowers, which resemble puffs of smoke.

Stop 5: the Barn

Do you want to know how I pass my time?—I rise at eight-thereabouts—&

go to my barn—say good-morning to my horse, & give him his breakfast. (It goes to my heart to give him a cold one, but it can't be helped.) Then, pay a visit to my cow—cut up a pumpkin or two for her, & stand by to see her eat it—for it's a pleasant sight to see a cow move her jaws—she does it so mildly & with such a sanctity. Melville to Evert Duyckinck, December 1850

Melville kept his horse, Charlie, in the barn along with his cow and oxen. His sons, Malcolm and Stanwix, eventually acquired ponies of their own, along with various pet dogs, cats, rabbits, and other animals that lived at Arrowhead. During Nathaniel Hawthorne's visits to Arrowhead, he and Melville would escape to the barn for a quiet place to discuss their writings.

Wildflowers

Species of Berkshire wildflowers you may find on the property include:

Dame's Rocket (<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>)	Oxeye Daisy (<i>C. leucanthemum</i>)
Queen Anne's Lace (<i>Daucus carota</i>)	Golden Alexanders (<i>Zizia aurea</i>)
Black-eyed Susan (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>)	Garlic Mustard (<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>)
Maiden Pink (<i>Dianthus deltoides</i>)	Hop Clover (<i>Trifolium aureum</i>)
Common Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus acris</i>)	Goldenrod (<i>Solidago spp.</i>)
Common Milkweed (<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>)	Bitter Vetch (<i>Vicia cracca</i>)
Winter Cress (<i>Barbarea vulgaris</i>)	Multi-flora Rose (<i>Rosa multiflora</i>)
Canada Anemone (<i>Anemone canadensis</i>)	Pale-blue Lobelia (<i>Lobelia spicata</i>)

These wildflowers continued to inspire Melville even thirty years after he left Arrowhead. In 1889, Melville published a book of poetry called *Weeds & Wildings, Chiefly, With a Rose or Two*. Referring to bouquets of clover, Melville wrote to his wife in the dedication:

*How often at our adopted homestead on the hillside—now ours no more—
... Did I come in from my ramble early in the bright summer mornings of old,
with a handfull of these cheap little cheery roses of the meek, newly pur-
loined from the fields.*

Section 2: the Meadow

Stop 1: the Upland Pasture

The west side, look. An upland pasture, alleying away into a maple wood at top. Sweet, in the opening Spring, to trace upon the hill-side, otherwise gray and bare—to trace, I say, the oldest paths by their streaks of earliest green.

So wrote Melville of the hill behind his house in his story, "The Piazza." The meadow was once a cow pasture, and a favorite spot of the four Melville children for picking wild strawberries. In the winter, they went sledding here, sometimes joined by their grandfather, Lemuel Shaw - Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

The pasture, now a meadow, serves as a habitat for countless species of birds, insects, mammals, and over 100 species of wildflowers, grasses, sedges, and rushes. The plants and animals have co-evolved, forming an intricate ecosystem. The plants hold the soil together with their deep, dense root systems, and create new soil when they decompose - allowing further stages of ecological succession. Flower nectar meets the needs of many insects, and other plants provide birds and mammals with fruit for nutrition.

Stop 2: Melville's Arrowhead Farm

The cock shook sparkles from his golden plumage. The cock seemed in a rapture of benevolent delight...Another upturned and exultant crow, mated to the former....The pallor of the children was changed to radiance. Their faces shone celestially through grime and dirt. Cock-a-Doodle Doo! 1853

Restoring the idea of Melville's farm has taken some research and some imagination. We know he grew hay and pumpkins, but we also know he fed his family with food he grew here. Root vegetables, greens, apples and berries join the squashes, corn, melons and herbs that have endured for centuries in the Berkshires. Our chickens in their coop are heritage breeds and the farm is maintained as a Community Supported Agricultural Project (CSA).

Chickens:

Silver-Laced Wyandotte
Barred Plymouth Rock
Buff Orpington
Speckled Sussex
Buckeye

Special Crops:

Diva cucumber
Edible Marigold
Salad Turnips
Jerusalem Artichoke
Celeriac
Sunflowers

Stop 3: the View

I sat down for a moment on a great rotting log nigh the top of the hill, my back to a heavy grove, my face presented toward a wide sweeping circuit of mountains enclosing a rolling, diversified country... My eye ranged over the capacious rolling country, and over the mountains, and over the village, and over a farmhouse here and there, and over woods, groves, streams, rocks, fells—and I thought to myself, what a slight mark, after all, does man make on this huge great earth[.] Cock-a-Doodle Doo! 1853

From this vantage point you can see all of Arrowhead: the north field, the meadow, the woods, the house, the barn, and the grounds. Above the property remains a view of the Berkshire hills. Due north, just right of the wood's edge, Melville would have seen the peaks of Saddleball (left) & Mount Greylock (right). To their right are Mount Williams & Mount Washington, and, to the southeast, October Mountain. This 1860s view has been partially obscured by tree growth in the years since Melville lived here.