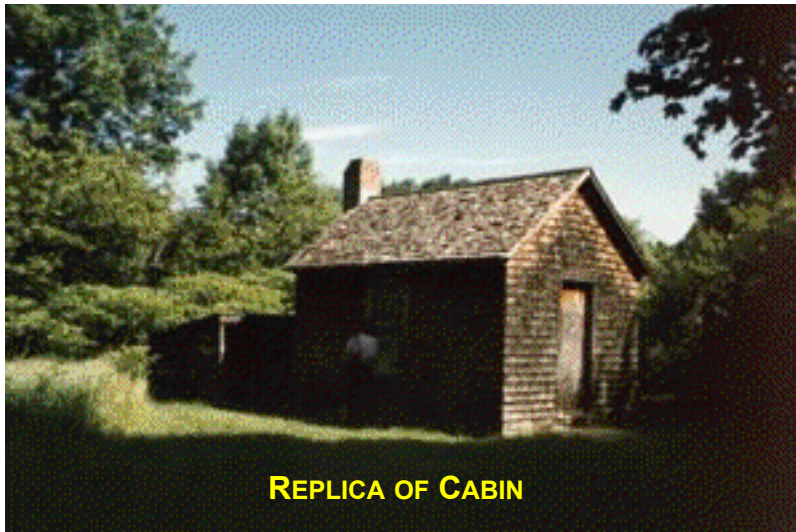




THE CAIRN AT THE SHANTY SITE

Let us compare the pile of rocks at [Henry David Thoreau](#)'s cabin site with the piles of rocks at the graves of [Edmund James Banfield](#) (a Thoreau wannabee far far away from New England), and of [Frederick Townsend Ward](#) (a somebody wannabee originating in New England).



REPLICA OF CABIN

1862

September 21, Sunday: [Frederick Townsend Ward](#) was shot in the back by treachery, presumably by arrangement of the Chinese general with whom he was collaborating, as he observed from a hill a battle against the [Chinese Christian](#) or “Longhair” or “[Taiping](#)” forces of South [China](#) in what is now known as Tz’u-cheng-chen.



Upon his death his fortune was of course instantly stolen by his equally greedy and equally opportunistic associates, and his troops were left without pay and mutinied and were reduced to shaking down shopkeepers to survive during their idleness and neglect. Eventually he would be replaced in command of this “Ever Victorious Army” by Major “Chinese” Gordon (later more famous as the lispng General [Charles George](#)

[Gordon](#) of Khartoum).



Great honor was however done. Ward’s body was attired in his Western uniform and a Chinese coffin was secured. Then, in the courtyard of a confiscated [Taiping](#) church that had been made over into a Buddhist temple, the coffin containing Ward’s body was placed on the ground and a tumulus of earth was mounded high over it.¹

THOREAU’S CAIRN
CHINESE CIVIL WAR

Here is how Jonathan D. Spence has recorded the conclusion to his story of adventure in a foreign land, and the beginning of another Westerner’s story of adventure in that foreign land, in Chapter 3 “Ward and Gordon: Glorious Days of Looting” of his TO CHANGE CHINA, WESTERN ADVISERS IN CHINA, 1620-1960 (pages 57-92; London: Penguin, 1969):

...on September 21, 1862, while attacking Tzeki, ten miles northwest of Ningpo, Ward, standing in full view surveying the position, “put his hand suddenly to his abdomen and exclaimed, ‘I have been hit.’” He died that night, and received the full honors of a Chinese general at his burial. His dog, “a great shaggy black-and-white creature” which died a few days later, was buried near him. Though Ward was only thirty years old when

1. This temple and its tumulus remains to this day, we are given to understand, as a visited memorial to China’s best Western friend. In some respects therefore this tumulus may bear comparison to the pyramid of rocks which was being begun near the site of Thoreau’s cabin on Walden Pond.



he died, he had managed to forge for himself, in a chaotic time and by whatever methods were at hand, a personal and financial success of imposing stature. He had, as well, managed for the first time to train Chinese troops to fight in the more effective European manner; had provided a model for Li, Hung-chang's own Huai army; had impressed Li with the possibility of China's strengthening herself along Western lines without relying on foreign nations and foreign troops; had helped to clear a thirty-mile radius around Shanghai of Taiping rebels; and had built up the foundations of a force that was to be more effectively used by his famous successor, Gordon. Yet, in the overall picture, the results had been small. He had defended a city of more importance to foreign interests than to the Chinese. He had, even then, lost many battles, and the Taiping rebels soon returned to "the areas he had cleared." He had not truly altered the course of the civil war which was being decided around the rebel capital of Nanking by Chinese troops without any foreign advisers. And he had died before having a chance to enjoy what he had won for himself. "Poor old Ward," one young British officer wrote home to his mother on visiting Sungkiang, "is buried here in Chinese fashion - his coffin over-ground. This place was his headquarters. He came out to China as mate of a ship, outlawed from America, and has died worth a million and a half. He was often wounded, and people had the idea he could not be shot." As the merchants of Shanghai turned to Ward to protect their city, an expedition of 41 warships, 143 troop transports, and 16,800 British, French, Sikh and Indian troops was advancing on Peking to enforce the Treaty of Tientsin and place Western resident ministers in the capital of the Central Kingdom. When the Chinese executed some twenty captured members of the allied expedition, Lord Elgin, in October 1860, ordered the destruction of the Ch'ing Emperor's magnificent summer palace just to the northwest of Peking. Charles George Gordon, a young captain of the British Royal Engineers, helping to direct the destruction of that complex of two hundred buildings, wrote home to his mother: [We] went out, and, after pillaging it, burned the whole place, destroying in a Vandal-like manner most valuable property which would not be replaced for four millions. We got upwards of £48 a-piece prize money before we went out here; and although I have not as much as many, I have done well. The people are civil, but I think the grandes hate us, as they must after what we did to the Palace. You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the places we burnt. It made one's heart sore to burn them; in fact, these palaces were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully. Quantities of gold, ornaments were burnt, considered as brass. It was wretchedly demoralizing work for an army. Everybody was wild for plunder." But a month later, a bored Gordon wrote to his sister: "My Dear Augusta, we are all of us getting sick of Peking, a dirtier town does not exist. I am sure one ride thro its filthy streets ought to content any enthusiast." The only consolation seemed to be that, by not arriving in China until late September, Gordon had found himself "rather late for the amusement, which won't vex mother." One can imagine that his mother, daughter of a merchant whaler,



THE CAIRN

AT THE SHANTY SITE

had already had quite enough vexation from this fourth of her five sons.

1863

September 27, Sunday: [Bronson Alcott](#) noted: “Abby walks with me to Walden. We find the old paths by which I used to visit [[Henry Thoreau](#)] from ‘Hillside,’ but the grounds are much overgrown with shrubbery, and the site of the hermitage is almost obliterated.”

[ALCOTT FAMILY](#)
[HERMITS](#)

(It is clear that at this point no cairn had yet been begun at the site on the shore of Walden Pond, where [Emerson’s \(Thoreau’s\) shanty](#) had once stood.)

[THOREAU’S CAIRN](#)

1874

June 28: [Bronson Alcott](#) noted: “After bathing we contribute severally our stone to [Thoreau’s cairn](#). The pyramid is insignificant as yet; but could Thoreau’s readers add theirs the pile would rise above the treetops to mark the site of his hermitage.”

[ALCOTT FAMILY](#)



1881

September 17: Walt Whitman, age 62, visited [Concord](#), staying at Franklin Benjamin Sanborn's home, and among other things visited Walden Pond and the grave of his friend [Henry Thoreau](#) in Sleepy Hollow cemetery. According to W. Barksdale Maynard's *WALDEN POND, A HISTORY*, "An illustrious group gathered for tea — those two plus Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, and [Emerson](#). Bronson was struck by Whitman's 'ruff of beard and open-bosom collar, folded shirt-cuffs — he standing full six feet in his skirtless blue coat, supporting himself with his staff and stooping a little.' They talked of Margaret Fuller and Thoreau, the conversation ranging back to heady days of 1840s transcendentalism. Whitman studied Emerson intently, concluding that the great man's mind was slipping."



“Specimen Days”

Next Day. – Several hours at E.’s house, and dinner there. An old familiar house, (he has been in it thirty-five years,) with surroundings, furnishment, roominess, and plain elegance and fullness, signifying democratic ease, sufficient opulence, and an admirable old-fashioned simplicity – modern luxury, with its mere sumptuousness and affection, either touch’d lightly upon or ignored altogether. Dinner the same. Of course the best of the occasion (Sunday, September 18, ’81) was the sight of E. himself. As just said, a healthy color in the cheeks, and good light in the eyes, cheery expression, and just the amount of talking that best suited, namely, a word or short phrase only where needed, and almost always with a smile. Besides Emerson himself, Mrs. E., with their daughter Ellen, the son Edward and his wife, with my friend F.S. and Mrs. S., and others, relatives and intimates. Mrs. Emerson, resuming the subject of the evening before, (I sat next to her,) gave me further and fuller information about Thoreau, who, years ago, during Mr. E.’s absence in Europe, had lived for some time in the family, by invitation.

OTHER CONCORD NOTATIONS

Though the evening at Mr. and Mrs. Sanborn’s, and the memorable family dinner at Mr. and Mrs. Emerson’s, have [Page 914] most pleasantly and permanently fill’d my memory, I must not slight other notations of Concord. I went to the old Manse, walk’d through the ancient garden, enter’d the rooms, noted the quaintness, the unkempt grass and bushes, the little panes in the windows, the low ceilings, the spicy smell, the creepers embowering the light. Went to the Concord battle ground, which is close by, scann’d French’s statue, “the Minute Man,” read Emerson’s poetic inscription on the base, linger’d a long while on the bridge, and stopp’d by the grave of the unnamed British soldiers buried there the day after the fight in April ’75. Then riding on, (thanks to my friend Miss M. and her spirited white ponies, she driving them,) a half hour at Hawthorne’s and Thoreau’s graves. I got out and went up of course on foot, and stood a long while and ponder’d. They lie close together in a pleasant wooded spot well up the cemetery hill, “Sleepy Hollow.” The flat surface of the first was densely cover’d by myrtle, with a border of arbor-vitae, and the other had a brown headstone, moderately elaborate, with inscriptions. By Henry’s side lies his brother John, of whom much was expected, but he died young. Then to Walden Pond, that beautifully embower’d sheet of water, and spent over an hour there. On the spot in the woods where Thoreau had his solitary house is now quite a cairn of stones, to mark the place; I too carried one and deposited on the heap. As we drove back, saw the “[School of Philosophy](#),” but it was shut up, and I would not have it open’d for me. Near by stopp’d at the house of W.T. Harris, the Hegelian, who came out, and we had a pleasant chat while I sat in the wagon. I shall not soon forget those Concord drives, and especially that charming Sunday forenoon one with my friend Miss M. [Horace Mann, Sr.’s daughter], and the white ponies.

1923

 The “beachcomber of Dunk Island,” [Edmund James Banfield](#), suffered medical complications. Isolated as he was from all medical support services, he died.



A cairn has been raised above the grave, and on it are words of Thoreau, words which the Beachcomber both loved and lived:

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears.

THOREAU’S CAIRN
HERMITS





1939

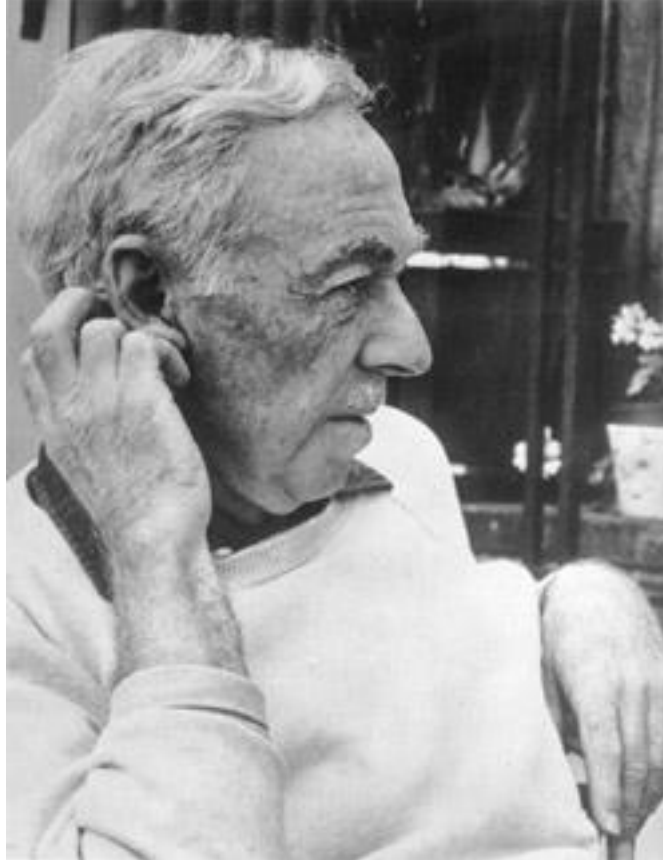
Joseph Raymond McCarthy was elected as a circuit judge in Wisconsin, in part by visiting farms and businesses and persuading voters to suppose that his opponent, who did not campaign at all, was a rich old man (he had no more respect for truthfulness than did, for instance, Richard Nixon).

MCCARTHYISM UNAMERICANISM

E.B. White² drove out Route 62 from Boston to Concord to visit Walden Pond, staying overnight at the Concord Inn for \$4.²⁵ (including meals), and then early the next morning walked out Main Street and Thoreau Street and out Route 126 to Walden Pond.



He wrote about this experience, in the form of a letter to [Thoreau](#), in a book of essays titled ONE MAN'S MEAT.




I have always wanted to see Walden Pond. The account which you left of your sojourn there is, you will be amused to learn, a document of increasing pertinence; each year it seems to gain a little headway, as the world loses ground. We may all be transcendental yet, whether we like it or not. As our common complexities increase, any tale of individual simplicity (and yours is the best written and the cockiest) acquires a new fascination; as our goods accumulate, but not our well-being, your report of an existence without material adornment takes on a certain awkward credibility.

2. Elwyn Brooks White (1899-1985) was the guy who had defined the style for the opening “The Talk of the Town” section of [The New Yorker](#), so beloved by persons awaiting dental attention. At this point in his life, however, he was writing for [Harper’s](#). Eventually he would write a classic children’s story entitled CHARLOTTE’S WEB, which does not take place at a farm near [Concord](#) and in which [Henry Thoreau](#) is not a character.

THE CAIRN

AT THE SHANTY SITE



In this essay he played with various of Thoreau’s lines, as when he echoed the opening of the chapter “Solitude” by saying “It was a delicious evening, Henry, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore, if I may coin a phrase.” The pines felled by the hurricane of the previous year were still lying around, and it was from the roots of one of these that he extracted a stone to place upon the growing cairn. In all likelihood, in moving this stone White was unintentionally tampering with the cabin site, for when the archeologist Roland Wells Robbins inspected this eroded root system on November 11, 1945, he realized that some of the stones pulled out of the ground by this ball of roots were in that spot because they had been utilized by Thoreau as the foundation for his chimney:  Driving through town, White noticed that Concordians seemed to be as much the victims of their own machinery and their own livelihoods during the first half of the 20th Century as Thoreau had reported them to be during the first half of the 19th.

THOREAU’S CAIRN

1975

The rock cairn near the site of [Emerson’s \(Thoreau’s\) shanty](#) site was removed at the order of Reservation Commissioner Brennan, who felt the big pile of stones to be “unsightly” (complaints from the Thoreau Society would result in its replacement, presumably using different rocks, during July 1978).

THOREAU’S CAIRN



THE CAIRN

AT THE SHANTY SITE



COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In addition to the property of others, such as extensive quotations and reproductions of images, this "read-only" computer file contains a great deal of special work product of Austin Meredith, copyright ©2013. Access to these interim materials will eventually be offered for a fee in order to recoup some of the costs of preparation. My hypercontext button invention which, instead of creating a hypertext leap through hyperspace –resulting in navigation problems– allows for an utter alteration of the context within which one is experiencing a specific content already being viewed, is claimed as proprietary to Austin Meredith – and therefore freely available for use by all. Limited permission to copy such files, or any material from such files, must be obtained in advance in writing from the "Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project, 833 Berkeley St., Durham NC 27705. Please contact the project at <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.

"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: July 24, 2013

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



THE CAIRN

AT THE SHANTY SITE

Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.