

**HENRY'S
RELATIVES**

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT



1748

June 11, Saturday (Old Style): [Mary Jones](#) was born. She would turn out to be the solitary girl among the fifteen offspring of Colonel Elisha Jones and Mary Allen Jones of Weston MA.

**HENRY'S
RELATIVES**

1772

October 22, Thursday: The Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) got married with [Mary Jones](#), a sister of Daniel Jones of Hinsdale, at about the same time as he took over as pastor of the Congregational Church in Salem.¹ The couple would have four children together.

THOREAU
GENEALOGY



The [Reverend and Mistress Dunbar](#)'s 1st child would cause a letter to its maternal grandfather, Colonel Elisha Jones:

Dear Sir, I have y^e happiness of informing you that Mrs. Dunbar is comfortably abed with a Daughter. She was delivered about three O'Clk this morning, after a moderate illness of thirty-six hours. Her circumstances seem very agreeable, & y^e child is a perfect & promising child. We have already named her after both her grand-Mammas and her immediate mother, and we will endeavor that she shall not disgrace y^e name wh. they have born with so much honor.

1. "I see by visiting [my parishioners in their homes] that my preaching does but little good."

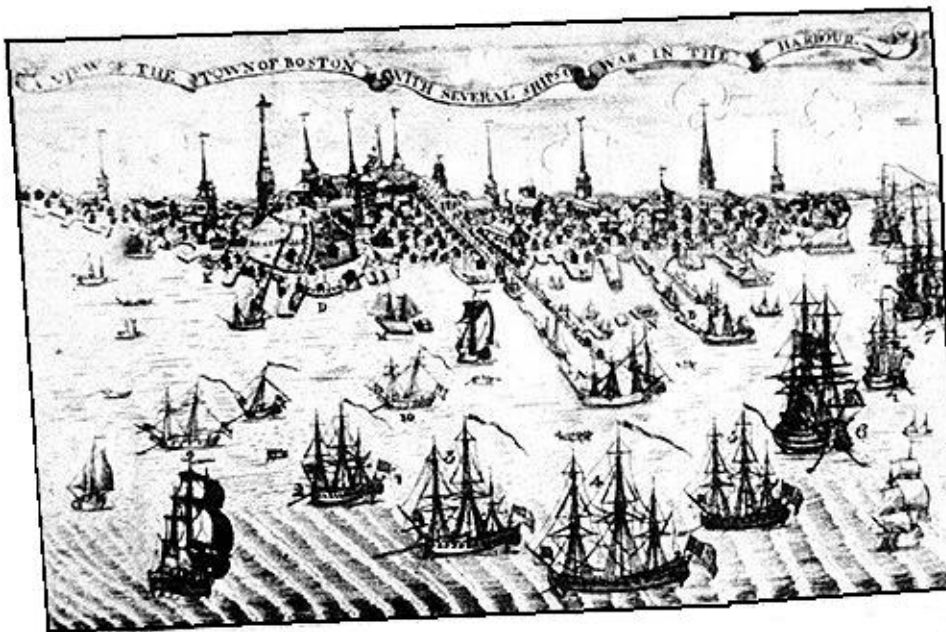
MARY JONES DUNBAR

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

1774

January: "A View of the Town of [Boston](#) with several Ships of War in the Harbour" was prepared by Paul Revere as the frontispiece for The Royal American Magazine, a Universal Repository of Instruction and Amusement. Revere based this engraving on his earlier engraving depicting the landing of British troops in October 1768. This should be available as a 13" x 20 1/2" reproduction in black and white on cover stock paper in a heavy mailing tube, from Historic Urban Plans, Inc., Box 276, Ithaca NY 14851 (607 272-MAPS), for roughly \$14.⁰⁰ inclusive of postage.

This was Revere's Boston Harbor:



Colonel Elisha Jones, maternal grandmother [Mistress Mary Jones Dunbar](#)'s wealthy father, a landowner and [slaveholder](#) in Newton, Massachusetts and an active Tory with 14 Tory sons, persuaded the town of Weston, Massachusetts to refrain from the Committees of Correspondence, and the Continental Congress, which were the precursor bodies of revolution.

DUNBAR FAMILY

Thoreau was
"clear Jones"
in one respect
at least ...

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MARY JONES DUNBAR

It wasn't all that unusual for Americans of this period to be in favor of peace and of the seeking of mutual accommodation with the mother country. For instance, the construction of the [Quaker](#) school at Nine Partners northeast of Poughkeepsie, New York was being delayed for five years, between 1775 and 1780, merely because the Quakers sensed this Revolutionary War a-coming and were resolved that they were not about to place themselves under any obligation by soliciting funds from persons who might not be able to maintain, in the face of such a popular cause, an attitude of Quaker pacifism.

I'll task you to find these American pacifists in this fresco by Brumidi on a wall in our federal capitol:



Don't think of these continental congresses as innocuous. For instance, the 1st Continental Congress would not merely deal with weighty issues of freedom, but also would ban horseracing, the theater, and gaudy attire.

CONTINETAL CONGRESS

1775

June 17, Saturday: The 2d Georgia Provincial Congress was held at Tondee's Tavern in Savannah.

Thoreau's grandmother [Mistress Mary Jones Dunbar](#) carried ripe cherries from Weston to her brother in the



[Concord](#) jail. Which means a number of things: that she had a brother, that he was in jail, and that cherries were ripe that year as of June 17th:



After May 26, 1849: Col. Elisha Jones was the owner & inhabitant of an estate in Weston Mass before the Revolution. He was a man of standing & influence among his neighbors. He was a tory. He had 14 sons & 1 daughter viz Nathan Daniel Ephraim, Israel Elias Josiah Simeon –Elisha Stephen –Charles Edward Silas –

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Philemon, Jonas –& –Mary 8th child.– Simeon was confined in Concord jail 4 months & a fortnight His sister Mary brought every meal he had from Weston– He was afraid he might be poisend else– 17th June ’75 she brought over ripe cherries in her chaise– There was a Hicks & one more imprisoned with him. They secreted knives furnished them with their food sawed the grates off & escaped to Weston. Hid in the cider mill. Mary heard they were in the mill put on her riding hood –was frightend –somebody had told her that they had seen 3 blackbirds hid that day somewhere –met cicero did’nt know her. took old Baldwin’s the sheriff’s horse who toke him up from lower part of Weston & went to Portland pawned him for 2 bushels of potatoes –wrote back to Baldwin where he’d find his horse by paying charges. All but 3 of the tories went abroad to England –Canada –& New-Brunswick Nova Scotia and Maine– 4 settled in one town Sissiboo now called Weymouth– One at Goldsborough on Frenchmans Bay.– Nathan the oldest son went to Goldsborough.



April 14, 1852: ... Can we believe when beholding this landscape—with only a few buds visibly swollen—on the trees & the ground covered 8 inches deep with snow—that the grain was waving in the fields & the appletrees were in blossom Ap. 19th 1775. It may confirm this story however—what Grandmother said that she carried ripe cherries from Weston to her brother in Concord Jail the 17th of June the same year.



It is probably true what E Wood senior says, that the grain was just beginning to wave, and the apple blossoms beginning to expand.

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After the jailbreak, it would be Colonel Elisha Jones's slave Black Cicero who would find the fugitives hiding in the family's cider mill.

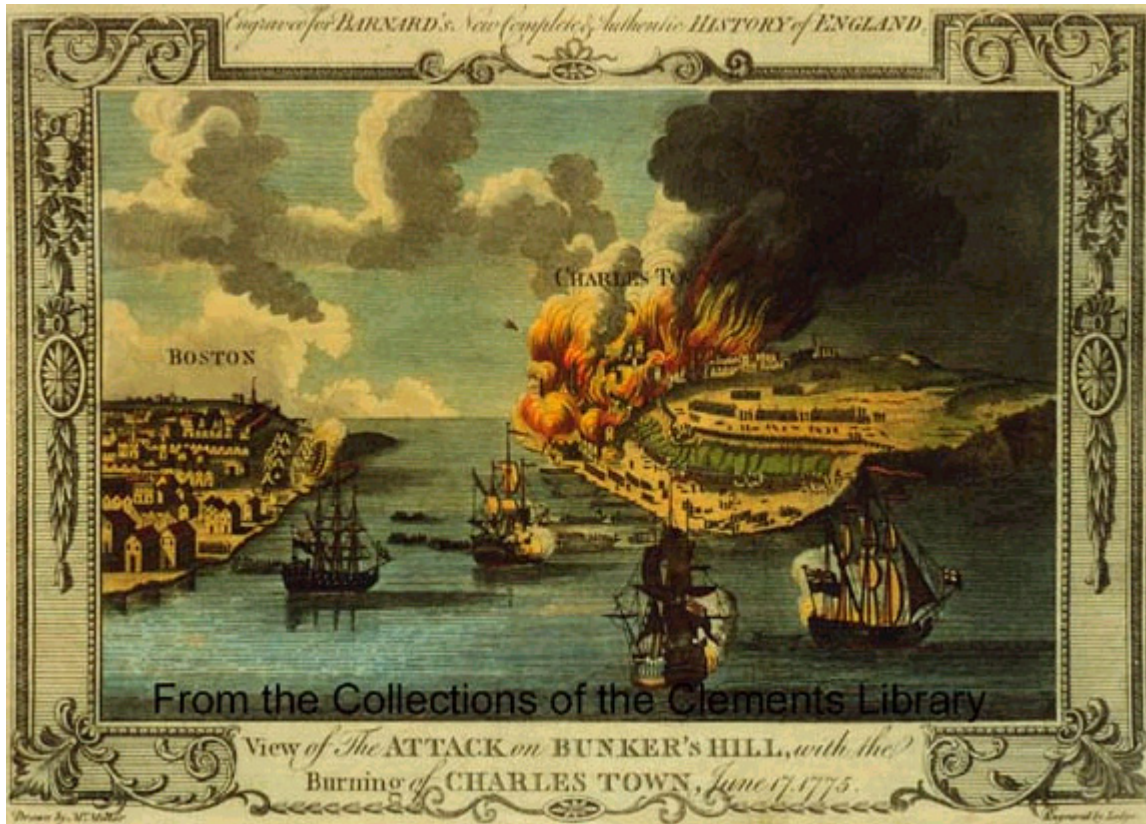
At some point during this year Colonel Elisha Jones of Weston MA had to take refuge from the revolutionaries in Boston, and while there General Gage appointed him the army's Forage Commissioner.



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People were trying to kill each other on Breed's Hill above Charlestown.²



On this day to be remembered as “Bunker Hill Day” on account of a fight that took place in John Breed’s cowpasture³ across from the city of [Boston](#), the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) recorded in his journal: “*prevented from going to Salem* [where he was minister, although the family was living with his rich father-in-law in Weston]

2. Sergeant Nathan Stow (April 27, 1746-1810) of Concord kept an orderly book from May 18th to July 6th of this year. He was at Bunker Hill.

3. Because Bunker Hill was the Committee of Public Safety’s pick as the place to defend, the name of the battle followed that choice, but here are some bits of information that you might want to know. There were three hills on the Charlestown Peninsula. The lowest was 35-foot Moulton’s hill on the east, and there was 65-foot Breed’s Hill in the south center, and 110-foot Bunker Hill on the north. There was no military bunker atop Bunker Hill; these hills had been named after the farmers Breed and Bunker who pastured their cattle there. The Committee of Public Safety ordered Bunker Hill defended by about 1,000 men, but after Prescott and the other officers arrived they decided that Breeds Hill would be a better position and would serve as a buffer for Bunker Hill. Prescott held Breed’s Hill and Stark manned the stone and rail fence blocking the British ability to flank the hill.

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by y^e battle at Charlestown.”



The army was taking possession of the terrain at the cost of 226 regular soldiers giving their lives for their country and 1,054 regular soldiers being wounded in the service of their King.⁴ Letters from army officers described their militia opponents camped at Cambridge as “a praying, ranting, hypocritical mob of levellers.” They saw the old English civil war reignited in the colonies, and that was a war between a Puritan/reform view of reality and the old aristo/catholic view. The hottest revolutionary, Samuel Adams, had been one of the converts as a young man during the great evangelical Awakening of 1741, and he had never lost the vision of the American colonies as the new Israel which must one day depart from Egypt and built Zion in the new world. Declaring the new nation’s goal to be a “Christian Sparta,” he had stirred the deepest fears and hopes of the simpler folks of New England against the British fathers in the name of the “liberty in which Christ hath made us free.” —One of the beginnings of our American democracy, therefore, was in this frank leveller notion, that even a peasant can experience grace.

GO TO MASTER INDEX OF WARFARE

4. And life went on: a few days after Bunker Hill the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) recorded that he had “Fixed my sythes [*sic*] for mowing.”



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Seth Pomeroy of [Northampton](#) served as a general during this battle.

Barzillai Lew was serving as a fifer, for Captain John Ford. Afterward, when he would return to Chelmsford MA, he would enlist with Joseph Bradley Varnum's militia from Dracut MA.



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MARY JONES DUNBAR

When news of the fighting in [Concord](#) reached King George III in his palace at Kew, which it did quickly courtesy of the fast schooner *Quero*, Georgibus made the following note:

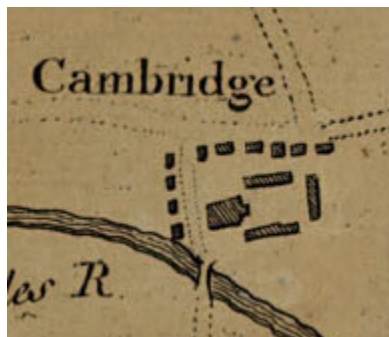
It is not improbable but some detachment sent by Lieutenant General Gage may not have been strong enough to disperse the Provincials assembled at Concord.

But then, after four more hours, he made another note:⁵

The die is cast.



During the siege of [Boston](#) by the Colonial forces which followed the battles of Lexington and [Concord](#), some 5,000 refugees, urged by the British forces under General Gage, were driven from Boston into the surrounding towns and became dependent upon the hospitality of the local inhabitants. General Gage was trying to ease the problem of supplying the city and his forces in it. By June, although there were shortages of fresh items such as milk, there was “a sufficiency of bread and salt provisions” for these refugees. By August 1st, only 6,753 of Boston’s 16,000 citizens remained in town, and in their place Boston was headquarters for a British army of 13,000. The Colonial forces were drawn up around the city and General Washington had his headquarters at Craigie House, across the Charles River in Cambridge. During this period the “dank but classic walls” of Hollis Hall at [Harvard College](#), and the room that would be [David Henry Thoreau](#)’s room, were being used as barracks for colonial troops.



5. Since the regular army had assaulted a position held by American irregulars and had not succeeded in running off these irregulars until, by exhausting their supply of ammunition, they had obtained a good excuse to run off, this of course had been a great victory for the oppressed. Don’t you agree that “Bunker Hill” has more of a ring to it than “John Breed’s Cow-pasture”?



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1776

January: During this month, Colonel Elisha Jones, [Mistress Mary Jones Dunbar](#)'s father, died and was buried in Boston.

THOREAU LIFESPANS

1781

[Sophia Dunbar](#) was born to [Mary Jones Dunbar](#) and the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#).

DUNBAR FAMILY

The birth occasioned a report to the maternal grandfather, Colonel Elisha Jones:

Dear Sir, I have y^e happiness of informing you that Mrs. Dunbar is comfortably abed with a Daughter. She was delivered about three O'Clk this morning, after a moderate illness of thirty-six hours. Her circumstances seem very agreeable, & y^e child is a perfect & promising child. We have already named her after both her grand-Mammas and her immediate mother, and we will endeavor that she shall not disgrace y^e name wh. they have born with so much honor.

1783

Toward the end of his 15th-Century captivity in England, Prince [James Stewart](#) of Scotland had written a long poem for Lady Joan Beaufort, "The Kingis Quair." In this year William Tytler discovered the poem among manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. Its 7-line stanza scheme would become known as "rime royal."

US independence was recognized in the Treaty of Paris.

READ THE FULL TEXT

The "Peace of 1783" with England, signed by [Benjamin Franklin](#), gave the new national government in North America a chance to settle scores at home. Among other punishments for disloyalty (loyalty), the mansion and estate of Colonel [Elisha Jones](#) outside Weston MA, at which the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) and his wife [Mary Jones Dunbar](#), the Colonel's daughter, had been residing in 1775 and 1776, was confiscated by representatives

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MARY JONES DUNBAR

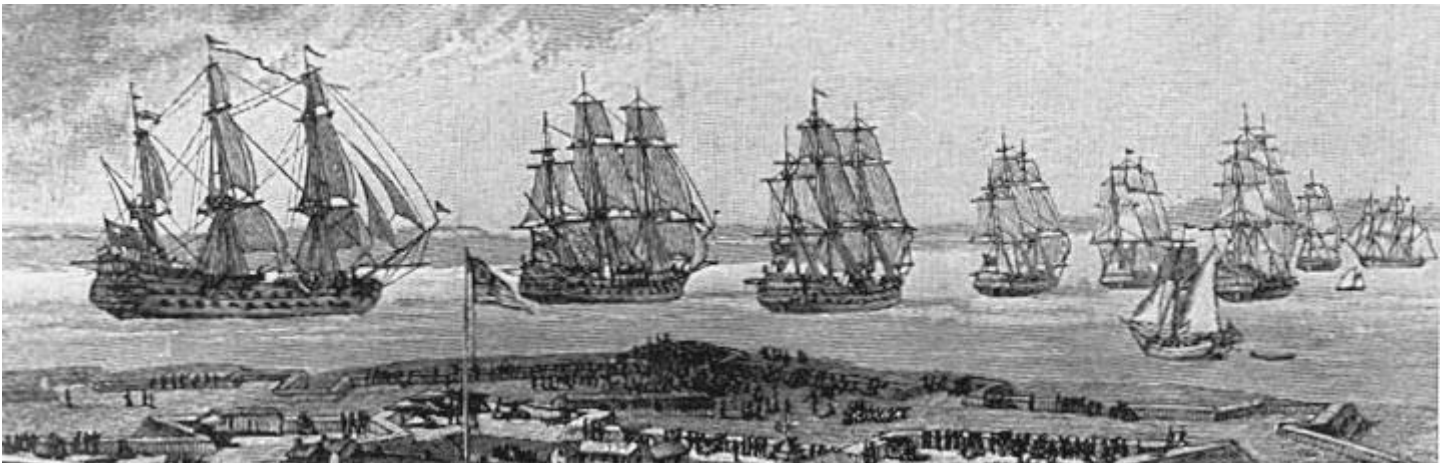
of the new American government. Suddenly they belonged to someone else.

DUNBAR FAMILY

(Oh, well, you didn't want David Henry to grow up a poor little rich kid, now did you!)



Here are a bunch of American loyalists, leaving everything behind and fleeing to Canada (think of the helicopters taking off from the roof of the American Embassy in [Saigon](#), crowded with panicked refugees — it was that sort of situation):



Early in the year [Asa Dunbar](#) was admitted to practice law in New Hampshire, and when [Elijah Dunbar](#) graduated from [Dartmouth College](#) later on during this year he came to study law in the Keene office of his Uncle Asa before beginning to practice law in [Keene](#), New Hampshire and Claremont. At that time Asa, Simeon Olcott, Benjamin West (neither the famous painter nor the Rhode Island almanac-maker), and Daniel Newcomb were the only lawyers in Cheshire County.



January 23, Saturday, 1858: ... Mrs. William Monroe told Sophia last evening that she remembered her (Sophia's) grandfather very well, that he was taller than Father, and used to ride out to their house—she was a Stone and lived where she and her husband did afterward, now Darius Merriam's—when they made cheeses, to drink the whey, being in consumption. She said that she remembered Grandmother too, Jennie Burns, how she came to the schoolroom (in Middle Street (?), Boston) once, leading her little daughter Elizabeth, the latter so small that she could not tell her name distinctly, but spoke thick and lispingly,—“Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau.”⁶

JEAN THOREAU

JANE “JENNIE” BURNS THOREAU

One should not forbear to mention that it would not have taken much to be “taller than Father” [John Thoreau](#), who was a remarkably short man, and that thus this passage in the journal in no way implied that [Jean Thoreau](#) had been tall.



February 7, 1858: ...Aunt Louisa Dunbar has talked with Mrs. Monroe, and I can correct or add to my

6. Vide February 7th.



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account. She says that she was then only three or four years old, and that she went to school somewhere in Boston, with Aunt Elizabeth and one other child, to a woman named Turner, who kept a spinning-wheel a-going while she taught these three little children. She remembers that one sat on a lignum-vitæ mortar, turned bottom upward, another on a box, and the third on a stool; and then she repeated the story of Jennie Burns bringing her little daughter to the school, as before. ...

JANE "JENNIE" BURNS THOREAU



February 8, 1858: ...Mrs. Monroe says that her mother, Mrs. Stone, respected my grandfather Thoreau very much, because he was a religious man. She remembers his calling one day and inquiring where blue vervain grew, which he wanted to make a syrup for his cough; and she, a girl, happening to know, ran and gathered some. ...

JEAN THOREAU

1787

May 22, Tuesday or 23, Wednesday: [Cynthia Dunbar](#) was born in [Keene](#), New Hampshire to [Mary Jones Dunbar](#) and the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#) (who had been ill and would die on June 22d at age 42 just as infant Cynthia was reaching one month).

DUNBAR
FAMILY

THOREAU
LIFESPANS

By the way, does everyone appreciate how utterly **exceptional** "Cynthia" was as a name -in spite of the fact that it is the oldest given name in the English language- in the Concord, and Boston, and Massachusetts, and New England, and United States of America of this period?

Can anyone bring to my attention **even one** person in her ancestry who had borne such a name of a moon goddess - for whom, as her son Henry would put it, "wolves howl in the forest"?

Can anyone bring to my attention **even one** other American woman bearing this name in the 19th Century? -I have so far found only four others, an older Mulatto woman named Cynthia Miers who applied for membership in the Religious Society of Friends on April 20, 1796 after worshipping with the Quakers of New Jersey for some two decades (causing consternation), and a woman named Cynthia Ann Parker who is on record as having been kidnapped in Texas in 1836, and a Cynthia Hastings, evidently the wife of a Vottingham VT grocer, who joined the Brook Farm experiment in social living, and a Cynthia P. Bliss of [Pawtucket, Rhode Island](#) who attended



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MARY JONES DUNBAR

the Women's National Convention of 1850 in Worcester MA!

June 22, Friday: [Asa Dunbar](#), who had been ill, died in [Keene](#), New Hampshire at age 42 after about four years practice of law there, and would be buried with Masonic honors. He left five children, his youngest, [Cynthia Dunbar](#), being but one month of age. [Mary Jones Dunbar](#), his widow, surviving him by a great many years, would remarry.

DUNBAR FAMILY

THOREAU
LIFESPANS



1795

Fall: [Mary Jones Dunbar](#), [Sophia Dunbar](#), [Louisa Dunbar](#) and [Cynthia Dunbar](#)'s excellent adventure:



After May 26, 1849: ... Mary Dunbar widow of Asa Dunbar (first a minister of the 1st church in Salem afterward a lawyer in Keene-) with her 3 children Sophia aged 14 -Louisa 10 -& Cynthia 8, health failing went from Keen to visit her Brother Nathan at Frenchman's Bay -& her brothers Josiah -Elisha Simeon Stephen -at Sissiboo. She took passage in the fall of '95 in a 90 ton wood sloop with a crew of 3 men beside the Capt. Sloop going down empty. She had lost her sails coming up -not sea worthy- she had fallen down into the stream bending her sails- were put aboard Saturday afternoon by a boat, found her down in the stream. Sunday fine weather but sick- Were all in berths at midnight Sunday. struck Matinicus rock. They went at sundown -from Boston to Goldsborough hands said they had touched every rock between B. & G. Cried all hands on deck. Water came in so fast as to wet her before they got up on deck.- She exclaimed Capt where are



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we — “God almighty only knows for I dont! The Capt was pulling a rope *{illegible letters}*”





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MARY JONES DUNBAR

1797

In 1817, [Henry Thoreau](#) would be born in the house of his grandmother's second husband, Captain [Jonas Minott](#) of [Concord](#), deceased. It had been not long after her hazardous voyage from [Keene](#), New Hampshire to Frenchman's Bay on the coast of Maine and back to [Boston](#) in 1795, maybe in this year, that the widow [Mary Jones Dunbar](#) had married Captain Minot. Minot owned a lot of wild land in New Hampshire, in what is now the town of Wilmot, and once he and his new wife [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#) visited this land. This about relations with local [Baptists](#) is from Thoreau's journal:

I have been told (a tradition in our family) that when my Grandmother with her second husband, the Captain [Minott], first went into Kearsarge Gore in her chaise, -where, by the way, the inhabitants baked a pig in expectation of their coming, which, as they did not come immediately, was kept baking for three days, - her chaise so frightened the geese in the road that they actually rose and flew half a mile. And the sheep all ran over the hills, with the pigs after them; and some of the horses they met broke their tackling or threw their riders; so that they had to put their chaise down several times, to save life.

When they drove up to the [Baptist] meeting-house, snap, snap went the bridles of several of the horses that were tied there, and they scattered without a benediction. Though it was in the middle of sermon-time, the whole congregation rushed out, "for they thought it was a leather judgment a-comin'." The people about the door got hold of and got into the vehicle, so that "they liked to have shaken it all to pieces" with curiosity. The minister's wife got in, too, and "tetered up and down a little"; but she thought it was "a darn tottlish thing," and said she "would n't ride in it for nothin' in the world." There was no service in the afternoon.

The next day some old women took their knitting-work and sat in the chaise. As my Grandfather had a lawsuit with a "witch-woman" there, the people prophesied that she would upset his chaise, till they remembered that there was silver-plating enough about it and the harness, to lay all the witches in the country.

My Grandmother also instructed that people how to make [coffee](#), which was pounded in a mortar; and by the time she went out of town, the sound of the mortar was heard in all that land. By this time, no doubt, she and Ceres are equally regarded as mythological, by their posterity.

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn would comment, in regard to this entry in Thoreau's journal, that it was "plainly a Dunbar story, slightly embroidered by the dramatic talent of Mrs. Thoreau."

MARY JONES DUNBAR

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

[Thoreau](#) would record in 1855 at his mother's suggestion that David Henry Thoreau had been



Born, July 12, 1817, in the Minott House, on the Virginia Road, where Father occupied Grandmother's thirds, carrying on the farm.



The Thoreaus would leave this gray house on Virginia Road in March 1818, when David Henry was eight months old. They would move to Chelmsford, where [Cynthia Dunbar](#) had spent the rest of her childhood, to live in a red house with [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#). We learn from this that [Thoreau](#) had a sort of a family relationship with the Minots or Minotts who lived in [Concord](#), and we can learn that the name was indifferently spelled with one or two t's.

**DUNBAR
FAMILY**

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

MARY JONES DUNBAR

1798

It was at this point that the 1st Dunbar appeared on the [Concord](#) scene, in that at this point [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#) arrived with her new husband, the Captain [Jonas Minott](#) to whom she would bear no children, bringing with her the three adoleseing daughters by her deceased husband, seventeen year old Miss Sophia Dunbar, thirteen year old Miss [Louisa Dunbar](#), and ten or eleven year old Miss [Cynthia Dunbar](#) (evidently the two sons had already been apprenticed or otherwise gone adventuring into the great world).

DUNBAR
FAMILY

1804



Samuel Ripley of [Concord](#), son of the [Reverend Ezra Ripley, D.D.](#), graduated from [Harvard College](#). He would become the minister of the first religious society in Waltham, Massachusetts.

SAMUEL RIPLEY [of [Concord](#)], son of the [Rev. Ezra Ripley, D.D.](#), was born March 11, 1783, graduated [at [Harvard College](#)] in 1804, and was ordained over the first religious society in Waltham November 22, 1809, where he still [1835] resides.⁷

7. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#) Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)
(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study. On July 16, 1859 he would correct a date mistake buried in the body of the text.)

MARY JONES DUNBAR

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

At the age of about 17 [Cynthia Dunbar](#) produced a piece of needlework –a mourning picture– that is now in the collection of the Concord Museum. In this year, possibly, or by 1806, this [Concord](#) family visited the studio of the Boston hollow-cut profile-taker William King, who was said to have a knack for “seeing people agreeably,” and the three [silhouettes](#) that were produced are also now in the Museum’s collection — one of [Cynthia](#), one of her mother [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), and one of her step-father Captain [Jonas Minott](#).⁸




8. At the time [Cynthia](#) was attending the Bridgewater Academy, 20 miles inland from Plymouth, in the south parish of Bridgewater. This institution of education had been established when on February 28, 1799 the half township of land granted by the General Court as an endowment had been sold for \$5,000 and individuals had subscribed \$3,000 toward the erection of a schoolhouse. The school had a reputation of training toward the ministry and Bridgewater had a reputation for forwarding many of its sons to Harvard College.

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

MARY JONES DUNBAR

1813

 March 20, Saturday: The [Concord](#) farmer Captain [Jonas Minott](#) used to roast wild apples in a long row on the hearth while the coals were still glowing. He would put a glass of milk on his nightstand to sip when he woke during the night.



On this particular morning, however, [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), who would be [David Henry Thoreau](#)'s grandmother, found the glass still full of milk in the morning — and her husband Jonas dead. She would receive a portion of his house and grounds on the [Virginia Road](#) as part of the “widow’s thirds” of his estate. When they had married, the widow [Mary Jones Dunbar](#) had brought along several children from her previous marriage, to the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#). [Henry Thoreau](#) would have this to say to his Journal on May 26, 1857 in regard to his mother [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#)'s childhood in the Virginia Road home:

My mother was telling me to-night of the sounds which she used to hear summer nights when she was young and lived on Virginia Road. The lowing of cows or cackling of geese or the beating of a distant drum, but above all Joe Meriam whistling to his team, for he was an admirable whistler. She says she used to get up at midnight and go and sit on the doorstep when all in the house was asleep and she could hear nothing in the world but the ticking of the clock in the house behind her.



THOREAU RESIDENCES

Of course, nowadays one would be likely to hear only the roar of military jets making practice takeoffs and

MARY JONES DUNBAR

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

landings at nearby Hanscom Airfield.

DUNBAR FAMILY



April 17, Saturday: The “widow’s thirds” dower pertaining to [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), widow of the deceased Captain [Jonas Minott](#), were on this day specified to include the east chamber on the second floor of the Minot home on [Virginia Road](#) in [Concord](#). (This is the room in which, later, her grandchild [David Henry Thoreau](#) would be born.)

THOREAU RESIDENCES



Such documents typically leave nothing unspecified. The widow would have the “front room & chamber & Garret over it in the east end of the House and one half of the front entry in common and the bed room in the north westward of the House and the celler under the front room as far north as the cellar window then running west in a parallelel line with the front of the House to the west side of celler with a priveledge to pass and repass to it and a priveledge in the kitchen and sinkroom equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ part in common.”

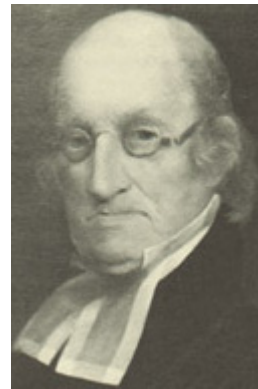
She had explicit permission to make use of the back door (evidently the front door was to be off limits). Her dower would include use of the back yard and its well, and “one half of the wood & Chaise house & ... laying and cutting wood in the wood yard east of the House the door yard in front and at the west end of the House.”

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MARY JONES DUNBAR

1815

➡ The widow [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), whose 1st husband, the Reverend [Asa Dunbar](#), had become a Mason in 1779, and in 1781 had become master of Trinity Lodge #6 in [Keene](#), New Hampshire in this year was able to apply to the Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts for financial aid. This request was endorsed by her minister, the Reverend [Ezra Ripley](#):



DUNBAR FAMILY

[In] the settlement of the estate of her ... husband, Jonas Minot ... she has been peculiarly unfortunate, and become very much straightened in the means of living comfortably; ... individual friends have been ... generous, otherwise she must have suffered extremely; ... being thus reduced, and feeling the weight of cares, of years and of widowhood to be very heavy, after having seen better days, she is induced by the advice of friends, as well as her own exigencies, to apply for aid to the benevolence and charity of the Masonic Fraternity.



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MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT

1818



October: The Thoreaus relocated from Josiah Davis's rental house at 47 Lexington Road in [Concord](#) to a red house next door to the church in Chelmsford MA (Chelmsford was where [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) had spent the rest of her childhood) to live with [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#). We learn from this that [Henry Thoreau](#) had a sort of a family relationship with the Minots or Minotts who lived in [Concord](#), and we can learn that the name was indifferently spelled with one or two t's.

**DUNBAR
FAMILY**



"Is a house but a gall on the face of the earth,
a nidus which some insect has provided for its young?"
-JOURNAL May 1, 1857



The Red House, where Grandmother lived, we the west side till October, 1818, hiring of Josiah Davis, agent for Woodward. (There were Cousin Charles and Uncle C. more or less.) According to day-book. Father hired of Proctor, October 16, 1818, and shop of Spaulding, November 10, 1818. Day-book first used by Grandfather, dated 1797. His part cut out and used by Father in Concord in 1808-9, and in Chelmsford, 1818-19-20-21.

MARY JONES DUNBAR MINOT**MARY JONES DUNBAR**

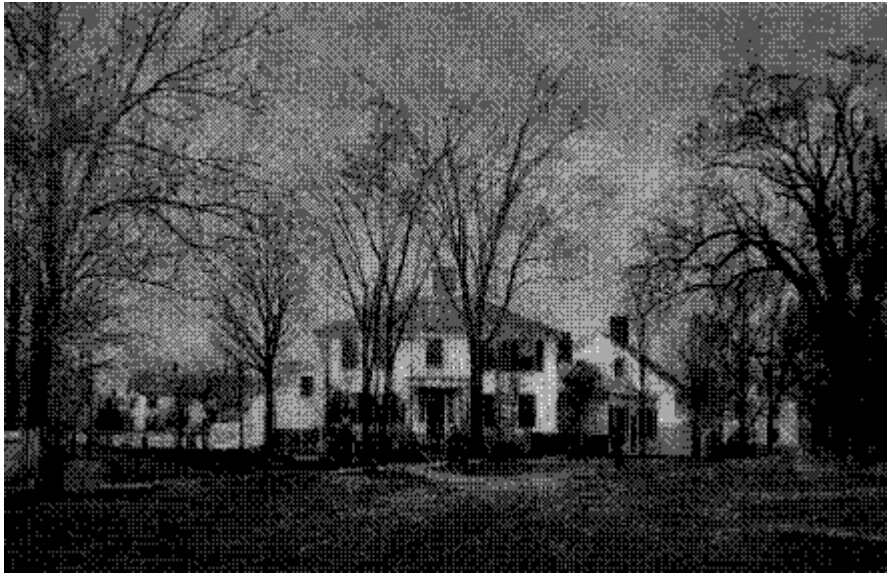
Father [John Thoreau](#) had borrowed from his stepmother and the family home at Number 57 on [Prince Street](#) in [Boston](#) had been mortgaged for \$1,000.⁰⁰ but his business had not done well. That spring he would need to sign the deed over to his sisters. There is a picture of this rather unimposing house on page 118 of the Reverend Edward Griffin Porter's RAMBLES IN OLD BOSTON, NEW ENGLAND (Boston 1887):



THOREAU RESIDENCES

1823

➡ March: [John Thoreau, Senior](#) left off teaching school at 6 Cornhill Court in [Boston](#), [David Henry Thoreau](#) was taken out of the Boston infant school, and the Thoreaus removed from Whitwell's house on Pinckney Street in Boston to rent space in the Jonas Hastings house in [Concord](#), built in about 1790, Deacon [William Parkman](#)'s brick house at the corner of Main Street and Walden Street,



where the father would go into the pencil-making business of Dunbar & Stow that was making use of graphite that [Charles Jones Dunbar](#) had discovered in 1821 near Bristol in New Hampshire, and also take up responsibility for the mill, milldam, race, and pond on Mill Brook just south of the “Milldam” district.

(Over the years the family would be living in nine different [Concord](#) buildings — nine, that is, in Concord alone, without adding in all the places they had lived elsewhere.)

We now know exactly where Henry's Uncle Charles had discovered the plumbago because Dr. Brad Dean has tracked down the following source information:

***Collections, Historical & Miscellaneous, and Monthly Literary Journal*. Vol. 2. Concord, N.H.: J. B. Moore, 1823. Edited by John Farmer and Jacob B. Moore.**

Plumbago, or Graphite.—This article has lately been discovered in the towns of Bristol and Francestown in this State. In Bristol, it has been found of superior excellence, and is said to be very abundant. By the politeness of Mr. Charles S. Dunbar, the proprietor of the land which contains it, the editors have been furnished with several specimens, one of which, they sent to Dr. MITCHELL of New-York, who, in a communication on the subject, speaks as follows:

“Your specimen of Plumbago was cordially received. I set a value upon it, by reason of the native and Fredonian source whence it came, and on account of its own apparent worth and excellence.

“It is pleasing to find our landed proprietors inquiring somewhat below the surface, for the good things contained in the grants they received by *superficial* measurement.—When they shall go deep into the matter, they will learn the importance of the French maxim, *approfondissez*, which, you know, means, *go to the bottom of the subject*. I trust the time is approaching when the purchaser of lands will require not merely a geometrical description, but a geological one; whereby the purchaser shall know that the gets so many acres

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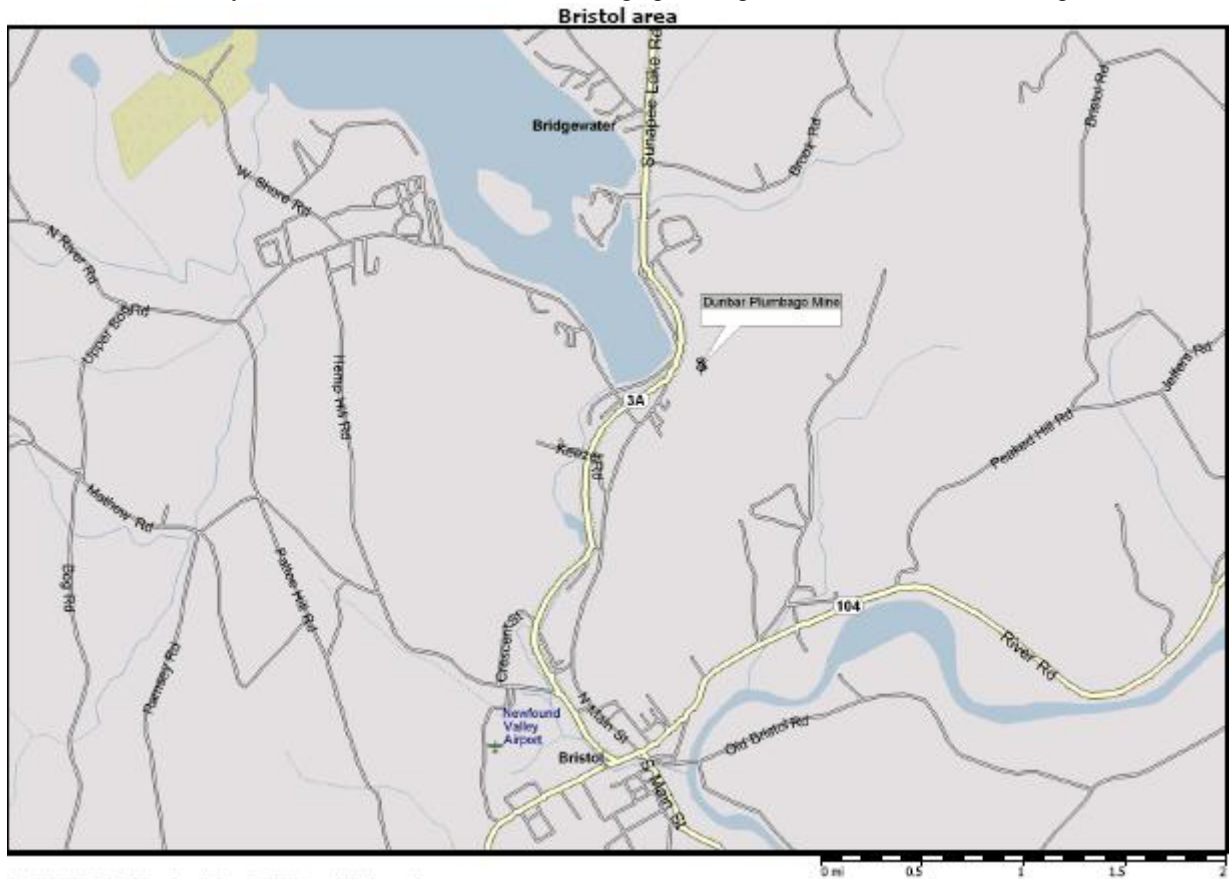
free and clear, and moreover, such and so many strata *nice and proper*.

"I congratulate you on the discovery of such a treasure in our country. Much is due to the Mines that supply us with pencils and crucibles."

Specimens have been furnished Professor Dana, of Dartmouth College, who thinks it equal to the celebrated Burrowdale ore.

That which has been discovered in Francetown is said to be of good quality. We are not informed whether it exists in large or small quantities. There has also been found in the south part of Francetown, near Lewis's mills, some beautiful specimens of Rock Crystal.

Which is to say, Uncle Charles had discovered the graphite deposit in the Bristol, New Hampshire area, here:



(Brad has visited the area and tells us there's nothing much there to be seen now, to mark the place where the graphite had been.)

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This photograph of [Concord](#) Center, taken in about 1865, shows in the distance the Jonas Hastings house belonging to Deacon [William Parkman](#) in which the Thoreaus were to reside from 1823 to 1826, at the corner of Main and Walden Streets.



As you can see, initially the Hastings corner had projected out into what is now part of Main Street, so that the house would need to be moved backward to allow Main Street to be widened prior to the opening in 1873 of the newly constructed Concord Free Public Library. (The Hastings house would ultimately be taken down to

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make way for the business block put up by pharmacist John C. Friend in 1892.)



THOREAU RESIDENCES

[David Henry Thoreau](#) began to attend Miss Phœbe Wheeler's infant school. Here is a later reminiscence of this period in the life of the Thoreau family: "Mother reminds me that when we lived at the [Parkman house](#) she lost a ruff a yard and a half long and with an edging three yards long to it, which she had laid on the grass to whiten, and, looking for it, she saw a robin tugging at the tape string of a stay on the line. He would repeatedly get it in his mouth, fly off and be brought up when he got to the end of his tether. Miss Ward thereupon tore a fine linen handkerchief into strips and threw them out, and the robin carried them all off. She had no doubt that he took the ruff."




April 21, 1852: ... Was that a large shad bush where fathers mill used to be.? There is quite a water fall beyond. where the old dam was Where the rapids commence at the outlet of the pond, the water is singularly creased as it rushes to the fall



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One of little David's toys, which he later said had really caught his attention, was a little pewter soldier (had it been cast at Concord's new lead factory?).

The Thoreau family, [John Thoreau, Senior](#) and [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) with the 5-year-old [David Henry Thoreau](#), and his older two siblings [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) and [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) and his younger sibling [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), with their grandmother the widow [Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), spent a memorable pic nic day that March on the exposed sandbar at the mouth of the cove on Walden Pond.⁹ When [Henry](#) remembered this for [WALDEN](#), below, he remembered it as his having been four years old, but later he corrected this to his having been five years old: 

[WALDEN](#): When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now to-night my flute has waked the echoes over that very water. The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture, and even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my infant dreams, and one of the results of my presence and influence is seen in these bean leaves, corn blades, and potato vines.

9. The water level of Walden Pond would be correspondingly low again, and the sandbar again exposed, in the year 2002!

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While he was still age 6, [David](#) would be tossed by a [Concord](#) cow.

[Henry](#) would also later record another childhood memory from approximately this period, of driving cattle down the lane past Walden Pond. This has some historical context, which I will quote from page 140 of Ruth



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R. Wheeler's CONCORD: CLIMATE FOR FREEDOM:

After the Narragansett grants to veterans of King Philip's War, Concord farmers acquired pastures in New Ipswich, Ashburnham, Westminster, Templeton, and Holden, sometimes adjacent to farms owned by sons and cousins. Every May the dry cows and young stock were assembled and driven over the road to summer pasture. The men and boys made the drive on foot or on horseback and as roads improved a "democrat" or utility vehicle went along to hold oats for the horses, blankets, and a youngster or two. Farmers on the way would rent a fenced field to hold the stock at night and would allow the boys to sleep in the barn. Reciprocally, Concord farmers had fenced yards to hold overnight upcountry stock being driven to market. These were very small drives compared to those we see in pictures of the West, but they were usually a boy's first trip away from home: they stood for romance and adventure. During the nineteenth century, as Boston grew and became a busy seaport, traders gradually took over the business, buying up cows, driving them off to pasture, feeding them in the fall on the aftermath in Concord fields, and finally driving them down to stockyards in Watertown or dressing them off in Concord for salt beef. Of course, this gave farmers extra income as butchers, tanners, candlemakers, and coopers. Now picket fences became necessary in the village to keep stray animals out of one's yard.

Note that I am not saying that Thoreau's memory of driving cattle past Walden Pond would have had to have originated specifically in this Year of Our Lord 1822, nor that it was of such a large herd or over such a long distance, but only that it is likely that he would have held this memory in the context of such local cow business precisely as now an adult's memories of cows encountered on the farm during childhood would be held in the context of stories heard about the "Wild West" and about "cowboys" on "cattle drives."

Now that I have mentioned some Spring and Autumn business that Thoreau would have been observing in about this year of 1822, I will take the occasion, and mention some Winter business that he may well have been observing in about this year as well: Bear in mind that there were no snowplows in those days of sleighs and sledges. Public roads were not **plowed** during the winter, they were **packed**. The device that packed the snow was termed a "pung" and it was pulled by oxen rather than horses. If the snow was deep or wet, the pung would need to be pulled by several yoke of oxen. A good pack of snow on a road could sometimes assure smooth sleighing for the duration of the winter.

THOREAU RESIDENCES

The remark about the flute at this point in WALDEN may remind us that Thoreau's intent was, importantly, to see with "new infant eyes."



After August 6, 1845: ... Well now to-night my flute awakes the echoes over this very water, but one generation of pines has fallen and with their stumps I have cooked my supper, And a lusty growth of oaks and pines is rising all around its brim and preparing its wilder aspect for new infant eyes. ...



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Per Walter Roy Harding's THE DAYS OF [HENRY THOREAU](#): A BIOGRAPHY (NY: Knopf, 1966):

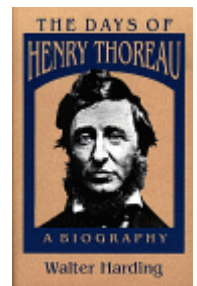
"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

Chapter 1 (1817-1823) -Downing gives a cursory account of the Thoreau and Dunbar heritage and more fully traces the nature and movement of the Thoreau family in the first five years of Henry's life.

Thoreau's father, John, while intellectual, "lived quietly, peacefully and contentedly in the shadow of his wife," Mrs. Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, who was dynamic and outspoken with a strong love for nature and compassion for the downtrodden.

- 1st Helen -quiet, retiring, eventually a teacher.
- 2nd John Jr. -"his father turned inside out," personable, interested in ornithology, also taught.
- 3rd Henry (born July 12,1817) -speculative but not noticeably precocious.
- 4th Sophia -independent, talkative, ultimately took over father's business and edited Henry's posthumous publications.

The Thoreau's constantly struggled with debt, and in 1818 John Sr. gave up his farm outside [Concord](#) and moved into town. Later the same year he moved his family to Chelmsford where he opened a shop which soon failed and sent him packing to Boston to teach school.



"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

In 1823 uncle [Charles Jones Dunbar](#) discovered [graphite](#) in New Hampshire and invited [John Thoreau](#) to join Dunbar and Stow Pencil Makers back in [Concord](#).

Henry's [Concord](#) youth was "typical of any small town American boy of the 19th century."

Henry attended Miss Phæbe Wheeler's private "infants" school, then the public grammar school, where he studied the Bible and English classics such as [William Shakespeare](#), [John Bunyan](#), Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Essayists.

Henry was considered "stupid" and "unsympathetic" by schoolmates he would not join in play, earning the nicknames "Judge" and "the fine scholar with the big nose." At school he was withdrawn and anti-social but he loved outdoor excursions.

From 1828-1834 Henry attended [Concord Academy](#) (Phineas Allen, preceptor). Allen taught the classics -[Virgil](#), Sallust, [Caesar](#), [Euripides](#), [Homer](#), Xenophon, [Voltaire](#), Molière and Racine in the original languages- and emphasized composition.

Henry also benefitted from the Concord Lyceum and particularly the natural history lectures presented there.



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"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

WALTER HARDING'S BIOGRAPHY

Chapter 3 (1833-1837) -Thoreau enters Harvard (president Josiah Quincy), having barely squeezed by his entrance exams and rooming with Charles S. Wheeler

Thoreau's Harvard curriculum: Greek (8 terms under Felton and Dunkin)-composition, grammar, "Greek Antiquities," Xenophon, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Sophocles, Euripides, Homer. Latin Grammar (8 terms under Beck and McKean)-composition, "Latin Antiquities," Livy, Horace, Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal. Mathematics (7 terms under Pierce and Lovering) English (8 terms under ET Channing, Giles, W&G Simmons)-grammar, rhetoric, logic, forensics, criticism, elocution, declamations, themes. Mental Philosophy (under Giles) [Paley](#), Stewart. Natural Philosophy (under Lovering)-astronomy. Intellectual Philosophy (under Bowen) Locke, Say, Story. Theology (2 terms under H Ware)-[Paley](#), Butler, New Testament. Modern Languages (voluntary) Italian (5 terms under Bachi) French (4 terms under Surault) German (4 terms under Bokum) Spanish (2 terms under Sales) Attended voluntary lectures on German and Northern literature (Longfellow), mineralogy (Webster), anatomy (Warren), natural history (Harris).

Thoreau was an above average student who made mixed impressions upon his classmates.

In the spring of '36 Thoreau withdrew due to illness -later taught for a brief period in Canton under the Rev. Orestes A. Brownson, a leading New England intellectual who Harding suggests profoundly influenced Thoreau.

(Robert L. Lace, January-March 1986)



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Allen, Gay Wilson. "A New Look at Emerson and Science," pages 58-78 in LITERATURE AND IDEAS IN AMERICA: ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF HARRY HAYDEN CLARK. Robert Falk, ed. Athens OH: Ohio UP, 1975

"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

Allen examines NATURE and [Waldo Emerson](#)'s attitudes toward science in the light of four of Emerson's early lectures. These lectures, given in 1833-34, were about science, and were titled "The Uses of Natural History," "On the Relation of Man to the Globe," "Water," and "The Naturalist." Allen's 1975 essay furthers the work done by Harry Haydon Clark in his 1931 essay "Emerson and Science;" Clark did not have access to these lectures.

The first lecture, "The Uses of Natural History," was, Allen says, a "preliminary sketch" for NATURE. In this lecture Emerson elaborated on the uses of nature much as he did in NAATURE: how nature contributes to human health (beauty, rest); to civilization (with due Emersonian skepticism about technology); to knowledge of truth (here Allen discusses the influence of geology on Emerson: how the age of the earth and the slowness of earth's transformative processes confuted traditional religious doctrine); and to self-understanding (nature as language that God speaks to humanity – nature as image or metaphor of mind) (60-64).

Emerson's second lecture, "On the Relation of Man to the Globe," was also a preliminary sketch for NATURE. In this lecture, Allen says,

Emerson drew heavily on his readings in geology, along with some biology and chemistry, and attempted to demonstrate how marvelously the world is adapted for human life. (64)

Emerson's sources included Laplace, Mitscherlich, Cuvier; his arguments echoed Lamarck (evolution, nature adapted to humans) and [the Reverend William] Paley (argument from design) (64-67).

The third lecture, "Water," was Emerson's "most technical" according to Allen, which is, perhaps, why it is not discussed at any length. It is also not assessed for its scientific accuracy. Allen does say that Emerson "read up on the geological effects of water, the laws of thermodynamics, the hydrostatic press, and related subjects" (67).

Allen says that Emerson's fourth lecture, "The Naturalist," "made a strong plea for a recognition of the importance of science in education" (60). Emerson "emphasized particularly the study of nature to promote esthetic and moral growth" (67). Emerson wanted science for the poet and poetry for the scientist; the fundamental search for the *causa causans* (67-69). He was reading Gray and other technical sources, observing nature, and reading philosophers of science, especially Coleridge and Goethe (68).

Allen says that the value of these lectures is not merely the light they shed on Nature but what they reveal about "his reading and thinking about science before he had fused his ideas thus derived with the Neoplatonic and 'transcendental' ideas of Plotinus, Swedenborg, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and seventeenth-century English Platonists" (69).



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"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

Allen concludes that [Waldo Emerson](#)'s theory of nature in NATURE is derived far more from Neoplatonism than modern scientific knowledge, but Emerson was not turning his back on science; he wanted instead to spiritualize science, to base science on the theory that the physical world is an emanation of spirit, "the apparition of God" (Chapter 6), or "a projection of God in the unconscious." (70)

Allen contends that Emerson's theory anticipates Phenomenology in its emphasis on mind/world interactions and correspondences. Science, Allen says, continued to have a "pervasive influence" on Emerson's thought even after 1836:

Indeed, the two most basic concepts in his philosophy, which he never doubted, were "compensation" and "polarity," both derived from scientific "laws," i.e. for every action there is a reaction, and the phenomena of negative and positive poles in electrodynamics. To these might also be added "circularity," which translated into poetic metaphors the principle of "conservation of energy." (75)

One could argue, I think, that these scientific laws were themselves "derived from" philosophical and metaphysical speculations (e.g. Kant); their life-long conceptual importance to Emerson, in other words, does not seem precisely described as scientific.

[Cecily F. Brown, March 1992]

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1830

➡ August 2, Monday: King Charles X abdicated the throne of France in favor of Henri, comte de Chambord.

After traveling upstream and back to Bussa (Nigeria), Richard and John Lander boarded canoes at Bussa to traverse the lower Niger River.

[Mary Jones Dunbar Minot](#), [David Henry Thoreau](#)'s maternal grandmother, died.

**THOREAU
LIFESPANS**

**DUNBAR
FAMILY**



1856

February 25, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) was working up his own genealogy, out of a couple of genealogy volumes that had been published only in the previous year:



Gathered some facts from Henry Bond's *Genealogies of the Families of Watertown &c*— My mother's mother was [Mary Jones](#), only daughter of— "Col. Elisha Jones, Esq., of Weston. A Boston newspaper, of Feb. 15th 1775, says: 'On Monday last, died, in this town, in the 66th year of his age, Elisha Jones Esq., late of Weston, for many years a magistrate, Col. of a regiment of Militia, and member of the General Assembly. In the many departments in which he acted, he eminently shewed the man of principle, virtue,' &c. He married, Jan 24, 1733-4, Mary Allen, and occupied his father's homestead." [Mary Allen was the daughter of Abel Allen — who was the son of Lewis Allen of Watertown Farms who died 1707-1708] The children of E Jones & Mary Allen were 1 Nathan 2d son died in infancy 3 Elisha 4 Israel 5 Daniel 6 Elias 7 Josiah 8 Silas — 9 Mary b. 1748 10 Ephraim 11 Simon (or Simeon) 12 Stephen 13 Jonas 14 Phillemore 15 Charles. Col. Elisha Jones was born 1710 the son of Capt Josiah Jones (born 1670 in Weston) & Abigail Barnes Capt. Josiah Jones was the son of Josiah Jones of Watertown Farms (born 1643) and Lydia Treadway (dr of Nathaniel Treadway who died in



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Watertown 1689) Josiah Jones was son of Lewis Jones (who appears to have moved from Roxbury to Watertown about 1650 & died 1684) and Anna (perhaps Stone? born in England.) This Josiah Jones in 1666 bought "of John Stone & Wife Sarah, of Wat., a farm of 124 acres on the N side of Sudbury highway, about 2 miles from Sud."—

HENRY'S RELATIVES

Unfortunately Google Books has as yet only scanned Volume II of Dr. Henry Bond's GENEALOGIES OF THE FAMILIES OF WATERTOWN..., so we are not yet able to include in the Kouroo Contexture the contents of Volume I. We can wonder whether Henry noticed in this genealogical reference, that a large part of Waldens Pond [*sic*] had at the earliest point been granted both to the town of Watertown and to the town of [Concord](#) (see next screen), until the ruling of the General Court of August 20, 1638 that the Watertown grant was to be extended only so far "as Concord bounds give leave."

BOND, VOLUME I BOND, VOLUME II

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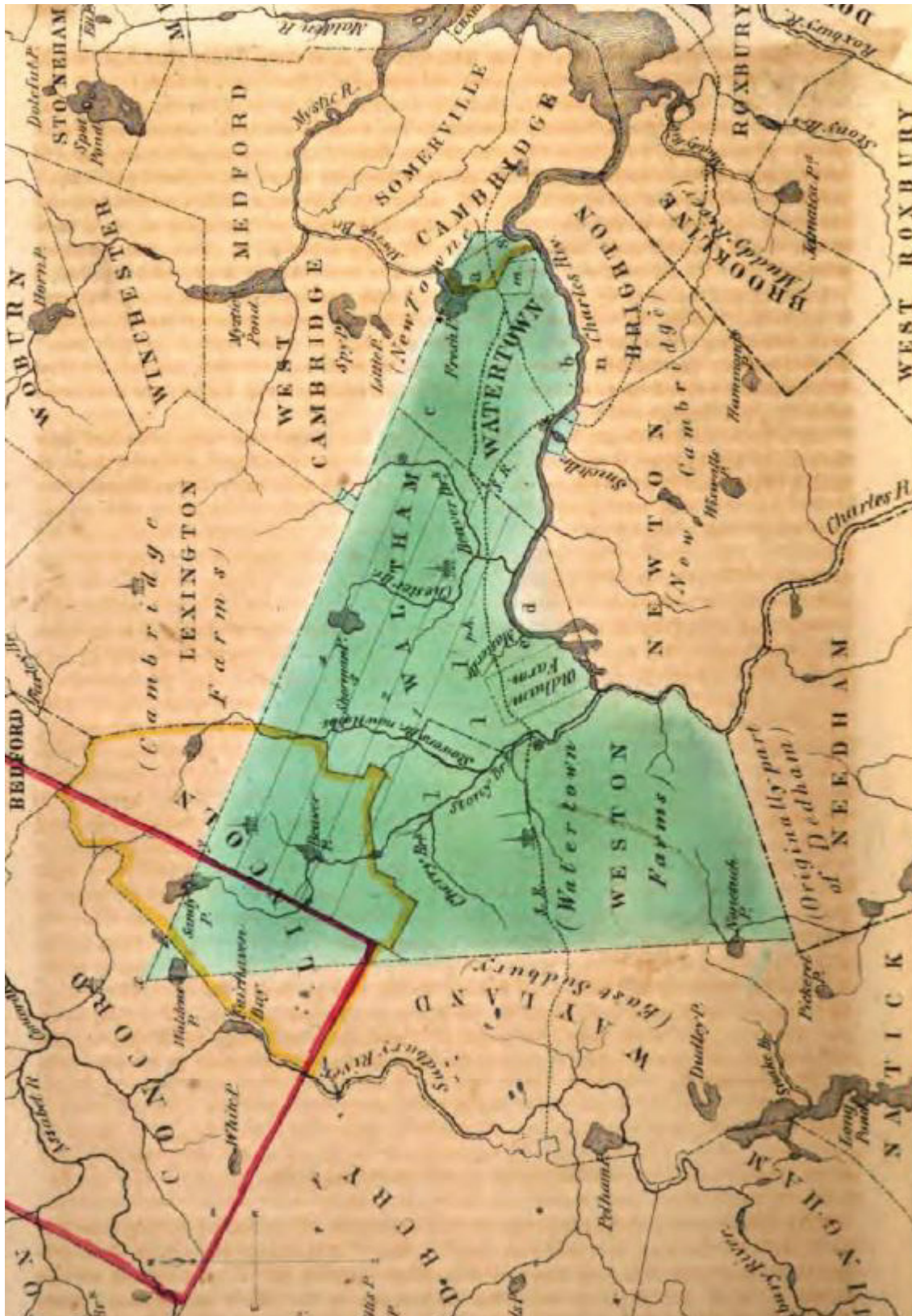
"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

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

Prepared: October 25, 2013

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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.



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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.