

HENRY'S RELATIVES

MISS LOUISA DUNBAR



1785

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

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*}



1796

[Timothy Flint](#), a recent graduate of Phillips Academy, matriculated at [Harvard College](#).

During this year [Daniel Webster](#) courted [Louisa Dunbar](#) on a buggy ride in Boscawen, while he was still a student at Phillips Academy preparing to matriculate at Dartmouth College.

If ever a school had an unblemished record, it was this New Hampshire powerhouse. Set in the state's third-oldest town, Exeter's ivy-clad buildings give it the appearance of a geographically displaced [Harvard College](#). It is. Only slightly smaller than arch-rival Andover, Exeter turns out students who are verbally acute, organized, and programmed to achieve; its graduates include [Daniel Webster](#), Jay Rockefeller, and John Irving.

— Jesse Kornbluth, "Exeter's Passion Play," [Vanity Fair](#), December 1992, page 218.

At the time "Black Dan" was courting, he did not look like this:



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He looked, instead, like this:



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 adolesceng 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).



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1830



Miss [Louisa Dunbar](#), [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#)'s unmarried sister, moved in with the Thoreau family in the Shattuck house at 63 Main Street in [Concord](#).



THOREAU RESIDENCES



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1849



January 15, Monday: In downtown [Boston](#)—where everything that happens of course happens for the greater glory of God—Chief Justice [Lemuel Shaw](#) lectured [Washington Goode](#) for an hour and a half on the habits of “intemperance” which he had had, the “ungodly” associates which he had had, the “dens of crime” which he had frequented, etc., informed him that having led such a life there was simply “no hope” that the governor of the state might reduce his sentence. The lecture probably was just what Seaman Goode needed. The judge then consigned him to be [hanged](#) by the neck, on May 25, Friday, 1849 (this seems to have been a traditional day upon which to conduct public hangings), until he was dead.¹ The opponents of the death penalty, to wit, the Standing Committee of the Massachusetts Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, would have a little more than four months to mobilize public opinion to bring pressure to bear on Governor George Nixon Briggs:

Why Sir, even the boys, and they are worth saving, for we have nothing else to make men, and even Governors of, are now saying in our streets, “it is only a nigger.”

During those four months 24,440 signatures would be collected, petitioning the Governor Briggs to commute Seaman Goode’s sentence, from death by hanging to life in prison without any possibility of parole.

For instance, [Friend Joseph Ricketson](#), [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#)’s brother who, if I mistake not, was a birthright [Quaker](#) in good standing with his Monthly Meeting, reported that:

I have exerted myself very much for the last month in behalf of Washington Goode; there were several petitions here and we obtained 746 signatures.

In addition to the 24,440 signatures mentioned, there was one petition, from Woburn, Massachusetts, bearing a total of nine signatures, which demanded that Governor Briggs remain steadfast in the plan of “execution.”

An article would appear in the [Boston Republican](#), pointing up the fact that in France the guillotine had been adopted, after consultation with medical men, as the least painful mode of execution, and that since the last hanging in Boston, “the [Ether](#) discovery has taken place.”

The question now arises, how shall the *hanging* be performed here in Boston.... Shall not the convict share also the advantage of this benign discovery? He is to be hanged by the neck. Shall not this be done *with the least possible pain*? If we follow the spirit of the law, there would seem to be no doubt that it must be done with the least possible pain. And it seems equally clear that it is within the *discretion* of the Sheriff, to permit any form of alleviating the pain, which is consistent with the one thing imposed upon him by the law; namely, the hanging of Goode, by the neck, until he is dead. We will not undertake to determine, whether Humanity does not require, that the convict, if he chooses, shall be allowed the benefit of ETHER. We content ourselves with saying that it is clearly within the *discretion* of the Sheriff to permit the pains of the convict to be thus alleviated.

1. In fact, [Boston](#) had not [hanged](#) anyone for simple homicide since 1826, almost a quarter of a century before, and there was another prisoner, Augustus Dutee, whose sentence to be hanged was being commuted during this period to life in prison—but then, we may presume that Augustus Dutee was a white man, not only because his sentence was commuted but also because the documents do not comment on his race as they would most assuredly have commented had he been anything other than white. In addition to Dutee, seven other murderers were then serving life in Massachusetts prison after having had their sentences to be hanged commuted by the state governor.



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The petition to commute the sentence of seaman Goode to life in prison without opportunity for parole that was being circulated and sponsored in Concord (either by [Anna Maria Whiting](#), one of the town's leading abolitionists, or by Caroline Hoar, the wife of Rockwood Hoar) is still in existence and bears, on the men's side of the sheet, the signature of [Henry Thoreau](#) as second in that column. It bears, on the women's side of the sheet, the signature of his younger sister, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), as 5th in that column, followed in immediate succession by the signature of his mother, [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), the signature of his elder sister, [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), the signature of his aunt [Louisa Dunbar](#), and the signature of his [Aunt Jane Thoreau](#). The signature of his father [John Thoreau, Sr.](#), however, appears nowhere on this petition. **Why not?** Thoreau's father was 62 years old at this point and still very actively engaged in his home business. Is one to suppose that he, quite alone in his home, **wanted** Seaman Goode to dance on air?

The full text of that petition, as it came to be circulated in the [Prisoner's Friend](#), had been as follows:



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WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, solemnly protest against the intended execution of Washington Goode, as a crime in which we would under no circumstances participate, which we would prevent, if possible, and in the guilt of which we will not, by the seeming assent of silence, suffer ourselves to be implicated.

We believe the execution of this man will involve all who are instrumental in it in the crime of murder – of the murder in cold blood of a helpless fellow being.

The arguments by which executions are generally defended are wholly wanted here. The prisoner is not one who in spite of good instruction and example, for purposes of avarice, revenge or lust, deliberately planned the murder of a fellow-being. The intended victim of law was a man of misfortune from birth, made by his social position, and still more by the color which God gave him, the victim of neglect, of oppression, of prejudice, of all the evils inflicted upon humanity by man. If in a paroxysm of drunken rage, he killed his opponent, (and this is the utmost alleged against him,) his case comes far short of premeditated murder.

But even this fact is extremely doubtful. It is supported only by the most suspicious testimony, and such as would not have weighed with any jury to touch the life of a white man. And since the trial, facts have come to light materially lessening the credibility of the evidence which led to conviction.

The glaring unfairness of his mode of trial is of itself sufficient ground for this protest. The maxim which gives to the accused a trial by his peers was essentially violated. In a community where sympathy with a colored man is a rare and unpopular sentiment, the prisoner should have been tried by a jury composed partly, at least, of his own race. This violation of the principles of equal justice demands our solemn protest.

We claim also that the petition of more than 20,000 of our fellow-citizens to have this man's life spared, demands respect. Such a number of voluntary petitioners, all upon one side, indicates the will of the sovereign people of the State, that the penalty should be commuted. Our respect for the right of the people to a voice and a just influence in the administration of public justice, also demands this solemn protest against the legal murder of Washington Goode.

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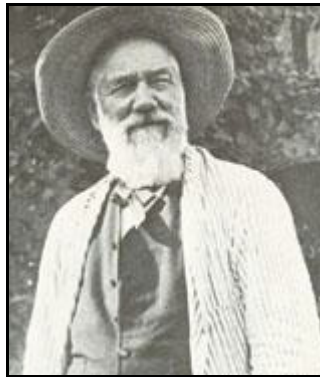
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1855

August 10, Friday: According to the Massachusetts census of 1855 the Thoreau household consisted of “[John Thoreau](#), 69, M[ale]; Cynthia, 69, F[emale]; Henry D., 38, M[ale]; Sophia E., 34, F[emale]; [Sophia Dunbar](#), 74, F[emale]; Louisa Dunbar, 69, F[emale].” [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and [Louisa Dunbar](#) were listed as born in New Hampshire, all others in Massachusetts. The father was listed as “Manufacturer,” [Henry Thoreau](#) as “Gentleman,” and (of course) no occupations were listed for homemakers.²(The census taker for [Concord](#) was

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

Sheriff Sam Staples.)



Aug.10. P.M. — To Nagog. Middle of huckleberrying. — (then no more entries until August 19th)

1860

According to census records, the Thoreau household in [Concord](#) included [Sophia Dunbar](#), age 79, [Henry D.](#), [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), [Louisa Dunbar](#), and [Sophia E. Thoreau](#).

2. Volume 21 in the Massachusetts State Archives in Boston. The historian [Lemuel Shattuck](#), the lawyer Moses Prichard, and the manufacturer William Monroe were also listed by census taker Sam Staples as gentlemen. [Waldo Emerson](#) was listed almost appropriately as “Writer of Books” and [Ellery Channing](#) almost appropriately as “Do Nothing” (see [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) drawing made in 1856).



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1862

At some point that Spring: At some point during this spring, shortly before his death, [Henry Thoreau](#) gave to [Edmund Hosmer](#) his personal copy of [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#), pointing out the lock of John's hair pasted into the front and the poem that accompanied it, and said:

*You know how a pregnant woman has to eat for two.
I have felt that I needed to live for John.*

According to Raymond R. Borst, this happened on May 5th: "At Thoreau's request, his friend Edmund Hosmer spends the night with him" and "In appreciation for this kindness, Thoreau asks his sister to give Hosmer his memorial copy of [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#) with a lock of his brother John's hair taped in it." Borst's reference is to the [Concord Saunterer](#), 11, Number 4 for Winter 1976, page 16.

Thoreau was then in the process of revising [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#) for [Ticknor & Fields](#) to reissue it.

At some point, also, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) presented Henry with a handwritten list of people to whom, she suggested, he might want to leave some special gift. Her list included in no particular sequence Bronson Alcott, H.G.O. Blake, Theophilus Brown, [Ellery Channing](#), [Aunt Louisa Dunbar](#), [Edith Emerson](#), [Edward Waldo Emerson](#), [Edmund Hosmer](#), Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, Elizabeth Sherman Hoar, Horace Mann, Jr., [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#), Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, the [Concord Town Library](#), and the [Boston Society of Natural History](#). Thoreau worked at this list, jotting down alongside the names various small gifts (such as his two-volume edition of [Froissart](#)'s CHRONICLES for Ellery),

FROISSART'S CHRONICLES, I

FROISSART'S CHRONICLES, II

until he got down to the entry for [Ellen Emerson](#). Evidently at this point he was unable to proceed, for the bequest to her (of his volume on the mineralogy of Maine and Massachusetts, evidently because it was by her uncle [Charles T. Jackson](#)), and all the remainder, are not in his handwriting but instead in [Sophia](#)'s.



1866

Sometime between 1866 and 1868, [Henry David Thoreau](#)'s coffin was moved to its present location on Authors' Ridge, possibly at the same time that his Aunt [Louisa Dunbar](#)'s body was being interred at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in 1867.



[Wouldn't they have needed to obtain the permission of surviving members of the Thoreau and Dunbar families in order to have done this? –Yet this database as it is presently constituted contains no record of any such negotiations.]

DIGGING UP THE DEAD



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1867

February 1: [Waldo Emerson](#) lectured on “The Man of the World” in St. Paul, Minnesota.

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, telling of the deaths of Aunt [Louisa Dunbar](#) and [Aunt Jane Thoreau](#) and adding:

"Let me thank you for the hearty expression of your sympathy, at the time dear Henry left us. It was fully appreciated. As you may suppose much of my time has been devoted to the publication of his papers. Five volumes have been printed since his death. – I trust that you have read them, & also the many friendly criticisms which discriminating readers have bestowed. I should like to tell you of numerous touching incidents, proving the respect & affection felt for him by those to whom he was personally a stranger. While the sense of our great loss is strengthened from year, to year, it is a pleasure to realize how many share our grief, & we are continually solaced by the sweetest memories of his whole life.—... I wish you to realize how feeble my dear mother is. Since her fall she has never been able to dress herself, or use her needle – the right arm being nearly helpless, & owing to weak eyes she is much of the time deprived of reading. Notwithstanding her infirmities, she is ever cheerful."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

HENRY THOREAU

**THOREAU
LIFESPANS**

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Henry Thoreau's Aunt Louisa would be interred in the Thoreau family plot at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and, when the famous Thoreau family would later be relocated to Authors' Ridge, her grave would be allowed to remain in its original location.





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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: September 30, 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.



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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.