

## MRS. SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY



In Concord, [Thoreau](#) and [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) were continually updating each other on their botanical observations, and when the Reverend John Russell, the minister-naturalist, stopped through, he would visit the Old Manse as readily as the Thoreau home. However, in the opinion of Joan W. Goodwin (Mrs. Ripley's current biographer), the relationship between her and Thoreau would have to be described as "casual" rather than as "close."<sup>1</sup> Goodwin points out that although it was Sarah who was the real botanist in the family, it was her younger brother [George Partridge Bradford](#) who became Thoreau's walking companion and co-botanizer.

1. Taking into account the restrained nature of 19th-Century intercourse between older married ladies/ministers' wives and younger bachelor males/laboring-class types, I would have to say that I am myself unable to make this distinction between "casual" and "close" in such a context. I think that, no matter how casual and close such persons might have been with one another, they would have felt constrained about wandering together in fields and copses collecting botanical specimens in early dawn hours. In other words: frankly, the biographer Goodwin has not yet provided us with an objective basis for making assertions in this regard.



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**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

**1793**

July 31, Wednesday: Sarah Alden Bradford ([Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#)) was born in Boston. She was the firstborn of [Captain Gamaliel Bradford](#), a shipmaster in the Mediterranean trade, and Elizabeth Parker Hicking Bradford (there would be 6 more surviving Bradford children). She would attend Jacob Cumming's school in Boston. She would be, during her childhood, friends with Abba Francis in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

Off the New Jersey coast there was an inconclusive engagement between a frigate of the British Royal Navy and a French frigate. British captain George Courtenay had arrived off New York harbor on May 28th with his vessel [HMS Boston](#) disguised as French, and had fooled a French officer and taken him as a prisoner of war. Knowing that a French frigate, the [L'Embuscade](#), was at anchor in New York harbor, Captain Courtenay issued a challenge. The challenge was widely disseminated throughout the city, and when on this morning Captain Jean-Baptiste-François Bompard sailed out to meet the [HMS Boston](#), the shoreline was crowded with thousands of spectators. The engagement was fiercely contested but the smaller and more lightly armed [HMS Boston](#) seemed to be receiving the more serious damage when at 6:20AM Captain Courtenay was thrown to the deck. According to the 2d-in-command, Lieutenant John Edwards, the corpse of Courtenay was pitched overboard to clear the deck (rumors would have it that Courtenay had merely been unconscious and was thrown into the sea still alive). Just after 7:00AM the surviving officers of the [Boston](#) ordered that all remaining sails be set and the British vessel withdrew. By 8:00AM the [L'Embuscade](#) was unable to continue the pursuit.


There were rumors in Philadelphia that the Minister of the French Republic might be scheming to issue an appeal over the head of the President of the United States, directly to the People. George Washington summoned Thomas Jefferson to a 9:00AM meeting on the following morning, instructing that he bring with him all state papers connected with the [Minister of the French Republic](#). Expecting that their deliberations would require all day, he arranged for a dinner at 4PM, saying that no company other than his immediate family, and those participating in this business, were to be invited.



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**1803**

 It was perhaps in this year that Sarah Alden Bradford ([Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#)) went:

*"Father, may I study Latin?"*

and her father, a scholarly sea captain, replied:

*"A girl study Latin! Yes, study Latin if you want to.  
You may study anything you like."*

(She would, therefore, spend at least one quarter in the Medford, Massachusetts academy of Dr. Luther Stearns, who had been a Latin tutor in Cambridge, Massachusetts.)






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**1810**

 One of Sarah Alden Bradford's ([Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#)'s) early mentors was the Reverend John Allyn of the First Parish in Duxbury, Massachusetts, who helped her bridge from her knowledge of Latin to the study of Greek. His daughter Abigail "Abba" Allyn became her lifelong friend. By this point she was botanizing.<sup>2</sup> Her father wrote to one of his sons, at [Harvard College](#), that

*Sarah and Abba are studying Botany, and one would think they hold converse only with the flowers for they in a manner seclude themselves from human observation & from communication with animal nature. I dont know what flower they affect to emulate but I dare say they are known to each other under some order or class of the Linean system – if you or John [Abba's brother] should write to them I would advise you to take all your ideas from the groves & fields – talk about calyx, corolla, & petals & I will engage you will be read.*

2. In those years, studying animals was felt to be indelicate, and females were discouraged from embarking on this sort of investigation. But flowers were pretty and delicate, and plants didn't fuck. For instance, [Dr. Jacob Bigelow](#), in his American edition of James Edward Smith's INTRODUCTION TO PHYSIOLOGICAL AND SYSTEMATIC BOTANY (London 1807), had opined that:

*The natural history of animals, in many respects even more interesting to man as an animated being, and more striking in some of the phenomena which it displays, is in other points less pleasing to a tender and delicate mind. In botany all is elegance and delight.*



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**1813**



Summer: Sarah Alden Bradford ([Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#)) and Abba [Alcott?] attended a series of lectures by Professor William Dandridge Peck of the [Harvard College botanical](#) garden.

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1818

➡ October 6, Tuesday: Persuaded by her father to accept after the death of her mother of “lung fever” in the previous year and after a proposal of marriage, [Sarah Alden Bradford](#) got married with the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#), half-brother of Mary Moody Emerson, and moved into his new home in Waltham. The couple may



well have met at the Emerson house, in which both had been frequent callers and helpers with the children after the death of the Reverend William Emerson. Ripley had been involved in the split in the Charlestown church under the conservative Reverend Jedidiah Morse and in the establishment of a more liberal church in which Gamaliel Bradford would play a prominent role. The bride took with her 3 younger sisters and a brother, because she was providing them with their education. Her nephews [William Emerson](#) and [Waldo Emerson](#) took turns as her teaching assistant. Between 1819 and 1833, as she was giving birth to 9 infants 7 of which would survive, she would hear student recitations in Latin and Greek.



Rufus Wyman, superintendent of the [Charlestown](#) branch of Massachusetts General Hospital (later to be renamed as the McLean Asylum for the Insane), admitted as his 1st patient a person who was possessed by a devil — or so this young man’s father was alleging. This early facility for people with mental illness would establish one of the 1st American laboratories of experimental [psychology](#) and would support an active research program.<sup>3</sup>

[Friend Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*3rd day Morning after breakfast we went into [Providence](#), stoped at [O Browns](#) from whence Ruth went to the meeting House & I took a walk about the town. I dined at [O Browns](#) spent the evening & lodged, in the evening in addition to the very interesting conversation of [Moses](#) I had the gratification of seeing many of his curiosities both Ancient & modern, particularly some old Manuscripts & some old printed books published by friends, some of which I had not seen or heard of. —*

3. Street, W.R. A CHRONOLOGY OF NOTEWORTHY EVENTS IN AMERICAN [PSYCHOLOGY](#). Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1994

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**1819**




September 15, Wednesday: Elizabeth Bradford Ripley was born in Waltham to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#).



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**1820**

 November 19, Sunday: Austria, Prussia, and Russia issued the Protocol of Troppau. They bound themselves together against liberal revolutions, peaceful or otherwise.

Mary Emerson Ripley was born to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) (she would get married on October 16, 1847 in a ceremony performed at Waltham by her father the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#), with the Unitarian Reverend George Frederick Simmons, 1814-1855, Harvard A.M. 1832).

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*1st day 19th of 11th M / Rose in season this morning & after breakfast went to the ferry to try to get a Passage to Connanicut but the wind was small & a head & no other passenger there, concluded to give up the prospect - Both our Meetings were Silent, & Seasons of some favor to me tho' of not much abounding - on the whole was satisfied with being at home as D Buffum & J Dennis were Absent, which left our Seats more vacant than was desirable.*


**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

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**1821**

 The family of the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) and [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) during this year embraced an additional member, Sarah Ellison (a niece of theirs), because in 1820 the parents of that [Boston](#) family and 2 siblings had been removed suddenly by “spotted fever” (possibly typhus). Sarah Ellison would live in the Ripley family until 14 years of age (her older brother James being ill-equipped to care for the surviving children). Meanwhile, her older brothers William Ellison (1811-1858) and Edward Ellison (1813-1866) were being taken in by Captain Gershom Bradford and Sarah Alden Hickling Bradford of Duxbury, a family that had 4 daughters but no sons (by agreement the room and board of the Ellison brothers would be reimbursed by their grandmother Elizabeth Hodson Hickling, possibly out of the estate of their parents).

Due to the need to provide some sort of education for boys who would have careers in business rather than vocations in the ministry or in the professions of law and medicine and education, the English High School opened its doors in [Boston](#). America’s first high school.



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The first patient was admitted to Massachusetts General Hospital in [Boston](#).

The [Concord](#) Social Library was established to house the collection of the earlier Charitable Library Society. [John Stacy](#), Concord bookseller and stationer, would be the librarian, and the library materials would be maintained in his and his son [Albert Stacy](#)'s store on the Milldam until in 1851 they would be transferred to the Concord Town Library in the new courthouse, and in 1873 passed along to the Concord Free Public Library.



This is despite what [Henry Thoreau](#) would say in the "Reading" chapter:

[WALDEN](#): My residence was more favorable, not only to thought, but to serious reading, than a university; and though I was beyond the range of the ordinary circulating library, I had more than ever come within the influence of those books which circulate round the world, whose sentences were first written on bark, and are now merely copied from time to time on to linen paper. Says the poet Mir Camar Uddin Mast, "Being seated to run through the region of the spiritual world; I have had this advantage in books. To be intoxicated by a single glass of wine; I have experienced this pleasure when I have drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines." I kept Homer's Iliad on my table through the summer, though I looked at his page only now and then. Incessant labor with my hands, at first, for I had my house to finish and my beans to hoe at the same time, made more study impossible. Yet I sustained myself by the prospect of such reading in future. I read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of my work, till that employment made me ashamed of myself, and I asked where it was then that **I** lived.

PEOPLE OF  
WALDEN

MIR CAMAR UDDIN MAST

JOHN CHARLES FREMONT

HOMER



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

Going on the basis of this mention, Stacy's offerings could not have been particularly sophisticated. However, he would, when WALDEN was published in 1854, purchase a copy for \$0.<sup>75</sup> presumably for this town circulating library.<sup>4</sup>

**IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT IT IS MORTALS WHO CONSUME OUR HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS, FOR WHAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO DO IS EVADE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE HUMAN LIFESPAN. (IMMORTALS, WITH NOTHING TO LIVE FOR, TAKE NO HEED OF OUR STORIES.)**

Sarah Alden Bradford

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project


4. By the way, you can make up your own mind whether Henry was being perfectly fair here, in not awarding more weight to the Concord Social Library. Its full records survive, and are now available for your inspection at the Concord Free Public Library. There is even a finding aid for the Social Library records, and it is available on the CFPL website: <http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin Aids/ConcordSocialLibrary.htm>. The CFPL has, also, the records of the Charitable Library Society, the Concord Town Library, and other pre-public libraries in Concord — although they have not as yet been able to make their finding aids for the other materials available on the internet. (Give them some money: let's get this work done.)




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**1822**

 January 22, Tuesday: The wedding of [Martha Tilden Bradford](#) and [Dr. Josiah Bartlett](#) took place at the Ripley parsonage (according to another record, the wedding took place on November 24, 1821). The couple would set up housekeeping in [Concord](#). A frequent visitor in their household would be [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) — and occasionally [Mary Moody Emerson](#) would pass through.

 September 6, Friday: [David Bradford Bartlett](#) was born, the 1st child of [Dr. Josiah Bartlett](#) and [Martha Tilden Bradford Bartlett](#) of Concord.


[Christopher Gore Ripley](#) was born in Waltham to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) (he would serve as Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, and then die in Concord on August 15, 1881 and be interred in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery).



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**1824**

 June 2, Wednesday: Phebe Bliss Ripley was born in Waltham to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) and was named after the Reverend's mother.


[Samuel Wilks](#) was born in Camberwell, London, England, a son of Joseph Barber Wilks, a cashier at the East India House.



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**1826**

 August 10, Thursday: [Ezra Ripley](#) was born in Waltham to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) and named in honor of the Reverend's reverend father (he would become a Lieutenant of the 29th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers and succumb to illness and the heat at the age of 36 in Helena, Arkansas on the Mississippi River near Vicksburg on July 28, 1863).

Doting father Allan Melvill wrote to Peter Gansevoort about the wellbeing of his 8-year-old son [Herman Melvill](#), "I depend much on your kind attention to my dear Boy who will be truly grateful for the least favour — let him avoid green Fruit & unseasonable exposure to the Sun & heat."

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*5th day 10th of 8 M / Father Rodman said a few words as did Francis Carr, the first time in Public, he is a friend who needs care, & I hope wisdom & prudence will go hand & hand with those who may find it their places to lend a helping hand. —*


**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**



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**1828**


 February 18, Monday: Sarah Caroline Ripley was born in Waltham to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#), but would die very young.




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**1829**

 July 12, Sunday: Ann Dunkin Ripley was born to [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) (she would get married with George Loring and bear one child, and would die at the age of 23 on August 8, 1852 and be buried in Concord's Sleepy Hollow Cemetery).

 During the marches of the [Orangemen](#) (Protestants affiliated with England) in Ulster in Ireland, this year, a number of people were killed (which, in itself, was not all that extraordinary, religiosity and murderousness tending there to go along hand in hand).

**IRELAND**

In [Providence, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*1st day 12th of 7 M 1829 / At our morning Meeting we were Silent  
Nicholas Congdon & wife & also Walter Allen were present. -  
In the Afternoon Wm Almy was here & engaged in testimony -  
After meeting this Afternoon Our much respected & beloved second  
teacher Lydia B Allen left the Institution [the Quaker school  
in Providence] not expecting to return to it in that capacity  
She carries with her the good will & wishes of every member of  
the family & Schollars*


**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

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**1833**

 July 14, Sunday: [Sophia Bradford Ripley](#) was born as the child of [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) with the [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) (she would get married with Professor James Bradley Thayer of the Harvard Law School and bear 6 children).

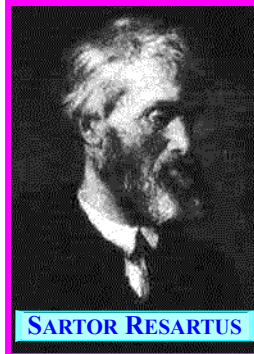
John Keble, Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, preached the Assize Sermon that marked the opening of this year's civil and criminal courts. He denounced the English nation for having turned away from God in a "National Apostasy." This would create a sensation, and is regarded as the beginning of the religious revival known as the "Tractarian Movement" (so designated because of a series of 90 pamphlets) or "Oxford Movement" (a number of adherents to this movement would become Roman Catholics).

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1834

➡ Not earlier than Thursday, November 13: The Reverend [Waldo Emerson](#) received [Thomas Carlyle](#)'s packet containing the four stitched pamphlet copies of the complete [SARTOR RESARTUS](#): "one copy for your own behoof" as the author had phrased it, plus "three others you can perhaps find fit readers for." Emerson would pass on these extras to the Reverend [Frederic Henry Hedge](#) in West Cambridge, to Mrs. [Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) in Waltham, and to [Lydia Jackson](#) in Plymouth. Mrs. Ripley's home in Waltham was functioning not only as a school for young women and a parsonage for her husband the Reverend [Samuel Ripley](#), but also as a general clearinghouse for [Transcendental](#) thought. Carlyle's opus would be read aloud there on winter evenings, and the Reverend Ripley definitely read it. Young Lydia's circle in Plymouth included not less than 7 others ([Elizabeth Davis](#), [Abby Burr Hedge](#), [Eunice Dennie Hedge](#), [Hannah Hedge](#), [Andrew Russell](#), [LeBaron Russell](#), and [Nathaniel Russell](#)) all of whom would presumably read or be hearing much about Carlyle's opus. Lydia's friend George Partridge Bradford, Mrs. Ripley's younger brother and thus Emerson's half-uncle, would definitely be reading it. It is a wonder these enthusiasts didn't wear the print right off the page!



SARTOR RESARTUS

**STUDY THIS STRANGENESS**

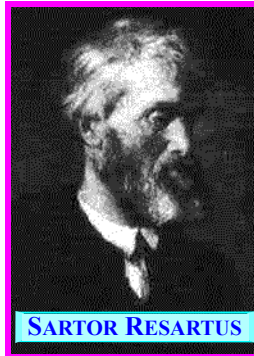
On this day the remains of Francois-Adrien Boieldieu were being laid to rest in Rouen, his birthplace.

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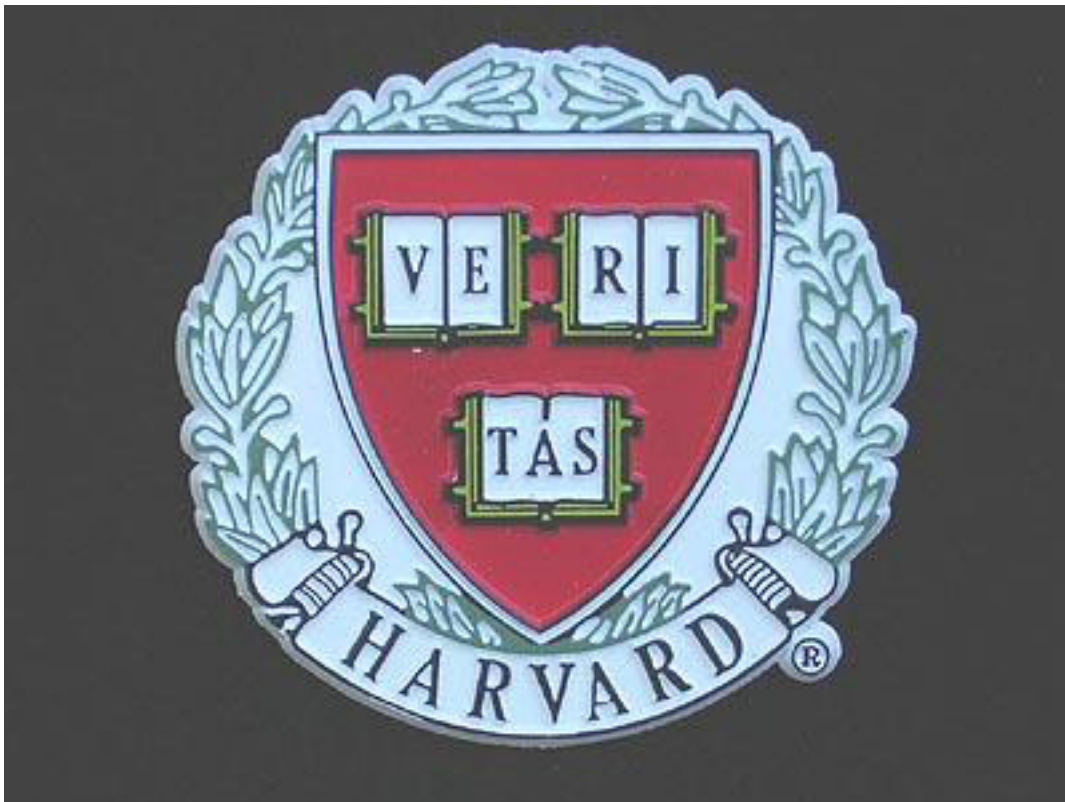
1835

➡ April 30, Thursday: [Waldo Emerson](#)'s letter to [Thomas Carlyle](#) identified some of the readers of [SARTOR RESARTUS](#): among them were the Reverend Nathaniel Langdon Frothingham of the highly prestigious 1st Church in Boston MA; Emerson's cousin and childhood friend the Reverend William Henry Furness of the 1st Congregational Unitarian Church in Philadelphia; Gamaliel Bradford, who was the father of George Partridge Bradford and [Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and a superintendent of the Massachusetts General Hospital; and Ellis Gray Loring, an abolitionist and trial lawyer based in Boston, who had been Emerson's classmate at both the Boston Latin School and [Harvard College](#), and in 1838 would help edit Carlyle's MISCELLANIES.



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY****SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD****1836**

→ September 8, Thursday: Some 1,100 to 1,300 alums attended [Harvard College](#)'s Bicentennial, and heard a professional choir offer the very original of "Fair Harvard." Although the very oldest living alumnus, 96-year-old Judge Paine Wingate (Class of 1759, of New Hampshire) was, unfortunately, unable to be present, 86-year-old Samuel Emery (Class of 1774, of Philadelphia) was able to march in the parade. Word arrived that President Josiah Quincy, Sr. had, while researching for a "History of Harvard University" in the College Archives, located in filed-and-forgotten records of an Overseers meeting on January 6, 1644 the first rough sketch for the shield with the Latin motto "VE RI TAS" ("Verity" or "Truth") and three open books, which was to become the College's arms. This is how it looks today, as a refrigerator magnet:



During this Bicentennial, a white banner atop a large tent in the Yard for the 1st time publicly displayed this design, which in 1843 would become the basis of the seal officially adopted by the Harvard Corporation, and then in 1847 would be dropped in favor of another seal, and then in 1885 would be readopted.





## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

Some of the alums had an interestingly historic discussion:

(following screen)

In September 1836,  on the day of the second centennial anniversary of [Harvard College](#), [Mr. Emerson](#), [George Ripley](#), and myself [[Frederic Henry Hedge](#)], with one other [who was this fourth person: would it have been an unnamed woman, an unnamed wife, specifically [Sophia Ripley](#)??], chanced to confer together on the state of current opinion in theology and philosophy, which we agreed in thinking was very unsatisfactory. Could anything be done in the way of protest and introduction of deeper and broader views? What we strongly felt was dissatisfaction with the reigning sensuous philosophy, dating from [John Locke](#), on which our Christian theology was based. The writings of [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#), recently edited by Marsh [Henry Nelson Coleridge had only at this point initiated publication of THE LITERARY REMAINS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE], and some of [Thomas Carlyle](#)'s earlier essays, especially the "Characteristics" and "SIGNS OF THE TIMES," had created a ferment in the minds of some of the young clergy of that day. There was a promise in the air of a new era of intellectual life. We four concluded to call a few like-minded seekers together in the following week.  Some dozen of us met in Boston, in the house, I believe, of Mr. Ripley. Among them I recall the name of [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#) (not yet turned Romanist), [Cyrus Augustus Bartol](#), [Theodore Parker](#), and [Charles Stearns Wheeler](#) and [Robert Bartlett](#), tutors in Harvard College. There was some discussion, but no conclusion reached, on the question whether it were best to start a new journal as the organ of our views, or to work through those already existing. The next meeting, in the same month, was held by invitation of Emerson, at his house in Concord. A large number assembled; besides some of those who met at Boston, I remember Mr. Alcott, [[Bronson Alcott](#)] [John Sullivan Dwight](#), [Ephraim Peabody](#), Dr. [Convers Francis](#), Mrs. [Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#), Miss [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#), [Margaret Fuller](#), [Caleb Stetson](#), [James Freeman Clarke](#). These were the earliest of a series of meetings held from time to time, as occasion prompted, for seven or eight years. [Jones Very](#) was one of those who occasionally attended; [H.D. Thoreau](#) another. There was no club, properly speaking; no organization, no presiding officer, no vote ever taken. How the name "[Transcendental](#)," given to these gatherings and the set of persons who took part in them, originated, I cannot say. It certainly was never assumed by the persons so called. I suppose I was the only one who had any first-hand acquaintance with German [transcendental](#) philosophy, at the start. [THE DIAL](#) was the product of the movement, and in some sort its organ.

CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

At the wrap-up of the day, guest speaker Josiah Quincy, Jr. (Class of 1821) made a motion "that this assembly of the Alumni be adjourned to meet at this place on the 8th of September, 1936" — and the motion was unanimously adopted.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**


*5th day 8th of 9 M / Our meeting was small but very quietly solid  
– I missed father Rodman at my right hand being confined at home  
with a lame back –*

*Thro' the day my mind has been much at Providence where I have  
concluded to go tomorrow (if the Steam Boat get in in season)  
to attend the funeral of my ancient & much beloved friend Moses  
Brown*

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

**ONE COULD BE ELSEWHERE, AS ELSEWHERE DOES EXIST.  
ONE CANNOT BE ELSEWHEN SINCE ELSEWHEN DOES NOT.  
(TO THE WILLING MANY THINGS CAN BE EXPLAINED,  
THAT FOR THE UNWILLING WILL REMAIN FOREVER MYSTERIOUS.)**

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY****SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD****1837**

 [Thomas Carlyle](#)'s [THE LIFE OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER](#). COMPREHENDING AN EXAMINATION OF HIS WORKS. ... FROM THE LONDON EDITION. (New York: George Dearborn & Co.). A copy of this would be in [Henry Thoreau](#)'s personal library.

## **THE LIFE OF SCHILLER**

From this year into 1840 [Carlyle](#) would be offering four courses of lectures in London, on German Literature and on Heroes.

The argument for the almost magical growth of this Scottish author's reputation was first made by the peripatetic English reformer, [Harriet Martineau](#), in her controversial travelogue SOCIETY IN AMERICA:

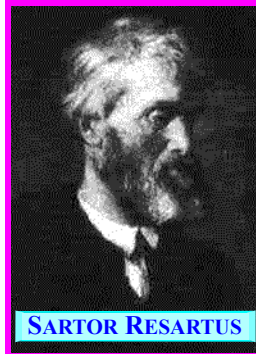
No living writer exercises so enviable a sway, so far as it goes, as Mr. Carlyle ... [whose] remarkable work [SARTOR RESARTUS](#), issued piecemeal through [Fraser's Magazine](#), has been republished in America and is exerting an influence proportioned to the genuineness of the admiration it has excited. Perhaps this is the first instance of the Americans having taken to their hearts an English work that came to them anonymous, unsanctioned by any recommendation and even absolutely neglected at home. It has regenerated the preaching of more than one of the clergy.



## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

This English author's published account of the situation, above, is of course entirely disingenuous, is a deliberate act of mystification of her audience. She had herself already become part of the American movement for this book by Carlyle before she had returned to England.



In April 1835 she had been had been "[fed] with the SARTOR" by the Reverend William Henry Furness in Philadelphia out of the copy he had just received from [Waldo Emerson](#) in [Boston](#). In May 1835 while vacationing with [Mrs. Sophia Dana Ripley](#) and the [Reverend George Ripley](#) she had "made the SARTOR her constant companion." In June 1835 while visiting the Reverend James Freeman Clarke in Lexington, Kentucky she had told him that what she was up to was "preparing the people for Carlyleism." In August 1835 while visiting the Reverend Clarke's cousin [Margaret Fuller](#) they had had "some talk about Carlyleism." During Fall 1835 she had met with Emerson himself several times as he exercised himself in behalf of [Thomas Carlyle](#). She had visited several times with [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) in Waltham, and in October 1835 she had been staying with the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in [Newport, Rhode Island](#) when Emerson had sent the Reverend Channing a copy of [SARTOR RESARTUS](#).

**NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT**



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**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

**1840**

May 8, Friday: [Waldo Emerson](#) was making arrangements for the [Transcendental Club](#), the “club of clubs,” to meet at his home on the succeeding Wednesday. He asked [Margaret Fuller](#) to let Mr. Ripley<sup>5</sup> bring her, “& see me & inspire our reptile wits.” He informed her that he had invited other females, Mrs. [Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) and Sarah Freeman Clarke, not to mention of course his Mrs., the lady of the house, Lydian Emerson, and in addition the Reverends [Frederic Henry Hedge](#) and [Theodore Parker](#), [Bronson Alcott](#), and [Henry Thoreau](#) would be there.

On the previous day at 1PM while all had been at peace and most of the population had been at the dining table, a tornado had burst upon the city of Natchez, Mississippi. On this day the surviving citizens were looking around them at devastation. The local Courier would report that a Mrs. Alexander had been pulled “from the ruins of the Steamboat Hotel; she was found greatly injured, with two children in her arms, and they both dead!”



1841

October 12, Tuesday: The combined British detachment that had ventured out from the relative safety of the metropolis, Cabul, [Afghanistan](#), by this morning had become large enough to transit the pass of Khoord-Cabul, and this was effected with some loss due to long range sniper fire down from the rocks at the sides of the defile. The force then set up a defensive camp perimeter on the far side of the defile at Khoord-Cabul and the 13th light infantry again subjected itself to losses due to its exposure to this unrelenting rifle fire, by returning through the pass to its defensive camp perimeter at Bootkhak. For some nights the camps would repel attacks, “that on the 35th native infantry being peculiarly disastrous, from the treachery of the Affghan horse, who admitted the enemy within their lines, by which our troops were exposed to a fire from the least suspected quarter. Many of our gallant sepoy, and Lieutenant Jenkins, thus met their death.”<sup>6</sup>

[Frederick Douglass](#) addressed the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society at the Universalist meetinghouse in [Concord](#).



6. Lieut. V. Eyre (Sir Vincent Eyre, 1811-1881). THE MILITARY OPERATIONS AT CABUL: WHICH ENDED IN THE RETREAT AND DESTRUCTION OF THE BRITISH ARMY, JANUARY 1842, WITH A JOURNAL OF IMPRISONMENT IN [AFFGHANISTAN](#). Philadelphia PA: Carey and Hart, 1843; London: J. Murray, 1843 (three editions); Lieut. V. Eyre (Sir Vincent Eyre, 1811-1881). PRISON SKETCHES: COMPRISING PORTRAITS OF THE CABUL PRISONERS AND OTHER SUBJECTS; ADAPTED FOR BINDING UP WITH THE JOURNALS OF LIEUT. V. EYRE, AND LADY SALE; LITHOGRAPHED BY LOWES DICKINSON. London: Dickinson and Son, [1843?]



## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

We very much need to know who was in town at the time, and who did and who did not attend this meeting:

- [Bronson Alcott](#) ?
- [Abba Alcott](#) ?
- [Anna Bronson Alcott](#) ?
- [Louisa May Alcott](#) (8 years old)?
- [Phineas Allen](#) ?
- Perez Blood ?
- Mrs. Mary Merrick Brooks ?
- Squire Nathan Brooks ?
- Caroline Downes Brooks ?
- George Merrick Brooks ?
- Deacon Simon Brown ?
- Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) ?
- [Waldo Emerson](#) ?
- Reverend Barzillai Frost ?
- [Margaret Fuller](#) ?
- [William Lloyd Garrison](#) ?
- [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) ?
- Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar ?
- [Edward Sherman Hoar](#) ?
- Senator George Frisbie Hoar ?
- [Elizabeth Sherman Hoar](#) ?
- Squire [Samuel Hoar](#) ?
- Dr. [Edward Jarvis](#) ?
- Deacon [Francis Jarvis](#) ?
- [John Shepard Keyes](#), [Judge John Shepard Keyes](#) ?
- John M. Keyes ?
- [Reverend George Ripley](#) ?
- [Mrs. Sophia Dana Ripley](#) ?
- Reverend [Samuel Ripley](#) ?
- [Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) ?
- [Lemuel Shattuck](#) ?
- [Daniel Shattuck](#) ?
- Sheriff Sam Staples ?
- [Henry David Thoreau](#) ?
- [John Thoreau](#), Senior ?
- [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) ?
- [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) ?
- [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) ?
- [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) ?
- [Aunt Maria Thoreau](#) ?
- [Aunt Jane Thoreau](#) ?
- [Alek Therien](#) ?
- Miss Prudence Ward ?
- xxxxxx ?

## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

1843

November 5, Sunday: Becoming ill at dinner, [Joseph Smith, Jr.](#) accused his pregnant wife of many years Emma Hale Smith of slipping poison into his coffee (in the prayer circle, [Brigham Young](#) interpreted Emma's silence as proof of her guilt; however, Joseph would so quickly recover that this had more probably been an attack of ulcers).

There was an insurrection on the island of [Haiti](#). Blacks and mulattos killed 6 white men, women, and children in an effort to drive whites off the island.

On March 24, 1853 [Henry Thoreau](#) would record an anecdote retailed by [William Ellery Channing](#), that [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) had "spent one whole season studying the lichens on a stick of wood they were about to put on the fire." We should compare and contrast this anecdote of [Channing's](#) with [Waldo Emerson's](#) mean-spirited remark in a letter to [Elizabeth Sherman Hoar](#) in Liverpool on August 3, 1859 while she was on the European grand tour, that "Henry T. occupies himself with the history of the river, measures it, weighs it, and strains it through a colander to all eternity." It would have to be before November 5, 1843, because on that date Mrs. Ripley mentioned this piece of firewood in a letter to the Reverend George F. Simmons:

*You recollect that stick with the Graphia Hebraica so beautifully sketched upon it, that I laboured with my hand and you with my penknife to procure, alas, some vandal has given it to the flames. I have not met with another specimen before or since.*



The primary intent of Emerson's remark to Miss Hoar touring in Europe, I would suggest, was to remind her that for a personage of the stature of Emerson to "occupy himself" with such activities and concerns would be *infra dig*, and that therefore there was a class difference which needed to be pointed to, with he and the touring Miss Hoar on the near side of this class divide, as gentle folk, and with our good "Henry T.," despite an education having been attempted upon him, decidedly beyond the pale as a mere crafts person without any really good money-earning craft. I find such a remark not humorous, nor in good humour, but quite offensively condescending and demeaning. Is this just me? I wonder what Elizabeth, knowing Henry as well as she knew Waldo, thought of this letter when she opened it in Europe. Presumably "Boys need to go after each other." So the question I am raising here is, might Thoreau's remark about Mrs. Ripley's preoccupation with the *Graphia Hebraica* on the stick of firewood be likewise interpretable as not humorous, nor in good humour, but quite offensively condescending and demeaning? (Do I have a blind spot of affection for Thoreau which I quite lack for Emerson? –Well, probably I do.)



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After having thought about this for some time, I am unable to construe Thoreau's remark about spending one whole season studying the stick of firewood as condescending or demeaning. The one invidious thing that Thoreau might have been suggesting would have been "Look, it's just a woman, what can you expect from a botanist that's just a woman?" And I haven't been able to grok sexism in the relationship between Thoreau and Mrs. Ripley.

There had been early snows, and all the recruits had deserted [Fruitlands](#) and its thin linen clothing and its vegetarian diet, leaving [the Alcott family](#) and the [Charles Lanes](#) to endure the harsh winter alone. It was shaping up to be the coldest winter of the decade. Between this day and Thursday the 8th, [Waldo Emerson](#) rather unsympathetically wrote in his journal:

*The Reformers wrote very ill. They made it a rule not to bolt their flour & unfortunately neglected also to sift their thoughts.... Alcott & Lane want feet; they are always feeling of their shoulders to find if their wings are sprouting; but next best to wings are cowhide boots, which society is always advising them to put on.*





**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

**1846**

[William Thaddeus Harris](#) graduated from [Harvard College](#). He would study for the law, but would never practice.

In Waltham the 1st bridge was erected on Moody Street across the Charles River (this bridge would be redone in 1871, in 1921, and in 1946).

The [Reverend Samuel Ripley](#) and [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) had been operating an academy in Waltham that prepared young men to enter [Harvard College](#). Sarah was the instructor in Greek, Latin, and German. In this year, empty nesters having raised their brood of children, totaling 7, Samuel and Sarah retired to the Old Manse in [Concord](#) to escape the “dreary passage of constant labours and homesick boys,” while son [Ezra Ripley](#), last one out of the house, matriculated at Harvard. The Reverend would die during the following year but his widow Sarah would survive him for another 20 years.

The [Harvard Class of 1846](#) funded a monument in the cemetery of Plymouth, Massachusetts, in memory of their tutor and proctor [Robert Bartlett](#):

To [Robert Bartlett](#), an alumnus of [Harvard College](#), who obtained the highest place among his companions, by genius, by study and learning, always distinguished by every form of virtue, most devoted to religion, to truth and liberty, who sacredly discharged all the offices of life, the most excellent and dutiful son, the most deserving brother, the most faithful friend, for almost four years the learned, kind and careful instructor, hurried away by a hasty death; in consequence of distinguished kindness to themselves, the members of the class of 1846, the last who listened to his instruction, have erected this monument.

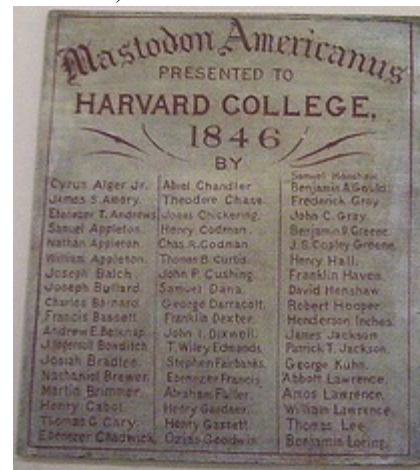
## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

The rules of “rugby” [football](#), which dated to William Webb Ellis’s famous act of 1823, were formalized.

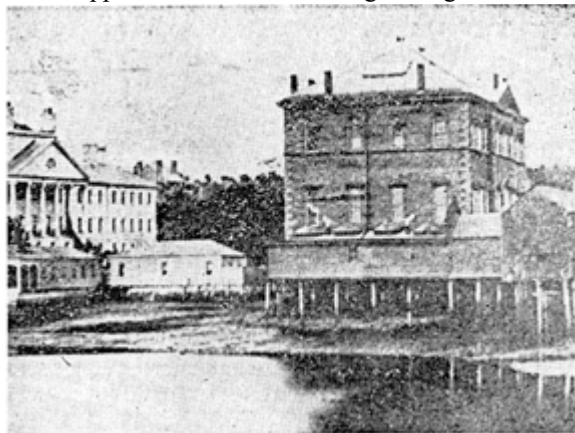
SPORTS

Professor [John White Webster](#) had gotten enthused about a mastodon skeleton *Mammot americanum* that had been found in a New Jersey bog in 1844 and was available on the market for only \$3,000, and jumped at the chance to acquire it for the [Harvard](#) Museum supposing that the officials of the college would be as enthusiastic as he was about these magnificently preserved bones and supposing that he could easily raise the funds to reimburse him for his grand procurement (but in this year he discovered that he had been quite mistaken, because some of the local folks whose names had been inscribed on the presentation plaques had failed to make good on their promises and had left him holding the bag for the balance of the debt).



[Professor Webster](#) would be undaunted by this residual obligation. He knew he would be able to turn to his richie-rich Boston acquaintance Doctor [George Parkman](#), who although he was personally rather unpleasant was the sole owner of a whole potfull of downtown real estate, for a personal loan to cover the balance.

A new building for the [Harvard Medical College](#) was erected upon land belonging to [Doctor Parkman](#) down on the flats of the Charles River at the foot of North Grove Street near the Massachusetts Hospital on Allen Street (now Massachusetts General) and near the New Gaol at Foundry Wharf, all of this in the neighborhood of the tollhouse at the [Boston](#) approaches to the Cambridge Bridge:



(Don't go looking for this two-story brick building set on piers at the waterfront near Massachusetts General Hospital. It was long ago torn down.)



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**1847**

February 11, Thursday: Albert Woolson was born in the New York farm hamlet of Antwerp 22 miles northeast of Watertown.

Thomas Alva Edison was born.

On this day, or shortly afterward, [Waldo Emerson](#) wrote [Margaret Fuller](#) about [Henry Thoreau](#)'s [Concord](#) lecture of the previous night:

*[Mrs. Ripley](#) & other members of the opposition came down the other night to hear Henry's account of his housekeeping at Walden Pond, which he read as a lecture, and were charmed with the witty wisdom which ran through it all.*



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

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**Lecture 11<sup>7</sup>**

DATE	PLACE	TOPIC
February 10, Wednesday, 1847, at 7PM	<a href="#">Concord</a> ; Unitarian Church, Vestry	“A History of Myself” (I)
February 17, Wednesday, 1847, at 7PM	<a href="#">Concord</a> ; Unitarian Church, Vestry	“A History of Myself” (II)
January 3, Monday, 1848, at 7PM	<a href="#">Concord</a> ; Unitarian Church, Vestry	“An Excursion to Ktaadn”

7. From Bradley P. Dean and Ronald Wesley Hoag's THOREAU'S LECTURES BEFORE WALDEN:  
AN ANNOTATED CALENDAR.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

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### Narrative of Event:

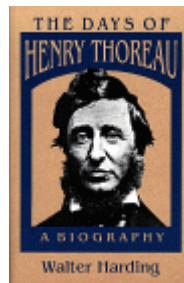
The records of the Concord Lyceum state, "Concord Feb 17 1847 A lecture was delivered by Henry D Thoreau of Concord. Subject — Same as last week. A. G. Fay Sec[retary]"<sup>8</sup> The lecture was the twelfth of the season's sixteen offerings.



### TIMELINE OF WALDEN

### Advertisements, Reviews, and Responses:

See lecture 10 for a discussion of Miss Prudence Ward's favorable comments on this lecture, which she reported, perhaps erroneously, to be a repetition of Thoreau's lecture of the previous week. Lyceums very rarely allowed repeat performances, and at this time [Henry Thoreau](#) almost certainly had a draft of the 2d of his 3 early [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) lectures. But whether Prudence was right or wrong about the duplication, this second lecture attracted "a very full audience," as Ward reported (quoted in Walter Roy Harding's *THE DAYS OF HENRY THOREAU*, page 187), and was well received.



Two other letters, one by [Waldo Emerson](#) and one by [Bronson Alcott](#), ambiguously refer to one or another of these lecture performances, with a slight favoring of the 17 February possibility. In a 28 February 1847 letter to [Margaret Fuller](#), Emerson comments, "Mrs Ripley [[Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#)] & other members of the opposition came down the other night to hear Henry's Account of his housekeeping at [Walden Pond](#), which he

8.Cameron, Kenneth Walter. *THE MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM DURING THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE*. Hartford CT: Transcendental Books, 1969, page 162.



## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

read as a lecture, and were charmed with the witty wisdom which ran through it all.”<sup>9</sup> The Alcott letter, to his daughter [Anna Alcott](#), was penned on a “Wednesday Night” in February 1847, the day of one of the two lectures. In a response to Anna’s query about how she might help her mother and father through the family’s present difficult circumstances, Alcott assures her that self-improvement guided by her own conscience is the path to follow. He concludes with a tantalizingly cryptic endorsement of the lecture she would hear that evening. His apparent familiarity with what Thoreau will say suggests that he either had had private access to the material or had already heard it delivered, either as a private reading or a public lecture. If the latter, his opportunities would have been in Lincoln on 19 January, assuming that Thoreau gave his “History of Myself” lecture then, or in Concord on 10 February, assuming the unusual: that Thoreau did deliver the same lecture on both the 10th and 17th. Alcott’s letter to Anna reads in part:<sup>10</sup>

*Your Note was the first thing I saw this morning, when I came in to make my study fire: and I was glad to find, all I knew, of your earnest desire to help us in these times of trial, confirmed in your own handwriting. You wish me to tell you what you can do to lighten your mother’s cares, and give your father a still deeper enjoyment in yourself, and your sisters .... Life is a lesson we best learn and almost solely too, by living. The Conscience within is the best, and, in the end, the only Counsellor .... Tis that first of all duties[,] Self-improvement, to which end life, and the world, and your friends are all given. I think I speak truly when I say that you wish this most of all things .... As for me, and my thoughts – Great is my Peace, if in going at night to my Pillow, I have the sense of having earned my faculties, or limbs even, by thinking One Thought, speaking one word, doing one deed, that my task master approves, or the nearest or remotest Person or Time shall adopt, repeat, or enjoy. –*

*Dear Anna, this from your thoughtful, yet careful-minded Father. For the rest, our friend Henry shall answer and explain in the Lecture you hear this evening.*

### Description of Topic:

Very likely the 2d of [Thoreau](#)’s two earliest “Walden; or, Life in the Woods” lectures, the text of this lecture is, for the most part, the second fifty-odd pages (paged “1” through “53” using Thoreau’s pagination on the manuscript leaves) of “the text of the first version” of WALDEN recovered by J. Lyndon Shanley.<sup>11</sup>

The following sentence suggests the sense of immediacy the lecture likely created among Thoreau’s auditors: “I trust that none of my hearers will be so uncharitable as to look into my house now — after hearing this, at the end of an unusually dirty winter, with critical housewife’s eyes, for I intend to celebrate the first bright & unquestionable spring morning by scrubbing my house with sand until it is as white as a lily — or, at any rate, as the washer-woman said of her clothes, as white as a ‘wiolet.’”<sup>12</sup> As with the first of his two lectures, Thoreau continued to revise this text and published it seven-and-a-half years later as the second chapter of WALDEN, “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” although several paragraphs of the lecture text consist of passages published in the “Reading” and “Sounds” chapters.

9. THE LETTERS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 9 volumes to date, ed. Ralph L. Rusk and Eleanor M. Tilton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; 1990), 3:377-78.

10. THE LETTERS OF A. BRONSON ALCOTT, pages 128-29.

11. Shanley, THE MAKING OF WALDEN, WITH THE TEXT OF THE FIRST VERSION, pages 137-57.

12. Shanley, THE MAKING OF WALDEN, page 153.



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**



MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

1853

January 15, Saturday: The magazine Scientific American, The Advocate of Industry, and Journal of Scientific, Mechanical and other Improvements reported an event at the brewery of Mr. Sietz in Easton, Pennsylvania. A hand, Phillip Winner, fell into an ale vat left open for gas to escape, "and when removed life was extinct."



January 15th: 9 Am to woods. The starry flakes or crystals, like everything that falls from heaven to earth – have – partially melted–, coalesced & lost their regularity and beauty. A good part of the snow has fallen from the trees. See one or two short trails of meadow mice – apparently they work now under the snow – but when the sun has melted & settled & the cold somewhat consolidated the snow they come out on the surface? As you walk in the woods you hear the rustling sound of limbs & leaves that are relieved of their burden and of the falling snow. Young ever- greens look like statues partially covered with white veils. Saw near Le Grosse's the 12 ult a shrike. He told me about seeing Uncle Charles once come to Barrett's mill with logs – leap over the yoke that drew them – and back again– It amused the boys. True words are those – as Trench says – transport – rapture ravishment, ecstasy – these are the words I want. This is the effect of music– I am rapt away by it –out of myself– These are truly poetical words. I am inspired – elevated – expanded– I am on the mount.

Mrs Ripley told me this Pm that Russell had decided that that green (& sometimes yellow dust) on the underside of stones in walls was a decaying state of Lepraria chlorina a lichen – the yellow another species of Lepraria. Science suggests the value of mutual intelligence. I have long known this dust – but as I did not know the name of it, i.e. what others called & therefore could not conveniently speak of it– It has suggested less to me & I have made less use of it. I now first feel as if I had got hold of it

In Carlisle & Boxboro they go to Church as of old – they are still pagans *Pagani* – or villagers

SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH

CHARLES JONES DUNBAR

Dr. Alfred I. Tauber would feel it possible to extrapolate from the above in arriving at an understanding of Thoreau's appreciation of the relationship between time and eternity.



March 24, 1853: 6 A.M. — By river to Hemlocks.

I see where the muskrats opened clams, probably last evening, close to the water's edge, or in the fork of fir or a willow, or on a tussock just covered with water, the shells remaining, for they bring the clam to the air to eat it. The downy (?) woodpeckers are quite numerous this morning, the skirts of their coats barred with white and a large, long white spot on their backs. They have a smart, shrill peep or whistle, somewhat like a robin, but more metallic. Saw two gray squirrels coursing over the trees on the Rock Island. The forest is to them a vast web over which they run with as little hesitation as a spider across his net. They appear to have planned or to be familiar with their course before they start. The Island has several bunches of leaves in its trees, probably their nests. For several mornings the water has been perfectly smooth at six o'clock, but by seven the wind has risen with the ascending sun and the waves with the wind, and the day assumed a new and less promising respect.

I think I may consider the shepherd's-purse in bloom to-day, for its flowers are nearly as conspicuous as those of the stellaria, which had its spring opening some days since, both being the worse for the frost this morning. Since the cold snap of the 14th, 15th, etc., have walked for the most part with unbuttoned coat, and for the most part without mittens.

I find the arrow-headed character on our plains, older than the written character in Persia.

Now are the windy days of March drying up the superabundant moisture. The river does not yet preserve a smooth reflecting surface far into the day. The meadows are mostly bare, the water going down, but perchance the April rains will fill them again.

Last afternoon was moist and cloudy and still, and the robin sang faintly, as if to usher in a warm rainstorm, but it cleared off at evening.

**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY****SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

There are very slight but white mists on the river these mornings.

It spits a little snow this afternoon.

P. M. - To Second Division Brook.

The white pine wood, freshly cut, piled by the side of the Charles Miles road, is agreeable to walk beside. I like the smell of it, all ready for the borers, and the rich light-yellow color of the freshly split wood and the purple color of the sap at the ends of the quarters, from which distill perfectly clear and crystalline tears, colorless and brilliant as diamonds, tears shed for the loss of a forest in which is a world of light and purity, its life oozing out. These beautiful accidents that attend on man's works! Fit pendants to the ears of the Queen of Heaven! How full of interest is one of these wrecks of a wood! C. declares that Mrs. Ripley spent one whole season studying the lichens on a stick of wood they were about to put on the fire. I am surprised to find that these terebinthine (?) tears have a hard (seemingly soft as water) not film but transparent skin over them. How many curiosities are brought to us with our wood! The trees and the lichens that clothe them, the forest warrior and his shield adhering to him.

I have heard of two skeletons dug up in Concord within twenty years, one, at least, undoubtedly an Indian. This was as they were digging away the bank directly behind I. Moore's house. Dr. Jarvis pronounced it an Indian. The other near the jail.

I tied a string round what I take to be the *Alnus incana*, two or three rods this side Jenny's Road, on T. Wheeler's ditch. The bark is of a more opaque and lighter color, the fruit more orbicular, but the most sure difference was that a part of the pistillate catkins were upright. It was not quite in bloom, but neither were some of those whose fertile catkins drooped, nor could I yet see a difference in the color of the opened catkins.

At Second Division, saw pollywogs again, full grown with long tails. The cowslip leaves are in many places above water, and I see what I suppose is that slender rush two inches high at the bottom of the water like a fine grass. What is that foliaceous plant amid the mosses in the wet which resembles the algæ? I find nothing like it in Hooker under head of Algæ. In many cases I find that the willow cones are a mere dense cluster of loose leaves, suggesting that the scales of cones of all kinds are only modified leaves, a crowding and stinting, of the leaves, as the stem becomes a thorn; and in this view those conical bunches of leaves of so many of the pine family have relation to the cones of the tree as well in origin as in form. The leaf, perchance, becomes calyx, cone, husk, and nutshell.

The past has been a remarkable winter; such a one as I do not remember. The ground has been bare almost all the time, and the river has been open about as much. I got but one chance to take a turn on skates over half an acre. The first snow more than an inch deep fell January 13th, but probably was not a foot deep and was soon gone. There was about as much more fell February 13th, and no more to be remembered, *i.e.* only two or three inches since. I doubt if there has been one day when it was decidedly better sleighing than wheeling. I have hardly heard the sound of sleigh-bells. A yellow lily bud already yellow at, the Tortoise Ditch Nut Meadow.

Those little holes in sandy fields and on the sides of hills, which I see so numerous as soon as the snow is off and the frost off the ground, are probably made by the skunk in search of bugs and worms, as Rice says. His tracks in the winter are very numerous, considering how rarely he is seen at that season. Probably the tortoises do not lay their eggs so early as I thought. The skunk gets them too.

**FLORA BOREALI AMERICANA**

## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

1856

May 12, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Bronson Alcott](#) walked by the Cottage of [the Alcott family](#) and the Hollowell Farm, and dined together, presumably at the Thoreau boardinghouse because Alcott was shown the “magnificent present of an Oriental library” from [Thomas Cholmondeley](#) in England. That evening Thoreau and Alcott went over to a party at the Emersons, and saw [Waldo Emerson](#) and Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#), Mary Merrick Brooks, [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), Miss Jane Whitney, Mary Brooks, [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#), [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), “and many more,” and, Alcott added in his journal, they “talk pleasantly on Society — Emerson, Thoreau, Mrs. Emerson, Mrs. Ripley, Sanborn contributing to the entertainment.”



We hear the first bobolink. How suddenly the birds arrive after the storm, even yesterday before it was fairly over, –as if they had foreseen its end! How much life the note of the bobolink imparts to the meadow!

May 17, Saturday: [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) showed [Henry Thoreau](#) a flower her son had picked on the prairie in Minnesota, which was not in the botany manual of Gray. It had been the 1st to blossom in the spring there, a blue flower with 6 petals, having a hairy stem, being “hairy involucred” and “slender-divisioned.” Unfortunately Mrs. Ripley’s son had not thought to also pick a leaf. She categorized the specimen as probably a species of hepatica and Thoreau agreed, noting that it was being termed *Pulsatilla patens*.



May 17: Rain still or lowering.

P.M. — To my boat at Cardinal Shore, thence to Lee’s Cliff.

Kingbird. The beech twigs I gathered the 15th show anthers to-day in chamber; so it probably blossoms to-day or to-morrow in woods. *Vaccinium vacillans* apparently a day or two at least. *Veronica serpyllifolia* abundant now on banks erected. Maryland yellowthroat heard afar in meadows, as I go along the road towards Hubbard’s Bridge. It is warm, but still overcast and sprinkling occasionally, near the end of the rain, and the birds are very lively. A goldfinch twitters over.

In the dry lupine bank pasture, about fifteen rods from the river, apparently travelling up the hill, I see a box tortoise, the first I have found in Concord. [Vide July 19.] Beside being longer (its upper shell five and one half by four and one fourth inches), it is much flatter and more oblong, less oval, than the one I found on Cape Cod last July. Especially it is conspicuously broader and flatter forward. The two rear marginal plates have a triangular sinus between them while the Cape Cod ones come to a point. The fifth and sixth marginal plates do not project by their edges beyond the shell. The yellow marks are much narrower, and more interrupted and like Oriental characters, than in the Cape Cod one. The sternum also is less oval, uniformly blackish-brown except a few slight bone- [?] or horn-colored blotches, while the Cape Cod one is light yellow with a few brown blotches. The scales of the sternum in this are much less sharp-angled than in the Cape Cod one. The sternum more hollow or depressed.

The tail about three eighths of an inch long only, beyond the anus (?). The bill is very upright, somewhat like this:

A beak like any Cæsar’s.... Fore legs covered with orange-colored scales. Hind ones mostly brown or bronze

## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY


## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

with a few orange spots. Beside the usual hiss, uttered in the evening as I was carrying it, a single, as it were involuntary, squeak much like a croaking frog. Iris, bright light red, or rather vermilion, remarkable. Head, brown above with yellow spots; orange beneath and neck.


The river is about a foot lower than on the 13th, notwithstanding yesterday's and to-day's rain.

At the Kalmia Swamp, see and hear the redstart, very lively and restless, flirting and spreading its reddish tail. The sylvias — *S. Americana* and redstart and summer yellowbird, etc. — are very lively there now after the rain, in the warm, moist air, amid the hoary bursting buds of maples, oaks, etc.

I stand close on the edge of the, swamp, looking for the kalmia. Nothing of its flower to be seen yet. The rhodora *there* will open in a day or two.

Meanwhile I hear a loud hum and see a splendid male humming-bird [**Ruby-throated Hummingbird**  **Archilochus colubris**] coming zigzag in long tacks, like a bee, but far swifter, along the edge of the swamp, in hot haste. He turns aside to taste the honey of the *Andromeda calyculata* (already visited by bees) within a rod of me. This golden-green gem. Its burnished back looks as if covered with green scales dusted with gold. It hovers, as it were stationary in the air, with an intense humming before each little flower-bell of the humble *Andromeda calyculata*, and inserts its long tongue in each, turning toward me that splendid ruby on its breast, that glowing ruby. Even this is coal-black in some lights! Then, along with me in the deep, wild swamp above the andromeda, amid the spruce. Its hum was heard afar at first, like that of a large bee, bringing a larger summer. This sight and sound would make me think I was in the tropics, — in Demerara or Maracaibo. [Another on our cherry blossoms the next day. A long, slender black bill.]

Nemopanthes on that very swamp-edge. *Vaccinium corymbosum* or the high blueberry.

Hear the first veery note and doubtless the *Muscicapa olivacca*. The *Sylvia Americana* (parti-colored warbler, etc.) [**Northern Parula**  **Parula americana**] is very numerous there, darting about amid the hoary buds of the maples and oaks, etc. It seems the most restless of all birds, blue more [or] less deep above, with yellow dust on the back, yellow breast, and white beneath (male with bright-orange throat, and some with a rufous crescent on breast); wings and tail dark, black, with two white bars or marks, dark bill and legs.

At Lee's the *Turritis stricta* pods three inches long, and plant two and a half feet high by measure. Get some to press. *Myosotis stricta* above there, maybe several days. *Ranunculus bulbosus* a day or two at least. *Arearia serpyllifolia*.

Mrs. Ripley showed me, from her son Gore in Minnesota, a few days ago, the first spring flower of the prairie there, a hairy-stemmed, slender-divisioned, and hairy-involucered, six-petalled blue flower, probably a species of hepatica. No leaves with it. Not described in Gray. [Yes. They say it is *Pulsatilla patens*.]

Yellow columbine well out at Lee's, one rod from rock, one rod cast of ash.

How plainly we are a part of nature! For we live like the animals around us. All day the cow is cropping the grass of yonder meadow, appropriating, as it were, a part of the solid earth into herself, except when she rests and chews the cud; and from time to time she wends her way to the river and fills her belly with that. Her food and drink are not scarce and precious, but the commonest elements of which nature is composed. The dry land in these latitudes, except in woods and deserts, is almost universally clothed with her food, and there are inland seas, ready mixed, of the wine that she loves. The Mississippi is her drink, the prairie grass her food.

The shrub oak and some other oak leafets, just expanding, now begin to be pretty.

Within the shell of my box turtle, in the cavity between its thighs and its body, were small dry leaves and seeds, showing where it laid. From these I should say it had come from amidst the alders.

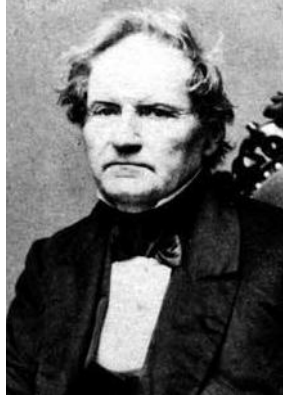


## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

June 22, Sunday: [H. Rider Haggard](#) was born.

[Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) spent the forenoon in [Henry Thoreau](#)'s room copying titles of books, etc. The [Reverend Convers Francis](#) was preaching in [Concord](#) that morning, and his proof-text was Colossians 1:27 and



his topic "Christ in Us the Hope of Glory." The thermometer reaching 95 at 3PM. At 4PM Ricketson and Thoreau went over to the Emerson home for tea by prior invitation, stopping by on the way to call on Mrs. Mary Merrick Brooks. Then he, Thoreau, and Emerson went with the Emerson children to [Walden Pond](#).



Thoreau walked back from the pond with [Ellen Emerson](#) and [Edith Emerson](#) while Ricketson, [Waldo Emerson](#), and 12-year-old [Edward Waldo Emerson](#) "bathed" and discussed the birds and flowers that they had met on the way. Upon return to the Emersons, Ricketson had a chance to meet [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) with her daughter Miss Ripley, Mrs. Marston Goodwin, and the [Reverend Francis](#). They visited until 9PM, and [Ricketson](#) was in bed back at the Thoreaus' boardinghouse at 10PM. He had found the day very satisfactory and mused to his journal about Concord's opportunity of becoming the famous-author [tourist trap](#) it is today:

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My ideas of Mr. Emerson, with whom I had my second interview last night, are that he is a kind, gentle-natured man, even loving, but not what is usually termed warm-hearted. His mind does not strike me as being so great and strong as good in quality; it appears to me also limited as to its power. I should think he could rarely surprise one with any outburst of inspiration – his genius, for what he undoubtedly has, is sui generis. He is thoughtful, original, and only Emerson, and the founder of his race. It does not appear to me that he is even indebted to Carlyle, although the latter has recognized him as a kindred spirit. Emerson's strength appears to me to lie in his honesty with himself; by his honesty he has produced a genuine article in the way of thought. He is an intelligent philosopher, a recipient of the divine cordial in doses rather homœopathic, but effectual specifics for those seeking a purer and better draught than what the schools afford. He is a blessing to the age. I am much interested in Concord, and should prefer it for a residence to almost any other place. The scenery is very picturesque in and about the village, and all appears quiet and peaceful, none of the stir and bustle of New Bedford. The Concord, or Musketaquid or grass-grown river, as my friend H.D.T. has learned its meaning from the Indians, runs along the edge of the village, which is chiefly on one street, although there are several others. It is a fine stream, and remarkable for its gentle current. With Thoreau I rowed up the river several miles, and had many pleasant views from different points. Walden Pond, by the shore where Thoreau built him a little house and there lived two years, is a small but delightful little lake, surrounded by woods. It is very deep and clear, a kind of well of nature. Concord has been for a long time the home or place of temporary abode for many of our most intellectual men and women, – commencing, so far as I am informed, with Dr. Ripley, then Emerson, Margaret Fuller for a short time as a visitor, Hawthorne, G.W. Curtis, H.D. Thoreau, the true Concord aborigine, William E. Channing, 2d, poet, Hon. Samuel Hoar, and his son, ex-Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar. It is also the home of Mrs. Brooks, a true and stirring abolitionist. Concord has a large number of fine old houses, and the old parsonage, once the home of Dr. Ripley and near the battle-ground, is one of the finest old homes in this county.

WALDO EMERSON

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

ELLERY CHANNING

SAMUEL HOAR

EBENEZER ROCKWOOD HOAR

EZRA RIPLEY

MARGARET FULLER

THOMAS CARLYLE

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## MRS. SARAH RIPLEY

## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

September: [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) sent [Henry Thoreau](#) a copy of [Blackwood's Magazine](#) with a note about an article by [George Henry Lewes](#) on Sea-side Studies she thought he would like to see. The article had reminded her of a time when he told her a story about the spontaneous generation of the butterfly — when did he tell her about that and what did he tell her?



Alden Ripley

My dear friend,

a story you once told me about the spontaneous generation of your butterfly was brought to my mind by an article in Blackwood's magazine on "Seaside studies." I thought you would like to look at it, if you have not seen it. The Magazine belongs to Mr Ames.

with much regard

SA Ripley



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1859

February 16, Wednesday: Following the recommendation of a commission he had appointed in 1858, the French Minister of the Interior proclaimed that the universal pitch, termed “diapason normal,” should be 870 vibrations per second at 15° C. A machine built to produce this pitch would be housed in a glass case at the Paris Conservatoire.



Feb. 16. P.M.— From the entrance of the Mill road I look back through the sun, this soft afternoon, to some white pine tops near Jenny Dugan’s. Their flattish boughs rest stratum above stratum like a cloud, a green mackerel sky, hardly reminding me of the concealed earth so far beneath. They are like a flaky crust of the earth, a more ethereal, terebinthine, evergreen earth. It occurs to me that my eyes rest on them with the same pleasure as do those of the hen-hawk which has been nestled in them.

My eyes nibble the piny sierra which makes the horizon’s edge, as a hungry man nibbles a cracker.

The hen-hawk [**Red-tailed Hawk** ■ *Buteo jamaicensis*] and the pine are friends. The same thing which keeps the hen-hawk in the woods, away from the cities, keeps me here. That bird settles with confidence on a white pine top and not upon your weathercock. That bird will not be poultry of yours, lays no eggs for you, forever hides its nest. Though willed, or *wild*, it is not willful in its wildness. The unsympathizing man regards the wildness of some animals, their strangeness to him, as a sin; as if all their virtue consisted in their tamableness. He has always a charge in his gun ready for their extermination. What we call wildness is a civilization other than our own. The hen-hawk shuns the farmer, but it seeks the friendly shelter and support of the pine. It will not consent to walk in the barn-yard, but it loves to soar above the clouds. It has its own way and is beautiful, when we would fain subject it to our will. So any surpassing work of art is strange and wild to the mass of men, as is genius itself. No hawk that soars and steals poultry is wilder than genius, and none is more persecuted or above persecution. It can never be poet laureate, to say “pretty Polly” and “Polly want a cracker.”

Henry Thoreau was being written by Sophy Ripley, a daughter of Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley:

My dear Mr Thoreau

Mr Johnson will spend the night at our house tomorrow, and Mr Emerson and a few others are coming at six to take tea with him, and Mother wants you to come very much — We hope you will be able to—

Yrs respectfully

Sophy Ripley

February 16<sup>th</sup>



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

**1862**

Hearing of [Henry David Thoreau](#)'s death, [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) wrote her daughter:

*This fine morning is sad for those of us who sympathize with the friends of Henry Thoreau the phylosopher and the woodman. He had his reason to the last and talked with his friends pleasantly and arranged his affairs; and at last passed in quiet sleep from this state of duty and responsibility to that which is behind the veil. His funeral service is to be at the church, and Mr. Emerson is to make an address. I hope Uncle George will get home in season to be there, he will regret it so if he does not.*



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At some point: At some point 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.

It is to be noted that despite not being specifically named, Edmund had in fact made several appearances in the pages of this book:

[WALDEN](#): At length, in the beginning of May, with the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers than I. They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day. I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain; but before boarding I laid the foundation of a chimney at one end, bringing two cartloads of stones up the hill from the pond in my arms. I built the chimney after my hoeing in the fall, before a fire became necessary for warmth, doing my cooking in the mean while out of doors on the ground, early in the morning; which mode I still think is in some respects more convenient and agreeable than the usual one. When it stormed before my bread was baked, I fixed a few boards over the fire, and sat under them to watch my loaf, and passed some pleasant hours in that way. In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment, in fact answered the same purpose as the Iliad.

PEOPLE OF  
WALDEN

BRONSON ALCOTT

ELLERY CHANNING

WALDO EMERSON

EDMUND HOSMER

EDMUND HOSMER, JR

JOHN HOSMER

ANDREW HOSMER

JAMES BURRILL CURTIS

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS



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## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

**WALDEN:** Sometimes, notwithstanding the snow, when I returned from my walk at evening I crossed the deep tracks of a woodchopper leading from my door, and found his pile of whittlings on the hearth, and my house filled with the odor of his pipe. Or on a Sunday afternoon, if I chanced to be at home, I heard the cronching of the snow made by the step of a long-headed farmer, who from far through the woods sought my house, to have a social "crack;" one of the few of his vocation who are "men on their farms;" who donned a frock instead of a professor's gown, and is as ready to extract the moral out of church or state as to haul a load of manure from his barn-yard. We talked of rude and simple times, when men sat about large fires in cold bracing weather, with clear heads; and when other dessert failed, we tried our teeth on many a nut which wise squirrels have long since abandoned, for those which have the thickest shells are commonly empty.

PEOPLE OF  
WALDEN

ANDREW HOSMER  
JOHN HOSMER  
EDMUND HOSMER  
EDMUND HOSMER, JR.



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](#).

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Shortly before Thoreau's death: [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) walked from the Old Manse to the Thoreau boardinghouse to visit and to her surprise found [Henry Thoreau](#), despite being so terribly wasted and feeble, sitting in the parlor in a handsome black suit. In Joan W. Goodwin's discussion of this visit in THE REMARKABLE MRS. RIPLEY: THE LIFE OF SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1998), here is how the relevant letter from Mrs. Ripley to her daughter [Sophia Bradford Thayer](#) is presented:<sup>13</sup>

TB

Now [Mrs. Ripley] found [Thoreau] seated in the Thoreau parlor uncharacteristically dressed in a handsome black suit. Though he was only forty-five [*sic*; he died at 44, about nine weeks before his 45th birthday], he appeared so wasted and feeble that she would not have recognized him if she "had fallen on him unawares." Yet "he talked cheerfully about what the earliest phylosophers had said about health, and natural remedies," and she was struck by "how much he has trusted to his life according to the natural laws."



On the day of Thoreau's death, [Waldo Emerson](#) was visiting Bronson Alcott. Emerson seems to have associated this death with the breaking up of the ice on Walden Pond.

13. To give this statement about trusting to one's life according to the natural laws some context, let us consider the manner in which the people of that era had accepted the normalness of the wasting fever which preceded deaths due to "consumption" or "phthisis," in an era in which there was no hint of any effective treatment. I will quote from a report which appeared in an 1894 medical journal, as this report was seconded in the [Scientific American](#) magazine of the period:



The [Medical Record](#) tells of a woman in Ohio who utilized the high temperature of her phthisical husband for eight weeks before his death, by using him as an incubator for hens' eggs. She took 50 eggs, and wrapping each one in cotton batting, laid them alongside the body of her husband in the bed, he being unable to resist or move a limb. After three weeks she was rewarded with forty-six lively young chickens.

One may fantasize the wisecracks a Thoreau would have been able to summon, had his sister and mother needed to use his hot, thinning body to hatch chicks during this April/May period. His would surely have been as excellent as the Vonnegut jests!

**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY****SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

May 6, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) had been helping her brother revise his [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#). In the early morning, about eight o'clock, she was completing the reading of the manuscript to Henry. When she read the sentence

**A WEEK:** We glided past the mouth of the Nashua, and not long after, of Salmon Brook, without more pause than the wind.

he commented

**TB**

*Now comes good sailing.*



Something about the manner in which [Henry David Thoreau](#) died indicates to me that his attitude toward eternity was what he was keeping before him at the end. It is, Thoreau noted in [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#), through silence that all revelations have been made. And, in a letter to Isaiah T. Williams on October 8, 1841, he suggested that to stop up our ears against the “immediate” voice of God and prefer to know him by report is “the only sin.” Since the Indian, for Thoreau, is the type case of the human being who understands how to live spontaneously, without mediation, in the presented eternal instant,

**THE MAINE WOODS:** He does not carry things in his head, nor remember the route exactly, like a white man, but relies on himself at the moment.

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## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

and since the Indian, like the moose and other animals, relies upon all his senses and “does not give a distinct, conscious attention to any one” and since the Indian finds his way in the wilderness “very much as an animal does,” when those attending Thoreau at the end detected him breathing the identifiable words

*moose*

and

*Indians*

then something occurs to me. It has done us no detectable harm to speculate about this thing that we cannot know, speculate for instance that what Thoreau was attempting to do was, in delirium, continue the job he had assumed of editing his manuscripts so as to be able to leave a greater estate for his survivors, but it would also do us no harm, I offer, to hypothecate that Thoreau was in uttering these words emphasizing to himself this similarity between animals and Indians in regard to immediacy and in regard to spontaneity, which he had so often urged us all to emulate, and which he had so often urged upon himself. It seems to me, at the very least, that this is the sort of appropriate thing of which one might need to remind oneself, as one is enduring the difficulties of lying somewhere dying.

We might be able to offer of [Henry David Thoreau](#)'s death in 1862 at the age of 44 what [John Dryden](#) wrote about the death on November 21, 1695 of Henry Purcell at the age of 36: “He long ere this had tuned the jarring spheres and left no hell below.”

On the day of [Henry](#)'s death, [Waldo Emerson](#) was visiting [Bronson Alcott](#) (Waldo seems to have fancifully associated the timing of his death with the breaking up of the ice on Walden Pond).



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Hearing of Thoreau's death, [Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) would write her daughter [Sophia Bradford Thayer](#):

*This fine morning is sad for those of us who sympathise with the friends of Henry Thoreau the phylosopher and the woodman. He had his reason to the last and talked with his friends pleasantly and arranged his affairs; and at last passed in quiet sleep from this state of duty and responsibility to that which is behind the veil. His funeral service is to be at the church, and Mr. Emerson is to make an address. I hope Uncle George will get home in season to be there, he will regret it so if he does not.*

Joan W. Goodwin, in *THE REMARKABLE MRS. RIPLEY: THE LIFE OF SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1998), supplements that letter as follows:<sup>14</sup>

By May he was gone.... She hoped her brother [George P. Bradford] would get to Concord in time for the funeral, knowing "he will regret it so much if he does not," having been a close walking and botanizing companion of Thoreau's over the years.

[Waldo Emerson](#) wrote immediately to [H.G.O. Blake](#) ("My Dear Blake") informing him of Thoreau's death and of arrangements for the pending funeral. (This letter has recently been recovered from between the pages of Herbert W. Gleason's *THROUGH THE YEAR WITH THOREAU*, a volume which has been published in 1917.)

The widowed [Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann](#) would write to [Sophia Peabody Hawthorne](#):

*I was made very happy to-day by seeing Miss Thoreau, whose brother died such a happy, peaceful death,—leaving them all so fully possessed of his faith in the Immortal Life that they seem almost to have entered it with him. They said they never could be sad in his presence for a moment; he had been the happiest person they had ever known, all through his life, and was just as happy in the presence of death. This is the more remarkable as he was still in the prime of life, with a vivid sense of its enjoyments. But he was nearer to the heart of Nature than most*

14. To give this statement about trusting to one's life according to the natural laws some context, let us consider the manner in which the people of that era had accepted the normalness of the wasting fever which preceded deaths due to "consumption" or "phthisis," in an era in which there was no hint of any effective treatment. I will quote from a report which appeared in an 1894 medical journal, as this report was seconded in the [Scientific American](#) magazine of the period:

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*men. Sophia said to-day that he once told her when looking at a pressed flower that he had walked 10,000 miles to verify the day on which that flower bloomed. It grew four miles from his home, and he walked there every day in the season of it for many years.... He seemed to walk straight into Heaven. It is animating and inspiring to see a great or a good man take that last step with his thoughts about him, and intent upon the two worlds whose connection he sees with the clairvoyance that death gives. I know it well, and I could fully sympathize in her sense of her brother's continued presence. Death is not the word to use for such a transit,—but more life,—for which we as yet have no word.*



Sophia Peabody Hawthorne would write to Mr. and Mrs. James Thomas Fields:

*On Friday ... Mr. Thoreau's funeral is to take place. He was Concord itself in one man — and his death makes a very large vacuum. I ought to be at his funeral for the sake of strewing [sic] my deep respect and value for him to others, though I could much better mourn him at home.... I suppose he believed that beasts and reptiles, birds and fishes fulfilled their ends, and that man generally came short. So he respected the one and avoided the other. His Alpine purity, his diamond truth, his stainless sincerity, his closeness to nature and faithful rendering — these are immortal beauties in him. He has now stepped out of his French body — and his soul has taken up its fitting celestial manifestation. And he has doubtless found the Victoria Regia, which would not grow wild in Concord, even though it were the birthplace of Henry Thoreau! and though he declared he should one day find it here.*



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

**1867**

July 26, Friday: The Governor-Generalship of Turkestan was formed by Russia.

[Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley](#) died at the home of her daughter Mary Emerson Ripley Simmons in Concord. While the body was being carried that night to the “Old Manse,” one of the tall ash-trees in the front avenue fell over.

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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: April 14, 2018**



**MRS. SARAH RIPLEY**

**SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD**

# 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, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.

Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in



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## SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD

the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process 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 requests with <kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.

Joan W. Goodwin’s *THE REMARKABLE MRS. RIPLEY: THE LIFE OF SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1998):

(Mentioned in passing), p. xviii Abolitionists and, p. 216 (getting permission to use courthouse for and ringing bell for Emerson lecture)

“Civil Disobedience,” p. 247 (recounts story of arrest)

Death of, pp. 313-14

Group discussion, p. 285 (at Emerson’s house)

Hawthorne and, pp. 194, 195 (helping prepare for H’s arrival at Manse & pointing out arrowheads near Manse)

Protest against Mexican War, pp. 246-47 (recounts story of “Civ. Disob.”)

Discussion of *ORIGIN OF SPECIES*, pp. 296-97 (Participation in, at Emerson’s house, 1 Jan. 1860)

Walden Pond, pp. 244, 247, 250 (two references to Walden stay and one to Walden lecture delivery)