







"[T]he growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."



- George Eliot, MIDDLEMARCH

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

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

Can anyone bring to my attention **even one** other American woman bearing this name in the 19th Century? —I have so far found only four others, an older Mulatto woman named Cynthia Miers who applied for membership in the Religious Society of Friends on April 20, 1796 after worshiping with the Quakers of New Jersey for some two decades (causing consternation), and a woman named Cynthia Ann Parker who is on record as having been kidnapped in Texas in 1836, and a Cynthia Hastings, evidently the wife of a Votingham VT grocer, who joined the Brook Farm experiment in social living, and a Cynthia P. Bliss of <u>Pawtucket</u>, <u>Rhode Island</u> who attended the Women's National Convention of 1850 in Worcester MA!



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

#### **ANTISLAVERY WOMEN**

Henry Thoreau's mother and sisters were antislavery women. To some general extent, therefore, their spirit has been characterized in this new book by Michael D. Pierson, FREE HEARTS AND FREE HOMES: GENDER AND AMERICAN ANTISLAVERY POLITICS:

# H-NET BOOK REVIEW Published by H-SHEAR@h-net.msu.edu (December 2004)

Michael D. Pierson. Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics. Gender and American Culture Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Reviewed for H-SHEAR by Chris Padgett, Department of History, American River College

#### The Intermingling Spheres of Antebellum Women's Politics

Anyone who picks up Michael Pierson's Free Hearts and Free Homes: GENDER AND AMERICAN ANTISLAVERY POLITICS will quickly appreciate the book's premise. Antebellum Americans developed significant partisan loyalties in response to "the distinctive nature of the parties' positions on family and gender" (p. 7). In light of today's partisan wrangling over "family values" and the meaning of the modern family, this makes sense. Disagreement over abortion rights, teen birth control, gay marriage, and the rights of domestic partners define the partisan boundaries of the early-twenty-first-century. The virtue of Pierson's book is that it shows how evolving and competing visions of gender and family influenced nineteenth-century politics as well. Furthermore, the author claims that such issues had a direct bearing on the greatest political crisis in the country's history: the breakup of the second party system and Civil War. FREE HEARTS AND FREE HOMES takes its place in the historiography of the new political history by looking beyond the formal "high politics" of the antebellum period, the platforms, editorials, and speeches of notable politicos, and the legislative issues they dominated. Instead, Pierson wants to explain how the partisan loyalties of ordinary men and women were defined by what we call, these days, the culture wars. Antebellum Americans developed divergent viewpoints on women's labor, companionate marriage, female sexual authority and childbearing, masculinity and patriarchy, and, as an important outgrowth of these issues, the debate over antislavery. Each of these issues, says the author, in turn influenced partisan appeal and the mainstream political debate.

To help explain the cultural and political shifts Pierson references the historical literature of community studies, gender, and the marketplace. Historians have drawn a picture of northern communities involved in the market revolution, and explained how a new ideology of "domestic feminism" characterized the increasingly public expressions of "activist women." Such women were mostly urban, middle class, white, Protestants, whose families were directly affected by the growing market economy. Pierson sees a connection between these



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women and the new antislavery political ideologies that emerged in the 1840s. According to the author, political debate over slavery was now "intertwined with issues pertaining to gender roles and the nature of the family" (p. 18). As he writes, "parties did consistently try to exploit the gender beliefs of their constituents as they carefully crafted campaign biographies, newspaper editorials, and the gendered division of labor at rallies to appeal to voters" (p. 23).

The author traces the rise of the new gendered politics and describes the emerging political constituency of "antislavery women" that accompanied it. Just as educated, northern, middle class women established greater authority over their own reproductive decisions, for example, they also asserted a new kind of political authority, which first became palpable with the national appearance of the Liberty Party in 1840. Politically interested women fastened together the issues of family and slavery to form what he calls an "antislavery gender ideology" (p. 21). At the heart of this ideology was a basic distrust of patriarchy which, though not as sharply edged as the radical feminist ideology of the day, drew a connection between the tyrannical authority of the slave owning patriarch and the sexual and physical depredations he committed against powerless slave women and children. From this perspective, families, whether free or slave, suffered from the unchecked authority of the patriarch. Antislavery women stopped short of the more radical calls for free love espoused by other feminists, or even the complete emancipation of women from their husbands' legal authority called for by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but their version of domestic feminism nevertheless redefined the relationship of husbands and wives on more equitable and mutual terms. It also conformed to the basic material changes that were shaping the North, which in their own way encouraged greater agency on the part of married women. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, accepted the basic tenets of the free labor ideology that defined the economic viewpoint of the Free Soilers and Republicans, and even supported "the idea of women working in the marketplace" (p. 76).

While antislavery women accepted the bourgeois vision of free labor and companionate marriage, the author shows how they projected their gendered view of equality through the prism of antislavery, and staked out a more uncompromising position than their male counterparts. Antislavery women argued that only the abolition of slavery could protect the rights of husbands, wives, and children from the tyranny of the slave owner. In this respect, antislavery women had little patience with the equivocating of their male counterparts in the Free Soil and Republican parties who found supposed constitutional protections for the rights of slave owners. As long as slavery remained in place, argued antislavery women, slave families could never approximate the liberal ideal of domestic feminism, let alone liberal free labor values, which they embraced in their own lives.

Since they were formally excluded from the political process as voters and officeholders, antislavery women influenced politics in other ways, as participants in rallies, petition signers, newspaper editors, and novelists. The most successful and



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influential expression of the new ideology came in 1852 with the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. According to Pierson, Stowe's novel represents only the best known work in a class he calls Free Soil women's writings. Women's voices were welcomed within the partisan circles of Free Soil and Republican campaign politics in the decade before the Civil War. Though the author does not clarify the exact working relationship between male party leaders and antislavery women, he offers examples of women's voices speaking directly to the interests of antislavery gender ideology. In addition to the prominent Stowe, he cites the writings of women who supported the mainstream antislavery candidates of the Free Soil and Republican parties, including longtime antislavery advocate Lydia Maria Child, as well as influential local newspaper editors Jane Grey Swisshelm, of Pittsburgh, and Clarina Nichols of Brattleboro, Vermont. Taken together their writings defined the political core of women's antislavery politics and, according to the author, influenced the mainstream appeal of Free Soil and Republican Party politics. Perhaps the most fascinating example he offers is the inaugural 1856 Republican campaign of John C. Fremont. Much of the political hubbub surrounding Fremont's candidacy centered on the idealized picture of his wife, Jesse Benton Fremont, and their elopement years earlier. Pierson frames the issue as a triumph of domestic feminism in the evolving political mainstream.

Fremont's defeat in 1856 may have tempered the Republicans' enthusiasm for domestic feminism, but according to the author it did not necessarily lessen its influence. Abraham Lincoln's candidacy four years later appeared less vigorous in its celebration of the "new" woman. Yet, as the author points out, southerners reacted with hostility to Lincoln's candidacy just the same, since in their minds the Republicans were by then indelibly marked with the twin evils of abolition and domestic feminism. This judgment seems well supported by the campaign propaganda issued by southerners and Democrats alike, which pigeonholed Republicans as radical reformers akin to free love advocates and other "lunatics" on the political fringe (p. 128). Ironically, it was two male politicians, Congressman Owen Lovejoy of Illinois and Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, who provoked the greatest ire of southerners by employing a sexual critique of slavery in their congressional speeches, using material drawn from the pages of domestic feminism authored by such antislavery women as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Lydia Maria Child.

The episodes involving Lovejoy and Sumner beg the question of women's political influence. Pierson tends to conflate what he calls "gender ideology" with the "Republican ideology of free hearts and free homes" (p. 4). The foremost student of antebellum Republican Party ideology, Eric Foner, pretty convincingly defined free soil and free labor as the ideological heart of the Republican Party. The free hearts and free homes rhetoric that Pierson identifies was certainly present in the partisan writings, speeches, and campaigns, but it is not clear from the evidence he provides that domestic feminism equates with a "Republican ideology." Lovejoy and Sumner represent but two rather liberal voices in the Republican ranks. Since the



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author himself acknowledges the more conservative character of the 1860 campaign, it remains to be seen how much influence gender ideology wielded in the partisan political culture of the Civil War years and beyond.

The question of influence is an admittedly difficult one to pin down, and it is hard to judge how much influence antislavery women exerted over the political process. "In the years after 1848, "Michael Pierson writes, "antislavery politics, based in the North where social and familial changes were most marked, incorporated domestic feminism into their political culture. By doing so, they staked out a political position that appealed to the increasingly large number of northerners who sought to ideologically validate the changes they were making in their lives" (p. 96). Unlike other historians of the second party system, Pierson does not attempt to quantify or correlate changes in electoral behavior, the point at which partisanship translates into formal political power and office holding. Instead, he draws inferences of political support, from selected literary sources, including partisan newspapers, pamphlets, correspondence, and other published writings. In this respect, he does a commendable job of inferring the political influence of antislavery women, who were after all a disenfranchised class of political actors.

It remains for others to continue the spadework of quantification and correlation, turning over newspaper subscription lists, petition signatures, poll books, census records, and the like to form a more empirical view of how many, how often, and with what result, women participated in antislavery politics. Recent studies by antislavery scholars such as Debra Bingham Van Broekhoven, Julie Roy Jeffrey, and Susan Zaeske serve to complement the work done by Michael Pierson, as they illuminate the grassroots populations of antislavery women.

Together these studies present a picture of antebellum America that refines the meaning of antislavery and considerably broadens the definition of politics, including its social and cultural underpinnings. By examining how gender influenced political style, rhetoric, and partisan appeal, Michael Person also helps to contextualize the ongoing conflicts over family, marriage, and gender that shape American democracy to the present day.

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#### Reply to Chris Padgett, by Michael D. Pierson:

I would like to thank Professor Chris Padgett for his careful and thorough review of my book, Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics. His review offers succinct summaries of the book's analysis of the evolution of antislavery gender ideology from its rather patriarchal beginnings in the



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early Liberty party through its most radical phase during the 1856 election, and concluding with the Republican party's occasional backpedaling on women's rights in 1860 even as its most radical men stepped up their attacks on slavery's moral and sexual crimes.

Professor Padgett's primary concern about the book is the difficulty of judging just how much influence these gender ideologies had on voters. Here, I have to agree with him to a large degree - the book examines the twists and turns of the parties' gender ideologies and does not attempt to directly assess the electoral impact of these ideas on voters. It is, perhaps, the curse of political historians who study ideologies that almost no voters -and certainly none who I looked at during this project- recorded what they were thinking when they cast their ballots. My book opens with a description of the extensive Republican party rally in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1856, and the one extant diary that records the events merely records that "They marched around and at last ended on forbes hill[.] there was a great deal of speaking going on." On election day, the same man recorded only that he had voted for "Freemont." 1 Indeed, Professor Padgett is right in saying that tying this ideology to the actions of voters is a methodological challenge. (Of course, even with all of the polling done on voters in 2004, it is hard to know what ideologies voters responded to last November, if any at all.)

So how can we study the impact of ideology on voters in the antebellum period? I can point to two possible approaches to this question. The first appears in chapter Six of FREE HEARTS AND FREE HOMES, and while it is not as exact as many practitioners of the "new political history" would like, it suggests a strong link between published Republican gender ideologies and their rank and file constituency. I think historians can see the gender ideologies of Republican women and men by the ways they acted at public party rallies. Especially in 1856 but in other years as well, antislavery party rallies featured distinct roles for men and women, and the way that local activists divided their tasks by sex tells us a great deal about the way they thought about gender. Analysis of the gendering of public space at rallies becomes especially significant when the local performances seem to closely mirror the gender roles that are enunciated in more formal party publications such as partisan newspapers or speeches by politicians. At those moments -and overwhelmingly there are close correlations between local performances and articulated ideologies- I feel that we have significant evidence of the ability of the stated party ideology to impact the actions of rank and file party activists.

A second approach is to look at monographs that assess how the changing family structures of a region correlate to changes in an area's political choices. John Mack Faragher's Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie chronicles the change from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming and the corresponding changes in family practices and size. While less his focus, he also notes that those changes occurred simultaneously with the region's transition from Democratic voting to Republican allegiance. These conclusions fit my larger argument that men whose lives

<sup>1.</sup> Edmund H. P. Platt Diary, Dutchess County Historical Society, Poughkeepsie, New York.



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are governed by the day-to-day rules of patriarchal life were more likely to vote Democratic in the antebellum North than their more "modern" neighbors. Nancy A. Hewitt's study of Rochester, New York families offers even more precise documentation of the link between family practice and political allegiance. In Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872, Hewitt quantifies the household sizes of women activists and notes the close correspondence between the number of children a woman gave birth to and her household's partisan sympathies. Women with the largest families tended to be Democrats or Whigs, while women with fewer children were often active in Liberty party and eventually Republican politics. Women with the fewest children tended towards Garrisonian abolitionism.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that the case is closed to all discussion - far from it- only that there are already quantifiable links established between family practice and partisanship. These have not yet been done for individual election results, however, and I would welcome such efforts to "continue the quantification and correlation" work that Professor Padgett refers to in his review.

Again, my thanks to Professor Padgett for his thoughtful review.

Michael D. Pierson Department of History University of Massachusetts Lowell MichaelPierson@uml.edu

<sup>2.</sup> John Mack Faragher's SUGAR CREEK: LIFE ON THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 199-225, especially pages 205, 217-18.

<sup>3.</sup> Specific numbers and averages appear in Nancy A. Hewitt, WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE: ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, 1822-1872 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 154, 156, 180.

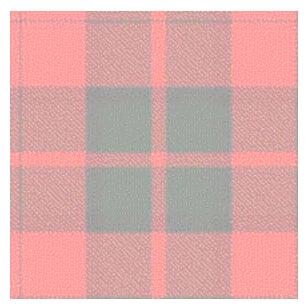


## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



In Scotland, the Battle of Inverurie, then the Battle of Brander. "Herschip" of Buchan. The Earl of Ross submitted to Robert the Bruce.

The son of Maldred, brother to the King Duncan who had died in 1040, had been granted the town of Dunbar and its adjoining lands, and in consequence during the ensuing century his descendants had adopted "Dunbar" as their hereditary surname. The first of these Dunbar clansmen to be referred to as the earl of March, Patrick Dunbar, died in this year. Here is the clan tartan:





## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

(Eventually this assumed name "Dunbar" would become a famous one — as in "Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau.")

of England; which lays the foundation of a long and desolating war between both nations.

1293 There is a regular succession of English parliaments from this year, being the 22d of Edward I.

1298 The present Turkish empire begins in Bithynia under Ottoman.
Silver-hafted knives, spoons, and cups, a great luxury.
Tallow candles so great a luxury, that splinters of wood were used for lights.
Wine sold only by apothecaries as a cordial.

1302 The mariner's compass invented, or improved, by Givia of Naples.

1307 The beginning of the Swiss cantons.

1308 The popes remove to Avignon, in France, for 70 years.

1310 Lincoln's Inn society established.

1314 The battle of Bannockburn, between Edward II. and Robert Bruce, which establishes the latter on the throne of Scotland.

The cardinals set fire to the conclave, and separate. A vacancy in the papal chair for two years.

1320 Gold first coined in Christendom; 1344, ditto in England.

1336 Two Brabant weavers settle at York, "which," says Edward III. "may prove of great benefit to us and our subjects."

1337 The first comet whose course is described with astronomical exactness.

1340 Gunpowder and Guns first invented by Swartz, a monk of Cologn; 1346, Edward III. had four pieces of cannon, which contributed to gain him the battle of Cressy; 1346, bombs and mortars were invented.

Oil-painting first made use of by John Vaneck.

Heralds college instituted in England.

1344 The first creation to titles by patents used by Edward III.

1346 The battle of Durham, in which David, king of Scots, is taken prisoner.

1349 The order of the garter instituted in England by Edward III. altered in 1557, and consists of 26 knights.

1720

The house in which Cynthia Dunbar (Thoreau) would grow up and in which she would in 1817 give birth to her son David Henry would be constructed on the Virginia Road near Concord at some date between this year and 1740. The house would be constructed on the portion of the Sergeant Thomas Wheeler (1625-1704) farm that had been inherited by his son John Wheeler (1655-1736). In front of the house, on the far side of the Virginia road, ran Elm Brook, which is a source for the Shawsheen River. In 1755 the heirs of John Wheeler would sell this farm to Deacon Samuel Minot, their cousin who was living near Meriam's Corner in Concord, and then it would pass "for love and affection" from Samuel to his son Jonas. When Captain Jonas Minott would die in 1813 this house and grounds would be involved in the "widow's thirds" of his estate which would remain with his wife Mary Jones Dunbar Minot, who when she married him had already several children by her previous marriage to the Reverend Asa Dunbar. Henry Thoreau would have this to say to his Journal on May 26, 1857 in regard to his mother's childhood in the Virginia Road home:



My mother was telling me to-night of the sounds which she used to hear summer nights when she was young and lived on Virginia Road. The lowing of cows or cackling of geese or the beating of a distant drum



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

[this is a reference to the drumming of the male **Ruffed Grouse**] Bonasa umbellus in the woods] as far off

## **CURRENT YOUTUBE VIDEO**

as Hildreth's, but above all Joe Meriam whistling to his team, for he was an admirable whistler. She says she used to get up at midnight and go and sit on the doorstep when all in the house was asleep and she could hear nothing in the world but the ticking of the clock in the house behind her.





(Of course, nowadays one would be more likely to hear the roar of a military jet taking off or landing from nearby Hanscom Airfield. But back to our romantic story: This farmhouse and the 30 or so acres that remained with it would be sold at auction in Fall 1818. Eventually it would fall to the ownership of Colburn Hadlock, who would keep pigs, tipping there the garbage from his Middlesex House in Concord. Consequently the pigfield near the house would acquire so much shattered hotel refuse that Henry would christen it "Crockery Field." In Winter 1878 the house would be placed on runners and moved down the road a bit, so there is now a newer farmhouse standing on its sacred original location.

THOREAU RESIDENCES

1740

The house in which <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u> (Thoreau) would grow up and in which she would in 1817 give birth to her son David Henry had been constructed on the <u>Virginia Road</u> near <u>Concord</u> at some date since 1720.

HENRY THOREAU
THOREAU RESIDENCES





### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1755

The heirs of John Wheeler sold their farm on <u>Virginia Road</u> to Samuel Minot, their cousin who was living near Meriam's Corner in <u>Concord</u>. This would become the home in which <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u> (Thoreau) would grow up and in which she would in 1817 give birth to her son David Henry.

HENRY THOREAU
THOREAU RESIDENCES



1787

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



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

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

Can anyone bring to my attention **even one** other American



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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 laweyer 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 betwen 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 we— "God almighty only knows for I dont! The Capt was pulling a rope {illegible letters}



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#### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1798

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



1800

The quotation below about Mr. Thoreau is per Mrs. Rebecca Kettell Thoreau's obituary and appeared in The Christian Disciple of October 1815, Volume III, No. 10:

Mr. Thoreau lost his health, moved to Concord, and there finished his course like a christian.



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1804

Samuel Ripley of <u>Concord</u>, son of the <u>Reverend Ezra Ripley</u>, <u>D.D.</u>, graduated from <u>Harvard College</u>. He would become the minister of the first religious society in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Samuel Ripley [of  $\underline{\text{Concord}}$ ], son of the  $\underline{\text{Rev. Ezra Ripley, D.D.}}$ , was born March 11, 1783, graduated [at  $\underline{\text{Harvard College}}$ ] in 1804, and was ordained over the first religious society in Waltham November 22, 1809, where he still [1835] resides.

At the age of about 17 <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u> produced a piece of needlework –a mourning picture– that is now in the collection of the Concord Museum. In this year, possibly, or by 1806, this <u>Concord</u> family visited the studio of the Boston hollow-cut profile-taker William King, who was said to have a knack for "seeing people agreeably," and the three <u>silhouettes</u> that were produced are also now in the Museum's collection — one of <u>Cynthia</u>, one of her mother <u>Mary Jones Dunbar Minot</u>, and one of her step-father Captain <u>Jonas Minott</u>.<sup>5</sup>



1811

July: <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u>, professing Christian faith and a resolve to lead a moral life, joined the First Church of the Reverend <u>Ezra Ripley</u> in <u>Concord</u>. (Six months later she would become pregnant by <u>John Thoreau</u>. Was the Reverend disappointed at this 24-year-old, supposedly chaste, woman's sexual activity?)

- 4. <u>Lemuel Shattuck</u>'s 1835 <u>A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...</u>. Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: John Stacy
  - (On or about November 11, 1837 Henry Thoreau would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study. On July 16, 1859 he would correct a date mistake buried in the body of the text.)
- 5. At the time <u>Cynthia</u> was attending the Bridgewater Academy, 20 miles inland from Plymouth, in the south parish of Bridgewater. This institution of education had been established when on February 28, 1799 the half township of land granted by the General Court as an endowment had been sold for \$5,000 and individuals had subscribed \$3,000 toward the erection of a schoolhouse. The school had a reputation of training toward the ministry and Bridgewater had a reputation for forwarding many of its sons to Harvard College.



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1812

2d half of January: During the courtship of <u>John Thoreau</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u>, John had been living on the <u>Concord</u> square and learning merchandising from Deacon <u>John White</u>, while Cynthia, the daughter of Mrs. Captain Minot, had been living with her mother in the farmhouse on Virginia Road. At this point what usually happened in New England during courtship in those days happened, and Cynthia became pregnant.

THE DEACONS OF CONCORD



May 11, Monday: <u>John Thoreau</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u> were united in <u>Concord</u>, in a wedding ceremony officiated over by the Reverend Ezra Ripley.

#### **Marriages**

Spouses	<b>Marriage Date</b>	Marriage Place
THOREAU, John & Rebecca Kettell	Jun, 1797	Concord
THOREAU, John & Cynthia Dunbar	<b>May, 1812</b>	Concord



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**





John in later years

Cynthia in later years



Cynthia would have been a noticeably pregnant bride, since <u>Helen Louisa Thoreau</u> would be born on October 22nd, but I simply do not know whether in that time and that place such a thing would have been a scandal (at least during earlier New England generations, a bride being already pregnant would have been quite normal and expectable).



At the turn of the century rural women in Massachusetts had been marrying at over 23 years of age, three years later than their mothers (their daughters would be marrying, in the 1830s, at over 25 years of age, two years later than this generation and five years later than their grandmothers). Therefore the age of this bride, 25 years, was not at all unusual for the time and the place.

Friend <u>Stephen Wanton Gould</u> wrote in his journal:

<u>2nd day</u> 11th of 5 <u>Mo//</u> The usual rounds of buisness & no peculiar occurrence

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

October 22, Thursday: A 1st child, <u>Helen Louisa Thoreau</u>, was born to <u>John Thoreau</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar</u> Thoreau, who had married one another on the eleventh of May in that year.







#### John in later years

#### Cynthia in later years

We may note that when this child would belatedly be recorded in the Concord town records, she would be recorded as having been born as of the year 1813. (The town's records are not all that accurate or complete, but might this error have been purposefully registered in order to remove any doubt as to Helen's legitimacy as the eldest child of this very new marriage?)

#### **Births**

Name	Sex	Birth Date	Birth Place	Father's Name	Mother's Name
THOREAU, John		1754	Concord		
THOREAU, Mary	F	1786	Concord	John	
THOREAU, Sarah		1791	Concord		
THOREAU, Helen L.	F	1813	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, John	M	1815	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, Sophia Elizabeth	F	<b>Sept. 27, 1819</b>	Chelmsford	John	Cynthia

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 22 of 10 M / Our friend Christo Hely was in town & attended Meeting & the funeral of Sam Wilcox - but being previously engaged I went to Conanicut with our friend D Buffum to attend the funeral of Job Watson where David was largely & very acceptably engaged in declaring the truth to the People. -We dined at John Weedens & got home before sunset. -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1813

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



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

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



THOREAU RESIDENCES

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



### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

landings at nearby Hanscom Airfield.



January 20, Thursday: Moses Prichard finally was able to get married with his fiancée of eight years, Jane Hallett. For the initial three years of their wedded bliss they would reside at Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau's boardinghouse in **Concord**.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 1 M 20th 1814 / Our Meeting was pretty well attended & I thought was favor'd - In the preparative meeting, Several of the Queries were remarked upon especially the one respecting the Poor & friends generally that were in ability & the Overseers of the Poor were encouraged to discharge their duty especially at this season of the Year - A request from Sally Hadwen was received to be admitted to Membership - her case is peculiar she was born after her father was disowned, but lived alternately with her Grandmother Hadwen & Aunt Dorcas Brown who brought her up in the ways of Society & she has attended Meetings of Discipline without knowing she had no right of Membership but being now inform'd of it has now requested to be confirmed as a member -

My H spent the eveng at Gilbert Chases. -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



1st half of October: Mrs. Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau became pregnant for the 2d time.

JOHN THOREAU





October 23, Sunday: William Mackay Prichard was born (presumably, this happened at Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau's boardinghouse in Concord at which his parents Moses Prichard and Jane Tompson Hallet Prichard were residing).

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

1st day 23 of 10 M / A few words were spoken in our forenoon meeting but I consider'd it a dull season - In the Afternoon I thought there was more life circulating among us. -My H set the eveng at Thos Robinsons I went about 7 OClock & was very agreeably entertained - both by their intersting conversation & Abigail read some of her sister Mortons letters.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



## CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

1814

July 5, Tuesday: As part of the <u>War of 1812</u>, American forces under General Jacob Brown turned back British forces under Major-General Phineas Riall at the Chippawa River of the Niagara front, after a 20-minute exchange of musket fire during which 148 British and 60 American soldiers lost their lives.

A son, John Thoreau, Jr., was born to John Thoreau and Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau.<sup>6</sup>





John in later years

Cynthia in later years

July 5th was an unusual date for a childbirth, in a rural white American community. For whatever reasons, the white babies were being birthed most frequently during the months of last winter and early spring, and sometimes, in the North, there was another, smaller, peak of white births in the early fall. However, uniformly, babies were born to white people least often in the late spring and early summer. (I can remember, as a child, listening to my aunts talking among themselves about timing children so they didn't have to be "heavy" just during the heat of the summer.)

When the birth would be recorded in Concord's town records, it would be recorded as of the wrong year:

#### **Births**

Name	Sex	Birth Date	Birth Place	Father's Name	Mother's Name
THOREAU, John		1754	Concord		
THOREAU, Mary	F	1786	Concord	John	
THOREAU, Sarah		1791	Concord		
THOREAU, Helen L.	F	1813	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, John	M	1815	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, Sophia Elizabeth	F	<b>Sept. 27, 1819</b>	Chelmsford	John	Cynthia

<sup>6.</sup> The gravestone, saying that John had been born in 1815, is incorrect, for the older brother had turned three before the younger brother was born. Horace Rice Hosmer reported, much later, that his mother Lydia Davis Hosmer had told him that one of <u>John Thoreau</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>'s children had "narrowly escaped being born on Lee's Hill."

<sup>7.</sup> The pattern was quite different for enslaved Americans, <u>slave</u> births tending to peak at midsummer and to bottom out in late fall and early winter.



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

At some point during the second half of this year, Mrs. Rebecca Kettell Thoreau, the stepmother who had cared for the Thoreau children in Concord, including John Thoreau, died. John and Cynthia were living in Boston, and John would write thence about this death to sisters in Bangor ME with his son John, Jr. on his knee.



1816

Middle of October: Mrs. Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, mother of two, became pregnant for the 3d time.

JOHN THOREAU



<sup>8.</sup> Franklin Benjamin Sanborn said that "Mary and Nancy" Thoreau died before coming of age — he must have meant Sarah Thoreau and some other Thoreau daughter since it seems unlikely that there would have been a daughter Mary as well as a daughter Maria, and since Nancy Thoreau married a Billings in Maine and had a daughter Rebecca Jane Billings. He said that "David Thoreau" died before he had any occupation —I wonder whether he meant David Orrok, Henry's cousin after whom he was named, who died before he had any occupation. If there were eight Thoreau children to rear, John being the eldest, what were the names of all eight, and what was their birth order? John Thoreau's sister Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau, was reared, like him and the other six children, in the Thoreau home in Concord after the death of their mother Jane "Jennie" Burns Thoreau in 1896, by Jean Thoreau's second wife, the widow Mrs. Rebecca Kettell Thoreau. Eventually Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau married and went to live in Maine. So: what was her husband's name, Thatcher? Where did they live? Did Henry visit them on his trips to Maine? And what were the names and ages of the Kettell children with whom the Thoreau children were reared?



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1817

At about this point <u>John Thoreau</u>'s mortgage on his 8th share to the house at Number 57 in <u>Prince Street</u> in <u>Boston</u> was discharged.



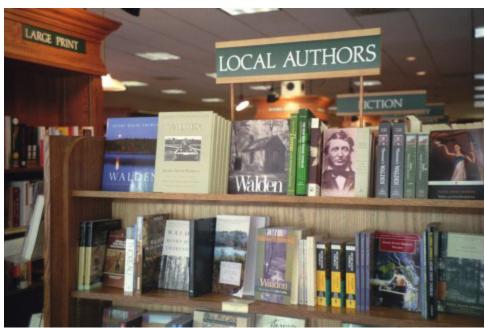




## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

The Thoreaus moved to **Concord** where **David Henry** would be born.





Thoreau recorded in 1855 at his mother <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>'s suggestion that David Henry Thoreau had been ...



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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

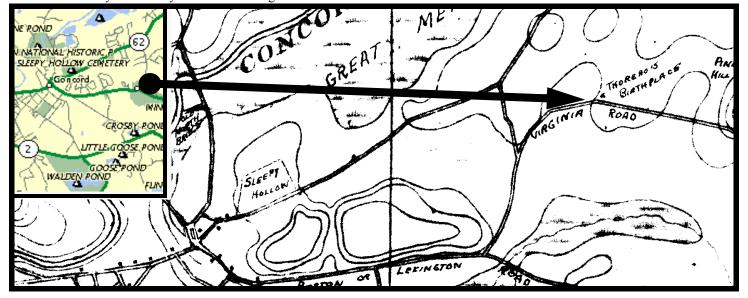


THOREAU RESIDENCES

Thoreau continued in 1855:

The Catherines the other half of the house. Bob Catherines and John threw up the turkeys. Lived there about eight months. Si Merriam next neighbor. Uncle David died when I was six weeks old.

David Henry would be born on his grandmother's farm, on the Bedford levels of Virginia Road  $2^{1/2}$  miles northeast of Concord, in sight of Walden Woods and not too far from the Concord River. This house was unpainted and gray, and the child was born in the easternmost of the upstairs chambers. The dooryard was unfenced and grassy, and led down to a brook. This was the home in which Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, little David Henry's mother, had spent her own childhood, and another family, the Catherines, was renting one end of the house, and Thoreau remembered that Bob Catherines and his brother John Thoreau, Jr. had had some fun tossing their turkey hens up into the air to make them fly and flap and gobble — if you've never done this, you've really missed something.





## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

<u>David Henry Thoreau</u>'s 1st year of existence, the initial stanza of the poem that was his life, began, nominally, on the day of his birth, July 12th, 1817 (although some cultures might instance that he had already during the previous year begun his mortal trajectory in utero: in China he would have been considered to be having this as his 1st birthday — which is approximately nine months more accurate than our "Western" style).

> BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 181 BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1818

David Henry was born "in the Minott House, on the Virginia Road, where Father occupied Grandmother's thirds, carrying on the farm." (On an internet astrology page, I have noticed that the assertion is being made that he had been born at 9PM. I have no idea whether that is accurate, the same page instances the following astrological data pertaining to this birth: "Sun: 20°14' Cancer; AS: 18°37' Aquarius; Moon: 4°09' Cancer; MC: 7°19' Sagittarius; Dominants: Sagittarius, Cancer, Aquarius, Jupiter, Uranus, Venus; Houses 5, 10, 9 / Water, Fire / Mutable; Numerology: Birthpath 9." I have no clue what any of that means. I have ascribed in the attached illustration, that he was born at 11:36AM — but I freely here acknowledge that I have merely fabricated that out of whole cloth because I can summon no interest about the hour at which Cynthia gave birth.)

Do you wonder what sort of diaper they would have put on our little guy? –Wonder no more:

### **Infants Flannel Pilchers or Savers**<sup>9</sup>

Infants often wear pilchers or savers, put over their napkins, to prevent their clothes from being wetted. They are made as follows:-

Cut a piece of flannel 11 nails square (a nail is 2-1/4"), fold it in half, and cut it crosswise, A B: it will make two pilchers. It must next be rounded off a little at the two corners, A B, and at the third corner, E, (which, observe, is opposite the cross-way of the flannel,) sew on a piece of calico, in which cut a button-hole. The crossed part, A B, is then neatly plaited into a calico band, 1 nail deep, when doubled, and 8 nails long, and a button and button-hole sewn on at the ends. In putting it on, first button the band round the waist in front, bring the corner between the legs, and button it to the same button. 10

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CUTTING OUT APPAREL FOR THE POOR, a guide issued in London in 1789, had recommended 24 squares of diaper and 2 squares of flannel for each poor mother, and had given instructions:

Squares of Diaper - Made of figured Diaper, called ell wide, but measures a yard, one nail and a quarter only. Ten shillings the piece, which contains seven yards and a quarter. Two pieces divided each into twelve, make 24 squares of diaper double, half a yard and near a nail wide, but not quite square. 11

Squares of Flannel - One yard and three quarters of white baize flannel, called yard wide, but measures three quarters and a half only, at 11 and a half pence per yard, which make two squares. 12

<sup>9.</sup> The OED has a 1674 reference: "Pilch – now used for a flannel cloth to wrap about the lower part of young children."



## CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

Thoreau would make a record in 1855 – at his mother Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau's suggestion – that David Henry Thoreau had been



Born, July 12, Saturday, 1817, in the Minott House, on the Virginia Road, where Father occupied

Grandmother's thirds, carrying on the farm.



VIRGINIA ROAD

(It is good that this was recorded at least in this manner, because in fact for an unknown reason, Concord town records would make no mention of the event.)

Thoreau drew his first breath and yet (as Wendell Berry has pointed out) "not a breath is drawn but for the grace of an inconceivable series of vital connections joining an inconceivable multiplicity of created things in an inconceivable unity." In this contexture we will attempt to plot out a modest subset of that inconceivable multiplicity of created things and explore a few of the more obvious of the unities which bind them into one universe. Various persons have from time to time asked "Why do this?" and the only answer I have ever been able to come up with has been "Why not?" 13

Thoreau continued in 1855:

- 10. THE NURSERY BASKET, published in 1854 by D. Appleton & Co. of New-York, advised,
  - We give, therefore, three lists the first adviseable from practical experience, the second possible, and the last indispensable:-
    - "5 dozen napkins of three sizes,"
    - "4 dozen napkins,"
      "3 Dozen napkins."

On page 92 a gift basket is assembled for the infant: "Place in the basket a complete set of the child's first clothes, slip, night petticoat, shirt, flannel band, and two small soft napkins; a fine wash cloth, as some nurses prefer it to a sponge; a pot of cold cream. A roll of old linen is especially to be thought of, worn-out handkerchiefs, or any other fine white fabrics." On page 97 for fastening the napkin pins: "The Victorian shield pin is, in a measure, out of the use for the napkins, as its place is supplied by a clever invention of elastic bands, with metal tips, one forming the head, the other receiving the point of the pin, as in one style of knitting sheaths. A half dozen of these pins, costing six cents a pair, will be an ample provision for as many months. When two napkins are worn, only one should be folded through the limbs, otherwise the thick fold separates them to far to the risk of crockness. Half napkins of bound flannel or oiled silk are often used: the latter require to be renewed frequently. Experienced nurses recommend preparring, at least, a dozen small sized napkins for the first use, from well worn table linen; wash cloths, feeding clothes, and bibs, may be made of the same. Two size of napkins will be required, the common diamond pattern, 12 yards in the piece, comes at \$1.50, and makes eleven or twelve, according to the width, as they must be cut just twice that; or a double square, bird's-eye, or Russia, fine enough for any use, and much wider, comes in longer pieces at 25 cents a yard."

- 11. An Ell in England equals 45 inches, a nail is a quarter of a quarter of a yard, or two and a quarter inches. Each piece would be 21.75 by 37.8 inches. This would be folded in half, sewn around most of three sides — a small running stitch with occasional backs would be sufficient, perhaps a quarter inch from the edge — then turned through the space not sewn and that carefully closed. Diaper is a particular linen weave with a small diamond pattern, for this use perhaps quarter inch diamonds with long floats on babies skin, very absorbent. Flannel is a soft, spongy woollen cloth, not usually fulled or napped; baize flannel would seem to imply a fulled flannel (especially considering the measurements) perhaps intended for just this purpose — soft, but more absorbent than regular woollen flannel.
- 12. Each piece will be about 31 inches square. Baize flannel presumably was fulled enough to have stable cut edges so no hemming would be necessary — or perhaps something smooth like a blanket stitch with fine 2-ply wool over the raw edge.



## CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

The Catherines the other half of the house. Bob Catherines and John threw up the turkeys. Lived there about eight months. Si Merriam next neighbor. Uncle David died when I was six weeks old.



That is, Davidem Henricum Thoreaus was born on the Bedford levels in the Holocene on July 12, 1817 C.E.

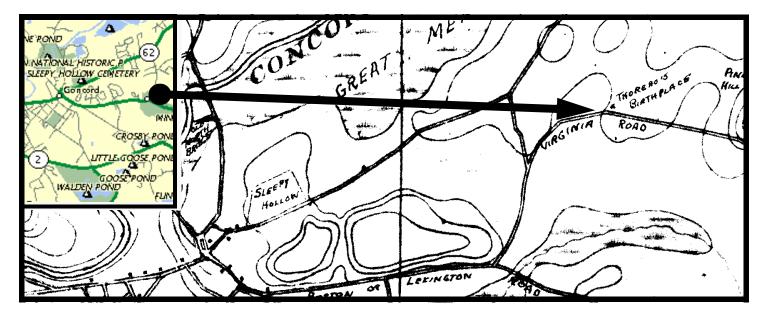
"Time of birth questionable. That does not affect the sign positions of the planets. A five planet majority in Mutable signs (communications). Only one in a Fixed sign: Mars in Taurus. Most of his emphasis was on simplifying life and had to do with the trivia of day-to-day living. The one Fixed sign planet drew his attention to longer range matters and he turned 'Simplify, simplify, simplify' into a crusade. A five planet majority in Water signs as well. This made his horoscope strong in both Mutable and Water. The Mutable Water sign is Pisces so we would expect traits of that sign to show up strongly in his life ('Let's run off to Walden Pond and get away from the world.'). Mars was also Thoreau's only planet in an Earth sign. Venus was his only Air sign placement. They have one thing in common. They both rule the small matters of day-to-day living."

<sup>13.</sup> Pardon me for hypothecating an 11:36AM birth. It merely happened to be 11:36AM as I pulled this illustration off my orphaned NeXT computer's screen (orphaned, because Steve Jobs had recently abandoned his NeXT hardware to concentrate on software). I have no idea at what hour Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, nor for that matter do the astrologers at http://www.bobmarksastrologer.com/famouscharts/Henry%20Thoreau.htm, who suppose Thoreau to have been some sort of escapist, have any idea at what hour he was born:



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

David Henry was born on his grandmother's farm, on the Bedford levels of Virginia Road  $2^{1/2}$  miles northeast of Concord, in sight of Walden Woods and not too far from the Concord River. This house was unpainted and gray, and the child was born in the eastermost of the upstairs chambers. The dooryard was unfenced and grassy, and led down to a brook. This was the home in which Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, little David Henry's mother, had spent her own childhood, and another family, the Catherines, was renting one end of the house, and Thoreau remembered that Bob Catherines and his brother John Thoreau, Jr. had had some fun tossing their turkey hens up into the air to make them fly and flap and gobble — if you've never done this, you've really missed something.



Hey, show some respect, we're talking infant memories here! The flapping and gobbling of those thrown up turkeys was the first memory trace planted indelibly in the new brain of David Henry. —The start of Thoreau's inner journal.

THOREAU RESIDENCES

The Thoreaus would leave this gray house in March 1818, when David Henry had reached eight months old.



October 12: <u>David Henry Thoreau</u> was named, by his parents <u>John Thoreau</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> in recognition of his paternal uncle <u>David Orrok Thoreau</u>, son of <u>Jane "Jennie" Burns Thoreau</u> and <u>Jean Thoreau</u>, who had died in August. <sup>14</sup>



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

October 12: "I was baptized in old M[eeting] H[ouse] by Dr. [Ezra] Ripley, when I was three months, and did not cry."

Nobody knows where the family came up with the name "Henry," but such untraditional naming was quite common among Huguenot transplant families of this period as they gradually assimilated to their new context and removed the "markers" by which they could be discriminated. There are some things to be said about Huguenots naming conventions from this period, that inform us of why little David Henry was not named Barzillai or Ralph or Stephen or whatever. American descendants of Huguenot refugees tended to favor names which existed in some form in French, such as Henry (*Henri*) and John (*Jean*). They also favored Old Testament names over the names of New Testament saints, whom were to them tainted with Catholicism. Hence "David" after King David of the Old Testament and the same as in French — satisfying both naming conventions at once. The ten most favored names were Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, David, Jacob, Salomon, and Samuel. 15

3d Lieutenant of the Corps of Artillery <u>James Duncan Graham</u>, freshly minted, began to serve at the United States Military Academy, West Point as Adjutant.

<sup>14.</sup> Professor William E. Cain, in the frontmatter to A HISTORICAL GUIDE TO HENRY DAVID THOREAU (NY, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) writes that this uncle David "died in Concord in July." We wonder from whence Professor Cain has derived this information that David Thoreau had died in Concord, and from whence he has derived this information that David Thoreau had died in July. He may well be correct. He has been asked, by email, whether he has perchance investigated, and discovered the grave of David Thoreau in what has now become the old section of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, or whether he has perchance managed to obtain a Concord documentary record of this death. However, he has not yet responded.

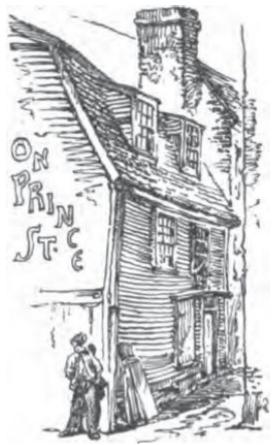
<sup>15.</sup> In the late 16th Century in Rouen, France, for purposes of illustration of these naming traditions, the ten most popular names for Huguenot boys had been, in order of popularity from most popular down, Jean, Pierre, Jacques, Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, David, Jacob, Salomon, and Samuel, whereas the ten most popular names for Catholic boys had been, in the same order, Jean, Guillaume, Pierre, Nicolas, Jacques, Robert, François, Charles, Richard, and Abraham. We may note that only the name Abraham appears on both lists. The influence of tradition presents itself in the fact that there is a 70% match between the list of names from Rouen and the list of names from the US despite the passage of four full generations. Now, it might be objected that the name "David" was assigned on the basis of an uncle named David Orrok Thoreau who lay dying at the time, but there is of course a reason why that uncle was named "David," and besides, it was at least as conventional among Huguenots to perpetuate or recycle names used in previous generations of the family as it was among other ethnic groups. From the 17th through the middle of the 19th centuries, over 60% of the families in Hingham MA assigned the name of the Huguenot father to a son (as, John Thoreau the father and little John the first son), and over 70% assigned the name of the Huguenot mother to a daughter (in America the Huguenots if you remember tended to outmarry, so Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau was, of course, not Huguenot, so the Thoreau daughters became Helen and Sophia rather than, perhaps, little Cynthia and, then, perhaps, Naomi). Thus, and this sums up my comment, the very fact that little David Henry was named David Henry speaks to the fact that their Huguenot heritage was a matter of importance in this family.

HDT WHAT? INDEX

## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

August 23, Saturday: Father John Thoreau, having borrowed from his stepmother Mrs. Rebecca Kettell
Thoreau in 1808 in order to set himself up in the dry goods business and having mortgaged the family home on Prince Street in Boston for \$1,000.00 in order to provide security for this loan, it turned out had dug himself a deep hole because since then business had not been good. At this point he and his wife Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau needed to turn the Prince Street property over to Joseph Hurd, executor of the estate of his stepmother who had died in 1814, who transferred ownership to the Thoreau sisters. There is a drawing of the rather unimposing house in question on page 118 of Edward G. Porter's RAMBLES IN OLD BOSTON, NEW ENGLAND (Boston 1887):



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





### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1818

March: The Thoreaus left the gray house on Virginia Road, where <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> had spent a portion of her youth and where her David Henry had been born, while the baby was but eight months old. They moved initially to a house they rented from Josiah Davis, at 47 Lexington Road in Concord.

HENRY THOREAU
THOREAU RESIDENCES



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



David Henry Thoreau's 2d stanza began of course on his birthday, July 12th, Sunday, 1818.

- Little David learned to walk while, for the time being, he still had ten toes.
- Brother John was playing with an inflated bladder when it "burst on the hearth."
- "The cow came into the entry after pumpkins."
- The gray house on Virginia Road, where Henry had been born, was sold at public auction. The
  family relocated from Josiah Davis's rental house in Concord to the Red House where the
  grandmother lived, next to the Chelmsford meetinghouse "where they kept the powder in the
  garret."
- At the age of 33, Mother Cynthia gave birth to Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau in Chelmsford.
- "I cut my toe and was knocked over by a hen with chickens, etc., etc."

BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1818

BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1819



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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



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



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

HDT WHAT? INDEX

## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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



THOREAU RESIDENCES



## CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



November 15, Sunday: Simeon Marshall of Gloucester, 22 years of age, drowned at sea.

John Thoreau, Senior's Chelmsford MA grocery store opened its doors for business. The plan was that while Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau waited counter, John would be painting signs on commission.

THOREAU RESIDENCES





John in later years

Cynthia in later years

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

1st day 15 of 11th M / Our Morning Meeting was silent & to me a season of but little life. - In the Afternoon soon after taking my seat was favor'd with a quickening of life which continued in a good degree thro' the meeting. father Rodman was concerned in a short lively testimony

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



Winter: The Thoreaus had abandoned Concord in favor of Chelmsford MA:

Chelmsford, till March, 1821. (Last charge in Chelmsford about middle of March, 1821.) Aunt Sarah taught me to walk there when fourteen months old. Lived next the meeting-house, where they kept the powder in the garret. Father kept shop and painted signs, etc. <sup>16</sup>

> JOHN THOREAU CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU THOREAU RESIDENCES

This was during **David Henry Thoreau**'s year one.

At some point John Thoreau, Senior "got a fall while painting Hale's (?) factory."

At some point John Thoreau, Jr. was playing with an inflated bladder when it "burst on the hearth."

At some point "The cow came into the entry after pumpkins."

At some point "I cut my toe and was knocked over by a hen with chickens, etc., etc."

16. That house next door to the meeting-house in Concord was of course the house bought in 1799 by David Henry's grandfather, which is now the east wing of the Colonial Inn. "Aunt Sarah" was of course Sarah Thoreau, John's sister who worked in Concord as a seamstress. (I am unclear, however, whether Thoreau intended that powder had been stored in the garret of the Concord meetinghouse, or in the garret of the Chelmsford one.)



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



June 24, Thursday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau was born in Chelmsford MA, the 4th and, surprisingly, the final child of John Thoreau, Senior and Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau.





John in later years

Cynthia in later years



An intriguing factoid is that although this birth unlike David Henry's is on record in <u>Concord</u>'s town records, it is on record not as of this date but as of September 27th:

#### **Births**

Name	Sex	Birth Date	Birth Place	Father's Name	Mother's Name
THOREAU, John		1754	Concord		
THOREAU, Mary	F	1786	Concord	John	
THOREAU, Sarah		1791	Concord		
THOREAU, Helen L.	F	1813	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, John	M	1815	Concord	John	Cynthia
THOREAU, Sophia Elizabeth	F	<b>Sept. 27, 1819</b>	Chelmsford	John	Cynthia



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Cynthia had her last baby at age 33 although, in the 18th Century, mothers usually had had their final pregnancy in their early 40s, presumably because, since the turn of the 19th Century, white women in New England towns had been having their final pregnancies at an earlier age in each decade, and in that way creating fewer children per family. In general, the number of children per white family increased as one traveled toward the frontier of white settlement, reaching seven or so in Illinois and Indiana; nevertheless the usual number in Massachusetts and Connecticut in the 1830s was still five or more, so the Thoreaus' four children, Helen Louisa Thoreau, then John Thoreau, Jr., then David Henry Thoreau, and then finally Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau, would have been considered to be a small family or a family that was still being eagerly worked on.

Walter Roy Harding's THE DAYS OF HENRY THOREAU: A BIOGRAPHY. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966:

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

#### WALTER HARDING'S BIOGRAPHY

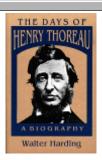
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Thoreau's father, <u>John Thoreau</u>, while intellectual, "lived quietly, peacefully and contentedly in the shadow of his wife," Mrs. <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>, who was dynamic and outspoken with a strong love for nature and compassion for the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

- 1st Helen Louisa Thoreau -quiet, retiring, eventually a teacher.
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- 4th <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> -independent, talkative, ultimately took over father's business and edited Henry's posthumous publications.

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

(Robert L. Lace, January-March 1986)



Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 24th of 6th M / With My H & John in a Chaise went to Portsmouth to attend the Moy [Monthly] Meeting. Stoped on the way at Uncle Saml Thurstons & were soon joined by Elizabeth Walker & Company, after a little refreshment we went to meeting,



#### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

which was a favord season, Elizabeth having much to communicate in the course of the public Meeting, & I have no doubt that the living Power of Truth rose into dominion in many minds present. -In the last meeting we had but little buisness, but the little that we had was pretty well transacted. - We dined at R Mitchells & towards night rode home. -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



David Henry Thoreau's 3d stanza began on his birthday, July 12th, Monday, 1819.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his junior year of college, became Waldo Emerson and began his journal.
- In the yard at Chelmsford, David Henry chopped the big toe of his right foot. [On the initial ten pages is my infamous cartoonist son Guy Duramen Meredith's depiction of David Henry Thoreau. learning to deal with life's little losses, out in the back yard with the kindling hatchet that was used by the family to chop turkey heads. The cartoon is copyright by Guy Duramen Meredith © 1991. To look at it, click on this paragraph. To look at a single frame of it, magnified, click on that frame.]

BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1819 BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1820





David Henry Thoreau's 4th stanza began on his birthday, July 12th, Wednesday, 1820.

- Waldo Emerson was bewildered by a period of intense infatuation with another Harvard lad, named Martin Gay.
- Henry visited Walden Pond: "One of the most ancient scenes stamped on the tablets of my memory, the oriental Asiatic valley of my world...."
- An unmarried couple living at the Thoreau boardinghouse experienced an unexpected pregnancy, which was papered over in the usual manner by prompt marriage plus a falsified official record (the infant would be baptized as Ellen Devereux Sewall).
- Uncle Charles Dunbar discovered a lode of superior graphite ore in New Hampshire.
- Father John abandoned the grocery in Chelmsford as marginal and the Thoreaus moved briefly into Concord, and then to the South End of Boston to reside in "a ten-footer," and then to Whitwell's House on Pinckney Street.

BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1820 BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1821



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1821

David Henry Thoreau's 5th stanza began on his birthday, July 12th, Thursday, 1821. At about this birthday, little David Henry would have graduated, according to the conventions for children of the time, from a tunic of merino opening down the front and reaching below his knees, over white trousers reaching to his ankles and fashioned either of similar material or of white linen, to knee breeches or trousers and a shirt with a ruffled collar covered with a close-fitting jacket, and a cloth cap with a full soft crown and visor, or a straw hat. (However, there would not yet have been the "leg-of-mutton" sleeve at this point, as this style would not become popular either in male of female attire until the 1830s.)

- Waldo Emerson graduated from Harvard College and went to work for his brother William as an assistant in a girls' school in Boston.
- There was great drought in Massachusetts and Walden Pond must have been many feet below normal levels.

BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1821
BACKGROUND EVENTS OF 1822



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1822

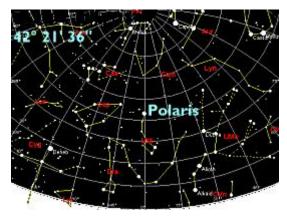
I'll insert this here, since at this point little <u>David Henry Thoreau</u> is five years old. This is a story passed on by <u>Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson</u> in his 1917 volume HENRY THOREAU AS REMEMBERED BY A YOUNG FRIEND EDWARD WALDO EMERSON, which he heard had been related by <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> to an old friend. I would caution the reader to take into consideration, in reading such stories, the general context of stories as they were told by parents about their children in the early 19th Century, which they need to understand is **most definitely not the same** context as now. The story may actually tell us more about the parent than about the child:



John and Henry slept together in the trundlebed, that obsolete and delightful children's bed, telescoping on large castors under the parental four-poster. John would go to sleep at once, but Henry often lay long awake. His mother found the little boy lying so one night, long after he had gone upstairs, and said, "Why, Henry dear, why don't you go to sleep?" "Mother," said he, "I have been looking through the stars to see if I could n't see God behind them."

JOHN THOREAU, JR.

However, just in case this story actually does have something to do with the appearance of the night sky over <u>Concord</u>, Massachusetts, here is what the night sky at the latitude of Concord, Massachusetts amounts to:

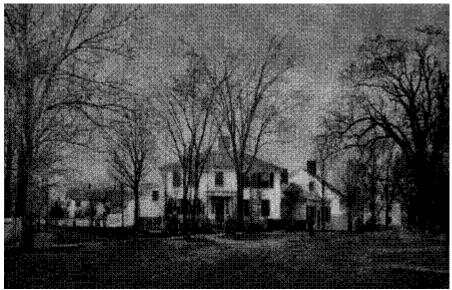




#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1823

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



where the father would go into the pencil-making business of Dunbar & Stow that was making use of graphite that <u>Charles Jones Dunbar</u> had discovered in 1821 near Bristol in New Hampshire, and also take up responsibility for the mill, milldam, race, and pond on Mill Brook just south of the "Milldam" district.

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

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

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

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

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

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



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

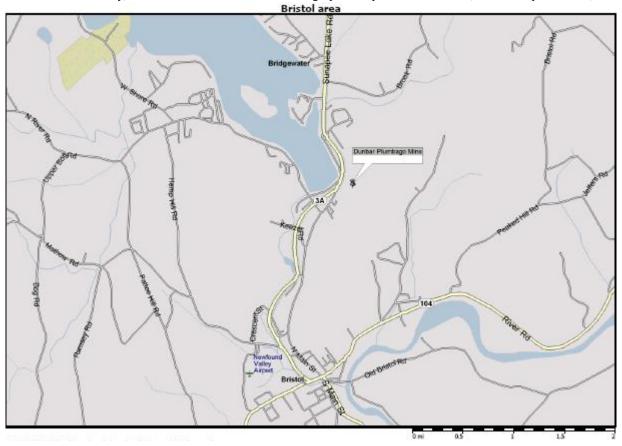
free and clear, and moreover, such and so many strata nice and proper.

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

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

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

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



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



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

This photograph of <u>Concord</u> Center, taken in about 1865, shows in the distance the Jonas Hastings house belonging to Deacon <u>William Parkman</u> in which the Thoreaus were to reside from 1823 to 1826, at the corner of Main and Walden Streets.



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



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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



THOREAU RESIDENCES

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

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



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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

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

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

<sup>17.</sup> The water level of Walden Pond would be correspondingly low again, and the sandbar again exposed, in the year 2002!

HDT WHAT? INDEX

# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



While he was still age 6, <u>David</u> would be tossed by a <u>Concord</u> cow.

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



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

R. Wheeler's CONCORD: CLIMATE FOR FREEDOM:

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

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

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

THOREAU RESIDENCES

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

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



#### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



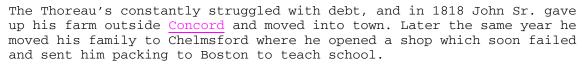
Per Walter Roy Harding's THE DAYS OF HENRY THOREAU: A BIOGRAPHY (NY: Knopf, 1966):

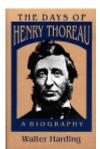
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#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

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

Henry's Concord youth was "typical of any small town American boy of the 19th century."

Henry attended Miss Phœbe Wheeler's private "infants" school, then the public grammar school, where he studied the Bible and English classics such as  $\underline{\text{William Shakespeare}}$ ,  $\underline{\text{John Bunyan}}$ , Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Essayists.

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

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

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



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

#### WALTER HARDING'S BIOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

(Robert L. Lace, January-March 1986)



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

Allen concludes that Waldo Emerson's theory of nature in NATURE is

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

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

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

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

[Cecily F. Brown, March 1992]



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1825

According to Marcel R. Garnier's *L'ANCÊTRE* (THE ANCESTOR), it was in about this year that John Guillet<sup>18</sup> went from the Isle of Jersey to Québec in the New World.

<u>Harrison Gray Dyar</u> reached his majority and completed his apprenticeship at the <u>Concord</u> clockmaking shop of Lemuel Curtis on the "Milldam".

Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau joined the Concord Female Charitable Society. One of the many things this society had done for the local "silent poor" was provide snuff, rice, tea, brandy, and spirits to Zilpah White while she had lived (she had died in 1820) "at the very corner of my bean field" near Walden Pond alone in a cabin, and provide varn that she could weave so as to have some sort of cash income.

WALDEN: Here, by the very corner of my field, still nearer to town, Zilpha, a colored woman, held her little house, where she spun linen for townsfolk, making the Walden Woods ring with her shrill singing, for she had a loud and notable voice. At length, in the war of 1812, her dwelling was set on fire by English soldiers, prisoners on parole, when she was away, and her cat and dog and hens were all burned up together. She led a hard life, and somewhat inhumane. One old frequenter of these woods remembers, that as he passed her house one noon he heard her muttering to herself over her gurgling pot, -"Ye are all bones, bones!" I have seen bricks amid the oak copse there.



ZILPAH WHITE

SLAVERY

1827

April 25, Wednesday: The Reverend <u>Daniel Starr Southmayd</u> was ordained as the pastor of <u>Concord</u>'s Trinitarian Congregationalists. <sup>19</sup> (He would serve there until 1832, not without controversy.)



#### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



May 7, Monday: The Thoreaus had moved in Spring 1826 from the brick "Josiah Jones" house at the corner of Main Street and Walden Street in Concord, into the Davis house next door to the substantial residence of the attorney Samuel Hoar and across the street from the "Shattuck House (now William Monroe's)," and at this point they moved again, across the street to the Shattuck house, the address of which was at that time #63 Main Street (it is now #185 Main Street). They would live in this house "to spring of 1835." It was their 3d Concord residence in four years. Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau would determine to make extra cash as her sistersin-law were doing in the old Thoreau home on the town common, by taking in lodgers. This nice facility would be made into her boardinghouse.<sup>20</sup>

THOREAU RESIDENCES



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



19. It seems likely, to Professor Robert A. Gross, that Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau was impressed with this young reverend, as a few days before the ordination of the Reverend Southmayd she had given notice of her intention to leave the Reverend Ezra Ripley's congregation. Per "Faith in the Boardinghouse: New Views of Thoreau Family Religion":

> True to their stepmother Mrs. Rebecca Kettell Thoreau's example, Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau, Jane Thoreau, and Maria Thoreau made public professions of faith over the years from 1801 to 1818. So did Cynthia Dunbar in 1811. All single women in their late teens and early twenties, they entered a pious sisterhood. In a pattern common in New England Congregationalism, seven out of ten members of the Concord church were women. But in 1826 the "Misses Thoreau," as they were often called in the town records, bolted from the Reverend Ezra Ripley fold. No longer willing to suppress misgivings over the parson's "liberal" preaching, they enlisted in the orthodox fight to restore "the primitive faith of the new England pilgrims." Elizabeth, Jane, and Maria Thoreau were among the "little band" of nine doughty dissenters who deserted Ripley's flock in May 1826 and founded a Trinitarian church. Soon they were recruiting their kin. In April 1827, sister-in-law Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau sought and won approval to leave the First Church in anticipation of joining its rival. But, as it turned out, she never did. Fourteen months later, she returned to the family pew in the First Church, having "changed her mind," as the Reverend Ripley happily noted in the church records. According to Walter Harding, who drew on the oral memories collected by Edward Emerson, the stumbling-block was the official creed that all members of the Trinitarian church were obliged to embrace. Cynthia Thoreau refused to accept it "verbatim," and the church would not allow her "staunch independence." By contrast, the creed proved no problem for her siblings: brother <a href="Charles Jones Dunbar">Charles Jones Dunbar</a> began worshiping with the Trinitarians in 1829, sister Louisa Dunbar joined them six years later. In a Calvinist family circle, Cynthia and her husband John Thoreau stood alone.



#### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

1828

The "little band" of nine religious reactionaries of <u>Concord</u>, led by Deacon <u>John White</u>, established a "Trinitarian" society and put its new church across the brook from the old church, on Walden Street. By 1830, the <u>Reverend Ezra Ripley</u> would no longer have a monopoly on the religious life of Concord and thus it would become possible for people to "sign off" from paying the parish tax to his church.





THE DEACONS OF CONCORD

Even <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> was for a time involved in this defection. Professor Robert A. Gross describes it in his "Faith in the Boardinghouse: New Views of Thoreau Family Religion".<sup>21</sup>

True to their stepmother Mrs. Rebecca Kettell Thoreau's example, Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau, Jane Thoreau, and Maria Thoreau made public professions of faith over the years from 1801 to 1818. So did Cynthia Dunbar in 1811. All single women in their late teens and early twenties, they entered a pious sisterhood. In a pattern common in New England Congregationalism, seven out of

- 20. What Shattucks did they know?
  - Daniel Shattuck
  - Henry L. Shattuck
  - Lemuel Shattuck the author of A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....
- 21. Robert A. Gross. "Faith in the Boardinghouse: New Views of Thoreau Family Religion," <u>Thoreau Society Bulletin</u>, Winter 2005



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

ten members of the Concord church were women. But in 1826 the "Misses Thoreau," as they were often called in the town records, bolted from the Reverend Ezra Ripley fold. No longer willing to suppress misgivings over the parson's "liberal" preaching, they enlisted in the orthodox fight to restore "the primitive faith of the new England pilgrims." Elizabeth, Jane, and Maria Thoreau were among the "little band" of nine doughty dissenters who deserted Ripley's flock in May 1826 and founded a Trinitarian church. Soon they were recruiting their kin. In April 1827, sister-in-law Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau sought and won approval to leave the First Church in anticipation of joining its rival. But, as it turned out, she never did. Fourteen months later, she returned to the family pew in the First Church, having "changed her mind," as the Reverend Ripley happily noted in the church records. According to Walter Harding, who drew on the oral memories collected by Edward Emerson, the stumbling-block was the official creed that all members of the Trinitarian church were obliged to embrace. Cynthia Thoreau refused to accept it "verbatim," and the church would not allow her "staunch independence." By contrast, the creed proved no problem for her siblings: brother Charles Jones Dunbar began worshiping with the Trinitarians in 1829, sister Louisa Dunbar joined them six years later. In a Calvinist family circle, Cynthia and her husband John Thoreau, Senior stood alone.

February: By this point the Reverend <u>Daniel Starr Southmayd</u> and his wife had moved out of the Thoreau boardinghouse on Main Street in <u>Concord</u>. The theological situation had become too tense. According to Joanna Kent Southmayd, although the Thoreau context had been very "pleasant," most "enjoyable," the housekeeping "agreeable," there had been few topics on which it had been possible to engage in conversation without "some little collision of feeling." Professor Robert A. Gross describes these tensions as having to do with the uniqueness of Christ: whether He be uniquely the spirit of God as "manifest in the flesh" as the Trinitarians demanded, or whether he be non-uniquely a mere relatively superior "creature of God's will" as the Unitarians would allow. In a preserved letter which Professor Gross has uncovered, Joanna vents:

I had a very serious conversation with Mrs. T. [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau], in which I told her my views and feeling respecting the Savior. She said her views were the same, yet acknowledged that she could not see now he was Divine. She could not receive Him as such. I told her I saw a vast difference between her views and mine. It would make a vast change in my mind to believe that I must reserve a higher homage for another being than Jesus Christ. I warned her with as much tenderness and faithfulness as I could, of that pride of reasoning which she exhibited much of.... I am afraid she is blind to the truth — yet she takes up sermons, which hold forth the character of Christ & professes to agree with them.... She says she prays to Christ without any feeling that he is inferior.

July 6, Sunday: The <u>Reverend Ezra Ripley</u> made a notation in the records of his 1st Parish Church in <u>Concord</u>, that "Our sister <u>Cynthia Thoreau</u> changed her mind, and did not offer herself for communion with the Trinitarian Church, and is still a member of this church."

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1st day 6th of 7 M / Our Meetings were well attended & both nearly silent. - The Afternoon was an uncommonly dull one to me.-Before I went to meeting this morning I met with a plain looking man at the door, who I took to be a man from Lynn & from his open & familiar look it seemed as if I had seen him & as he advanced I gave him my hand - he told me he was from Phila & after a little familiar conversation I asked him in to the house On conversing further I found he was not a member of our society, but had been in his youth & was disowned for his outgoings, but had become (as he called it) convinced, but had not joined any society & was now travelling on truths account - I told him as he was not a member we could not consent to his preaching in our meeting, he said he did not attend any Meeting, but went round chiefly conversing in families - said he had been to New Bedford & Staid at S Rodmans. - well I said didst thou feel Saml & his wife to be friends in the life of truth. - he replied, he did not feel free to speak on that subject, but he could say thus much that "while he was there he felt free" - finding what he was, I felt but little openess [the word is crossed out] with him & we frequently fell into long pauses. - I however told him that I had no unity with discenters from friends such as followed Elias Hicks - after a little dissultory conversation he got up to go away saying that he was going to NYork in the Steam Boat this Afternoon - I expected him at meeting but found he did not come. -

Just as I rose from dinner he knocked at the door, came in & set down to wait for the boat - I asked him some leading questions on doctrinal subjects, particularly of his belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, whether he believed in his character as  $\operatorname{God}\ \&\ \operatorname{man}$ ,  $\&\ \operatorname{whether}\ \operatorname{he}\ \operatorname{considered}\ \operatorname{him}\ \operatorname{as}\ \operatorname{a}\ \operatorname{meer}\ \operatorname{prophet}\ \&\$ good man - he expressed an unwillingness to give his opinion on these points of doctrine, & engaged[?] the necessity of attending to the inward Light - said he was a friend to all good folks of any denomination & that he did not meddle with particular doctrines, especially the points on which Friends are divided -but still where ever I found him he was associated with those of the separatists or new order. - I told him he could not get along so, that I knew as well as he knew any thing that there were points which they held to that were not christian & took away their claim to the name, that I wanted him to acknowledge the true principle & give his strength to Orthodox Friends & not to carry out two [?] but to come out on the right side, thus he would openly & show himself subserve the good cause &c. He told me that very soon after he came in in the Morning that he perceived I was under bondage & oppression from a sense of feeling. - I told him as to bondage, I acknowledged more of that than I wished, & as to oppression, he was correct for I did silently set up Lamentation over him, from an apprehension that he had known something of the purifying power of truth in his heart & been in some measure enlightened by it, but from a want of properly embracing the Doctrines of the Gospel, he had not attained to that clearness which he ought to have done - he should bring what I had said to judgement & if it was for him he should take it & if not it would pass off. - & urged the necessity of Love &c & wished me to examine & see if my own words did not apply to myself &c



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

This is a very imperfect outline of all that passed between us.—but as the opportunity was a little remarkable I thought best to insert something of it here - - we parted Kindly. —

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1829

July 30, Thursday: Fanny Wright began to lecture in <u>Boston</u>, to enthusiastic full houses. This paid lecture tour was perhaps the 1st ever by a woman and would continue for several nights. She attacked organized religion for the secondary place it assigned to women, and advocated their empowerment through divorce and birth control.

FEMINISM



One wonders who from <u>Concord</u> –such as <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> – may have been in those full houses.<sup>22</sup> No cause for concern, <u>Lydia Maria Child</u> would suggest to alarmed male friends: such proper Bostonians were merely "weary of going to the museum" and "were as thankful to Miss Wright for giving them something new to talk about, as they would have been to a Boa-Constrictor, or a caravan of monkeys."



Lyman Beecher would comment in his LECTURES ON POLITICAL ATHEISM that "regrettably she [Wright] won over the educated, refined women ... and worst of all, women who had been friends to his own children."

<sup>22.</sup> Concord's <u>Helen Louisa Thoreau</u>, <u>John Thoreau</u>, <u>Jr.</u>, <u>David Henry Thoreau</u>, and <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> would have been considered at that time and place to constitute a smallish family or one still being eagerly worked on. Nevertheless, Cynthia would bear no children after age 33.



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

<u>Felix Mendelssohn</u> visited Holyrood Castle (home of Mary Queen of Scots and site of the murder of Rizzio) and was inspired to begin his "Scottish" Symphony.

According to an almanac of the period, "Battle near Eski Stamboul between the Russian division under Krassowski, and the troops of the Grand Vizier, resulting in a loss to the latter of 500 or 600 men" and "Nine persons, several of them of rank, condemned to death for high treason at Barcelona, Spain."

# **CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS**

<u>Hector Berlioz</u>'s entry in the Prix de Rome competition, the cantata "Cleopatre," was performed for the initial time. No grand prize would be awarded this year — the jury desired to give the prize to Berlioz but (Adrien Boieldieu would explain to the composer) could not judge music they were incapable of understanding.

Hearing a rumor that King Charles X was planning a counter-revolution, a crowd marched to arrest the king at St. Cloud. Among the citizens was <u>Hector Berlioz</u>. When they reached the Etoile they found the soldiers gone, so they returned to town. 80 deputies met in the Palais Bourbon led by Jacques Lafitte and established a new regime.

<u>Robert Schumann</u> wrote to his mother, telling her of his decision to give up the study of law and asking her to write to Friedrich Wieck requesting his opinion of his future as a pianist.

1832

August 31, Thursday: <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> rejoined the established Unitarian church of <u>Concord</u>, signing its covenant that she believed in "One God, the Father of all, and in Jesus Christ his Son, our Savior, the One Mediator between God & man." Her dalliance with the Trinitarian Congregationism of the Reverend <u>Daniel Starr Southmayd</u> was over and done with.



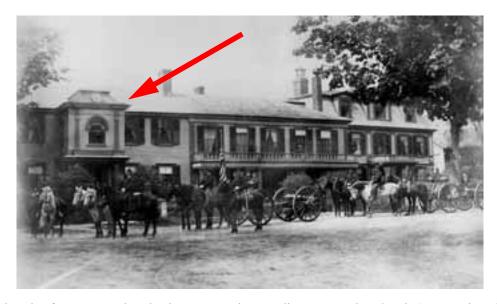
## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1835

The Thoreau family in <u>Concord</u> would live in "Aunt's House, to spring of 1837," the house which is now the west part of Concord's Colonial Inn, with <u>Aunt Elizabeth Orrock Thoreau</u> (Aunt <u>Sarah Thoreau</u> having died in 1829): David Henry was away most of the time, as a student at Harvard College.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

JOHN THOREAU, SR.



On the Isle of Jersey, a savings bank was opened. According to Marcel R. Garnier's *L'ANCÊTRE* (THE ANCESTOR), it was in about this year that John Guillet, <sup>23</sup> originally from the Isle of <u>Jersey</u>, moved from Québec to Ontario.



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1837

This was the year in which <u>Waldo Emerson</u> would deliver his Phi Beta Kappa Society oration "The American Scholar" to the seniors at Harvard College (one of whom was in the process of changing his name from David Henry Thoreau to Henry David Thoreau, and was beginning a journal of sorts).

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1837 (æt. 20)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1838 (æt. 20-21)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1839 (æt. 21-22)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1840 (æt. 22-23)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1841 (æt. 23-24)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1842 (æt. 24-25)

Read Henry Thoreau's Journal Volume for 1845-1846 (æt. 27-29)

Can you parse this? According to Anita Haya Patterson's FROM EMERSON TO KING: DEMOCRACY, RACE, AND THE POLITICS OF PROTEST (NY: Oxford UP, 1997, page 120), during this year in which the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society was constituting itself, the husband of Mrs. <u>Lidian Emerson</u>, one of the women<sup>24</sup> involved in that formation, in the writing of a lecture on "SOCIETY", would alter his concept of the obligations that obtain among friends. He would come to place primary reliance upon a concept "kindness" that savored of proto-racialism:

[H]e argues that political obligations associated with kindness can bind together not simply an intimate circle of friends, but also casual acquaintances and neighborhoods, whole towns, countries, and even continents. The obligations that arise out of such kindness, in this account, are in every case involuntarily assumed.

24. Also involved in this new society were Abba Alcott and seven women residing at the Thoreau boardinghouse:

Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau

Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau

Helen Louisa Thoreau

Aunt Maria Thoreau

Aunt Jane Thoreau

Miss Prudence Ward

Miss Prudence's mother.



### CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



Fall: Henry David Thoreau read Virgil and translated Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's ITALIENISCHE REISE into English. It would be during this period that a conversation occurred in the Thoreau home, if it occurred as reported by Ellery Channing in THOREAU: THE POET-NATURALIST as edited by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1902, page 18). The story is that at this age, the age of 20 years, Thoreau broke into tears when his mother Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau suggested that he could take up his knapsack and "go abroad to seek his fortune," and was distraught until his sister Helen had proposed that he "stay at home and live with us." About the only comment I would be willing to make in regard to Channing's story, other than that Channing's perceptions of Thoreau's state of mine are in general not to be trusted, is that in "Thoreau's Concord" by Ruth Wheeler in Walter Harding et al, HENRY DAVID THOREAU: STUDIES AND COMMENTARIES.<sup>25</sup> the assertion is made that of Thoreau's generation of young males in Concord, fully half emigrated to the West.

1839

February 24, Sunday: Mrs. Lidian "Asia" Jackson Emerson gave birth to Ellen Tucker Emerson, named after Waldo Emerson's first wife Mrs. Ellen Louisa Tucker Emerson. Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau acted as midwife.

1842

January 11, Tuesday: At the last point, while John Junior was delirious, he was thinking that he had written something for his friend Bill Robinson's Concord Republican, and was trying to get his brother Henry to read this piece.





In the afternoon, in Henry Thoreau's arms, at the age of 27, John Thoreau, Jr. died of lockjaw. 26

#### **Thoreau Deaths**

Name	<b>Death Date</b>	Age	Buried
<u>John</u>	<u>March 1801</u>	47	<u>Concord</u>
<u>Mary</u>	<u>July 24, 1811</u>	25	Concord

25. Rutherford NJ: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1972, page 27.



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

### **Thoreau Deaths**

Name	<b>Death Date</b>	Age	Buried
<u>Sarah</u>	<u>August 1829</u>	38	<u>Concord</u>
Miss Betsey	November 1839	60s <b>?</b>	Concord
<u>John</u>	January 1842	27	Concord
<u>Helen L.</u>	<u>June 1849</u>	36	<u>Concord</u>

### DIED:

In this town, on Tuesday last, suddenly of the lock jaw, Mr JOHN THOREAU, Jr., aged 27.





#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

On this day and the following one, <u>Lidian Emerson</u> was composing a letter to her sister:

I begin my letter with the strange sad news that John Thoreau has this afternoon left this world. He died of lockjaw occasioned by a slight cut on his thumb. Henry mentioned on Sunday morning that he had been at home helping the family who were all ailing; and that John was disabled from his usual work by having cut his finger. In the evening Mr. Brooks came for him to go home again, and said they were alarmed by symptoms of the lockjaw in John. Monday John was given over by the physicians and to-day he died - retaining his senses and some power of speech to the last. He said from the first he knew he should die - but was perfectly quiet and trustful - saying that God had always been good to him and he could trust Him now. His words and behavior throughout were what Mr. Emerson calls manly - even great. Henry has been here this evening and seen Mr. Emerson but no one else. He says John took leave of all the family on Monday with perfect calmness and more than resignation.... Henry has just been here - (it is now Wednesday noon) I love him for the feeling he showed and the effort he made to be cheerful. He did not give way in the least but his whole demeanour was that of one struggling with sickness of heart. He came to take his clothes - and says he does not know when he shall return to us. We are wholly indebted to John for Waldo's picture. Henry and myself each carried him to a sitting but did not succeed in keeping him in the right attitude - and still enough. But John by his faculty of interesting children succeeded in keeping him looking as he should while the impression was making....

Lieutenant Vincent Eyre would report from the border of Afghanistan that "From Kutter-Sung to Jugdulluk it was one continued conflict; Brigadier Shelton, with his brave little band in the rear, holding overwhelming numbers in check, and literally performing wonders. But no efforts could avail to ward off the withering fire of juzails, which from all sides assailed the crowded column, lining the road with bleeding carcasses. About 3PM the advance reached Jugdulluk, and took up its position behind some ruined walls that crowned a height by the roadside. To show an imposing front, the officers extended themselves in line, and Captain Grant, assistant adjutant-general, at the same moment received a wound in the face. From this eminence they cheered their comrades under Brigadier Shelton in the rear, as they still struggled their way gallantly along every foot of ground, perseveringly followed up by their merciless enemy, until they arrived at their ground. But even here rest was denied them; for the Affghans, immediately occupying two hills which commanded the position, kept up a fire from which the walls of the enclosure afforded but a partial shelter. The exhausted troops and followers now began to suffer greatly from thirst, which they were unable to satisfy. A tempting stream trickled near the foot of the hill, but to venture down to it was certain death. Some snow that covered the ground was eagerly devoured, but increased, instead of alleviating, their sufferings. The raw flesh of three bullocks, which had fortunately been saved, was served out to the soldiers, and ravenously swallowed."<sup>27</sup> At about 3:30PM Akber Khan called for Captain Skinner and despite the continuing rifle fire from above the survivors threw themselves down for a brief rest. Captain Bygrave led a sally of about 15 British and the riflemen atop one of the hills fell back, but as they came back down these riflemen returned and resumed firing. At 5PM Captain Skinner brought the information that Akber Khan was requesting a conference with the surviving General and to ensure that the British vacated the town of Jellalabad was demanding Brigadier Shelton and Captain Johnson as hostages. Akber Khan would feed these officers but not permit them to return to their troops.



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

27. 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?]



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

January 14(?), Friday(?): In rural New England, the town bell would be rung three times at the death of a child, six times for a woman, and nine times for a man. Then there would be a pause, and the death bell would be tolled once for each year of life of the deceased. In the Freeman Family Papers available in the Old Stourbridge Village Research Library in Stourbridge, Lyndon Freeman reminisced that "It was seldom that we could not tell who was the deceased person." Why did it have to be the Reverend Barzillai Frost who officiated at John's funeral?



With slow even blows he drove his wedge into the Thoreau family, suggesting that it might be a mistake to suppose that the dearly departed had "adopted the transcendental views to any considerable extent," because although John Thoreau, Jr. had been exposed to such "revolutionary opinions abroad in society in regard to inspiration and religious instructions," he had escaped this infection, or at least he had recently seemed to the reverend to have been shaking off this influence and coming toward "those views which have fortified the minds of the great majority of the wise and good in all ages." In the absence of any deathbed conversion, Frost was imagining a post-deathbed conversion: alive or dead, people were going to see that



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

it was Barzillai Frost who owned the truth.

TRANSCENDENTALISM

The truth this man owned had something to do with the texts, James 4:14 and Job 14:2, upon which he relied for his funeral eulogy:

"For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."

"He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down."

We note that these two texts used in Frost's eulogy of John Thoreau, Jr., by commenting upon human impermanence, place emphasis upon the human desire for permanence. I believe these were not hinted at by Henry Thoreau in any of his many uses of scriptural phraseology. It may be that such texts had by Frost's touch become contaminated, or become too painful to be contemplated. But, more likely in view of Thoreau's attitude toward time and eternity, Thoreau simply couldn't respect the human lust for permanence. An interesting letter has been found, dating to this period, from an Abby Tolman to her friend Eliza Woodward:



Have you received last week's paper? If so you have seen the death of J. Thoreau. How sad and melancholy his death seems. I cannot realize he is gone, that his bright cheerful countenance and pleasant voice will no longer be heard among us. Very few would be missed as he will among us. He was generally known but I do not think his character was truly appreciated by many. I presume you will learn more particulars of his sickness and death before this letter reaches you.... I'm glad that I have known him, my acquaintance with him though short will always be pleasantly remembered.

1843

May 11, Thursday: <u>Joseph Smith, Jr.</u> got married with the teenage orphans Maria Lawrence and Sarah Lawrence (he would serve as executor of their \$8,000 estate).

<u>Henry Thoreau</u>, exceedingly homesick, wrote to his mother <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>, etc. from Castleton on Staten Island.

THOREAU RESIDENCES



Castleton, Staten[]Island,
May 11<sup>th</sup> 1843.
Dear Mother and Friends at home,



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

We arrived here safely at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, having had as good a passage as usual, though we ran aground and were detained a couple of hours in the Thames river, till the tide came to our relief. At length we curtseyed up to a wharf just the other side of their castle [g]arden, very incurious about them and their city. I believe my vacant looks absolutely inaccessible to questions did at length satisfy an army of starving cab-men — that I did not want a hack, cab, or any thing of that sort as yet. It was the only demand the city made on us; as if a wheeled vehicle of some sort were the sum and summit of a reasonable man's wants. "Having tried the water[,"] they seemed to say, "will you not return to the pleasant securities of land carriage? Else, why was your boat's prow turned toward the shore at last?" They are a sad looking set of fellows —not permitted to come on board—

#### [Page 2]

and I pity them. They had been expecting me it would seem, and did really wish that I should take a cab, though they did not seem rich enough to supply me with one— It was a confused jumble of heads, and soiled coats dangling from flesh-colored faces, all swaying to and fro, as by a sort of undertow, while each whipstick, true as the needle to the pole, still preserved that level and direction in which its proprietor had dismissed his forlorn interrogatory. They took sight over them, the lash being wound up thereon, to prevent your attention from wandering, or to make it concentre upon its object by the spiral line. They began at first, perhaps, with the modest but rather confident inquiry— "Want a cab sir"? but as their despair increased, it took the affirmative tone,



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

as the disheartened and irresolute are apt to do— "[Y]ou want a cab sir"; or even, "You want a nice cab sir, to take you to [F]ourth street." The question which one had bravely and hopefully be-[gan] to put, another had the tact to take up and conclude with fresh

#### [Page 3]

emphasis, twisting it from his particular whip stick as if it had emanated from his lips —as the sentiment did from his heart— Each one could truly say "Them's my sentiments." But it was a sad sight.

I am 7 1/2 miles from New-[Y]ork, and as it would take half a day at least have not been there yet. I have already run over no small part of the island, to the highest hill and some way along the shore. From the hill directly behind the *house, I can see New-York — Brookl*{MS torn} & Long Island — the Narrows, through {MS torn} vessels bound to and from [all] [parts] of the world chiefly pass — Sandy Hook and the Highlands of Neversink (part of the coast of New Jersev) — and by going still f[a]rther up the hill, the Kill van Kull, and Newark Bay. From the pinnacle of one Madame Grimes' house, the other night at sunset, I could see almost round the island. Far in the horizon there was a fleet of sloop[s] bound up the [H]udson, which seemed to be going over the edge of the earth — and in view of these trading ships commerce seem[ed] quite imposing. But it is rather derogatory that your dwell[ing]

#### [Page 4]

a great city place should be only a neighborhood to <u>something</u> <u>else</u> — [T]o live on an inclined plane. I do not like their cities and [f]orts with their morning and evening gun, and sails flapping in ones eye. I want a whole continent to breathe in — and a good deal of solitude and silence, such as [a]ll Wall street cannot buy — [n]or Broadway



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

with its wooden pavem[e]nt. I must live along the beach on the southern shore which looks directly out to sea — and see what that great

{written perpendicular to text in center of page:

[Postmark:]

[Address:] Mrs. Cynthia Thoreau

Concord

Mass.}

parade of water means that dashes and roars and has not yet wet me as long as I have lived. I must not know any thing about my condition and relations here till what is not permanent is worn off. I have not yet subsided. Give me time enough and I may like it. [A]ll my inner man heretofore has been a Concord[]impression, and here come these Sandy Hook and [C]oney Island breakers to meet and modify the former, but it will be long before I can make nature look as innocently grand and inspiring as in Concord. Yr affectionate son Henry D Thoreau

May 22, Monday: Tom Thumb was exhibited in **Boston**.

<u>Joseph Smith, Jr.</u>'s wife of many years Emma Hale Smith was shocked to discover her husband secluded in an upstairs bedroom of their home in Nauvoo, Illinois with a family maidservant, <u>Eliza M. Partridge</u> (with whom her husband had entered into secret plural marriage on March 8th).

Henry Thoreau wrote to Mrs. Lidian Emerson from Castleton, Staten Island:

You always seemed to look down at me as from some elevation -some of your high humilities- and I was better for having to look up. I felt taxed not to disappoint your expectations.

Castleton, Staten Island, May 22<sup>nd</sup>

1843

My Dear Friend,

I believe a good many conversations with you were left in an unfinished state, and now indeed I dont know where to take them up. But I will resume



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

some of the unfinished silence[]. I shall not hesitate to know you. I think of you as some elder sister of mine, whom I could not have avoided — a sort of lunar influence — only of such age as the moon, whose time is measured by her light. You must know that you represent to me woman — for I have not travelled very far [or] wide — and what if I had? I like to deal with you, for I believe you do not lie or steal, and these are very rare virtues. I thank you for your influence for two years — I was fortunate to be subjected to it, and am now to remember it. It is the noblest gift we can make — What signify all others that can be bestowed? You have helped to keep my life "on loft," as Chaucer [of Griselda] says, and in a better sense. You always ^ seemed to look down at me as from some elevation, some of your high humilities, and I was the better for having to look

**GEOFFREY CHAUCER** 

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up. I felt taxed not to disappoint your expectation — or could there be any accident so sad as to be respected for something better than we are? It was a pleasure even to go away from you, as it is not to meet some, as it apprised me of my high relations, and such a departure is a sort of further introduction and meeting. Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance[.] *They make the latitudes and longitudes.* You must not think that fate is so dark there, for even here I can see a faint reflected light over Concord, and I think that at this distance I can better weigh the value of a doubt there. *Your moonlight* — as I have told you, though it is a reflection of the sun, allows of bats and owls and other twilight birds to flit therein. But I am very glad that you can elevate your life with a doubt — for I am sure that it is nothing but an insatiable faith after all



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

that deepens and darkens its current — And your doubt and my confidence are only a difference of expression.

I have hardly begun to live on Staten Island yet, but like the man who, when forbidden to tread on English ground, carried

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Scottish ground in his boots, I carry Concord ground in my boots and in my hat — and am I not made of Concord dust? I cannot realize that it is the roar of the sea I hear now, and not the wind in Walden woods. I find more of Concord after all *in the prospect of the sea, beyond Sandy*[-] Hook than in the fields and woods. If you were to have this Hugh the gardener for your man you would think a new dispensation had commenced. He might put a fairer aspect on the natural world for you, or at any [rate] a screen between you and the [almshouse.] There is a beautiful red honevsuckle now in blossom in the woods here, which should be transplanted to Concord, and if what they tell me about the tulip tree be true, you should have that also. I have not seen Mrs Black yet, but I intend to call on her soon. Have you established those simpler modes of living yet? — "In the full tide of successful operation?"— *Tell Mrs*[.] *Brown that I hope* she is anchored in a secure haven, and derives much pleasure still from reading the poets — And that her constellation

#### Page 4

is not quite set from my sight, though it is sunk so low in that northern horizon. Tell Elizabeth Hoar that her bright present did "carry ink safely to Staten Island", and was a conspicuous object in Master Haven's inventory of my [goods] effects. — Give my respect to M<sup>me</sup> Emerson, whose Concord face I should



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

{written perpendicular to text in center of page: Address: Mrs. Lidian Emerson[.] Concord Mass[.]}

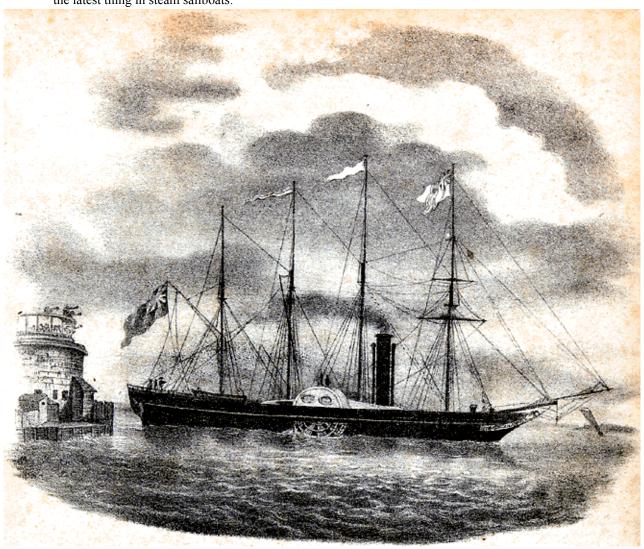
her be glad to see here this summer; and remem^ ber me to the rest of the household who
have had vision of me. [Has Edith degenerated or Ellen regenerated [yet,] for I
fear and hope that so it will be?
Shake a day-day to Edith, and
say "[G]ood night" to Ellen for me.]
Farewell — Henry D. Thoreau



## **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Lidian commented to her friend <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>, Thoreau's mother, that Henry had written her a "grateful and affectionate" letter, and Cynthia remarked tactfully that her Henry "was always tolerant." It must have been rather difficult for Cynthia and <u>John Thoreau</u>, Senior, to watch from the sidelines as their surviving son's affections were pre-empted and their parental influence diluted by this local gentry with which they could not compete.

<u>Thoreau</u> also wrote on this day to his younger sister <u>Sophia</u>, informing her that he had seen the *Great Western*, the latest thing in steam sailboats:



Castleton, Staten Island, May  $22^{nd}$ . — 43 Dear Sophia, I have had a severe cold ever since I came here, and have been confined to the house for the last week with bronchitis, though I am now getting out, so I have not seen much in the botanical way. The cedar seems



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

to be one of the most common trees here, and the fields are very fragrant with it. Ther are also the gum and tulip trees. The latter is not very common, but is very large and beautiful, bearing flowers as large as tulips and as handsome. It is not time for it yet. The woods are now full of a large honeysuckle in full bloom, which differs from ours in being red instead of white, so that at first I did not know its genus. The painted cup is very common in the meadows here. Peaches, and especially cherries, seem to grow by all the fences. Things are very forward here compared with [Co]ncord. The apricots growing out of doors are already as large as plums. The apple, pear, peach, cherry, and plum trees, have shed their blossoms. The whole Island is like a garden,

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and affords very fine scenery. In front of the house is a very extensive wood, beyond which is the sea, whose roar I can hear all night long, when there is no wind, if easterly winds have prevailed on the Atlantic. There are always some vessels in sight — ten, twenty, or thirty miles off and Sunday before last there were hundreds in long procession, stretching from New York to Sanday Hook, and far beyond, for Sunday is a lucky day. I went to New York Saturday before last. A walk of half an hour, by half a dozen houses, along the Richmond road, ie. the road that leads to R — on which we live — brings me to the village [Southfield] of Stapleton, still in [Castleton,] where is the lower dock; but if I prefer I can walk along the shore three quarters of a mile further toward New York, to Quarantine, another village of Castleton, to the upper dock, which the boat leaves five or six times every day, a quarter of an hour later than the former place. Further on is the village of New-



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Brighton — and further still Port Richmond, which villages another steamboat visits.

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In New York I saw Geo. Ward, and also Giles Waldo and William Tappan, [whom] I can describe better when I have seen them *more* — *They are young friends of Mr* [Em-] erson. Waldo came down to the Island to see me the next day. I also saw the *Great Western, the Croton Water works,* and the picture gallery of the National Academy of Design. But I have not had time to see or do much in N. Y. yet. Tell Miss Ward I shall try to my put her microscope to a good use, and if I find any new and pressible flower, will throw it into my common place book[.] Garlic, the original of the common onion, grows like grass here all over the fields, and during its season spoils the cream and butter for the market, as the cows like it very much. Tell Helen there are two schools just established in this neighborhood, with large prospects, or rather designs, one for boys, and another for girls. The latter by a Miss Errington — and though it is very small as yet — I will keep my ears open for her in such directions — The encouragement is very slight. I hope you will not be washed away by the Irish sea. Tell Mother I think my cold was not wholly owing to imprudence Perhaps I was being acclimated.

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Tell [fa]ther that Mr Tappan whose son I know — and whose clerks young Tappan and Waldo are — has invented and established a new and very important business — which [Wa]ldo thinks would allow them to burn 99 out of 100 of the stores in NY, which now only offset and cancel one another. It is a kind of intelligence office for



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

the whole country — with branches in the principal cites, giving information with regard to the credit and affairs of every man of business in the country. Of course it is not popular at the south and west. It is an extensive business and will employ a great many clerks.

Love to all — not forgetting aunt and aunts — and Miss and Mrs Ward.

[Y<sup>I</sup>] Affectionate Brother Henry D. Thoreau.

Elsewhere, Thoreau would muse, in a manuscript now at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, that has been dated by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn to the 1848-1850 period and contains material that would get put in WALDEN:

#### A Sister.

One in whom you have - unbounded faith - whom you can - purely love. A sweet presence and companion making the world populous. Whose heart answers to your heart. Whose presence can fill all space. One who is a spirit. Who attends to your truth. A gentle spirit - a wise spirit - a loving spirit. An enlargement to your being, level to yourself. Whom you presume to know.... The stream of whose being unites with your own without a ripple or a murmur. & this spreads into a sea.

I still think of you as my sister.... Others are of my kindred by blood or of my acquaintance but you are part of me. You are of me & I of you I cannot tell where I leave off and you begin.... To you I can afford to be forever what I am, for your presence will not permit me to be what I should not be.... My sister whom I love I almost have no more to do with. I shall know where to find her.... I can more heartily meet her when our bodies are away. I see her without the veil of the body.... Other men have added to their farms I have annexed a soul to mine.

When I love you I feel as if I were annexing another world to mine.... O Do not disappoint me.

Whose breath is as gentle and salubrious as a Zephyr's whisper. Whom I know as an atmosphere.... Whom in thought my spirit continually embraces. Unto whom I flow.... Who art clothed in white. Who comest like an incense. Who art all that I can imagine - my inspirer. The feminine of me - Who art magnanimous

It is morning when I meet thee in a still cool dewy white sun light In the hushed dawn - my young mother - I thy eldest son.... Whether art thou my mother or my sister - whether am I thy son or thy brother.

On the remembrances of whom I repose - so old a sister art thou - so nearly hast thou recreated me ... whose eyes are like the morning star Who comest to me in the morning twilight.

From another holograph sheet in Thoreau's handwriting, a sheet which is torn at the top:

By turns my purity has inspired and my impurity has cast me down.

My most intimate acquaintance with woman has been a sisters relation, or at most a catholic's virgin mother relation — not that it has always been free from the sus-



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

picion of lower sympathy. There is a love of woman [page torn] with marriage; — of woman on the [page torn] She has exerted the influence of a goddess on me; cultivating my gentler humane nature; cultivating & preserving purity, innocence, truth, [end of page]

[Succeeding fragment; marked 1850 by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn.] Woman, is a nature older than I and commanding from me a vast amount of veneration -like Nature. She is my mother at: the same time that she is my sister, so that she is at any rate an older sister.... I cannot imagine a woman no older than I. ... Methinks that I am younger than aught that I associate with. The youngest child is more than my coeval?

June 8, Thursday: <u>Henry David Thoreau</u> wrote to his mother <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> and father <u>John Thoreau</u> in <u>Concord</u> from Castleton on Staten Island:

Castleton, Staten Island, June 8<sup>th</sup> 1843

Dear Parents,

I have got quite well now, and like the lay of the land and the look of the sea very much— Only the country is so fair that it seems rather too much as if it were made to be looked at. I have been to N.Y. four or five times, and have run about the island a good deal. Geo. Ward when I last saw him, which was at his house in Brooklyn, was studying the Daguerreotype process, preparing to set up in that line. The boats run now almost every hour, from 8 AM. to 7 Pm. back and forth, so that I can get to the city much m ore easily than before. I have seen there one Henry James, a lame man, of whom I had heard before, whom I like very much, and he ask s me to make free use of his house, which is situated in a pleasant part of the city, adjoining the University. I have met several people whom I knew before, and among the rest Mr Wright, who was on his way to Niagara.

I feel already about as well acquainted with New York as with Boston, that is about as little, perhaps. It is large enough now and t hey intend it shall be larger still. 15<sup>th</sup> Street – where some of my new acquaintances live, is two or three miles from the Battery where the boat touches, clear brick and stone and no give to the foot; and they have layed out, though not built, up to the 149<sup>th</sup> Street above. I had rather see a brick for a specimen for my part such as they exhibited in old times. You see it is quite a day's training to make a few calls in different parts of the city (to say nothing of 12 miles by water and three by land, ie. not brick or Stone) especially if it does not rain shillings which might interest omnibuses in your behalf. Some Omnibuses are marked "Broadway —

Fourth Street" – and they go no further – otherss "8<sup>th</sup> Street" and so on, and so of the other principal streets. This letter will be circumstantial enough for Helen.

This is in all respects a very pleasant residence – much more rural than you would expect of the vicinity of New York. There are woods all around. We



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

breakfast at half past six – lunch if we will at twelve – and dine or sup at five. Thus is the day partitioned off. From 9 to 2 or thereabouts I am the schoolmaster – and at other times as much the pupil as I can be— Mr and Mrs Emerson and family are not indeed of my kith or kin in any sense – but they are irreproachable and kind.

I have met no one yet on the Island whose acquaintance I shall actually cultivate — or hoe around — unless it be our neighbor Capt Smith — an old fisherman, who catches the fish called moss-bonkers — (so it sounds) and invites me to come to the beach when he spends the week and see him and his fish.

Farms are for sale all around here— And so I suppose men are for purchase. North of us live Peter Wandell — Mr Mell — and Mr. Disusway (dont mind the spelling) as far as the Clove road; And south John Britton — Van Pelt, and Capt Smith, as far as the Fingerboard road. Behind is the hill, some 250 feet high — on the side of which we live, and in front the forest and the sea — the latter at the distance of a mile and a half.

Tell Helen that Miss Errington is provided with assistance. This were as good a place as any to establish a school, if one could wait a little. Families come down here to board in the summer – and three or four have been already established this season.

As for money matters I have not set my traps yet, but I am getting the bait ready. Pray how does the garden thrive and what improvements in the pencil line? I miss you all very much. Write soon and send a Concord paper to yr affectionate son Henry D. Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau also wrote to Waldo Emerson:

STATEN ISLAND, June 8, 1843.

DEAR FRIEND, — I have been to see Henry James, and like him very much. It was a great pleasure to meet him. It makes humanity seem more erect and respectable. I never was more kindly and faithfully catechised. It made me respect myself more to be thought worthy of such wise questions. He is a man, and takes his own way, or stands still in his own place. I know of no one so patient and determined to have the good of you. It is almost friendship, such plain and human dealing. I think that he will not write or speak inspiringly; but he is a refreshing forward-looking and forward-moving man, and he has naturalized and humanized New York for me.

He actually reproaches you by his respect for your poor words. I had three hours' solid talk with him, and he asks me to make free use of his house. He wants an expression of your faith, or to be sure that it is faith, and confessess that his own treads fast upon the neck of his understanding. He exclaimed, at some careless answer of mine, "Well, you Transcendentalists are wonderfully consistent. I must get hold of this somehow!" He likes Carlyle's book, but says that it leaves him in an excited and unprofitable state, and that Carlyle is so ready to obey his humor that he makes the least vestige of truth the foundation of any superstructure, not keeping faith with his bet-



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

ter genius nor truest readers.

I met Wright on the stairs of the Society Library, and W.H. Channing and Brisbane on the steps. The former (Channing) is a concave man, and you see by his attitude and the lines of his face that he is retreating from himself and from yourself, with sad doubts. It is like a fair mask swaying from the drooping boughs of some tree whose stem is not seen. He would break with a conchoidal fracture. You feel as if you would like to see him when he has made up his mind to run all the risks. To be sure, he doubts because he has a great hope to be disappointed, but he makes the possible disappointment of too much consequence. Brisbane, with whom I did not converse, did not impress me favorably. He looks like a man who has lived in a cellar, far gone in consumption. I barely saw him, but he did not look as if he could let Fourier go, in any case, and throw up his hat. But I need not have come to New York to write this.

I have seen Tappan for two or three hours, and like both him and Waldo; but I always see those of whom I have heard well with a slight disappointment. They are so much better than the great herd, and yet the heavens are not shivered into diamonds over their heads. Persons and things flit so rapidly through my brain, nowadays, that I can hardly remember them. They seem to be lying in the stream, stemming the tide, ready to go to sea, as steamboats when they leave the dock go off in the opposite direction first, until they are headed right, and then begins the steady revolution of the paddle-wheels: and they are not quite cheerily headed anywhither yet, nor singing amid the shrouds as they bound over the billows. There is a certain vouthfulness and generosity about them, very attractive; and Tappan's more reserved and solitary thought commands respect. After some ado, I discovered the residence of Mrs. Black, but there was palmed off on me, in her stead, a Mrs. Grey (quite an inferior color), who told me at last that she was not Mrs. Black, but her mother, and was just as glad to see me as Mrs. Black would have been, and so, forsooth, would answer just as well. Mrs. Black had gone with Edward Palmer to New Jersey, and would return on the morrow.

I don't like the city better, the more I see it, but worse. I am ashamed of my eyes that behold it. It is a thousand times meaner than I could have imagined. It will be something to hate, — that's the advantage it will be to me; and even the best people in it are a part of it, and talk coolly about it. The pigs in the street are the most respectable part of the population. When will the world learn that a million men are of no importance compared with one man?

But I must wait for a shower of shillings, or at least a slight dew or mizzling of sixpences, before I explore New York very far.

The sea-beach is the best thing I have seen. It is very solitary and remote, and you only remember New York occasionally. The distances, too, along the shore, and inland in sight of it, are unaccountably



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

great and startling. The sea seems very near from the hills, but it proves a long way over the plain, and yet you may be wet with the spray before you can believe that you are there.

The far seems near, and the near far.

Many rods from the beach, I step aside for the Atlantic, and I see men drag up their boats on to the sand, with oxen, stepping about amid the surf, as if it were possible they might draw up Sandy Hook. I do not feel myself especially serviceable to the good people with whom I live, except as inflictions are sanctified to the righteous. And so, too, must I serve the boy. I can look to the Latin and mathematics sharply, and for the rest behave myself. But I cannot be in his neighborhood hereafter as his Educator, of course, but as the hawks fly over my own head. I am not attracted toward him but as to youth generally.

He shall frequent me, however, as much as he can, and I'll be I. Bradbury told me, when I passed through Boston, that he was coming to New York the following Saturday, and would then settle with me, but he has not made his appearance yet. Will you, the next time you go to Boston, present that order for me which I left with you? If I say less about Waldo and Tappan now, it is, perhaps, because I may have more to say by and by. Remember me to your mother and Mrs. Emerson, who, I hope, is quite well. I shall be very glad to hear from her, as well as from you. I have very hastily written out something for the Dial, and send it only because you are expecting something, — though something better. It seems idle and Howittish, but it may be of more worth in Concord, where it belongs. In great haste. Farewell.

HENRY D. THOREAU

WILLIAM HOWITT

(The "Bradbury" he mentions in this letter was of the publishing house of Bradbury & Soden, which had published, in Nathan Hale's BOSTON MISCELLANY, and promised to pay for but so far neglected to pay for, "Walk to Wachusett.")

August 6, Sunday: Herr Gott, dich loben wir for solo voices, double chorus, orchestra and organ by Felix Mendelssohn was performed for the initial time, in Berlin Cathedral. The music helped mark the 1,000th anniversary of the founding of the German Reich.

<u>Henry Thoreau</u> wrote from Staten Island to <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> in Concord, telling of his publication effort at <u>The United States Magazine and Democratic Review</u>:

I have been translating some Greek, [& r]eading English poetry [-] and a month ago sent a paper to the Democratic Review, which, at length, they were sorry they could not accept — but they could not adopt the sentiments. However, they were very polite, and earnest that I should send them something else, or reform that.

Staten-Island Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 1843.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Dear Mother, As Mr William Emerson is going to Concord on T[ue]sday I must not omit sending a line by him — though I wish I had something more weighty for so direct a post. I believe I directed my last letter to you by mistake, but it must have appeared that it was addressed to Helen— At any rate this is to you without mistake. I am chiefly indebted to your letters for what I have learned of Concord and family news, and am very glad when I get one. I should have liked to be in Walden woods with you, but not with the railroad. I think of you all very often and wonder if you are still separated from me only by so many miles of earth, or [so] many [] miles of memory. This life we live is a strange dream, and I dont believe at all any account men give of it. Methinks I should be content to sit at the back-door in Concord, under the poplar tree, henceforth forever. Not that I am homesick at all, for places are strangely indifferent to me. but Concord is still a

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Cynosure to my eyes, and I find it hard to attach it, even in imagination, to the rest of the globe, and tell where the seam is. I fancy that this Sunday eve you are poring over some select book, almost transcendental[,] perchance, ore else "Burgh's Dignity," or Massillon, or the Christian Examiner.— Father has just taken one more look at the garden, and is now absorbed in Chaptelle, or reading the newspaper quite abstractedly, only [looking] up occasionally over his spectacles to see how the rest are engaged, and not to miss any newer news that may not be in the paper.— Helen has [slipped] in for the fourth time to learn the very latest item— Sophia, I



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

suppose is at Bangor — but Aunt
Louisa without doubt is just flitting
away to some good meeting — to save
the credit of you all.
It is still a cardinal virtue with me[]
to keep awake. I find it impossible to write
or read except at rare intervals, but am
generally speaking tougher than formerly. I
could make a pedestrian tour round the
world, and sometimes think it would perhaps
be better to do at once the things I
can, rather than be trying to do what
at present I cannot do well. However,

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I shall awake sooner or later. I have been translating some Greek, [& r]eading English poetry [—] and a month ago sent a paper to the Democratic Review, which, at length, they were sorry they could not accept — but they could not adopt the sentiments. However, they were very polite, and earnest that I should send them something else, or reform that. *I go moping about the fiel*[d] *and woods* here as I did in Concord, and, it seems, am thought to be a surveyor — an eastern man inquiring narrowly into the condition and value of land &c here, preparatory to an extensive speculation. One neighbor observe[s] to me in a mysterious and half inquisitive way that he supposed I must be pretty well acquainted with the state of things — that I kept pretty close — he didn't see any surveying instrumen[ts], but perhaps I had them in my pocket. I have received Helen's note, but have not heard of Frisbie Hoar yet. She is a faint[-]hearted writer who could not take the responsibility of blotting one sheet alone. However I like very well the blottings I get. [T]ell her I have not seen Mrs Child nor Mrs. Sedgwick. Love to All from [Y]r Affect<sup>e</sup> Son Henry D. Thoreau.

DEMOCRATIC REVIEW



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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Address: Mrs. Cynthia Thoreau

Concord Mass. By W. Emerson Esq.

October 1, Sunday: <u>Henry Thoreau</u> wrote from Staten Island to <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> in Concord, telling of his publication effort at <u>The United States Magazine and Democratic Review</u>:

As for Eldorado that is far off yet. My bait will not tempt the rats; they are too well fed. The Democratic Review is poor, and can only afford half or quarter pay —which it will do— and they say there is a Lady's Companion that pays — but I could not write anything companionable... The Mirror is really the most readable journal here. I see that they have printed a short piece which I wrote to sell in the Dem. Review, and still keep the review of Paradise that I may include in it a notice of another book by the same author, which they have found, and are going to send me.

"PARADISE (TO BE) REGAINED"

(<u>John L. O'Sullivan</u>'s magazine was currently at its October issue.)

# US MAG & DEM. REV.

Contrary to the very thing that every person on the street thinks they know about Thoreau, he never lived the life of a <a href="https://example.com/hemmile.com/h

DOG

The man of genius, like a dog with a bone, or the slave who has swallowed a diamond, or a patient with the gravel, sits afar and retired, off the road, hangs out no sign of refreshment for man and beast, but says, by all possible hints and signs, I wish to be alone -good-bye -farewell.

Staten Island Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 43

#### Dear Mother,

I hold together remarkably well as yet, speaking of my outward linen and woolen man, no holes more than I brought away, and no stitches needed yet. It is marvellous. I think the Fates must be on my side, for there is less than a plank between me and—Time, to say the least. As for Eldorado that is far off yet. My bait will not tempt the rats; they are too well fed. The Democratic Review is poor, and can only afford half or quarter pay—which it will do—and they say



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

there is a Lady's Companion that pays — but I could not write anything companionable. However, speculate as we will, it is quite gratuitous, for life never the less, and never the more, goes steadily on, well or ill fed and clothed, somehow, and "honor bright" withal. It is very gratifying to live in the prospect of great successes always, and for that purpose, we must leave a sufficient foreground to see them through. All the painters prefer distant prospects for the greater breadth of view, and delicacy of tint.— But this is no news, and describes no new condition. Meanwhile I am somnambulic at least – stirring in my sleep – indeed, quite awake. I read a good deal and am pretty well known in the libraries of New York. Am in with the Librarian, one Dr Forbes, of the Society Library—who has lately been to Cambridge to learn liberality, and has come back to let me take out some un-take-out-able books, which I was threatening to read on the spot. And Mr Mackean, of the Mercantile Library, is a true gentleman – a former tutor of mine – and offers me every privilege there. I have from him a perpetual stranger's ticket, and a citizen's rights besides – all which privileges I pay handsomely for by improving.

H. S. MCKEAN

A canoe-race "came off" on the Hudson the other day, between Chippeways and New Yorkers, which must have been as moving a sight as the buffalo hunt which I witnessed. But canoes and buffaloes are all lost, as is everything here, in the mob. It is only the people have come to see one another. Let them advertise that there will be a gathering at Hoboken – having bargained with the ferry boats, and there will be, and they need not throw in the buffaloes.

I have crossed the bay 20 or 30 times and have seen a great many immigrants going up to the city for the first time—Norwegians who carry their old fashioned farming tools to the west with them, and will buy nothing here for fear of being cheated.— English operatives, known by their pale faces and stained hands, who will recover their birth-rights in a little cheap sun and wind, — English travellers on their way to the Astor House, to whom I have done the honors of the city.— Whole families of imigrants cooking their dinner upon the pavements, all sun-burnt—so that you are in doubt where the foreigner's face of flesh begins—their tidy clothes laid on, and then tied to their swathed bodies which move about like a bandaged finger—Caps set on the head, as if woven of the hair, which is still growing at the roots—each and all busily cooking, stooping from time to time over the pot, and having something to drop into it, that so they may be entitled to take something out, forsooth. They look like respectable but straightened people, who may turn out to be counts when they get to Wisconsin—and will have this experience to relate to their children.

Seeing so many people from day to day one comes to have less respect for flesh and bones, and thinks they must be more loosely {MS torn} of less firm fibre, than the few he had known. It must have a very bad influence upon children to see so many human beings at once—mere herds of men.

I came across Henry Bigelow a week ago, sitting in front of a Hotel in Broadway, very much as if he were under his father's own stoop. He is seeking to be admitted into the bar in New York, but as yet, had not succeeded. I directed him to Fuller's store, which he had not found, and invited him to come and see me, if he came to the island. Tell Mrs & Miss Ward that I have not forgotten them, and was glad to hear from George, with whom I spent last night, that they had



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

returned to C.— Tell Mrs Brown that it gives me as much pleasure to know that she thinks of me and my writing as if I had been the author of the piece in question; but I did not even read the papers I sent. The Mirror is really the most readable journal here. I see that they have printed a short piece which I wrote to sell in the Dem. Review, and still keep the review of Paradise that I may include in it a notice of another book by the same author, which they have found, and are going to send me.— I dont know when I shall come home— I like to keep that feast in store— Tell Helen that I do not see any advertisement for her—and I am looking for myself— If I could find a rare opening, I might be tempted to try with her for a year till I had payed my debts; but for such I am sure it is not well to go out of N. Eng. Teachers are but poorly recompensed even here.— Tell her and Sophia (if she is not gone) to write to me— Father will know that this letter is to him as well as to you— I send him a paper which usually contains the news-if not all that is stirring-all that has stirred-and even draws a little on the future. I wish he would send me by and by the paper which contains the results of the Cattleshow. You must get Helen's eyes to read this—though she is a scoffer at honest penmanship — yr affectionate son Henry D. Thoreau



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1844

April 15, Monday: In <u>Boston</u>, Charles Bulfinch died. The body would be interred in the burial ground adjacent to <u>King's Chapel</u>:



<u>Waldo Emerson</u> paid the Concord PO8 <u>Ellery Channing</u> \$7.50 for chopping 15 cords of wood. After one year of renting the red farmhouse next to the Emersons for \$55.00, the Channings were moving to a larger house, on the Lexington Road, that was available for the same rent.

At about this point <u>Isaac Hecker</u> was returning from New-York to the <u>Boston</u> area. First of course he visited the family of <u>Orestes Augustus Brownson</u>. Then he stopped off at Brook Farm and the Shaker Village, before taking up residence in the Concord boardinghouse of the Thoreau family. When he arrived in Concord, <u>Emerson</u> suggested that he solicit the schoolmaster George Partridge Bradford to tutor him in classic languages, and Bradford agreed to do this during his noon hours of freedom. Bradford and Hecker went off to find Hecker a rooming house, and the first house they found asked too much, \$75.00 per year, but then they chanced on <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> and found that at the Thoreau rooming house Hecker would have to pay only \$0.75 per week, light included — although Cynthia stipulated that Hecker would have to purchase his own firewood if he wanted to use the fireplace in his room. Hecker's plan was to spend his days learning Greek and Latin from Schoolmaster Bradford and his evenings meditating over literary and theological works, including THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, but as it turned out his spirit was so disturbed that he was unable to make headway in his studies.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

September 12, Thursday: <u>John Thoreau</u> borrowed \$500.00 from Augustus Tuttle to purchase materials for the construction of the "<u>Texas</u>" <u>House</u>, a mortgage on the home being offered as security. John Thoreau, <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>, <u>Helen Louisa Thoreau</u> and <u>Henry Thoreau</u> were present as the mortgage was signed, sealed, and delivered. Tuttle would be repaid in September 1855.<sup>28</sup>



Henry himself dug and stoned the cellar of this new family home. The Thoreaus would live in this "Texas House, to August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1850."



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



<u>Henry</u>'s experience, helping his father build the new family home, the house they referred to as the "Texas" house because it was so far out on the grassy plains beyond the new railroad tracks south-west of the Milldam, would help him in his solitary carpentry at Walden Pond.

And, something Thoreau scholars seem never to have considered, although they well know that Henry and Edward Hoar had recently, negligently burned down nearly 300 acres of the woods north of Concord at great cost to some of the town's citizens: Thoreau may have had a supplemental reason for getting out of the family home. The loss he had helped cause was on the order of \$2,000. \( \frac{90}{20} \), which at that time was approximately the value of two really fine new houses facing Concord common. And the Hoar family seems to have made a cash payment to the financially injured parties –the brothers Cyrus Hubbard and Darius Hubbard, and A.H. Wheeler– while we know that the Thoreaus instead elected to conspicuously, promptly, and locally spend their surplus money by embarking on the construction of this new home. The Texas house cost the family \$25.\( \frac{90}{20} \) (or \$100??) for the lot, \$475.\( \frac{90}{20} \) for construction materials, and \$600.\( \frac{90}{20} \) for labor. This was being thrown in Henry's face in the streets! We know there were arson fires, we know there were grudge fires, we know that everything was not sweetness and light in Concord in the first half of the 19th Century. Could one supplemental reason for Henry's stay on Walden Pond have been, that he needed to reduce his family's fears that their new house might go up in flames, that if something had to go up in a grudge fire, it would be

28. This mortgage was placed on record on September 14, 1844 and recorded as discharged on February 11, 1856.



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something that they could do without such as a shanty on a lake? Anybody who knows anything about living in small towns knows that the Thoreau family's action must have been like touching a recent skin burn, and that so long as Thoreau was under the roof of the newly built, reasonably isolated Thoreau family home on the outskirts of Concord, that new house was in danger of going up in flames any snowy winter or wet spring when the townspeople could be sure the fire would not spread. We can imagine that, if such a situation occurred in our own lives, today, we would be greatly concerned at the attitude of the people we had injured – who considered that we were living high instead of meeting our obligations. And at our present level of historical research into life in Concord in the early 19th Century, we haven't been able to clear this up. Perhaps the Concord newspapers and other dated public records have preserved some clue, that will help us clear this up. For instance, what sort of people were these woods owners, the Hubbard brothers and A.H. Wheeler?

THOREAU RESIDENCES

#### Dr. Alexander Keith Johnston's visit to <u>Jardine Hall</u> continued:

Thursday, Sept. 12th. A long drive to-day. Starting immediately after breakfast, we took the road to Dumfries; which for some miles was very uninteresting, and would have been more so, had I not had Sir William to tell me the names and history of the more prominent objects and hills in our view. These I have now almost forgotten. The first and better half of our road was very much of a continued ascent, until we reached a poor village, with a name so foreign to my ears, that I could not retain it in my memory. There is a considerable seminary, or "Classical and Commercial Academy" in it, but we saw none of the scholars or boarders. From the hill above this village, there opened upon us a fine view, which reminded me of Milfield Plain; but the latter had a decided superiority in all respects. The plain below was a large basin encircled with hills, traversed by the little river Lochar on the nearest side, and occupied by the town of Dumfries to the south-west. Lochar Moss lies in the centre, an enormous peat bog of about 10 miles in length, and 3 in breadth; and our road cuts it into two unequal halves. This road is remarkable for its origin: a stranger, a great number of years ago, sold some goods to certain merchants at Dumfries on credit; he disappeared, and neither he nor his heirs ever claimed the money; the merchants in expectation of the demand, very honestly put out the sum to interest; and after a lapse of more than 40 years, the town of Dumfries obtained a gift of it, and applied the same towards making this useful road. We presume the good folks of Dumfries had concluded that the stranger had laired himself in this bog, and sunk in one of its pits, which served him for an untombstoned grave, a thing they of Dumfries seem to have in fear. Lochar Moss supplies the good people of Dumfries with an abundance of peat, which is the fuel with the commonality all over this district, and there were workers of it scattered throughout the moss. There is a certain interest about these men, who appeared to be of the lowest class in general. No noise attends their monotonous labour, the spade cuts without grating, the clod is thrown aside without evoking a sound, there is no converse, each toils by himself, without giving or receiving another's orders or directions; silence reigns around, and imparts to the labour a peculiar, but rather disagreeable, interest; for this outward solemnity of nature tells not favorably on the minds of men of the low degree of cultivation these have. Solitude is not for them. Dumfries is a very fine town. We walked through its broad, clean, busy street with pleasure, admired its shops, its bridges, and its magnificent asylum for the insane, at a little distance on a. wooded bank above the Nith; drove through the pretty suburb of Maxwelltown, and following the course of the Nith, took a seaward direction. The road was greatly improved in interest; the land and the style of farming good. We were not long in arriving at New Abbey, where we rested an hour, in order to examine its beautiful remains. Within its walls there lie the bodies of many Maxwells, the prevalent families in this neighborhood; and as the head of them is a Roman Catholic, there appear to be many of that religion hereabouts. Near the Abbey there is a Chapel and manse for the priest and his charge. Leaving the Abbey, we had a pleasant walk through the churchyard; around the old garden, with its fern-clad wall; and up the road a little, where it is lined with a double row of limes, that meet overhead and form an avenue, where monks may have mused, or conned their sermons, in days of yore. There is a monument in the Abbey, erected to the memory of two young gentlemen — brothers,— who were drowned together hard by; and I now feel sorry that I did not take a copy of the inscription on their tombstone. I gathered some memorials of the place from its damp walls, which the ivy strives in vain to decorate. It is trite to make contrasts, for, in this world everything must suffer change and decay; nor doth it seem of use to revive a picture of the Celebration of High Mass, with all the gorgeous pageantry, in an Abbey that now shelters a herd of cows from the inclemency of the weather. What may be the thoughts of the spirit of the Lady Foundress, I know not! How vain it is to attempt to immortalize our affections, which are, and must be, part of our perishable organization! The Abbey was founded by Devorgilla, daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway, and wife of John Baliol, Lord of Castle Bernard, who died and was buried here; his lady embalmed his heart and placed it in a case of ivory bound with silver, near the high altar; on which account the Abbey is often called Sweet Heart, and Suavi-cordium.<sup>29</sup> Again we are on the road, and attention is kept awake by the novelty of every scene and object we pass. But the first place we note is the neat and pretty hamlet of Kirkbean; whose ornate character tells as plainly as a guide could, that a rich proprietor's residence is at hand; and a triumphal arch erected across



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the road proclaimed to us that this proprietor, Mr. Oswald, MP., for Ayrshire, had brought to the favorite residence his lady, the widow of the late Sir James Johnstone of Westerhall, to whom he had been married about three weeks ago. And next we admire a small and humble cottage, covered in front with the vine and fig tree, which appeared to be in a flourishing condition; and I observe that all hereabouts, and afterwards on our route, the brambles abound to a degree greatly beyond what they do on the Eastern Borders, and are loaded with fruit. The species too are not the same as they are with us. The prospect improves as we drive on, and we often stop to admire it; the Solway and its broad sands, the Westmoreland and Cumberland hills, the opposite coast with its indistinctly seen villages, the hills and woods of Galloway. Many interesting localities were pointed out by Sir William which served the purpose of raising and satisfying a curiosity that died away on the spot. We nighed the shore of the Solway; the road sides rough with brambles, and rich in many other plants that interest an eastern botanist. Sedum telephium, almost unknown on the eastern side of the island, was not uncommon here, truly wild and luxuriant. But it was as interesting to notice the different habit which some plants, common to the two districts, here assumed; in general they were more luxuriant. The banks too, where steep and elevated, were clothed to the very base with a very rash vegetation of numerous plants, and with trees and shrubs. A rock called "Lot's Wife," at the foot of a rocky deep ravine, was a tempting object, but time could not be spared for a descent upon it; it was rich in many a flower, and at an earlier season must have been gay and joyful with their various blossoms. We halt at Douglas Hall, a hamlet of poor cottages, where it was difficult to find accommodation for the horses. And then we had a nice stroll, first over some links, where I gathered Thalictrum flavum, which is a rare plant in Scotland, and Erythraea linarifolia. Ruppia maritima was plentiful in some pools of brackish water. We then entered on the Solway sands, which spread far and wide, around and before; my head was full of Sir Walter Scott and his vivid descriptions of them. This extent of sands has a grandeur and solemn influence, which is greater than one could imagine mere extent of a fiat surface could give; but you feel the scene, and that feeling would be even oppressive — fearful perhaps — were one alone to traverse their weary and watery level. After walking a short way over this fiat surface, we reached a coast bounded by a rocky precipitous bank of great height and rugged beauty. The rocks were hard and sharp as flint, of a reddish color, broken into acute angles and masses, and caverned with many caves that lead sometimes far inwards. Often an enormous mass of rock had fallen down and concealed the front of these dark recesses; and more than one might have been the type of the cave that sheltered Dick Hatterig and his ruffian smugglers. As this fine and bold piece of coast was wooded too to the very ledge, there were other places whence Kennedy might have been precipitated:— indeed the scenery seemed to be exact to that described by Sir Walter Scott, in his "Guy Mannering" It is of these very rocks that Chambers says:— "It has been supposed, with no inconsiderable degree of probability, that they furnished materials for the scenery of Ellangowan." — I enjoyed this scenery greatly, and it was rich also in a botanical view. First in interest, there was the Samphire, growing in places whence to have gathered it would be indeed a "dreadful trade." - "Half-way down hangs one that gathers Samphire.— dreadful trade!" Sir William told me, that within his memory a man living at Douglas Hall, was wont thus annually to collect Samphire from these rocks. I succeeded in reaching one tuft, which supplied me with specimens as memorials of the Colvend rocks; which, I ween, are somewhat grander than those of Dover, and not less immortal in man's memory were they; in fact, the objects the great Northern Novelist had in his eye, when he drew the coast scenery of "Guy Mannering." The *Pyrethrum maritimum* grew here abundantly, also in inaccessible spots; but it was truly ornamental, as its large white flowers showed bravely with the dark rock behind, The rock was studded everywhere with these and other sweet flowers. The Arenaria marina, Silene maritima, Statice armeria, Sedum telephium, Cochlearia officinalis, Asplenium marinum, commingled themselves on the rugged front, with wiry grasses, the Ivy, the Holly, the Whin, and several fine arching briars and roses; while on more exposed abutments, several yellow and green lichens found space to spread their circular patches. Sir William pointed out one or two specimens of the Yew, which would seem to be indigenous here. Left this scene with reluctance, and ascending the bank, we returned to Douglas Hall by a high road, that afforded extensive views of the Solway and the coast. I know not in what direction we were now driven; but the road was tortuous and interesting, and fringed on each side with numberless briars, the species different from those of Berwickshire, and more productive of fruit. The hills around us were granite, and the country was very unequal and rocky; so that Galloway must be as ticklish a place as Galway, for the gentlemen who love to follow the hounds fair; indeed we were told that fox hunting was here an unknown sport, and the proprietors give 10s 6d. for every fox that any countryman may destroy, by fair means or foul. There were many valleys stretching up and between these rough hills, that, as a botanist, I yearned to explore; but, it was onwards we must go, contented with the glances of fields which it seemed very certain I would never again re-visit. Oats and barley appeared to be the only corns cultivated, and the fields were redolent of annual weeds. Peat mosses were

29. ["She feundit intil Galoway
Of Cistertians order an Abby,
Dulce Cor she gart thame all
That is Sweet Heart the Abby call,
But now the men of Galloway
Call that Steid New-Abby." WYNTOWN.

It is named by Lesly "Monasterium novum, seu Sauvi-cordium." —DE ORIGINE, &c., SCOTORUM, p. 9.]



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numerous, and in each of them a solitary individual worked away in cheerless silence. After a long stage in which we had passed very few houses, and not even an onstead, we came to Dalbeattie, a nice looking village that looks as if it had been set down in this thinly peopled district by some mistake, and one wonders what the inhabitants of it can find to do. Yet it has every symptom of comfort about it, and the stone houses are all covered with blue slates, and white washed. There is a good Inn in the village, and a mail coach passes daily through it. A few minutes drive now brought us to Munches, and to the end of our day's travels.

1849

January 15, Monday: In downtown <u>Boston</u> —where everything that happens of course happens for the greater glory of God—Chief Justice <u>Lemuel Shaw</u> lectured <u>Washington Goode</u> 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 <u>hanged</u> 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. 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, <a href="Friend Joseph Ricketson">Friend Daniel Ricketson</a>'s brother who, if I mistake not, was a birthright <a href="Quaker">Quaker</a> 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 "exicution."

An article would appear in the <u>Boston Republican</u>, 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 <u>Ether</u> 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,

30. 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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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.



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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 <u>Prisoner's Friend</u>, 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.



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

February 28, Wednesday: 1st steamship entered San Francisco Bay, California.



<u>Sophia Peabody Hawthorne</u> wrote to her sister, <u>Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann</u>, describing how <u>Henry Thoreau</u>'s great blue eyes offset his uncomely nose:

This evening Mr. Thoreau is going to lecture, and will stay with us. His lecture before was so enchanting; such a revelation of nature in all its exquisite details of wood-thrushes, squirrels, sunshine, mists and shadows, fresh, vernal odors, pine-tree ocean melodies, that my ear rang with music, and I seemed to have been wandering through copse and dingle! Mr. Thoreau has risen above all his arrogance of manner, and is as gentle, simple, ruddy, and meek as all geniuses should be; and now his great blue eyes fairly outshine and put into shade a nose which I once thought must make him uncomely forever.





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This was either Henry's 1st, or his 3d, lecture, lecture on the general topic of his life in the woods, and it took place at Salem — either "Economy" or "Where I lived" (per a review quoted by Holtje), or "White Beans."



His <u>Aunt Maria Thoreau</u> wrote to Miss Prudence Ward, "He is preparing his Book for the press, and the title is to be, Waldien (I don't know how to spell it) or Life in the Woods":

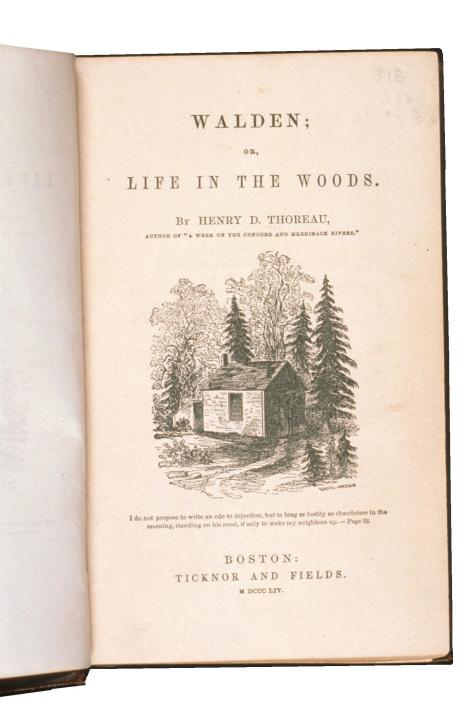
Today Henry has gone to Salem to read another lecture they seem to be wonderfully taken with him there, and next month he is to go to Portland [Maine], to deliver the same, and George wants him to keep on to Bangor they want to have him there, and if their funds will hold out they intend to send for him, they give 25 dollars, and at Salem and Portland 20 - he is preparing his Book for the press and the title is to be, Waldien (I don't know how to spell it) or life in the Woods. I think the title will take if the Book don't. I was quite amused with what Sophia told me her mother said about it the other day, she poor girl was lying in bed with a sick head ache when she heard Cynthia (who has grown rather nervous of late) telling over her troubles to Mrs. Dunbar, after speaking of her own and Helen's sickness, she says, and there's Sophia she's the greatest trial I've got, for she has complaints she never will get rid of, and Henry is putting things into his Book that never ought to be there, and Mr. Thoreau has faint turns and I don't know what ails him, and so she went on from one thing to another hardly knew where to stop, and tho it is pretty much so, I could not help smiling at Sophia's description of it. As for Henry's book, you know I have said, there were parts of it that sounded to me very much like blasphemy, and I did not believe they would publish it, on reading it to Helen the other day Sophia told me she made the same remark, and coming from her, Henry was much surprised, and said she did not understand it, but still I fear they will not persuade him to leave it out.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

JOHN THOREAU, SR.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



TIMELINE OF WALDEN



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Here is Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau's famous drawing:



Here is Charles H. Overly's version of Sister Sophia's drawing:



June 14, Thursday: Helen Louisa Thoreau died at age 36 of tuberculosis.

# **Thoreau Deaths**

Name	<b>Death Date</b>	Age	Buried
<u>John</u>	<u>March 1801</u>	47	Concord
<u>Mary</u>	<u>July 24, 1811</u>	25	Concord



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

# **Thoreau Deaths**

Name	Death Date	Age	Buried
<u>Sarah</u>	August 1829	38	<u>Concord</u>
Miss Betsey	November 1839	60s?	Concord
<u>John</u>	January 1842	27	Concord
<u>Helen L.</u>	<u>June 1849</u>	36	Concord



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

<u>Henry David Thoreau</u> would startle mourners by cranking up a music box while they were carrying out the coffin after the funeral service.<sup>31</sup>





<sup>31.</sup> The music box was presumably the one <u>Richard F. Fuller</u> had given him in the summer of 1842, the one with placid Lucerne on its lid. Those of us who interest ourselves in this sort of thing would be interested to learn what tune it played. [Get the panegyric that Henry wrote about Helen after her death, which has seemed to some "almost hysterical." Refer to Perry Miller, CONSCIOUSNESS IN CONCORD, pages 101-2.]



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



September 17, Tuesday: To put down unrest between himself and the landed classes, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm II of Hesse requested military aid from the <u>German Confederation</u>.

In the national census, the household of <u>Nehemiah Ball</u> in Concord amounted to Nehemiah, age 59, wife Mary, and children Mary (and husband), Caroline, Maria, Angelina, Ephraim, Elizabeth, and Nehemiah.

Assistant Marshall W.W. Wilde of the 1850 US Census inventoried the Thoreau household as consisting (for government purposes) of:

- John Thoreau, 63-year-old male
- Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, 63-year-old female
- Henry David Thoreau, 33-year-old male
- Sophia E. Thoreau, 31-year-old female
- <u>Jane Thoreau</u>, 64-year-old female
- Maria Thoreau, 53-year-old female
- Margaret Doland, 18-year-old female
- Catherine Rioden, 13-year-old female



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

Catherine was listed as born in Ireland, the rest in Massachusetts. Presumably the name should have been listed as Riorden rather than Rioden. The head of the Thoreau family was listed as pencil maker and no occupations were indicated for the others. Presumably the two younger females were helping maintain the boardinghouse.





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



November 19, Friday: In the evening Mrs. Barzillai Frost, the preacher's wife, walking on the street in front of the Channing home, shepherding the morals of her <u>Concord</u> community, overheard what seemed to her to be <u>Ellery Channing</u> and <u>Henry Thoreau</u> having "a jubilee in the front parlor." She would of course report this unseemly jubilation to <u>Ellen Fuller Channing</u>'s mother. Whatever attempt was being made by friends and neighbors to cheer Channing up, this effort also included going boating regularly with Thoreau, being invited by <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> to dinner at the Thoreau home on at least one occasion, and regular dining at the <u>Waldo Emerson</u> home. However, the forlorn husband was not only being helped, he was also being most carefully watched, for instance by the railroad agent at the depot down the street.

And in fact Ellery was on his best behavior and was detected being polite to certain persons to whom he had previously behaved somewhat rudely.



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1854

June 2, "Bad Friday": <u>Louis D'Entremont Surette</u> was born in <u>Concord</u> to <u>Louis A. Surette</u> and <u>Frances Jane Shattuck Surette</u>.

By 6AM, crowds were already beginning to accumulate outside the <u>Boston</u> courthouse.



At 7:30AM, to maintain order and to make some sort of gesture that this is after all America, a brace of horses dragged a cannon onto the square before the courthouse and a squad of US Marines trained its load of six pounds of grapeshot on the crowd.

At 8AM a martial law notice was posted, which someone read aloud to the crowd:

TO THE CITIZENS OF BOSTON.

To secure order throughout the city this day, Major-General Edmands and the Chief of Police will make such disposition of the respective forces under their commands as will best promote that important object; and they are clothed with full discretionary power to sustain the laws of the land. All well-disposed citizens and other persons are urgently requested to leave those streets which it may be found necessary to clear temporarily, and under no circumstances to obstruct or molest any officer, civil or military, in the lawful discharge of his duty.

J.V.C. SMITH, Mayor.

Boston, June 2, 1854.



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

At 8:45AM the defendant's attorney, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., entered the courtroom, and was startled to observe his client Anthony Burns attired in a stylish new suit.

At 9AM Judge of Probate Edward Greeley Loring entered the chamber, and the troops outside began to drive the citizenry out of the courthouse square. The Marines began ostentatiously to "train" by going through the motions of loading, firing, and reloading their cannon, while the police began to make arrests. Judge Loring, in regard to the objection that was being raised that his rôle as a Fugitive Slave Bill Commissioner of the United States of America was an unconstitutional one for judges to play, commented mildly that his duties as a Fugitive Slave Commissioner were "ministerial rather than judicial."

Horace Mann, Sr. and E.G. Loring were old buddies from the Litchfield Law School. It had been just a brief period since Loring, who was an officer of Harvard College, had been rejected as a candidate for a law professorship because of his favoring the Fugitive Slave Law as written by James Mason of Virginia.

To prove to the court what everyone knew to be the fact, the slavemaster and his attorney displayed to the judge a copy of the Revised Code of Virginia.

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"On the law and facts of the case, I consider the claimant entitled to the certificate from me which he claims."
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Judge Loring then signed the certificate and outside upon a signal the bells of Boston's churches began to toll. In response to the pealing of the bells, the townspeople began to hang black bunting, and women's black shawls and mantles, out of their windows. The streets of Boston were being patrolled by the National Guard, and by US Army cavalry, and by marines, and by artillery brigades, totaling some 2,000 soldiers –President Pierce having ordered that no expense be spared—but no quantity of mere soldiering could force local citizens to raise their flags above half-mast or take down their drapings of black bunting.

At 2:30PM the procession of troops, each with pistol by his left hand and drawn cutlass in his right, began to move toward the waterfront and, eventually, the government revenue cutter *Morris* that was being kept at a safe distance in the harbor, out at the mooring at Minot's Light. Burn was moved along quick-step by the troops "down that sworded street" from the Boston courthouse in the custody of US Marshall Asa O. Butman. The Marine Band attempted to incite the crowds of citizens lining the streets to riot by playing the tune "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," so that the army would have an opportunity to do what it does best, but could not get a firefight started. The colored man was heard to comment,

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There was a lot of folks to see a colored man walk through the streets.
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The New England Woman's Rights Convention was getting little done, for the delegates were out on State Street watching the colored man in the new suit being marched past. William Lloyd Garrison and the Reverend Moncure Daniel Conway watched together from the window of a law office (this would get Conway in big trouble in his home town in Virginia). On the way down to Dock T, it seems that by coincidence a druggist's stockboy from Roxbury, William Ela, who had been sent into town that afternoon to procure a bottle of ink, was in the vicinity lugging his bottle — and the troops presumed that the bottle he was carrying contained vitriol which he intended to hurl at them. The bottle of ink was smashed and the boy would be brain-damaged from being assaulted with the butts of muskets (later there would be a lawsuit for his maintenance: Ela v. J.V.C. Smith). The nervous troops also bayoneted a cart horse that happened to get in their way as Anthony Burns was being marched to the dock. There was a dock, and there was a street leading down to it; the cutter was at the end of the dock, and sometimes a cart driver does not mean to get in the way. What to do? Where a human being means nothing, what the hell is a horse supposed to mean? The white soldiers, having gotten all keyed up to bayonet citizens, of course bayoneted the horse. The driver of the cart was lucky they didn't bayonet him



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

as well.

At 3:20PM, after the troops had loaded their black captive and their brass cannon aboard the steamer *John Taylor* at Dock T, the steamer pulled away from the dock and began to make its way through the massed small craft in the harbor toward Minot's Light, where the federal revenue cutter *Morris* was waiting.

That afternoon Henry Thoreau had taken his mother Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and sister Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau in his boat up the Assabet River to Castilleja and Annursnack.

They wouldn't return until about 7 PM.

By 8:30PM, Richard Henry Dana, Jr. had finished writing out a version of the closing argument which he had offered, and had sent it off to the Boston <u>Traveller</u> to be published in their next edition. When he met Anson Burlingame, the 9PM omnibus to Cambridge having already departed, Burlingame offered to escort Dana home. As they walked together on Court Street, however, Dana was struck from behind. The lawyer's glasses flew off and shattered. His eye was blackened and some of his teeth were chipped.<sup>32</sup>

Friend <u>John Greenleaf Whittier</u> would turn the Anthony Burns episode into one of his occasional poems, but –poetry to the contrary notwithstanding– the man of color's wrists had not been in handcuffs as he had been quick-stepped "hand-cuffed down that sworded street" of sordid downtown Boston:

#### The Rendition, by John Greenleaf Whittier.

I HEARD the train's shrill whistle call, I saw an earnest look beseech, And rather by that look than speech My neighbor told me all.

And, as I thought of Liberty Marched handcuffed down that sworded street, The solid earth beneath my feet Reeled fluid as the sea.

I felt a sense of bitter loss, — Shame, tearless grief, and stifling wrath, And loathing fear, as if my path A serpent stretched across.

All love of home, all pride of place, All generous confidence and trust, Sank smothering in that deep disgust And anguish of disgrace.

Down on my native hills of June, And home's green quiet, hiding all, Fell sudden darkness like the fall Of midnight upon noon!

And Law, an unloosed maniac, strong, Blood-drunken, through the blackness trod, Hoarse-shouting in the ear of God The blasphemy of wrong.

"O Mother, from thy memories proud, Thy old renown, dear Commonwealth, Lend this dead air a breeze of health,

32. The men were later identified as Luigi Varelli and Henry Huxford, who had been serving that day as part of the marshall's guard and who were celebrating their earnings at Allen's Saloon when they recognized Richard Henry Dana, Jr. as he passed on the sidewalk. Anthony Burns would turn out to be the last escapee from slavery to be returned from Massachusetts. His owner would not, as was feared at the time, torture him to death. He would be kept in the traders' jail in Richmond VA until sold to a white man from North Carolina. This man would then retail him to a Massachusetts minister at Barnum's Hotel in Baltimore in February 1855 for the sum of \$1,325.00 On March 7, 1855 Burns would be feted at Tremont Temple and handed manumission papers. He would attend the School of Divinity at Oberlin College and, bless him, he would become a minister of the gospel.



#### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

And smite with stars this cloud.

"Mother of Freedom, wise and brave, Rise awful in thy strength," I said; Ah me! I spake but to the dead; I stood upon her grave!

June 2: ... I would fain be present at the birth of shadow. It takes place with the first expansion of the leaves....

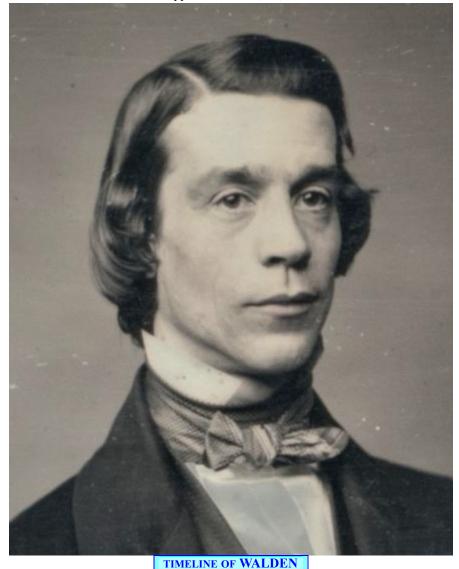
The following commentary on Thoreau's journal entry for this day is from H. Daniel Peck's THOREAU'S MORNING WORK: MEMORY AND PERCEPTION IN A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS, THE JOURNAL, AND WALDEN (Yale UP, 1994):

To "improve these seasons as much as a farmer his" is to cultivate them richly through perception and to fix them in enduring phenomenological categories. One of the most obvious signs of Thoreau's ongoing revision of the traditional calendar in the Journal is his unceasing recording of first-observed appearances of seasonal phenomena. These observations cluster in the spring, when their myriad occurrences signify the vigorous rebirth of nature celebrated in the climatic chapter of WALDEN. Yet a close reading of the Journal reveals that Thoreau was closely attentive to "first facts" at all seasons. There are hundreds of such observations in the Journal, recorded at all times of the year and usually without commentary. In part, they are an expression of Thoreau's deep preoccupation with origins. By searching the world for the first visible appearances of natural growth, he hopes to participate through observation in the creativity of nature - to be there at the moment of genesis. A passage from a Journal entry of June 2, 1854, expresses this desire poignantly: "I would fain be present at the birth of shadow. It takes place with the first expansion of the leaves." But as this example shows, the concept of beginning as it is usually expressed in the Journal is defined not by pure origination but by repetition. The necessary context for observing the "first" appearance of a seasonal phenomenon is the natural cycle; any "first" in nature is recognizable only because it has happened before. That is, Thoreau has already prepared, or recognized, a category for anticipating it; he is keyed for the observation of first facts. In the spring of 1860, we find him "on the alert for several days to hear the first birds" (March 9, 1860). Reporting the appearance of these "first birds" to his Journal is an act of confirmation as much as an act of origination; the beginning, in Thoreau, always pivots between memory and anticipation. As he puts it in a Journal entry of June 6, 1857, "Each annual phenomenon is a reminiscence and prompting." But even the most vigilant of nature's observers cannot "be present at the birth of shadow," and Thoreau is acutely aware of this, as he shows in an entry of March 17, 1857: "No mortal is alert enough to be present at the first dawn of the spring."



### **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

July 9, Sunday: The <u>Reverend Thomas Starr King</u> of the Universalist Church in Charlestown, Massachusetts thanked <u>James Thomas Fields</u> for a "luscious copy" of <u>WALDEN</u>; OR, <u>LIFE IN THE WOODS</u>. 33



The Reverend would review the gift for the Christian Register:

A young man, eight years out of college, of fine scholarship and original genius, revives, in the midst of our bustling times, the life of an anchorite. By the side of a secluded pond in Concord, he builds with his own hands a hut which cost him twenty-eight dollars and twelve and a half cents; and there he lived two and a half years, "cultivating poverty," because he "wanted to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and suck out all its marrow."

Here he found that the labor of six weeks would support him through the year; and so he had long quiet days for reading, observation, and reflection, learning to free himself from all the hollow customs and false shows of the world, and to pity

33. James T. Fields. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND PERSONAL SKETCHES. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 188, page 89.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

those who by slavery to inherited property seemed to be doing incredible and astonishing penance.

In the account he gives us of his clothes, house, food, and furniture, we find mingled many acute and wise criticisms upon modern life; while in his descriptions of all living things around him, birds, fishes, squirrels, mice, insects, trees, flowers, weeds, it is evident that he had the sharpest eye and the quickest sympathy.

One remarkable chapter is given to the sounds that came to his ear, with suggestions, full of poetry and beauty, of the feelings which these sounds awakened. But nothing interested him so much as the Pond, whose name gives the title to his book.

He describes it as a clear sheet of water, about a mile in circumference; he bathed in it every morning; its cool crystal depths were his well, ready dug; he sailed upon its bosom in summer, he noted many curious facts pertaining to its ice in winter; in short, it became to him a living thing, and he almost worshiped it.

But we must not describe the contents of this book any farther. Its opening pages may seem a little caustic and cynical; but it mellows apace, and playful humor and sparkling thought appear on almost every page....

Rarely have we enjoyed a book more, or been more grateful for many and rich suggestions...

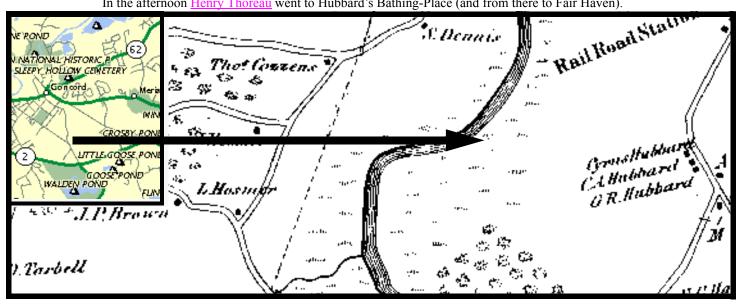
As we shut the book up, we ask ourselves, will the great lesson it teaches of the freedom and beauty of a simple life be heeded? Shall this struggle for wealth, and this bondage to the impedimenta of life, continue forever? Will the time ever come when it will be fashionable to be poor, that is, when men will be so smitten with a purpose to seek the true ends of life that they will not care about laying up riches on the earth?

Such times we know there have been, and thousands listened reverently to the reply, given in the last of these two lines, to the inquiry contained in the first; "O where is peace, for thou its path hast trod?" "In poverty, retirement, and with God." Who can say that it is impossible that such a time may come round, although the fashion of this world now runs with such a resistless current in the opposite direction.



# CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

In the afternoon Henry Thoreau went to Hubbard's Bathing-Place (and from there to Fair Haven).



This day saw the first meeting of Concord's "Vigilance Committee," organized in the wake of Anthony Burns's return to slavery earlier that year (Thoreau doesn't mention such a meeting in his journal entry for the day). Attendees were: Mary Merrick Brooks, Waldo and Lidian Emerson, Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and John Thoreau, Mary Rice, Charles Bowers, Joshua R. Brown, Nathan B. Stowe, Nathan Henry Warren, James Weir, Stearns Wheeler, and William Whiting. Since, at this informal meeting, the attenders signed a pledge that they would do whatever was in their power to aid fleeing slaves, some incautious commentators have presumed that this meeting, and this new committee, had something to do with the Underground Railroad! What the attenders did, however, was merely to agree to sponsor a weekly series of public meetings on the topic of slavery. Emerson for instance agreed to invite the Reverend Theodore Parker to deliver an opening lecture. Of course they would honor their pledge, but of course, the Emersons couldn't be expected to invite persons of color to enter their home, so it wouldn't be within their power to interpret this pledge as including the aiding of any actual fleeing slave individuals. Surely such a pledge should be categorized as pious attitudinizing, or as righteous posturing, or as good public relations proselytizing, rather than as some incautious historians have supposed, the sort of Underground Railroad activism in which Cynthia and John and Henry Thoreau, were involved, for which they were putting their own persons and the assets of their family on the line. (I cannot presently cite any occasion on which any person of color ever was allowed to enter the Emerson home in Concord at any point during the 19th Century, before or after the Civil War, even as a servant. If a person is to be categorized as "vomit" on the basis of the color of his or her skin, would they then proceed to allow such a "vomit" person through the door — just because they were in need?)

My guess would be that we can take a clue from the fact that Thoreau hadn't bothered to attend this meeting, and recognize from that, that actually this meeting didn't have one doggone thing to do with the Underground <u>Railroad</u>. (If it did have something to do with such covert agendas — then this would be the very first instance of which we have any record of anyone ever putting anything having to do with that clandestine operation into incriminating ink on an incriminating piece of paper other than Bronson Alcott scribbling in a voluminous personal journal that he could be quite confident nobody but himself would trouble themselves to glance at.)

We need constantly to bear in mind that there were two very distinct types of white abolitionist, the non-racist abolitionist and the racist abolitionist. The non-racist abolitionists wanted to help improve the lives of black Americans and were opposed to race slavery because it harmed the lives of black Americans. The racist abolitionists didn't think there even ought to be such a thing as a black American, and were opposed to race



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

slavery because it created a place for black people in America, where they ought not to have any place at all. Likewise, there were two reasons for being in favor of the <u>Underground Railroad</u>, because it helped black people who needed help, and because it helped remove black people from the local area by shuffling them off toward the north where there might or might not be a place for them and that didn't matter. (The genius of the abolition movement was to make strange bedfellows of these two very different sorts of personality, the non-racist Thoreau personality and the racist Emerson personality, enabling them to work together at a common task.) The point is that people like <u>Thoreau</u>, who wanted to help improve people's lives, would sometimes be willing to place their own homes at risk of confiscation, but people like Emerson who just wanted weeds to grow somewhere else than in their own vicinity would never place their fine homes at risk of confiscation. That, to mix a metaphor, would be to risk throwing the clean white baby out with the dirty black bathwater!



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

September 16, Saturday: Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau returned from Wachusett.

In the afternoon Thoreau went to Fringed Gentian Meadow over the Assabet River and to Dugan Desert (Gleason 39/H4), where he found the mud turtle's eggs all hatched. Tortoise Eggs Review of WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS under the heading "News" in the Portland ME <u>Transcript</u>, 179:3.

Thoreau in his recently published work "Walden" thus hits off the popular eagerness for news:-

[Reprints "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," pages 93.24-94.2.]

The book was also reviewed on the second page of the Rochester NY Daily American.

Joshua Abraham Norton appeared in the office of San Francisco <u>Call</u> attired in a comic-opera uniform, with a document in hand that proclaimed him to be the Emperor of the United States and the Protector of Mexico.<sup>34</sup>





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1855

Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau was listed in Dr. Henry Bond's GENEALOGIES OF THE FAMILIES AND DESCENDANTS OF THE EARLY SETTLERS OF WATERTOWN, MASS. INCLUDING WALTHAM AND WESTON published in this year by Little, Brown & Co. in Boston, as being among the many, many descendants of Deacon Lewis Jones and Anne Jones who had come over from England in 1645 and had settled initially in Roxbury MA. – Would Mother Cynthia not have make her two children Henry Thoreau and Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau who were still living at home aware of this family history? 35

HERE LIETH THE BODY OF

ANNE JONES,

AGE 78 YEARS,

DIED THE FIRST DAY OF MAY, 1680.

UPON THE DEATH OF THAT PIOUS MATRON.

SHE LIVED A PIOUS, HOLY, GODLY LIFE,

BEING NOW ESCAPED FREE FROM HATE AND STRIFE.



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

34. Refer to ZANIES: THE WORLD'S GREATEST ECCENTRICS by Jay Robert Nash (New Century Publishers, 1982, pages 267-74).



"Son — they say there isn't any royalty in this country, but do you want me to tell you how to be king of the United States of America? Just fall through the hole in a privy and come out smelling like a rose."

<sup>35.</sup> Anne Jones was a great-great-great grandmother of Henry Thoreau, who presumably had as many as 63 other such great-great-great grandparents (though we do not currently know of any other of them). It was through this lineage that Thoreau had inherited his ostensive narcolepsy. We don't know where Deacon Lewis Jones was buried; he's not next to his wife, and the boulder upon which his name has later been inscribed functions not a grave marker but as a mere memorial monument.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

10 Ephraim 11 Simon (or Simeon) 12 Stephen 13 Jonas 14 Phillemore 15 Charles. Col. Elisha Jones was born 1710 the son of Capt Josiah Jones (born 1670 in Weston) & Abigail Barnes Capt. Josiah Jones was the son of Josiah Jones of Watertown Farms (born 1643) and Lydia Treadway (dr of Nathaniel Treadway who died in Watertown 1689) Josiah Jones was son of Lewis Jones (who appears to have moved from Roxbury to Watertown about 1650 & died 1684) and Anna (perhaps Stone? born in England.) This Josiah Jones in 1666 bought "of John Stone & Wife Sarah, of Wat., a farm of 124 acres on the N side of Sudbury highway, about 2 miles from Sud.",—

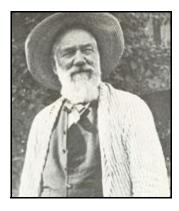
Unfortunately Google Books has as yet only scanned Volume II of Dr. Henry Bond's GENEALOGIES OF THE FAMILIES OF WATERTOWN..., so we are not yet able to include in the Kouroo Contexture the contents of Volume I. We can wonder whether Henry noticed in this genealogical reference, that a large part of Waldens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



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. <sup>36</sup>(The census taker for Concord

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

was Sheriff Sam Staples.)



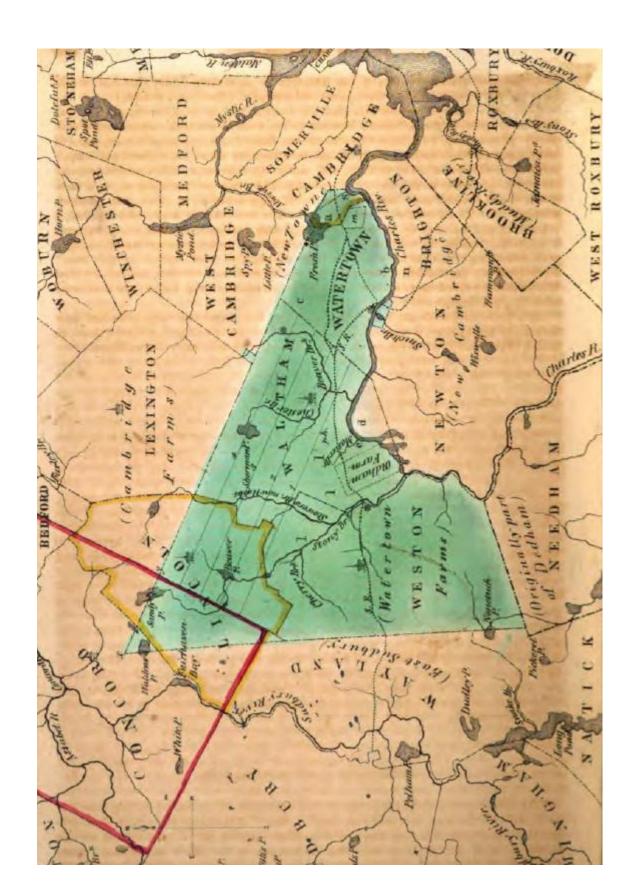


Aug. 10. P.M. — To Nagog. Middle of huckleberrying. — (then no more entries until August 19th)

<sup>36.</sup> Volume 21 in the Massachusetts State Archives in Boston. The historian <u>Lemuel Shattuck</u>, the lawyer Moses Prichard, and the manufacturer William Monroe were also listed by census taker Sam Staples as gentlemen. <u>Waldo Emerson</u> was listed almost appropriately as "Writer of Books" and <u>Ellery Channing</u> almost appropriately as "Do Nothing" (see <u>Friend Daniel Ricketson</u> drawing made in 1856).



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1856

March 27, Thursday: Death of <u>Charles Jones Dunbar</u>, <u>Henry Thoreau</u>'s favorite uncle, <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>'s eccentric brother.

The Reverend Samuel J. May, Jr. wrote from the Anti-Slavery Office to Mrs. Elizabeth Buffum Chase:

As W. Phillips can give no time to the R.I. Convention, until the last week in April, we have, after conferring with Providence friends, fixed upon the 25th, 26th, and 27th of that month as the days.

A. Fairbanks gives me no encouragement about the formation of a State Society. It seems to me to be, like Immediate Emancipation itself, one of the first things to be done. Action, in this country, to be effective, must be organized.

Nor is it a very numerous Society that is wanted. We are not politicians—thank God-I hope we are not "Know nothings" in any sense; we are not striving to form a great Lodge or body, every man of which shall talk, and move, and vote, to order.

I began my note chiefly to say that I propose appointing a meeting for S.S. Foster at Pawtucket on Sunday, April 6th, and I think he will stop and see you on the Saturday evening previous, as you desired. I am not sure who the best person in Pawtucket for me to write to is, since Daniel Mitchell has gone. Will you give me your opinion as to the three best places for S.S.F. to spend the three Sundays in, which are all he can give to R.I.?

ASA FAIRBANKS

RHODE ISLAND



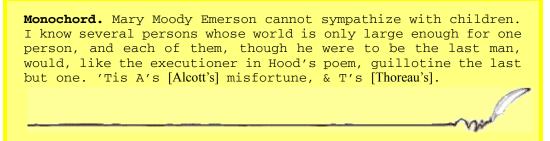
March 27. Uncle Charles died this morning, about midnight, aged seventy-six.

The frost is now entirely out in some parts of the New Burying-Ground, the sexton tells me, - half-way up the hill which slopes to the south, unless it is bare of snow, he says. In our garden, where it chances to be bare, two or more rods from the house, I was able to dig through the slight frost. In another place near by I could not. The river is now open in reaches of twenty or thirty rods, where the ice has disappeared by melting. Elijah Wood, Senior, about seventy, tells me he does not remember that the river was ever frozen so long, nor that so much snow lay on the ground so long. People do not remember when there was so much old snow on the ground at this date.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

April: It would appear that Miss <u>Mary Moody Emerson</u> was back in <u>Concord</u> again at this point, settled by Elizabeth Sherman Hoar in the "Deacon Brown" house — for we date this remark in <u>Waldo Emerson</u>'s journal to approximately this month:



HEADCHOPPING

The biographer Phyllis Cole would explain the meeting between Waldo's petite Aunt Mary and Henry Thoreau as follows:

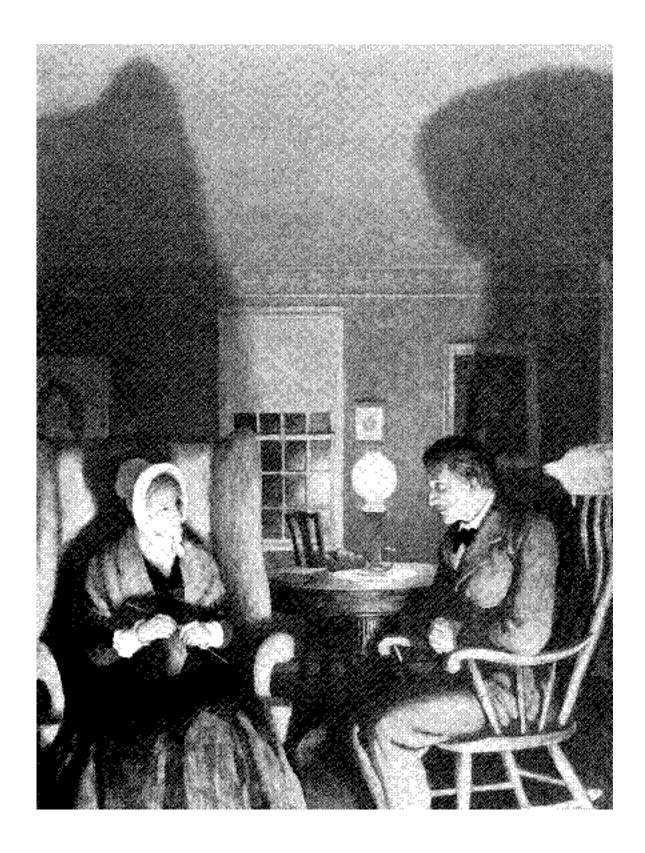


Back in Concord a year and a half later, Mary gave Thoreau the attention across generations that she had no way of giving Dickinson. Once more he recorded the event in his journal. "Talking with Miss Mary Emerson this evening, she said, 'It was not the fashion to be so original when I was young.' She is readier to take my view -look through my eyes for the time- than any young person that I know in this town." Mary endorsed his high valuing of simplicity, even at the expense of his own mother. Holding court at the "Deacon Brown" house the same year, she shut her eyes while conversing with her old friend Cynthia Thoreau in protest against the long yellow ribbons on her cap. "I did not wish to look upon those ribbons of yours," she explained, "so unsuitable at your time of life and to a person of your serious character." Perhaps others in the room challenged her to defend the more "original" oddities of her own apparel.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

June 17, Tuesday: The Reverend <u>Theodore Parker</u> wrote to Dr. Füster, a Viennese professor, mentioning news of <u>Professor Pierre Jean Édouard Desor.</u>

In Worcester, <u>Henry Thoreau</u>, H.G.O. Blake, and Theophilus Brown needed to use a carriage when they went out to Quinsigamund Pond, because they were being accompanied by <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u>.

<u>Friend Daniel Ricketson</u> abandoned <u>Newport</u>, <u>Rhode Island</u> to visit <u>Concord</u> to see Henry, unaware that Henry had gone to Worcester. The father <u>John Thoreau</u> must have been very short indeed, for a man who himself stood 5'3" to have pronounced him "very short":



Left Newport this morning at five o'clock for Concord, Mass., via Providence and Boston, and arrived at C. about 12 M. The sail up the Providence or Blackstone River was very fine, the morning being clear and the air very refreshing. My object in coming to Concord was to see H.D. Thoreau, but unfortunately I found him on a visit at Worcester, but I was received with great kindness and cordiality by his father and mother, and took tea with them. Mrs. Thoreau, like a true mother, idolizes her son, and gave me a long and interesting account of his character. Mr. Thoreau, a very short old gentleman, is a pleasant person. We took a short walk together after tea, returned to the Middlesex Hotel at ten. Mrs. T. gave me a long and particular account of W.E. Channing, who spent so many years here.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

ELLERY CHANNING

PROVIDENCE

June 19, Thursday: Friend Daniel Ricketson to his journal, in Concord:

EDMUND HOSMER



Walked after breakfast with Mr. Thoreau, Senr., by appointment to the cemetery and over the ridge to see Mr. Hosmer, an intelligent farmer. Purchased the life of Mary Ware, and a framed portrait of Charles Sumner, the former for Mrs. Thoreau, and the latter for her daughter Sophia.

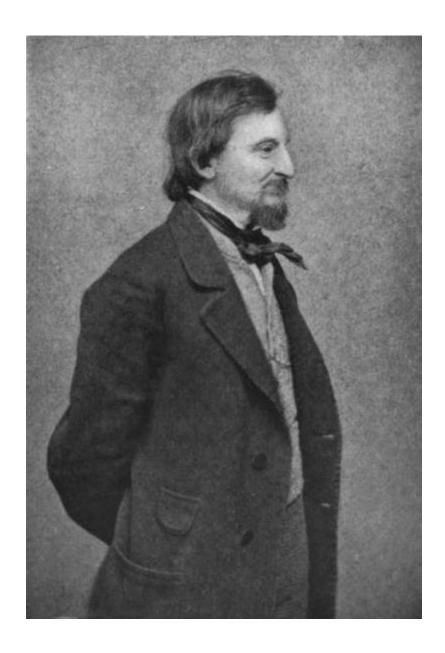
H.D. Thoreau and his sister S. arrived home this noon from a trip to Worcester. Passed a part of the afternoon on the river with H.D.T. in his little boat, — discussed Channing part of the time. Took tea and spent the evening at Mr. T.'s (Item) H.D.T. says buy "Margaret."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

SOPHIA E. THOREAU, SR.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1859

February 21, Monday: <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> wrote to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts in regard to the death of her father John Thoreau:

It gives me pleasure to respond to any expression of sympathy at this time of sad bereavement, & I would thank you most heartily for your very kind note. -It is two years last Oct. since our dear fathers long & wasting sickness commenced. He has been a most patient sufferer. At the last he declined very rapidly, he was confined to his chamber but three weeks & to his bed only one week. I shall be ever grateful that his suffering was not more acute & that his nearest & dearest friends were at hand with their sympathy & aid to comfort & relieve him so far as was in their power- Through all my dear fathers illness he was borne up by that fallacious hope so often attendant on consumption. I do not think that he realized the impossibility of recovery till about ten days before he left us, but then he was 'all ready, willing & waiting to be gone' as he said. My fathers two sisters were with us at the time of his death. They have since returned to Boston & I assure you we are lonely indeed. I feel as if there was nothing for me to do now that all anxiety on poor fathers account has ceased. But it is a great consolation to think of him at rest. Oh my dear friend would that I could express my appreciation of divine wisdom as manifested to us all. It is surely safe to trust the good God who so wisely cares for us. While I must ever mourn his absence I shall delight to cherish the memory of his many virtues, & I trust that our loss is his gain .- Mother is at present suffering with the influenza.



CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

October 11: Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau made a donation, through Waldo Emerson, for John Brown.



October 11: P.M.-To Cliffs.

Looking under large oaks, black and white, the acorns appear to have fallen or been gathered by squirrels, etc. I see in many *distant* places stout twigs (black or scarlet oak) three or four inches long which have been gnawed



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

off by the squirrels, with four to seven acorns on each, and left on the ground. These twigs have been gnawed off on each side of the nuts in order to make them more portable, I suppose. The nuts all abstracted and sides of the cups broken to get them out.



The note of the chickadee, heard now in cooler weather and above many fallen leaves, has a new significance. There was a very severe frost this morning (ground stiffened), probably a chestnut-opening frost, a season-ripener, opener of the burs that inclose the Indian summer. Such is the cold of early or middle October. The leaves and weeds had that stiff, hoary appearance.

1860

According to census records, the Thoreau household in <u>Concord</u> included <u>Sophia Dunbar</u>, age 79, <u>Henry D.</u>, <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u>, <u>Louisa Dunbar</u>, and <u>Sophia E. Thoreau</u>.

June 23, Saturday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA with news of relatives and of Concord friends:

"Mother and myself have been in Bangor about a week.... I left my brother to the very tender mercies of aunt Louisa & feel a little afraid that the fellow may be harmed by indulgence."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



July 8, Sunday: A fire destroyed much of the business district of Dallas, Texas. A plot would develop, that would use this conflagration to create a general panic in regard to <u>servile insurrection</u> and thus cause states to secede from the federal union. Across the South said conspiracy would spark white panic in regard to black insurrection — and states would in fact secede.

"TEXAS TERROR"

Although <u>Henry Thoreau</u> had sprained his thumb, making writing difficult, when his mother <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> suggested this, he was able to manage a letter to <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u>:

Concord July 8 1860 Dear Sophia,

Mother reminds me that I must write to you, if only a few lines,



# CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

though I have sprained my thumb so that it is questionable whether I can write legibly, if at all. I can't bear on much. What is worse, I believe that I have sprained by brain too — ie it sympathises with my thumb. But there is no excuse, I suppose, for writing a letter in such a case, is, like sending a newspaper, only a hint to let you know that "all is well" — but my thumb.

I hope that you begin to derive some benefit from that more mountainous air which you are breathing Have you had a distinct view of the Franconia Notch mts (blue peaks in the N horizon)? which I told you that you could get from the road in Campton, & probably from some other points nearer. Such a view of the <u>mts</u> is more memorable than any other.

Have you been to Squam Lake, or overlooked it — I should think that you could easily make an excursion to some <u>mt</u> in that direction from which you could see the lake & the <u>mts</u> generally.

Is there no friend of N.P. Rogers who can tell you where the "lions" are.

Of course I didnt go to North Elba, but I sent some reminiscences of last fall

I hear that John Brown jr has just come to Boston for a few days. Mr Sanborn's case, it is said, will come on after some murder cases have been disposed of — here.

I have just been invited, formally, to be present at the annual picnic of Theodore Parker's Society (that was) at Waverly next Wednesday, & to make some remarks — But this is wholly out of my line — I do not go to pic-nics even in Concord you know —

Mother & Aunt Sophia rode to Acton with me yesterday. I suppose that you have heard that Mr Hawthorn has come home. I went to meet him the other evening & found that he had not altered except that he was looking pretty brown after his voyage He is as simple & child-like as ever.

I believe that I have fairly scared the kittens away at last, by my pretended fierceness — which was humane surely.

& now I will consider my thumb — & your eyes Henry

July 8. Yesterday was quite hazy, with an east wind. This morning there is a cold mist, which soon becomes rain,—at 2.30 P. M. The thermometer is at 66°, and some sit by fires.

December 27, Thursday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts with some gossip and with news of the trip to Bangor and of a trip to the White Mountains:

Early last Spring my dear mother was very severely attacked with lung fever & ever since her health has been exceedingly frail. At present she is more unwell than usual suffering with



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

influenza, which in her feeble condition, renders her very ill.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU





May 15, Wednesday or later: <u>Henry Thoreau</u> wrote to <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> &/or <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> presumably from <u>Niagara Falls</u>, New York <u>New York</u>.

Horace Mann asked me if I did not hear the sound of the Fall as we went—from the Depot to the Hotel last night—but I had not—though certainly it was loud enough— I had probably mistaken it for a train coming or a locomotive letting off steam—of which we hear so much at home— It sounds hardly as loud this morning though now only 1/3 of a mile off————As I sit in my chamber the impression is as if I were surrounded by many factories—in full blast This is quite a town—with numerous hotels—& stores—Pave streets & &c——& niagra falls will soon be surrounded by a city—I intend to walk down to the Falls & goat Island after dinner I pay a dollar a day here & shall certainly stay here till next monday— Direct to Chicago Ill. till Monday next is passed—

HDT WHAT? INDEX

# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**



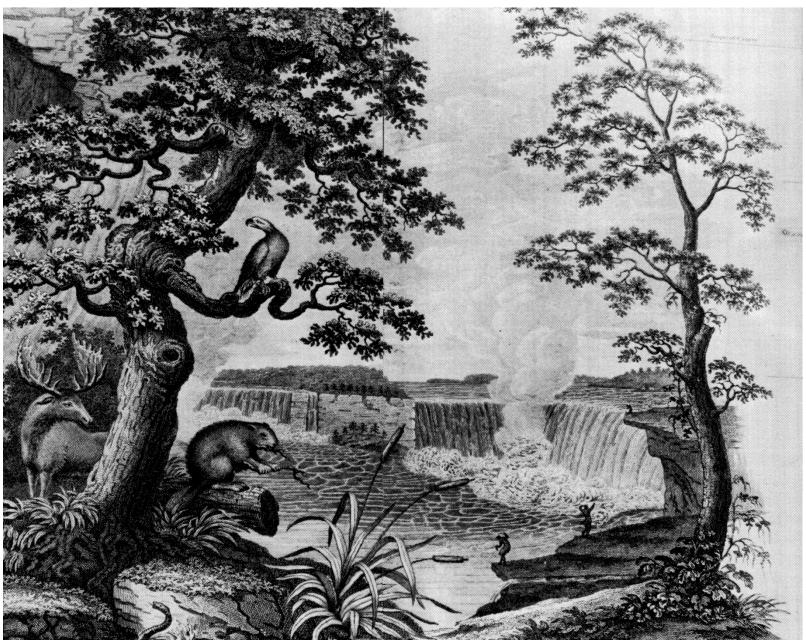


Sight of rapids, from Brid[g]e like sea off Cape Cod.... Many ducks<sup>37</sup> constantly floating a little way



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

down the rapids, then flying back & alighting again.... Pestered by coachmen &c. &c.



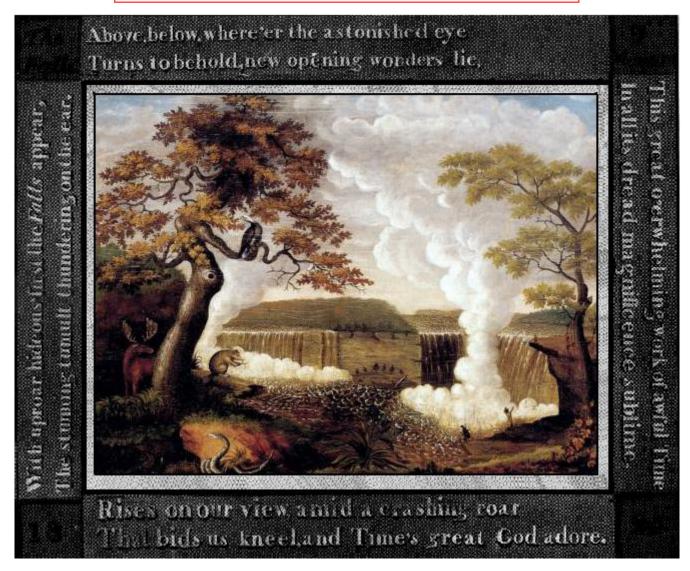
Niagara as portrayed by H.S. Tanner in 1822



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

"It was not until I came to Table Rock and looked, Great Heaven, on what a fall of bright green water, that it came upon me in its full might and majesty.... Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart, an image of beauty, to remain there changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat forever."

-Charles Dickens, 1842



The H.S. Tanner picture of 1822, as quoted by **Edward Hicks** in 1825

May 27, Monday: <u>Henry Thoreau</u> in St. Paul, Minnesota wrote to <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> &/or <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u>.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

7 Am May 27—

last evening I called on Mr Thatcher. He is much worse in consequence of having been recently thrown from a carriage—so as to have had watchers within a few nights past. He was however able to give me a note of introduction to a Dr Anderson, of Minneapolis just over the river

You may as well direct to Mr Thatcher's care—still, for I cannot see where I may be a fortnight hence

"Nicollet Island, where the bridge crosses" — this appears to be Thoreau's rough draft of a letter home about Colonel Samuel Thatcher, a distant cousin who had moved to Minnesota from Maine for his health and who would die on August 31st (Dr. Charles L. Anderson was the Minnesota state geologist):

7 a.m., May 27. I last evening called on Mr. Thatcher. He is much worse in consequence of having been recently thrown from a carriage, so as to have had watchers within a few nights past. He was however able to give me a note of introduction to a Dr. Anderson, of Minneapolis, just over the river. You may as well direct to Mr. Thatcher's care, still, for I cannot see where I may be a fortnight hence.

Alyeksandr Borodin met Yekaterina Sergeevna Protopopova, a talented Russian pianist in Heidelberg to be treated for <u>tuberculosis</u>.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1862

May 9, Friday: In preparing the body, they had placed a wreath of the local Andromeda on its rib cage.



They had missed a fine opportunity: they should also have placed in the body's hand that sprig of wild



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

American crab-apple *Malus angustifolia*, that our guy had just traveled so far to recover.

Against the better judgment of surviving members of the family, <u>Waldo Emerson</u> had insisted that the 3PM funeral service be staged at the 1st Parish Church of <u>Concord</u> from which <u>Henry David Thoreau</u> had resigned. (The Unitarians got him at last.) H.G.O. Blake and Theophilus Brown came from Worcester. The <u>Unitarian</u> reverend who had been the 1st person to plunk down one dollar and purchase a copy of <u>WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS</u>, the <u>Reverend William Rounseville Alger</u>, came out to <u>Concord</u> from <u>Boston</u> specifically to attend (this reverend would demean him as "constantly feeling himself, reflecting himself, fondling himself, reverberating himself, exalting himself, incapable of escaping or forgetting himself"). <u>Nathaniel Hawthorne</u> attended. The Emersons had invited James T. and Annie Fields to their home for dinner. At the funeral, at which the Reverend <u>Grindall Reynolds</u> officiated, Waldo, being the sort of person who can find a way to turn a profit even in the death of a friend, used the opportunity to deliver himself of a judgmental lecture singularly unsuitable as a remembrance upon such an occasion, and, on the church steps after the funeral, he cut a deal with his publisher guest <u>James Thomas Fields</u> for its distribution by <u>Ticknor & Fields</u> as "Thoreau."

Ross/Adams commentary

Emerson's charge of Stoicism

What Emerson should have said:

Son of John Thoreau and Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau.

He helped us to gain our independence,
instructed us in economy,
and drew down lightning from the clouds.

Bronson Alcott, more appropriately, read a few passages from A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS, one of America's first treatises on comparative religion: "Does not that which is within



# CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

make that which is without also? May we not see God?"

A WEEK: We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a purely sensuous life. Our present senses are but the rudiments of what they are destined to become. We are comparatively deaf and dumb and blind, and without smell or taste or feeling. Every generation makes the discovery, that its divine vigor has been dissipated, and each sense and faculty misapplied and debauched. The ears were made, not for such trivial uses as men are wont to suppose, but to hear celestial sounds. The eyes were not made for such grovelling uses as they are now put to and worn out by, but to behold beauty now invisible. May we not see God? Are we to be put off and amused in this life, as it were with a mere allegory? Is not Nature, rightly read, that of which she is commonly taken to be the symbol merely? When the common man looks into the sky, which he has not so much profaned, he thinks it less gross than the earth, and with reverence speaks of "the Heavens," but the seer will in the same sense speak of "the Earths," and his Father who is in them. "Did not he that made that which is within, make that which is without also?" What is it, then, to educate but to develop these divine germs called the senses? for individuals and states to deal magnanimously with the rising generation, leading it not into temptation, - not teach the eye to squint, nor attune the ear to profanity. But where is the instructed teacher? Where are the **normal** schools?

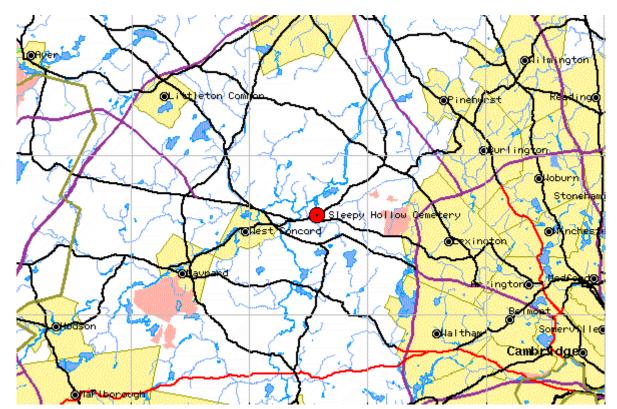


# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

The funeral bell tolled his 44 years and the coffin was lowered into a hole in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.<sup>38</sup>







Here is how Professor Scott A. Sandage, in BORN LOSERS: A HISTORY OF FAILURE IN AMERICA, would describe the scene of this day:

<sup>38.</sup> Not in the current family plot on Authors Ridge, as in the photo, nor with the current stone. The original stone was red and bore his name and his date of death. When the body was later moved to Authors Ridge, the stone was put with many another stone to be recycled, and used to cover over one or another drainage gutter in the cemetery. It is probably still there somewhere alongside one of the cemetery paths, with its inscription facing downward: "HENRY / MAY 6, 1862."



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

The American Dream died young and was laid to rest on a splendid afternoon in May 1862, when blooming apple trees heralded the arrival of spring. At three o'clock, a bell tolled forty-four times, once for each year of a life cut short. Dismissed from school, three hundred children marched to the funeral under the bright sun. Those with luck and pluck would grow up to transform American capitalism during the Gilded Age. But on this day the scent in the air was not wealth, but wildflowers. Violets dotted the grass outside the First Parish Church. The casket in the vestibule bore a wreath of andromeda and a blanket of flowers that perfumed the sanctuary with the sweetness of spring. Townsfolk and visiting notables crowded in to hear the eulogist admit what many had thought all along: the dearly departed had wasted his gifts. Neither a deadbeat nor a drunkard, he was the worst kind of failure: a dreamer. "He seemed born for greatness ... and I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition," the speaker grieved. Rather than an engineer or a great general, "he was the captain of a huckleberry-party." When not picking berries, the deceased had tried his hand at a variety of occupations: teacher, surveyor, pencilmaker, housepainter, mason, farmer, gardener, and writer. Some who congregated that day in Concord, Massachusetts thought it tactless to say such things of Henry Thoreau at his own funeral, however true Mr. Emerson's sermon about his dear friend was: Henry's quirky ambitions hardly amounted to a hill of beans. Perhaps no one present fully understood what Ralph Waldo Emerson was saying about ambition, least of all the children fidgeting and daydreaming in the pews. Someday they would rise and fall in the world the sermon presaged, where berry picking was a higher crime than bankruptcy. If a man could fail simply by not succeeding or not striving, then ambition was not an opportunity but an obligation. Following the casket to the grave, stooping here and there to collect petals that wafted from it, the children buried more than the odd little man they had seen in the woods or on the street. Part of the American Dream of success went asunder: the part that gave them any choice in the matter. We live daily with Emerson's disappointment in Thoreau. The promise of America is that nobody is a born loser, but who has never wondered, "Am I wasting my life?" We imagine escaping the mad scramble, yet kick ourselves for lacking drive. Low ambition offends Americans even more than low achievement. How we play the game is the important thing, or so we say. Win or lose, Thoreau taunts us from the dog-eared pages and dogwooded shores of WALDEN: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." We sprint as much to outrun failure as to catch success. Failure conjures such vivid pictures of lost souls that it is hard to imagine a time, before the Civil War, when the word commonly meant "breaking in business" - going broke. How did it become a name for a deficient self, an identity in the red? Why do we manage identity the way we run a business - by investment, risk, profit, and loss? Why do we calculate failure in lost dreams as much as in lost dollars?



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

In the summation paragraphs to a general derogation of the author and all his works in 1866 (considering Henry, for example, to have led a life that consisted primarily of "fondling himself"), the Reverend <u>William Rounseville Alger</u> would describe this day's procession, bells, funeral, and interment:

While we walked in procession up to the church, though the bell tolled the forty-four years he had numbered, we could not deem that he was dead whose ideas and sentiments were so vivid in our souls. As the fading image of pathetic clay lay before us, strewn with wild flowers and forest sprigs, thoughts of its former occupant seemed blent with all the local landscapes. We still recall with emotion the tributary words so fitly spoken by friendly and illustrious lips. The hands of friends reverently lowered the body of the lonely poet into the bosom of the earth, on the pleasant hillside of his native village, whose prospects will long wait to unfurl themselves to another observer so competent to discriminate their features and so attuned to their moods. And now that it is too late for any further boon amidst his darling haunts below,

There will yet his mother yield A pillow in her greenest field, Nor the June flowers scorn to cover The clay of their departed lover.

Shortly after <u>Henry David Thoreau</u> had been buried, the Emerson family would feel that an adventure in California would assist their son in the slow recovery of his health, and <u>Edward Waldo Emerson</u> would set off on the overland route.

1863

May 19, Tuesday: Destruction of Medora's papers.

<u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> wrote from <u>Concord</u> to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, giving news of relatives and of Concord friends:



"I really shrink from telling you what befell my precious mother last Dec. the 21st day of the month. It was bitter cold, all the family (that is my two aged aunts & Joanna our girl) except mother & myself had gone to bed, when dear mother fell down a very steep staircase, very nearly killing herself. She was deprived of her senses for an hour or two, & during that time she called continually for Henry to help her, her right arm was frightfully shattered. The Dr. administered either, & set her arm carrying off four pieces of bone in his pocket. It was months before poor mother left her bed. Our previous afflictions, & this terrible shock to my nerves, added to the fatigue of nursing mother has seriously impaired my frail health, & the spring finds us miserable indeed. Mother can walk, but there is no prospect that she will ever recover the use of her right hand. I would not forget the many blessings which attend me, but in my feebleness I do miss an earthly friend to lean upon, dear Henry was a host so wise in counsel & so efficient in every



# CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

emergency. Oh it is a great mystery that we are left to live without him. Ticknor & Fields are about to issue a volume of my brother's papers.... I have been preparing some of my brothers MSS, for the press."

> CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU **HENRY THOREAU**

September 2, Wednesday: Calvin H. Greene had breakfast at the Middlesex House in Concord, and then walked out to the cemetery, where he searched around and asked directions through the old burial grounds and the new burial grounds and the Sleepy Hollow area until he found a grave with a headstone that read "John Thoreau Jr." and near it a new, unmarked grave. He then went into Walden Woods to Walden Pond and sought out the cite of Henry Thoreau's cabin, and his bean-field. Later on this day he visited Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau at their home, and Thoreau's mother told him "Why, this room (their parlor,) did not seem like a sickroom! — My son wanted flowers & pictures & books all around here — & he was always so cheerful & wanted others to be so too, while about him! And during the nights he wanted the lamp set on the floor — (footlights?) and some chairs placed around behind it (actors?) so that, in his waking or semi-sleeping hours he could somehow amuse himself...."

JOHN THOREAU, JR.

September 7, Monday: With the Confederate forces having evacuated Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg, Federal troops were able to occupy all of Morris Island in Charleston Harbor.

Calvin H. Greene went for a walk outside Concord and found a young maple that had already turned fire-red. He broke off a branch with leaves and, on his return to the Thoreau home, tossed this up into an evergreen tree where it could be seen from the windows of the house. "It caught Mrs T's eyes — after breakfast, & she went to wondering what it meant. When I showed her, she exclaimed, "There that was just like my son, Henry" (Calvin of course felt most highly honored by such a comparison of himself by the mother Cynthia Dunbar <u>Thoreau</u> with her beloved son <u>Henry Thoreau</u> — as she undoubtedly had grasped full well that her house guest would be — she was slathering the icing onto the cake of his trip to Concord). After dinner with the Thoreaus, and sad farewells, he went on the train to Boston and put up at the Parker House.

Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau and Waldo Emerson met to plan for Emerson to represent her interests before James Thomas Fields in contracting for the publication of EXCURSIONS:

Boston MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1863 (stereotyped and printed by H.O. Houghton in Cambridge MA). First edition.

Edited by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Sophia Thoreau.

Biographical sketch [by Emerson] — Natural history of Massachusetts. — A walk to Wachusett. — The landlord. — A winter walk. — The succession of forest trees. — Walking. — AUTUMNAL TINTS.

- Wild apples. — Night and moonlight.

PS3045 .A1 1863

319 p. incl. front. (port.) 18 cm.

I learn from Topsell's Gesner, whose authority appears to be Albertus, that the following is the way in which the hedgehog collects and carries home his apples. He says,-

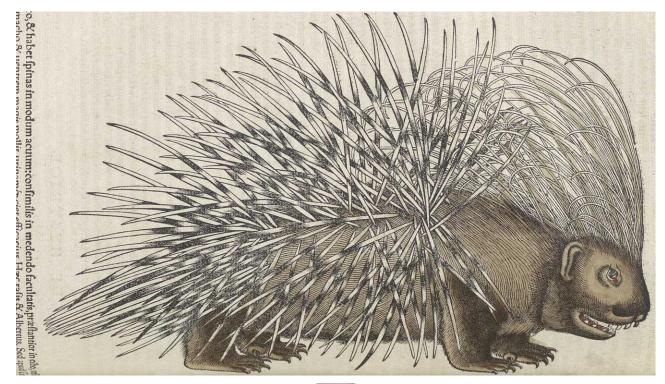
His meat is apples, worms, or grapes: when he findeth apples or grapes on the earth, he rolleth himself upon them, until he have filled all his prickles, and then carrieth them home to his den, never bearing above one in his mouth; and if it fortune that one of them fall off by the way, he likewise shaketh off all the residue, and walloweth upon them afresh, until they be all





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

settled upon his back again. So, forth he goeth, making a noise like a cart-wheel; and if he have any young ones in his nest, they pull off his load wherewithal he is loaded, eating thereof what they please, and laying up the residue for the time to come.







# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

1864

July: <u>Waldo Emerson</u> recorded in his <u>JOURNAL</u> for about his period, that:

Mrs Cynthia Thoreau, Henry's mother, was a woman of a sharp & malicious wit, and a very entertaining story-teller, I have been told. But my wife repeats two or three passages of her wit. When I first bought a horse in Concord I looked about for a cheap carriage of some kind. Samuel Staples offered to sell me one called a rockaway which would carry four persons, & was decent & convenient. My wife had occasion to speak of it at Mrs Thoreau's, and she replied, "O yes, I know it very well. 'Tis the old one in which Sam Staples always carries his prisoners to jail: they sat right in front of him so they could not get away." A speech quite new to my wife, & which Mrs Thoreau hoped would not recommend her new carriage much to her imagination.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

DUNBAR FAMILY

July: <u>Waldo Emerson</u> recorded in his <u>JOURNAL</u> for about his period, that:

When Henry was at Staten Island, he wrote two or three letters to my wife. She spoke of them to his family, who eagerly wished to see them. She consented, but said, "She was almost ashamed to show them, because Henry had exalted her by very undeserved praise." — "O yes," said his mother, "Henry is very tolerant."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

DUNBAR FAMILY



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

July: <u>Waldo Emerson</u> recorded in his <u>JOURNAL</u> for about his period, that:

Mrs [Lucy Jackson?] Brown who boarded with the Thoreaus, was one day talking with Mrs T. of the remarks made by many persons on the resemblances between Mr Emerson & Henry in manners, looks, voice, & thought. Henry spoke like Mr E. & walked like him, &c. "O yes," said his mother, "Mr Emerson had been a good deal like David Henry, and it was very natural should catch his ways."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

DUNBAR FAMILY

1867

February 1, Friday: 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 must 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





# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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.



November 29, Friday: <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> wrote from <u>Concord</u> to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, in regard to the ill health of her mother and other <u>relatives</u>:

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

"If you will come to see us I shall be glad to show you some of my dear brother's haunts. Pilgrims from afar often come to visit them. I was spending a day at 'Walden' lately when a gentleman from the West came to the pond to search for Henrys house. He afterwards spent an hour or two at our home. It is a melancholy



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

pleasure to find my brother thus remembered-"



1870

April 21, Thursday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, in regard to the ill health of her mother and describing current reading.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

November 15, Tuesday: An alliance was concluded between the North German Confederation and Wurtemberg.

<u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> wrote from <u>Concord</u> to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, in regard to the ill health of her mother and herself, of a trip to the White Mountains, and describing current reading.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

1871

September 18, Monday: <u>Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau</u> wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, telling of Concord friends, describing her current poor health, and her current reading:

"My mother is greatly blessed in retaining with rare vigor, all her faculties.... I managed to spend a week with a friend in Cohasset, in Aug."  $^{39}$ 

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

1872

March 12, Tuesday: Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau died.

39. Would this visit to Cohasset perchance have been with Mrs. Ellen Sewall Osgood?



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

April 8, Monday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA:

"Since the departure of my most precious mother I have been much prostrated, & for the past ten days all my strength has been taxed in breaking up house keeping. I have rented my house & gone to board with the family. I could not live utterly alone. No words can tell the severe struggle it has cost me to part with the many relics which had become sacred through association with my departed loved ones. But my house must be emptied. I am sorry that you know so well how to sympathize with me in my loneliness. I long to see you & tell you the particulars of dear mother's passing away., & when the warm days come I hope to avail myself of y'r kind invitation & spend a little time with you.-Dear mother was in her bed three weeks. She retained full possession of all her faculties to the last. The vigor & activity of her mind was truly wonderful. Her bodily infirmities she bore as she had done for many years, & the Lord granted a gentle exit. A rare beauty came to her in death, I wish you could have seen her as she lay like a queen, bedecked with costly flowers, the tokens of friendship & respect...."

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

1883

February 14, Wednesday: Jean Munro LeBrun (Mrs. William LeBrun, Jennie M. LeBrun) made a spirited defense of <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> against unkind statements made by <u>Franklin Benjamin Sanborn</u> in his biography of her son in the "American Men of Letters" series, in the pages of the Boston <u>Advertiser</u>.

THE OFFENDING MATERIAL
THE CORRECTIVE MATERIAL

On its voyage from Liverpool to Boston, the 320-foot steamship *Glamorgan* encountered an enormous wave that swept the captain and seven others overboard (the foundered wreck would be sighted by the steamship *Republic* two days later, and 44 rescued). 40

Alexander Graham Bell sent a telegram to Alexander Melville Bell: "... HOPE YOU ARE NOT DROWNED...."

William James, experimenting with the sensation of sea-sickness, noticed that he was able to make "a rising qualmishness disappear entirely 3 or four times by rubbing vigorously" behind his ears.

<sup>40.</sup> Such waves are now described as "freaque" waves.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

February 23, Friday: The material by Jean Munro LeBrun in defense of <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> against unkind statements made by <u>Franklin Benjamin Sanborn</u> in his biography of her son in the "American Men of Letters" series, that had recently appeared in the pages of the Boston <u>Advertiser</u>, was reprinted in the Concord <u>Freeman</u>.

THE OFFENDING MATERIAL
THE CORRECTIVE MATERIAL

Karl Theodor Jaspers was born.

PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE

1899

Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, quoted by "Dr." Samuel Arthur Jones on page 75 of SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF HENRY D. AND SOPHIA E. THOREAU (Jamaica: Marion Press):

Why, this room [Thoreau's sickroom at the boardinghouse] did not seem like a sickroom. My son wanted flowers and pictures and books all around here; and he was always so cheerful and wished others to be so while about him. And during the nights he wanted the lamp set on the floor and some chairs put around it so that in his sleepless hours he could amuse himself with watching the shadows.

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

1908

Jean Munro LeBrun's COLLECTANEA: HENRY THOREAU'S MOTHER. NUMBER TWO (Lakewood, Michigan: hand printed in a very limited edition by Edwin B. Hill) recorded a defense of <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> against unkind statements made by <u>Franklin Benjamin Sanborn</u> in his biography of her son in the "American Men of Letters" series, from the Boston <u>Advertiser</u> of February 14, 1883 and then the Concord <u>Freeman</u> of February 23, 1883.

THE OFFENDING MATERIAL
THE CORRECTIVE MATERIAL

1976

Moller, Mary Elkins. "Thoreau, Womankind, and Sexuality." ESQ 22 (1976): 123-48

HOMOSEXUALITY



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

FIRST REVIEW: In this article Moller analyzes <a href="Henry Thoreau">Henry Thoreau</a>'s attitudes toward women and his own sexuality. She identifies two popular opinions regarding this subject: that Thoreau was "a woman-hater, and that his feeling about sex was consistently negative." Moller, however, recognizes a "functional distinction" between Thoreau's view of women in general and his view of sexuality and proceeds to prove the "striking contradictions" — the "frequent ambivalence" — existing between them.

Thoreau's relationships with the members of his own family, reveal that "there is little in what is known ... which would have disposed him to serious or chronic misogyny." He had a good relationship with his active mother [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau], a close relationship with his older sister Helen Louisa Thoreau, and after Helen's death, an increasingly strong relationship with his other sister Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau. And although the death of his brother John Thoreau, Jr. made the family "quite lopsidedly female," Thoreau's "escapes" into the countryside are balanced by his desired returns to the Concord home.

During the years 1837-1842, his "impressionable years," several women evoked Thoreau's response. Among these is Margaret Fuller, the intelligent, strong-willed editor of <a href="https://doi.org/10.10">THE DIAL</a>, with whom he maintained a constant though never intimate friendship. In contrast to his admiration of Margaret, Thoreau revealed his impatience with the lecturer Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith, whose "flirtatiousness or frivolity" annoyed him. Thoreau included several "exasperated outbursts" in his JOURNAL as he reacted against the stereotypical "ideal woman": the woman whose priority was "to be as pretty and charming as possible, and as pliant, and helpless as necessary, in order to attract the admiration of men." While he condemned women's "slavery" to fashion and to the idea of marriage, he praised <a href="https://doi.org/10.10">Waldo Emerson</a>'s aunt, <a href="https://doi.org/10.10">Mary Moody Emerson</a>, for her wisdom and clear thinking. Thoreau also maintained positive relationships with other women in the Concord community, women such as Emerson's daughters [Ellen Emerson and Edith Emerson], <a href="https://doi.org/10.10">Sophia Peabody Hawthorne</a>, <a href="https://doi.org/10.10">Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann</a>, etc.

However, there were four women to whom Thoreau was attracted romantically during 1837-1845. The first was Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown, Mrs. Lidian Emerson's elder sister. Although she was twenty years older than he, Thoreau revealed a "half younger-brotherly and half lover-like" affection for her. It was Ellen Devereux Sewall, however, to whom Thoreau eventually proposed. During a visit with her grandmother then living with the Thoreaus, Ellen sparked the interest of both John and Henry. Later, after John had proposed to Ellen, been initially accepted then rejected, Henry asked for her hand in marriage but was also refused. This was Thoreau's "closest brush with matrimony." His third romantic encounter was with Mary Ellen Russell, a young friend of the Emersons who sometimes acted as the children's governess. While both she and Thoreau were living in the Emerson home, they developed a strong mutual attraction.

But it was Mrs. <u>Lidian Emerson</u> for whom Thoreau probably maintained the longest sustained admiration and attraction. Getting to know Lydia during his residences in the Emerson home, Thoreau wrote letters to her that were often intimate in tone, although there is no evidence "that any physical intimacy ever took place." Thoreau realized Lydian was "ultimately inaccessible" and eventually



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

#### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

decided he would never marry. This decision did not seem to be based solely on the fact that he could not marry the woman he loved or on some critics' assumption that he was not capable of propagation. Indeed, Thoreau appeared to be "an extraordinarily sensuous man" who had "by no means lost all interest in sexual love."

His view of love and marriage, however, seemed to be ambivalent. While taking offense at Channing's vulgar allusions to sex, Henry Thoreau often maintained a seemingly "puritanical" attitude: he expressed "diffidence and shame" regarding his thoughts in the piece "Chastity and Sensuality" and in a journal entry expressed "disgust" toward his own body with its sexual desires. Nevertheless, Thoreau at times wrote idealistically of the "passionate love between men and women," revealing "his own yearning for a mate." And in many different passages Thoreau used "erotically suggestive imagery" or "sex-related figures of speech." Clearly Thoreau was not "hostile" to the idea of sexual love but "acknowledged his own sexuality, and that of every other man and woman, as a valued part of his and their emotional nature and thus at the core of a sympathetic relatedness to all other human beings."

[Janet B. Ergino (Sommers), May 1989]

**SECOND REVIEW:** A long article the sole purpose of which seems to be to prove that Thoreau was heterosexual, had sexual attractions to several women (we know which ones), and perhaps was actually sexually active.

Moller makes a distinction between Thoreau's general attitude toward women and his feelings for specific women. She points out his idealization of women and contrasts it with the way he felt about young, non-intellectual women. "What Thoreau reacted against was a traditional stereotype of ideal womanhood: the assumption that the first business of any girl or woman is to be as pretty and charming as possible" to attract a mate and that intellect and independence are dangerous. She then cites several journal passages which are critical of women's frivolity and explores Thoreau's feelings toward older, intellectual women, such as Mary Moody Emerson and Mrs. Lidian Emerson.

Moller discounts <a href="https://www.nosexual">homosexual</a> tendencies that Thoreau might have had with a cursory look at his poem "Sympathy" (the "gentle boy" poem). She calls his attraction to Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr. "a fleeting emotional complication." She does not however mention any journal passages from that time which are also homoerotic and celebrate masculinity. She cites four passages that illustrate Thoreau's feelings for Ellen Devereux Sewall at that time, though she admits that by the time he proposed to her he probably wasn't seriously interested.

She, of course, spends a lot of time on the relationship with Lidian Emerson and points out the passionate letters. She contrasts the letters from Staten Island to later letters which treat Lidian as a sister.

Finally Moller discusses "Love" and "Chastity and Sensuality." Her conclusion is that Thoreau meant "control" when he said "chastity" and not "celibacy." She asserts that sexual love was not necessarily taboo for Thoreau unless it was outside of a truly affectionate and highly intellectual relationship. She suggests that Thoreau may have been sexually active himself, though he probably was limited to wet dreams and masturbation.

The point of all this sex talk, of course, is to find out what Thoreau's sexuality had to do with his writing and his views of women, ideas of purity, etc. Moller doesn't discuss Thoreau's asceticism at all and largely ignores his feelings toward men and the sexuality that may have been behind it. The article seems to be a justification of Thoreau as a lover of women and not a misogynist.
[James J. Berg, May 8, 1989]



# CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



Ellen Tucker Emerson. THE LIFE OF LIDIAN JACKSON EMERSON. Edited by Delores Bird Carpenter. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980 (written late in the 19th Century).

#### We learn that:

- <u>Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson</u> nearly named one of his sons for <u>Henry David Thoreau</u>.
- Mrs. <u>Lidian Emerson</u> and <u>Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau</u> sometimes annoyed one another.
- <u>Sophia Foord</u> refused to help <u>Lidian Emerson</u> mend carpets because she considered floor coverings to be a vanity.
- Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau and Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau were impressed by table-tipping Spiritualists.

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

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



Prepared: October 25, 2013



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

# 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.



# **CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

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.