

HENRY'S RELATIVES

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



1685

October 18, day (Old Style): [John Evelyn](#)'s diary entry for this day was in part as follows:



*Dr. Good-man [at Whitehall:] preached on 2:Cor:4:18:
The King was now building all that range from East to west by the Court & Garden to the
streete, & making a new Chapel for the Queene, whose Lodgings this new building was:
as also a new Council Chamber & offices next the South end of the Banqueting-house:*

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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King Louis XIV of France commenced a merciless persecution of his Protestant subjects., by declaring the April 13, 1598 Edict of Nantes which had been issued by King Henry IV to be null and void and by removing all religious and civil liberties of any French citizens who were [Huguenots](#). The eighth and largest mass out-migration of Huguenots began:¹



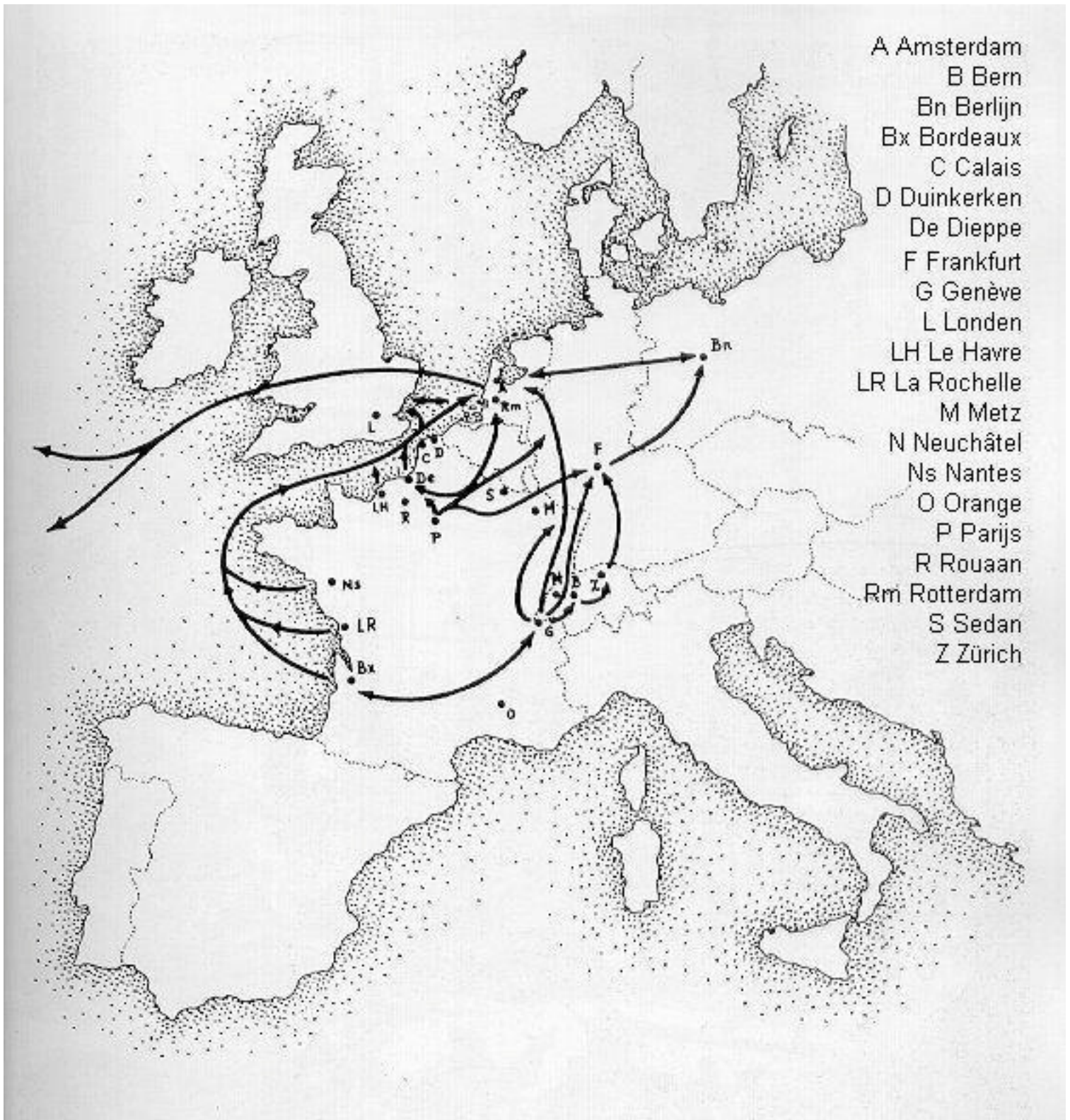
WALDENSES

In this year [Pierre Thoreau](#), who at the time was approximately ten years of age, his two sisters Francoise and Marie, and their mother, fled from the Poitou-Charentes district of France, initially to Richmond near London and then to St. H  lier on the island of [Jersey](#) in the English Channel. Presumably this religio-political situation was what occasioned the flight, at penalty of being sent to row in the galleys had they been intercepted. (We can imagine the image above, which is of Huguenots arriving in this year on the shingle beach under the white cliffs at Dover, as an approximation of the group including the combined Thoreau and Guillet families disembarking in the harbor on the island of Jersey!) Presumably the Thoreau family fled from France to Jersey in the Channel Islands in about 1685, at roughly the same time that the Jacques Louis Guillet family fled to

1. This movement of refugees is said to have been the "largest forced migration of Europeans in the early modern period." Refer to Jon Butler's *THE HUGUENOT IN AMERICA: A REFUGEE PEOPLE IN NEW WORLD SOCIETY*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1983. The English word "refugee" would come about due to reluctance to employ the term "diaspora" which seemed to be reserved for the scattering of the Jews per JOHN 7:35. The Huguenots amounted to some 1/4th million out of France's 20 million citizens, and during the years 1682-1690 were concentrated in the West and in the South. After some 50,000 had fled to England, they made up 5% of London town at a time when the London population was 10% of England. Genetically, the statistical probability that the next English person you meet in England will have at least some [Huguenot](#) ancestry is 75%. Refer to Bernard Cottret's *THE HUGUENOT IN ENGLAND* and to Peter Steven Gannon's volume on *REFUGEES IN THE SETTLING OF COLONIAL AMERICA*. In 1985 French President Mitterrand would issue an official apology, on behalf of the French government and the French people, for Louis XIV's *diktat* revoking the Edict of Nantes, and a commemorative postage stamp would be issued characterizing this our modern era as under the suasion of "Tolerance, Pluralism, Brotherhood.")

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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Jersey, because the two families were intermarried.



It would be Pierre's grandson [Philippe Thoreau](#) who would become the ancestor of Henry David, but it would be his great-granddaughter Marie who would marry Charles William Guillet in 1796 and it would be their son John Guillet who would emigrate in 1832 to Cobourg on Lake Ontario east of Toronto, eventually producing Edwin Clarence Guillet, the Canadian historian. Since the American branch of the Thoreau family would come to an end with the unmarried generation of [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), [John Thoreau, Jr.](#), [Henry David Thoreau](#), and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), this Edwin Clarence Guillet, who died in 1974, would be one of Henry David's few modern American relatives (though Henry had a closer relative in England until 1949, a son of Sophia Thoreau Du Parcq who had risen to the status of Law Lord and been entitled, who was named at birth Herbert Du Parcq).

HENRY'S RELATIVES

As you can see in the following footnote from page 230 of his THE PIONEER FARMER AND BACKWOODSMAN,



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Edwin was quite proud of Henry — although reluctant to brag about being a relative:

The period of the settlement of Upper Canada was too late for the inclusion of religious refugees among its settlers. But a large number of descendants of French Huguenots, driven from France in the sixteen-eighties, came to the United States and Canada, where they have tended to retain an independent and non-conformist attitude. The greatest of them all, of course, is Henry David Thoreau, whose philosophy and example have been so influential in shaping the career of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, British labour leaders, and broader loyalties of every type throughout the world.

In addition to the above revocation of religious liberty at home, Louis also proclaimed a *Code Noir* for his colonies in the Caribbean. First, all Jews get out, you are to be gone within three months. Second, Huguenots may not observe their religion in any way. There was to be no intermarriage of non-Catholics with Catholics. Products of such unions were declared bastards. Slaves of Huguenots were to be baptized as Catholics. When the news of this reached the Caribbean, many Huguenot families fled from French islands to English and Dutch islands.

Now I need to lay on you an analogy which you may consider, at first glimpse, to be severe. “Even with due allowance for exaggeration in contemporary accounts, one gets the impression of stark terrorism just as grim as the anti-Semitic nightmare in Nazi Germany.” Yet the opinion I just gave you is that of a reputable historian, Warren C. Scoville.² As an example, the king of France had declared that if any “New Convert” from Protestantism to Catholicism should recant his conversion on his death bed, all his property was to be seized by the authorities, and they were to have his “naked body dragged through the streets and tossed on a public dump.” Of every six men captured in Huguenot worship meetings, one was to be executed and five condemned to serve as galley slaves, and in fact we know of at least 1,132 men who became galley slaves in this manner prior to the death of Louis XIV. Serving out one’s sentence as a galley slave was no guarantee of release, and in fact a number of Huguenots were kept at their seats on the rowing benches, in their chains, for the duration of their lives, in spite of the fact that they had long since completed their sentences.³

It was in the Languedoc-Dauphine area of southern France, so impacted by the Catholic extermination of the Cathar heresy, that Huguenots were most concentrated. Under persecution, there were visions, people claimed they had heard choirs of angels in the sky and so on and so forth, and a belief arose that the Christian millennium was coming in the year 1689.

A number of Huguenots would wind up in Charleston.

2. Scoville, Warren C. THE PERSECUTION OF HUGUENOTS AND FRENCH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, 1680 TO 1720. Berkeley CA: U of California P, 1960, page 61.

3. During this period the Pope himself, in the Papal States, was holding galley slaves to row him to and fro. These slaves might be in one or another of the following categories: “convicted criminals condemned to a life sentence” — “captured non-Christian prisoners of war” — “bonavoglie, so-called ‘volunteers’ who through indigence had sold themselves into slavery, and could be released at the end of their contracted period of service in the galleys on condition of good conduct.”



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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I suppose Abraham D. Lavender to be the poet who wrote the following (since he did not attribute the poem and since the color lavender appears in it):



THE EXILE

Your sunny shores,
Your rugged peaks,
Your vineyards, fields, and forests,
Your flowery gardens in bloom,
With red, yellow, lavender, pink, and blue,

Your meandering rivers,
Your flowing streams,
Your roads that lead everywhere,
Your humble hamlets,
Your teeming towns,
Your courtly cities ablaze,

Your toiling farmers,
Your masterful merchants,
Your artful artisans and would-be scholars,
Your poor, pious, pampered, and princely,
Men and women of all nuances and shades,

Your lives so colorful,
Vivaciously vibrant,
But oppressive,
Struggling to be free,
To break the shackles of an ancient age,

Blood of my fathers,
Tears of my mothers,
Roots of my branches,
All intertwined in your soil so deep,
My mother earth,
My father land,

How my heart weeps for you,
From whom I was so cruelly exiled,
In leaking boats,
Over frightful borders,
Hurried journeys in the darkened nights,
Leaving behind so much of me,
Embittered, impoverished, but free,

Angered by the fearful tyrant,
The betraying countrymen,
The yoke of intolerance,

Saddened by the theft of freedom,
The rupture of dreams,
The hopeful hope of a speedy return,

A new beginning,
In a strange new land,
Different, engulfing, demanding,
But flexible, sensitive, and free,
This land that welcomed me,

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



Exhausted, lonely, afraid,
Sadder, but wiser,
Stronger and prouder,

Reaffirmed in honor,
From a life torn asunder,
This exile that became me,

Days turned into years,
And years into decades,
And generations multiply and divide,

A new language,
A new name,
A new home,
New loves to love,
In this no longer strange new land,

But, your sunny shores,
Your rugged peaks,
Your vineyards, fields, and forests,
Your flowery gardens in bloom,
With red, yellow, lavender, pink, and blue,

My colorfully vibrant memories,
That my mind cannot repress,
My meandering gazes ablaze,
That go with me everywhere,

My mother earth,
My father land,
How my soul dreams of you,
I am a part of you,
And you are a part of me,

The dreams,
The hope,
The faith,
That neither tyranny,
Nor time,
Can ever erase.

1812




2d half of January: During the courtship of [John Thoreau](#) and [Cynthia Dunbar](#), John had been living on the [Concord](#) square and learning merchandising from Deacon [John White](#), 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

**DUNBAR
FAMILY**

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

 October 22, Thursday: A 1st child, [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), was born to [John Thoreau](#) and [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), who had married one another on the eleventh of May in that year.



John in later years



Cynthia in later years

DUNBAR FAMILY

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	Sept. 27, 1819	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



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1813

→ October 22, Friday: [Maria Louisa Sampson](#) was born in [Plymouth](#), Massachusetts.

The Meerfeld Endowment, by Imperial decree, was awarded to Franz Schubert.

[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 1st birthday.

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

*6th day 22 of 10 M 1813 / Last Night I watched with David
Huntington & feel but Poorly today
We have this Afternoon finished pulling down the old house &
building the fence round the Lot. -*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1814

→ October 22, Saturday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 2d birthday.

1815

→ October 22: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 3d birthday.

1816

→ October 22, Tuesday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 4th birthday.

1817

→ October 22, Wednesday: A Grand Bacchanale for orchestra by Gaspare Spontini was performed for the initial time, in a performance of Les danaïdes by Antonio Salieri.

[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 5th birthday.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1818

 October 22, Thursday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 6th birthday.

On his 7th birthday, Franz Liszt accompanied his father Adam Liszt on a business trip to visit a merchant named Ruben Hirschler in Lackenbach. Adam asked Hirschler's daughter to play something for Franz on her new piano. Franz was so overcome by the music that he began to cry and flew into his father's arms. Hirschler was so taken by the scene that he gave the piano to the boy.

Commander David Buchan brought the *Dorothea* and the *Trent* back to port in England, having been prevented by ice off Spitsbergen from getting very far at all toward their intended eventual destination of the Bering Strait. The only success of this expedition was the setting of a new northern latitude record, of 82° 34' N.


THE FROZEN NORTH

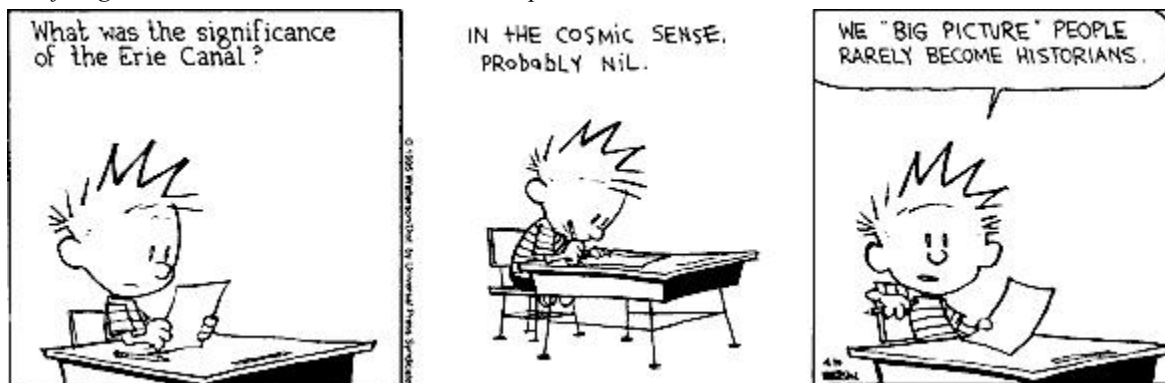
Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

1st day [sic] 22d of 10th M / Our Meetings was rather small, was silent and to me a season of but little life, tho' no small activity of mind. — In the last which was preparative Osborn Mowry published his intentions of marriage with Eliza Ann Southwick, daughter of Amasa Southwick Set part of the evening with Abigail Robinson & Mary Morton Where I went to wait on Sister Ruth home D & M Williams was also there.
—

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1819

 October 22, Friday: The [Erie Canal](#) opened between Rome and Utica, New York, when the [canal](#) boat *The Chief Engineer* arrived at Rome after a 4-hour trip.



[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 7th birthday.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1820

➡ October 22, Sunday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 8th birthday.

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

1st day 22nd of 10 M / Our Mornng Meeting was well attended & a solemn covering was witnessed soon after it was settled. Hannah Dennis was largely & solemnly engaged in testimony. Father Rodman & Jonathon were also concerned in short communications & it proved a season of uncommon favor. – In the Afternoon we were silent but a season of solemnity & favor for which I desire to be thankful – Oh that Zions banks may be enlarged & her Stakes Strengthened.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1821

➡ October 22, Monday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)'s 9th birthday.

1822

➡ [Hugh Blair](#)'s AN ABRIDGEMENT OF LECTURES ON RHETORIC ... TO WHICH ARE ADDED, QUESTIONS, ADAPTED TO THE ABOVE WORK, FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES, BY AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER OF YOUTH (Exeter: Printed and published by John J. Williams).⁴




HUGH BLAIR ABRIDGED

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1824

 December: DUNALLAN: OR, *KNOW WHAT YOU JUDGE*. (The 1828 Exeter edition of this would be found in the personal library of [Henry David Thoreau](#), bearing the autograph of [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#).)

DUNALLAN :

OR,

Know what you Judge.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DECISION,"
"FATHER CLEMENT," &c. &c.

VOL. I.



EXETER :

PRINTED FOR THE PUBLISHERS.

1828.

KNOW WHAT YOU JUDGE

KNOW WHAT YOU JUDGE

GRACE KENNEDY

4. A copy of this volume, bearing the autograph of [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), has been found in [Henry Thoreau](#)'s personal library.

THE MAINE WOODS: At four o'clock the next morning, in the dark, and still in the rain, we pursued our journey. Close to the academy in this town they have erected a sort of gallows for the pupils to practice on. I thought that they might as well hang at once all who need to go through such exercises in so new a country, where there is nothing to hinder their living an out-door life. Better omit Blair, and take the air.

HUGH BLAIR



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1837



This was the year in which [Waldo Emerson](#) 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 \(æf. 20\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1838 \(æf. 20-21\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1839 \(æf. 21-22\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1840 \(æf. 22-23\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1841 \(æf. 23-24\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal for 1842 \(æf. 24-25\)](#)

Read  [Henry Thoreau's Journal Volume for 1845-1846 \(æf. 27-29\)](#)

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. [Lidian Emerson](#), one of the women⁵ 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.

5. 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.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

October 27, day: According to the New-York Evening Post, there had been something of a slave insurrection in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. Although available details are scanty, two companies of US infantry were involved and we know of three free blacks and nine slaves who were hanged.

In Concord, Henry Thoreau wrote in his journal some materials that would wind up in A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS:



Every part of nature teaches that the passing away of one life is the making room for another. The oak dies down to the ground, leaving within its rind a rich virgin mould, which will impart a vigorous life to an infant forest. The pine leaves a sandy and sterile soil, the harder woods a strong and fruitful mould. So this constant abrasion and decay makes the soil of my future growth. As I live now so shall I reap. If I grow pines and birches, my virgin mould will not sustain the oak; but pines and birches, or, perchance, weeds and brambles, will constitute my second growth.

A WEEK: The shadows chased one another swiftly over wood and meadow, and their alternation harmonized with our mood. We could distinguish the clouds which cast each one, though never so high in the heavens. When a shadow flits across the landscape of the soul, where is the substance? Probably, if we were wise enough, we should see to what virtue we are indebted for any happier moment we enjoy. No doubt we have earned it at some time; for the gifts of Heaven are never quite gratuitous. The constant abrasion and decay of our lives makes the soil of our future growth. The wood which we now mature, when it becomes virgin mould, determines the character of our second growth, whether that be oaks or pines. Every man casts a shadow; not his body only, but his imperfectly mingled spirit. This is his grief. Let him turn which way he will, it falls opposite to the sun; short at noon, long at eve. Did you never see it? – But, referred to the sun, it is widest at its base, which is no greater than his own opacity. The divine light is diffused almost entirely around us, and by means of the refraction of light, or else by a certain self-luminousness, or, as some will have it, transparency, if we preserve ourselves untarnished, we are able to enlighten our shaded side. At any rate, our darkest grief has that bronze color of the moon eclipsed. There is no ill which may not be dissipated, like the dark, if you let in a stronger light upon it. Shadows, referred to the source of light, are pyramids whose bases are never greater than those of the substances which cast them, but light is a spherical congeries of pyramids, whose very apexes are the sun itself, and hence the system shines with uninterrupted light. But if the light we use is but a paltry and narrow taper, most objects will cast a shadow wider than themselves.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

He also wrote to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) staying at their relatives the Dunbars in Taunton.



Concord Oct 27 18[3]7

Dear H.

Please you, let the defendant say a few words in defence of his long silence. You know we have hardly done our own deeds, thought our own thoughts, or lived our own lives, hitherto. For a man to act himself, he must be perfectly free; otherwise, he is in danger of losing all sense of responsibility or of self-respect. Now when such a state of things exists, that the sacred opinions one advances in argument are



Page 2

[] apologised for by his friends, before his face, lest his hearers receive a wrong impression of the man,—when such gross injustice is of frequent occurrence, where shall we look, & not look in vain, for men, deeds, thoughts? As well apologize for the grape that it is sour, —or the thunder that it is noisy, or the lightning that it tarries not. Farther, letterwriting too often degenerates into a communing of facts, & not of truths; of other men's deeds, & not our thoughts. What are the convulsions of a planet compared with the emotions

Page 3

*of the soul? or the rising of a thousand suns, if that is not enlightened by a ray?
Yours affectionate brother,
Henry*



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1838

March 17, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) from [Concord](#).

Since Doctor [Edward Jarvis](#) of [Concord](#), who had settled in Louisville as a family doctor but had developed as a specialist in nervous and mental disease, and had become a statistical author, had recently suggested to the Thoreau brothers that one or the other or both of them should come and try their fortunes in the native territory of Kentucky, this letter not only acknowledged arrival of John's box of Indian artifacts but also suggested that they go to this new West together:⁶

To: John Thoreau, Jr.
From: HDT
Date: 17 March 1838

Concord, March 17th 1838

Dear John,
Your box of relics came safe to hand, but was speedily deposited on the carpet I assure you. What could it be? Some declared it must be Taunton herrings— Just nose it sir. So down we went onto our knees and commenced smelling in good earnest, now horizontally from this corner to that, now perpendicularly from the carpet up, now diagonally, and finally with a sweeping movement describing the entire circumference. But it availed not. Taunton herring would not be smelled. So we e'en proceeded to open it vi et chisel. What an array of nails! Four nails make a quarter four quarters a yard'— i faith this is'nt cloth measure. Blow away old boy, clap in another wedge, then!—there! softly she begins to gape— Just give that old stickler with a black hat on a hoist — Aye! W'ell pare his nails for him. Well done old fellow there's a breathing hole for you— "Drive it in," cries one, "rip it off," cries another. Be easy I say. What's done, may be undone— Your richest veins don't lie nearest the surface. Suppose we sit down and enjoy the prospect, for who knows but we may be disappointed? When they opened Pandora's box, all the contents escaped except hope, but in this case hope is uppermost and will be the first to escape when the box is opened. However the general voice was for kicking the coverlid off.
The relics have been arranged numerically on a table. When shall we set up house-keeping? Miss Ward thanks you for her share of the spoils, also accept many thanks from your humble servant "for yourself".

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

I have a proposal to make. Suppose by the time you are released, we should start in company for the West and there either establish a school jointly, or procure ourselves separate situations. Suppose moreover you should get reddey to start previous to leaving Taunton, to save time. Go I must at all events. Dr Jarvis enumerated nearly a dozen schools which I could have—all such as would suit you equally well. I wish you would write soon about this. It is high season to start. The Canals are now open, and travelling comparatively cheap. I think I can borrow the cash in this town. There's nothing like trying

Brigham wrote you a few words on the eighth. which father took the liberty to read, with the advice and consent of the family. He wishes you to send him those of the library of health received since-38, if you are in Concord, otherwise, he says, you need not trouble yourself about it at present. {MS torn} is in {MS torn} and enjoying better health than usual. But one number, and that you have, has been received.

The bluebirds made their appearance the 14th day of March—robins and pigeons have also been seen. Mr. E—has put up the blue-bird box in due form.

All send their love. From
Y'r Aff. brother
H. D. Thoreau

We may learn more of this in a letter from boarder Miss Prudence Ward to her sister, Mrs. Edmund Quincy Sewall of Scituate:



...Mrs. John Thoreau's children are soon to leave her; Helen and Sophia to keep school in Roxbury, and John and Henry to go West. They purpose instructing there, but have no fixed plan. They will go as far as Louisville in Kentucky, unless employment can be found nearer....

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

JOHN THOREAU, JR.

6. Dr. [Edward Jarvis](#) himself would not of course remain in the wild and woolly native American West of Louisville, for he would return to Massachusetts at some point and spend the remainder of his productive years caring for the mentally ill in the asylum at Dorchester. And, of course, eventually, in retirement, he would write the ADDENDA to the Shattuck volume, and his REMINISCENCES, which so flesh out for us this period of Concord history.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

May 2, Wednesday: Miss Prudence Ward wrote more to her sister in Scituate, Mrs. Edmund Quincy Sewall, Sr.:



...Mr. Thoreau has begun to prepare his garden, and I have been digging the flower-beds. Henry has left us this morning, to try and obtain a school at the eastward (in Maine). John has taken one in West Roxbury. Helen is in another part of Roxbury, establishing herself in a boarding and day-school. Sophia will probably be wanted there as an assistant; so the family are disposed of. I shall miss the juvenile members very much; for they are the most important part of the establishment....

JOHN THOREAU, SR.

JOHN THOREAU, JR.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

SOPHIA E. THOREAU



“Went to Maine for a school.” Searching for a teaching position with a letter of recommendation from [Waldo Emerson](#) in his pocket, [Henry Thoreau](#) was taking a steamer out of Boston past Gloucester’s Eastern Point and Cape Ann to Portland, to travel through Brunswick, Bath, Gardiner, Hallowell, Augusta, China, Bangor, Oldtown, Belfast, Castine, Thomaston, Bath, and Portland and back to Boston. Passing Nahant, he was



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

underimpressed at the sight of the Frederic Tudor “Rockwood” estate and its ugly fences:

THE MAINE WOODS: But Maine, perhaps, will soon be where Massachusetts is. A good part of her territory is already as bare and commonplace as much of our neighborhood, and her villages generally are not so well shaded as ours. We seem to think that the earth must go through the ordeal of sheep-pasturage before it is habitable by man. Consider Nahant, the resort of all the fashion of Boston, – which peninsula I saw but indistinctly in the twilight, when I steamed by it, and thought that it was unchanged since the discovery. John Smith described it in 1614 as “the Mattahunts, two pleasant isles of groves, gardens, and cornfields”; and others tell us that it was once well wooded, and even furnished timber to build the wharves of Boston. Now it is difficult to make a tree grow there, and the visitor comes away with a vision of Mr. Tudor’s ugly fences, a rod high, designed to protect a few pear-shrubs. And what are we coming to in our Middlesex towns? – a bald, staring town-house, or meeting-house, and a bare liberty-pole, as leafless as it is fruitless, for all I can see. We shall be obliged to import the timber for the last, hereafter, or splice such sticks as we have; – and our ideas of liberty are equally mean with these. The very willow-rows lopped every three years for fuel or powder, – and every sizable pine and oak, or other forest tree, cut down within the memory of man! As if individual speculators were to be allowed to export the clouds out of the sky, or the stars out of the firmament, one by one. We shall be reduced to gnaw the very crust of the earth for nutriment.

While he was in Oldtown he would meet an old Indian on the dock who would point up the Penobscot and inform Thoreau that:

Two or three miles up that river one beautiful country.

TIMELINE OF THE MAINE WOODS

July 8, Sunday: Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin was born.

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

1st day 8th of 7 M / Our friend Richard Mott attended Our Meeting in [Newport](#) this Morning in which he was favoured to get hold of our State & administer comfort to some who were heavy hearted - at the close of the Meeting he requested the Afternoon Meeting should be deferred till 5 O'clock & a general invitation given to the people of the Town – which was done. a very large meeting gathered, it was rather long in getting together but it consisted of the most respectable inhabitants of the Town who were very attentive to a truly gospel testimony, in which our friend was much favoured – a number of the Ministers of the Town were present as well as some of the Most religious & well informed of their persuasions – West the Minister of the New



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

episcopal Church gave out the Meeting at the close of his afternoon Meeting, & deferred his evening Meeting on the occasion - This is a view of liberality never before done by that persuasion - it was once asked but refused - Richard took tea & lodged at Mary Williams but our friend Abraham Sherman Jr who came with him from [New Bedford](#) returned home with us, again lodged & took tea

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) about the prospect of teaching private school there in [Concord](#).

Concord July 8th 38—
Dear John,
[We] heard from
Helen today and she informs us
that you are coming home by
the first of August, now I wish
you to write, and let me know ex-
actly when your vacation take[]place,
that I may take one at the same
time. I am in school from 8
to 12 in the morning, and [form]
2 to 4 in the afternoo[n]; after
that I read a little Greek or
English, or for variety, take a
stroll in the fields. We hav not
had such a year for berries this
long time—the earth is actually
[b]lue with them. High blubberries,
three kinds of low—thimble and

Page 2
rasp-berries constitute my [diet]
at present. (Take notice—I only
diet between meals.) Among my deeds
of charity I may reckon the picking
of a cherry tree for two helpless single
ladies who live under the hill[-]—but
i'faith it was robbing Pet[er] to pay
Paul—for while I was exalted in
charity towards them, I had no mercy
on my own [stomach]. Be advised,
my love for currants continues.

The only addition that I have made
of late to my stock of ornithological
information—is in the shape, not of
a Fring. [M]elod. but surely a mel-
odious Fringilla--the F. [J]uncorum,

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

*or rush sparrow. I had long know
him by his note but never by name.
Report says that Elijah Stearn[s]
is going to take the town school.*

Page 3

*I have four [scholars], and one more
engaged. Mr. [Fenner] left town [yest-]
terday. Among occurrences of ill omen,
may be mentioned the ~~era~~ falling out
and cracking of the inscription stone
of Concord monument. Mrs Lowell
and children are at Aunt's.
Peabody walked up last Wednesday—
spen[t] the night, and took a stroll in
the woods. Sophia says I mu[]
leave off and pen a few lines for
her to Helen. S Good bye.
Love from all and among
them yr
aff brother
H D T*

Postmark: CONCORD

Jul

10

Address: John Thoreau

West Roxbury

Mass.

Postage: 6

October 6, Saturday: In the course of a letter to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) in [Taunton](#), we learn as much as we need to know about the sort of philosophical materials [Harvard College](#) was inflicting upon its young scholars in this period, and we learn also as much as we need to know, of the extent to which scholar Henry had been able to distance himself from such “academic” philosophastering. This letter reminds us of the context in which [Henry Thoreau](#) could write “There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers”:

Concord Oct. 6th—38.

Dear Helen,

*I dropped Sophia's letter into the box immediately on taking yours
out, else the tone of the former had been changed.*

*I have no acquaintance with “Cleavelands First Lessons,” though I
have peeped into his abridged Grammar, which I should think very
well calculated for beginners, at least, for such as would be likely to
wear out one book, before they would be prepared for the abstruser*



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

parts of Grammar. Ahem! As no one can tell what was the Roman pronunciation, each nation makes the Latin conform, for the most part, to the rules of its own language; so that with us, of the vowels, only a has a peculiar sound.

In the end of a word of more than one syllable, it is sounded like ah—as pennah, Lydiah Hannah, &c. without regard to case.— but da is never sounded dah because it is a monosyllable.

All terminations in es and plural cases in os, as you know, are pronounced long — as homines (homin; amese) dominos (domin; amose) or in English Johnny Voss. For information see Adam's Latin Grammar — before the Rudiments— This is all law and gospel in the eyes of the world — but remember I am speaking as it were, in the third person, and should sing quite a different tune, if it were I that made the quire. However one must occasionally hang his harp on the willows, and play on the Jew's harp, in such a strange country as this. One of your young ladies wishes to study Mental Philosophy—hey?— well tell her that she has the very best text book that I know of already in her possession. If she do not believe it, then she should have bespoken a better in another world, and not have expected to find one at "Little and Wilkins'." But if she wishes to know how poor an apology for a Mental Philosophy men have tacked together, synthetically or analytically, in these latter days — how they have squeezed the infinite mind into a compass that would not nonpluss a surveyor of Eastern Lands — making Imagination and Memory to lie still in their respective apartments, like ink-stand and wafers in a l{MS torn} escritoire—why let her read Locke—or Stewart, or Brown.

The fact is, Mental Philosophy is very like poverty—which, you know, begins at home; and, indeed, when it goes abroad, it is poverty itself. Chorus. I should think an abridgment of one of the above authors, or of Abercrombie, would answer her purpose. It may set her a-thinking.

Probably there are many systems in the market of which I am ignorant. As for themes—say first "Miscellaneous Thoughts"—set one up to a window to note what passes in the street, and make her comments thereon; or let her gaze in the fire, or into a corner where there is a spider's web, and philosophize —moralize —theorize, or what not.

What their hands find to putter about, or their Minds to think about,— that let them write about.— To say nothing of Advantages or disadvantages — of this, that, or the other. Let them set down their ideas at any given Season — preserving the chain of thought as complete as may be.

This is the style pedagogical. I am much obliged to you for your peice of information. Knowing your dislike to a sentimental letter I remain

Yr affectionate brother.

H D T

JOHN LOCKE
DUG. STEWART
THOS. BROWN
ABERCROMBIE

1840

January 21, day: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote at length to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), teaching in nearby Roxbury, and to his sister [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), who was assisting her, quoting the opening lines, slightly modified, of [Horace](#)'s ODES I 9. He deployed the phrase *laetioire plectro* (which would be a slight alteration of ODES II.1.40's *leviore plectro*, and then deployed three verses of ODES I 4, and then lifted the phrase *desipere in loco* from ARS POETICA.⁷

Concordiae, Dec. Kal. Feb. AD. MDCCCXL.
Care Soror,
Est magnus acervus nivis ad limina,
et frigus intolerabile intus. Coelum ipsum ruit, credo,
et terram operit. Sero stratum linquo et mature
repeto; in fenestris multa pruina prospectum absumit,
et hic miser scribo, non currente calamo, nam digiti
mentesque torpescunt. Canerem cum Horatio, si vox
non faucibus haeserit—
“Vides, ut alta stet nive candidum
Nawshawtuct, nec jam sustineant onus
Silvae laborantes, geluque
Flumina constiterint acuto?
Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco
Large reponens; etc.”
Sed olim, Musa mutata, et laetioire plectro,
— “neque jam stabulis gaudet pecus, aut arator igni,
Nec prata canis albicant pruinis,
Jam Cytherea choros ducit Venus, imminente luna;”

Quum turdus ferrugineus ver reduxerit,
tu, spero, linques curas scholasticas, et negotio re-
ligato, desipere in loco audebis, aut mecum inter

Page 2
inter sylvas, aut super scopulos Pulchri-Portus, aut in
cymba super lacum Waldensem, mulcens fluctus manu,
aut speciem miratus sub undas.
Bulwerius est mihi nomen incognitum, unus ex

7. Here's an interesting factoid which I have picked up out of Sarah Gertrude Pomeroy's derivative treatise LITTLE-KNOWN SISTERS OF WELL-KNOWN MEN (Boston MA: D. Estes & Co., 1912): During the stay of the Thoreau sisters Helen and Sophia in Roxbury, they joined the Episcopal Church. I don't know from what source Pomeroy derived this information or what its actual import might be, but judging from the bibliography of this book, she must have derived it from some early biographical effort the primary effort of which was in regard to Henry. The interpretation she placed on this factoid is an utterly unnecessary and tendentious one, that although the Thoreau sisters were able to tolerate their educated brother's sort of religiosity they very much disapproved of it.



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

*ignobil[e] vulgo, nec refutandus nec laudandus.
Certe alicui nonnullam honorem habeo qui insanabile
cacoethe scribendi teneatur.
Species flagrantis Lexingtonis non somnia deturbat?
At non Vulcanum Neptunumque culpemus cum
superstitioso grege. Natura curat animalculis aequae
ac hominibus; cum serena, tum procellosa amica est.
Si amas historiam et fortia facta heroum
non deponere Rollin, precor, ne Clio offendas
nunc, nec illa det veniam olim.
Quos libros Latinos legis? legis, inquam, non studis.
Beatus qui potest suos libellos tractare et saepe
perlegere sine metu domini urgentis! ab otio
injurioso procul est; suos amicos et vocare et
dimittere quandocunque velit potest. Bonus liber
opus est nobilissimum hominis! Hinc ratio non
modo cur legeres sed cur tu quoque scriberes.
Nec lectores carent; ego sum. Si non
librum meditaris, libellum certe. Nihil posteris*

Page 3

*proderit te spirasse et vitam nunc leniter nunc
aspere egisse, sed cogitasse praecipue et scripsisse.
Vereor ne tibi pertaesum hujus epistolae sit;
necnon alma lux caret,
“Majoresque ca[d]unt altis de montibus umbrae.”
Quamobrem vale, imo valete, et
requiescatis placide, Sorores.
H.D. Thoreaus.
[M]emento Scribere!*

*Care Sophia,
Samuel Niger crebris aegrotat ionibus, quae agilitatem et aequum
animum abstulere,
obnoxius est; iis temporibus ad cellam descendit et [m]*

Page 4

*Adolescentula E. White apud pagum paulisper moratur.
Memento scribere intra duas hebdomedas.
Te valere desiderium est
Tui Matris C. Thoreaus.
Amanuense, H.D.T.
Postmark: CONCORD
JAN
[1]
[s]
Address: Ad Helenam L. Thoreau*



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Roxbury
Mass.
Postage: 6

June 13, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) from Concord.

Page 1

*Concord June 13.th 1840,
Dear Helen,
That letter to John,
for
which you had an opportunity doubt-
less to substitute a more perfect com-
munication, fell, as was natural, into
the hands of his "transcendental brother",
who is his proxy in such cases, having
been commissioned to acknowledge and
receipt all bills that may be presente {MS torn}
But what's in a name? Perhaps
it does not matter whether it be John
or Henry. Nor will those same six
months have to be altered, I fear, to
suit his case as well: — but methink
they have not passed entirely without
intercourse, provided we have been sin-
cere though humble worshippers of the
same Virtue in the meantime.
Certainly it is better that we should
make ourselves quite sure of such a
communion as this, by the only course
which is completely free from suspicion —*

Page 2

*The coincidence of two earnest and aspiring
lives — than run the risk of a
disappointment by
relying wholly or
chiefly on so meagre and uncertain
a means as speech — whether written or
spoken affords. How
often when we have
been nearest each other bodily, have we
really been farthest off. Our tongues were the [withy]
foils with which we fenced
each other off. Not that we have*

not met heartily and with profit as members of one family — but it was a small one surely — and not that other human family. We have met frankly and without concealment ever, as befits those who have an instinctive trust in one another — and the [scenery] of whose outward lives has been the same, but never as prompted by an earnest and affectionate desire to probe deeper our mutual natures. Such intercourse, at least, if it has ever been, has not condescended to the vulgarities of oral communication, for the ears are provided with no lid, as the eye is, and would not have been deaf to it in sleep.

Page 3

And now glad am I if I am not mistaken in imagining that some such transcendental inquis[i]tiveness has travelled post thither — for as I observed before, where the bolt hits, thither was it aimed — any arbitrary direction notwithstanding. Thus much at least our kindred temperament of mind and body — and long family-arity — have done for us, that we already find ourselves standing on a solid and natural footing with respect to one another, and shall not have to waste time in the so often unavailing endeavor to arrive fairly at this simple ground. Let us leave trifles then to accident, and politics, and finance, and such gossip, to the moments when diet and exercise are cared for, and speak to each other deliberately as out of one infinity into another — you the[re] in time and space, and I here. For be-



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

*side this relation all books and doc-
trines are no
better than gossip, or
the turning of a spit.
Equally to you and Sophia[]from
Yr aff. brother H. D. Thoreau*

Page 4
Postmark: Concord MS
June 13
Postage: 6
Address: Miss. Helen L. Thoreau
Roxbury
Mass.

1841

October 12, Tuesday: The combined British detachment that had ventured out from the relative safety of the metropolis, Cabul, [Afghanistan](#), by this morning had become large enough to transit the pass of Khoord-Cabul, and this was effected with some loss due to long range sniper fire down from the rocks at the sides of the defile. The force then set up a defensive camp perimeter on the far side of the defile at Khoord-Cabul and the 13th light infantry again subjected itself to losses due to its exposure to this unrelenting rifle fire, by returning through the pass to its defensive camp perimeter at Bootkhak. For some nights the camps would repel attacks, “that on the 35th native infantry being peculiarly disastrous, from the treachery of the Affghan horse, who admitted the enemy within their lines, by which our troops were exposed to a fire from the least suspected quarter. Many of our gallant sepoy, and Lieutenant Jenkins, thus met their death.”⁸

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



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

- Bronson Alcott ?

8. 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 [AFGHANISTAN](#). 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?]



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1842

April 8, Friday: [Frederick Douglass](#) spoke in Milford MA.



Some 41 persons, half of them children, registered as members of the new [Association of Industry and Education](#) at its first official meeting at Boughton's Meadows near [Northampton](#). The Reverend William Adam became Secretary instead of Treasurer as the institution shaped up according to the following schedule:

Northampton Association of Industry and Education

Name	Origin	Category	New Titles	Status
Reverend William Adam	India	abolitionist	Secretary	Present
George W. Benson	Brooklyn CT	abolitionist	Director of Stock Company	Present
Erasmus Darwin Hudson	Torrington CT	abolitionist	????	Present
Joseph Conant	Mansfield CT	silk manufacturer	President, Committee for Accommodations	Present
Earl Dwight Swift	Mansfield CT	silk manufacturer	Director of Stock Company	Present
Theodore Scarborough	Brooklyn CT	farmer	Director of Stock Company	Present



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Northampton Association of Industry and Education

Name	Origin	Category	New Titles	Status
Hiram Wells	Mansfield CT	mechanic	Board for Admitting New Members, Committee for Accommodations	Present
Samuel L. Hill	Willimantic CT	abolitionist	Treasurer	Absent
Hall Judd	Northampton	abolitionist	Board for Admitting New Members	Absent
David Mack	Cambridge MA	abolitionist	Board for Admitting New Members	Absent
Samuel Brooks	Northampton	farmer	Board for Admitting New Members	Absent

Since it seemed that the new association was to be based upon no particular creedal declaration, no mandatory statement of “faith,” the members of this association would be denigrated and derided by the general public as “Nothingarians.”

COMMUNITARIANISM

Membership

April 1842	41
May 1842	65
End of 1842	83
June 1843	113
Winter 1844	120
Spring 1845	120

[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)’s advertisement appeared in the local gazette:

SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES.

HELLEN L. THOREAU will open a school for Young Ladies on MONDAY, May 2d. Terms—English Branches with Plain and Ornamental Needle-work.....\$4 00
French 2 00
Drawing and Painting in Water Colors.....2 00
Oil Painting.....8 00
Music on the Pianoforte.....8 00

Scholars from a distance can be accommodated with board in the family with the Teacher at \$2,00 per week

Apply at J. THOREAU’S

Concord, April 8th, ’42.

Sw—14.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



1843

May 23, Tuesday: [Joseph Smith, Jr.](#)'s wife of many years Emma Hale Smith, threatened that she would be "destroyed," gave her assent to his plural-marriage dalliances.

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Waldo Emerson](#) from Staten Island:

Castleton, Staten Island, May 23.^d

My Dear Friend, — I was just going to write to you when I received your letter. I was waiting till I had got away from Concord. I should have sent you something for the Dial before, but I have been sick ever since I came here, rather unaccountably, — what with a cold, bronchitis, acclimation, etc., still unaccountably. I send you some verses from my journal which will help make a packet. I have not time to correct them, if this goes by Rockwood Hoar. If I can finish an account of a winter's walk in Concord, in the midst of a Staten Island summer, not so wise as true, I trust, — I will send it to you soon.

I have had no later experiences yet. You must not count much upon what I can do or learn in New York. I feel a good way off here; and it is not to be visited, but seen and dwelt in. I have been there but once, and have been confined to the house since. Everything there disappoints me but the crowd; rather, I was disappointed with the rest before I came. I have no eyes for their churches, and what else they find to brag of. Though I know but little about Boston, yet what attracts me, in a quiet way, seems much meaner and more pretending than there, — libraries, pictures, and faces in the street. You don't know where any respectability inhabits. It is in the crowd in Chatham Street. The crowd is something new, and to be attended to. It is worth a thousand Trinity Churches and Exchanges while it is looking at them, and will run over them and trample them under foot



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

one day. There are two things I hear and am aware I live in the neighborhood of, — the roar of the sea and the hum of the city. I have just come from the beach (to find your letter), and I like it much. Everything there is on a grand and generous scale, — seaweed, water, and sand; and even the dead fishes, horses, and hogs have a rank, luxuriant odor; great shad nets spread to dry; crabs and horseshoes crawling over the sand; clumsy boats, only for service, dancing like sea-fowl over the surf, and ships afar off going about their business.

Waldo and Tappan carried me to their English alehouse the first Saturday, and Waldo spent two hours here the next day. But Tappan I have only seen. I like his looks and the sound of his silence. They are confined every day but Sunday, and then Tappan is obliged to observe the demeanor of a church-goer to prevent open war with his father. I am glad that Channing has got settled, and that, too, before the inroad of the Irish. I have read his poems two or three times over, and partially through and under, with new and increased interest and appreciation. Tell him I saw a man buy a copy at Little & Brown's. He may have been a virtuoso, but we will give him the credit. What with Alcott and Lane and Hawthorne, too, you look strong enough to take New York by storm. Will you tell L., if he asks, that I have been able to do nothing about the books yet?

Believe that I have something better to write you than this. It would be unkind to thank you for particular deeds.

Your friend, Henry D. Thoreau.

[Thoreau](#) also wrote his elder sister [Helen](#):

Castleton Staten Island

May 23^d 43.

Dear Helen,

In place of something fresher I send you the following verses from my journal, written some time ago.

*Brother where dost thou dwell?
What sun shines for thee now?
Dost thou indeed farewell?
[As] we wished here below.*

*[] What season didst thou find?
'Twas winter here.
Are not the fates more kind
[T]han they appear?*

*Is thy brow clear again
As in thy youthful years?
And was that ugly pain*



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

[T]he summit of thy fears?

*Yet thou wast cheery still,
They could not quench thy fire,
Thou didst not abide their will,
And then retire.*

Page 2

*Where chiefly shall I look
To feel thy presence near?
Along the neighboring brook
May I thy voice still hear?*

*Dost thou still haunt the brink
Of yonder river's tide[,?]
And may I ever think
That thou art by my side?*

*What bird wilt thou employ
To bring me word of thee?
For it would give them joy,
'Twould give them liberty,
To serve their former lord
With wing and minstrelsy.*

*A sadder strain has mixed with their song,
They've slower built their nests,
Since thou art gone
Their lively labor rests.*

*Where is the finch — the thrush,
I used to hear?*

Page 3

*Ah! [t]hey could well abide
The dying year.*

*Now they no more return,
I hear them not;
They[]have remained to mourn[:]
Or else forgot{MS torn}*

[Henry D. Thoreau] {not HDT?}

{next page (verso)} written vertically



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Miss. Helen L. Thoreau
Concord

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

July 21, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) in Roxbury MA from Staten Island, mentioning that [tomatoes](#) were being raised by the acre on this island on which [Huguenots](#) had settled,

Dear Helen,
I am not in such haste to write home when I remember that I make my readers pay the postage— But I believe I have not taxed you before.— I have pretty much explored this island — inland and along the shore — finding my health inclined me to the peripatetic philosophy— I have visited Telegraph Stations — Sailor's Snug Harbors — Seaman's Retreats — Old Elm Trees, where the Hugonots landed — Brittons Mills — and all the villages on the island. Last Sunday I walked over to Lake Island Farm — 8 or 9 miles from here — where Moses Prichard lived, and found the present occupant, one Mr Davenport formerly from Mass. — with 3 or four men to help him — raising sweet potatoes and tomatoes by the acre. It seemed a cool and pleasant retreat, but a hungry soil. As I was coming away I took my toll out of the soil in the shape of arrow-heads — which may after all be the surest crop — certainly not affected by drought.



and also describing immigrants he had seen on the streets of New-York, and speaking of the [Quaker](#) meeting shortly before July 7th, in the Hester Street meetinghouse in Brooklyn on *Paumanok* Long Island at which

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

[Lucretia Mott](#) had spoken:

I liked all the proceedings very well -their plainly greater harmony and sincerity than elsewhere. They do nothing in a hurry. Every one that walks up the aisle in his square coat and expansive hat- has a history, and comes from house to a house. The women come in one after another in their Quaker bonnets and handkerchiefs, looking all like sisters and so many chick-a-dees- At length, after a long silence, waiting for the spirit, Mrs Mott rose, took off her bonnet, and began to utter very deliberately what the spirit suggested. Her self-possession was something to say, if all else failed - but it did not. Her subject was the abuse of the BIBLE -and thence she straightway digressed to slavery and the degradation of woman. It was a good speech -[transcendentalism](#) in its mildest form. She sat down at length and after a long and decorous silence in which some seemed to be really digesting her words, the elders shook hands and the meeting dispersed. On the whole I liked their ways, and the plainness of their meeting house. It looked as if it was indeed made for service.

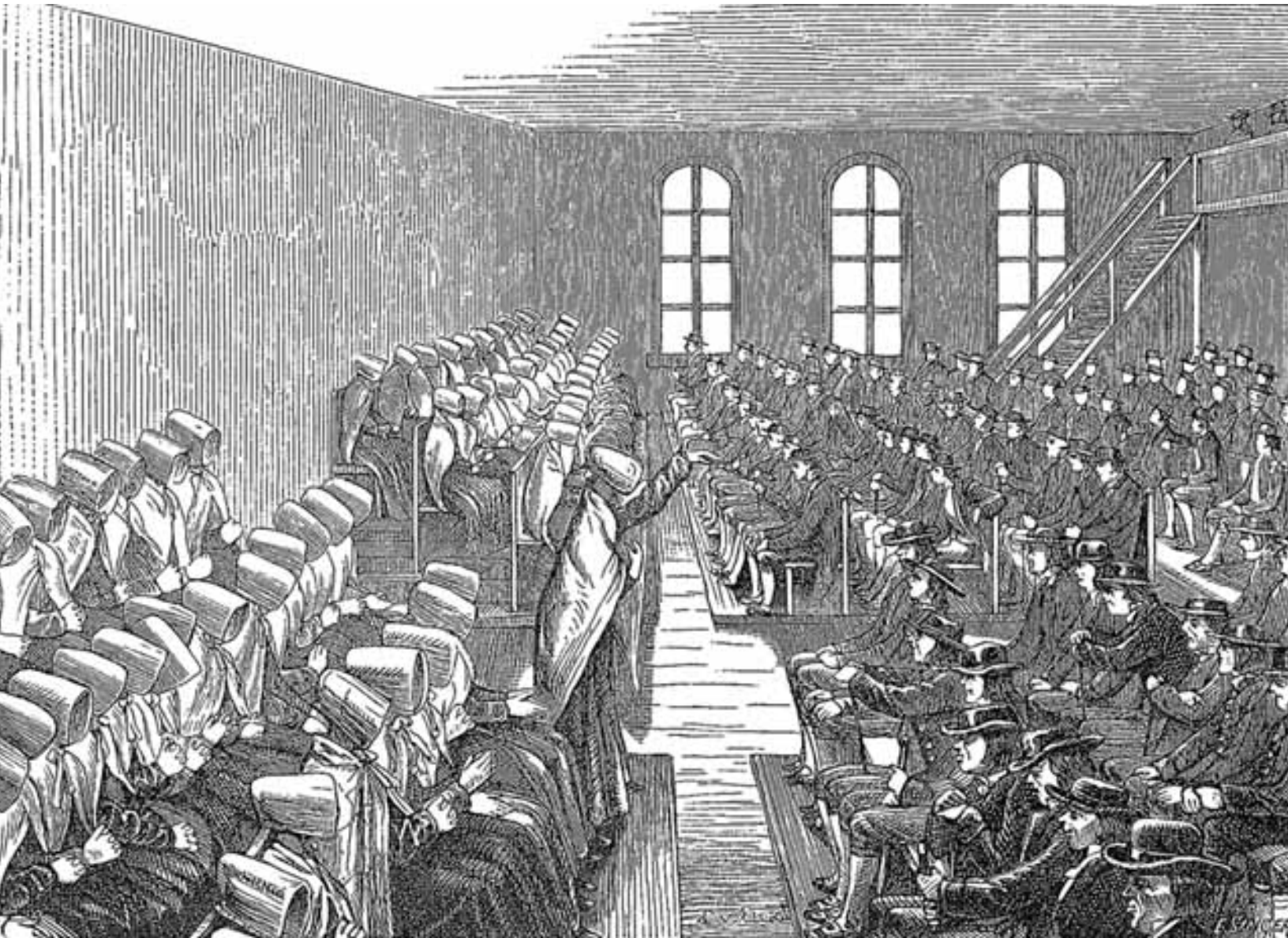


The biographer Henry Seidel Canby has commented, about this worship service, that “Already, and long before [Emerson](#), [[Henry Thoreau](#)] sensed the dangerous quietism of the [Quakers](#), which was to be content with solidity and reform, and let the spirit speak too mildly. Indeed, his final conclusion as to all these idealists is a distrust of reformers.” Canby seems not to have been aware that Quakerism had torn itself apart, and that the very person and presence of this [Hicksite](#) traveling minister, Mott, was a reproach to these evangelical Quakers Canby so rightly here condemns for their dangerous self-righteous and self-satisfied quietism. With an understanding of what was going on within Quakerism at that point, we must place quite a different interpretation on that particular worship. Clearly Thoreau had no inclination to mouth his favorite gibe at those

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU**HELEN LOUISA THOREAU**

who replace faith in deity with membership in community,

*"Why do all your prayers begin
'Now I lay me down to sleep'?"*



What precisely was it that Friend Lucretia said? The Herald incorrectly asserted that she handed her bonnet to

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

another woman before beginning to speak and incorrectly asserted that a handkerchief was laid over the



railing, so there is little in its report that we can accept as reliable. Those who wish to learn how she spoke to the condition of a [Henry Thoreau](#) she somehow knew, must consult representative sermons that we know were accurately transcribed, such as “Abuses and Uses of the BIBLE,” “Likeness to Christ,” and “Keep Yourself from Idols.”⁹ One of the things she might have urged was:

“First that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual.” It is theology, not the Scriptures, that has degraded the natural ... skepticism has become a religious duty -skepticism as to the scheme of salvation, the plans of redemption, that are abounding in the religious world ... this kind of doubt, and unbelief are coming to be a real belief, and ... a better theology will follow -has followed. ... We need non-conformity in our age, and I believe it will come.

Another agenda she might have urged:

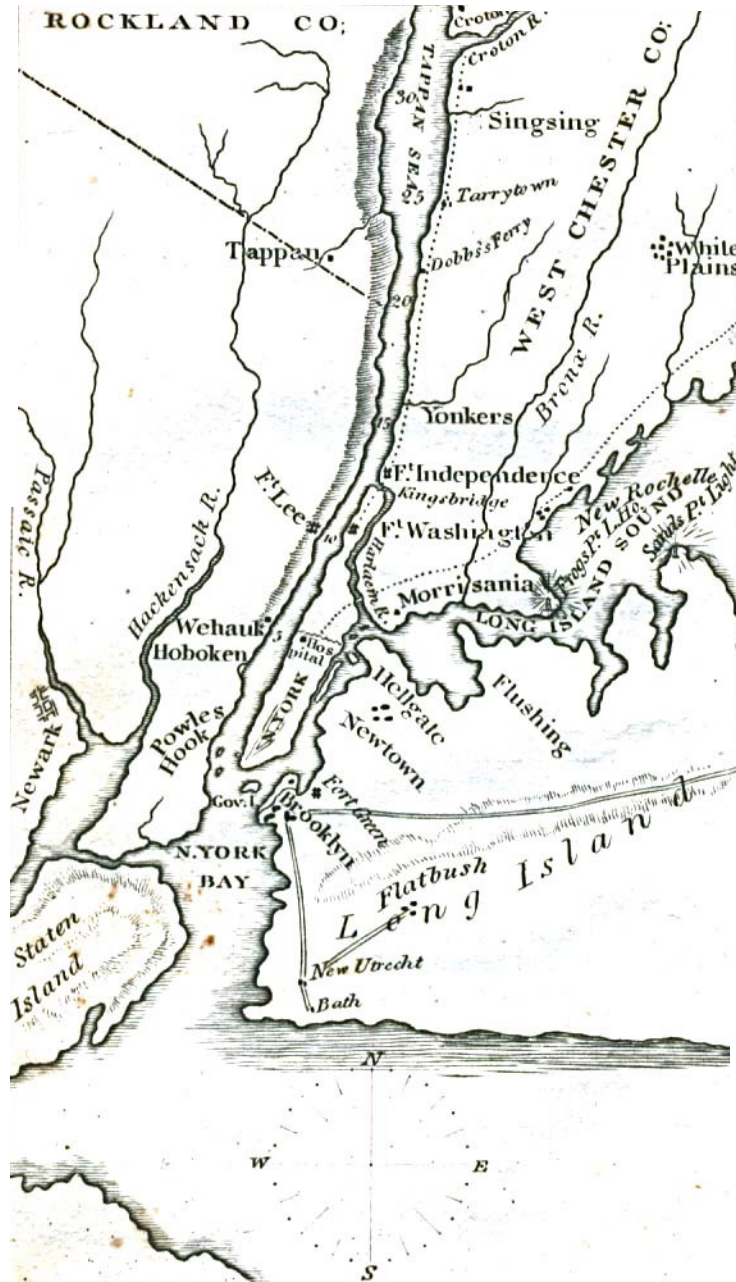
That while we are applying our principles to civil government we will not be unmindful of their application to ourselves in the regulation of our own tempers and in the government of our families, leading to the substitution of the law of peace and love.

Whatever. In that meeting at the [Religious Society of Friends](#) meeting-house on Hester Street in New York City shortly before July 7, 1843, despite the sectarian turmoil of the split between [Hicksite](#) and non-[Hicksite](#) Quakers, clearly Friend [Lucretia Mott](#) succeeded in putting a defensive 26-year-old man more or less at ease.

9. Mott 279-80. The volume does not, however, include a transcript of what she said at the Hester Street meeting in 1843 (which indicates there is more research that needs to be done, than I have as yet been able to do).

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



In this letter he characterized [Horace Greeley](#) as “cheerfully in earnest” and contrasted this with the “sadly in earnest” Reverend [William Henry Channing](#) with his Fourierist fantasies of resolving all human frictions. He mentioned obliquely that Greeley was at that point deeply involved in the creation of the [Eagleswood](#) intentional community — the New Jersey grounds of which, incidentally, he would one day, upon its failure and dissolution, be surveying into individual house lots:

Staten Island July 21st 43

Dear Helen,



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

I am not in such haste to write home when I remember that I make my readers pay the postage— But I believe I have not taxed you before.— I have pretty much explored this island – inland and along the shore – finding my health inclined me to the peripatetic philosophy— I have visited Telegraph Stations – Sailor’s Snug Harbors – Seaman’s Retreats – Old Elm Trees, where the Hugonots landed – Brittons Mills – and all the villages on the island. Last Sunday I walked over to Lake Island Farm –8 or 9 miles from here– where Moses Prichard lived, and found the present occupant, one Mr Davenport formerly from Mass.– with 3 or four men to help him – raising sweet potatoes and tomatoes by the acre. It seemed a cool and pleasant retreat, but a hungry soil. As I was coming away I took my toll out of the soil in the shape of arrow-heads – which may after all be the surest crop – certainly not affected by drought.

*I am well enough situated here to observe one aspect of the modern world at least – I mean the migratory – the western movement. Sixteen hundred immigrants arrived at quarantine ground on the fourth of July, and more or less every day since I have been here. I see them occasionally washing their persons and clothes, or men women and children gathered on an isolated quay near the shore, stretching their limbs and taking the air, the children running races and swinging – on this artificial piece of the land of liberty – while their vessels are undergoing purification. They are detained but a day or two, and then go up to the city, for the most part without having landed here. In the city I have seen since I wrote last – WH Channing – at whose house in 15th St. I spent a few pleasant hours, discussing the all absorbing question – What to do for the race. (He is sadly in earnest – — About going up the river to rusticate for six weeks— And issues a new periodical called *The Present* in September.)— Also Horace Greeley Editor of the *Tribune* – who is cheerfully in earnest. – at his office of all work – a hearty New Hampshire boy as one would wish to meet. And says “now be neighborly” – and believes only or mainly, first, in the Sylvania Association somewhere in Pennsylvania – and secondly and most of all, in a new association to go into operation soon in New Jersey, with which he is connected.— Edward Palmer came down to see me Sunday before last— As for Waldo and Tappan we have strangely dodged one another and have not met for some weeks.*

I believe I have not told you anything about Lucretia Motte. It was a good while ago that I heard her at the Quaker church in Hester St. She is a preacher, and it was advertised that she would be present on that day. I liked all the proceedings very well – their plainly greater harmony and sincerity than elsewhere. They do nothing in a hurry. Every one that walks up the aisle in his square coat and expansive hat – has a history, and comes from a house to a house. The women come in one after another in their Quaker bonnets and handkerchiefs looking all like sisters and so many chic-a-dees— At



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

length, after a long silence, waiting for the spirit, M{MS torn} Motte rose, took off her bonnet, and began to utter very deliberately what the spirit suggested. Her self-possession was something to say if all else failed – but it did not. Her subject was the abuse of the Bible – and thence she straightway digressed to Slavery and the degradation of woman. It was a good speech – transcendentalism in its mildest form. She sat down at length and after a long and decorous silence in which some seemed to be really digesting her words, the elders shook hands and the meeting dispersed. On the whole I liked their ways and the plainness of their meeting-house— It looked as if it was indeed made for service. I think that Stearns Wheeler has left a gap in the community not easy to be filled. Though he did not exhibit the highest qualities of the scholar, he possessed in a remarkable degree many of the essential and rarer ones – and his patient industry and energy – his reverent love of letters – and his proverbial accuracy – will cause him to be associated in my memory even with many venerable names of former days— It was not wholly unfit that so pure a lover of books should have ended his pilgrimage at the great book-mart of the world. I think of him as healthy and brave, and am confident that if he had lived he would have proved useful in more ways than I can describe— He would have been authority on all matters of fact – and a sort of connecting link between men and scholars of different walks and tastes. The literary enterprises he was planning for himself and friends remind me of an older and more studious time— So much then remains for us to do who survive.

Tell mother that there is no Ann Jones in the Directory. Love to all—

Tell all my friends in Concord that I do not send m{sealing wax}e to them but retain it still. yr affectionate Brother H.D.T.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

September 4, Monday: [Frederick Douglass](#) lectured at the Liberty Hall of Oakland, Ohio, before the annual meeting of the Ohio American Anti-Slavery Society.

General Winfield Scott visited [Boston](#).

[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to Maria Weston Chapman mentioning that she had not commented about [David Lee Child](#)'s editorial in the [National Anti-Slavery Standard](#), "Where We Are," that had been reprinted in [The Liberator](#) on September 1st:

Concord Sept. 4th 1843.

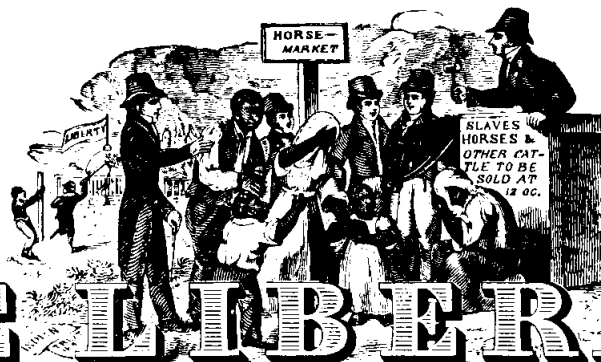
Dear Mrs. Chapman,

The proceeds of our little Sale amounted to but sixty five dollars, twenty four of which, received for your articles, I enclose. Our society sends twenty dollars to the Western mission, which I will thank you to hand to Francis Jackson.

We were very much disappointed in not receiving a visit from your sister at the time of the fair, but hope that that pleasure is still in reserve.

You do not, in the Liberator give us your opinion of D.L. Child's editorial "Where we are." will it pass unnoticed think you? Accept my thanks as an individual for the feast you are weekly serving us.

*Yrs. truly,
Helen L. Thoreau.*



THE LIBERATOR.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

October 18, Wednesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to his sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) from Staten Island, expressing his distrust of the sort of Fourierist economism of efficiency-worship and critical-size-worship which was for the moment the “sadly in earnest” Reverend [William Henry Channing](#)’s entire stock in trade. It is clear that our



historians have underappreciated this disaffection with American Fourierism (with the single exception of Linck C. Johnson, who would point out that this letter “contained the germ” of Thoreau’s sermon, not to be delivered until five months later, in Boston’s Amory Hall where Albert Brisbane had just presented one of his evangelical Fourierist lecture serieses, about the conservative and the reformer):

My objection to Channing and all that fraternity is that they need and deserve sympathy themselves rather than are able to render it to others. They want faith and mistake their private ail for an infected atmosphere, but let any one of the recover hope for a moment, and right his particular grievance, and he will no longer train in that company. To speak or do any thing that shall concern mankind, one must speak and act as if well, or from that grain of health which he has left.

Staten Island Oct 18th 43

Dear Helen,

What do you mean by saying that “we have written eight times by private opportunity”? Is ’nt it the more the better? And am I not glad of it? But people have a habit of not letting me know it when they go to Concord from New York. I endeavored to get you “The Present[,]” when I was last in the City, but they were all sold; — and now another is out, which I will send[,] if I get it. I did not send the Dem.[ocratic] Rev.[iew] becuase I had no copy, and my piece was not worth fifty cents. — You think that Channing’s words would apply to me too, as living more in the natural than the moral world, but I think that you mean the world of men and women rather[,] the Editors and reformers generally. My objection to ~~Channing~~ and all that fraternity is that they need and deserve sympathy themselves, rather than are able to render it to others. They want faith, and mistake their private ail for an infected atmosphere[;] but let any one of them recover hope for a moment, and right his particular grievance, and he will no longer train



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

in that company. To speak or do any
{written perpendicular to text in left margin:
Tell Father and Mother I hope to see them before long —
yr affectionate brother
H. D. Thoreau.}

thing that shall concern mankind, one
must speak and act as if well, or
from that grain of health which he has
left — This “Present” book indeed is blue,
but the hue of its thoughts is yellow.
— I say these things with the less hesita-
tion because I have the jaundice myself,
but I also know what it is to be well.
But do not think that one can escape
from mankind, who is one of them, and [is so]
constantly dealing with them.
I could not undertake to form a nucleus
of an institution for the development
of infant minds, where none already
existed— It would be too cruel,— And
then as if looking all this while one
way with benevolence, to walk off another
suddenly about ones own affairs!— Something
^ of this kind is an unavoidable objection
to that.
I am very sorry to hear such bad news about
Aunt Maria, but I think that the
worst is always the least to be apprehended —
for nature is averse to it as well as we.
I trust to hear that she is quite well soon
I send love to her and to Aunt Jane.
Mrs Emerson is not decidedly better
yet, though she is not extremely sick.
For three months I have not known whether
to think of Sophia as in Bangor or Con-
cord, and now you say that she is going
directly. Tell her to write to me, and establish

[her whereabouts, and also to get well
directly— And see that she has some-
thing worthy to do when she gets down
there, for that’s the best remedy for
disease.]
{four-fifths page missing}



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU


HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

*judge that the prospect was as good
as anywhere in the west — and yet
I think it very uncertain, though
perhaps not for anything that I know
i{MS torn} p{MS torn}ti{MS torn}lar — unless that she got
{four-fifths page missing}*

1844

June 12, Wednesday-13, Thursday: [Frederick Douglass](#), Charles Calistus Burleigh, and Charles Lenox Remond attended a meeting of the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society at the Universalist Church building of Concord. According to Professor Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) served as Secretary Pro Tem at this meeting and thus can be inferred to have met Douglass. The Reverend Barzillai Frost argued in opposition to the abolitionists, and Mrs. Mary Merrick Brooks would later write to her friends in the Boston Female Antislavery Society of the embarrassment this had caused the Concord abolitionists, particularly to the women who were active in both the Middlesex County and the Concord Female Antislavery organizations. Douglass spoke and offered three resolutions. [Henry Thoreau](#) was definitely not present for this meeting since he was not yet back in town from his long hike into the Adirondacks. In Frederic May Holland's first biography of Douglass¹⁰ there is an interesting if convoluted paragraph on page 100 about this meeting of the local anti-slavery society in the local Universalist church building, which later would become the Catholic church building. If I unpack this paragraph correctly, what Holland alleges is that on this date Douglass, Burleigh, and Remond were attempting but failing to obtain a resolution from the white Concordians:

1.) condemning the Christian church as an ally of slaveholders
and

10.  Frederic May Holland. FREDERICK DOUGLASS: THE COLORED ORATOR. Concord edition 1891.
(A revised edition prepared by the author in 1895 was eventually published, NY: Haskell House, 1969.)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

- 2.) repudiating the federal Union under the US Constitution as a legitimization of slavery, under the motto "No Union with Slaveholders."

This would have been in furtherance of the vote taken in the AASS's New England convention in Boston on May 31st, 250 signatures against 24 signatures, that the antislavery society should agitate for a dissolution of the Federal Union. However, as it turned out, the antislavery people of Concord simply wouldn't go along with this, they would not vote for disunion.



Here is how a more recent source¹¹ has analyzed this Concord meeting (the material appears on pages 236-9, and has been lightly edited to make it slightly less convoluted, and for conformity with the punctuation and spelling conventions of this Kouroo database):

Frederick Douglass returned from Maine in time to attend the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Concord, Massachusetts on June 12th and 13th (Blassingame, ed. DOUGLASS PAPERS, SERIES ONE, 1:xciii misdates this meeting as taking place on June 12th only). The meeting convened in the Universalist Church, and Douglass actively participated throughout the proceedings. On the first day, during the afternoon session, Douglass offered a resolution which supported in principle the recent action taken at the New England Anti-Slavery Society meeting to agitate for the peaceful dissolution of the Union. The resolution closely resembled the main ideas he had expressed during his speech at the New England society's annual meeting two weeks earlier. "This Convention do most fully concur in opinion with the New-England Convention," Douglass's resolution read, that "liberty and slavery are antagonisms—that freemen

11. Gregory P. Lampe. *FREDERICK DOUGLASS: FREEDOM'S VOICE, 1818-1845*. East Lansing MI: Michigan State UP, 1998



can have no union with slaveholders –that the Constitution of the United States is a slaveholding instrument; and that no abolitionist can take office or swear to support it without gross and palpable violation of the abolition principle." After William A. White proposed a substitute motion holding that the Constitution was not a proslavery document and calling for a repudiation of the position taken by the American and New England Anti-Slavery Societies, Douglass spoke in support of his original resolution "until time for adjournment." Douglass's resolution and White's amendment were the subjects of debate during the evening session, with White speaking in support of his amendment and Douglass and Charles Lenox Remond defending the original motion (Liberator of June 21st).

The following morning, Thursday, June 13th, a motion was made to lay the disunion resolutions on the table. A resolution was then introduced condemning the ministers and churches "who do not bear testimony against slavery at all times." These churches and those who support them, the resolution continued, should be "branded as infidels and deniers of the supremacy of God." To this resolution, [Frederick Douglass](#) added two of his own, which he, William A. White, and others discussed. Douglass's 1st resolution praised the recent decision of the Methodist Episcopal Church not to elect any person to the office of bishop who was a slaveholder. "We rejoice to learn," the resolution stated, "that the Methodist Episcopal Church, by its General Conference now in session in the city of New-York, have decided that it is incompatible with the office of Bishop, for its occupant to be a manstealer." Douglass's 2nd resolution, however, called into question the motive behind the church's decision. "While we hail this movement of the Methodist Episcopal Church as an indication of the progress of our cause," the second resolution announced, "we cannot, in the light of facts, accord to the Conference ... any higher motive than that of expediency." Then, listing the sins of the union between the Methodist Churches of the North and those of the South, Douglass declared "that while northern churches remain in fellowship with the southern, by meeting with slaveholders, in the General Conference, and by allowing their Bishops to ordain as ministers of the gospel, manstealers and their guilty abettors, we must continue to brand that body as a slaveholding church." Discussion of these resolutions dominated the rest of the afternoon, with Douglass speaking at length in their defense. At the end of the session, however, the resolutions were "laid on the table," where they remained for the rest of the convention. In the evening, Douglass's disunion resolution was discussed, with [Frederick Douglass](#), Charles Lenox Remond, and William A. White emerging as the principal speakers. Unfortunately, there is no published account of what they said, and Douglass's resolution was tabled when the convention came to a close (Liberator of June 21st).

During the Concord meeting, Douglass not only spoke numerous times, but also offered resolutions for discussion. Before this time, he had usually commented on the resolutions of others, and it was rare for him to present even one resolution at a meeting. His introduction of three resolutions at Concord reflects his growing self-confidence and his command of the issues facing the

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

abolitionist movement. Offering resolutions allowed him to guide the proceedings, to influence the course of the discussion, and to have abolitionists address concerns of special interest to him. He would continue to introduce resolutions at subsequent abolitionist meetings.

September 12, Thursday: [John Thoreau](#) borrowed \$500.⁰⁰ from Augustus Tuttle to purchase materials for the construction of the “[Texas](#)” House, a mortgage on the home being offered as security. John Thoreau, [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) and [Henry Thoreau](#) were present as the mortgage was signed, sealed, and delivered. Tuttle would be repaid in September 1855.¹²



Henry himself dug and stoned the cellar of this new family home. The Thoreaus would live in this “Texas House, to August 29th, 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



[Henry](#)’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 \$2,000.⁰⁰, 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.

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



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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 \$25.⁰⁰ (or \$100??) for the lot, \$475.⁰⁰ for construction materials, and \$600.⁰⁰ 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 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 [Jardine Hall](#) 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



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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*.¹³ 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 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

13.["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.]



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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 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.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1845

August 6, Wednesday: [Waldo Emerson](#) delivered “Discourse” at the commencement exercises of Connecticut Wesleyan University in Middletown. The president of the university was so alarmed by some of the things that were said that he begged Emerson not to repeat them and thus alienate the institution’s financial backers. Emerson promised. From Middletown Emerson went on to Staten Island, to visit his brother.



The Thoreaus had removed from Whitwell’s house on Pinckney Street in Boston to “Brick House, Concord, to spring of 1826,” and from that point forward had remained in the town of [Concord](#).



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Playing the flute at his cabin on Walden Pond at some point in time subsequent to August 6th, 1845, [Henry Thoreau](#) recollected that the Thoreau family, [John Thoreau](#), Sr. and [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) with their little David Henry, as well as the two older two siblings [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) and [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) and the younger [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), with their grandmother the widow Mary Jones Dunbar Minot, had spent a pic nic day on Walden Pond. When at this point in time he wrote this into his [WALDEN](#) manuscript, as below, he was recollecting it as his having been at the age of four, but later he would correct this to his having already turned five:



[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.

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. ...

[WALDEN](#): In warm evenings I frequently sat in the boat playing the flute, and saw the perch, which I seemed to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the ribbed bottom, which was strewn with the wrecks of the forest. Formerly I had come to this pond adventurously, from time to time, in dark summer nights, with a companion, and making a fire close to the water's edge, which we thought attracted the fishes, we caught pouts with a bunch of worms strung on a thread; and when we had done, far in the night, threw the burning brands high into the air like skyrocketes, which, coming down into the pond, were quenched with a loud hissing, and we were suddenly groping in total darkness. Through this, whistling a tune, we took our way to the haunts of men again. But now I had made my home by the shore.

At this point in Thoreau's life, was the cloth pouch with drawstrings in which he carried his flute already made from a piece of one of Friend [Lucretia Mott](#)'s old gray-lady Quaker dresses? For we know from a letter he had written to his sister that by this point Thoreau had already encountered Friend Lucretia, at a [Quaker](#) silent worship:

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

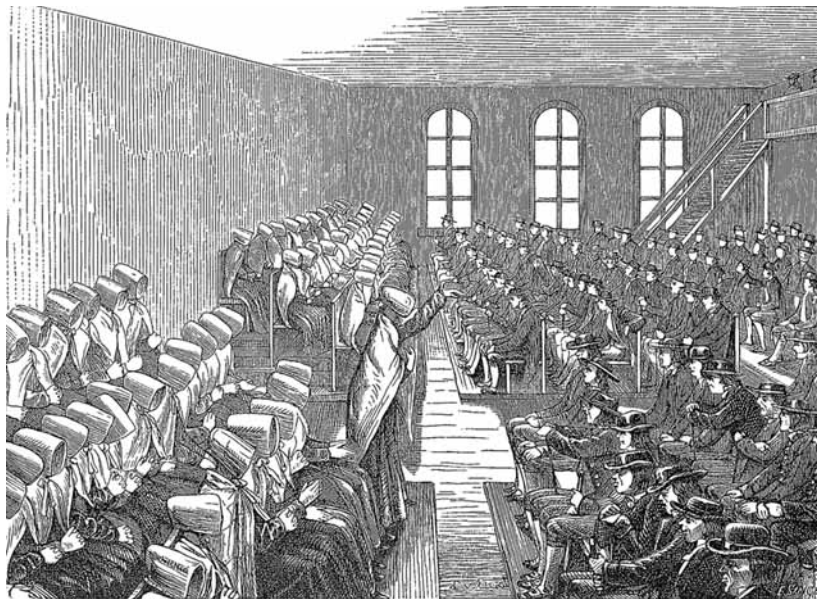


HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



I liked all the proceedings very well –their plainly greater harmony and sincerity than elsewhere. They do nothing in a hurry. Every one that walks up the aisle in his square coat and expansive hat– has a history, and comes from house to a house. The women come in one after another in their Quaker bonnets and handkerchiefs, looking all like sisters and so many chick-a-dees– At length, after a long silence, waiting for the spirit, Mrs Mott rose, took off her bonnet, and began to utter very deliberately what the spirit suggested. Her self-possession was something to say, if all else failed –but it did not. Her subject was the abuse of the BIBLE –and thence she straightway digressed to slavery and the degradation of woman. It was a good speech –transcendentalism in its mildest form. She sat down at length and after a long and decorous silence in which some seemed to be really digesting her words, the elders shook hands and the meeting dispersed. On the whole I liked their ways, and the plainness of their meeting house. It looked as if it was indeed made for service.



Aug 6, 1845: I have just been reading a book called “The Crescent & the Cross” till now

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



I am somewhat ashamed of myself. Am I sick, or idle –that I can sacrifice my energy –America –and to-day – to this mans ill remembered and indolent story– Carnac and Luxor are but names, and still more desert sand and at length a wave of the great ocean itself are needed to wash away the filth that attaches to their grandeur. Carnac –Carnac –this is carnac for me and I behold the columns of a larger and a purer temple.

May our childish and fickle aspirations be divine, while we descend to this mean intercourse. Our reading should be heroic –in an unknown tongue –a dialect always but imperfectly learned –through which we stammer line by line, catching but a glimmering of the sense –and still afterward admiring its unexhausted hieroglyphics –its untranslated columns.

Here grow around me nameless trees and shrubs each morning freshly sculptured –rising new stories day by day –instead of hideous ruins– their myriad-handed worker –uncompelled as un compelling

This is my carnac –that its unmeasured dome –the measuring art man has invented flourishes and dies upon this temples floor nor ever dreams to reach that ceilings height. Carnac & Luxor crumble underneath – their shadowy roofs let in the light once more reflected from the ceiling of the sky

Behold these flowers –let us be up with Time not dreaming of 3000 years ago. Erect ourselves and let those columns lie –not stoop to raise a foil against the sky– Where is the *spirit* of that time but in this present day –this present line 3000 years ago are not gone –they are still lingering here aye every one,

And [Memnon](#)'s mother sprightly greets us now
Wears still her youthful blushes on her brow
And Carnac's columns why stand they on the plain?
T' enjoy our Opportunities they would fain remain

This is my Carnac whose unmeasured dome
Shelters the measuring art & measurer's home
Whose propylaeum is the system nigh
And sculptured facade the visible sky



Where there is memory which compelleth time the muse's mother and the muses nine –there are all ages– past and future time unwearied memory that does not forget the actions of the past –that does not forego –to stamp

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU


HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

them freshly— That old mortality industrious to retouch the monuments of time, in the world's cemetery through out every clime

The student may read [Homer](#) or AEschylus in the original Greek —for to do so implies to emulate their heroes —the consecration of morning hours to their page—

The heroic books though printed in the character of our mother tongue —are always written in a foreign language dead to idle & degenerate times, and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than the text renders us at last out of our own valor and generosity.

A man must find his own occasions in himself. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove our indolence. If there is no elevation in our spirits —the pond will not seem elevated like a mountain tarn, but a low pool a silent muddy water—a place for fishermen.

I sit here at my window like a priest of Isis —and observe the phenomena of 3000 years ago, yet unimpaired. The tantivy of wild pigeons [**American Passenger Pigeon**,  *Ectopistes migratorius*], an ancient race of birds — gives a voice to the air —flying by twos and threes athwart my view or perching restless on the white pine boughs occasionally—a fish-hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish And for the last half hour I have heard the rattle of rail-road cars conveying travellers from Boston to the country.

After the evening train has gone by and left the world to silence and to me The Whippoorwill chants her vespers for half an hour— And when all is still at night the owls take up the strain like mourning women their ancient ululu. Their most dismal scream is truly Ben-Jonsonian —wise midnight hags It is no honest and blunt Tu whit Tu who of the poets but without jesting a most solemn graveyard ditty —but the mutual consolation of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love —in the infernal groves.

And yet I love to hear their wailing their doleful responses trilled along the wood side reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds as if it were the dark and tearful side of music —the regrets and sighs that would fain be sung The spirits —the low spirits —and melancholy forebodings —of fallen spirits —who once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness now expiating with their wailing hymns —threnodia their sins in the very scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the vastness and mystery of that nature which is the common dwelling of us both.

Oh-o-o-o-o —that I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn —sighs one on this side of the pond and circles in the restlessness of despair to some new perch in the grey oaks. “That I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn” echoes one on the farther side with a tremulous sincerity —and “born or-or-or-orn” comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods.

And then the frogs—bull Frogs— They are the more sturdy spirits of ancient wine bibbers and wassailers still unrepentant—trying to sing a catch in their stygian lakes. They would fain keep up the hilarious good fellowship and all the rules of their old round tables —but they have waxed hoarse and solemnly grave and serious their voices mocking at mirth —and their wine has lost its flavor and is only liquor to distend their paunches —and never comes sweet intoxication to drown the memory of the past but mere saturation and waterlogged dulness and distension— Still the most Aldermanic with his chin upon a pad, which answers for a napkin to his drooling chaps under the eastern shore quafs a deep draught of the once scorned water— And passes round the cup — with the ejaculation —tr-r-r-r-r-oonk —tr-r-r-r-r-oonk —tr-r-r-r-r-oonk. And straightway comes over the water from some distant cove the self-same pass word where the next in seniority and girth has gulped down to his mark— And when the strain has made the circuit of the shores —then ejaculates the master of ceremonies with satisfaction Tr-r-r-r-oonk —and each in turn repeats the sound —down to the least distended, leakiest —flabbiest paunched —that their be no mistake—

And the bowl goes round again until the sun dispels the mornings mist and only the Patriarch is not under —the pond —but vainly bellowing —Troonk from time to time —pausing for a reply.



After August 6: All nature is classic and akin to art— The sumack and pine and hickory which surround my house remind me of the most graceful sculpture. Some times the trees do not make merely a vague impression — but their tops or a single limb or leaf seems to have grown to a distinct expression and invites my life to a like distinctness and emphasis.

Poetry Painting Sculpture claim at once and associate with themselves those perfect pieces of art —leaves —vines acorns— The critic must at last stand as mute though contented before a true poem — as before an acorn or a vine leaf. The perfect work of art is received again into the bosom of nature whence its material proceeded — and that criticism which can only detect its unnaturalness has no longer any office to fulfill.

The choicest maxims that have come down to us are more beautiful or integrally wise —that they are wise to our understandings— This wisdom which we are inclined to pluck from their stalk is the fruit only of a single association. Every natural form —palm leaves and acorns —oak-leaves and sumack and dodder —are untranslatable aphorisms

I love to gaze at the opposite or south side of the pond which has a foreign shore —low hills skirted with oaks and pines which seem but the front rank of a forest beyond which stretches a level country, the earth I read of,

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

as far as Tartary and the empire of the Grand Khan —where tribes of men dwell in tents. The struggle of the hero Ajax are thus forcibly described in the 16th book of the Iliad. He endeavors to ward off fire from the ships while Patroclus is interceding with Achilles for his armor and his Myrmidons.

“Thus *they* spoke such things to oneanother.

But Ajax no longer stood fast; for he was forced by javelins;
Both the will of Zeus overcame him & the illustrious Trojans,
Hurling (their darts); and his bright helmet being struck
Had a terrible clanging about his temples; and he was struck incessantly
Upon his well-made armor. he was disabled in his left shoulder
Always holding firm his variegated shield; —nor were they able
(Around him to make an impression), striving with their weapons.
But all the while he was breathing hard, and the sweat
And much sweat ran down from him on every side from his limbs, nor ever had he
To breathe; and on every side misfortune succeeded surely to misfortune.
or better

Thus they were speaking such words to oneanother.
i.e. (Patroclus & Achilles)

But Ajax no longer stood his ground; for he was compelled by weapons;
The will of Zeus subdued him, and the illustrious Trojans,
Hurling (their javelins); and his bright helmet being struck
Had a terrible clang about his temples, & he was struck incessantly
Upon his well-made armor; he was wounded in his left shoulder
Always holding firm his variegated shield; nor were they able
Around to stagger him, striving with their weapons.
But constantly he breathed with difficulty; and much sweat
Ran down on every side from his limbs, nor ever had he
(A chance) to breathe; And on every side misfortune was riveted to misfortune

Twenty three years since when I was 5 years old, I was brought from Boston to this pond, away in the country which was then but another name for the extended world for me —one of the most ancient scenes stamped on the tablets of my memory —the oriental asiatic valley of my world —whence so many races and inventions have gone forth in recent times. That woodland vision for a long time made the drapery of my dreams. That sweet solitude my spirit seemed so early to require that I might have room to entertain my thronging guests, and that speaking silence that my ears might distinguish the significant sounds. Some how or other it at once gave the preference to this recess among the pines where almost sunshine & shadow were the only inhabitants that varied the scene, over that tumultuous and varied city —as if it had found its proper nursery. 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.

Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture.—

Even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my imagination — and one result of my presence and influence is seen in the bean leaves and corn blades and potatoes vines.

Seek to preserve the tenderness of your nature as you would the bloom upon a peach.

Most men are so taken up with the cares and rude practice of life — that its finer fruits can not be plucked by them. Literally the laboring man has not leisure for a strict and lofty integrity day by day — he cannot afford to sustain the fairest and noblest relations. His labor will depreciate in the market.

How can he remember well his ignorance who has so often to use his knowledge

1846

July: At the convention of the New England Anti-Slavery Society in Boston, the Reverends [William Henry Channing](#) and [Theodore Parker](#) joined in a pledge to oppose the new war against [Mexico](#) “at all hazards, and at every sacrifice, to refuse enlistment, contribution, aid and countenance.” [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) were also at this convention, and signed this pledge.¹⁴

14. Within the month, [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#)’s and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)’s surviving brother [Henry David Thoreau](#) would not only refuse to pay his past-due poll tax but also suggest that he be imprisoned.

WAR ON MEXICO

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1848

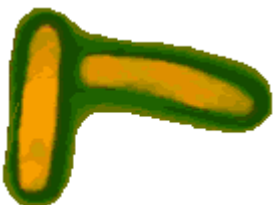
Winter: Lidian Emerson was gravely ill with hepatitis (“jaundice”) most of the winter. [Henry Thoreau](#) described her as “yellow as saffron.”

The [consumption](#) of [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) was worsening. She was, so clearly, wasting away in the manner which in those days was so familiar.¹⁵



15. To give some idea of the terminal fever which was expected in cases of “phthisis,” I will quote from a report which would appear in an 1894 medical journal, as this report was seconded in the [Scientific American](#) magazine of the period:

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





HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1849

January 15, Monday: In downtown [Boston](#)—where everything that happens of course happens for the greater glory of God— Chief Justice [Lemuel Shaw](#) lectured [Washington Goode](#) for an hour and a half on the habits of “intemperance” which he had had, the “ungodly” associates which he had had, the “dens of crime” which he had frequented, etc., informed him that having led such a life there was simply “no hope” that the governor of the state might reduce his sentence. The lecture probably was just what Seaman Goode needed. The judge then consigned him to be [hanged](#) by the neck, on May 25, Friday, 1849 (this seems to have been a traditional day upon which to conduct public hangings), until he was dead.¹⁶ The opponents of the death penalty, to wit, the Standing Committee of the Massachusetts Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, would have a little more than four months to mobilize public opinion to bring pressure to bear on Governor George Nixon Briggs:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16. 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 Dutée, whose sentence to be hanged was being commuted during this period to life in prison — but then, we may presume that Augustus Dutée 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 Dutée, seven other murderers were then serving life in Massachusetts prison after having had their sentences to be hanged commuted by the state governor.



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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

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



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

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.

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

Early June: Some day early in June was the day for the Artillery Election Sermon, which I suppose would have been held on the parade grounds out in what is now Sleepy Hollow.¹⁷

[Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) was continuing gradually to weaken due to [tuberculosis](#). This was a well understood process at the time, it was something that was happening in a lot of families, it was like AIDS in that everybody knew pretty much how such a wasting illness was going to progress and what the inevitable result was going to be. A letter from Aunt Maria Thoreau to a family friend, now held by the Huntington Library, indicates that when [Henry Thoreau](#) learned of the presence in Concord of an itinerant Daguerreotypist (not necessarily on Artillery Election Day) he persuaded him to come to the Thoreau home to photograph his sister, holding a nosegay, her head propped up by her hand.



During the same session [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) was also separately Daguerreotyped, holding a closed mother-of-pearl inlaid Daguerreotype case that may well have contained an image of the deceased brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) — but Sophia was unsatisfied with the image and so the Daguerreotypist was recalled for another sitting.



Within a week Helen would succumb to her [tuberculosis](#).

17. This was not the general election day, the last Wednesday in May, as it didn't have anything to do with voting but had to do rather with patriotic indoctrination. The "Artillery Election" sermon was delivered annually before the assembled state militia, and focused on the military and upon preparedness for combat. An "Election" sermon was also preached annually to the governor and legislature after their election of their new officers (in Massachusetts, election sermons would occur for 256 consecutive years).



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

June 14, Thursday: [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#) died at age 36 of [tuberculosis](#).

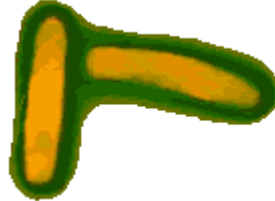
Thoreau Deaths

Name	Death Date	Age	Buried
John	March 1801	47	Concord
Mary	July 24, 1811	25	Concord
Sarah	August 1829	38	Concord
Miss Betsey	November 1839	60s?	Concord
John	January 1842	27	Concord
Helen L.	June 1849	36	Concord

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

[Henry David Thoreau](#) would startle mourners by cranking up a music box while they were carrying out the coffin after the funeral service.¹⁸



**THOREAU
LIFESPANS**



18. The music box was presumably the one [Richard F. Fuller](#) 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.]



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

June 22, Friday: The tiny body of Elizabeth DeForest was retrieved from a rock below the always-deadly American Falls of [Niagara Falls](#).

Stephen C. Massett opened at the San Francisco courthouse as its 1st professional entertainer, utilizing what was allegedly the only piano yet to have arrived in California.

The Liberator carried the following obituary of [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), apparently by William Lloyd Garrison:

ANOTHER FRIEND OF THE SLAVE GONE

Died, in Concord, on Thursday, June 14th, Miss HELEN THOREAU, aged 36 years.

Our friend, Miss Thoreau, was an abolitionist. Endowed by nature with tender sensibilities, quick to feel for the woes of others, the cause of the slave met with a ready response in her heart. She had a mind of fine native powers, enlarged and matured by cultivation. She had the patience to investigate truth, the candor to acknowledge it when sufficient evidence was presented to her mind, and the moral courage to act in conformity with her convictions, however unpopular these convictions might be to the community around her. The cause of the slave did not come before her in its earliest beginnings; but as soon as it was presented, she set herself to inquire how it was, that a system which imbrutes man so cruelly, which tears asunder all the tenderest ties so ruthlessly, which puts out the life of the soul, by denying it the means of growth and progress so effectually, was supported. She saw the religious denominations with which she had been connected vehemently crying out against the Catholics for denying the BIBLE to the people, and yet one-sixth part of the people of the Protestant United States were legally deprived of the right to read God's word, nay, worse than the Catholics, the right of learning to read. She ascertained that the actual number of slaveholders in the land was not more than two hundred and fifty or three hundred thousand. How, she said, can these keep three millions of people in bondage? Why do not the slaves rise, as did our fathers in the revolution, and demand their rights at the point of the bayonet? She ascertained that the bayonets of the North were pledged to unite with those of the Southern tyrants, in case of any attempt at insurrection, and put down the poor crushed bondman, if, in his agony, he would strike down the oppressor. She saw that the nation had written in the Constitution the grievousness it had prescribed to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of the people, that widows might be its prey, and that it might rob the fatherless. This Constitution, every man, either by himself or his deputy, held up his hand to heaven, and swore, So help me God, I will sustain. She saw that in the same Constitution, they agreed, by the same solemn oath, if the poor victim of oppression should flee to any of the so-called free States, braving incredible danger, facing death in its most terrible forms, to obtain deliverance from his oppressors, and appeal to Northern men for protection, being pursued by his enslaver, they must perjure themselves, or allow his being delivered up to his pursuers, and sent back again to the most cruel bondage, without lifting a finger in his defence — thus



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

stifling the noblest feelings of their natures.

In despair, she turned to the church. Surely, she said, the church of Christ is free from these abominations. But she found the church made up of men from all the political parties, alike pledged to the support of the accursed institution. In keeping with this, she saw the church, almost universally, giving to the slaveholder or his abettor, the right hand of Christian fellowship – calling him dear brother in Christ. She saw the pulpits of the North open to Southern divines, while the advocates of the slave knocked in vain for admission at the door of almost every church in the land. She said to herself, Is this the church of Christ, and has it come down so low? She repudiated such a church. Immediately did she turn her back upon its communion, and if she went to the house of prayer, as she occasionally did, she went to see if the spirit of Christ and humanity might not be rising among them. Again and again has she called upon the writer of this notice, when returning from church, and said, with strong emotion, it is all darkness and gloom. It was not eloquent declamation which led her from the church; but it was the array of strong, incontrovertible facts, which impelled her to the course she felt called upon to pursue and she knew that the eloquence of anti-slavery owed its source to these same facts, and endowed with eloquence the most ungifted tongues. To her, as to many others, it was pleasant to go to the church on the Sabbath, and worship with her friends; and nothing but an entire conviction of its wrongfulness, in her case, would have prevented her constant attendance upon the institutions of religion. But the call to her was imperative – “Come out of her, that ye be not partaker of her plagues,” and she obeyed. This obedience brought peace in health, and peace in sickness. Not an hour of gloom did she experience during her protracted illness. Though constitutionally timid, the gloom of death was all taken away, and the king of terrors became to her an angel of hope and joy, opening before her bright visions of beauty; to use her own expression. One day, in conversation, she expressed her gratitude for what anti-slavery had done for her, in opening new and juster views of God, and truth, and duty, and exclaimed – “O how much has anti-slavery done for me, and how little have I done for it! I wanted health, that I might keep school, and in this way do something for the cause I so much love. But it is ordered otherwise.”

She experienced in its fullest extent the fulfilment of the promise – “Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord shall be with him upon his bed of languishing, and make all his bed in his sickness.” Her long continued illness made the suffering virtues, patience and resignation, to shine brightly, and smoothed away the sharp edges of her character, fitting her, we doubt not, for a polished stone in the great temple above.


The abolitionists of Concord will mourn deeply her loss; for, few and feeble as they are, they can ill afford to lose one so intelligent and so true. But they feel, that though no longer present with them in the flesh, she will still be a co-laborer with them in the great and good cause in which they have so long been associated.



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

1976

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

HOMOSEXUALITY



"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

FIRST REVIEW: In this article Moller analyzes [Henry Thoreau'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 [THE DIAL](#), 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 [Waldo Emerson's](#) aunt, [Mary Moody Emerson](#), 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](#)], [Sophia Peabody Hawthorne](#), Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann, 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. [Lidian Emerson](#) 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 Lidian was "ultimately inaccessible" and eventually



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA 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 [homosexual](#) 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]



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU



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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 24, 2013

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA 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.



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA 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.

Julie Roy Jeffrey. *THE GREAT SILENT ARMY OF ABOLITIONISM: ORDINARY WOMEN IN THE ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENT*. Chapel Hill and London: The U of North Carolina P, 1998

**Reviewed for H-SHEAR by Carolyn Williams <cwilliam@unf.edu>,
University of North Florida**

THE GREAT SILENT ARMY OF ABOLITIONISM, by Julie Roy Jeffrey, is an important contribution to nineteenth-century Women and Gender Studies, and the history of abolitionism in the United States. This focus on the women who composed the grassroots rather than the elite and leading figures illuminates ways in which ordinary women's lives were transformed, and the invaluable service they rendered to the rise of antislavery sentiment in the north and west.

Jeffrey combines the insight uncovered by numerous secondary studies on leading women abolitionists and female antislavery organizations over the past three decades, with a creative and skillful analysis of primary materials on ordinary women who have not been examined previously. The result is a very useful study illuminating how for many of the women who participated in abolitionist activities in the early nineteenth century, their perspectives and actions transcended the prescribed female sphere of the antebellum period. Like their foremothers of the era of the American Revolution, without becoming feminists, the women foot soldiers of the abolitionist campaign were politicized and began to move into the public arena beyond domesticity. Jeffrey's study illustrates that while supported by the conventional early nineteenth-century view of women as moral missionaries, charged by God and nature to uplift humanity and society, these women were able to challenge both secular and religious patriarchal authority and still claim to conform to the gender status quo. The impact, of course, was that as they challenged the status quo regarding race they inadvertently eroded the gender status quo.



HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

HELEN LOUISA THOREAU

In the introduction, Jeffrey explains that her discussion of the role and contributions of African American women, impeded somewhat by the relative scarcity of materials, was not as thorough as that of her examination of white women abolitionists. And this is a minor criticism. There could have been a greater discussion of one major obstacle African American women abolitionists encountered -- that is, the racism within the abolitionist community, prejudices of both males and females. Despite these limitations, Jeffrey does manage to convey some of the unique challenges and the special role played by African American women. For example, black abolitionists, like some white abolitionists, were just as motivated by the desire to free the slaves as to eliminate racial discrimination in the nominally free parts of the country. One chief means of accomplishing this was for African Americans to participate on an equal basis with whites in the antislavery campaign.

Jeffrey's study is particularly useful because of the insight it provides into the role white and black women abolitionists, both prominent figures like Lydia Maria Child and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and the army of female abolitionist general troops, played in disseminating antislavery sentiments in the North and West in the 1840s and 1850s. Despite the obvious formal disadvantage of not having the franchise, women continued to play a very special function in partisan politics by their public addresses and appeals to male voters and politicians to support abolitionism. Also many became accustomed to attending political rallies and playing an active role. In addition to a growing number of women abolitionist lecturers, the literature and antislavery fairs sponsored by women, as well as boycotts by women in their homes of items produced by slave labor, encouraged a resistance to slavery among many who were not formal members of abolitionist societies or active in the antislavery movement. Ordinary women had a profound impact on the antislavery attitudes and views of the general public that would bear fruit during the Civil War.

THE GREAT SILENT ARMY is an excellent history of American female abolitionism. Julie Roy Jeffrey presents very important information about the contributions of ordinary women who played a pivotal role in a pivotal era in American history which still resonates in gender and race relations, religion, and politics in contemporary society.

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