

## **HENRY'S RELATIVES**

### **THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD: SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU<sup>1</sup>**



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,  
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**

1. Refer to Pomeroy, Sarah G. LITTLE-KNOWN SISTERS OF WELL-KNOWN MEN. Boston MA: Dana Estes, 1912.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1819

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



John in later years



Cynthia in later years

DUNBAR  
FAMILY

HENRY'S  
RELATIVES

An intriguing factoid is that although this birth unlike David Henry's is on record in [Concord](#)'s town records, it is on record not as of this date but as of September 27th:

### Births

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

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

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

#### WALTER HARDING'S BIOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

(Robert L. Lace, January-March 1986)



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

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1820



March 12, Sunday: Caroline Downes Brooks was born, the daughter of [Concord](#) lawyer Nathan Brooks. Shortly after her birth, her mother Caroline Downes Brooks died. She would become the unloved stepdaughter of his second wife, Mary Merrick Brooks, the president of the Concord Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, would avoid sugar produced by slave labor, and would assist her remote step-mother in the making of the famous "Brooks Cake" that was used to raise funds for antislavery purposes. She would marry Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar and thus become a sister-in-law to [Elizabeth Sherman Hoar](#), fiancée of [Charles Chauncy Emerson](#). A fellow-student with the Thoreau children at the [Concord Academy](#) taught by [Phineas Allen](#), she would be a girlhood companion of [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#). She would function as an officer of the Concord Female Charitable Society.

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.



June 24, Saturday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s 1st birthday.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1821



June 24, Sunday: South American forces under [Simón Bolívar](#) defeated Spanish and Loyalist troops at Carabobo on Lake Maracaibo, insuring the independence of Venezuela.

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s 2d birthday.

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

*1st day 24th of 6 M / Our meetings were both well attended In the forenoon D Buffum & in the Afternoon Father Rodman, were engaged in short testimonies – Took tea at Father Rodmans, & in the eveng called to see Mary Williams. –*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1825



Fall: As her older brother [David Henry Thoreau](#) had been, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) was sent to Miss Phœbe Wheeler's dame school.



At some point during her childhood, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s elder brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) wrote her a letter in which he provided a sketch of a rabbit munching on a sprig. She would preserve this drawing.

## THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



At some point during her childhood, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s elder brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) wrote her a letter in which he provided a sketch of a rabbit munching on a sprig. She would preserve this drawing.

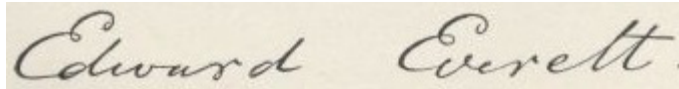


THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1826

 [Heinrich Heine](#)'s *DIE HARZREISE* (THE HARZ JOURNEY).



The 2d American edition of [Edward Everett](#)'s English translation of [Professor Philip Karl Buttmann](#)'s *GRIECHISCHE SCHUL-GRAMMATIK*, titled GREEK GRAMMAR FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS, FROM THE GERMAN OF PHILIP BUTTMANN (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company), prepared by [George Bancroft](#) and [George Henry Bode](#) at the Round Hill School in [Northampton](#).

(At the [Concord Free Public Library](#), under Accession # 10443, is [Henry David Thoreau](#)'s personal copy, presented to the library by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) in 1874. On the front free endpaper is inscribed "D.H. Thoreau / Cambridge / Mass 1833.")<sup>2</sup>

AS STUDIED BY THOREAU

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

2. During this year Professor Buttmann was issuing his *ÜBER DIE ENTSTEHUNG DER STERNBILDER AUF DER GRIECHISCHEN SFÄRE*.





THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1833



Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (1786-1870)'s DISCOURSES AND ADDRESSES ON SUBJECTS OF AMERICAN HISTORY, ARTS, AND LITERATURE (New York: J. & J. Harper). A copy of this would be inscribed in ink on the front free endpaper "[Mr John Thoreau Jr.](#)" and, beneath that in pencil, "[Henry D. Thoreau](#)," would be presented in 1874 by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to the Concord Library, and is now in Special Collections at the [Concord Free Public Library](#).

CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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 women<sup>3</sup> involved in that formation, in the writing of a lecture on “SOCIETY”, would alter his concept of the obligations that obtain among friends. He would come to place primary reliance upon a concept “kindness” that savored of proto-racialism:

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

3. 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.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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:<sup>4</sup>

*To: John Thoreau, Jr.*

*From: HDT*

*Date: 17 March 1838*

*Concord, March 17<sup>th</sup> 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".*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

4. 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.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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](#)

## THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1840

January 21, Tuesday: [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.<sup>5</sup>

*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*  
*ignobil[e] vulgo, nec refutandus nec laudandus.*  
*Certe alicui nonnullam honorem habeo qui insanabile*

5. 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.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*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 depone 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  
asperere 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  
requiescat placide, Sorores.  
H.D. Thoreaus.  
[M]emento Scribere!*

---

*Care Sophia,  
Samuel Niger crebris aegrotationibus, 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  
Roxbury  
Mass.*





**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

Postage: 6

**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND  
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1841

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

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



**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 ?

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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 ?



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1843

May 22, Monday: Tom Thumb was exhibited in [Boston](#).

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

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Mrs. Lidian Emerson](#) from Castleton, Staten Island:

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

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

*1843*

*My Dear Friend,*

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

GEOFFREY CHAUCER



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*elevation, some of your high humilities,  
and I was the better for having to look*

Page 2

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

Page 3

*Scottish ground in his boots, I carry Con-  
cord ground in my boots and in my  
hat — and am I not made of  
Concord dust? I cannot realize  
that it is the roar of the sea I  
hear now, and not the wind in Walden  
woods. I find more of Concord after all  
in the prospect of the sea, beyond Sandy[-]  
Hook than in the fields and woods.  
If you were to have this Hugh the  
gardener for your man you would  
think a new dispensation had commenced.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*He might put a fairer aspect on the  
natural world for you, or at any [rate]  
a screen between you and the [almshouse.]  
There is a beautiful red honeysuckle  
now in blossom in the woods here, which  
should be transplanted to Concord, and  
if what they tell me about the tulip  
tree be true, you should have that  
also. I have not seen Mrs Black  
yet, but I intend to call on her  
soon. Have you established those simpler  
modes of living yet? — “In the full  
tide of successful operation?” —  
Tell Mrs[.] Brown that I hope  
she is anchored in a secure haven, and de-  
rives much pleasure still from reading  
the poets — And that her constellation*

Page 4

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

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

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



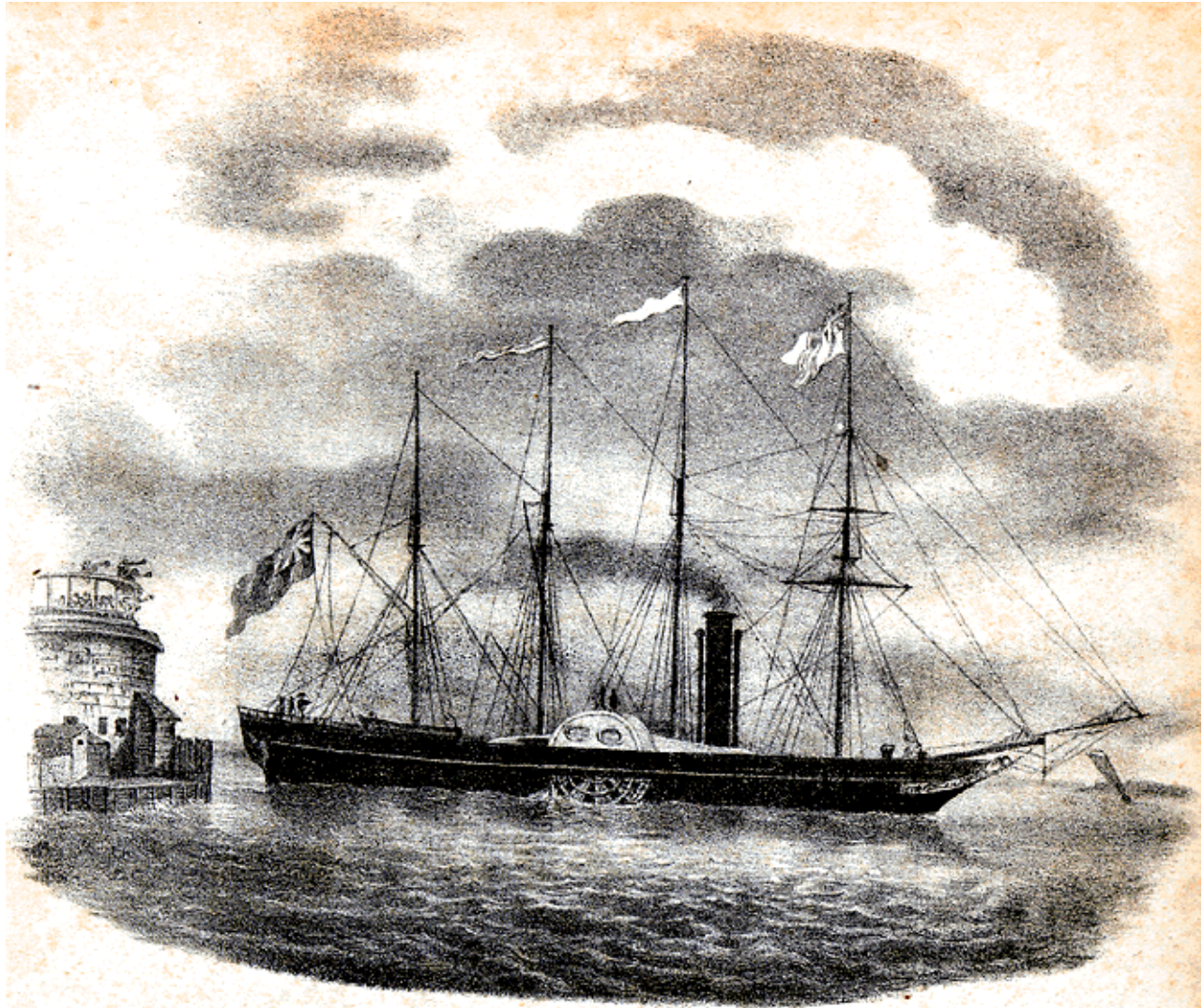
[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

[Thoreau](#) also wrote on this day to his younger sister [Sophia](#), informing her that he had seen the *Great Western*, the latest thing in steam sailboats:



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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

Page 2

*and affords very fine scenery. In front of the house is a very extensive wood, beyond which is the sea, whose roar I can hear all night long, when there is no wind, if easterly winds have prevailed on the Atlantic. There are always some vessels in sight — ten, twenty, or thirty miles off — and Sunday before last there were hundreds in long procession, stretching from New York to Sanday Hook, and far beyond, for Sunday is a lucky day.*

*I went to New York Saturday before last. A walk of half an hour, by half a dozen houses, along the Richmond road, ie. the road that leads to R — on which we live — brings me to the village [Southfield] of Stapleton, ~~still~~ in [Castleton,] where is the lower dock; but if I prefer I can walk along the shore three quarters of a mile further toward New York, to Quarantine, ~~another~~ village of Castleton, to the upper dock, which the boat leaves five or six times every day, a quarter of an hour later than the former place. Further on is the village of New-*





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*Brighton — and further still Port Richmond, which villages another steam-boat visits.*

Page 3

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

Page 4

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*the whole country — with branches in the principal cities, giving information with regard to the credit and affairs of every man of business in the country. Of course it is not popular at the south and west. It is an extensive business and will employ a great many clerks. Love to all — not forgetting aunt and aunts — and Miss and Mrs Ward.*

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

### THOREAU RESIDENCES

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

*A Sister,*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*By turns my purity has inspired and my impurity has cast me down.  
My most intimate acquaintance with woman has been a sisters relation, or at most*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*a catholic's virgin mother relation — not that it has always been free from the suspicion of lower sympathy. There is a love of woman [page torn] with marriage; — of woman on the [page torn] She has exerted the influence of a goddess on me; cultivating my gentler humane nature; cultivating & preserving purity, innocence, truth, [end of page]*

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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.<sup>7</sup>

7. 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.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1847

Fall: The 30-year-old [Henry Thoreau](#) worked on “KTAADN,” on relationship to government, and, abstractly, on relationship to others. He firmly rejected, however, the advances of 45-year-old [Sophia Foord](#), who had been living in the barn at the [Waldo Emersons](#) while tutoring the Emerson and Alcott children until she had become ill in October 1846 and had left Concord in March 1847.<sup>8</sup>

*"By the way have you heard what a strange story there was about Miss Ford, and Henry, Mrs. Brooks said at the convention, a lady came to her and inquired, if it was true, that Miss F. had committed, or was going to commit suicide on account of H\_\_\_\_\_ Thoreau, what a ridiculous story this is. When it was told to H\_\_\_\_\_ he made no remark at all, and we cannot find out from him any thing about it, for a while, they corresponded, and Sophia said that she recollected one day on the reception of a letter she heard H\_\_\_\_\_ say, he shouldn't answer it, or he must put a stop to this, some such thing she couldn't exactly tell what."*

— per an undated, unprovenanced letter by Maria Thoreau

AUNT MARIA THOREAU

SOPHIA FOORD

MARY MERRICK BROOKS

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

October 24, Sunday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#).

*Concord Oct 24<sup>th</sup>—47*

*Dear Sophia*

*I thank you for those letters about Ktadn and hope you will save and send me the rest and anything else you may meet with relating to the Maine woods. That Dr Young is both young and green too at traveling in the woods. However I hope he got “yarbs” enough to satisfy him.— I went to Boston the 5<sup>th</sup> of this month to see Mr Emerson off to Europe. He sailed in the Washington Irving packet ship, the same in which Mr Hedge went before him. Up to this trip, the first mate aboard this ship, was as I hear, one Stephens, a Concord boy — son of Stephens the carpenter who used to live above Mr. Dennis’ — Mr E's state-room was like a carpeted dark closet, about six feet square,*

8. Nevertheless, Ms. [Sophia Foord](#) or Ford, formerly associated with the [Association of Industry and Education](#) in [Northampton](#), would love Henry all her life from a distance, and would remain in contact with his friend and neighbor Louisa May Alcott to be kept up to date about this man she loved. The fact that she loved Thoreau all his life shows the Edward Dahlberg rendition —that Thoreau’s refusal of Miss Foord’s advances must have been “orgiastic and savage”— to be a superficial reading perhaps motivated more by Mr. Dahlberg’s personal situation in the world than by a familiarity with the historical materials. We may note that Mr. Dahlberg was also troubled that Professor Kant had been guilty of [masturbation](#), or perhaps troubled at Professor Kant’s having acknowledged that he masturbated.

Immanuel Kant embraced godhead, the universe, the abstract Man, and, as he himself confessed, [masturbated](#)!



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*with a large key-hole for a window. The window was about as big as a saucer and the glass 2 inches thick. —not to mention another skylight over head in the deck, of the size of an oblong doughnut and about as opaque; of course it would be in vain to look up if any contemplative promenader had his foot upon it. Such will be his lodgings for two or three weeks — and instead of a walk in Walden woods, he will take a promenade on deck, where the few trees you know are stript of their bark. The steam tug carried the ship to sea against a head wind, without a rag of sail being raised.*

*I dont remember whether you have heard of the new telescope at Cambridge or not. They think it is the best one in the world — and have already seen more than Lord Ross or Herschel. I went to see Perez Blood's some time ago with Mr E. He had not gone to bed, but was sitting in the wood shed in the dark alone, in his astronomical chair, which is all legs and rungs, with a seat which can be inserted at any height, we saw Saturn's ring, and the mountains in the moon, and the shadows in their craters and the sun light on the spurs of the Mts in the dark portion. &c &c When I asked him the power of his glass, he said it was 85 But what is the power of the Cambridge glass? 2000!!! The last is about 23 feet long.*

*I think you may have a grand time this winter pursuing some study —keeping a Journal, or the like— while the snow lies deep with out— Winter is the time for study, you know, and the colder it is the more studious we are.*

*Give my respects to the whole Penobscot tribe, and tell them that I trust we are good brothers still, and endeavor to keep the chain of friendship bright — though I do dig up a hatchet now & then.*

*—I trust you will not stir from your comfortable winter quarters — Miss Bruin— or even put your head out of your hollow tree, till the sun has melted the snow in the Spring, and “the green buds, they are a swellin.”*

*from your  
Brother Henry.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

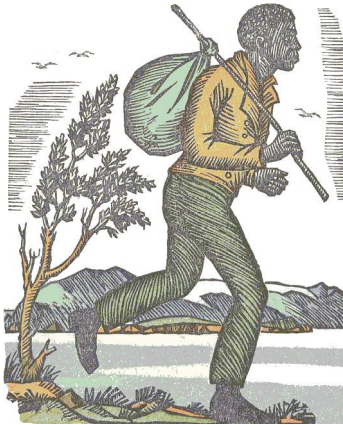
## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1849

[William Whiting](#) was president and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) and Mary Merrick Brooks were members of the executive committee of the Middlesex County Antislavery Society.

In this year the Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) was being expelled from his Unitarian pulpit in Newburyport due to his offensive antislavery sermons. He would be put forward by Friend [John Greenleaf Whittier](#), who was not only a nonviolenter [Quaker](#) poet but also an extraordinarily effective behind-the-scenes political manipulator, as the Free Soil candidate for Congress from the 3rd Congressional District. The Reverend's campaign would be based upon the concept of a Higher Law. His platform in regard to the Fugitive Slave Law would be:

DISOBEY IT ... and show our good citizenship by taking the legal consequences.



(In October 1851 his Whig opponent would win the seat — sometimes you just can't win for losing. :-)



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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.<sup>9</sup> 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.

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





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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?

**DUNBAR  
FAMILY**

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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.<sup>10</sup>

[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](#).

10. 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).



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1850

September 17, Tuesday: To put down unrest between himself and the landed classes, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm II of Hesse requested military aid from the [German Confederation](#).

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

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

- [John Thoreau](#), 63-year-old male
- [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), 63-year-old female
- [Henry David Thoreau](#), 33-year-old male
- [Sophia E. Thoreau](#), 31-year-old female
- [Jane Thoreau](#), 64-year-old female
- [Maria Thoreau](#), 53-year-old female
- Margaret Doland, 18-year-old female
- Catherine Riorden, 13-year-old female

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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



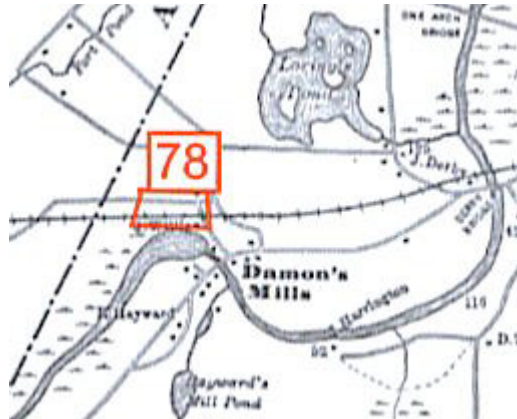


## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1851

April 12, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) surveyed, for Thomas Lord, 29 acres of Factory Village land between Factory Road and Boxboro Road,



while the Reverend Daniel Foster, temporary minister at the Trinitarian Church in Concord, prayed on Long Wharf, while the young Thomas Simms (Sims) was being marched under very heavy guard to the dock for transport aboard the brig *Acorn* back to a slaveholder in Savannah GA.<sup>11</sup>



As the brig pulled away Simms cried out to the docks: “And is this Massachusetts liberty?” The sordid affair began to add materials to Thoreau’s journal (J 2:173-85, continuing into May) which eventually would find their way into the lecture “Slavery in Massachusetts.”

View [Henry Thoreau](#)’s personal working drafts of his surveys courtesy of AT&T and the Concord Free Public Library:

[http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau\\_Surveys/Thoreau\\_Surveys.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau_Surveys/Thoreau_Surveys.htm)

(The official copy of this survey of course had become the property of the person or persons who had hired this Concord town surveyor to do their surveying work during the 19th Century. Such materials have yet to be recovered.)

View this particular personal working draft of a survey in fine detail:

[http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau\\_Surveys/78.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau_Surveys/78.htm)



circa April 1, 1851: When I read the account of the carrying back of the fugitive into slavery, which was read last Sunday evening –and read also what was not read here that the man who made the prayer on the wharf was Daniel Foster of *Concord* I could not help feeling a slight degree of pride because of all the towns in the Commonwealth Concord was the only one distinctly named as being represented in that tea-party –and as she had a place in the first so would have a place in this the last & perhaps next most important chapter of the Hist of Mass. But my second feeling, –when I reflected how short a time that gentleman has resided in this town, –was one of doubt & shame –because the *men* of Concord in recent times have done nothing to entitle them to the honor of having their town named in such a connexion.

11. Daniel’s wife Dora Foster was for a number of years [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)’s best friend.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

“SLAVERY IN MASSACHUSETTS”: The Liberator and the Commonwealth were the only papers in Boston, as far as I know, which made themselves heard in condemnation of the cowardice and meanness of the authorities of that city, as exhibited in '51. The other journals, almost without exception, by their manner of referring to and speaking of the Fugitive Slave Law, and the carrying back of the slave Simms, insulted the common sense of the country, at least. And, for the most part, they did this, one would say, because they thought so to secure the approbation of their patrons, not being aware that a sounder sentiment prevailed to any extent in the heart of the Commonwealth. I am told that some of them have improved of late; but they are still eminently time-serving. Such is the character they have won.

But, thank fortune, this preacher can be even more easily reached by the weapons of the reformer than could the recreant priest. The free men of New England have only to refrain from purchasing and reading these sheets, have only to withhold their cents, to kill a score of them at once. One whom I respect told me that he purchased Mitchell's Citizen in the cars, and then threw it out the window. But would not his contempt have been more fatally expressed, if he had not bought it? Are they Americans? are they New Englanders? are they inhabitants of Lexington, and Concord, and Framingham, who read and support the Boston Post, Mail, Journal, Advertiser, Courier, and Times? Are these the Flags of our Union? I am not a newspaper reader, and may omit to name the worst.

Could slavery suggest a more complete servility than some of these journals exhibit? Is there any dust which their conduct does not lick, and make fouler still with its slime? I do not know whether the Boston Herald is still in existence, but I remember to have seen it about the streets when Simms was carried off. Did it not act its part well – serve its master faithfully? How could it have gone lower on its belly? How can a man stoop lower than he is low? do more than put his extremities in the place of the head he has? than make his head his lower extremity? When I have taken up this paper with my cuffs turned up, I have heard the gurgling of the sewer through every column. I have felt that I was handling a paper picked out of the public gutters, a leaf from the gospel of the gambling-house, the groggery and the brothel, harmonizing with the gospel of the Merchants' Exchange.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

September 11, Thursday: The following attempt at humor had recently appeared in the [Northampton Courier](#): “Dr. Bran – his dignity and consistency. The people of Northampton were amused one day last week by seeing this philosopher of sawdust pudding trundled on a wheelbarrow from his house to the barber’s house, he being infirm and unable to walk the distance.... The doctor stands a chance to recover and will be able before long to do without the wheelbarrow.... his best physician is the keeper of the hotel hard by his dwelling with whom he luxuriates on beef and mutton.” The local newspaper had, it seemed, been mistaken about the seriousness of Graham’s illness, as on this day he died. Having eaten healthily and abstained from merely recreational sex for all his life, Graham had given up the ghost at the advanced age of 57. (We trust that his life had at least **seemed** longer.) The Amherst newspaper would carry an obituary: “He has left behind him several works on physiology, hygiene, theology, etc., ably and powerfully possessed great clearness of perception and vigor of intellect.” The Graham residence in Northampton would be made into a restaurant called Sylvester’s, on Pleasant Street, which you may now visit.

At this point [Henry Thoreau](#) was well into his “Night and Moonlight” preparations, for we can find an altered paragraph from the journal for this date in the sheaf of unfinished notes labeled “The Moon.” Possibly he made the emendations as he copied this into the sheaf which would after his death be accessed either by [Ellery Channing](#) or [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) in the generation of the “Night and Moonlight” article in [The Atlantic Monthly](#) for November 1863. The additions from the journal version are indicated here in our standard markup coding, but note that Thoreau’s punctuation has also here obviously been “touched up,” at one point or another, by one editor or another:

After I have spent the greater part of a night abroad in the moonlight, I am obliged to sleep enough more the next night<sup>^</sup> *or perhaps the next day*, to make up for it—*Endymionis somnum dormire* (to sleep an Endymion sleep), as the ancients expressed it. And there is something gained still by thus turning the day into night. Endymion is said to have obtained of Jupiter the privilege of sleeping<sup>^</sup> *to be always young and sleep* as much as he would. Let no man be afraid of sleep, if his weariness comes of obeying his *Genius*<sup>^</sup> *genius. It depends on how a man has spent his day, whether he has any right to be in his bed even by night. So spend some hours that you may have a right to sleep in the sunshine.* He who has spent the night with the gods sleeps ~~more innocently~~ by day <sup>^</sup>*as innocently as* ~~than the sluggard who has spent the day with the satyrss sleeps by night. He who has travelled to fairy land in the night sleeps by day more innocently than~~ he who is fatigued by the ~~merely trivial~~<sup>^</sup>*ordinary* labors of the day sleeps by night. <sup>^</sup>*Cato says, ‘The dogs must be shut up by day that they may be more sharp (acriores), more fierce and vigilant by night.’ So I might say of a moon- and star-gazer.* That kind of life which sleeping we dream that we live awake, in our walks by night we waking, ~~dream that we~~ live; while our daily life appears as a dream.



September 11, Thursday: Every artizan learns positively something by his trade. Each craft is familiar with a few simple well-known well established facts—not requiring any genius to discover but mere use & familiarity. You may go by the man at his work in the street every day of your life.— & though he is there before you carrying into practice certain essential information—you shall never be the wiser. Each trade is in fact a craft a cunning a covering an ability—& its methods are the result of a long experience. There sits a stone-mason splitting Westford granite for fenceposts— Egypt has perchance taught New England something in this matter— His hammer—his chisels, his wedges—his shames? or half rounds—his iron spoon, I suspect that these tools are hoary with age as with granite dust. He learns as easily where the best granite comes from as he learns how to erect that screen to keep off the sun. He knows that he can drill faster into a large stone than a small one because there is less jar & yielding. He deals in stone as the carpenter in lumber— In many of his operations only the materials are different. His work is slow & expensive. Nature is here hard to be overcome. He wears up one or two drills in splitting a single stone. He must sharpen his tools oftener than the carpenter He fights with granite. He knows the temper of the rocks—he grows stoney himself—his tread is ponderous & steady like the fall of a rock. And yet by patience & art he splits a stone as surely as the carpenter or woodcutter a log. So much time





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

& perseverance will accomplish. One would say that mankind had much less moral than physical energy—that every day you see men following the trade of splitting rocks, who yet shrink from undertaking apparently less arduous moral labors—the solving of moral problems. See how surely he proceeds. He does not hesitate to drill a dozen holes each one the labor of a day or two for a savage—he carefully takes out the dust with his iron spoon—he inserts his wedges one in each hole & protects the sides of the holes & gives resistance to his wedges by thin pieces of half round iron (or shames)—he marks the red line which he has drawn with his chisel—carefully cutting it straight—& then how carefully he drives each wedge in succession—fearful lest he should not have a good split. The habit of looking at men in the gross makes their lives have less of human interest for us. But though there are crowds of laborers before us—yet each one leads his little epic life each day. There is the stone mason who methought was simply a stony man that hammered stone from breakfast to dinner—& dinner to supper & then went to his slumbers. But he I find is even a man like myself—for he feels the heat of the sun & has raised some boards on a frame to protect him. And now at midforenoon I see his wife & child have come & brought him drink & meat for his lunch & to assuage the stoniness of his labor—& sit to chat with him. There are many rocks lying there for him to split from end to end and he will surely do it—this only at the command of luxury since stone posts are preferred to wood—but how many moral blocks are lying there in every man's yard which he surely will not split nor earnestly endeavor to split.

There lie the blocks which will surely get split but here lie the blocks which will surely not get split—Do we say it is too hard for human faculties?— But does not the mason dull a basket-full of steel chisels in a day—& yet by sharpening them again & tempering them aright succeed? Moral effort—! difficulty to be overcome!!! Why men work in stone & sharpen their drills when they go home to dinner!<sup>12</sup>

Why should Canada wild and unsettled as it is impress one as an older country than the states—except that her institutions are old. All things seem to contend there with a certain rust of antiquity—such as forms on old armor & iron guns. The rust of conventions and formalities. If the rust was not on the tinned roofs it was on the inhabitants.

2 P M to Hubbards meadow grove. The skunk cabbage's checkered fruit (spadix) one 3 inches long, all parts of the flower but the anthers left and enlarged.

*Berdens cernua* or Nodding Burr-Mary Gold like a small sunflower (with rays) in Heywood brook i.e. Beggar tick

*Bidens Connata?* without rays in Hubbards meadow— Blue-eyed grass still— Drooping neottia very common—I see some yellow butterflies and others occasionally & singly only The *Smilax* berries are mostly turned dark I started a great bittern from the weeds at the swimming place.

It is very hot & dry weather. We have had no rain for a week & yet the pitcher plants have water in them.— Are they ever quite dry? Are they not replenished by the dews always—& being shaded by the grass saved from evaporation? What wells for the birds!

The White-red-purple berried bush in Hubbards meadow whose berries were fairest a fortnight ago—appears to be the *Viburnum nudum* or withe-rod

Our cornel (the common) with berries blue one side whitish the other appears to be either the *C. sericea* or *C. Stolonifera* of Gray i.e. the silky or the red-osier *C. (osier rouge)* though its leaves are neither silky nor downy nor rough. This and the last 4 or 5 nights have been perhaps the most sultry in the year thus far—



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1852

12. [Thoreau](#) would later copy this into his early lecture “WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT” as:

[Paragraph 27] Each trade is a craft or cunning, and its methods are the result of a long experience. One is continually surprised to find how much his neighbors know that he does not. You may go by a man at his work in the street every day of your life, and though he is carrying into practice there certain essential information before your eyes—you may never be the wiser for it. Yet if you do attend to him, you will probably conceive an undue respect for his skill. Every artizan learns positively something by his trade—is familiar with a few well established facts, the knowledge of which implies no genius, but mere use and familiarity, and unless it is applied to his life—is trivial. There sits a stone-mason,<sup>1</sup> for instance, splitting granite for fence-posts before my window. Egypt perchance has taught New England something in this matter. His hammer, his chisels, his wedges, his shims<sup>2</sup> or half-rounds—his iron spoon—are hoary with age as with granite dust. He learns as surely where the best granite comes from, as how to erect that screen to keep off the sun. He knows that he can drill faster into a large stone than into a small one because there is less yielding to it. He deals with stone as the carpenter with lumber. In many of their operations only the materials are different. His work is slow and expensive, for Nature is here hard to be overcome. He must sharpen his tools far oftener than the carpenter. He fights with granite; knows the temper of the rocks; and grows stony himself; his tread is ponderous and steady like the fall of a rock, like the march of a grenadier.

[Paragraph 28] See how surely and resolutely he proceeds. He does not hesitate to drill a dozen holes, each one the labor of a day or two for a savage; patiently taking out the dust with his iron spoon, he inserts his wedges, one in each hole, and protects the sides of the holes, and gives resistance to the wedges with his shims;<sup>3</sup> he marks with his chisel the chalk line which he has drawn between the holes, slowly cutting it straight;—and then how carefully he drives each wedge in succession, fearful lest he should not have a good split! He dulls a basket-ful of steel chisels in a day, and yet by sharpening and tempering them again he at last splits a stone as surely as the carpenter or woodcutter a log.

[Paragraph 29] And now I perceive that his wife and child have come and brought him his luncheon, and he stops and chats with them. So he has other things to interest him than stone-posts. But they have brought him also something strong to drink. Poor fellow! Did Egypt teach him that also? I fear it will undo him as surely as he undoes granite.

[Paragraph 30] There are many rocks lying there for him to split, and he will surely do it; and this only at the command of luxury—since stone posts are preferred to wood. But like you and me he has less moral than physical energy. How many moral blocks are lying in his yard, which he surely will not split, nor earnestly endeavor to split! Do we say it is too hard for human faculties? Why, men work in stone and sharpen their drills when they go home to dinner.

1. The stone-mason has not been identified.

2. The manuscript copy-text reads ‘shames (shams?—shims?)’. The PRACTICAL DICTIONARY OF MECHANICS (Philadelphia, 1874-77) defines “shim” under the heading “Stone-working” as “One of the plates in a jumper-hole to fill out a portion of the thickness not occupied by the wedges or feathers.” There is no listing for either “shame” or “sham.”

3. The manuscript copy-text reads ‘shams (?)’.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

January 25, Sunday: At the Holy Trinity Church in Brighton in England, the [Reverend Frederick William Robertson](#), who had over the years grown disillusioned with the fruits of [evangelicalism](#), preached on “The Law of Christian Conscience” and suggested to his congregation that they might as well be forgiving toward those of sincere [Quaker](#) tradition, deluded as such persons might be: “The words, and garb, and customs of that sect of Christians called Quakers may be formal enough; founded, no doubt, as in the former case, upon a mistaken interpretation of a passage in the Bible. But they are at least harmless; and have long been associated with the simplicity, and benevolence, and Christian humbleness of this body of Christians — the followers of one who, three hundred years ago, set out upon the glorious enterprise of making all men friends. Now would it be Christian, or would it not rather be something more than unchristian — would it not be gross rudeness and coarse unfeelingness to treat such words, and habits, and customs, with anything but respect and reverence?”



January 25, Sunday: The snow has been for some time more than a foot deep on a level, and some roads drifted quite full. and the cold for some weeks has been intense—as low as 20 & 21° in the early morning—A Canadian winter. Some say that we have not had so long a spell of cold weather since '31, when they say it was not seen to thaw for 6 weeks. But last night & today the weather has moderated. It is glorious to be abroad this afternoon. The snow melts on the surface. The warmth of the sun reminds me of summer— The dog runs before us on the R R cause way & appears to enjoy it as much as ourselves. C. remarks truly that most people do not distinguish between a pup & a dog—& treat both alike though the former may not yet have a tooth in his head.

When Sophia told R Rice that Dr B said that Foster was an infidel—and was injuring the young men &c “Did he?” He observed. “Well he is a great man. He swims in pretty deep water, but it is’nt very extensive.” When she added Mr Frost says that Garrison had to apologize for printing Foster’s sermon—He said—“Did he? Well they may set as many back fires as they please, they won’t be of any use”.

She said the selectmen were going to ask 7 dolls instead of 5 for the Hall. But he said that he would build them a hall if they would engage to give him 5 dolls steadily—. To be sure it would not be quite so handsome as the present, but it should have the same kind of seats.

The Clay in the Deep Cut is melting & streaming down—glistening in the sun. It is I that melts. While the harp sounds on high— And the snow drifts on the west side look like clouds.

We turned down the brook at Heywood’s meadow. It was worth the while to see how the water even in the marsh where the brook is almost stagnant sparkled in this atmosphere—for though warm it is remarkably clear. Water which in summer would look dark & perhaps turbid now sparkles like the lakes in November. This water is the more attractive since all around is deep snow. The brook here is full of cat tails *Typha latifolia* Reed Mace—I found on pulling open or breaking in my hand, as one would break bread the still nearly perfect spikes of this fine reed—that the flowers were red or crimson at their base where united to the stem. When I rubbed off thus what was at first but a thimble full of these dry flowerets, they suddenly took in air & flushed up like powder expanding like feathers & foam filling & over flowing my hand, to which they imparted a sensation of warmth quite remarkable. I was astonished to see how a small quantity was expanded and inflated on being released & given to the air—& I could not be tired with repeating the experiment I think a single one would more than fill a half peck measure if they lay as light as at first in the air. It is something magical to one who tries it for the first time like a puff of powder it flashes up You do not know at first where they all come from. It is the conjurer’s trick in nature, equal to taking feathers enough to fill a bed out of a hat. When you had done—but still will scrape the almost bare stem—still they overflow your hand as before. See it again & try the combustibility of the pollen.

As the flowerets are opening & liberating themselves showing their red extremities, it has the effect of a **changeable** color

Ah then the brook beyond—its rippling waters & its sunny sands.— They made me forget that it was winter—where springs oozed out of the soft bank over the dead leaves & the green sphagnum they had melted the snow or the snow had melted as it fell perchance—and the rabbits had sprinkled the mud about on the snow. The sun reflected from the sandy gravelly bottom, sometimes a bright sunny streak no bigger than your finger reflected from a ripple as from a prism—& the sunlight reflected from a hundred points of the surface of the rippling brook—enabled me to realize summer. But the dog partly spoiled the transparency of the water by running in the brook. A pup that had never seen a summer brook.

I am struck & attracted by the parallelism of the twigs of the hornbeam, **fine** parallelism

Having gone  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile beyond the bridge—where C. calls this his Spanish Brook I looked back from the top of the hill on the S. into this deep dell. Where the white pines stood thick rising one above another reflecting the sunlight—so soft and warm by contrast with the snow—as never in summer—for the idea of warmth prevailed over the cold which the snow suggested—though I saw through & between them to a distant snow clad hill—& also to oaks red with their dry leaves. And maple limbs were mingled with the pines. I was on the verge of

ELLERY CHANNING

DOG

SOPHIA THOREAU

AEOLIAN HARP

ELLERY CHANNING



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

seeing something but I did not. If I had been alone & had had more leisure I might have seen something to report. Now we are on Fair Haven, still but a snow plain. Far down the river the shadows on Conantum are bluish—somewhat like the holes in the snow perchance.

The sun is half an hour high perhaps. Standing near the outlet of the pond I look up & down the river with delight—it is so warm & the air is notwithstanding so clear. When I invert my head & look at the woods  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile down the stream they suddenly sink lower in the horizon and are removed full two miles off— Yet the air is so clear that I seem to see every stem & twig with beautiful distinctness— The fine tops of the trees are so relieved against the sky—that I never cease to admire the minute subdivisions. It is the same when I look up the stream. A bare hickory under Lees Cliff seen against the sky becomes an interesting even beautiful object to behold. I think where have I been staying all these days— I will surely come here again.

When I first paddled a boat on Walden it was completely surrounded by thick & lofty pine woods, and in some of its coves grape vines had run over the trees & formed bowers under which a boat could pass. The hills which form its shores are so steep & the woods on them were then so high, that as you looked down the pond from west to east—it looked like an amphitheater—for some kind of forest spectacle. I have spent many an hour floating over its surface as the zephyr willed lying on my back across the seats of my boat, in a summer forenoon— & looking into the sky above dreaming awake—until I was aroused by my boat touching the sand and I arose to see what shore my fates had impelled me to— When idleness was the most attractive & productive industry. Many a forenoon have I stolen away thus—preferring thus to spend the most valued part of the day. For I was rich—if not in money, in sunny hours and summer-days & spent them lavishly. Nor do I regret that I did not spend more of them behind a counter or in the workshop or the teacher's desk, in which last two places I have spent so many of them.

July 13, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) commenting that Concord was “just as idiotic as ever in relation to the spirits and their knockings,” and expressing his own skeptical attitude that “If I could be brought to believe in the things which they believe, I should make haste to get rid of my certificate of stock in this and the next world's enterprises, and buy a share in the first Immediate Annihilation company that offered.”

SPIRITUALISM



Concord July 13<sup>th</sup> '52

Dear Sophia,

*I am a miserable letter-writer, but perchance if I should say this at length, and with sufficient emphasis & regret, it would make a letter. I am sorry that nothing transpires here of much moment; or, I should rather say, that I am so slackened and rusty, like the telegraph wire this season, that no wind that blows can extract music from me. I am not on the trail of any elephants or mastodons, but have succeeded in trapping only a few ridiculous mice, which cannot feed my imagination. I have become sadly scientific. I would rather come upon the*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*vast valley-like “spore” only of some celestial beast which this world’s woods can no longer sustain, than spring my net over a bushel of moles. You must do better in those woods where you are. You must have some adventures to relate and repeat for years to come — which will eclipse even Mother’s voyage to Goldsborough & Sissiboo. They say that [Mr Pierce the presidential candidate](#) was in town last 5<sup>th</sup> of July visiting [Hawthorne](#) whose college chum he was, and that Hawthorne is writing a life of him for electioneering purposes. Concord is just as idiotic as ever in relation to the spirits and their knockings. Most people here believe in a spiritual world which no respectable junk bottle —which had not met with a slip— would condescend to contain even a portion of for a moment — whose atmosphere would extinguish a candle let down into it, like a well that wants airing — in spirits which the very bull frogs in our meadows would blackball. Their evil genius is seeing how low it can degrade them. The hooting of owls —the croaking of frogs —is celestial wisdom in comparison. If I could be brought to believe in the things which they believe — I should make haste to get rid of my certificate of stock in this & the next world’s enterprises, and buy a share in the first Immediate Annihilation Company that offered— I would exchange my immortality for a glass of small beer this hot weather.*

*Where are the heathen? Was there ever any superstition before? And yet I suppose there may be a vessel this very moment setting sail from the coast of North America to that of Africa with a missionary on board! Consider the dawn —& the sun rise —the rainbow & the evening — the words of Christ & the aspirations of all the saints! Hear music! See —smell —taste —feel —hear —anything —& then hear these idiots inspired by the cracking of a restless board — humbly asking “Please Spirit, if you cannot answer by knocks, answer by tips of the table”.!!!!!! Yrs H. D. Thoreau*



July 13, Tuesday: A Journal. —a book that shall contain a record of all your joy —your extacy.

4 Pm to R. W. E’s woodlot S of Walden. The pool by Walden is now **quite yellow** with the common utricularia (vulgaris) This morning the heavens were overcast with a fog which did not clear off till late in the forenoon — & heard the muttering of thunder behind it about 5 Am and thought it would rain at last but there were dewy cobwebs on the grass —and it did not rain but we had another hot dry day after all. The northern wild red cherry of the woods is ripe —handsome bright red but scarcely edible— Also sooner than I expected huckleberries both blue & black —the former not described by Gray or Big —in the greater abundance —and must have been ripe several days —they are thick enough to pick— The black only here & there The former is apparently a variety of the latter blue with bloom & a tough or thick skin. There are evidently several kinds of huckleberries and blueberries not described by botanists. Of the very early blueberries at least two varieties one glossy black with dark green leaves the other a rich light blue with bloom & yellowish green leaves —& more kinds I remember. I found the vaccinium Corymbosum well ripe on an exposed hill side. Each day now I scare up woodcocks by shady springs & swamps The dark purple amelanchier are the sweetest berries I have tasted yet. One who walks the woods & hills daily —expecting to see the first berry that turns —will be surprised at last to find them ripe & thick before he is aware of it —ripened he cannot tell how long before —in some more favorable situation. It is impossible to say what day almost what week the huckleberries begin to be ripe unless you are acquainted



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

with & daily visit every huckleberry bush in the town—at least every place where they grow. Already the golden rod apparently *Solidago stricta*—Willow leaved *G. preaches* of the lapse of time on the Walden road. How many a tale its yellow tells!— The *polygala Sanguinea* & *P. cruciata* in Bristers meadow—both numerous & well out—The last has a fugacious? spicy scent in which methinks I detect the scent of nutmegs—afterward I find that it is the lower part of the stem & root which is most highly scented like checquerberry & not fugacious. The *verbena urticifolia* white vervain. Succory or *Cichorium intybus*. It appears to shut up this hot weather. Is that nettle like plant by the wall below Mrs Heywoods—*Urtica gracilis*? now in blossom. *Polygonum aviculare*—goose-grass about the door.

The weather has been remarkably warm for a week or 10 days—the thermometer at 95 degrees more or less—& we have had no rain. You have not thought of cold or of taking cold night or day, but only how you should be cool enough. Such weather as this the only use of clothing is to cover nakedness—and to protect the body from the sun. It is remarkable that though it would be a great luxury to throw aside all clothing now—except one thin robe to keep off the sun—yet throughout the whole community not one is found to do it.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:


## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1853


June 13, Monday: William M. White's version of [Henry Thoreau](#)'s journal entry:

*I would rather save one of these hawks  
Than have a hundred hens and chickens.  
It was worth more to see them soar  
Especially now that they are so rare in the landscape.  
It is easy to buy eggs,  
But not to buy hen-hawks.*



June 13: What was that rare and beautiful bird in the dark woods under the Cliffs, with black above and white spots and bars, a large triangular blood-red spot on breast, and sides of breast and beneath white? Note a warble like the oriole, but softer and sweeter. It was quite tame. I cannot find this bird described. I think it must be a grosbeak [**Rose-breasted Grosbeak**  *Pheucticus ludovicianus*]. At first I thought I saw a chewink, [as] it sat within a rod sideways to me, and I was going to call Sophia to look at it, but then it turned its breast full toward me and I saw the blood-red breast, a large triangular painted spot occupying the greater part of the breast. It was in the cool, shaded underwood by the old path just under the Cliff. It is a memorable event to meet with so rare a bird. Birds answer to flowers, both in their abundance and their rareness. The meeting with some rare and beautiful flower, which you may never find again, perchance, like the great purple fringed orchis, at least. How much it enhances the wildness and the richness of the forest to see in it some beautiful bird which you never detected before!



June 13: 9 AM. -To Orchis Swamp. Find that there are two young hawks [**Red-tailed Hawk**  *Buteo jamaicensis*]; one has left the nest and is perched on a small maple seven or eight rods distant. This one appears much smaller than the former one. I am struck by the large, naked head, so vulture-like, and large eyes, as if the vulture's were an inferior stage through which the hawk passed. Its feet, too, are large, remarkably developed, by which it holds to its perch securely like an old bird, before its wings can perform their office. It has a buff breast, striped with dark brown. Pratt, when I told him of this nest, said he would like to carry one of his rifles down there. But I told him that I should be sorry to have them killed. I would rather save one of these hawks than have a hundred hens and chickens. It was worth more to see them soar, especially now, that they are so rare in the landscape. It is easy to buy eggs, but not to buy hen-hawks. My neighbors would not hesitate to shoot the last pair of hen-hawks in the town to save a few of their chickens! But such economy is narrow and grovelling. It is necessarily to sacrifice the greater value to the less. I would rather never taste chicken's meat or hen's eggs than never to see a hawk sailing through the upper air again. This sight is worth incomparably more than a chicken soup or a boiled hog. So we exterminate the deer and substitute the hog.

SOPHIA THOREAU






## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1854

May 16, Tuesday: In the afternoon [Henry Thoreau](#) went in his boat to Conantum, probably with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#).



May 16, 1854: Looked into several red-wing **[Red-winged Blackbird  *Agelaius phoeniceus*]** blackbirds' nests which are now being built, but no eggs yet. They are generally hung between two twigs, say of button-bush. I noticed at one nest what looked like a tow string securely tied about a twig at each end about six inches apart, left loose in the middle. It was not a string, but I think a strip of milkweed pod, etc., –water asclepias probably,– maybe a foot long and very strong. How remarkable that this bird should have found out the strength of this, which I was so slow to find out!



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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

June 2, "Bad Friday": [Louis D'Entremont Surette](#) was born in [Concord](#) to [Louis A. Surette](#) and [Frances Jane Shattuck Surette](#).

By 6AM, crowds were already beginning to accumulate outside the [Boston](#) courthouse.



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

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

TO THE CITIZENS OF BOSTON.

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

J.V.C. SMITH, Mayor.

BOSTON, June 2, 1854.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

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

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

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

"On the law and facts of the case, I consider the claimant entitled to the certificate from me which he claims."

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

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

There was a lot of folks to see a colored man walk through the streets.

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

as well.

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

That afternoon [Henry Thoreau](#) had taken his mother [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and sister [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) in his boat up the Assabet River to Castilleja and Annursnack. They wouldn't return until about 7 PM.

By 8:30PM, Richard Henry Dana, Jr. had finished writing out a version of the closing argument which he had offered, and had sent it off to the Boston [Traveller](#) to be published in their next edition. When he met Anson Burlingame, the 9PM omnibus to Cambridge having already departed, Burlingame offered to escort Dana home. As they walked together on Court Street, however, Dana was struck from behind. The lawyer's glasses flew off and shattered. His eye was blackened and some of his teeth were chipped.<sup>13</sup>

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

### The Rendition, by [John Greenleaf Whittier](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. The men were later identified as Luigi Varelli and Henry Huxford, who had been serving that day as part of the marshall's guard and who were celebrating their earnings at Allen's Saloon when they recognized Richard Henry Dana, Jr. as he passed on the sidewalk. Anthony Burns would turn out to be the last escapee from slavery to be returned from Massachusetts. His owner would not, as was feared at the time, torture him to death. He would be kept in the traders' jail in Richmond VA until sold to a white man from North Carolina. This man would then retail him to a Massachusetts minister at Barnum's Hotel in [Baltimore](#) in February 1855 for the sum of \$1,325.<sup>00</sup>. On March 7, 1855 Burns would be feted at Tremont Temple and handed [manumission](#) papers. He would attend the School of Divinity at Oberlin College and, bless him, he would become a minister of the gospel.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

And smite with stars this cloud.

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



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

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

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



HDT

WHAT?

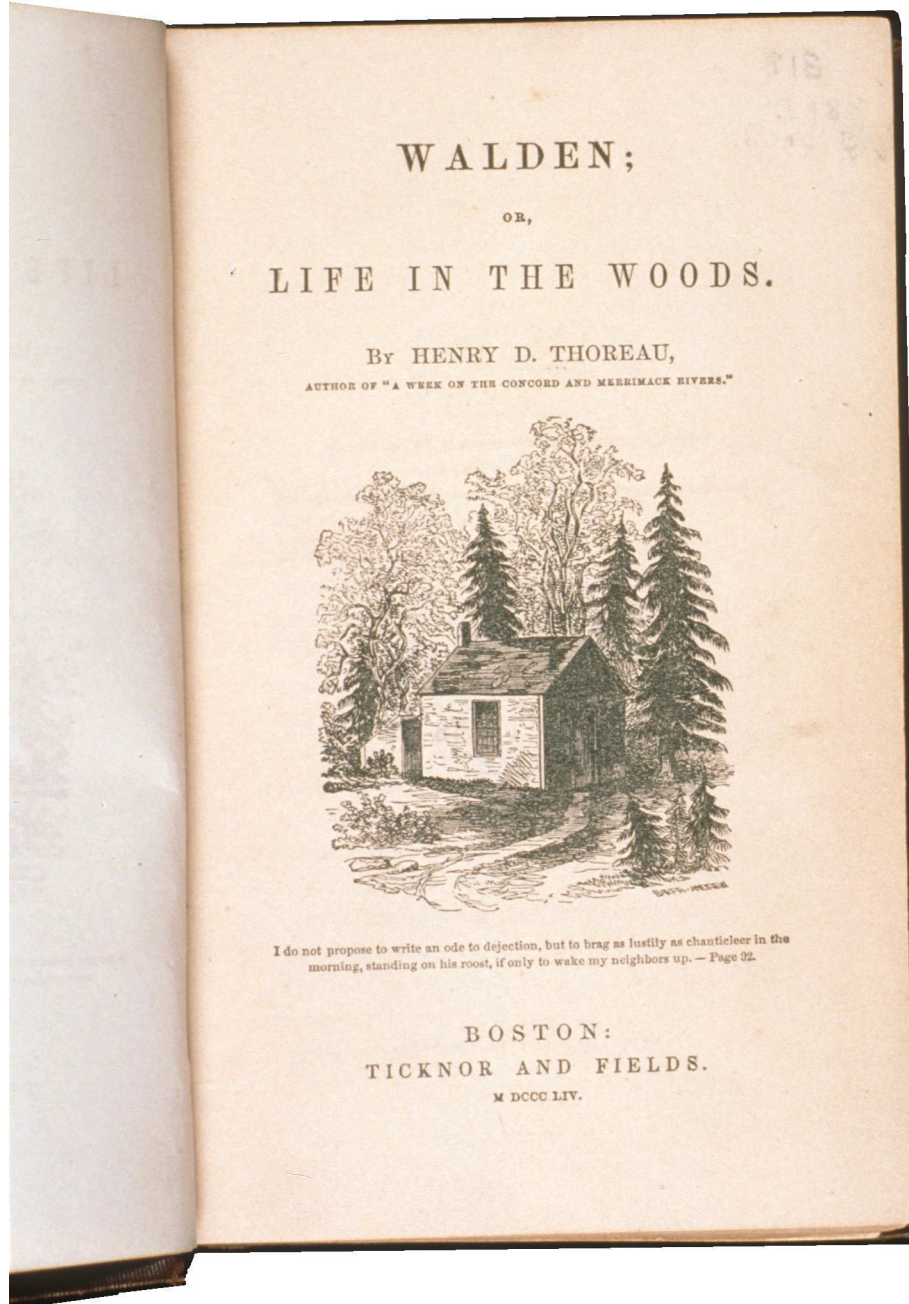
INDEX

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

July 3, Monday: In the afternoon [Henry Thoreau](#) went by boat to Hubbard's Bridge.

In [Boston](#), the sheets of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) were passing through the printing press!





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

The firm of Baker & Andrew, Engravers of Boston had rendered [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s drawing of the shanty on the pond as an engraving for the title page.

WILLIAM JAY BAKER

JOHN ANDREW

TIMELINE OF WALDEN



Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, considering the death of one of the members of the Marshall's posse, a man named James Batchelder, during the attempt to rescue Anthony Burns from the slavecatchers, issued the following pronouncement:

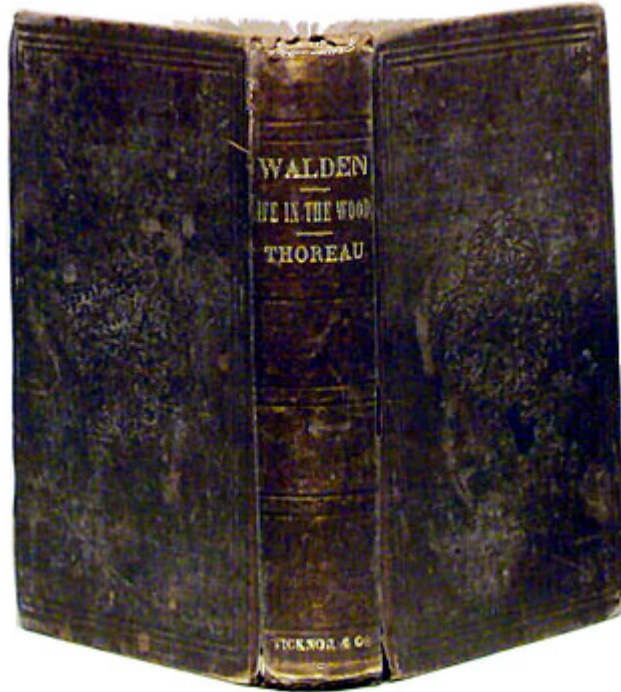
A man whose private conscience leads him to disobey a law recognized by the community [the federal Fugitive Slave Law] must take the consequences of that disobedience. It is a matter solely between him and his Maker. He should take good care that he is not mistaken, that his private opinion does not result from passion or prejudice, but, if he believes it to be his duty to disobey, he must be prepared to abide by the result; and the laws as they are enacted and settled by the constituted authorities to be constitutional and valid, must be enforced, although it may be to his greivous harm.

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

August 9, Wednesday: “[WALDEN](#)’ published” (JOURNAL); Ticknor and Fields had printed 2,000 copies.



### TIMELINE OF WALDEN

The drawing provided by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) for the title page of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) has been criticized in a number of particulars. The evergreens shown are firs rather than the pines which surrounded the actual shanty, the deciduous trees are far too large and omnipresent, the slope against which the shanty was positioned is not clearly depicted, and, as [Henry Thoreau](#) himself pointed out, the door and the roof projection above it were not accurately portrayed.

Thoreau went in to the publisher’s offices to pick up copies of his book.

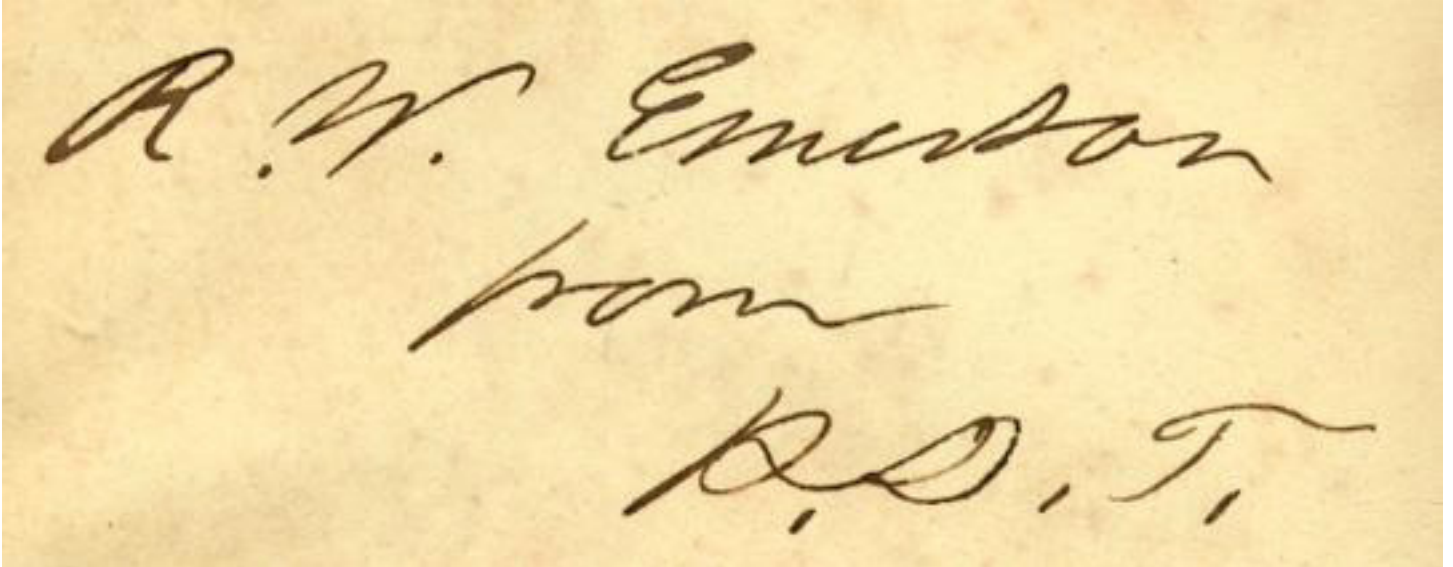




## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Presumably it was one of these copies, that he presented to [Waldo Emerson](#):



**Did Waldo ever read it? Did Waldo ever comment on it?**



HDT

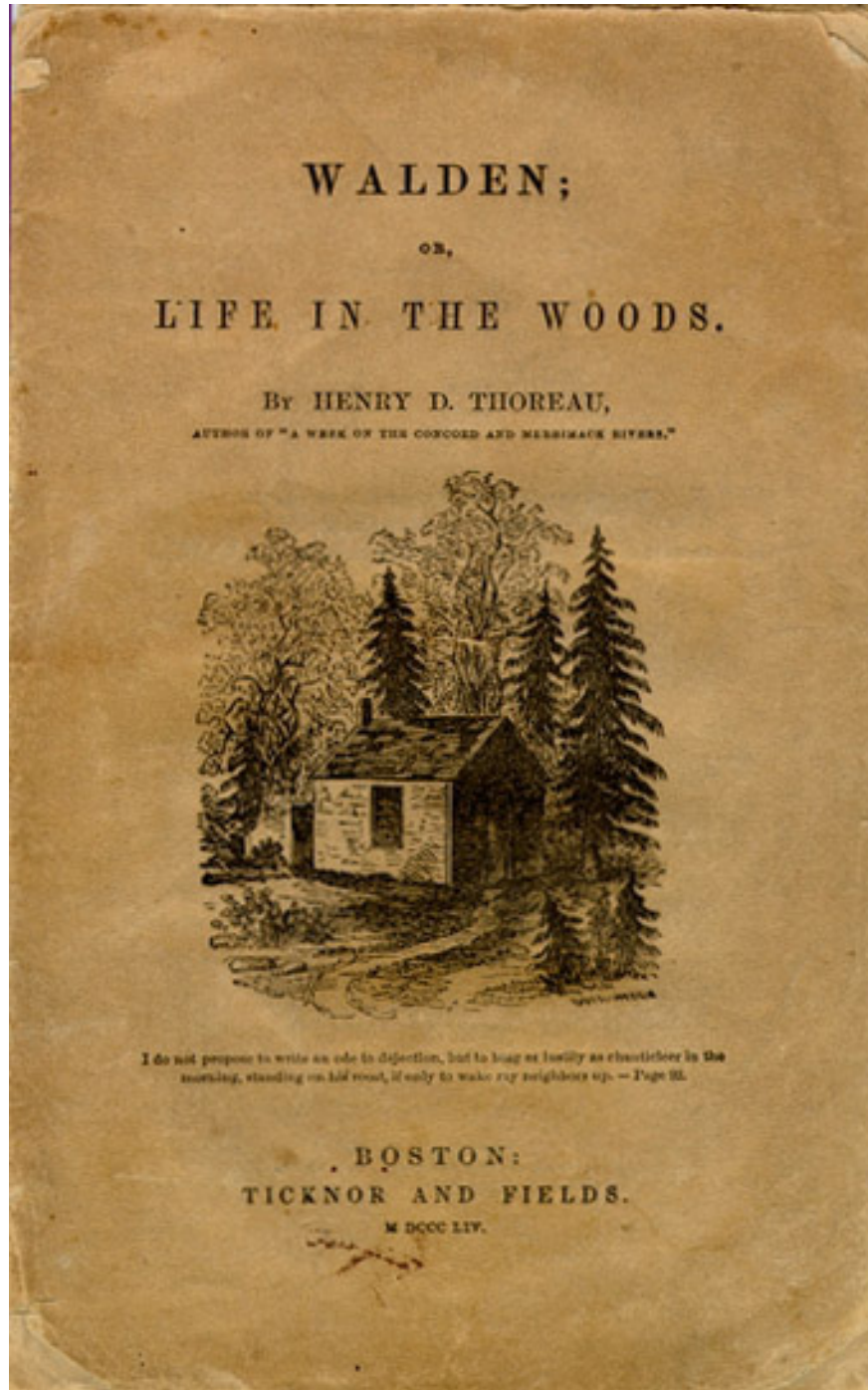
WHAT?


INDEX

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

A two-inch announcement of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) appeared in the New-York Daily Tribune.

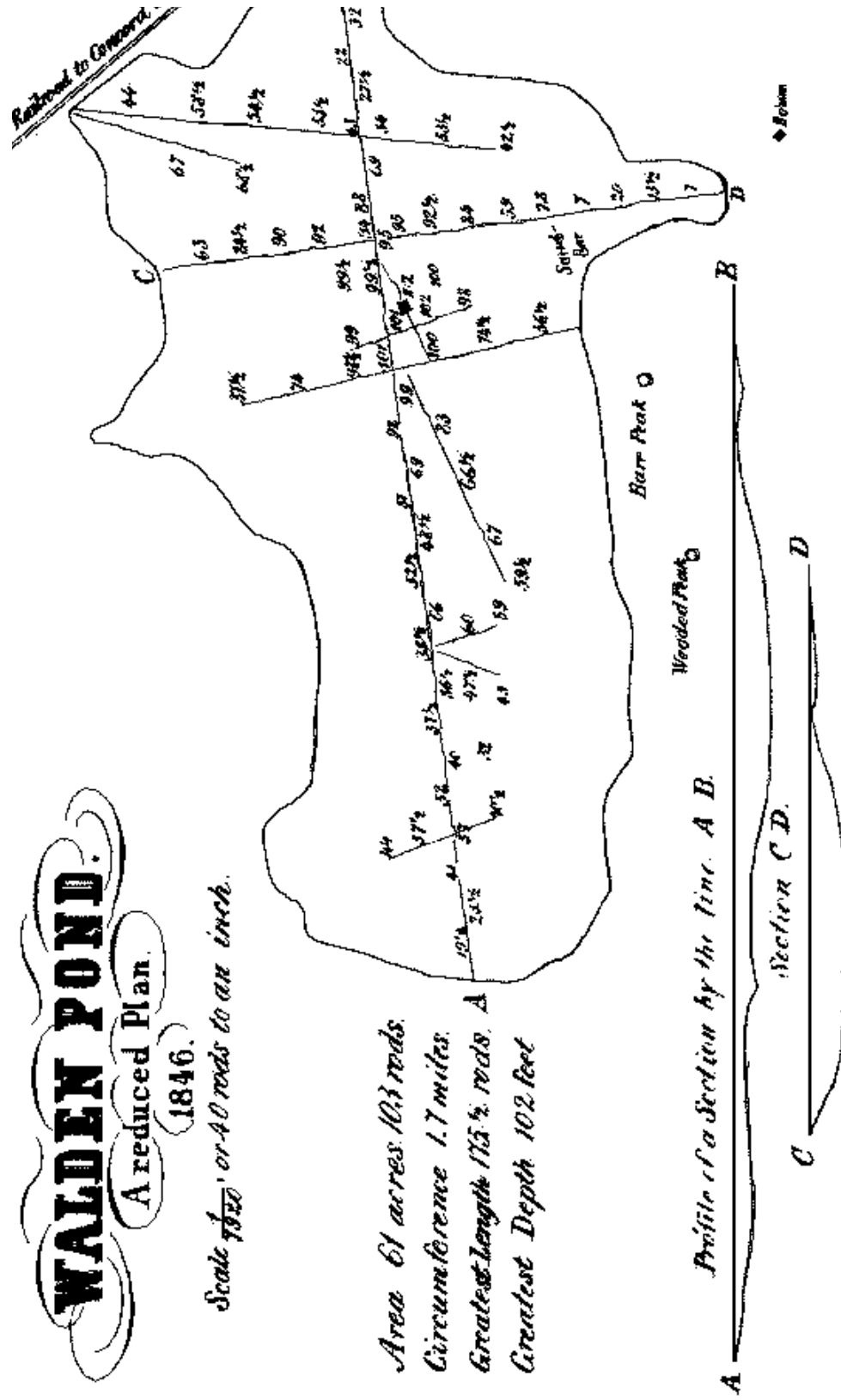


Of this first edition of 2,000 copies of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#), as many as 500 may have been lacking the map of Walden Pond  that should have faced page 307.

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

THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Review of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) under “New Publications” in the Boston Daily Bee, 2:6.



An original book, this, and from an original man—from a very eccentric man. It is a record of the author's life and thoughts while he lived in the woods—two years and two months. It is a volume of interest and value—of interest because it concerns a very rare individual, and of value because it contains considerable wisdom, after a fashion. It is a volume to read once, twice, thrice—and then think over.—There is a charm in its style, a philosophy in its thought. Mr. Moreau [*sic*] tells us of common things we know, but in an uncommon manner. There is much to be learned from this volume. Stearn [*sic*] and good lessons in economy; contentment with a simple but noble life, and all that, and much more. The author “lived like a king” on “hoe cakes,” and drank water; at the same time outworking the lustiest farmers who were pitted against him. Get the book. You will like it. It is original and refreshing; and from the brain of a **LIVE** man.

Review of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) on the front page of the Boston Daily Evening Traveller: That evening [Thoreau](#) dined with Bronson Alcott and presented him also with a copy of his new book.

By the day of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#)'s publication, Ticknor & Fields had received advance orders for only 402 copies. Another 164 would be ordered during the first week of publication. As the number of reviews dwindled, so would sales. Over the following month, the firm would receive orders for merely 123 copies, which would bring total sales during the first five weeks after publication to a very disappointing 689. Only about 65 more copies would be sold between mid-September 1854 and early-August 1855.<sup>14</sup> Not until 1859 would the printed stocks of the book be depleted — and then it would remain out of print until after Thoreau's demise.

14. The information about the sale of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) is per Harding's “The First Year's Sales of Thoreau's Walden,” 1-2. Harding noted that we have no sales records for April 1st to June 29th, 1855, but that average monthly sales figures suggest that at most 20 copies would have sold during the period.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

September 16, Saturday: [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) returned from Wachusett.

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

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

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

The book was also reviewed on the second page of the Rochester NY [Daily American](#).

Joshua Abraham Norton appeared in the office of San Francisco [Call](#) attired in a comic-opera uniform, with a document in hand that proclaimed him to be the Emperor of the United States and the Protector of Mexico.<sup>15</sup>






## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1855

[Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) was listed in Dr. Henry Bond's GENEALOGIES OF THE FAMILIES AND DESCENDANTS OF THE EARLY SETTLERS OF WATERTOWN, MASS. INCLUDING WALTHAM AND WESTON published in this year by Little, Brown & Co. in Boston, as being among the many, many descendants of Deacon Lewis Jones and Anne Jones who had come over from England in 1645  and had settled initially in Roxbury MA. – Would Mother Cynthia not have make her two children [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) who were still living at home aware of this family history?<sup>16</sup>

HERE LIETH THE BODY OF  
ANNE JONES,  
AGE 78 YEARS,  
DIED THE FIRST DAY OF MAY, 1680.  
UPON THE DEATH OF THAT PIOUS MATRON.  
SHE LIVED A PIOUS, HOLY, GODLY LIFE,  
BEING NOW ESCAPED FREE FROM HATE AND STRIFE.



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

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

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



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





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

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

**BOND, VOLUME I****BOND, VOLUME II**

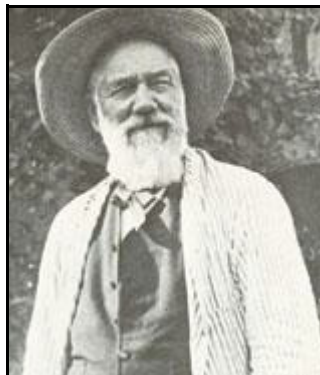
August 10, Friday: Calvin Wheeler Philleo’s novel TWICE MARRIED: A STORY OF CONNECTICUT LIFE (New York: Dix & Edwards, 10 Park Place; London: Sampson Low & Son) was reprinted from [Putnam’s Monthly](#).

### TWICE MARRIED, A NOVEL

According to the Massachusetts census of 1855 the Thoreau household consisted of “[John Thoreau](#), 69, M[ale]; [Cynthia](#), 69, F[emale]; [Henry D.](#), 38, M[ale]; [Sophia E.](#), 34, F[emale]; [Sophia Dunbar](#), 74, F[emale]; [Louisa Dunbar](#), 69, F[emale].” [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and [Louisa Dunbar](#) were listed as born in New Hampshire, all others in Massachusetts. The father was listed as “Manufacturer,” [Henry Thoreau](#) as “Gentleman,” and (of course) no occupations were listed for homemakers.<sup>17</sup>(The census taker for [Concord](#)

**DUNBAR  
FAMILY****SOPHIA E. THOREAU**

was Sheriff Sam Staples.)



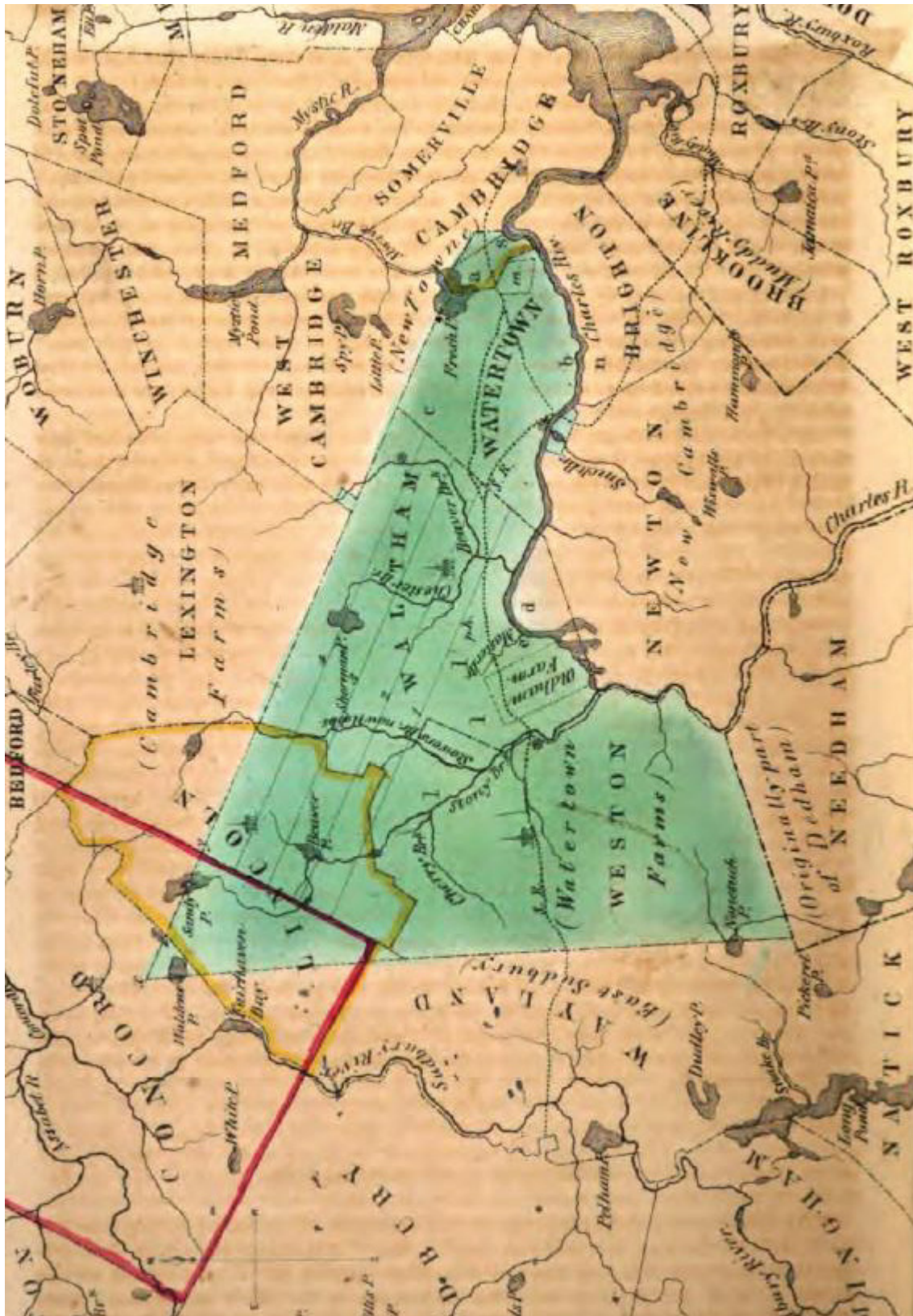
Aug.10. P.M. — To Nagog. Middle of huckleberrying. — (then no more entries until August 19th)

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

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

November 14, Wednesday: Professor James Russell Lowell “of [Cambridge](#)” was elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in the section of Literature and Fine Arts.




Nov. 14. Minott hears geese to-day.

Heard to-day in my chamber, about 11 A.M., a singular sharp crackling sound by the window, which made me think of the snapping of an insect (with its wings, or striking something). It was produced by one of three *small* pitch pine cones which I gathered on the 7th, and which lay in the sun on the window-sill. I noticed a slight motion in the scales at the apex, when suddenly, with a louder crackling, it burst, or the scales separated, with a snapping sound on all sides of it. It was a general and sudden bursting or expanding of all the scales with a sharp crackling sound and motion of the whole cone, as by a force pent up within it. I suppose the strain only needed to be relieved in one point for the whole to go off.

I was remarking to-day to Mr. Rice on the pleasantness of this November thus far, when he remarked that he remembered a similar season fifty-four years ago, and he remembered it because on the 13th of November that year he was engaged in pulling turnips and saw wild geese go over, when one came to tell him that his father was killed by a bridge giving way when his team was crossing it, and the team falling on him walking at its side.

P. M. — Up Assabet with [Sophia](#).

A clear, bright, warm afternoon. A painted tortoise swimming under water and a wood tortoise out on the bank. The rain has raised the river an additional foot or more, and it is creeping over the meadows. My boat is two thirds full and hard to come at. The old weedy margin is covered and a new grassy one acquired. The current is stronger, though the surface is pretty smooth. Much small rubbish is drifting down and slowly turning in the eddies. The motion of my boat sends an undulation to the shore, which rustles the dry sedge half immersed there, as if a tortoise were tumbling through it. Leaves and sticks and billets of wood come floating down in middle of the full, still stream, turning round in the eddies, and I mistake them for ducks at first. See two red-wing blackbirds [**Red-winged Blackbird**  *Agelaius phoeniceus*] alight on a black willow.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1856

June 12, Thursday: [Henry Thoreau](#) was written to by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), from Worcester.



Abraham Lincoln's speech of June 10th was characterized on this day by his political opponents, in the pages of the [Illinois State Register](#), as "niggerism" of "as dark a hue" as that of Frederick Douglass:

Mr. Lincoln opened his speech, and for more than an hour he bored his audience with one of the weakest speeches that he ever perpetrated. He was evidently laboring under much restraint, conscious that he was doling out new doctrine to the old whigs about him, and fearful that in keeping within moderate bounds, he would so filter his discourse that it would not in any degree reach the end he desired. He would occasionally launch out and lead his hearers to think that the most ultra abolitionism would follow, when, under the old whig eyes we have mentioned, he would soften his remarks to a supposed palatable texture. In this way, backing and filling, he frittered away anything of argument that he might have presented, convincing his audience, however, that his niggerism has as dark a hue as that of Garrison or Douglass but that his timidity before the peculiar audience he addressed prevented its earnest advocacy with the power and ability he is known to possess.

The gist of his remarks were intended to show that the democratic party favors the extension of slavery, that black republicanism aims to prevent it; by what process we did not learn from him, nor did he furnish any evidence of the truth of his allegation against the democracy. He was opposed to the extension of slavery. So are we. But we desire to see it done in a constitutional manner – by the act of the people interested. For leaving the decision of the question there, by the adjustment of '50, and by the Nebraska act, black republicanism has raised another furor in the country, and until very lately, they have claimed for congress the power to refuse the admission of any new state recognizing slavery by its constitution. Latterly, this plank of their platform has been suppressed. We heard nothing of it on Tuesday evening from Mr. Lincoln. The same caving in as to the restoration of the Missouri restriction, marks the latter day policy of the sectional party, and he as cautiously avoided it. They seek power, Mr. Lincoln naively told us, by the agglomeration of all the discordant elements of



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

faction, and if obtained, the now suppressed platform of ultra abolitionism will be avowed and acted upon. He boldly avowed, in one of his many escapings, that there could be no Union with slavery. That agitation would be ceaseless until it shall be swept away, but the mode of its eradication he left to inference from his own antecedents and those of the ruling spirits of black-republicanism – Garrison, Greeley, Seward, Sumner, and others of that genus.

To attain power, by whatever means, was the burden of his song, and he pointed to the complexion of the Bloomington ticket as evidence of the desire of the factions to attain it by any process. Bissell [William H. Bissell, Republican running for governor], a renegade democrat, headed it. Hoffman, a German nondescript [Francis A. Hoffman, Republican running for lieutenant governor, who would as a native of Germany lacking the requisite 14 years of citizenship later be replaced by John Wood of Adams County], followed; Miller, ex-whig and probable know-nothing [James Miller, Republican for treasurer], followed next, while Hatch [Ozias M. Hatch, Republican for secretary of state], Dubois [Jesse K. Dubois, Republican for auditor] and Powell [William H. Powell, Republican for superintendent of public instruction], avowed know-nothings, brought up the rear. With such a medley – such a fusion of opposites, none can doubt that the end and aim of the Bloomington organization is “power” – and place, and that its managers would sink any principle, trample upon right, law and constitution to attain their object. Mr. Lincoln’s allusion to Bissell’s services as a warrior was singularly malapropos, in him, at least; Bissell’s laurels having been won in a war, the “identical spot” on which it commenced never could be learned by Mr. L., and consequently had his inveterate opposition during its entire progress, by his congressional action in hampering the democratic administration in its prosecution. In this connection, Bissell may well exclaim – “Save me from such backing!”

Except from the squad of claquers we have mentioned, Mr. Lincoln’s remarks were received with coldness. He convinced nobody of his own sincerity, of the justness of his cause, nor did he elicit any applause except from the drilled few who occupied the front benches.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

June 17, Tuesday: The Reverend [Theodore Parker](#) wrote to Dr. Fuster, a Viennese professor, mentioning news of [Professor Pierre Jean Édouard Desor](#).

In Worcester, [Henry Thoreau](#), H.G.O. Blake, and Theophilus Brown needed to use a carriage when they went out to Quinsigamund Pond, because they were being accompanied by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#).

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



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

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

ELLERY CHANNING

DUNBAR FAMILY

PROVIDENCE



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

June 19, Thursday: [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) to his journal, in [Concord](#):

EDMUND HOSMER



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

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

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

ELLERY CHANNING

JOHN THOREAU, SR.

DUNBAR FAMILY

June 21, Saturday: [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) to his journal, in [Concord](#):



*Exceedingly warm at Concord. Thermometer at 93 in the shade north side Mr. Thoreau's house, 12 M., rose to 97; spent the forenoon with Mr. Thoreau, Senr., walked down by the river and sat under the shade of the willows by the bank. I had a pleasant conversation with Miss Thoreau this P.M.; walked to Walden Pond with H.D.T. this P.M.; bathed, and crossed the pond with him in a boat we found upon the shore. Saw the Scarlet Tanager by the aid of Thoreau's glass, a bird I had never seen before. He was perched upon the topmost bough of a pine, and chanted forth his simple song with considerable earnestness for some time. R.W. Emerson called upon me this evening; talked of Channing and the Kansas affairs. Walked home with him and with Thoreau. This has been extremely warm, thermometer at 99 at 5 P.M. north side shade of Mr. T.'s house.*

ELLERY CHANNING

JOHN THOREAU, SR.

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

WALDO EMERSON

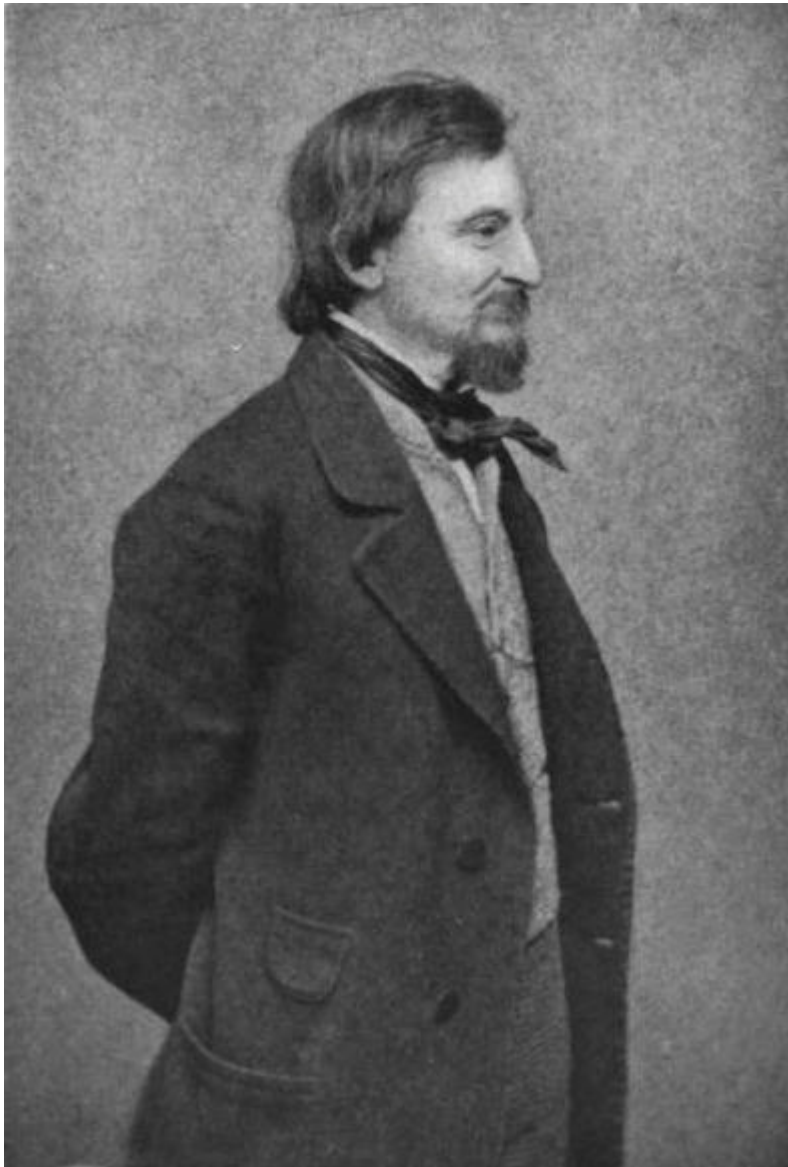
A series of poems by [Louisa May Alcott](#), entitled "Beach Bubbles," began in Boston's [Saturday Evening Gazette](#).

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to Calvin H. Greene of Rochester, Michigan.



THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*Concord Saturday*

*June 21<sup>st</sup> '56*

*Dear Sir*

*On the 12 ult I forwarded the two books to California, observing your directions in every particular, and I trust that Uncle Sam will discharge his duty faithfully. While in Worcester this week I obtained the accompanying daguerreotype — which my friends think is pretty good — though better looking than I.*

<i>Books &amp; postage</i>	— — —	<i>\$2.64</i>
<i>Daguerreotype</i>		<i>.50</i>
<i>Postage</i>	— — —	<i><u>.16</u></i>
		<i>3.30</i>
		<i>5.00</i>
		<i><u>3.30</u></i>

*You will accordingly  
find 1.70 enclosed with my shadow.*

*Yrs*

*Henry D. Thoreau*

November 1, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote home to [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) while at the [Eagleswood](#) community near Perth Amboy, [New Jersey](#).

*Direct Eagleswood—Perth Amboy*

*N.J.*

*Sat. eve Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> '56*

*Dear Sophia,*

*I have hardly had time & repose enough to write to you before. I spent the afternoon of Friday (it seems some months ago) in Worcester, but failed to see Blake, he having “gone to the horse race”! in Boston;—to atone for which I have just received a letter from him, asking me to stop at Worcester & lecture on my return— I called on Brown & Higginson, & in the evening came by way of Norwich to N.Y. in the steamer Commonwealth, and though it was so windy on land, had a perfectly smooth passage, and about as good a sleep as usually at home. Reached NY about 7 Am, too late for the John Potter (there was 'nt any Jonas) so I spent the forenoon there, called on Greeley, (who was not in) met Bellew in Broadway and walked into his work-shop, read at the Astor Library &c &c— I arrived here, about 30 miles from N.Y. about 5 pm saturday, in company with Miss E. Peabody, who was returning in the same covered wagon from the Landing to Eagleswood, which last place she has just left for the winter. This is a queer place— There is one large long stone building, which cost some \$40000, in which I do not know exactly who or*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*how many lurk—one or two familiar faces, & more familiar names have turned up)—a few shops & offices, an old farm house and Mr Spring's perfectly private residence within 20 rods of the main building. "The City of Perth Amboy" is about as big as Concord, and Eagleswood is 1 1/4 miles S W of it, on the bay side. The central fact here is evidently Mr Weld's school—recently established—around which various other things revolve. Saturday evening I went to the school room, hall, or what not, to see the children & their teachers & patrons dance. Mr Weld, a kind looking man with a long white beard, danced with them, & Mr Cutler his assistant, lately from Cambridge, who is acquainted Sanborn,—Mr Spring—and others. This Sat. eve-dance is a regular thing, & it is thought something strange if you dont attend. They take it for granted that you want so-  
ciety!*

*Sunday forenoon, I attended a sort of Quaker meeting at the same place—(The Quaker aspect & spirit prevails here— Mrs Spring says "—does thee not?") where it was expected that the spirit would move me (I having been previously spoken to about it) & it, or something else, did, an inch or so. I said just enough to set them a little by the ears & make it lively. I had excused my self by saying that I could not adapt myself to a particular audience, for all the speaking & lecturing here has reference to the children, who are far the greater part of the audience, & they are not so bright as N.E.*

*children Imagine them sitting close to the wall all around a hall—with old Quaker looking men & women here & there. There sat Mrs Weld (Grimke) & her sister, two elderly grayheaded ladies, the former in extreme Bloomer costume, which was what you may call remarkable; Mr Buffum with broad face & a great white beard, looking like a pier head made of the cork tree with the bark on, as if he could buffet a considerable wave;—James G. Birney formerly candidate for the Presidency with another particularly white head & beard—Edward Palmer, the anti-money man (for whom communities were made) with also an ample beard somewhat grayish. Some of these I suspect are very worthy people. Of course you are wondering to what extent all these make one family—to what extent 20. Mrs Kirkland, another name only to me, I saw— She has just bought a lot here. They all know more about your neighbors & acquaintances than you suspected.*

*On Sunday evening, I read the moose-story to the children to their satisfaction.*

*Ever since I have been constantly engaged in surveying Eagleswood—through woods ravines marshes & along the shore, dodging the tide—through cat-briar mud & beggar ticks—having no time to look up or think where I am—(it takes 10 or 15 minutes before each meal to pick the beggar ticks out of my clothes—burrs & the rest are left—rents mended at the first convenient opportunity) I shall be engaged perhaps as much longer. Mr Spring wants me to help him*

ANGELINA EMILY GRIMKÉ

SARAH MOORE GRIMKÉ



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*about setting out an orchard & vineyard— Mr Birney asks me to survey a small piece for him, & Mr Alcott who has just come down here for the 3<sup>d</sup> Sunday—says that Greeley (I left my name for him) invites him & me to go to his home with him next saturday morning & spend the Sunday.*

*It seems a twelve-month since I was not here—but I hope to get settled deep into my den again ere long. The hardest thing to find here is solitude & Concord. I am at Mr Spring's house— Both he & she & their family are quite agreeable—*

*I want you to write to me immediately—(just left off to talk French with the servant man—) & let Father & Mother put in a word—to whom & to aunts—*

*Love from*

*Henry.*





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1857

September 15, Tuesday: William Howard Taft, who would become our 27th President (1909-1913), was born. At this point he was but an infant, weighing but some finite number of pounds.

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, inviting her to visit Concord and see the autumn foliage.



October 6, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Boston to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, commenting on the weather and on Concord friends:

*"You inquire after the big squash<sup>18</sup> I suppose I must consider it was indeed duly honored since I saw a notice of it in the Boston Herald."*



October 6, Tuesday: P.M. –To Saw Mill Brook via Hubbard's Close. A beautiful bright afternoon, still warmer than yesterday. I carry my coat on my arm. This weather makes the locust to be heard, –many of them. I go along the hill from the old burying-ground and descend at Minott's. Everything –all fruits and leaves, the reddish-silvery feathery grass in clumps,<sup>19</sup> even the surfaces of stone and stubble– are all ripe in this air. Yes, the hue of maturity has come even to that fine silver-topped feathery grass, two or three feet high, in clumps on dry places. I am riper for thought, too.

Of trees which are numerous here and form considerable masses or groups, those now sufficiently changed in their color to attract the eye generally are red maple (in prime), –N.B., the white maples began in water long ago, but are rare, –white birch (perhaps in prime), young oaks in sprout-lands, etc. (especially young scarlet oaks), white ash, white pines (when near), elms, buttonwoods, and perhaps walnuts. Some others are equally changed, but so rare or distant from the village as to make less impression on me.

The shrubs now generally conspicuous from some distance, from their changed color and mass, are huckleberries and blueberries (high and low), smooth sumach and *Rhus venenata*, woodbine, button-bush, and grape perhaps.

I observe too that the ferns of a rich brown (being sere), about swamps, etc., are an important feature. A broad belt of rich brown (and crisp) ferns stands about many a bright maple swamp.

Some maples are in form and color like hickories, tall and irregular. It, indeed, admits of singular variety in form and color. I see one now shaped like a hickory which is a very rich yellow with a tinge of brown, which, when I turn my head slightly, concealing the trunk, looks like a mass of yellow cloud, wreath upon wreath, drifting through the air, stratified by the wind.<sup>20</sup>

The trumpet-weeds are perfectly killed sere brown along the fences.

18. Journal, September 28, Monday, 1856: I planted six seeds sent from the Patent Office and labelled, I think, "Poitrine jaune grosse" (large yellow pumpkin (or squash?)). Two came up, and one bore a squash which weighs 123  $\frac{1}{3}$  lbs.

19. *Andropogon scoparius*.

20. Excursions, p. 262; Riv. 321.

GEORGE MINOTT



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Think what a change, unperceived by many, has within a month come over the landscape! Then the general, the universal, hue was green. Now see those brilliant scarlet and glowing yellow trees in the lowlands a mile off! I see them, too, here and there on the sides of hills, standing out distinct, mere bright [an indecipherable word] and squads perchance, often in long broken lines, and so apparently elevated by their distinct color that they seem arranged like the remnants of a morning mist just retreating in a broken line along the hillsides. Or see that crowd in the swamp half a mile through, all vying with one another, a blaze of glory. See those crimson patches far away on the hillsides, like dense flocks of crimson sheep, where the huckleberry reminds of recent excursions. See those patches of rich brown in the low grounds, where the ferns stand shrivelled. See the greenish-yellow phalanes of birches, and the crisped yellowish elm-tops here and there. We are not prepared to believe that the earth is now so parti-colored, and would present to a bird's eye such distinct masses of bright color. A great painter is at work. The very pumpkins yellowing in the fields become a feature in the landscape, and thus they have shone, maybe, for a thousand years here.

I have just read Ruskin's "Modern Painters." I am disappointed in not finding it a more out-of-door book, for I have heard that such was its character, but its title might have warned me. He does not describe Nature as Nature, but as Turner<sup>21</sup> painted her, and though the work betrays that he has given a close attention to Nature, it appears to have been with an artist's and critic's design. How much is written about Nature as somebody has portrayed her, how little about Nature as she is, and chiefly concerns us, i. e. how much prose, how little poetry! Going through Ebby Hubbard's woods, I see thousands of white pine cones on the ground, fresh light brown, which lately opened and shed their seeds and lie curled up on the ground. The seeds are rather pleasant or nutritious tasting, taken in quantity, like beechnuts, methinks. I see a great quantity of hypopitys, now all sere, along the path in the woods beyond. Call it Pine-Sap Path. It seems to have been a favorable season for it. It was evidently withered earlier than the tobacco-pipe, which is still pretty white!

Going through the Ministerial sprout-lands, I see the young oaks generally turning scarlet, and chestnuts, too, the young and also the old.

The lower chestnut leaves are among the most interesting now when closely inspected, varying from green to yellow, very finely and richly peppered with brown and green spots, at length turning brown with a tinge of crimson; but they, like others, must be seen on the twig, for they fade immediately, or in one night, if plucked. These brilliant leaves are as tender and inclined to wilt and fade as flowers, indeed are more transitory.

The amelanchier is yellowing and reddening a little, and also falling. I see Lobelia inflata leaves in the shade, a peculiar hoary white.

I see one or two chestnut burs open on the trees. The squirrels, red and gray, are on all sides throwing them down. You cannot stand long in the woods without hearing one fall.

As I came up the Turnpike, I smelt that strong-scented –like carrion, etc.– obscene fungus at the mossy bank, and I saw a dozen of those large Mat oval black bugs with light-colored shoulder-pieces, such as, methinks, I see on carrion, feeding on its remnants....

The frontier houses<sup>22</sup> preserve many of the features of the logging-camp....

Looking up Trout Stream, it seemed as wild a place for a man to live as we had seen. What a difference between a residence there and within five minutes' walk of the depot! What different men the two lives must turn out!

December 31, Thursday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, among other things about concerts in Boston and her current reading:

*In October ... my dear father was attacked with jaundice & became very dangerously ill, for many weeks I was absorbed in the duties of nurse. The good man is now much better & were it not for a cough which is very severe at present I should consider him quite sound –.... As to Concord we are kept awake by our Lyceum lectures which have been particularly acceptable thus far. Mr. Emerson gave the first of the season, next came Mr. Algar & then Geo. W. Curtis charmed us all with his discourse on "Sir Philip Sidney." We are now listening to a course of lectures from Rev. Mr. Stone on English literature. The Concord "Dramatic Union" composed of some gifted young people serve us to an entertainment occasionally. Christmas night they gave us some scenes from Dickens.*

21. J.M.W. Turner.

22. In Maine.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[George William Curtis](#) lectured about [Sir Philip Sidney](#) (this would in 1895 appear in his [LITERARY AND SOCIAL ESSAYS](#)).



[Waldo Emerson](#) checked out [Edmond François Valentin About](#)'s GREECE AND THE GREEKS OF THE PRESENT DAY from the Boston Athenaeum library.

### GREECE AND THE GREEKS

[Richard Henry Horne](#) was a commissioner of the Yan Yean water supply in Australia.



December 31, Thursday: P.M. Surveying Goose Pond.

After some rain yesterday and in the night, there was a little more snow, and the ground is still covered. I am surprised to find Walden still closed since Sunday night, notwithstanding the warm weather since it skimmed over, and that Goose Pond bears, though covered with slosh; but ice under water is slow to thaw. It does not break up so soon as you would expect. Walking over it, I thought that I saw an old glove on the ice or slosh, but, approaching, found it to be a bullfrog, flat on its belly with its legs stretched out. Touching it, I found it to be alive, though it could only partially open its eyes, and it hung motionless and flimsy like a rag in my hands. It was evidently nearly chilled to death and could not jump, though there was then no freezing. I looked round a good while and finally found a hole to put it into, squeezing it through. Perhaps in such a warm rain the surface water becomes warmer than at the bottom, and so tempts the frogs up on to the ice through a hole. This one was wholly unscathed by any animal, but would surely have frozen stiff in the night.

It is remarkable that in ordinary winter weather you will commonly find some of these small holes called air or breathing holes, in most ponds. But of whatever service they may be to the inhabitants of the water, they are not commonly formed by any undulation or upwelling from below, but as far as I have observed, by surface water flowing in through a crevice and wearing away the ice.

Warm as it is, underneath all this slosh the ice seems as solid as ever.

Under and attached to one of the lowermost branches of a white pine sapling in my old potato-field, I see a large hornet's nest, close to the ground.

I have been surveying most of the time for a month past and have associated with various characters:—

First there was Staples, quick, clear, downright, and on the whole a good fellow, especially good to treat with



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

rougher and slower men than himself, always meaning well.



An Irishman, rather slow and dull but well-meaning.

A rustic innkeeper, evidently rather close-fisted.

George Heywood, a quiet, efficient man, very gentlemanly and agreeable to deal with; no pretense nor bluster, but simple, direct, and even sweet.

——, a crooked stick, not readily apprehending your drift, referring to old deeds or places which he can't find, thinking he is entitled to many more acres than belong to him, but never leaving his work or his cattle to attend to you. To be found commonly in his barn, if you come upon him suddenly before he can hide. Has some complaint or injury which deforms him somewhat, —has crooked his body, so that when you meet him in the street he looks as if he was going across the road. Another Irishman, one of the worst of his race, full of blarney, one of the would-be gentlemen, who, when treated according to his deserts, having complained unreasonably of my price, apologizes by saying that he meant nothing. "What's the use of having a tongue in your head if you don't use it?"

A common specimen of the Yankee, who commonly answers me with "exactly" or "just so."

——, who was so afraid he should lose some land belonging to him that, though he had employed Rice to survey his small wood-lot of three acres, within a year, he working two or three days at it and setting at least fifty stakes about it, having also two plans of it, yet, seeing that I had by chance set a stake a foot or two one side of his line, thought there was some mistake and would have me measure his lot anew. It was but little labor, the lines were so open, —for a path was actually worn round the whole lot. He appears to go round it every day or two. When I wanted a straight pole, he was very scrupulous not to cut it from his neighbor's side of the line. He did not seem able to understand a plan or deed, and had sold some of his land because he did not know that he had a good title to it. Everything I told him about his deed and plan seemed to surprise him infinitely and make him laugh with excess of interest. When I pointed out anything in the plan, he did not look at it, only at my finger and at me, and took my word for it. I told him that I wondered his last surveyor had not set a stake and stone in one place, according to his plan and deed, a perfectly plain case, the stump of the pitch pine referred to being left. He said he did n't want to make bounds, and asked me if I should have set it there, to which I answered, "Yes, of course," that was what I had been doing all my life, making bounds, or rather finding them, remaking what had been unmade, where they were away. He listened to me as if I were an oracle. He did not in the least understand my instrument, or "spy-glass," as he called it, but had full faith that it knew the way straight through the thickest wood to missing bounds. He was so deaf I had to shout to him, and there were two more in his house deafer than he, —and I think only one other. The passers-by commonly hear them talking to one another within. I could never communicate with him when setting a stake or-carrying the chain but by signs, and must first get his attention to the signs. This I accomplished, when he had hold of the chain, by giving it several smart jerks. When he paid me at his house, I observed that all his money was in silver. He said he told H—— that we had been cutting off some of his land, and H said, "Is that right?" H has a good deal of large old wood which he will not cut. —— says that he goes into it with his axe, and striking on an old tree says, "That's sound," and so lets it stand, though when cut it turns out to be false-hearted.

—— says that Rice worked two days on only two sides of his lot, but that he told him he would not charge him but two dollars if it took him a week. I found and used one of Rice's poles, left on the ground all planned for the purpose, for he worked not without tools.





THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1858

February 5, Friday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, passing along some Concord gossip and describing her current reading:

*"My poor father continues being unwell still."*





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

November 29, Monday: After visiting the “Hill,” [Henry Thoreau](#) went with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to one of [Bronson Alcott](#)’s “Conversations,” held at the Emerson home. The topic of this particular conversation was “Private Life.” Also attending were Henry James, Sr., [Ellery Channing](#), Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) and Miss [Mary Moody Emerson](#), the Pratts (John Bridge Pratt, his sister Caroline Pratt, and their mother?), Miss Ripley, [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), [Albert Stacy](#), and Samuel Gray Ward. After a number of confrontations and



verbal exchanges one-to-one, the Concord people finally ganged up on James. The *coup de grace* was administered as a monologue by Miss [Mary](#), and is unrecorded except for her peroration “Let me confront the monster.” James made a record that “The old lady had the flavour to me of primitive woods wherein the wolf howls, and the owl has never been dislodged; and I enjoyed the novelty of her apparition in these days too much to mind the scratches I got in making her better acquaintance.” Indeed. However unrecorded in detail, we know the monologue was effective, for [Bronson](#), who earlier that evening had been reduced to silence by Henry James, Sr.’s gibes, recorded in his journal that her “gifts of speech and mode of handling poor James, win the admiration of the party and the thanks of everyone present.”

Here is biographer Phyllis Cole’s account of the Alcott reading in the Emerson parlor, with the famous encounter between Henry James, Sr. and Mary Moody Emerson. Note that she considers Bronson Alcott and Miss Mary Moody Emerson as “two [Platonists](#)”:



Only the immediacy of conversation now brought out Mary’s fullest verbal power. Bronson Alcott, who had won enough of Mary’s confidence to attract her to his public conversations, offered dinner and an afternoon’s talk in early September. She appeared witty and incisive, regaling the company with stories about Waldo’s childhood and forbears. The two Platonists finally pursued their common ground as well: Alcott declared her “metaphysical in her tendencies and a match for any theologian,” favoring Dr. Price and his school.

Their reconciliation came just in time for Mary to make her justly famous last stand in Concord a defense of Bronson Alcott. Waldo was out of town lecturing the evening of Alcott’s conversation on “Private Life” in the Emersons’ parlor; but





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

those present, in addition to Mary, included Henry Thoreau and his sister Sophia, Ellery Channing, Franklin Sanborn, Lidian Emerson, Mary Brooks and her son George, Sarah Ripley's daughter Elizabeth, "others of our townfolk," and from out of town Sam Ward and Henry James Sr. Alcott's list of guests amounts to a group photograph of a Concord cultural event, rather easily blending genders and generations, writers and their neighbors. But Sanborn's report of the evening brings the photograph to life. James did not understand Alcottian conversation and took charge, so that neither Alcott nor Thoreau could "check the flow of the semi-Hibernian rhetoric." Even worse, James's point was to exonerate criminals from their crimes and charge society instead. Such moral relativism appealed to no Concordian. But Mary, amidst the men's consternation, grappled with the enemy directly. When James "spoke repeatedly and scornfully of the Moral Law," she burst forth to the whole group.

Rising from her chair at the west side of the room, and turning her oddly-garnished head toward the south side, where the offender smilingly sat, she clasped her little wrinkled hands and raised them toward the black band over her left temple (a habit she had when deeply moved), and began her answer to these doctrines of Satan, as she thought them. She expressed her amazement that any man should denounce the Moral Law, – the only tie of society, except religion, to which, she saw, the speaker made no claim. She referred him to the Bible and to Dr. Adam Clark (one of her great authorities from childhood) and she denounced him personally in the most racy terms. She did not cross the room and shake him, as some author, not an eye-witness, has fancied, – but she retained her position, sat down quietly when she had finished, and was complemented by the smiling James, who then perhaps for the first time had felt the force of her untaught rhetoric.

Sanborn's account of Mary's gestures and style of speech is unparalleled among all her chroniclers, but he did not fully grasp the issues at stake in this encounter. Mistaken in the name of Mary's philosopher (it was Dr. **Samuel** Clarke), he knew even less about the eighteenth-century school to which Clarke, along with Price, belonged. In fact, moral law was the center of the Enlightenment ethics, allowing for an affirmation at once of the mind's intuition and of God's universal truths. The "fitness" between these two realities had been the formative discovery of Mary's youth and the basis of her first argument with Alcott in 1834. Now it was her bond to the Transcendentalists, despite their replacement of Clarke with Kant: Waldo had written in 1841 that he and Mary could meet across generations "where truly we are one in our perception of one Law in our adoration of the Moral Sentiment." All of the inhabitants and visitors at the Emerson house except James wanted to affirm the individual's intuition of moral right as one with a "higher law."

Sanborn seriously underestimated Mary as well in calling the speech a piece of "untaught rhetoric," as though it were the





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

natural effusion of her soul rather than the result of long and difficult self-education. James himself was guilty of much greater condescension in his description of Mary several years later. He had not really been upset at "that confabulation at Mr Emerson's," James recalled, when "'shamefully treated' by the old Lady from Maine." "The old lady had the flavour to me of primitive woods wherein the wolf howls, and the owl has never been dislodged; and I enjoyed the novelty of her apparition in those days too much to mind the few scratches I got in making her better acquaintance." Leaving Clarke and the issues of universal ethics wholly behind, he jovially dismissed his critic by lowering her to a backwoods animality beneath mental life.

In truth her response to James was a triumphant ending to Mary's years of intellectual exchange in Concord, at once a recollection of her reading as a young woman at the Manse and a major defense of her vexatious allies the Transcendentalists. Alcott recorded that she won "the admiration of the party and thanks of everyone present." Then, after a Thanksgiving including all the Emersons and Ripleys, she was gone, finally assenting to Hannah Parsons's request that she come live in Williamsburg. Lidian and Ellen put in several hours packing her worldly goods and papers at the Brown house (she had either gotten them from Maine or collected more); Waldo accompanied her by train through Hartford, where they stayed in a hotel that was an "old lady's paradise"; William and his wife welcomed her for dinner at their Manhattan townhouse on December 15. At the age of eighty-four, Mary became a New Yorker.



November 29: P.M.— To Hill.

About three inches of snow fell last evening, and a few cows on the hillside have wandered about in vain to come at the grass. They have at length found that place high on the south side where the snow is thinnest.

How bright and light the day now! Methinks it is as good as half an hour added to the day. White houses no longer stand out and stare in the landscape. The pine woods snowed up look more like the bare oak woods with their gray boughs. The river meadows show now far off a dull straw-color or pale brown amid the general white, where the coarse sedge rises above the snow; and distant oak woods are now more distinctly reddish. It is a clear and pleasant winter day. The snow has taken all the November out of the sky. Now blue shadows, green rivers, — both which I see, — and still winter life.

I see partridge and mice tracks and fox tracks, and crows sit silent on a bare oak-top. I see a living shrike caught to-day in the barn of the Middlesex House.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1859

February 21, Monday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts in regard to the death of her father [John Thoreau](#):

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



CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

February 28, Monday: [George William Curtis](#) wrote from the north shore of Staten Island to Charles Wesley Slack agreeing to read on December 11th a lecture that he had prepared for Philadelphia and elsewhere on “The Recent Aspect of the Slavery Question.” In a postscript he made reference to the Reverend [Theodore Parker](#).

Sallie Holley wrote to Mrs. Porter about having attended [Henry Thoreau](#)’s Worcester lectures in H.G.O. Blake’s parlor on “AUTUMNAL TINTS”:

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*The last two evenings we had in Worcester, we were at two parlour lectures given by Mr. Henry D. Thoreau, the author of that odd book, Walden, or Life in the Woods. The first lecture was upon "Autumnal Tints," and was a beautiful and, I doubt not, a faithful report of the colours of leaves in October. Some of you may have read his "Chesuncook," in The Atlantic Monthly; if so you can fancy how quaint and observing, and humorous withal, he is as traveller – or excursionist-companion in wild solitudes. Several gentlemen, friends of his, tell us much of their tour with him to the White Mountains last summer, of his grand talk with their guide in "Tuckerman's Ravine," where they had their camp. He paid us the compliment of a nice long morning call after we heard him read his "Autumnal Tints," and remembered our being once at his mother's to tea, and Miss Putnam's looking over his herbarium with his sister.*

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

"AUTUMNAL TINTS": Europeans coming to America are surprised by the brilliancy of our autumnal foliage. There is no account of such a phenomenon in English poetry, because the trees acquire but few bright colors there. The most that Thomson says on this subject in his "Autumn" is contained in the lines –

"But see the fading many-colored woods,  
Shade deepening over shade, the country round  
Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dusk and dun,  
Of every hue, from wan declining green  
To sooty dark."

And the line in which he speaks

"Of Autumn beaming o'er the yellow woods."

The autumnal change of our woods has not made a deep impression on our own literature yet. October has hardly tinged our poetry.

JAMES THOMSON



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), the two volumes of Sir [Alexander Mackenzie](#)'s VOYAGES FROM MONTREAL, ON THE RIVER ST. LAURENCE, THROUGH THE CONTINENT OF NORTH AMERICA TO THE FROZEN AND PACIFIC OCEANS IN THE YEARS 1789 AND 1793. WITH A PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT OF THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND PRESENT STATE OF THE FUR TRADE OF THAT COUNTRY. WITH ORIGINAL NOTES BY BOUGAINVILLE, AND VOLNEY. ILLUSTRATED WITH MAPS. (London: Printed for T. Cadell; Jun. and W. Davies; and W. Creech by R. Noble; Edinburgh, W. Creech, 1802).



### VOYAGES FROM MONTREAL

"A YANKEE IN CANADA": I got home this Thursday evening, having spent just one week in Canada and travelled eleven hundred miles. The whole expense of this journey, including two guidebooks and a map, which cost one dollar twelve and a half cents, was twelve dollars seventy five cents. I do not suppose that I have seen all British America; that could not be done by a cheap excursion, unless it were a cheap excursion to the Icy Sea, as seen by Hearne or McKenzie, and then, no doubt, some interesting features would be omitted. I wished to go a little way behind that word *Canadense*, of which naturalists make such frequent use; and I should like still right well to make a longer excursion on foot through the wilder parts of Canada, which perhaps might be called *Iter Canadense*.

SAMUEL HEARNE  
ALEXANDER MACKENZIE



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Thoreau also checked out John Halkett, Esq.'s HISTORICAL NOTES RESPECTING THE INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA: WITH REMARKS ON THE ATTEMPTS MADE TO CONVERT AND CIVILIZE THEM (London: Printed for Archibald Constable and Co. Edinburgh; and Hurst, Robinson, and Co. 90, Cheapside, and 8, Pall Mall, 1825).<sup>23</sup>



### RESPECTING THE INDIANS

Thoreau also checked out Lionel Wafer (1640-1705)'s A NEW VOYAGE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ISTHMUS OF AMERICA, GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S ABODE THERE, THE FORM AND MAKE OF THE COUNTRY, THE COASTS, HILLS, RIVERS, &C. WOODS, SOIL, WEATHER, &C. TREES, FRUIT, BEASTS, BIRDS, FISH, &C. (London: Printed for J. Knapton, 1699).

<http://web.princeton.edu/sites/english/eng321/WAFER.HTM>



"There is no Frigate like a Book  
To take us Lands away"  
— Emily Dickinson

23. He would put his notes on this reading into his Indian Notebook #12. He would also, in about 1861, read a review of this book by Lewis Cass and put his notes on this reading of this review into that same Indian Notebook.



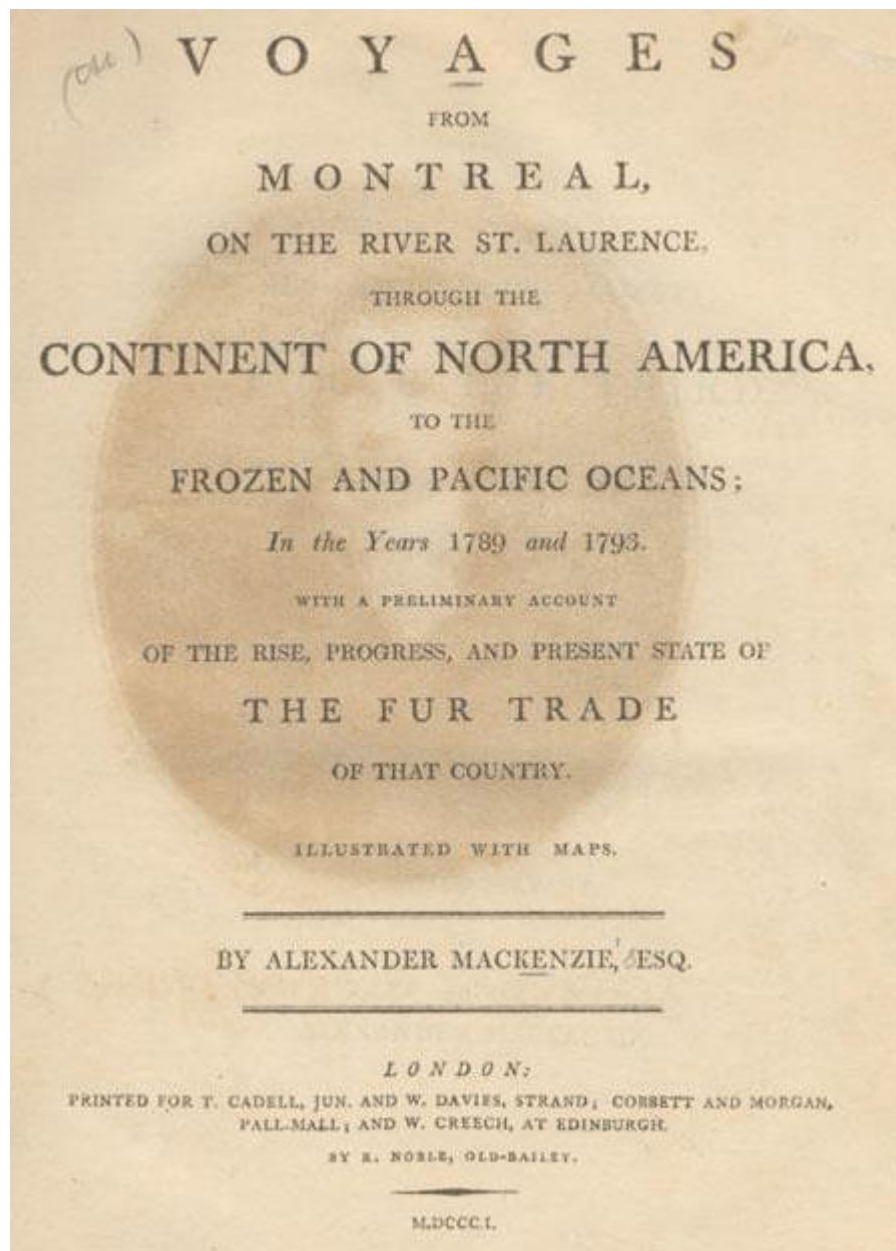
HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU







## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU



February 28. To Cambridge and Boston.

Saw a mackerel in the market. The upper half of its sides is mottled blue and white like the mackerel sky, as stated January 19th, 1858.

October 11, Tuesday: [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) made a donation, through [Waldo Emerson](#), for John Brown.



October 11: P.M.—To Cliffs.

Looking under large oaks, black and white, the acorns appear to have fallen or been gathered by squirrels, etc. I see in many *distant* places stout twigs (black or scarlet oak) three or four inches long which have been gnawed off by the squirrels, with four to seven acorns on each, and left on the ground. These twigs have been gnawed off on each side of the nuts in order to make them more portable, I suppose. The nuts all abstracted and sides of the cups broken to get them out.



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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1860

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

Walt Whitman came to [Boston](#) to oversee the printing of the 3d edition of LEAVES OF GRASS. He had picked up, from various scientific and scientistic sources in the general culture, the Lamarckian notion that if you ate right and exercised, and then had good free sex, your children could be genetically improved, leading to the progressive development of the human kind.<sup>24</sup> [Waldo Emerson](#) tried to persuade him to omit his overtly sexual “Children of Adam” poem (Whitman explained later that Emerson “did not see that if I had cut sex out I might just as well have cut everything out,” because his doctrine that the expression of human instinct was the expression of divine immanence could not allow that in a single exception the expression of human instinct was the expression of something else, something not divine, something that needed to be, not uninhibited, but inhibited). Whitman was proposing a new nationalistic chronology, according to which the supreme, in fact pivotal, event of world history was not the birth of Christ but the date of our throwing off the English yoke. Thus that 3d edition, issued in AD1860, was marked “85TS,” that is, the 86th year of These States. Despite all this hot patriotism, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), [Lidian Emerson](#), and Abba Alcott, discussing together, put it out to the menfolk that this Walt fellow would not to be welcome in their homes.

January 9, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) went into [Boston](#) to spend the day testifying the case of their aunts [Aunt Maria Thoreau](#) and [Aunt Jane Thoreau](#) vs. the spite fence that had been erected by Eliza Pallies. They were reimbursed by the court for their time and travel.

[Thoreau](#) was being written to by Hobart & Robbins in [Boston](#), paying \$9.<sup>00</sup> for six pounds of [plumbago](#).

*Boston Jany 9, 1860  
Mr. Henry D. Thoreaux Concord, Mass.  
Enclosed are Nine Dollars, for which, please send at once 6 lbs  
best (ground) plumbago, with bill  
Yrs &c  
Hobart & Robbins*

[Thoreau](#) was being contacted by Edward Bangs of [Boston](#),  
to testify on January 10th in the case of the Thoreau aunts versus Miss Pallies.

*Dear Sir:  
Your Aunts case vs. Miss Pallies will be tried tomorrow – will  
you please come down by the first train?  
Very truly yours  
Edward Bangs*

[Thoreau](#) was being written to by the Superintendent of the Franklin Type and Stereotype Foundry of Cincinnati, R. Allison, who was paying a bill for \$10.<sup>00</sup> worth of supplies.

24. That hot fantasy did not necessarily have anything in particular to do with [Waldo Emerson](#)’s worm “striving to be man” as it “mounts through all the spires of form,” for it was a notion that had been around for a long time: certain ancient Greeks believed that were a woman to receive an inadequate quantity or quality of semen and sexual interest during her pregnancy, she was more likely to bear a female / deformed / inadequate child. And Lamarckism would also be around for a long time after Whitman, as witness such pop luminaries of our own era as Arthur Koestler and Teilhard de Chardin.



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

*From R. ALLISON  
Jany 9th 1860  
Mr. H.D. Thoreau Concord Mass.  
Dear Sir:  
Enclosed please find \$10 Amt of your bill of 27th Ult. Please  
acknowledge recpt and oblige  
From EDWARD BANGS  
Yours truly  
R. Allison Supt.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

February: Walt Whitman came to Boston to oversee the printing of the 3d edition of LEAVES OF GRASS. He had picked up, from various scientific and scientific sources in the general culture, the Lamarckian notion that if you ate right and exercised, and then had good free sex, your children could be genetically improved, leading to the progressive development of the human kind.<sup>25</sup> [Waldo Emerson](#) tried to persuade him to omit his overtly sexual “Children of Adam” poem (Whitman explained later that Emerson “did not see that if I had cut sex out I might just as well have cut everything out,” because his doctrine that the expression of human instinct was the expression of divine immanence could not allow that in a single exception the expression of human instinct was the expression of something else, something not divine, something that needed to be, not uninhibited, but inhibited).

### “Specimen Days”

#### BOSTON COMMON — MORE OF EMERSON

I spend a good deal of time on the Common, these delicious days and nights – every mid-day from 11.30 to about 1 – and almost every sunset another hour. I know all the big trees, especially the old elms along Tremont and Beacon streets, and have come to a sociable-silent understanding with most of them, in the sunlit air, (yet crispy-cool enough,) [Page 915] as I saunter along the wide unpaved walks. Up and down this breadth by Beacon street, between these same old elms, I walk’d for two hours, of a bright sharp February mid-day twenty-one years ago, with Emerson, then in his prime, keen, physically and morally magnetic, arm’d at every point, and when he chose, wielding the emotional just as well as the intellectual. During those two hours he was the talker and I the listener. It was an argument-statement, reconnoitring, review, attack, and pressing home, (like an army corps in order, artillery, cavalry, infantry,) of all that could be said against that part (and a main part) in the construction of my poems, “Children of Adam.” More precious than gold to me that dissertation – it afforded me, ever after, this strange and paradoxical lesson; each point of E.’s statement was unanswerable, no judge’s charge ever more complete or convincing, I could never hear the points better put – and then I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakable conviction to disobey all, and pursue my own way. “What have you to say then to such things?” said E., pausing in conclusion. “Only that while I can’t answer them at all, I feel more settled than ever to adhere to my own theory, and exemplify it,” was my candid response. Whereupon we went and had a good dinner at the American House. And thenceforward I never waver’d or was touch’d with qualms, (as I confess I had been two or three times before).

Whitman was proposing a new nationalistic chronology, according to which the supreme, in fact pivotal, event of world history was not the birth of Christ but the date of our throwing off the English yoke. Thus that 3d edition, issued in AD1860, was marked “85TS,” that is, the 86th year of These States. Despite all this hot patriotism, [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#), and Mrs. Abba Alcott, discussing together, put it out to the menfolk that this Walt fellow would not to be welcome in their homes.

[THE ALCOTT FAMILY](#)

25. That hot fantasy did not necessarily have anything in particular to do with [Waldo Emerson](#)’s worm “striving to be man” as it “mounts through all the spires of form,” for it was a notion that had been around for a long time: certain ancient Greeks believed that were a woman to receive an inadequate quantity or quality of semen and sexual interest during her pregnancy, she was more likely to bear a female / deformed / inadequate child. And Lamarckism would also be around for a long time after Walt Whitman, as witness such pop luminaries of our own era as Arthur Koestler and Teilhard de Chardin.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

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

[CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU](#)





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Early Summer: [The Alcott family](#) hosted a reception for Mary Ann Day Brown.



20 people were invited and 42 attended. Evidently the ladies, instigated by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), presented a bedquilt or comforter to Mrs. Brown, hand inscribed with appropriate mottoes, for we have a letter written on a Sunday during this period by Annie Bartlett, 23-year-old daughter of [Dr. Josiah Bartlett](#) of Concord,<sup>26</sup> to her soldier brother Ned, speaking of such an appropriate gift:



*Miss Sophia Thoreau has been round for all the ladies to make a square for a bedquilt or comforter to be given to Mrs. John Ossawatomie Brown the center of which must be white so the ladies can write their names and a line of poetry or prose from scripture or elsewhere. Florry and Annie Keys have made theirs and have written "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Emmie doesn't like the writing, but George said he wrote on hers, "Blessed are the peacemakers (piece-makers)." Wasn't that a good joke. So was Florry's but I don't think she thought of it.*

26. We can see here that though the Bartletts didn't approve of Henry, they didn't have such a problem regarding [Sophia](#).





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

### “TEXAS TERROR”

Although [Henry Thoreau](#) had sprained his thumb, making writing difficult, when his mother [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) suggested this, he was able to manage a letter to [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#):

*Concord July 8 1860*

*Dear Sophia,*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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



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

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

*Early last Spring my dear mother was very severely attacked with lung fever & ever since her health has been exceedingly frail. At present she is more unwell than usual suffering with [influenza](#), which in her feeble condition, renders her very ill.*

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1861

May 15, Wednesday or later: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) &/or [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) presumably from [Niagara Falls](#), New York.

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

HDT

WHAT?

INDEX

THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU



**White Men Worship Size and Power *circa* 1698**



Sight of rapids, from Brid[g]e like sea off Cape Cod.... Many ducks<sup>27</sup> constantly floating a little way

27. Apparently long-tailed Coween or “Oldsquaw” ducks *Clangula hyemalis*.

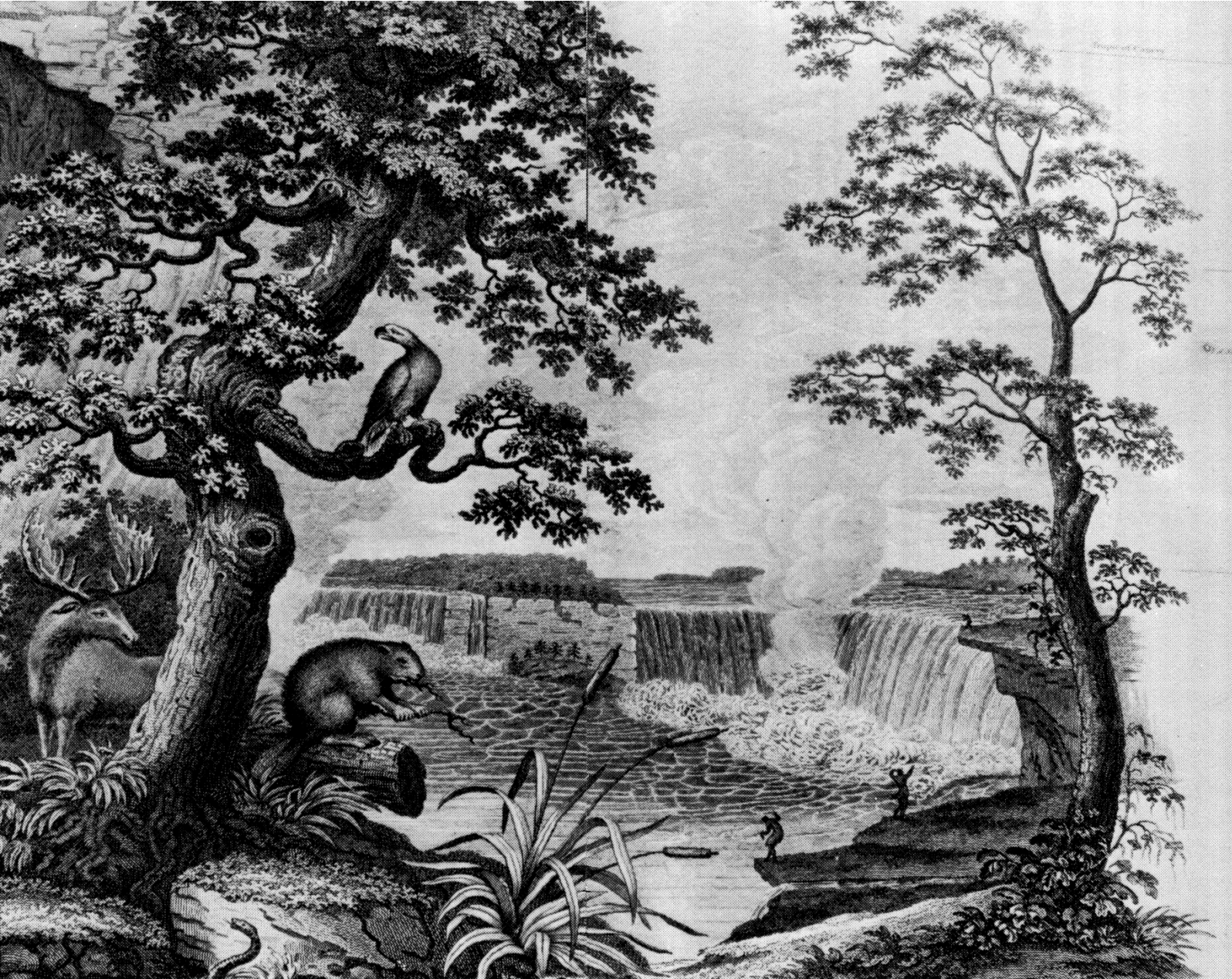


[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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



Niagara as portrayed by H.S. Tanner in 1822



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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

—Charles Dickens, 1842



The H.S. Tanner picture of 1822, as quoted by [Edward Hicks](#) in 1825

May 27, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) in St. Paul, Minnesota wrote to [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) &/or [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#).





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*7 Am May 27—*

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

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

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

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

Alyeksandr Borodin met Yekaterina Sergeevna Protopopova, a talented Russian pianist in Heidelberg to be treated for [tuberculosis](#).



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

September 3, Tuesday: The 23rd anniversary of Frederick Douglass's freedom, which we may well elect to celebrate **in lieu of an unknown slave birthday.**

Here is a Daguerreotype, by an unidentified photographer in the 1850-1855 timeframe.



*"It has been a source of great annoyance to me, never to have a birthday."*

Per [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#)'s journal:<sup>28</sup>By this point Abby May, the youngest of the Alcott daughters, would

BRONSON ALCOTT

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

SOPHIA E. THOREAU



*Weather warm and cloudy. Spent forenoon with Mr. Alcott in his study, Thoreau there part of the time. On our way visited an antiquarian collection of a Mr. Davis in company with Miss Sophia Thoreau and Mr. Thoreau. Dined with Mr. Alcott, his wife, and daughters Louisa and Abby.*

*Returned to Thoreau's to tea, walked this evening in the dark, got lost for a time, but by retracing my steps found my way again. Dark cloudy evening, warm. Talked with T. till ten.*

have reached her full adult stature of five feet ten inches, so she must have made quite a contrast with the five foot three inch Ricketson! "How's the weather down there?"

THE ALCOTT FAMILY

28. Would this Mr. Davis be the wealthy philanthropist who in 1843 was leading the "Providence Movement" of mystic anarchists in Providence RI? Or the owner of "Eleazer Davis's Hill" near Carlisle Bridge? Would he be a descendant of the Davis who stood and delivered among the Concord minutemen on the Lexington battleground?



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1862

Early in the year: A later letter from Theophilus Brown to [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#), on January 19, 1868, described a conversation that had taken place early in this year: H.G.O. Blake had asked [Henry Thoreau](#) how the future seemed, and



*"Just as uninteresting as ever, was his characteristic answer.... He said it was just as good to be sick as to be well, – just as good to have a poor time as a good time."*

According to a letter from [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to [Friend Ricketson](#) on May 20, 1862, shortly before dying [Henry](#) indicated by a shattering remark



Death is as near to you as it is to me.

that he had not deviated in the slightest from his belief in the incommensurability of durations, and his disbelief in any real dimensionality of time. Let us replay this snip of conversation in full: A visitor had ventured the banal remark



We must all go.

And Thoreau responded, faintly, between coughs



When I was a very little boy, I learned that I must die, and I set that down, so of course I am not disappointed now. Death is as near to you as it is to me.

Something about the manner in which Thoreau died indicates to me that his attitude toward eternity was what he was keeping before him at the end. It is, Thoreau noted in WEEK, through silence that all revelations have been made. And, in a letter, he suggested that to stop up our ears against the “immediate” voice of God is “the only sin” (CORRESPONDENCE 52). Since the Indian, for Thoreau, is the type case of the human being who understands how to live spontaneously, without mediation, in the presented eternal moment (“He does not carry things in his head, but relies on himself at the moment” in III 205), and since the Indian, like the moose and other animals, relies upon all his senses and “does not give a distinct, conscious attention to any one” and since the Indian finds his way in the wilderness “very much as an animal does,” when those attending Thoreau at the end detected him breathing the identifiable words “moose” and “Indian,” it has done us no harm to speculate that Thoreau was attempting to continue the job of editing his manuscripts so as to be able to leave an estate for his survivors, but it would also do us no harm to hypothecate that Thoreau was emphasizing to himself this similarity which he had so often urged us all to emulate, and which he had so often urged upon himself. This is an appropriate thing of which to remind oneself, as one is enduring the difficulties of lying somewhere dying.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

March 4, Tuesday: Letter to [Ticknor & Fields](#) from [H.D. Thoreau](#) by the hand of his sister [Sophia](#), changing the title of “The Higher Law” to “Life without Principle,” and changing the title of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#): “I wish to make one alteration in the new edition viz, to leave out from the title the words ‘Or Life in the Woods’.”

[TIMELINE OF WALDEN](#)

*Concord March 4<sup>th</sup> '62*  
*Messrs Ticknor & Fields,*  
*I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your check for one hundred dollars on account of manuscript sent to you— As for another title for the Heigher Law article, I can think of nothing better than, Life without Principle. The paper on Walking will be ready ere long. I shall be happy to have you print 250. copies of Walden on the terms mentioned & will consider this answer as settling the business. I wish to make one alteration in the new edition viz, to leave out from the title the words “or Life in the Woods.”*  
*Yours truly*  
*H.D. Thoreau*  
*by S.E. Thoreau*

HDT

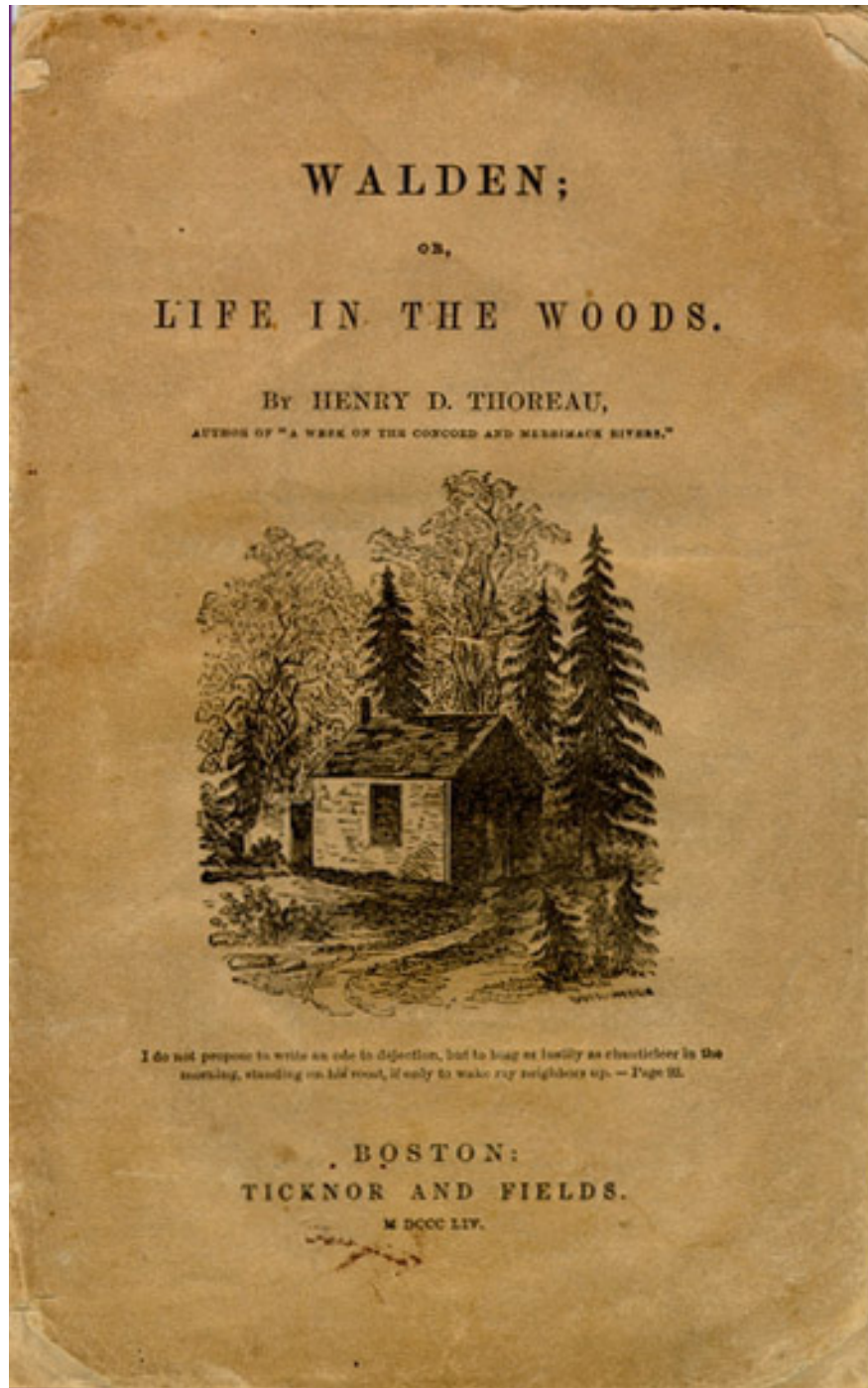
WHAT?

INDEX

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[Thoreau](#) acknowledged receipt from Ticknor & Fields of a draft, for \$100.<sup>00</sup>, which may well have been their payment for "AUTUMNAL TINTS".





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

(Thoreau's book had been primarily the publication of a collection of lyceum lectures he had offered, made up of one lyceum lecture per chapter. One of his earliest of these lyceum lectures had been titled "Life in the Woods," and the "hook" that had rounded up an audience for this particular lecture had been that he was going to explain to his fellow townspeople, why as a younger man he had made the strange experiment of going off and living by himself outside of town. In the year in which he had first published this collection of his lyceum lectures, the names "Walden Pond" and "Walden Woods" were quite unknown outside of the immediate environs of Concord, Massachusetts and therefore a book title such as simply [WALDEN](#) wouldn't have meant much to anybody, any more than if he had titled it [IPSUM](#), or [PERMOS](#), or [LADDET](#). The situation was very different, however, at this 2d publication. By the year of republication, this word "Walden" had come to be a word known to everyone and everyone's aunt Matilda. The word stood for one thing and one thing only — that famous book, a book that everybody had come to know about even if they hadn't themselves bothered to peruse it. —Meanwhile, however, the fact that Thoreau had once offered a lyceum lecture that he had titled "Life in the Woods" had been quite forgotten.

The title needed to be simplified because simple titles are better titles, and because the "Life in the Woods" part of the title had turned out to be ill-advised — there had turned out to be a certain sort of reader who would presume, on the basis of this title, that what Thoreau was doing was sponsoring an agenda, that folks ought to go off and live in the woods the way he had gone off and lived in the woods. That was an unfortunate interpretation and one that was getting in the way of his communicating his message. He hadn't ever been proposing that anyone ought to go live on the shore of Walden Pond, or that anyone ought to go out and live in the piney Walden Woods, that had been no part of his agenda. So it was better to be rid of this part of the title.)



HDT

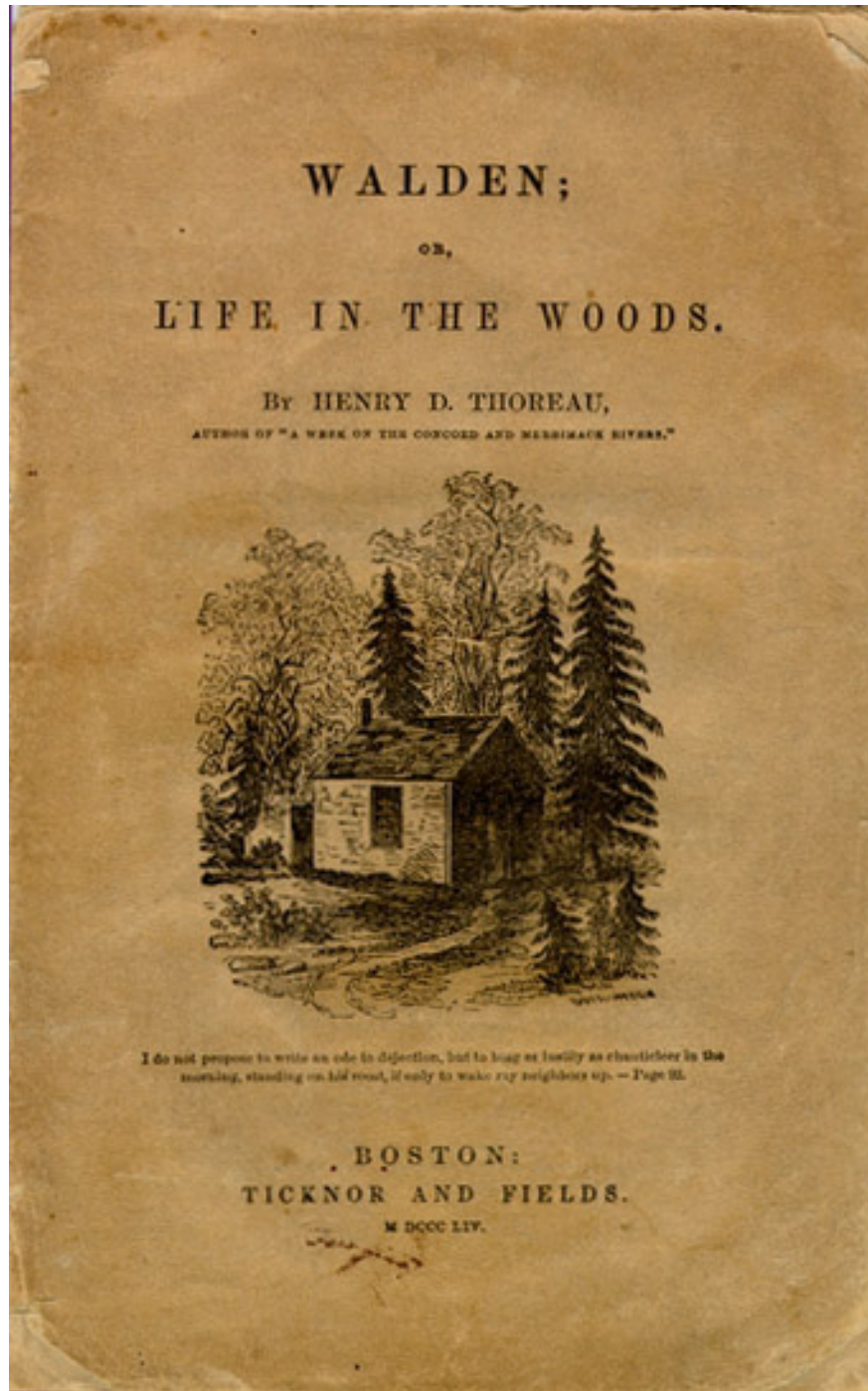
WHAT?

INDEX

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[Thoreau](#) acknowledged receipt from Ticknor & Fields of a draft, for \$100.<sup>00</sup>, which may well have been their payment for "AUTUMNAL TINTS".





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

(Thoreau's book had been primarily the publication of a collection of lyceum lectures he had offered, made up of one lyceum lecture per chapter. One of his earliest of these lyceum lectures had been titled "Life in the Woods," and the "hook" that had rounded up an audience for this particular lecture had been that he was going to explain to his fellow townspeople, why as a younger man he had made the strange experiment of going off and living by himself outside of town. In the year in which he had first published this collection of his lyceum lectures, the names "Walden Pond" and "Walden Woods" were quite unknown outside of the immediate environs of Concord, Massachusetts and therefore a book title such as simply [WALDEN](#) wouldn't have meant much to anybody, any more than if he had titled it [IPSUM](#), or [PERMOS](#), or [LADDET](#). The situation was very different, however, at this 2d publication. By the year of republication, this word "Walden" had come to be a word known to everyone and everyone's aunt Matilda. The word stood for one thing and one thing only — that famous book, a book that everybody had come to know about even if they hadn't themselves bothered to peruse it. —Meanwhile, however, the fact that Thoreau had once offered a lyceum lecture that he had titled "Life in the Woods" had been quite forgotten.

The title needed to be simplified because simple titles are better titles, and because the "Life in the Woods" part of the title had turned out to be ill-advised — there had turned out to be a certain sort of reader who would presume, on the basis of this title, that what Thoreau was doing was sponsoring an agenda, that folks ought to go off and live in the woods the way he had gone off and lived in the woods. That was an unfortunate interpretation and one that was getting in the way of his communicating his message. He hadn't ever been proposing that anyone ought to go live on the shore of Walden Pond, or that anyone ought to go out and live in the piney Walden Woods, that had been no part of his agenda. So it was better to be rid of this part of the title.)

February 11, Tuesday: Fighting began at Fort Donelson in Tennessee.

William Brooks wrote from Washington DC to [Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe](#), sending along some petitions relative to [emancipation](#) that had been submitted to the US Senate.

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote for [Henry Thoreau](#) to [W.D. Ticknor](#) and James T. Fields, currently the editors of [The Atlantic Monthly](#), who were interested in publishing more easy-reading crowd-pleasing nature-related stuff:

I have no objection to having the papers you refer to printed in your monthly—if my feeble health will permit me to prepare them for the printer.

Bradley P. Dean has commented that since Thoreau knew his condition, "he was probably more interested in moving some of his lectures into print than his rather nonchalant reply to [Ticknor & Fields](#) seems to indicate."

*Concord Feb. 11.<sup>th</sup> '62*

*Messrs, Editors*

*Only extreme illness has prevented my answering your note earlier. I have no objection to having the papers you refer to printed in your monthly—if my feeble health will permit me to prepare them for the printer— What will you give me for them? They are, or have been used as, lectures of the usual length, taking about an hour to read & I dont see how they can be divided without injury— How many pages can you print at once?— Of course, I should expect that no sentiment or sentence be altered or omitted without my consent, & to retain the copyright of the paper after you had used it in your monthly.— Is*



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

*your monthly copyrighted?  
Yours respectfully,  
S.E. Thoreau  
for H.D. Thoreau*

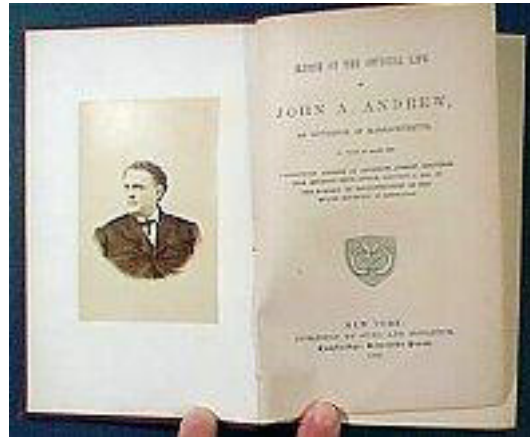


## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

March 11, Tuesday: The USS *Constellation* left Portsmouth, New Hampshire under the command of Commodore Henry K. Thatcher, heading for the Mediterranean.

The Governor of Massachusetts, [John Albion Andrew](#), proclaimed "Thursday, the third day of April next, to be observed throughout this Commonwealth, as a day of public HUMILIATION, FASTING, AND PRAYER."



"Henry D. Thoreau by S.E. Thoreau" sent in to [Ticknor & Fields](#) in Boston both "WALKING"

"WALKING": Where on the Globe can there be found an area of equal extent with that occupied by the bulk of our states, so fertile and so rich and varied in its productions, and at the same time so habitable by the European, as this is? Michaux who knew but part of them, says that "the species of large trees are much more numerous in North America than in Europe: in the United States there are more than 140 species that exceed thirty feet in height; in France there are but thirty that attain this size." Later botanists more than confirm his observations. Humboldt came to America to realize his youthful dreams of a tropical vegetation, and he beheld it in its greatest perfection in the primitive forests of the Amazon, the most gigantic wilderness on the earth, which he has so eloquently described. The geographer Guyot, himself a European, goes farther – farther than I am ready to follow him, yet not when he says, "As the plant is made for the animal, as the vegetable world is made for the animal world, America is made for the man of the Old World."

"The man of the Old World sets out upon his way. Leaving the highlands of Asia, he descends from station to station, towards Europe. Each of his steps is marked by a new civilization superior to the preceding, by a greater power of development. Arrived at the Atlantic, he pauses on the shore of this unknown Ocean, the bounds of which he knows not, and turns upon his foot prints for an instant." When he has exhausted the rich soil of Europe and reinvigorated himself – "Then recommences his adventurous career westward as in the earliest ages." – So far Guyot.

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT  
ARNOLD HENRI GUYOT



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

and the corrected proofs for “AUTUMNAL TINTS”, under a cover note in [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau's](#) handwriting.



*Concord Mar. 11<sup>th</sup> 1862*

*Messrs Ticknor & Fields,*

*I send with this the paper on Walking & also the proofs of Autumnal Tints.*

*The former paper will bear dividing into two portions very well, the natural joint being, I think at the end of page 44. At any rate the two parcels being separately tied up, will indicate it—*

*I do not quite like to have the Autumnal Tints described as in two parts, for it appears as if the author had made a permanent distinction between them; Would it not be better to say at the end of the first portion “To be continued in the next number”?*

*As for the leaf, I had not thought how it should be engraved, but left it to you. Your note suggests that perhaps it is to be done at my expense. What is the custom? and what would be the cost of a steel engraving? I think that an ordinary wood engraving would be much better than nothing.*

*Yours truly*

*Henry D. Thoreau*

*by S.E. Thoreau.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

General McClellan was relieved of command.

A later letter from Theophilus Brown to [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#), on January 19, 1868, described a conversation of this period: H.G.O. Blake had asked [Henry](#) how the future seemed, and



*"Just as uninteresting as ever, was his characteristic answer.... He said it was just as good to be sick as to be well, - just as good to have a poor time as a good time."*

Also, sometime during this period, occurred the conversation in which [Henry](#) was asked a question about the next world, and replied "One world at a time." Thoreau's nonchalant response has reminded me of a play by Paul Claudel, *Tidings Brought to Mary*, in which the question of paying attention to another world besides this one is dismissed with the remark "There are two, but I say there is only one and that is enough."<sup>29</sup>

March 21, Friday: [Ticknor & Fields](#) issued a 2nd edition of [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#), at [Henry Thoreau](#)'s request deleting from the title page 'Or Life in the Woods'."

**TIMELINE OF WALDEN**

[Thoreau](#) wrote with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)'s help to Myron B. Benton.

{No MS – printed copy LVP, 1865}

Concord, 21 March 1862

Dear Sir,—

I thank you for your very kind letter, which, ever since I received it, I have intended to answer before I died, however briefly. I am encouraged to know, that, so far as you are concerned, I have not written my books in vain. I was particularly gratified, some years ago, when one of my friends and neighbors said, "I wish you would write another book,—write it for me." He is actually more familiar with what I have written than I am myself.

The verses you refer to in Conway's "Dial," were written by F.B. Sanborn of this town. I never wrote for that journal.

I am pleased when you say that in "The Week" you like especially "those little snatches of poetry interspersed through the book," for these, I suppose, are the least attractive to most readers. I have not been engaged in any particular work on Botany, or the like, though, if I were to live, I should have much to report on Natural History generally.

You ask particularly after my health. I suppose that I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing.

Yours truly,  
Henry D. Thoreau,  
by S.E. Thoreau.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

March 24, Monday: At the head of the thumbnail file of the life of the Reverend Samuel Joseph May and his contacts with people who were in contact with [Henry Thoreau](#), there stands the following inscription:

In the index to Raymond Borst's THE THOREAU LOG: A DOCUMENTARY LIFE OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU 1817-1862, there is one and only one reference to a person bearing the surname "May." That reference is to page 604, on which, under the date March 24, 1862, "Abigail Alcott writes to her brother, Samuel May," about the weak condition of "Our poor Thoreau." So who was this brother Samuel May and what had been his contact with Thoreau? This file provides a bit more detail.

Here is the post from Abba Alcott to her minister brother as reprised by Borst:

Our poor Thoreau is most gone- Elizabeth Hoar is arranging his papers- Miss Thoreau copying for him - he is too weak to do any of the mechanical part himself. Mr Ticknor has been up to buy the right of all his works- He means to get up a uniform edition- Mr Alcott has written a beautiful sketch of Thoreau which is to appear in the April number of the "Atlantic" preparatory to this works- Mr Fields thought it a good introduction- He is very calm, but earnest about every thing as if his moments were numbered- Mr Alcott carries him sweet apples and now and then a Bottle of Cider which seems to please him.

ELIZABETH SHERMAN HOAR

WILLIAM DAVIS TICKNOR

BRONSON ALCOTT

SOPHIA E. THOREAU

Sheriff Sam Staples visited the Thoreaus and the next day recounted the substance of his visit to [Waldo Emerson](#):

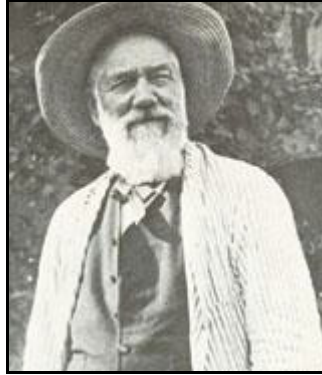
Samuel Staples yesterday had been to see Henry Thoreau. Never spent an hour with more satisfaction. Never saw a man dying with so much pleasure & peace. Thinks that very few men in Concord know Mr Thoreau; finds him serene & happy. Henry praised to me lately the manners of an old, established, calm, well-behaved river, as perfectly distinguished from those of a new river. A new river is a torrent; an old one slow & steadily supplied. What happens in any part of the old river relates to what befalls in every other part of it. 'Tis full of compensations, resources, & reserved funds.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU



This happens to be the first recognition among [Emerson](#)'s journal jottings that [Thoreau](#) had been for some time in an irreversible and inevitable process of wasting away and dying. The situation had become so much more than obvious as to be no longer avoidable. [At some point during his terminal illness (I'll insert this here) Thoreau heard an organ grinder on the street, "loosening the vary paving stones and tearing the routine of life to rags and tatters," and insisted "Give him some money. Give him some money." This was reminiscent of what he wrote in his Journal for August 8, 1851: "The really inspiring melodies are cheap & universal –& are as audible to the poor man's son as to the rich mans. Listening to the harmonies of the universe is not allied to dissipation.... All Vienna cannot serve me more than the Italian boy who seeks my door with his organ."]

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

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

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

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





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

### FROISSART'S CHRONICLES, I

### FROISSART'S CHRONICLES, II

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

April 7, Monday: A treaty between the United States of America and Great Britain for the suppression of the [international slave trade](#).

### READ THE FULL TEXT

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) replied to [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) (however, evidently she would not post this letter until May 11th, after her brother's death).

CONCORD, April 7, 1862.

MR. RICKETSON:

DEAR SIR, — *I feel moved to acknowledge the pleasant letters which Henry has lately received from you. It is really refreshing to hear of the flight of the wild geese and the singing of birds. There is a good deal of snow still whitening our fields. I am almost impatient to see the ground bare again.*

*My dear brother has survived the winter, and we should be most thankful if he might linger to welcome the green grass and the flowers once more.*

*Believing as I do in the sincerity of your friendship for Henry, I feel anxious that you should know how ill he is. Since the autumn he has been gradually failing, and is now the embodiment of weakness; still, he enjoys seeing his friends, and every bright hour he devotes to his manuscripts which he is preparing for publication. For many weeks he has spoken only in a faint whisper. Henry accepts this dispensation with such childlike trust and is so happy that I feel as if he were being translated, rather than dying in the ordinary way of most mortals. I hope you will come and see him soon, and be cheered. He has often expressed pleasure at the prospect of seeing you.*

*I asked Mr. Alcott to write to you some weeks since; but I do not think that he impressed you with Henry's true condition. Few of his friends realize how sick he is, his spirits are always so good.*

*In much haste, believe me,*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

yours truly,

S.E. THOREAU.

*P.S. Henry sends kind regards to you and your family, and desires me to tell you that he cannot rise to greet a guest, and has not been out for three months.*

May 4, Sunday: At his home Brooklawn in New Bedford, in the forenoon, [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) was composing and posting a letter to [Henry Thoreau](#).

*The Shanty, Sunday 7 1/2 a.m.*

*4<sup>th</sup> May 1862.*

*My dear Friend,*

*I have just returned from driving our cow to pasture, and assisting in our usual in, and out-door, work, the first making a fire in our sitting room, a little artificial warmth being still necessary for my invalid wife, although I sit most the time as I do now, with my Shanty door open, and without fire in my stove. Well my dear friend, & fellow pilgrim, Spring has again come, and here appears in full glow—the farmers are busy and have been for some weeks, ploughing, and planting,—the necessity of paying more attention to agriculture being strongly felt in these hard times—old fields & neglected places are now being brought into requisition and with a good season, our former neglected farms will teem with abundance.*

*I too am busy in my way, but on rather a small scale, principally in my garden, and among my fruit trees—Walton however is head man, and I am obliged generally to submit to his superior judgment. About all the birds have returned—the large thrush (*T. rufus*) arrived here on the 25<sup>th</sup> last month.—I am now daily expecting the cat-bird, and ground robin, and soon the BobO'link, and Golden robin. With the arrival of the two last, our vernal choir becomes nearly complete. I have know them both to arrive the same day. Of the great variety of little woodland and wayside warblers, I am familiar with but few, yet some of them are great favorites of mine, particularly the oven bird, warbling vireo, veery (*T. Wilsonii*) &c &c. The windflower & blue violet have been in bloom some time, and I suppose the columbine & wild geranium are also, although I have not been to visit them as yet. How beautiful, & how wonderful, indeed, is this return of life — how suggestive & instructive to mankind. Truly God is great, & good, & wise, and glorious!*

*I hope this will find you mending, and as I hear nothing to the contrary, I trust it may be so that you are. I did expect to be able to come to Concord soon—I still may, but at present I do not see my way clear as we “Friends” say. I often think of you, however, and join hands with you in the spirit, if not in the flesh, which I hope always to do.*

*I see by the papers, that Concord has found a new voice in the way*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*of a literary journal, Y'clept "The Monitor", which has my good wishes for its success. I conclude that Mr Sanborn is the pioneer in this enterprise, who appears to be a healthy nursing child of the old mother of heroes. I do not mean to be classic, and only intend to speak of old mother Concord. I hope Channing will wake up, and give us some of his lucubrations, and father Alcott strike his orphic lyre once more, and Emerson discourse wisdom & verse from the woods around. There sings a Whortleberry Sparrow (T. Juncorum) from our lush pasture beyond the garden. I hear daily your sparrow (F. graminus) with his "here! here! there! there! come quick or I'm gone." By the way is not Emerson wrong in his interpretation of the whistle of the chickadee as "Phebe" — the low, sweet, whistle of the "black cap" is very distinct from the clearly expressed Phoebe of the wood pewee. But I must not be hypercritical, with so true a poet & lover of nature as E.*

*How grandly is the Lord overruling all for the cause of the slave — defeating the evil machinations of men by the operation of his great universal and regulating laws, by which the Universe of mind and matter is governed. I do not look for a speedy termination of the war although matters look more hopeful, but I cannot doubt but that Slavery will soon find its Exodus. What a glorious country this will be for the next generation should this curse be removed.*

*We have had a Miss Dickinson here, who spoke very acceptably. I did not hear her however, but had the pleasure of an interview with her in the Shanty. She is a bright hopeful young creature, and bids fair to be a useful instrument for her own sex — her particular vocation being, as she informed me, "women's rights." She intends being in Boston at the May Meetings of the Anti-Slavery Society. The Concord people should hear her.*

*Amid the song of purple finches, robins meadow larks & sparrows, a kind of T. solitarius myself, and with a heart full of kind wishes and affection for you, I conclude this hasty epistle  
as ever yours faithfully,*

*D. R.*

*P.S. I believe I answered your sister's kind & thoughtful letter to me. I also wrote you at length soon thereafter but laid the letter aside in my drawer where it still remains with other unsent epistles &c.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

According to a letter from [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to [Friend Daniel](#) on May 20th, shortly before dying [Henry](#) indicated by a shattering remark



Death is as near to you as it is to me.

that he had not deviated in the slightest from his belief in the incommensurability of durations, and his disbelief in any real dimensionality of time. Let us replay this snip of conversation in full: A visitor had ventured the banal remark



We must all go.

And [Henry](#) had responded, faintly, between coughs<sup>30</sup>



When I was a very little boy, I learned that I must die, and I set that down, so of course I am not disappointed now. Death is as near to you as it is to me.

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

[A WEEK](#): We glided past the mouth of the Nashua, and not long after, of Salmon Brook, without more pause than the wind.

30. When Kurt Vonnegut was interviewed by William Rodney Allen in 1987, Allen asked about Ernest Becker's book *THE DENIAL OF DEATH* and Vonnegut confessed he hadn't read it:



Allen: Its premise is that Freud was wrong when he said our first repressions are of sexual impulses. Becker says, no, what we repress first is our awareness that we're going to die. And so most of the artificial creations of society – like a class structure, which implies that all the upper class is exempt from certain harsh realities – are attempts to deny our mortality. Do you see that?

Vonnegut: I see it as a very expensive way. [Laughter]  
I'm like Thoreau: I like to save money any way I can.

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:


## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

he commented

[TB](#)

*Now comes good sailing.*



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

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





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

*moose*

and

*Indian*

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

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

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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

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

Joan W. Goodwin, in *THE REMARKABLE MRS. RIPLEY: THE LIFE OF SARAH ALDEN BRADFORD RIPLEY* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1998), supplements that letter as follows:<sup>31</sup>

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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



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

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

### Famous Last Words:



"What school is more profitably instructive than the death-bed of the righteous, impressing the understanding with a convincing evidence, that they have not followed cunningly devised fables, but solid substantial truth."

— A COLLECTION OF MEMORIALS CONCERNING DIVERS DECEASED MINISTERS, Philadelphia, 1787



**"The death bed scenes & observations even of the best & wisest afford but a sorry picture of our humanity. Some men endeavor to live a constrained life — to subject their whole lives to their will as he who said he might give a sign if he were conscious after his head was cut off — but he gave no sign Dwell as near as possible to the channel in which your life flows."**

**—Thoreau's JOURNAL, March 12, 1853**


<a href="#">399 BCE</a>	<a href="#">Socrates</a>	drinking the hemlock	<i>"Crito, I owe a cock to Æsclepius."</i>
<a href="#">27 CE</a>	<a href="#">Jesus</a>	being crucified	<i>"It is finished."</i> [John 19:30]
<a href="#">1415</a>	<a href="#">John Huss</a>	being burned at the stake	<i>"O, holy simplicity!"</i>
<a href="#">May 30, 1431</a>	<a href="#">Joan of Arc</a>	being burned at the stake	<i>"Hold the cross high so I may see it through the flames."</i>
<a href="#">May 4, 1534</a>	<a href="#">Father John Houghton</a>	as he was being disemboweled	<i>"And what wilt thou do with my heart, O Christ?"</i>
<a href="#">July 6, 1535</a>	<a href="#">Sir Thomas More</a>	being beheaded	<i>"The King's good servant, but God's First."</i>
<a href="#">1536</a>	<a href="#">Anne Boleyn</a>	being beheaded	<i>"Oh God, have pity on my soul."</i>
<a href="#">February 18, 1546</a>	<a href="#">Martin Luther</a>	found on his chamber table	<i>"We are beggars: this is true."</i>
<a href="#">July 16, 1546</a>	<a href="#">Anne Askew</a>	being burned at the stake	<i>"There he misseth, and speaketh without the book"</i>
1601	Tycho Brahe	unsolicited comment	<i>"Let me not seem to have lived in vain."</i>
1618	Sir Walter Raleigh	his wife would embalm his head and keep it near her in a red leather bag	<i>"Strike, man, strike."</i>
1649	Charles I	the chopper was to wait for a signal that the king had prepared himself	<i>"Stay for the sign."</i>
1659	Friend Marmaduke Stevenson and Friend William Robinson	unsolicited comments made over the muting roll of a drum intended to prevent such remarks from being heard	<i>Friend Marmaduke: "We suffer not as evil-doers but for conscience' sake." Friend William: "I die for Christ."</i>





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1660	Friend Mary Dyer	asked at her execution whether they should pray for her soul	<i>"Nay, first a child; then a young man; then a strong man, before an elder of Christ Jesus."</i>
1681	Headman Ockanickon of the Mantas	the Mantas are the "Leaping Frogs" group of the Lenape tribe	<i>"Be plain and fair to all, both Indian and Christian, as I have been."</i>
1692	Massachusetts Bay colonist Giles Corey	being pressed to death for refusing to cooperate in his trial for witchcraft	<i>"Add more weight that my misery may be the sooner ended."</i>
1777	John Bartram	during a spasm of pain	<i>"I want to die."</i>
1790	Benjamin Franklin	unsolicited comment	<i>"A dying man can do nothing easy."</i>
1793	Louis Capet, King Louis XVI of France	being beheaded in the Place de la Concorde	<i>"I die innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge; I Pardon those who have occasioned my death; and I pray to God that the blood you are going to shed may never be visited on France."</i>
1793	Jean-Paul Marat	reviewing a list of names 	<i>"They shall all be guillotined."</i>
1793	<a href="#">Citizen Marie Antoinette</a>	stepping on the foot of her executioner	<i>"Pardonnez-moi, monsieur."</i>
1794	George Jacques Danton	he had been convicted of not having made adequate use of the guillotine	<i>"Show my head to the people. It is worth seeing."</i>
1798	Giovanni Casanova	having spent his life collecting sequentially and in tandem 132 pubic scalps	<i>"I have lived as a philosopher and died as a Christian."</i>
1799	George Washington	fearing being buried alive (a common fear for that period), he was being heartily reassured by his physician	<i>"'Tis well."</i>
1806	Charles Dickinson	he was dueling with Andrew Jackson	<i>"Why have you put out the lights?"</i>
1809	Thomas Paine	his physician asked whether he wished to believe Jesus to be the son of God	<i>"I have no wish to believe on that subject."</i>
1821	John Keats	dying of TB in Rome	<i>"Severn ... I am dying ... I shall die easy ... don't be frightened ... be firm and thank God it has come."</i>
1825	Phebe Walker Bliss Emerson Ripley	died in Concord	<i>"Don't call Dr. Ripley his boots squeak so, Mr. Emerson used to step so softly, his boots never squeaked."</i>
1826	<a href="#">Thomas Jefferson</a>	died at 12:50PM	<i>"Is it the 4th? —Ah."</i>
1826	John Adams	died at 5:30PM — Jefferson actually had, in Virginia, predeceased him	<i>"Thomas Jefferson still surv..."</i>
1830	King George IV	early one morning in Windsor Castle	<i>"Good God, what is this? — My boy, this is death."</i>
1832	Sam Sharpe	being hanged after an unsuccessful slave revolt on the island of Jamaica	<i>"I would rather die on yonder gallows than live in slavery."</i>
<a href="#">1836</a>	<a href="#">James Madison</a>	unsolicited comment	<i>"I always talk better lying down."</i>





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1846	Benjamin Robert Haydon	final entry in 38-year journal before offing himself	<i>"Stretch me no longer on this tough world. — Lear"</i>
<a href="#">1848</a>	<a href="#">John Quincy Adams</a>	had just voted "no" on war on Mexico	<i>"This is the last of earth. I am composed."</i>
<a href="#">1849</a>	<a href="#">Washington Goode</a>	offered a cup of water before being hanged in Boston	<i>"This is the last Cochituate water that I shall ever drink."</i>
<a href="#">1849</a>	<a href="#">Edgar Allan Poe</a>	in bad shape in Baltimore	<i>"Lord help my poor soul."</i>
1850	John Caldwell Calhoun	unsolicited comment	<i>"The South! The poor South! God knows what will become of her."</i>
1851	John James Audubon	shooting at sitting ducks on his estate, at age 66 despite stroke and senility	<i>"You go down that side of Long Pond and I'll go down this side and we'll get the ducks!"</i>
1852	<a href="#">Daniel Webster</a>	his attendant was tardy in administering some brandy	<i>"I still live!"</i>
1857	Auguste Comte	he had been making himself the pope of a religion of science, "Positivism"	<i>"What an irreparable loss!"</i>
1859	John Brown	request	<i>"I am ready at any time — do not keep me waiting."</i>
1862	<a href="#">Henry David Thoreau</a>	he was editing manuscript	<i>"moose ... Indian"</i>
1864	General John Sedgwick	Battle of Spotsylvania	<i>"They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance."</i>
1865	<a href="#">Abraham Lincoln</a>	on stage, an actor ad-libbed a reference to the presence of the President	The President laughed
1865	John Wilkes Booth	with his leg broken, surrounded by relentlessly angry armed men, in a burning barn	<i>"Useless ... useless."</i>
1872	Samuel F.B. Morse	doctor tapped on his chest and said: <i>"This is the way we doctors telegraph, Professor."</i>	<i>"Very good, very good."</i>
1872	Horace Greeley	Whitelaw Reid took over the <a href="#">Tribune</a>	<i>"You son of a bitch, you stole my newspaper!"</i>
1881	Billy the Kid	in the dark, he heard Pat Garrett enter	<i>"Who is it?"</i>
1882	Charles Darwin	fundamentalists tell lying stories of his abandoning his heretical theories in favor of Christ Jesus and His salvation	<i>"I am not the least afraid to die."</i>
1883	Sojourner Truth	advice for us all	<i>"Be a follower of the Lord Jesus."</i>
1883	Karl Marx	his housekeeper asked him whether he had any last words	<i>"Last words are for fools who haven't said enough."</i>
1887	Henry Ward Beecher	unsolicited comment	<i>"Now comes the mystery."</i>
1888	<a href="#">Louisa May Alcott</a>	unsolicited comment	<i>"Thus far the Lord has led me on."</i>
1890	Joseph Cary Merrick	the actor John Hurt, pretending to be The Elephant Man in a movie	<i>"Nothing ever dies."</i>







## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1891	Phineas Taylor Barnum	inquiry	<i>"How were the circus receipts today at Madison Square Garden?"</i>
1894	George Inness	witnessing the sunset, he threw his hands into the air and fell	<i>"My God! oh, how beautiful!"</i>
1910	Leo Tolstoy	asked to reconcile with the church	<i>"Even in the valley of the shadow of death, two and two do not make six."</i>
1912	Robert Scott	freezing to death at the South Pole	<i>"It seems a pity, but I do not think that I can write more."</i>
1923	Pancho Villa	retired with a general's salary, he visited the local bank and was ambushed on July 23, 1923 in Parral, Chihuahua	<i>"Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something."</i>
1926	Luther Burbank	Three months before he had admitted that he did not believe in an afterlife; he died in a frenzy of daily hate-mail.	<i>"I don't feel good."</i>
1927	Isadora Duncan	The long white scarf around her neck got caught in the wheel of her car.	<i>"Adieu, mes amis, je vais à l'amour."</i>
1932	George Eastman	Suicide note — he shot himself.	<i>"My work is done. Why wait?"</i>
1936	George V, King of England	It was suggested that he might recuperate at Bogner Regis	<i>"Bugger Bogner."</i>
1945	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	having a massive cerebral hemorrhage	<i>"I have a terrific headache."</i>
1945	Adolf Hitler	as hypothesized by Kurt Vonnegut	<i>"I never asked to be born in the first place."</i>
1946	Alfred Rosenberg	hangman asked if he had last words	<i>"No."</i>
1977	Gary Gilmore	being inventively executed	<i>"Let's do it."</i>
1997	Diana, Princess of Wales	per French police records	<i>"My God. What's happened?"</i>
1998	Karla Fay Tucker	Governor George W. Bush refused requests from Christian organizations based upon her alleged conversion	<i>"I am going to be face to face with Jesus now.... I will see you all when you get there. I will wait for you."</i>



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

May 11, Sunday: [Louisa May Alcott](#) sent [Sophia Foord](#) a keepsake snippet from the wreath of andromeda they had placed on Henry's coffin.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU



Concord May 11th

Dear Miss Ford

As I promised to write you when Henry died I send these few lines to fulfil that promise though I suppose you have seen notices of the event in the papers.

Father saw him the day before he died lying patiently & cheerfully on the bed he would never leave again alive. He was very weak but suffered nothing & talked in his old pleasant way saying "it took Nature a long time to do her work but he was most out of the world". On Tuesday at eight in the morning he asked to be lifted, tried to help do it but was too weak & lying down again passed quietly & painlessly out the old world into the new. On Friday at Mr. Emerson's desire he was publicly buried from the church, a thing Henry would not have liked but Emerson said his sorrow was so great he wanted all the world to mourn with him. Many friends came from Boston & Worcester, Emerson read an address good in itself but not appropriate to the time or place, the last few sentences were these & very true.

"In the Tyrol there grows a flower on the most inaccessible peaks of the mountains, called 'Adelvezia' or 'noble purity,' it is so much loved by the maidens that their lovers risk their lives in seeking it & are often found dead at the foot of precipices with the flower in their hands. I think our friend's life was a search for this rare flower, & I know that could we see him now we should find him adorned with profuse garlands of it for none could more fitly wear them".

Mr. Channing wrote the Stanzas & they were very sweetly sung. Father read selections from Henry's own books, for many people said he was an infidel & as he never went to church when living he ought not to be carried there dead. If ever a man was a real Christian it was Henry, & I think his own wise & pious thoughts read by one who loved him & whose own life was a beautiful example of religious faith, convinced many & touched the hearts of all. It was a lovely day clear, & calm, & spring like, & as we all walked after Henry's coffin with its pall of flowers, carried by six of his townsmen who had grown up with him, it seemed as if Nature wore her most benignant aspect to welcome her dutiful & loving son to his long sleep in her arms. As we entered the churchyard birds were singing, early violets blooming in the grass & the pines singing their softest lullaby, & there between his father & his brother we left him, feeling that though his life seemed too short, it would blossom & bear fruit for us long after he was gone, & that perhaps we should know a closer friendship now than even while he lived.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*I never can mourn for such men because they never seem lost to me but nearer & dearer for the solemn change. I hope you have this consolation, & if these few words of mine can give you anything you have not already learned I am very glad, & can only add much love from us all & a heart full from your*

*Lou.*

*Come & see us when you can, after this week we shall be clean & in order, & always ready. I enclose a little sprig of "andromeda" his favourite plant a wreath of which we put on his coffin.*

The above does not do complete justice to the letter. Louisa was using two sheets of paper, front and back for a total of four pages, to write to her former teacher, and when she got to "I hope you have this consolation, & if these few words" she had run out of space at the bottom of the back of her second sheet. To have added a third sheet would have increased the postage, so she therefore went back to the top of the front side of the first sheet, above the salutation, to continue in the blank space there with "of mine can give you anything you have not already learned ... we shall be clean & in good order, & always ready," whereupon she again ran out of blank space, and so she turned the sheets over, and at the top margin of the front of the second sheet, upside down, she wrote "I enclose a little sprig of 'andromeda'" and at the top margin of the back of the first sheet, upside down, she wrote "his favorite plant — a wreath of which we put on his coffin." (In the 1962 publication, a photograph of the actual letter has been presented.)



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) evidently posted on this day a letter that she had begun to write to [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) on April 7th:

CONCORD, April 7, 1862.

MR. RICKETSON:

DEAR SIR, — I feel moved to acknowledge the pleasant letters which Henry has lately received from you. It is really refreshing to hear of the flight of the wild geese and the singing of birds. There is a good deal of snow still whitening our fields. I am almost impatient to see the ground bare again. My dear brother has survived the winter, and we should be most thankful if he might linger to welcome the green grass and the flowers once more.

Believing as I do in the sincerity of your friendship for Henry, I feel anxious that you should know how ill he is. Since the autumn he has been gradually failing, and is now the embodiment of weakness; still, he enjoys seeing his friends, and every bright hour he devotes to his manuscripts which he is preparing for publication. For many weeks he has spoken only in a faint whisper. Henry accepts this dispensation with such childlike trust and is so happy that I feel as if he were being translated, rather than dying in the ordinary way of most mortals. I hope you will come and see him soon, and be cheered. He has often expressed pleasure at the prospect of seeing you. I asked Mr. Alcott to write to you some weeks since; but I do not think that he impressed you with Henry's true condition. Few of his friends realize how sick he is, his spirits are always so good.

In much haste, believe me,  
yours truly,

S.E. THOREAU.

P.S. Henry sends kind regards to you and your family, and desires me to tell you that he cannot rise to greet a guest, and has not been out for three months.

SUNDAY May 11th '62.

Mottoes placed in Henry's coffin by his friend W.E.C.:—

"Hail to thee, O man, who art come from the transitory place to the imperishable."

"Gazed on the heavens for what he missed on earth."

"I think for to touche also

The world whiche neweth everie daie,

So as I can, so as I maie."

Dear friend, you will not forget the bereaved mother and sister.

Yours truly,

S.E. THOREAU.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

May 20, Wednesday: The Homestead Act came into effect, limiting the privilege of becoming homesteaders to citizens and to those immigrants whose intention it was to become citizens.

**READ THE FULL TEXT**

(That, of course, intentionally left free black Americans out in the cold, completely unable to participate in the all-white development of North and South Dakota, and Oklahoma. In the commemorative stamp below, for instance, you can be very certain that the husband and wife depicted as standing outside their sod hut are white people.)



"In those parts of the Union in which the negroes are no longer slaves, they have in no wise drawn nearer to the whites. On the contrary, the prejudice of the race appears to be stronger in the States which have abolished slavery ... and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those States where servitude has never been known."



— Alexis de Tocqueville





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

One for me and one for you and one for me, one for me and one for you and one for me. From a demographic standpoint, and from an ecological standpoint, the Homestead Act would be a disaster, as many of the quarter-sections of prairie handed out “for free” would be simply inadequate to support the life of one human being. A number approaching half of the US citizens who would avail themselves of the opportunity would fail to carry the process through to completion and would not ever obtain title to “their land,” while the direct result of this denuding of the countryside would be the great Dust Bowl of the 1930s. –On the bright side, a whole lot of the land would be disposed of in block grants to corporations, primarily railroads, and the railroads would in general do very well indeed.



“There is only one way to accept America and that is in hate; one must be close to one’s land, passionately close in some way or other, and the only way to be close to America is to hate it; it is the only way to love America.”



– Lionel Trilling

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote about her brother [Henry](#) to [Friend Daniel Ricketson](#):

*You ask for some particulars relating to Henry’s illness. I feel like saying that Henry was never affected, never reached by it. I never before saw such a manifestation of the power of spirit over matter. Very often I have heard him tell his visitors that he enjoyed existence as well as ever. He remarked to me that there was as much comfort in perfect disease as in perfect health, the mind always conforming to the condition of the body. The thought of death, he said, could not begin to trouble him. His thoughts had entertained him all his life, and did still. When he had wakeful nights, he would ask me to arrange the furniture so as to make fantastic shadows on the wall, and he wished his bed was in the form of a shell, that he might curl up in it. He considered occupation as necessary for the sick as for those in health, and has accomplished a vast amount of labor during the past few months in preparing some papers for the press. He did not cease to call for his manuscripts till the last day of his life.*

*During his long illness I never heard a murmur escape him, or the slightest wish expressed to remain with us; his perfect contentment was truly wonderful. None of his friends seemed to realize how very ill he was, so full of life and good cheer did he seem. One friend, as if by way of consolation, said to him, “Well, Mr. Thoreau, we must all go.” Henry replied, “When I was a very little boy I learned that I must die, and I sat that down, so of course I am not disappointed now. Death is as near to you as it is to me.”*

*There is very much that I should like to write you about my precious brother, had I time and strength. I wish you to know how very gentle, lovely, and submissive he was in all his ways. His little study bed was brought down into our front parlor, when he could no longer walk with our assistance, and every arrangement pleased him. The devotion of his friends was most rare and touching; his room was made fragrant by the gift of flowers from young and old; fruit of every kind which the season afforded, and game of all sorts was sent him. It was really pathetic, the way in which the town was moved to minister to his comfort. Total strangers sent grateful messages, remembering the*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*good he had done them. All this attention was fully appreciated and very gratifying to Henry; he would sometimes say, "I should be ashamed to stay in this world after so much had been done for me, I could never repay my friends." And they so remembered him to the last. Only about two hours before he left us, Judge Hoar [Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar] called with a bouquet of hyacinths fresh from his garden, which Henry smelled and said he liked, and a few minutes after he was gone, another friend came with a dish of his favorite jelly.*

*I can never be grateful enough for the gentle, easy exit which was granted him. At seven o'clock Tuesday morning he became restless and desired to be moved; dear mother, Aunt Louisa, and myself were with him; his self-possession did not forsake him. A little after eight he asked to be raised quite up, his breathing grew fainter and fainter, and without the slightest struggle, he left us at nine o'clock.*

May 22, Friday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne (or Mary Anne) Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts using as stationery the leaflet of "Stanzas: Written to be sung at the funeral of Henry D. Thoreau."

*I cannot let another sun set without acknowledging your kind note of sympathy for us at this time. Although we have met with an irreparable loss, & great is the mystery of that Providence which has gathered this dark shadow about us, yet so much love & wisdom is manifest amidst it all, that I feel as if a beautiful miracle had been wrought in the life, sickness & death of my dear brother, & the memory of his sweet & virtuous soul must ever cheer & comfort me.*





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

May 23, Saturday: There was fighting at Front Royal / Guard Hill / Cedarville.

[Friend Daniel Ricketson](#) mailed to [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) the ambrotype taken of her brother [Henry](#) at Dunshee's in August 1861.

At her request, Ricketson sent Sophia a copy of his poem in which he attempted to describe the memorable evening on which Thoreau, in the best of spirits, had gracefully but wildly executed an improvised dance in the Ricketson parlor (a dance in which repeatedly he had trod on the toes of Bronson Alcott):

### The Improvised Dance

Like the Indian dance of old,  
Far within the forest shade,  
Showing forth the spirit bold  
That no foeman e'er dismayed;

Like the dancing of the hours,  
Tripping on with merry feet,  
Triumphing o'er earthly power,  
Yet with footsteps all must greet;

Like the Fauns and Satyrs, too,  
Nimbly leaping in the grove,  
Now unseen and then in view,  
As among the trees they move;

Like the leaves by whirlwind tossed  
In some forest's valley wide,  
Scattered by the Autumn frost,  
Whirling madly, side by side;

Thus, and still mysterious more,  
Our philosopher did prance,  
Skipping on our parlor floor  
In his wild, improvised dance.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

August: [Waldo Emerson](#) to his journal:

*How shallow seemed to me yesterday in the woods the speech one often hears from tired citizens who have spent their brief enthusiasm for the country, that Nature is tedious, and they have had enough of green leaves. Nature and the green leaves are a million fathoms deep, and it is these eyes that are superficial.*



“Thoreau” appeared in The Atlantic Monthly. At [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#)’s insistence Emerson had omitted the implicit reference which he had made, during his funeral oration, to Walt Whitman, “one who is not known to those here assembled.”

In his oration over [Henry Thoreau](#)’s corpse Emerson had mentioned the dead man’s “mythical record of ... disappointments.” Now, although we don’t have documentation that he had ever bothered to read through [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#), this, clearly, would amount to a categorization of the hound/horse/turtledove passage as an attempt at myth (as well as one of the author’s “riddles”), characterizing it as having to do with some series of personal life disappointments — and it would constitute evidence that Emerson had at least skimmed the first few pages of the book although it might not constitute evidence that he had



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

considered the material very carefully.

WALDEN: In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.

To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself! How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.



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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

It may well be that it was during this month that [Emerson](#) confided to his journal a discovery that the generals of the North were womanly:

*Strange that some strong-minded president of the Woman's Rights Convention should not offer to lead the Army of the Potomac. She could not do worse than General Maclellan [George B. McClellan].*

During this month Union General John Pope would suffer defeat at the 2nd Battle of Bull Run on August 29-30, a defeat for which General Fitz-John Porter would be held responsible since he had failed to commit his troops quickly to the battle: by 1863 this hesitant "womanly" officer would be forced out.



Commissioned as Chaplain of the 33rd Massachusetts Regular Volunteers, Daniel Foster would serve with manhood in this capacity during numerous engagements, such as those at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Beverley's Ford, Gettysburg, and Lookout Mountain, before being killed.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1863

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) delivered a corrected copy of A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS to Ticknor & Fields with a request for a new edition (the publisher would cover the remaining copies printed in 1849 with a new title page).

TIMELINE OF A WEEK

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

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, giving news of relatives and of Concord friends:

*"I really shrink from telling you what befell my precious mother last Dec. the 21st day of the month. It was bitter cold, all the family (that is my two aged aunts & Joanna our girl) except mother & myself had gone to bed, when dear mother fell down a very steep staircase, very nearly killing herself. She was deprived of her senses for an hour or two, & during that time she called continually for Henry to help her, her right arm was frightfully shattered. The Dr. administered either, & set her arm carrying off four pieces of bone in his pocket. It was months before poor mother left her bed. Our previous afflictions, & this terrible shock to my nerves, added to the fatigue of nursing mother has seriously impaired my frail health, & the spring finds us miserable indeed. Mother can walk, but there is no prospect that she will ever recover the use of her right hand. I would not forget the many blessings which attend me, but in my feebleness I do miss an earthly friend to lean upon, dear Henry was a host so wise in counsel & so efficient in every emergency. Oh it is a great mystery that we are left to live without him. Ticknor & Fields are about to issue a volume of my brother's papers..... I have been preparing some of my brothers MSS, for the press."*

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

HENRY THOREAU

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

September 4, Friday: Calvin H. Greene went in the afternoon with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to Neshawtuck [Nawshawtuck] Hill near [Concord](#), where they enjoyed the view of Ponkawtasset to the north across the Assabet River, “& the village spread out in its beauty.”

Major [Stephen Elliott](#) took command of the rubble heap that was all that remained after the extensive US Navy bombardments of Fort Sumter, at the entrance to the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>32</sup>



September 5, Saturday: Calvin H. Greene went out for a ride with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), and with “the 2 Misses T. maiden aunts ... 4 of us in all.”

[MARIA THOREAU](#)[JANE THOREAU](#)

32. This is not the Professor [Stephen Elliott](#) of South Carolina whose botany textbook Henry Thoreau consulted, but his grandson.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

September 6, Sunday: In Charleston Harbor, the Union forces were putting pressure on Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg by means of advancing siegeworks.

Calvin H. Greene went with [Ellery Channing](#) to the “Eastabrook [Estabrook] Country” to take a look at what was left of “the Thoreau Hut, where it had been moved to, yrs before this. Took a memento — a broken shingle, as a fitting emblem.”

### EMERSON'S SHANTY

That evening he went with [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) to the home of [Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann](#), where he met Miss [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#) and Horace Mann, Jr. The lad showed Calvin “his \$175.00 microscope & something of its power.”

That night, Confederate forces evacuated Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg in Charleston Harbor.

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

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

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

Boston MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1863 (stereotyped and printed by H.O. Houghton in Cambridge MA).  
First edition.  
Edited by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Sophia Thoreau.  
Biographical sketch [by Emerson] — Natural history of Massachusetts. — A walk to Wachusett.  
— The landlord. — A winter walk. — The succession of forest trees. — Walking. — AUTUMNAL TINTS.  
— Wild apples. — Night and moonlight.  
319 p. incl. front. (port.) 18 cm.  
PS3045 .A1 1863



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

His meat is apples, worms, or grapes: when he findeth apples or grapes on the earth, he rolleth himself upon them, until he have filled all his prickles, and then carrieth them home to his den, never bearing above one in his mouth; and if it fortune that one of them fall off by the way, he likewise shaketh off all the residue, and walloweth upon them afresh, until they be all settled upon his back again. So, forth he goeth, making a noise like a cart-wheel; and if he have any young ones in his nest, they pull off his load wherewithal he is loaded, eating thereof what they please, and laying up



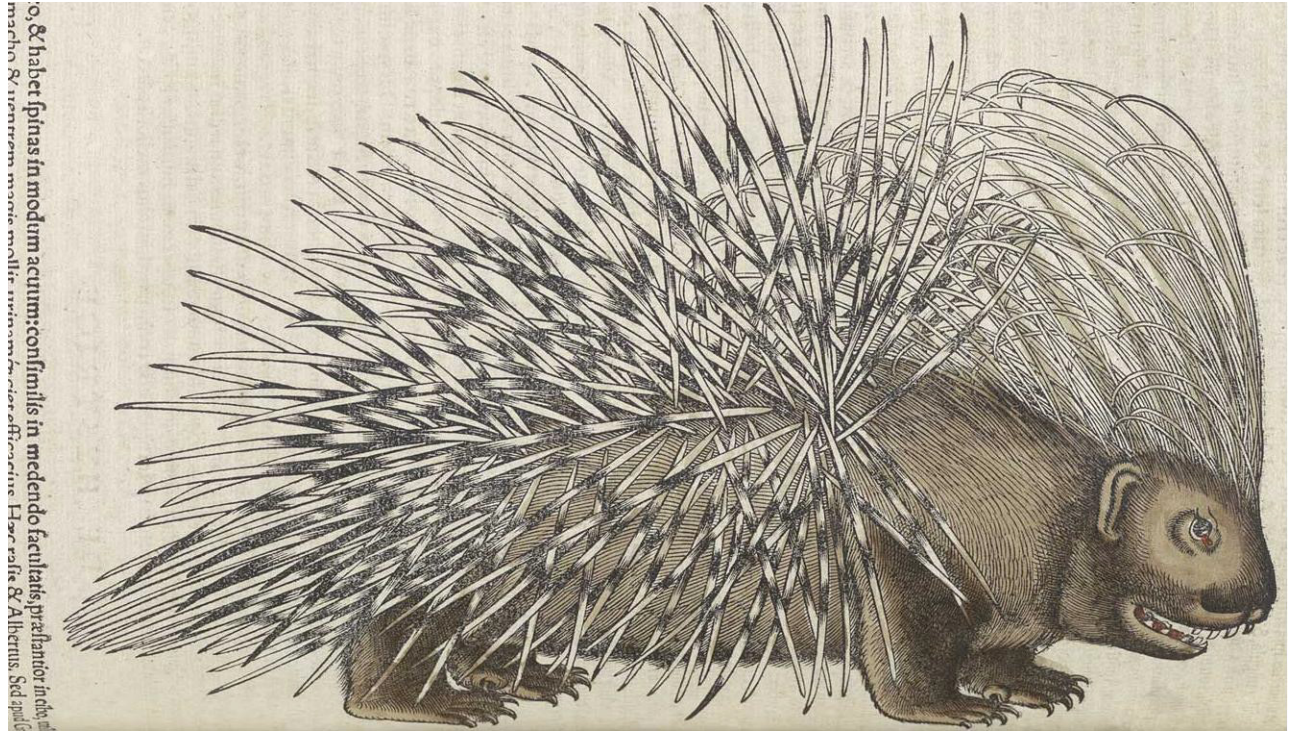
**WHAT?**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

# SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

the residue for the time to come.







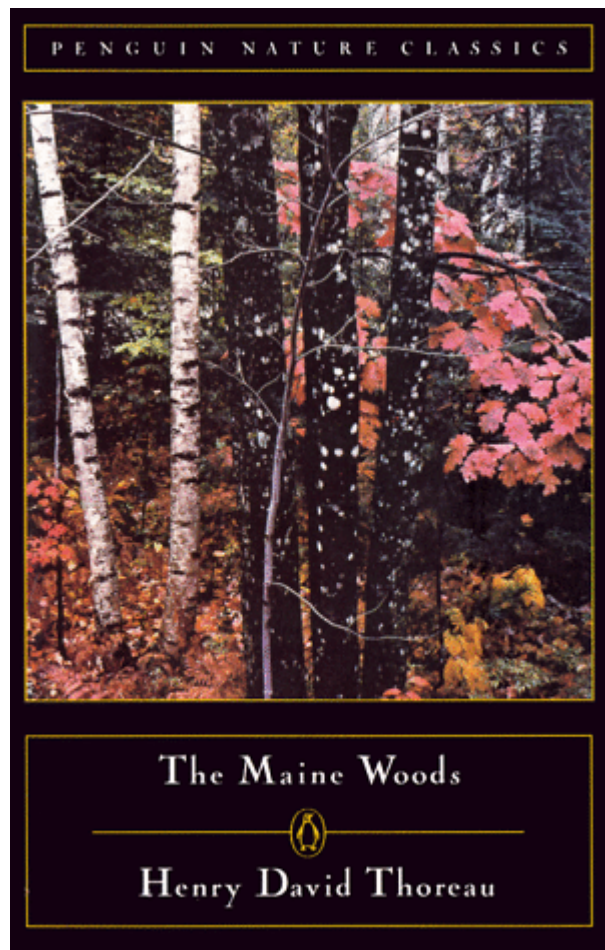
## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1864

In this year [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) and [Ellery Channing](#) were jointly editing [Henry Thoreau](#)'s several magazine articles about Maine travels into an edition entitled THE MAINE WOODS. Their effort was reviewed by the Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) in [The Atlantic Monthly](#), saying of Thoreau that "the world repaid him with lifelong obscurity and will yet repay him with permanent renown."<sup>33</sup>

[TIMELINE OF THE MAINE WOODS](#)



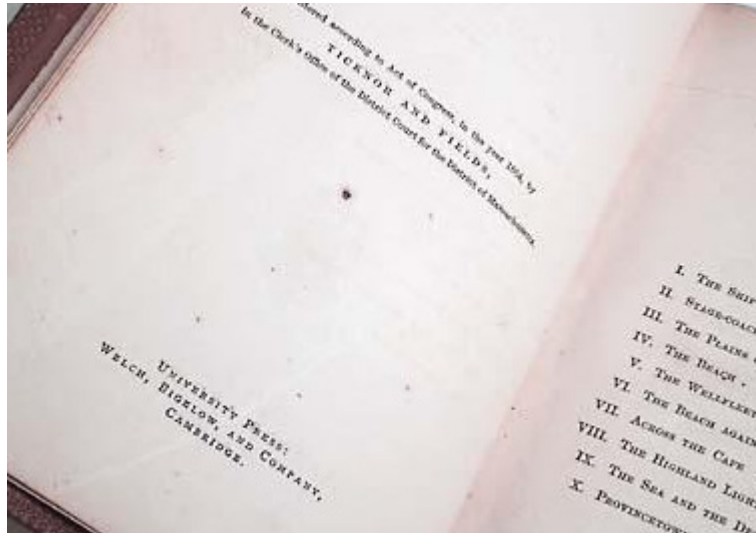
33. Earlier typographical errors were corrected, and some material was added from Thoreau's reading after 1848.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[CAPE COD](#) also was being posthumously edited by [Ellery Channing](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), and would be published by Ticknor & Fields.



Fields would publish two more of those chapters in The Atlantic Monthly during October and December, omitting (perhaps out of concern for the genteel sensibilities of that mag's readers) only the passage from Chapter 5  on the breakfast foods that were sustaining "detriment from the old man's shots." Thoreau had added the second paragraph of Chapter 1  (although parts of this were in his February 1850 lecture), the paragraph on Greenland (60-61), two historical footnotes (15, 38), and a half dozen minor pieces of a sentence or two. These additions supplement rather than alter what was already in the published articles in Putnam's.



The first reading of the [Emancipation](#) Proclamation, as fantasized by Francis Bicknell Carpenter during this year (and then subsequently modified by 1878 so that the pen was put in Abraham Lincoln's right hand, the document in his left hand, the area behind his head lightened as in a halo, and his figure turned toward the

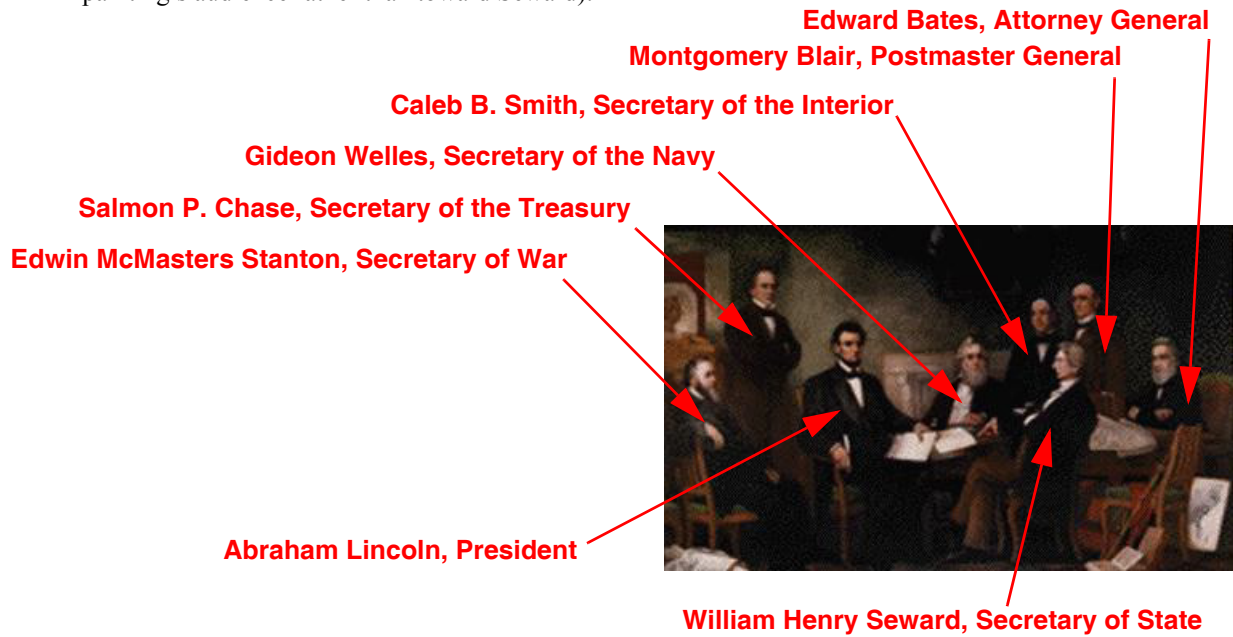




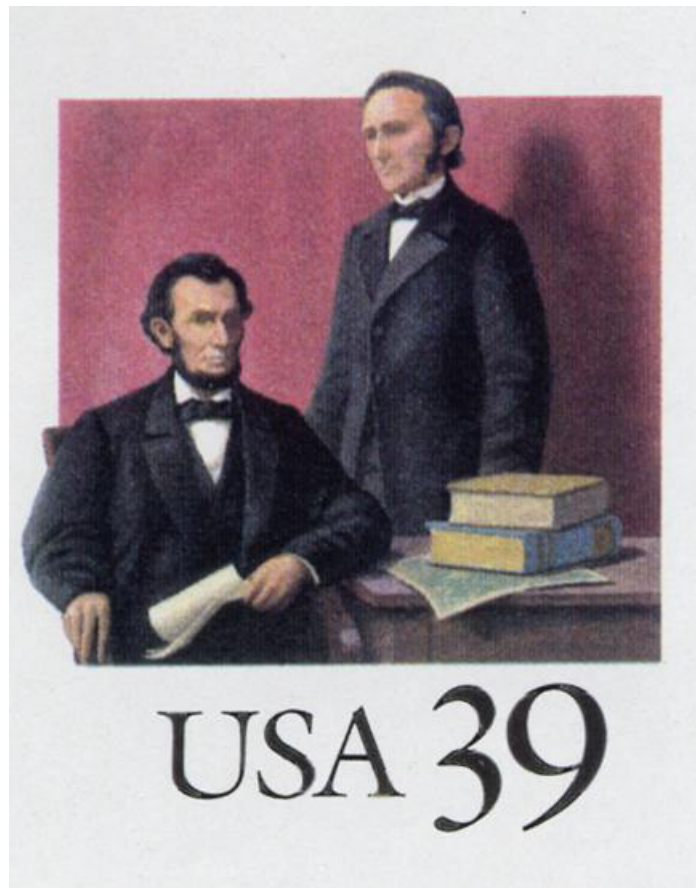
## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

painting's audience rather than toward Seward):



In accordance with the rule of thumb “Don’t bunch up, guys, one grenade’ll getcha all!” that scene has more recently been reimagined:





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

In the famous painting, the guy standing behind Abraham Lincoln was Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Portland Chase, but is that supposed to be Chase above, standing behind the President, or is it merely some amorphous unnamed supporting character, maybe a Secret Service agent, or his personal attorney? Anyway, in this year “In God We Trust” was being printed on the paper currency for the 1st time by order of Chase, who since his face was gracing the \$1 bill and since the bills had plain green backs would come to be known to the public as “Old Mr. Greenbacks.”<sup>34</sup>

### SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

I can't show you what Chase looked like on this Civil-War one-dollar greenback — but I can show you what Old Mr. Greenbacks looked like on a subsequent denomination:



Disagreements between Salmon Portland Chase and Abraham Lincoln had been common occurrences, and when such a matter of disagreement arose it had been Chase's habit to tender his resignation. The 4th time he played this card, to Chase's great surprise Lincoln accepted the resignation as Secretary of the Treasury.

"....I will tell you how it is with Chase. Chase has fallen into two bad habits. He thinks he has become indispensable to the country.... He also thinks he ought to be President. He has no doubts whatever about that. It is inconceivable to him why people have not found it out, why they don't as one man rise up and say so.... He is either determined to annoy me, or that I shall pat him on the shoulder and coax him to stay. I don't think I ought do it. I will not do it. I will take him at his word.... And yet there is not a man in the Union who would make as good a Chief Justice as Chase, and if I have the opportunity I will make him Chief Justice of the United States."

Lincoln's only concern about his subsequent appointment of Chase to the US Supreme Court during this year was that black robes of the court might not cloak Chase's persistent ambition to be president. Lincoln thought about asking Chase to agree not to seek the presidency but Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, Chase's friend, advised Lincoln against asking for such a pledge. A few days later, Lincoln's secretary, Mr. Nicolay, brought in a letter from Chase. Lincoln asked what it was about and Nicolay responded "Simply a kind and friendly letter." Instead of reading it, Lincoln went "File it with his other recommendations."

In the following decade, Chief Justice Chase would involve himself in five significant opinions:

In 1866 he would deliver a separate opinion in *Ex parte Milligan*, 71 U.S. 2

In 1866 he would present the opinion of the court in *Mississippi v. Johnson*, 71 U.S. 475

In 1868 he would present the opinion of the court in *Ex parte McCordle*, 74 U.S. 506

In 1868 he would present the opinion of the court in *Texas v. White*, 74 U.S. 700

In 1871 he would present the opinion of the court in *United States v. Klein*, 80 U.S. 128

34. No high American public official would dare protest against this breach of the barrier between religion and government — until Theodore Roosevelt would take it upon himself to attempt a removal — and would be overridden by a pious Congress.



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1865

At some point during this year [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), with perhaps some assistance from [Ellery Channing](#), saw the first complete book edition of [Thoreau's CAPE COD](#) through to publication:

The title-page date of the first edition is 1865. But Horace E. Scudder, literary advisor for Houghton, Mifflin and Company and editor of the Riverside Edition of Thoreau's Writings, asserts in his brief introduction to volume four, [CAPE COD](#), that the first edition was released as a Christmas book in 1864. Scudder may have reached this conclusion from the book's copyright notice, dated 1864, or from the December 1864 date on the twenty-four pages of Ticknor and Fields advertising bound into most copies of the first edition. The explicit cost-book entry for publication on March 25, 1865 is supported by notices and advertisements in trade journals, general magazines, and newspapers and by early reviews of CAPE COD. No announcements of the title appeared in late-1864 issues of the American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular; Ticknor and Fields's holiday gift book was an illustrated edition of Tennyson's ENOCH ARDEN. The first mention of CAPE COD occurred in the February 15, 1865, issue, where it was advertised as forthcoming in the present season. A similar publisher's announcement appeared in the March 1 issue of the Literary Gazette and in the March Atlantic Monthly. On April 1, the Literary Gazette included CAPE COD in its List of Books Recently Published in the United States. In this issue of the fortnightly Literary Gazette Ticknor and Fields advertised CAPE COD as one of several New Books Just Published by the firm: Readers of "Walden" and "Maine Woods" will welcome this last work of the gifted Thoreau. "Cape Cod" has been pronounced the best of his productions. On March 25 the Boston Advertiser had noted the publication of the book that same day. Advertising CAPE COD and its other Thoreau titles in the April 15 Literary Gazette and in the May issue of the Atlantic, Ticknor and Fields quoted from appraisals of Thoreau's work in the Boston Evening Traveller, the Hartford Press, and the Boston Recorder. On May 15 and June 1, advertisements in the Literary Gazette named CAPE COD among Recent Publications; and on August 1 and 15 LETTERS TO VARIOUS PERSONS and CAPE COD were offered as two of the Choice New Books Lately Published by Ticknor and Fields.

[Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) alleged that in this year and the next he had permission to go through the papers of the [Reverend Ezra Ripley](#) stored in an attic of the Old Manse, and that among these papers, written on the back of a pious meditation from 1818, he discovered the following document:

*Understanding that Mr. John Thoreau, now of Chelmsford, is going into business at that place, and is about to apply for license to retail ardent spirits, I hereby certify that I have been long acquainted with him, that he has sustained a good character, and now view him as a man of integrity, accustomed to storekeeping, and of correct morals.*

Clearly, at some point during the year 1818, after the Thoreaus had moved to Chelmsford, [John Thoreau, Sr.](#) had solicited his former pastor, the Reverend Ripley, for the sort of letter of recommendation which he needed



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

in order to be able to offer<sup>35</sup> hard liquor to his favored customers while he “kept shop” there.


35. It was customary in those heavy-drinking times for a storekeeper to pour a glass for a favored customer.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1866



Posthumous publication by Ticknor & Fields of Boston of [Henry Thoreau's](#) "A YANKEE IN CANADA" in A YANKEE IN CANADA, WITH ANTI-SLAVERY AND REFORM PAPERS, presumably edited by [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) (and [Ellery Channing](#)?) because the "THOMAS CARLYLE" essay had been shortened by some 4,000 words:

And still older, in Thomas Morton's "New English Canaan," published in 1637, it is said, on page 97, "From this Lake [Erocoise] Northwards is derived the famous River Canada, so named, of Monsier de Cane, a French Lord, who first planted a Colony of French in America."

— [Thoreau](#), at start of "A YANKEE IN CANADA"

A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN...

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

LAST DAYS OF CAPT....

LIFE WITHOUT PRINC...

PARADISE (TO BE) R...

PRAYERS

SLAVERY IN MASSAC...

THOMAS CARLISLE

WENDELL PHILLIPS

A YANKEE IN CANADA

September 26, Wednesday: James T. Fields and [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) had formed a plan to publish "the diaries," but, as Higginson would report, "The attempt was defeated by the unwillingness of Miss Sophia Thoreau, the custodian of the books, who wrote us [on this date] that while entirely satisfied with the proposed editorship, she was not yet ready."

*These papers are very sacred to me, and I feel inclined to defer giving them to the public for the present.*

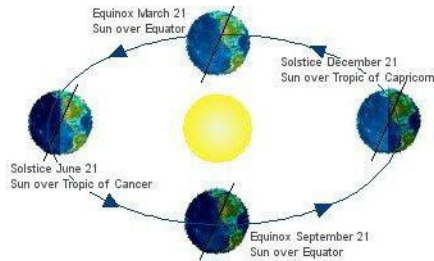


[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) would retain the manuscript journals, indeed, as long as she lived, and would entrust them on her death on October 7, 1876 to H.G.O. Blake of Worcester. Blake would become habituated to reading every day the entries in Thoreau's Journal for that date of all the years covered, thus following the progress of the seasons.



When, in response to an evident public demand, he would determine to publish the Journal in part, he would follow the routine that had provided him himself with so much delight, and the result would be first EARLY SPRING IN MASSACHUSETTS as of 1881, then SUMMER as of 1884, then WINTER as of 1887, then AUTUMN as of 1892). For some reason the 1st edition of EARLY SPRING IN MASSACHUSETTS would omit the entries for the first four days of April, but these had been printed in The Atlantic Monthly under the heading "April Days" in the issue for April 1878, and would get incorporated into the Riverside Edition of the book when it would be published in 1893. The first real edition of Thoreau's works, the Riverside Edition, would be published in 1893 but would receive a publication date as of the following year, as this was then the custom for a book which was being issued in the autumn. This would be edited by Horace E. Scudder, the head of what was then known as the Literary Department of Houghton, Mifflin & Company.

[TIMELINE OF JOURNAL](#)



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1867

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

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

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

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

HENRY THOREAU

**THOREAU  
LIFESPANS**

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

## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

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



November 29, Friday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, in regard to the ill health of her mother and other relatives:

[CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU](#)

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*pleasure to find my brother thus remembered—"*





**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

**1868**

December 20, Sunday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote to Mrs. Ellen Sewall Osgood.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1870

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

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU

May 13, Friday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, describing her current poor health.

November 15, Tuesday: An alliance was concluded between the [North German Confederation](#) and Wurtemberg.

[Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, in regard to the ill health of her mother and herself, of a trip to the White Mountains, and describing current reading.

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1871

September 18, Monday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, telling of Concord friends, describing her current poor health, and her current reading:

*"My mother is greatly blessed in retaining with rare vigor, all her faculties.... I managed to spend a week with a friend in Cohasset, in Aug."*<sup>36</sup>

CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1872

March 12, Tuesday: [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) died.

**THOREAU  
LIFESPANS**

**DUNBAR  
FAMILY**

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

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

**CYNTHIA DUNBAR THOREAU**

June 13, Thursday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts of her visits to Boston and to Bridgewater, and of friends and relatives:

*"In the evening Mr Gifford & Mr Payne called, the latter was enthusiastic about Henry whose 'Walden' he quoted."*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

July 31, Wednesday: At some point during the summer [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) had moved from Concord, Massachusetts to Bangor, Maine. Upon her departure, she had left with [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#) the outstanding note of obligation pertaining to a debt that the Flannery family of Concord owed to the Thoreau family, representing some of the money that [Henry Thoreau](#) had loaned to [Michael Flannery](#) in 1854, fully eighteen years before, so that he could bring his wife [Ann](#) and his little children over from Ireland as he so longed to do. Both [Michael and Ann Flannery](#) were still living, and they were in Concord, and all their children were now mature, and there seemed no reason why they should continue and continue to owe the remainder of this money. She had instructed Sanborn that if, for any reason, either inability to pay or unwillingness to pay, he was unable to collect on this note from the Flannery family, Sanborn should simply make a present of the note to them, thus discharging their obligation forever.<sup>37</sup> Sophia wrote on this day from Bangor to her cousin Marianne (or Mary Anne) Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater about having left Concord, as well as about the Emerson home having burned.

[This is what the Emerson home looked like after it had been burned and restored:]



October 28, Monday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts about her return to Concord from Bangor, Maine, her ill health, and her current reading, mentioning an epidemic among [Boston](#) horses.

37. When asked later about [Thoreau](#), by historians collecting impressions, after both [Michael and Ann Flannery](#) were deceased, one of the Flannery sons and one of the grandsons would speak contemptuously of him: he had been lazy and insulting. Neither of these ingrates would refer to the manner in which Henry had helped their parents, or to the respect in which he had held [Michael](#), or to the friendship that had existed between them, or take any notice at all of this forgiven family debt.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1873

Ellery Channing's THOREAU: THE POET-NATURALIST / WITH MEMORIAL VERSES (Boston: Roberts Brothers) characterized Thoreau as having "the deepest-set blue eyes that could be seen, in certain lights, and in others grey."

### READ CHANNING'S TEXT

In regard to those grey-blue eyes, we can inspect a recent colorized image of Thoreau prepared by Ron Koster:

<http://www.psymon.com/art/#new>

(Real-World Information: There is no blue pigment in any human eyes. The eyes we describe as "blue," such as my own eyes, are merely reflecting the blue of the sky. Any and all human eyes, even the darkest jet ones, can therefore be said, if there is any good reason to say such a thing, in certain lights to have a tint of blue in them. However, a hard and fast rule would be that any eyes which can in any lights be seen as grey ones are indeed grey ones and are in fact not blue ones.)

(More Real-World Information: When we want to be able to respect someone's life and ideas, one of the standard tricks we white racists pull is to pretend that this person had been a Nordic hero. This ain't nice, but it's us.)

The edition sold out.<sup>38</sup>

- Page 2: Henry retained a peculiar pronunciation of the letter *r*, with a decided French accent. He says, "September is the first month with a *burr* in it;" and his speech always had an emphasis, a *burr* in it.
- Page 3: Once when a follower was done up with a headache and incapable of motion, hoping his associate would comfort him and perhaps afford him a sip of tea, he said, "There are people who are sick in that way every morning, and go about their affairs," and then marched off about his.
- Page 11: He also had the firmness of the Indian, and could repress his pathos; as when he carried (about the age of ten) his pet chickens to an innkeeper for sale in a basket, who thereupon told him "to stop," and for convenience' sake took them out one by one and wrung their several pretty necks before the poor boy's eyes, who did not budge. He had such a seriousness at the same age that he was called "judge."
- Page 11: A pleasing trait of his warm feeling is remembered, when he asked his mother, before leaving college, what profession to choose, and she replied pleasantly, "You can buckle on your knapsack, and roam abroad to seek your fortune." The tears came in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks, when his sister Helen, who was standing by, tenderly put her arm around him and kissed him, saying, "No, Henry, you shall not go: you shall stay at home and live with us."
- Page 12: Being complained of for taking a knife belonging to another boy, Henry said, "I did not take it," — and was believed. In a few days the culprit was found, and Henry then said, "I knew all the time who it was, and the day it was taken I went to Newton with father." "Well, then," of course, was the question, "why did you not say so at the time?" "I did not take it," was his reply.
- Page 12: A school-fellow complained of him because he would not make him a bow and arrow, his skill at whittling being superior. It seems he refused, but it came out after that he had no knife.
- Pages 12-13: An early anecdote remains of his being told at three years that he must die, as well as the men in the catechism. He said he did not want to die, but was reconciled; yet, coming in from

38. When Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau would have a chance to inspect this effort, the experience would be painful, presumably because of its inaccuracies and animadversions, it having more of Ellery in it than of Henry.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

coasting, he said he “did not want to die and go to heaven, because he could not carry his sled with him; for the boys said, as it was not shod with iron, it was not worth a cent.”

- Page 24: Another school experience was the town school in Concord, which he took after leaving college, announcing that he should not flog, but would talk morals as a punishment instead. A fortnight sped glibly along, when a knowing deacon, one of the School Committee, walked in and told Mr. Thoreau that he must flog and use the ferule, or the school would spoil. So he did, by flogging six of his pupils after school, one of whom was the maid-servant in his own house. But it did not suit well with his conscience, and he reported to the committee that he should no longer keep their school, as they interfered with his arrangements; and they could keep it.
- Page 25: In height, he was about the average; in his build, spare, with limbs that were rather longer than usual, or of which he made a longer use. His face, once seen, could not be forgotten. The features were quite marked: the nose aquiline or very Roman, like one of the portraits of Caesar (more like a beak, as was said); large, overhanging brows above the deepest set blue eyes that could be seen, in certain lights, and in others gray — eyes expressive of all shades of feeling, but never weak or near-sighted; the forehead not unusually broad or high, full of concentrated energy and purpose; the mouth with prominent lips, pursed up with meaning and thought when silent, and giving out when open a stream of the most varied and unusual and instructive sayings. His hair was a dark brown, exceedingly abundant, fine and soft; and for several years he wore a comely beard. His whole figure had an active earnestness, as if he had no moment to waste. The clenched hand betokened purpose. In walking, he made a short cut if he could, and when sitting in the shade or by the wall-side seemed merely the clearer to look forward into the next piece of activity. Even in the boat he had a wary, transitory air, his eyes on the outlook — perhaps there might be ducks, or the Blondin turtle, or an otter, or sparrow.
- Pages 26-27: Once walking in old Dunstable, he much desired the town history by C.J. Fox; and, knocking as usual at the best house, went in and asked a young lady who made her appearance whether she had the book in question: she had — it was produced. After consulting it somewhat, Thoreau in his sincere way inquired very modestly whether she “would not sell it to him.” I think the plan surprised her, and have heard that she smiled; but he produced his wallet, gave her the pistareen, and went his way rejoicing with the book.
- Pages 249-50: If he needed a box on his walk, he would strip a piece of birch-bark off the tree, fold it when cut straightly together, and put his tender lichen or brittle creature therein. In those irritable thunderclaps which come, he says, “with tender, graceful violence,” he sometimes erected a transitory house by means of his pocketknife, rapidly paring away the white-pine and oak, taking the lower limbs of a large tree and pitching on the cut brush for a roof. Here he sat, pleased with the minute drops from off the eaves, not questioning the love of electricity for trees. If out on the river, haul up your boat, turn it upside-down, and yourself under it. Once he was thus doubled up, when Jove let drop a pattern thunderbolt in the river in front of his boat, while he whistled a lively air as accompaniment. This is noted, as he was much distressed by storms when young, and used to go whining to his father’s room, and say, “I don’t feel well,” and then take shelter in the paternal arms, when his health improved.
- Page 258: When Thoreau laughed, like Shelley, the operation was sufficient to split a pitcher.
- Page 263: As an honorary member, Thoreau appertained to the Boston Society of Natural History, adding to its reports, besides comparing notes with the care-takers or curators of the *mise en scène*. To this body he left his collections of plants, Indian tools, and the like. His latest traffic with it refers to the number of bars or fins upon a pike, which had more or less than was decent. He sat upon his eggs with theirs. His city visit was to their books, and there he made his call, not upon the swift ladies of Spruce Street, and more than once he entered by the window before the janitor had digested his omelet.
- Page 311: When asked whether he knew a young miss, celebrated for her beauty, he inquired, “Is she the one with the goggles?”
- Page 311: As long [*sic*] he could possibly sit up, he insisted on his chair at the family-table, and said, “It would not be social to take my meals alone.” And on hearing an organ in the streets, playing some



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

old tune of his childhood he should never hear again, the tears fell from his eyes, and he said,  
“Give him some money! give him some money!”

### TIMELINE OF JOURNAL

January: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts with news of friends and relatives, and describing her current reading.

July 1, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts giving news of relatives and describing her current reading and the lectures and concerts of Boston:

*In the spring I decided to sell my house & make my home with my friends in Bangor who are most dear to me.... It seemed wise to give up all care of renting & keeping my house in repair, so I put it into the hands of a broker, after waiting two months & not finding a purchaser I decided to lease it for three years to F.B. Sanborn, who will keep it in repair. Mr. S. is a friend I have long known, & it is pleasant to have his family occupy the house.... The breaking up selling furniture, & severing myself from every association grown sacred was enough to prostrate me.*

September 25, Thursday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts conveying news of friends and relatives, and telling of a visit to Camden, Maine.

November 25, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts telling of her current reading and complaining of the paucity of books and lectures in Maine.





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1874

Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau deposited her brother's surveying papers at the Concord Free Public Library.



View Henry Thoreau's surveys courtesy of the Concord library's presence on the internet:

[http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau\\_surveys/Thoreau\\_surveys.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Thoreau_surveys/Thoreau_surveys.htm)

Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau presented her brother Henry Thoreau's personal copy, between blue-gray paper boards and bearing a printed spine label, of Giacomo Costantino Beltrami's *LA DÉCOUVERTE DES SOURCES DU MISSISSIPPI ET DE LA RIVIÈRE SANGLANTE ...* (Nouvelle-Orléans: Impr. par Benjamin Levy, 1824) to the Concord Free Public Library. We note in this volume, now filed as Accession No. 10423, some markings and annotations in pencil.



### *LA DÉCOUVERTE ...*

She presented, also, her brother's personal copy of the 2d edition of the English translation of Professor Philip Karl Buttmann's GREEK GRAMMAR FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS, FROM THE GERMAN OF PHILIP BUTTMANN (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), and this is now filed as Accession # 10443. On the front free endpaper is inscribed "D.H. Thoreau / Cambridge / Mass 1833."

### BUTTMANN'S GREEK GR.

July 8, Wednesday: Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, telling of a recent visit to Concord:

"Wonder if you have seen 'Thoreau The Poet Naturalist' by W.E.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*Channing. The book has pained me very much."*

HENRY THOREAU  
ELLERY CHANNING



"What a gump!...On the whole, he is but little better than an idiot. He should have been whipt often and soundly in his boyhood; and as he escaped such wholesome discipline then, it might be well to bestow it now."

— [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#), about [Ellery Channing](#)



November 23, Monday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater MA, telling of her ill health, of a visit to the Maine woods, and of the painting of autumn leaves:

*"My reading of late runs to magazines. The publishers give me the 'Atlantic' out of respect to my brother's memory."*

TIMELINE OF THE MAINE WOODS



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1875

January 11, Monday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, giving news of relatives and citing [Christmas](#) gifts received.

September 2, Thursday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, reporting that she had become seriously ill with ascites.<sup>39</sup> She also reported her current reading and gave news of relatives.

October 5, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, reporting that her ill health was continuing, and giving her current reading.

The Palace Hotel on Market Street in San Francisco opened.

39. An abnormal accumulation of serous fluids (bodily fluids other than blood, such as lymph) in the abdominal cavity.



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1876

January 5, Wednesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, reporting that her ill health was continuing, giving her current reading, and including some news about Concord friends.

February 15, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, expressing sympathy on the death of her father.


April: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to Mrs. Ellen Sewall Osgood, forwarding to her a collection of old family letters.

May 17, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) sent a postcard from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts:

*"For the last ten weeks I have been very ill – one half the time confined to my bed."*

June 13, Tuesday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) wrote from Bangor, Maine to her cousin Marianne or Mary Anne Mitchell Dunbar of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, communicating the severity of her illness and reporting on her current reading:

*"Accept my truest thanks, dear friend, for all your sympathy, & excuse this apology for a letter which betrays my weakness of mind and body. O! I am so tired. Good-by darling. From Sophia."*

 October 7, Saturday: [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) died in Bangor, Maine, bequeathing her brother's surveying papers and the portrait that Samuel Worcester Rowse had made in 1854 to the [Concord Free Public Library](#), and sending the three trunks of [Henry](#)'s manuscripts to H.G.O. Blake.

Brad Dean's  
Commentary

TIMELINE OF JOURNAL

THOREAU  
LIFESPANS



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1893

January 4, Wednesday: Edward S. Burgess wrote a short manuscript of "Notes on [Concord](#) People," which is now on deposit in the Concord Free Public Library (this document mentions [Henry Thoreau](#), his brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#), his sister [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#), [Edward Sherman Hoar](#), and [John Burroughs](#)):

*Thoreau's brother John was of practical rather than literary bent. Singular, it is that there is so little of him in Henry's book Week on Concord when he too was bred in our schools & had the same adventures Henry had. He was frightened to death. He cut his finger, lockjaw followed. Henry held him in his arms when he died. Henry told me for 2 or 3 days after that he felt the lockjaw tightening on him too - so great was his sympathy. Henry was very affectionate; he had a great deal of sympathy that people did not know; during his last illness he received a great deal of attention; people were constantly coming & sending him flowers &c. He came to feel very differently toward people, & said if he had known he wouldn't have been so offish. He had got into his head before that people didn't mean what they said....*

LOCKJAW

*From Mr. Edward Hoar. Dec. 30, '92.  
I have just finished reading Thoreau's "Winter." There is not so much natural history in it as in some other works, not so much as there is of matter addressed to man's moral nature. I have greatly regretted that I did not know Thoreau better. Did you not often go out with him? Yes, I did; I was one of the few to whom he granted that favor. I was shown that side of his nature to the full, the natural history side, the minute observer. But there were other sides to him, and I was wholly unaware then of the moral side that appears so strongly in his books. He did not show me that in our walks. Thoreau was intensely a moralist, to him everything was valuable according as it appealed to the moral sentiment & he would lose no opportunity to intone a moral sentiment. Nor would he lose any opportunity for observing nature, even if it was to get up in dark night and watch for hours the lightning and a rotten log in Maine. He was ready to open that side of himself to any one who would pay the price. But that meant, to go with him in his walk; to walk long & far; to have wet feet & go so for hours; to pull a boat all day & to come home late at night after many miles. If you would do that with him, he would take you with him. If you flinched at anything, he had no more use for you. Thoreau was of a very fine-grained family. He knew he had not long to live & he determined to make the most of it. How to observe and acquire knowledge & secure the [word?] aspects of life without much expenditure of money was his great study. He would not wait as most men, to acquire a competence before settling down to realize the ends of life. He would show how they could be secured without money; or with very little. This was the object of his Walden Pond. Thoreau's family had a [scrofulous](#) tendency; his sister Sophia,*





## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

*a very fine-grained nature, died of consumption and so did his brother; he died in Thoreau's arms & that nearly killed Henry....*

*I could not become a good ornithologist. When I was young I was a good shot, & could hit a bird on the wing at 200 yards. But when I became acquainted with Henry Thoreau, he persuaded me out of it. He would never shoot a bird, & I think his method greatly preferable to that of Mr. John Burroughs. Thoreau would lie & watch the movements of a bird for hours & also get the [word?] he wanted. He used to say that if you shot the bird, you got only a dead bird anyway; you could make out a few parts in anatomy or plumage just such as all Dr. Coues' work is; but you couldn't see how the bird lives & acts. Since then I have never shot a bird....*

*I think Thoreau has suffered in his editing. I think many things have been published which should not have been, notes & hints in [word?] to guide himself in future observations which are of no use to the public.*



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1898

The Reverend [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#)'s CHEERFUL YESTERDAYS (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, page 170:

I remember well that when I endeavored to enlist Judge Hoar, the leading citizen of Concord, in an effort to persuade Miss Thoreau to allow her brother's journals to be printed, he heard me partly through, and then quickly said, "But you have left unsettled the preliminary question, Why should any one care to have Thoreau's journals put in print?"

The author received an honorary degree from [Harvard University](#).

H.G.O. Blake died, and the three trunks containing [Henry Thoreau](#)'s manuscripts passed to E. Harlow Russell, who had at one time been an acquaintance of Thoreau's. Unlike [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) and unlike Blake, this man considered the trunks as representing an opportunity for profit rather than indicating his assumption of a heavy responsibility.

**Brad Dean's  
Commentary**

**TIMELINE OF JOURNAL**

A text on AMERICAN LITERATURE opined that "not the best of his disciples" (presumably such disciples were other American nature writers) could reach Thoreau's "upper notes."

In WITH FEET TO THE EARTH (Philadelphia PA and London: J.B. Lippincott Co., pages 58-9),<sup>40</sup> Charles M. Skinner, famous author of DO-NOTHING DAYS, related that once upon a time he and [Waldo Emerson](#) had visited Walden Pond in an automobile, with Emerson evidently waving from the car window in the general direction of Bay Henry and attempting to inform his fellow author of the essence of his friend [Henry](#):

He showed from the car window where Thoreau's hut had stood. "More like an Indian," said he, speaking of the hermit, "than a white man. He was free and strange. If he found the sky clear when he got up in the morning he might say, 'This is a good day to go to the White Mountains,' and shut his door and trudge off to the White Mountains just as he would go to the spring for a drink. He used to come up through the woods and call on us without ceremony, and help himself to any axe or spade or bucket that he found on my premises, and would keep it until he was through with it." A reminiscent twinkle here. Thoreau was neither romantic nor misanthropic, nor was he unhappy. His nature had nothing of the morbid or unhealthful, his sympathies were fresh and keen, he was content to be alone, yet he delighted in tramps and boating trips with his college chums, and would walk to Worcester to ask his friend, Mr. Blake, to take a jaunt up-country to the mountains. For prying strangers and supercilious people he lacked courtesy. He disliked pretense of all kinds, but restrained himself to reproof of wrong and folly rather than enlarged his energies as an active reformer. A creature of impulses, he was still a hard worker, after his fashion, wrote much in his cabin,

40. Illustrations by Violet Oakley and Edward Stratton Holloway. The edition would sell out immediately and J.B. Lippincott Co. would publish a 2nd edition in London and Philadelphia in the following year "with two additional chapters."



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

and left a chest of manuscript, but made next to nothing by his writing. He did get a job of surveying, now and then, and gave an occasional lecture, and the few dollars that he made in that way seemed to satisfy him. Thus Mr. Emerson.



THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1899

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

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

SOPHIA E. THOREAU



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

**1927**

June : The series of articles by Dr. John Kimball de Laski about the Maine landscape that had appeared in the Bangor Whig and Courier on September 7-11, 1847, that [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) had mailed at least one of to her brother [Henry](#), were reprinted in The Maine Naturalist (pages 38-62).



THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1964

[Professor Walter Roy Harding](#) edited [SOPHIA THOREAU](#)'S SCRAPBOOK for publication by the Thoreau Society.



COLLECTED POEMS OF [HENRY THOREAU](#), enlarged edition.

Translation of [Thoreau](#) materials into Portuguese in Brazil: *ESCRITOS SELECIONADOS SOBRE NATUREZA E LIBERDADE*. Série Clássicos da Democracia, vol. 25. Tradução de Aydano Arruda. Contém: “Desobediência Civil,” “Onde vivi e a razão por que vivi,” “Naufrágio,” “Domingo,” “Caminhada,” “Cartas familiares selecionadas.” São Paulo: IBRASA. 167 pages.

[TIMELINE OF WALDEN](#)






**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

**1976**

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

**HOMOSEXUALITY**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

### "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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH 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]



**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

1980

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

- [Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson](#) nearly named one of his sons in honor of [Henry David Thoreau](#).
- Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) and [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) sometimes mutually annoyed one another.
- [Sophia Foord](#) refused to help [Lidian Emerson](#) mend carpets because floor coverings were vanity.
- [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#) and [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#) were impressed by table-stunt Spiritualists.

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In addition to the property of others, such as extensive quotations and reproductions of images, this “read-only” computer file contains a great deal of special work product of Austin Meredith, copyright ©2014. Access to these interim materials will eventually be offered for a fee in order to recoup some of the costs of preparation. My hypercontext button invention which, instead of creating a hypertext leap through hyperspace –resulting in navigation problems– allows for an utter alteration of the context within which one is experiencing a specific content already being viewed, is claimed as proprietary to Austin Meredith – and therefore freely available for use by all. Limited permission to copy such files, or any material from such files, must be obtained in advance in writing from the “Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project, 833 Berkeley St., Durham NC 27705. Please contact the project at <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.

“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





**THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:**

**SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU**

Prepared: August 8, 2014





THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

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



## THE PEOPLE OF CONCORD:

## SOPHIA ELIZABETH THOREAU

Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.