One of the first obligations of any biographer is to read all previous biographies to be certain he is aware of all the basic facts that are available in print. By the time I was ready to start work on my biography there were already more than twenty biographies of Thoreau available, ranging from scholarly studies such as that by Henry Seidel Canby to brief pamphlets and children's lives and memoirs by Thoreau's friends. One of the most interesting of these latter was Henry Thoreau as Remembered by a Young Friend written by Ralph Waldo Emerson's son Edward Waldo Emerson, OF WHOM WE HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN, AND who as a child had known Thoreau as an inmate of his father's house, ~~and who in later life spent many years in Concord as a family physician.~~ His book, hardly more than a pamphlet in length, appeared in 1917 to commemorate the centennial of Thoreau's birth. It is a warmly written, rambling series of anecdotes that portrays a quite different ~~portrait of~~ Thoreau from the earlier biographies that tended to overemphasize his coldness and austerity. (As a matter of fact, oddly enough, it was the famous eulogy of Thoreau by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward's father, that more than anything else crystalized the cold, stoic concept of Thoreau, RWE having honestly believed that it was as a Stoic that Thoreau had his greatest claim to fame.) Edward, without mentioning his father, said it was a quite different Thoreau he had known as a child, Thoreau, to him, was like a warm, friendly, thoughtful elder brother, who was always ready to lend an ear or join in a game. It was this Thoreau that he portrayed in his booklet.

Knowing how proud the Emerson family was of its heritage and how carefully they preserved all family documents, the late Leo Stoller of Wayne State University remarked to me one day that he wondered if by any chance the family still preserved Edward Emerson's notes for his book, for Stoller said he had a sort of intuitive feeling that they might contain material not included in the booklet. Since I had the good fortune of knowing Raymond and Amelia Emerson, Edward Emerson's son and daughter-in-law, I took the liberty of writing them and asking them that question. Mrs. Emerson replied very promptly that I should drop in to see them the next time I was in Concord. A few months later when I was in town, I phoned and she asked me to come out to their house on Easterbrook Road. She greeted me at the front door with "I am afraid I have brought you on a wild goose chase, for I have been able to find no trace of my father-in-law's notes. But do you know who John Shepard Keyes was?' I did indeed, for he was Mrs. Emerson's grandfather, a contemporary and friend of Thoreau, and later one of Abraham Lincoln's guards at Gettysburg. She then said she had inherited her grandfather's diaries and would I care to look at them, for they occasionally mentioned Thoreau? She however cautioned that while the diaries ran from the eighteen thirties to the seventies, unfortunately about ten years of them, those for the 1840s were missing (sadly some of the most interesting years of Thoreau's life, those for example when he was living at Walden Pond) and that when grandfather mentioned "Henry" he was more frequently referring to his chum Henry Fuller than to Henry Thoreau.

She then led me into their living room and piled beside a comfortable chair was a huge pile of old diaries. Before I could look at them, however, she asked once again what it was

among her father-in-law's papers that I wished to see and when I described what I knew of them in detail, she set off for the attic for one last look for them, leaving me with her grandfather's diaries to look over.

I am sure now that when she had placed those diaries beside my chair, she had made sure that the 1839 volume was on top and that she had tracked the volume so that it opened automatically to August 29, 1839 when I picked it up. As all good Thoreauvians know, it was August 31, 1839 that Henry Thoreau and his brother John set out in their homemade rowboat on the trip that Henry later immortalized in his first book, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. What is much less widely known is that Henry was famous in Concord for the melons he raised in his garden each summer. He raised not only the common watermelons and muskmelons, but all sorts of exotic varieties that few Concordians had ever heard of before. And, what is more, each fall he gave a great "melon party" that was one of the social events of the Concord year, one that all aspired to attend. Here then, with that background is John Shepard Keyes' entry for August 29th:

> Went up to see Henry Thoreau who is about starting on his expedition to the White Mts in his boat. He has all things arranged prime and will have a glorious time if he is fortunate enough to have good weather. He showed me all the minutiae of packing and invited me up there to eat some fine melons in the evening. I spent the rest of the time getting the fellows ready to go to the Thoreau melon spree. We went about 9 and saw a table spread in the very handsomest style with all kinds and qualities

of melons and we attacked them furiously and I eat [sic] till what with the wine & all I had quite as much as I could carry home.

Quite a different Thoreau from the popular picture of a cold misogynic solitaire.

Searching that and the other volumes I found much more about Thoreau. Most amusing were those telling of a visit to Concord by Ellen Sewall of Scituate, the girl to whom Thoreau once proposed marriage. Keyes was as attracted to her as was Henry Thoreau, but when he tried to corner her for an evening, Prudence Ward, Ellen's aunt who boarded with the Thoreaus, looking upon Henry as the favored suitor, intervened and broke up Keyes' tête a tête with Ellen and he was left out in the cold. The Keyes diaries were so fascinating in their portrait of Concord life of the mid-nineteenth centruy that I told Mrs. Emerson they must be published. When she replied, "No, they can't be," I asked why and she answered, "No, Grandpa was too much a man with the girls." And so they still remain unpublished, although she was most generous in giving me full access to them and permitting me to use any information I found about Thoreau therein.

Perhaps a half an hour after Mrs. Emerson headed for the attic, she returned with an enormous red cardboard accordian folder of the sort that lawyers used to use. "Is this what you wanted?" she asked as she tossed it into my lap. It was indeed just what I wanted. Apparently sometime in the 1880s or early 1890s Dr. Emerson suddenly realized that many of those who had known Thoreau before his death in 1862 were themselves now dying off. And so to save their memories of Thoreau before they were gone, he began collecting what we would now call "oral histories," jotting down on scraps of

paper the words of any Concord old-timers he met in his medical practice or on the streets of the town. The accordian folder was filled with such scraps varying in length from a sentence or two to several pages. Much of the material he had used in his memoir of Thoreau, but still more he had not used--I have no idea why, for some that he had omitted were the most colorful of all. So, more than a hundred years after Thoreau's death I had luckily come upon a whole series of unpublished, indeed unknown first-hand reminiscences of him. Typical of them is a tale that Sam Staples, the Concord tax collector and constable who had once jailed Thoreau overnight for non-payment of taxes--the source indeed of the famous civil disobedience incident in Thoreau's life, had told Dr. Emerson. Staples owned land adjacent to Emerson's and had hired Thoreau to survey it. In doing so, Thoreau discovered that Emerson's fence intruded several feet on to Staples' land. Thoreau immediately dragged Staples over to Emerson's house and there accused Emerson to his face of posing as an upright citizen, but every year secretly resetting the fence a little further on to Staples' land, until now he had stolen enough land to "feed a yearling heifer. But Mr. Staples has been too smart for you, and I'm glad to have a hand in exposing you, though it's an awful disappointment to me," said Thoreau. "Emerson," said Staples, "looked as though he had been caught picking pockets at town-meeting." And Staples was so embarrassed by Thoreau's tirade that he could do nothing but look at the floor. "Then," adds Staples, "whilst Thoreau was a-raking of him and had just said somethin' darned haa'sh, I just had to look at him, and when I see his eye, I laughed 'til you could a heard it up to the top of the Hill Buryin' Ground. You

see, he was just guyin' Mr. Emerson and when he see it, he didn't take it amiss at all. They were the nicest men that ever lived."

There were three packets in the accordian folder--Dr. Emerson's original notes taken down on odds and ends of scrap paper as he interviewed his old Concordians, a typescript of these notes, and a carbon of the typescript. Who had done the typing Mrs. Emerson did not know, but she very generously gave me the carbon for my own use and files. Luckily I asked if I might check the carbon against the original notes, for I soon discovered that a number of the best anecdotes had not been included in the typescript and so made copies of them too. Thus, thanks to the Emersons' generosity I was able to add dozens of lively anecdotes to my biography, ~~but~~ AND also had enough left over to use in two later books I did on Thoreau. How much more such material still remains unknown in Concord attics, I have no idea. But I do know that I very rarely spend a summer in Concord--and I have spent more than twenty there--that I do not find or have pointed out to me some new letter or diary or will or legal document that is pertinent to the life of Henry Thoreau. And I expect such materials to continue to turn up for years to come.

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Some years ago the phone rang one day in my office and it was a well-known rare-book dealer who said he wanted to tell me a story. A young man from Montana appeared in his store a few days before, wanting to sell a first edition of Walden that was autographed "R. W. Emerson from H. D. T." He said he had found it in a thrift shop in a small town in Montana, had paid two dollars for it, and had discovered the autograph only after he got home. The dealer, luckily an honest one, told the young man he didn't have enough money in his store to buy the book but offered to try to sell it for him on commission. Now the dealer wanted me to authenticate the book, if I could, before he attempted to sell it. I agreed to try and when the book arrived, it was insured for $20,000.

The autograph looked authentic. It was apparently in Thoreau's handwriting; its inscription was typical of those in his presentation copies; and the ink was that peculiar shade of brownish purple that Thoreau's home-made ink often faded into. Yet I was wary. Thoreau's books brought large sums on the market and all of these characteristics could have been forged by someone who really knew his business. I needed some other evidence if I were to clinch the identification. Leafing through the volume, I discovered dozens of pencilled annotations in the margins and even more on the back endpapers. They were in neither the handwriting of Emerson nor of Thoreau and, in fact, some of the annotations were dated after the deaths of BOTH MEN. Yet it was obvious from their content that they had been written by someone who knew Thoreau and Emerson well and had lived in or near Concord in the later years of the nineteenth century. It also seemed likely, particularly from the inscriptions on the endpapers that whoever had made the notes had been working on some

kind of essay or lecture on Thoreau. The mystery was finally solved when I found one of the annotations initialed "E.W.E." Obviously Edward Waldo Emerson--Ralph Waldo Emerson's son, and the member of the family most closely attached to Thoreau. He had spent his entire life in Concord as a family physician, and in 1917 had published a book, Henry Thoreau as Remembered by a Young Friend, based on lectures he had been giving for some years. Obviously he had received the book from his father, and all his annotations (for they proved to be in his handwriting) completely authenticated the book, for no SANE PERSON would have attempted to forge all of Edward's notes: he would have been too likely to have given himself away by an anachronism or some other slip.

When I called the dealer, he agreed that the annotations indeed authenticated the book, and added, "Well, that will raise its price considerably." But then he ASKED, "How do you suppose the book ever got to Montana?" I could only guess that Edward Emerson had given it to a friend or that it perhaps had been sold in the settling of his estate in 1930. At any rate, the book was put up for sale at an antiquarian book fair in Boston and was snapped up immediately by a syndicate of three prominent West Coast book dealers for $27,000. They in turn immediately got in touch with three prominent collectors and said, "Start bidding." It was knocked down at $72,500 and presented anonymously to the Library of Congress.

But the story does not end there. A few days later David Emerson, Edward Waldo Emerson's grandson and nominal head of the Emerson family, announced that the book had been stolen from his sister Ellen's (Mrs. Ellen Emerson Cotton's) RANCH,

in Montana, and asked the courts to impound the book until its ownership could be determined. The young man stuck to his story that he had picked the book up in a thrift shop until Mrs. Cotton produced a guest book in court that included the young man's autograph on a charity tour of her estate. The book was awarded to Mrs. Cotton and since luckily no money had as yet changed hands, there were no financial complications. Shortly thereafter Mrs. Cotton donated the ~~precious~~ volume to the Concord Free Public Library with the stipulation that it always be available for any interested person to see. So the book is now at last back in the hometown of Emerson and Thoreau. What happened to the young man I have never found out.

* * * * * * *

That I am obsessed with Thoreau is perfectly obvious, I think. The mere mention of his name invariably excites my interest. Whether I am in a library or a bookshop and I spot a book that seems to have the least likelihood of pertaining in any way to him, I find myself impelled to pick it up and check to see if his name is included in the index. It may be the biography, autobiography, journal or letters of one of his contemporaries. It may be an historical or political study of the period. It may be a volume of literary criticism or a study of natural history. It is astounding how frequently his name turns up. Over the years I have accumulated more than twelve thousand such references to Thoreau on my bookshelves and filing cabinets, and I by no means have them all. They continue to turn up everywhere. Let me give one such instance. I think it comes as a shock to most people to learn that Thoreau acquired a full set of false teeth when he was only in his early thirties. Somehow Thoreau and false teeth just do not seem to go together. But I was even more surprised myself when years ago one day I was exploring the old second-hand book store section on Fourth Avenue in New York City, I came across a battered little pamphlet on Emerson by one Rev. William Hague and found therein this little anecdote:

> It happened, one day, that Mr. Emerson was passing the house of Dr. Robbins, dentist, just as I was leaving it; and, while on the top of the steps, closing the door behind me, he hailed me from the sidewalk with the greeting, "Pray, what have you been doing there?"
>
> "I have been getting a mutilated mouth repaired," was my reply.
>
> "Indeed; have you come to that already? When Thoreau

reached that stage of experience, and the operation had been ended, he exclaimed, 'What a pity that I could not have known betimes how much Art outdoes Nature in this kind of outfit for life, so that I might have spoken for such a set to start with!'"

So, Thoreau not only wore false teeth, but preferred them to his natural ones!

Speaking of bookstores--especially second-hand book stores, they are one of my greatest joys. I would be appalled, I am sure, if I were ever able to total up the number of hours, days, and weeks I have spent in cities and rural areas around the world exploring bookstores. I simply cannot resist going in when I spot one. Thoreau books are difficult to find, for as bookdealers always remind me, they sell almost as soon as they are placed on the shelves. But "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and I continue searching. I recall once visiting a scruffy little shop in Washington, D.C. and there spotting a copy of Frank Sanborn's The Personality of Thoreau, a rare book indeed for it was issued in a very limited edition more than eighty years ago. To find a copy for sale was hard enough, but to find a copy within my then limited range of pocketbook I thought was impossible. But here was a copy for sale marked two dollars. I was so astonished that without thinking I asked the dealer if the price was right, kicking myself the moment I said it. He reached over, tapped me on the shoulder and pointed to a sign at the top of that particular bookcase, which read "Every book in this section reduced 50%." I handed him a dollar bill before he could change his mind, and while he wrapped up the book for me, he turned and said, "You book

collectors don't know what you are doing. You should hunt around places like the Salvation Army where they don't know the values of books. You can pick up books there for a song."

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Unfortunately for me I came along just too late to ever interview anyone who actually had known Thoreau in person. I recall once ~~when~~ as a teen-ager visiting Concord and seeing old Howard Melvin who ran a little gift and postcard shop at Old North Bridge for years and who used to regale visitors with his memories of Thoreau, but that was before I became obsessed with Thoreau--and besides I probably would have been too shy to ask him even if I had had the foresight. But then it is probably just as well, for although Melvin used to tell of going hunting and mountain climbing with Thoreau, he was, I have since been told, two or three years old when Thoreau died.

As late as the early 1940s, Dr. Fred S. Piper of Lexington, Massachusetts, who then in his nineties had been an ardent Thoreauvian himself for years, told me he had a patient in Lexington nearly a hundred years old who as a child and young teen-ager had lived next door to Thoreau and could still vividly remember his "piercing eyes, like an owl's" as he walked by her house. But unfortunately I was unable to get up to Lexington to see and interview her before she died.

Mrs. Daniel Chester French, the wife of the sculptor of the Concord Minuteman and of the Lincoln statue in the Lincoln Memorial, moved to and settled down in Concord as a young bride. She was fascinated by historic Concord and devoted much time to gathering anecdotes about the famous of the town from the natives. She tells us in her autobiography, Memories of a Sculptor's Wife, about the recollections of an old farmer by the name of Murray:

> "Henry D. Thoreau--Henry D. Thoreau," jerking out the words with withering contempt. "His name ain't no more Henry D. Thoreau than my name is Henry D. Thoreau. [When Thoreau had returned from Harvard to Concord in

1837 he had changed his name from the David Henry Thoreau he had been christened simply because the family and all his friends had always called him "Henry."] And everybody knows it, and he knows it. His name's Da-a-vid Henry and it ain't never been nothing but Da-a-vid Henry. And he knows that! Why, one morning I went out in my field across there to the river, and there, beside that little old mud pond, was standing Da-a-vid Henry, and he wasn't doin' nothin' but just standin' there--lookin' at that pond, and when I came back at noon, there he was standin' with his hands behind him just lookin' down into that pond, and after dinner when I come back again if there wan't Da-a-vid standin' there just like as if he had been there all day, gazin' down into that pond, and I stopped and looked at him and I says, 'Da-a-vid Henry, what air you a-doin'? ' And he didn't turn his head and he didn't look at me. He kept on lookin' down at that pond, and he said, as if he was thinkin' about the stars in the heavens, 'Mr. Murray, I'm a-studyin'--the habits--of the bullfrog!' And there that darned fool had been standin'--the livelong day--a-studyin'--the habits--of the bull-frog!"

Unfortunately Mr. Murray's opinions of Thoreau were all too prevalent in Old Concord. Many of his contemporaries simply could not understand why he, a Harvard graduate, wasted his time and his talents in living in a cabin alone in the woods and in wandering aimlessly, so they thought, in the woods and fields of Concord.

One of the first times I visited Concord to pursue my study of Thoreau, I wandered out Belknap Street to try to find the so-called Texas House, the house which Thoreau and his father had built in 1844, which was then still standing. Seeing a man mowing his lawn, I inquired as to which was Thoreau's house. He stopped

mowing and said to me, "What are you interested in Thoreau for? He never paid his rent?" and then went back to his mowing without ever answering my question.

As recently as 1985 a reporter for the Washington Post came up to Concord to interview the residents of Walden Breezes, the trailer park that still remains on the shores of Walden Pond. Their opinion of Henry Thoreau was not very high and referred to him as "that old drunk who used to live in a shack over on the cove." [THOREAU WAS A TEETOTALER HIS ENTIRE LIFE] Fortunately not everyone in Concord had such views of Thoreau. Raymond Adams of the University of North Carolina was probably the last scholar to interview Concordians who could still remember Thoreau. He visited there in the 1920s and came back to Chapel Hill with hundreds of notes. One of the best that he passed on to me one time makes a good antidote to Mr. Murray's choleric remarks. Adams had interviewed Abby Hosmer in her old age. She was the daughter of Thoreau's friend Edmund Hosmer and as a child had known Thoreau well. She told Adams:

> "One day, we children saw Mr. Thoreau standing right down there across the road near the Assabet. He stood very still, and we knew he was watching something in the water. But we knew we must not disturb him, and so we stayed up here in the dooryard. At noontime he was still there, watching something in the water. And he stayed there all afternoon.
>
> At last, though, along about supper time, he came up here to the house. And then we children knew that we'd learn what it was he'd been watching. He'd found a duck that had just hatched out a nest of eggs. She had brought the little ducks down to the water. And Mr. Thoreau had watched all day to see her teach those little ducks about the river.
>
> "And while we ate our suppers there in the kitchen, he told

us the most wonderful stories you ever heard about those ducks."

I think it enlightening that the children of Concord, that is, those who were children when Thoreau was an adult, almost invariably [DESPITE EDDY SIMMONS] had a good word to say for Thoreau. He, to them, was the one adult in town who shared their interest in nature and always had time for a word with them. They were able to overlook what the adults thought his eccentricities.

Unfortunately (AS WE HAVE SEEN) there are still those around Concord who have little or nothing good to say about Thoreau and who are puzzled that admirers come from around the world to Concord to pay tribute to him. Typical of these Concordians was a distinguished elderly lady who whenever I met her never failed to bring up "the fire." It was not Walden, nor "Civil Disobedience," nor Thoreau's contributions to natural history that she connected with his name. It was "the fire." Thoreau and a companion in 1844 had built a campfire on the shore of Fairhaven Bay. It was not a wise thing to do, for the woods were very dry, and the fire soon got away frmm them and eventually burned more than three hundred acres. My elderly friend's grandfather had owned some of the land that had burned and she loved to quote her mother as saying, "Don't talk to me about Henry Thoreau. Didn't I all that winter have to go to school with a smootched apron or dress because I had to pitch in and help fill the wood box with partly charred wood?" Being Yankees they couldn't bear to waste even charred wood. And thus Thoreau's reputation failed them.

I should add a word about my elderly friend. Shortly after my biography of Thoreau was published I had dinner with a mutual friend, Ruth Robinson Wheeler, the late distinguished historian of Concord. In the midst of our conversation she told me that our mutual friend was pleased with my book because I "had left the scandal out." I immediately asked what the scandal was that I had omitted. Mrs. Wheeler replied, "I don't know, but I assumed you would know." I am not normally a scandal-monger, but I decided that if there was some little-known scandal about Thoreau, it should be gotten into the record and I commissioned Mrs. Wheeler to find out before our mutual friend, who was then in her nineties, passed on, even if she had to promise to keep the secret till after our mutual friend's demise. It did not take Mrs. Wheeler LONG to worm the secret out, so long as it was not put into print during our friend's lifetime. She died a few years back and now I can tell the story--what there was of it. She came from one of the most prominent families in town. One of her great aunts had once experienced an unrequited love for one of the Thoreau brothers. She was not sure whether it was for Henry or, more likely, for his brother John. But that a member of her family had stooped so low as to fall in love with a member of the lowly Thoreau family, that to her was indeed a scandal of major proportions. She can rest in peace now though, for while I have told the story, I have not revealed her family name.

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One never knows where and when new material will turn up. My friend Charlie Dee, who is in charge of the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, one day a few years ago went out to the Concord town dump to dispose of some trash and saw an old piece of paper blowing along the ground. For some unknown reason--serendipity, perhaps--he stooped down and picked it up and found it to be a receipt by the Town of Concord for surveyer's services, dated in the 1850's and signed by Thoreau. Dee then looked back to see where it had come from and saw a whole pile of old papers blazing. They were many of the town's records for the mid-nineteenth century. Stamping the blazes out with his feet, he rescued as many of them as he could. The town archivist, you can well imagine, had a fit when he took them to her. It was then discovered that carpenters had been hired to convert an attic in the Town House over into a lounge for the town police. Finding some old boxes filled with papers in their way, the carpenters had taken them down to the dump and thrown them on the fire.

For another discovery I always feel grateful to a herd of Ayrshire cattle. No, they did not dig it out, but they were responsible nonetheless for the discovery of a number of Thoreau documents and, indirectly, for a whole archive of colonial Americana. Caleb Wheeler, a Concord farmer, took great pride in his prize herd of Ayrshire cattle. His wife, Ruth, THE HISTORIAN, had long since found that if she ever wanted him to go on a trip of any kind, it was easiest to arrange a visit with some other Ayrshire cattle owner. So when she wanted to make a trip to Plymouth, Massachusetts, she checked the directory of Ayrshire cattle owners and found that a Robert Bowler maintained a herd in Plymouth. Caleb was easily persuaded to make a social call on Mr. Bowler and a few hours later they were

knocking on the Bowler's front door. As they were invited in, Mrs. Wheeler noticed hanging on the wall of the front hall an old framed map and sidling over to see it better she was astonished to discover it was a survey signed by Henry D. Thoreau. When she asked her hostess where it came from, Mrs. Bowler explained that her grandfather, Marston Watson, had been a friend of Thoreau at Harvard and when he had purchased this farm in the 1850s, he had hired Thoreau to survey it for him. She had found it in the attic a few years before, had dusted it off and had it framed as an interesting souvenir. "Do you have any other souvenirs of your father's friendship with Thoreau?" "Oh, yes, we have a number of Thoreau letters up in the attic." Explaining that she knew that I was then in the midst of editing a new collection of Thoreau's correspondence, MRS WHEELER asked if she could see them. Mrs. Bowler disappeared immediately into the attic but after a long while returned empty-handed, muttering that she could not find them and had a vague recollection that she had let someone borrow them. Mrs. Wheeler, stressing their historical and monetary importance, urged Mrs. Bowler to make a determined search for them. A few months later Mrs. Wheeler received a note from Mrs. Bowler saying that she had not found the Thoreau letters, but in searching further for them she had found more than a hundred letters from Ellery Channing, Thoreau's closest friend and biography, to her grandmother Mary Russell Watson. At one point, as a young man, Thoreau himself "had been sweet" for a time on Mary Russell and had written her a love poem or two. The letters she had found had mostly been written by Channing in the last year of Thoreau's life and reported regularly on the state of his health. "What," Mrs. Bowler asked, "should she do with them?" Mrs. Wheeler easily persuaded her to donate them to the Concord Free Public Library

and there they were of tremendous help when I later was working on Thoreau's biography.

Mrs. Wheeler continued to urge Mrs. Bowler to search for the missing Thoreau letters and a few months later she located them in a neighbor's possession. It turned out that most of the letters had already appeared in print, but a few did fill in gaps in the correspondence and I was happy to be able to use them. Mrs. Bowler was entranced by their publication and decided to search her attic for further treasures. She found little more Thoreau material, but she did find a good deal of her grandfather's correspondence with other of the Transcendentalists, enough in fact to take up a two-hundred page book to catalog and describe it. She also found vast piles of documents about her Mayflower ancestors and their descendants shedding much new light on the early history of Plymouth. All of this material she very generously gave to the Pilgrim Society in Plymouth. After a great exhibition was arranged displaying it, the interest of many other Plymouth citizens was aroused and they in turn examined their own attics and donated their findings to the Pilgrim Society. And all of this occurred because of a herd of Ayrshire cattle. One never knows!

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I have always been interested in knowing where Thoreau derived many of his ideas and have tried to track down any books that Thoreau read and read them myself. To that end I over the years started compiling a list of all the books in his personal library, locating where possible the actual volumes he owned which are now scattered almost literally to the four corners of the earth, and in 1957 I published Thoreau's Library, a catalog of his books and their present locations.

A few years later Ruth Wheeler, ~~Concord's historian,~~ told me that she had just located one I had missed. When she told me that it was his copy of Homer's Iliad, I was thunderstruck, for in Walden itself Thoreau tells us that for the two years he lived at the pond he never locked his cabin door, and the only thing he ever had stolen was his copy of the Iliad! And when she told me where she had found it, I was even more astonished. It was in the possession of one of the collatoral descendants of Alek Therien, the French-Canadian woodchopper of Walden. It was only then on re-reading Walden that I NOTICED Thoreau, at another spot, tells us of asking Therien if he liked Homer. When Therien replied that he was familiar with the name but had never read him, Thoreau took his Iliad down off the shelf and read to him the passage of Achilles' friendship for Patroclus. It was now quite obvious ~~to me~~ that Therien enjoyed the reading and later at some point helped himself to the book.

When I asked Mrs. Wheeler how she had tracked down the volume, she said that as a member of the local public library board she had heard rumors of the book's location and she had gone to the man to try to persuade him to donate the book to ~~the library~~

the library to add to their already sizable collection of Thoreau's books. He had brought out the book and showed her Thoreau's signature and notes in it, but he was not ready to give it away.

I was especially delighted with the news because it meant that in my biography of Thoreau, which was then well under way, I could announce the solution of the more-than-a-century-ago puzzle of the disappearance of the book. But since I thought it might be well to get the present owner's permission to tell the story, I asked a mutual friend, the late Gladys Hosmer of Concord, to interview him. Mrs. Hosmer, as all who knew her can testify, could be a pretty formidable person, but when she asked him about the book, he absolutely refused to admit he knew anything about it, telling her she must have mixed himself up with someone else. The only thing I can imagine to explain his denial was that when two such doughty women had come to call upon him in rapid succession, he began to fear that he was becoming involved with a stolen book, though the statute of limitations had of course expired more than a century ago. He did however agree that I could tell the story in my biography, so long as I put it in the best possible light. And so there I said:

> Although Therien had had little formal education, he was keen and alert. The two often talked of books. Quite naturally their discussion turned to one of Thoreau's favorite authors, Homer. And when Therien told Thoreau that he thought Homer a great writer, "though what his writing was about, he did not know," Thoreau ~~told~~ took his

Iliad down and translated portions for him. Therien was so delighted that he later quietly borrowed Pope's translation from the cabin and forgot to return it.

Thoreau was to wonder in *Walden* where it had gone to. The owner was apparently satisfied that I had not implicated the woodchopper and made no attempt to sue me.

The story, however, unfortunately does not end there. When several years later he died, both Mrs. Hosmer and Mrs. Wheeler went to his family to alert them of the existance of the volume. The family had not known of it and made a particular search of all their father's possessions. But it was nowhere to be found AND has not come to light again to this day. Whether he gave it away or sold it or destroyed it, no one knows. And so this book that disappeared mysteriously in the eighteen-forties and reappeared in the nineteen-sixties, has once more disappeared ~~once more~~ just as mysteriously and I do not know if it will ever turn up again.

* * * * * * *

In 1958, Professor Carl Bode of the University of Maryland and I published the first new edition of Thoreau's correspondence in more than sixty years. Because earlier editions had included only selected letters and had been badly edited by modern standards, we determined to print every letter written by or to Thoreau that we could find and tracked down the original manuscript as our text whenever we could. We were luckily able to turn up many hitherto unpublished letters, among them one Thoreau had written to his cousin George Thatcher in Bangor Maine on January 1, 1858, the manuscript of which ~~was~~ is now in the great Berg Collection in the New York Public Library. Shortly after our book reached print, Paul Oehser, then director of publications at the Smithsonian Institution, published a letter in Science, the official publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, pointing out a particularly interesting sentence in the letter. Thoreau, in speaking of their mutual friend Edward Hoar, had said:

> Mr Hoar is still in Concord, attending to Biology, Ecology, &c with a view to make his future residence in foreign parts more truly profitable to him.

Up to the time of our publication of this letter it had generally be supposed that the word "ecology" had been coined in 1866 by the German Darwinian Ernst Haeckel. But here was Thoreau using the word eight years earlier and using it in a way that implied his cousin would be familiar with it. For a time I was very proud of the fact that I had, though quite accidentally, corrected what was apparently a false claim and pushed the history of a very important word back at least eight years.

Fortunately for the record (though unfortunately for my pride) in the spring of 1965, the late Richard Eaton, a botanist associated with Harvard University, pointed out to me that Haeckel had spelled the word as "oecology" and that the simpler spelling of "ecology" had not been adopted until the International Botanical Congress had been held in Madison, Wisconsin, in August of 1893. Thus Thoreau was not only using the word eight years before it was supposedly coined, but he was using a spelling that did not come into usage until forty-five years later. What is more, even after an intensive search, Eaton could find no other use of the word than Thoreau's before Haeckel's of 1866. "Was there any chance," Eaton asked, "that Thoreau's letter was a forgery and the use of the word an anachronism?"

Since Thoreau's manuscripts nowadays bring such high prices on the autograph market, it seemed perfectly possible that some unscrupulous soul had forged the letter. But when I checked with Dr. John Gordan, the curator of the Berg Collection, he had an absolutely water-tight provenance for the manuscript. George Thatcher, the recipient of the letter, had sold it to George Hellman, the well-known book dealer. Hellman, in turn, sold it to the book collector Stephen Wakeman. When Wakeman died, it was purchased at auction by W.T.H.Howe, the president of the American Book Company. And at his death, his entire collection was purchased by the Berg brothers. What is more, Gordan had sales receipts for each transaction.

It was obvious then that the manuscript was genuine, but how to explain the seeming anachronism? Thoreau's hand-

* I can supply a xerox of the word in Thoreau's hand

writing was notoriously bad, but a look at the word in the manuscript seemed clearly "Ecology." However when I checked it against other manuscripts that Thoreau had written about that time of his life, it was just as clear that his capital "Es" looked very different. They were rounded while that in the letter was sharply angled. It was only after intense study that I finally realized that Thoreau's word was not "Ecology" but "Geology." And this was confirmed when I discovered that in his journal entries for that winter Thoreau speaks of visiting quarries with Edward Hoar.

Upon making this discovery, I immediately wrote a letter of apology and explanation which was published in Science and I thought the matter was done with. But a few years later I picked up a copy of the New York Times Book Review one Sunday morning and started reading a review of the new supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary only to find the reviewer commenting how interesting it was that Thoreau was the first known user of the word "ecology"! A quick check of the supplement revealed ~~indeed~~ that it did indeed cite Thoreau's sentence as the earliest known use of the word. I immediately wrote another letter of apology and explanation, this time to the editor of the OED. He wrote a most gracious letter back agreeing that the word in Thoreau's handwriting did look like "Ecology" and adding that the Merriam-Webster Company of Springfield, Massachusetts in checking the proofs of the OED supplement came up with my letter to Science and notified the OED of the error. Unfortunately their letter arrived too late to make the correction. And so it seems likely that if I am going down in history, it will most likely be as the man who corrupted the Oxford English Dictionary.

~~man who corrupted the Oxford English~~

My longest search has been for the long lost journals of Harrison Gray Otis Blake, Thoreau's Worcester friend and correspondent. In searching through some old newspaper files about thirty-five years ago, I ran by chance across a copy of Blake's obituary of 1898 which indicated Blake's journals were still then in existance. Since Blake had been Thoreau's most ardent disciple (so much so that Thoreau's sister Sophia had willed to him most of Thoreau's manuscripts), what insights might Blake's journals not give into Thoreau's life and personality?

I started my search by tracking down Blake's will and found that while the journals were not mentioned, he had bequeathed the Thoreau manuscripts to his friend E. Harlow Russell, then principal of the old Worcester State Normal School. It took only a few letters to Worcester friends to find that ~~Harlow's~~ Russell's granddaughter, whom I shall call Mrs. Ross, though that is not her name, was still living. A letter to her brought a rather vague letter saying that she had inherited most of her grandfather's possessions, but they were all in storage and she had no idea what was among them. Someday she intended to go through them, and when she did, she would let me know if the missing journals were among them.

Some years went by without my hearing again from Mrs. Ross and I got diverted to other projects. Then in the early 1960's a Thoreau scholar who was a native of Worcester began to make a study of Thoreau's Worcester connections. He too ran across a reference to the missing journals AND realized how important they might be. He too tracked them to Mrs. Ross and drove to her summer cottage in the mountains to interview her. Although her letter to me had been friendly despite its vagueness, she was crisp and crusty to her caller. "Yes, she was Harlow Russell's

granddaughter." "Yes, she had inherited his papers." "Yes, they were up in the attic of this very house." But she was"not going up into that hot attic for anyone, not even Henry Thoreau." "Could I come back in cooler weather and look at the papers?" "No, in cooler weather I live in my winter house a hundred miles from here and I see no point in driving back. Those papers do not interest me one bit." And so the Worcester scholar left even more frustrated than I.

Another ten years later a third Thoreau scholar got involved. He too tracked down Mrs. Ross and drove to her summer cottage. He rang the front door bell and as she answered the door, a large and ferocious dog came snapping and snarling around the corner of the house. "Does that dog bite?" "I certainly hope so," she replied, but she did invite him in. Spotting a Thoreau book on her shelves, he took it down and out fell the manuscript of a hitherto unknown Thoreau letter. She let him make a copy of the letter but on everything else she was more adamant than ever. There was no way he was going to get up in her attic and look through those papers. She wished he would go away and stop bothering her.

It was at this time that the three of us got together, compared notes, and decided to launch a joint campaign to get into that attic. We discovered that she had a brother still living, but he was in the foreign service and lived abroad. We wrote to him explaining the importance of the papers and asking his help. He replied very sympathetically but said he thought he ought to delay action until his next visit home, several years off, when he could use his persuasive powers on his sister face-to-face. That was the last we ever heard

from him, though we understand he has since retired and is still living abroad.

Next we learned that Mrs. Ross's late husband had taught for years at a very distinguished university. Perhaps the university could help us. I went to the rare book librarian of the university and explained the importance of the papers. He was immediately excited and said he would approach Mrs. Ross to see if she would donate the papers to the university library in honor of her husband, stressing the tax advantages of such a donation. But, alas, a few days later he called to say that in doing some research on Professor Ross, he discovered that there had been a quarrel between Ross and the university over a retirement pension and Mrs. Ross was not on speaking terms with anyone associated with the university.

Still conniving, we aroused the interest of a public library in the papers. Excitedly they invited her out for luncheon to broach the subject. To impress her they took her to the area's best restaurant. The waiters were all too attentive and brought her martini after martini. By the time the lunch was over and they were ready to discuss the papers, she had imbibed too much and was in no shape to discuss such a delicate subject. She responded to no further invitations.

Next by one of those purely lucky bits of serendipity we discovered that a mutual friend of all three of us, a man whom I shall call George Whitehead had as a youth many years ago once been in love with Mrs. Ross before she had married. But they had quarreled and each gone his separate way. George had married someone else too, had had a long and happy marriage, but his wife had died a few years back and now he was lonely.

When he learned that Mr. Ross had died, he decided to get in touch WITH Mrs. Ross again. When we told him about the papers, he promised to see if he could get a look at them. Mrs. Ross responded immediately to his letter and invited him to visit her in her summer cottage. Within a few days the two were together exploring the attic. Almost the first thing he came across was the manuscript of an unpublished essay by Harlow Russell on his acquaintance with Thoreau. They took it downstairs to read, but when they had finished, she said, "Oh, George, it's too hot to go back up into that attic again. Let's postpone it until another day." And he never got up into the attic again.

By now, of course, we despaired of ever getting up into the attic. Several years went by and then, much to our joy and surprise a young couple turned up at one of our Thoreau Society's annual meeting and the wife introduced herself as the niece of Mrs. Ross. "Did we know about the papers in the summer cottage attic?""Would we like to see them?" "No," she had not been in the attic herself, but she suspected there were some real treasures there, and she was working on her aunt to explore FOR them. After months of careful negotiations, the Worcester scholar and the niece not only got into the attic but examined everything in it. ~~They~~ THERE were a number of interesting manuscripts and other bits, but not a sign of what we wanted most--the Blake journals

Our interest then focussed on the barn across the street from the cottage. There was a locked room there that apparently had books and papers in it. After much persuasion the two searchers examined that room and its contents. Again there were a few small treasures, but not the journals. By now we realized

that Mrs. Ross was playing a cat and mouse game with us, for when we indicated we were giving up hope, she hinted that maybe the journals were someplace in her winter place. Again she showed a few small treasures, but she died before our search team really got to work on the house, and, when after her death, they explored the whole house, they found no trace of the journals. Mrs. Ross had apparently been leading us on all those years. We have no proof actually that she had ever had them. Perhaps Blake never willed them to Russell, or perhaps Russell did inherit them but destroyed them or gave them to someone else--we hope the latter. We still hope too that someday yet they will turn up, but where, we have no idea.

They say that misery loves company and I will have to admit that it has been a consolation at times that others have been frustrated in their search for information about Thoreau. Brooks Atkinson, the late New York Times drama critic who himself wrote a biography of Thoreau more than half a century ago, once told me of his most frustrating experience. He said that he learned that Edward Simmons, then a well-known painter, had spent his childhood summer vacations living in the Old Manse in Concord and had thus gotten to know Thoreau. With some difficulty Atkinson, through a mutual friend, arranged to meet Simmons. Atkinson's first question was "Mr. Simmons, tell me, what did you think of Henry Thoreau?" "I thought he was a son of a bitch," was the disconcerting reply and he refused to say any more.

Later I came across the explanation for Simmons' gruffness. In his little-known autobiography Simmons tells us:

> Like all boys, I was intensely interested in birds and animals. One day I was playing in the grass in front of the

Old Manse, when I suddenly looked up to see a short man with a blond beard leaning over me.

"What have you there, Eddie?"

"A great crested flycatcher's egg," I replied.

This was a very rare find.

He wanted me to give it to him, but I would not. Then he proposed a swap.

"If you will give it to me, I will show you a live fox," he said. This was too much to resist. We made a rendezvous for the next Sunday.

Although descended from a line of parsons, I had already learned that Sunday was, for me, merely a holiday, and it was evidently the same for him. This man was Henry D. Thoreau.

Accordingly, the following Sabbath I trudged down to his place at Walden Pond, and he, who had "no walks to throw away on company,' proceeded to devote his entire afternoon to a boy of ten. After going a long way through the woods, we both got down on our bellies and crawled for miles, it seemed to me, through sand shrubbery. But Mr. Fox refused to show himself--and worse luck than all, I never got my egg back!

I have always had a grudge against Thoreau for this.

Incidentally it is interesting to note that since Edward Simmons was not born until 1852, five years after Thoreau gave up his cabin, Simons could never have "trudged down to his place at Walden Pond. Confused recollections are often true of the elderly. But I do not doubt the gist of Simmons' tale.

Simmons' recollections remind me of the recollections of one of his contemporaries, Annie Sawyer Downs. But, first, let me tell the story of finding Annie's recollections.

Some few years ago Marcia Moss, the indefagitable curator of special collections at the Concord Free Public Library, called my attention to a a manuscript of recollections of mid-nineteenth century Concord that had recently been given to them. It had been found in an attic in Cambridge. It was unsigned and no one in the family knew its origin other than as indicated in a postscript which read "Andover, Massachusetts, November 10, '91." It was obvious from its contents that it had been written by a woman who had been a child in Concord during the 1840s. The only other seeming clue was Nathaniel Hawthorne's identification of the writer therein as the "Doctor's little girl." But the Hawthorne family doctor at the time was Josiah Bartlett who had no daughter of an age appropriate to have written the recollections. However, the author did happen to mention that she was long interested in botany. When I showed the manuscript to Thomas Blanding, the Thoreau authority in Concord, he picked up on this and said he vaguely recollected that Ellery Channing mentioned a Concord woman botanist in his biography of Thoreau. Checking, I found the name of Annie S. Downs, identified as "that admirably endowed flower-writer. . . [who] died in 1901." Her only book in the Concord Library was an atrocious verse history of the town of Andover that had not circulated in eighty years and had to be searched out of storage. An inscription in the book revealed she had once attended Bradford Academy, now Bradford College, but calls to Bradford College revealed only that the secretary of the alumni association and the curator of the Bradfordiana collection were both abroad for the summer, so no records were available.

If she wrote a history of Andover, Massachusetts, probably she had had some connection with the town, but the reference desk in the town library had no record of her. "Try the historical

No other appropriate doctor in Concord turned up in the medical directory.

society. It is just down the street and today is the only day it is open this month. In fact, it closes in half an hour." There was no Annie Sawyer Downs in the society's name files, but in the 1901 folder of the chronological file there was a tiny sliver of an unidentified newsclipping which said, "Died, Annie Sawyer Downs, the well-known verse writer, December 7 1901"! "Are there any newspaper files for Andover at the turn of the century?" "Yes, there are microfilms at the library." So back to the library I went and out with the microfilms for 1901 and the first issue of the weekly newspaper after Annie's death. But, alas, not a mention of Annie in the first issue or the second. Fortunately in re-winding the film, the name "Annie Sawyer Downs" caught my eye. Here to my astonishment in an issue dated several days before her supposed death was a lengthy account of her funeral! Obviously the clipping in the historical society had been misdated.

The funeral account stated she had been born, Annie Sawyer, in Concord and lived there through her childhood, was long especially interested in flowers, and published poetry regularly in various religious journals. But what about Hawthorne's comment about her being the "Doctor's little girl"? Back to Concord to check the vital statistics. There was no record of her birth--apparently her parents had never filed one. But a little more than a year before her birth there was record of the marriage of a Dr. Sawyer of Manchester, N.H. to a Concord girl. Why was he not in the medical directory? He was a homeopathic physician and they were boycotted by the prevailing more conventional physicians. A check with Arlin Turner, the biographer of Hawthorne, confirmed that Mrs. Hawthorne occasionally

consulted Dr. Sawyer, much to her husband's dismay. So Annie Sawyer Downs was unquestionably the author of the manuscript. Thomas Blanding later turned up evidence for me that she had delivered the paper at the dedication of the Lawrence, Massachusetts, Public Library in 1892.

Mrs. Downs' paper was filled with anecdotes, most of them familiar, of the many famous Concordians, but there was one about Thoreau that I had never heard and I think it worth retelling. Let me give it in Annie's own words:

> No entreaties ever induced [Thoreau] to show us where his rare floral friends made their homes. He had no secrets, however, from Mr. Minot Pratt [a Concord resident and amateur botanist], and only a couple years before his death I had an amusing interview with him. Mr. Pratt had promised to take me to the only place in Concord where the climbing fern could be found. I had given my word of honor that I would not tell, and in due season we were on the ground. In the midst of our enjoyment we heard a snapping of twigs, a brisk step, in the bordering thicket, and in a second Mr. Thoreau's spare figure and amazed face confronted us. Mr. Pratt answered for my trustworthiness, and so won over Mr. Thoreau by representing what a deed of charity it was to enlighten my ignorance that he climbed with us into our clumsy vehicle and by circuitous ways took us to the haunt of a much rarer plant which he said nobody else in Concord had ever found. I was sincerely grateful and not backward in telling him so. But noticing an odd twinkle in Mr. Pratt's eye, I asked him later what it meant. He told me he had known of the plant years before Mr. Thoreau found it, and that the spot was not half a mile from where

Mr. Thoreau had discovered us. He had doubled and redoubled upon his track simply to puzzle and prevent my ever finding the place again.

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The one romance in bachelor Thoreau's life has long fascinated his followers. According to legend both he and his older brother John fell in love with the same girl, Ellen Sewall of Scituate, Massachusetts. John proposed, was accepted, and then a few hours later rejected, Ellen explaining that he had caught her by surprise and it was really Henry she loved. But when a few months later Henry proposed, Ellen regretfully turned him down too because her father objected to his daughter marrying "any associate of that damned radical Ralph Waldo Emerson"!

In 1958 the late great Perry Miller of Harvard University caused a sensation in Thoreau circles by announcing in his book Consciousness in Concord that he thought the whole story of ELLEN a fabrication, pointing out that there WAS no record of the romance in print until 1890, nearly thirty years after Thoreau's death, and the tale seems to have grown by accretion in modern times. Miller accused more recent biographers of expanding on it to add a little spice to their books.

Shortly after his book was published, Miller received a letter from a man in New York City who identified himself as a grandson of Ellen Sewall (she had later happily married a Rev. Joseph Osgood) and stated that he knew there was an amplitude of evidence that the Sewall story was fact and not fiction. Since Miller was by then busy at a book on another subject and thought he had had his say on Thoreau, he turned the letter over to me to follow up on since I was already at work on my biography of Thoreau. The New York grandson quickly put me in touch with his cousin, another grandson of Ellen, George Davenport by name, who lived in Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Davenport informed me that he had inherited most of the Sewall-Osgood family papers and, recently retired, he was now engaged in making transcripts of the more important ones for distribution among his cousins. He would add my name to his mailing list. Over the next several years I received from him nearly six hundred pages of transcripts of wills, diaries, and letters. Perhaps only five percent, if that much, pertained to the Thoreau-Sewall romance, but that five percent did in fact, fully document the romance and included even manuscript poems Thoreau had written to Ellen. Mr. Davenport ~~even~~ gave me xeroxes of all the pertinent manuscripts so that I could check them with my own eyes.

The great surprise however came when well along the way he mentioned having just received a letter from his aunt, Louisa Koopman. Now if Mr. Davenport was Ellen's grandson, then his aunt must have been Ellen's daughter. Ellen and Thoreau had had their romance in 1840. Thoreau had died in 1862. This was now 1963. Could a daughter of Ellen still be alive? "Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Davenport. "Aunt Louisa was Ellen's youngest child and was born in 1863. She was now ninety-nine years old, vigorously alive and living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since she was born the year after Thoreau died, she could obviously not remember him, but she had much to say about her mother's interest in Thoreau."

Needless to say, I was very shortly in touch with Mrs. Koopman. She had just written a little essay on her mother's friendship with Thoreau and was disappointed to have it rejected by the Atlantic Monthly--why, when I read it, I could not understand, for it was delightfully written. I very quickly

persuaded the Massachusetts Review to accept it for the special Thoreau number they were then preparing. Mrs. Koopman was so pleased that she wrote me that she, at the age of ninety-nine, had decided to embark on a new career, that of writing.

I visited her in her Cambridge apartment and she was indeed as spry as her nephew had asserted. She lived alone and did all her own cooking and housekeeping. She told me her mother always kept a portrait of Thoreau hanging on the livingroom wall. (What Mr. Osgood thought of that I did not learn.) Her mother always gathered in every new edition of any of Thoreau's works and any book or article about him. However she did add that while her mother had followed her father's command on rejecting Thoreau's proposal of marriage, she indicated that had there been similar objection to Mr. Osgood's later proposal, she would have gone ahead and married him anyway. She also indicated that the long secrecy about the Thoreau-Sewall romance had been deliberate on the family's part--in deference to Mr. Osgood's feelings.

We chatted along at a great rate. After an hour or so, aware that she was ninety-nine, I got up to go, saying I was afraid I might be tiring her. Her reply was, "Nonsense!" and she persuaded me to stay on and on until I had spent nearly three hours with her. A few days later she wrote asking me to come back soon when I was not worried about her health. Unfortunately I never did get back, for she died suddenly and unexpectedly a few months later.

The highlight of my evening with her though was when she turned to me and asked, "Have you met my older sister?" I then

learned that she had an older sister, Frances Collier of Cohasset, Massachusetts, who was 101. Oddly enough I had known Mrs. Collier's daughter, Mrs. Gilbert Tower. But who would have thought to ask an eighty-year-old woman if her mother were still alive? I got in touch with Mrs. Tower again almost immediately and was soon invited out to Cohasset to have luncheon with mother and daughter. I was met at the door by Mrs. Tower who deplored the fact that I had not met her mother earlier. "She was fine until last winter when she had a severe case of influenza, and since then she has had great trouble with her memory," she said. (I learned from another source that up until her illness she had been known as the keenest bridge player in Cohasset.)

Mrs. Collier turned out to be as lively as her sister, but it was true her memory was failing her. She could not remember where she had put her glasses five minutes ago and she told the same stories over and over again. But if I asked her about things that had happened eighty or ninety years ago, she remembered them clearly. The highpoint of the afternoon came when she asked me if I would like to see her mother Ellen's journal. Mr. Davenport, when he found I was to meet his Aunt Fannie, had alerted me to the fact that while he had inherited most of the family papers, Aunt Fannie had Ellen's journal for 1840-41, the very period of her romance with Thoreau. But, he added, ~~that~~ I should not get too excited about it, for at some point in the distant past--most probably at the point when she became engaged to Mr. Osgood--she had scissored out all the references to Thoreau.

Aunt Fannie brought out the journal. It was a little paper-covered school notebook, very similar to the college

examination bluebooks of today. When I opened it up, I discovered that Ellen had not scissored out any references to Thoreau, but rather had torn out the complete section covering the summer and fall of 1840. And that section is apparently gone forever. The Osgood family has searched without success for it for years. I THINK WE CAN ASSUME ~~Apparently~~ Ellen burned it. In looking over the remaining manuscript, however, I discovered the entry for January 31, 1841, that Ellen had ~~apparently had~~ missed. It had been a cold, snowy day and she had invited some of her schoolmates (She was only seventeen at the time.) over for the afternoon. Somehow the name of Thoreau came up and she read to them some of the love poems he had written her. Then she added in the journal:

> I wonder if his [i.e., Thoreau's] thoughts ever wander back to those times when the hours sped so pleasantly and we were so happy. I think they do. I little thought then that he cared so much as subsequent events have proved.--But to quit this painful theme. . .

and she changed the subject, never to mention it again. You can imagine the thrill of finding this passage in her own handwriting. Adding to the pleasure of the afternoon, Mrs. Tower brought out a daguerreotype of Ellen taken in about 1840. It had just been discovered in a friend's attic. Scratched and dimmed, it was hardly visible, but fortunately experts at Kodak's Eastman House went to work on it and the result was a gem to include in my biography. That all these Sewall materials should come to light at just the point when I was working on my biography after having been hidden for more than a century was a fortuity that I had not reckoned with but now reveled in.

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Photographs of Thoreau are rare indeed since he died shortly after photography was invented and before it was really popularized. In fact only five authenticated photographs of him are known to exist--three copies of one pose and two of another, the first set, daguerreotypes made by Benjamin Maxham of Worcester, Mass., in 1856, and the second set, ambrotypes by E. S. Dunshee of New Bedford, Mass., in 1861. Of these five copies, two have been missing for many years. It was a great thrill then when in 1968 Theo Brown, ~~then~~ of Moline, Illinois, announced that he was giving to the Thoreau Society the Maxham daguerreotype that Thoreau had given to his grandfather in 1856. To commemorate the event I persuaded Robert Bretz, then librarian of Rochester's famed Eastman House photographic museum and a collector of early photographs, to print ~~a limited edition~~ a booklet on his personal Gaudeamus Press in an edition limited to 1050 copies. They were distributed among members of the Thoreau Society and some of Bretz's friends.

Several years later Bretz on a collecting trip in Vermont visited a dealer who specialized in early daguerreotypes. In conversation Bretz happened to mention the little booklet and showed the dealer a copy. The dealer's wife, looking over their shoulders, suddenly exclaimed, "Why, we have that daguerreotype downstairs!" and retiring to the cellar soon came back with the missing third Maxham daguerreotype of Thoreau in her hand. Where they had picked it up, she had no idea. They were constantly acquiring old daguerreotypes from all sorts of sources and this was in a large unassorted group they had picked up over the past year. Thoreau had sent it to an admirer, Calvin Greene in Michigan in 1856. Greene handed it along to another admirer of Thoreau, Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones of Ann Arbor, Michigan, about the turn of the century. Later a Chicago book dealer acquired

it in the settling of Jones's estate. It then disappeared from sight for many years until it turned up in the Vermont dealer's cellar. Where it had been and why it had lost its identity all those years, no one knows. But the Vermont dealer, recognizing its value, put it up for auction in New York City and it brought two thousand dollars from a Rhode Island dealer--the largest amount ever paid up to that time for a daguerreotype. That dealer, in turn, sold it a few months later for four thousand dollars and it was then donated anonymously to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington where it is now housed. The other missing portrait was one of the Dunshee ambrotypes. It had been stolen from the Concord Antiquarian Society in 1910, surfaced briefly in 1924 when it was sold at auction in New York City, but has been missing ever since. A few years ago one of the best known dealers in daguerreotypes offered a reward of ten thousand dollars if anyone could turn it up, but as yet it has failed to come to light.

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My search for Thoreau has not ended. Not a day passes but that I am not in pursuit of him in books or papers or libraries or attics. As my old friend Ted Bailey used to say, "I shall never be rid of Henry," and I am sure I too shall never be rid of Henry. Thoreau, in the closing pages of Walden, tells of the legendary artist of Kouroo who found meaning in life in his pursuit of the perfect staff. Thoreau has become that staff for me. My pursuit has led, I hope, to a better understanding of Thoreau for me. But without question it has led me to a better understanding of myself. For Henry Thoreau represents to me man.

When I began research for my biography of Thoreau, I was astonished to discover that one of the most obvious resources, the Concord newspapers of Thoreau's day, had been almost completely ignored by all previous biographers. It took little effort to learn that there was at least one (and sometimes two or even three) weekly newspapers published in Concord for all but approximately ten years of Thoreau's life, and, what is more, there was an almost complete file of these available in the basement of the Concord Free Public Library. Turning through the pages of these old files--or, more precisely, searching through the reels of microfilms of the newspapers--could be a tiresome task. Often several years' files would go by without a thing of interest, then quite unexpectedly something unusual would pop up. As is well known, just after he was graduated from Harvard College in 1837, Thoreau was hired by the Concord School Board to teach in the local Center School. But after two weeks a school committee member, observing Thoreau's teaching, complained that he was not using enough physical discipline. In self-righteous wrath, Thoreau called six of his pupils out at random and feruled them. Then turning to the committeeman he said that if he was expected to use physical force, he had now fulfilled the contract, but that was not the way he believed in teaching, and he handed in his resignation.

Scholars for years had been searching for the school committee report on the matter, but it was not with most of the other annual reports in the town offices. Imagine my surprise then to have it turn up this one year printed in the pages of the Yeoman's Gazette for April 14, 1838, complaining about an interruption in the fall term "which was occasioned by a change

of masters and produced the usual evil attendant on the event."

Scattered through ~~later~~ other issues of the Gazette were advertisements for the private school Thoreau later established, announcements of and reports of lectures he gave at the local Lyceum, and other of his activities. More important, perhaps, there were recorded old town legends that Thoreau was later to incorporate into Walden and some of his other works. Altogether, despite its often dull pages, it provided a vivid picture of contemporary life in Thoreau's home town.

I have mentioned that the Concord Library's file was nearly complete. Actually only a few issues of the Gazette for the spring of 1849 were missing and fortuitously a clipping from one of those missing issues has turned up in a scrapbook kept by one of Thoreau's sisters that is now in the possession of the late pioneer Thoreau scholar Raymond Adams of the University of North Carolina. Thoreau had written a letter to his friend Horace Greeley describing his life at Walden Pond and Greeley in turn had published excerpts from the letter in his New York Tribune in an editorial urging young writers to follow Thoreau's example. Although there has long been a tradition that Thoreau was pretty much "a prophet without honor in his own country," there were at least some exceptions to that rule, for the clipping reads:

> OUR TOWNSMAN--MR. THOREAU. All the good things which the Tribune says of this gentleman are richly deserved. But the Tribune is mistaken in supposing he still continues this course of life, or that he continued in it four years. Mr. Thoreau lived upon the banks of our beautiful Walden Pond for two years, where he wrote some of the most inter-

esting and instructive lectures we have ever heard, and where he became "as conversant with beans" as any man living, because he cultivated them extensively. He is a gentleman of rare attainments, and now has one or two works in press which all who have heard him lecture are anxious to see.

Thus were Walden and A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers introduced to his fellow townsmen.

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or even centuries. Such hours and days and weeks I have spent in just such places. And there have been times when I have been dirty, dusty, bored and frustrated. But such times have been comparatively rare. I am not sure that I possess the quality of serendipity in larger portions than usual, but I know that most of my searches for Thoreau have been one grand adventure after another, a series of literary detective stories come true and that have led me to find out more and more about my hero.

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