

1839

The Whigs nominated William Henry Harrison. The Mormons, forced out of Missouri, sent their agents to buy land on the Illinois side of the Mississippi for the new city of Nauvoo. W. F. Harnden started the first express between Boston and New York. A treaty of navigation and commerce was signed between Texas and France. Men's trousers, after having been almost skintight and somber in the earlier years of the decade, were now being cut with luxurious fullness out of plaids. The bloodless Aroostook War between Maine frontiersmen and Canadian trespassers took place, the president having even been given authority to send troops to Maine to protect the sanctity of the frontier. A petition from settlers on the Willamette River asking the United States to take formal possession of Oregon was laid before the Senate. Congress passed a law prohibiting dueling and one abolishing imprisonment for debt in certain circumstances.

Thoreau, in his *Journal* for this year, set down more verses, as well as several pages on bravery and a few paragraphs about love and friendship. A page and a half contains a brief itinerary, with such comments as "Camped in Merrimack, on the west bank, by a deep ravine" and "Ascended the mountain and rode to Conway." These scraps of sentences are all we have at this point about what later became one of the most famous of American journeys, the one transcendentalized in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. The other major event of the year was Thoreau's falling in love. Ellen Sewall, a pretty girl from a nearby town, came to visit the Thoreau household. Thoreau's brother John, Henry's companion on the excursion up the rivers, fell in love with her too. The triangle was not resolved until the next year.

From EMERSON

Friday, 15 Feb.

My dear Sir

The dull weather and some inflammation still hold me in the house, and so may cost you some trouble. I wrote to Miss Fuller at Groton a week ago that as soon as Saturday (tomorrow) I would endeavor to send her more accurate answers to her request for information in respect to houses likely to be let in Concord. As I know that she & her family must be anxious to learn the facts, as soon as may be, I beg you to help me in procuring the information today, if your engagements will leave you space for this charity.

My questions are

1. Is Dr. Gallup's house to be vacant shortly, & if so, what is the rent?
It belongs, I believe, to Col. Shattuck.
2. What does Mrs Goodwin determine in regard to the house now occupied by Mr. Gourgas? Since, if she do not wish to apply for that house, I think that will suit Mrs. F. If it is to be had, what is the rent?
Col. Shattuck is also the owner of this house.
3. What is the rent of your Aunts' house, & when will it be rentable?
4. Pray ask your father if he knows of any other houses in the village that may want tenants in the Spring.

If sometime this evening you can without much inconvenience give me an answer to these queries, you will greatly oblige your imprisoned friend

R. W. Emerson

In the spring of 1839 Margaret Fuller was house-hunting in Concord, and Emerson called on Thoreau to assist in the search. Sanborn tenta-

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tively misdated the letter 1840. Rusk (Emerson Letters, II, 182), however, points out that this letter was clearly written on the same day, February 15, 1839, as one from Emerson to Margaret Fuller. Concordians mentioned are Dr. William Gallup, Colonel Daniel Shattuck, Mrs. Amelia Goodwin, and Francis R. Gourgas. Thoreau's aunts were the Misses Jane and Maria Thoreau, who lived in what is now part of the Colonial Inn. MS., Hosmer.

From EMERSON

Dear Sir,

Mrs Brown wishes very much to see you at her house tomorrow (Saturday) Evening to meet Mr Alcott. If you have any leisure for the Useful Arts, L. E. is very desirous of your aid. Do not come at any risk of the Fine.

R. W. E.

The Mrs. Brown mentioned here is undoubtedly Emerson's sister-in-law, Lucy Jackson Brown. A quiet and sensitive woman, older than Thoreau, she made for him a good friend and listener. His poem "Sic Vita" was for her, and he later sent her some idealistic letters. Rusk suggests that since Alcott was not yet a resident of Concord, Thoreau may have met him for the first time as a result of Mrs. Brown's invitation. L. E. is undoubtedly Lidian Emerson. This note was apparently an afterthought to be sent with the letter given just above. Rusk notes (Emerson Letters, II, 183) that he has seen a copy of the letter accompanied by a copy of the note, and the note is preceded by this introduction "[inclosed a scrap of paper on wh. is written]." MS., Berg, copy in J. E. Cabot's hand.