

DANIEL RICKETSON'S COPY OF WALDEN

by

Walter Harding

It is an astonishing thing to have a hitherto unknown copy of Henry David Thoreau's Walden, heavily annotated by his most ardent disciple, Daniel Ricketson, turn up more than a century after Thoreau's death. It is even more astonishing to discover in that volume two equally unknown caricatures of Thoreau made from life by Ricketson. Yet exactly this has happened, and the volume is now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

Daniel Ricketson, a well-to-do, New Bedford Quaker lawyer, who, though he had passed the bar, devoted himself almost entirely to literary and historical interests and the ^{CULTIVATION OF} ~~collection~~ of intellectual friends. On August 10, 1854, the day after Walden was first published by Ticknor & Fields in Boston, Ricketson purchased a copy, sat down and read it through. So impressed was he that on August 12, he wrote a long letter to Thoreau, whom he had never met, congratulating him on a book "which bears the stamp of a genuine and earnest lover for the true philosophy of human

life." He told Thoreau of the "shanty" which he had built on his estate, Brooklawn, on the outskirts of New Bedford, to which he retired to read and contemplate nature, and invited Thoreau to visit him should he ever be in the vicinity of New Bedford. Thoreau, quite characteristically, did not bother to reply until October 1, and then wrote so coolly that Ricketson inscribed on the manuscript, "Letter hastily written and hardly satisfactory, evidently well-meant though over-cautious." However, when Thoreau found that he would be filling a lecture engagement in New Bedford on December 26, 1854, he promptly informed Ricketson and was invited to stay overnight with him.

Thoreau missed the train and arrived at Ricketson's home after his host had given up hope of seeing him. Ricketson, expecting from his reading of Walden "to see a man of unusual vigor and size," did not recognize Thoreau and was about to dismiss him as an unwanted peddler. Once Thoreau identified himself, however, he was welcomed into the house and as Ricketson has said, the disappointment which he felt "soon passed off, and never again obtruded itself to the philosopher's disadvantage."

From this point on until Thoreau's death in 1862, Ricketson and Thoreau frequently visited back and forth in New Bedford and Concord. Ricketson was unquestionably the more ardent of the two. Thoreau at times was annoyed with

Ricketson's chronic hypochondria and insipidity. On occasion he would neglect to answer Ricketson's letters for months at a time. Ricketson would chide him for the neglect, whereupon Thoreau would only reply, "You know that I never promised to correspond with you, and so, when I do, I do more than I promised." But despite apparent coolness, Thoreau nonetheless found Ricketson an affable companion on occasion and spent many a pleasant day with him.

Ricketson's copy of A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers with its drawing of Thoreau as he appeared on the doorstep of Brooklawn on December 25, 1854, and which is now in the Albert E. Lowmes collection in Brown University Library, has long been well-known and the caricature frequently reproduced. The Walden volume, however, comes as a surprise to the world of Thoreau scholarship. Just when it left Ricketson's hands and where it remained hidden for many years is unknown, but it was recently offered for sale by a well-known rare-book dealer and so has been acquired by Harvard University.

The book is still in the original typical Ticknor & Fields blind-stamped, homely, brown binding which shows signs of much use. Ricketson has filled both the front and back endpapers with pencilled annotations and comments, has pasted a caricature of Thoreau's bust on the first

front endpaper, and has drawn in ink on the next to the last endpaper in the back of the book a delightful full-length caricature of Thoreau with beard, cane, boots, and coonskin cap. Throughout the text of the volume, he has frequently underlined or made marginal lines beside passages that attracted his attention and here and there has made various comments, not all of them complimentary. Occasionally he had even attempted to revise Thoreau's wording and punctuation. While none of Ricketson's comments give any remarkably new insights into Walden, they do give us a better understanding of Ricketson's interest in Thoreau, himself, and help to confirm some of the details of their long friendship. It would thus seem worthwhile to set down for the record a detailed description of this newly discovered volume.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Front endpaper a] [Pasted in, a caricature labeled "H. D. Thoreau from life Dec. 26th 1854," in ink on an octagonal piece of blue paper. This drawing was thus made on the occasion of Thoreau's first visit with Ricketson at Brooklawn.]

He now wears a full beard which much improves his countenance 1858. [Thoreau grew his full beard in the summer of 1857.]

[Front endpaper b] Daniel Ricketson Aug. 10th 1854 [Walden was published on August 9, 1854. Ricketson purchased his copy the very next day.]

"It is the declaration of Seneca, that "as often as he mingled in the company of men he came out of it less a man than he went in," and to the truth of this our own experience after much free conversation bears testimony; for it is much easier to be wholly silent than not to exceed in word; it is much easier to keep concealed at home than to preserve ourselves from sin abroad. He therefore that passeth forward to the perfection of the internal and spiritual life must with Jesus withdraw himself from the multitude."

Thomas A Kempis "Imitation of Christ"
[Chap. XX. "Of the Love of Solitude and Silence"]

[Front endpaper c] Thoreau's visits December 1854 September 1855
 June 1856 April 1857 Dec. 1858 last visit Aug. 1861
 H. D. T. died May 6th 1862. Henry D. Thoreau was born in Concord
 July 12th 1817-- Died in Concord May 6th 1862. Aged 44 years,
 9 months, 24 days "non omnis moriar" ["I shall not altogether die,"
 --Horace, Odes, 3.30.6.]

Date of Thoreau's Ambrotype taken in N[ew] B[edford]
by Dunshee Aug. 21, 1861 [This is the well-known last
portrait of Thoreau taken at Ricketson's request just after
Thoreau's return from Minnesota.]

[Front endpaper d] Henry D. Thoreau arrived at Brooklawn Sat-
[urda]y noon Sept 30th and remained until Friday morning
Oct~~o~~6th 1855 [According to Ricketson's own journal, Thoreau
arrived for this second visit to New Bedford on Saturday,
September 29, 1855. October 6, 1855, was on a Friday.]

H. D. T. came to Brooklawn from Concord with me Monday
June 23rd 1856--and remained until Tuesday [Ricketson's
cancellation] Wednesday July 2d 1856

1st ? W[alton?] R[icketson?]

[The date of Thoreau's arrival in New Bedford is
difficult to decipher and looks almost as though it might
be June 25th, but the 23rd is confirmed in both Thoreau's
and Ricketson's journals, as is the date of departure,
July 2nd, even though Walton Ricketson, Ricketson's son,
apparently questioned that date.]

H. D. T. arrived April 2d 1857 left April 15th
1857, several visits since to Aug 1861 his last [Al-
though Ricketson's journal lists April 1st as the date of
Thoreau's arrival, Thoreau's journal confirms the 2nd as
the correct date.] Obiit die VI Maii AD MDCCCLXII [He
died May 6, 1862.] Non omnis moriar

[Front endpaper e] Henry David Thoreau Philomath [lover of
learning, Ricketson's favorite epithet for Thoreau.]
Concord, Mass.

"Humble quiet builds her cell,
Near the source whence pleasure flows;
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
And tastes it as it goes."

[Thomas] Gray. ["Ode on the Pleasure Arising
from Vicissitude," II 53-56]

[Title-page] [Drawing of Thoreau's cabin rather crudely water-
colored in green, blue, and brown.]

[Copyright page] [A clipping entitled "Henry Thoreau, A Faithful
Portraiture" pasted in. It is apparently the first install-
ment of Ellery Channing's biography of Thoreau which appeared
serially in the Boston Commonwealth beginning with the issue
of December 25, 1863.]

[Page [4]] The author of this book now lives at his father's--
having a room in the garret. His living is obtained by
surveying & making lead pencils.--He spent two days with
me in Dec 1854--a man of the most gentle & genial manners.
Jan. 1855. D. R.

Gilpin['] s Forest Scenery
Works of Wm Gilpin

River Wye

Lakes of Scotland

except sermons [William Gilpin was one of Thoreau's

favorite authors--he is mentioned, for example, in the "House-Warming" chapter of Walden. Thoreau, in his letter of October 1, 1854, recommended Gilpin's works to Ricketson and in his letter of October 12, 1855, sent Ricketson a long list of Gilpin's works with instructions for ordering them from England.]

[Page 6] [Marginal line by "I have traveled a good deal in Concord."]

[Page 9] Rather wanting in sympathy or feeling [Written in the margin by Thoreau's comments on the "mean and sneaking lives many of you live."]

[Page 10] [Marginal lines by the passage about "what a man thinks of himself" and the final paragraph on the "Mass of men [who] lead lives of quiet desperation."]

[Page 11] [Sentence at the top of the page on "the characteristic of wisdom" underlined and a question mark in the margin by the passage on the old never having very important advice to give the young.]

[Page 12] [Marginal line marking the top paragraph on the lack of available advice.]

[Page 17] [Marginal lines by the passages on "most of the luxuries," on "the ancient philosophers," and on "voluntary poverty," the latter phrase being marked in both margins and underscored as well.]

[Page 23] His object [Written in the margin by Thoreau's statement

on his purpose of going to Walden Pond to live.]

[Page 24] Clothing [Written in at the break between the paragraphs.]

[Page 25] [Apparently not satisfied with Thoreau's punctuation, Ricketson has inserted commas after "do" in the second line, "recollect" in the third, and "appliances" in the fifteenth. Marginal line by the passage on our clothes becoming assimilated to ourselves.]

[Page 27] [Marginal line by the passage on bewareing of enterprises that require new clothes and the sentence on having any enterprise before you, underlined.]

[Page 30] [Marginal line by the passage on the factory system. The word "Shelter." written in at the large break between paragraphs.]

[Page 32] [The sentence about "the natural yearning" underlined. Marginal "X" by the passage on constructing a house. Final sentence on the railroad box marked with a marginal line.]

[Page 33] [Marginal line continued over from the preceding page for the same sentence. Sentence on the size of the Indian house underlined and words "Large wigwam" written in the margin. On this and on several other pages, light, irregular pencil scratches which seem to be accidental and which I shall ignore.]

[Page 43] A dwelling of this kind which I visited was standing a few years ago near the south shore of Assawampset Pond

Middleborough [and] was occupied by John Rosier, a half blood Indian [Written at the bottom of the page below Old Johnson's description of the early New England farm-houses. Thoreau visited Assawampset Pond, north of New Bedford, several times with Ricketson.]

[Page 49] [Passage on digging the cellar marked with a dotted marginal line.]

[Page 54] [First full paragraph on the cost of the cabin foot-noted by Ricketson: "Built on land of R. W. Emerson." Paragraph on building a more luxurious house has marginal line and is followed by exclamation point. "I brag for humanity" underlined.]

[Page 56] [Marginal line from the 7th line to the bottom of the page. Single parenthesis placed just before the sentence beginning "If I wish."]

[Page 57] [Exclamation point in the margin by the comments on Smith, Ricardo, and Say.]

[Page 59] [Planting." written between the paragraphs.]

[Page 63] [Sentence on Arcadia underlined and with marginal line. Marginal question mark by the passage on drowning in the Nile.]

[Page 64] [Occupation" written in the margin by Thoreau's comments on his day-labor.]

[Page 65] [Dotted line from the phrase "amounted to" down to "\$8 40 3/4" in mid-page.]

[Page 70] [Question mark in the margin by the statement on living on board nails.]

- [Page 77] [Marginal line by paragraph on maintaining one's self.]
- [Page 78] ["The man who goes alone can start to-day" underlined and entire sentence marked with marginal line.]
- [Page 80] [Sentences on doing good, running over on to Page 81, marked with marginal line.]
- [Page 82] [Sentence on employing the poor in one's kitchens marked with marginal line.]
- [Page 84] [Paragraph on the sadness of reformers marked with marginal line.]
- [Page 87] ["T. Carew" footnoted, "Thomas Carew, a native of Gloucestershire [sic], educated at Corpus Christi, Oxford. He died about 1639. Blake."]
- [Page 89] The way he purchased a Farm. [In the margin by the Hollowell place comments. Marginal line by entire paragraph and "for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to leave alone" underlined.]
- [Page 90] Thoreau is a surveyor occasionally. [Footnoted to the word "survey" in the poem.]
- [Page 91] [Marginal line by the paragraph on Old Cato.]
- [Page 92] [Marginal line and underlining of sentences on winds at the Walden cabin.]
- [Page 96] [Asterisk by sentence on morning as a cheerful invitation; underlining of sentence on somnolence; and marginal line on comments about the mosquito.]
- [Page 97] [Marginal line by sentence on "auroral hour."]

[Page 98] [Underlining of "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life."]

[Page 100] Somewhat obscure [In margin by passage on "sound sleepers."]

[Page 111] [Marginal line by paragraph on eloquence.]

[Page 117] [Sentence beginning "How many a man" underlined and marked by marginal line.]

[Page 123] [Marginal line by sentence on "getting our living."]

[Page 125] Channing [In margin by the quoted poem.]

[Page 134] [Dotted marginal line by paragraph on the church bells.]

[Page 137] [Marginal line, extending over to the next page, by the paragraph on frogs.]

[Page 139] "In the barn the tenant cock,

Close by Partlet perched on high,

Briskly crows, the Shepherd's clock,

Jocund that the morning's nigh."

Day--a pastoral--[John] Cunningham [1729-1773, II, 1-4, slightly misquoted. Footnoted to the word "Chanticleer."]

[Page 140] [Marginal line by first half of opening paragraph.]

[Page 147] [Marginal line by first five sentences on being alone.]

[Page 148] From whom could this information have been derived?

Perhaps the man tho' dying, yet revived [Footnoted to comment on a man lost in the woods. Marginal line, extending to next page, by paragraph on loneliness.]

[Page 149] one of the most remarkable passages in the English language. [Marginal comment on paragraph about the old settler. Phrases "old settler" and "original proprietor" underlined and "The Creator" written in margin. "An elderly dame" also underlined, with "Nature" written in margin.]

[Page 151] July 25th 1863. [Written at end of paragraph.]

[Page 153] [Marginal line by sentence on the inconvenience of so small a house.]

[Page 155] "Inveⁿⁱ requiem: spes et Fortuna valete
Nil mihi vobiscum: ludite nunc alios."

[I have found rest: hope and fortune farewell.

You have brought me nothing: now mock others.]

Motto over the door of Petrarch's retreat, Vaucluse.

[Footnoted to quoted poem.]

[Page 172] [Marginal line by sentence on top dressing.]

[Page 183] [Marginal line by passage on returning to cabin at night.]

[Page 185] An experience of this kind I had one dark eve [nin]g in Concord D R [In margin by sentence on going astray at night.]

[Page 186] [Marginal line by account of Thoreau's arrest.]

[Page 189] [Marginal line by sentence on striking the side of his boat.]

[Page 191] not so! A[nna?] R[icketson]. The sea is always blue I believe off soundings. D. R. [Footnote to passage on color of the sea. Anna Ricketson was Daniel's daughter]

[Page 213] Probably so called from its being a resort of Wild Geese on their semi-annual passages. [Footnote to "Goose Pond." Marginal line by passage on "model farm."]

[Page 219] [Final three lines of poem cancelled and revised to read:

"Innocent of angler's hook
Where mercurial trout,
Are seen to dart about."

and identification "Channing" added in the margin. Since Ricketson knew Ellery Channing well, it is quite possible that he derived these changes from Channing himself.]

[Page 220] Channing [Marginal note by poem in which word "steers" has been underlined.]

[Page 225] Channing [Marginal note by poem.]

[Page 226] Thoreau somewhere else says "How near the wild is to the good." [Footnoted to sentence on loving the wild. In his essay on "Walking," Thoreau says, "How near to good is what is wild!"]

[Page 230] [Marginal line by passage on fishing and hunting losing his respect.]

[Page 231] ["because they were not agreeable to my imagination" underlined and marked with marginal line.]

- [Page 232] [Dotted marginal line by paragraph on cooked food.]
- [Page 233] [Marginal line and question mark by sentence on eating a fried rat.]
- [Page 235] [Marginal line and asterisk by paragraph on moral life.]
- [Page 236] [Marginal line along entire page. Asterisk by sentence on animal dying out in one.]
- [Page 237] [Dotted marginal line along entire page.]
- [Page 238] [A man's heart changeth his countenance whether it be for good or evil. Solomon. [Footnoted to sentence on effect of nobleness on a man's features. Dotted marginal line for all but final paragraph on page.]
- [Page 260] [Wm. Channing [Marginal note to sentence about a poet being taken to beard.]
- [Page 267] [along [Marginal correction to "the geese came lumbering in in the dark."]
- [Page 272] [large [Marginal correction to "it had burned a place as big as my hand."]
- [Page 274] [Mrs. Hooper of Boston a daughter of the late Wm Sturgis. From the Dial
-
- [Page 287] [Caroline Sturgis daughter of William Sturgis [Footnoted to poem.]
Hosmer [Marginal note to "a long-headed farmer"]
Channing [Marginal note to "a poet."]
- [Page 288] [Alcott [Marginal note to paragraph on Connecticut pedler.]

[Page 289] vide page 149 [Footnote to "old settler."]

[Page 290] Emerson [Marginal note to "one another."]

[Page 294] ["Brisk about" corrected to "frisk about."]

[Page 338] He probably witnessed the gyrations of the Woodcock [Footnote to "The Merlin."]

[Page 341] From March 1845 to Sept[embe]r 1847 about 2½ years [Added at end of last paragraph.]

[Page 348] ["Apple-tree" and "oak" in last line underlined.]

[Back endpaper a] Mr John Thoreau the father of the author died at Concord Feb 3d 1859 aged 71 years. Henry D. Thoreau died at his home in Concord Mass May 6th 1862, aged 44 years. non omnis moriar.

[Following clipping, dated in pencil "1858," pasted on page.]

Mr. Thoreau, of Concord, lived, and for aught we know to the contrary lives now in a little house of his own construction on the borders of a beautiful pond. He has been said to be quite eccentric in his habits, and so indeed he must be if stories of his primitive way of living are correct. It is rather curious to see a gentleman of cultivated intellect retiring from the world, dividing his time betwixt literary labors and cooking, hunting, and fishing. But Mr. Thoreau is not the only man who believes in solitude and practically seeks for it. It may not be generally known to our readers that there is living on this Cape, a man who has a rough little house built and occupied by himself alone. It stands just on the edge of a hill which overlooks the valleys below and the ocean and shore in the distance. Its furniture is rude, yet sufficient for one who two years ago forsook the haunts of men, the society in which he had moved, and sought the quiet of this sequestered spot. We called to see this strange man a short time ago and were struck with the ease of his manners and the

philosophical character of his remarks. By a process of reasoning which certainly was ingenious, if not correct, he had arrived at the conclusion that the life he leads is best for the happiness of man. We were much pleased with our visit, though we could not but wonder what sorrows and trials had led to this strong, unchangeable desire for solitude. --Gloucester Telegraph. 1858 [Date entered in pencil.]

[Back endpaper b] Henry D. Thoreau. Concord, Mass.

"Take this my son, the Father said.

This Globe I give thee for thy bread.

Eager he seized the precious store

The gift devoured, and asked for more."

Alcott [I assume Ricketson means Bronson Alcott but I am unable to find it among his published poems. Quite likely Alcott gave him a manuscript copy.]

[Back endpaper c]

A. B. Alcott

R. W. Emerson

H. D. Thoreau

Concord, Mass

W. E. Channing

New Bedford 1857

W[ilson] Flagg

Andover, Mass

A. Bronson Alcott

H. D. Thoreau

at Brooklawn April 1857.

H. D. Thoreau

Thomas Cholmondeley

Dec. 1858.

Flagg was a minor nature writer and friend of Ricketson. Cholmondeley was Thoreau's English admirer who visited Ricketson with him in 1858. Pasted in, lengthy clipping entitled "Boston and Vicinity. Thoreau Talk," an account of "Life without Principle" lecture given to Theodore Parker's congregation at the Music Hall in Boston on October 9, 1859. The clipping, in large part a summary of the lecture, is too lengthy to quote in its entirety, but it begins:

Henry D. Thoreau of Concord, the hermit of Walden Pond, and the model cynic of modern times, occupied the Music Hall platform yesterday, and for an hour and a half discoursed upon what he considers to be "Misspent Lives." Mr. Thoreau has a fine voice, and a prompt, effective style of oratory that fixes the attention of the hearer. . . .

Back endpaper d

Will the winter never end
 Never end the chilling wind
 Never end the biting frost?
 Shall not Nature, genial, kind,
 Come again ere all be lost,
 And her balmy spirit blend?
 1857

There follows a rough sketch entitled "Baker Farm -- House." There was also an old Barn and both unoccupied except by swallows & other birds, when I used to visit them with my friend H.D.T.

There follows a rough sketch entitled "Old Barn."

Baker Farm is the setting of the chapter of that name in Walden.

Back endpaper e Made a visit to the author of Walden Sept 1855, arriving on the evening of the 20th and leaving at noon the 22d after a pleasant visit during which I was introduced & took tea with Ralph W. Emerson, and stopped over night with Wm E. Channing the poet.

On the 21--visited the spot where the author spent two years by the side of Walden Pond--a beautiful little lake about 1½ miles from Concord village. H.D.T. arrived at Brooklawn Sat[urda]y noon Sept. 29, 1855. Left for Plymouth with myself Friday morning Oct 5th. Dates confirmed in both Ricketson's and Thoreau's journals.

Back endpaper f "The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of Creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it.

Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere."--

Page 92 Fairly accurate transcription from Walden.

Back endpaper g an ideal Thoreau

An Ideal Thoreau. First phrase written in pencil; second, in ink. They accompany ink caricature of a bearded Thoreau with cane, boots, and coonskin cap.

[Back endpaper h] March 13th 1859

June 27th 1866. [Significance of these dates unknown;
perhaps they mark Ricketson's re-readings of Walden.]

Henry D. Thoreau

The Man of Nature

"--Slighted as it is and by the great
Abandon'd, and which still I more regret
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still
I never framed a wish or formed a plan
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss
But there I laid the scene."

--[William] Cowper

[The Task:] Winter Evening [IV, 691-7, slightly misquoted.

The above quotation is in ink.]

Shanty Book.
