

The 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society  
**Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing**

July 8-12, 2026

**Presenter Bios & Abstracts**



**Austin Bailey, PhD** is a Doctoral Lecturer in English at Hunter College, where he teaches courses ranging from first-year writing to 19th-century American literature and literary theory. He is a member of the Thoreau Alliance board and chairs the Fellowships committee.

*The Unclouded Eye/I: Vision as Vital Sympathy in Emerson*



**Barry Andrews** is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister, independent scholar and life-time member of the Thoreau Society.

*Thoreau and the Art of Life*

The art of life! Was there anything memorable written upon it?" Not finding anything useful, he wrote his own: *Walden*, a treatise on the cultivation of the soul.



**Ron Balthazor** retired from the University of Georgia, where he taught Sustainability and Environmental Literature, and now writes and gardens on his farm.

*Seasons of Living Well*

This presentation explores how the idea of living well evolved in Thoreau's writing through the ways he investigated seasons: the season of sowing (being fully present to the moment), the season of ripening and harvest (living through the cycle of the year), and the seasoning of life, the bringing to fullness or completion (investigating complex ecological cycles).



**Lois Brown** is a Foundation Professor of English and Director of the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy at Arizona State University.

*Flourishing Women and the Common Good in Thoreau's New England*

What might we learn about multi-layered definitions of flourishing from women such as the trailblazing abolitionist educator Susan Paul, the dedicated antislavery colleagues Sophia Thoreau and Mary Merrick Brooks, or the cosmopolitan philanthropist Nancy Prince? This paper focuses on how the flourishing of these individuals— whose lives and livelihoods engaged with and also were decidedly different from Thoreau's world—called their communities and the nation to account.



**Katrina Byrd** is a storyteller and disability advocate who uses storytelling as a tool to educate, legislate, and maintain spiritual balance.

*Rejoicing During the Storm*

This talk explores Thoreau's connection to transforming daily life into art and how uses storytelling to live deliberately and to relieve mental blocks. While living at Walden, Thoreau used storytelling to process grief, an idea that has shaped my advocacy.



**Paul H. Carr**, joined the Thoreau Society 33 years ago before retiring as a supervisory physicist at the nearby AF Research Lab.

*Economics to Heal Ecology*

This presentation shows how the “Economy” Chapter in *Walden* guides us into cooling the Earth’s warming climate by putting a price on the emissions from fossil fuels. We should follow Thoreau’s simple, vegetarian lifestyle to heal our ecology and use free solar energy from heaven and not fossil fuels from hell.



**Christopher Ulloa Chaves** is a published member of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society; he completed his doctoral dissertation about the liberal arts through the University of Southern California (USC).

*Emerson's Thoreau and the Art of Living Well*

This presentation will explore key highlights of Emerson’s eulogy for Henry David Thoreau titled THOREAU (1862). The audience is invited to reflect upon the possible ethical implications for human flourishing derived from this public eulogy which was, subsequently, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in August of 1862.



**Phyllis Cole** is Professor Emerita of English, Women's Studies, and American Studies at Penn State Brandywine. A longtime leader in the Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller Societies, she is the author of *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism* and co-editor of *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism*.

*Illness and Health in the Personal Writing of Two Transcendentalist Women*

This talk explores how Margaret Fuller and Mary Moody Emerson navigated the four pandemic diseases—smallpox, consumption, cholera, and scarlet fever—that shadowed their circles, as well as their turn from bleeding to water-cure and mesmerism as cures.



**Frank Cronin** is a retired professor from Austin Community College who is focusing in retirement on his work as a board member of DarkSky Texas and educating college students about Thoreau and the Thoreau Society.

*A New Kind of Huckleberry Party*

In the spirit of the conference theme, "Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing," we consider the future “flourishing” and “health” of Thoreau’s legacy with college-aged students and the role of Society members outside of Concord in stimulating engagement with Thoreau and Thoreau’s works. We will present our ongoing work in Austin, Texas, where we developed shared programming between Austin Community College and the University of Texas at Austin on Transcendentalism, Thoreau, and the Society by coordinating events around the PBS Documentary, *Henry David Thoreau*.



**Kate Culkin** is a professor of history at Bronx Community College and the author of *Emerson's Daughters: Ellen Tucker Emerson, Edith Emerson Forbes, and their Family Legacy* (2025).

*Enthroned Cheerfulness: Illness and Optimism in the Life of Edith Emerson Forbes*

This talk examines how Lidian Jackson's and Ralph Waldo Emerson's differing ideas about illness manifested in the choices of their daughter, who suffered from rheumatic pain, and, more generally, how these strands of thought informed women's options for taking charge of their own health.

**Tracey A. Cummings**, Commonwealth University-Lock Haven

*Louisa May Alcott's Thoreauvian Characters: Reflections on their Good Lives ... & Deaths*

**Daniela Daniele** holds a doctoral degree in Anglistics from the University of Genoa and a PhD in Comparative Literature at the City University of New York. She currently teaches Anglo-American Literature at the University of Udine.

*Vegetarian Diets and Liberal Pedagogy: Bronson Alcott in the Transatlantic network of Utopian Abolitionists*



**Josephine Doucette** is a graduate of Barnard College and a devoted Thoreauvian.

*Worship as a Power of Harm and Healing: Thoreau's Natural Sabbath*

This presentation explores how Thoreau's observance of the "natural Sabbath" builds a powerful framework of universal respect and responsibility towards others. Today, it is often difficult to find a balance between taking care of the self and taking care of one's neighbors, but Thoreau regrounds us in a practice of mutual care and stewardship.



**Julia X. Du** is an independent scholar and translator who translated "Walden: The Annotated Edition" into Chinese.

*Thoreau's Enduring Popularity in China*

This talk explores surprising cross-cultural connections, examining why *Walden* continues to inspire readers in modern China and what these shared perspectives reveal about living well—physically, mentally, and ethically—in an increasingly demanding world.



**David Emblidge** is a Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Writing, Literature and Publishing, Emerson College; previously, he was Acquisitions Editor at Harvard and Cambridge university presses, Executive Editor at Continuum, Publisher at Berkshire House, Director at David Emblidge -- Book Producer, and Editor in Chief at The Mountaineers Books.

*Solitude and Visitors: No Smartphones at Walden Pond*

We question now the mental health impacts of our most widely used technology, the Smartphone. What can *Walden's* seminal chapters -- "Solitude" and "Visitors" -- teach us about the basics of mental health which engender a balance between *time apart* and *time together*?



**Kathy Fedorko** has been a member of the Thoreau Society since 2013 and is the author of *Henry Thoreau's Spiritual Time*, *Revisiting Henry's Last Words*, and "Henry's brilliant sister": *The Pivotal Role of Sophia Thoreau in Her Brother's Posthumous Publications*.

*Desperation and Joy: Mental Health and Henry Thoreau*

My presentation explores references in Thoreau's writing to suicide, to sanity and insanity, to "cheerless resignation," despondency, and "worthlessness," and how he found restorative joy in nature, exploring, sauntering, music, friends, and family. In so doing, he provides a sound example of embracing the complexity of one's mental health.



**Paul Fraser** is a writer, philosopher, and marketer whose work examines algorithmic determinism, philosophical practice, and the ethics of attention in contemporary life.

*Seasonal Attention: Thoreauvian Wellness in the Age of Algorithmic Determinism*

This presentation explores how Thoreau's practice of seasonal attention, phenological observation, and immersion in natural cycles offers a vital counterbalance to the digitally governed systems of prediction and repetition that narrow human perception and stifle deliberate action in the modern world.



**Michael Frederick** is a nonprofit development professional specializing in fundraising, conservation, environmental education, and the arts and sciences. He served as Executive Director of the Thoreau Society from 2006–2024 and now advances land protection and community conservation as Development Director at Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust.

*Inhabiting Time: Thoreau and the Ethics of Personal Agency*

This talk explores Thoreau's vision of time as a moral condition rather than a resource to be optimized. Through his ethic of deliberate living, Thoreau reveals personal agency as the practice of aligning conscience, daily action, and embodied experience—suggesting that well-being emerges not as an outcome to pursue, but as a consequence of living with fidelity.



**William Fusfield** was educated at Macalester College, St. John's College, the University of Chicago, the University of Washington, and Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen. He earned a Ph.D. in Speech Communication from the University of Washington in 1991 and taught the history of German and American rhetoric at the University of Pittsburgh until his retirement in 2016.

*"Moments in Time" and "Eternal Instants": Some Thoughts on Henry Thoreau's*

*Transcendental Epistemology* This talk explores two distinct forms through which Henry David Thoreau conveys transformative experiences: everyday "moments in time" and the more transcendent "eternal instants" drawn from the early German Romantic tradition. By tracing these forms across Thoreau's writings, it examines how both ordinary discoveries and profound spiritual insights contribute to his vision of self-cultivation and the pursuit of higher understanding.



**Jason Giannetti** is the author of *Chrysalis*, *The Adventures of Layman P 'ang*, *Modern Art in Context*, and *Naked Zen*. He has been part of the Alcott Summer Conversational Series for over a decade. Jason has lectured on the New England Transcendentalists and has taught philosophy at various colleges and universities. He also facilitates the Eshoji East Zen Center.

*Thoreau and the Emerging Discipline of Geography*

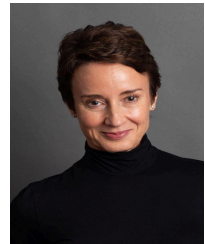
This paper is specifically on the late research and fragments of Thoreau's work and suggests that he was contemplating a work that would look like the British style of Geography that takes into consideration both the physical and social aspects of the land.



**David H. Gordon** is an Assistant Teaching Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Maryland.

*Environmental Ethics is Bioethics*

As opposed to Western philosophical traditions which emphasize the primacy of the individual, a more ecological approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans with the natural world. Thoreau's insight that humans "are part and parcel of Nature" demonstrates that human health is deeply connected to environmental health, and because personal well-being depends upon a healthy environment, caring for nature becomes a moral responsibility.



**Charmion Gustke** is an Associate Professor of English and Honors and the Coordinator of Belmont University's First Year Seminar Program in Nashville.

*From East to West: A Thoreauvian Guide Through the River of Grief*

This presentation explores the influence of Hinduism on Thoreau's memorial account of his 1839 boat trip with his brother John from Concord to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, demonstrating how Thoreau expressed his grief through the mystical elements of the corporeal world. It draws on quotations from Indian texts referenced in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* to highlight how Thoreau relies on the body as a divine source of wisdom, healing, and connection.



**Karla Hailer** is a retired 5th/6th grade classroom teacher who writes fiction under several pen names and has a penchant for tiaras.

*Confessions of an Accidental Saunterer*

Long before *shinrin-yoku* ("forest bathing") and modern research confirmed the health benefits of time in nature, Thoreau argued that walking nourishes both body and imagination while challenging society's obsession with productivity. This talk explores whether science has finally caught up with what Thoreau understood all along—or whether we still need evidence to believe the wisdom of the woods.



**Shelley Drake Hawks** teaches Asian art history at Middlesex Community College and Suffolk University and is a member of the Thoreau Society.

*Thoreau's Descriptions of the Natural World in Walden in dialogue with Chinese painter Shitao's concept of the Single Stroke* At the end of *Walden*, Thoreau writes of an artist, so intent on carving a wooden staff to perfection that he dedicates his life to that sole purpose. Upon the final stroke of his hand, the staff expands before the artist's eyes to become the harbinger of a new, more just system. In "Remarks on Painting," the

Chinese painter Shitao (1642–ca. 1707) similarly stressed the artist's capacity for initiating a virtuous transformation uniting humanity and the natural world through an inspired brushstroke.



**William Homestead** is the author of *An Ecology of Communication: Response and Responsibility in an Age of Ecocrisis* and *Not Till We Are Lost: Thoreau, Education, and Climate Crisis*, and the editor of *The Active Soul: Emerson and Thoreau on Reform and Civil Disobedience*.

*Thoreau and Philosophy as a Way of Life*

This presentation explores how key themes and practices in Thoreau's writings constitute what Pierre Hadot called "philosophy as a way of life." Thoreau's philosophy does not provide final answers, but it does gift us with an ongoing path of self-culture, simple riches, and living well that inspires contemplation and action.



**Jacob Hundt** is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Thoreau College, a microcollege located in Viroqua, Wisconsin, as well as host of the Microcollege Podcast.

*6 Years of Living Deliberately at Thoreau College: The Making of a Microcollege*

For over 6 years, Thoreau College, a microcollege located in Viroqua, Wisconsin, has been intensively prototyping a model of education for young adults that is *humanly scaled, place based, and meaning centered* and offers a *holistic curriculum* combining academic study, manual labor, creative arts, engaged community life, and immersions in nature. Co-founder Jacob Hundt shares stories and lessons learned from this project to use the example and ideas of Henry David Thoreau to offer an educational experience for college-aged students that promotes belonging, wellness, and engagement of the whole human being.

**John Terence Hyland** has been a devoted reader and student of Thoreau since 1958, with lifelong interests in William Blake, Carl Jung, Dante, Homer, Native American cultures, and the practice of journaling, and is currently completing *The California Campfire Chronicles: An Autobiographical Novel in Ten Stories*.

*Dare to be Daniel*

Drawing on the Japanese concept of *gaman*—"bearing the unbearable" with perseverance and grace—this presentation explores how Thoreau's life exemplifies resilience in the face of adversity. Through episodes including his struggle with tuberculosis, the death of his brother John, his disciplined pursuit of writing, and his moral opposition to the political and economic injustices of his time, the talk considers what Thoreau's example can teach us about living purposefully and courageously amid today's challenges.



**Don Jewler** of McLean, Virginia, serves on the Board of Directors of The Thoreau Alliance and brings his enthusiasm for Henry David Thoreau as well as more than 25 years experience in non-profit association communications, public relations, and publications.

*Acceptance, Optimism, and the Song of Blackbirds: Thoreau's Tonic for Well-Being*

This presentation explores how Thoreau teaches us to find happiness in difficult times and how we may ease our anxiety about the fragility and impermanence of a world that brings us face to face with the reality that life changes and not always for the better. Healing came to Thoreau, as it comes to us, from accepting suffering as workable and making room for discomfort and relief, for the weight of illness and the lightness of well-being.



**Marc Jolley** is Director of Mercer University Press and Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Great Books at Mercer University.

*Thoreau & Flourishing*

Thoreau not only lived, but he lived a life of flourishing. What does this mean?

**Michael Jonik** teaches American literature and contemporary critical theory at the University of Sussex, and was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Cornell University Society for the Humanities.

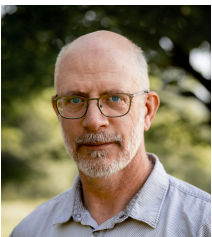
*Correspondences: Stoic Ethics and the Eco-Politics of Friendship*



**Kathleen Coyne Kelly** is Professor of English at Northeastern University and editor of the *Concord Saunterer*.

*"Worth the Postage": Thoreau's Correspondence*

Kathleen will preside over this celebration and exploration of Thoreau's letters and the (lost) art of letter-writing as a way to affirm connection and community despite distance.



**John J. Kucich** is a professor of English at Bridgewater State University and currently serves as president of the Thoreau Society; he is the author of *Unsettling Thoreau: Native Americans, Settler Colonialism and the Power of Place* (2024).

*Thoreau's Native Medicine*

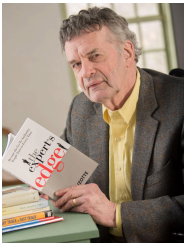
Drawing on a striking image from Thoreau's *Indian Notebook*, this presentation explores how Native culture, nature, and health intertwine in his thought. It argues that, for Thoreau, true health was less a matter of medicine than of spiritual and philosophical renewal—a perspective shaped by his engagement with Indigenous knowledge and reflected throughout his later writings.



**Monica Kucich** curates and facilitates nature-based programs for seniors and adults with disabilities through The Nature Connection, a local non-profit.

*Bringing the Outdoors In: The Power of Nature-Based Wellness*

In this presentation, I will connect Thoreau's experience of healing in nature with current research and direct observation, distilling the wisdom of these three approaches.



**Ken Lizotte** CMC is Chief Imaginative Officer (CIO) of Emerson Consulting Group Inc. and author of 11 books including a focus on the business mind of Henry David Thoreau, coming fall from HarperCollins Leadership.

*The Market Value of Henry's Cabin: Affordable? Sunk Cost? ... or Ongoing Profit!*

Was Thoreau's experiment at Walden a costly retreat, or a model of financial sustainability? This talk reexamines the economics of *Walden*, arguing that Thoreau carefully managed his finances, turned a profit during his time at the pond, and created a legacy that continues to generate value more than 170 years later.



**Ross Martin** is Head Preceptor in Expository Writing at Harvard College.

*"Grows by decays": Physiology, Counter-Philosophy, and the Laws of Disease in Emerson*

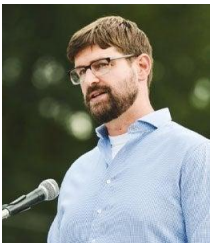
This presentation explores Ralph Waldo Emerson's provocative claim that intellectual health depends upon experiencing disease, arguing that he understood the intellect as fundamentally embodied and subject to the same laws as the physical body. Situating "Spiritual Laws" within nineteenth-century medical thought, it shows how Emerson reimagines illness not as the opposite of health but as an essential part of intellectual and philosophical growth.



**Jake McGinnis** is Assistant Professor of Humanities at Graceland University and author of *The Making of Thoreau's Excursions* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2026).

*Health & Happiness & Inspiration" in the Huckleberry Commons*

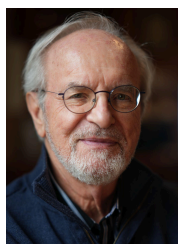
This presentation explores Thoreau's late Journal to outline a unified theory of human-ecological flourishing grounded in access to and engagement with the landscape. For Thoreau, I argue, wellness is reliant on not simply access to nature, as many modern health professionals are now realizing, but a specific kind of relationship with and orientation toward post-wild environments.



**Eric C. Miller** is professor of communication studies at Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania.

*The Prophet of Degrowth: Thoreau, Simplicity, and Economy*

This presentation traces the contemporary degrowth movement to ideas originating in *Walden*. Thoreau's great insight—that a truly "economical" life will minimize consumption rather than maximizing production—remains crucial in our age of exponential growth.



**Thomas Moore** is the author of the bestselling *Care of the Soul*, which spent 44 weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list, and more than 30 other books translated into 35 languages. A former Catholic monk with a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Syracuse University, he writes and lectures internationally on living a soulful life. His latest book, *The Cure at Walden Pond* (2026), offers reflections inspired by Henry David Thoreau.

*The Way to your Natural Self: Walden as a Model for Becoming an Original Person*

In going to Walden Thoreau was not just communing with nature. He wanted to discover his natural self. His first aim was psychological in the deep sense of the word. Applying this lens to his life work, we may find sure guidance for discovering our own natural self, which is the first step toward a healthy life.



**Alissa O'Brien** is an artist and natural science illustrator, who has published her first essay in the Thoreau Society, *Bulletin*, and currently has an exhibit of her pyrography (wood burning art) displayed at the Walden Pond Visitor's Center which is on view until July 31<sup>st</sup>.

*Voluntary Poverty: Being Poor with Purpose*

Thoreau said, "None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty."; this presentation is an exploration of the advantages and proof of Thoreau's concept of "voluntary poverty" as seen from the perspective and through the life experiences of an artist. It is an examination of how living authentically without much money, produces a wealth of insight and an abundance of knowing what matters most.

**Roberta Pardi-Oláh, Independent Scholar**

*Health Education by Bronson Alcott and Its Representation in Louisa May Alcott's Juvenile Fiction*



**Sonia Paradis** is a PhD candidate at the Center for the Study of Contemporary Religion (CERC), Sherbrooke University (Québec, Canada).

*Thoreau's Northern Imaginary: Place, Health, and Spirituality*

This talk explores how Thoreau's lived experience of the land shapes a northern imaginary and a view of health that is both physical and spiritual. Drawing on excerpts from his journals, correspondence, and notebooks (especially the *Canada* and *Indian Notebooks* at the Morgan Library) it highlights key passages that ground and shape this conception.



**Richard Piccarreto** is a public historian in Concord and is the Membership Coordinator for The Thoreau Society.

*Soul Matters: Thoreau's Soul-Health Illuminated by Advaita Vedanta*

This talk makes the case that Henry Thoreau's soul health and spiritual awakening aligned more closely with the monastic philosophical traditions of Advaita Vedanta than any other.



**Beverly D. Pittman** teaches cardiovascular disease prevention in the African American community, and she is a member of the Thoreau Society Board of Directors.

*Germ Theory: The Gateway from HDT to RFK, Jr.*

Thoreau's approach to healthy living anticipated many principles of modern preventive health, yet he died from tuberculosis, a disease whose cause and prevention were not understood in his time. This presentation traces the evolution of health care from Thoreau's era through the rise of germ theory, vaccines, and contemporary debates over American health policy.



**Dale Potts**, Associate Professor of History at South Dakota State University, teaches courses in U.S. and world history, environmental history, American Indian and Indigenous Studies, and U.S. cultural history and is engaged in research with popular nature writing in the 20th century and how it relates to American conservation and environmentalism.

*Naturalists Olaus & Mardie Murie and the Health of the Landscape and Peoples of Alaska in the Mid-20th Century*

The early-twentieth century scientific work of Olaus and Mardie Murie fostered legislation for the preservation of the Alaska Wildlife Refuge and the subsequent 1964 Wilderness Act. Although Olaus and Mardie Murie

acknowledged Indigenous spaces in the Arctic Circle, their publications are important to scrutinize with a decolonizing lens for the presence or absence of Indigenous voices and influences.



**Donna Marie Przybojewski** is a former Junior High Language Arts educator and author/illustrator of eight children's books on Henry David Thoreau.

*Perspectives for Creating a Spiritually Healthy and Moral Marriage by Henry David Thoreau and St. Pope John Paul II*

This presentation will compare Thoreau's *Love and Marriage* to St. John Paul's *Theology of the Body* noting similarities that denote a reverence for the Divine and a deep respect for human sexuality in marriage. Both *Theology of the Body* and *Love and Marriage* are blueprints for understanding how chastity and morality can formulate a healthy marriage.



**Brent Ranalli** edits the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*.

*Celia P.R. Frease, Henry David Thoreau, and the Water Cure*

This presentation explores a brand-new primary source in Thoreau studies, a memoir by hydropathic physician Dr. Celia P.R. Frease (one of the first women in the nation to earn a medical degree) that Walter Harding saw excerpts from but never laid hands on. Frease's memoir devotes more than a page to an undated encounter she had with Thoreau and his friend George William Curtis. In this talk we will seek to unravel the mystery of when and how this meeting took place, and we will become acquainted with the hydropathic movement that was all the rage in Thoreau's lifetime.



**Todd Richardson** is Professor of English at University of Texas Permian Basin, where he teaches and publishes in the area of American Romanticism. He is a life member of the Thoreau Society.

*Teaching Thoreau's Art of Walking in the Age of AI*

This paper shares my approach to teaching Thoreau's "Walking" in an American literature survey for non-English majors. Students take a solitary walk through a local nature preserve with frequent stops for reflection and writing. As I argue, Thoreau's diagnosis of social and spiritual ills brought about by the cancerous growth of technology is more relevant than ever, and so too is his solution.



**Gary Ricketts** lives in Shaker Heights, OH, and his work explores the philosophical dimensions of American Transcendentalism.

*Thoreau's Tranquility: Walden and the Hellenistic Ideal of Ataraxia*

This paper argues that Henry David Thoreau's Walden experiment serves as profound evidence of the Hellenistic concept of ataraxia—the state of unperturbedness, tranquility, and serenity achieved through freedom from mental or emotional disturbance. My claim engages with, and expands upon, the scholarly debate between Toby J. Svoboda and Pierre Hadot over whether Thoreau is better understood as Epicurean or Stoic, a debate that leaves the most precise term for what Thoreau achieves unspoken. This tranquility finds its most conclusive expression beyond the pages of *Walden*, in the serenity Thoreau achieved through sustained philosophical practice—most legibly in his final months.



**Freya Riebling** is a Humanities Fellow at the Cambridge Centre for International Research, is studying Thoreau's reception of Homeric poetry with the support of an Ancient World, Modern Communities grant from the Society for Classical Studies.

*The Picture of Homeric Health: Alek Therien in Walden*

This presentation explores how Thoreau makes the woodchopper Alek Therien's "simple Homeric health" a model of natural flourishing. As we read Therien alongside recent scholarship on Thoreauvian health, he becomes a limit case that reveals Thoreau's pluralistic vision of well-being—different healths for different lives.

**Dr. Lucy Salib** is a research affiliate at the University of Texas at Austin. Lucy's dissertation, titled "Botanical Incendiaries: Natural Politics and Abolitionist Literature in the United States, 1830–1865," begins with a chapter on Thoreau's "Wild Apples." Her work has appeared in *The Literary Encyclopedia* and *The Concord Saunterer*.

*A New Kind of Huckleberry Party*

In the spirit of the conference theme, "Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing," we consider the future "flourishing" and "health" of Thoreau's legacy with college-aged students and the role of Society members outside of Concord in stimulating engagement with Thoreau and Thoreau's works. We will present our ongoing work in Austin, Texas, where we developed shared programming between Austin Community College and the University of Texas at Austin on Transcendentalism, Thoreau, and the Society by coordinating events around the PBS Documentary, *Henry David Thoreau*.



**Paul Schacht** is Professor of English at the State University of New York at Geneseo and the director of Digital Thoreau, a multi-project digital humanities initiative that includes "Walden: A Fluid-Text Edition" and the Walden Manuscript Project.

*Following "Higher Laws"*

How did Thoreau's ideas in "Higher Laws" evolve as he wrote Walden? Focusing on the chapter's manuscript history—from its early title, "Animal Food," through successive drafts—this interactive session introduces participants to the evidence preserved in Thoreau's manuscripts and demonstrates how Digital Thoreau's Manuscript Search Tool and Walden: A Fluid-Text Edition can be used to trace his revisions and explore how "Higher Laws" fits within the larger work.



**Michael Schleifer** is a past president of the Thoreau Society and current treasurer of the Thoreau Alliance. He is a practicing CPA/tax consultant and a retired lecturer/undergraduate advisor in Accounting and Economics at Hunter College (CUNY, 1986 to 2018).

*Surely Joy is the Condition of Life*

Long before modern research explored the health benefits of joy, Henry David Thoreau recognized its essential role in human flourishing. This presentation examines Thoreau's insights alongside voices from the arts and beyond, tracing how joy has been understood as a vital force for resilience, healing, and living well.



**Elizabeth Scofield** was a Visiting Associate at Harvard University for the academic year of 2004–2005, is currently enrolled in the MFA program at Dominican University in San Rafael, California, and her first book *Nordic Influence on Emerson's Self-Reliance* was published in November 2021.

*Comparing Successful Contemporary Lifestyle Elements to the Flourishing Community Traditions in Thoreau's Concord*

How many of known contemporary elements, such as friendships, social circles, daily exercise and purposeful living were incorporated into the flourishing Transcendentalists' lifestyles while residing in Concord, Massachusetts at the time of Thoreau's best years? In cross-comparing the current activities that contribute to a modern long and successful life, to the everyday lifestyles led by the Concord, Massachusetts residents at that time, it might be possible to identify why so many of these local inhabitants flourished while living together as a community in this small New England town.



**Ariel Silver** is an Associate Professor of English and Humanities Division Chair at Southern Virginia University and President of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society. She is the author of *The Book of Esther and the Typology of Female Transfiguration* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). She is currently at work on *The Conversationalists*, a book project on nineteenth century women reformers, for which she has received the Alyson R. Miller Fellowship at MHS and the NERFC Fellowship at MHS, the Schlesinger Library, and the Boston Athenaeum.

*Labor Pains": Economics, Medicine, and Motherhood for Nineteenth-Century American Women*

This talk examines the writings of Fuller, Louisa May Alcott, Ednah Dow Cheney, Carolyn Healy Dall, and Julia Ward Howe to argue that, for these authors, women's health was not an isolated topic of concern, but an oppression to be relieved through their work of political, social, and literary activism.



**Richard Smith** is a Public Historian who has written or edited eleven books for Applewood Books/Arcadia Publishing.

*The Sainly Life; Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Muscular Christianity*

A look at how minister, abolitionist, and Transcendentalist Thomas Wentworth Higginson championed physical fitness as a path to moral, spiritual, and intellectual flourishing.

Situating Higginson within the 19th-century physical culture movement, this talk explores his advocacy for exercise for both men and women and his critique of sedentary modern life. Was a regular visit to the gym a Transcendental experience? And did he predict the fitness craze of the 20th Century?

**Joan Grasse Spinazola** is an adjunct professor of English at Worcester State University where she teaches, among other classes, a seminar on Louisa May Alcott and her "Blood & Thunder" tales. She is also a stand-up comic with more than 35 years experience, including more than twenty years performing in Las Vegas.

*Healing with Humor*

We have all heard that "laughter is the best medicine." It has been proven to enhance our daily lives physically, emotionally, and socially. This presentation will explore how Thoreau and others in the Transcendental circle used humor in their writings and everyday life as both a way to cope with day-to-day challenges and to reach out and connect with their communities in a way that still resonates with us today.



**Jym St. Pierre** is the Maine Director of RESTORE: The North Woods.

*Make Parks, Not War*

Thoreau was at the forefront of understanding that public parks can safeguard and heal land, wildlife, and humans. The world is lurching toward violence aimed at people and wild nature, yet parks are expanding and advocates have proposals for new national parks in the US for ecological, cultural, and spiritual health.



**Dr. Katherine Stebbins** has researched, written, and taught histories of science, technology, medicine, and Graphic Medicine for almost 20 years from a little wild lot on Cape Cod.

*Discovering a Huckleberry Cosmos on Cape Cod*

This talk shares how a quest to make Edith Emerson Forbes's huckleberry cake recipe became the impetus to discovering Cape Cod's abundant patches of wild huckleberries. It explores the lessons taught by a season of huckleberry expeditions, examines the natural

history of Cape Cod's huckleberries, and considers how Thoreau's *Huckleberries* illuminates healthy approaches to the post-pandemic world of hybrid work.



**Robert (Thor) Thorson** is a Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Connecticut and is a Life Member of the Thoreau Society and current board member.

*Hunting-Gathering for Health*

This presentation re-examines Thoreau's daily commitment to hours of sojourning. On the surface, it was a combination of exercise, scientific reconnaissance, and immersion in Nature. Fundamentally, it was a visceral and intuitive replay of the default human lifestyle of

hunting-gathering, which accounted for the origin of our species and at least 98 percent of human history.

**Jan Turnquist** is Director of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House

*Bumps, Brains, and Belief: The Place of Phrenology in 19th Century Health*



**Geoff Wisner** is the editor of four books drawn from Thoreau's Journal: *Thoreau's Wildflowers* (2016), *Thoreau's Animals* (2017), *A Year of Birds* (2024), and *The Forest Floor* (coming in 2027).

*Thoreau's Wheel of Health and Immortality*

For Thoreau, the key to physical and spiritual health is to align yourself with the seasons, as the world revolves like a giant wheel around the axle of the universe. Attendees will see a visual representation of that wheel, presenting more than a thousand natural phenomena as Thoreau recorded them in 19th century Concord.



**Beth Witherell** is Editor-in-Chief of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*, based at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and published by Princeton University Press. She is a member of the Digital Thoreau editorial team.

*Second-class Letters: Thoreau Reuses his Mail*

This talk explores how Henry David Thoreau treated the letters he received as physical objects. Some he preserved—perhaps even organizing them by correspondent, as Brad Dean suggested—while others he repurposed as notes or drafts for other projects.



**Dr. Xiujuan Yao** is a lecturer at Tianjin Chengjian University, China and a recipient of the third annual Thoreau Society Short-Term Research Fellowship in 2014.

*Like Corn in the Night: On Thoreau's 'Goods of the Soul*

This presentation explores how Thoreau conceptualizes the “goods of the soul” through his practice of immersive engagement with the wilderness. It examines how he regards the wilderness as a cure for the “quiet desperation” of his time, and how this engagement enables him to live a meaningful life—characterized by spiritual ecstasy, unexpected revelation, and

fresh perceptions of nature.