

The 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society
Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing
July 8-12, 2026

REGISTRATION

Registration includes all in-person sessions except where otherwise noted.
Virtual Registration details to come in June.

The Thoreau Alliance does not exclude anyone because of the inability to pay. Please contact rebecca@thoreaualliance.org to request reduced rates.

If you'd like to help keep this event financially accessible to all, please consider making a donation to support attendance for others. [Donate Here](#).

VENUE

Most of the conference events take place at **Trinity Episcopal Church at 81 Elm St, Concord, MA 01742**.
Learn more about the Parish History [here](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS

If securing accommodations presents a hardship, we have a limited number of **homestay options** available.
Please email us at info@thoreaualliance.org and we will be happy to coordinate with one of our hosts.

Concord's Colonial Inn, 48 Monument Square, Concord, MA 01742 (1 mile to Trinity Episcopal Church)
Reservations: 800.370.9200. Mention the Thoreau Alliance when booking. www.concordscolonialinn.com

Residence Inn by Marriott, 320 Baker Avenue Extension, Concord, MA 01742 (1.6 miles to Trinity Episcopal) 978-341-0003 [BOOK WITH THIS LINK](#)

CARPOOLING & ROOM SHARES

Interested in coordinating with other attendees for carpooling or room shares? Please check the box in your registration form that permits us to add you and your contact information to the shared Google Sheet.

THOREAU FARM, THE BIRTHPLACE OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Free public tours are available on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays at 11am, 1pm, and 3pm. To schedule a special tour, please email. Learn more at: thoreaufarm.org

SHOP AT WALDEN POND

Located at 915 Walden Street and open year-round and follows seasonal park hours. Thoreau Society members get a 10% discount in-person, over the phone at 978-287-5477, and online at: shopatwaldenpond.org/

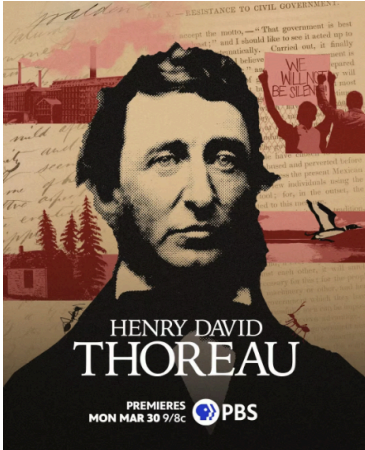
QUESTIONS?

Reach out to rebecca@thoreaualliance.org or 978-369-5321 with any questions or concerns.

PRE-CONFERENCE EVENTS

THOREAU DOCUMENTARY: TALK WITH THE EXPERTS

Join leading Thoreau scholars featured in the new documentary for free public events exploring the themes in the film. You are encouraged to watch the documentary before attending as only clips will be shown.



On Zoom

Sunday, April 12, 2-3 pm [Register](#)
Wednesday, May 13, 7-8 pm [Register](#)
Sunday, June 14, 2-3 pm [Register](#)

At the Concord Free Public Library's Goodwin Forum

Thursday, May 7, 6:00-7:30 [Register](#)
Thursday, June 11, 6:00-7:30 [Register](#)

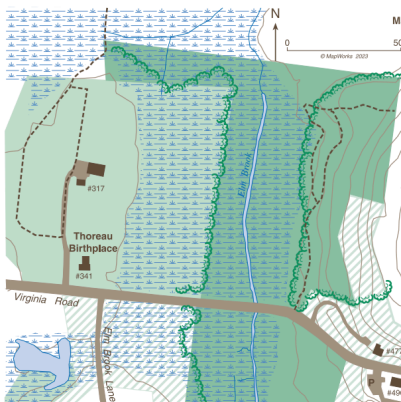
Free and open to all.

Ken Burns Presents *Henry David Thoreau*, a film by Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers premiered on PBS on March 30 and 31, 2026



Presented in partnership with

Concord FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY



WETLANDS TALK & WALK

Sunday, April 26, 2026
1:00-3:00pm

At Thoreau Farm, 341 Virginia Rd, Concord, MA
oars3rivers.org/events/event/wetlands-talk-walk/

An all-levels presentation on wetlands ecology followed by a guided walk with OARS' wetlands scientist, Ingeborg Hegemann, and Concord Land Conservation Trust's Manager of Land Stewardship, Alexi Dart-Padover, at CLCT's Elm Brook property.

Registration is free and is required to attend. Donations are encouraged to support programming and the work of CLCT, The Thoreau Alliance, and OARS.



Presented in partnership with

PRE-CONFERENCE EVENTS (CONT.)



THOREAU PRIZE HONORING ROSS GAY

June 14, 2026

7:00pm

TriCon Church, Walden Street, Concord

thoreaualliance.org/events/thoreau-prize-ross-gay

The Thoreau Alliance is delighted to honor **Ross Gay**, acclaimed poet and essayist, with the **2026 Henry David Thoreau Prize for Literary Excellence in Nature Writing**. Gay is the author of four books of poetry—including *Against Which*, *Bringing the Shovel Down*, *Be Holding* (winner of the PEN/Jean Stein Award), and *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* (winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award)—as well as three essay collections: *The Book of Delights*, *Inciting Joy*, and *The Book of (More) Delights*.

Through his writing, Gay celebrates curiosity, gratitude, and delight in everyday life, inviting readers to slow down, notice the small wonders, and engage the world with care—an approach that resonates deeply with Thoreau’s attentiveness to nature and daily life.

Join us on **June 14, 2026, in Concord, Massachusetts**, at **Trinitarian Congregational (TriCon) Church** on Walden Street, where Gay will accept the prize and deliver a keynote address. **Students and educators may attend for free.**

INFO SESSION FOR CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

Sunday, June 7, at 4pm on Zoom

[Register Here](#)

Join Annual Gathering committee members for an overview of presentation guidelines and conference expectations. This is a chance to ask logistical questions and meet fellow presenters. It’s also an opportunity to share ideas, clarify goals, and connect with the committee members who will be supporting your work throughout the conference. Whether this is your first Annual Gathering or you’re returning as a seasoned presenter, this session will help ensure your presentation is confident, engaging, and well supported.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

9:00 am - 11:00 am Alumni Reunion for Barbara Mossberg's Memoirists Thoreau Farm
Free and open to all alumni of Barbara's past programs. Donations encouraged in support of future workshops. Calling all past participants from Barbara Mossberg's memoir workshops for a special reunion and workshop session at Thoreau Farm. RSVP to info@thoreaualliance.org.

10:00am - 12:00pm Volunteering at Gaining Ground Thoreau Farm, 341 Virginia Rd.
Free. Pre-registration required; limited to twelve participants.
Join us for two-hours of volunteering at Gaining Ground, the organic, no-till farm behind the Thoreau Birthplace. We will help with whatever tasks need attention on the farm, under the guidance of professional farmers.



Our mission is to provide free, sustainably grown, fresh organic produce to people experiencing food insecurity. We do this with the helping hands of a diverse community of volunteers who work and learn with us on our farm. Production has risen from 2,500 pounds at the start to 127,000 pounds in 2020, all of which is donated to over fifteen hunger relief organizations.

WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

(Pre-registration required, except Open Forum. Contact the Alliance office for reduced/waived fees.)

10:30pm - 12:00pm Then & Now: Peaceful Activism & Practical Action Wright Tavern
FREE. Presented in collaboration with Concord Indivisible and Diana Mackiewicz
Diana Mackiewicz will present a talk "**Roots of Peaceful Activism: Transcendentalism, Hinduism, and Civil Rights**" followed by a panel from Concord Indivisible then breakout groups for taking action.



Dedicated to preserving our democracy and promoting progressive values. concordindivisible.org/



Wright's Tavern is a historic tavern located in the center of Concord. It is now a National Historic Landmark owned by the Society of the First Parish, Concord, with important associations with the Battle of Lexington and Concord at the start of the American Revolution. www.wrighttavern.org/

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Memoir Workshop with Barbara Mossberg Thoreau Farm
\$15/person; limited to 12 participants.
New and old memoirists are all invited to participate in a two-hour writing workshop with Barbara Mossberg. Explore Thoreau as a guide and model for memoir as a life-saving act.

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Leave No Trace Trail Training at the Concord Scout House
\$5/person; registration required.
A hands-on workshop that teaches outdoor enthusiasts how to minimize their impact while hiking and using trails. Participants learn the core Leave No Trace principles, practical trail etiquette, and simple skills to help protect local natural spaces. The training is ideal for anyone who enjoys the outdoors and wants to be a better steward of the land. *On Friday morning of the Gathering, there is an opportunity to walk the Thoreau LNT Trail in Concord.*



Using the power of science, education, and stewardship, the Leave No Trace organization is on a mission to ensure a sustainable future for the outdoors and the planet. lnt.org/



The Concord Scout House

The Concord Scout House is an eighteenth century barn that was completely renovated in 1930 and became a community meeting resource with a dance floor and stage. It is located in downtown Concord, Massachusetts.
<http://concordscouthouse.org/>

12:00pm – 2:00 pm Workshop: Teaching the Documentary Parish Hall, Trinity Episcopal
FREE. Presented by the Thoreau Alliance Education Committee with Frank Cronin & Lucy Salib.
The new Ken Burns / Ewers Brothers documentary offers an incredible opportunity to bring Thoreau to new audiences. This workshop will share our experiences in teaching the documentary in a variety of settings, from universities and community colleges to libraries and community centers, using a range of strategies. You will leave with various tools and resources to help teach with the documentary yourself.

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Whole-Brain Journaling with Sarah Gothe Room TBD, Trinity Episcopal
FREE; Limited to 12 participants. Pre-registration encouraged.
This pre-conference workshop explores the integration of writing and drawing through Horeau's bilateral stimulation technique, engaging both left- and right-brain processes. By alternating and combining written and visual expression, participants are invited into a more holistic, embodied creative practice. The workshop will include a balance of group and individual activities, such as guided writing, drawing, and walking—both together and independently. These varied modes are designed to support reflection, creativity, and fresh ways of thinking and making meaning.

PLENARY SESSIONS

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm Conference Welcome and Announcements* TEC, Main Hall

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm **FEATURED OPENING PANEL: Critical Health Comes to Concord** *Highlights from the Paris Conference Exploring Feminist Perspectives on Health and Well-Being in the Nineteenth-Century United States*

Moderator: Alice De Galzain

Main Hall

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

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

Kate Culkin, *Hemings, Jefferson, and Teaching Slavery Holistically*

4:00 pm – 5:45 pm **“Worth the Postage”: Thoreau’s Correspondence**

Main Hall

Presenter: Kathleen Kelly

Celebrate the publication of the third and final volume of Thoreau’s correspondence (*The Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau: Volume 3: 1857–1862*), edited by Robert N. Hudspeth, Elizabeth Hall Witherell, and Lihong Xie.

Beth Witherell, *Talk Title TBD*

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

Kristen Case, Cristin Ellis, Rebecca Kneale Gould, Marc Jolley, Jake McGinnis, and Geoff Wisner have each chosen a letter to discuss briefly (letters supplied before the Gathering, TBA) We invite the audience to discuss a letter of their choosing—please bring a few copies to share. We will also have selected letters that we can give to folks who would like to participate, but did not bring a letter.

This session riffs on this year’s AG theme, “Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing,” by highlighting the (lost) art of letter writing as a way to affirm connection and community in spite of distance and absence.

Dinner on your own.

6:45 pm – 8:00 pm **Screening: *Henry David Thoreau, Episode 1***

Concord Free Public Library

Conference participants and the public are invited to this free viewing in the Goodwin Forum.

Experience **episode one** of *Henry David Thoreau*, a film by Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers that traces Thoreau’s journey from his early life in Concord, Massachusetts, to his deep engagement with the moral crises of the 19th century, including industrialization, slavery, war, and environmental degradation.

THURSDAY, JULY 9

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk in Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge with Peter Alden

Meet at the Municipal Parking Lot on Keyes Road for car-pooling.



Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge is roughly 85% composed of valuable freshwater wetlands, alongside the Sudbury and Concord Rivers. The Sudbury unit includes tranquil trails around wetlands and through woodlands and features a non-motorized boat launch on the Sudbury River. The Eastern MA Complex headquarters is located at this unit and you can purchase America the Beautiful Passes here. The Concord unit has excellent birding, and noted ornithologists consider this unit to be one of the best inland birding areas in the state. This site has a wildlife observational tower, observational platform and direct access to the Concord River. <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great-meadows>

7:30 – 8:30 am A Walking Conversation on Eudaimonia, Flourishing & Thoreau with Marc Martorana

Meet at the Walden Street Parking lot at the Hapgood-Wright Town Forest end of the Ramble.

What does it mean to live well—not just happily, but deeply and purposefully? Join us for a gentle, guided walk through the Thoreau-Emerson Ramble as we explore the idea of *eudaimonia*, an ancient Greek concept of human flourishing that asks how we might live a full and meaningful life.

Inspired by the spirit and writings of Thoreau, this experience blends conversation, reflection, and movement. Along the way, participants discuss how attention, virtue, and connection—to ourselves, each other, and the natural world—shape a life well lived.

This free program offers a welcoming space for conference attendees to slow down, connect, and think together—on foot. No preparation needed, just curiosity and comfortable shoes.



The Emerson-Thoreau Amble is a 1.7-mile walking path, over public and private property, blazed throughout with trail markers bearing a silhouette of the two famed authors. This trail represents an approximate walking route used by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau from Emerson's "Bush" house to Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond. The natural beauty and tranquility of the forest, combined with the cultural and historical features rooted here makes the Amble a unique walking experience. The Emerson-Thoreau Amble is maintained by Concord's Division of Natural Resources and the Concord Trails Committee.

concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27909/Emerson-Thoreau-Amble-Trail-Map

PLENARY SESSIONS

- 9:00 am – 9:15 am **Conference Welcome, Reprise*** Main Hall
- 9:15 am – 10:30 am **Panel: Spiritual Health**
Moderator: John Kucich Chapel
Xiujuan Yao, *Like Corn in the Night*: On Thoreau's "Goods of the Soul"
Richard Smith, *The Saintly Life; Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Muscular Christianity*
Barry Andrews, *Thoreau and the Art of Life*
Thomas Moore, *The Way to your Natural Self: Walden as a Model for Becoming an Original Person*
- 10:30 am – 10:45 am Break
- 10:45 am – 12:00 pm **Panel: Walking and Health**
Moderator: Beverly Pittman Main Hall
Todd Richardson, *Teaching Thoreau's Art of Walking in the Age of AI*
Roger Hutt, *Walk for the Sake of Walking*
Karla Hailer, *Confessions of an Accidental Saunterer*
- 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm **OPEN LUNCH DISCUSSIONS** Main Hall
(Boxed lunches available for pre-order in registration form. **Ordering closes June 26**)
Bring your lunch, or pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch, and join a discussion table. Topics include:
- Body** (Diet, Exercise, Sleep) *Did Thoreau's eating choices have health implications that resonate today? How do his observations about sleep and waking speak to modern challenges with rest?*
- Mind** (Attention, Solitude, Technology) *What role does attention play in both intellectual and physical health according to Thoreau's writings? Are there lessons in Thoreau's resistance to convenience?*
- Environment** (Nature, Public Health) *What can Thoreau teach about the effects of green spaces and natural rhythms? How could his era of epidemics and sanitation challenges inform public health today?*
- Society** (Relationships, Community) *How did Thoreau understand the impact of relationships and deep feelings (ex. love, grief) on a person's overall well-being? How did he envision healthy communities?*
- Spirit** (Meaning, Simplicity) *How did Thoreau seek purpose in everyday life? What practices did he use to cultivate spiritual well-being? How can reflecting on personal values improve health and resilience?*
- 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**
- | | |
|--|---|
| <u>Panel: Wellness & Thoreau Across Cultures</u> | <u>Panel: Health in Thoreau's Texts</u> |
| Moderator: Catherine Staples Chapel | Moderator: Marc Jolley Main Hall |
| Richard Piccarreto, <i>Soul Matters: Thoreau's Soul-Health Illuminated by Advaita Vedanta</i> | Paul Schacht, <i>Following "Higher Laws"</i> |
| Shelley Hawks, <i>Thoreau's Descriptions of the Natural World in Walden in dialogue with Chinese painter Shitao's concept of the Single Stroke</i> | Freya Riebling, <i>The Picture of Health: Therien in Walden</i> |
| Julia Du, <i>Thoreau's Enduring Popularity in China</i> | John Kucich, <i>Thoreau's Native Medicine</i> |
| John Terence Hyland, <i>Dare to be Daniel</i> | Charmion Gustke, <i>From East to West: A Thoreauvian Guide Through the River of Grief</i> |

4:45 pm - 6:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Joy and Despair

Moderator: Court Booth Chapel
Michael Schleifer, *Surely Joy is the Condition of Life*
Don Jewler, *Acceptance, Optimism, and the Song of
Blackbirds: Thoreau's Tonic for Well-Being*
Joan Spinazola, *Healing with Humor*
William Fusfield, *Perhaps it is none of my business,
even if it is yours.*

Panel: Economic Health

Moderator: Molly Eberle Main Hall
Alissa O'Brien, *Voluntary Poverty: Being Poor with
Purpose*
Eric C. Miller, *The Prophet of Degrowth: Thoreau,
Simplicity, and Economy*
Ken Lizotte, *The Market Value of Henry's Cabin:
Affordable? Sunk Cost? ... or Ongoing Profit!*
Paul Carr, *Economics to Heal our Ecology*

6:00 pm - 6:30 pm Conference Social (No-host)

Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm Conference Dinner (Pre-registration required.)

Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

You are welcome to continue the evening's festivities at the Forge Tavern at the Colonial Inn after dinner.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk Around Walden with Robert Thorson & Catherine Staples

Meet at the Walden Pond Visitor Center

We hope you'll be engaged by the possibility of the geologist and poet taking a rain-or-shine walk around Walden pond, stopping in three or four places for the physical phenomena and the poetic take. The silent walk, in between stops, will allow participants to take in sensory detail—pines, wind, light—as well as ponder the geology of deep time, the poetry of spring turnover, radial lake breezes, the readiness to see things. (Detour to beaver lodge, perhaps?!) At our last stop, everyone will have a chance to begin writing something of their own in **small notebooks which we'll provide**, each with a different passage from *Walden* or the *Journal*.

8:30 am – 11:00 am Registration

TEC, Entryway

EXCURSIONS IN THOREAU COUNTRY

By popular demand, we are providing time to explore places and ideas.

8:30 am – 11:00 am Canoe the Concord River

Meet at the South Bridge Boathouse

\$25/person. Pre-registration required. Limited to 20 people.

A favorite for many Thoreauvians and a great way to explore the Concord River. Launching from South Bridge Boathouse, close to Trinity Episcopal Church, it takes about 45 minutes to reach the North Bridge, where the “shot heard round the world” was fired, April 19, 1775.

8:30am – 10:30 am Walk part of the Henry David Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail with the Boy Scouts

FREE. Pre-registration encouraged, but you can join at any point.

Step outside and into Thoreau's beloved landscape on a walk along a portion of the Henry David Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail in Concord. The group will begin at the Concord Train Station, follow Main Street to Monument Square, and continue north to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery for a roughly 3 mile walk. Individuals may continue on to Great Meadows and the rest of the Thoreau LNT Trail, or return along the same or different path to the station or to Robbins House for the Picnic and Reading event.

The Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail was created in 2017 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Henry David Thoreau's birthday through a partnership among The Thoreau Society, Thoreau Farm, Concord Scout House and the Boy Scouts Spirit of Adventure Council. It was approved by the Boy Scouts of America to be an official BSA “National Historic Trail,” which Scouts can hike and earn patches and medals.



The Concord Scout House

The Concord Scout House is an 18th-century barn that was completely renovated in 1930 and became a community meeting resource with a dance floor and stage. It is located in downtown Concord, Massachusetts.

<http://concordscouthouse.org/>

9:30 am – 10:30 am Meet the New Curator!

Walden Woods Project

FREE. Pre-registration required. Limited to 40 people.

Join **Jenifer Ishee**, the new Walden Woods Project Curator of Collections (including our Thoreau Society Collections) at the Higginson House at WWP for an informal program during which she is eager to meet Gathering attendees, talk about the Library and collections, and provide a chance to tour the current exhibition.

Rooted in the Woods: The Boundless Life and Writings of Henry David Thoreau

A two-part exhibition curated by The Walden Woods Project Library in collaboration with The Thoreau Alliance, in connection with the Ewers Brothers Production, Henry David Thoreau, Executive Producers, Ken Burns and Don Henley, which premiered on March 30, 2026 on PBS stations nationwide.

Henry David Thoreau lived a boundless life, yet one that was deeply connected to nature, in particular, the woods surrounding Walden Pond. The Walden Woods Project library is positioned in that same forest where Thoreau discovered his love of the natural world. Utilizing the rich primary materials mined from The Walden Woods Project Library Collections and The Thoreau Society Collections, **Part I, “Who he was, what he stood for” (On view May 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027)** focuses on Thoreau’s early adulthood, his emergence as a writer, how the forces of society, family, friends, and the Transcendentalist movement helped shape who he was and what he stood for, including the time he spent living at Walden Pond.



The Walden Woods Project Library holds more than 60,000 items that include books, manuscripts, periodicals, art, music, maps, pamphlets, correspondence, and personal histories about the lives and writings of the Transcendentalists. In particular, it provides the most comprehensive body of Thoreau-related material available in one place.

<https://www.walden.org/what-we-do/library/>

9:30am -10:30 am Tour of Emerson House with Kate Culkin

Emerson House

\$10/person; limited to 15 people. Pre-registration required.

Join Kate Culkin, author of *Emerson’s Daughters*, for this special tour that celebrates sisterhood and highlights Ellen and Edith's private lives and their behind the scenes role in their father's career. This tour will appeal to visitors interested in women's history, and may be a perfect weekend outing to share with your sister or best friend.



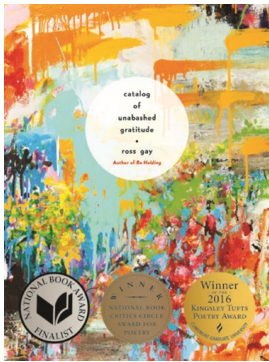
Founded in 1930 by members of the Emerson family, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association—RWEMA—is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization guided by its mission to promote interest in and access to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s literary works and to preserve the home surroundings in which they were written.

To this end, the RWEMA manages the historic Ralph Waldo Emerson House in Concord, open to the public as a seasonal museum from late April through October. The RWEMA also owns the contents of the Emerson Study at the Concord Museum, a replica of Emerson’s home study that contains his original working library. The majority of Emerson’s archival materials are held at Harvard University’s Houghton Library and the Concord Free Public Library.

<https://rwema.org/>

10:00am - 11:00am "Thoreau Society Reads" Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay

Thoreau Farm



Free. Pre-registration required. Limited to 15 people.
Lead by Catherine Staples.

Join in our second "Thoreau Society Reads" event, a discussion of 2026 Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay's book *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*. We will consider: Where do we find the wild in this book of poems? Is it to be found in the fig tree on 9th and Christian? What vigor does the city fig bring to the community that builds around it? Is Ross Gay redefining wilderness as the ecological, as the community garden, perhaps even as wild attention to small things like buttoning a shirt or pushing a seed into the earth? We'll also explore the notion of kinship and the braid of sorrow and joy in his poems as well as excerpts and links from his essays in *Inciting Joy*. *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* is available through the Shop at Walden Pond [HERE](#). Bring your copies to Thoreau Farm for this book group experience.

11 am - 12:30 pm Picnic & Reading of Thoreau's "Walking"

Robbins House

Free and open to all (no pre-registration required for reading.)

Pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch (*available for conference registrants until online registration closes*) or bring your own picnic lunch to Robbins House lawn for public reading of one of Thoreau's most famous essays.



The Robbins House is a Concord-based nonprofit organization focused on raising awareness of Concord's African, African American, and antislavery history from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Our mission is to reveal the little known African American history of Concord and its regional and national importance. Our vision is to inspire conversation, expand understanding and contribute to a better society. <https://robbinshouse.org/>

1:00 pm - 4:30 pm Registration

TEC, Entryway

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS*

Panel: Contemporary Health

Moderator: Nicole Palmer

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

Elizabeth Scofield, *Comparing Elements of Contemporary "Blue Zones" to the Flourishing Lifestyles in Thoreau's Concord*

Katrina Byrd, *Dancing in the Storm*

Monica Kucich, *Bringing the Outdoors In: A Nature-Based Program for Wellness*

Panel: Philosophical Approaches to Flourishing

Moderator: David Gordon

Main Hall

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

William Homestead, *Thoreau and Philosophy as a Way of Life*

Marc Jolley, *Thoreau and Flourishing*

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

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm Break

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS*

Panel: 19th-Century Cures

Moderator: Lydia Willsky-Ciollo Chapel
Albena Bakratcheva, *'Topsy With Water': The
Impossibility of an Opium Eater in
Transcendental New England*
Brad Parker, *William A. Alcott's Young Man's
Guide (1834) and David H. Thoreau*
Brent Ranalli, *Celia P.R. Frease, Henry David
Thoreau, and the Water Cure*

Panel: Place & Health

Moderator: Robert Thorson Main Hall
Dale Potts, *Naturalists Olaus & Mardie Murie, the
Health of the Landscape and Peoples of Alaska in
the Mid-20th Century*
Sonia Paradis, *Representations of the North as a Site
of Learning in Thoreau*
Jacob Hundt, *6 Years of Living Deliberately at
Thoreau College: The Making of a Microcollege*
Jason Giannetti, *Thoreau and the Emerging
Discipline of Geography*

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm Break

4:15 pm – 5:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**Panel: Transcendentally Well: How the Alcotts
and Their Circle Conceived of a Healthy Life**

Moderator: Chrissa Ventrelle Chapel
Sponsored by the Louisa May Alcott Society
Daniela Daniele
Tracey A. Cummings
Roberta Pardi-Oláh
Jan Turnquist



*The LMA Society offers Alcott scholars and others an
opportunity to share in the study and appreciation of
the life and works of a major American writer.*

*Through scholarly panels, special symposia, a
newsletter, and more, it connects Alcott scholars and
expands the possibilities for Alcott studies.*

louisamayalcottsociety.org/

Panel: Ethics of Flourishing

Moderator: Lois Brown Main Hall
Christopher Ulloa Chaves, *Emerson's Thoreau and
the Art of Living Well*
Donna Marie Pryzbejewski, *Thoreau's and St. Pope
John Paul II's Perspectives for a Spiritually
Healthy and Moral Marriage*
Michael Frederick, *Ethics of Personal Agency*
David Gordon, *Environmental Ethics is Bioethics*

Following these sessions, Michael Frederick will be presented the
Thoreau Society Distinguished Service Award, in recognition of
substantial dedication to the Thoreau Society and its mission.

Dinner on your own.

6:30 pm – 9:30 pm Documentary Screening: *Henry David Thoreau*, Episodes 2 & 3 TEC, Main Hall
Attendees and the public are invited to experience the second and third parts of *Henry David Thoreau*.

SATURDAY, JULY 11

All Saturday events are free and open to the public.

7:00 am – 8:30 am Memorial Walk at Walden Pond with Richard Smith Walden Pond

Meet at the Thoreau Cabin replica at Walden Pond State Reservation, 915 Walden Street

Begun in 1996 as a tribute to both Henry Thoreau and Walter Harding, this silent early morning saunter along the pond's shoreline offers a chance for individual contemplation. Witness the special morning atmosphere as we practice Pradakshina, an Eastern routine of honoring our mentors.

8:30 am – 4pm Registration

9:00 am – 10:00 am ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Please plan to attend this annual business meeting, during which we discuss current and future initiatives, hear from partner organizations, hear election results, and honor individuals with awards.

During this meeting, Jane Bennett receives the Thoreau Society Medal, the Thoreau Society's highest honor, in recognition of sustained, essential contributions to the legacy and vitality of Thoreauvian studies and ideals through extraordinary scholarship or service. Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers receive the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award, in recognition of significant achievement that furthers the mission of the Thoreau Society.

[At other points in the program Michael Berger will be presented with the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award and Michael Frederick will be presented with the Thoreau Society Distinguished Service Award.]

10:00 am – 10:15 am Break

10:15 am – 11:15 am DANA S. BRIGHAM MEMORIAL KEYNOTE LECTURE



“Thoreauvian Enchantments as Ecological Action”

Thoreau was enchanted by natural beings, atmospheres, and processes; nature cast a spell on him. And, what is more, Thoreau's own practice of “mythologizing” his encounters with animals, vegetables, and minerals also, like nonhuman nature, has an enchanting power. My talk will explore how the experience of enchantment can propel and support efforts to live ecologically, even amidst a society that is organized around exploitation of the earth and the impossible idea of endless (economic) “growth.”

Jane Bennett is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, where she holds a joint appointment in Political Science and Comparative Thought and Literature. A leading voice in environmental humanities and political philosophy, her work bridges nature-writing, American romanticism, political theory, and contemporary social thought. She is the author of influential books including *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*—translated into 13 languages—as well as *Influx & Efflux*, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, and *Thoreau's Nature*. A founder of *Theory & Event* and former editor of *Political Theory*, Bennett is currently exploring ideas of a creative cosmos in ancient Greek and classical Daoist thought. Her work has been widely recognized, including a 2023 profile in *The New Yorker*.

11:15 am – 11:45 am Discussion in Response to Keynote

11:45 am – 1:15 pm STEWARDSHIP LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

(Boxed lunches available for pre-order in registration form. **Ordering closes June 26**)

Bring your lunch, or pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch, and join a discussion. Topics focus on how our scholarly activities can be supported and how they might evolve over the next 5 or 10 years and include: Annual Gathering, Collections, Fellowships, Fundraising, Programs, Publications.

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm Erik Ewers & Christopher Loren Ewers Discuss *Henry David Thoreau* Main Hall

The filmmakers discuss the documentary, its research and production, and Thoreau's continuing relevance. *Please note: that this session is a discussion only; the film will not be shown during this time.*

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm Break

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm **Panel: Flourishing Differently**

Chapel

Moderator: Kristen Case

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

Kathy Fedorko, *From Desperation to Joy: Mental Health and Henry Thoreau*

David Emblidge, *Solitude and Visitors: No Smartphones at Walden Pond*

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm Break

4:15 pm – 5:30 pm **Panel: Natural Health & the Commons**

Chapel

Sponsored by the Associations for the Study of Literature and the Environment

Moderator: Cristin Ellis

Robert Thorson, *Hunting-Gathering for Health*

Katherine Stebbins, *Discovering a Huckleberry Cosmos on Cape Cod*

Jym St. Pierre, *Make Parks, Not War*

Jake McGinnis, *"Health & Happiness & Inspiration" in the Huckleberry Commons*



The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) seeks to inspire and promote intellectual work in the environmental humanities and arts. Our vision is an inclusive community whose members are committed to environmental research, education, literature, art and service, environmental justice, and ecological sustainability.

[\(https://www.asle.org/discover-asle/vision-history/\)](https://www.asle.org/discover-asle/vision-history/)

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm **HAPPY HOUR BOOK SALE AND CELEBRATION**

Members and friends sell and sign their books during this active social event. Meet fellow conference attendees, catch up on recent Thoreau-related titles, and enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres from NOSH/Concord Market.

Dinner on your own. No more conference events.

SUNDAY, JULY 12

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk at Fairhaven Bay to Walden with Peter Alden

Meet at the Municipal Parking Lot on Keyes Road for car-pooling.

9:00 am – 10:00 am Coffee & Donuts for Educators

Thoreau Farm

This informal session will be an opportunity for teachers at all levels and contexts to discuss the opportunities and challenges of teaching Thoreau in our challenging times. Led by John Kucich, this session will include a special introduction to Michael Berger's *Henry David Thoreau: A Companion*.

10:00 am – 11:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: "Give me Health and a Day": Emerson and Health, Illness, and Unity Thoreau Farm

Moderator: Austin Bailey

Dominic Mastroianni, *A Disease of Thought in Thoreau and Emerson*

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

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



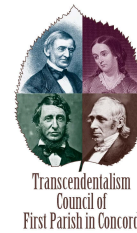
The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. is dedicated to fostering scholarship on and appreciation of the life and writings of one of America's greatest authors. The Society, which has about 200 members in eleven countries, publishes the biannual [Emerson Society Papers \(ESP\)](#), featuring original scholarly articles, current book reviews, notes and queries, an annual Emerson bibliography, abstracts of conference papers, reflections on "My Emerson," and announcements of interest to Emersonians.

Sermon:

First Parish Church

Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom, Preacher

This service is sponsored by the First Parish Transcendentalism Council and encourages any participants at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering to attend.



First Parish in Concord

Unitarian Universalist | ALL ARE WELCOME!

<https://firstparish.org/wp/>

PLENARY SESSIONS

11:00am – 12:00pm Open Forum: Future of the Thoreau Alliance

Thoreau Farm

Last year, we gathered to explore the possibilities of a merger. In December, we voted. Now, we turn to the work ahead: building the strong, vibrant, and sustainable organization we imagined together. Join us for an informal discussion on the future of the Thoreau Alliance, including an update on merger implementation and what's coming next. This session is an opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and help shape how we continue to move forward together.

11:00 pm, 1:00 pm, and 3:00 pm Tours of Thoreau Farm

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Thoreau Farm Picnic (BYO)

Thoreau Farm

Bring your lunch and enjoy conversation among conference attendees while exploring the grounds of Thoreau Farm and Gaining Ground. Birthday cake and other refreshments will be served.

At the picnic, Michael Berger will be presented the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award in recognition of significant scholarly achievement that furthers the mission of the Thoreau Society.

As we have for several years now, we invite all conference participants to attend the first session of the Orchard House Summer Conversational Series. The focus of the 2026 Conversation Series is “Creativity.”

2:30 pm – 4:00 pm “Artificial Intelligence Could Not Make THESE Mistakes: Creativity and the Correct Errors.” School of Philosophy at Orchard House

William J. Healey III, Jason Giannetti, and Alice Kenney

This panel explores creativity in the Alcott circle alongside contemporary questions about AI. Drawing on ideas from James Russell Lowell and James Joyce, it frames creativity as a process of transformation shaped by error, revision, and growth—central to the Alcotts’ ethos and to human experience more broadly. Speakers will consider why meaningful mistakes are essential to human creativity and how this differs from AI. Alice Kenney will address imitation and experimentation in development; William Healey will examine the role of the unconscious; and Jason Giannetti will explore Nietzsche’s perspective, together highlighting creativity as an evolving, distinctly human practice.

Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House

Orchard House, purchased by Amos Bronson Alcott in 1857, became the Alcotts’ long-sought permanent home after decades of moving, with its apple orchard inspiring its name and reflecting Bronson’s ideals. It is best known as the place where Louisa May Alcott wrote and set Little Women, and today remains remarkably preserved, offering visitors an authentic glimpse into the family’s life and literary legacy.

<https://louisamayalcott.org/home>

End of Conference Events

6:00 – 9:30pm Unofficial Wrap-up Cookout on the Assabet River
\$25/person all inclusive. Hosted by Peter Alden and the Hammonds.
Details will be available at the registration table at the Annual Gathering.
