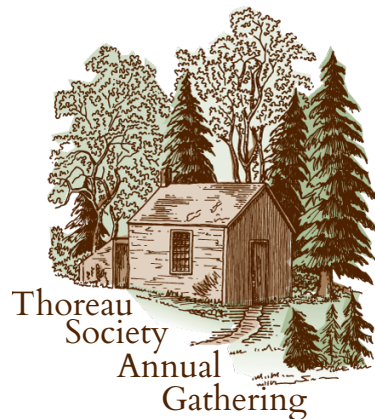


The 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society

Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing



July 8–12, 2026

“Nature is but another name for health,” Thoreau wrote in “Huckleberries,” an essay he left unpublished at his death at age 44 from tuberculosis. Thoreau celebrated health even as he battled his final illness. He found ways to flourish in spite of a body, and a society, that was anything but well. In our own time, when civic and natural ailments are both chronic and acute, what can

Thoreau, and his time, show us about the conditions that promote flourishing—physical, mental, spiritual, social, ecological—as well as the conditions that hinder or prevent it? How can we be well in a troubled world? How can we live well in troubled times? For the 2026 Annual Gathering, we hope to explore some of the many aspects of health in Thoreau’s world and ours.



The Thoreau Alliance

Championing Thoreau’s legacy in Concord and around the globe.

Thoreau Farm, the birthplace of Henry David Thoreau, is our home base.

The Thoreau Society is our international community dedicated to Thoreau studies.

Together we inspire efforts to build the more just, mindful, and sustainable world Thoreau imagined.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

9:00 am – 11:00 am Alumni Reunion for Barbara Mossberg’s Memoirists Thoreau Farm
Free and open to alumni of Barbara’s past programs. Seasoned participants from Barbara Mossberg’s iconic memoir “joy”shops will regroup for a special reunion, check in, and workshop at Thoreau Farm—and PIE! Donations encouraged in support of future workshops. RSVP to info@thoreaualliance.org

10:00am – 12:00pm Volunteering at Gaining Ground Thoreau Farm
Free. Pre-registration required; limited to twelve participants. Join us for two-hours of volunteering at Gaining Ground, the organic, no-till farm behind Thoreau’s Birthplace. We’ll help with farm tasks 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 hunger relief organizations.

WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

10:30pm – 12:00pm Then & Now: Peaceful Activism & Practical Action Wright Tavern
FREE. Registration encouraged; Drop-ins welcome. A panel of local activists share current causes and initiatives. Learn from: Jen Hurley-Wales, on forming and effectively sustaining a team's energy; Marsha Turin on the role music plays in activism; Julia Gengster, on organizing and supporting stand-outs and their value to the community; Chris Miara on Build Back Blue, a postcarding organizational effort; Julie Hirschler on supporting standouts against ICE and its allies at Hanscom; and a representative from SPJE (Stop Private Jet Expansion) addressing the strategies needed to thwart private jet expansion at Hanscom.



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

**STOP PRIVATE
JET EXPANSION**
at Hanscom or Anywhere

*A coalition of state and local organizations standing against the plan to **expand** private jet capacity at Hanscom. stopprivatejetexpansion.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/

12:00pm – 2:00 pm Workshop: Teaching with the Documentary Main Hall
FREE. Registration encouraged; Drop-ins welcome. Presented by Kristen Case, Frank Cronin, John Kucich & Lucy Salib. The new Thoreau documentary offers an incredible opportunity to bring Thoreau to new audiences. This workshop will share our experiences with the film in a variety of settings, from universities and community colleges to libraries and community centers, using a range of strategies. Leave with tools and resources for teaching with the documentary yourself.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, CONTINUED

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm **Memoir Workshop with Barbara Mossberg** Thoreau Farm
\$15/person; limited to 12 participants. Pre-registration required. Calling new and seasoned memoirists to the woods for a three-hour transformational writing workshop with Barbara Mossberg. Explore your own woods with Thoreau as a model for memoir as a life-changing, life-saving act.

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm **Whole-Brain Journaling with Sarah Gothe** Conference Room
FREE. Limited to 12 participants. Pre-registration encouraged.
This pre-conference workshop explores the integration of writing and drawing through Thoreau'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 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** Main Hall

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm **FEATURED OPENING PANEL: Critical** Main Hall

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

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

Learn more about the Critical Health Conference held 17-18 October 2025 at Sorbonne Université in Paris, organized by Alice de Galzain and Johanna Pitteti-Heil



criticalhealthconference.wordpress.com/

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

Presider: Kathleen Kelly

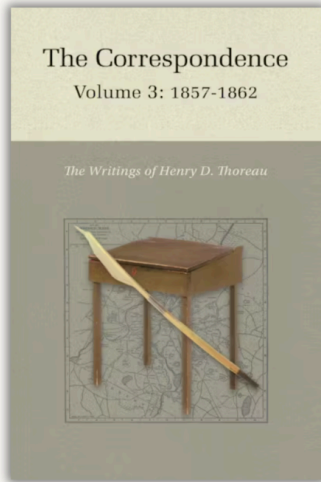
Celebrate the publication of the third and final volume of Thoreau's correspondence (*The Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau: Volume 3: 1857–1862*), edited by Robert N. Hudspeth, Elizabeth Hall Witherell, and Lihong Xie.

Beth Witherell, *Second-class Letters: Thoreau Reuses his Mail*.

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. We invite the audience to discuss a letter of their choosing—please bring a few copies to share. We will also have selected letters for 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.



**The Correspondence, Volume 3: 1857-1862
(The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau)**

This is the third and final volume of the first full-scale scholarly edition of Thoreau's correspondence in more than half a century. This volume contains 239 letters, 121 written by Thoreau and 118 written to him. Sixty-seven letters are collected here for the first time; of these, forty-four have not been published before, including five dated between 1837 and 1855 that are included in an addenda.



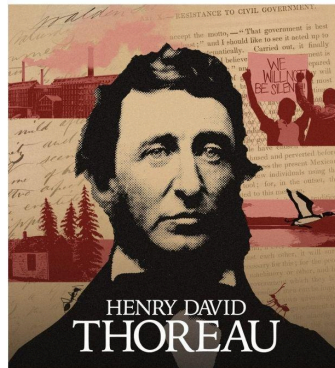
Edited by Robert N. Hudspeth,
Elizabeth Hall Witherell, and Lihong Xie.
Princeton University Press, 2026.
Hardcover, 736 pp.

Available from the Shop at Walden Pond

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.

The 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society
**Henry David Thoreau
Documentary Screenings**



Episode 1: Who Are We?
Wednesday, July 8, 2026 at 6:30 pm
Goodwin Forum, Concord Free Public Library, 129 Main St, Concord

Episode 2: Being Alive & Episode 3: Several More Lives to Live
Friday, July 10, 2026 at 6:30 pm
Trinity Episcopal Church, 81 Elm St, Concord

Concessions will be available for sale.
Guests are welcome to bring their own dinner.

Free and Open to All

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 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. 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

Main Hall

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 – 11:30 am **Panel: Walking and Health**

Moderator: Beverly Pittman

Main Hall

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

Karla Hailer, *Confessions of an Accidental Saunterer*

11:30 am – 12:00 pm **Talk on Special Topic**

Main Hall

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

THURSDAY, JULY 9, CONTINUED

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm OPEN LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

Main Hall

Bring your 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

Panel: Wellness & Thoreau Across Cultures

Moderator: Catherine Staples Chapel

Richard Piccarreto, *Soul Matters: Thoreau's*

Soul-Health Illuminated by Advaita Vedanta

Shelley Hawks, *The Finishing Stroke of the Artist of*

Kouros in Walden: How does it compare to Chinese painter Shitao's concept of the Single Stroke?

Julia Du, *Thoreau's Enduring Popularity in China*

John Terence Hyland, *Dare to be Daniel*

Panel: Health in Thoreau's Texts

Moderator: Marc Jolley Main Hall

Paul Schacht & Beth Witherell, *Following "Higher Laws"*

Freya Riebling, *The Picture of Health: Therien in Walden*

John Kucich, *Thoreau's Native Medicine*

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

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm Break

3:00 pm – 4:15pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Seasons of Health

Moderator: Don Jewler Chapel

Ron Balthazor, *Seasons of Living Well*

Geoff Wisner, *Thoreau's Wheel of Health and Immortality*

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

Panel: Trouble and Recovery: Health in Margaret Fuller's Life and Society

Main Hall

Presented by the Margaret Fuller Society

Moderator: Jana Argersinger

Johanna Pitetti-Heil, *Leaving 'Venus Urania at her*

feet': Margaret Fuller's Mesmeric Recoveries of Health

Sarah Wider, *Therapeutic Deluge or Constraining*

Delusion? Caroline Sturgis's Reports from the Brattleboro Hydropathic Establishment

Yoshiko Ito, *Troubled Bodies, Recovering Nations:*

Health Discourse in Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth

Oakes Smith

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Tour of William Munroe Special Collections at Concord Free Public Library Pre-registration by lottery.

The CFPL holds the largest and most important collection of primary Thoreau material in New England, and the major archive documenting Concord as Thoreau knew it. Special Collections includes Thoreau's "Walking" manuscript, close to 200 of his surveys, and much more! Arrange a separate visit to Special Collections at any time by contacting Anke Voss, avoss@minilib.net. There are inexhaustible treasures to explore in Special Collections.

The Margaret Fuller Society is a nonprofit, educational organization. Established in 1992, through the efforts of Bell Gale Chevigny and Larry J. Reynolds, the society provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among Margaret Fuller scholars around the world. margaretfullersociety.org/

4:15 pm – 4:30 pm Break

4:30 pm – 5:45 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, "Moments in Time" and "Eternal Instants": *Some Thoughts on Henry Thoreau's Transcendental Epistemology*

Panel: Economic Health

Moderator: Molly Eberle Main Hall
Alissa O'Brien, *Voluntary Poverty: Being Poor with Purpose* (2026 Fellowship Awardee)
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)

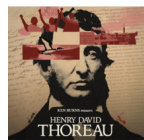
Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

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

Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

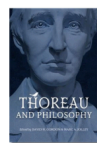
You are welcome to continue the evening's festivities at the Forge Tavern at the Colonial Inn after dinner.

**SAVE THE DATES
FOR OUR FALL PROGRAMS**



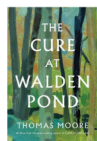
Scoring the Thoreau Documentary
A CONVERSATION WITH COMPOSER DAVID CIERI

Friday, September 18 | 7:00 pm
At the Concord Conservatory of Music



Thoreau & Philosophy
A PANEL OF ESSAYISTS

Thursday, October 1 | 7:00 pm
At the Concord Museum



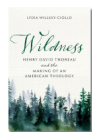
The Cure at Walden Pond
A CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS MOORE

Saturday, October 3 | 2:00 pm
At Thoreau Farm



Thoreau's Journal Drawings
A CONVERSATION WITH KATHLEEN KELLY

Friday, October 23 | 7:00 pm
Part of the Concord Festival of Authors



Wildness
AN EVENING WITH LYDIA WILLSKY-CIOLLO

Thursday, November 5 | 7:00 pm
At the Concord Museum



More Details &
Registration
Information
Available in August



The Walden Experiments
A BOOK TALK WITH ROBERT THORSON

Thursday, November 12 | 6:00 pm
At the Concord Free Public Library



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*.

EXCURSIONS IN THOREAU COUNTRY

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 way to explore the Concord River. Launching from South Bridge Boathouse 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. Step into Thoreau's beloved landscape on a walk along part 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 Trail, or proceed 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 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 hike to earn patches & medals.



The Concord Scout House

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

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

Emerson House

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

Join Kate Culkin, author of *Emerson's Daughters*, for a special tour that celebrates sisterhood and highlights Ellen and Edith's private lives and their behind-the-scenes role in their father's career.



RALPH WALDO EMERSON
MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1930 by members of the Emerson family, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association (RWEMA) is a 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. The RWEMA manages the historic Emerson House in Concord, open to the public as a museum from April to October. The RWEMA also owns the contents of the Emerson Study held at the Concord Museum in a replica of Emerson's home study. The majority of Emerson's archival materials are held at Harvard University's Houghton Library and the Concord Free Public Library.

<https://rwema.org/>

FRIDAY, JULY 10, CONTINUED

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

Higginson House, Walden Woods Project

FREE. Pre-registration required. Limited to 40 people. Meet **Jenifer Ishee**, the new WWP Curator of Collections (including our Thoreau Society Collections), talk about the Library and collections, and 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.



Watercolor by Sophia Thoreau (from Prudence Ward’s scrapbook in the Thoreau Society Archives in The Thoreau Society Collections at The Walden Woods Project Library)



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

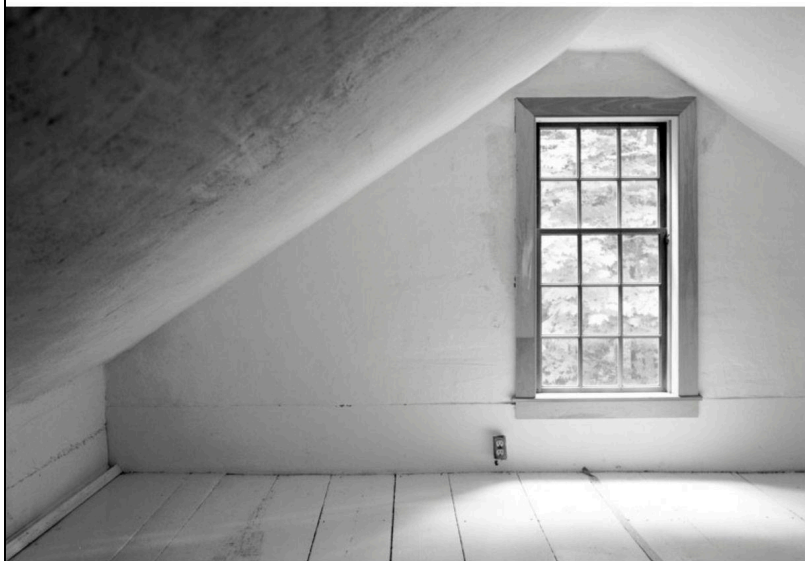
9:30am -10:30 am **“A Palace of Trees” Exhibition Open House**

Main Hall

FREE. Registration not required; drop-ins welcome

**A PALACE OF TREES:
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF
HENRY DAVID THOREAU**

AN EXHIBITION BY
PHOTOGRAPHER
JEFFREY STEEN



“Light” (“The Bright Light of Freedom”), attic, Robbins House

ON VIEW JULY & AUGUST 2026
TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
81 ELM STREET, CONCORD

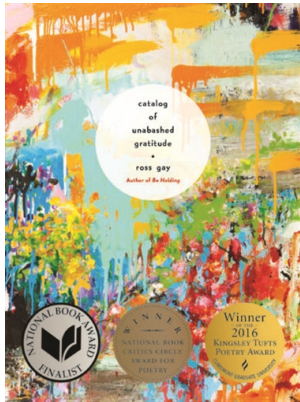
An invitation to see, anew, places important to Thoreau’s life and reconsider his themes: the wonderment of nature and intricacies of the human condition.

A collaboration between the Thoreau Alliance, the Robbins House, and the Arts Committee of Trinity Episcopal Church for the 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society.



FRIDAY, JULY 10, CONTINUED

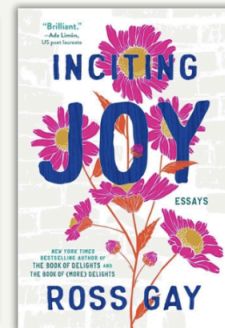
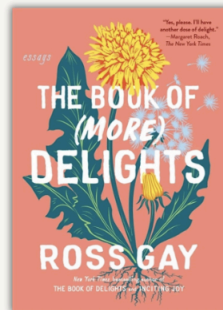
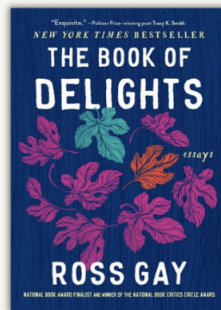
10:00 am – 11:00am “Thoreau Society Reads” Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay Thoreau Farm



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*. Gay’s books are available through the Shop at Walden Pond. Bring your copies to Thoreau Farm for this book group experience.

Through his writing, 2026 Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay reminds us to notice the small wonders of life, to approach the world with curiosity, and to find delight in the ordinary—expanding what we think of as nature writing in ways that are both tender, insightful, and exuberant.

Signed books available from the Shop at Walden Pond



11:00 am – 12:30 pm Picnic & Reading of Thoreau’s “Walking” Robbins House

Free and open to all. Bring your lunch to Robbins House lawn for public reading of one of Thoreau’s most famous essays.



The Robbins House is a Concord-based nonprofit 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/>

1:15 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 Healing and Action: Thoreau's Natural Sabbath*

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm Break

FRIDAY, JULY 10, CONTINUED

2:45 pm - 4:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Place & Health

Moderator: Robert Thorson Chapel
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* (2026 Fellowship Awardee)
Jason Giannetti, *Thoreau and the Emerging Discipline of Geography*

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

Moderator: Chrissa Ventrelle Main Hall
Sponsored by the Louisa May Alcott Society
Daniela Daniele, *Vegetarian Diets and Liberal Pedagogy: Bronson Alcott in the Transatlantic network of Utopian Abolitionists*
Tracey A. Cummings, *Louisa May Alcott's Thoreauvian Characters: Reflections on their Good Lives ... & Deaths*
Roberta Pardi-Oláh, *Health Education by Bronson Alcott and Its Representation in Louisa May Alcott's Juvenile Fiction*
Jan Turnquist, *Bumps, Brains, and Belief: The Place of Phrenology in 19th Century Health*

The LMA Society allows Alcott scholars and others to share in the study and appreciation of her life and works. Through scholarly panels, special symposia, and more, it connects scholars and expands the possibilities for Alcott studies. louisamayalcottociety.org/

4:00 pm - 4:15 pm Break

4:15 pm - 5:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Healthy Education

Moderator: Lydia Willsky-Ciollo Chapel
Marc Martorana, *Revisiting Thoreauvian Flourishing for Civic Education: A Tribute to Jason Scorza*
Frank Cronin & Lucy Salib, *Growing the Society: A New Kind of Huckleberry Party*
Jacob Hundt, *6 Years of Living Deliberately at Thoreau College: The Making of a Microcollege*

Panel: Ethics of Flourishing

Moderator: Lois Brown Main Hall
Christopher Ulloa Chaves, *Emerson's Thoreau and the Art of Living Well*
Donna Marie Przybojewski, *Thoreau's and St. Pope John Paul II's Perspectives for a Spiritually Healthy and Moral Marriage*
Michael Frederick, *Inhabiting Time: Thoreau and the 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.

5:45 pm - 7:00 pm Young Scholars Social

An informal gathering for students, early-career researchers, and emerging scholars attending the Annual Gathering. Connect with peers, exchange ideas, and enjoy conversation in a relaxed setting.

Village Forge Tavern in the Colonial Inn

FRIDAY, JULY 10, CONTINUED

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm Special Reception

Barrow Bookstore

Attendees of the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering are cordially invited to an evening at the Barrow Bookstore. Stop by anytime for light refreshments and a chance to visit with fellow Thoreauvians. Weather permitting we will be outside, but the air conditioning will also be on in the store. Barrow Bookstore is located at 79 Main Street, behind the Fritz and Gigi clothing store in the yellow building.

Barrow Bookstore specializes in Concord history and authors (including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bronson and Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, and more) and a wide array of genres for readers of all ages and interests. From first editions to fine condition reading copies, to an assortment of book-inspired gifts, literary delights await.

6:30 pm – 9:30 pm Documentary Screening: *Henry David Thoreau*, Episodes 2 & 3 Main Hall

Attendees and the public are invited to experience the second and third parts of *Henry David Thoreau*. Concessions will be available, but all are also welcome to BYO dinner for the screening.

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**



“Ethereal: Thoreau Encounters the Diffuse”

This talk focuses on how Thoreau uses the (fascinating) notion of the “ethereal” to engage those regions of experience that are not made up of specific “things” (which have the stable and dense-enough consistency to qualify as “entities”) but rather engages diffuse and vague no-things like haze and atmospheres which are non-metrical and hard to pin down or measure but still have the subtle but powerful kind of causality that he calls “influence.” I am interested in his take on the ethereal as a special kind of materiality, rather than as something ‘spiritual’, although Thoreau does of course sometimes use ethereal as a synonym for divine or spiritual. It seems pertinent today (given the mad rush to data science and AI) to think about how that which isn’t quantifiable or metric-izable is still valuable.

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**

Moderator: Kristen Case

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: Collections, Farmhouse, 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 SIGNING & CELEBRATION

The 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society
**Book Signing
& Celebration**



Featuring over 20 authors of new and classic books in Thoreau studies and related topics.
Plus, heavy hors d'oeuvres and desserts from NOSH.

July 11, 2026
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Trinity Episcopal Church, 81 Elm Street, Concord
Free and Open to All

Dinner on your own. No more conference events.

2026 Annual Gathering Schedule AT-A-GLANCE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

9:00 am - 11:00 am	Alumni Reunion for Barbara Mossberg's Memoirists	Thoreau Farm
10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Volunteering at Gaining Ground	Thoreau Farm

WORKSHOPS

10:30 pm - 12:00 pm	Then & Now: Peaceful Activism & Practical Action	Wright Tavern
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Memoir Workshop with Barbara Mossberg	Thoreau Farm
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Workshop: Teaching with the Documentary	Main Hall
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Whole-Brain Journaling with Sarah Gothe	Conference Room

PLENARY

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm	Conference Welcome and Announcements	Main Hall
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm	<u>Featured Opening Panel: Critical Health Comes to Concord</u>	Main Hall
4:00 pm - 5:45 pm	<u>"Worth the Postage": Thoreau's Correspondence</u>	Main Hall

Dinner on your own or bring it to the screening.

6:45 pm - 8:00 pm	Screening: <i>Henry David Thoreau</i> , Episode 1	Concord Free Public Library
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THURSDAY, JULY 9

6:30 am - 8:30 am	Walk in Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge with Peter Alden	
7:30 am - 8:30 am	A Walking Conversation on Eudaimonia, Flourishing & Thoreau with Marc Martorana	

PLENARY

9:00 am - 9:15 am	Conference Welcome, Reprise	Main Hall
9:15 am - 10:30 am	<u>Panel: Spiritual Health</u>	Main Hall
10:30 am - 10:45 am	<i>Break</i>	
10:45 am - 11:30 am	<u>Panel: Walking and Health</u>	Main Hall
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	<u>Talk: Celia P.R. Frease, Henry David Thoreau, and the Water Cure</u>	Main Hall
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	<i>Open Lunch Discussion on Conference Theme</i>	Main Hall
1:30 pm - 2:45 pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: <u>Panel: Wellness & Thoreau Across Cultures</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Health in Thoreau's Texts</u>	Main Hall
2:45 pm - 3:00 pm	<i>Break</i>	
3:00 pm - 4:15pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: <u>Panel: Seasons of Health</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Trouble & Recovery</u> (Fuller Society)	Main Hall
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Tour of William Munroe Special Collections	Concord Free Public Library
4:15 pm - 4:30 pm	<i>Break</i>	
4:30 pm - 5:45 pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: <u>Panel: Joy and Despair</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Economic Health</u>	Main Hall
6:00 pm - 6:30 pm	Conference Social (No-host)	Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Conference Dinner	Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

FRIDAY, JULY 10

6:30 am - 8:30 am	Walk Around Walden with Robert Thorson & Catherine Staples	
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EXCURSIONS IN THOREAU COUNTRY

8:30 am - 11:00 am	Canoe the Concord River	South Bridge Boathouse
8:30 am - 10:30 am	Walk the Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail	Concord Train Station
9:30 am - 10:30 am	Meet the New Curator!	Walden Woods Project
9:30 am - 10:30 am	Tour of Emerson House with Kate Culkin	Emerson House

2026 Annual Gathering Schedule AT-A-GLANCE

10:00 am - 11:00 am	“Thoreau Society Reads” Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay	Thoreau Farm
11:00 am - 12:30 pm	Picnic & Reading of Thoreau’s “Walking”	Robbins House
1:15 pm - 2:30 pm	<u>CONCURRENT: Panel: Contemporary Health</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Philosophical Approaches to Flourishing</u>	Main Hall
2:30 pm - 2:45 pm	<i>Break</i>	
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm	<u>CONCURRENT: Panel: Place & Health</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Transcendentally Well</u> (Alcott Society)	Main Hall
4:00 pm - 4:15 pm	<i>Break</i>	
4:15 pm - 5:30 pm	<u>CONCURRENT: Panel: Healthy Education</u>	Chapel
	<u>Panel: Ethics of Flourishing</u>	Main Hall

EVENING EVENTS

5:45 pm - 7:00 pm	Young Scholars Social	Village Forge Tavern in the Colonial Inn
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Special Reception	Barrow Bookstore
6:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Documentary Screening: <i>Henry David Thoreau</i> , Episodes 2 & 3	Main Hall

SATURDAY, JULY 11

7:00 am - 8:30 am	Memorial Walk at Walden Pond with Richard Smith	Walden Pond
9:00 am - 10:00 am	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING	Main Hall
10:00 am - 10:15 am	<i>Break</i>	
10:15 am - 11:15 am	Dana S. Brigham Memorial Keynote Lecture by Jane Bennett	Main Hall
	“Ethereal: Thoreau Encounters the Diffuse”	
11:15 am - 11:45 am	Discussion in Response to Keynote	Main Hall
11:45 am - 1:15 pm	Stewardship Lunch Discussions	Main Hall
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Erik Ewers & Christopher Loren Ewers Discuss <i>Henry David Thoreau</i>	Main Hall
2:30 pm - 2:45 pm	<i>Break</i>	
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm	<u>Panel: Flourishing Differently</u>	Chapel
4:00 pm - 4:15 pm	<i>Break</i>	
4:15 pm - 5:30 pm	<u>Panel: Natural Health & the Commons</u> (ASLE)	Chapel
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm	HAPPY HOUR BOOK SIGNING & CELEBRATION	Main Hall

SUNDAY, JULY 12

6:30 am - 8:30 am	Walk at Fairhaven Bay to Walden with Peter Alden	
9:00 am - 10:00 am	<u>Coffee & Donuts for Educators</u>	Thoreau Farm
10:00 am - 11:00 am	<u>CONCURRENT: Panel: "Give me Health and a Day"</u> (Emerson)	Thoreau Farm
	<u>Sermon: "Living Transcendentally"</u>	First Parish

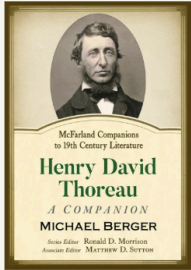
PLENARY SESSIONS

11:00am - 12:00pm	Open Forum: Future of the Thoreau Alliance	Thoreau Farm
11:00 am, 1:00 pm, and 3:00 pm	<i>Tours of Thoreau Farm</i>	
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Thoreau Farm Picnic (BYO)	Thoreau Farm
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	“Artificial Intelligence Could Not Make THESE Mistakes...”	School of Philosophy

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*.



Henry David Thoreau: A Companion

Drawing on the work of outstanding scholars and critics, this companion provides information on the full body of Henry David Thoreau's work, his life, and his world, connecting the factors that affected Thoreau's thought and writing, and highlighting his impact, in his own time and since. This study brings these various aspects of Thoreau's life and writings into focus in more than 100 detailed, interconnected entries. McFarland & Company, 2025. Paperback, 479 pp. Available from the Shop of Walden Pond



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

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*

Alice deGalzain, *Reading and Community Health: From "The American Scholar" to Brook Farm*



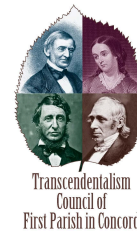
The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. is dedicated to fostering scholarship on and appreciation of the life and writings of one of America's greatest authors. The Society, which has about 200 members in eleven countries, publishes the biannual [Emerson Society Papers \(ESP\)](#), featuring original scholarly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

Sermon: "Living Transcendentally"

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.

Annual Gathering 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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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

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, of creating shared programs between Austin Community College and the University of Texas at Austin on Transcendentalism, Thoreau, and the Society by coordinating events around the PBS Documentary.



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



Alice de Galzain is a postdoctoral researcher at Sorbonne Université whose work explores Transcendentalism, Brook Farm, and the history of American feminism; she also serves as Associate Editor of *The Concord Saunterer* and board member of the Thoreau Alliance.

Reading and Community Health: From “The American Scholar” to Brook Farm

This paper explores the feminist implications of Emerson’s *The American Scholar*, arguing that his idea that “one must be an inventor to read well” inspired forms of active, creative reading that resonated with women at Brook Farm. Through the examples of Marianne Dwight Orvis and Anna Quincy Thaxter Parsons, it shows how their active reading of Fourier’s socialist writings helped shape early feminist initiatives, including a mutual-support fund that anticipated aspects of modern health care.



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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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 talk explores Thoreau's practice of seasonal attention, phenological observation, and immersion in natural cycles as 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.

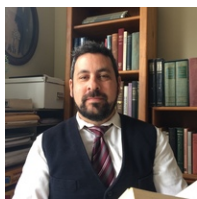


William Fusfield holds a Ph.D. in Speech Communication from the University of Washington and taught the history of German and American rhetoric at the University of Pittsburgh until retiring in 2016.

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

This talk explores two forms through which Thoreau conveys transformative experience: everyday "moments in time" and the transcendent "eternal instants" of early German Romanticism. Tracing these forms across his writings shows how ordinary discoveries and profound spiritual insights together shape his vision of self-cultivation and higher understanding.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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 and taught philosophy at various colleges and universities. He also facilitates the Eshoji East Zen Center.

Thoreau and the Emerging Discipline of Geography

This paper explores 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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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

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

For over 6 years, Thoreau College 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. This talk shares lessons learned from using Thoreau's example and ideas 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/ 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 writing *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 talk explores how Thoreau's life exemplifies resilience in the face of adversity. Through 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 is Thoreau Alliance board member and brings his enthusiasm for 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 talk 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 and 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. He is a member of the Thoreau Alliance Board of Directors.

Thoreau & Flourishing

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

Michael Jonik professor of American Literature and Philosophy at the University of Sussex, and author of *Herman Melville and the Politics of the Inhuman* and editor of several literary volumes. He is completing a new book manuscript from which this talk comes, *New Earths Expect Us: Thoreau's Radical Ecologies*.

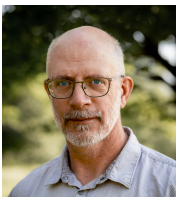
Correspondences: Stoic Ethics and the Eco-Politics of Friendship



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 is co-president of the Thoreau Alliance; 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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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: *Walden for Hire*

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 while 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

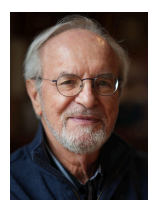
This talk explores Thoreau's late Journal to outline a unified theory of human-ecological flourishing grounded in access to & engagement with the landscape. For Thoreau, I argue, wellness is reliant on not simply access to nature but a specific relationship with and orientation toward post-wild environments.



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 Thoreau-inspired reflections.

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 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, with an essay in the Spring 2026 *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, and a pyrography (wood burning art) exhibit at the Walden Pond Visitor's Center.

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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts

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

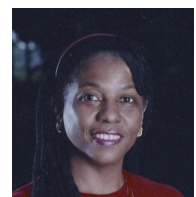
This talk explores how Thoreau's lived experience of the land shapes a northern imaginary and a view of health that is both physical and spiritual. Drawing on excerpts from his journals, correspondence, and notebooks (especially the *Canada* and *Indian Notebooks* at the Morgan Library) it highlights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



Richard Piccarreto is a public historian in Concord and the Membership & Farmhouse Manager for The Thoreau Alliance.

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, and American Indian & Indigenous Studies, and researches 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 & Peoples of Alaska in 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 & Moral Marriage by Thoreau & 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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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 Thoreau's *Walden* experiment embodies the Hellenistic concept of *ataraxia*—a state of tranquility and freedom from mental disturbance. Building on the scholarly debate between Toby J. Svoboda and Pierre Hadot over whether Thoreau was Epicurean or Stoic, it argues that *ataraxia* more precisely captures his philosophical achievement, culminating in the serenity of 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 talk 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, the example reveals Thoreau's pluralistic vision of well-being—different healths for different lives.

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

A New Kind of Huckleberry Party

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, of creating shared programs between Austin Community College and the University of Texas at Austin on Transcendentalism, Thoreau, and the Society by coordinating events around the PBS Documentary.



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

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.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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 a stand-up comic with over 35 years experience, including more than 20 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 proposed for new national parks in the US for ecological, cultural, and spiritual health.

Annual Gathering Presenter Bios & Abstracts



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.

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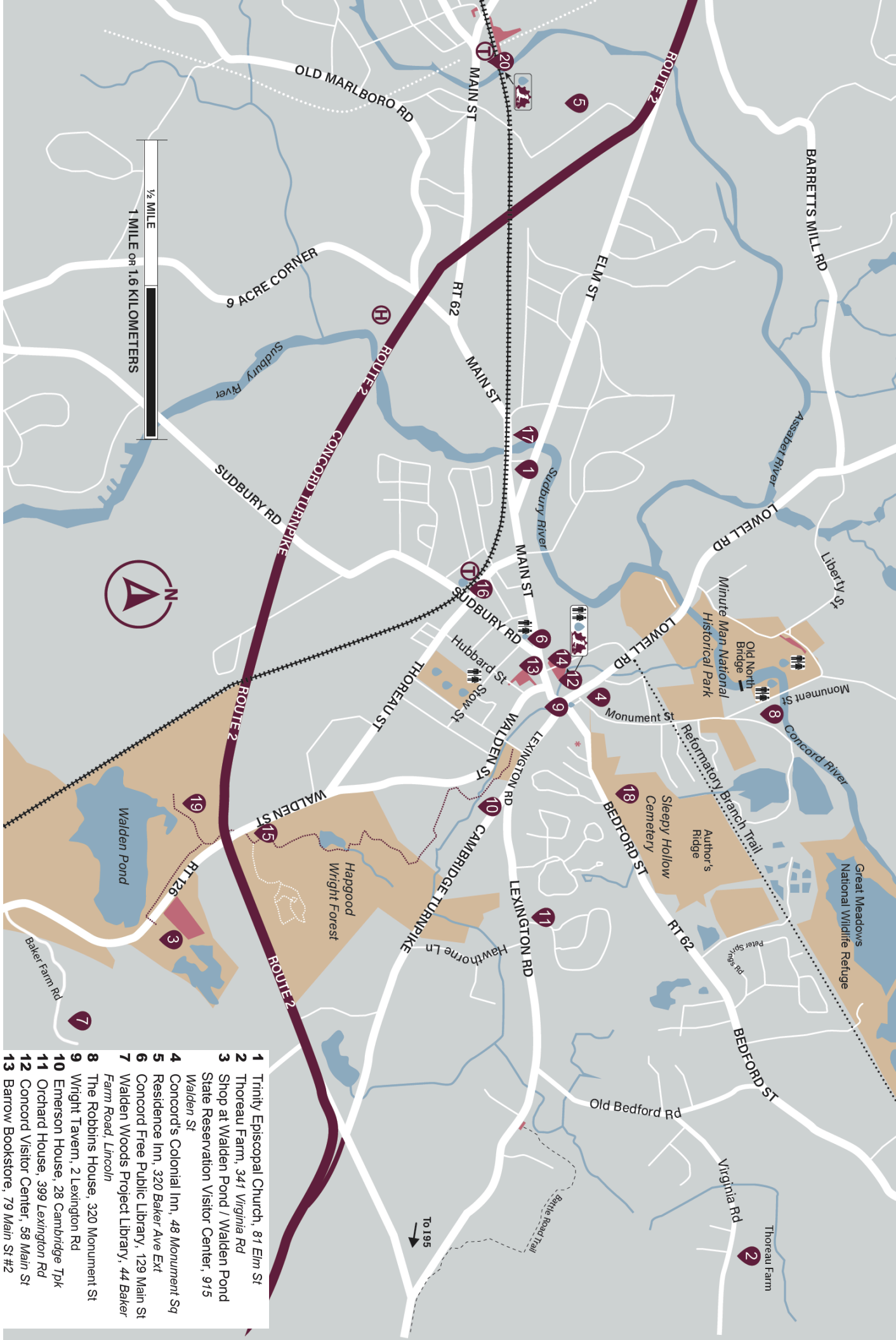
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The Thoreau Society is part of the Thoreau Alliance, championing Thoreau's legacy in Concord and around the globe. Learn more at thoreaualliance.org.



1/2 MILE
1 MILE OR 1.6 KILOMETERS

- Public Parking
- Ⓣ Railroad Station (MBTA)
- Park / Open Space
- Rivers, Ponds, Lakes
- Water Fountain
- ♿ Public Restroom
- Battle Road Trail
- Route 2 (4 lane highway)
- Reformatory Branch Trail
- Emerson-Thoreau Amble
- Thoreau Path at Brister's Hill
- Points of Interest
- Ⓣ Train Tracks
- ♿ Bike Rental Stations

- 1 Trinity Episcopal Church, 81 Elm St
- 2 Thoreau Farm, 341 Virginia Rd
- 3 Shop at Walden Pond / Walden Pond State Reservation Visitor Center, 915 Walden St
- 4 Concord's Colonial Inn, 48 Monument Sq
- 5 Residence Inn, 320 Baker Ave Ext
- 6 Concord Free Public Library, 129 Main St
- 7 Walden Woods Project Library, 44 Baker Farm Road, Lincoln
- 8 The Robbins House, 320 Monument St
- 9 Wright Tavern, 2 Lexington Rd
- 10 Emerson House, 28 Cambridge Trpk
- 11 Orchard House, 399 Lexington Rd
- 12 Concord Visitor Center, 58 Main St
- 13 Barrow Bookstore, 79 Main St #2
- 14 Municipal Parking Lot, Keyes Rd
- 15 Hapgood Wright Town Forest, Walden St
- 16 Concord Train Station, 90 Thoreau St
- 17 South Bridge Boat House, 496 Main St
- 18 Author's Ridge Sleepy Hollow Cemetery
- 19 Thoreau's Cabin Site
- 20 West Concord Train Station