

*To Harrison Gray Otis Blake**April 17, 1849*Concord Ap. 17<sup>th</sup> 1849

Dear Sir,

It is my intention to leave Concord for Worcester, via Groton, at 12 o'clock on Friday of this week. Mr<sup>a</sup> Emerson tells me that it will take about two hours to go by this way. At any rate I shall try to secure 3 or 4 hours in which to see you & Worcester before the lecture.<sup>1</sup>

Yrs in haste

Henry D. Thoreau.

*Correspondent:* Harrison Gray Otis Blake (1816-1898), son of Francis and Eliza Chandler Blake of Worcester, Massachusetts, graduated from Harvard University in 1835 and from the Harvard Divinity School in 1838. Though he preached occasionally in 1838 and 1839, Blake never became a minister. In 1839 he opened a school for boys in Charlestown; after leaving that school, he taught sporadically until 1857. Blake was married twice: to Sarah Chandler Ward (1817-1846), daughter of Samuel and Sarah Chandler Ward, in 1840, and to Nancy Pope Howe Conant (1828-1872), daughter of Jacob and Betsy Pope Conant, in 1852. More than a friend, Blake was a disciple who received T's most elaborate and philosophical letters. After T's death, Blake edited four volumes of extracts from T's Journal from the manuscripts Sophia Thoreau bequeathed him.

<sup>1</sup> T gave three lectures in Worcester in 1849: "Economy" on April 20, "Life in the Woods" on April 27, and "White Beans and Walden Pond" on May 3. In his May 28, 1850, letter to Blake, T refers to his 1849 lectures in Worcester but mentions two lectures only (see pp. 59-60), perhaps because he considered "Economy" and "Life in the Woods" as one lecture in two parts. The account of the first lecture that appeared in the Worcester *Palladium* was dismissive: "Such philosophers illustrate the absurdities the human mind is capable of. What would a forest of them be good for? Nothing but curiosities for people to look after, as they pay their shilling to see a menagerie. They are watches without any pointers; their springs and wheels are well adjusted, and perform good service; but nobody is the wiser for it, as they do not tell the time of day" ("T's Lectures before *Walden*" 1995, p. 177).

*Copy-text:* MSC by Harrison Gray Otis Blake (NN-BGC, Henry David Thoreau Collection, 1837-1917, Series III)

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*Editor's Notes*

This letter is addressed "H. G. O. Blake. / Worcester / Mass.," post-marked "Concord Ms. 17 {*illegible*}," and endorsed "Ap. 17, 1849." and "Ap. 17, '49."

T wrote the letter on p. 1 of a folio and the address on p. 4. Blake copied T's letter, including the closing and signature, on the opposite side of the address leaf; then he tore the folio in half at the fold, presumably so that he could give away the original letter. Following his copy of T's letter, Blake added:

The above is a copy of a note of Thoreau, written to me on the other half of this sheet, the original of which I intend to give to Miss Rice who lives near Adams Square, Worcester. H. G. O. Blake. Worcester, Sept. 14, 1893. The signature had been previously cut *out*, of course, to give away.

*Alteration*

A change appearing in the manuscript copy is reported below; it could be either a faithful representation of the original manuscript or an error made and corrected by the copyist.

Mr] Mrs

*To Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz*

*June 30, 1849*

Concord Mass June 30<sup>th</sup>

-49

Dear Sir,

Being disappointed in not finding you in Boston a week or two since, I requested Dr. Gould<sup>1</sup> to make some inquiries of you for me; but now, as I shall not be able to see that gentleman for some time, I have decided to apply to you directly.

Suffice it to say, that one of the directors of the Bangor (ME.) Lyceum has asked me to ascertain simply—and I think this a good Yankee way of doing the business—Whether you will read *two* or *three* lectures before that institution early in the next lecture season, and if so, what remuneration you will expect.

Of course they would be glad to hear more lectures, but