

From Ralph Waldo Emerson

February 6, 1850

Saco, Maine,
Wednesday 6 Feb

Dear Henry

I was at *South Danvers* on Monday Evening,¹ & promised Mr C. Northend,² Secretary of the Lyceum, to invite you for Monday 18th Feb. to read a^a lecture to his institution. I told him there were two lectures to describe Cape Cod, which interested him & his friends, & they hoped that the two might somehow be rolled into one to give them some sort of complete story of the journey.³ I hope it will not quite discredit my negotiation if I confess that they heard with joy that Concord people laughed till they cried, when it was read to them.⁴ I understand Mr N., that there is a possibility but no probability that his absent colleague of the Lyceum has filled up that evening by an appointment But Mr N. will be glad to hear from you that you will come, & if any cause exist why not, he will immediately reply to you.

They will pay your expenses, & \$10.^{oo}. You will go from the Salem depot in an omnibus to Mr^a N's house. Do go if you can. Address *Charles Northend, Esq. South Danvers*.

Yours ever
R. W. Emerson.

Correspondent: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), son of William and Ruth Haskins Emerson of Boston, graduated from Harvard University in 1821 and taught for several years. After study at the Harvard Divinity School, he became the minister of Boston's Second Church. He resigned that position in 1832 and moved to Concord with his second wife, Lydia (Lidian) Jackson (1802-1892). By 1839 he had established himself as a writer and lecturer and was the central figure in the Transcendentalist movement, which came to include both T and Margaret Fuller.

¹ Emerson was lecturing in New England at this time: having lectured at the lyceum in South Danvers on February 4, he was now in Saco, Maine, where he lectured the evening he wrote this letter.

² Charles Northend (1814-1895), son of John and Nancy Titcomb Northend, was the principal of the Epes Grammar School in Salem from 1841 to 1852.

³ T had written three lectures about his first excursion to Cape Cod but had to combine them into two lectures for the Concord Lyceum, before which he lectured on January 23 and January 30, 1850. For his lecture on February 18, he apparently complied with Northend's request that he combine his material into a single lecture about the entire trip, as the preface he drafted for the South Danvers lecture reveals: "I purpose to read this evening as many extracts as the time will permit from a long account of a visit to Cape Cod made last October, particularly those parts relating to Nauset beach. As I had already condensed three lectures into *two*, and I am now invited to roll those *two* into *one* so as to give some sort of connected account of my journey, you can imagine how unconnected and incomplete this lecture must be" (CSmH, HM 13206).

⁴ James L. Chapin of Lincoln was less amused than the Concord residents among the audience: "His ideas are strange, many of them," he wrote after the first performance. Chapin commented again after T's second lecture a week later: "He seems to have a great faculty of saying a great deal about a very small affair,—rather too much so I think" (Thomas Blanding, "T's Local Lectures in 1849 and 1850," *Concord Saunterer* 17 [December 1984]: 25).

Copy-text: ALS (NN-BGC, Henry David Thoreau Collection, 1837-1917, Series IV)

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Editor's Notes

This letter is addressed "Henry D. Thoreau. / Concord. / Mass.," postmarked "Saco Me. 7. Feb," and endorsed "R. W. Emerson".

PE supplies the year "1850" from the contents of the letter: T lectured in Concord in January 1850 about his trip to Cape Cod, and in that year February 18, the day T lectured in South Danvers, fell on a Monday.

Author's Alterations

a] as

Mr] *added in margin*