Lecture delivered at the Concord Free Public library, October 13, 2007, in connection with the joint CFPL/Thoreau Society exhibit, “Reconstructing Thoreau’s World”

Reconstructing Thoreau’s Intentions

When I was considering what to talk about tonight and how to make a connection with this terrific exhibit, I decided to focus on the fact that our work at the Thoreau Edition involves a kind of reconstruction as well. The exhibit shows how parts of the landscape Thoreau knew have been reconstructed by a number of different people, using methods as different as glass-negative photography and pick and shovel archaeology. At the Thoreau Edition we reconstruct texts that reflect what Thoreau intended. Sometimes this involves trying to figure out exactly what he wrote--you’ve seen his handwriting--and sometime it involves distinguishing what he wrote from what others added or changed. Making these decisions often requires the ability to imagine past events in the way a detective or even an archaeologist might, and I’m going to describe a few examples of applying that kind of forensic imagination to the manuscript volumes that contain Thoreau’s Journal, and to other, related manuscripts. I’ll also lay out a couple of the puzzles we’ve come across, one solved, the other still a mystery.

Those who reconstruct the landscape are dealing with buildings and trees, roads, rivers and ponds--these can be dramatically altered by human agency or by the passage of time, but one or two centuries is a relatively short time in the life of a place, and with the right information even a bean-field can be rediscovered--as you may have seen in the exhibit.
At the Thoreau Edition, our “landscape”—the evidence for Thoreau’s intention—is paper, mostly. At the end of Thoreau’s life, most of those pieces of paper were in his top-floor room in the Yellow House on Main Street, in the order into which he’d put them himself. After his death, though, they were gradually dispersed, and now they’re in libraries and private collections all around the country. When Walter Harding established the Thoreau Edition, one of his first tasks—a monumental one—was to locate and obtain copies of all of the Thoreau manuscripts he could find. Reconstructing Thoreau’s order for this material is an ongoing task.

Many of you probably know something about what we do at the Thoreau Edition, and some of you know a lot more about the work because you’re involved in it. I’ll start tonight with just a brief description of the project.

To begin at the beginning, the Thoreau Edition was founded by Walter Harding in 1966 to produce a new edition of all of Thoreau’s writings for publication, his Journal, and his correspondence—that is, letters both from him and to him. The original design of the project excluded the many notebooks of poems and extracts he copied from his reading—about natural history, native Americans, and Canada—as well as his surveying notebook and the 1800 or so pages of notes, lists, and charts analyzing and organizing information about natural phenomena he observed around Concord. As it turns out, we have to know a great deal about the excluded material in order to understand the included material, but still, we’re not publishing it.

A new edition of Thoreau was needed because earlier editions were incomplete or contained non-authorial revisions—in other words, they didn’t represent Thoreau’s
intentions for his works. Determining intention is a tricky business—we all know from everyday experience that it’s all but impossible to escape our own biases when we interpret the words and actions of others. As Thoreau’s editors, what we try to do is recognize the potential for bias and be as objective as we can be in using the available evidence about what Thoreau wanted.

As a result of this decision to stick to what we judge to be Thoreau’s intentions, our versions of Thoreau’s works are different from all the earlier versions. The differences are most marked in the Journal, because of the policy applied by Bradford Torrey, the editor of the only other edition available—the one published by Houghton Mifflin in 1906. Torrey regularized spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; he standardized dates and headings; and he excluded some botanical information as well as long passages that appeared in published form in Thoreau’s books and essays. Editorial standards and readers’ expectations were quite different a hundred year ago, and Torrey’s principles were accepted as reasonable by H. W. Boynton in an October 20, 1906, review of the 1906 Journal in the NYT: he wrote, “On the whole, it would hardly be asserted that those three volumes [of excluded draft for works later published] add anything material to our knowledge of Thoreau.”

We think the material Torrey excluded adds a great deal to our knowledge of Thoreau, and our aim is to present a text that represents the manuscript features much more closely. I’ll use an entry from 155 years ago—of October 13, 1852—to illustrate.

[pdfs of October 13, 1852, entry in MS (Morgan), 1906, PE]
I think I will have beef stew eating a rather soggy potato. Both the potatoes were unfortunately quite dry - and though in the instance a little strong, had a more nutty flavor. With a little salt a hungry man could make a very feel-
atable meal on them. Would put the easy yield them - especially now that the names are dead. Unless your have 
pre hard when they grow.

OC-13

One & Cliffs

Many muskets came last fall. The Leaves are now through & once to handsome clear gray 
through in the edge of the meadows. They crowded together & the cause they are like me. None 
so sudden and important change.

profounded nearly. Monday, Thursday, and

Corso, Thursday & Yeasted Fitzgerald & Fyzaela

This here Partime Thinks here 

look. in hand some as at the time. 

was a sufficient clean & warm 

meat. be more thin. was 

and the
an epistle the apple in this dear friend and more
required. The outcome of it described it all. The man who with plans and
work with red with green and leaves mixed
The darkness took the lead to bring above these came red. Further
lesai - whatever be in the distance are the innumerable small stones on the hill with rocks. The pond is seen most beautifully
pond with the calmness into the cool
waters - the water or lake from lake
disturb a great seen in the sky. The
vast and landscape. Far nearer
be more often seen can be seen from
more distant points than any of
our ponds. The ice is still very fine
grained. The water has clear form
the ice are more distant from the
red earth of the earth is not 
untouched. Turning all up more. The peaceful
great nature. Here is the
turning wind, a wind that aids the vegetation
with these nice gray wintes over the

Mountains. Even of which? What
through the wintes - and the trees covered
enveloping the cotton grass of Brye -
unexpectedly quite dry—and though in this instance a little strong, had a more nutty flavor. With a little salt a hungry man would make a very palatable meal on them. It would not be easy to find them—especially now that the vines are dead—unless you knew before hand where they grew.

Oct 13th
Pm to Cliffs

Many maples have lost all their leaves—and are shrunk all at once to handsome clean grey wisps on the edge of the meadows where crowded together at a distance they are like smoke. This is a sudden and important change—Produced mainly I suppose by the rain of Sunday 10th. The autumnal tints have commonly already lost their brightness—It lasts but a day or two Corn spurrey & spotted Polygonum & Polytala

Fair Haven Pond methinks never looks so handsome as at this season. It is a sufficiently clear & warm rather Ind. Summer day—and they are gathering the apples in the orchard—The warmth is more required & we welcome & appreciate it all. The shrub oak plain is now a deep red—with greyish withered apparently white oak leaves intermixed—The chicadees take heart too & sing above these warm rocks. Birches hickories—aspens &c in the distance are like innumerable small flames on the hill sides about the Pond. The Pond is now most beautifully framed with the autumn tinted woods & hills—The water or lake from however distant a point seen is always the center of the landscape. Fair Haven lies more open & can be seen from more distant points than any of our ponds. The air is singularly fine grained—the sward looks short & firm. The mts are more distinct from the rest of the earth & slightly impurpled. Seeming to lie up more. How peaceful great nature—There is no disturbing sound, but far amid the Western hills there rises a pure white smoke in constant volumes.

That handsome kind of sedge (?) which lasts through the winter—must be the scriopus Eriophorum red cotton grass of Big—& Wool grass (under Bulrush & club rush) of Gray.

Oct 14th 52

That coarse yellowish fungus is very common in the paths in woods of late for a month often pecked by birds—often decayed often mashed by the foot like a piece of pumpkin defiling & yellowing the grass as if a liquor (or dust) distilled from them. The pines are now 2 colored green & yellow—the latter just below the ends of the boughs—The woods have lost so many leaves they begin to look bare maples poplars &c chestnuts—flowers are fast disappearing—Winter may be anticipated—But few crickets are heard—jays & chicadees are oftener heard in the fall than in summer. It is apparently the Eriophorum virginicum virginian Cotton grass now nodding or waving with its white woolly heads over the greenish andromeda & amid the red isolated bluberry bushes in Beck stows Swamp. A thousand white woolly heads 1 to 2 inches in diameter suggesting winter. The lower or older leaves of the andromeda begin to redden. This plant forms extensive solid beds—with a definite surface—level or undulating, like a moss bed. Not like the huckleberry irregular & independent each of the other—but regular & in community—as if covered by a film.

Oct 15th
9 Am

The first snow is falling (after not very cool weather) in large flakes filling the air & obscuring the distant woods & houses—as if the inhabitants above
almost him alone. Their wings set so far back. They are not handsome, but wild.

What an ample share of the light of heaven each pond and lake on the surface of the globe enjoys! No woods are so dark and deep but it is light above the pond. Its window or skylight is as broad as its surface. It lies out patent to the sky. From the mountain-top you may not be able to see out because of the woods, but on the lake you are bathed in light.

I can discern no skaters nor water-bugs on the surface of the pond, which is now rippled. Do they, then, glide forth to the middle in calm days only, by short impulses, till they have completely covered it? 1

A new carpet of pine leaves is forming in the woods. The forest is laying down her carpet for the winter. The elms in the village, losing their leaves, reveal the birds’ nests.

I dug some ground-nuts in the railroad bank with my hands this afternoon, the vine being now dead. They were nearly as large as hen’s eggs, six inches or a foot beneath the surface, on the end of a root or strung along on it. I had them roasted and boiled at supper time. The skin came readily off like a potato. Roasted, they have an agreeable taste very much like a potato, though somewhat fibrous in texture. With my eyes shut, I should not know but I was eating a rather soggy potato. Boiled, they were unexpectedly quite dry, and though in this instance a little strong, had a more nutty flavor. With a little salt, a hungry man would make a very palatable meal on them. It


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1 [Walden, p. 264; Riv. 371.]
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the winter must be the Scirpus Eriophorum, red cotton-
grass of Bigelow, and wool-grass (under bulrush and
club-rush) of Gray.

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mon in the paths in woods of late, for a month, often
picked by birds, often decayed, often mashed by the
foot like a piece of pumpkin, defiling and yellowing the
grass, as if a liquor (or dust) distilled from them. The
pines are now two-colored, green and yellow,—the lat-
ter just below the ends of the boughs. The woods have
lost so many leaves they begin to look bare,—maples,
poplars, etc., chestnuts. Flowers are fast disappearing.
Winter may be anticipated. But few crickets are heard.
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summer. It is apparently the Eriophorum Virginicum,
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huckleberry, irregular and independent each of the
ether, but regular and in community, as if covered by
a film.

Oct. 15. 9 A. M.—The first snow is falling (after
not very cool weather), in large flakes, filling the air
and obscuring the distant woods and houses, as if the
inhabitants above were emptying their pillow-cases.
Like a mist it divides the uneven landscape at a little
distance into ridges and vales. The ground begins to
whiten, and our thoughts begin to prepare for winter.
Whiteweed. The Canada snapdragon is one of the
latest flowers noticed, a few buds being still left to
blossom at the tops of its spike or raceme. The snow
lasted but half an hour. Ice a week or two ago.

P. M.—Walden.

The water of Walden is a light green next the shore,
apparently because of the light rays reflected from the
sandy bottom mingling with the rays which the water
reflects. Just this portion it is which in the spring,
being warmed by the heat reflected from the bottom
and transmitted through the earth, melts first and forms
a narrow canal about the still frozen pond.¹ The water
appears blue when the surface is much disturbed, also
in a single cake of ice; that is, perhaps, when enough
light is mixed with it.

The flight of a partridge, leaving her lair (?) on the
hillside only a few rods distant, with a gentle whirring
sound, is like the blowing of rocks at a great distance.
Perhaps it produces the same kind of undulations in
the air.

¹ [Walden, p. 196; Rev. 277.]
NB: Headings, position of text, ragged right vs flush right. 1906 does

Thoreau a service that we now deem unnecessary and even intrusive.

We count on the document itself for much of the evidence of Thoreau’s intentions—much of our work involves just figuring out how to translate the squiggles on the page into recognizable words, and we’ve gathered pages and pages of guidelines that help to make us more consistent in our translation. About ten years ago I decided I needed to go to the Morgan Library to survey the MS volumes of the Journal in a systematic way, to see what I could learn. We include physical description of the MS volumes in the Textual Introductions to our volumes of Journal, and I wanted to make sure our descriptions were consistent from printed volume to printed volume.

In order to preserve them, the MSS and rare books at the Morgan are treated with a care that borders on reverence; in fact if you can’t make a case for needing to see the original MSS of Thoreau’s Journal, you’re required to use a reproduction. You make an appointment to view the material, and after being admitted to the locked reading room and signing in with the supervisor, you sit in your place while a square of felt is laid on the table in front of you and two angled foam blocks are positioned on the felt. The MS volume is placed carefully between the foam blocks, which support it and minimize strain on its spine.

I’ve experienced this ritual many times, and every time it reinforces my sense of the Journal volumes as precious and protected, which of course they are—and should be. But the ritual obscured for me an important fact that I realized when I was working
on the physical descriptions, and that is that these volumes acquired their iconic status only after years of being treated with much less reverence. We talked about this last night in connection with the Library’s collection of books that Thoreau owned, which circulated until the 1970s. For Thoreau, they were utilitarian--they just needed to contain his words. He tore out pages--even took several apart completely--pasted in newspaper clippings, pressed plants, waxed on relevant scraps, and gave them to Emerson to read. After Thoreau’s death, Sophia was their custodian until 1874, when she moved to Bangor. She loaned them out from time to time: Emerson drew quotations for his eulogy from them; Channing published excerpts in a biography that appeared in the *Boston Commonwealth* in 1863 and 1864; Alcott held them after Sophia moved out of Concord, and he thought he’d probably inherit them. However, he made the fatal mistake of lending them to Sanborn, whom Sophia didn’t trust, so they ended up with H. G. O. Blake, Thoreau’s Worcester disciple. From Blake they passed to Elias Harlow Russell, who went to court to obtain the literary rights to them, and he arranged for their publication by Houghton Mifflin in 1906. For that project, the MSS were in the hands of transcribers for a couple of years. In 1916, Russell sold all but two of the MS volumes to J. Pierpont Morgan through the NY rare book and MS dealer George S. Hellman.

The point I want to make about Thoreau’s intentions here is that each of these possessors had the opportunity to add to the Journal manuscripts, deliberately or accidentally, and that we have to be careful in deciding what features to count as Thoreau’s. We don’t want to accept as a manifestation of Thoreau’s intention
something added to the MS by one or another of these custodians. I haven’t been able
to positively identify any additions by Emerson or Channing or Sanborn or Alcott,
though occasionally a letter is reformed in pencil in a way that just doesn’t look like
Thoreau to me.

Blake added wide blue pencil marks vertically through passages he chose for
inclusion in four volumes of seasonal extracts that he prepared, and that were
published from 1881 to 1892--*Early Spring in Massachusetts* (1881), *Summer* (1884), *Winter*
(1887), and *Autumn* (1892). These marks are quite distinctive, and we report their
presence, thought not exactly where they appear, in the Textual Introduction to each of
our Journal volumes. Because these are so easy to identify, there’s no chance we’ll
mistake them for Thoreau’s.

[pdfs of October 13 entry again (Morgan), and of Blake’s *Autumn*]
I shall not know if I was eating a rather starchy potato. Baked they were unfortunately quite dry—indeed, in this instance a little string, had a more witty flavor. With a little salt a hungry man could make a very edible vegetable meal on them. (Would not the carp catch them—especially now that the vines are dead—under your new leaves hard when they grow.)

Oct 13th

On & Cliffs

Many maple leaves last all this fall. Even the shrubbery is cut once & handsome clean stripes in the edge of the meadows now crowded together & the cause they are like mulch. This is a sudden and important change—produced partly by a strong wind Nov. 10th. The autuminal leaf loaves common which lost their brightness—though but for day and two

Cyran, Curney & Yeolde Peggymen & Peggals

The teams Peggal & Yeold have come as with this season do sufficient clear & warm weather but November clad, — and the
as itGLOBAL THE APPLES IR VICTIM
shall... I have been... more
grounded than... I supposed it... at all. The thought... plant... was
well with... not gripped... apparently still... and leaves... intermingled. The... habit... the... of... thing
above... then... rock... another... therefore... in the... distance... the... immovable... small... than... the... hill... into... a... wind... lake... from... distant... Across... a... sharp... keen... Always... the... center... landscape... forest... often... lean... from... more... distant... from... many... outer... the... irregular... five... ground... the... last... thoughts... from... more... distant... from... the... earth... thought... wiped... turning... all... more... peaceful... great... nature... tree... its... turning... wind... last... aid... the... western... hill... these... me... these... winter... make... in... constants... Within... most... never... world... through... these... winter... mark... the... debido... emplherence... the... cotton... grains... of...
going at large, and assigned a penalty of five dollars. I am troubled by an Irish neighbor's cow and horse, and have threatened to have them put in the pound. But a lawyer tells me these town laws are hard to put through, there are so many quibbles. He never knew the complainant to get his case, if the defendant had a mind to contend. However, the cattle were kept out several days, till a Sunday came, and then they were all in my grounds again, as I heard, but all my neighbors tell me that I cannot have them impounded on that day. Indeed, I observe that very many of my neighbors do for this reason regularly turn their cattle loose on Sundays. The judges may discuss the question of the courts and law over their nuts and raisins, and mumble for the decision that "substantial justice is done," but I must believe they mean that they really get paid a "substantial" salary.

Oct. 13, 1849. The only prayer for a brave man is to be a-doing. This is the prayer that is heard. Why ask God for a respite when he has not given it? Has he not done his work, and made man equal to his occasions, but he must needs have recourse to him again? God cannot give us any other than self-help.

The workers in stone polish only their chimney ornaments. But their pyramids are roughly done. There is a soberness in a rough aspect,

in unheown granite, which addresses a depth in us, but the polished surface only hits the ball of the eye.

The draft of my stove sounds like the dashing of waves on the shore, and the lid sings like the wind in the shrouds. The steady roar of the surf on the beach is as incessant in my ear as in the shell on the mantelpiece. I see vessels stranded, and gulls flying, and fishermen running to and fro on the beach.

Oct. 18, 1851. The alert and energetic man leads a more intellectual life in winter than in summer. In summer the animal and vegetable in him flourish more, as in a torrid zone; he lives in his senses mainly. In winter cold reason, not warm passion, has sway; he lives in thought and reflection. If he has passed a merely sensual summer, he passes his winter in a torpid state like some reptiles and other animals. Man depends more on himself, his own resources, in winter, less on what is outward. Insects disappear for the most part, and those animals which depend upon them, but the nobler animals side with man the severity of winter. He migrates into his mind, to perpetual summer, and to the healthy man the winter of his discontent never comes.

Oct. 13, 1852. P. M. To Cliff's. Fair Haven Pond never, I think, looks so handsome as at
this season. It is a sufficiently clear and warm, a rather Indian summer day, and they are gathering the apples in the orchard. The warmth is required now, and we welcome and appreciate it all. The shrub-oak plain is a deep red with grayish, withered, apparently white-oak leaves intermixed. The chickadee takes heart too, and sings above these warm rocks. Birches, hickories, aspens, etc., are like innumerable small flames on the hillsides about the pond, which is now most beautifully framed with the autumn-tinted woods and hills. The water or lake, from however distant a point seen, is always the centre of the landscape. Fair Haven lies more open, and can be seen from more distant points than any other of our ponds. The air is singularly fine-grained, the sward looks short and firm. The mountains are more distinct from the rest of the earth and slightly impurpled, seeming to lie up more. How peaceful great nature! There is no disturbing sound, but far amid the western hills there rises a pure, white smoke in constant volumes.

Oct. 18, 1852. To Poplar Hill. Maple fires are burnt out generally, and look smoky in the swamps. When my eyes were resting on those smoke-like bare trees, it did not at first occur to me why the landscape was not as brilliant as a few days ago. The outside trees in the swamps lose their leaves first.

I see a pretty large flock of tree sparrows, very lively and tame, pursuing each other and drifting along a bushy fence and ditch like driving snow. Two pursuing each other would curl upward like a breaker in the air, and drop into the hedge again. This has been the ninth of these wonderful days, and one of the warmest. I am obliged to sit with my window wide open all the evening as well as all day. It is the earlier Indian summer.

Oct. 18, 1859. The shad bush is leafing again by the sunny swamp side. It is like a youthful or poetic thought in old age. Several times I have been cheered by this sight when surveying in former years. The chickadee seems to lip a sweeter note at the sight of it. I would not fear the winter more than the shad bush, which puts forth fresh and tender leaves on its approach. In the fall I will take this for my coat of arms. It seems to detain the sun that expands it. These twigs are so full of life that they can hardly contain themselves. They ignore winter. They anticipate spring. What faith! Away in some sheltered recess of the swamp you find where these leaves have expanded. In my latter years let me have some shad-bush thoughts.

I perceive the peculiar scent of witch hazel in bloom for several rods around, which at first I refer to the decaying leaves.
Another reader made his own distinctive marks in the Journal: the letter “R” in pencil superimposed on a vertical pencil line.

[pdf of MS of April 3, 1857 passages (Morgan)]
fell off once with the regular loggers jay - bending under his pack & holding him middle of road with a tending yant

On way up W Bedford see little

in the woods of the RR - in some country town - a large box type set up

one mile or so outside of the side of a little pond. The last car passed through. See the track in its front.

II A stork - make me see yesterday. The

smoke burned ground -

M. 37 - In Richeton. Dandy -

R. has seen white belted walker more than a week. I walked by N side of

the river - see walker's ice bucket left in

the bank.

Letter

R. - Erecting - I will let him know.

Thornton - When he awakes in the morning

he lights the fire in his stove (all prefired)

with a match - in the end of March

than is getting up. When he gets up

he puts all of his clothes in his
dressing - clean - puts tobacco in

can - heart back scratch - sometimes he

even stuttering his courages. Then

he goes to a relative store and

the whole city knows - getting in a

...
Our transcribers simply record such marks in a footnote without investigating their origins. When I came across these in the transcripts, I had a suspicion about who "R" was, but the confirming evidence built incrementally.

Almost every MS volume has a label pasted on the front cover, and in my survey of the MS volumes, I first noticed the initials "W. R." on the label for Thoreau’s MS volume 18, which covers entries dated September 3, 1854, through May 12, 1855. Then I saw them on the labels for Thoreau’s volumes 19 (13 May ’55-3 Jan ’56), 21 (23 Apr-6 Sep ’56), and 23 (2 Apr-31 Jul ’57). I was pretty sure this was Walton Ricketson, Daniel Ricketson’s son, because I knew that he and his sister Anna had included passages from Thoreau’s Journal in Daniel Ricketson and His Friends, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1902.

Then I found a note in Thoreau’s MS volume 23. I don’t have an image of the MS because it doesn’t appear in the hard copy we use as the basis for our transcription, but it’s laid in between pages 2 and 3. It reads

[pdf of transcribed note]
X_____________X Should prefer not to have the allusion to family made public

Walton Ricketson
Worcester Mch. 1902
Now I was sure that Walton Ricketson was the source of these marks, and that he was the “W. R.” of the labels. I don’t know how the Ricketson children put together *Daniel Ricketson and His Friends* (several other contributors were involved so it’s almost certainly possible to find this out), but since it was published in 1902, Ricketson could have been going through the MS volumes before Blake died in 1898. Or he might have reviewed them when Elias Harlow Russell owned them. At any rate, it seems he was keeping track of which volumes he’d reviewed for material to include in the book—the first passage he marked in MS volume 23 appears on p. 350 of *Daniel Ricketson and His Friends*:

[pdf of transcription of April 3, 1857, passages]
fell at once into the regular way-
farers gait—bending under his pack—
& holding the middle of the road with
a tetering gait.

On my way to N. Bedford see within
a couple of rods of the RR—in some
country town—a boy’s box trap set for
some musk rat or mink by the side of
a little pond. The lid was raised & I could
see the bait on its point.

A black-snake was seen yesterday in the
Quaker burying ground here—

Ap. 3rd—In Ricketson’s shanty—
R. has seen white bellied swallows more
than a week. I walk down the side of
the river—& see Walton’s ice-boat left on
the bank.

Hear R. describing to Alcott his uncle James.

Thornton—When he awakes in the morning
he lights the fire in his stove (all prepared)
with a match on the end of a stick,
without getting up—When he gets up
he first attends to his ablutions, being
personally very clean, cuts off a head
of tobacco to clean his teeth with—eats
a hearty breakfast—sometimes it was said
even buttering his sausages. Then
he goes to a relative’s store and reads
the Tribune till dinner—sitting in a
corner with his back to those who enter—
go to his boarding house and dines—eats an
apple or 2—& then in the pm fre-
quently goes about the solution of some
mathematical problem (having
been a schoolmaster) which often employs
him a week.

R. thought himself at last unfitted
for the family relation. There was his sick
wife. He knew what she wanted—that he
should go in & sympathize with her—then
she would have a good cry & it would be
all over—but he could not do it—
His family depended on him & it drew
from him the little strength he had. Some
times when weakened thus with sym-
pathy for his sick family—he had gone
out & eaten his dinner on the end of
a log with his workman—cutting his
meat with a jackknife & did not fail
to get appetite & strength so. So sensitive
is he.

Saturday Ap. 4th

Walk down the shore of the river—
A dutchman pushes out in his skiff
after quahogs—He also took his eel
spear thinking to try for eels if he
could not get quahogs—for owing
to the late cold weather they might.
The passage Ricketson marked for omission appears just after this one that he included. If the plan to publish Thoreau’s Journal had already been formed when he was collecting extracts for *Daniel Ricketson and His Friends*, he probably marked these two at the same time—one to put in his book, one to keep out of the Journal.

The 1906 editors honored Walton Ricketson’s request, and Thoreau’s account of Ricketson’s troubled domestic relations didn’t appear in print.

[pdf of 1906 April 3, 1857, passages]
April 3. In Ricketson's shanty. R. has seen white-bellied swallows more than a week. I walk down the side of the river and see Walton's ice-boat left on the bank.

Hear R. describing to Alcott his bachelor uncle James Thornton. When he awakes in the morning he lights the fire in his stove (all prepared) with a match on the end of a stick, without getting up. When he gets up he first attends to his ablutions, being personally very clean, cuts off a head of tobacco to clean his teeth with, eats a hearty breakfast, sometimes, it was said, even buttering his sausages. Then he goes to a relative's store and reads the Tribune till dinner, sitting in a corner with his back to those who enter. Goes to his boarding-house and dines, eats an apple or two, and then in the afternoon frequently goes about the solution of some mathematical problem (having once been a schoolmaster), which often employs him a week.  

April 4. Saturday. Walk down the shore of the river. A Dutchman pushes out in his skiff after quahogs. He also took his eel-spear, thinking to try for eels if he could not get quahogs, for, owing to the late cold weather, they might still be buried in the mud. I saw him raking up the quahogs on the flats at high (?) tide, in two or three feet of water. He used a sort of coarse, long-pronged hoe. Keeps anchoring on the flats and searches for a clam on the bottom with his eye, then rakes it up and picks it off his rake.

Am not sure what kind of large gulls I see there, some more white, some darker, methinks, than the herring gull.

R. tells me that he found dead in his piazza the south side of his house, the 23d of last January, the snow being very deep and the thermometer \(-13^\circ\) at sunrise, a warbler, which he sent to Brewer. I read Brewer's note to him, in which he said that he took it to be the Sylvicola coronata and would give it to the Natural History Museum.

\[\text{Daniel Ricketson and his Friends, p. 350.}\]
I haven’t completed my survey of the MS volumes of the Journal, and I’m still wondering what marks the Houghton Mifflin transcribers might have added. Printers regularly added stint marks to setting copy MSS to indicate where they had started and stopped setting type--is there a mark I just haven’t recognized? Here’s an image of the front pastedown endpaper of Thoreau’s MS volume 23, one of the volumes Ricketson marked:

[pdf other marks on endpaper of J MS Vol 23 (April 2-July 31, 1857) (Morgan)]
The “No 23” is Thoreau’s, but what’s this squiggle? And for whom is the volume “Ready”? I don’t know . . . yet.

Before I leave the topic of what the physical characteristics of the MS volumes of the Journal reveal, I want to mention a change in the actual construction of the volumes from 1856 on. The MS volumes through the one Thoreau numbered “19,” which ended in January 1856, consist of groups of standard-sized gatherings, called signatures.

[use *Excursions* to show what I mean]

Starting with MS volume 20, however, each volume is composed of only one signature, stitched sturdily down the middle. The smallest of these volumes is made up of 16 long sheets, folded to make 64 pages; the longest is 85 sheets, folded to make 340 pages.

Did Thoreau decide in 1855 to buy paper in bulk and have it stitched and bound as one large signature? Did he find some unsold stock from the family stationery business? This doesn’t bear on issues of intention—except perhaps to support the notion that Henry meant to save money any way he could—but I’m curious about the process. I mentioned it to Brad Dean once he said he thought Alcott had done the same, but I haven’t looked at Alcott’s papers.

Regarding the content of the Journal volumes, we know that how Thoreau used his Journal, and therefore what it meant to him, changed over the years. In fall 1841, he went through the first two MS volumes that he kept, his “Red Journal of 546 pages” and his “Journal of 396 pages”, copying the contents he wanted to save into five-and-a-half MS volumes that do exist intact. The first of these he titled, “Gleanings-- Or What Time
Has Not Reaped Of My Journal.” Among other internal evidence of this redaction is the fact that when he came to an entry containing material he had published, he didn’t copy the material but referred to it as published. For example, the entry for January 16, 1841, is “‘Sic Vita’--in the Dial”. The poem was published in the Transcendentalist magazine the Dial in July 1841, and in fall 1841, when he was making the redaction, he apparently decided it was more efficient to refer to the published version than to copy the poem out.

During the first thirteen years in which Thoreau kept a journal, 1837-1850, he sometimes used the documents to the point of using them up. Three MS volumes covering the period July 1842 to after January 1844 originally filled about 500 pages; less than 100 pages survive. Thoreau cut or tore out 200 leaves--400 pages of material--presumably for other writing projects.

From 1851 on, though, Thoreau kept his MS volumes intact. At about that time, he became much more faithful about recording his observations of the natural phenomena of Concord, and he had a strong interest in keeping these observations together where he could consult them.

I want to describe a couple of interesting things about how Thoreau wrote these entries. One is that he kept highly abbreviated notes during his walks and expanded them in his Journal volumes. Channing describes the process:
CHAPTER IV

NATURE

His habit was to go abroad a portion of each day, to fields or woods or the Concord River. "I go out," he said, "to see what I have caught in my traps which I set for facts." He looked to fabricate an epitome of creation, and give us a homeopathy of Nature. During many years he used the afternoon for walking, and usually set forth about half-past two, returning at half-past five; this (three hours) was the average length of his walk. As he got over the ground rapidly, if desirable (his step being very long for so short a man), he had time enough to visit all the ordinary points of interest in his neighborhood. In these walks, two things he must have from his tailor: his clothes must fit, and the pockets, especially, must be made with reference to his out-door pursuits. They must accommodate his note-book and spy-glass; and so their width and depth was regulated by the size of the note-book. It was a cover for some folded papers, on which he took his out-of-door notes; and this was never omitted, rain or shine. It was his invariable companion, and he acquired great skill in conveying by a few lines or strokes a long story, which in his written Journal might occupy pages. Abroad, he used the pencil, writing but a few moments at a time, during the walk; but into the note-book must go all measurements with the foot-rule which he always carried, or the surveyor's tape that he often had with him. Also all observations with his spy-
glass (another invariable companion for years), all conditions of plants, spring, summer, and fall, the depth of snows, the strangeness of the skies,—all went down in this note-book. To his memory he never trusted for a fact, but to the page and the pencil, and the abstract in the pocket, not the Journal. I have seen bits of this note-book, but never recognized any word in it; and I have read its expansion in the Journal, in many pages, of that which occupied him but five minutes to write in the field. "Have you written up your notes in your Journal?" was one of his questions. Such was the character of his mind,—to make what is called little become grand and noble, and thus to dignify life. "To have some one thing to do, and do it perfectly,"—many times have I heard this maxim for students fall from his lips.

In his Journal for November 9, 1851, I found this entry describing an incident which I could recall: "In our walks, Channing takes out his note-book sometimes, and tries to write as I do, but all in vain. He soon puts it up again, or contents himself with scrawling some sketch of the landscape. Observing me still scribbling, he will say that he confines himself to the ideal,—purely ideal remarks,—he leaves the facts to me. Sometimes he will say, a little petulantly, 'I am universal; I have nothing to do with the particular and definite.'"

The particular and definite were much to Thoreau. His pockets were large to hold and keep not only his implements, but the multitude of objects which he brought home from his walks; objects of all kinds,—pieces of wood or stone, lichens, seeds, nuts, apples, or whatever he had found for his
And Thoreau himself alludes to his field notes in an April 6, 1854, Journal entry: he writes, “You may see anything now—the buffedged butterfly & many hawks—along the meadows—& hark—while I was writing down that field note the shrill peep of the hylodes was born to me from afar through the woods” (*Journal 8*, p. 55)

Very few examples of these field notes have been identified among Thoreau’s papers—maybe because no one has looked at all the MSS with a mind to see them (As Thoreau wrote in “Autumnal Tints,” “The Scarlet Oak must, in a sense, be in your eye when you go forth. We cannot see anything until we are possessed with the idea of it, take it into our heads,—and then we can hardly see anything else.”); or maybe because, as parsimonious as Thoreau was, he just couldn’t find another use for these pieces of paper; or maybe because, like some other writers, he didn’t want to reveal too much of his process. If the reason is the last, he needn’t have worried—the few that we have are really hard to read, and it’s even more difficult to relate them to Journal passages.

To give you a flavor of these, here are a couple of examples. These were found laid in Thoreau’s MS volume 27 (July 9-November 9, 1858).

[pdf for notes laid in MS Vol 27 (Morgan)]
And these were laid in Thoreau’s MS volume 13 (August 31, 1852-January 7, 1853).

[PDFs for notes laid in MS volume 13 (Morgan)]
saying: Look - Chicago not flying around.

[elsewhere]

Write William, tea, no.

sun without clouds - not a blue sky.

shining rays gold - sun unattached. The sky

minds altered, a more balanced sense. This is

the horizon.

Wednesday, April 13th, 1994.

St. Louis, Illinois, the last Monday.

morning. Felt free, free, no concern with things.

hit by the lack of control - continue.

call, write, letter, comments.

morning, morning, morning - not a lot learned.

[elsewhere]

talking, song learning, art, for 2.

[elsewhere]
Just a couple of weeks ago, in preparing to give this talk, I found yet another example of field notes that are right here at CFPL--in fact, right here in this case. Leslie was as excited as I was about this discovery, and she made it possible for this MS to be exhibited tonight. Bob Hall provided a wonderfully sharp image, which you see now.

[pdf of CFPL MS]
AB 5460
BC 5496
DC 5496

Telma 1584

F 2
D 2
C 2
B 2
A 2

2-21/2
2-1
1-20
1-20
1-20
1-20

1.3-10
1.3-10
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1.3-10

A 15
B 15
C 15
D 15
E 15
F 15
G 15

1-5
3-9
5-3
1-5
3-9
5-3
1-5

T. A. 4
F. A. 4
S. A. 4
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Besides the field notes, other contents of this piece of paper include survey calculations--you can see these, upside down, next to the field notes (I don’t know how to relate these to a dated survey)--and, fortunately, on the other side, a list dated November 18, 1850, of “old books containing maps” that Thoreau saw at Cambridge that day. The date and one of the notes--“Fair Haven skimed over”--led me to Journal entries for November 23 and 25, where Thoreau expanded these brief notes.

Here’s a transcript of the MS

[pdf of transcript]
ice in brooks--get in apples--
frozen pond cadis worm & bottom--wild apple
lost beauty--begin to freeze
not get into woods at once--shake
off village & study & business--
The clear air--finer & purer warmth
of thought-- Fair Haven skimed over
though the mercury is low not feel
cold--the landscape so clean & pure
& dry--trees stripped of leaves--look as
through a washed window--the meadow[ ]
swept-- River not frozen-- Muskrat--
boats drawn up-- Light soft white
waving grass in path. Wondered that
dry leaves did not blaze.-- Ind Sum
though winter. Shrub oak fire. (show
all difference. Wild cherry leaves--oak
do--blueberry Same plants as before
little more killed. grows purple in horizon.
The first three lines—

ice in brooks--get in apples--

frozen pond cadis worm & bottom--wild apple

lost beauty--begin to freeze

are expanded in the November 23, 1850, entry. All the rest form the basis for the November 25, 1850 entry.

not get into woods at once--shake

off village & study & business--

The clear air--finer & purer warmth

of thought-- Fair Haven skimmed over

though the mercury is low not feel
cold--the landscape so clean & pure
& dry--trees stripped of leaves--look as
through a washed window--the meadow[ ]
swept-- River not frozen-- Muskrat--
boats drawn up-- Light soft white
waving grass in path. Wondered that
dry leaves did not blaze.-- Ind Sum

though winter. Shrub oak fire. (show
all difference. Wild cherry leaves--oak
do--blueberry Same plants as before
little more killed. grows purple in horizon.
I’ll read the Journal passages while you look at the transcription of the MS, and you’ll get an idea of how these brief notes functioned--they triggered both precise and lyrical descriptions, like Japanese paper flowers that expand in water.
unexpected—They even played like kittens in their way—shook their heads raised their tails & rushed up & down the hill.

The witch-hazel blossom on Conantum has for the most part lost its ribbons now.

Some distant angle in the sun where a lofty and dense white pine wood with mingled grey & green meets a hill covered with shrub oaks affects me singularly—reinspiring me with all the dreams of my youth. It is a place far away—yet actual and where we have been— I saw the sun falling on a distant white pine wood whose grey & moss covered stems were visible amid the green—In an angle where this forest abutted on a hill covered with shrub oaks— It was like looking into dream land— It is one of the avenues to my future. Certain coincidences like this are accompanied by a certain flash as of hazy lightning—floodling all the world suddenly with a tremulous serene light which it is difficult to see long at a time.

I saw Fair Haven pond with its Island & meadow between the island & the shore—and a strip of perfectly still & smooth water in the lee of the island—& two hawks—fish-hawks perhaps—sailing over it. I did not see how it could be improved— Yet I do not see what these things can be. I begin to see such an object when I cease to understand it—and see that I did not realize or appreciate it before—but I get no further than this. How adapted these forms and colors to my eye—a meadow & an island; what are these things? Yet the hawks & the ducks keep so aloof! and nature is so reserved! I am made to love the pond & the meadow as the wind is made to ripple the water.

As I looked on the walden woods eastward across the pond, I saw suddenly a white cloud rising above their tops now here now there marking the progress of the cars which were rolling toward Boston far below—behind many hills & woods.

October must be the month of ripe & tinted leaves—Throughout November they are almost entirely withered &

somber—the few that remain. In this month the sun is valued—when it shines warmer or brighter we are sure to observe it—There are not so many colors to attract the eye. We begin to remember the summer. We walk fast to keep warm. For a month past I have sat by a fire.

Every sunset inspires me with the desire to go to a west as distant and as fair as that into which the sun goes down.

I get nothing to eat in my walks now but wild-apples—sometimes some cranberries—& some walnuts. The squirrels have got the hazlenuts & chestnuts.

Nov 23

Today it has been finger cold.

Unexpectedly I found ice by the side of the brooks this afternoon nearly an inch thick. Prudent people get in their barrels of apples today. The difference of the temperature of various localities is greater than is supposed. If I was surprised to find ice on the sides of the brooks—I was much more surprised to find quite a pond in the woods containing an acre or more quite frozen over so that I walked across it.

It was in a cold corner where a pine wood excluded the sun. In the larger ponds & the river of course there is no ice yet. It is a shallow weedy pond. I lay down on the ice and looked through at the bottom—The plants appeared to grow more uprightly than on the dry land, being sustained & protected by the water. Cadis worms were everywhere crawling about in their handsome quiver like sheaths or cases.

The wild apples though they are more mellow & edible have for some time lost their beauty, as well as the leaves, and now too they are beginning to freeze. The apple season is well nigh over. Such however as are frozen while sound are not unpleasant to eat when the spring sun thaws them.

I find it to be the height of wisdom not to endeavor to over-see myself—and live of life of prudence and common sense—but to see over & above myself—entertain sublime conjectures to make myself the thoroughfare of thrilling
thoughts—to live all that can be lived. The man who is dissatisfied with himself—what can he not do?

Nov. 24th
Plucked a butter-cup on Bear Hill today.
I have certain friends whom I visit occasionally—but I commonly part from them early with a certain bitter-sweet dissatisfaction. That which we love is so mixed & entangled with that we hate in one another that we are more grieved & disappointed, aye and estranged from one another by meeting than by absence. Some men may be my acquaintances merely but one whom I have been accustomed to regard to idealize to have dreams about as a friend & mix up intimately with myself can never degenerate into an acquaintance. I must know him on that higher ground or not know him at all.

We do not confess and explain because we would pain be so intimately related as to understand each other without speech.

Our friend must be broad. His must be an atmosphere coextensive with the universe, in which we can expand and breathe. For the most part we are smothered and stifled by one another.

I go and seek my friend & try his atmosphere. If our atmospheres do not mingle—if we repel each other strongly, it is of no use to stay.

Nov. 25th
I feel a little alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. I would fain forget all my morning's occupation—my obligations to society. But sometimes it happens that I cannot easily shake off the village—the thought of some work—some surveying will run in my head and I am not where my body is—I am out of my senses. In my walks I would return to my senses like a bird or a beast. What business have I in the woods if I am thinking of something out of the woods.

This afternoon, late & cold as it is has been a sort of Indian summer. Indeed I think that we have summer days from time
to time the winter through, and that it is often the snow on the ground makes the whole difference. This afternoon the air was indescribably clear & exhilarating—& though the thermometer would have shown it to be cold I thought that there was a finer & purer warmth than in summer. A wholesome intellectual warmth in which the body was warmed by the mind's contentment— The warmth was hardly sensuous but rather the satisfaction of existence.

I found Fair Haven skimmed entirely over, though the stones which I threw down on it from the high bank on the east broke through— Yet the river was open. The landscape looked singularly clean & pure and dry—the air like a pure glass being laid over the picture—the trees so tidy stripped of their leaves the meadows & pastures clothed with clean dry grass looked as if they had been swept—ice on the water—& winter in the air—but yet not a particle of snow on the ground. The woods divested in great part of their leaves are being ventilated. It is the season of perfect works—of hard tough—ripe twigs—not of tender buds & leaves— The leaves have made their wood—and a myriad new withes stand up all around pointing to the sky, able to survive the cold. It is only the perennial that you see—the iron age of the year.

These expansions of the river skim over before the river itself takes on its icy fetters. What is the analogy?

I saw a muskrat come out of a hole in the ice— He is a man wilder than Ray or Melvin. While I am looking at him I am thinking what he is thinking of me. He is a different sort of man, that is all. He would dive when I went nearer then reappear again, and had kept open a place 5 or 6 feet square so that it had not frozen, by swimming about in it. Then he would sit on the edge of the ice & busy himself about something, I could not see whether it was a clam or not. What a cold blooded fellow—thoughts at a low temperature, sitting perfectly still so long on ice covered with water mumbled a cold wet clam in its shell— What safe low moderate thoughts it must have. It does not get onto stilts. The generations of
muskrats do not fall. They are not preserved by the legislature of Massachusetts.

Boats are drawn up high which will not be launched again till spring.

There is a beautiful fine wild grass which grows in the path in sprout land now dry white & waving in light beds soft to the touch.

I experience such an interior comfort, far removed from the sense of cold, as if the thin atmosphere were rarified by heat—were the medium of invisible flames—as if the whole landscape were one great hearthside, that where the shrub oak leaves rustle on the hill side I seem to hear a crackling fire and see the pure flame and I wonder that the dry leaves do not blaze in to yellow flames.

I find but little change yet on the S side of the cliffs—only the leaves of the wild apple are a little frost bitten on their edges & curled dry there, but some wild cherry leaves & blueberries are still fresh & tender green and red as well as all the other leaves & plants which I noticed there the other day.

When I got up so high on the side of the cliff the sun was setting like an Indian summer sun—There was a purple tint in the horizon. It was warm on the face of the rocks. And I could have sat till the sun disappeared, to dream there. It was a mild sunset such as is to be attended to.

Just as the sun shines in to us warmly & serenely—our creator breathes on us & re-creates us.

Nov. 26th

An inch of snow on ground this morning—our first

Went tonight to see the Indians who are still living in tents—Showed the horns of the moose, the black moose they call it, that goes in low lands, horns 3 or 4 feet wide. The red moose they say is another kind, runs on Mts & has horns 6 feet wide) can move their horns. The broad flat side portions of the horns are covered with hair and are so soft when the creature is alive that you can run a knife through them. They color the lower portions a darker color by rubbing them on alders &c to harden them. Make Kee-nong-gun or pappoose cradle of the broad part of the horn, putting a rim on it. Once scared will run all day. A dog will hang to their lips and be carried along and swung against a tree & drop off. Always find 2 or three together. Can't run on glare ice but can run in snow four feet deep. The caribou can run on ice. Sometimes spear them with a sharp pole—sometimes with a knife at the end of a pole. Signs good or bad from the turn of the horns. Their caribou horns had been gnawed by mice in their wigwams. The moose horns & others are not gnawed by mice while the creature is alive. Moose cover themselves with water all but noses to escape flies—about as many now as 50 years ago.

Imitated the sounds of the moose caribou & deer with a birch bark horn which last they sometimes make very long. The moose can be heard 8 or ten miles sometimes a loud sort of bellowing sound clearer more sonorous than the looting of cattle—The caribou's a sort of snort—the small deer,—like a lamb.

Made their clothes of the young moose skin. Cure the meat by smoking it—use no salt in curing it, but when they eat it.

Their spear very serviceable. The inner pointed part of a hemlock knot—the side spring pieces of hickory. Spear salmon pickerel—trout—chub &c also by birch-bark light at night using the other end of spear as pole.

Their sled Jeybong or Jeybong? 1 foot wide 4 or 5 long of thin wood turned up in part draw by a strong rope of bass-wood bark—

Canoe of moose hide. One hide will hold 3 or 4—can be taken apart and put together very quickly. Can take out cross bars and bring the sides together a very convenient boat to carry & cross streams with. They say they did not make birch canoes till they had edge tools. The birches the lightest

They think our birches the same only second growth.
This glimpse of Thoreau at work in his Journal is fascinating to me. I’ve seen literally hundreds of pages of drafts of his books and essays, but the process was quite different and involved a good deal of recombination of material already composed in the Journal. This shows something deeper--something fundamental about how he apprehended and transformed the objects of his attention. It’s clear that by now--1850--he knows what he needs to record on the fly to get the writing going later, in his study.

Incidentally, Thoreau’s practice of making field notes also spared his MS volumes from being dragged with him through the mud of the Maine Woods, across the Plains of Nauset, and into the midst of Beck Stow’s and Gowing’s swamp.

Another thing we know about Thoreau’s Journal-writing process is that he often composed several days’ worth of entries at once. There are a number of instances that reveal this habit--the most interesting one is part of a real puzzle that I want to pose to you. I think I’ve figured out what Thoreau was up to here--I’ll lay out the evidence for you, and you can make your own judgment.

From the outside, Thoreau’s MS volume 19 looks like many of his other Journal volumes. The boards are marbled in black (or very dark blue) and green, the corners and the spine are bound in worn leather. And when you open the book, it seems ordinary. The first entry is for May 13, 1855,

[pdf (Morgan)]
May 13th 1855

For John and E. F. got sickening

Wife and two children

Today it is much

Well. It is hot and dry

I am a

Sick

Horse

Yesterday was the same

The sky is blue

The weather is warm

The sun is setting

I saw

To

To the right

The

Across the

The

To the right

The

I saw

The

House

The

To the right

The

As I write

The sun is setting

As the sun is setting

I can see

As the sun is setting

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and all goes well as you page through the volume until you get to the end of an entry for September 23 on p. 83, about a third of the way through the volume.

[pdf (Morgan)]
Many little work about the means of my death. I know not what to think - how to feel. The person of a. is still more about a. than him. Seems to me. 6. This is the last time I shall see.
That entry ends with the following direction: “For continuation see the other end of this book.”

You turn the page and find that the text on the facing pages that follow is upside down, and so are the rest of the entries in the MS volume.

[2 pdfs for January 3 upside down (Morgan)]
When you go back to the page that comes right after the September 23, 1855, entry and flip the book, you see that you’re reading an entry for January 3, 1856.

[2 pdfs for January 3 rightside up (Morgan)]
day through the most last night
I read a very, the one
was last night, for I was what
the cat now was, a fallen. The
ashes are last pile. The one
is the
he learned. The ground has many places with a few grass
points the leaf for some
worse places, making a short house
in the snow - sometimes fast
in the down a yard length
and often. The place for
though it is much farther
in the middle of the night farm.
they had it. Theont, soft,
light enough. The calm
a peaceful one. One cannot
seriously very part, with these
places. They have left the lesson
of short the mouth of the hole.
Glides now about to make up
here, where it cool in a young
hill, is an accent falling
the other in accent direction. It
coming inside of the hole
just out of the hole. Now
burnt by the one - not empty
though the one is first
fell.

There will be the world and
as coins still with most
the warm color. This 59, others
worn red.
You go to the end of the volume and find an entry for September 24, 1855, and
interlined above that entry another direction: “For beginning v. [for ‘vide’ or ‘see’] other
end.”

[pdf (Morgan)]
Feb. 24th, 1855

The sun is very pleasant and the sky is clear. The water is calm, and the sound of the waves is gentle. The sail is spread, and the ship moves smoothly through the water. The air is fresh, and the breeze is gentle.

The men are perhaps a little restless, but they are content. The sea is vast, and they are on a long voyage. The days are long, and the nights are short. They are in a state of almost constant motion. The sea is vast, and they are on a long voyage. The days are long, and the nights are short. They are in a state of almost constant motion.
And if you turn the pages from there until the text flips at the September 23 entry, you find all in order.

[show mockup]

But you’re really confused! What was Thoreau doing? There is a book-binding structure called “tête-bêche” defined by Joan Reitz in the *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* (2004-2006), as “A form of binding in which the text of one work begins at the ‘front’ of the book and the text of a second work at the ‘back,’ inverted (upside down) with respect to the other so that their last pages meet somewhere in the middle of the sections.” That’s the arrangement we have here, but this isn’t two works in one document, it’s all the same book.

At first I was completely stumped by this situation, but I found a cryptic sentence in the first third of the volume, before the flip, that ultimately became a clue to understanding it. In June 11 entry, Thoreau writes,

[pdf (Morgan)]
When I found my writing impaired.

This is the beginning of a letter. The letter is addressed to a friend, discussing the state of health and the condition of the writer's hand. The letter is written in a flowing, cursive script, typical of 19th-century handwriting.

The content of the letter is not entirely clear due to the quality of the image and the style of handwriting. However, it appears to be a personal missive, possibly discussing health concerns or seeking advice.

The letter ends with a note that suggests a return to a more natural state, possibly indicating a desire to improve or recover from whatever health issue is being addressed.

The handwritten script is consistent throughout, showing a steady hand and even pressure on the pen. The layout is typical of a personal letter, with paragraphs and a clear division between the beginning and the end of the letter.
“Now (Sep 16th 55) after 4 or 5 months of invalidity & worthlessness I begin to feel some stirrings of life in me--“

Thoreau was quite ill in the spring and summer of 1855, with fatigue and a heaviness in his legs that may have been symptoms of tuberculosis. He did continue walking and making notes, but he fell several months behind in composing in his Journal. This cryptic sentence tells us that he didn’t feel well enough to expand the notes for the June 11 entry until mid-September. And by then, he was walking and making new observations at the same time as he was expanding his summer field notes. Fall was always a busy time for Thoreau, as he recorded changes in leaf colors and leaf fall, tree by tree, bird migration, and other autumn phenomena.

So there’s the scenario--before I give you my conclusion, does anyone want to hazard a guess about how this would cause him to flip the MS volume?

Here’s my explanation. We know that on September 16, Thoreau was still expanding field notes for his June entries and also keeping notes for September entries. I think he wanted to begin expanding his fall field notes while the experiences were still fresh, but he didn’t know how many pages he was going to need for the rest of the summer entries. He could have skipped an arbitrary number of pages and begun his fall entries, but if his summer entries were shorter than he predicted he’d waste paper and if they were longer he’d be all cramped for space.

So he hit on the solution of flipping the volume and starting the September 24 entry at what had been the end of the book. That left him almost 200 blank pages, and he could be pretty sure that the expansion of the summer field notes would fill less than
200 pages. He continued to write in both directions until he finished the September 23
columnary, and then he filled in the book up to that entry from the other direction.

My last set of examples has to do with the uses to which Thoreau put some of the
information in his Journal, and there’s another puzzle here, but I don’t have a solution
for this one.

Some of you have probably heard me talk on other occasions about the lists and
charts of natural phenomena that Thoreau probably began working on in 1860 or so.
Thoreau’s use of his Journal passages in his published writings—his books and essays—
is well documented. The Princeton Journal volumes from Journal 2 on include tables of
cross-references that link the Journal text to published works, and these connections are
examined in a number of critical works. But he also extracted and organized
information recorded in the Journal that documented the cycles of the seasons. (You
may have read recently about Richard Primack and Abe Miller-Rushing’s use of one of
Thoreau’s list of flowering times—along with lists kept by Fred Hosmer and consulted
here, and others—to document the effect of global warming on climate change in
Concord. According to the October 2007 Smithsonian magazine, they determined that
“some common plants, such as the highbush blueberry and a species of sorrel, were
flowering at least three weeks earlier than in Thoreau’s time.” Richard and Abe, with
whom I met yesterday, found that, “On average, . . . spring flowers in Concord were
blooming a full seven days earlier than in the 1850s—and their statistics clearly showed a
close relationship between flowering times and rising winter and spring
temperatures.”
Starting in 1851, Thoreau indicated such information—leafing, flowering, river and pond heights and temperatures, freezing and thawing, and so on—in his Journal volumes by writing double virgules or slashes in either the left or right margins beside the recorded observations. These marks guided him when he went back through the volumes in 1860 to create lists of phenomena. The lists are topical, by month or by category of event, and they’re organized primarily by year and secondarily by date, as you see in these pages from a list titled “All Phenomena for December”.

[pdfs of 3 December lists (Abernethy, Middlebury)]
All phenomena for January

15
The boys have been playing for a week.

Something unusual
The man in the room saw 2 parakeets

A sunny day - wind in the room 17.

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

Large ball rolling 20

December Notes
AN AMBASSADOR FROM ALGERIA

I. Pre-ambulatory

The meeting will be held on [date] at [time]. The agenda includes discussions on [topics]. The meeting is open to the public.

II. Agenda

1. Introduction
   - Welcome remarks by [name]
   - Purpose of the meeting

2. Discussions
   - Topic A
   - Topic B

3. Concluding remarks
   - Summary of the meeting
   - Next steps

III. Adjournment

The meeting adjourns at [time].
December Notes

On the 1st of December there was a meeting of the Board of Trade. The topic for discussion was the current state of the economy. The discussion was lively, with various members expressing their views on the matter. The meeting lasted for several hours, and the minutes were recorded thoroughly.

On the 2nd of December, there was a special session dedicated to the review of the annual report. The report was presented by the chief accountant, and it was met with mixed reactions. Some members were satisfied with the progress made, while others found the report lacking in certain areas.

On the 3rd of December, there was a meeting with the local community leaders to discuss the development plan for the area. The meeting was attended by representatives from various sectors, including education, healthcare, and finance. The discussion was constructive, and a new plan was proposed for further consideration.

On the 4th of December, there was a meeting with the local police to review the recent crime statistics. The meeting highlighted the need for increased police presence and better community engagement.

On the 5th of December, there was a meeting with the local business leaders to discuss the recent economic trends. The meeting was attended by representatives from various sectors, including manufacturing, retail, and technology. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable growth.

On the 6th of December, there was a meeting with the local educational institutions to discuss the recent academic achievements. The meeting was attended by representatives from various schools and universities. The discussion was focused on identifying areas for improvement and celebrating the achievements.

On the 7th of December, there was a meeting with the local health authorities to review the recent health statistics. The meeting was attended by representatives from various hospitals and clinics. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for improving public health.

On the 8th of December, there was a meeting with the local farmers to discuss the recent agricultural trends. The meeting was attended by representatives from various farms. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable agriculture.

On the 9th of December, there was a meeting with the local energy suppliers to discuss the recent energy statistics. The meeting was attended by representatives from various energy companies. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable energy.

On the 10th of December, there was a meeting with the local transportation authorities to discuss the recent transportation statistics. The meeting was attended by representatives from various transportation companies. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable transportation.

On the 11th of December, there was a meeting with the local environmental authorities to discuss the recent environmental statistics. The meeting was attended by representatives from various environmental groups. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable environmental practices.

On the 12th of December, there was a meeting with the local technology leaders to discuss the recent technology trends. The meeting was attended by representatives from various technology companies. The discussion was focused on identifying strategies for sustainable technology.

The meeting minutes were recorded thoroughly, and the topics discussed were noted down for future reference.
Many of these lists are written over and through business letters that Thoreau recycled. Surviving lists gather information about all the months except July, August, and September, as well as about flowering, birds, leafing, animals, reptiles, insects, and fish. You can see that many entries on the December list are cancelled: this was Thoreau’s indication to himself that he had transferred the information to one or another of his charts, which he formatted differently.

The charts are on large paper, arranged with categories in boxes down the left side and years across the top.

[pdf of December chart (Beinecke, Yale)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>Rise from bed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Morning work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Afternoon work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Afternoon work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td>Free time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This schedule is only an example and may vary based on individual needs and circumstances.
There are seventeen extant charts. They don’t cover as many topics as the lists—perhaps Thoreau never intended that they would; perhaps he didn’t survive long enough to complete all the ones he planned to make. Phenomena of the months of April, May, and June, and October, November, and December are charted, as well as flowering, birds, leafing, insects, and the dates Walden froze and thawed from 1845 through 1861. (I find it poignant that a line for 1862 dates at the bottom of this Pond Kalendar, which Thoreau kept on the front endpapers of his MS volume 15 [March 9-August 18, 1853; our J6] is empty of data.)

I want to use one category in this December material, “Skating,” to illustrate a general observation about Thoreau’s process, and to introduce the puzzle. I’m going to show you the Journal source for the 1851 chart entry, “14 boys been skating a week” [pdf of 1851 Journal (Morgan)]
Dec 14th

The crops have been harvetting for a week but I have not had time to start for mowing. I have hardly realized that there was ice—though I have walked over it about my business. As for the weather all reasons are pretty much alike ; the air is active at work in the woods. I have my heels now more than ever—though remarkably warm days—though many cold ones in the course of a year. But the cold are all alike—without any subject to temperature. This is my armor to my October turns however I can withstood it very well being out all day.

Mrs. Keen let me out hardy hordes left to walk in the cold outside. (For the first weeked went) Can any be discerned of these hearts Champaign to do the rest report to me? I hear the small wood-pecker while as he flies towards the leafling woods on first winter. The chills, remind me of Badem's Bay for some reason look on them as natives for more northern latitude. We now done hardly last clean-washed cups of the blue curls not the body...
Note that there are no slash marks beside the observation, “The boys have been skating for a week . . .”

Now here again is the list--it’s the first entry for 1851 on this page: “The boys have been skating for a week 14th” He has room to copy the entry word for word here.

[pdf of 1851 list (Abernethy)]
All phenomena in December

The boys have been missing a week. It's
important that the
station remain audible
The man has been very quiet
and hasn't put in a report
A birthday plan is being discussed in the meeting.
Two boys have been classified as
the new radio operator.

F21 December Notes
Let’s look at the chart again for the 1856 record—“6 fairly begun”

[pdf of chart (Beinecke, Yale)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/31</td>
<td>Work 8am-4pm</td>
<td>8am-4pm</td>
<td>Workday summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Study 9am-12pm</td>
<td>9am-12pm</td>
<td>Study notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>Meeting with team</td>
<td>1pm-3pm</td>
<td>Meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>Lunch details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>Work 8am-4pm</td>
<td>8am-4pm</td>
<td>Workday summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>Study 9am-12pm</td>
<td>9am-12pm</td>
<td>Study notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>Meeting with team</td>
<td>1pm-3pm</td>
<td>Meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>Lunch details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Work 8am-4pm</td>
<td>8am-4pm</td>
<td>Workday summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>Study 9am-12pm</td>
<td>9am-12pm</td>
<td>Study notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>Meeting with team</td>
<td>1pm-3pm</td>
<td>Meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>Lunch details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Work 8am-4pm</td>
<td>8am-4pm</td>
<td>Workday summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>Study 9am-12pm</td>
<td>9am-12pm</td>
<td>Study notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>Meeting with team</td>
<td>1pm-3pm</td>
<td>Meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>Lunch details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tasks:**
- Complete project report
- Prepare for next meeting
- Submit weekly update

**Notes:**
- Important project deadline on 1/15
- Team meeting on 1/11 at 1pm
And now the Journal source for the 1856 list and chart observation: “Skating is fairly begun—” Here you do see the marginal marks, which are very frequent in the Journal MSS after 1853 or so.

[pdf of 1856 J (Morgan)]
I am getting into them.
I have not yet seen my favorite thing
in the universe and an
irreplaceable stone in a "hit the mark" - & in
my mind's image.

Feb 6

2 pm - at Bell Bridge & Nott's Swamp
some nice 1st for now - just below
pond - back in E with glee.

Heating's fairly begun -
the air is pretty pleasantly brown & - though
I will wear you'll come in very pleasant
much. The rain in the middle, &
the having been furred last night -
when you don't yell the later welter
it - but there.

I can walk through, the Papers many
one by one and the water's frozen &
the rain, a glance & feel in a distant
for the next been frost. The frozen
water's frozen a string about the middle -
last by invisible - visible. The lower
stone. The dune's panders steel - sea
now - gone from - made Pardone-
lasting often on 2 seasons - only knowing
darker. "eryg.
now handy in every one of those leaves
that - into town about & in the morning
- is not neglected beneath - does them.
And again the list for December phenomena in 1856: “Skating fairly begun 6”

[pdf of 1856 list (Abernethy)]
AN PREMISES IN JUNO

156

BEGIN JANUARY 6

AND GENERALLY FOR AN ADVERTISEMENT PLANNED WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY

158

THE HOUSE AT 1600 HOURS. THE MEETING WILL BE AT 1700 HOURS.

160

FOR 1600 HOURS THE MEETING WILL CONCLUDE.
So you see the pattern--Thoreau returns to his Journal MSS to gather observations into lists and then transfers the information into charts, the better to compare the timing of events from year to year.

And now the puzzle. The list includes almost twenty entries for December 1861.

[pdf of 1861 list (Abernethy)]
60 December Notes

61

62

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69
Skating isn’t among them because the last entry is dated December 12 (I think there’s another page of this at the Huntington), but there is an example of the list-to-chart progression: the fact that the temperature fell to 14 on December 3 and 4 is recorded on both the list and the chart. List:

14°+ coldest morning--1st handsome frost on windows  3d

Another cold morning--14°+ at 7 am  4th

[pdf of chart (Beinecke, Yale)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/12/57</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/14/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/15/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/19/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/22/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/23/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/24/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/25/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/26/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/27/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/28/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/29/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/31/57</td>
<td>Continue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Activity details and additional comments are filled in the table for each date.
- Specific activities and dates may vary and are best assessed from the handwritten notes.
Chart:

3d coldest yet
14°+ also
the 4 at 7 AM

But the last entry in Thoreau’s Journal is a passage dated November 3, 1861. Where did he record these December 1861 events? Is this list the Journal for December 1861? If so, should we consider publishing it in our last volume? Are there field notes for November and December 1861, and even perhaps for parts of 1862 that we haven’t yet identified among the manuscript remains? I do hope that by the time we get to Journal 16 we will have solved this mystery.

Thanks for your attention, and my special thanks to Bob Hall for technical assistance, and to Leslie and Bob Hudspeth for providing the opportunity--this wonderful exhibit--for me to talk to you.