

Reading Thoreau's Manuscripts

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The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau

In the course of my work on Thoreau, I've looked at originals or facsimiles of almost all of his manuscripts. This is an essential task in scholarly editing: the manuscripts provide invaluable information about the author's process and intention. For me, working with original manuscripts has also been one of the most intriguing parts of the job. They offer an emotionally engaging physical connection with their creator, and they present their own narratives, conveyed by both physical and circumstantial evidence, some of it textual and some extra-textual. These narratives, which are much less under Thoreau's control than the texts he composed, reveal information that can't be obtained in any other way.

Today, I want to show you three examples of what can be learned by reading the physical features and the extra-textual circumstances of Thoreau's manuscripts along with the textual content.

1. Thoreau's Manuscript Volume 19

This is an example of reading text and document together to better understand the factors that produced an unusual configuration in the manuscript volume of Thoreau's Journal that he numbered "19." The volume, which is owned by the Morgan Library & Museum, contains entries dated from May 13, 1855, through January 3, 1856; its accession number is MA 1302:25.

Thoreau was ill in the spring and summer of 1855: in a June 27, 1855, letter to Blake he writes, "I have been sick and good for nothing but to lie on my back and wait for something to turn up, for two or three months." Emerson and Alcott both comment on Thoreau's condition, and in *The Days of Henry Thoreau* Walter Harding writes that on September 16 Thoreau noted "After four or five months of invalidity and worthlessness, I begin to feel some stirrings of life in me."

It turns out that reading Thoreau's expression of returning health in the manuscript volume is a radically different experience from reading it in Harding's description, where it seems quite straightforward. The first entry in the manuscript volume is dated May 13, 1855.

May 13. 1855

From dawn till - & to 4 p.m. very warm &
yesterday was the first warm day for
a week or 2 - & today it is much
warmer still & hazy - As much like
summer as it can be without the
trees being generally leafed. I saw a
T. herodias this morning. & heard the
golden robin - now that the alms are
beginning to leaf, also the myrtle birds
leaves. The earliest quince in garden
in fruit X

As we floated down the river through
the still & hazy air - enjoying the
fine - blue water - see the first
king birds on the bare bluffs with
with their broad white breasts & white
with tails - but the sound of the
first bobolinks was floated from
from over the meadows - now that
the meadows are lit by the tender
yellow green of the willows & the
silvery green tint of the alms. I heard
from a female returning that a peculiar
rich scolding warble (just 2 gentle ee)
- made with r - not with l. The
whole air is filled with the ring
of road birds than here before -
Some men are already fishing - in the
twilight seen through the haze.
Waded in the deep hornbeam below the
monument - opened a large pocket

Forty-three pages into the manuscript, on the third page of the entry dated June 11, one finds with some surprise (at least I was surprised) that the September 16 comment that Harding quotes is actually part of that entry.

When I would go & visit, I find
that I go off the fashionable
street - not being inclined to change
my dress - I wish I had more
and not polished shoe.

As to Holland's (D. + J.) Boston
Mass. & Westfield (1921), it was voted
that the best vest the pulpit should be
highest in dignity. The next year it was voted that
persons should be seated in the meeting house
according to their age & date, and that so
much as any man's estate is increased &
his negro, that shall be left out. If a
man lived on a hired farm, or had de-
tained his property by marrying a widow, it
shall be reckoned only one-third, that is,
he shall have only 1/3 as much dignity
as if he owned his farm, or had ac-
quired his money of his own industry.

What if we feel a yearning
to which no breast answers? I walk
alone - my heart is full - feelings
include the current of my thoughts -
I knock on the earth for my friend -
I expect to meet him at every turn -
but no friend appears - & perhaps
none is dreaming of me.

I am tired of persons' society - in
which silence is for ever the most
natural & the best manner. I
would fain walk in the deep water,
but my companions will only
walk on shallows & puddles.

I am naturally silent in the
midst of 20 years day & day - from
year to year - I am rarely reminded
of their presence - 2 yards of po-
liteness do not make society for
me.

Paul complains that I do not take
his jokes - I take them before he has
time uttering them in any way.
The letter to me of his "Apple" speaks
& I depart with my secrets untold.
His use of the Apple that tempt me.

→ Now (Sep. 16 '55) after 40
to months of invalidity & weather near
Gleason I feel some stirrings of life
in me -

Is not that *Carex pennsylvanica* like
with a long spike (1 inch long x 1/2 inch wide)
C. *bellata*?

What a diff. between *new* black birds' egg
and another - C. finds one long in a
rebin's but narrower with large black spots
on lower end & on side or a bet. the sides
& midrib - like the red wings - another
much shorter with a large black spot
on the side. Both pale blue ground.

The early witherers of the *Erigeron*
me of. either S. *hiemalis* or *Erigeron*
or both.

I have noticed the green oak buds
some days - now observe the dark
conspicuous of June.

The manuscript volume holds yet another surprise. Journal entries continue in chronological order until the end of the September 23 entry, where one finds an unusual notation--“For continuation see other end of this book.”

Thinking it a frog - advancing from 2
sides - looking where our course intersects
got in vain.

" Opened a new spotty, scorable mud was
house with no hollow yet made in it. Many
tortoise scales upon it. It is a sort of
tropical vegetation with the history of the river.
The palm like palm-mergion - a natural place.
Sep. 21

Knocked at the Old Bent house with Reel
son & C. The rafters are very slanting & set
quite sound. The lattice of split cedar (?) is
long & as thin as thinner than our usual one.
Between the boards of plastering in all
the lower story at least large mud bricks
are set on their sides in clay - has it not
been to make it bullet proof? They had
also been laid from within after boarding from
the back makes of the boards on the clay.
An Egyptian shaped fire place in the
chamber I saw & painted on plaster panels
& the door - all fashioned latches, had with
made? The upper story project in front
& stands by a 8 inches on the lower - &
the gables above it project over this.
No water-brake at the corner.
Sep. 22

" Many tortoise scales about the river
some of my traps and floating rafts
&c are scented with musk-scent - have been
their perfume - and also covered with a thick
clear slime or jelly.
Sep. 23

" Small narrow with yellow on one side above
eye in front & white belly - crested(?) crown

divided by a light line. These birds are on the
level meadow came up spontaneously.

8 P.M. I left from my chamber a
young owl about mouse's house - the bright
moon light higher - about piercing scream much
like the whinner of a colt per chance - a rapid
till - then subdued or more throat - a note or two.
A little more like female gold finch - but on
a willow at Parker's laundry - eating a miller with
bright red rump - when wings open - & white on tail.
Could it have been a red-rump warbler?

For continuation see the other end of
this book.

One turns the page, and finds the entries upside down. In fact all of the rest of the entries in the manuscript volume are upside down with respect to entries in the first eighty or so pages of the volume. The first upside-down entry is dated January 3, 1856. Here's the entry as you come to it in the manuscript volume:

And here it is with the pages rotated 180° so it's easier to read:

Pen & Walden

As for the fox & rabbit race last
yesterday - I find that the rabbit
was going the other way - & possibly
the fox was a rabbit - for tracing
back the rabbit I found tracks it
had just been talking with alternate
like fox-like

There were many white rabbits
back in the woods - & many more
of the grey rabbit - but the former
were ^{the most numerous} ^{smaller} ^{and} ^{deeper}
traces ^{of} ^{the} ^{fox} ^{was} ^{the} ^{most} ^{marked} ^{and} ^{the} ^{most} ^{marked}
a faint impression on the surface.
The latter were very much in the
same ratio - which is well worth
your notice - think you are in the
middle of quite a settlement of them -
beyond the R.R. all the beyond meadow

I saw some snow buntings ^{and} ^{from}
the side of the embankment & with
singing & singing flight under the
ray of sunlight the sun. I walked
through the meadow beyond
marsh. There are two tracks of many
rabbits - with grey & white which have
run about ^{the} ^{meadow} ^{of} ^{these} ^{marsh}
since the snow came - amid the alder
& Sambucus - & one white one has
crossed it. The cat tracks are high
above the snow on the swamp. Their
brown heads busting on one side into
creams, & willows & meadows & paths here.

also the rattle make you in this
massfully, that is on every side into the
weight of its seeds - a note will you
but other will make & make me alone
the snow - There is that will looking
remnant of white pine, quite dead
rising 15-20 feet - and the wood-
peckers have bored & it is still ^{and} ^{with}
sapling lichens - & many dark colored
tufts of cetraria in the fork of the branches.

Returning I saw near the bank road
& R.R. a small flock of 8 snow buntings
feeding on the seeds of the big weed - picking
them from the snow & when I approached
a lighting on the rail fence they were pretty black
with white wings & a brown accent on their
heads. They have come with this deep snow
& colder weather.

Jan 30 '56

Snow again - about 2 inches have
fallen in the night - but it turns
to a fine mist. It was a damp snow
from 10 to 11

The snow turned to a fine mist or mistle
through which I see a little blue
in the snow - looking on the mist. ||
In the snow meadow & on the
(perhaps moist) side of the hill I saw
common & conspicuous the brown bear
heads of the best back above the snow
& looking black & contrast with it.
Just beyond the marsh spring I
saw where a squirrel - gray or red -

dig through the snow last night
in search of acorns. I know it
was last night, for it was while
the last snow was falling & the
tracks we partly filled with the
like this. This squirrel
has burrowed ⁱⁿ the ground in
many places within a few yards
probing the leaves for acorns & various
insects, making a short tunnel
under the snow - sometimes passing
under the snow a yard & coming
out at some other place - for
though it is somewhat hardened
on the surface by the night freezing
& the hail it is still quite soft
& light beneath w^{ch} the earth
& ^{by a squirrel or mouse could burrow}
^{very part & indeed there are many}
places it has dug the leaves
to about the mouth of the hole.
(The whole snow about is like deep
sand where it falls in a young
nut & etc an acorn dropping
the shells on the snow beneath -
for there is no track to the shells
but only at the base of the oak.
I am independent of the line - not
alarmed, though the snow is 2 feet
deep.

Now when all the fields & meadows
are covered deep with snow the
warm colored shoots of osiers

now red & yellow - rising above
it, remind me of flames.

It is astonishing how far a
man may go without being challenged by
any one. What is called good so-
ciety will not look for such.

The man whom the State
has raised to high office, like that
of Governor for instance - from some
thing he cannot but less respected calling
cannot obtain & his former humble
and profitable pursuits - his old customers
with the worthy of him - his ^{institutions} help stands
- mainly in his way - whether he is a lawyer
or a shopkeeper - he becomes a
sorry state pauper - an object of
shame on its bank with the State
is bound in honor to see through to pro-
vide still with office of similar reputation
- that he may not come to want.

Arman who has been president become
the 4 - president. It is cruel to remember
his deeds or long when his time
is past why can't we let the poor
fellow go? I can't see any where
that men will persist in paying respect
to his ^{old} shop.

To understand what is happening here, one needs to know about both the September 16 comment embedded in the June 11 entry, and Thoreau's practice of journal-keeping. We know that when Thoreau was outdoors walking and working, as well as during his trips to Cape Cod and Canada, Maine and Minnesota, he noted his observations in pencil, on paper folded to fit into a pocket. He used these field notes as the basis for Journal entries which he sometimes wrote several days and sometimes several weeks after making the notes. Here's one of the few surviving pages of field notes, which is in the William Munroe Special Collections Department of the Concord Free Public Library.

for beginning V. Stevens.
Sep 24th 55

pm up river to Compton
with C. A very bright & pleasant
fall day. The bottom bushes pretty well
brown with frost - (though the maples
are but just beginning to show -) their
pale yellowish season past. Now
- says - some the more the upright
& few green phalanges, I call bushes
when the *Portulaca* ^{is} prostrate.
The river is perhaps as low as it has
been this year - hardly can I say
a bird sings except a slight warble
perhaps from some kind of migrating
sparrow - was it a tree-sparrow? ^{perhaps}
The slender white pipes of the *P.*
mydopsipheoides - & the rose-colored ones
of the *portulacae* kind - and some
of the *P. amphitruon* - look late &
cool over the water - see some
Kalmiana lilies still fresh bloomed -
Along the Bulbort bridge we
see coming from the south in
loose array some 20 *Sp. black* -
ducks - with a streamer to the
underside of their wings - at first
the row in form like a flock of black
birds, then for a moment assumed the
outline of a fluctuating horizon -
Some still sailing - others picking
water.
I suppose it was the solitary sandpiper
(*Totanus solitarius*) which I saw reading at the

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ptelins 1684

A B S 403 5
 B C S 484E 3-7
 C D R Aug 2-21 1/2
 D & line of dbar 1-4
 D & NC 8/8 AM
 dbar sm. 6 hrs W.
 8-13 & more about
 7/2 mud stone.
 9-23 & mud stone
 13-10
 R And 1-20 1/2
 E & rick dbar 15 links
 F A S 64 E 4-19
 A & Face grand rock (20 hrs)
 S 17 1/4 W 19 1/2 links
 9 hrs 2 1/2 links under
 E 9 hrs 2 1/2 links clean
 at 1 more over night
 more & conf of them
 in them 20 1/2 clean 18 hrs
 18 hrs

ice in brook - get in apples
 frozen and calli norm motion - half of pile
 hot beauty - high & press
 just get into brook at once - strike
 off village & study & business
 The clear air - finer & purer warmth
 of thought - thin water skinned over
 though the mercury is low not feel
 cold - the land cake is clean & pure
 & dry - trees stripped of leaves - look in
 through a washed window - the meadows
 swept - River not frozen - musk cats
 boats drawn up - light soft white
 hairs upon a path. Wounded the
 dry leaves did not blaze. - did seem
 through winter. Shrub oak fine - show
 an difference. Wild cherry leaves were
 do blueberry. Same plants as before
 little more bitter. young purple in horizon

when found 1-10 but SE 1-11
 and from North & South 1-2 1/2 links
 16 1/2
 12 8
 29 2 1/2

Thoreau expanded these notes into Journal entries dated November 23 and 25, 1850.

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—flooding 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—and 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 &

Passages and words that appear in Thoreau's field notes, above, are highlighted in the entries below.

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 sun-set 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 hazelnuts & 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—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 fain 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 see 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 mumbling 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 fail. 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 looing 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 Jeborgon or Jebongon? 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.

In the case of manuscript volume 19, Thoreau evidently delayed writing up his summer 1855 field notes--which don't survive--for at least three months, and perhaps for longer. We know that he was working on the June 11 Journal entry in mid-September, but we don't know how long he let the field notes accumulate or when he started expanding them.

And why did he turn the volume upside down and start writing at the other end? This is, I think, where the manuscript allows us to see the mind of a thrifty engineer at work. As he began to recover, Thoreau was able to do more writing. In September, as he was expanding the notes he had made in earlier months, he was also making new observations. Fall was always a busy time for him, as he recorded changes in leaf colors, the fall of leaves, bird migration, and other autumnal phenomena. He didn't want to let the fall field notes build up, as the spring and summer ones had, and the only way to prevent that was to start expanding the fall notes at the same time as he was working on the summer notes. He could have skipped ahead in manuscript volume 19, leaving some blank pages for the summer entries, or he could have started a new manuscript volume. But neither solution would have been entirely satisfactory: although he didn't know how many pages to leave blank, he probably realized that the expanded notes weren't going to fill the rest of the volume. He didn't want to waste paper, nor did he want to run out of space for the summer and early fall entries.

So on September 24 or 25 (he often wrote his entries a day or more after the date of the events he's recording), he flipped the volume, and started the September 24 entry at the end of the book. He continued expanding the summer and then fall notes until

September 23. At the same time, he was making and recording notes for September and October and expanding them--writing from both ends of the book toward the middle.

2. Thoreau's phenological lists and charts

My second example involves the lists and charts Thoreau used to organize the phenological observations he recorded in the Journal from 1850 on. These manuscripts, which represent, among other things, Thoreau's detailed, unwavering commitment to understanding the seasonal cycles and his place in them as observer and participant, have to be taken into account in creating a full understanding of his intellectual engagements from 1850 on. In addition, they provide a heretofore unremarked glimpse of the continuation of his commitment to phenological observation and recording through late 1861 and into early 1862.

The lists and charts have their source in the Journal. Starting with an 1850 Journal entry that reads "Plucked a wild-rose the 9th of Oct. on Fair Haven Hill," Thoreau inscribed hundreds of pairs of short parallel marks in the margins of manuscript volumes of the Journal next to observations about seasonal phenomena that he wanted to keep track of. The last of those marks appears near the end of the Journal, in Thoreau's manuscript volume 33 (owned by the Morgan Library & Museum, accessioned as MA 1302:39), next to an entry dated May 13, 1861. Thoreau traveled that day from Worcester to Albany, one leg of the trip he took to Minnesota in an attempt to recover his health. After observing that "The leafing is decidedly more advanced in western Mass. than in eastern," he noted, "Red elder-berry is ap. just beginning to

dissected all records -
This suggests that a dog could be
educated to be far more clever in
some respects than men are.

He who writes that a fox has
not regard all dogs - or rather
most of them - but only hunting dogs.

He one day heard the voices of hounds
in pursuit of a fox - & soon after
saw the fox come trotting along a path
in which he himself was walking. He
himself held a stick he watched the
motions of the fox withing & got a
start at him, but at that moment
his dog - a spaniel - leapt out into the
path & he danced to meet the fox -
which shook itself with rage & de-
clared him. They snarled at one another
like dogs, & the sportsman was prevented from
pursuing the fox, for fear of hitting his
dog. He suddenly snarled himself in
the path, hoping thus to separate them
& get a shot. The fox immediately cast
backward in the path, but his dog
ran after him so directly in a line with
the fox - that he was afraid to fire
for fear of hitting the dog.

May 13 Worcester & Albany
The latter part of the day rainy
The hills come near the RR. between
Westfield & Chester Village. There often in
mass. They may be as high or higher, but
are somewhat further off.

The leafing is decidedly more advanced
in western Mass. than in eastern. Apple
trees are greenish. Red elder-berry is
just beginning to bloom -
put up at the Selman House - not
so good as early.

May 14
Albany & Saugerties Bridge
Albany & Saugerties - a level 1.5 mile plain
with a white pine - white birch - that look yellow
with a little. No woods - only 2 or
3 feet on the edge of woods without any
real. There were the last pines
that I saw on my westward journey.

It is amusing to observe
how a kitten regards the latter
kitchen & so forth when it was used
in its castle to retreat to in times of
danger. It loves best to sleep on some
elevated place as a shelf or chair
& for many months does not venture
from the back door - it once

PROPERTY OF
THE THOREAU EDITION
RETURN TO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENESEO, NEW YORK 14454

In the late 1850s Thoreau began to organize these observations into lists of phenomena by year and day, and then further into charts with years across the top, categories of phenomena down the side, and dated observations in the boxes of the grid. There are seventeen extant charts that track different seasonal phenomena, including general phenomena by month, plant life cycles (leafing, flowering, fall of the leaf), birds, insects, and ice in and out at Walden, Flint's, and White ponds, and there are more than twice as many lists as charts. (An additional eighty or so lists of phenomena appear within Journal entries--these may have helped Thoreau determine how to organize the data that appears in the freestanding lists and charts.)

May 14, 1861, is the last regular dated entry in the final volume of the Journal; in it Thoreau names several of the trees he saw between Albany and Schenectady, on his way to Minnesota. He kept field notes recording the events of that trip, but he did not follow his usual practice of expanding them in his Journal. Several paragraphs describing the family kitten follow the May 14 entry; one of these contains the parenthetical date "Oct 5th." Entries that follows contain the parenthesized dates "Oct. 61" and "sep 29"; the last entry is dated parenthetically "Nov 3^d."

One might reasonably conclude that the end of the Journal marks also the end of Thoreau's practice of observing and recording, but three of the lists and two of the charts record observations made after November 3, in November and December 1861 and in January 1862. Entries dated from November 1 through November 29, 1861, appear on two pages of a list of November phenomena in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library; see high resolution images of these pages at

<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/d8992fa0-7347-0132-3403-58d385a7bbd0> and
<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/d87dee20-7347-0132-76e4-58d385a7bbd0>.

Nov 14-61 Rain at 11 am 2 1/2 in. above S.E.

See they had found - Epidemic - Strychnine (but no record says later)
Near other houses & road of hoppers on grass ground - on pavement, none.

2 or 3 flights of snow wind N.W. 16 in snow hitting
Rain 2 in about 1 1/2 in total S.E. 17"

Tawny path 18"

See a red side of river in fallen place in Rain 19"

A marsh bank lower along a ditch for a few

Clear sunny fall November Rain 22

After cloudy sun

White crisp fall fall & morning
at least within a week past say 15"

A little more snow in noon which 29

at noon rain - 29
at noon rain 67

Mr. Thomas

Yours etc

Very Respectfully

It gives me to see the discovery of your
achievement myself and Mr. Black
of the recent discovery of particular
of merit seems to you.

As soon as possible in November, when
payment of the Black under the
has your indulgence for the
former communication, and must
apologize for not replying to you

Dear Sir: - I am
Dr. J. Johnson

35

New York, Oct. 27/54.

Thoreau transferred information from the 1861 list to the column headed "61" in a chart he titled "General Phenomena for November," which is accessioned as MA 610 at the Morgan Library & Museum.

Entries dated from December 1 through December 12, 1861, appear on one page of a list of December phenomena in the Abernethy Library at Middlebury; see a high resolution image of this page at

<http://middarchive.middlebury.edu/cdm/ref/collection/abercoll/id/498>.

All Phenomena of December

160

Rain & yesterday morning River somewhat 1st
Tide about 9. Brown & Clouds 3'

~~know 4.5 inches then 4"~~

Even a little things - Smith and - "Huddellberg"
The miserable Canal a judges
All but Hebrew - he false gods

C. says that water went 1st from the 16th -

This even tonight the 2nd important snow 22
There has been ^{the snow} sleeping since the 4th

7 or 8 inches snow at least 23

Snake were about here the mid. this month.

A trap and for melon 24 25

Crow after a snow week ago 30
catch young turtles now & see

Turtle dove were not -

161

More a little 1st

Warm rain last night 2

Clear & cooler

14th + coldest morning - 1st hand some put on windows 3'

Another cold snow. 14th + at 9 am 4"

C. finds T. H. P from over - & think he could cross it

Also river as far down as that bridge at least

An early thick cloudy morning - 7"

mostly the little snow which had melted the night since the 11th melting
cooler now & reports in air - Temp. prob. 58° at noon

Get pleasant - very fine wind still SW - 8

Therm at 1 1/2 pm 60° + at 2 (2.7) sun.

River about 25.

Another warm storm but overcast day 9"

See 3 good showers on state lot clouds - 11

Wonderful getting started snow

Coldest - (20° + at 8 am) fine clear pleasant day 12

Thoreau transferred information from the 1861 list to the column headed “61” in a chart he titled “All Phenomena for December,” which is in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University; see high resolution images of these pages at <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3558328>.

50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61
Hasting, del						9-19-					
Woodcock 2 1/2						17					
Partridge 2 more							15				
Black Ducks in water		27-2nd white duck out						2 ducks in	10-2nd white duck in		
Goshawk with worm									25		
Red-wings in water?	50										
1st fish through ice		15-2nd white duck out			21-2nd white duck out	7-2nd white duck out			22-2nd white duck out		
Trout						29-2nd white duck out					
Dig up frog		3-2nd white duck out									
Small frog out							31				
1st larva in ice			15					29-	25		
Ants in water							31				
Dogwood fruit											
Prunus berries											
Woodchuck in snow		23-2nd white duck out			14-2nd white duck out						
White rabbit from 7th 1/2 mile	14	27			26			3-2nd white duck out	13-2nd white duck out		
Thicket sunset											
Ants in water	22										
Reflection - 2nd white duck											
Prunus green											
Mother & family	52										
Walk in snow											
Walken with 1st heart											
Small O. long. 1st heart											
Photograph											
White as at table											

50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61
River down forest											
River down highest											
Rain											
Fizzling rain driving mist											
Warm foggy day											
Mist reaching road side											
Ppinit & granite like boulders											
Rain here now on MS											
Rain and a snow											
Wet snow on road											
Snow turns to rain											
Slope now											
Thick fog, white & haze now											
Bring home baskets											
A great snow snow storm											
Snow there on cut near											
Snow on road											
Snow now plaster trees											
Sloth											
Work was done											
Very more quick											
Laughing											
Now now											
Carved the snow on the											
Now cold by wind											
Drift											
Shall drift											
Days length of daylight											
More reflected from snow											
Can't get a horse											
Trucks											
Small covered											
Hunter out of traps											
Some plank on below now											
Many fine rocks on snow											
Print seals on snow											
See that red squirrel											

Entries dated from January 1 through January 25, 1862, appear on one page of a list of January phenomena at the Huntington Library. There is no corresponding chart for this material.

The existence of these manuscript records doesn't contradict accounts indicating that Thoreau's health was failing seriously in the late fall of 1861 and the winter of 1862: many of the observations could have been made from indoors, and in at least two cases Thoreau reports what others, Channing and Rice, have told him. But they demonstrate that for at least three months after he had stopped regular Journal-keeping, Thoreau continued the habit of observing and recording natural phenomena.

3. Thoreau and the American Association for the Advancement of Science

My final example illustrates how the coincidental connection of manuscripts can obscure their real significance.

In 1956, two Thoreau documents were published for the first time in a booklet called *Mr. Thoreau Declines an Invitation*. These documents, now both accessioned as MA 2108 in the Morgan Library & Museum, were Thoreau's December 19, 1853, letter to Spencer Fullerton Baird, the first permanent secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science:

Declines

Concord Dec. 19 1853

Spencer F. Poard,

Dear Sir,

I wish hereby
to convey my thanks to the one
who has kindly proposed me
as a member of the Association
for the Advancement of Science,
and also to express my interest
in the Association itself. Never-
theless, for the same reason
that I should not be able
to attend the meetings, unless
held in my immediate vicinity,
I am compelled to decline
the membership.

Yrs. with hearty Thanks,

Denny J. Thoreau

and Thoreau's response to a printed questionnaire from Baird about his scientific interests:

[To be returned to S. F. BAIRD, Washington, with the blanks filled.]

NAME.....	Henry, (David) Thoreau
OCCUPATION..... (Professional, or otherwise.)	Literary and Scientific, Combined with Land-surveying
POST-OFFICE ADDRESS.....	Henry D. Thoreau Concord Mass.
BRANCHES OF SCIENCE IN WHICH ESPECIAL IN- TEREST IS FELT.....	The Manners & Customs of the Indians of the Algonquin Group previous to contact with the civilized Man.

REMARKS.

I may add that I am an
observer of nature generally,
and the character of my
observations, so far as they are
scientific, may be inferred from
the fact that I am especially
attracted by such books of science
as White, Selborne and Hum-
boldt's "Aspects of Nature".

With thanks for your
"directions", received long since
I remain

Yours &c
Henry D. Thoreau

When the *Mr. Thoreau Declines an Invitation* was published, both documents were owned by John L. Cooley, a collector who supported the publication, and Cooley apparently assumed that Thoreau had included the questionnaire with the letter. Walter Harding, who wrote the title essay in the booklet, accepted that assumption, although he knew from a March 5, 1853, entry in the Journal that Thoreau had received the questionnaire long before December 19. Harding included Thoreau's private response to the questionnaire that appears in that March Journal entry: the part that's often quoted is Thoreau's characterization of himself as "a mystic--a transcendentalist--& a natural philosopher to boot." Harding did comment on Thoreau's long delay in returning the questionnaire: "Yet, strangely enough," he wrote, "though Baird's letter had stirred him so much, for some reason or other he waited nine months before replying directly to him." However, Harding accepted the idea that the questionnaire was an enclosure. In Harding and Carl Bode's *Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, which New York University Press published in 1958, the two documents entered the canon connected, with the questionnaire following the December 19 letter (pp. 309-310).

Reviewing the letters to be included in the Princeton Edition's *Correspondence 2: 1849-1856*, we had a chance to reconsider the connection between these documents. Thoreau's March 5 Journal entry clearly indicates that he received the questionnaire either late in February or early in March 1853--he says he got it "the other day." The full entry reads,

closed perfectly tight. It was put into a table drawer Today I am agreeably surprised to find that it has there dried & opened with perfect regularity, filling the drawer, and from a solid narrow & sharp cone  has become a broad rounded open one—has in fact expanded with the regularity of a flowers petals into a conical flower of rigid scales,  and has shed a remarkable quantity of delicate winged seeds Each scale, which is very elaborately & perfectly constructed is armed with a short spine pointing downward, as if to protect its seed from squirrels & birds— That hard closed cone which defied all violent attempts to open it, and could only be cut open with, has thus yielded to the gentle persuasion of warmth & dryness. The expanding the pinecones that too is a season.

Mr Herbert is strenuous that I say ruffed grouse for Partridge & hare for rabbit

He says of the snipe "I am myself satisfied that the sound is produced by the fact, that the bird, by some muscular action or other, turns the quill-feathers edgewise, as he drops plumb through the air; and that, while in this position, during his accelerated descent, the vibration of the feathers, and the passage of the air between them, gives utterance to this wild humming sound."

March 5th

F. Browne showed me today some Lesser Red polls which he shot yesterday— They turn out to be my falsely called chestnut frontlet bird of the winter. "Linaria minor, Ray. Lesser Red poll Linnet.

From Pennsylvania & New Jersey to Maine, in winter; inland to Kentucky. Breeds in Maine, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, & the Fur Countries—" Aud. Synopsis. They have a sharp bill—black legs & claws—and a bright crimson crown or frontlet—in the male reaching to the base of the

bill—with, in his case, a delicate rose or carmine on the breast & rump.

Though this is described by Nuttall as an occasional visiter in the winter it has been the prevailing bird here this winter.

Yesterday I got my grape cuttings.

The day before went to the Corner spring—to look at the tufts of green grass— Got some of the very common leptogium?? is it one of the Collemaceae — Was pleased with the sight of the yellow osiers of the Golden willow—& the red of the cornel now colors are so rare. Saw the green fine threaded conferva in a ditch—commonly called frog-spittle brought it home in my pocket & it expanded again in a tumbler It appeared quite a fresh growth—with what looked like filmy air bubbles as big as large shot in its midst.

The Secretary of the Association for the Ad. of Science—requested me as he probably has thousands of others—by a printed circular letter from Washington the other day—to fill the blanks against certain questions—among which the most important one was—what branch of science I was specially interested in— Using the term science in the most comprehensive sense possible— Now though I could state to a select few that department of human inquiry which engages me—& should be rejoiced at an opportunity so to do—I felt that it would be to make myself the laughing stock of the scientific community—to describe or attempt to describe to them that branch of science which specially interests me—in as much as they do not believe in a science which deals with the higher law. So I was obliged to speak to their condition and describe to them that poor part of me which alone they can understand. The fact is I am a mystic—a transcendentalist—& a natural philosopher to boot. Now I think—of it—I

should have told them at once that I was a transcendentalist—that would have been the shortest way of telling them that they would not understand my explanations.

How absurd that though I probably stand as near to nature as any of them, and am by constitution as good an observer as most—yet a true account of my relation to nature should excite their ridicule only. If it had been the secretary of an association of which Plato or Aristotle was the President—I should not have hesitated to describe my studies at once & particularly.

Sunday March 6th

Last Sunday I plucked some Alder (ap speckled) twigs— Some (ap tremuloides) aspen—& some Swamp (?) willow— And put them in water in a warm room. Immediately the alder catkins were relaxed & began to lengthen & open & by the 2nd day to drop their pollen—like handsome pendants they hung round the pitcher and at the same time the smaller female flower expanded and brightened. In about 4 days the aspens began to show their red anthers & feathery scales—being an inch in length & still extending

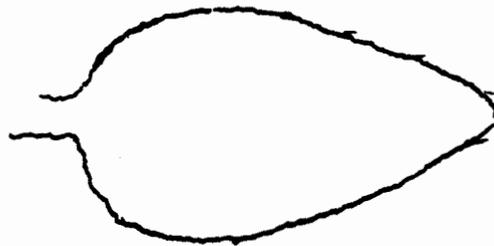
March 2nd I added the Andromeda March 3d the Rhodora. This morning—the ground being still covered with snow—there was quite a fog over the river & meadows which I think owing to a warm atmosphere over the cold snow.

Pm to Lee's Hill

I am pleased to cut the small woods with my knife to see their color—the high blueberry—hazel & swamp pink are green. I love to see the clear green shoots of the sassafras—& its large & fragrant buds & bark. The twigs or extremities of the branches of young trees 20 feet high look as if scorched & blackened. I gathered a pocket full of pignuts from a tree of Lee's Hill. still

sound half of them. The water is pretty high on the meadows (though the ground is covered with snow) so that we get a little of the peculiar still lake view at evening when the wind goes down. Two red squirrels made an ado about or above me near the N. river hastily running from tree to tree leaping from the extremity of one bough to that of the nearest on the next tree—until they gained & ascended a large white pine, I approached and stood under this—while they made a great fuss about me. One at length came part way down to reconnoitre me. It seemed that one did the barking—a faint short chippy bark—like that of a toy dog—its tail vibrating each time—while its neck was stretched over a bough as it peered at me— The other higher up—kept up a sort of gurgling whistle—more like a bird than a beast— When I made a noise they would stop a moment. Scared up a partridge—which had crawled into a pile of wood. Saw a Grey Hare—a dirty yellowish gray—not trig & neat—but as usual apparently in a deshabelle. As it frequently does—it ran a little way & stopped just at the entrance to its retreat. Then when I moved again suddenly disappeared. By a slight obscure hole in the snow it had access to a large and ap deep woodchucks (?) hole. Stedman Buttrick calls the ducks which we see in the winter widgeons & wood Shelldrakes

The Hemlock cones have shed their seeds— But there are some closed yet on the ground. Part of the pitch pine cones are yet closed. This is the form of one.



Thoreau's choice of words in the Journal--"So I was obliged to speak to their condition and describe to them that poor part of me which alone they can understand"--strongly suggests that he is referring to what he wrote in the questionnaire *after* having returned it.

In exploring this question, I looked into Sally Kohlstedt's 1976 history of the AAAS (*The Formation of the American Scientific Community: The American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1848-60* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976]), and I learned that the replies to Baird's questionnaire were bound in a volume titled "Scientific Addresses," now in the Baird Collection in the Archives of the Smithsonian Institution (call number RU 7002, Box 60). Kohlstedt notes that "The volume . . . shows mutilated areas where autograph seekers apparently removed signatures and even full replies" and mentions Thoreau's questionnaire as "not bound in the volume but held by a collector" (p. 195n11).

Several lines of Thoreau's completed copy of the questionnaire lack initial characters, and I suspected that the stub might still be bound in the volume of "Scientific Addresses." Bob Hudspeth, the editor for *Correspondence*, had an East Coast trip scheduled in spring 2009, and I asked him to check the volume in the Smithsonian Archives for a stub that fitted the left edge of Thoreau's questionnaire. He found it (photo courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives):

(To be returned to S. P. Dixon, Washington, with the Bureau Blank)

NAME.....	
<i>E. M. Christian</i>	
OCCUPATION..... (Professional, or otherwise)	
<i>Educator</i>	
POST-OFFICE ADDRESS.....	
<i>Charleston, Maine</i>	
BRANCHES OF SCIENCE IN WHICH ESPECIAL IN- TEREST IS FELT.....	
<i>Whatever is best adapted to develop the youthful mind.</i>	

REMARKS.

[Faint, illegible handwriting on the reverse side of the paper, likely bleed-through from the other side.]

The bound questionnaires are in alphabetical order by the name of the respondent, and a number of the other responses are dated in the first two weeks of February 1853.

Bob also found bound in "Scientific Addresses" a copy of the cover letter Baird sent to accompany the questionnaire; it is dated November 25, 1852. This was George N. Burwell's copy; it includes Burwell's calculations of the cost of the volumes of *Proceedings of the American Scientific Association* that he wanted to purchase, with postage and an "Initiation fee," and calculations in another hand that seem to reduce the amount owed by \$2.

WASHINGTON, D. C., November 25, 1852.

The undersigned, desirous of obtaining a perfectly accurate list of members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, respectfully requests that all to whom this Circular may be sent, will fill up the blanks on the opposite leaf, and return the same to him (prepaid) at the earliest possible moment. The name, and scientific, literary, professional, or other occupation, should be given at length; professors stating the institution to which they belong, and the chairs of which they are the incumbents, &c. A column has also been added for the insertion of the branches of science in which especial interest is felt. It is hoped that gentlemen will not hesitate to communicate the information desired.

Copies of this circular will be sent to many who are not now members of the American Association, in order, as far as possible, to complete the lists of scientific, literary, and professional men in the United States. These addresses, thus obtained, will be extensively used by the American Association, the Smithsonian Institution, the Coast Survey, and other bodies and individuals in the distribution of circulars, and printed matter of various kinds.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

SPENCER F. BAIRD,

Perm. Sec. Am. Association.

The 5th volume of Proceedings of the American Scientific Association is now ready for distribution to members at \$1.25 per copy. It may be obtained of CHAS. K. DILLAWAY, Rooms of the Boston Natural History Society, Boston; JOHN PATERSON, Albany; GEORGE P. PUTNAM & Co., New York; Dr. ZANTZINGER, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; or of SPENCER F. BAIRD, Perm. Sec. Am. Association, Washington. The postage (prepaid) to any part of the United States is 13 cents. The other volumes may also be had of the above named agents at the annexed prices:

1st Meeting, Philadelphia, \$1.25—postage, 10 cents.	
2d " Cambridge, 1.50 " 23 "	
3d " Charleston, 1.25 " 14 "	
	4.00 .47

4th Meeting, New Haven, \$2.00—postage 25 cents.	
5th " Cincinnati, 1.25 " 13 "	
6th " Albany, 2.00 " 29 "	
	5.25 .67

9.25

10.25

1.14

11.39

214

5.25

47

4.00

10.39

3.00

13.39

3.00 Substantive fee

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All of the evidence here, both Harding's and ours, is circumstantial, but I believe that our circumstantial evidence for separating the questionnaire from the December 19 letter and assigning it a date of "before March 5, 1853" is stronger than Harding's evidence--essentially, that the documents came into the possession of a collector together--for assuming the completed questionnaire was enclosed in the December 19 letter.

There is one more aspect to this issue that goes to the question of Thoreau's complicated response to the practice and the goals of science and the scientific community in the 19th century. Harding and others after him have concluded from the March 5 Journal entry and the December 19 letter to Baird that Thoreau declined membership in the AAAS, and indeed, you can see the word "Declines" in another hand on the manuscript. But Kohlstedt includes Thoreau as a member for 1853 based on his being listed as such in the AAAS *Proceedings*. I think it's likely that Thoreau knew he would be considered a member of the AAAS if he returned the questionnaire, and I think Baird himself proposed Thoreau for continued membership in November or December. I also believe that Thoreau's December 19 response, which Harding characterizes as "a superficial excuse," was sincere. Newer Thoreau scholarship, especially that by Laura Dassow Walls in *Seeing New Worlds*, has given us a more nuanced picture of Thoreau's relationship to the scientific community of his time, and perhaps we're now ready to see that Thoreau was capable of joining the AAAS--for a year, at least--without surrendering his unique vision.

I hope I've managed to convey both the significance and the satisfaction involved in reading the stories told by Thoreau's manuscripts as physical objects. Thoreau himself enjoyed observing and interpreting physical evidence, from tracks in the snow to an oak wood springing up when a pine wood was cut down. As I try to wring every drop of information from the manuscripts Thoreau left behind, I have a sense that he would both understand and appreciate the effort.

This piece was initially presented as "Tracking a Life: The Narrative of Thoreau's Manuscripts" in a session at the Modern Language Association's Convention in January 2011 titled "More Lives to Live: Thoreau's Life/Texts." The session was sponsored by the Thoreau Society; Laura Dassow Walls presided.

Revised 1/2016