



**THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS  
ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER**

**Guide to**

**Henry David Thoreau Papers  
1847-1862, 1917, n.d.**

**FM.MS.8**

**by Jane E. Ward**

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Extent: 2 folders

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## **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

### **PROVENANCE**

Transcendental manuscript materials were first acquired by Clara Endicott Sears beginning in 1914 for her Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts. Sears became interested in the Transcendentalists after acquiring land in Harvard and restoring the Fruitlands Farmhouse.

Materials continued to be collected by the museum throughout the 20th century. In 2016, Fruitlands Museum became The Trustees' 116th reservation, and these manuscript materials were relocated to the Archives & Research Center in Sharon, Massachusetts.

In Harvard, the Fruitlands Museum site continues to display the objects that Sears collected. The museum features four separate collections of significant Shaker, Native American, Transcendentalist, and American art and artifacts. The property features a late 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse that was once home to the writer Louisa May Alcott and her family. Today it is a National Historic Landmark.

The papers in this collection were acquired through purchase prior to 1936.

### **OWNERSHIP & LITERARY RIGHTS**

The Henry David Thoreau Papers are the physical property of The Trustees of Reservations. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns.

### **CITE AS**

Henry David Thoreau Papers, Fruitlands Museum. The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center.

### **RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS**

This collection is open for research. Restricted Fragile Material may only be consulted with permission of the archivist.

### **HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)**

Henry David Thoreau was born on 12 July 1817 in Concord, Massachusetts. His father was John Thoreau (1787-1859), a storekeeper and pencil manufacturer. His mother was Cynthia Dunbar (1787-1872) of Keene, New Hampshire. Thoreau spent most of his life in Concord. He attended Concord Academy and Harvard University, graduating in 1837. A year later, Thoreau opened Concord Academy, a small private school with his brother, John, and taught about nature through outdoor field trips. However, when his brother became fatally ill with tetanus in 1842, the school was closed.

Thoreau met Ralph Waldo Emerson after graduating from college and went to live in Emerson's house from 1841 to 1843, and again from 1847-48. At the Emersons, Thoreau performed duties as a handyman, but he also became a member of Emerson's Transcendental circle. Other members in this circle included Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and Charles Lane. The Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial* offered Thoreau the first opportunity to publish his writings. (See the George Willis Cooke Papers for information regarding *The Dial*.)

In 1845, Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond. Here he created his own personal Transcendental experiment from 1845 to 1847. In 1854 he published *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, which detailed his experiment and is considered one of the classics of American literature.

After leaving Walden, Thoreau made a living as a surveyor, lecturer, and writer. His writings such as *Walden*, and his essay "Civil Disobedience" established Thoreau as a naturalist and individualist. He was also an abolitionist who participated in the Underground Railroad, which helped conduct slaves to freedom. Thoreau lived his life in accordance with his principles. He had suffered from tuberculosis for years and died at the age of 44 on 6 May 1862.

[Sources: An earlier version of this finding aid was found within "The Guide to the Transcendentalist Manuscript Collection," and was shared with The Trustees at the time of the Fruitlands Museum acquisition. It was used as a resource.

Other sources are the following:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-David-Thoreau>;

<http://uudb.org/articles/henrydavidthoreau.html>]

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS

The Henry David Thoreau Papers comprise a collection consisting of only ten items that primarily span 1847 to 1852. The collection is divided into two series: Writings by Thoreau and Materials about Thoreau.

**Series I, Writings by Thoreau**, contains two leaves of Thoreau's journals dated in the summers of 1851 and 1852. One of these leaves describes an outing to look through Perez Blood's telescope. The other describes the early morning hours at Walden. There is one letter written by Thoreau to his publishers regarding a manuscript he submitted. Several short, incomplete essays by Thoreau consist of leaves of manuscript, two of which describes "Autumn"; one "On a Good Book"; one "On Nature"; one "On Nature Study"; and one "On Religion."

**Series II, Materials about Thoreau**, includes a 1917 letter from Edward Emerson (Ralph Waldo Emerson's son) discussing an image of Thoreau that Emerson had never seen before. John Burroughs's manuscript about Thoreau is titled "Estimate of Thoreau's Character and Writings." Images include a cabinet-card photograph of Thoreau and an engraving of Thoreau that appears to have been modeled from this photograph.

Some objects of Thoreau's, including a desk, some minerals and Indian relics, books, and pencils from the Thoreau factory can be found in The Trustees' object collections. See also the Charles Lane Papers, which contain two letters from Lane to Thoreau.

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
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### Series I. Writings by Thoreau

2 folders

Dates: 1847-1852

1	1	Letter to Evert A. Duyckinck, Esq., care of Wiley & Putnam, New York. 1 p. Original and typed transcript. "Three weeks since returned my MSS." If Wiley & Putnam aren't prepared to answer now, Thoreau will look elsewhere for publication. <i>Published in The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau, eds. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 184.</i>	1847 Jul 27
1	2	Leaf of Henry Thoreau's Journal. Original unlocated; typed transcript and B&W glossy reproduction of page only. Re: Looking through Perez Blood's telescope. – Original missing at time of transition to TTOR, 2016.	1851 Jul 7

Box	Folder	Contents	Date
1	3	Leaf of Henry Thoreau's Journal. Original unlocated; typed transcript and b&w glossy reproduction of page only. Re: 3 A.M. To Conantum. – Original missing at time of transition to TTOR, 2016.	1852 Jul 4
1	4-5	Partial manuscript "Religion" – on reverse, partial manuscript "Autumn" which continues onto the next sheet. Second sheet is a continuation of "Autumn" – on reverse of second sheet is a partial manuscript "Nature." 4 pp. total. Original and two different typed transcripts of "Religion" and "Nature"; original and one typed transcript of "Autumn." <i>"Autumn" manuscript published in William L. Howarth, The Literary Manuscripts of Henry David Thoreau (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), C 3a.</i>	n.d.
1	6	Partial manuscript, "On a Good Book" – on reverse, a partial manuscript, "Nature Study." 2 pp. Original and two different typed transcripts for both.	n.d.

## Series II. Materials about Thoreau

2 folders

Dates: 1860-1917

2	1	Letter from Edward W. Emerson to Mr. [William H.] Allen. 4 pp. Original and typed transcript. Discusses a likeness of Thoreau that Emerson had never seen before.	1917 Mar 2
2	2	Original manuscript "John Burrough's estimate of Thoreau's Character and Writings." 34 pp. Original and typed transcript, done by Alice G. Felch, March 1949.	n.d.
3	1	Cabinet card photograph of Henry David Thoreau wearing a dark jacket with wide lapels, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He has greying hair and a full beard. Probably done shortly before his death [beards came back into fashion in the early 1860s]. 4 1/8" x 5 7/8", mounted on cardboard 4 1/4" x 6 1/2"	[1861-1862?]
3	2	Engraving of Henry David Thoreau, modeled after the photograph above.	n.d.