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The following article was published in the journal of the Thoreau Society, *The Concord Saunterer*, n.s., 4 (Fall 1996):73-148. Henry Thoreau wrote sixty thousand words about his Easterbrooks Country over a span of more than twenty years, but never gathered them in a single book or essay. This is a discussion of Henry Thoreau's writings about this great wild tract, especially from his *Journal*, with extensive annotations about its history.

Henry Thoreau and the Estabrook Country:

A Historic and Personal Landscape

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[Note: The endnotes to this essay contain brief texts on many matters of interest. They include a discussion of the place-name Estabrook (in endnote [2](#)); Harvard University's nature reserve and Estabrook's conservation history ([3](#) and [4](#)); colonial history and Bullock's wigwam ([8](#)); the old Estabrook road ([10](#)); John Thoreau's cedar saw mill ([14](#)); Punkatasset and the Minutemen ([15-18](#), [26](#)); Native Americans ([19](#)); the Estabrook cellar hole ([28](#)); the lime kiln and quarries, and the stone circles ([31](#)); Two Rod Road ([32](#)); Carlisle's almost-meetinghouse in Estabrook Woods ([33](#)); the mort stones ([35](#)); Kibbe's declaration of independence ([37](#)); the Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams site and the old corn hills ([45](#)); Bateman's Pond and nature in Estabrook ([46](#)); an Estabrook farmer's diary ([50](#)); Raymond Emerson and Mary Sherwood ([58](#)); Minot Pratt, his elm, and his spring ([60](#)); William Brewster of October Farm ([70](#)); Asa Gray and his spring ([84](#)); and the fate of Thoreau's Walden house in Estabrook Woods ([95](#)).]

[Note: The illustrations accompanying the published article are the following: (1.) Barefooted Brooks Clark, by N. C. Wyeth; (2.) Map by Herbert C. Gleason; (3.) Ancient Black Oak and Hosmer on Ebby Hubbard's Hill, by Gleason; (4.) The Estabrook cellar hole and the stone circles, by Janet Buerger; (5.) Stump (or Mink) Pond, by Ann Chapman; (6.) Dam for John Thoreau's sawmill, by Gleason; (7.) Distant view of Ball's Hill from Punkatasset, by Gleason; (8.) The old Carlisle road, or the Estabrook road trail, by Chapman; (9.) The lime kiln and the lime quarries, by Gleason; (10.) The Old Paul Adams Place, by Joseph Chandler Melvin; (11.) Asa Gray's Spring, also called the Minot Pratt Spring; (11.) Map.]

1. Introduction— "We are all schoolmasters, and our schoolhouse is the universe."^{[\[1\]](#)}

There still is a place in Concord and Carlisle within which, because of its essential wildness, beats the spiritual heart of Henry Thoreau. It is the Estabrook Country. Few people know of it, and many who visit do not visit again because the place is not charismatic. Now wooded and intimate, it is less starkly beautiful than it was in his day. Not being famous has protected it. With a beauty that must be teased out, Estabrook is not hard to get lost in, not hard to be surprised in. Still often empty, it is Thoreau's first-named "great wild tract" and is the final resting place of his Walden house. Rocky, rough and swampy, Estabrook Country is different from the sandy Walden Woods, and people over the years have used it differently. Emerson called it "the savage fertile houseless land." His daughter called it "dear Easterbrook."^[2]

By happy chance, the care of some of its owners, and the perseverance and generosity of citizens, much of Estabrook Country remains undeveloped. Remarkably, more than \$4 million of federal, state, town, and charitable funds have been spent to protect Estabrook Country since 1965. In 1966, the Thoreau Society gave one thousand dollars from its slender treasury for the symbolic purchase of two acres of Estabrook to be preserved "forever wild."^[3] But conservation victories are sometimes illusory, so stewardship and watchfulness are always the order of the day. Estabrook's apparent preservation at this writing is like the false front on a building in a cowboy movie set—a gust could destroy the illusion. For example, the conservation restrictions on the seven-hundred-acre Harvard-owned parcel in the middle of Estabrook have expired. This leaves the core of Estabrook vulnerable to sale, while subdivisions gobble its edges. Also, Middlesex School, though once an active Estabrook protector, now proposes to build faculty housing and soccer fields one quarter mile inside the Woods; it has also reserved an area for future development that thrusts a third of the way across the waist of the Woods. In response to these and other encroachments, citizens have acquired lands and easements to partially buffer the Harvard parcel, hoping to persuade the university to reaffirm its intent to keep this ecology research site in perpetuity. In addition, more than five hundred Middlesex alumni have petitioned their school to preserve its part of the woods, many writing testimonials about their intellectual and spiritual development there.

The late Dr. C. Richard Taylor, who was the long-time Director of Harvard's Concord Field Station (of which Estabrook is the principal part), said that Estabrook "allows us to do things in the woods with long term continuity, knowing that the area won't be changed into recreation space or developed in any way. It will still be here in a hundred years. It is space to do experiments that couldn't be conducted in a crowded urban environment . . . but close enough that students and faculty can use it on a daily basis." Dr. Taylor thought the Estabrook Woods, over the centuries, would play a role similar to the roles played by the woods belonging to Oxford and Cambridge Universities and make a real contribution to the science of ecology.^[4] Thus, Thoreau anticipated us all when he wrote, after a day

in Estabrook:

To the Botrychium Swamp. . . . Each town should have . . . a primitive forest . . . where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation. . . . All Walden Woods might have been preserved for our park forever, with Walden in its midst, and the Easterbrooks Country, an unoccupied area of some four square miles in the north of the town, might have been our huckleberry field. . . . We boast of our system of education, but why stop at schoolmasters and schoolhouses. We are all schoolmasters, and our schoolhouse is the universe. To attend chiefly to the desk or schoolhouse while we neglect the scenery in which it is placed is absurd. If we do not look out we shall find our fine schoolhouse standing in a cowyard at last.^[5]

To rally public support for its preservation, Estabrook's friends, in addition to pointing to its notable history, its ecological value, and the community's affection, have relied on a few evocative passages in Thoreau's writings about Estabrook. My sense, however, was that there was a richer vein to discover—that there were more, hidden references about Estabrook in the journals than had been realized. When I searched, the journals did not disappoint me. Not only did they tell a vivid story about Estabrook, they also told much about Thoreau, the man, the writer, and the naturalist. What was to be a simple—but more complete—list of journal entries has become a text of fifty thousand words from 160 journal entries and other passages in "Wild Apples," "Dispersion of Seeds," "Huckleberries," *Walden*, and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. I call this larger text, from which this article is drawn, The Estabrook Journal of Henry Thoreau.

First, a word about Thoreau's journal, which Paul Brooks calls Thoreau's "great poem."^[6] I find it absorbing and believe that the best way to read it is—to read it. To take it straight, undiluted. It burns like a long, slow fuse. I am hesitant when reading one of the "selections from . . ." editions because, there being so much of interest in the original, I always wonder what I am missing. The journal's two million words are daunting, though, and their mass had frustrated the general readers' efforts to learn about and to honor Estabrook. J. Walter Brain has said, "Although Thoreau never got to writing a book or essay on the Estabrooks Country, it was in the *Journal* that, for over twenty years, he tracked its poetry of place."^[7] I make no claims that the extracts about Estabrook in this article capture the soul of Thoreau's journal or record all aspects of his development as a writer or naturalist. In fact, these images are inevitably at random, and the lines of thought are sometimes truncated. The heart of this text, however, is the ever-fresh journal, and the extracts in this article may be thoughtful *enough*, complete *enough*, varied *enough*, coherent *enough*. As the Concord Historical Commission said on November 20, 1996, "These passages are not merely haunting descriptions of a landscape lost to time. They continue to resonate because we are still able to experience the beauty

and mystery of these woods in much the same way Thoreau did." The passages connect the woods to its various histories—geological, Native American, colonial,^[8] early industrial, revolutionary, agricultural, natural, and literary. John Hanson Mitchell believes that—thanks to these journals—"There is no place on earth where the sense of place is better documented."^[9]

Moreover, these passages capture the tensions hidden in Estabrook's landscape and in Thoreau's inner terrain. Some tensions are reminiscent of *Walden*; some are Estabrook's own. Is it a deserted or a peopled land; a wild or a congenial place? With open moors or dark woods? Are the people coarse or simple and direct? Do they find there sterility or fertility? Starvation or satisfaction? Does he write of the present or ancient times; of former inhabitants or current visitors; of death or creation; with natural or spiritual vision; in dispassionate or lyrical expression? These tensions enrich our experience because they express truths about the land and the thoughts it evoked. Though Waldenless, Estabrook has its own Walden, its own spiritual metaphor—the old Carlisle road. This road (now the old Estabrook road) was and is the spine of the Estabrook experience.^[10]

In this article, the voices of the people of Concord describe Estabrook Country. The principal narrator is, of course, Thoreau. We hear, too, from Waldo Emerson and his children, Ellery Channing, farmer D. B. Clark, William Brewster, Mary Sherwood, and others—husbandmen, naturalists, ne'er-do-wells and poets. Only the voice of the Native American is silent, though artifacts hint of the past. I think of them all as the ghosts of the woods. Because our attention is focused on an interesting place and its people, the initially overwhelming full journal becomes graspable. We can see Thoreau and his journal evolve, yet the passion and the personality of the man, our remarkable fellow-citizen, remain vivid and likable. This article's text and extensive endnotes present Henry Thoreau's Estabrook Country and its histories.

2. Thoreau's early years in Estabrook Country

Unfortunately, early biographical material is slight, and only fragments of the journal of the 1830s and 1840s survive. Thus, there are only hints of Thoreau's boyhood explorations of Estabrook. There is a penciled list in which Thoreau at age twenty wrote a tumble of childhood memories. This may include a memory of his earliest visit to Estabrook, about age six. Here is an extract: "First fishing expedition—skating—berrying—hunting . . . fireflies—Indian wigwam--*old mill*" (Emphasis added).^[11] The Thoreau family had returned to Concord when Henry was almost six, and his father put at risk his family's future when he joined (and within a year owned) a pencil-making business.^[12] The business cut cedars for the pencil wood at

a mill site in Estabrook on Saw Mill Brook. Though there is no direct proof that the phrase "old mill" in the penciled scrap refers to his father's mill, Thoreau later referred to a mill site in Estabrook using the same phrase.^[13] One might well expect John Thoreau to have taken his young son to the family's new enterprise—and for the son to have remembered it. Henry's next recorded visit to the Estabrook mill site was twenty-nine years later when he was thirty-four years old. He said, poignantly, "Was that a large shad bush where fathers mill used to be.? There is quite a waterfall beyond. where the old dam was Where the rapids commence at the outlet of the pond, the water is singularly creased as it rushes to the fall[Thoreau sketch here] –like braided hair as the poet has it" (4:478, April 21, 1852). In 1969, Mary R. Fenn wrote, "We can still see its stone foundation with ferns and herb robert growing in the crannies, bloodroot covering the banking above, [and] wild pinks along the path."^[14]

An early journal entry does survive from those years. In the fall of 1837, the recent Harvard graduate and quickly unemployed Thoreau (he had resigned a teaching job that required him to flog his students) wrote his first journal entry and reported a prodding question put to him probably by his mentor Emerson: "'What are you doing now?' he [Emerson] asked, 'Do you keep a journal?'—So I make my first entry today" (1:5, October 22, 1837). Three weeks later, he wrote his first journal description from the empty quarter that he would later name Easterbrooks Country:

Ponkawtasset.

There goes the river, or rather is, "in serpent error wandering"—the jugular vein of Musketaquid. Who knows how much of the proverbial moderation of the inhabitants was caught from its dull circulation?

The snow gives the landscape a washing-day appearance—here a streak of white, there a streak of dark—it is spread like a napkin over the hills and meadows. This must be a rare drying day; to judge from the vapor that floats over the "vast clothes" yard.

A hundred guns are firing and a flag flying in the village in celebration of the whig victory. Now a short dull report—the mere disk of a sound shorn of its beams—and then a puff of smoke rises in the horizon to join its misty relatives in the skies.^[15]

Though the gunfire that Thoreau heard celebrated only an election victory, this hill called Punkatasset—marking the southeast corner of Estabrook—had been witness to the start of the Revolutionary War only sixty years before. It was to this hill, then much more open than now, that on April 19, 1775, Concord's outnumbered minutemen initially withdrew, with the evacuated women and children of the area, to watch the activities of the British troops. One minuteman had taken his family deeper into the Woods: "One of the Clarks took his wife and baby off into the woods beyond what is Hugh Cargill Road

and hid them. He warned them to stay there until he returned, but said if he had not returned by dark, they must come out of hiding, for he would be dead."^[16] Men were stationed on the several roads leading to Concord, to direct reinforcements to the Punkatasset rendezvous. Concord's men on Punkatasset were soon joined by minutemen from now-Carlisle, who came down the old Carlisle road. Hurrying men from other towns took other lanes through Estabrook.^[17] Reinforced, the Americans marched towards the North Bridge and into history.^[18]

Thoreau and his brother John soon opened their own school in town. Concord educator and biographer Frank B. Sanborn tells how the innovative Thoreau would bring his classroom to the natural world—to Bateman's Pond, for example, in Estabrook Country: "One new feature [of Thoreau's activities as a new schoolmaster] was a weekly walk in the woods or pastures, or a sail or row on the river, or a swim in one of the ponds of the township, [such as] Bateman's Pond; and there was much instructive talk about the Indians who formerly lived or hunted there."^[19]

While Thoreau was living at Walden Pond in 1845-47, his friend Ellery Channing lived on Punkatasset in a "small cottage on the lonely hill." Channing wrote of it,

Of my small cottage on the lonely hill,
Where like a hermit I must bide my time,
Surrounded by a landscape lying still
All seasons through, as in the winter's prime,
Rude and as homely as these verses chime.^[20]

It was Channing of whom Thoreau wrote in *Walden*—"The one who came from farthest to my lodge, through deepest snows and most dismal tempests, was a poet. . . . [N]othing can deter a poet, for he is actuated by pure love."^[21] Channing described such a tempest, which caused him to lose his way near Punkatasset:

A gigantic snow-storm occurs here seldom. The last I saw was in 1846. . . . I lost the road going home [to Punkatasset] from the village . . . by getting over the wall, so great was the drift, the quantity of the snow & the violence of the wind. The great trees shook then like their twigs, a mighty wind was roaring, & the snow fell in damp masses, & so stuck to one's face & figure. I have seen nothing at all up with that since.^[22]

A note from Channing reveals that Thoreau, while still living at the pond, included in *Walden* an image that suggests he was familiar with a deserted part of Estabrook—the image of "a sweet-scented black birch" growing from a cellar hole now only a "dent in the earth." Channing wrote in the margin of his personal copy of *Walden*, "This refers to a cellar-hole in Estabrook's, in which grows a large black birch,—cut

down in 1866."^[23] In *Walden*, the image is used to embellish the cellar site of one of the pond's former inhabitants, perhaps Cato Ingraham, Zilphia, Brister Freeman, or Wyman the potter, and reads as follows:

Now only a dent in the earth marks the site of these dwellings, with buried cellar stones, and strawberries, raspberries, thimbleberries, hazel-bushes, and sumachs growing in the sunny sward there; some pitch-pine or gnarled oak occupies what was the chimney nook, *and a sweet-scented black birch, perhaps, waves where the door-stone was.* (Emphasis added. *Walden*, 263)

Another Estabrook image appears in *Walden*, though added in a later draft. In 1852, Thoreau revised his manuscript to add the anecdote about a "crazy fellow" who tried to dig to China—"As for your high towers and monuments, there was a crazy fellow once in this town who undertook to dig through to China, and he got so far that, as he said, he heard the Chinese pots and kettles rattle; but I shall not go out of my way to admire the hole which he made."^[24] Eight years later, the journal tells us that the hole to China was in Estabrook Country: it retells the story of this rustic Ozymandias with the rhythm of country speech, as laconically as Jacob Farmer must have told it that day to Thoreau, and it adds a memorable bit of folk wisdom about foxes:

Up Assabet to Farmer's. . . . He showed me the place [on the side of the hill where the black snake laid her eggs]. Was close by where his uncle (?) tried to dig through to the other side of the world. Dug more or less for three years. Used to dig nights, as long as one candle lasted. Left a stone just between him and the other side, not to be removed til he was ready to marry Washington's sister. The foxes now occupy his hole. . . . Farmer said . . . that he thought foxes did not live so much in the depths of the woods as on open hillsides, where they lay out and overlooked the operations of men,—studied their ways,—which made them so cunning.^[25]

As the decade of the 1840s ended, Thoreau turned to the wider landscape of Concord for inspiration. At this time, he began the habit of daily afternoon walks, "sometimes with a companion [Channing] who celebrates our adventures in some rhymes."^[26] Though Thoreau commented dryly that Channing wrote "in a sublimo-slipshod style," he also expressed his pleasure with his friend's work.^[27] Channing's appealing and forgotten poem "The Lonely Road" is about a walk in 1845-46 along the old Estabrook road to the cellar hole:^[28]

The Lonely Road

No track had worn the lone deserted road,
Save where the Fox had leapt from wall to wall;
There were the swelling, glittering piles of snow,
Up even with the walls, and save the Crow
Who lately had been pecking Barberries,
No other signs of life beyond ourselves.
We strayed along, beneath our feet the lane
Creaked at each pace, and soon we stood content
Where the old cellar of the house had been,
Out of which now a fruit-tree wags its top.
Some scraggy orchards hem the landscape round,
A forest of sad Apple-trees unpruned,
And then a newer orchard pet of him,
Who in his dotage kept this lonely place.
In this wild scene, and shut-in Orchard dell,
Men like ourselves, once dwelt by roaring fires,
Loved this still spot, nor had a further wish.
A little wall half falling bounds a square
Where choicer fruit-trees showed the Garden's pride,
Now crimsoned by the Sumach, whose red cones
Displace the colors of the cultured growth.
I know not how it is, that in these scenes
There is a desolation so complete,
It tarries with me after I have passed,
And the dense growth of woodland, or a sight
Of distant Cottages or landscapes wide,
Cannot obscure the dreary, cheerless thought.
But why should I remember those once there,
And think of childish voices, or that kind
Caressing hands of tender parents gone,
Have twined themselves in that soft golden hair,
All fled, and silent as an unlit Cave.
Why should I stand and muse upon their lives,
Who for me truly never had more life,
Than in the glancing mind's eye; or in Fancy
Wear this irrespective form, thus fleeting.
I people the void scene with Fancy's eye,
Her children do not live too long for me,
They vibrate in the house whose walls I rear,
The mansions as themselves, the fugitives
Of my Intent in this soft Winter day.

Nor will I scatter these faint images,
Idle as shadows that the tall reeds cast
Over the silent ice, beneath the moon,
For in these lonely haunts where Fancy dwells,
And evermore creating weaves a veil
In which all this that we call life abides,
There must be deep retirement from the day,
And in these shadowy vistas we shall meet,
Sometime the very Phantom of ourselves.—
A long Farewell, thou dim and silent spot,
Where serious Winter sleeps, or the soft hour,
Of some half dreamy Autumn afternoon;
And may no idle feet tread thy domain,
But only men to Contemplation vowed,
Still as ourselves, creators of the Past.^[29]

In his journal in the fall of 1849, Thoreau jotted down lists of "Places to walk to—trees &c."^[30] Some of these are in Estabrook Country—e.g., "The Eastabrooks place The old lime-kiln^[31] The Caeder Swamp The Bridle road [Two Rod Road^[32]] For brooks we have . . . Saw Mill brook For hills— . . . Ponkawtasset." Thus, Thoreau's explorations in Estabrook were to continue.

3. Perambulation of the bounds

Thoreau's first recorded *sustained* experience with Estabrook came because of his occupation as surveyor. In September 1851 Concord's selectmen asked Thoreau to accompany them as they, over the course of a week, perambulated the boundaries of the town, including the complex and contentious boundary with Carlisle in northern Estabrook Country. A 1660 law required each neighboring town to send its selectmen to reaffirm each boundary, walking in company over the hills and through the swamps. The Carlisle boundary in northern Estabrook was a special case; its two dozen angles were the result of decades of disputation as the towns split apart. In fact, the 1755 Carlisle meetinghouse and town center were almost built in northern Estabrook. After the perambulation, Thoreau's job would be to find the old markers and to survey a straighter line that would (if agreed to) shorten the boundary by half its length. It had, however, taken a hundred years to create this mess in the first place, and, Thoreau's efforts notwithstanding, it would take another fifty-two years to straighten it out.^[33] Thoreau did look forward to the novelty of going cross-lots through unknown country, but the experience was to affect him darkly:

As I am partial to across-lot routes, this appears to be a very proper duty for me to perform, for certainly no route can—well be chosen which shall be more across lot—since the roads in no case run round the town but ray out from its center, and my course will lie across each one. It is almost as if I had undertaken to walk round the town at the greatest distance from its center & and at the same time from the surrounding villages. . . . It is a sort of reconnaissance of its frontiers authorized by the central government of the town—which will bring the surveyor in contact with whatever wild inhabitant or wilderness its territory embraces. (4:77, September 12, 1851)

The five days in the puckerbrush with people not of his choosing disturbed him. The "wild inhabitants" were not what he may have hoped for. The boundary in Estabrook—the one with Carlisle—was the last to be perambulated, and the following day he wrote, as he walked towards Walden:

As I go through the fields endeavoring to recover my tone & sanity—& to perceive things truly & simply again, after having been perambulating the bounds of the town all the week, and dealing with the most common place and worldly minded men, and emphatically *trivial* things I feel as if I had committed suicide in a sense. I am again forcibly struck with the truth of the fable of Apollo serving king Admetus—its universal applicability.^[34] A fatal coarseness is the result of mixing in the trivial affairs of men. Though I have been associating even with the *select* men of this and the surrounding towns, I feel inexpressibly begrimed, my pegasus has lost its wings, he has turned a reptile and gone on his belly. Such things are compatible only with a cheap and superficial life. The poet must keep himself unstained and aloof. Let him perambulate the bounds of Imagination's provinces the realms of faery, and not the insignificant boundaries of towns. The excursions of the imagination are so boundless—the limits of towns are so petty. (4:84-85, September 20, 1851)

Two days after the Estabrook perambulation, he reflected again on the spiritual isolation of its inhabitants—present and former—and related it to the physical isolation of the place, a backwater home of the left-behinds ^[35] :

The retirement in which [Isaiah] Green has lived for nearly eighty years in Carlisle is a retirement very different from & much greater than that in which the pioneer dwells at the west, for the latter dwells within sound of the surf of those billows of migration which are breaking on the shores around him or near him of the west—but those billows have long since swept over the spot which Green inhabits & left him in the calm sea— There is something exceedingly pathetic to think of in such a life as he must have lived—with no more to redeem it—such a life as an

average Carlisle man may be supposed to live drawn out to eighty years—and he has died perchance and there is nothing but the mark of his cider-mill left.^[36] Here was the cider mill & there the orchard & there the hog-pasture—& so men lived and drank & passed away.— like vermin. Their long life was mere duration. As respectable as the life of the woodchucks which perpetuate their race in the orchard still. That is the life of these *select-men*! spun out. They will be forgotten in a few years even by such as themselves like vermin. They will be known only like Kibbe,^[37] who is said to have been a large man who weighed 250 —who had 5 or 6 heavy daughters [Sally, Betty, Molley, Beulah, and Miriam] who rode to concord meeting house on horseback—taking turns they were so heavy that only one could ride at once. What, then, would redeem such a life? We only know that they ate, and drank, and built barns, and died and were buried, and still perchance their toomb-stones cumber the ground. But if I could know that there was ever entertained over their cellar hole some divine thought which came as a messenger of the gods—that he who resided here acted once in his life from a noble impulse—rising superior to his grovelling and penurious life—if only a single verse of poetry or of poetic prose had ever been written or spoken or conceived here beyond a doubt—I should not think it in vain that man had lived here.— It would to some extent be true then that God had lived here. That all his life he lived only as a farmer—as the most valuable stock only on a farm—& in no moments as a man! (4:88-89, September 21, 1851)

As John Hanson Mitchell wrote, "[B]y Thoreau's time Estabrook was a haunted land, the farms deserted, the families departed, and only a wind blowing."^[38] Later that week, Thoreau was still trying to shake off the effects of his experience— "What can be uglier than a country occupied by groveling coarse & low-lived men—no scenery will redeem it—what can be more beautiful than any scenery inhabited by heroes!" (4:101, September 26, 1851). It was not for two more months that Estabrook—and Perez Blood, an unlikely hero— would relieve Thoreau's sourness and give him a needed insight into the human condition.

Some years earlier Perez Blood had caught Thoreau's interest. Blood was a farmer-astronomer who lived at the lonely northern edge of Estabrook. Blood had asked Thoreau to get him a book from the Harvard library, and when he did so the librarian asked, "Who in your town reads a book like that?" When Thoreau told him, the librarian said, "Tell him to send to me for any books that he would like to have."^[39] One night in 1847, about the time he left Walden, Thoreau went with Emerson to see Blood's telescope. As

Thoreau described the scene to his sister Sophia,

[Blood] had not gone to bed, but was sitting in the woodshed, in the dark, alone, in his astronomical chair, which is all legs and rounds, with a seat which can be inserted at any height. We saw Saturn's rings, and the mountains in the moon, and the shadows in their craters.[\[40\]](#)

A month later, Thoreau wrote gently of Blood in his first letter to Emerson in England, "Mr. Blood and his company have at length seen the stars through the great telescope [at Harvard] and he told me he thought it was worth the while. Mr. [Benjamin] Pierce made him wait until the crowd had dispersed (it was a Saturday evening [perhaps a public open house at the observatory]), and then was quite polite,—conversed with him, and showed him the micrometer, etc.; and he said Mr. Blood's glass was large enough for all ordinary astronomical work. . . . Mr. Blood tells me that he is too old to study calculus or higher mathematics." [\[41\]](#)

Four years later, but six months prior to the perambulation, Thoreau had again gone to Blood's woodshed:

I have been tonight . . . to look through Perez Blood's Telescope a 2nd time. A dozen of . . . Bloods neighbors were swept along in the stream of our curiosity. . . . I was amused to see what sort of respect this man with a telescope had obtained from his neighbors—something akin to that which savages award to civilized men—though in this case the interval between the parties was very slight. Mr. Blood with his skull cap on his short figure—his north European figure made me think of Tycho Brahe. . . .

I am still contented to see stars with my naked eye. (3:289, July 7, 1851)

Thus, he had some prior acquaintance with at least one of the "wild inhabitants" of this Carlisle boundary he walked.

In December, three months after the perambulation, he returned to Estabrook to do the actual survey. As he worked that December day, the sun melted his "stoniness" a little, and he found that "I wanted to know the name of every shrub." Meeting Perez Blood again, he realized that humans could sense another's positive, as well as negative, inner nature through the veil of the body:

While surveying [the Carlisle boundary] today . . . had one hour of almost Indian summer weather in the middle of the day. I felt the influence of the sun— It melted my stoniness a little. The pines looked like old friends again. Cutting a path through a swamp where was much brittle dogwood &c &c I wanted to know the name of every shrub. This varied employment to which my necessities compel me serves instead of foreign travel & the lapse of time— If it makes me forget somethings which I ought to remember, it no doubt enables me to forget many things which it is well to forget. By stepping aside from my chosen path so often I see myself better and am enabled to criticise myself. Of this nature is the only true lapse of time. It seems an age since I took walks & wrote in my journal— And when shall I revisit the glimpses of the moon? To be able to see ourselves—not merely as others see us—but as we are—that service a *variety* of absorbing employments does us. . . .

When I think of the Carlisle man whom I saw today—& the filthiness of his house—I am reminded that there are all degrees of barbarism even in this so called civilized community. Carlisle too belongs to the 19th century.

Saw Perez Blood in his frock. A stuttering sure —unpretending man, who does not speak without thinking, does not guess— When I reflected how different he was from his neighbors Conant— Mason— Hodgman— —I saw that it was not so much outwardly—but that I saw an inner form.— We do indeed see through and through each other—through the veil of the body—& see the real form and character—in spite of the garment—any coarseness or tenderness is seen and felt under whatever garb. How nakedly men appear to us—for the spiritual assists the natural eye. (4:203-205, December 13, 1851)

And so he was prepared to meet other Estabrook denizens—and see them through and through.

4. The Habitats of Estabrook Country

In the eighteen-fifties, as Thoreau began to look at the countryside of Concord with new eyes, what did he see in the landscape of Estabrook? Initially he found it different, thus interesting. Within a month of perambulating its northern part, he walked with Channing across its mid-section, the "high open land between Bateman's Pond & the lime kiln. . . . I do not remember any other pasture in Concord where the rocks are so remarkable as this." His poet-companion "remarked that the land (for the most part consisting of decayed orchards —huckleberry pastures & forests) on

both sides of the Old Carlisle road was uneven and undulating like the road, and appeared to be all in-motion like the traveller –travelling on with him" (4:119-20, October 5, 1851). The following spring, walking Estabrook's Two Rod Road, Thoreau wrote, "This is a singular & interesting part of Concord.— extensive & rather flat rocky pastures without houses or cultivated fields on any but this unused Bridle Road These are Channing's moors."^[42] And again later that summer, he wrote, "These are very agreeable pastures to me; no house in sight, no cultivation" (IV:132, June 23, 1852). And "It is a peculiar part of town. . . . A great tract here of unimproved and unfrequented country" (IV:277, August 3, 1852). And the following summer, "There is a tract of pasture, woodland, orchard, and swamp in the north part of town, through which the old Carlisle road runs, which is nearly two miles square, without a single house and scarcely any cultivated land in it,—four square miles" (V:225, June 5, 1853).

What Thoreau was discovering was that describing Estabrook was like the fable of the blindfolded person who had been told to describe an elephant by touch while standing in one spot. The object could not be satisfactorily described. Though the sweep of Estabrook's high rocky pastures had initially caught Thoreau's interest, the journals soon pictured a more complex landscape of woods and swamps:— one where a robin sang in the woods in the rain with "sounds to make a dying man live"; or one where he could sit under dark hemlocks as if in the gloom of night, and the birds would come to a small pond in front of him—he called it "a centre to them" just as he called Walden "this centre" for himself. The white pines of Estabrook were great harps on which the wind made music; open oak groves were "handsome and cool and bosky"; ferns were tropical; and yellow birches were "great vegetable chandeliers . . . stand[ing] in the swamps."^[43] J. Walter Brain describes Estabrook as it is now:

The pastures and orchards in the Estabrook Country have reverted to forest today, particularly in the core of this tract known as the Estabrook Woods, and few wild apple trees remain. Through forest succession, the great wild tract has further reverted to a more primitive and pristine state, constituting today an unbroken mosaic of moist, rocky and boulder-strewn woods, hills, and swamps laced with brooks. If Walden is Concord's hill and wold country of forested prominences among glacial ponds, the Estabrook is its moor and heath country, run wild and rank, a tract to stalk and trudge through, repository of Concord's richest living

legacy.[\[44\]](#)

It was this profusion of mini-habitats that led Thoreau to list them as he tried to give a single name to this "great wild tract." After a walk with Channing in a great loop up the Two Rod Road, then swinging west over Curly Pate Hill past the Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams house[\[45\]](#) near Bateman's Pond,[\[46\]](#) he wrote:

What shall this great wild tract over which we strolled be called? Many farmers have pastures there, and wood-lots, and orchards. It consists mainly of rocky pastures. It contains what I call the Boulder Field, the Yellow Birch Swamp, the Black Birch Hill, the Laurel Pasture, the Hog-Pasture, the White Pine Grove, the Easterbrooks Place, the Old Lime-Kiln, the Lime Quarries, Spruce Swamp, the Ermine Weasel Woods; also the Oak Meadows, the Cedar Swamp, the Kibbe Place, and the old place [Boaz Brown's] northwest of Brooks Clark's. Ponkawtasset bounds it to the south. There are a few frog ponds and an old mill-pond within it, and Bateman's Pond on its edge. What shall the whole be called? The old Carlisle road, which runs through the middle of it, is bordered on each side with wild apple pastures, where the trees stand without order, having, many if not most of them, sprung up by accident or from pomace sown at random, and are for the most part concealed by birches and pines. These orchards are very extensive, and yet many of these apple trees, growing as forest trees, bear good crops of apples. It is a paradise for walkers in the fall. There are also boundless huckleberry pastures as well as many blueberry swamps. Shall we call it the Easterbrooks Country? It would make a princely estate in Europe, yet it is owned by farmers, who live by the labor of their hands and do not esteem it much. Plenty of huckleberries and barberries here.[\[47\]](#)

Thus, in 1853 Thoreau was reasonably precise about what he thought he knew of Estabrook Country. To the last, though, he was still discovering more nooks and crannies of habitat.

5. Emerson's "savage fertile houseless land"

Was Estabrook wild, lonely and barren, a place of druids, Titans, brute life, and fabulous, mythological phenomena? Or was it fruitful and friendly, a paradise for walkers, a place of berrypicking, picnics, and hints of

dalliance? It was (and is) both, and the tension between these sets of powerful images is often as explicit as it is in the quotation at the end of the last section. Or in his exuberant "What a wild and rich domain that Easterbrooks Country! Not a cultivated, hardly a cultivatable field in it, and yet it delights all natural persons, and feeds more still" (X:112, October 20, 1857). Sometimes, however, one characteristic predominates, as in Channing's poem fragment from his pocket diary, written at the Boulder Field, a group of huge glacial erratics, in a thick February fog:

The rocks for age, gray with time,
Their soft rounded outlines wear away
Whole races of men. What time! What time! Mysterious was the boulder-field in the fog. I might have lost myself here. Here loom the great boulders, silent as the past. Here they loom, here they lay, mysterious as eld. Here might you sit your long,--lone life away.^[48]

And Thoreau faced down intellectual starvation on Curly Pate Hill one November:

To Boulder Field. . . . I wandered over bare fields where the cattle, lately turned out, roamed restless and unsatisfied with the feed; I dived into a rustling young oak wood where not a green leaf was to be seen; I climbed to the geological axis of elevation and clambered over the curly-pated rocks whose strata are on their edges, amid the rising woods; and again I thought, They are all gone surely, and left me alone. Not even a man Friday remains. What nutriment can I extract from these bare twigs? Starvation stares me in the face. "*Nay, nay!*" said a nuthatch, making its way, head downward, about a bare hickory close by. "The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat. Only the superfluous has been swept away. Now we behold the naked truth. If at any time the weather is too bleak and cold for you, keep [to] the sunny side of the trunk, for there is a wholesome and inspiring warmth such as the summer never afforded. . . .

"While buds sleep, thoughts wake. . . . Winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel if you know where to look for it." And then the speaker shifted to another tree, further off, and repeated his assertions. (XI:298, November 8, 1858)

The author John Hanson Mitchell also sees beyond Estabrook's loneliness. He, too, has a different vision. In 1993 he led a group of educators from all over the world on a Tufts University seminar, using Estabrook as the text. "Estabrook Woods," Mitchell told the group, is "an

incredibly *worked* piece of land. The stone walls running through the forest are only the most obvious indicator." He noted that "European settlers in this region had a very different attitude towards streams than the native Americans did." The newcomers saw them instantly as a source of water power and proceeded to build mills on even the smallest brooks. Standing on a stone wall that Mitchell said was probably built by Thomas Estabrook himself, Mitchell suggested this would be a great place to bring a physics class. Quite apart from lessons about levers and balance and position, he said, there is the matter of Estabrook's kinetic energy: "What enabled Thomas [Estabrook] to move the rocks from the field to the wall has become stored, potential energy. There in those rocks is something of Estabrook still waiting to speak to those who will listen."^[49] The rocks made Thoreau wonder about their movers: "[S]ince we have put their lives behind us we can think of no sufficient motive for such exertion—how can their works be so visible & permanent and themselves so transient? . . . [The wall] suggests an energy & force of which we have no memorials Where are the traces of the corresponding moral and intellectual energy?" (3:71, after May 12, 1850). A year earlier, the rocks had told D. B. Clark the terse tale that this was not an easy place for farming: Clark wrote in his diary, "Held plow for Uncle Joseph Clark in among the rocks up on the lime kiln pasture."^[50] Estabrook's strongest magic, however, was its ability in season to transform itself from a barren place to one flooded with wild fruits and berrypickers. For example, one day in early September 1857, Emerson and Thoreau walked together in Estabrook Country, and their journals transmit the energy of the natural world in autumn.^[51] The entries are both literal and vivid. Thoreau methodically recorded the ten-foot, nine-inch circumference of a yellow birch in a cellar hole. He then dramatized a climbing poison ivy vine thirty feet long as having "altogether a venomous look [It was] a venomous beast of prey which had sprung upon the tree and had it in its clutches, as the glutton is said to cling to the deer while it sucks its blood. It had fastened on it, as a leopard or panther on a deer and there was no escape." Emerson responded that the vine was "like a hairy snake" and listed other plants as if there were no end to them. Emerson's journal then continues with this extraordinary sentence:

A valuable walk through the savage fertile houseless land, where we saw

[passenger] pigeons & marsh-hawks, &, ere we left it, the mists, which denote the haunt of the elder Gods, were rising.[\[52\]](#)

Emerson then ended his entry for the day by recording two remarks his friend made during their walk, and, as if to testify to the impression the day had made on him, he later included them in his eulogy of Thoreau. The one most pertinent is emphasized below:

[Thoreau's] power of observation seems to indicate additional senses. He saw as with microscope, heard as with ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. And yet none knew better than he that *it is not the fact that imports, but the impression or effect of the fact on your mind*. Every fact lay in glory in his mind, a type of the order and beauty of the whole.[\[53\]](#)

The next spring Emerson included the Estabrook Farm "paradise," its tart apples, and the invading forest in his lecture "Country Life":

In old towns there are always certain paradises known to the pedestrian, old and deserted farms, where the neglected orchard has been left to itself, and whilst some of its trees decay, the hardier have held their own. I know of a whole district, Estabrook Farm, made up of wide, straggling orchards, where the apple-trees strive with and hold their ground against the native forest-trees: the apple growing with profusion that mocks the pains taken by careful cockneys, who come out into the country, plant young trees and watch them dwindling. Here no hedges are wanted; the wide distance from any population is fence enough; the fence is a mile wide. Here are varieties of apple The "Tartaric" variety, and "Cow-apple," and the "Bite-me-if-you-dare," the "Beware-of-this." Apples of a kind which I remember in boyhood, each containing a barrel of wind and half a barrel of cider. But there was a contest between the old orchard and the invading forest-trees, for the possession of the ground, of the whites against the Pequots, and if the handsome savages win, we shall not be losers.[\[54\]](#)

Estabrook in September seemed to make Emerson exultant. Three years later, he retraced his "savage fertile" walk:

Fine walk yesterday with Ellery [Channing] to Estabrook Farm. Finest day in the year, & best road, almost all the way "through the lots." Birds singing; –got over their summer silence–sunlight full of gnats; crickets in full cry; goldfinches . . . on the thistle. . . . Boulder Field: cooper's hawk: rock of Sinai, all books and tables of

law, wonderful hedges, barberry, apple, elder, viburnum, ivy, cornel, woodbine, grape, white thorn, the brook through the wood-. Benzoin. The big birch. Largeness of the estate. . . . A cornucopia of golden joys.^[55]

6. The Solitary Observer: "There I go searching . . ." ^[56]

Missing from Thoreau's writing about Estabrook are accounts of his participation in its community or social rites. Contemporary references describe Estabrook, at certain seasons, as being peopled. Some are youngsters at play. For example, in her letters, Emerson's daughter, Ellen, wrote of many "blissful" expeditions and picnics to "dear Easterbrook," where, she said, "the great fun began."^[57] Ellen wrote of an 1866 trip to Estabrook with Hawthorne's daughters in a hay-rick "festal chariot" and described the jouncing ride:

Friday morning the faithful Dolly brought to the door the hay-rigging, festal chariot! with hay and buffaloes in the bottom, and we set out. . . . It was the most perfect day possible. The trees had hardly begun to turn but there were occasional symptoms of autumn among them. The hay-rigging jolted merrily down the hill after it had passed the Dakin's and into the Brooks Clark [Estabrook] road. The big white pine was all in its glory, with no yellow needles yet. When once we entered the gates of Easterbrook the jolting of course became frequent and delightful. Mrs. Sanborn was personally averse to such a shaking but for all that she enjoyed the ecstasy of the juniors. . . . At last we came to our particular apple-tree, where Dolly was left untied, and we escorted the new comers to the beautiful summer-parlour [a bower of saplings and vines?].^[58]

Another lively 1865 letter to her father tells of children sledding on Punkatasset, a tradition that continued for more than a century:

Coasting is the great business nowadays. Edward and I have tried it almost every day, and it is so perfect that Miss Dillingham has been moved to give a half holiday to the children, who began early in the afternoon, first on the back hill where they were soon joined by the children of Lizzie Weir's school. This didn't suit the young aristocracy and they emigrated to Mr. Stedman Buttrick's hill and coasted there till someone proposed Poncatasset, and the boys drew the girls on their sleds down the river till they came to the right place, and then they coasted till dark. Wasn't it a splendid afternoon's work?^[59]

Ellen Emerson's brother Edward, many years later, remembered an idyllic evening with the young people of Concord at Minot Pratt's farm at the foot of Punkatasset:

One more picture of old times is so pleasant in memory as to call for a record. . . . One beautiful evening under the September moon, Mr. and Mrs. Pratt summoned the Concord young people to their farm for a husking. We worked gayly at the piles of bleached gold leaves and stalks to get out the livelier gold within—the lanterns shining above, and the cows beside us creaking their stanchions. After an hour we passed across the moon-lit yard, under the most beautiful elm in Middlesex into the house where we washed our hands and brushed our clothes and were then invited into the kitchen to a supper by our hostess. There was a long table with a white cloth. In the centre, in a shining milk pan, was a mountain of white-blossomed pop-corn, flanked by candles placed in sockets cut in the small ends of huge orange carrots. Next were baskets of apples, crimson and yellow and green, round towers of brown bread and fragrant soft gingerbread, with fresh cheese near by. There were candelabras made of inverted multiplex rutabagas, and here and there gleamed the tanned, yellow faces of pumpkin pies. The room was decorated with autumn leaves, probably scarlet and yellow maple, and blue gentians and asters.^[60]

One would have assumed that Estabrook would have been a *locus* for some of Thoreau's berrying expeditions, of which Moncure Conway writes, "Though shy of general society, Thoreau was a hero among children and the captain of their excursions. He was captain of the Concord huckleberry party, which was an institution. To have Thoreau along with us was to be sure of finding acres of bushes laden with the delicious fruit. On these occasions his talk with the children was a part of the spirit and circumstance of what is called in American phrase 'a good time.'"^[61] Edward Emerson wrote of Thoreau, "As the children grew older, he led them to choice huckleberry hills, swamps where the great high-bush blueberries grew, guided to the land of the chestnut & barberry."^[62] But none specifically mentions Thoreau in Estabrook. Frank B. Sanborn writes about his introduction to "beloved" Estabrook upon moving to Concord in 1855: "Channing soon carried me to White Pond and Bateman's, and the wild Estabrook country, beloved by all the walking fraternity." Even farmer D. B. Clark wrote in his diary that he "took a walk

into Carlisle, through the woods." After becoming a schoolmaster in Concord, Sanborn adopted the practice of taking his students on an annual chestnutting picnic to "the Estabrook woods." In 1859, this benign tradition was nearly interrupted by news of John Brown's anti-slavery raid on the government's arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Sanborn, one of Brown's secret backers, learned that his letters to Brown had been seized and their conspiracy compromised. Having a justified fear of arrest, Sanborn arranged for others to accompany his students to Estabrook, while he fled to Canada.

[63]

Thus, wild Estabrook could be full of people participating in communal rituals, walking, or harvesting berries, nuts, and fruits. Though Thoreau describes these rites, he gives no description of himself as a participant, or as a teacher-companion to children, or even as captain of a huckleberry party there. In his writing he keeps his distance yet observes. For example, he wrote, "A great many have improved this first fair day to come a-barberrying to the Easterbrooks fields. These bushy fields are all alive with them, *though I scarcely see one*" (XII:348, 350, September 24, 1859). And, "There are barberry bushes or clumps there, behind which I could actually pick two bushels of berries *without being seen by you on the other side*" (Emphasis added in each. X:112, October 20, 1857). When he hails trapper George Melvin one day, he infers that Melvin may have been dallying—but not he:

To Melvin's Preserve. . . . As I stood looking over a wall this afternoon at some splendid red sumach bushes, now in their prime, I saw [George] Melvin the other side of the wall and hailed him. "What are *you* after there?" asked he. "After the same thing that you are, perhaps," answered I. But I mistook, this time, for he said he was looking amid the huckleberry bushes for some spectacles which a woman lost there in the summer. It was his mother, no doubt. (XII:348, September 24, 1859)

Thoreau confessed to an appetite for solitude. Daniel Ricketson describes "walk[ing] this forenoon with Thoreau to the high land northeast of the village about three miles; ate our dinner of brown bread and cheese on the lee side of a stone wall." (Thoreau's journal identified their destination as "Easterbrooks.") In the letter that arranged this visit, Thoreau had given his "Friend Ricketson" a fair warning along with the invitation:

As some heads cannot carry much wine, so it would seem that I cannot bear so much society as you can. I have an immense appetite for solitude, like an infant for sleep, and if I don't get enough of it this year, I shall cry all the next. . . . However, if you care to storm the town, I will engage to take some afternoon walks with you,—retiring into profoundest solitude the most sacred part of the day. [\[64\]](#)

Even when Thoreau was accompanied by a sympathetic companion, he may not mention it. For example, on the memorable day when Emerson described Estabrook as the "savage fertile houseless land," Thoreau's journal never mentions that Emerson was present: Thoreau that day used the first person singular pronoun even when describing something both saw—and both wrote about. Another day at Bateman's Pond, he omitted any reference to his companion Channing, whose own diary that day appropriately grouses, "But I was hurried along & could not see things well. It is bad to be hurried & against your will." [\[65\]](#) Writing a diary about what most people would describe to be the events of the day is not what Thoreau's journal is about. His detachment permits him to hear his thoughts, even when they spin:

Road—that old Carlisle one—that leaves towns behind; where you can put off worldly thoughts; where you do not carry a watch, nor remember the proprietor; where the proprietor is the only trespasser,— looking after *his* apples!— the only one who mistakes his calling there, whose title is not good; where fifty may be a-barberriyng and you do not see one. It is an endless succession of glades where the barberries grow thickest, successive yards amid the barberry bushes where you do not see out. There I see Melvin and the robins, and many a nut-brown maid *sashŽ*-ing to the barberry bushes in hoops and crinoline, and none of them see me. The world-surrounding hoop! F³/₄ry rings! Oh, the jolly cooper's trade it is the best of any! Carried to the furthest isles where civilized man penetrates. This is the girdle they've put round the world! Saturn or Satan set the example. Large and small hogsheads, barrels, kegs, worn by the misses that go to the lone schoolhouse in the Pinkham notch. The lonely horse in its pasture is glad to see company, comes forward to be noticed and takes an apple from your hand. Others are called *great* roads, but this is greater than they all. . . . Rocks which the druids *might* have raised—if they could. There I go searching for malic acid of the right quality, with my tests. The process is simple. Place the fruit between your jaws and then endeavor to make your teeth meet. The very earth contains it. The Easterbrooks Country contains malic acid. (XII:348-49, September 24, 1859)

"Malic" is the acid that makes apples tart, and tart apples are what the solitary Brooks Clark would find to protect him from winter's hunger when he, like Thoreau, "had been out to see what nature had for him." This cheery, feeble old man, on the edge of poverty, bustling on what some would call a fool's errand, has, says Thoreau in this next remarkable passage, learned to live as he approaches death:

To the Easterbrooks Country. . . . There is a very strong northwest wind, Novemberish and cool, raising waves on the river and admonishing to prepare for winter. . . . Apples are gathered; only the ladders here and there, left leaning against the trees.

I had gone but a little way on the old Carlisle road when I saw Brooks Clark, who is now about eighty and bent like a bow, hastening along the road, barefoot, as usual, with an axe in his hand; was in haste perhaps of the cold wind on his bare feet. . . . When he got up to me, I saw that besides the axe in one hand, he had his shoes in the other, filled with knurly apples and a dead robin. He stopped and talked with me a few moments; said that we had a noble autumn and might now expect some cold weather. I asked if he had found the robin dead. No, he said, he found it with its wing broken and killed it. He also added that he had found some apples in the woods, and as he had n't anything to carry them in, he put 'em in his shoes. They were queer-looking trays to carry fruit in. How many he got in along toward the toes, I don't know. I noticed, too, that his pockets were stuffed with them. His old tattered frock coat was hanging in strips about the skirts, as were his pantaloons about his naked feet. He appeared to have been out on a scout this gusty afternoon, to see what he could find, as the youngest boy might. It pleased me to see this cheery old man, with such a feeble hold on life, bent almost double, thus enjoying the evening of his days. Far be it from me to call it avarice or penury, this childlike delight in finding something in the woods or fields and carrying it home in the October evening, as a trophy to be added to his winter's store. Oh, no; he was happy to be Nature's pensioner still, and bird-like to pick up his living. Better his robin than your turkey, his shoes full of apples than your barrels full; they will be sweeter and suggest a better tale. He can afford to tell how he got them, and we to listen. There is an old wife, too, at home, to share them and hear how they were obtained. Like an old squirrel shuffling to his hole with a nut. . . .

. . . I was glad for an occasion to suspect that this afternoon he had not been at "work" but living somewhat after my own fashion (though he did not explain the axe),— had been out to see what nature had for him, and now was hastening home to a burrow he knew, where he could warm his old feet. If he had been a young man, he would probably have thrown away his apples and put on his

shoes when he saw me coming, for shame. But old age is manlier; it has learned to live, makes fewer apologies, like infancy. This seems a very manly man. I have known him within a few years building stone walls by himself, barefooted. I keep along the old Carlisle road. The leaves having mostly fallen, the country now seems deserted, and you feel further from home and more lonely. (X:109-110, October 20, 1857)

Thoreau, like Brooks Clark, gleaned alone in Estabrook, for apples and thoughts:

To Bateman's Pond. . . . My apple harvest! It is to glean after the husbandman and the cows, or to gather the crop of those wild trees far away on the edge of swamps which have escaped their notice. . . . [W]ith experienced eyes I explore among the clumps of alder (now bare) and in the crevices of the rocks full of leaves, and prying under the fallen and decaying ferns . . . I draw forth the fruit, all wet and glossy, nibbled by rabbits and hollowed out by crickets, but still with the bloom on it. . . . I fill my pockets on each side, and as I retrace my steps [in the frosty eve, being perhaps four or five miles from home], I eat one first from this side, and then from that, in order to preserve my balance.^[66]

7. "A man must attend to Nature closely"^[67]

Thoreau had mused that Brooks Clark had not been at "work" but had been living somewhat after Thoreau's fashion—"had been out to see what nature had for him." But we must be careful here to understand what is being said. Thoreau talks neither of rambling nor of treasure hunts for apples. As Bradford Torrey, the principal editor of the 1906 edition of the *Journal*, wrote,

With him the study of nature was not an amusement, nor even a more or less serious occupation for leisure hours, but the work of his life; a work to which he gave himself from year's end to year's end. . . . He was no amateur, no dilettante, no conscious hobbyist, laughing between times at his own absorption. . . . In degree, if not in kind, this whole-hearted lifelong devotion was something new. It was one of Thoreau's originalities. To what a pitch he carried it, how serious and all-controlling it was, the pages of his journal bear continual witness.^[68]

On another level, Torrey takes care to identify Thoreau's "real work, his *hard* work, that taxed his capacities to the full." Torrey first describes three skills

that he believed Thoreau definitely possessed but that were *not* his "real work," and then he describes one skill that *was*. I will give my own examples of each (below) from Estabrook, though I know others would choose their own Estabrook favorites. The first example is an anecdote described by Emerson; the remaining three are from Thoreau's journal:

(1) Such "real" work, wrote Torrey, was *not* simply "**an amassing of relative knowledge**" (though Thoreau possessed such knowledge):

[Emerson wrote that though Thoreau] meant to be just, he seemed haunted by a certain chronic assumption that the science of the day pretended completeness and he had just found out [and according to Moncure Conway, "reported to Emerson somewhat triumphantly"] that the savans had neglected to discriminate a particular botanical variety, had failed to describe the seeds, or count the sepals. "That is to say," [Emerson] replied, "the blockheads were not born in Concord; but who said they were? It was their unspeakable misfortune to be born in London, or Paris, or Rome; but, poor fellows! they did what they could, considering they never saw Bateman's Pond, or Nine-Acre Corner, or Becky Stow's Swamp. Besides, what were you sent into the world for but to add this observation?"[\[69\]](#)

(2) It was *not* simply an "**accumulation of facts**" (though Thoreau spent years in their pursuit):

To Melvin's Preserve. . . . A man must attend to Nature closely for many years to know when, as well as where, to look for his objects, since he must always anticipate her a little. Young men have not learned the phases of Nature; they do not know what constitutes a year, or that one year is like another. I would know when in the year to expect certain thoughts and moods, as the sportsman knows when to look for plover.[\[70\]](#)

(3) And it was *not* simply a "**familiarizing of himself with appearances**" (though the passage below is a breathtaking jumble of appearances):

Pm to the Boulder Field. I find the [Common Blue or Marsh Blue] violet quite abundant in a meadow—& the pedata [Birdfoot Violet] in the Boulder field. I have now seen all but the blanda—palmata—& pubescens [Sweet White Violet, the Palmate Violet, and Downy Yellow Violet] blooming again.[\[71\]](#) And blue birds & robins &c are heard again in the air This is the commencement, then, of the 2nd

spring. Violets *potentilla Canadensis* [Dwarf Cinquefoil]—lambkill—wild rose, yel. lily &c &c begin again.

Children are now gathering barberries just the right time. Speaking of the great fall flower which the valleys are at present—its brightest petal is still the scarlet one of dogwood, and in some places the redder red-maple one is equally bright—then there is the yellow walnut one, and the broad dull red one of the huckleberry—& the hazel—high blueberry—& [*Viburnum cassinoides* or Withe-rod] of various similar tints. . . .

Grapes are still abundant. I have only to shake the birches to bring down a shower of plums. But the flavor of none is quite equal to their fragrance. Some soils, like this rocky one on the old Carlisle Road, are so suited to the apple that they spring up wild and bear well in the midst of pines birches maples & oaks & their red & yellow fruit harmonizing with the autumnal tints of the forest in which they grow. I am surprised to see rising amid the maples & birches in a swamp the rounded tops of apple trees rosy with fair fruit. [no paragraph here] A windy day. What have these high & roaring winds to do with the fall—no doubt they speak plainly enough to the sap that is in these trees—& perchance they check its upward flow. [no para here] A very handsome grey *dotted* [Hawthorn] near the black birch grove. 6 inches in diameter with a top large in proportion—as large as a small apple tree—bristling with many thorns from suckers about its trunk. This is a very handsome object—& the largest thorn I have seen in Concord almost bare of leaves—& one mass of red fruit $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch in diameter causing its slender branches to spread & droop gracefully...

Ah if I could put into words the music that I hear—that music that can bring tears to the eyes of marble statues! to which the very muscles of men are obedient (IV:367-68, September 28, 1852)

(4) But, wrote Torrey, his *real* work was a "**perfecting of sympathy**, the organ or means of that absolute knowledge which alone he found indispensable, which he alone cared greatly to communicate":

To Owl Swamp (Farmer's). In an open part of the swamp, started a very large wood frog, which gave one leap and squatted still. I put down my finger, and, though it shrank a little at first, it permitted me to stroke it as long as I pleased. Having passed, it occurred to me to return and cultivate its acquaintance. To my surprise, it allowed me to slide my hand under it and lift it up, while it squatted cold and moist on the middle of my palm, panting naturally. I brought it close to my eye and examined it. It was very beautiful seen thus nearly, not the dull dead-leaf color which I had imagined, but its back was like burnished bronze armor defined by a varied line on each side, where, as it seemed, the plates of armor united. It had four or five dusky bars which matched exactly when the legs were folded, showing that the painter applied his brush to the animal when in that

position, and reddish-orange soles to its delicate feet. There was a conspicuous brown patch along the side of the head, whose upper edge passed through the eye horizontally, just above its center, so that the pupil and all below were dark and the upper portion of the iris golden. I have since taken up another in the same way. (X:31-32, September 12, 1857)

Thus, Torrey believed that Thoreau's object was to be a writer, that nature was to be his medium of expression, that his work was the perfecting of sympathy with the object, and the measure of the union was the spiritual or emotional effect achieved. Torrey concluded, "He walked in the old Carlisle road, as the saint goes to his knees, to 'put off wordly thoughts.' The words are his own. There, when the hour favored him, he 'sauntered near to heaven's gate.'" ^[72] I admire how Torrey expressed the intensity of Thoreau's involvement with the natural world, but this summary does not acknowledge the changing nature of that involvement. Thoreau's spiritual life, his writing, and his skills in perception were evolving as his knowledge of the natural world increased. Thoreau wanted his senses to be attentive, intentional, available:

To Boulder Field. . . . It is remarkable how little any but a lichenist will observe on the bark of trees. The mass of men have but the vaguest and most indefinite notion of mosses, as a sort of shred and fringes, and the world in which the lichenist dwells is much further from theirs than one side of the earth from the other. They see bark as if they see it not. Those objects which, though constantly visible, are rarely looked at are a sort of eye-brush.

Each phase of nature, while not invisible, is yet not too distinct and obtrusive. It is there to be found when we look for it, but not demanding our attention.

. . . Animals generally see things in the vacant way I have described. They rarely see anything but their food, or some real or imaginary foe. I never saw but one cow looking into the sky.

Lichens as they affect the scenery, as picturesque objects . . . are one thing; as they concern the lichenist, quite another. (XI: 296-97, November 8, 1858)

In "Autumnal Tints" he wrote, "Objects are concealed from our view . . . because we do not bring our minds and eyes to bear on them; for there is no power to see in the eye itself, any more than in any other jelly. . . . [I]t requires different intentions of the eye and of the mind to attend to different

departments of knowledge! How differently the poet and the naturalist look at objects!"^[73] The ubiquitously quoted Yogi Berra is said to have said, "You can see a lot by looking;" but Thoreau might have responded as he did in 1842, "We must look a long time before we can see."^[74] In his study of nature, Thoreau went from trying to describe and name the *things* that constitute it to trying to understand, through observation and reflection, both the *process* that drives and disperses life and the spiritual laws that lie behind nature. As Laura Dassow Walls says, "The poet's love has matured into a form of 'attention,' alert but undemanding, and steeped in the kind of knowledge that makes such acute responsiveness possible."^[75] But he was not Gilbert White, the kindly vicar of Selbourne. He became voracious.

8. Man and Nature in Productive Harmony?

Thoreau wrote, in the passage about Estabrook that opens and is the theme of this paper, "We are all schoolmasters and our schoolhouse is the universe" (XII:387, October 15, 1859). In Estabrook, he wondered why the plumes of the pines were gnawed every fall; he categorized woods by their ages and origins; he recorded the flowering and seeding of species upon species year after year; he took the temperature of springs to understand groundwater; he discerned the microscopic tooth marks of mice on chestnuts sprouting in quarry niches; he noted the alignment of the strata of Curly Pate Hill; he puzzled out a century and a half of a woodlot's history; he reported on Estabrook's lynx; he speculated about watersheds and the physiography of the hills; he wrote about how humans connected to the landscape; he climbed trees to study nests; and he fathomed varying rates of growth during a tree's cycle of maturity. Sherman Paul notes that the rhetorical barrenness of some of these last journals is a function of the "gargantuan researches" that were underway.^[76] E. O. Wilson also reminds us that Thoreau could have spent his entire life on "a Magellanic voyage of discovery around a single rotten stump, for we live on a little known planet."^[77] Above all, in his last months in Estabrook he studied forest succession and the dispersion of seeds in a landscape of change. In these final months of the journals we see a work in progress. They are inchoate. We sense the passion

but not the paradigm. Each day he charged his mind with new facts. His imagination had been fired, but we find it hard to identify with him. His commitment has no context for us. Reading of him counting tree rings can be as meaningless to most of us as if he were spinning Tibetan prayer wheels. To understand these entries and Thoreau's last years in Estabrook, we need to infer an organizing principle—we need to expand our minds to appreciate Thoreau's multi-leveled world. For example, for Thoreau, each natural fact was invested with divinity—it was to be perceived metaphorically to arrive at its spiritual counterpart—the higher law. On another level, most of those people in the woods gathering barberries were not using them for floral decorations—the berries were acid and good for pickling and preserving *food*; we have forgotten that in now-romanticized Concord there were flesh-and-blood people using the land, some in "haggard poverty and harassing debt" (XII:367, October 3, 1859). We, on the other hand, are shrink-wrapped. Moreover, we can never fully understand what it must have been like to be a careful observer of nature at the moment *Origin of Species* stunned the world. Stephen Jay Gould, who has spent his career writing about Darwin, says with awe and envy,

And whatever the excitement and pleasure of new discoveries made every year by biologists, no one will ever again experience the ultimate intellectual high of reconstructing all nature with the passkey of evolution—a privilege accorded to Charles Darwin, and now closed to us.^[78]

Darwin's work, however, was but a hypothesis, and there was work to be done and understanding to be gained. Thoreau first saw *The Origin of Species* on New Year's Day of his final year in Estabrook (1860), within five weeks of its publication in England.^[79] Evolution had been in the air for a decade (Thoreau had read the principal arguments), but Darwin's straightforward theory (and documented text) suggested *how* evolution principally occurred: a species randomly produces variations, the most successful of which survive (and may displace the original form) through natural competition in the crowded environment. Thoreau the observer found Darwin's work congenial—some of the evolutionary processes Darwin suggested were consistent with his own observations on the dispersion of seeds and the principal role they played in forest succession. Earlier,

Thoreau had been eager to see, indeed found it to be healthy, that Nature was so rife with life that it could sacrifice myriads and suffer them to prey upon one another, even as if it had rained flesh and blood (*Walden*, 318).

Furthermore, Thoreau the man, whose own quest had been essentially unmentored, must have been gratified to have the example of Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace confirm that a lifetime of lone observation could lead one close to the heart of things. Thoreau's ruminations about forests and the profusion of acorns were indeed observations about life and creation and a search for the laws that lay behind nature.

Parallel writings (some of which are drawn from Estabrook) in his journal, in his September 1860 lecture "Succession of Forest Trees," and in his never-finished book "Dispersion of Seeds," hint of what he was about, but the map of his thought is incomplete.^[80] Perhaps Thoreau himself did not know the outcome. "Never had Thoreau been so captivated by a project," says William Howarth.^[81] He was as mentally focused on tree rings and acorns as a free climber is on a face, fingers curved towards the next ascending crack—even though the top may have been obscured. I think Thoreau's emerging vision was that Concord's woods (and Estabrook's) had become a dismaying model of human alteration, not natural regeneration. (He could not walk in Estabrook without hearing the sound of the axe; and the capes of the woods retreated ever farther from the town.) He feared it was the end of the wild here. He had come to understand that there would be profound changes in the biological life of the deforested land, affecting its ability to reproduce and grow. The whole intricate system (the *natural* process of dispersion of seeds, forest succession, and rotation of soils), the *natural* chain of life Thoreau was discovering, would be delinked and replaced by the human blunderings that were the norm. It would be a shameful and unnecessary waste of a system which nature had devised and from which humans could benefit perpetually. It would add to the impoverishment of his community and the emptiness of the lives of those trapped on the wasted lands. Thoreau's raging against the meanness of some of the lives that he observed was not directed as much against the individuals as it was against a situation which frustrated the transcendentalist's conviction that each human could complete himself by living spiritually and intellectually.

Furthermore, our forest was a symbol of the uninterrupted spiritual opportunity of the New World, but now America would become like Europe. The forest would be discarded without our realizing its biological and spiritual connections. The mistreated and barren land that Thoreau saw symbolized disharmony with nature.^[82] He knew that we did not know. In *Walden*, in the chapter "The Pond in Winter," Thoreau had written about human ignorance, the laws of nature, and harmony:

If we knew all the laws of Nature, we should need only one fact, or the

description of one actual phenomenon, to infer all the particular results at that point. Now we know only a few laws, and our result is vitiated, not, of course, by any confusion or irregularity in Nature, but by our ignorance of essential elements in the calculation. Our notions of law and harmony are commonly confined to those instances which we detect; but the harmony which results from a far greater number of seemingly conflicting, but really concurring, laws, which we have not detected, is still more wonderful. The particular laws are as our points of view, as, to the traveller, a mountain outline varies with every step, and it has an infinite number of profiles, though absolutely but one form. Even when cleft or bored through it is not comprehended in its entirety. (*Walden*, 290-91)

This concept of harmony is a central one for a transcendentalist, signifying the state of understanding of the spiritual laws that are expressed in Nature's appearance. For example, Emerson, in his book *Nature*, describes the idealism of the poet and the philosopher:

The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both. . . . It is, in both cases, that a spiritual life has been imparted to nature; that the solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and dissolved by a thought; that this feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an informing soul, *and recognized itself in their harmony, that is, seized their law.* (Emphasis added.)^[83]

Looking out from Estabrook's Curly Pate Hill toward Mounts Wachusett and Monadnock, Thoreau had his own vision of man in harmony with his surroundings:

Looking from [Curly Pate Hill] . . . over the valley of Spencer Brook westward, we see the smoke rising from a huge chimney above a gray roof amid the woods, at a distance, where some family is preparing its evening meal. . . . There beneath, we suppose, that life is lived of which we have only dreamed. . . . Why are distant valleys, why lakes, why mountains in the horizon, ever fair to us? Because we realize for a moment that they may be the home of man, and that man's life may be in harmony with them. Shall I say that we thus forever delude ourselves? . . . We are constrained to imagine a life in harmony with the scenery and the hour. The sky and clouds, and the earth itself, with their beauty forever preach to us, saying, Such an abode we offer you, to such and such a life we encourage you. (XII:366-67, October 3, 1859)

I have unfairly edited this passage, however, to make clear Thoreau's

ambivalence. The *omitted* words are like the silenced warnings of a Greek chorus. They express his fear that his vision is a lie, a mirage of our hopes, and that beneath this idealized roof are the "haggard poverty and harassing debt," "the indifferent stolidity and patient misery" of a family that mortgaged its farm and "long since sold itself to the devil and wrote the deed with its blood." Thoreau was troubled by human disharmonies ("the idiot that sits by the kitchen fire") as well as by spiritual and natural ones, and he was seeing that they were connected. Concord (or America), I think he believed, *could* be harmonious but was instead wasting itself.

This, I believe, would have become Thoreau's work: He would teach in his writings (he was at heart a teacher) about this astonishing process of natural harmony that occurs each year as seeds are urgently dispersed in an evolving world. He would write of the links between the forest and the animals, wind, water, and soil, which were seen but not seen, were noticed but not comprehended, were ignored and devalued, and would soon be destroyed. It was natural harmony at risk, a metaphor for wider disharmonies.

The vision I suggest he was developing contained elements of natural science, economic husbandry, ethical stewardship, and spiritual search. These themes are implicit in much of Thoreau's writing, but his immersion in 1860 suggests his vision was infused with something new, the unifying insights of evolution. By this I do not mean that he was motivated to become a Darwinian soldier in the theological battles over divine causation (though he did deny "special creation" in "The Succession of Forest Trees"). Indeed, I am not sure Thoreau acknowledged the unrelenting materialism that Darwin believed lay behind natural selection. Instead, Thoreau seems to have been energized by the impetus that Darwin's experience and great book gave to his own world view that Nature was a complex system of wondrous beauty (even its terror and grief), the higher laws and harmonies of which could be approached by the human mind through observation and an intuitive or illuminative experience.

He also wrote approvingly that the theory of evolution "implies a greater vital force in Nature, because it is more flexible and accommodating, and equivalent to a sort of constant *new* creation" (Emphasis in the original. XIV:147, October 18, 1860). The thought of a vital and constant renewal, which would have had great significance to a transcendentalist, was implicit in Darwin, but Thoreau's expression of it here may have been derived from a

surprising source: botanist Asa Gray of Harvard. Gray, who was Darwin's chief American associate, had used a similar evocative phrase only two months before, in the *August Atlantic Monthly*: "as if the world were one prolonged gestation."^[84] Thus, Thoreau's presumed last project, the *Kalendar of nature's seasons*, might have been transformed by this new unifying principle: as *Walden* was "a fable of renewal of life"^[85] in the melting and green fire of spring, Thoreau's new work might have been a fable of the harmonies of death and "new creation," expressed in the seeds of autumn. In Darwin's world, individual death has meaning—an evolutionary significance (its role in natural selection) as part of a constant creation. Darwin thus gives Thoreau an explanation from nature for what he had sensed spiritually when, as a young man, he had written Emerson a letter of grief and condolence over the devastating deaths of Emerson's son and of his own brother:

How plain that death is only the phenomenon of the individual or class. Nature does not recognize it, she finds her own again under new forms without loss. Yet death is beautiful when seen to be a law—It is as common as life.^[86]

In 1860, Darwin provided Thoreau with the natural law of death he sought. It is one thing for a mourner to say that, in Nature, life *follows* death inevitably, as green grass follows winter's sere. (That is to say: God's clock ticks on; no substitutions, please.) It is quite another thing for a mourner, biologist, or philosopher to say that, in Nature, life *depends* upon death, as it does with Darwin. (That is to say: each death, a man's or a maggot's, is some part of Nature's "vital [selective] force" of evolution, in which is the preservation of the world.)

Visions of harmony with nature have recurred in our nation as both an ethical and ecological principle, but its attainment has been as elusive as the Grail. Thoreau had used the phrase to describe Emerson the transcendentalist: "In his world, every man would be a poet— Love would reign— Beauty would take place— Man & nature would harmonize."^[87] One hundred ten years later, in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the nation's environmental policy became "*to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony.*"^[88] Aldo Leopold had explained the national implications of the ecology of disharmony:

A harmonious relation to land is more intricate, and of more consequence to a civilization, than the historians of progress seem to realize. Civilization is not, as they often assume, the enslavement of a stable and constant earth. It is a state of *mutual and interdependent cooperation* between human animals, other animals, plants, and soil, which may be disrupted at any moment by the failure of any of

them. Land-despoliation has evicted nations, and can on occasion do it again.^[89]

Eight months after NEPA's enactment, in the first Presidential report to Congress on the state of the nation's environment (which had become dismaying), President Nixon defined the nation's task of harmonizing man and nature as being one of mastering ourselves for the greater good of all:

In dealing with the environment we must learn not how to master nature but how to master ourselves, our institutions, and our technology. We must achieve a new awareness of our dependence on our surroundings and on the natural systems which support all life, but awareness must be coupled with a full realization of our enormous capability to alter these surroundings. . . . We should strive for an environment that not only sustains life but enriches life, harmonizing the works of man and nature for the greater good of all.^[90]

But Thoreau was not a fool when he envisioned harmony that evening on Estabrook's Curly Pate Hill. He knew what he was up against and so should we: "Surely," he said in the closing line of "The Succession of Forest Trees," "men love darkness rather than light."^[91]

9. Oaks and Bittersweet Acorns—Wild Fruits to Feed the Imagination

Prosaic journal passages from Estabrook are part of this groping for facts to express his unifying vision—Henry Shattuck's woods were a demonstration plot of seed dispersion; Blood's primitive oaks were a touchstone for a climax ecology; and the prodigality of the acorns was part of a world that Thoreau hoped could redeem us literally and spiritually. For example, Europeans found it remarkable that in America, when woods were cut, a wood of a different species often sprang up in its place. Some authorities ascribed this to long-dormant seeds in the soil; others, such as Harvard's Louis Agassiz, ascribed it to the spontaneous generation of species whose ranges and habitats were a fixed part of God's design. To the contrary, in Shattuck's pitch pine wood, Thoreau finds "remarkable proof" of the opinion that he had held for some years: that it was not recognized how powerfully seeds are broadcast each year, in this case by animals. In Shattuck's woods in Estabrook, the squirrels and jays had brought the acorns

from the nearby oak grove into their winters quarters (in the pines), to store them for food. Those acorns not eaten by their planters would, for a year or two, struggle to survive in the shadowy light of the grove and, if a break in the canopy occurred, would quickly grow to fill it. Thus, by annual dispersion of seeds by animals, wind or water—not by long-dormant seeds and not by spontaneous generation—does the forest prepare itself for its renewal. As Robert Richardson points out, "On the big issue [the theory of special creation] Agassiz was wrong and Thoreau was right."^[92] Human activities can mimic nature's opening of the canopy, but human mistakes often frustrate regrowth. For example, Farmer Shattuck cut his pine woodlot in Estabrook woods and, not noticing or understanding the significance of the tiny oak seedlings already growing there, wanted to grow a few crops of grain on this unsuitable land for quick cash before he let the land revert to a woodlot. Thus, harrowing between the stumps, he would soon destroy nature's carefully prepared, tiny new forest, the naturally planted oak seedlings. Thoreau wrote,

A thousand little red flags (changed oak leaves) already wave over the green rye amid the stumps. The farmer stumbles over these in his walk, and sweats while he endeavors to clear the land of them, and yet wonders how oaks ever succeed to pines, as if he did not consider what *these* are.^[93]

What results would be a starved pasture or a barren, pine-sick field, for years good for neither pasture nor woods.^[94] It was "a greediness that defeats its own ends, for Nature cannot now pursue the way she had entered upon. As if oaks would . . . come at his bidding!" ("DS," *Faith*, 173). Thoreau would ask, "Why not control our own woods and destiny more?" ("DS," *Faith*, 166). He proposed to leave in proximity groves, of various species and ages, where a natural rotation could be kept, calamity avoided, and connection with higher laws maintained. Where animals, wind, and water could do their work of planting—and be honored for it. When "a squirrel goes a-chestnutting," Thoreau wrote, following a description of Estabrook's, "it is no transient afternoon's picnic but the pursuit of his life, a harvest that he gets as surely as the farmer his corn" ("DS," *Faith*, 128). How drab, one might say, that the poet now thinks about squirrels, but Thoreau saw the poetry in it: "Yes, these dense and stretching oak forests,

whose withered leaves now redden and rustle on the hills for many a New England mile, were all planted by the labor of animals. . . . Consider what vast work these forest planters are doing!" ("DS," *Faith*, 130). The animals would fill a nearby pine grove with chestnuts, the passenger pigeon would carry an acorn a state away at the speed of a locomotive, and a birch seed's flight in the wind would baffle a mathematician. He knew that the profusion of seeds and the urgency of their dispersal were the engines of natural selection, and thus of evolution. "The very earth itself is a granary and a seminary," Thoreau the naturalist realized, and Thoreau the transcendentalist added "and to some minds its surface is regarded as the cuticle of one great living creature" ("DS," *Faith*, 151).

But some things happen unseasonably. On a cold dark afternoon in November, 1860, Thoreau was gleaning for facts before the winter snows covered the ground. He was at the southern end of the old Estabrook road, and he mentioned in passing, simply as a way of identifying two oaks, that they were "southeast of my house" (XIV:263, November 24, 1860). This was the now-famous building that had been his home at Walden Pond for two years. A farmer had moved it, probably pulled by oxen, to Estabrook Country where most of it eventually rotted away.^[95] Though Thoreau must have passed it regularly, his journal did not mention its presence in Estabrook for six years after it was moved there—he made only one brief mention in 1855. He did not mention it again for another five years, when he made three brief mentions in 1860, of which this is the last. He never hinted that he even peeked through the window. He did, however, call it "my house that was" or "my old house" for indeed it was, as Channing wrote, "his only true house."^[96]

What had caught his intentional looking "southeast of my house" that day in November were a surprising (to him) number of sound acorns under these particular Estabrook oaks. He had been puzzled that fall by the rotting and the worms that had destroyed so many millions of the acorns. He had inferred a purpose for *some* of the profligacy—excess seeds to feed the planters; to extend the plant's range; and to occupy every bit of habitat, where evolutionary "peculiarities more or less considerable" might be produced "in consequence of their various conditions" ("DS," *Faith*, 101). Was the mass death of these acorns, however, the sign of some "glaring imperfection"? It was hard to see, he had said, what "great purpose" was

served by this seeming waste (XIV:149, October 19, 1860). So he kept observing, as he was doing that day "southeast of my house." Was he curious about whether these particular oaks were somehow peculiar "in consequence of their . . . conditions" so that a higher percentage of their acorns might survive? Was he curious about the possibility of Darwinian variation in a species near his old house? This day, he called these Estabrook acorns—these wild fruits— "remarkable" and looked forward to seeing "how many of these sprouted acorns are left and are sound in the spring." He then attended to the storm around him:

The first spitting of snow—a flurry or a squall—from out [of] a gray or slate-colored cloud that came up from the west. This consisted almost entirely of pellets of an eighth of an inch or less in diameter. These drove along almost horizontally, or curving upward like the outline of a breaker, before the strong and chilling wind. The plowed fields were for a time whitened with them. The green moss about the bases of trees was very prettily spotted white with them, and also the large beds of cladonia in the pastures. They come to contrast with the red cockspur lichens on the stumps, which you had not noticed before. Striking against the trees on the west side they fell and accumulated in a white line at the base. Though a slight touch, this was the first wintry scene of the season. The air was so full of these pellets that we could not see a hill a half a mile off for an hour. The hands seek the warmth of the pockets, and fingers are so benumbed that you cannot open your jack-knife. . . .

The bitter-sweet of a white oak acorn which you nibble in a bleak November walk over the tawny earth is more to me than a slice of imported pineapple. We do not think much of table-fruits. They are especially for aldermen and epicures. They do not feed the imagination. That would starve on them. These wild fruits, whether eaten or not, are a dessert for the imagination. The south may keep her pineapples, and we will be content with our strawberries.^[97]

And these, fittingly, are the last words Thoreau wrote about his Easterbrooks Country. Absorbed, determined, he walked the talk—wild fruits that very day had fed both his palate and his imagination. He must have literally been on his knees as he counted the acorns beneath those oaks and puzzled about their secrets. The next day he would say, "How is any scientific discovery made? Why, the discoverer takes it into his head first. He must all but see it" (XIV:267, November 25, 1860). The following week, he spent a cold afternoon counting more tree rings on his beloved Fair Haven Hill near

Walden, trying to understand his world and what it represented. He came down with the illness that reawakened his tuberculosis. He was to linger for eighteen months but he rarely walked far afield again. He died at forty-four.

10. Conclusion: "All nature rejoices with one joy."

The final passage, however, in our journey with Henry Thoreau through the Estabrook Country should not be so astringent—and so sad, knowing what we know. For this land has a pulse of life, and an entry from the 1853 journal (the second passage below) lets us feel it. He had been walking along the old Estabrook road, and such a road was for him both an actual and a metaphorical place. For example, he had once prominently quoted poetry by Emerson in which the image of a road expressed both the journey of life and a spiritual path:

Go where he will, the wise man is at home,
His hearth the earth,—his hall the azure dome;
Where his clear spirit leads him, there's his road,
By God's own light illumined and foreshowed.^[98]

So, on the Estabrook road in early spring, Thoreau wrote about revival:

To the Kibbe Place. . . . It is a genial and reassuring day; the mere warmth of the west wind amounts almost to balminess. The softness of the air mollifies our own dry and congealed substance. I sit down by a wall to see if I can muse again. We become, as it were, pliant and ductile again to strange but memorable influences; we are led a little way by our genius. We are affected like the earth, and yield to the elemental tenderness; winter breaks up within us; the frost is coming out of me, and I am heaved like the road; accumulated masses of ice and snow dissolve, and thoughts like a freshet pour down unwonted channels. A strain of music comes to solace the traveller over earth's downs and dignify his chagrins, the petty men whom he meets are the shadows of grander to come. Roads lead elsewhere than to Carlisle and Sudbury. The earth is uninhabited but fair to inhabit, like the old Carlisle road. Is then the road so rough that it should be neglected? Not only narrow but rough is the way that leadeth to life everlasting. Our experience does not wear upon us. It is seen to be fabulous or symbolical, and the future is worth expecting. Encouraged I set out once more to climb the mountains of the earth, for my steps are symbolical steps, and in all my walking I have not reached the top of the earth yet. . . .

Ah! Then, as I was rising this crowning road, just beyond the old lime-kiln, there leaked into my open ear the faint peep of a hyla [spring peeper] from some far pool. One little hyla somewhere in the fens, aroused by the genial season, crawls up a bank or a bush, squats on a dry leaf, and essays a note or two, which scarcely rends the air, does no violence to the zephyr, but yet breaks through all obstacles, thick-planted maples, and far over the downs to the ear of the listening naturalist, who will never see that piper in this world, —nor even the next, it may be,—as it were the first faint cry of the new-born year, notwithstanding the note of birds. Where so long I have heard only the brattling and moaning of the wind, what means this tenser, far-piercing sound? All nature rejoices with one joy. If the hyla has revived again, may not I? . . . Came home through the Hunt pasture.^[99]

* * * * *

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Notes

These endnotes contain brief texts on many matters of interest. They include a discussion of the place-name Estabrook (in endnote 2); Harvard's nature reserve and Estabrook's conservation history (3 and 4); colonial history and Bullock's wigwam (8); old Estabrook road (10); John Thoreau's cedar saw mill (14); Punkatasset and the Minutemen (15-18, 26); Native Americans (19); the Estabrook cellar hole (28); the lime kiln and quarries, and the stone circles (31); Two Rod Road (32); Carlisle's almost-meetinghouse in Estabrook Woods (33); the mort stones (35); Kibbe's declaration of independence (37); the Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams site and the old corn hills (45); Bateman's Pond and nature in Estabrook (46); farmer Clark's diary (50); Raymond Emerson and Mary Sherwood (58); Minot Pratt, his elm, and his spring (60); William Brewster of October Farm (70); Asa Gray and his spring (84); and the fate of Thoreau's Walden house in Estabrook (95).

[1]. Henry David Thoreau, *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen (New York: Dover Publications,

1962), XII:387, October 15, 1859. Hereafter, I will usually cite the *Journal* parenthetically in the text by volume and page. Roman volume numbers indicate entries after April 27, 1852 in journal volumes in the 1906 Torrey and Allen edition, which has been reprinted by Dover. Arabic volume numbers indicate volumes of the authoritative Princeton edition of the *Journal*, which include entries through April 27, 1852 (Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal*, Robert Sattelmeyer, general editor, vols. 1-4 [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981-92]). The text from the Princeton edition, being a more accurate rendition of Thoreau's journal, preserves its irregularities in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. These may appear to be typographical errors. To avoid interrupting the text, the expression *sic* will not normally be used to reassure the reader.

[2]. The sources for this paragraph are as follows: "great wild tract," V:239, June 10, 1853; "the savage fertile houseless land," Ralph W. Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960-82) 14:162 (hereafter designated as *JMN*); and "dear Easterbrook," Edith W. Gregg, ed., *The Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson* (Kent: Kent State Univ. Press, 1982), II, 572. **What's in a name?** Estabrook Country is located in the northern part of Concord, Massachusetts, and in adjoining Carlisle. Nearby to the south is the Minuteman National Historical Park and the North Bridge of Revolutionary War fame. Nearby to the east is the Concord River and the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Thoreau (and his friend Ellery Channing) made up names for this area—"Easterbrooks Country," "Melvin's Preserve," "Apple pastures," and "Robin Hood Ground," and good names they are. His consistent favorite was "Easterbrooks Country" (always with initial caps, at least as edited), and I preserve this spelling in any Thoreau quotations. This name is a reference to the earliest known European settler in the middle of Estabrook Country, Thomas Estabrook, brother to Rev. Joseph Estabrook, the third Concord minister. Thoreau also used "Easterbrooks" as a descriptive adjective (to describe quarries, fields, and a moraine), as a noun describing the area (as in "get stone out of Easterbrooks"), and in various forms as a possessive adjective that generally refers to the cellar-hole site on Estabrook road. See, the end note discussing that cellar hole. Compare Thoreau's puzzling but probably unrelated use of the phrase "Easter Brooks" in an August 29, 1843 letter to his mother about Charles Dunbar, her eccentric brother (*The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode [Washington Square: New York Univ. Press, 1958], 135).

In my text, however, I use the spelling "Estabrook," which is how the land is and has been identified by almost all writers, even in Thoreau's time. For example, farmer D. B. Clark used "the Estabrook place" in 1849 (Daniel Brooks Clark, "Diary, 1847-1851" [photocopy at the Concord Free Public Library, hereafter cited as CFPL], September 4, 1849). Emerson used "Estabrook farm [or Farm]" in 1854, 1857, 1858, and 1860 (Emerson, *JMN*, 8:347, 14:162, 14:357; and "Country Life," *Atlantic Monthly* 94 [November 1904]: 597-98). Channing used "in Estabrook's" (F. B. Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years* [Boston: Gorham Press, 1909], 394). In 1890, Carlisle historian Sidney Bull used "Estabrook place" (Sidney A. Bull, "Carlisle" in *History of Middlesex County*, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd [Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1890], I, c. LIV, 712). In 1892, ornithologist William Brewster used "the Estabrook woods" and "the Estabrook road" (William Brewster, *October Farm* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937], 26, 36, 55). In 1897, Edwin M. Bacon used in his guidebook "Estabrook Woods," "Estabrook Road," and "Estabrook farmstead" (Edwin M. Bacon, *Walks and Rides About Boston* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company for Appalachian Mountain Club, 1897], 202-206). Sanborn used "Estabrook country" in 1901 and 1902 (F. B. Sanborn, *The Personality of Thoreau* [Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed, 1901], 19; and Ellery Channing, *Poems of Sixty-Five Years*, ed. F. B. Sanborn [Philadelphia and Concord: James H. Bentley, 1902], 96). And Sanborn used "the Estabrook woods" in 1909 (*Recollections*, 1: 187). Emerson's daughter Ellen, however, used "Easterbrook" as a noun in correspondence throughout her life (e. g., Gregg, *Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson*, II, 572).

For current usage, the name "Estabrook Woods" has the advantage of emphasizing the present ecological value of the *core*—"an extensive, continuous, unbroken and undisturbed swath of forest" (J. Walter Brain, "Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Inventory and Assessment of the Middlesex School Proposed Expansion Area in the Estabrook Woods in Concord, Massachusetts" [report to the Concord Natural Resources Commission, 1994], 16, LWV at 159). For the overall area, I prefer, however, the name "Estabrook Country" because Thoreau's tract was only partly woods. Moreover, the name "Estabrook Country" is generous enough to include the beautiful open rural lands, which Thoreau so admired, that still exist on the *edges* of the original tract and approximate the natural diversity he enjoyed. Thus, I think both names have their use—Estabrook Woods (of which the Harvard land is only a part) is the forested core of a fifteen-hundred-acre (or more)

Estabrook Country. Or Estabrook, for short.

[3] Harvard's nature reserve and Estabrook conservation history.

This Thoreau Society donation was part of the 1960s campaign to purchase the seven-hundred-acre core of Estabrook for a Harvard University ecology research site. The idea for such a reserve in Estabrook took shape under the guidance of Professor Ernst Mayr and Curator Barbara Lawrence of Harvard, David Emerson and Thomas Flint of Concord, and Lawrence Terry, retiring headmaster of Middlesex School. At the Society's annual meeting, Mr. Flint announced that the Society's grand gift had been matched by the Ford Foundation! (*Thoreau Society Bulletin* 96 [1966]: 4; hereafter cited as "*TSB*"). Messrs Flint and Terry, who co-chaired the campaign, raised \$495,000 to enable Harvard to acquire 642 acres as the center of a biological study area. There were six hundred donors, as follows: \$67,000 from individuals and \$427,000 from such local and national foundations as the Ford Foundation, Arthur Vining Davis, Avalon, Nature Conservancy, Permanent Charities, Concord Land Conservation Trust. The project was hailed nationwide as an outstanding example of cooperative stewardship and community unity. Since that time, the expenditures for additional land acquisition in Estabrook Woods have been as follows: \$80,000 from private donations; \$653,000 from the towns of Concord and Carlisle; \$294,000 in state aid; and, in 1996, a \$1.5 million federal grant. Estabrook was eligible for this federal grant because, on nomination by the state, it was designated part of the "nation's forest legacy" by the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture under an Act of Congress. Thus, the sums expended since 1965 to purchase land and restrictions to protect Estabrook Woods total \$3 million; this is a conservative estimate as the area included is narrowly defined and as neither inflation nor the value of the considerable gifts (and bargain sales) of land and conservation restrictions are included. An additional million public dollars have been spent for agricultural preservation restrictions for the old Nathan Barrett farmland, between Punkatasset and the Concord River, as beautiful today as in Thoreau's time.

Estabrook Woods is not a public park or an organized athletic course. It is a nature reserve, much of it privately owned, for study, with sauntering and respectful, traditional uses allowed. Barbara Anderson describes an encounter on the Estabrook road between a motorcyclist and a group of Thoreauvians led by Mary Fenn, on a walk after a Thoreau Society annual meeting. Recalling Thoreau's admonition, the saunterers prevailed. The cyclist was so contrite he parked his bike

and joined the walk (Barbara Anderson, "Fenn and the Art of Motorcyclist Modification," *The Concord Saunterer* 15.3 [winter 1980]: 28). Thoreau had admonished, "Going along this old Carlisle [Estabrook] road,—road for walkers, for berry-pickers, and no more worldly travellers . . . where there are countless rocks . . . which no jockey, no wheelwright in his right mind, drives over" (XII:345, September 24, 1859).

[4]. Nancy Spears, "The Concord Field Station," *Harvard University Gazette*, September 2, 1988. And Joyce Miller, "Research and Renown: The Concord Field Station," *Concord Patriot*, June 28, 1979, p. A1 The *Concord Patriot* article is reproduced at pages 60 e-g, Janet Buerger, ed., "Portfolio I: A Collection of Information on Estabrook Woods, Thoreau's Other "Great Wild Tract" (Preliminary Report of the Environment Committee, League of Women Voters of Concord/Carlisle, December 1994), 485 pp. This document is an invaluable source of information and is hereafter cited as "LWV."

Concord Field Station of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Harvard's portion of the Estabrook Woods is the largest parcel in what Harvard calls the Concord Field Station, the laboratory for which is in Bedford, Mass. The Field Station has published a series of monographs on the biota and resources of the Woods. See, in general, David S. Woodruff, "Introductory Notes: Concord Field Station, A Guide to Resources, No. 8" (Cambridge: Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, 1974, hereafter MCZ). These include studies on vegetation and flora; reptiles and amphibians; social and solitary wasps; climate and meteorology; mammals; physiography and geology; and soils. It also published a booklet on a demonstration forestry project just east of Middlesex School: Mary Eugenia Myer and Nancy Ranney, *Aesthetic Management in New England Woodlands* (Bedford: Concord Field Station, Harvard Univ., 1976). Botanical information on the area has been collected since 1825, and the Museum published Richard Jefferson Eaton's book, *A Flora of Concord. An Account of the Flowering Plants, Ferns, and Fern-allies*, Special Pub. No. 4 (Cambridge: MCZ, 1974). Many individual research projects have been undertaken by students and independent researchers. A color annotated resource map of the MCZ ownership that the Field Station published in 1973, which is still in use, locates features accurately, but some errors crept in during final

production. For example, some of the names seem to have been just made up (Lynn Maguire et al., "Concord Field Station, Estabrook Woods" (map, MCZ, May 1973, and corrections sheet). Over the years, however, Harvard's attention to Estabrook has appeared to vary.

[5] XII:387; October 15, 1859. This passage also appeared in modified form in Thoreau's essay "Huckleberries," in Henry David Thoreau, *Natural History Essays* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1980), 259-60. Hereafter, this edition will be cited as "NHE."

[6]. Paul Brooks, *The People of Concord* (Chester: Globe Pequot Press, 1990), 39.

[7]. J. Walter Brain, "Estabrook Land Was Thoreau's 'Wild Tract'," *Concord Journal*, Feb. 17, 1994, and in LWV, 109.

[8] **Estabrook's colonial history.** It is remarkable how much there is still unknown about even such a lovingly memorialized town as the venerable Concord. I am sure that unscrambling the property maze of the Estabrook Woods would yield many dividends in understanding early land use practices, the area's history, and the types of resources the settlers prized. Enough is known, however, to give a blurred picture of colonial Estabrook, and the remarkable fact is—many of the sites still exist. Dr. Janet Buerger referred to this when she said, "The intact broader landscape is the single most important thing about the value of the archeological sites in Estabrook." (Buerger, Memorandum to Concord Carlisle League of Women Voters, Oct. 1, 1996) As the Concord Historical Commission says, "To allow *any* development to disturb such a . . . historical resource, such an important link between future generations and our cultural heritage, would seem unthinkable" (Concord Historical Commission, statement to Natural Resources Commission, November 20, 1996).

Shortly after Concord's settlement in 1635, in the "first division" of land, the settlers not only took title to individually owned lots but also created parcels for community or neighborhood ownership. Examples of each type of ownership occurred in Estabrook. One was the common planting field, one of which is said to have been located to the southwest of Punkatasset (Richard T. T. Forman, et al., *Highlights of Concord's Historic Resources* [Concord: Concord Historical Commission], 126, map 2; Ruth R. Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors: A History of Area B, Minuteman National Historical Park" [report for the National Park Service, Concord, Mass. 1964], 72). Another example of neighborhood

proprietorship, created at mid-century before or at the second division of land (which was about 1654), was the Twenty Score, an area of four hundred acres in which the twenty owners of the North Quarter of Concord each owned *rights* to an undivided twenty acres therein (thus, twenty score acres). The Twenty Score lay to the south and southeast of Bateman's Pond, perhaps extending as far east as Punkatasset (Charles H. Walcott, *Concord in the Colonial Period* [Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1884], 28, 83) though the exact boundaries are unclear. It probably included the southern portion but not even most of what is now called Estabrook Woods. Other Estabrook parcels came into individual ownership at the time of the second division. The Twenty Score is frequently referenced in town records of about 1666, when land descriptions were rerecorded in the new book, and this land was not completely parceled out to individual ownership until the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Soon after settlement, however, at least one parcel deep in Estabrook apparently came to be individually owned, and it may have been inhabited, at least temporarily. At his death, original settler Thomas Flint owned a parcel *north* of the Twenty Score. The parcel was enigmatically identified in the November 9, 1653, inventory of his estate as "three score acres at Bullocks wigwam" (Edward F. Flint Jr. and Gwendolyn S. Flint, *Flint Family History* [Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1984], I, 25, 28). This name or a derivation appears three more times in deeds between 1667 and 1680. One Flint deed refers to this parcel as being part of the first division, which occurred prior to 1640 ("Town of Concord Ancient Records" [transcribed 1935, in CFPL], I:177b; see also I:176b; I:2, 221b; I:2, 286a). This "Bullocks wigwam," which could be of either Native American or Colonial origin (the term could refer to the crude habitation of a colonial settler), is a mystery (memorandum by author, 1996). This wigwam was a significant enough feature, however, to have given its name to sixty acres of land for at least thirty years. It may also have given Estabrook's Saw Mill Brook its seventeenth century name of Wigwam Brook. Intriguing hints exist. There is, for example, an oblong, corbeled stone chamber in Estabrook, but its age, use and relationship to the Flint parcel have not been determined; one authority advocates a Native American origin (Letter, Mark Strohmeyer to Dr. C. Richard Taylor, January 3, 1995). Also, there were settlers named Bullock or Bulloch or Bullocke in eastern Massachusetts as early as 1635, though I have found no record of one in Concord. On an amusing note, Shattuck relates John Winthrop's story that, apparently about 1640, "At Concord a bullock was killed, which had in its maw a ten shilling piece of English gold, and yet it could not be known that any had lost it" (Lemuel

Shattuck, *A History of the Town of Concord* [Boston and Concord: Russell, Ordione and Co. and John Stacy, 1835], 18).

To understand the settlement of Estabrook, one should remember that colonial Concord's original northern boundary was up to a mile farther north than its present location, that is, in the vicinity of Russell Street, Stearns Street, and Skelton Road in present Carlisle. The separate settlement of Blood's Farms (purchased as early as 1650) bordered Estabrook on the northeast, and in 1685 Concord bulged a mile farther into eastern Carlisle to swallow Blood's Farms. Thus, some settlement in the last half of the seventeenth century was pushing into Estabrook Country from the north as well as from the direction of Concord's original village. The lime quarry on old Estabrook road, according to Ruth Wheeler, was in operation by the end of the seventeenth century (see endnote 31). Seventeenth-century settlement in Estabrook Woods included Thomas Estabrook (about 1683), one of the Boaz Browns (from 1664, at the cellar hole off the way called, variously, the lane, the road to the Paul Adams place or Hugh Cargill Road), and their families. Nearby, in addition to the Flints and the Hunts, were the Clarks (1690), Samuel Buttrick (1677), Benjamin Russell (1680), John Adams (1662) and Robert Blood (about 1653), and their families. These are some of the families of whom Emerson wrote in his poem "Hamatreya" (Carl Bode, ed., *The Portable Emerson* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 637-38):

Buckeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint,
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,

Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my names's.
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog; we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."
Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plow.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plow, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.

.....
Hear what the Earth says:—

.....
"They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone,
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?"

By the mid-eighteenth century, there was a sufficient settlement near the northern end of old Estabrook road for the inhabitants to petition the legislature to become a separate town, even voting to make Estabrook road the site of their first meetinghouse (see endnote 33). Eighteenth-century dwellings included those of Robert Estabrook (at the Paul Adams place), Benjamin Clark, Samuel Kibbe, Nathan Barrett, and their families, and, at the Yellow Birch Cellar, the unfinished house of Henry Flint, whose wife reportedly vetoed their move. Little is known about a fifth cellar site, the "Black Birch Cellar." Other stone features exist. See also, in general, for Concord, Shirley Blancke and Barbara Robinson, *From Musketaquid to Concord: the Native and European Experience* (Concord: Concord Antiquarian Society, 1985); Desmond Fitzgerald, "Land Use History of the Estabrook Woods" (copy of typescript, probably Concord Field Station, September 1974, at CFPL without bibliography or maps); Ruth R. Wheeler, *Concord: Climate for Freedom* (Concord: Concord Antiquarian Soc., 1967), 16, 39-40, 46; Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 35, 39-40; Walcott, *Concord*, 28, 83. For Carlisle, see Ruth Chamberlin Wilkins, *Carlisle: Its History and Heritage* (Carlisle: Carlisle Historical Society, Inc., 1976); Donald A. Lapham, *Carlisle, Composite Community* (n. p., n. d.).

[9]. Constance Putnam, "Estabrook Woods Teaches Educators a Lesson." *Concord Journal*, June 17, 1993, and in LWV, 361.

[10] **The old Carlisle road, the old Estabrook road, or the Estabrook trail.** This lane—little used for two hundred years—splits Estabrook Woods in half, north to south. It is important not only to history but to our appreciation of Estabrook. I will refer to the unpaved portion through the Woods as the old Estabrook road. Some now call it the Estabrook

trail.

I think the Estabrook Woods in the seventeenth century was a web of paths with names as vague as "ye way which goeth into the woods." Some of these, as the centuries passed and parcels were exchanged and divided, were formalized as bridleways, cart paths, or private or public ways. To figure them out will require the solving of the jigsaw puzzle of land transactions, a task which will bear other historical dividends. (Somewhere I hope there is a legal Boswell of the Estabrook.) These paths or ways appear in the early and confusing Concord town records of the 1600s (Charles H. Walcott, "Notes on land, roads, Concord Mass and vicinity, 18th and 19th century" [manuscript, prob. c. 1890, at CFPL], 178, 190, 194, 194a, 201; Walcott, "Concord Roads: Notes" [typescript, 1938, at CFPL], 28, 44c, 45). Sometimes information is scant; there is no record of acceptance for even some of the principal roads in the North Quarter, such as Lowell Road and Monument Street (Elmer Joslin, "Notes on the acceptance or layouts of public ways in the town of Concord," [copy of typescript, May 1, 1956, at CFPL]).

Lapham says that Estabrook road appears to have been the earliest route between the seventeenth-century settlement (now in Carlisle) known as Blood's Farms and Concord Center (Lapham, *Carlisle*, 2, 18, and map; see Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 38). From now-Carlisle, an early road called the Lime Kiln Road (now probably called the Carlisle trail) entered the Woods about one thousand feet east of the old Estabrook road (i. e., from Zacheus Green's [now, Bartlett's] and the direction of Bloods' Farms) and joined the network of Estabrook paths en route to the kiln (Lapham, *Carlisle*, map). The southern part of Estabrook road was, in part, the early "way to the Twenty Score." Ruth Wheeler says Estabrook Road was also called "the road from Concord to Carlisle by Benj. Clarks" (Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," n. 26). In Concord's first town directory, published in 1886, Estabrook Road was called "Lime Kiln Road," but Laurence Richardson notes this may not reflect a formal adoption of the name (Laurence Eaton Richardson, *Concord Chronicle 1865-1899* [Concord: n. p., 1967], 67). That same year, William Brewster referred to spending the morning "on the Lime Kiln Road," which he does not otherwise identify (Brewster, *October Farm*,

18, compare 27, where he uses "Estabrook road"). John Hanson Mitchell suggests that, during King Philip's War in 1676, it was down the old Estabrook road that the peaceful Christianized Indians of Nashobah Plantation in Littleton may have come (Mitchell, *Walking towards Walden* [Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1995], 259). They came seeking Concord's protection (and some gave it), but they were soon taken, roped together by the neck, to misery and starvation on Deer Island in Boston Harbor. It also appears that, in the late 1600s, the lime quarry and kiln may have been operating in Estabrook, with commerce to the north as well as the south. See endnote 31.

In the eighteenth century, Carlisle's first meetinghouse was almost built in 1754 on old Estabrook road (see endnote 33) and down this road came the minutemen from now-Carlisle. As Parkman Howe said, writing about the road and April 19th, "History is not bunk. It is our collective act of memory" (Parkman Howe, "The Estabrook Line of March," *The Carlisle Mosquito*, April 29, 1994). By the 1850s, however, as the land emptied and more populous roads were improved, Estabrook road was so little used that Ellery Channing called it the Deserted Road. In 1877, however, "Most of [Concord's] road work . . . was the repair of the whole of Estabrook Road to the Carlisle line which had been badly cut up by teams bringing out wood" (Richardson, *Concord Chronicle*, 31). It was also becoming fashionable for walking. As late as the 1890s, farmers continued to drive dry cattle up to the Estabrook pastures for the summer (Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 38), and they carried produce over the old road into this century. Old Estabrook road in Concord remained a public way until 1932 (Joslin, "Notes," unpagged 15). Perhaps it survived so long, in part, to maintain legal town access to the Kibbe parcel, which remained disconnected from the rest of Concord until 1903 (see endnote 37); perhaps it was given up because the Estabrook parcels had been reassembled into large holdings (e. g., Middlesex School, Buttrick, Hutchins, Emerson, and Robb, see LWV at 298), and public passage was not thought of as desirable or convenient. For a description of the road's condition in 1958, see endnote 58.

[11] This scrap, from the University of Virginia library, is quoted in full by Thomas Blanding in "Beans, Baked and Half-Baked (6)," *The*

Concord Saunterer, 12:4 (Winter 1977): 14.

[12] Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 16-17. For a surmise about how important this new venture would have been to this young family, who had bet their future on its success, see Raymond Adams's lecture "The Stream I Go A-Fishing In" (mimeographed lecture, The Social Circle in Concord, Oct. 23, 1934, in Piper Collection, Cary Library, Lexington, Mass.).

[13] He uses the phrase in the following journal entries, which I have italicized: V:239, June 10, 1853 ("There [is] an *old mill-pond* within it What shall the whole be called?"); VI:128, February 18, 1854. "To Yellow Birch Swamp. . . [Flickers] at the *old mill-site*."); VII:106, January 8, 1855 ("To Easterbrooks place via *old mill site*."); IX:91, September 28, 1856 ("To *old mill-site* behind Ponkawtasset."). And see, for related usages, 4: 478, April 21, 1852 ("Was that a large shad bush where *Father's mill* used to be? There is quite a waterfall beyond. where the *old dam* was"); and VII:235, March 8, 1855 ("To old Carlisle road. . . I crossed through the swamp south of Boulder Field toward the *old dam*."). Thoreau also annotated an "*old mill site*" on Estabrook's Saw Mill Brook on his draft Humphrey Hunt Wood and Pasture Land survey, December 1852 (in CFPL), but this site appears to be about three hundred yards downstream from the traditional Thoreau dam site (see endnote 14 on John Thoreau's sawmill).

This textual evidence is not conclusive, however, for Thoreau elsewhere makes infrequent use of the phrase "old mill" to describe other abandoned mills, but the only one with a comparable connection is the "old mill" in the village, near his boyhood home (VII:506, 516, October 21, 24, 1855). It is not clear to me when this mill ceased operation.

[14] **John Thoreau's cedar sawmill.** The quotation is from Mary R. Fenn, "The Old Carlisle Road is still there" *TSB* 107 (1969), and in *LWV*, 102. Ray Angelo notes the presence here of impressive twisting vines of Asian bittersweet of remarkable girth, which leads him to believe this is probably the origin site for this species in Concord (pers. comm., September 13, 1996).

The various descriptions of the dam site are consistent with Thoreau's, but

his notation on one of his draft surveys presents us with a puzzle: Mary Fenn described "a little brook [which] flows into a large mill pond now choked with bushes. This in turn enters the sluiceway to the stone foundation of Thoreau's father's mill where he cut the cedar wood for his pencils" on Saw Mill Brook ("Report of the Walking Society: Punkatasset," *TSB* 115 [1971], and in *LWV*, 105). And see Mary R. Fenn, "Thoreau's pencil factory was once cedar sawmill," *Concord Journal*, March 24, 1983: "The building has long since gone, but today one can see the stone foundation and a small canal leading from the silted-in mill pond." In 1897, Edwin M. Bacon said the mill was on the right (north) bank of the stream, which makes a miniature cascade by the mill (*Walks and Rides*, 202-206). For this and other Estabrook sites, see Mary R. Fenn, "Concord Woods and Fields," *TSB* 95 (Spring 1966): 2. All the above quotations probably refer to the traditionally-accepted location of John Thoreau's dam.) There is a puzzle, however. On his draft "Humphrey Hunt Wood and Pasture Land Survey" of December 1852 (in *CFPL*), Thoreau penciled "old mill site" with a north-south "path" nearby, but these appear to be three hundred yards downstream of the traditional location of his father's dam and mill site. By correlating the pattern of the survey's stone walls with 1973 Harvard map, this unexpected mill site appears to have been located where Saw Mill Brook now passes under the raised trail and enters now-Hutchins Pond at its northwest end. (Hutchins Pond was constructed about 1910 as an ice pond.) Furthermore, in her moving testimonial to Estabrook, Allie Bemis Bueti, who grew up on this land, also had deduced that this unexpected Thoreau-noted mill was near this location—under the northwestern corner of now-Hutchins Pond. She compared the Thoreau survey with Wood and Adams surveys I have not seen (Bueti, "Notes on the Land and People of Estabrook Woods" [Senior Class Report, Concord Academy, 1973, at *CFPL*]). There may have been more than one mill site, or the mill may have been separated from the dam. (For example, fifty years ago the author came upon an old Vermont sawmill shaking itself to pieces; it was powered by a small pipe from a distant pool that was barely large enough to swim in—he tested it to see.)

At least one dam existed on Saw Mill Brook as early as 1735. When at that time Two Rod Road was formally laid out, it was described as

passing "over the dam of the Lower Saw-mill or Wigwam brook" over an "old path" by which inhabitants were "accustomed to travel" (Walcott, "Concord Roads," 39; Walcott, "Notes on land, roads," 237; "Ancient Records," I, 394a). Note also that the reference to *Lower Saw Mill Brook* is unnecessarily specific for a brook this tiny; perhaps this acknowledges that there was another dam upstream.

[15] 1:12, November 16, 1837. Ponkawtasset (currently, Punkatasset) is the Indian name (meaning broad topped hill) of a hill at the southeast edge of Estabrook Country, near the river and the Old North Bridge. Musketaquid is the Native American name for the slow-moving Concord River with its broad flood meadows. Thoreau translates it as Grass-ground River or Meadow River. The serpent image is from a favorite work, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, vii: 302. Ann Forbes notes that it is said that the Concord grape was first marketed from Hunt's vineyard on the south slope of Punkatasset.

[16] Mary R. Fenn, *Tales of Old Concord* (Concord: The Women's Parish Assn., 1965), 23-24; Gladys Clark, Oral History Interview, transcript CFPL, Renee Garrelick, interviewer (July 19, 1977), 14; Mary Rogers Clark (Gladys R. Clark), "Afield in Concord," undated typescript, CFPL.

[17] Frederic Hudson, "Concord Fight," *Harper's*, v. 50, No. 300 (May 1875), quoted in Josephine Latham Swayne, ed., *The Story of Concord Told by Concord Writers* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis Co., 1923), 56.

[18] Wheeler, *Concord*, 117-118 and Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 154. John Hanson Mitchell in his book *Walking towards Walden* gives a lively view of the battle—from Estabrook's perspective (between pages 214 and 269). Authorities seem to differ whether young Joseph Hosmer made his exhortation "Will you let them burn the town down?" near Punkatasset or from the rise above the North Bridge.

[19] **Native Americans.** (The citation is from F. B. Sanborn, *The Life of Henry David Thoreau* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917], 204.) Estabrook is laced with the hints of a Native American past. For example, the Concord Historical Commission says that a highly significant archeological area, dating from the Middle Archaic Period to Late Woodland (from 8000 to 350 years ago) is at Punkatasset Hill near Saw Mill Brook (in seventeenth century, Wigwam or Ralph's Brook) (Forman, *Highlights*, 89, 124 (map 1) and letter, Shirley Blancke to author, April 27, 1996). Thoreau found an adze there

(IV:486, January 31, 1853) and farmer Daniel B. Clark, Jr., who farmed near the present Hutchins Pond, relates that on July 5-6, 1847, "Commenced haying. . . . Mowed over the indian hills on the side hill [east of the house]" (Clark, "Diary "). When asked about Native American artifacts, a family member told the author that jars were full of artifacts that had been picked up on the Lawrence lands, at the northeast edge of Estabrook Woods.

On a terrace above Bateman's Pond, which once may have been enriched by annual runs of shad and alewives (3:249, June 9, 1851), archaeologists found a black argillite Levanna point, which suggests a Late Woodland or Contact-era occupation. Beneath a unique colonial agricultural field there, the archaeologists found possible evidence of Native American corn hills. See end note on Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams place.

Thoreau spoke of an Indian campsite in Estabrook: "The Indian Rock . . . is upright, or overhanging two feet, and a dozen feet high. Against this the Indians camped" (X:18; August 29, 1857). Shirley Blancke was told by Gladys Clark of perhaps the last recorded Native American resident of Estabrook and of his campsite, though it is not clear that these locations are the same:

'A Native American farmhand worked intermittently for Thomas Tileston Davis and lived in a rock shelter in the woods south of Bateman's Pond, known locally as "Indian Rock." It is north of a path leading east from Lowell road. He is said to have left for good when angered by Davis's refusal to pierce his nose for him for a nose ring. (pers. comms., Shirley Blancke, April 27, October 18, 1996)'

Thomas Tileston Davis was born in 1823, son of Thos. H. Davis. The latter was, according to Thoreau's 1857 survey at the Concord Museum, a now-or-former owner of a parcel in the Bateman Woodlots. See also the discussion of Bullocks wigwam and the corbeled stone chamber in endnote 8 on colonial history.

[20] From the poem "New England," in Channing, *Poems of Sixty Five Years*, ed. Sanborn, 68.

[21] Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton:

Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), 267-68. Further citations to this edition will generally be documented parenthetically in the text.

[22] *Pocket Diaries of William Ellery Channing*, ed. Frederick T. McGill, Jr. (transcribed typescript, 1930s), 120, November 13, 1853 (courtesy of Thomas Blanding).

[23] **The Black Birch Cellar Hole.** The Channing quote is from Sanborn, *Recollections*, 394. The source for the "sweet smelling black birch" phrase being in the original (1846-47) version of *Walden* is J. Lyndon Shanley, *The Making of Walden with the text of the First Version*, (Urbana-Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 197. See, for drafts in the journal, 2:212, 216, fall 1845. The next mention in the journal of Estabrook's "Black Birch Cellar" does not occur until VII:334, April 26, 1855. Mary Gail Fenn's map shows the Black Birch Cellar to be east of the Estabrook road in the north-central part of the woods. Mary Gail Fenn, "Map of Thoreau's Easterbrook Country, Concord, Massachusetts," Thoreau Society Booklet No. 25 (Geneseo, N. Y.: The Thoreau Society, 1970). Very little is known of this cellar hole.

[24] *Walden*, 58, in "The Economy" chapter. The source for this passage appearing in the fourth manuscript version is Shanley, *The Making of Walden*, 31, 72.

[25] XIII: 375-77, June 27-28, 1860. The parenthetical question-mark is Thoreau's. Thoreau often dropped by Jacob Farmer's place (now 761 Lowell Road) for talk about natural history. A fox den and kits were seen in Estabrook in 1995 (Ronald Lockwood, pers. comm., October 1996).

[26] **Channing on Punkatasset Hill.** Channing remained at Punkatasset until 1849. Emerson's journal of that year contains a touching compliment to Channing's cottage on the lonely hill. He wrote, "Who buys Channing's house buys a sunset. It should be sold in a fair day, then the purchaser gets rivers, mountains, villages, in the bargain. I would not, if I owned that place, sell it. I would hold on to it as long as I could see." Emerson, *JMN*, 11:85. This reminds us that an important part of the Estabrook experience was the journey to it and the view from it. Passing over the shoulder of Punkatasset, Thoreau would look across the great sweep of the cultivated and hayed Barrett farm, and the Great Meadows and Great Fields, the common lands of the colonial days, before turning into the moors and the wildness of Estabrook. One can still get some sense of that openness from the Hutchins' organic farm stand on Monument Street, once Nathan Barrett's farm. One

spring day there, Thoreau wrote as he passed Punkatasset:

"The year has the down of youth on its cheeks. This, too, is the era of the bobolink, now, when apple trees are ready to burst into bloom. Now it is too late to retreat from the summer adventure. You have passed the Rubicon, and will spend your summer here." (V: 147, May 12, 1853)

[27] Thoreau's comment is from III:118, November 15, 1851. Ricketson recalled, however, that Thoreau declared some of Channing's poetry better than almost any other poet (Anna Ricketson and Walton Ricketson, eds., *Daniel Ricketson and his Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1902), 298, September 24, 1856). F.B. Sanborn later noted that Channing's forte was "walking and artistic perception, friendship and whimsical conversation" (Sanborn, *Recollections*, 322).

[28] **The Estabrook Cellar Hole.** For many people, this cellar hole, at the physical center of the woods and near the intersection of its principal trails, is the destination of their Estabrook experience. As Channing's poem suggests, this small but picturesque ruin and the nearby jumble of walls, piles, and holes make it a satisfying rustic puzzle. Because at least three generations of Estabrooks may have lived in at least two house sites in Estabrook Woods, an uncertainty has recently arisen as to which site was occupied by whom and when. Until recently it had been generally accepted that Thomas Estabrook (b? d. 1720-21), younger brother of Concord's minister, settled at this place on old Estabrook road about the time he was married 1683. He is listed in the second order of proprietors in 1694 as having one horse, two oxen, and two cows. As discussed in endnote 31, there is evidence that the adjacent lime kiln was in operation in the late 1600s, and that Estabrook road was an early access between Blood's Farm and Concord. Researcher Martha Holland, however, after examining confusing deeds and inadequate maps, could not find primary sources that definitely confirmed this seventeenth century occupancy by Thomas Estabrook (M. Holland, "The Estabrook Farm: exploring fact and fantasy through historical archeology" [paper, Harvard Univ. Extension, May 20, 1985, at CFPL], 10-12, 19). She did, though, find deed evidence that Thomas Estabrook's grandson Robert bought in 1741 a parcel in Estabrook on which there was a

house probably built by Ephraim Brown between 1705 and 1741. She believed this was the house that stood on the cellar on old Estabrook road. She believed that Robert soon abandoned this site, building and moving to a new house at Bateman's Pond. (This later house came to be known as the Paul Adams place.) In 1996, however, a team of archaeologists concluded that the house bought by Thomas in 1741 was the house near Bateman's Pond. See, endnote 45. These archaeologists expressed no opinion on the origin of the Estabrook road cellar hole, it being outside the scope of their study. See also endnote 33, on the 1754 vote to construct Carlisle's first meetinghouse near the Estabrook cellar hole.

Ms. Holland also theorized that it was Thoreau's naming of the entire area "Easterbrooks Country" that may have caused the Estabrook road cellar hole to be carelessly identified as Thomas Estabrook's. I find no support for this in the literature of the mid and late 19th century. Thoreau and his contemporaries displayed no doubt about the primary Estabrook identity of the cellar hole. For example, in 1847-49, local farmer D. B. Clark's diary referred to both the "Estabrook place" and "Paul Adams's" (Clark, "Diary," May 8, 1847, September 4, 1849). Thoreau, too, was particular in his usage. He referred (with various minor variations in spellings) seven times to the "Easterbrooks place" (and other times to "Easterbrook's"). These uses often contained specific identifiable references to the site, e. g., to the cellar hole itself (IX:370-71, May 18, 1857) or to "Warren Brown, who owns the Easterbrooks place, west side of the road" (X:111, October 10, 1857). Two entries distinguish between "Easterbrooks" as a "Country" and as a "place," i. e., one a general reference to the area, the other a site-specific reference to the house-site (V:239, June 6, 1853; X:108, 111, October 20, 1857). Furthermore, Thoreau distinguished between the Estabrook road site and the Paul Adams place. Finally, as is discussed in endnote 2, this cellar hole was generally referred to by Thoreau's knowledgeable contemporaries as Estabrook's. Their memories would have been refreshed or corrected by recent local knowledge: e.g., Rebecca Estabrook Cargill Adams (Robert's daughter and presumed settler Thomas's great-granddaughter) lived at the Paul Adams place until 1838 (see endnote 45.)

Thus, though the deeds are puzzling and positive proofs of

seventeenth-century events are still elusive, the traditional explanation for the occupancy of the Estabrook road cellar hole—by the original Thomas Estabrook in the late 1600s—has not yet been discredited.

[29] William Ellery Channing, *The Collected Poems of William Ellery Channing the Younger 1817-1901*, intro. by Walter Harding (Gainesville: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967), 220.

[30] 3:23-24, 385-86, 405, after September 11, 1849. As there are two Cedar Swamps and two Saw Mill Brooks in Concord, it is not clear that references in this list to features of this name refer to Estabrook.

[31] **The old lime kiln and quarries, and the stone circles.** The old lime kiln and its ramp is about twenty yards east of old Estabrook road, and a quarter mile south of the quarries. The kiln is an almost unrecognizable, fallen-in jumble of rocks. The quarries are unusual rugged slices into the rock of the earth—a mini-mine. This early lime industry in Concord may represent an important, unwritten chapter in Concord history. Lime for cement and plaster was a precious commodity in colonial times, as evidenced by what must have been the laborious extraction of the marbled stone from the twisting quarry seams. In addition to plaster and mortar, it could be used as flux in the bog iron process, though no such link has been made in this case. In a passage that his journal's 1906 editors cross-referenced to Estabrook, Thoreau explains how he was struck by limestone's importance:

I was as interested in the discovery of limes stone as if it had been gold—& wondered that I had never thought of it before— now all things seem to radiate round limes-stone – And I saw how the farmers lived near to or far from a locality of lime stone. I detected it sometimes in walls & surmised from what parts it was probably carted—or when I looked down into an old deserted well I detected it in the wall. I read a new page in the history of these parts in the old lime stone quarries &

kilns where the settlers found the materials of their houses. (3:71, after May 12, 1850)

Concord geologist Eugene Walker has described the quarry as "eight pits, as wide and deep as 10 feet, and up to seventy feet long, following beds of marble that stand vertically and pinch out on both ends into thin seams" (*Concord Journal*, June 25, 1987, and in LWV, 99). Fenn School seventh graders (in a school Estabrook project involving math, geology, chemistry, history, and literature) calculated that workers excavated 7,600 cubic feet of limestone and rock from the largest quarry ("Concord and Estabrook Woods and Two Men Who Lived There: Henry David Thoreau and John Brooks Clark" (1969), not seen but reported in "A Student Documentary of Estabrook Woods," *Hear Ye*, III:7 [July-August, 1969?], and in LWV, 359). Thus, thousands of tons of marble were hauled a quarter of a mile south, where by means of an earth ramp, still somewhat visible by the side of the road, the raw material was lowered into the kiln, where the heat changed its chemical composition.

Ruth Wheeler says "a lime kiln was built in the north part of town in the Estabrook woods, that region of rugged pastures once called twenty score. Lime for Watertown's west meetinghouse was bought here and of course it was used with the Concord bricks for Concord chimneys" (Wheeler, *Concord*, 66). This meetinghouse was probably the Angier meetinghouse, the first built in western Watertown, near present Waverly, in 1695 (Edmund L. Sanderson, *Waltham, 1630-1884* [Waltham: Waltham Historical Society, 1936], 27). The access to this lime kiln from both the north and south may have opened up this country in the 1600s. See discussion of Lime Kiln Road in endnote 10.

Thoreau, however, reported a conversation with eighty-year-old Brooks Clark, who told him that he remembered when Peter Barrett (b. 1755 d. 1808) "started to burn lime there, and bought the right to get the stone out of Easterbrooks more than sixty years ago" (X:167, November 6, 1857). Desmond Fitzgerald in his paper suggests that the quarry opened during the 1750s, when Thomas Estabrook II and Peter Barrett "discovered" the limestone, and Estabrook sold Barrett the right to mine (Fitzgerald, "Land

Use History of the Estabrook Woods," 5). Though the Peter Barrett enterprise appears to conflict with a seventeenth-century date for the opening of the quarry, it is possible that the quarry, which must have been marginal, opened and closed more than once, as need and economic conditions changed. In fact, Thoreau suggested "that perchance these quarries might be worked again" (3:71, after May 12, 1850).

Another puzzle is just to the north of the quarries and between them and the Estabrook cellar hole: what are the rows of circles of pointed stones? Mary Fenn describes them as follows:

Then, crossing the stone-wall-enclosed field toward the Estabrook cellar, we came upon a dozen or more stone circles [others have counted thirty-three]—much in the nature of [generous] camp fires. The stones were lichen covered, indicating they had been there for many a year. As usual, no one in Concord except one man who owned property in that area had ever seen them, and he had no idea what they were for. It wasn't until we met a mining engineer the following summer that we

learned that such stone circles were used in a very ancient method of burning the acids out of the lime and rendering it useable for plastering. The ore was piled within the circle with wood burned on top, a process which

predated the use of a kiln. (Mary Fenn, "Report of the Walking Society: The Lime Quarries," TSB [Winter 1971], and in LWV, 100)

There were unanswered questions, however. (Why so many circles and why are the stones pointed? Why so close to the cellar hole? Why were some circles incorporated into walls? Why weren't the stones scavenged for walls or the house? Why did no one mention them? What are the connections between the quarries, the Estabrook road, the circles, and the nearby habitation, particularly if they all had their origins in the late seventeenth century?) An alternative explanation is suggested by a clue found by Martha Holland in a 1793 will, which describes a boundary (not one apparently in Estabrook) as running "to a appletree with stones around it" (Holland, "The Estabrook Farm," 14). This suggests that some of the stone circles might

have been intended to protect fruit trees near the Estabrook farmhouse from free-roaming hogs or cattle, though they do not now seem tall enough to be effective. Interestingly, Channing's poem "The Deserted Road," quoted earlier, provides some insight, for it describes at the Estabrook cellar hole both the scraggy orchards and "A little wall half falling bounds a square / Where choicer fruit-trees showed the Garden's pride." Perhaps the reason neither Channing nor Thoreau remarked upon the circles was because they were unremarkable—an obsolete but still known up-country way of protecting fruit trees. Other early industrial activity in Estabrook may have been a soap factory near Hugh Cargill Road, the dim memories of which were recollected by Gladys Clark:

At one time, but I'm not sure just when in time, there was a soap factory up the Lane [Hugh Cargill Road] also. But as a child I can remember seeing sort of a wall built up and two big iron kettles, in which I suppose the fat was fried out as they called it. There is also a little man-made pond there where the soap factory used to be. I don't know anything beyond the fact that there was a factory there. I saw the ruins of it. But that is something in history that was never recorded. People just knew about it and forgot it. (Gladys Clark, "Oral History Interview" [transcription, interviewer Renee Garrelick, August, 1979, at CFPL], 5)

[\[32\]](#) **The bridle road or Two Rod Road.** Information in nine entries in the journal and in a draft Thoreau survey establishes that Thoreau's "bridle-road" is what is now known as the Two Rod Road. Herbert Gleason agrees (Gleason, *Photographs Illustrating the Writings of Henry David Thoreau* [unpublished bound photos with typed captions, various dates through 1935, III, 2d series, at CFPL], 78). It marks the eastern edge of the core of Estabrook as it runs south from the Malcolm land and the Davis corridor in now-Carlisle, to the Hutchins Pond area at the northern foot of Punkatasset. As

discussed in the endnote 14, it appears to have been formally laid out in 1735 along old customary paths, across a dam in Lower Saw-mill Brook (near Hutchins Pond) and thence westward to now-Lowell Road (see also Lapham, *Carlisle*, 14, 18). The way from Hutchins Pond to Monument Street may never have been recognized as a town way and was formally abandoned in 1908 by the County Commissioners, at the time Hutchins Pond was built as an ice-pond. This portion (or the entire length) was also known as Bigelow Road (Joslin, "Notes," 51 unpagged).

[33] Malcolm M. Ferguson, "Concord's 'Carlisland' [*sic*]," *Concord Journal*, Jan. 18, 1979. **The "tedious question" of Carlisle's meetinghouse on old Estabrook road.** This backwater, however, almost became the center of Carlisle. In the 1750s, there were enough people in northern Concord (which then extended in places two miles north of the current border) to petition to break away from Concord. They also would have taken seven thousand acres of old Concord (almost all of the land north of the Concord River and almost all of Estabrook) with them. Robert A. Gross describes the factionalism and bitterness that existed between the "outliers" and the Concord establishment (Gross, *Minutemen and their World* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1976], 15-17). The isolated northerners petitioned, "In the extreme difficult seasons of heat and cold, we were ready to say of the Sabbath, Behold what a weariness is it" (Henry D. Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl V. Hovde et al. [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980], 51).

There was one hitch—the petitioners had to agree on a site for the new meetinghouse for worship. Human nature, however, conspired with Estabrook's glaciation to frustrate a solution. There were two centers of settlement, and because the two centers were separated by eastern Estabrook's north-south Cedar Swamp, which is almost a mile long, each group wanted the meetinghouse to be in its neighborhood. After two years and many, many votes, the new district had chosen—and rescinded—three meetinghouse sites. One was east of Two Rod Road on "Capt. Jonathan Buttrick's plain," thus in the vicinity of the house still standing at 1024 Monument Street. The two other sites voted were near the old Estabrook road on forgotten "Poplar Hill" (Sidney A. Bull, "Carlisle," in *History of Middlesex County, Mass.*, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd [Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis

& Co., 1890], I, ch. LIV, 712). About the first of these, chosen in 1754, Carlisle historian Sidney Bull wrote in 1890,

[The winning voters] went so far as to prepare a part of the timber and have it teamed to the location on Poplar Hill, which elevation is situated on an elevation at the right of what is known at the present day as the old Concord road, and near what was formerly known as the Estabrook place, but which, at the present time, is used only for the purpose of pasturing cattle, and is only distinguished by the ruins of what was formerly the cellar, no building having covered the same for many years past. This timber was never used, but, tradition informs us, was allowed to lie on the spot until it decayed. (Bull, "Carlisle," 712)

The second Estabrook site, chosen in 1756, was apparently further to the north on old Estabrook road, probably to attempt to appease other settlers. Carlisle historian Ruth Wilkins locates this other Poplar Hill site at a place I believe to be on the rise just south of the present town line and just west of old Estabrook road (Wilkins, Carlisle, 49). The disgruntled Monument Streeters and others refused to abide by the selection, and this first effort to form Carlisle died aborning in 1756. Ninety years later, Thoreau commented dryly, "Yonder in Carlisle the building of the temple was for many wearisome years delayed. . . . [W]hether on 'Buttrick's plain,' or rather on 'Poplar Hill.'—It was a tedious question" (Week, 52).

There is another Poplar Hill in Concord (near the North Bridge) and the existence of the meetinghouse's Poplar Hill has been overlooked. Thoreau's survey (in the CFPL) "Plan of Poplar Hill Woodlot (so-called) in Concord and Carlisle. Belonging to Samuel Hoar of Concord, Mass." of April 5, 1854, confirms the existence of Poplar Hill in Estabrook. See

Shattuck, *Concord*, 321; and Town of Concord Assessors Tax Maps (1994), map G-2, parcel 1531-1 ("Poplar Hill Lot"). It was of this survey experience that Thoreau wrote, "I rode with my employer a dozen miles today [probably up and back along the old Estabrook road], keeping a profound silence almost all the way as the most simple and natural course. I treated him as if he had bronchitis and could not speak, just as I would a sick man, a crazy man, or an idiot. The disease was only an unconquerable stiffness in a well-meaning and sensible man" (VI:184, April 5, 1854). His employer was Concord's leading citizen, Samuel Hoar, lawyer, state senator, and congressman.

[34] **The myth of Apollo, god of poetry, as slave to a mortal.** This was a favorite myth of Thoreau's. In it, Jove punished Apollo (god of poetry, music, and wit) by banishing him to be a shepherd for a mortal, King Admetus. Though the fable has other elements (e. g., the favor of the gods, their implacability once a bargain has been made with them, the fragility and hypocrisy of human relationships, and the intervention of the half-god hero, Hercules), Thoreau seemed most struck by the image of the god of poetry being banished to the service of mortals. It was for him an multi-purpose myth, but generally represented the diminution of the god's genius by the mortal world. Experiences in Estabrook twice evoked it. See, e. g., 2:184, after December 6, 1845; 3:355, August 5, 1851; 3:358, August 6, 1851; and VI:185, April 5, 1854.

In V:293, June 22, 1853, however, he wrote this stunning reconciliation, in which he (the poet) would give up his divinity and muse if he could but spend his time in the wild:

I long for wildness, a nature which I cannot put my foot through,
woods where the wood thrush forever sings, where the hours are early
morning ones, and there is dew on the grass, and the day is forever
unproved, where I might have a fertile unknown for a soil about me. I
would go after the cows, I would watch the flocks of Admetus there

forever, only for my board and clothes. (emphasis added)

[35] **Isaiah Green and mort stones.** Isaiah Green (1772-1855), with whom Thoreau met, had been born before the Revolution and while Carlisle was still part of Concord, and had been a selectman of Carlisle when Henry Thoreau was three years old. His farm was located just north of the town line. One gets a sense of the abandonment of the countryside from Thoreau's narrative: "Perambulated Carlisle line. . . . In an old pasture now grown up to birches & other trees—followed the cow-paths to the old apple trees. Mr. Isaiah Green of Carlisle who lives nearest the Kibbe Place—can remember when there were 3 or 4 houses around him (he is nearly 80 years old & has always lived there & was born there) now he is quite retired—& the nearest road [probably the old Estabrook road] is scarcely used at all" (4:84, September 19, 1851).

Walking through the woods, one can imagine the people from this tiny settlement coming down the road to go to the village or to bury their dead. Mary Fenn found an old record that says there were at least two "mort stones" in the Estabrook woods, on which pallbearers would rest the coffins. She believes she has found them along or near the Estabrook road, the only flat-topped stones in the woods large enough to accommodate a coffin (Mary R. Fenn, *Old Concord Anecdotes* [date and publisher obscured], in LWV, 106).

[36] **Cider Mills.** There was usually a cider mill in back of the house of a typical settler, for hard cider was a staple. Edward Jarvis remembers,

"It may be safely said that every farmer made cider. . . . [Much] the greater part [of the apples] were sour, unpleasant, and unfit for cooking or eating. It was sufficient that they had juice All of these of every sort and condition—sound and rotten, the fair, and those having worms within them—were all poured in one mass into the mill and there ground together (the sound and the decayed, the pulp, and the worms) and then pressed, and the juice poured out." (Edward Jarvis, *Traditions and Reminiscences of Concord, Mass. 1779-1878*, ed. Sarah S. Chapin [Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1993], 102) This mill was turned by an old dobbin, and the horse's circular path, Lapham says, may still be seen at the Kibbe cellar hole (Lapham, Carlisle, 3).

[\[37\]](#) **Kibbe Place's own declaration of independence.**

Housewright and farmer Samuel Kibbe's (1725-1796) place near Estabrook road in Carlisle, was originally within Concord, but in 1779, when Carlisle successfully split off to become a separate district (later, town), Mr. Kibbe refused to assent. He and five other stubborn Concordians petitioned the legislature for their post-Revolutionary freedom to be let alone: "It is our oppinion a right every american ought to enjoy, and for which LIBERTY they have fought and BLED, and are still in Contest for, not to have their Rights taken from them without their Consent, or Receiving an Equavolent therefor [all sic]" (Gross, *Minutemen*, 167). Thus, his lot remained for more than a hundred years (until 1903), officially and stubbornly a small patch of Concord within Carlisle, yet within Estabrook Country, too. He marked his lot with four cornerstones, into which he chiseled a clear "C" for old Concord, not new Carlisle. Even by Thoreau's time, however, it was an abandoned cellar hole. See, for a description of an exploration for the Kibbe cellar hole, Mary Fenn, "Report from the Concord Walking Society: The Kibbe Place," *TSB* 112 (Summer 1970), and in *LWV*, 103.

[\[38\]](#) Mitchell, *Walking Towards Walden*, 217.

[\[39\]](#) Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 25.

[\[40\]](#) The quotation is from an October 24, 1847 letter to Sophia Thoreau, which dates the trip only as "some time ago" (Harding, *Correspondence*, 187).

[\[41\]](#) Harding, *Correspondence*, 190, November 14, 1847 ("I have almost never written letters in my life"). See 2:297, July 7, 1851.

[\[42\]](#) 4:489, April 24, 1852. Channing's poem "The Barren Moors," published in 1847, is about this open country between Ponkawtasset and the Carlisle line along Two Rod Road. It opens breathlessly with "On your bare rocks, O barren moors, / On your bare rocks I love to lie" (Channing, *Collected Poems*, 313).

[\[43\]](#) For robins and "centre," see 4:478-79, April 21, 1852 and *Walden*, 179 ("The Ponds"). For "great harps," see X:33, September 16, 1857. For "oak groves," see IV:137, June 23, 1852. For ferns, see XII:345, Sept. 24, 1859. For "vegetable chandeliers," see XII:182, May 5, 1859.

[\[44\]](#) Brain, "Estabrook Land Was Thoreau's 'Wild Tract.'" Thomas Blanding adds, "If the Estabrook woods go, there won't be any place to get lost in the woods. . . . If Concord doesn't think that's essential, Concord's very much mistaken" (Adam Engel, "Estabrook Countdown,"

Concord Journal [obscured date], in LWV at 60).

[45] **The Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams house site and the "corn hills," a hilled agricultural field.** In the woods northeast of Bateman's Pond, this house site (now a dent in the earth), its old fruit trees, and its interesting old well, shadowy with memories, was rediscovered independently by Mary Gail Fenn and Roland W. Robbins sometime before 1970, and rediscovered again by Allie Bemis Bueti in the 1970s and in 1994 (with her sister and friends). Ms. Bueti also found in the attic of the Concord Antiquarian Society (now the Concord Museum) a charming colored drawing of "The Old Paul Adams Place," drawn by J. Chandler Melvin (signed H. Melvin). It shows much homely detail of the farm and outbuildings, such as small-paned windows, fruit trees, the well and bucket arm, flying birds, and even fresh manure on the pile outside the barn window (Bueti, "Notes on the Lands and People of Estabrook Woods" [B & W copy, at CFPL]; and LWV, 15, 98).

An archaeology report was required by the Corps of Engineers and the National Historic Preservation Act as part of the federal wetlands permit process for the Middlesex School expansion. The archaeologists, the Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PALab), not only reported a staggering amount of material at the Paul Adams site but also rediscovered in the woods nearby, after one hundred forty years, the old, hilled agricultural field seen by Thoreau and Emerson on November 7, 1857. Thoreau had identified them that day as "very prominent Indian corn hills These very regular round grassy hillocks, extending in straight rows over the swells and valleys, had a singular effect, like the burial ground of some creatures" (X: 175, November 13, 1857). Astonishingly, hundreds of these hills are still visible (and still have "a singular effect") on the forest floor on a promontory above Bateman's Pond. The discovery of a black argillite Levanna point nearby suggested occupation of the terrace by the Late Woodland or Contact era (1000-1500 A.D.). Though PALab found some suggestions of an earlier Native American corn hill site, the report (under review as of the date of this writing) concluded that the visible ones were made about 1750, during the ownership of Robert Estabrook (James C. Garman et al., "Technical Report, Results of an intensive [locational] archaeological survey of the Middlesex School East Fields Project Area and a site examination of 'The Paul Adams Place,' Concord, Massachusetts," [The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., Report No. 686, April 1996, for Middlesex School and the Corps

of Engineers, under review], 31, 64, 73, hereafter PALab Report; and e-mail communication, James C. Garman, October 1996).

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) on July 15, 1996, said, "While the European adoption of Native practices for planting in hillocks is noted in 17th century documents, *the survival of surface evidence for the practice is unique as far as can be determined at this time.*" The MHC then declared the Hilled Agricultural Field as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, at the state level of significance (Letter, Brona Simon, MHC, to James A. Saltonstall, Middlesex School).

The PALab report on the "Paul Adams Place" near Bateman's Pond did somewhat examine the relationship between the Estabrook road site and "Paul Adams" sites. Unfortunately, PALab could not locate at the Peabody Museum the results of the earlier "digs" at the Estabrook road site and Kibbe sites (Alan Richard MacMillan, "The Estabrook and Kibby Sites in Concord: A case study in early Massachusetts farm life," [undergraduate thesis, at Tozzer Library, Harvard Univ., 1976, and at CFPL]). Thus, regrettably, these sites could not be compared with PALab's 1995 finds at the Paul Adams place. The dates for construction at the Paul Adams site are inconsistent in the PAL report and the MHC letter, and are under review at this writing.

When did the Estabrooks finally leave Estabrook Country? The last males named Estabrook left about 1780. The author learned by chance that they settled in a remote district (now deserted) of Reading, Vermont, within a mile of his camp (Gilbert A. Davis, *History of Reading, Windsor Country, Vermont* [Windsor, Vt., 1903], II, 224-25). Robert Estabrook of the Estabrook Woods corn hills fell from his horse and died in Reading, Vermont in 1803. The last female named Estabrook to live in the Woods was, I believe, Robert's daughter Rebecca (b. 1767 d. 1838), whose childhood home was probably the Bateman's Pond house (the later-named Paul Adams house) and who inherited it. She married the wealthy and older Hugh Cargill in 1798, who lived at 736 Lowell Road in 1798-99 (Forman, *Highlights*, 63). She was widowed within a year, and, now wealthy, married Paul Adams (d. 1774-1852) about 1800. She lived with Paul Adams and their children at the Bateman's Pond house until she died in 1838.

The archaeological dig at the "Paul Adams Place" produced "an impressive array of ceramics" and thousands of shards of pottery, much of which was dated after 1800 and was biased towards English-manufactured pottery and even "elite" ceramics. This suggested to the archaeologists the surprising (to me) conclusion that this household was by no means backwards but had access to the "latest consumer goods," and that the "occupants kept an eye on changing fashions in ceramics and possibly in architectural styles" (PALab report, 55, 61). Despite knowing of Rebecca's status as a Cargill heiress and the cheery appearance of the Estabrook-Adams house in the Concord Museum's colored drawing, I had assumed that this house, apparently so remote and overlooked that neither it nor its road appeared on any map, was back-o'-the-moon. The house was apparently abandoned at some point during the time of Thoreau's walks. Mary Fenn notes that Rebecca and her two husbands are buried in a row in the hill cemetery above St. Bernard's Church in Monument Square. I suggest that in fairness the site should be called the *Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams Place*, to remember Rebecca Estabrook Cargill Adams —the person who lived there the longest (seventy-one years, probably), who was the last person named Estabrook to live in Estabrook Woods, and whose pluck and widowed fortune (according to the tale told by the ceramics) enabled the house's brightest moments. The Massachusetts Historical Commission also found this site to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

But for the federal wetlands process, which required an archeological survey in response to citizen-raised concerns, the Rebecca Estabrook-Paul Adams site would have been destroyed by the Middlesex School project, and the School's plans also showed a gazebo on top of the corn hills.

[\[46\]](#) **Bateman's Pond and nature in Estabrook.** There are thirty-one references in Thoreau's journal to the natural area near Bateman's Pond. It is officially a "great pond" of the commonwealth, to which the public is guaranteed limited access privileges by the Colonial Ordinance of 1641-1647. Like much of Estabrook, the Bateman's Pond area has been studied and documented for more than a century and a half. Walter Brain describes it as the botanical center of the woods. Its wetlands and the nearby upland are the habitat

(already much diminished by Middlesex's dredging) of a state-listed, globally-endangered species, a dragonfly, that was first discovered there about 1905 by an original faculty member of Middlesex School, Dr. Reginald Heber Howe. It was Dr. Howe, an educator and naturalist, who in 1905 raised funds among the friends of Middlesex School to build the School's former Thoreau Museum of Natural History (Roger F. Duncan, *The Story of Belmont Hill School* [Belmont, Mass.: Belmont Hill School, 1985], 7). In 1904, there was a "Middlesex School Natural History Society," which maintained records of observations and published "Bulletins," as supplements to the school's periodical, *The Anvil*. (For example, a notable sighting in 1904 was a surf scoter on Bateman's Pond.) Dr. Howe was also an associate of and fellow Nuttall Ornithological Club member with William Brewster, whose October Farm lay across Estabrook. See endnote 70 on William Brewster. The museum was demolished and the collection dispersed in 1949 (Ruth Wheeler, "A Thoreau Herbarium," *TSB* 29 [October 1949]: 2).

Two other state-listed Species of Special Concern also breed at Bateman's Pond. It is obviously impossible to give here a complete list of additional wildlife species, but a selection may demonstrate the richness of Bateman's and Estabrook. The unusual spotted turtle and blue-spotted salamander have also been reported as breeding in Bateman's wetlands. Forest breeding birds include the Wood and Hermit Thrush (Thoreau's favorites) and Veery, Northern Goshawk, Great Horned and Barred Owls, Ovenbird, Winter Wren, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Ruffed Grouse, Pileated and Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, Wood Duck, Northern Waterthrush, Redstart, and Pine, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green Warblers. Wild Turkey have been seen recently and may breed. Botanically, it harbors Pale Corydalis, White Flowering Dogwood, Common Polypody, Ostrich Fern, Long Beech Fern, Tufted Loosestrife, and Sweet White Violet. Mammals now in Estabrook include the beaver, deer, fox, coyote, and fisher (Brain, "Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Inventory"; Richard K. Walton, "Census of birdlife on grounds of Middlesex School" [report for Concord Natural Resources Commission, July 24, 1994], LWV at 179-84; and pers. comm., Ronald Lockwood, October 17, 1996). A moose was reported in Estabrook Woods in November 1996. Amphibians near Bateman's, including vernal pool species, are described by former Middlesex teacher Peter Arnold in "In Thoreau's Woods" *Massachusetts Audubon Bulletin* (Spring 1968), 2-9.

Geologically, in addition to the metamorphic whorls that led Thoreau to give Curly Pate Hill its name, there are large rocks in the woods above Bateman's Pond, called *roches moutonnées* or sheepbacks, which show to great effect the grinding action of the glacier (J. Walter Brain, "Field Observations in the Estabrook Country: Field Notes" (1994), 2, and in LWV, 140).

[47] V:239, June 10, 1853. The photographer Herbert Gleason commented on Thoreau's habit of "giving names of his own choosing to certain localities of Concord, the particular names often being suggested by the discovery of some rare plant." He rhetorically asks, "Where were these places? It was useless to appeal to residents of Concord. They might as well have been situated in Siberia or Patagonia" (Herbert Gleason, *Through The Year with Thoreau* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911], xxxi, 46). But Ruth Wheeler comments, "Unusual place names abound in the North Quarter. . . . [T]he first settlers were quick to notice and distinguish special areas. In the first property descriptions are foxcastle swamp, cranberry pond, swamp oak meadow, Joseph's meadow, Ralph's brook, spruce swamp, and rubbish meadow—all in the 1697 agreements about the Twenty Score [in Estabrook]. Names used in early property transfers [in Estabrook and nearby] are latin (or lateen) sponge, bullocks wigwam or wigwam meadow, stickfast meadow, Joshua's orchard, the iron hole, the brook where the Indian goes over, bounds brook, the sorrel pasture, the fir pasture and nonesuch pasture" (Wheeler, "North Bridge Neighbors," 42).

[48] McGill, *Pocket Diaries*, 130-31, February 5, 1853.

[49] Constance Putnam, "Estabrook Woods Teaches Educators a Lesson" *Concord Journal*, June 17, 1993, and in LWV, 361.

[50] Clark, "Diary," Oct. 26, 1849. **An Estabrook farmer's diary.** The diary of Daniel Brooks Clark, Jr. sparsely chronicles four years of life on his Estabrook farm, which then was near the present Hutchins Pond (near location 70 on Gleason map). In it, he writes succinctly that he laid stone wall, "chopt" wood, took dry cattle to summer pasture in New Hampshire, pulled out peach trees, hauled manure, borrowed a horse, split rails, skinned a cow, drove a team of oxen, went on the "iron road" to Boston once, swapped labor with neighbors and family, picked cranberries, won a hand of cards Christmas eve, hauled the

Thoreau cabin from Walden to Estabrook Woods, cut and stacked peat for fuel, and mowed hay over the old corn hills. He was no rustic simpleton: though he may not have owned a horse, he also went to "singing school" and attended lectures at the Lyceum: "Went to the Lyceum. Mr. Emerson lectured upon the instinct and genius of the mind—he had many assertions that had the appearance of being unquestionable" (April 2, 1849). And, of course, he went to church: "Attended church. The subject is simplicity. As we advance towards simplicity in each and every department of life, just so far is it toward perfection, no matter where or when" (June 27, 1847).

[51] X:22, September 2, 1857. Note a minor discrepancy in dates. Emerson's journal says the walk occurred September 3 (Emerson, *JMN*, 14:162).

[52] In addition to this reference by Emerson to the now-extinct Passenger Pigeons, Thoreau refers once to their presence in Estabrook (VII: 334, April 26, 1855), as does Channing in his *Pocket Diaries* (April 21, 1859).

Emerson's use of "fertile" (in the sense of fruitfulness) suggests *Paradise Lost* and Eve's praise of the "fertile burden" of Eden's apple tree "offered free to all," the taste of which gave humans "knowledge, as the Gods who all things know." I like to think that, with their mood "hight'n'd as with Wine" (*PL*, IX:791-797), these Concord companions climbed up out of Ebby Hubbard's swamp to sit on a rock in a high pasture, talking, and reciting Eve's praise of the wild apples as they ate them (*PL*, IX:795-804).

For millennia the mythology of the mists has contained stories of their divine inhabitants and uses. To which mythological tradition was Emerson alluding? The Norse Eddas describe an original world of mist from which the rivers and first gods came. Probably, however, the "elder gods" is a reference to the Titans, the initial gods of the Greek mythology, who formed earth out of Chaos but were cast out by Zeus. The Emerson *JMN* editors think so; they footnote Emerson's journal sentence by referencing lines in Emerson's poem "Waldeinsamkeit," which read as follows:

Down in yon watery nook,
Where bearded mists divide,
The gray old gods whom Chaos knew,

The sires of Nature, hide.

[53] Carl Bode, ed., *The Portable Emerson*, 580, 585. Emerson's full journal entry reads: "Henry said of the railroad whistle, that nature had made up her mind not to hear it, she knew better than to wake up. And, 'the fact you tell, is of no value, 'tis only the impression.'"

[54] *Atlantic Monthly* 94 (November, 1904): 597-98.

[55] Sept. 11, 1860, Emerson, *JMN*, 14:357. See also, Emerson's summer walk with Channing in 1854: "Delicious summer stroll through the endless pastures of Barrett, Buttrick, Estabrook farms, yesterday, with Ellery, the glory of summer. What magnificence, yet none to see it. What magnificence, yet one night of frost will kill it all. E[llery] was witty" (*JMN*, 13:347).

[56] XII:349, September 24, 1859.

[57] Gregg, *Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson*, II:572, describing a picnic on Oct. 5, 1886.

[58] October 4, 1866 to brother Edward (Gregg, *Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson*, I:404-405). **Raymond Emerson and Mary Sherwood**. A hundred years later, another Emerson took a bumpy ride up the old Estabrook road. Mary P. Sherwood of *Walden Forever Wild* wrote,

When I was new in Concord, the year being about 1958 or 1959, I was living on the edge of Estabrook One day I decided I wanted to walk in along the Estabrook trail. . . . I knew an Emerson lived in the old house at beginning of the trail [Brooks Clark's house, in Thoreau's time], and I felt I shouldn't go in there without permission. So I knocked on the door. A tall older man answered, and said, "Wait a minute. I will go with you." He had me come in and sit down, in a room with Emerson family photographs all over a wall. He did go with me, I had assumed I was going to walk, but he went right for my car and got

in. It was one bumpy road, just a wagon track really. At one place we came to a fallen smallish tree and he got out and removed it. We went all the way to Carlisle, and out the town road then and back around to take him home. He thanked me for the ride, I drove back up Lowell Rd. to the town line where I was staying, and discovered I couldn't get out of the car—the door handle had been shaken off by that rough dirt road. Later I learned that was Raymond Emerson [Waldo's grandson] I toted up Estabrook trail. (Letter, Mary P. Sherwood to Helen M. Bowdoin of Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance, July 24, 1995)

[59] Jan. 31, 1864, Gregg, *Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson*, I: 330-1.

[60] Edward W. Emerson, "When Louisa Alcott Was a Girl," *Ladies Home Journal* (December 1898): 15-16. (This passage has recently been mistakenly attributed to Louisa May Alcott herself.) Edward Jarvis described the simpler work-gatherings of the early nineteenth century corn-huskers as being followed by "a plain entertainment of pumpkin or apple pie, or crackers and cheese, and water or cider" (Edward Jarvis, *Traditions and Reminiscences of Concord, Mass. 1779-1878*, ed. Sarah Chapin [Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1993], 54).

Minot Pratt. Minot Pratt, once the trusted citizen-farmer of Brook Farm, lived at the foot of Punkatasset at 635 Monument Street. Mrs. Pratt said Henry Thoreau used to come much to their home: "He was sociable & kind, & always seemed at home." They liked his ways, like their own, and believed in them: "[N]o pretense; no show; let guests & friends come at any time, & take them as they find them" (Edward Waldo Emerson, *Henry Thoreau As Remembered By A Young Friend* [Thoreau Foundation Inc. and Thoreau Lyceum, 1968], 80). Sanborn calls him a farmer-naturalist, whose "recreation, and one might say, his worship,

was among the wild-flowers and woodlands" (Sanborn, *Recollections*, 326). Thoreau described the great elm in the Pratt's front yard (sixteen and a quarter feet in circumference and particularly electric in appearance) as "the stupendous boughy branching elm—like vast thunderbolts stereotyped upon the sky. Heaven defying—sending back dark vegetable bolts—as if flowing back in the channel of the lightning" (5:424, January 4, 1853). A photograph of this large and unusual elm accompanies the Brook Farm article in this issue of *The Concord Saunterer*.

Minot Pratt's Spring. Thoreau referred to Minot Pratt's spring as "Perhaps the most natural well of them all [Concord's springs] . . . filling an oblong angular cavity between upright rocks" (XIII:390, July 7, 1860). Thoreau used this spring as one of his sampling stations from which he deduced the temperature of groundwater. General knowledge of this spring had apparently been lost; for example, even Concord native and avid botanist Richard Eaton did not know of its location, as evidenced by the absence in his writings of any mention of the highly unusual plants that are now known to have been found there. In 1982, however, botanist and author Ray Angelo of Harvard found a distinctive spring matching Thoreau's description and, fortuitously, protected it by calling it to the attention of those who were doing major landscaping nearby (April 1983 photograph of spring, Minot Pratt folder, Photofile P, CFPL). Thank you, Ray. The photograph reveals the spring to be set into a bold rock formation, the left side of which (the most clearly visible) is an in-sloping ledge about four feet high. The rock rear face appears to be about five feet high. A narrow stone-edged channel appears to be bridged at the spring's mouth by a large flat stone and to lead the overflow away from the spring at least eight feet. Botanical information Angelo found also supports this rediscovery and identification: Though Minot Pratt's list of the plants of Concord does not refer to a spring, the analogous manuscripts of Alfred Winslow Hosmer (1851-1903) refer to "Pratt's Spring" (Both MSS at CFPL). According to Angelo, several unusual non-native plants that Pratt introduced persist at this spring to this day. Mr. Angelo believes this spring was also called the "Asa Gray Spring" (for his reasons, see endnote 84). I have looked for this spring unsuccessfully.

A photograph taken June 19, 1901, by Herbert W. Gleason and labeled by him as "Minot Pratt's Spring" does not, however, fit either Thoreau's description cited above or the spring found by Mr. Angelo. Gleason appears to have misidentified the spring or mislabeled the

photograph, and this may have caused some confusion over the years (Gleason, "Photographs Illustrating the Writings of Henry David Thoreau" [bound prints with annotations, at CFPL], 1st series, VII, 29). See endnote 84 on the Asa Gray Spring.

[61] Moncure Daniel Conway, *Emerson At Home and Abroad* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1882), 286.

[62] Edw. Emerson, *Henry Thoreau*, 5-7.

[63] Sanborn, *Personality*, 19; Clark, "Diary," March 6, 1850; and Sanborn, *Recollections*, 187.

[64] Thoreau's letter of September 9, 1857, to Daniel Ricketson and Ricketson's journal entry describing his walk with Thoreau are in Ricketson, *Daniel Ricketson*, 77, 306. Thoreau identifies the destination in X:224, December 20, 1857.

[65] McGill, "Pocket Diaries of William Ellery Channing," 127, January 28, 1853.

[66] XI:292, November 7, 1858, and, with the addition of bracketed text, in "Wild Apples," *NHE*, 205.

[67] XII:347, September 24, 1859.

[68] Bradford Torrey, *Friends on the Shelf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 143. The quotes from Torrey on following two pages are from 143-46.

[69] R.W. Emerson, "Thoreau," in Carl Bode, ed., *The Portable Emerson*, (New York: Viking Penguin 1946, 1981 ed.), 590. See also, Conway, *Emerson at Home and Abroad*, 288.

[70] XII:347, September 24, 1859. **William Brewster of October Farm and Estabrook Woods.** Estabrook and the Concord area has been blessed by more than a century and a half of natural history observations, both botanical and ornithological. The late Ludlow Griscom of Harvard, an authority known for the rigor of his opinions, wrote in 1949, "[I]t should be clear that ornithological data available for the Concord area cover a span of over a century, and constitute the greatest continuous quantity record in the United States" (Ludlow Griscom, *The Birds of Concord* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949], 20). "There are few areas of England, save perhaps London and Oxford, where there has been such continuity of observation" (Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher, *Wild America* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955], 30). Hard on Thoreau's heels came William Brewster (1851-1919), who for many decades had a beloved home, October Farm, at the edge of Estabrook Country, now 1360 Monument Street. Griscom wrote of Brewster:

"Having now spent some thirteen years in studying Brewster's field work and records, it is my humble opinion that he was one of the greatest and most naturally gifted field ornithologists that America has ever produced" (Griscom, 13). For many years Brewster restricted his observations to Concord, the October Farm area, and Carlisle, and consulted with other Concord residents, such as Dr. Reginald Heber Howe of Middlesex School. Edward Howe Forbush, author of *Birds of Massachusetts*, lived in a nearby Brewster cabin for two years to add to the observations. Griscom describes the "voluminous" and "meticulous" Concord area data in Brewster's diaries, fifteen journal volumes, and eight volumes of a systematic field list entitled "Birds of Concord" (Griscom, 7). These are now preserved at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Brewster was founder of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, first chairman of the committee for protection of North American birds from slaughter, and first president of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Two books of non-technical entries were edited from Brewster's journals and have become classics of American nature writing (*October Farm* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936], and *Concord River* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937]). Griscom comments that, in addition to the technical data, another ten volumes of worthy extracts, without a line of repetition, could be easily compiled. Three Estabrook entries from *October Farm* (27, 55, 66-67) follow:

February 4, 1892. . . . This morning I went to the lime kiln, riding up the Estabrook road on a wood sled. The scene, after we had fairly entered the woods, was simply one of bewildering beauty. . . . The forest had put on an ermine robe. Not a tree or a bush of whatever species that was not clad wholly in purest white.

July 20, 1892. I did not go out today until after tea, when I started for a walk up the Estabrook Road. In Clark's woods, which I did not reach until 7.15, when the light was getting dim under the arches of the grand old trees, the concert of Wood Thrushes was the finest that I ever listened to. There were three of them close about me at one time and they fairly made the woods ring. With this species as with the Hermit there is much individual variation in quality of voice and variety and ease of execution and, as it happened, all three of the birds in Clark's woods this evening were particularly good performers while one was preeminently fine. On the other hand, a bird singing in the hemlocks on the opposite (eastern) side of the adjoining swamp had a voice so effectually "veiled" that I was actually

unaware of his presence until I came nearly under the tree in which he was sitting. Indeed, the odd medley of lows, wheezy gasps catarrhal squeaks and clucks, and thin, feeble whistles, not one note of which was either musical or pleasing, was wholly inaudible at a distance of fifty yards. It was not sotto voce singing. On the contrary, the poor bird was quite evidently exerting himself to the utmost as if striving to outdo his rivals in the woods across the swamp. Was he conscious of the lamentable failure or, like certain human singers equally devoid of musical ability, did he delude himself into the belief that he was really producing melodious sounds? It occurred to me that possibly he might be deaf .

October 8, 1892. Holden's Meadow was alive with crows, walking about feeding. I counted fifty. They reminded me of the Rooks in England. Every little while a few would rise and start off southward, cawing loudly as if calling on the others to follow, but all such attempts failed to start the main host to which these adventurous pioneers invariably returned. One of them, however, succeeded at length in raising great excitement by discovering an Owl (doubtless the same [Great Horned Owl] which I have seen there before this autumn) in Holden's woods and shouting the news in Crow language to the feeding birds. "An Owl! An Owl! Wake up, you sleepy, murderous, yellow-eyed villain, you mule-eared Knave! Come on, friends, and help me drive the thief from his stronghold! Let us pluck out his cat-ears and gouge out his big eyes and pummel and peck him to death!" All this and more to the same purpose, if I understood the Crow rightly. He did not call in vain for in a twinkling the able horde left their repast and came trooping to the woods where they clustered all over the tops of the trees and shouted and raved and swore as long as I was within hearing.

[\[71\]](#) **Estabrook's Violets.** Dr. Robert E. Cook, the Director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, did his post-doctoral research on violets in Estabrook Woods. He wrote in *Smithsonian* magazine, "When the first spearheads of skunk cabbage push through Estabrook's snow, I begin my search for violets. . . . I try to understand why one species can grow and reproduce very well in one habitat and not another, and why there are two or three plants in a patch rather than twenty. So I've chosen populations of violets for close scrutiny, much as one might track a pride of lions in the East African savanna to know and understand their lives" (Robert E. Cook, "Fragile Blossoms of Spring Aren't Shrinking Violets" *Smithsonian* [March 1978]: 66). I have corrected the scientific names and added the current common names for Thoreau's botanical references using Ray Angelo's *Botanical Index*

to the *Journal of Henry David Thoreau* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984).

[72] The Thoreau quote is from XII: 347, September 24, 1859.

[73] *NHE*, 173-74. The word *poet* can, for Thoreau, mean *philosopher*.

[74] Henry D. Thoreau, "Natural History of Massachusetts," *NHE*, 29.

[75] Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth Century Science* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 173.

[76] Sherman Paul, *The Shores of America: Thoreau's Inward Exploration* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1958), 396, 399.

[77] E. O. Wilson, Address to the Annual Meeting of the Thoreau Society, First Parish Church, Concord, Mass., July 1995.

[78] Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996), 225.

[79] Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*, 275 n.24.

[80] Henry D. Thoreau, "Succession of Forest Trees," *NHE*, 73; and "Dispersion of Seeds," *Faith in A Seed*, ed. Bradley P. Dean (Washington: Island Press, 1993), 152, 154 and notes. This latter essay and book will be hereafter referred to in the text as ("DS," *Faith*).

[81] William Howarth, *The Book of Concord* (New York: Penguin Books edition, 1983), 198.

[82] These urgent concepts concerned others of Thoreau's contemporaries. For example, George Perkins Marsh published in 1864 his *Man and Nature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1965), which forcefully proclaimed that man was in the process of reducing the earth and its forests to a condition of impoverished productiveness. Marsh had originally proposed the title, *Man the Disturber of Nature's Harmonies*. Marsh, who of course probably had never seen Thoreau's journal, later praised him as an observer of organic nature. The two make an interesting study in different backgrounds and approaches. Their dismay and sense of urgency are parallel. Stuart Udall described the situation Marsh saw as one in which "Men were working against themselves" (Stewart L. Udall, *The Quiet Crisis* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963], 79).

[83] Bode, *The Portable Emerson*, 37.

[84] **Asa Gray and the Asa Gray Spring.** A series of three articles by Harvard's Asa Gray, which were sympathetic to Darwin, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July, August, and October, 1860 (Asa Gray, "Darwin

and the Origin of Species," *Atlantic Monthly* 6 [July, August 1860]: 109, 229, and "Darwin and His Reviewers," 6 [October 1860]: 406). The quotation in the text is in 6 (August 1860): 235. Though these articles were unsigned, as was the convention at the *Atlantic Monthly* at that time, "no special mystery has been made of the authorship of reviews or of opinions in the several departments," says an authoritative index (*The Atlantic Index: A List of Articles with Names of Authors Appended, Published in "The Atlantic Monthly," from Its Establishment in 1857 to the Close of the Sixty-Second Volume in 1888* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1889], 3). The *Atlantic* articles were the most comprehensive and widely distributed effort by Gray, who was the American scientist most determined that Darwin should have a fair hearing. Gray did, however, have doubts about the *cause* of variation (for the science of genetics was still unknown) and about the theological implications of natural selection (i. e., its implications about the existence and role of divine power) (A. Hunter Dupree, *Asa Gray, Botanist and Friend of Darwin* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1988], 298).

Thoreau regularly read the *Atlantic* (Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988), 62). Furthermore, it had been Gray's brother-in-law who brought *Origin of Species* to Concord on New Year's Day, 1860, introducing Thoreau to the book. Sattelmeyer's book provides an excellent summary of the evolving nature of the debate on evolution in the 1850s, on 78-92, as does, at greater length, Walls, *Seeing New Worlds*. Asa Gray had kept his distance from the Transcendentalists, because, Dupree suggests, as an empiricist he distrusted their idealism.

There is said to be an "**Asa Gray Spring**" in Estabrook near Punkatasset, allegedly named such by Minot Pratt after Professor Gray lingered there in admiration during a June tour in the 1860s of the Pratt botanical nursery in the Woods (Bacon, *Walks and Rides*, 204). (Bacon notes that some of the plant material Pratt introduced into the region was obtained from Gray's Cambridge Botanical Garden [178].) Thoreau does not refer to a spring of this name, and its location is unclear to me. Bacon, writing forty years later, described it as being (if I read his hiking directions correctly) northwest of Punkatasset and set in "a frame of mossy stone against a wooded bank, shaded by a large red maple." Sarah S. Chapin, in her delightful "Eleven Weeks at Turtle Pond" reports that a spring believed by Mary Fenn to be the Asa Gray Spring is to the west of Turtle Pond on the Spruce Trail ([photocopied typescript of

report, September 10, 1976, at CFPL], 3). The Sierra Club's book of Herbert Gleason photographs, *Thoreau Country* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1975) includes (as both frontispiece and on page 67) a June 19, 1901 photograph labeled "'Asa Gray Spring' (Minot Pratt's)." Gleason himself, however, identified this photograph only as "Minot Pratt's Spring," but it now appears that even Gleason's identification is mistaken, for another spring is probably Minot Pratt's (see endnote 60). Gleason's draft text on a proof print for his volume "Photographs" reveals his confusion (Gleason, "Photographs Illustrating the Writings," 2d. ser., VII, 29). He added to the above legend on this proof print *but omitted on the final print* the bracketed phrase " [Often called Asa Gray Spring]" (box of original Gleason prints, some with annotations, in vault, CFPL, folder XIII).

Later indexers of the Gleason negatives do refer to the June 19, 1901 photograph as the "Asa Gray Spring," but their source for this conclusion is unknown (Barbara and William Howarth, "Herbert W. Gleason Photographic Negatives, Concord Free Public Library" [index, December 1972], for negative 131.91, June 19, 1901).

From the botanical evidence, however, Ray Angelo of Harvard infers that the Asa Gray Spring is the same as the distinctive Minot Pratt Spring that he rediscovered (see endnote 60). He believes that it was the distinctiveness of the formation and the botanical richness (evidence of which still exists) at this latter spring which would have led Mr. Pratt to show it to Asa Gray and would have caused the professor to linger there. If Mr. Angelo is correct, the spring photographed by Gleason on June 19, 1901, and displayed in the Sierra Club book, has an unknown name. But this would not be the only unnamed spring in Estabrook Woods.

[85] Paul, *The Shores of America*, 293.

[86] March 11, 1842, Harding, *Correspondence*, 63-4.

[87] 2:224, winter 1845-46. This image of the harmony between man and nature at the moment of transcendence is a powerful one in Emerson's book *Nature*, as for example, in the famous "transparent eyeball" passage:

"Standing on the bare ground, -my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, -all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the

Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. . . .
Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside
in nature, but in man, *or in a harmony of both.*" (Emphasis added.
Bode, *Portable Emerson*, 11)

[88] Pub. L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970.

[89] Essay "The Conservation Ethic [1933]" in Aldo Leopold, *The River of the Mother of God*, ed. Susan L. Flader and J. Baird Callicott (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 183. Leopold described diversity, one of the criteria he used to judge the ecological impacts of agriculture, using concepts of harmony and productivity: "Diversity [in this case] means a food chain aimed to harmonize the wild and the tame in the joint interest of stability, productivity, and beauty" (Aldo Leopold, "The Round River," *A Sand County Almanac with other essays* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966], 185).

[90] "President's Message," message of transmittal to Congress of the First Annual Report of the Council on Environmental Quality (August, 1970), xiv-xv.

[91] *NHE*, 92. Aldo Leopold said it another way: One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise. (Leopold, "The Round River," *A Sand County Almanac*, 184)

[92] For Blood's woods as specimen of primitive oaks, see XIV:217, November 5, 1860. For "remarkable proof" in Shattuck's woods, see XIV:187, October 29, 1860. (Interestingly, map G-2 of the 1994 Concord assessors' maps annotates a parcel deep in Estabrook as "Shattuck Wood Lot.") For Agassiz, see "Introduction," *Faith*, 8. See also Robert D. Richardson Jr., *Henry Thoreau, A Life of the Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 362, 373-86; and "The Succession of Forest Trees," *NHE*, 77. Though others had written about the principle of forest succession, Thoreau was the first to explain how the process worked for individual species and their seeds (Howarth, *Book of Concord*, 194).

[93] XIV:187, October 29, 1860. Related passages from Estabrook are at "DS," *Faith*, 152, 154, 259 note.

[94] "DS," *Faith*, 121, 172-3. ~~Through sympathetic observation,~~

Thoreau had inferred what Aldo Leopold wrote about: "Foresters attribute the inferior performance of the old slashing to its depleted microflora, meaning that underground community of bacteria, molds, fungi, insects, and burrowing mammals which constitute half the environment of the tree" ("The Last Stand [1942]", in Leopold, *The River of the Mother of God*, 293). Leopold fits Thoreau like a hand fits a glove.

[95] **The fate of the Walden house in Estabrook.** Thoreau persistently refers in his writings to his Walden cabin as a "house," and so will I (Roland W. Robbins, "House Hunting for Henry D. Thoreau," *TSB* 92 [1965]). On Sept. 3, 1849, two years after Thoreau left Walden to return to his family's house in the village, farmer D. B. Clark (who lived in Estabrook just north of Punkatasset) wrote in his diary, "Helpt James [his brother] move his building from Walden pond" to the Clark family farm on the old Carlisle (Estabrook) road. On the 15th he added, "rained some, worked on James' cellar," which suggests some type of occupancy was intended (Clark, "Diary"). It is not clear why the cabin was moved to Estabrook (explanations range from James' philosophical sympathy with Thoreau's experiment to the family's desire to give a sense of protected independence to a family member of limited capacity), or whether the house was lived in or for how long. Bacon says that the occupant (probably James) was soon committed to an asylum (*Walks and Rides*, 207). After a few years the house became a granary and storehouse though it is said that the family retained a sentimental attachment to it. At various times, Channing made disconnected marginal notes in his personal copy of *Walden* that tell of its fate. One of Sanborn's versions of those notes follows:

"[The hut] was standing, Sept. 5, '63, near old Clarke's, and still perfect. I visited it, next above old Clarke's on the Deserted Road, March, '60, also Feb., '62, Sept. 5, '63, and Jan., '66; torn down June 4, 1868. . . . (9) I saw H.'s rafters, June 4, 1868, the ruins of this house on the old Carlisle Road, just pulled down. . . . (13) The house stood in perfect conditions as far as the frame and covering, to June 4, '68, a period of 23 years, and would have lasted a century. It was well built, the covering being poor. . . . (16) The windows were gone in '63, and the plaster mostly cracked off, from the moving to old Clarke's, in the N. part of the town, very near the opening of the old Carlisle Road. Used as a place to store corn—visited with Blake and Brown, Sept. 11, '64." (Sanborn, *Recollections*, 2: 390-92).

Sanborn later gave a prettified and supplemented version of Channing's comments in Sanborn's *Life*, 329-30. In 1965, Walter Harding, however, cited the *original* of Channing's notes to say that in 1868 the roof was removed and used for a pig pen, an impolite detail that does not appear in Sanborn's version. Harding continues, "In 1875 the remaining floor and timbers were made into a stable shed on the south side of the Brooks Clark barn. Still later the shed collapsed, the timbers were used to patch up the barn, and their identity was completely lost" (Harding, *Days*, 224, citing the detailed study by William E. Griswold, "After Walden: A Biography of Thoreau's Hut" [copy of typescript without map attachments, 1954, in CFPL]).

Where was the Walden house in Estabrook? It was on the left of the old Estabrook road, probably a short distance after passing the Brooks Clark house (which was near 393 Estabrook Road). Its exact location and how far it was from the road have been debated. Griswold, with access to Raymond Emerson's and Roland Robbins's documents, concluded that the Clark brothers placed the house by the roadside for twelve days while they dug a cellar hole. Zimmer reports that Mrs. Willeta Dodge, wife of a former owner of the farm, told Roland Robbins that the hut was set back from the Estabrook road "not in excess of about one hundred feet" but was further north (Jeanne M. Zimmer, "A History of Thoreau's Hut and Hut Site," *Concord Saunterer*, Supp. No. 3 [December 1973]). Griswold, on page 34, reported that Miss Gladys Clark (Daniel's granddaughter) showed him a map titled "Map of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County: Surveyed by the Town 1852," which had a black square northeast of the Brooks Clark farmhouse that corresponded with the spot the hut supposedly occupied (and was 107 feet from the road). I infer that this does not refer to a personal pen-and-ink annotation, but instead refers to the printed mark showing an unidentified structure that appears on the well-known Walling map of 1852, which was completed with the aid of a local "Civ. Engr." named H. D. Thoreau. The map attachments to Griswold's report are missing from the copy at the CFPL, but the Walling map is reproduced in Robert F. Stowell, *A Thoreau Gazetteer*, ed. William L. Howarth (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), 10, Map 6. Robbins suggested that the house had more than one resting place over the years. Bacon states that the Walden house once "stood within an angle in the stone wall on the edge of this [old Estabrook] road" (*Walks and Rides*, 203). The late Raymond Emerson, Waldo's grandson and the owner for many years of the Brooks Clark house, remembers his father pointing out that the hut had been by the side of the Estabrook road, as does Cyrus Clark's niece.

It is plausible to me that the as-printed 1852 Walling map marks the Walden house's site at that time, particularly because James Clark was still alive (until 1854), and the map maker would not be likely to show a structure unless it had been recently occupied or was suitable for occupancy. The current owners of the Brooks Clark house site at 393 Estabrook Road, however, believe that the Thoreau house was at some point "at the exact site where the small brick cottage is located by the side of the [old Estabrook] road." In a letter to the author dated September 26, 1996, they say,

"During our recent restoration of the [small brick] cottage, which was constructed about 1920, we found two distinct foundations. The cot tage itself is about 20 by 28 feet and rests on stone/cement foundation walls about 3 ft high which were constructed at the time of the brickwork. However, inside this perimeter was a deeper, smaller, earlier, dry-laid foundation fieldstone [*sic*] in the range of 10 by 14 feet (approximate). Based on our study of the maps along with this finding, we are fairly certain that this was the location of the cabin. The early foundation is now inaccessible as it is behind poured concrete walls."

Because this property dominates one of the principal entrances to Estabrook, perhaps a word about other changes there is appropriate. The owners' consultants determined that Brooks Clark's house itself had undergone so many changes over the years that, at the time it was demolished in 1995, none of the original structure remained. The owners wrote, "We opened all the walls before demolition and found . . . not a single timber, joist, or stud [was] in the house from before 1900, [based] on the joinery techniques used, nails, masonry, and saw marks on the wood." Reconstructed on the site is the Stratton Tavern built in Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1759. The Strattons settled in Concord in the mid-1600s and, though some moved to Deerfield-Northfield in 1713, the family was represented on Concord's minutemen muster roll in 1775. Though the Strattons had no direct connection with Estabrook, there was once a tavern (much less grand) nearby: Edward Jarvis recalled that "Abel Davis kept an indifferent tavern on the Carlisle road [probably Lowell Road]. . . . This was much the haunt of drinking men from Concord and Acton" (Jarvis, *Traditions*, 102). The barn at 393 Estabrook Road, replacing one of 1960s vintage, is a reconstruction of a 1790 Dutch barn from upper New York state.

Passing the fields, one can remember what Gladys Clark said about Cyrus Clark, who farmed nearby until he was ninety-six (in 1923): "[W]e

always enjoyed him because we could hear his voice way across the field calling to his horse as he worked, 'Come on, Kate.' That horse was a real part of his life" (Gladys Clark, Oral History, August 1979). Meadowlarks and breeding kestrels are now using the fields.

It appears that the approximate site(s) of the Walden-Estabrook house have been located well enough for most purposes, but what of the structure itself? Does any of it still exist? There are hints about the fate of the timbers, door, and planking. Among them is a neat, penciled note in the CFPL, purporting to be written by a former owner of the Brooks Clark farm, dated August 6, 1904 and signed "D. E. W." I cannot discover the writer's identify. This note states that a prior owner "Mr. [Daniel] Sullivan bought the place and added the hut to the barn with some change to enlarge the barn. Years later we owned the place & in rebuilding the barn came across the old hand-hewn timbers and boards. We saved the timbers hoping one day to reproduce [Thoreau's] hut, but the farm has since passed from me, but I have several of the timbers. . . . If the inquirer is interested to ever see the timbers, such as I have, I shall be very glad to show them at anytime he may be in Concord."

Fragments of the house may be in collections. For example, Middlebury College had in 1940 "a piece of the frame of the cabin by Walden pond showing the marks of Alcott's axe" (Viola C. White, ed., *A Check List: Abernathy Library of American Literature* [Middlebury: Middlebury College Press, 1940], 221). When Raymond Adams received from Fred Hosmer via Dr. Fred S. Piper an inch square chip of the Walden house, he wrote Dr. Piper that "I felt as though I had a piece of the True Cross, though I supposed it was but a piece of the True Crossbeam" (Raymond Adams, *Thoreau News Letter* [June 9, 1936], 1).

[96] The Channing quotation is from Sanborn, *Recollections*, 2: 399. The other journal references to the Walden house in Estabrook are VII:235, March 8, 1855; XIII:314, May 26, 1860; XIV:191, October 29, 1860; and XIV:263, November 24, 1860.

[97] XIV:264-65, November 24, 1860. The final paragraph (slightly modified and less effective) also appears in "Wild Fruits," the beginning of a book-length manuscript Thoreau wrote during the summer of 1860 and winter of 1860-61 (*Faith in A Seed*, 180).

[98] The lines are from Emerson's poem "Woodnotes: I" (Bode, *The*

Portable Emerson, 644). This quotation is used by Thoreau as the concluding lines of an epigraph opening the climactic "Thursday" chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, 298. In this chapter, Thoreau and his brother John (who had died prior to its writing) leave the river and journey to the summit of Mount Washington, which Thoreau refers to as Agiocochook, the place of the great spirit. See also for Thoreau on such old, uninhabited roads, 3:317-24, July 21, 1851; XII:347, September 24, 1859; and "Walking," *NHE*, 102.

[\[99\]](#) V:34-35, March 21, 1853.

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