Last July 14th, members of the Emerson Society visited the Concord Free Public Library during the Thoreau Society's Annual Gathering. As Curator of Concord's Special Collections, I showed them representative manuscript, printed, and visual items from among the Library's Emerson holdings. To the surprise of both presenter and audience, even some of the group who had been using the Library for decades were unaware of the full extent of the Emerson materials here. Although the Special Collections staff has worked over the past decade to organize and describe unprocessed archival and manuscript collections, to prepare on-line cataloging for all types of materials for OCLC, RLIN,* and the database of the Minuteman Library Network (much of this work supported by federal funding), to create an informative and user-friendly web site, and to publicize holdings through a variety of outreach programs, there is clearly still a need to take advantage of all opportunities to inform the scholarly community of the significance of Concord's Emerson collections.

In offering my personal view of what is most important and useful about the holdings of the Concord Free Public Library, I hope to remind those who have used the collections of their richness and research value, and to alert those unfamiliar with the Library to the availability of a major and far from fully plumbed resource. I want, as Emerson wrote to Brook Farmer Charles King Newcomb on 16 August 1842, to "by & by make our village [read “library”] more attractive to you."

What makes Concord's Emerson holdings so special? There are a number of good answers, but perhaps the strongest is that the collections here—actively growing since the Library's founding in 1873—are wide-ranging, complex, and above all interconnected. They provide a variety of different types of research materials illuminating aspects of the life and work of Emerson, one item dovetailing with another to create a coherent picture in the same way that the pieces of a puzzle interlock to form a whole. Of course we have spectacular “high-spot” items that qualify as national treasures in and of themselves. But however impressive such individual items may be, they are most useful to the scholar as threads in the larger fabric of documentation. What matters is not just what an archive has, but also how it all fits together.

One of the best examples of the coherence of the Concord Free Public Library holdings is provided by a sequence of materials relating to the 1835 celebration in Concord of the bicentennial of the Town's incorporation. In 1985, to commemorate Concord's 350th anniversary, David Emerson presented the manuscript of the discourse that Ralph Waldo Emerson had delivered at the celebration in 1835. A stellar gift, to be sure, but one that is doubly meaningful viewed in combination with other Library holdings.

Emerson's manuscript, containing numerous emendations and deletions in the author's hand, was used both for delivering the speech and as printer's copy for the 1835 pamphlet publication of the discourse (printed in Concord). The Library owns the printed version as well as the manuscript. A comparison of manuscript and printed text tells something of Emerson's editorial process. In addition, we have typed transcripts of the many volumes of manuscript Emerson journals in the Houghton Library at Harvard. Among them is Journal L, "Concord," which contains material upon which Emerson drew in preparing his oration. The Library also houses the original Town records used by Emerson as source material for the periods of Concord history treated in the discourse. Typed transcripts and municipal records may not be as glamorous as holograph Emerson manuscripts. However, they are useful tools for scholars seeking to understand Emerson as a thinker and writer.

Furthermore, the Special Collections include the records of the Committee of Arrangements for the 1835...
EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS
The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Published at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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Managing Editor: Wesley T. Mott
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SESSION I
Emerson in New England,
Editors: Phyllis Cole (Penn State Delaware County)

Emerson, Rhetoric, and Ecstasy,
Roger Thompson
(Edinburgh University)

Whose Waldo? Emerson and His New England
Biographers, 1881-1889,
Robert D. Habich (Ball State University)

American Literature Association Conference
The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels
at the twelfth annual conference of the American Literature
Association, to be held on 24-27 May 2001 in Cambridge,
Massachusetts. Both panels—as well as the society’s
annual meeting—will be conducted on Friday, 25 May,
at a time and room to be announced.

SESSION II
Emerson and Science.
Chair and Rapporsee: Laura Dassow Walls
(University of Wisconsin)

“Approaching Creation: Emerson and Evolution,” Barbara
Packard (UCLA)

The Transparency of Physics: Science and Ethics in
the Legacy of Emerson,” Ronald A. Bosco (University at
Albany—SUNY)

Emerson, Electricity, and the Redemption of Matter,”
Eric Wilson (Woke Forest University)

The ALA conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency
Cambridge, 575 Memorial Drive, in Cambridge, Mass.,
on 24-27 May 2001 (Thursday through Sunday). Besides
scores of panels, features include an exhibit of scholarly
books, an opening reception at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday,
and a major celebration on Saturday at 7:00 p.m. on
Thursday. The conference fee of $100 ($50 for graduate
students, independent scholars, and retired faculty) covers the costs of the conference in
cluding the opening and closing receptions and two lunches.
The Hyatt Regency Cambridge will offer a conference rate of $139 for a single or double room (triples are $164). For
reservations and information, call 1-800-233-1234 before 15 April 2001 and
request the American Literature Association conference rate.
The official ALA travel agent is Travel Professionals,
which will attempt to negotiate discounted airfares and
which now charges a $10 service fee. Their toll-free number is 888-293-9441.

For more information about the conference, check the
ALA web site—www.americanliterature.org—or e-mail
the conference director, Professor Maria Karafilis at
mkarafi@calstatela.edu.

Cuban Scholar Seeks Leads on Poetry
Criticism

A new member of the Emerson Society from Cuba—
Professor Felix Flores—would like to hear from
Emersonians with suggestions about criticism of Emerson’s poetry.
Professor Flores won the 2000 Marinello Prize,
which now charges a $10 service fee. Their toll-free number is 888-293-9441.

For more information about the conference, check the
ALA web site—www.americanliterature.org—or e-mail
the conference director, Professor Maria Karafilis at
mkarafi@calstatela.edu.

Annual Meeting
The Annual Meeting of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
will be held at the Hyatt Regency in
Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Friday, 25 May.
As has been our practice since 1991, the 2001 Annual Meeting
is being conducted during the annual conference of the
American Literature Association. The exact time and
location have not been announced, but details should
be forthcoming in the ALA program. For conference
information see the first item in “PROSPECTS.”

“Emerson Weekend” with the Philosophy
Foundation

“Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Infinite Soul” is the theme of a
weekend program being offered in Concord, Massachusetts,
by the Philosophy Foundation, Inc. on 5 and 6 May 2001.
Activities include tours of the Emerson House and
the Alcott Orchard House, and a Curator’s Tour of Emerson
primary materials in the Concord Free Public Library, as
well as lectures and a tour of the Thoreau Institute. For more
information, call 1-800-423-4553, or visit www.philosophy
foundation.org.
Edward Jarvis. Jarvis annotated his copy of Shattuck extensively, commenting with an insider’s knowledge on many topics, among them the 1835 celebration. His account of the culture, the city, and the events of the 1835 celebration is eye-opening. In 1835 as surely as in 2001, local personalities, politics, and agendas influenced the course of events.

The Library also holds the copy of Lemuel Shattuck’s 1835 _A History of the Town of Concord_ that once belonged to physician, statistician, and social historian Edward Jarvis. Jarvis annotated his copy of Shattuck extensively, commenting with an insider’s knowledge on many topics, among them the 1835 celebration. His account of the culture, the city, and the events of the 1835 celebration is eye-opening. In 1835 as surely as in 2001, local personalities, politics, and agendas influenced the course of events.

All of these materials provide context for understanding the holograph discourse—how it evolved, the climate in which it was delivered. The fact that the manuscript treasure is part of a cluster of related materials enhances its significance and elevates it above the antifactual level. The history and social fabric of Concord and the lives of W.H. Emerson—on whom Emerson depended—are documented not through high-spot collecting but by the thoughtful and deliberate accumulation of many types of material, all of them informative.

In addition to the 1835 discourse, the Special Collections include a number of other dazzling Emerson holdings: the manuscript of the essay “Culture,” prepared for publication in the _Atlantic Monthly_ (it appeared in the September 1860 issue and later in the same year as an essay in _The Conduct of Life_), presented in 1873 as part of a Concord Free Public Library dedication gift by publisher James T. Fields; twenty-two manuscript letters from Emerson to Charles King Newcomb, written between 1842 and 1858; first printings of Emerson’s major writings and orations, among them _Nature_ (1836). _An Oration, Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge_ ... (1837), _An Address Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge_ ... (1838), and _An Address Delivered in the Court-House in Concord, Massachusetts_ ... on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies (1844), all in collector’s condition; a complete run of _The Dial_ , with wrappers intact; a group of volumes from Emerson’s own library, including several (presented to the Concord Free Public Library by Emerson himself in 1873) that apparently originated in the James Pierpont Graves library brought back from England in 1842 by Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane; and manuscript Henry David Thoreau surveys of Emerson properties in Concord, including woodlot land by Walden Pond. While each of these is unquestionably precious, they tell the researcher far more when examined in the context of related Library holdings than when elevated above other more pedestrian materials.

A second major strength of Emerson’s Concord holding is the degree to which they reflect Emerson’s place in the community of Concord. Indeed, the Concord Free Public Library is unique in this respect. The Library holds the records of various local organizations to which Emerson and members of his family belonged, and other materials that document his life as a resident of Concord. We have, for instance, the complete records of the Special Collections subject areas and because they more clearly constitute primary source materials, they are integrally connected to our major Special Collections subject areas and because they contribute to the fulfillment of our collecting mission—the documentation of Concord history, life, people, and literature from 1635 to the present time. As creative interpretation, art is added to the collections passively, solely through gift rather than purchase. Photographs, on the other hand, are actively collected because they more clearly constitute primary source material, potentially offering new information to add to the body of knowledge.

Notable Emerson-related works of art in the Concord Free Public Library include: the 1879 marble bust from life of Emerson by Daniel Chester French (the famous “face I shave” bust); the massive statue of the seated Emerson unveiled in the Library in 1914, also by French; the 1848 David Scott oil portrait of Emerson painted in Edinburgh, presented to the Library in 1873 by Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar; Elizabeth Hoar, and Reuben N. Rice; and William James Stillman’s 1857 oil painting _The Philosopher’s Camp in the Adirondacks_ (bequested by E.R. Hoar), in which Emerson and other members of the “Adirondack Club” are depicted. Among the Library’s photographs are formal portraits of Emerson at various times in his life, exterior and interior images of his home in the 19th and 20th centuries, pictures of family members, and many photographs of Emerson’s Concord. An Emerson family photograph album that came in 1982 from the estate of Amelia Forbes Emerson contains a particularly fine and moving collection of family portraits. I love to show this album to visitors, who are usually delighted to see Emerson captured as pater familias rather than sage.

A fourth and final distinctive characteristic of the Concord Free Public Library Emerson collections—and one that may provide a particular inducement for Emersonians to come to Concord—is the fact that certain intrinsically important materials here have been underused. For whatever reason, some significant collections remain largely untapped, seemingly awaiting the right researcher. I refer specifically to the valuable Newton Emerson Collection, a closed collection given to the Library in 1918 by Edith Emerson Forbes and Edward Waldo Emerson and since maintained as Boston collector William Taylor Newton assembled it. (Additions to our printed Emerson holdings, including newly published biography and criticism, are made to another collection, open and actively developed.) Newton’s Emerson library features: first printings of Emerson’s writings, including some English first editions; newspaper accounts of Emerson lectures and sermons, and the first appearance in print of letters to the editor by Emerson and of his contributions to various books and periodicals (many such items gathered by Newton in a two-volume scrapbook-style compilation entitled _Uncollected Writings_); contemporary reviews and assessments of Emerson in American and British periodicals and newspapers (assembled by the collector in sixteen indexed volumes called _Emersoniana_); and the first biographical and critical books about Emerson.

Newton was a knowledgeable collector. His gem of a library holds tremendous possibilities for the bibliographically oriented researcher, or for the scholar working on aspects of Emerson’s early reputation. Moreover, his collection is all the more valuable for Newton’s extensive extra-illustration of some items with photographs, engravings, and...
Study Group on Geldard’s Esoteric Emerson

Study group to discuss The Esoteric Emerson, by Richard Geldard.

Emerson in the CFPL

(Continued from page 5)

manuscript material. For example, he took the original two volumes of the large-paper edition of Cabot’s 1887 A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson and expanded them into four lavishly illustrated volumes, some of whose additions enlarging upon information within the printed text. Like other relatively unexplored Emerson holdings in the Special Collections, the Newton Emerson Collection offers much to the researcher willing to spend time with it.

There are no doubt other good reasons why Emerson scholars will find a visit to the Concord Free Public Library worthwhile. I sincerely hope that those presented above will draw some of you to Concord to see the collections for yourselves, or to revisit them if you have been here before. Those who have not used the Library in some time may not realize that the collections have grown and changed. Manuscript, printed, and photographic items are purchased as they become available and as funding permits, and donors continue to make gifts of important materials. Furthermore, as we work through our backlog of unprocessed archival and manuscript collections, newly identified material is brought to light. The Special Collections are dynamic, not static, and additions enlarging upon the information within the printed text. Like other relatively unexplored Emerson holdings in the Special Collections, the Newton Emerson Collection offers much to the researcher willing to spend time with it.

In his keynote address at the dedication of the Concord Free Public Library, Emerson proclaimed that “the Concord Library makes Concord as good as Rome. Paris or London.” Indeed, as far as Emerson studies go, few libraries anywhere can surpass the Concord Free Public Library in importance and usefulness. OCLC and RLIN are major bibliographic databases consulted by researchers around the world. The membership of OCLC, the Online Computer Library Center, includes a broad range of institutions, among them academic and research libraries. The Research Libraries Group more specifically represents academic and research institutions.

Leslie Perrin Wilson is Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library.

PROSPECTS

(Continued from page 3)

Study Group on Geldard’s Esoteric Emerson

Emerson Society member Harlan Ketterling is proposing a study group to discuss The Esoteric Emerson, by Richard Geldard. Emerson has been presented in many ways, says Mr. Ketterling, but never simply and radically as a spiritual teacher—a guide to the intimate processes of inner development and self-transformation. Geldard, he explains, asserts that he was just that. “In countless ways, including the example of his own life, he showed that ‘the holy and mysterious sources of life’ were available to anyone, at any hour of the day, who could ‘listen for the right word.’”

Mr. Ketterling proposes starting with Geldard’s chapter on “the courage to be what we are,” followed by the chapter on “the authentic life.” Call Mr. Ketterling at 508-376-2715.

Library Subscriptions to ESP

Members of the Emerson Society can help spread the word about Emerson and our Society by requesting that their academic or public library’s serials department open a subscription to Emerson Society Papers. Annual rates are only $10 (U.S.). Checks should be sent to the managing editor, Wesley T. Mott, Dept. of Humanities & Arts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA 01609-2280.

"Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Wisdom": Open Forum in Concord

At this year’s Thoreau Society Gathering, 12-15 July in Concord, the Emerson Society will offer a panel and audience discussion of Emersonian wisdom. All members of the Society are invited to propose a favorite passage (100-word limit) from anywhere in the essays, poems, journals, or letters that captures our writer’s wisdom for his time or ours. Contrace wisdom in any personal or philosophical context. Send your passage by 20 May, along with a comment on its significance (also about 100 words), to pro

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When Joseph Slater received the Emerson Society’s Distinguished Achievement Award in 1996, I wrote an appreciation of him as a friend and a scholar for this Journal (Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1996). Now that he has died, on the 22nd of February this year, of pneumonia that developed from a complication of other causes — including injuries caused by a fall when he slipped on the ice in getting out of a car — I find it hard to say much more than what was in that appreciation.

Joe’s family and friends, his colleagues at Colgate and his fellow Emersonians and others, will of course miss him; for he was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and brother, a loyal friend, a helpful collaborator, a wise mentor, and a courteous gentleman. Because he had something of the formality of the old school, some people when first meeting him thought him rather cold and reserved. But one didn’t have to know him as long as I did (we first met in 1948 at Rutgers) to realize that this was a superficial and false impression; he could be, and often was, thoroughly relaxed, congenial, and fun to be with. For example, the Emerson editors who stayed in a faculty house (the “Snow House”) at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge almost every summer in the 1970s and ’80s remember with pleasure the time each year when Joe would meet with us for an open meeting of the Editorial Board of the Collected Works edition, followed (or sometimes preceded) by a walk to the Akropolis Restaurant on Massachusetts Avenue for a “dutch treat” dinner. Nobody stood on ceremony then, and certainly not Joe.

In my correspondence files of the Emerson Works edition I have hundreds of letters from Joe about general problems of the edition and particular points of the several volumes we worked together on. His letters are serious but often funny at the same time, written with humor as well as good sense. He had the idiosyncracy of wanting to put everything on one page; and when he ran out of space before he exhausted his ideas — as he usually did — he would continue sideways across the top of the page, vertically up and down the side margins, and upside down (in a different colored ink) between the lines of the main text. Somewhere on the page I would find his signature, always in the form, “Yrs, &c., Joe.” Just a few days ago I had to go through one folder of them, looking for information I needed to answer a specific question; and the letters were such a joy to read that even after I found what I was looking for, I kept on until I had gone through the whole folder. Some day I plan to do the same with all the other folders. It is sad to think that I shall never again receive any letters like those.

As a scholar of Emerson and nineteenth-century American literature, Joe contributed much that will endure for a long time. His edition of the Emerson-Carlyle correspondence is still the standard edition of those documents; Emerson’s letters to Carlyle are not included in the ten volumes of the otherwise complete Rusk-Tilton Letters, and Joe’s long introduction is the most authoritative account of the relationship of the two men. I think, too, that his Historical Introductions to Essays I and II (Volumes 2 and 3 of the Collected Works) and his Informational Notes to both those volumes and The Conduct of Life (Volume 6, forthcoming) will continue to be the best places for future students of those volumes to begin their serious studies. Their thoroughness and high quality make me regret all the more that Joe was not able, as he had hoped, to write the notes to Volume 10, the final volume which will incorporate the prose writings that Emerson published in his lifetime but did not collect in book form.

—Douglas Emory Wilson