Len Gougeon, Distinguished University Fellow and Professor of American Literature at the University of Scranton, is the 2008 recipient of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society's Distinguished Achievement Award. The Society is pleased to make this acknowledgment of Professor Gougeon's longstanding commitment to Emerson studies, the pioneering quality of his publications, and the consistently high standard of scholarship he has displayed.

Professor Gougeon's best-known work, *Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery, and Reform* (University of Georgia Press, 1990), has had as profoundly positive an effect on our understanding of Emerson as any book published in the last thirty years. His deeply researched clarification of Emerson's record on the slavery issue has put all students of Transcendentalism permanently in his debt. Before the publication of this book, English professors had no counter-argument to the consensus of historians (from Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. to Stanley Elkins to Anne Rose) that Transcendentalism was an elegant name for retreating from the world and its difficulties—that it had, specifically, no efficient word to say or deed to perform in opposition to American slavery. It is hard to overstate the prejudicial effect of this consensus on the prestige of the intellectual life, for such a life was conceded by the selfsame historians to center, during the antebellum years, precisely on these moonstruck New England Platonists. What is the use of ideas, they seemed to imply, if ideas can't free a slave? That question has not been much asked since 1990. And asked even less frequently since 1995, when Len Gougeon teamed up with Joel Myerson to produce *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* (Yale University Press).

His most recent book is *Emerson and Eros: The Making of a Cultural Hero* (State University of New York Press, 2007), a compact, thematically organized biography that plots Emerson's intellectual and artistic development against the narrative of Joseph Campbell's hero archetype. One advantage of Gougeon's attentiveness to the heroic in Emerson's life and letters is that it productively centers the concept of Eros, the meaning of which Gougeon lays out in a useful variety of ways, following the varying lights under which Emerson saw it. As in *Virtue's Hero*, so too in *Emerson and Eros*, Gougeon looks into territory that other scholars have left alone. The association of Emerson and Eros may at first blush seem a little improbable, yet as we come to value him ever more seriously as a poet, Gougeon reminds us that Eros, in some form, is certainly the pivot of the poet's gift.

Professor Gougeon took his undergraduate degree at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and advanced degrees at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Since earning his Ph.D. in 1974, he has published numerous articles, principally on Emerson, in such major journals as *The New England Quarterly, Modern Language Studies, American Literature, Studies in the American Renaissance, American Transcendental Quarterly*, and *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*. He has served as President of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and has also been an active supporter and member of other Transcendentalist author societies. He is currently at work on a monograph treating Anglo-American literary relations during the period of the Civil War.

—Albert J. von Frank
Prospects.

Calls for Papers

Program Co-Chairs Todd Richardson and Susan Dunston announce calls for papers on three Emerson Society panels in 2009.

American Literature Association, 21-24 May, 2009

Emerson after Cavell

Stanley Cavell is one of Emerson’s most provocative, influential, and dedicated readers. The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society invites paper proposals on all aspects of Cavell’s work on Emerson— including Emerson’s nonconformity, politics, epistemology, ethics, and his craft as a writer. Email 300-word abstracts to Todd H. Richardson (richardson_t@utpb.edu) by 20 December.

Teaching Emerson: A Roundtable Discussion

The teaching of Emerson, a central author in many American literature courses, remains wonderfully exhilarating yet deeply challenging. The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society invites short papers on any aspect of the teaching of Emerson’s works in a variety of contexts—from the undergraduate survey to a specialized graduate course. Innovative approaches to both well-known and typically overlooked texts are encouraged. Email 200-word abstracts to Todd H. Richardson (richardson_t@utpb.edu) by 20 December.

Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, 9-12 July 2009, Concord

Emerson and the Political Function of the Intellectual

Historically understood, Emerson was loath to engage directly with pressing political problems on the American scene. Such an understanding in large measure was brought about by Emerson himself. In the opening of his address “The Fugitive Slave Law,” he wrote, “I do not often speak to public questions. They are odious and hurtful and it seems like meddling with the govern­ing majority, Obama must now embody the idea of innovation.”^{\text{Newsweek online}} has Emerson less ambiguously suggesting that the United States was poised for a new era. But such an era happened — and took the particular shape it did— only because of the skill and ambition of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. One of Barack Obama’s favorite thinkers, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote in 1841 that “the two parties which divide the state, the party of Conservatism and that of Innovation... have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made... Innovation is the salient energy. Conservatism the pause on the last moment. To create a new governing majority, Obama must now embody the idea of innovation.”^{\text{Emersonian scholars. Send manuscripts to the editor, Wesley T. Mott, Department of Humanities & Arts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609-2280, or email wmot@wpi.edu. Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book review editor Jennifer Gurley, Department of English, Le Moyne College, 1419 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, NY 13214-1399.}}
I liked the formality of the semicolon, and the way it echoed biblical lines like the ones from Ecclesiastes (as punctuated in the Authorized Version): "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full." Or "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."

This sense was reinforced when I read more of Emerson's speech, where other semicolons kept this one company: "The British instantly retreated," his paragraph continued. "We had no electric telegraph; but the news of this triumph of the farmers over the King's troops flew through the country, to New York, to Philadelphia, to Kentucky, to the Carolinas, with speed unknown before, and ripened the colonies to inevitable decision."

Emerson's semicolon isn't required, and later versions of the line often use a comma. The Chautauqua, in fact, revised Emerson's lines even more thoroughly and bombastically in 1897: "The thunderbolt falls on an inch of ground; but the light of it fills the horizon. The British instantly retreated!"

But I voted for the semicolon, and that's what the marker has. So my recommendation for a National Punctuation Day outing—for semicolon fans within range—is a visit to the Old North Bridge, to honor both Emerson's semicolon and your freedom to use it where less daring punctuators might make do with a modest comma.

Reprinted by permission of the author. Ms. Freeman's column also appears weekly at www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/jan_freeman. For past columns, go to boston.com/ideas/throwout.

2008 Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society took place on 23 May at 11:00 a.m. in Room Pacific H of the Hyatt Regency in Embarcadero Center, San Francisco. President Elizabeth Addison presided, and approximately twenty members attended.

1. Secretary-Treasurer Robert Habich could not be present but offered his report in written form. Total membership stands at 184 in May 2008, including international members from Japan (7), France (4), Germany, Italy (3), as well as Australia, Canada, China, England, Finland, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, and Spain (1 each). The death of longtime member Gary Collison was noted with sorrow. The treasurer's report was accepted. Current assets of the society stand at $31,774 as of 1 May 2008. Major expenses of the previous twelve months include two Emerson scholarships ($3,500, design and layout of E, $300), website updates ($880), a supply of medals for Distinguished Service Awards ($665), postage ($316), catering for the RWS birthday celebration at ALA 2007 ($300), and support for the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering ($250). Major credits of the previous twelve months include membership dues ($4681) and appreciation of CDs ($713).

At the recommendation of Treasurer Habich and with the credits of the previous twelve months, the membership awards will be increased to $750. A contribution of $250 to this year's Thoreau Society Annual Gathering was also approved.

2. Elizabeth Addison reported a plan to put Awards Committee procedure in written form, as the Advisory Board had discussed and recommended. Jennifer Gurley and Roger Thompson will create this record.

3. Joel Myerson reported on updates of the society website, where 250 new images have been added. He urged members to visit and suggest improvements.

4. Ronald Bosco reported as General Editor of the Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, published by Harvard University Press. This project, which has now reached the 46th anniversary of its conception, is slated for completion by 2011. The Editorial Board named Bosco as the Principal Editor in 2003, and after the death of Douglas Emory Wilson in 2005, he brought Joel Myerson and Albert von Frank onto the Editorial Board. Myerson has served as a Textual Editor of volumes 8 through 10, and organized a schedule for remaining work. Society and Solitude (vol. 7) was published in December 2007, edited by Bosco and Wilson; Letters and Social Acts (vol. 8) will be completed by the end of summer 2008, edited by Bosco, Myerson, and Glen Johnson. Then just two volumes will remain. Poems (vol. 9), edited by von Frank and Thomas Wortham, will be due at the press by the end of 2009 for appearance in 2010, and Unpublished Prose Writings: Addresses, Krantor, and Essays (vol. 10), edited by Bosco and Myerson, will be due at the press in 2010 and scheduled for publication early in 2011. Some discussion followed about the worthiness of a celebration sponsored by the Society at that point, but Bosco asked that any particular plans should await a time when the end is more immediately sight.

5. Future conferences were discussed. Susan Dunston reported that planning for a conference in Rome along with the Fuller and possibly Hawthorne Societies is still at the idea stage. It was also announced that a Margaret Fuller bicentennial conference will be sponsored in 2010 by the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston.

6. Elizabeth Addison spoke of the Society's desire to continue the dialogue began last year by Board members and RWEMA representative Phyllis Cole about ways we could support the Emerson House in Concord.

At the Board meeting, Elizabeth and Phyllis Cole volunteered to propose further involvement with Beatrix at this July's Thoreau Gathering in Concord.

7. At von Frank represented the Distinguished Achievement Award Committee in nominating Len Gougeon for this year's recipient and describing his accomplishments, especially in the recovery of Emerson's antislavery oratory. Len was not able to attend ALA this year and will be presented with his award after the Emerson session at the Thoreau Gathering in July. All Society members are sworn to secrecy until that moment.

8. The Society congratulated Todd Richardson on his solo creation as Program Chair this year of the successful former PALS and a fourth for the gathering. The Advisory Board proposed Susan Dunston as co-Program Chair for next year, so the remaining panel topic might be Emerson and philosophy, possibly focusing on the work of Stanley Cavell.

9. Other new officers were proposed, especially Barbara Packer and Daniel Malachuk as board members, with Michael Jonick as alternate should either decline. These members will replace Shoji Goto and Jennifer Gurley, whose terms conclude this year. Wesley Mott, chosen as President Elect last year, will give up editorship of ESP at the end of 2009. Bosco has expressed interest in picking up this position and is listed as Associate Editor even this year. He will end his term as Secretary/Treasurer at the end of 2009. All of these new officers were approved, and the meeting concluded with a half and a half to find a successor to Bob Habich as Secretary/Treasurer.

10. Members were urged to contact their libraries about subscribing to ESP, which is indexed by MLA and ALA and costs a mere $10 a year. Jennifer Gurley announced this year's awards and offered congratulations to all:

• Graduate Student Award: Erica Ann Kroll McCombs of the University of Illinois, Chicago, for her ALA paper "Civil Disobedience, Civil War and Satyagraha: The Application of Natural Law in Emerson, Thoreau and Gandhi."

• Research Award: Michael Jonick of SUNY-Albany to support consultation of manuscripts for his project "Tracing the 'Fragmentary Curve' of Emerson's Natural History of the Intellec."

• Subvention Award: Daniel Koch of Oxford University for a book, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Lecture Tour of Great Britain and the Revolution of 1832 (tentative title and view by a publisher (award conditional on publisher acceptance)

• Community Project Award: David La Rocca for a collaboration on Emerson and Nixtche.

12. Other announcements were offered by members present:

• Joan Mudge reported progress on her documentary film and companion book Mr. Emerson's Revolution. All two essays have been completed for the book; NEH and other funding sources are still being sought for the film, and a new director is soon to be interviewed.

• A new multimedia series entitled "Reading New England" was announced as an ongoing project of University of Massachusetts Press and the Boston Public Library. Free to the public, it will provide open access to primary sources online with information, analysis, and visual supplements. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next business meeting will be held at the May 2009 ALA in Boston.
abstracts of san francisco ala papers

the following panels were presented by the ralph waldo emerson society at the nineteenth annual conference of the american literature association in san francisco. the first two sessions were on 23 may 2008, the third on 25 may.

session i: emerson and war i
chair, elizabeth addison, western carolina university

concord's idealistic hawk: emerson's advocacy of "the benefits of... war"
ronald borsoi, university at albany, suny

abstract not available at press time.

emerson, thomas cary, and the mexican war
barbara packer, university of california, los angeles

what did emerson think of the mexican war (1846-48), and how did his attitude toward it square with that of his new england neighbors? toward the beginning of the war emerson wrote an "ode" inscribed to a young antiwar minister, w.h. channing, sat since put behind him. emerson's manner of reconciling his arguments in "resistance to civil government" (1849) and religiously inspired violence? emerson was compelled by the crucible of abolition and political violence as one of the most prescient and useful of his many contributions to the contemporary moment.

session ii: emerson's representations of asia
chair, sarah wiler, colgate university

heracles in emerson
shawn gotto, rikkyo university

one of heracles' fragments (on the universe) reads: "immemorially mortal, men die, living in their death and dying in their life." this appealed to emerson, who was looking for a universal law, something indispensable for his thinking and philosophy. post-mortem thought of god pass but a moment, death cannot be the absolute dissolution of life itself. it passes into a new form, a new energy, and it rises again in its opposite. in a sense, the living and the dead are identical, and death is connected to life. then, metamorphosis or transmigration must be the law of the universe. this unity of death and life suggests to emerson a new way of thinking. for, as heracles says, a beautiful harmony is brought about by opposites.

this cycle of cysclical transmutation suggests a divine form of thinking to bring about the revelation of thought: "decomposition is recombination," in emerson's words. to emerson, "all things cohere & unite," an idea he reads in the persian (avesta) and indus civilizations. the characteristic of the slave power and the burning ship (his figure for the u.s. during "bleeding kansas") point directly to his growing resolve over the slavery crisis. but what are we to make of "the turk," a figure of religiously inspired violence? emerson was compelled by the theological sanction brown and other abolitionists claimed for insurrectionary activity to reconsider basic questions about the positive ethical force of religious orthodox (supposedly long since put behind him). emerson's manner of reconciling his admission for the free-soulers with his condemnation toward their religious beliefs took the form of a secular rationale for warship, that sustained, whatever very heavily on the activation of a religious pluralism. when the journal entry was revised for use in "fate" (1860), the turk reappears alongside other models of ancient religious violence. the classical, the hindoo, the arab, the persian, and... the calvinist. this move on emerson's part from a quasi-abolitionist rhetoric of self-reliance and self-defense toward a more explicitly religious form was formally (though not substantively) religious is the secret topic of "fate," which in my reading turns out to be one of the most searching treatments of american political secularism in the nineteenth century. using recent writing that insists on the shared history of religion and secularism, i identify emerson's forger of a sacralized culture in which law, reason, and the state are the crucible of abolition and political violence as one of the most prescient and useful of his many contributions to the contemporary moment.

session iii: emerson and war ii
chair, todd richardson, university of texas-permian basin

civil disobedience, civil war, and satyagraha:
the application of natural law in emerson, thoreau, and gandhi
erika anne kroll mccombs, university of illinois at urbana-champaign

by comparing the work of ralph waldo emerson, henry david thoreau, and mahatma gandhi, this paper examines the main orientations of natural law endorsed by these three men, and how their applications of natural law used their own ethical perspectives to create theoretical approaches to civil disobedience and war. emerson, thoreau, and gandhi were all versed to different extents, in hindu philosophy and interwove these teachings into the following differences also can be recognized in their views of the roles of a "scholar." the duties of chu's "scholar" are the "cultivation of the self and the "government of the people," and his thought personal ethics is closely connected to social political ethics. emerson's "scholar," on the other hand, faces serious conflicts between trusting one's inner self and following moral standards. chu's "scholar" is exclusively limited to a great sage who embodied a moral ideal, while emerson's "scholar," using the power of imagination, has a tendency to create beauty and history.

emerson states that a poet, by the act of naming, liberates things into higher organizational states, with the inherent existence of the individual as a consequence. with the indwelling essence within things. for chu, when i (an abstract principle) comes to have a moral meaning by human investigation, it is called a "name." language, not the world of humans, merely indicates the external aspects of things. hence an essential difference between emerson's "giving names" and chu's "verifying names" can be pointed out. in emerson's polarity, the dual opposing poles have a tendency to develop toward unity by overcoming the struggle. "integrity" is a key word in emerson's view of peace. for emerson "integrity" doesn't mean a state of keeping harmony, but a dynamic process of evolution toward a more complete unity and realization of goodness. on the other hand, chu's yin-yang, two phases of movements of chi (a material force), is rather a principle of interchange and transformation. for chu "bringing peace throughout the world" will be finally realized by letting the state of "equilibrium and harmony" exist in perfection and supreme virtue manifest itself.

abstracts continued on page 8
their interpretations of morality; however, there was a distinct philosophical difference between the way in which Emerson and Thoreau conceptualized the workings of natural law through the progress of history and the way in which Gandhi conceptualized it. This variation caused Gandhi to pursue courses of action to eradicate oppression quite different from those eventually accepted by the two Transcendentalists. Emerson and Thoreau extracted the higher law from the natural world, among other processes. Consequently, their understanding of principled action was determined by the language of natural processes. Both Emerson and Thoreau believed that a cohesive moral philosophy could be extracted from the study of natural law. Gandhi, however, did not attempt to create a moral philosophy from natural processes but, rather, rejected the “law of the jungle” as a lower order of existence. And it is this disparity in opinion about the creative force that allowed Emerson and Thoreau to finally accept aggressive means above and beyond the application of civil disobedience, as evidenced by their support of John Brown and their writings about the Civil War, while Gandhi maintained firmly that nonviolence was the true “soul-force” of the Universe.

ROGER C. THOMPSON, Virginia Military Institute

In his first “Eloquence” essay, Ralph Waldo Emerson invokes the concept of kairos as a foundation for the development of a true rhetoric. He insists that “in transcendent eloquence, there was ever some crisis in affairs, such as could deeply engage the man to the cause he pleads, and draw all this wide power to a point” (CW 7: 92). The “crisis in affairs” often leads to the emergence of a heroic orator who can lead people to just action, and kairos as a type of heroic time appears throughout Emerson’s writings, such as in the Divinity School Address where he distinguishes between a good and a bad preacher based on their transcendence of time. Emerson carefully theorizing of conscientious violence in unfounded states deserves more attention.
Reviews

Emerson and Eros: The Making of a Cultural Hero,

This book has a superb project, which is to rejoice Emerson the thinker to Emerson the intuitional "visionary who feels as well as thinks." Its interrelatedness to Daniel S. Schwartz's previous book Emerson: Activist, Anarchist, and Reform (Georgia, 1990) it will anticipate that rehumanization involves social reform, and the book's final full chapter of "Concerns for a Common Home," another political position. But Gougeon's interest here is in the spiritual and ontological bases of Emersonian reform, and he argues that the sources of Emersonian rehumanisation is an intuitional morality based on Higher Law. This morality's core intuition is Eros, understood as the Divine, a oneness of being. As Emerson once put it as an abolitionist rally, liberty and justice would achieve through "the progress of the great universal human," that is, through humanity's self-consciousness. Individual morality redeems society when it rests on a felt intuition of the unity of the human and the divine. This is a powerful alternative to any total interconnection rejects the destruction of the basic wholeness of existence that is wreaked by slavery and similar phenomena. Moral intuitions underlie cultural heroism to the extent that they allow the hero to provide example a "transcendent, redemptive experience" to everyone in range. It is not only the weight of the sense of divine being leads to social reform or redemption. To explain, Gougeon offers the model of the "Whaling gangs of Henry David" and "the writer's voice" of Europe. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular

The Value of Transcendentalism for the Philosophy of Science,

Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.

The Philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau: Oriental Occidentals


Plato, as Emerson famously conceived him in 1850, embodied the noblest aspirations of the Greek warp of European. Writing in 1855, William T. Harris turns this characterisation back on himself. "What Emerson says," he writes, "may easily and properly apply to himself. But he goes further than Plato toward the Orient, and his pendulum swings further west into the Occident." (40). For Shoji Goto, a distinguished professor emeritus in the Department of English at Kikuyu University, this conception of Emerson might well serve as a corrective to severalczy's account of a trade of the transcendentalists in particular.
Emerson’s Wisconsin Land: An Update

JEANNA KADLEC
West Wisconsin Land Trust

When Ed Emerson, the city administrator of St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, roams a protected 25-acre property on Bass Lake in Burnett County, he feels a close connection to a well-known distant cousin. Emerson has papers indicating common ancestors with Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In the mid-1800s, Ralph Waldo Emerson purchased 129 acres near the Town of Trade Lake in Burnett County, Wisconsin, which included Government Lot 5, the property on Bass Lake. With that purchase, Emerson joined thousands of other land speculators who were buying up “western land.” Just before his death in April 1882, Emerson sold off one lot, and his heirs eventually sold off the remaining lots, including Government Lot 5.

Though Emerson apparently never set foot on the property, the land has retained its pristine condition; it is undisturbed, quiet—and now permanently protected. Emerson relations have walked the property, and thanks to the conservation easement, the property will remain in its natural state forever. The land is currently for sale by the easement holder, West Wisconsin Land Trust, through private broker Jim Sokup. The Bass Lake property was gifted to West Wisconsin Land Trust in late 2005 by Jack and Colleen Holmbeck, who purchased the property with the intention of saving it from development, a decision Emerson would certainly have lauded. (See Jack and Colleen Holmbeck, “Emerson Land Gifted to West Wisconsin Land Trust,” ESP 17 [Spring 2006]: 1, 11-12.) Wisconsin has the third largest concentration of freshwater lakes on the planet, and nearly 80 percent of the land bordering lakes and rivers are privately owned and already developed. The conservation easement on Bass Lake property ensures that this 25 acres of land and 1,400 feet of shoreline will be preserved in perpetuity.

The conservation easement allows for restorative and non-invasive recreational activities, such as canoeing or hiking. Though the land is for sale, West Wisconsin Land Trust has been actively involved in restoring the property. On 3 May 2008, WWLT staff and volunteers planted 1,600 tree seedlings—red oak and sugar maple—on two acres of the Bass Lake property. The seedlings planted were determined by pre-settlement vegetation. Red oaks and sugar maples have existed on the property since before Ralph Waldo Emerson’s time. The Bass Lake property is a hub of Wisconsin wildlife. The lake’s wild shoreline is covered with lily pads and weed beds; the lake itself has an abundant population of largemouth bass, northern pike, and sunfish. Loons, geese, eagles, and swans can be numbered among its inhabitants. Deer, beavers, bears, and wolves make their homes nearby.

It takes a special kind of person to purchase protected property. With rampant development and the demand for lakefront property, buying conserved land (or buying with the intention to protect) takes a single-minded devotion to environmental values. The Bass Lake property has been valued at $405,000. As the conservation easement restricts any development, it is currently for sale at $59,500. West Wisconsin Land Trust has enlisted James Sokup, a WWLT member and private broker, to sell the property. Sokup is familiar with conservation easements, and his experience selling protected property.

Sokup participated in the tree planting on Bass Lake earlier this year.

As one of America’s finest philosophers, Ralph Waldo Emerson understood our primary connection to nature. As such, it is fitting that the property he owned in the nineteenth century has been permanently preserved here in the twenty-first century. To learn more about private land conservation or the Bass Lake property, visit www.wwlt.org.

Annual Emerson Dinner

A dinner in honor of W. W. Emerson has become a tradition during the annual ALA conference. Emerson Society members celebrating at the San Francisco Il Fornitolo restaurant were, left to right, Bonnie Cary O’Neill, Jennifer Garley, Elizabeth Addison, John Davidson, Yoshio Takeshiko, Leslie Ezell, Shoji Goto, Todd Richardson, Peter Baliaum, and Mikyoro Sakama. (Todd Richardson reports that the photo was taken by a “kind stranger” using Professor Takeshiko’s camera.)
IN MEMORIAM

Vinnie
1993–2008

Beloved Friend and Editorial Assistant

"The very...cats incline to affection in their relation to man. It often happens that a man is more humanely related to a cat... than to any human being. What bond is it relates us to any animal we keep in the house but the bond of affection. In a degree we grow to love one another."

—Henry D. Thoreau, Journal, 29 April 1851

—WTM