While most Emersonians are familiar with Emerson's considered rejection of George Ripley's invitation to join the Utopian community at Brook Farm in December of 1840, some might be less aware of his experience a year later with another famous communitarian, Adin Ballou (1803-1890), the founder of the Hopedale Community.

Born in Cumberland, R.I., Ballou was raised in a strict Calvinist household before his conversion to a more enthusiastic and fundamental "Christian Connection" faith. In 1821, he became a self-appointed preacher within that group, but very soon came to doubt their doctrine of "Destructionism," a belief in the "final doom of the impenitent wicked." As a result, in 1822, he converted to the Universalist faith, which professed a belief in the unconditional salvation of all souls. However, by 1830 Ballou began to become uncomfortable with this "ultra-Universalist" position, as it was called, and eventually aligned himself with the "Restorationists," who held that some type of purgatorial process would necessarily precede the restoration of sinners into the grace of God. The Restorationist view tended to emphasize good works and strong moral values which would aid the individual in leading a good and just life. This, in turn, encouraged Ballou's commitment to a variety of reform efforts and to the development of his concept of "Practical Christianity," which applied Christian principles to specific social ills.

Undoubtedly as a result of this development, in 1837 Ballou became convinced that slavery was a crime against humanity, as well as a sin against God. He offered his first antislavery sermon on the Fourth of July in that year. In the following year, he began an association with William Lloyd Garrison which led him to embrace the causes of Non-resistance and "no government." Sometime earlier Ballou had adopted a strong temperance policy. His association with these radical reform efforts alienated him from his congregation in Mendon, Massachusetts, and in January 1841 he organized the Hopedale Community. In April of the following year the group established itself on 250 acres of land in Milford, Massachusetts. The community was designed to put into effect Ballou's practical Christian values, which included "abhorrence of war, slavery, intemperance, licentiousness, covetousness, and worldly ambition in all their forms."

About the time Ballou was drawing up his plans for the Hopedale Community, he was also working the lecture circuit, promoting his various reforms, including communitarianism. On February 4, 1841, he lectured on antislavery at the Universalist Church in Concord. The following night he spoke on Non-resistance at the Concord Lyceum. Emerson attended the latter gathering, and apparently was not impressed. He reported the following to his brother William:

At this point I left my sheet this P.M. to go & find a Mr Ballou who is here to christianize us children of darkness in Concord with his Non Resistance & who is an apostle of "Communities" he now forming one of 25 families at Mendon—but he & his friends & Lyceum &c have eaten up all my afternoon & evening—it is night 10 o'clock & some more 'copy' must go to diabolic printer in morn.²

Obviously, Emerson was in no mood to be converted to philanthropic enterprises by the visiting Ballou.³ One possible reason for this is revealed in his journal. An entry dated February 4, 1841, indicates that he was feeling a sort of depression at the time, perhaps related to the deadlines which he faced. In his private rumination he states:

But lately it is a sort of general winter with me. I am not sick that I know, yet the names & projects of my friends sound far off & faint & unaffected to my ear, as do, when I am sick, the voices of persons & the sounds of labor which I overhear in my solitary bed. A puny limitlety creature am I, with only a small annuity of vital force to expend, which if I squander in a few feast days, I must feed on water & moss the rest of the time.⁴

(Continued on page 2)
Ballou (Continued from page 1)

For his part, Ballou was apparently not impressed with Emerson. In his Autobiography he indicates that his lecture in Concord was delivered to a large audience, “including many of the literary and professional elite of that community.” He goes on to note that “This visit to Concord was memorable to me as furnishing the only opportunity I ever had of a personal interview with the distinguished Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was a pleasant one, being devoted chiefly to a free conversation between us upon the questions of reform, but fruitful of no important results.” Years later, following Emerson’s death, Ballou would offer further commentary regarding Emerson’s philosophy of life, and his long-ago visit to Concord. His emphasis in these comments is clearly on the perceived lack of a “practical” element in Emerson’s transcendental world view.

I never read his wonderful writings with more pleasure or spiritual profit. His ophitic truisms, when interpretable to common sense, are far better expressed in the language of scripture or by plain old poets; other sayings of his are not to me truths at all, or only in some vague metaphorical sense. ... As to Emerson’s moral character, it was amiable, harmless, blameless. But I never understood that his practical ethics lifted him much above the surrounding civilistic, social, and scholastic level. He quietly cogitated and elaborated...

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EMERSON HOUSE HOURS FOR 1997

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Here is an abbreviated schedule of the items found in RLIN, with some comments:

3. Tallman, Arlene, Motto on Texts from THE POET and NATURE 1982?
5. Ives, Charles, Thirty-four Songs!, Merion Music, c1933.
9. Clarke, Henry Leland, THE SUN SHINES ALSO TODAY.
10. McKay, Carl Frederick, The Seek!, Fischer, c1946.
12. Clarke, Henry Leland, NO GREAT, NO SMALL!, c1982.
21. Ivey, (on New World Records #NW782-2 among many others).
This led in turn to Ives’ Essays before a Sonata (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.), in which he gives his appreciation of the writers. I’m looking forward to finding the poetry in RLIN of songs of Ives’ Thirty-Four Songs! and 114 Songs. Incidentally, Ives did quote, “I appeal from your customs: I must be myself!” in an advertisement for his insurance business published in Partis, Vivre: Charles Ives Remembered, An Oral History, Yale University Press, 1974.

In the visit to the American Antiquarian Society library in Worcester, Mass., was interesting. Georgia Barnhill, Curator of Graphics, told me that AAS does not list its scores on RLIN and then showed me two of the listed scores:

One was Ethelwold “Eddie” Hanson’s At The End Of The Sunset Trail. The copy has a pencil notation on it: “J. Blanck say (sic) not by R. W. Emerson” J. Blanck, of the Bibliography of American Literature, ought to know, especially after reading such lines as, “I want to go back to that vine covered shack, where the love that awaits me is all that I lack”. Nevertheless the score proclaims, “Words by Ralph Waldo Emerson.” Is there another?

The other was Jesse Jewel’s Father We Thank Thee! Granger’s Index to Poetry lists the author as “Unknown; attributed to Emerson.”
THE WORLD-SOUL

WOODNOTES II [Text beginning, "Harken! Harken!/ If thou wouldst know the mystic song...."]

WALDEINSAMKEIT

Miscellaneous

TERMINUS

VOLUNTARIES [Sec. 3 beginning, "In an age of fops and toys"

TEACH ME YOUR MOOD, O PATIENT STARS

JULY 4,1857

ON MAN & GOD

1250 Tracy, G. L., Thanks to the Morning Light

1247 Bacon, Ernst

1244 Ives, Charles, Duty

1245 Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, Duty

1240 Kreutzer, Konradin

1242 Schneider, Edwin (RLIN #34)

1252 Gartlan, G. H., A Nation’s Builders

1239 Ivey, Jean E. (RLIN #21)

1241 Parry, Hubert (RLIN #6), Thine Eyes Still Shined

1255a We Sing of Golden Mornings. Text loosely based on THE WORLD-SOUL.

1238 Bassett, Leslie (RLIN #13), in Five Love Songs

1246 Georgina Schuyler

1234 Averre, Dick, Yes, I Am Willing, a setting of the Pieces

1250a The Emerson section of this work identifies: Myerson, Joel. Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982. as its source.

1254 Korte, Karl, Marriage in Aspects of Love

1256 Smith, Gregg, Nature in Four Concord Chorales. Text by Alicia Smith based on poems by Emerson.

1255a The other reference was A Singer’s Guide to the American Art Song, by Victoria Emier Villamil, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N. J. & London, 1986, Volume I lists Davison, John, The American Prophet as an unpublished Bicentennial Cantata commissioned by Deerfield Academy with text by Emerson and others. It also had Bucz’s The Wondrous Kingdom as reported by Myerson under PABLE.


1242 Schneider, Edwin (RLIN #34)

TO ELLEN, AT THE SOUTH

1243 Schuyler, Georgia, in Album of Songs by Georgina Schuyler

VOLUNTARIES [Sec. 3 beginning, "In an age of fops and toys"

1240 Ives, Charles, Duty

1245 Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, Duty

1242 Schneider, Edwin (RLIN #34)

1247 Bacon, Ernst

WOODNOTES I

1248 Mueller, Wenzel, Woodnotes

WOODNOTES II [Text beginning, "Harken! Harken! If thou wouldst know the mystic song...."]

1249 McKay, George F. (RLIN #10), Mystic Song in The Seer

1250 Tracy, G. L., Thanks to the Morning Light

1250a The Emerson section of this work identifies: Myerson, Joel. Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982. as its source.

1256 Smith, Gregg, Nature in Four Concord Chorales. Text by Alicia Smith based on poems by Emerson.

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The Emerson Society Papers

Edward A. Johnson, 1931-1996

The Emerson Society sadly notes the passing of the Rev. Edward A. Johnson, a member from Jasper, Indiana. The Rev. Mr. Johnson had served Lutheran congregations in Illinois and Nebraska and was currently interim pastor in Terre Haute. His wife, Edith Grosberg Johnson, writes that he enjoyed his association with the Emerson Society.

A Letter from Longfellow to William Winter

Edward L. Tucker
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

In the six-volume edition of the letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, edited by Andrew Hilden (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966-82), Emerson is frequently mentioned. A letter in which Emerson is mentioned but which is not included in the Hilden edition is to William Winter (1836-1917). Winter, born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and a graduate of the Harvard Law School in 1857, moved to New York and from 1865 to 1909 was the influential theater critic of the New York Herald Tribune. In addition to several biographies of theatrical personalities, he was the author of Old Shires and Ivy (New York: Macmillan, 1892); Other Days: Being Chronicles and Memoirs of the Stage (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1908), and Old Friends: Being Literary Recollections of Other Days (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1909).

The two men were good friends, and Winter often spoke of how important the New England poet had been in his life. The following letter, printed here for the first time, was written after Winter had visited Cambridge.

Camb. March 30 1870

My Dear Mr Winter,

I am very much obliged to you for your note and for the photographs, and only regret that you did not add your own, that I might have the whole family together. But it may be easily remedied, if you will.

I have to say only such a brief glimpse of you and your boy when you were here. Standing awhile deep in snow and water, one is not in the best position for enjoying the conversation of a friend. Though Emerson may say ‘on a bleak common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a cloudy sky’, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration.

When you next come to Cambridge I hope I shall have the good fortune to see you longer and more at ease. Not having your address, I am not sure that this will reach you, but nevertheless remain always Yours faithfully

Henry W. Longfellow

Notes

1In speaking of Longfellow, Winter stated: ‘it was my good fortune to begin my literary life (1854) under the personal influence of that rare poet, and, throughout a friendship of thirty years, I knew him well and loved him dearly’ (264-65). On the relationship Winter had visited Cambridge. Camb. March 30 1870

2The letter is printed by permission of the Fales Library, New York University. There is no omission; the dots are in the manuscript.

3In 1860 Winter married Elizabeth Campbell, a novelist of Scotch origin, by whom he had five children.
Review


Emerson’s aphoristic style of writing may be one reason for his lasting popularity. Just as he himself read other writers for their “lustres,” so have many generations of readers read him for the passages that shined in their eyes. I think a major reason for the present interest in Emerson is that this aspect of his style is the nineteenth-century equivalent of today’s “sound bite.” (Reporter: “Mr. Emerson, what do you think about self-reliance?” Emerson: “Well, Peter, I think that nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.”) Emerson’s ability to produce memorable pithy statements has also long endeared him to editors and publishers seeking to produce short collections of his best thoughts. The phenomenon began right before his death with Houghton, Mifflin’s publication in 1881 of the Emerson Birthday Book (C 9), a collection of brief sentiments arranged on a day-by-day basis that remained in print into the 1920s.1 A year after Emerson’s death, an Edinburgh publisher brought forth the first British collection of this sort (Thoughts from Emerson [C 13]) that was simultaneously the first miniature book of Emerson’s writings. Many other publishers have since jumped on the bandwagon.

My bibliography of Emerson’s writings locates over fifty volumes whose function is to present brief selections from Emerson’s works (as opposed to collections of entire essays). The most popular genre of these books is similar to the very first one: they allow us to follow Emerson on a daily basis throughout the year. These include more Birthday Books (C 49, C 56), Birthday Gems (C 90), calendars (C 43, C 46, C 75), Day by Day (C 46), Year Book (C 25), Every Day (C 33), Through the Year (C 47, C 81), and—I assume for those with less patience—To Day (C 85) and Moments (C 53). Some collections are thematically oriented, such as Nature Thoughts (C 75), Leaves of Friendship (C 52, C 86, C 114), and Thoughts of Friendship (C 84, C 93). Mostly, though, the collections use Thoughts from Emerson (C 35, C 38, C 55, C 83) or such variations as Beautiful Thoughts (C 30), Stars of Thought (C 58), Golden Thoughts (C 66), Great Thoughts (C 73, C 91), Inspiring Thoughts (C 141), and the macho Master-Thoughts (C 37, C 50). Other compilers must feel that “thoughts” is too loose a term for what they are presenting, so they are more definite about their purpose by defining Emerson’s writings as Essay-Gems (C 15), Treasury (C 39, C 44), Timely Extracts (C 105), Pointers from Life (C 41), Social Message (C 99), Gospel (C 123), or Wisdom (C 79, C 152), along with its corollaries, Pearls of Wisdom (C 174) and Words of Wisdom (C 177). Others make clear the brevity of their selections: Echoes (C 74), Epigrams (C 112), Philosograms (C 117), and—in testimony to Emerson’s oft-discussed lapidary style—Gems (C 23, C 42, C 169, C 170, C 171). One even makes the false claim that Emerson Speaks (C 138). But my favorite title is this one, which is compulsively descriptive of its contents: Light of Emerson A Complete Digest with Key-Word Concordance The Cream of All He Wrote Majestic, Inspiring, Thought-Provoking Paragraphs and Utterances of America’s Greatest Literary Genius—the Most Quoted Man of Modern Times—Known as “The Sage of Concord” (C 118).

The advent of the computer made possible a different and more complete type of access to Emerson’s writings. Two examples of how the electronic age works can be found in Eugene F. Irey’s A Concordance to Five Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Garland, 1981) and Mary A. Ihrig’s Emerson’s Transcendental Vocabulary: A Concordance (Garland, 1982). Today, many of Emerson’s texts are available in electronic form over the internet and can be downloaded and fed into concordance packages by individual users. In this context, D. Shivaji’s Emerson Dictionary seems like a pleasant voice from the past.

Emerson Dictionary is a topically arranged series of sentences and paragraphs from Emerson’s published works and journals (thankingly, the JMN), each headed with a descriptive phrase describing its contents and its source. This is not a concordance: the author clearly states that he has made no attempt to be complete. The result is a wonderful book in which to browse. Getting ready to teach your first day of school in the fall? Turn to “teaching” and discover the sage’s advice: “I advise teachers to cherish mother-wit. I assume that you will keep the grammar, reading, writing and arithmetic in order; ‘t is easy and of course you will. But struggle in a little contraband wit, fancy, imagination, thought.” There are good thoughts here for the reading, and Shivaji has made a fair and representative sampling from Emerson’s works. There are, however, some caveats to the use of his book. The descriptive phrases used in the text as headers for the selections are repeated—in the same order—in the table of contents, which renders the latter redundant. The omissions are more serious. Selections which deal with more than one topic are printed only under the main topic. That is, a passage with the header “On the value of good and evil” would appear only with other passages dealing with “good.” There are no cross-references in the text to “evil,” nor does the phrase appear under “evil” in the table of contents, nor—incrreditably—is there an index in which to look up “evil.” These omissions limit use of the book.

Still, Emerson Dictionary is a good source for those looking to find an appropriate passage from Emerson to illustrate a point they wish to make, and it’s a lot easier than trying to search through the index to the Centenary Edition. It’s an ideal book to skim through during leisure times. The publisher has promised a third volume, devoted to lectures and miscellanies, but it seems to have been delayed indefinitely.2

—JOEL MYERSON
University of South Carolina

Notes
1All references to editions of Emerson’s writings are to the numbers assigned them in my Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982).
2I have tried without success to find out from the author and publisher about the status of the projected third volume.