In June of 1863, Ralph Waldo Emerson visited the United States Military Academy at West Point as a member of an evaluation committee officially known as the “Board of Visitors.” Other than a few comments in his journals and letters for the time, however, little is known about how he came to make this trip, what its official purpose was, or what the final report of the board recommended. It is the intention of this brief article to offer some answers to these basic questions.

The first Board of Visitors met at the Military Academy in 1815 and was appointed by the Secretary of War. Eventually, through an Act of Congress in 1846, the President was authorized to appoint the Board of Visitors, “whose duty it shall be to report to the Secretary of War, for the information of Congress…the actual state of the discipline, instruction, police, administration, fiscal affairs, and other concerns of the Institution.” The number of visitors was limited to half the number of states. Membership normally consisted of individuals prominent in education, the militia, public and political life, and the Army. They were paid no compensation other than travel expenses and room and board while at the Academy. There were nineteen members on Emerson’s Board (no secessionist states were represented). Five of these were ministers, two were medical doctors, three were professors, three held law degrees, and one was a Major-General. Emerson and three others were listed simply as “Esq.”

It is not clear how Emerson came to be chosen to perform this task, but informed conjecture is possible. By June of 1863 Emerson, who was already a prominent national figure, had undoubtedly acquired a fairly high level of visibility as a strong supporter of the Union cause. As Robert Richardson points out, “Emerson had become by 1863 an inescapable part—a fixture—of American public life.” His activities in support of the Union were given increasing prominence in the press and, “At the huge meeting in Boston’s Music Hall on January 1 to celebrate the first day of Emancipation, Emerson opened the program, bringing the crowd shouting and singing to its feet with his ‘Boston Hymn.’” While Emerson had been a supporter of the war effort from the firing on Fort Sumter in April of 1861, his commitment was undoubtedly bolstered by Lincoln’s Preliminary Emancipation announcement following the Battle of Antietam in September of 1862. For Emerson, as for other abolitionists, the war had always been a moral crusade against slavery and he was pleased and relieved to have the President finally confirm that truth. In January of 1862 in his lecture “American Civilization,” which would be published in the April issue of the Atlantic Monthly (pp. 502-511), Emerson insisted that “Civilization depends on morality” and that “Everything good in man leans on what is higher,” and because of this, “Emancipation is the demand of civilization. That is a principle; everything else is an intrigue” (504, 509). Later, at the end of January, he would reiterate these sentiments in Washington, D.C., in his lecture at the Smithsonian, a lecture which Lincoln very likely attended.

The spring of 1863 was a dark time for the Union. Edward Emerson would later reminisce that at this time, “The tide of the Rebellion seemed to be rising; the frightful sacrifice of our troops at Fredericksburg was recent, and the great failure of Chancellorsville was just coming on. Our finances were embarrassed. In the shipyards of Liverpool ironclad rams, against which our ports were defenceless, were being built, unchecked, for our foe.” The North was suffering from war weariness, and the Copperhead movement, which sought a cessation of hostilities and accommodation with the South, was at its peak at this time. Emerson was concerned about these developments and remained adamantly committed to the need to vigorously prosecute the war and to achieve an unambiguous military victory over the

(Continued on page 2)
Emerson at West Point (Continued from page 1)

slavesholders. To this end, in March of 1863, he volunteered his energies to promote enlistments in the Massachusetts 54th, one of the first all-black regiments in the Union Army. It is this regiment which Col. Robert Shaw, a young Harvard-educated Union officer, would lead to “glory” in an ill-fated assault on Fort Wagner, Morris Island, South Carolina. According to a report of the regimental fund-raiser, which appeared in the Boston Traveller, in his address Emerson spoke against racial prejudice. Overall, the Traveller concluded that the effort was an economic fund-raiser, which appeared in the Boston Traveller, in his address Emerson spoke against racial prejudice. Overall, the Traveller concluded that the effort was a great success, both socially and financially and will have a good influence in favor of the President (L 5:329,330). It appears that he stayed for more than a week.”

Emerson’s special concern of the Confederate cause was further demonstrated when he wrote, “It does not yet appear what day I shall find it honest to release myself from this Board, & I am kept pretty well occupied” (L 5:329,330). It appears that he stayed for more than a week.”

Emerson at West Point

The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

PROGRAM CHAIRS
Len Gougou (1999) University of Scranton

[Hence requires a year of pre-employment.]

Emerson Society Papers is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which include membership in the Society, are $10 a year (students $5). Send checks for membership (calendar year) and back issues ($5 each) to Wesley T. Mott, Department of Humanities & Arts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA 01609-2280.

For further issues of Emerson Society Papers we solicit information about editions, publications, and research on Emerson and his place in American literature, and requests for information in aid of research in these fields; and significant news (promotions, transfers, retirements, deaths, etc.) of Emersonian scholars. We will also consider notes and short articles (about 4 to 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, or less) on subjects of interest to our membership. MLA style is preferred. Send manuscripts to the editor, Douglas Emery Wilson, 1404 Christine Ave., Anniston, AL 36207-3924.
As its "Preface" states, "The Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism is a comprehensive guide to the major philosophical concepts, antecedents [including people, genres, institutions, organizations, movements] and events or movements associated with Transcendentalism in the United States." Employing a "history-of-ideas approach," the book elucidates the "religious, philosophical, literary, artistic, educational, political, and social aspects" of this movement. Focused on the New England Renaissance, the Encyclopedia also covers "classical, European, Oriental, and native sources and influences." A 15-page "Chronology" "affords an overview of events and publications significant to the emerging, flourishing, and memorializing of American Transcendentalism, with selected historic events included as 'benchmarks' and to point up 'parallels' and 'ironies.'" A helpfully divided "Bibliography" of book-length studies supplements the specifics of "References" accompanying individual entries.

The Biographical Dictionary of Transcendentalism, according to its "Preface," covers "figures most prominent in 19th-century and modern accounts of Transcendentalism and in the public and private veneration of the Transcendentalists, as they have been celebrated by historians, writers, theologians, philosophers, educators, scholars, politicians, scientists, reformers." The volume "includes significant American and international antecedents, mentors, friends, relatives, and disciples who lived until at least 1830, as well as those who carried on, transformed, or memorialized the spirit of Transcendentalism after 1865, and important contemporaneous authors whose stances toward the movement may have been aloof, critical, or antagonistic but whose writings in various ways engaged with Transcendentalism." As its "Preface" concludes, "this Dictionary is the first comprehensive reference to include 'metaphysics' and 'moral Anarchists' with the major American and international counterparts, critics of the movement, and great artists who, necessarily Transcendentalists themselves, creatively grappled with the tenets of Transcendentalism. This bibliographic overview supplements the specific 'References' with the separate entries.

As for shortcomings, inevitably individual readers will question the absence of certain subjects, the presence of others, and the amount of attention paid to still others. For example, the Encyclopedia includes the entries on "V" and "Y" (one for "V," "V," "V," "Y," and "Z") but not entry for "W." The Dictionary has only one entry for "W" and none at all for "L," "L," "L," "X," "Y," and "Z." Do the gaps here represent an actual void? While the Dictionary's index cites 11 page references for the "Over-Soul," this key Transcendental term does not have its own entry, whereas the "World-Soul" does. Two aspects of the development of the Encyclopedia and Dictionary are the "competing" over either the selection of entries or the quality of their content. To solve some of these problems, most notably pervasively developed his list of subjects—first by consulting the comprehensive "index" in an abundance of relevant books from O. B. Frothingham's 1876 "History of American Transcendentalism in New England" on up to by securing authoritative reviews of that list, a process that added some 75 entries and in other ways refined its scope. As to quality, suffice it to say that both the vetting of subjects and the resulting essays and biographical works of the many authoritative contributors to this project, including an honor roll of scholars in American literary history (Moldenhauer, Myerson, Richardson, Robinson, Sattell, mayer, et al.) and experts from other disciplines.

Originally conceived as a single-volume Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism, the project was divided at the publisher's request into a Dictionary and a Biographical Dictionary. While the separate volumes are more comfortably sized, this bifurcation creates a few problems beyond simply increasing the cost of the combined information. The difficulty, of course, is that "encyclopedia" and "dictionary" is not readily apparent. Yes, the entries in the former are longer on average, but there are enough exceptions both ways to make length a suspect criterion. Whatever their nuanced distinction, the titles are misleading because the Encyclopedia also contains biographical entries—specifically, those "significant metaphysical, theological, and literary antec-

dents who died before 1830" in contrast to the Dictionary's post-1830 listings. This division of human subjects may in fact be helpful, especially if a user knows the dates of the figure he or she seeks, but the titles belie the fact that both volumes are needed if one wishes to encounter the entire pantheon. Also disadvanta-
eguous, the two-volume format requires a shifting back and forth that the single-volume alternative helps to obviate. Helpful also are the asterisked terms within entries that direct readers to other entries in both volumes (one asterisk for the same volume, two for the other volume). Regrettably, though, this sense of the essential reciprocity between volumes does not inform their indexes, which, unlike the asterisks, refer only to the volume at hand.

Despite the relatively minor navigational problems associated with the two-volume format, the Encyclopedia and Dictionary tell the story of American Transcendentalism in a coherent, if necessarily incremental, fashion. To encourage the kind of sustained reading that reveals this integrity, each volume would be enhanced by a prominent list of its alphabetical entries, the equivalent of a library's open stacks, conducive to browsing and serendipitous discovery. Under the existing arrangement, a curious reader must either skim each volume to survey its contents, or closely scan the index for italicized page numbers (often one or two numbers among many) that indicate an entry. At least, these page num-

ber and the indexed entries referred to should be boldfaced to provide a user with a sense of the entire book's contents. A nit-picking aside, the Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism and the Dictionary of Transcendentalism are the most comprehensive resources available for anyone interested in Transcendentalism. These books should be welcomed not just as study guides for a game of Transcendental Pursuits but as a fact-filled portrait of a complex and all-consuming project, one that concerned with that period from students seeking a comprehensive introduction to fully fledged scholars hoping to recall what they have for-
gen and possibly discover what they never knew. Together these two volumes are a welcome corrective to specialization and theorizing, reminding advanced scholars of the breadth and topography of American Transcendentalism. For all but the most ardent browsers of tables and indexes for libraries, they are little less than that for anyone with a serious interest in American Transcendentalism whose knowledge falls short of encyclopedia. My own copies are already well thumbed.
Emerson Society Papers

Prospects.

American Literature Association Conference

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels at the ninth annual conference of the American Literature Association in San Diego, California, on 29 and 30 May:

Session I
Teaching the Anthologized Emerson.

Friday, 29 May
Chair, Daniel Shaugh, Univ. of North Carolina-Charlotte Panelists: Laura Dalsow Walls (Lafayette Coll.), Ronald A. Bosco (Univ. at Albany SUNY), Robert N. Hudspeth (Univ. of Redlands).
Each panelist will present a brief (5-10 minute) talk, followed by open discussion.

Session II
Emerson and the Question of Reform.

Saturday, 30 May
Chair, Sarah Ann Wider, Colgate Univ.
"Emerson's Political Spirit and the Problem of Language," T. Gregory Garvey (State Univ. of New York, Coll. at Brockport).
"Emerson, Slavery, and the Evolution of the Principle of Self-Reliance," Michael P. Szryczek (Davidson Coll.).

The ALA conference will be held at the Bahia Resort Hotel in San Diego on 28-31 May (Thursday through Sunday). A welcoming reception will be held from 8:30 to 10:30 for those attending on Wednesday evening. Pre-registration conference fees will be $40 (with a special rate of $10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel (619-488-0551) is offering a conference rate of $95 per night (single) or $92 (double). Inquiries should be sent to the conference director, Professor Jeanne Campbell Reesman, English Department, University of Texas, San Antonio, San Antonio, TX 78249; e-mail reesman@lones- tae.utsa.edu.

A Japanese Translation of Whicher

Emerson Society member Yoshio Takamaki has translated Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson into Japanese and is in negotiation with a Japanese publishing company. He would appreciate information about any U.S. subvention grants available for publication of American works into foreign languages. Please write to Professor Takamaki at 10-7 Mitaka 2 chome, Nagano-ken, Nagano-shi, 380 Japan.

Professor Takamaki is presently studying resemblances of the views of Nature between Ralph Waldo Emerson and Dogen, a Japanese Zen priest in the Kamakura period.

ESP has received the following communication:

"Life As It Is Known"

Life, as Emerson described, is marked by a ceaseless battle between higher thinking and material worship. In each stage of history's course, there remain the evidences of this bitter struggle. Mr. Emerson fought for higher thinking, but the odds were great. Today, our society does not want to think; the poet's voices have grown cold in the blue glow of a billion reality defining television sets. Is the struggle for the control of the consciousness of this country finally over? Does it hurtle forward on definite tracks leading to a planned forthcoming? Could Mr. Emerson himself have been involved in an experiment to change the course of history? Please mail all comments or inquiries to Kenneth Bauman, 5101 W. Whitley Road, South Whitley, IN 46787.

Emerson Society Life, Sustaining, and Patron Members and Contributors

Emerson Society members have responded generously to the appeal by Past President Ronald A. Bosco to join at new levels of membership. All donations above the $10 annual regular membership go to support the "Emerson in 2003" Bicentennial celebration now being organized. Dues for 1998 are $50-Sustaining; $25-Contributing; $10-Regular. Please send check payable to The Emerson Society (U.S. dollars only) to Wesley T. Mott, Secretary/Treasurer, Dept. of Humanities and Arts, WPI, Worcester, MA 01609-2280.

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Clarence L. F. Gohdes 1901-1997

On 8 December 1997, Clarence Gohdes, James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of American Literature in Duke University, died in Durham, N.C. Decades earlier, he had worked energetically in teaching and publishing sound studies of American Transcendentalists and their outreach. Brook Farm, A. B. Alcott, Ripley, Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, and Dickinson numbered among his subjects. In the first issue of American Literature (March 1929) appeared his essay on "The Divinity School Address," and that same year his "The Western Messenger and The Dial" in Studies: A Journal of Philology, a journal at the time exceptionally hospitable to works on American literature. In 1931 came The Periodicals of Transcendentalism, a book inspired, naturally enough, by Gohdes's Columbia teacher, Ralph L. Rusck, which remains a standard work. An edition of uncollected early Emerson lectures (1932) was followed by volumes publishing items from the Duke University Whitman collection. American Literature in Nineteenth Century England (1948) shed new lights on other aspects of Transcendentalism. Gohdes's graduate seminars in Emerson and Whitman were renowned at Duke, and his signal works on Whitman continued to appear into the 1970s, when he retired. Mentor to such notables in Transcendentalist researches as Gay Wilson Allen and John A. Christie, Gohdes also served as consultant for editions of Emerson and Whitman. His longtime connection with American Literature brought him additional renown. Gohdes the bright young man—whose accomplishments impressed those formidable learned professors A. H. Quinn, Jay B. Hubbell, Paul F. Baum (with whom he edited Whitman materials)—ultimately became Gohdes the bright elder statesman, who, till his death at 96, maintained keen interests in the work and careers of younger scholars, and whose own mind never seemed to age. Like many of the Transcendentalists, Gohdes was learned in the Classics (which he also taught, after earning a Harvard degree in Classical Studies), a lifelong avid gardener, and lover of the great outdoors. The death of this pioneer Americanist concludes an epoch in academic life that commenced during the 1920s and '30s, when he and others performed aggressively to develop and promote studies in American literature.

—Benjamin F. Fisher

Shirley Jean Hanson Mott 1923-1998

Shirley J. Mott, a Founding Member of the Emerson Society, died on 9 January after a fourteen-year struggle with cancer. In recognition of her courage and her service and comfort to others with the disease, she was honored as a "Survivor of the Year" in 1994 during the annual National Cancer Survivors' Day. She frequently attended the Emerson Society's summer programs in Concord, and she helped promote awareness of the Walden Woods Project's work to protect and preserve historic land in Concord and Lincoln.

A graduate of Burdett College in Boston, she was the mother of three sons and co-owner and manager of Mott the Florist in Foxboro, Mass., her home for most of her life. She was an overseer of Old Sturbridge Village and a trustee of the Foxboro Universalist Church, which she served also as organizer for many years. Her memorial service featured selections from Emerson's "Termius," "Address at the Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery," and "Threnody." A florist and avid gardener who eagerly awaited the annual New England Spring Flower Show, she especially liked Emerson's "The Rhodora: On Being Asked, Whence Is the Flower?" Why thou went there, O rival of the rose! I never thought to ask, I never knew: Bz, in my simple ignorance, suppose The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

—WTM

Spring 1998
The Ralph Waldo Emerson House, at 28 Cambridge Turnpike in Concord, Mass., is open for the 1998 season. For dates, times, and rates, call 508-369-2236.

—Photo by W. T. Mott

Emerson at West Point
(Continued from page 3)

5. Richardson, p. 548.
11. Report of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy at West Point (Extracted from Senate Documents, 1st Session, 38th Congress, 1863, pp. 76-100).

1998 Annual Meeting

The 1998 annual meeting of The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. will be held at the American Literature Association Conference in San Diego, California, on Saturday, 30 May.

The time and location will be announced at the Conference and during the first Emerson Society panel. (See PROSPECTS.)