

Edward Waldo Emerson's letter to Hugh McGraw, 22 October 1920, identifying the location of the bean-field

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Rediscovery at Walden: The History of Thoreau's Bean-Field

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Thoreau points out in the second chapter of *Walden* that his house at the pond was located "about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord Battle Ground" (86). The fame that eventually accrued to his second book, and the many hundreds of hours' labor he put into clearing and cultivating a small tract of land during his sojourn at the pond, should qualify that location as his hometown's *other* "field known to fame." I refer, of course, to the location that is the subject of *Walden*'s seventh chapter, "The Bean-Field." There, on two and a half acres of upland belonging to his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau during the first week of June 1845 planted seven miles of "the common white bush bean ... in straight rows, three feet by eighteen inches apart," one end of the rows "terminating in a shrub oak copse where [he] could rest in the shade, the other in a blackberry field" (*Walden* 163, 156). Almost fourteen years later Thoreau and two assistants spent two and a half days, from 19 to 21 April 1859, replanting this field with "some four hundred" white-pine seedlings "at fifteen feet apart diamondwise" (*Writings* 18: 152).

Throughout the remaining decades of the nineteenth century and for the first four decades of the twentieth century, Thoreauvian pilgrims occasionally included the bean-field in their itineraries—along with the principal object of their visits, the Walden housesite, which, beginning in July 1872, was marked by the famous cairn (Dawson 3). The bean-field was not similarly marked, however, so some pilgrims had a difficult time locating the field. The well-known early photographer of Thoreau country, Herbert Wendell Gleason, for instance, was not able to locate the bean-field based on descriptions provided by Thoreau in *Walden*; he only learned the location when Thoreau's friends Franklin B. Sanborn and Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson pointed it out to him. To Gleason's surprise, not even so eminent a student of Thoreau as Allen French, a long-time resident of Concord, knew the location of the bean-field.¹ Gleason set French right on the matter by passing along the information he had acquired from Sanborn and Dr. Emerson, and less than two years later French used his new-found knowledge to good purpose by attracting considerable public attention to an ominous development that threatened the aesthetic and ecological integrity of the bean-field.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, a lapse of intergenerational memory about the location of Thoreau's bean-field occurred during the war years of the early 1940s. Well-known, highly respected Thoreau scholars and aficionados who came of age during those years, and who flourished during the remainder of that decade and well beyond, identified the bean-field as having occupied part of the tableland a couple of dozen yards up the hill north and northwest of Thoreau's Walden housesite.² A few of these scholars pointed out during the Thoreau quiz held at several annual meetings of the Thoreau Society during the 1980s, for instance, that a lone survivor of the white pines which Thoreau planted in the bean-field, as well as quite a few stumps and a few remaining dead but standing trunks, could still be seen in that area.³ As a consequence of such testimonies, this tableland uphill from the Walden housesite was identified as the bean-field to inquisitive Concordians and out-of-town visitors alike. This "putative bean-field," as I will occasionally refer to it, was also identified as the bean-field to students taking the Concord History course for certification as town guides, who over the years led many tours to that site (Gordon, Fenn 4). Directed either by these certified town guides or, probably more often, by general word of mouth, thousands of pilgrims have since the mid-1940s trekked to the putative bean-field, many of them, doubtless, in order to worship there after their fashion. The most dramatic development relating to this site occurred in the spring of 1996, when a sophisticated archaeobiological study was conducted there, a scientific—and no doubt very expensive—effort to determine "the exact location and boundaries of Thoreau's bean-field" ("Notes & Queries," No. 215, 7).

Actually, Thoreau's bean-field is about two hundred yards east-northeast of the putative bean-field. The northernmost corner of the actual bean-field is in fact just a few yards south of the intersection of present-day Route 2 (the four-lane "turnpike" built in the early 1930s) and Route 126 (called at various times Sudbury Road, Lincoln Road, Wayland Road, High Road, County Road, and, more recently, Walden Street). More specifically, the bean-field is situated almost entirely within the two-and-a-half-acre area south-southwest of the aforementioned intersection, and now completely wooded and bound by three ten-foot-wide woodland roads and, on its eastern side, by Route 126. This area is the extreme northeast corner of Ralph Waldo Emerson's thirteen-acre "Wyman" lot (see Fig. 1).

The evidence that Thoreau's bean-field abuts the west side of Route 126 just south of the intersection with Route 2 is overwhelming, as we will shortly see, but three facts briefly and conclusively establish the matter: the known dimensions of the bean-field, the ownership during Thoreau's time of the two locations in question, and the topography of Emerson's "Wyman" lot. Once again, Thoreau tells us that he planted seven miles of bean-rows, each row fifteen rods in length, and the rows spaced three feet apart. Assuming his description is precisely accurate, the dimension of his bean-field would have been 247.5 by 447 feet or 110,632.5

square feet—that is to say, 2,534 acres or slightly over one hectare (a hectare is 2.47105 acres), which squares nicely with his statement in *Walden's* "The Bean-Field" chapter that he "planted about two acres and a half of upland..." (156).⁴ As for ownership of the property, Thoreau's copy of Cyrus Hubbard's December 1848 survey of Emerson's "Wyman" lot shows clearly that the tableland behind the Walden housesite, the putative bean-field, belonged to Abel Brooks, not Emerson (Thoreau "31a").⁵ Finally, and most conclusively, the only portion of Emerson's "Wyman" lot level enough to accommodate a bean-field anywhere near the size Thoreau describes is the one in the northeast corner of the lot abutting what is now Route 126—the portion Emerson himself referred to on 28 September 1847 as "the cultivable part of the lot" (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3).

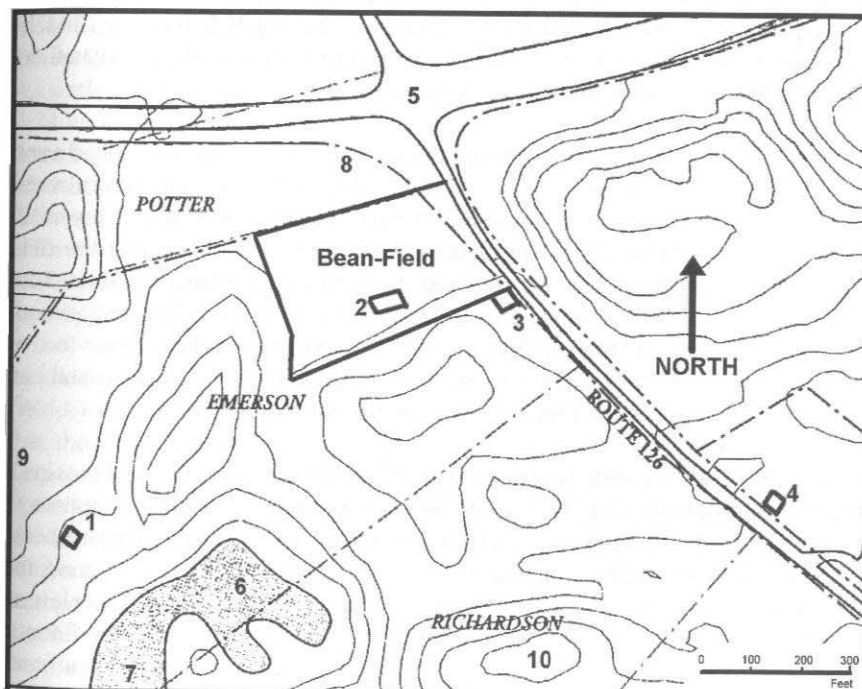


Figure 1: Map showing areas around Thoreau's bean-field.

Note: Base map courtesy of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. Scale and placement of numbered items, and boundaries of bean-field are approximate.

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|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 Thoreau's Housesite | 6 Wyman's Meadow |
| 2 Hugh Whelan's Cellarhole | 7 Thoreau's Cove |
| 3 Zilpha White's Cellarhole | 8 John Dunn's Filling Station (proposed) |
| 4 Cato Ingraham's Cellarhole | 9 Putative Bean-Field |
| 5 Intersection Routes 2 & 126 | 10 Wooded Peak (map in <i>Walden</i>) |

Thoreau's Tenancy, 1845-47

The history of Thoreau's bean-field at Walden could begin with a description of its geological background, telling how the colossal glacier many thousands of years ago was instrumental in forming that particular portion of the New England land mass, the account extending through the four-year-old Thoreau's first visit to the site in 1821. Because those earlier parts of the story have been well told elsewhere,⁶ however, I will begin this history with Emerson's purchase of two lots north of Walden Pond in the fall of 1844 and will generally focus on those elements of the story relating to the bean-field's location.

Emerson had settled at Concord in 1834 (McAleer xvi) and had by the fall of 1844 gotten into the habit of walking almost daily to "the borders of a lake which is the chief ornament of this town, called Walden Pond" (Emerson, *Correspondence* 2: 77-78). During one such excursion, on 21 September 1844, he "met two or three men who told [him] they had come thither to sell and buy a field, on which they wished [him] to bid as a purchaser":

As it was on the shore of the pond, and now for years I had a sort of daily occupancy of it, I bid on it and bought it, eleven acres, for \$8.10 per acre. The next day I carried some of my well-beloved gossips to the place, and they deciding that the field was not worth anything if Heartwell [*sic*] Bigelow should cut down his pine grove, I bought, for \$125 more, his pretty wood-lot of three or four acres, and am now landlord and water-lord of fourteen acres, more or less, on the shore of Walden, and can raise my own blackberries. (Cabot 1: 492-93)

Thoreau was almost certainly one of Emerson's "well-beloved gossips," and very likely another was the farmer Thoreau mentions in *Walden's* "Economy" chapter (probably Edmund Hosmer, whose farm was less than half a mile northeast of the field), who pointed out that the original eleven-acre lot was "'good for nothing but to raise cheeping squirrels on'" (54). Significantly, the original eleven-acre lot was described in the deed as being "bounded northerly on the County Road: Easterly on land of John H. Richardson, Southerly on Walden Pond and land of Cyrus Hubbard, and Westerly on land of Hartwell Bigelow and John Potter..." (Harding, "Emerson's First Purchase" 5). These directions are dramatically askew, however, because the "northerly" line of the property, the side that "bounded ... on the County Road," actually faces east-northeast—a conundrum we shall look at more closely below. The land had been owned by Thomas Wyman, who had died intestate; Emerson actually purchased the land from Cyrus Stow, the executor of Wyman's estate (Harding, "Emerson's First Purchase" 5). The deed mentions that Wyman had purchased the land in two lots, from James Barrett in the summer of 1823 and from "Joseph G. Cole and others" in April 1834 (Harding,

Emerson's First Purchase" 5).⁷ The three-acre Hartwell Bigelow lot, as the Wyman deed suggests, abutted the west-southwest boundary of the Wyman lot and consisted of pines growing along a ridgeline west of a large kettlehole that is visible on the map (Fig. 1) between the actual bean-field and the putative bean-field.⁸

Emerson told Carlyle that he dreamed, once he had enough money, of building "a cabin or a turret" on his newly acquired land at Walden Pond (*Correspondence* 2: 77-78). What he did instead was get Thoreau to build the cabin for him in exchange for squatter's privileges. But the arrangement he made with his gardener after Thoreau left the pond, which arrangement I will relate in the next section of this history, indicates that Emerson was not particularly earnest about putting a foundation under his dream, for he eventually sold the cabin Thoreau built.

Thoreau had begun casting about as early as 1841 for a rural site in or around Concord on which to build himself a small writer's retreat. But based on Ellery Channing's letter of 5 March 1845, Thoreau had even at that late date not yet settled on a location for his retreat: "I see nothing for you in this earth but that field which I once christened 'Briars'; go out upon that, build yourself a hut, & there begin the grand process of devouring yourself alive. I see no alternative, no other hope for you. Eat yourself up; you will eat nobody else, nor anything else" (Thoreau, *Correspondence* 161). The field Channing speaks of here is the portion of Emerson's newly acquired lot that became the bean-field, which Thoreau suggests in *Walden* had been predominantly covered with blackberry bushes (155, 156) and thereby "christened 'Briars'" by Channing.

Sometime later that month Thoreau apparently negotiated with Emerson for the right to squat on the Wyman lot and there conduct his "experiment of living" (*Walden* 51). Emerson's permission was apparently attended with two provisos: that the small house Thoreau planned to build would become Emerson's after Thoreau's tenancy, and that Thoreau would clear and plant the cultivable portion of the lot. In addition to blackberries, the "dry pasture" that became the bean-field (*PJ* 2:131), when Thoreau first looked upon it as a prospective tenant-farmer in March of 1845, was strewn with small stones, and studded here and there with stumps from a cutting fifteen years before, in 1830 (Shanley 128). Thoreau reports that he was able to harvest two or three cords of wood from the stumps, which went some way toward keeping him warm during his first winter at the pond (Shanley 178). Interspersed throughout the field were "scores of pitch pines ... from one to three inches in diameter," as well as "wormwood & piper & millet grass" (*PJ* 2:129) and "Johnswort—& cinqfoil—sweet wild fruits & pleasant flowers" (*PJ* 2:158).

His first order of business after securing Emerson's permission to squat upon the land, then, was to clear the briars and other vegetation, and to remove the stumps, both of which tasks he accomplished well before the first week of June 1845, for he tells us in *Walden* that this was when he planted his beans in rows fifteen rods long (156), each row traversing the width of the field on a north-

northwesterly line—and he first had to plow the field. He hired a team of oxen from a local farmer (he was careful to point out in *Walden* that he “held the plough” himself); and later, while readying and then tending his bean-rows with a hoe, he turned up shards of pottery, bits of glass, and even a few arrowheads—tell-tale signs of previous occupants (*Walden* 55, 156; Shanley 180). The blackberry bushes continued on the other side of a woodland path running along the northern terminus of the newly planted bean rows, on land owned by Jonas Potter (Thoreau “31a”). A path extending from present-day Route 126 and running back toward the housesite formed the southern terminus of the rows, and an oak copse grew along the ridge that dropped off beyond the road, toward the south.⁹

Much of Thoreau’s work in the bean-field that first summer was accomplished in the early mornings, the coolest part of the day, “before ... the sun had got above the shrub oaks” (Shanley 178) along the ridge. But seven miles of beans, not to mention the other non-cash-crops he planted that first summer (potatoes, sweet corn, yellow corn, peas, and turnips), required that he work throughout the mornings and into the afternoons, leaving very little time for writing, reading, or any other pursuits (Shanley 178, *Walden* 54). As he put it in *Walden*, “This was my curious labor all summer,—to make this portion of the earth’s surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse.... I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day’s work” (155). Periodically, as the sun swung high across the southern sky, he rested in the shade on the slope of the ridge along the field’s south border. “It was my amusement when I rested in the shrub oaks,” he recalled in his journal, “to watch a pair of hen-hawks circling high in the sky” (*PJ* 2:373). On at least one occasion his work kept him so late in the bean-field that he resorted to gathering some purslane which had sprung up among his corn plants, boiling and salting the leaves and shoots for dinner when he got back to his house (*Walden* 61).

Both the journal he kept while at the pond and the version of *Walden* he wrote while at the pond—as well as the final, published version of the book—contain a great deal of evidence indicating that the bean-field abutted present-day Route 126. Thoreau describes himself as “a very *agricola laboriosus* to the travellers bound westward through Wayland” (*PJ* 2:129). He went to work in the bean-field “before yet any woodchuck or squirrel has run across the road” (*PJ* 2:130). Travelers passing by on the road “sitting at their ease in gigs” see him at work in the bean-field, which “was the only open & cultivated field for some distance on either side” (Shanley 179). Because the bean-field abuts the road, he can hear these travelers’ conversations: “Sometimes the man in the field heard more than was meant for his ear, of travellers’ gossip and comment—‘Beans so late!—peas so late!’ ” (Shanley 179). On one occasion “the hard featured farmer reins up his grateful dobbie—to know what [Thoreau] is doing where he sees no manure in the furrow, and recommends a little chip-dirt” (Shanley 179); on another occasion a “man who was carrying a load of pottery to market—stopped his horse

against my field and inquired concerning Wyman” (Shanley 196); and on other occasions “[f]ellow-travellers as they rattled by compared it aloud with the fields which they had passed, so that I came to know how I stood in the agricultural world” (*Walden* 158). Clearly these incidents could not have happened had Thoreau been working in the putative bean-field, which is more than a thousand feet from the road.

Thoreau identifies the residences of two “Former Inhabitants” in *Walden* by locating their cellarholes in relation to his bean-field. “East of my bean-field, across the road, lived Cato Ingraham,” begins one paragraph (257). The next paragraph begins, “Here, by the very corner of my field, still nearer to town, Zilpha, a colored woman, held her little house...” (257). Both of these locations as Thoreau describes them are problematic, as a quick glance at a map of the area will show (see Fig. 1). First, the road east of the bean-field, present-day Route 126, runs southeasterly, so Cato Ingraham’s cellarhole, since it is on the far side of the bean-field from Concord Center, would have to be *southeast* of the bean-field, not east. And since the length of the bean-field is canted toward the east-northeast, it is not immediately clear which of the two eastern-most or road-side corners of the bean-field adjoined Zilpha White’s cellarhole.¹⁰

Resolving these difficulties involves a little detective work and raises interesting questions relating to Thoreau’s sense of the terrain around Walden Pond. Fortunately, we know precisely where Cato’s cellarhole was located because we have the testimony of Ellery Channing supplemented by a Thoreau survey. In the margin next to the Ingraham paragraph in his personal copy of *Walden*, Channing wrote that Cato’s cellarhole was “at the opening of the path from the Walden Road to Goose Pond” (Thoreau, *Walden: An Annotated Edition* 250n1). This path appears in one of Thoreau’s surveys of the Goose Pond area (Thoreau “35d”);¹¹ it intersected present-day Route 126 immediately across the road from the junction of Richardson’s and Heywood’s property lines, and it proceeded from the road in a northeasterly direction. Clearly, then, Cato’s cellarhole actually was southeast of the bean-field, not east, as Thoreau stated in *Walden*.

Locating Zilpha White’s cellarhole is a bit thornier. Obviously, it was by one of the road-side corners of the bean-field, but which one? In the journal source of these two cellarhole passages in *Walden* we learn that Zilpha’s cellarhole is “on the N E corner” of the bean-field (*PJ* 2: 212). Okay, fine, but which of the two corners in question is “the N E corner”? Depending upon how one looks at a map of the area, an equally convincing case could be made for either one of the two corners. How to resolve this apparent impasse?

I assert that the southernmost of the two corners—the corner furthest from Concord Center—is what I will call Zilpha’s Corner. We saw earlier that Emerson’s deed for the Wyman lot refers to the roadside bound as “northerly,” which suggests that Thoreau could creditably have regarded that as the northern side of the lot—and could therefore have regarded Zilpha’s Corner as being “on the N E corner” of the bean-field. Also, we know Thoreau regarded Cato’s



"Zilpha's Corner" at the intersection of Wyman Road and Route 126, 9 November 1899
Gleason's own caption reads, "Pines planted by Thoreau on his beanfield at Walden, Concord, Mass., November 9, 1899." Negative number II. 1899.70 in the Robbins-Mills Collection of Herbert Wendell Gleason Photographic Negatives at the Concord Free Public Library. *Courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library*

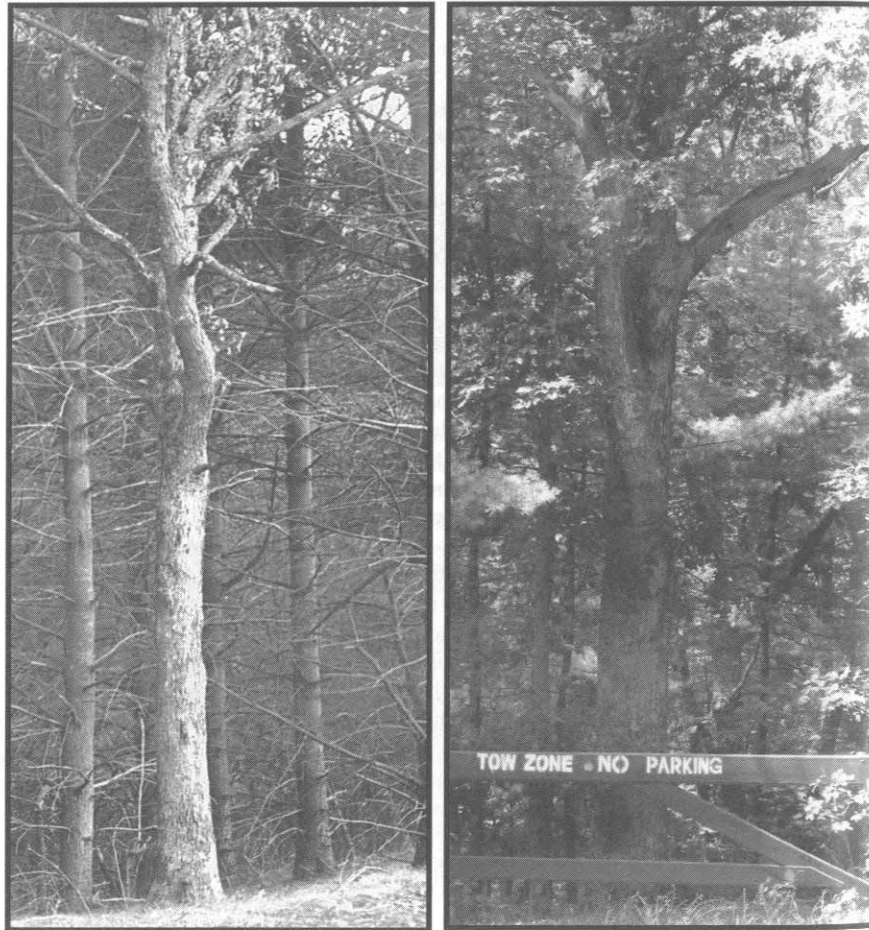


"Zilpha's Corner" at the intersection of Wyman Road and Route 126, 10 July 2003
Courtesy of the author

cellarhole as being east of the bean-field when it is in fact forty-four degrees south of true east. If we cant a map of the area counter-clockwise forty-four degrees, thereby making Cato's cellarhole *appear* to be directly east of the bean-field (and the roadside bound directly north, as described in Emerson's deed), then Zilpha's Corner would very obviously *appear* to be in "the N E corner."

If this evidence seems not compelling enough, consider also that Thoreau ends the paragraph about Zilpha White in *Walden* by noting that he had "seen bricks amid the oak copse there" (257). As I point out above, Thoreau informs us that one end of his bean-rows "terminat[ed] in a shrub oak copse where [he] could rest in the shade," and the shade he rested in would have been along the southern border of his field, the sun of course traversing the southern sky throughout the day. Also, the slope along the southern terminus of his bean-rows would provide an additional enticement to rest there. What's more, on 9 November 1899 Herbert Gleason did us the great favor of taking a photograph of Zilpha's Corner from across Walden Road, and right there in the center of the image is a vigorous oak that to my wholly untutored eyes looks to be old enough to have been there since Thoreau's time and perhaps was there as he hoed his beans that summer in 1845. I am pleased to report that, if I am correct in my assertion about Zilpha's Corner, that very same oak presides to this day over the cellarhole of Zilpha White on one side (immediately to the southeast) and the bean-field of Henry David Thoreau on the other (to the north of Zilpha's cellarhole, just across the ten-foot-wide woodland path now called Wyman Road). Regrettably but inevitably, the tree has of late experienced a decline. A windstorm in the fall of 2000 claimed the top portion of a large, distinctively twisted branch that has all these many years been a prominent feature on the tree's eastern side. The entire branch is clearly discernible in Gleason's photograph and what is left of the branch is visible in the photograph taken from approximately the same location on 10 July 2003.

Finally, if the oak copse and canted map are together not quite compelling enough, consider that Zilpha's Corner today boasts a significant depression that certainly appears to qualify as an old cellarhole, whereas the other corner in question appears to have remained relatively undisturbed for millenia (barring the expansion of Route 126 in the early 1930s, which I admit could possibly have resulted in a cellarhole at that location being filled in or otherwise obliterated). What is needed to clinch the matter, I submit, is for some modern-day Roland Robbins, a historical archaeologist, to go out to that depression at Zilpha's Corner and see if he or she cannot turn up one or more of those bricks which Thoreau saw "amid the oak copse there" (257). I strongly suspect such a person would at least find evidence of a past fire there, for during the War of 1812 Zilpha White's house was torched by "English soldiers, prisoners on parole..." (Thoreau, *Walden* 257). Although I am somewhat reluctant to suggest this, that venerable oak might also be cored to determine precisely how old it is. And since any one of these procedures would require reams of applications, certifications, and other forms to be submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management,¹² as well (probably) as other state agencies, the historical archaeologist might also seek permission to conduct soil-profile and perhaps other, even more sophisticated tests in and around the bean-field.



Detail of oak at "Zilpha's Corner" from Gleason's photo of 9 November 1899 (left) and from author's photo of 10 July 2003 (right).

Before leaving Zilpha's Corner, two other bits of evidence can be assessed that, like Zilpha's Corner and Cato's cellarhole, indicate Thoreau had an incongruous conception of the geographical orientation of his bean-field and, indeed, of Walden Pond and Walden Woods. On the afternoon of 22 January 1856 he walked to Walden from Concord Center, observing along the way that "[t]he Walden road is nearly full of snow still, to the top of the wall on the north side..." (*Writings* 14: 127). The problem here is that Walden Road extends from Main Street in Concord in a south-southeasterly direction past Walden Pond. Nowhere along the road is there what could accurately be called a "north side" of the road—unless, of course, one's conception of the landscape was somehow skewed, as all the evidence suggests Thoreau's was. True, Thoreau was a surveyor with a well-deserved reputation for accuracy and attention to detail. It is likewise true that many of Thoreau's surveys of Walden Pond and various lots around the pond are extant and that most of those surveys indicate magnetic north very clearly. But there is no escaping the fact, it seems to me, that Thoreau conceived of the bean-field as being oriented with Walden Road on the northern side when in fact Walden Road runs in a generally north-south line, as indicated in Figure 1.

During his second growing season while residing at Walden, Thoreau simply spaded "about a third of an acre," presumably deciding to spend more time at his desk and less in the bean-field (*Walden* 55). From both years he learned that "if one would live simply and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only a few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it, and to select a fresh spot from time to time than to manure the old, and he could do all his necessary farm work as it were with his left hand at odd hours in the summer; and thus he would not be tied to an ox, or horse, or cow, or pig, as at present" (*Walden* 55–56). He left his house at the pond on 6 September 1847.

Hugh Whelan Episode, 1847–48

During the four months after Thoreau vacated his house at Walden, both that house and the bean-field were the scene of a comically pathetic episode that forms an interesting counterpoint to the unorthodox but nonetheless successful domestic arrangements reported in the "Economy" chapter of *Walden*. On 28 September 1847, three weeks after Thoreau moved to Emerson's house in anticipation of serving as handyman while Emerson lectured in England, Emerson concluded a memorandum of agreement with his Scotch-Irish gardener, Hugh Whelan, a married man who had been working for the Emerson family since at least 1843 (Thoreau, *Correspondence* 104). The terms of the agreement stipulated that Emerson would rent the Walden house and bean-field to Whelan, who would at an unspecified time provide "some addition" to the house, Emerson allowing "a sum not exceeding \$50.00 for the removal & enlargement of the cottage, and \$20.00 worth of manure in the Spring" for the field (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3). The generosity of this agreement was typical of Emerson,



View looking west along Wyman Road, 29 September 2000

Thoreau's bean-field is on the right, the ridge south of the bean-field is on the left.

Courtesy of the author

who before leaving for England also paid the perpetually strapped Amos Bronson Alcott \$50 to build a "summer house" on Emerson's property in town (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3).

Under the terms of this agreement, Whelan obliged himself "to plant apples, pears, peaches, & grapes" in the "cultivable portion of the lot" (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3). Thus, Emerson planned to have Whelan transform what had been Thoreau's bean-field into a two-and-a-half-acre lot with a cottage surrounded by an orchard and vineyard. To help carry this plan into effect during his absence, Emerson left in trust with Thoreau a check for \$30, noting the fact in his Account Book on 4 October (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3). Whelan also agreed to cut no trees from the larger Wyman lot, and Emerson was careful to stipulate that he would retain for his own use "the land growing up to woods near the pond, & a road through the field from the Lincoln road & along the ridge" (Harding, "Thoreau in Emerson's Account Books" 3). This "road through the field ... along the ridge" is now called Wyman Road, which begins at Route 126 (Emerson's "Lincoln road"), runs 420 feet along the top of a ridge through the center of the eastern portion of Emerson's lot, and then descends to a sort of land-bridge between Wyman's Meadow to the south and the large glacial kettlehole to the north before ascending slightly and heading in a more westerly direction toward the Walden housesite. That first 420 feet of Wyman Road, from the intersection of Route 126 to the end of the ridge Emerson mentioned, was the southern border of Thoreau's bean-field. As I pointed out above, the ridge during Thoreau's day, or at least the eastern extremity of the ridge, sported an oak copse—the very oak copse under which Thoreau says in *Walden* he rested during the mornings he hoed his beans.

On 14 November 1847, just over a month after Emerson departed for England, Thoreau wrote his first letter reporting on Whelan's progress—or, rather, lack thereof:

Hugh still has his eyes on the Walden *agellum* [Latin: "small field"], and orchards are waving there in the windy future for him. ["That's-the-where-I'll-go-next[,]"] thinks he—but no important steps are yet taken. He reminds me occasionally of this open secret of his with which the very season seems to labor, and affirms sincerely that as to his wants[—]wood, stone, or timber—I know better than he. That is a clincher which I shall have to consider how to avoid to some extent, but I fear that it is a wrought nail and will not break. Unfortunately the day after Cattle-show—the day after small beer, he was among the missing, but not long this time. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots—nor indeed Hugh his—Hugh. (*Correspondence* 191–92)

During the four weeks following this inauspicious report, Thoreau in two transactions paid out on Whelan's behalf sixteen of the thirty dollars Emerson had left in trust. Ten dollars paid to have the Walden house moved to the location in the bean-field where Whelan planned to build. The house was unceremoniously placed more than two hundred feet into the field from the main road, present-day Route 126, and about fifty feet north of present-day Wyman Road, the ten-foot-wide woodland path that defines the southern border of the bean-field. At this juncture the house had no foundation under it, although it is possible that Whelan removed some stones from Thoreau's housesite, using them simply to keep the house off the ground, where it would otherwise absorb moisture. In his copy of *Walden*, Ellery Channing wrote, "The stones that were brought up from the pond for the chimney were carried away, I think, by the Scotch gardener, Hugh Whelan, for his intended house on the Bean-field" (Sanborn, *Recollections* 2: 392). But Roland Robbins, during his excavation of the housesite in 1945, found that only the "top section" of "Thoreau's chimney foundation" was missing (*Discovery at Walden* 48). In any case, in addition to the ten dollars to have the house moved, Thoreau paid six dollars for foundation stones to Sol Wetherbee, who owned the old Le Grosse place on Walden Road (Thoreau, *Correspondence* 196-97; *PJ* 6: 269). Because Whelan had not yet dug the cellar, however, Thoreau did not at this time pay the four-dollar fee to have the stones delivered. He jocularly reported these latest developments to Emerson in a letter of 15 December:

Hugh's plot begins to thicken. He stands thus. 80 dollars on one side—Walden field & house on the other. How to bring these together so as to make a garden & a palace.

\$80 ----- field house

1st let 10 go over to unite the two last
 70
 6 for Wetherbee's rocks to found your palace on.
 64
 64 so far indeed we have already got.
 4 to bring the rocks to the field.
 60

save 20 by all means to manure the field, and you have
 left 40 to complete the palace—build cellar—& dig well.
 Build the cellar yourself—& let *well* alone—& now how does it stand?

\$40 to complete the palace, somewhat like this

 —for when one asks—What do you want?

[“]Twice as much room more,[”] the reply. Parlor kitchen & bedroom—these make the palace.— Well, Hugh, what will you do? Here are forty dollars to buy a new house 12 feet by 25 and add it to the old.— [“]Well, Mr[.] Thoreau, as I tell you, I know no more than a child about it. It shall be just as you say.[”]— Then build it yourself—get it roofed & get in. Commence at one end & leave it half done, and let time finish what money's begun.

So you see we have forty dollars for a nest egg—sitting on which, Hugh & I, alternately & simultaneously, there may in course of long time be hatched a house, that will stand, and perchance even lay fresh eggs one day for its owner, that is, if when [he] returns he gives the young chick 20 dollars or more in addition by way of “swichin[’]” to give it a start in the world. (*Correspondence* 196-97)

As if these antics were not ridiculous enough, the very day he wrote this letter Thoreau learned of another portentous development. He had cashed Emerson's thirty-dollar check with Mr. Cheney, the local banker, who had sent it to Emerson's Boston bank for remittance, but the bank in Boston returned it, citing insufficient funds. Thoreau immediately understood that a mistake had occurred, told Cheney he would pay back the thirty dollars, included this development in his letter to Emerson, and told Emerson he would await instructions on how to resolve the difficulty (*Correspondence* 197).

It could not have been very many days later that Whelan on his own contracted with Cyrus Warren to plough “the upland and the orchard and a part of the meadow” for a promised payment of eight dollars (*Correspondence* 204). At about the same time Whelan went out to the bean-field to dig the cellar for his planned house. Thoreau warned him not to dig the cellar too near the existing house (*Correspondence* 204), for the weight of the house might cause the side of the cellar to cave. One can imagine poor hapless Hugh Whelan out in the field measuring off his cellar before digging, giving Thoreau's Walden house an occasional glance by way of keeping that warning in mind. As Thoreau had reported to Emerson, Whelan planned “to buy a new house 12 feet by 25 and add it to” Thoreau's Walden house, so we should not be at all surprised that there is today a cellarhole in the bean-field measuring slightly larger than that size (twenty-six by fourteen feet, the fourteen-foot sides facing east and west)—time and erosion having slightly expanded the four sides of the hole. Actually, though, Thoreau's Walden house prematurely expanded the southern side of the cellarhole, for despite Thoreau's admonition, Whelan did indeed dig too near the house, the back side of which fell into the erstwhile cellarhole,¹³ leaving what would become the world-famous structure ignominiously tilted into the hole just south of the center of the bean-field (*Correspondence* 204).

Based on Thoreau's report to Emerson on 12 January 1848, Whelan appears to have been mightily depressed by the caving of one side of his planned cellar. He had good reason to be depressed because winter had set in with good earnest, and his whole plan probably seemed to be going the way of Thoreau's Walden house. In any case, rather than extricate the house from the cellar, Whelan ceased his labor and returned to town—but possibly not to his home in town. His wife suspected that he sought illicit solace from another woman. Heated words were exchanged and strong beer was consumed by the depressed, hapless, and now completely penniless husband, who was seen crying on his way out of town. Whelan had decided to abandon wife, Emerson, Cyrus Warren, Concord, house, and the bean-field altogether. He sent word from Sterling, Massachusetts, just north of Worcester, that he would depart for warmer climes after spending the remainder of the winter in Sterling employed as a woodchopper (*Correspondence* 203). The last we hear of Hugh Whelan is a brief sentence in Thoreau's letter to Emerson dated 23 February 1848: "Hugh by the last accounts was still in Worcester County" (*Correspondence* 209). Six months later Emerson sold Thoreau's Walden house to the Clark family. They carted it from the bean-field on 3 September 1848 and used it as a corn-storage shed on their farm in the north part of Concord (Channing 241).

Pitch Pines and White Pines, 1848–62

Between the spring of 1848 and the spring of 1859 the bean-field, like many other cultivated fields in New England left fallow for a period of years, began to revert to pitch-pine forest. Thoreau had a name for these sorts of locations, as he mentions in *The Dispersion of Seeds*, where he discussed six categories of woodlands in New England: "In my classification of our woodlands, I call those *new woods* which have sprung up on land which has been cultivated or cleared long enough to kill all the roots in it, though the present growth may be different from that which came up soon after the clearing was abandoned. It happens that almost all the new woods that I remember are pine or birch" (154–55). In his journal entry of 20 October 1860 he included his "field at Walden" in a long list of "the new woods [he] remembered," following his notation with "pitch pine," which identifies the trees that grew on the field during those interim years (*Writings* 20: 159).

Thoreau and Emerson were walking with one another on the afternoon of 30 May 1857 when the topic of the Wyman lot came up. Emerson recorded the discussion in his journal: "Henry thinks, that planting acres of barren land by running a furrow every four feet across the field, with a plough, & following it with a planter, supplied with pine seed, would be lucrative. He proposes to plant my Wyman lot so. Go in September, & gather white-pine cones" (*JMN* 14: 144). Nothing came of these plans until the afternoon of 19 April 1859, when Thoreau "[b]egan to set white pines in R. W. E.'s Wyman lot" (*Writings* 18: 152). Using a horse and cart, he and two assistants dug up four hundred "bushy pines only one

foot high which grow in open or pasture land, yellow-looking trees which are used to the sun, instead of the spindling dark-green ones from the shade of the woods. Our trees will not average much more than two feet in height, and we take a thick sod with them fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter" (*Writings* 18: 152). All but about 120 of the trees they got from the nearby Brister lot and from elsewhere on the Wyman lot, the 120 or so others coming "from George Heywood's land" (*Writings* 18: 153). Emerson had purchased "a quarter of a pound of white pine seed at \$4.00 per pound," but Thoreau does not state what, if anything, he or his assistants might have done with the seed (*Writings* 18: 153).

Thoreau mentions that he and his assistants spent the afternoon of the nineteenth and both of the next two days setting pines in a two-acre area—almost certainly the entire two acres falling within the two-and-a-half-acre field that had been his bean-field (*Writings* 18: 152). In addition to pitch pines, the field sported patches of sweet-ferns, for Thoreau mentioned in his journal entry of 18 March 1860, eleven months after setting the pines, "The sweet-fern grows in large, dense, more or less rounded or oval patches in dry land. You will see three or four such patches in a single old field. It is now quite perfect in my old bean-field" (*Writings* 19: 203).

While in residence at Walden in August 1846, Thoreau had read in Alcott's copy of *The Three Books of M. Terentius Varro concerning Agriculture* Varro's advice that one should "plant in Quincunx order in order not to 'obstruct the beneficial effects of the sun and moon and air...'" (Thoreau, *PJ2*: 269; Varro 49). "Quincunx" is an "arrangement of five objects with one at each corner of a rectangle or square and one at the center" (*American Heritage* 940)—or, to use Thoreau's description: "We have set some four hundred trees at fifteen feet apart diamondwise, covering some two acres" (*Writings* 18: 152). Thoreau indicated to one of his assistants where to dig the hole, and Thoreau himself set each of the four hundred or so trees (*Writings* 18: 152). While they planted a song sparrow serenaded them (*Writings* 18: 154), and on at least one occasion a carriage passed on the road adjoining the field, an event which prompted the following meditation in Thoreau's journal entry of 22 April:

As I planted there, wandering thoughts visited me, which I have now forgotten. My senses were busily suggesting them, though I was unconscious of their origin. *E. g.*, I first *consciously* found myself entertaining the thought of a carriage on the road, and directly after I was aware that I heard it. No doubt I had heard it before, or rather my ears had, but I was quite unconscious of it,—it was not a fact of my then state of existence; yet such was the force of habit, it affected my thoughts nevertheless, so double, if not treble, even, are we. Sometimes the senses bring us information quicker than we can receive it. Perhaps these thoughts which run in ruts by themselves while we are engaged in some routine may be called automatic. I

distinctly entertained the idea of a carriage, without the slightest suspicion how it had originated or been suggested to my mind. I have no doubt at all that my ears had heard it, but my mind, just then preoccupied, had refused to attend to it. This suggests that most, if not all, indeed, of our ideas may be due to some sort of sensuous impression of which we may or may not be conscious. (*Writings* 18: 155–56)

Later that year, on 17 December, he was walking to Walden after a snowfall and noticed the pines he had set out. “The snow being some three or four inches deep, I see rising above it, generally, at my old bean-field, only my little white pines set last spring in the midst of an immense field of *Solidago nemoralis*, with a little sweet-fern (i. e. a large patch of it on the north side). What a change there will be in a few years, this little forest of goldenrod giving place to a forest of pines!” (*Writings* 19: 30).

Pilgrims, Fires, and a Hurricane, 1863–1938

The first recorded instance of a pilgrim visiting the bean-field took place almost nineteen months after Thoreau’s death, on 2 September 1863, when Calvin Greene of Rochester, Michigan, strolled from Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord out “the old Lincoln road” to “the Pond, Bean-field, & housesite” (Maynard, “A Pilgrim ... Part I,” 1). He remarked in his journal that day, “The ‘beanfield’ is now growing trees—pine, b[i]rch &c in rows—quincux order—A fine sight...” (Maynard, “A Pilgrim ... Part I,” 1). The following day he visited the housesite again and, on the way back to town, he walked “through the quondam [*sic*; i.e. “quodam” or former] Beanfield to the Lincoln road where following north through a hollow” that Channing had pointed out to him, he drank from Brister’s Spring (Maynard, “A Pilgrim ... Part I,” 2).

Greene returned to the bean-field eleven years later, on 31 August 1874, and noticed the effects of a fire that had occurred two years before: “Left the pond passing out by the ‘beanfield.’ The grove of trees that T[horeau] subsequently planted it to, looked quite sorry from a heartless fire that had run through there a short time ago” (Maynard, “A Pilgrim ... Part II,” 2). Channing had noted in his personal copy of *Walden* that the bean-field was “Burnt over in [18]72” (Sanborn, *Recollections* 2: 392), a fire Emerson also reported in a letter of 31 May 1872 (*Letters* 10: 79). Indeed, in 1866 Emerson had mentioned in a letter to Thoreau’s disciple Harrison G. O. Blake that two fires had swept through the woods around Walden Pond that year, although apparently neither damaged the bean-field pines (*Letters* 5: 463). Such fires were to become all too frequent, being caused primarily by sparks from the locomotives running along the nearby tracks, but also by one or another of the increasing number of visitors to the Lake Walden Picnic Grounds, which the Fitchburg Railroad built at Ice Fort Cove in 1866, the year of the two fires Emerson mentioned to Blake.

In 1880 Concord resident George Bartlett published the first edition of his *The Concord Guide Book*, which went into its 16th revised edition in 1895 under the title *Concord: Historic, Literary and Picturesque*. Bartlett knew precisely where the bean-field was located and gave pilgrims specific directions on how to get there:

On returning to the village, the first road turning to the left above Mr. Emerson’s house leads, behind his famous garden, past the Poor Farm, to Walden Pond. Ascending the steep hill [Brister’s], the first road to the right leads directly to the [Lake Walden] Picnic ground, and the second, which turns to the right at the telegraph-pole, takes one to the tall pines back of Thoreau’s grove. These trees are in plain sight from the main road; and under them is a well-worn path which turns to the left, directly to the site of Thoreau’s hut, now marked by a pile of stones.

The Pond, which he loved and immortalized, is in front of this cairn, to which every visitor adds a stone, before walking down to the edge of the Pond to enjoy the unbroken solitude, if fortunate enough to escape a picnic. If a student of Thoreau, on his return to the main road he can keep to the right twenty rods [330 feet] along it, to see the orchard which Thoreau planted with pine-cones [*sic*] in straight lines; and the ancient cellars of which he writes may still be distinguished. (*Concord: Historic* 21)

.....
Climbing up its [Fairyland’s] steep path by the spring [Brister’s], the visitor soon enters Walden woods, and threading his way through the straight lines of pine-trees which compose Thoreau’s orchard, he can cross the patch which was cultivated with six [*sic*] miles of beans by the Walden hermit. (*Concord: Historic* 169)

Almost certainly, the first road that Bartlett mentions diverged from Walden Street, or present-day Route 126, near the bottom of Brister’s Hill; this is Laurel Glen wood road, a favorite, frequently used approach to Walden Pond (Maynard, *Walden Pond* 26), which was also Emerson’s favorite approach to the pond (Sanborn, “Thoreau and the Walden Woods”). Happily, around 1890 Alfred Hosmer took a photograph looking down Brister’s Hill, and the telegraph pole Bartlett mentions at the head of the second road appears plainly near the top of the hill.¹⁴ Bartlett’s instruction for those wishing to see Thoreau’s bean-field “orchard” to turn right once they return along that woodland road to the main road (Walden Street) and proceed 330 feet or so (southward) along Walden Street makes perfect sense only if the bean-field is located where I have asserted it in fact is located—just southeast

of the intersection of present-day Routes 2 and 126, which is indeed a little over one hundred yards south of the top of Brister's Hill.

Theodore Wolfe's *Literary Shrines* was published in 1895, the same year Bartlett's sixteenth edition appeared. Wolfe had visited the Walden area and mentioned that the bean-field "is covered by a growth of pines and dwarf oaks, in places so dense as to be almost impassable" (69). Photographs of the bean-field by Alfred Hosmer, taken in 1891 at the behest of Dr. Samuel A. Jones of Michigan (Oehlschlaeger 102), support Wolfe's observation that the bean-field pines had generally escaped the frequent fires in Walden Woods and flourished during the thirty-six years since Thoreau had planted them. But that changed dramatically the following year.

The spring of 1896 was unusually dry. The weekly *Concord Enterprise* ran bold headlines bemoaning the drought on 14 May: "TOO HOT AND DRY. Farming In New England Impeded by Lack of Rain.... Heavy Rain Is Badly Needed In All Sections" ("Too Hot and Dry"). Under these ominous headlines appeared a dire "weather-crop bulletin issued [on 12 May] by the New England section of the United States agricultural department, J. Warren Smith, director." A correspondent to the *Boston Evening Transcript* described the situation clearly:

The total rainfall in the month of April was 1.72 inches, or less than half the average for the month. The last rain occurred on April 21-22, and it amounted to 0.32 inch. On May 3 and May 9 small showers fell of 0.10 and 0.03 inch respectively fell [*sic*]. As both of these rains amounted practically to nothing, we have had no rain in Boston since April 22, making twenty-seven days without rain, and if none occurs today or tomorrow, four weeks will have passed without rain, which is a remarkable drought for any season, but particularly for this time of the year. The flow of the streams has fallen off to about 175,000 gallons daily per square mile of water shed, which is a very small flow for May, the average being 1,174,000, or more than seven times the present yield. The clouds of dust which fill the air testify to the dryness of the soil ("The Present Drought").

These grim facts portended no good at all for the densely grown pines on Thoreau's bean-field. Disaster struck an hour before noon on 18 May, as reported in the *Boston Evening Transcript* of that night: "A fierce forest fire is raging in Walden woods. It started about eleven o'clock near the picnic grounds, and has burned about two miles of territory, destroying a large amount of standing woods. All available help here is fighting the flames" ("Fire Raging"). Because Lake Walden Picnic Grounds was such a popular summer destination for sweltering Bostonians, the city's newspapers covered the fire and its aftermath very closely. They painted a bleak assessment of the disaster, as did the weekly *Concord Enterprise* on 21 May:

Heavy Fire Losses.

The fire that started Monday noon in the woods surrounding Lake Walden was one of the fiercest ever known here, and it has burned more than 1000 acres of woodland and destroyed hundreds of cords of wood. The stately pines that sheltered the site of Thoreau's hermitage on the shore of Lake Walden were destroyed, and the beautiful park way owned by Mrs. W. H. Forbes was burned over.

The extreme drought of the month and the high wind made it impossible to do much more than protect buildings that were located near the wood, many of which were in danger, while some out-buildings were consumed.

Five separate alarms were rung at Concord, and help came from Concord Junction. Lincoln and roadmaster McNamara of the Fitchburg railroad sent a special train with 50 men from Waltham.

The fire crossed Walden street, Sandy Pond road and the old Cambridge turnpike, and burned through Lincoln to the Lexington line. Some of the principal losses in Concord are the estate of the late Ralph Walden Emerson, Hon. George Derby and R. F. Wood.

Another alarm Tuesday called the fire department again to the same district but the fire was soon under control.

The mention of "the estate of the late Ralph Walden Emerson" tells the tale here for the bean-field pines, which were all but decimated by the fire. One gets the impression from reading the Boston newspaper reports that the damage caused by the fire was so extensive that no woodland at all was left around Walden Pond. This impression apparently concerned Concordians, many of whose livelihoods probably depended on summer tourists from Boston. Thoreau's friend Franklin B. Sanborn was keenly aware of this problem and on 25 May wrote the following letter to the editor of Boston's most popular newspaper, the *Herald*, the letter appearing the following day:

THOREAU AND THE WALDEN WOODS.

The Damage by the Recent Fire Not as Great as Was Reported.
The Editor of The Herald:

The notice in your widely-circulated journal concerning the recent fire in the Walden woods will convey a wrong impression to many readers, the facts about that fire having naturally been exaggerated while it was going on, and before any one could say where it would stop. I examined the localities yesterday, and can qualify to some extent your remarks.

The term "Walden woods" covers a great tract, on both sides of the Fitchburg railroad, and on all sides of the pond, which it is now the fashion to call a "lake." This tract might be so

measured as to be two miles long by half a mile, or even a mile in width, and of this area, probably less than half a square mile was burnt over in the last fire, which did not reach the fine large pines around Thoreau's cove and cairn, nor, indeed, any of the woods immediately encircling the water. It did run through a large plantation of white pines, made by Thoreau some 20 rods [330 feet] from his hut, eastward, on land belonging to his friend, Emerson; and the hillsides covered with great oaks, chestnuts, and pines, once called "Hubbard's wood," and named by Emerson, "The Park." Fortunately, this park, now the property of Emerson's daughter, Mrs. W. H. Forbes, was hardly touched at all, so that the regions more especially associated with the two friends, Emerson and Thoreau, were not greatly injured by the fire.

Through this park ran the path by which Alcott, while Thoreau was living by Walden (1845-'47), used to visit his young friend—walking across from the Edmund Hosmer farm, or from what soon became Hawthorne's "Wayside," then owned and occupied by the Alcotts. Emerson's own way to Walden was only for a few rods through the fields; he then followed the wide Lincoln road, over "Brister's hill," or diverged to the right, at the hill's foot, into a woodpath [Laurel Glen wood road]. Both sides of this woodpath have been devastated, either by the axe or by fire; but nature is quick to repair such ravages in our woods, and before 10 years, if the railroad engines set no more fires, nobody could see where the late fire has run in this part of the tract. Probably the pines planted by Thoreau's hand are mostly killed, and this is a serious loss. But the woodland associations of Thoreau and Walden are only slightly injured, otherwise, by what seemed so disastrous a combustion.

Edwin Bacon's Appalachian Mountain Club guidebook of 1900 sums up the results of the fire and, in so doing, adds yet another bit of evidence confirming the location of Thoreau's bean-field: "From the main road, a few rods before the turn toward the pines back of Thoreau's grove, is seen the remnant of Thoreau's 'orchard'" (188). Annie Russell Marble added her testimony in 1902 by pointing out that Thoreau's bean-field was "near the highway" (124), and in his popular *Country Homes of Famous Americans*, Oliver Bronson Capen mentioned that Thoreau's bean-field pines had been killed by fire (87).

Unquestionably, the bean-field was southwest of the intersection of Routes 2 and 126, but the single most compelling bit of evidence proving this assertion was written by Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson on 22 October 1920 for Harry A. McGraw, Esq. This document shows conclusively that the bean-field abutted "High

Road" or present-day Route 126 on one side and was surrounded (in 1920) by three woodland paths or roads. Dr. Emerson traced the pond from a copy of *Walden* (the size of his drawing matches the size of the map in first editions of *Walden*), and used that tracing as the basis for his map, which shows "Pines" on both sides of Thoreau's "shanty" or housesite and has the following sentences written in a cramped hand within the space indicated by the bean-field: "Bean Field[.] About 1856 HDT planted this field with white pines for RWE. A fire in the woods killed them in 1896." Emerson added the following sentences to the bottom of the document: "The bean-field where Thoreau had, in self defense, to 'effect the transmigration' of the wood chuck was in the square between the Lincoln Road and the wood roads, as in the plan. When the pines perished in a wood-fire it grew up to birches and scrub oaks, as now seen. Age and disease have destroyed nearly all of the pines which made a screen, in their prime, to the house."

Over the years some have suggested that some few remnants of Thoreau's bean-field pines escaped the fire of 1896. This suggestion was probably based on the large white pines that grew along the ridge behind Thoreau's Walden housesite, which is to say on the putative bean-field. If any of Thoreau's pines did escape the fire of 1896, however, those survivors almost certainly did not escape the Great New England Hurricane of 1938, sometimes called the Long Island Express because it made landfall at Long Island at a record-breaking forward speed of 70 m.p.h.—a record that still stands. This hurricane plowed across central Massachusetts on 21 September with sustained winds of 121 m.p.h. and a peak gust, recorded at Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory just south of Boston, of 186 m.p.h. An incredibly catastrophic storm, rendered all the more catastrophic because the official forecast from the U.S. Weather Service called for cloudy skies and gusty winds, the Great New England Hurricane of 1938 caused 600 deaths in New England, left 63,000 people homeless, caused an estimated US\$6.2 million (1998 adjusted: US\$15 billion) damage, and destroyed an estimated two billion trees—very likely including any bean-field white pines that might have survived the fire of 1896 ("Remembering the 1938 Hurricane"; "The Hurricane of '38"; "September in the Northeast"). According to reliable scientific studies, white pines can live about 130 years (Yanosky), which suggests that Thoreau's pines of 1859 would have died of age before 1990. The bean-field today features a few large white pines near the northeastern corner, but there are no stumps or standing dead white pines anywhere within the bean-field.

Filling-Station Controversy, 1938-39

The 1920s saw a dramatic increase of suburbanization in what is now called Boston's MetroWest region.¹⁵ To handle the automobile traffic resulting from this increase, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation in the early 1930s built a four-lane "turnpike" or bypass through the Town of Concord, routing it south of Concord Center and directly across the lot owned during Thoreau's time by Jonas Potter. By 1938 four local landowners had built filling stations along the turnpike to serve the needs of motorists; but John Dunn of Watertown, Massachusetts, the owner of the Jonas Potter lot just north of Thoreau's bean-field, determined that motorists' needs were not sufficiently met by those four establishments and sought permission to develop a filling station on his property. Probably he did not have the slightest idea that the southern line of his property was just a few feet away from Thoreau's bean-field.

Dunn did certainly know, however, that his property was zoned residential, so he submitted the paperwork necessary for a variance to the Town Planning Board, asking that he be allowed to exercise his rights as a property owner and "install underground storage tanks at the corner of Walden Street and Concord Turnpike, where he will erect and maintain a filling station" ("Board of Selectmen"). Part of the required paperwork was an advertisement in the local paper and notification letters sent to surrounding landowners ("Board of Selectmen"). Although I have not been able to determine why, the Planning Board denied Dunn's request, so "Mr. Dunn carried his petition to the board of appeals which granted it" ("Board of Selectmen"). One additional hurdle remained, however, before Dunn could begin construction: he had to appear before the Town Board of Selectmen and prove that his underground tanks would be safe from fire or explosion ("Board of Selectmen"). This final meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 20 December 1938. As required by law, the hearing would be open to the public ("Spirit of Thoreau").

Based on contemporary newspaper reports, these ominous developments attracted virtually no public interest. Regrettably, that situation did not change a great deal in the days leading up to the 20 December hearing, even though by then two formidable local Thoreauvians had been alerted. The venerable Allen French, who had just learned the location of the bean-field from Herbert Gleason less than two years before, was clearly alarmed when he learned of Dunn's plans, seeing them as "generally detrimental to the welfare of the town and not in keeping with its traditions and standards of beauty" ("Board of Selectmen"). Somewhat less venerable than French, perhaps, but at least as formidable, was the legendary Gladys Eleanor Holman Hosmer. When *she* learned that Dunn's petition had been approved, she sat herself down, wrote the following witheringly satirical "Open Letter To The Board Of Appeals," and fired the missive off to the local newspaper:

Concord, Dec. 18, 1938

Gentlemen:—

Like a good many other citizens of Concord, I was "asleep at the switch" when the recent hearing took place on the matter of the location of a gasoline filling station on Thoreau's beanfield.

In consequence I missed the successful arguments in favor of this improvement, by which I might profit when and if I petition your honorable body to allow me to convert my property on Elm Street into a business enterprise.

Of course I may strike a few snags in proving that my contemplated plan will not be detrimental to the neighborhood, for, unlike the more fortunate owner of the land at the junction of Walden Street and the new road, I have resident neighbors, and they may possibly harbor illiberal and unprogressive prejudices. Luckily for the aforesaid owner, the "former inhabitants" of Thoreau's domain are no longer extant, and, according to his own account, they were a worthless lot anyway. His own hut is an untenanted site, and the trees in the Town Forest are not even ratable polls.

As to my own enterprise, I shall cite my individual and economic right to do what I please with my own property on which I have paid taxes for nearly twenty years. I have even, despite the precedent established by my distinguished predecessor, connected it with the sewer. Incidentally, I am taxed on one acre of land which I defy the assessors to find without taking deep-water soundings at the usual season of their annual visitation.

I shall propose to convert my establishment into a recreational center, for which there appears to be a crying need, for a moderate remuneration from the users. There are exceptional opportunities for boating, bathing and fishing, and, in the proper season, ice-boating and skating. The area will be floodlighted by night at commercial rates from the Municipal Light Department, and a loud speaker will bring you your favorite band. If we may even stretch a point and relegate town ordinances to the scrap-of-paper limbo of the zoning laws, we might provide duck blinds and target shooting.

The users of these facilities will be accommodated by the sale of refreshing tonic, hot dogs and ice cream (28 flavors). A line of staple groceries, gasoline and oil, small-wares and five-and-dime commodities will be added for the convenience of the

neighborhood, situated as we are at some distance from the shopping centers.

I am contemplating no architectural changes that will be out of keeping with the town's high standards, though a few rustic arbors along the lines of Mr. Alcott's classic design might be appropriate. I plan to do some landscaping with suitable aquatic plants near enough to the public highway to enable me to be eligible to compete for the Garden Club prizes.

On festal days, such as Memorial and Patriots' Days, the town might co-operate with profit to itself by letting out concessions on the nearby three-arch bridge, and thereby help to divert some of the traffic now unfortunately rolling past us on the new road.

I believe that these plans offer a really constructive effort to boost Concord into a bigger, better, busier place. Interest in its historic and literary attractions is distinctly on the wane, as any guide will tell you. Tourists are dwindling to mere handfuls of school children reluctantly shepherded by teachers. Surely something should be done about it.

I infer from your recent action that the Board will be in complete accord with my views.

Respectfully yours,
G. E. H. H.

Although written two days before the public hearing at the Selectman's office, Hosmer's letter was not actually published until the weekly *Concord Journal* appeared—two days *after* the hearing, which may help to explain why only four citizens showed up at the meeting. Hosmer and French were, of course, two of those citizens, and it saddens me to say that the other two were newspaper reporters, one from the *Concord Journal*, the other from the *Boston Evening Transcript*. The presence of the local reporter is easily understood; one might suspect that the other reporter was present at the meeting because he or she had been invited by either French or Hosmer or both.

In any case, the reports of the meeting in those two newspapers suggest that the meeting was dominated by French and Mr. Brown, Chairman of the Concord Board of Selectmen ("Spirit of Thoreau," "Board of Selectmen"). French appears to have spoken first, expressing himself "in no uncertain terms as opposed to the establishment of new business enterprises in districts zoned as residential," and stating his opinion that the filling station was both detrimental to the welfare of the town and contrary to the town's traditions ("Board of Selectmen").

In response, Chairman Brown officiously quoted state statute about safety being the only grounds for refusing a permit to Dunn and then "made his position clear to those present that he had from the outset opposed 'spot zoning,' citing

statements made by him during a discussion at a town meeting on the question of permitting the erection of a restaurant on the turnpike.... [He] warned of too much regimentation ... and he stressed the need for preserving what he considered to be the rights of the individual to do what he wished, under the law, with his own property" ("Board of Selectmen").

At this point French spoke up again and said he wanted "to know why the question of granting a permit for the erection of another filling station had not been advertised, so that the people could have had some voice in the matter" ("Board of Selectmen"). After Chairman Brown told him that the meeting, presumably the Planning Board meeting, had been advertised in the local papers, French "stated that he hoped to see the subject of zoning taken up at the next town meeting" ("Board of Selectmen"). The Selectmen then voted their approval of Dunn's permit, something of a formality, as Chairman Brown all but pointed out in his remarks, and the meeting adjourned.

The reporter from the *Boston Evening Transcript* appears to have sought statements from various parties after the meeting adjourned, and one of those happy to oblige was "Elizabeth F. Brennan, secretary of the trustees," who opined first that "the projected filling station will be a great asset to the town," perhaps in part because it would be "a Colonial-type frame house with a central chimney, and dormer windows," as well as "attractively landscaped and surrounded by a picket fence" ("Spirit of Thoreau"). But Brennan also told the reporter, somewhat ungraciously, that "the opponents might be better employed in clearing away the ruins of Thoreau's pencil factory near the railway station," which had "burned down last year" ("Spirit of Thoreau"). Interestingly, the loquacious Brennan also remarked that "the site of the projected station is nowhere near the surroundings dedicated to the memory of Thoreau. The service station will be at the junction of Walden street and the new by-path [*sic; i.e.,* by-pass], an eighth of a mile away" ("Spirit of Thoreau"). This statement suggests that even at this relatively early date a rumor of the bean-field being behind Thoreau's housesite (which is actually about a fifth of a mile from the intersection) had either taken hold in the community or—most interestingly—may have been perpetrated at this time to help Dunn's development efforts. In either case, this is certainly the earliest indication I have encountered that the bean-field had become lost.

The first published accounts of the sparsely attended but highly contentious meeting of the Concord Board of Selectmen appeared the following day, 21 December 1938. The *Boston Evening Transcript* ran the story on page two under the provocative headlines "Spirit of Thoreau Stirs Concord Gas Station Fight" and "'Stimulating Contrariness' Rife Over Site For Projected Building in Author's Old Bean Field." The report opened with the following observation, after which the more-or-less unvarnished facts were presented: "Henry David Thoreau was said to have a 'stimulating contrariness,' a characteristic that is rampant today in his home town, Concord, where sides are being taken on whether or not a filling station shall be erected on the site of the author-naturalist's bean field" ("Spirit of

Thoreau"). The *Evening Transcript* was a member of the Associated Press (AP), and the AP datelines indicate that the unnamed *Evening Transcript* reporter who attended the meeting filed his or her story on the AP wires sometime during the day of the meeting. The story was immediately broadcast to hundreds of newspapers across the country, of course, and many of them probably ran one or another version of the story the following morning, most of the stories probably about as informative as this one in the *Oklahoma City Times* of 21 December 1938:

Thoreau's 'Bean Field' To Get Filling Station

CONCORD, Mass., Dec: 20—(AP)—Over protests of several prominent residents, the Concord selectmen Tuesday night granted permits for oil and gas storage to John Dunn of Watertown who would erect a filling station on the site of Henry D. Thoreau's "bean field."

Allen French, Concord writer and historian, and Mrs. Gladys Hosmer, clubwoman, said the field, often mentioned in the writer's books, was being desecrated and threatened to appeal their case to the town meeting.

Thus, for a brief time Thoreau's bean-field garnered national attention as the locus of a controversy that had most if not all the earmarks of the one in our own time between developer Mortimer Zuckerman and the formidable local Thoreauvians who founded the Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance.

Meanwhile, back in Concord, folks were able to read about the bean-field flap over their evening milk—but only if they were high-brows and subscribed to the *Evening Transcript*. No offense intended, but probably most Concordians did not learn of the controversy till their coffee the following morning, 22 December, when the presumably low-brow *Concord Journal* came out with Gladys Hosmer's letter and the factual account of the meeting from which I quoted extensively above—as well as with the following last-minute and highly indignant article, which waffles on the newspaper's position in the controversy and straddles the fence on whether the "hallowed ground" of Thoreau's bean-field is located near the intersection of Walden Street and the new turnpike or back behind Thoreau's housesite:

CONTRARY MINDED!

Last night's Boston Transcript says, "Miss Elizabeth F. Brennan, secretary of the trustees, thinks the projected filling station will be a great asset to the town. In her opinion, the opponents might be better employed in clearing away the ruins of Thoreau's pencil factory near the railway station." In the same piece this highbrow daily refers to Thoreau's "'stimulating contrariness', a characteristic that is rampant today in his home town." It gives Mr. French's opinion or alleged opinion and

states that the filling station will be attractively landscaped, but the piece doesn't say one word about what Mrs. Herbert B. Hosmer thinks of the turnpike's fifth gas station on or within musket shot of Concord's hallowed ground. We've always respected Miss Brennan's opinions though we've seldom had occasion to hear them. It is only natural, therefore, for us to respect her ALLEGED opinions especially when they actually appear in the Boston Transcript, noted for its record for accuracy. In fact we rather hope she said that about the pencil factory because we had tentatively broached the same subject to Mrs. Hosmer. Now it seems there are a number of Thoreau houses but only one bean field. Somehow imagination fails us in any attempt to visualize either Mrs. Hosmer or Mr. French as building wreckers despite the renowned versatility of each.

What with fomenting a controversy of national proportions and causing Concordians to sound like a bunch of curmudgeons in both the Boston and the national press, John Dunn probably suffered through a pretty lousy holiday season at the end of 1938. Nor did the holiday lull result in a diminishment of attention. The local paper ran a folksy article on 5 January 1938 under the headline (apparently alluding to a remark Gladys Hosmer made in her letter of 18 December) "CRYING NEED DEPT." The article, which could not have been a comfort to Dunn, began, "They're still worrying about that bean field gas station. Well, we don't see how it concerns the bulk of 'em who can get all the gas they want without they run clean to the hard road for it."

Although the newspapers were quiet on the bean-field story for four weeks, Dunn was not out of the woods. In late January the influential Concord Woman's Club, almost certainly spurred on by one of its most formidable members, Gladys Hosmer, "accepted the following resolutions, which were sent to the Concord Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, the Board of Appeals and the newspaper":

Resolved that, inasmuch as the planning board opposed individually and collectively the granting of a permit for a fifth gasoline filling station on the Concord Turnpike, the Concord, Mass. Woman's Club, hereby expresses its aproval [*sic*] of the action of said Board.

Resolved that, inasmuch as the Board of Appeals has the sole power to make rulings which will permit additional gasoline stations in Concord, the Woman's Club regrets the recent decision of the Board of Appeals and is opposed to any further rulings of this board which will permit any more gasoline filling stations on the Concord Turnpike or in the vicinity of the Town Forest. ("Women's Club")

These resolutions either preceded or followed hard on the heels of an unusual joint meeting of the Concord Planning Board and the Board of Appeals on Monday night, 30 January, "to discuss possible amendments to the zoning laws" ("Planning Board"). The first suggestion discussed at this meeting may have been offered by Allen French, but more likely it was offered by someone acting on his behalf: "that the laws be changed so approval at a town meeting be made a prerequisite to the granting by the Board of Appeals of permits for filling stations" ("Planning Board"). One or both of the Boards voted to let this matter stand for a reason that sounds obfuscatory: "as the Board of Appeals can impose restrictions which could not be enforced otherwise" ("Planning Board"). The joint Boards also "agreed that the Board of Appeals shall definitely have powers to impose restrictions, limitations and conditions when it grants any permit" ("Planning Board").

The late-January resolutions of the Concord Women's Club, and the joint meeting of the Concord Planning Board and Board of Appeals may have been more than John Dunn of Watertown, Massachusetts, could bear. After the reports of those two developments, all newspaper chatter of a filling station adjoining the site of Thoreau's bean-field stops. Nothing was heard from Dunn again, at least not that I have been able to find, and there most certainly was never a filling station built at the southwest corner of Walden Street and the turnpike. For that we have the venerable Allen French and the indomitable Gladys Eleanor Holman Hosmer to thank.

Intergenerational Memory Lapse, 1940–95

It is difficult to explain how the memory of the bean-field's true location became lost, but lost it surely became, gradually, as the generation that flourished between the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century passed away. Surely many Concordians during the 1930s knew where it was, perhaps in large part because of the filling-station ruckus. Simon Willard was no great fan of Thoreau, for instance, and was happy to poke holes in the myth of Thoreau's seclusion in Walden Woods by pointing out that, in fact, the famous writer's "bean field on a highway was but a mile from Emerson's" house. Clearly, many other Concordians and Thoreauvians of that generation knew where the bean-field was located, but I will mention only two: Gladys Hosmer and the well-known, well-beloved naturalist and author Edwin Way Teale. I mention these two because, in addition to belonging to the pre-WWII generation, they demonstrably knew the true location of Thoreau's bean-field, and they were both extremely active in the Thoreau studies community for many years beyond World War II. Yet both passed from the scene—Hosmer in February 1970, Teale in October 1980—and took their knowledge of the bean-field's true location with them (Harding, "In Memoriam"; Harding, "Edwin Way Teale").

We have seen that Allen French learned the location of the bean-field from Herbert Gleason and Edward Emerson. Although I have not been able to discover how either Hosmer or Teale learned of the bean-field's true location, Hosmer obviously knew of it because she fought the good fight with French against Dunn's proposed filling station. The dean of Thoreau studies, Walter Harding, pointed out in his obituary-tribute of Hosmer that she was "one of the most active" members of the Thoreau Society for the first twenty-nine years of the Society's existence, until her death in February 1970 ("In Memoriam"). She served as vice-president from 1955 to 1965, as president in 1965–1966, on the Executive Committee from 1955 until her death, and hosted at her house each year the night before the annual meeting legendary dinner parties for the Thoreau Society's Executive Committee, upon which sat the most prominent Thoreau scholars of that fifteen-year period (Harding, "In Memoriam"). Yet, strange to relate, none of those scholars in after years knew the true location of the bean-field; each thought the bean-field was on the tableland behind Thoreau's Walden housesite.

The only evidence I have discovered that Teale knew the bean-field's true location is a caption in an illustrated edition of *Walden* that he edited in 1946, which caption accurately states that Walden Road went by the bean-field on its way to Lincoln, Massachusetts (187). Teale was almost as active in the Thoreau studies community as Gladys Hosmer. Harding pointed out in his obituary-tribute of Teale that his good friend and colleague "joined the New York group [of the Thoreau Society] in the early 1940s" and had remained an active member since that time ("Edwin Way Teale"). Teale "was president of the Society in 1958," Harding continued, "and a member of the Executive Committee from then to the time of his death" ("Edwin Way Teale"), which of course means that Teale participated in upwards of twelve of Gladys Hosmer's annual dinner parties, from 1958 until 1969. According to Harding, Teale was "a frequent visitor to Concord" and "a regular attendant at the annual meetings of the Thoreau Society," at which "[h]undreds of [Society] members looked forward" to seeing him and at which "he was ... always willing ... to answer a question..." ("Edwin Way Teale"). But here again, despite all those years of regular contacts with the Thoreau community, Teale's knowledge of the true location of the bean-field was not passed along to the younger members of that community.

No one belonging to the generation that flourished during and after World War II was more active in Thoreau studies than Walter Harding. He edited the quarterly *Thoreau Society Bulletin* for fifty years, from the first number in October 1941 to Number 195, published in the Spring of 1991. He attended virtually every annual meeting of the Thoreau Society, from the first one in 1941 to the one in 1995, and as his obituary-tributes of both Hosmer and Teale indicate, he spent untold hours with those two very good friends and colleagues. Yet, incredibly, Hosmer and Teale never conveyed their knowledge of the bean-field's true location to Harding, that most insatiably inquisitive of Thoreau scholars, who even as late

as 1995 believed that Thoreau's bean-field was "a hundred feet or so north of [Thoreau's] cabin site" at Walden Pond (*Walden: An Annotated Edition* 51n2).

One could speculate at some length and probably to little purpose about how this incredible intergenerational memory lapse could possibly have occurred. Doubtless many factors contributed to the lapse, but I will confine my remarks to what I regard as the three likeliest reasons, two of which I can discuss very briefly.

The most obvious reason is World War II, with its massive dislocations, restrictions, and shortages. In the July 1943 *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, for example, Harding reported, "The gasoline situation in the New England area was so very critical that Allen French and [Society] Secretary Longstreth wrote that a meeting was out of the question" that summer ("No Formal Meeting"). But even this example is unnecessary because the sheer magnitude and seriousness of World War II would understandably have put out of mind all notions of or concern for where a bean-field had been located some one hundred years before.

The second of the three reasons I will discuss is related to the amazing "Battle of Red Cross Beach" that W. Barksdale Maynard has recently done such an exquisite job of chronicling in *Walden Pond: A History* (255–60). This momentous battle took place during 1958–60 between the Thoreau Society and the Middlesex County Commissioners, the latter of whom had violated their trust by bulldozing and otherwise desecrating part of the eastern or business end of the pond. Although nowhere near as momentous as World War II, of course, the Battle of Red Cross Beach had the same general effect in terms of the bean-field: it diverted the attention of Thoreauvians and the larger public alike away from the issue of the bean-field's location. Another difference, of course, is that in the late 1950s fewer members of the pre-WWII generation remained alive to pass along their knowledge of the bean-field's location.

Probably the most important reason that memory of the bean-field's location was lost is the phenomenal attention focused throughout the immediate post-WWII period on the "Discovery at Walden" that took place in the fall of 1945. The story is familiar to most Thoreauvians even today—which fact in itself is indicative of how completely locating the housesite captivated the minds of the generation which began to flourish in the immediate post-WWII era.

"For years," Walter Harding noted in the July 1945 *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, "Thoreau scholars have discussed the cairn at Walden Pond marking the supposed site of Thoreau's hut" ("Cairn Controversy"). Harding goes on to report that the centennial celebrations of Thoreau's move to Walden caused the cairn controversy to break "out into the open and become a public discussion" ("Cairn Controversy"). A good part of that discussion actually took place around the cairn during the annual Society meeting that July. The scene, surely, ranks among the most hilarious in the annals of Thoreau studies. Imagine in your mind's eye the assembled Ph.D.s standing around the cairn with their educations straining their hatbands, one good professor taking a crack at reciting the passage from *Walden* about Thoreau being able to see the railroad from his doorstep, another recalling

around the various details of Alcott's testimony about starting the cairn in 1872 with a woman from Iowa, still another chiming in that the cairn is most certainly much further back from the pond than Thoreau's description in *Walden* allows, and yet another dispassionately suggesting that the cross marking the housesite on Thoreau's map in *Walden* seems to be approximately the same distance from the pond as the cairn ("Cairn Controversy"). Over there, silently standing among these sage, world-class scholars is the young, relatively untutored Roland Robbins, a new member of the Thoreau Society that year, enjoying his first annual meeting, but now fairly bursting with bemused exasperation—wondering to himself WHY IN THE WORLD one of these highly educated wags does not simply take up a shovel and dig to find the foundation stones!

As is well known, Robbins nominated himself for this entirely commonsensical task, and after a fair amount of probing—with his mind among a few historical sources, it is true, but more importantly with steel rods in the ground around where those sources indicated the housesite should be—uncovered the foundation of Thoreau's chimney on 11 November 1945. This "Great Discovery at Walden Pond," as Harding trumpeted it in the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, enchanted members of the Thoreau Society and a great number of people outside the Society for a considerable period of time, an enchantment assiduously cultivated by Robbins, who was eager to speak to any group wanting to listen about the process by which he discovered the site and who, it quickly became clear, had as much talent for self-promotion as for amateur archaeology.

The general enthusiasm excited by Robbins's discovery was renewed in October 1946. At that time he completed his excavation of the site, a process that was accomplished in front of many witnesses who had the pleasure of watching him uncover a very significant number of artifacts, both from Thoreau's house and from the early cairn. The following summer the site was solemnly dedicated at the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society, the ceremony being widely reported in the media. Then, a little later that year, Robbins's *Discovery at Walden* was published. It too garnered considerable attention. Those three years, 1945–1948, were heady ones for Robbins, who won for himself the acclaim that provided a foundation upon which he built an impressive career as an amateur archaeologist.

Robbins deserves our gratitude for his accomplishments, of course, but his discovery at Walden did have two regrettable consequences for the bean-field, both completely unintended. For one, his activities were something of a cynosure during a critical time. Had attention not been focused so exclusively on the housesite, the approximate location of which had always been known, French (before his death in the fall of 1946) or Hosmer or Teale might have communicated their knowledge of the bean-field's location to young Thoreauvian ears better fitted to listen. As it turned out, however, that did not happen, probably in part because those ears were so filled with the din attending Robbins's great discovery.

Young ears were not the only thing unfitted by the housesite hubbub of the post-WWII period. Robbins's scrupulous research notes indicate both that he assumed the bean-field was located on the tableland behind the housesite and that his attention was wholly consumed by what he had tasked himself with: locating the housesite. While undivided attention is certainly an admirable characteristic for a researcher to possess, attention too exclusively focused can result in overlooking or disregarding what would otherwise be obvious. In Robbins's case, the combination of highly focused attention and a firmly embedded assumption proved blinding.

Robbins knew from Thoreau's letter of 15 December 1847 to Emerson that Hugh Whelan had dug a cellarhole in the bean-field that was sized to accommodate a cottage measuring "12 feet by 25" (*Correspondence* 197). In studying the landscape around Walden Pond, Robbins had "found a depression in the ground which is of about the size Hugh's cellar hole would have been ... located about three hundred feet from Walden Street, perhaps one hundred fifty feet northerly from the fire road which leads to the hutsite."¹⁶ Although the distances are exaggerated, the two critical facts are here, and the implication should have been perfectly obvious. Robbins was on the cusp of a second "discovery at Walden," but because he could not see that the two facts were related, he never considered adding them together. He continued to believe, like virtually all other Thoreauvians of the post-WWII era, that Thoreau's bean-field was located on the tableland behind the housesite.

"Intensive Archaeological Survey," 1996

In the spring of 1996 James B. Stark and Alison Dwyer, both graduate students at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, walked up the hill behind Thoreau's housesite to the tableland beyond. Stark was pursuing a Master's degree in biology under the tutelage, in part, of Professor Lawrence Kaplan, a well-known archaeobotanist; Dwyer was pursuing her Master's degree in archaeological history but was also working for Timelines, Inc., a cultural-resources management firm based in nearby Littleton, Massachusetts. Timelines had contracted with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to conduct a three-part project. Dwyer, the project leader, had brought Stark in to oversee one of the three parts of her project.

The previous year DEM had formulated a plan "to reconstruct, stabilize and restore the paths, slopes and banks along the north and south shores" of Walden Pond (Dwyer iii). Prior to implementing this plan, however, DEM and the Massachusetts Historical Commission had requested and received appropriations to enable Timelines to conduct an "intensive archaeological survey" of three discrete locations near Thoreau's housesite (Dwyer iii). The purpose of surveying one of these locations, designated "Area 'B'" in the final project report, was "more

precisely to identify the location of the bean field Henry Thoreau tended while living at Walden and to identify the trees he planted after he left" (Dwyer iii). Area "B" had been identified in personal communications earlier in the year between Dwyer and local Thoreau expert Thomas Blanding, who along with Marcia Moss, the Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library, had also supplied Dwyer with historical information relating to Thoreau's bean-field (Dwyer 31, iv).

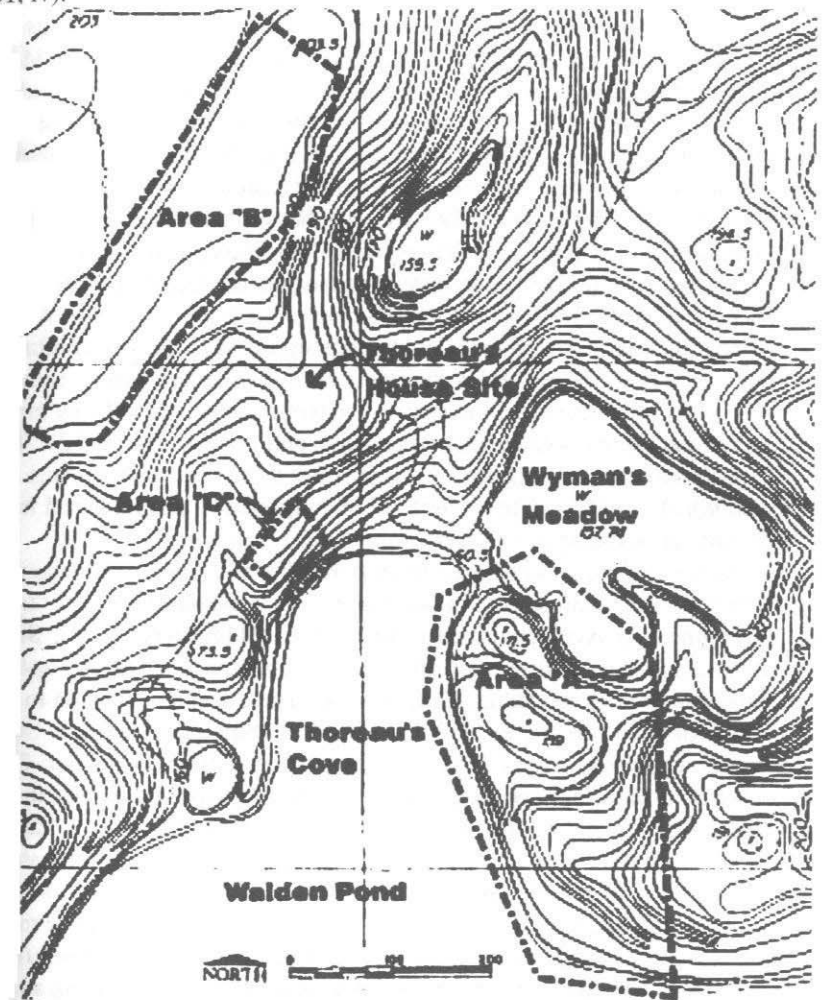


Figure 2: Map from Timelines Inc. report (Dwyer 3) showing the three areas around Thoreau's Walden housesite to be studied. "Area 'B'" is the putative bean-field.

As Dwyer walked with Stark around Area "B," she pointed out the large decaying stumps scattered throughout the area. At the conclusion of their meeting

she gave him "the phone number of someone described as a knowledgeable local resident, as a possible contact for further information concerning the past use of the site," but Stark never contacted the person. He simply assumed "that surely the location of the bean field was a matter of historical record," although he admits that he "wondered more than once during the course of the project exactly how it had come to pass that such elaborate methods were being deployed simply to confirm what was (I imagined) already well established."

Stark had been trained in the archaeobiological techniques of dendrochronology and soil-analysis by Kaplan and other professors of the UMass Boston's Department of Biology, whose laboratory facilities he would use to conduct his study for Timelines. Having examined Area "B" and studied the historical information that Dwyer had received from Blanding and Moss, Stark decided to pursue two lines of investigation. First, he would "search for evidence of trees planted on the site by Thoreau in 1859," and then he would analyze soil samples collected at the site to determine if they contained "opal phytoliths, microscopic silica bodies which might have entered the soil upon decomposition of Thoreau's bean plants" (Dwyer 22).

Stark pursued his first line of investigation in two ways. He first compared the present vegetation of Area "B" with surrounding vegetation to see if perhaps an "abrupt demarcation between forest types or tree-species assemblages might correspond to the former boundaries of Thoreau's pine grove" (Dwyer 22). The final report indicates that this method was unfruitful: "The vegetation of Area 'B' and the additional level terrain to its west cannot at present be distinguished from that of the area surrounding it" (Dwyer 27).

The other method Stark used to carry out his first line of investigation involved "a standard 5 mm. bore screw-feed coring tool" to collect samples "from some of the numerous extant tree stumps" within Area "B" (Dwyer 24, 22). Stark analyzed these samples in order to distinguish eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*, L.), the species Thoreau planted in 1859, from other tree species common to the area. This distinction being made and the individual white pines mapped, Stark hoped to detect within Area "B" evidence of the distinctive fifteen-foot "diamondwise" pattern Thoreau used to plant his four hundred white pines in the bean-field. Of the thirty-five stumps cored and mapped within Area "B," Stark determined that twenty-two were eastern white pines (Dwyer 22). Unfortunately, however, the distinctive "diamondwise" pattern Thoreau described "did not hold for many of the stumps located" (Dwyer 26). But rather than conclude from these findings that Area "B" might not actually be the bean-field, Dwyer in her final report suggests that Thoreau's plantings may not have been quite as precise as his journal description indicates:

While sets of three or four stumps could be found which approximately matched this geometry, the pattern could not be extended beyond these small groupings. It is unclear, however,

whether Thoreau carried out his tree planting with the precision of the surveyor that he was, or whether, as one who embraced wildness, he simply approximated the 15-ft. dimension as a distance adequate to ensure space and sunlight for each seedling, but without lining the trees up in perfect rows. The fact that he and two helpers set out 400 or so seedlings in two and a half days, and had obtained them by digging them up elsewhere, might suggest that the operation was carried out at a pace too rapid to permit adherence to a strict geometry. (26)

Stark had also hoped to date the white pines that he had cored, but "Unfortunately, none of the stumps from which wood samples were taken were sound enough to permit coring for dendrochronology" (Dwyer 26).

In short, Stark's first line of investigation came up empty on all counts.

The techniques Stark used to pursue his second line of investigation seem to a layman considerably more sophisticated than the first. The section in the final report describing the "Collection and Processing of Soil Samples" contains 598 words; the following 281-word extract will perhaps be sufficient to give the reader a sense of the whole:

Soil samples were taken at 12 locations in and around the area in which the stumps were found.... Four of the resulting soil cores ... were extruded onto a clean surface.... Each sample was disaggregated by soaking in a solution of 0.25 g. sodium dodecyl sulfate in 100 ml. of de-ionized water.... Three to 4 ml. of wet soil from each sample was passed through fine copper screening, and placed in a pointed-bottomed 15 ml. centrifuge tube. After centrifuging, each soil pellet was about 1.5 ml. in volume. The supernatants were decanted, and the pellets resuspended in 10% hydrochloric acid (HCl) and left at 60° C. overnight to effect digestion of organics. The samples were then centrifuged to concentrate the soil pellets, the HCl poured off, and three rinses in de-ionized water, followed by three in 100% ethanol, were carried out by vortexing to resuspend, then centrifugation and decantation. The samples were dried in covered watch glasses in a 50° C[.] oven.

A heavy liquid procedure using a bromoform/ethanol mixture of specific gravity 2.4-2.5 was then employed to float the opal phytoliths out from the denser quartz and other minerals. The phytolith-containing pellets thus obtained were dehydrated with three rinses in 100% ethanol and subsequently dried.

Slides for microscopy were prepared by mounting a small quantity of this material in dilute Canada balsam in 100% ethanol.

A minimum of 200 phytoliths were counted for each extracted sample, and further scanning for bean phytoliths was carried out beyond this without counting, probably covering in most cases an equal or greater number of phytoliths. A compound microscope equipped with crossed polarizing filters was utilized, in order to distinguish the isotropic opals from birefringent quartz. (Dwyer 24–25)

The results of these (to a layman) dazzlingly sophisticated techniques are communicated in a section of the final report containing just forty-eight words: "Phytoliths were found in abundance in the heavy liquid extracted portion of each of the processed soil samples. No phytoliths of the bean hooked trichome type were located, however. This negative result does not, of course, mean that the site was not the location of the bean field" (Dwyer 27).

Having found no evidence at all to indicate that Area "B" was in fact Thoreau's bean-field, the concluding section of the Timelines report surprisingly recommends "that a plaque, perhaps located near the remains of Thoreau's cabin, be used to interpret the bean field" (Dwyer 29). The report continues, "The plaque should depict the location of the bean field in relation to the cabin, and using quotes from Thoreau's journal, describe the planting of the beans, working in the bean field, and the eventual planting of the white pines" (Dwyer 29). The report did not recommend identifying particular stumps in the bean-field, however, for fear they might fall "prey to vandalism" (Dwyer 29).

Although I have not been able to determine if DEM ever seriously considered the report's recommendation, I am pleased to report that DEM did not follow it.

Bean-Field Rediscovered, 1998

The bean-field was one of the many locations I wanted to visit when I first visited Concord in the summer of 1983, but like many pilgrims before me, I did not know exactly where it was. I had scheduled a meeting with the Founding Secretary of the Thoreau Society and dean of Thoreau studies, Walter Harding, to discuss a research project I was working on at the time, so I took advantage of my opportunity and put the question to him: Where is Thoreau's bean-field? He informed me, as I have since learned he informed many others, that the bean-field was on the tableland behind Thoreau's housesite. He would have been mortified to learn that he was spreading misinformation, of course, for few scholars in the history of Thoreau studies have been more concerned with getting their facts right. He was simply a victim of that regrettable lapse that occurred just at the time he was beginning his career.

By March 1998 I had visited the putative bean-field many dozens of times and, in fact, during that period walked on an almost daily basis along a woodland path beside what Harding had told me was the bean-field. So it is something of an understatement to say I was amazed by a small sheet of paper that my colleague at the time, Susan Glover Godlewski, showed me one day.

The previous month she had received the Raymond Adams Collection, which had been donated to the Thoreau Society by Adams's widow, Charlotte, and his niece, Shirley Van Clay. Godlewski had been going through the materials in the collection and had come across this sheet of paper, which turned out to be Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson's letter to Harry A. McGraw, Esq., dated 22 October 1920, the one featuring a map indicating the location of Thoreau's bean-field. I was at first very puzzled because the location on the map in no way conformed to what Harding had told me almost fifteen years before. Far from being behind the housesite, as I had been told, the bean-field in Dr. Emerson's map abutted "High Road," which for one who walked there almost daily was obviously present-day Route 126 or Walden Street. Clearly this matter warranted looking into, and thus began my quest to affirm the location of the actual bean-field and to learn the story of how the bean-field became "lost."

It did not take a great deal of time to determine that, in fact, Dr. Emerson was right—the bean-field does indeed abut Route 126. But researching the history of the bean-field proved to be so enjoyable that I stayed at it for quite a while and, in a sense, am still at it—and may well be at it for the remainder of my days. Research never ends, really, not if one has a good subject, a subject that retains one's interest. In any case, I learned during the research process that three savvy Thoreau aficionados had in one way or another concluded on their own that the bean-field must be where I began learning from Dr. Emerson it in fact is.

Professor Brian Donahue, a landscape historian at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, is the first person I came across in my research who knew where the actual bean-field is located. I had asked Donahue to examine the bean-field with me in the hope that he might see something there which I may have missed, he having such differently educated eyes than my own. I also wished to discuss with him how I might go about getting permission to perform a simple soil-profile test to determine if the land in and around the bean-field had ever been plowed.

While on the phone setting up the meeting, I informed Donahue of where the bean-field actually is, as opposed to where I assumed he may have heard it was. Upon my divulging this information, he vocalized the telephonic equivalent of a shrug and said he had already known where the bean-field was and would meet me there the following morning. In response to my inquiry, he simply stated that the bean-field had to be near the intersections of Routes 2 and 126 because Thoreau mentioned overhearing conversations from passersby in carriages while working in the field, which he could not possibly have done were the field located where everyone seemed to think it was, behind Thoreau's housesite, more than



Thoreau's bean-field along Walden Street (Route 126) with "Zilpha's Corner" at the far left, 10 July 2003

Courtesy of the author

three hundred yards back into the woods from the road. In response to further questions, Donahue told me that he simply assumed folks sited the bean-field that far off the road because they wanted to imagine Thoreau laboring deep in the woods, not right next to one of Concord's main thoroughfares.

The high point of our examination of the bean-field the following morning was Donahue's observation that huckleberry bushes had grown into a good portion of the western side of the bean-field. Huckleberries, he explained, are an "indicator species," *indicator* because they migrate at a known rate into fields that have lain fallow for long periods of time and therefore indicate, by the distance into the field they have grown, how long the field has lain fallow. The portion of the bean-field covered by huckleberry bushes, of course, indicated to Donahue's experienced eyes that this field had last been cultivated sometime in the mid-nineteenth century.

The only other person I have met who knew where the actual bean-field is located was landscape architect Walter Brain, one of the five founders of the Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance, which several years ago published a fairly detailed wall-poster map that seems to show the bean-field between the putative tableland location behind the Walden housesite and the actual location near the intersections of Routes 2 and 126. Walter may or may not have had a hand in what may or may not have been this compromise placement, which as it happens puts the bean-field in the deep glacial kettlehole between the putative and the actual bean-field. In any event, while talking with Brain before setting out on the second of two Thoreau Society excursions that I have led to sites in and around the bean-field, he insisted that he has always known the location of the actual bean-field but has simply kept the information to himself, which those who know how self-effacing he is would not be at all surprised to hear.

My friend and colleague W. Barksdale Maynard informed me of the only other contemporary Thoreauvian I know of who clearly knows where the actual bean-field is located, an environmental historian whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, Robert Kuhn McGregor. In his excellent book, *A Wider View of the Universe: Henry Thoreau's Study of Nature*, MacGregor mentions in passing that Thoreau planted his beans "in an old field some two hundred yards northeast of his house" (63). This brief description precisely matches the location of the actual bean-field and indicates that McGregor is as insightful or incisive as Donahue and Brain. I tip my hat to these three gentlemen and take this opportunity to point out what I feel confident is something more than simply an interesting coincidence—that all three have expertise in landscape or place-based fields, not literary or book-based ones.

So What?

During the seventh annual meeting of the Thoreau Society at Concord in July 1948, early Thoreau scholar and Founding Thoreau Society president Raymond Adams addressed the assembled members on "Emerson's House at Walden." He spoke at some length on the topic indicated by his title. But it is difficult to read his speech now without getting the impression that what he really wanted to talk about was the "great discovery" that had so completely enchanted Thoreau Society members thirty-three months before and that continued to absorb their attention. The preceding March nine stone posts were placed to mark Thoreau's Walden house site, and the assembled members of the Thoreau Society had just returned from a ceremony celebrating the new markers. Not Emerson's, but *Thoreau's* house at Walden—or at least the site of that house and the tremendous ruckus created in the aftermath of its October 1945 discovery—had been much on Adams's mind:

There is a danger that attaches to shrines and holy sepulchres. It is the danger that Emerson felt when he said, "Love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue." Walden is not significant because of a few square feet of sandy hillside north of its little cove nor because of what once was a briarpatch and then a beanfield. Walden is not significant as a *place* at all.... It is significant because the word *Walden* suggests some thoughts a man had once. Where he had them doesn't really matter. What matters is that they found lodging—and have continued to find lodging in other minds. (Adams 7)

When I first read these words in 1980, I assented to them with wholehearted enthusiasm. I think that I now have some idea why that was. I was born at Clark Air Force Base in the Republic of the Philippines. My father's regular job (munitions maintenance, or caring for bombs and loading them onto jet fighters and strategic bombers) and his incredible skill as a marksman resulted in his being reassigned every time there was a major national or international rifle or pistol match. These repeated reassignments resulted in my family's moving very regularly—so often, in fact, that I attended thirty-six different schools before high school. Because it takes me several minutes to answer what for most is the simple question, "Where are you from?" I usually dodge the issue by saying something evasively inane, such as "Oh, here and there." Probably because I had no attachments to any particular location during my youth, place had never been especially important to me.

Nor were ideas all that important, frankly. Because I knew that for me high school would end in a fairly menial job (college never once crossed my benighted young mind), and because I attended high school in Honolulu, I did little more than enough to scrape by in school, spending most of my time on beaches and surfboards. When my senior English teacher assigned *Walden*, I half-heartedly

plowed into the first chapter, but the boredom or intimidation resulting from the collision sent me careening with some desperation to the far more accommodating Cliff Notes, by which means I was able, once again, to scrape by. Then there was the draft, a hasty enlistment into the U.S. Navy to avoid the Army and possibly Vietnam, sporadic reading in the Krutch edition of Thoreau's selected writings, a reaction against military authority, deeper reading in Thoreau's writings, a court-martial, some brig time, a learning of the ropes well enough to get myself an administrative discharge with benefits, marriage, a stint in hotel management, a son, and then, beginning in 1978, college on the G.I. Bill. Thoreau became my constant during those tumultuous years, later and ably joined by my wonderful wife. I quoted Thoreau extensively at my court-martial; I read him for hours on end in my cells at the Long Beach and San Diego brigs. As I entered my junior year in college, in 1980, the world of ideas had become my world, the place where I wanted to live. I owe that transformation almost solely to Thoreau.

So, again, I agreed wholeheartedly with Adams's assertion that Walden as a place does not matter, is not important. Thoreau's *ideas*, those alone were important. My study of Thoreau has continued and deepened since 1980. I have attended every annual meeting of the Thoreau Society since 1983, I visited Concord several times each year through the early 1990s, and since 1997 I have lived in New England—indeed, lived five of those six years less than half a mile from Walden Pond. Gradually during those five years, as I walked through Thoreau's woods, located sites Thoreau mentioned in his writings, meditated on the landscape and the man who invested so much in that landscape—gradually and perhaps ineluctably, Thoreau country became my country. Concord is not my home, nor will it ever be, but many parts of it I know and know well. And knowing them well has prompted me to care deeply about them, which in turn prompts me now to demur from Adams's assertion.

Places are important, critically important, as important as ideas. There is a reason, an important reason, for pilgrimages. A pilgrimage is an outward manifestation of a deep-seated impulse. Many have visited Old North Bridge, I suspect, and perhaps for the first time were truly inspired by the idea associated with that location because they were *there*. *Here*, they could say with Emerson, *here* once embattled farmers did indeed stand, *here* those farmers fired actual shots, *here* real blood spilled out onto *this* now hallowed ground. The far-fabled shot still being heard round the world first emanated from that special place.

A place can be as important as an idea or a complex of ideas because some sacred event enacted at or associated with that location links the idea inextricably to the place, the place to the idea. Such an enactment or association may so thoroughly imbue the one with the essence of the other that neither can be distinguished from the other without some violence being done both. Diminish the one, you diminish the other. Some places, surely—and Thoreau teaches that *all* places, rightly seen—are important, sacred; and it diminishes ideas not a whit that places can be, should be, and indeed are equally as valuable. In an almost visceral but deeply mysterious, magical sense, a place can *become* an idea, its

embodiment or manifestation. Places and ideas do both matter. We would do well to regard the places under our feet as highly as we regard the ideas in our heads.

While the truths of *Walden* would not be the less true were the bean-field or the housesite or even all Walden Pond and Woods entirely lost or obliterated, the same deep-seated impulse that causes us to conduct pilgrimages to “idea-places” would prompt us to locate those truths elsewhere, literally to *ground* those truths in some other physical location, which would thenceforth become sacred to us *because* of that grounding. The word not made flesh is a disembodied, intangible thing, substantively unreal to us—an “airy nothing,” to borrow Shakespeare’s phrase, because without “a local habitation.” Both are vitally, inextricably necessary. In like manner, an ungrounded idea is one at risk of being easily ignored and forgotten, just as a place not suffused with an idea risks being neglected and abused.

But, of course, we need not trouble ourselves about such a transference. We have been fortunate to know that these, our important Walden shrines, have been largely preserved, remain fairly well protected, and can be visited by us whenever we choose. We are twice blessed because the ideas Thoreau passed on to us are grounded in sacred places. A knowing pilgrim makes the best use of a place. We are the more fortunate to know precisely where all our Walden “idea-places” are located, Thoreau’s bean-field not now excepted.¹⁷

Notes

¹In his 1937 letter to Thoreau-editor Francis H. Allen, Gleason wrote of his surprise that Allen French “did not seem to know where [the bean-field] was.... On one of my early voyages to Concord I happened to visit the site of the beanfield with Mr. Sanborn, and he told me he distinctly remembered when Thoreau planted the pines for Mr. Emerson, and he also said that he had seen the tract (a portion of it) *twice* burned over in fires set by the railroad. These were white pines, and quite a number are still standing in that portion of the tract on the left of the road which goes down to the pond.” It is not entirely clear if this “road which goes down to the pond” is present-day Wyman Road or Boundary Road, the latter of which defines the northern border of Thoreau’s bean-field. If the former, as I suspect, Gleason believed that the bean-field extended south of Wyman’s Road—a highly problematic belief when we consider Thoreau’s description of his bean rows as fifteen rods in length, which is the distance *between* Wyman Road and Boundary Road. Also, Wyman Road runs along a ridge that drops off ten feet or so into a low area that gets swampy after rainy periods, which suggests that Thoreau would not have planted crops in that low area. Moreover, Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson’s map of 1920 clearly shows the bean-field *between* present-day Wyman Road and Boundary Road. Gleason did not clarify matters when he also informed Allen in his 1937 letter, “The fact that this [“a tract of ground between the highway and Thoreau’s Cove, adjoining the wood road which leads from the highway to the Pond”] was

Thoreau’s beanfield has long been a current tradition in Concord.... Dr. Edward Emerson drove me there one day and identified the locality.” I am grateful to W. Barksdale Maynard for bringing Gleason’s letter to my attention.

²Walter Harding, for instance, states in *Walden: An Annotated Edition*, “In 1859 T[horeau] replanted his old garden to trees, chiefly pines, for Emerson. Although the last of these trees has long since died, most of them having burned or blown down, their stumps can still easily be discerned a hundred feet or so north of his cabin site” (51n2).

³I base this observation on my own recollections of the Thoreau quizzes at the annual gatherings of the Thoreau Society throughout the 1980s and how various members of the audience during those quizzes reported that remnants of the white pines could still be seen on the tableland behind Thoreau’s housesite at the pond.

⁴The woodland roads defining the southern and northern borders of the bean-field are now called Wyman Road and Boundary Road, respectively. The easternmost one hundred and fifty feet of the old road defining the northern border of the bean-field was truncated, probably while Route 2 was being built in the early 1930s, to route foot-traffic in a more southerly direction, away from the intersection of Routes 2 and 126. Although now growing up to pines, the indentation of the old roadbed is still plainly visible. The unnamed western road connecting Wyman Road and Boundary Road did not exist during Thoreau’s time, but Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson sketched it on his map of 1920. I conjecture that it was built sometime after 1866, when many existing paths in the Walden area were widened and new roadbeds were built, apparently to accommodate the wide crinoline dresses worn by women of the era. Thoreau almost certainly used the portion of the field now occupied by that western road as the westernmost portion of his bean-field. A deep glacial depression or kettlehole begins just a few yards west of that road (see Fig. 1), and Thoreau probably planted up to the point where that kettlehole begins. Incidentally, because Thoreau also points out that he planted each bean plant eighteen inches apart (*PJ* 2: 134), his bean-field contained some 25,000 white-bush bean plants, the exact figure (again, assuming his description is precisely accurate) being 24,750 plants. He tells us as well that he planted, in addition to beans, “a small patch of potatoes and corn, and a few turnips beside” (Shanley 128), although he does not indicate precisely where that small patch was located. Presumably the patch abutted his bean-field.

⁵An image of this survey is accessible at <http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau_surveys/31a.htm>. The two cut stones marking each end of the boundary line between Emerson’s and Brooks’s properties are still in place. The line between them runs along the top of the hillside behind or west and north of Thoreau’s housesite. Generally, Emerson’s land begins where the tableland begins to drop off toward Thoreau’s Cove. I assume, of course, that Thoreau would not have planted his bean-field on Brooks’s land.

⁶Koteff; Goldthwait, "Appendix A"; Goldthwait, "Sand Plains"; Skehan and Puddingstone, *Drumlins*; Skehan and Puddingstone, "Walden Pond"; Skehan and Puddingstone, "Walden Woods"; Maynard, *Walden Pond* 15, 338n1.

⁷Thoreau reported on the earlier ownership of the bean-field lot in his journal of 2 December 1857, which contains suggestions about how the famous pond may have acquired its name: "I find that, according to the deed of Duncan Ingraham to John Richardson in 1797, my old bean-field on Walden Pond then belonged to George Minott. (Minott thinks he bought it of an Allen.) This was Deacon George Minott, who lived in the house next below the East Quarter schoolhouse, and was a brother of my grandfather-in-law. He was directly descended from Thomas Minott, who, according to Shattuck, was secretary of the Abbot of Walden (!) in Essex, and whose son George was born at Saffron Walden (!) and afterwards was one of the early settlers of Dorchester" (*Writings* 10: 219).

⁸Clearly the western bound of the three-acre Bigelow lot stretched between the two boundary stones mentioned in note 5 above, but I have not been able to locate the other bounds. It is certainly possible that Thoreau's housesite occupies part of the Bigelow lot rather than the Wyman lot, as has long been assumed.

⁹As his journal entry of 30 January 1853 suggests (*Writings* 10: 486), and as botanist Ray Angelo also suggests (194n214), Thoreau referred to *all* small oaks prior to 30 January 1853 as "shrub oaks," so the "shrub oak copse" that he mentions in "The Bean-Field" chapter of *Walden* as being at one of the ends of his bean rows (156) was actually a copse of small oaks of one or another species and not a copse of shrub oak proper (*Quercus ilcifolia*, Wang.; also called Bear Oak, Black Oak, Scrub Oak, and Black Scrub Oak).

¹⁰Edward Jarvis provides a fairly specific description of the location of Zilpha White's house: "Just at the bottom of the hill [where Brister Freeman lived], on the south side and west of the junction of the Watertown road and the lane leading to what is now the picnic grounds, was a hut where an old colored woman, Zilpah [*sic*] White lived. This, too, with its poor occupant has long since disappeared." There is no question, however, that this identification is incorrect because it places Zilpha's hut at the bottom of Brister's Hill rather than at one of the two roadside corners of Thoreau's bean-field. I am grateful to Leslie Perrin Wilson for bringing Jarvis's manuscript to my attention.

¹¹An image of this survey is accessible at <http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau_surveys/35d.htm>.

¹²The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has recently changed its name to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

¹³My claims that the *southern* side of Whelan's cellarhole caved and that the *back* side of Thoreau's Walden house tipped into the hole are based on three facts and four assumptions. First, Whelan planned to build a twelve-by-twenty-five-foot house over the still extant cellarhole, which cellarhole indicates that the twenty-five-foot sides form the north and south sides of the planned house. Second,

Thoreau's rudimentary drawing of the finished house in his letter to Emerson indicates that Whelan planned to add Thoreau's Walden house to one of the two twenty-five-foot sides of the newly built house. Third, the nearest means of egress to the cellarhole or Whelan's planned house is Wyman Road or the southern border of Thoreau's bean-field, which is sixty feet from the cellarhole. I assume (1) that Whelan planned to use Thoreau's Walden house with its door as his completed house's front door and front parlor, (2) that Whelan would have faced his front door toward Wyman Road as the nearest means of egress, (3) that Whelan would therefore have dug his cellarhole directly north of where Thoreau's Walden house was placed in the bean-field, and (4) that Whelan would have had the foresight to place Thoreau's Walden house with its front door facing south, toward Wyman Road. The latter assumption is given some weight by Thoreau's testimony that "one end of the house" tipped into the hole. Had one of the two sides or the front of the house tipped into the hole, Thoreau would likely not have used the word *end* in describing the unfortunate event.

¹⁴This photograph appears in Maynard, *Walden Pond*, p. 26.

¹⁵I am grateful to Leslie Perrin Wilson, Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library in Concord, Massachusetts, for bringing to my attention the newspaper clippings used as the basis for this section.

¹⁶Quoted in Zimmer (139n3) from an "unpublished research paper" titled "After Walden: A Biography of Thoreau's Hut" by William Griswold, 24 March 1954, p. 24. A copy of the paper was at the time (1972) at the Thoreau Lyceum in Concord, Mass. The collection of the Thoreau Lyceum now belongs to the Thoreau Society, so Griswold's paper is now presumably in the Thoreau Society Collections, Lincoln, Mass.

¹⁷I am enormously grateful to W. Barksdale Maynard for generously sharing with me the copious notes on the bean-field that he had gathered while researching his excellent recent volume, *Walden Pond: A History*.

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