



Rev.

"EMERSON IN 2003"
A Bicentennial Celebration

Volume 14, Number 1

Spring 2003

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

Emerson at 100

LEN GOUGEON
University of Scranton

While major events are scheduled in celebration of the Emerson bicentennial in 2003, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Emerson in American consciousness in 1903. The signs of this importance were everywhere as the young nation stood on the threshold of what would become known as "The American Century." Houghton Mifflin was issuing a new, twelve-volume edition of his *Complete Works*, to be known thereafter as the "Centenary Edition"; the U. S. Postal Service was issuing a commemorative stamp, an honor reserved for only the most historically significant Americans, and three years earlier, Emerson had been inducted into the "Hall of Fame for Great Americans" at New York University, only the eighth so honored, and the first man of letters. (The seven who preceded him were Washington, Lincoln, Webster, Franklin, Grant, Marshall, and Jefferson.) His fame even stretched across the Atlantic. The *London Times* (25 May 1903) took note of the fact that, in honor of Emerson's one-hundredth birthday, "there will be observances of one kind or another among every section of the United States. It is a national tribute to an American whom Americans now recognize as a leader of American thought." After presenting an overview of the many activities and testimonials scheduled for the celebration, the *Times* writer concludes with the following observation:

It will be seen that his fellow-citizens, while declaring themselves grateful to Emerson for the renown he and, through him, American literature has won abroad, are more grateful still for his Americanism at home. Once denied, it is now regarded as Americanism of the best type, if only because he taught the lesson of true independence in thought and life. That is the note which rings clear through all these centennial essays, speeches, and panegyrics from every source.

The *Times* correspondent was not exaggerating in noting the breadth of the Emerson Centenary celebrations. A survey of American newspapers publishing in 1903 shows

that the event was celebrated in one way or another in virtually every part of the country, from Maine to Texas, Boston to San Francisco. Every major city took note of Emerson's birthday. There was a grand celebration in New York City, sponsored by the Society of American Authors, in the Authors Gallery of the Waldorf-Astoria on 25 May 1903. A report in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (26 May 1903) indicates that more than 200 guests attended. In connection with the dinner, there was an exhibit of Emersoniana including "various editions of his books, portraits, busts, correspondence and photographs." Guests included the presidents of Cornell and New York universities and the U. S. Commissioner of Education. President Roosevelt himself sent a note expressing his regret that he was unable to attend "your dinner in honor of the memory of a man to whom American literature, American philosophy, and American citizenship owe so much."

Then, like today, Boston/Cambridge/Concord were sites for major events. An article in the *Boston Globe* (25 May 1903) describes a large gathering at Symphony Hall, sponsored by the American Unitarian Association, as many celebrations were. The event was presided over by Senator George F. Hoar, an illustrious son of Concord, and the featured speaker was Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University. This major event was reported throughout the nation, and Eliot's address was the subject of numerous articles in major newspapers where it was often reproduced, in whole or in part.

Harvard celebrated the Centennial in a special way. The *Houston Post* (24 May 1903) reported, as many other newspapers did, on the events in Boston/Cambridge and noted that the celebration there was to be formally opened "by the laying of the cornerstone of Emerson Hall, in Cambridge, destined to be the home of the departments of philosophy and education in Harvard University." The princely sum of \$150,000 had already been raised for the project, and more was expected. The paper also reported

(Continued on page 6)

2002 EMERSON SOCIETY PATRONS

Thanks to Emerson Society members who have joined at levels above basic membership. All donations above the \$10 annual basic membership go to support the "Emerson in 2003" Bicentennial celebration now under way. Dues categories are Life (\$500), Sustaining (\$50), Contributing (\$25), and Regular (\$10). Please send check payable to The Emerson Society (U.S. dollars only) to Robert D. Habich, Secretary/Treasurer, Dept. of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

Life Members

Barry Andrews
José C. Ballón
Ronald A. Bosco
Paul S. Christensen
Phyllis Cole
Roger L. Cole
Sterling F. Delano
Ellen Emerson
Mary H. Emerson
John Ford
Richard Lee Francis
Len Gougeon
Robert L. Hamilton
Don Henley
J. Parker Huber
Wesley T. Mott
Joel Myerson
Izumi Ogura
Barbara L. Packer

Robert Nelson Reddick
Wendell F. Refior
Robert D. Richardson, Jr.
Nancy Craig Simmons
Mary C. Wider
Douglas Emory Wilson

Sustaining Members

Randall H. Albright
Margaret Emerson Bancroft
Evelyn Barish
Alton L. Becker
Teresa Carson
Jean Darcy
Rev. F. Jay Deacon
Sallee A. Engstrom
Ryoichi Fuji
Richard G. Geldard
Shoji Goto
Roger L. Gregg
Richard Grossman

Robert Habich
Robert N. Hudspeth
Rosemary G. Hunter
Richard A. Koster
Kent P. Ljungquist
Samuel K. Parish
Edward L. Tucker
Sarah Ann Wider

Contributing Members

Pedro Abreu, Jr.
Elizabeth Addison
Silas K. Baker, Jr.
Lloyd Becker
Susan Belasco
August B. Black
True Boardman
Martha Casey
Gary Collison
Martha Coutant
Michael F. Crim

Meta Cushing
Helen R. Deese
T. Gregory Garvey
Suzanne Hardin
Anne Hill
Ronald Hoag
Glen Johnson
Linck C. Johnson
Paul Kane
Harlan Ketterling
John Lehmann
Richard J. Luehrs
Waldo B. Lyon
David J. Lytle
Karie Mellema
Edith Murphy
Ralph Orth
Richard Piccarreto
Barbara Powell
Todd Richardson

Susan Roberson
David M. Robinson
John G. Rudy
Kenneth Sacks
Jane H. Sciacca
Roger Shuart
Frank Shuffelton
Gayle L. Smith
Mark Stirling
Yoshio Takanashi
Joseph M. Thomas, Jr.
Roger Thompson
John Toomey
Gustaaf Van Cromphout
Laura Dassow Walls
S. B. Weeks
Pinckney Seabrook Wilkinson
Richard Wolf

EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society
Published at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Editor: Douglas Emory Wilson
Managing Editor: Wesley T. Mott
Book Review Editor: T. Gregory Garvey
Editorial Assistant: Nik Waggener
Design and Production: Peggy Isaacson

Emerson Society Papers is published twice a year. Subscriptions, which include membership in the Society, are \$10 a year (students \$5). Send checks for membership (calendar year) and back issues (\$5 each) to Robert D. Habich, Dept. of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0460.

For future issues of *Emerson Society Papers* we solicit information about editions, publications, and research in progress on Emerson and his circle; queries and requests for information in aid of research in these fields; and significant news (promotions, transfers, retirements, deaths, etc.) of Emersonian scholars. We will also consider notes and short articles (about 4 to 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, or less) on subjects of interest to our membership. MLA stylesheet is preferred. Send manuscripts to the editor, Douglas Emory Wilson, 1404 Christine Ave., Anniston, AL 36207-3924.

Review copies of books on Emerson should be sent to book review editor T. Gregory Garvey, Department of English, SUNY-Brockport, Brockport, NY 14420-2968.

EMERSON SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: Wesley T. Mott (2003)
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
President-Elect: Phyllis Cole (2003)
Penn State University-Delaware County
Secretary/Treasurer: Robert D. Habich (2003)
Ball State University

ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth Addison (2004)
Western Carolina University
Len Gougeon (2003)
University of Scranton
Roger L. Gregg
Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association
Alan Hodder (2003)
Hampshire College
Susan L. Roberson (2005)
Alabama State University
Gayle L. Smith (2003)
Penn State University-Worthington Campus
Joseph M. Thomas, Jr. (2004)
Pace University
Roger Thompson (2005)
Virginia Military Institute
Douglas Emory Wilson (2003)
The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

PROGRAM CHAIRS

Sarah Ann Wider (2003)
Colgate University
Elizabeth Addison (2005)
Western Carolina University

"EMERSON IN 2003" CHAIRS

Ronald A. Bosco
University at Albany, SUNY
Joel Myerson
University of South Carolina

MEET OUR SCULPTOR—STEVEN H. MADDOCK

One of the highlights of the Emerson Society's bicentennial of the birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson is the commissioning of New Mexico artist Steven H. Maddock to create a bust of Emerson. Steve generously sculpted two separate and distinct busts—six-inch and nine-inch versions. Each is still available to members of the Emerson Society at substantial savings while the "Emerson in 2003" celebration lasts.

The work of Steve Maddock has been exhibited throughout Wisconsin and in Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Steve works in several media, including two-dimensional pencil, charcoal, ink, and watercolor. Though he is best recognized for his bronze figural sculpture, he also creates art on a larger scale. Recently he installed a life-sized bronze of St. Francis at Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin, and he is under consideration to do a bas-relief for a church in Detroit. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, he also earned a Masters in Art Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has taught extensively.

"Being a visual artist," says Maddock, "I try to put a face on important and meaningful writings, to see a face and make that connection." He describes his work as "contemporary western." "Subject matter is primarily the human figure. A love of history, classical study, and a sense of humor direct my work." Emerson is not his first project with literary and historical associations. "I have done Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln busts, trying to impart their lives and philosophies in their faces. R. W. Emerson offered a similar challenge. I tried to visualize his written words and impart them to his image." The two Emerson busts, he explains, are very different. "It is not often that an artist has the opportunity to do two portraits of the same individual. I tried to capture two different expressions of the man. I hope people see some element of Emerson's personality in the portraits."



Steve works in a large adobe studio outside of Albuquerque. He and his wife, Susan Awe—director of Parish Memorial Library for

Business and Economics at the University of New Mexico—enjoy traveling. While Susan attends library conferences, Steve can be found at local art museums and galleries. Steve welcomes inquiries. For a brochure of his work, write to him at Apishapa Studio, 9 Holiday Drive, Tijeras, NM 87059, call 505-286-9763, or email sawe21@hotmail.com.

NOTE OF THANKS

The Emerson Society is grateful for institutional support throughout the year that enables us to conduct our business and provide important member services.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute has been home to *Emerson Society Papers* since its inception in 1990. Wes Mott expresses thanks to Provost John F. Carney III, whose continued support for the past seven years has covered many of our publishing costs and enabled Mott, as an officer and managing editor, to attend our annual board and business meetings.

The Secretary/Treasurer, Bob Habich, is grateful to Dr. Patti White, chairperson of the Department of English at Ball State University, for clerical and financial support.

Thanks also to Peggy Isaacson for expert design and production of *ESP*, and to Margaret Brodmerkle and Penny Rock of the WPI Department of Humanities & Arts, who help in innumerable ways, including getting *ESP* into the mail.

PROSPECTS.



American Literature Association

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society will present two panels at the fourteenth annual conference of the American Literature Association, to be held 22-25 May in Cambridge, Mass. Exact times are not yet available.

SESSION I (FRIDAY, 23 MAY)

Emerson's New Publication: *The Later Lectures*

CHAIR: Sarah Ann Wider (*Colgate University*)

"New Prospects: Obligations to the Rhetorical Mr. Emerson,"

Roger C. Thompson (*Virginia Military Institute*)

"Emerson's Summing Up: 'The Rule of Life,'" Elizabeth Addison (*Western Carolina University*)

"Style and Substance in Two Introductory Lectures, 'The Powers and Laws of Thought' and 'Powers of the Mind,'" Gayle L. Smith (*Penn State Worthington Scranton*)

SESSION II (SATURDAY, 24 MAY)

Emersonian Prospects: *The Third Century*

CHAIR: Elizabeth Addison (*Western Carolina University*)

"Emerson as Private Intellectual," Mark Bauerlein (*Emory University*)

"Contemporary Intersections: Emerson and Feminism," Susan Field (*New Mexico Tech*)

"The waves of mutation': Emerson, Poetry, Postmodernity," Sandra Morris (*Bucknell University*)

The ALA conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency, 575 Memorial Drive, in Cambridge, Mass., on 22-25 May. An opening reception will be held on Thursday evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. The conference fee is \$75 (with a special rate of \$25 for graduate students, independent scholars, and retired faculty).

The hotel is across the Charles River from Boston. Conference participants will be able to take advantage of the proximity to the rich cultural and scholarly resources of New England. The hotel will provide shuttle service to area attractions in Cambridge and Boston and a special parking rate of \$10 per day for ALA conference registrants. Those who pre-register will receive a \$20 food credit, which is good for breakfast or lunch in the hotel. See the hotel's Web site (www.cambridge.hyatt.com).

The Hyatt Regency Cambridge will offer a conference rate of \$149 for a single or double room (triples are \$174). For reservations, please call 1-800-233-1234 before 15 April 2003 and request the American Literature conference rate.

The official ALA travel agent is still TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS, which will attempt to negotiate discounted fares and which now charges a \$20 service fee. Their toll free number is 888-293-9441.

For more information about the conference, check the ALA Web site (www.americanliterature.org).

Thoreau Society Celebrates Emerson

"Thoreau and the Emersonian Influence" is the theme of the Thoreau Society 2003 Annual Gathering. The rich program of lectures, panels, exhibits, and outings will be held in Concord, Mass., Thursday, 10 July through Sunday, 13 July. Thoreau Society members will receive program and registration materials in the spring *Thoreau Society Bulletin*. Others interested in attending may call Jayne Gordon, Executive Director of the Thoreau Society, at 781-259-4751.

Call for Presenters: The Emerson Society seeks presenters for its panel discussion on the Emerson-Thoreau connection, to be offered at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord on Friday, 11 July. This "Emerson in 2003" bicentennial panel will not emphasize the personal relationship but rather parallel passages that reveal something about cross-inspiration, -stimulation, and -provocation. E-mail Emerson Society Program Co-Chairs Sarah Ann Wider (swider@mail.colgate.edu) and Elizabeth Addison (addison@wcu.edu).

Concord Museum Programs

In observance of the Emerson Bicentennial, the Concord Museum has an exhibit—"Emerson and His Study: An Inside Look"—25 January to 6 April. Call 978-369-9763 for details. The Museum's Annual Thoreau Lecture Series for 2003, in honor of Emerson's 200th birthday, is "Inspired Minds, Inspiring Place." Lectures are as follows:

- 16 January, 7:30. Dr. Sandra Petruionis, "Women and Reform in Emerson's Town"
- 6 March, 7:30. Dr. Robert Gross, "The Transcendentalists and Their World"
- 27 March, 7:30. Dr. Sarah Wider, "'As soon as the Blood is Up': Emersonian Conversation and Where it Ends"
- 27 April, 4:00. Dr. Sterling Delano, "Inspired Minds, Inspiring Places: Concord, Brook Farm, and Fruitlands"
- 15 May, 7:30. Dillon Bustin, "The Musketaquid Program: Emerson's Direct Legacy"

All are free and open to the public. Donations accepted at the door. Co-sponsored by the Concord Museum, the Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, and The Thoreau Society.

Baltimore Exhibit

"Emerson & Baltimore" is the title of an exhibit scheduled for 4 June to 15 September 2003 in Baltimore, Maryland. The location is the Main Level of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University, Charles & 34th Streets. For details, contact Allan Holtzman in the Resources Services Department at 410-516-5315 or holtzman@mse.jhu.edu.

ESQ Discount

ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance is pleased to offer a 20 percent discount on subscriptions to members of the Emerson Society. The discounted rate is \$14.40 for one year, or \$25.60 for two years. To subscribe, send a check made out to *ESQ* (in US dollars payable through a US bank) to *ESQ* Subscriptions Manager, Department of English, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-5020. For more information, e-mail subscriptions manager Jijo Vanbrunt at vanbrunt@wsu.edu, or associate editor Jana Argersinger at argerj@mail.wsu.edu.

Call for Papers: *Walden* 150th

In 2004 the Thoreau Society will celebrate the sesquicentennial of the publication of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. To celebrate that anniversary, the 2004 issue of *The Concord Saunterer* will be a special issue devoted to "Walden, the Book, and Walden Pond, the Place." The editor invites papers for possible publication in this issue on a variety of related topics, such as

- the literary significance of *Walden*
- structures and themes in *Walden*
- readers' responses to *Walden*
- the history of Walden Pond and Walden Woods
- the ecology of Walden Pond and Walden Woods

Papers on other Walden-related topics will also be considered. Send submissions to the editor, Richard J. Schneider, by mail (hard copy accompanied by computer diskette) at Dept. of English and Modern Languages, Wartburg College, 100 College Blvd., P.O. Box 1003, Waverly, IA 50677-0903, or by e-mail as an attachment to richard.schneider@wartburg.edu. Deadline for submissions is 1 October 2003.

Ukrainian Call for Papers

The American Studies Association in Ukraine invites members of the Emerson Society to submit articles (1,500-2,000 words) about any aspect of his work for publication in the ASAU Newsletter. The ASAU is also celebrating the Emerson Bicentennial by publishing his poems in Ukrainian. A contest for the best translation has been announced throughout the country. For details, please write to Oksana Shostak, the ASAU Secretary, at oshostak@ukr.net.

Filling the Gaps in Your Emerson Collection

If you wish to obtain any volumes of *The Collected Works*, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, or *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, or of several non-Emersonian editions published by Harvard University Press but now out of print or out of stock, they are being made available through a new arrangement with Acme Bookbinding of Boston. The books will be clothbound and printed on acid-free paper; they will be exact reproductions of the original editions (latest printing), except that the bindings may be somewhat different in color, and will not include paper jackets. For additional information on this project, see pages 26 and 60 in the March-April 2003 issue of *Harvard Magazine*, or visit the HUP Web site, www.hup.harvard.edu. The project is known as "Print on Demand (POD)."

Emerson Sightings

Clarence Burley writes that Emerson briefly appears in Matthew Pearl's new novel *The Dante Club* (Random House). Emerson also is invoked by Edmund L. Andrews in the opening of his column "The Wisdom and Folly of Tax Cuts and Deficits" (*Sunday New York Times*, 2 March 2003, Business section, 4). "Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, expressing a wisdom most political leaders can appreciate. ¶ Those accused of contradicting their previous views, Emerson advised, should simply claim to have been misunderstood. "To be great is to be misunderstood," he wrote. ¶ Perhaps with Emerson's spirit in mind, the Bush administration last week brushed aside the ridicule that the newest member of its economic team once heaped on two ideas that are sacrosanct in today's White House: the wisdom of deep tax cuts and the insignificance of budget deficits."

Joel Brattin reports three appearances by Emerson in recent issues of *The New Yorker*. In the 3 March issue, in a review of Scott Spencer's novel *A Ship Made of Paper*, Joyce Carol Oates notes that the main character is named Daniel Emerson: "His transcendental yearnings, if not his intellectual capacities, are of the same scale as Ralph Waldo Emerson's" (90). In a review of musical events, Alex Ross notes that the late Lou Harrison "belonged to the California of the mind—to the high horizon of the national imagination, the limitless expanse that Emerson hailed and Melville feared, that Wallace Stevens named the American Sublime, the 'empty spirit in vacant space'" (92). And in the 10 March issue, in an article titled "The Unloved American: Two centuries of alienating Europe," Simon Schama discusses a book by the Norwegian Knut Hamsun. *The Cultural Life of Modern America*, writes Schama, "was largely devoted to asserting its nonexistence. Emerson? A dealer in glib generalizations. Whitman? A hot gush of misdirected fervor. For Hamsun, America was, above all, bluster wrapped up in dollar bills" (34).

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc., will be held at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge—during the American Literature Association conference—on Friday, 23 May at 8:00 a.m. The room has not been announced. All members of the society are warmly welcome.

"Minute Biography" of Emerson

Clarence A. Burley, a founding member of the Emerson Society and author of "Emerson, the Lyricist" in the Spring 1997 issue of *ESP*, sends us the delightful sketch of Emerson—printed on page 8—from *Minute Biographies: Intimate Glimpses into the Lives of 150 Famous Men and Women*, by Samuel Nisenson and Alfred Parker (Grosset & Dunlap, 1931). "This was my introduction to RWE—way back when I was 6 or 7," he writes, adding that his daughter and grandchildren have also enjoyed the book. But beware: Exaggerations and errors lurk in the Emerson sketch, in spite of its brevity.

"Emerson in 2003" Calendar

The bicentennial celebration of Emerson's birth is now under way. Several organizations, including the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, are preparing special programs, events, and publications. Joel Myerson and Ron Bosco, co-chairs of the Emerson Society's "Emerson in 2003" offerings, announce the following updated calendar. Events organized by the Emerson Society are indicated by an asterisk (*).

March/April	Emerson featured in <i>Unitarian Universalist World</i>
7 March-June	Emerson exhibit at 25 Beacon St., Boston (UUA Offices)—7 March ceremonies at First and Second Church with addresses by Wesley Mott and David Robinson on Emerson's ministry and connection to Unitarianism
21 March-30 May	Concord Free Public Library exhibition "Emerson in Concord"
26 March	*Opening of Houghton Library "Bicentennial Exhibition" on RWE
27 March	*Ron Bosco and Joel Myerson talk on Emerson before the Ticknor Society at the Houghton Library
2 April	Panel discussion on Emerson at Harvard chaired by Lawrence Buell
8 April	Opening of University of South Carolina library exhibition of Emerson (Joel Myerson)
Mid-April	*Official announcement of Emerson Society Web site
25-26 April	*Conference at Massachusetts Historical Society, co-sponsored by the Emerson Society, and exhibition of Emerson materials at the MHS
26 April	Reception at Concord Museum; opening of Emerson House to guests
26 June	Presentation on RWE by Robert D. Richardson, Jr., at UUA General Assembly in Boston
27-30 June	Emerson sessions at UUA General Assembly in Boston
1-3 July	Post-UUA General Assembly conference in Concord with Barry Andrews, Joan Goodwin, Jayne Gordon, Wes Mott, Bob Richardson, Nancy Craig Simmons, and others
7 July-8 Aug.	NEH Summer Institute "RWE at 200: Literature, Philosophy, Democracy," Santa Fe, N.M. Dir. Russell Goodman
10-13 July	Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord, Mass., devoted to the theme "Thoreau: The Emersonian Influence"
19-21 Sept.	Emerson Conference in Beijing
16-18 Oct.	Emerson conference in Rome

Special issues are being planned of *Harvard Library Bulletin*, *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History*, and *Nineteenth-Century Prose*.

Emerson at 100

(Continued from page 1)

that "within the hall will stand a bronze statue of Emerson by Frank Duveneck of Cincinnati." (Happily, both projects were completed in a timely fashion, and the results can still be seen at Harvard today.)

As might be expected, readers then, like today, interpreted Emerson according to their own lights, and, as a result, often found themselves in disagreement. In a number of articles, Emerson is described as a spiritual guide and seer, an American prophet. Thus, an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (24 May 1903) states that "Foremost of all Emerson's great qualities ... [is] his fine spirituality that lifts him completely out of the reach of everyday life and sets him among the prophets and the sages." Similarly, an article in the [Knoxville, Tenn.] *Daily Journal and Tribune* (24 May 1903) holds that Emerson's "message was prophetic," and that "Of all the spiritual voices of the last century, none have [sic] a greater carrying power, or ring with so true and clear a note as that of Ralph Waldo Emerson." Many other articles strike the same note. In these, Emerson is celebrated as a spiritual idealist and secular saint whose message provides a welcome antidote to the growing materialism of the age. Indeed, accounts indicate that Emerson's spirituality was the subject of many sermons in churches throughout America on 24 May, the Sunday before Emerson's birthday. Often ministers, especially Unitarians, depicted Emerson as a Christ-like figure, if not an orthodox Christian. The *Kansas City [Mo.] Star* (24 May 1903) and *Hartford Daily Times* (26 May 1903) report such events, the latter noting one preacher's assertion that "Everyone these days quotes Emerson without even knowing it. There is no other echo of Jesus in this new century as that which comes through him." The *New York Herald* (25 May 1903) reported that many preachers in that city had taken "Emerson and his teachings as the theme of their sermons." The writer also notes that "Unitarians refer to Emerson as 'our Emerson' although he left the church." This latter point was not lost on the writer of a letter to the editor of the *Hartford Daily Courant* (25 May 1903). He points out that Emerson's "whole attitude is that of a thorough-going disbeliever in all that the Christian Church has taught and now believes, and he would without doubt repudiate with energy the term Christian, if applied to him." Such complaints, however, were relatively few and far between.

The writings of the times show other areas of disagreement among Emersonians, some of them still familiar today. One concerns Emerson's political and social involvement, or lack thereof. The *London Times* article, noted earlier, included the following statement from a memorial article in

the *Boston Globe*, testifying to Emerson's political connectedness and strong social conscience.

[Emerson] stood for free speech and free men. No partisan, he yet was ready to sacrifice himself when the cause was good. It was part of his religion to see that the land was well governed.... Emerson believed that a care for politics is as great an interest as a rational being can have. His fine example of civil duty is no small part of his contribution to the strength and greatness of this nation.

Contrastingly, Charles Eliot offered in his address an image of a largely disengaged Emerson, a conservative Brahmin, who was aloof from politics and the major social movements of his time. Thus he asserts, that "although a prophet and inspirer of reform, Emerson was not a reformer. He was but a halting supporter of the reforms of his day.... When it came to action," says Eliot, Emerson was "surprisingly conservative" and "probably would have been an ineffective worker in any field of reform." Other commentators repeated this view. A writer in the *Kansas City Star* (24 May 1903) observes that "the cry of the heart was never heard by [Emerson] sitting there above the clouds. The tragedy of defeated hope, the melancholy of despair were things not realized. The note of wailing from 'the damned of the earth' never reached his ear, attuned to the monotone of spiritual calm."

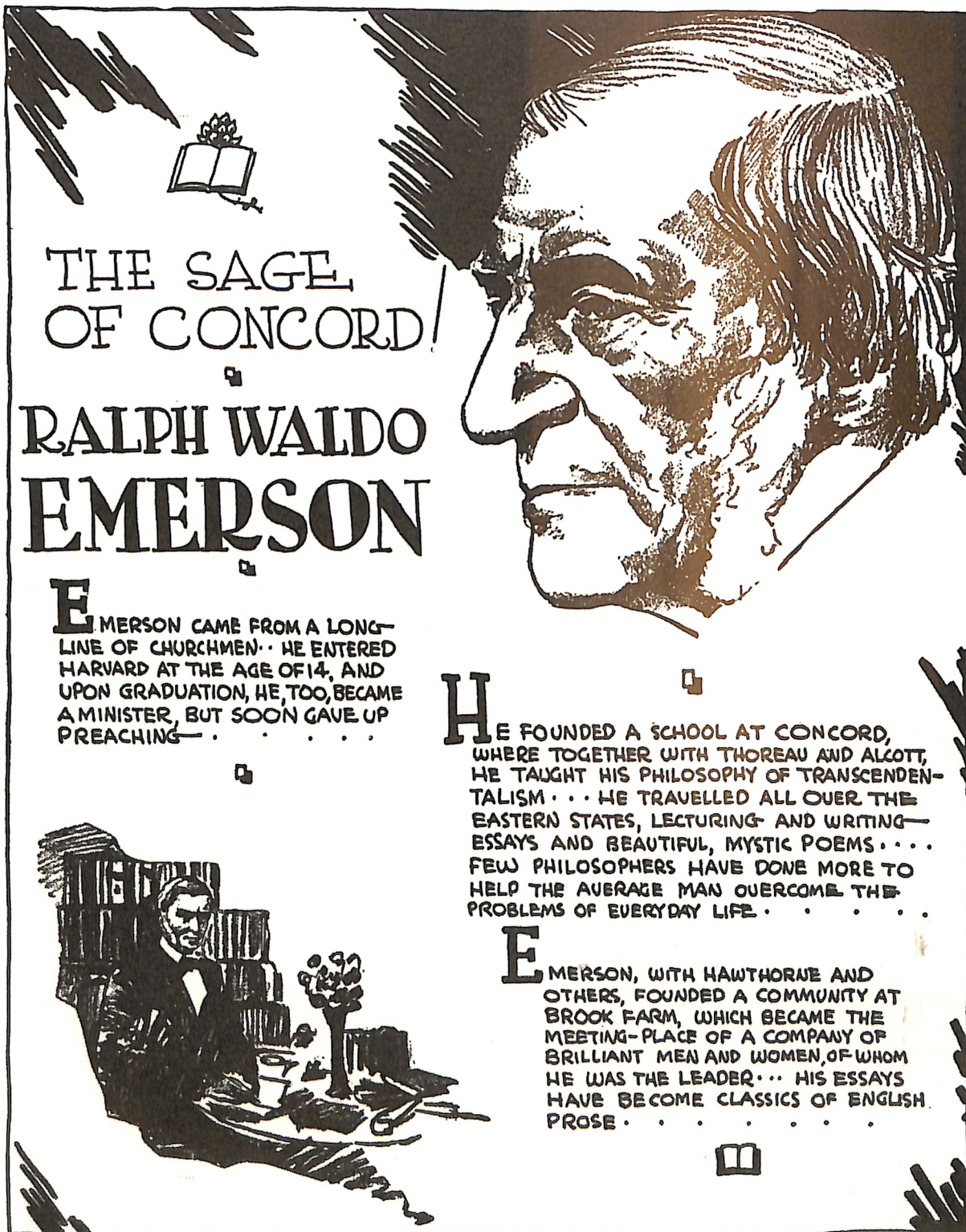
These charges of indifference and aloofness were answered in various memorial speeches and presentations by people who had known Emerson as politically engaged and socially active. The group included Franklin Sanborn; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, William Lloyd Garrison II, Moorfield Storey, and others. Storey was probably the best known social reformer of his day. He was very much involved in Civil Service Reform, Anti-Imperialism, and Civil Rights. Eventually he would serve as the first president of the NAACP (1910-1929).

The Emerson celebration in 1903 extended into the summer months. There had been a celebration in Concord in May, sponsored by the Social Circle there. Samuel Hoar, Higginson, William James, and other notables, including Storey, spoke on the occasion. In July, in part because the National Educational Association was having its annual conference in Boston at the time, an "Emerson Memorial School" was planned, somewhat on the model of the old "Concord School of Philosophy." Thirty presentations were scheduled, divided equally between venues in Concord and Boston. Here again, the subject of Emersonian individualism (and social aloofness) vs. social engagement was debated. Moorfield Storey, in a presentation titled "Emerson and the Civil War," outlined in detail Emerson's long service in the crusade against slavery, rebutting Eliot's earlier claims of

aloofness in the process. William M. Salter, of the Ethical Culture Society, Chicago, in a talk on "Emerson's Aim and Method in Social Reform," also took note of Emerson's opposition to slavery, but faulted him for his presumed estrangement from the social reformers who were most effective in fighting the evil. Emerson's "aloofness from the ranks of the reformers," he notes, "may have been temperamental," but whatever the cause, Salter concludes, Emerson's individualism and his "impatience of means blinded him to the fact that the individual is impotent...." Because of this, "he may be looked at as a prophet for reformers," but was not one himself (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 25 July 1903). Another speaker, George W. Cooke, a Unitarian minister and early Emerson biographer, while applauding Emerson's concept of individualism as appropriate for his time, notes "the whole modern conception of the sociality of man, as opposed to the individuality so earnestly preached by Emerson, has made transcendentalism an outdated philosophy" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 17 July 1903). Taking the opposite position, William Roscoe Thayer, a prominent American historian, insisted on the continuing importance and correctness of Emersonian individualism. In a presentation on "Emerson's Gospel of Individualism," he argues that "the champions of collectivism or combination, all agree in looking outside of themselves for strength. Over against them is a band made of the elite of all times and peoples, who hold that strength comes from within. This is the essence of individualism, and Emerson has never been surpassed as its interpreter." For Thayer, "the remedy for our public evils is not socialism," but Emersonian individualism (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 21 July 1903).

Finally, Emerson was also remembered for his contributions to the women's movement. In "The American Woman's Debt to Emerson," Anna Garlin Spencer, a suffragist who would become an ordained Unitarian minister, invoked the historic Transcendental partnership between Emerson and Margaret Fuller, while insisting that "the greatest debt of American women to Emerson ... is due not because of his recognition and aid given to the movement to better their own position, but that he taught the necessity of freedom for the true development of all human nature. ... When Emerson declares 'one mind, one will, in all things, and that will good,' he indicates that it requires all personal power, contributed by feminine as well as masculine minds, to reveal the divine unity in human society" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 16 July 1903).

Perhaps the fact that so many men and women have managed to find so much in Emerson, both then and now, testifies more than anything else to his enduring significance as America's greatest "Representative Man."



THE SAGE
OF CONCORD!

**RALPH WALDO
EMERSON**

EMERSON CAME FROM A LONG-
LINE OF CHURCHMEN. HE ENTERED
HARVARD AT THE AGE OF 14, AND
UPON GRADUATION, HE, TOO, BECAME
A MINISTER, BUT SOON GAVE UP
PREACHING.

HE FOUNDED A SCHOOL AT CONCORD,
WHERE TOGETHER WITH THOREAU AND ALcott,
HE TAUGHT HIS PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSCENDEN-
TALISM. . . HE TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE
EASTERN STATES, LECTURING AND WRITING
ESSAYS AND BEAUTIFUL, MYSTIC POEMS. . .
FEW PHILOSOPHERS HAVE DONE MORE TO
HELP THE AVERAGE MAN OVERCOME THE
PROBLEMS OF EVERYDAY LIFE. . .

EMERSON, WITH HAWTHORNE AND
OTHERS, FOUNDED A COMMUNITY AT
BROOK FARM, WHICH BECAME THE
MEETING-PLACE OF A COMPANY OF
BRILLIANT MEN AND WOMEN, OF WHOM
HE WAS THE LEADER. . . HIS ESSAYS
HAVE BECOME CLASSICS OF ENGLISH
PROSE. . .

BORN 1803 IN BOSTON, MASS.—DIED 1882 IN CONCORD, MASS.

From Minute Biographies: Intimate Glimpses into the Lives of 150 Famous Men and Women, by Samuel Nisenson and Alfred Parker (Grosset & Dunlap, 1931). See acknowledgment on page 5 of this issue.