2003

Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Bicentenary Exhibition

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON
(1803–1882)

a bicentenary exhibition from the
Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century
American Literature

Admit the bearer
Friend to the Emory
Lecture.
R.W. Emerson

Thomas Cooper Library
University of South Carolina
2003
I am to offer you, that the aim of each young man in this society is the very highest that belongs to a rational mind. Let it be granted that our life is common mean, that some of those offices and duties for which we were mainly created are becoming so rare that in society that the memory of them is only to live in old books and traditions that poets those beautiful tales men are not more
RALPH WALDO EMERSON
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Joel Myerson

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Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this catalogue, which provides a permanent record of the Ralph Waldo Emerson bicentenary exhibition at the Thomas Cooper Library. This is the second major exhibition that Professor Joel Myerson has curated for the library and community from the Myerson Collection, and it is the first devoted to a single author. This exhibition of manuscripts, letters, first editions, association copies, and memorabilia can display only a relatively small number of items from the comprehensive Emerson holdings in the larger collection, but it makes clear the range, depth, and quality of the outstanding materials that the Myerson Collection has brought to the University.

Professor Myerson has long been recognized both nationally and internationally for his scholarship on the American Transcendentalists, including Emerson. In this bicentenary year, his expertise has been in demand also for exhibits and celebrations at Emerson's university, Harvard, and in Emerson's hometown, at the Concord Public Library. We are deeply appreciative of Professor Myerson's willingness during a busy year to share his expertise with the Thomas Cooper Library in exhibitions such as this, in the continuing development of the Myerson Collection, and in plans to make it known to the wider scholarly community. The authoritative catalogue he has prepared for this very impressive exhibition demonstrates that with his generous transfer of his collection to the Thomas Cooper Library the University of South Carolina now has the resources to be a significant center for the study of nineteenth-century American literature.

Paul A. Willis
Dean of Libraries
Introduction:
Ralph Waldo Emerson—A Bibliographical Life

I first began collecting Emerson in graduate school. By my second year there I knew that I would write a dissertation on the Dial, a journal edited by the Transcendentalists; and because Emerson was the major figure in the movement, it was natural to begin by collecting information on him. My funds in graduate school were limited, and I was collecting books by and about all the Transcendentalists, but I had two aids: I worked at the campus bookshop, which allowed me to buy all the new scholarly editions of Emerson's writings at a 40 percent discount, and I was able to go booking with my dissertation director, Harrison Hayford, who also sold me books from his own collection.

Arriving at USC, I discovered that the department had some very serious book collectors—indeed, a few of them considered it a blood sport. Some—like Matt Bruccoli, Paula Feldman, Ross Roy, and Patrick Scott—shared catalogues and other tips with me; others—like Judith James and Ed Madden—made notes on books I might want as they saw them in their travels. But above all, I traveled and found books on my own. One enjoyable aspect of the scholarly life is travel, whether on research trips or going to conferences, and everywhere I went I visited bookstores. In the 1970s and 1980s prices for nineteenth-century American literary works were extremely reasonable—in retrospect, even depressed—and, for me, Boston had the most and the best bookstores. After all, there Emerson is a "local author."

Booking in Boston was a joy. I used to be able to spend two full days going through all the shops in Boston, Cambridge, and Concord. After I shipped back dozens of large boxes full of goodies, I would again savor the joy of acquisition when opening the boxes after they arrived here. Goodspeed's Old South was a gem, with Arnold Silverman there and marvelous runs of nineteenth-century periodicals and Harvard-related materials. George Goodspeed ruled the eponymous flagship store with an iron hand, and I knew that I would never be quoted another book if I ever turned down one of the items he had saved for me. Ernie Starr was on Kingston Street and ran a store that would be shunned today: no fancy bookcases, no comfortable reading chairs, no lattes, and no baristas for Ernie—tens of thousands of books were stuffed into orange crates stacked to the ceiling, and one ventured into this treasure trove with a stepladder and a flashlight. Next door was Edward Morrill and Son, the latter being Sam Morrill, who always had a table full of Unitarian sermons to rummage through and a fine collection of Boston-related materials. Sam frequently had things for me when I arrived and put me on the "A" list for receiving his catalogues first. George Gloss's Brattle Bookshop was always fun to go looking in, because the books were often in random order, resulting in the most determined or the luckiest browsers coming up with the best books. George also had whatever I was looking for—
only it was always at home, and he always forgot to bring it in. Brattle (now relocated to a new store with metal shelves and the books in orderly categories) and Starr's (now Canterbury Books, located in Cambridge) are now run by the sons of the previous owners (making me feel old); the rest are gone. New dealers have come in—the best being the Bromers and especially Priscilla Juvelis—but it's not as much fun when I now spend as much money as I did twenty years ago for dozens of large boxes and come home with only one book.

The Emerson collection came about because I wanted to do extensive work on this author, beginning with a descriptive bibliography of his writings. When I began, the most recent full-scale bibliography had been published in 1908 and was seriously out of date, and the volume of Bibliography of American Literature with Emerson in it, published in 1959, was not comprehensive and was especially weak on British editions and printings. I began collecting Emerson with a simple goal: get everything. (I now have over 2,500 books by him, making mine the most comprehensive collection of books by Emerson in the world.) A descriptive bibliography is not a list: It is an analytical description of and commentary on an author's public life as depicted in the history of his or her publications. I therefore set out to obtain multiple copies of works, knowing that the informality of nineteenth-century printing and publishing practices would result in variants and that some of those variants would tell stories (many of these are described in the catalogue). Because Emerson's works began to enter the public domain in the late nineteenth century, my collection is especially strong in reprintings of his works and is a rich resource for tracing the leasing, borrowing, and stealing of plates from reprint publisher to reprint publisher during this time period. I of course obtained first editions and, as the collection grew, manuscripts.

In the catalogue that follows, I attempt to present a reconstruction of Emerson's life in books by interweaving a biographical narrative with items from my collections that tell a story. Each entry begins, where appropriate, with the entry number for the work in my Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography (Pittsburgh, 1982) or the Supplement (Pittsburgh/Oak Knoll, forthcoming). I have given information about the number of copies printed when known. All items are from the Joel Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Literature at the Thomas Cooper Library, except for a few pieces that I have bought for myself since the collection went to USC in 2000. Good collectors never stop collecting—there are always more tales to be told by books and manuscripts.

J.M.
EARLY YEARS

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on 25 May 1803 in Boston, Massachusetts, one of eight children of William Emerson, a Congregational minister. His father died on 12 May 1811, placing the family in financial straits, and, even though the parish voted them a stipend for seven years, Emerson's mother was forced to take in boarders to help make ends meet. Education was important to the Emersons and all the boys in the family were well schooled. Young Ralph (he did not prefer "Waldo" until the early 1820s) began attending the Boston Latin School in 1812, graduating in 1817, the year in which he entered Harvard College. He had an undistinguished career there, graduating thirtieth in a class of fifty-nine. He did, however, win second prize in the Bowdoin essay contest with "The Character of Socrates" and "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," and he was named class poet, but only after the honor had been rejected by seven other students. Soon after leaving Harvard in 1821, he published his first work, "Thoughts on the Religion of the Middle Ages," which appeared in the November-December 1822 issue of the Christian Disciple and Theological Review and was signed "H.O.N." (created by using the last letters of his names).

- Printed and filled out bill for the funeral of William Emerson, Waldo's father, 22 May 1811.
- Program for Harvard College commencement, 29 August 1821. Emerson is listed as participating in a discussion "On the Character of John Knox, William Penn, and John Wesley."
- Broadside for Twentieth Reunion of Emerson's Harvard class. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
- Letter to Rebecca Haskins of September 1824 about her early reading.

After stints of teaching school, Emerson began studying theology and divinity at Harvard in 1825, and on 10 October 1826 he was licensed to preach. But ill health (problems with his eyes and with tuberculosis) forced him on a curative trip to the South. In November 1826 he visited Charleston, South Carolina, and St. Augustine, Florida, for their warmer climates, returning home in the late spring of 1827. In Charleston he first saw in person the institution of slavery and was repelled by it. After returning, he supplied various pulpits before marrying Ellen Louisa Tucker on 30 September 1829, after he had been ordained junior
pastor of the prestigious Second Church of Boston on 11 March. The marriage was a happy one, but Ellen had tuberculosis, which worsened, and she died on 8 February 1831. Emerson, who disliked the many social responsibilities he had as pastor and who disagreed with his parish over the administration of the Lord's Supper, resigned in October 1832.

- Letter to Samuel Ripley of 12 April 1827, written from Charleston, South Carolina, where Emerson had traveled for his health, and in which he comments on how the locals “have no particular pretensions to a religious character any farther than a decided hostility to Unitarianism, as ‘the Yankee religion.’” Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
- Manuscript of “To Eva,” dedicated to Emerson’s first wife, Ellen. This manuscript served as printer’s copy for the 1847 London edition of Emerson’s Poems.

EUROPE AND A NEW CAREER

Emerson sailed for Europe in December 1832, where he met Thomas Carlyle, beginning a friendship with him that included acting as Carlyle’s agent for his books published in America. After Emerson returned to the United States in October 1833, he began a period of introspection and reading, supporting himself by supply preaching, lecturing, and on the income derived from stocks left him by Ellen. In October 1834, Emerson moved to Concord, his ancestral town. There he began his lifelong involvement in the life of the community, starting with A Historical Discourse in 1835, which celebrated the bicentennial of Concord’s incorporation and was his first separate publication. Also in 1835, Emerson married Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, whom he called Lidian.

- A Historical Discourse, Delivered Before the Citizens of Concord, 12th September 1835. On the Second Centennial Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town. Concord: G.F. Bemis, 1835. Wrappers. A 2.1. Copy inscribed (but not in Emerson’s hand) to Charles King Newcomb, one of the many young men whose careers he tried to assist. There are relatively few copies of this extant, because many of them were destroyed by a fire in the Concord Town Clerk’s office.
- Signed printed document, Concord Free Public Library Committee, 5 September 1877. Emerson acknowledges the gift of a book in his role as chair of the committee. He served on the library committee for over a decade.
• **Reports of the Selectmen and Other Officers of the Town of Concord.** [Concord: various publishers, various dates]. Emerson was active in the social life of Concord, serving on the town's library and cemetery committees, and as a member of the Social Circle, Concord's most distinguished discussion club. The Myerson Collection has a bound complete run of these reports (belonging to the Boston bookseller George Goodspeed's father, himself a famous bookseller), as well as over thirty copies in wrappers.

• Pictures of the Emerson house in Concord, called "Bush," as well as commemorative plates and other ephemera depicting it.

**TRANSCENDENTAL TIMES**

In 1836 the public recognized a new movement, Transcendentalism, in which Emerson took a leading role. This group, mainly dissident, Harvard-educated Unitarian ministers, expressed their disagreement with the current state of affairs on three fronts. In literature they championed English and Continental writers such as Carlyle and Goethe. In philosophy they followed Immanuel Kant in believing that people had an innate ability to perceive that their existence transcended mere sensory experience, as opposed to the prevailing belief of John Locke that the mind was a blank tablet at birth that later registered only those impressions received through the senses and experience. In religion they denied the existence of miracles, preferring Christianity to rest on the spirit of Christ rather than on his supposed deeds, as was the belief of the conservative Unitarians. Transcendentalists also opposed the traditional view of "success" as measured by vulgar monetary standards with an argument that the moral insight of the individual should replace the dollar as the standard of conduct.

Emerson's first real book, *Nature* (1836), was a rallying cry for the Transcendentalists, espousing organicism in art and viewing Nature as the divine teacher of man. The publication of *Nature* came when many new ideas were coalescing, and it was Emerson who collected and synthesized most of these ideas in one place and produced the closest thing that the Transcendentalists had to a manifesto. Although the book was published anonymously, Emerson was widely known to be its author, and he became the central figure among the Transcendentalists. In September, when *Nature* was published, Emerson helped to form the Transcendental Club, which served as a forum for the movement over the next four years, as they met some thirty times. He was also instrumental in establishing the semiofficial journal of the Transcendentalists, the *Dial*, in July 1840, and edited it from July 1842 (when its first editor, Margaret Fuller, resigned because her salary had not been paid) until its demise in April 1844.
• *Nature*. Boston: James Munroe, 1836. A 3.1.a. Possibly 1,500 copies printed. This work has been noted in sixteen different types of cloth with five different styles of blindstamping. The Myerson Collection contains seven copies of *Nature*, all in different bindings, reflecting the fact that the book was bound up in small batches as sales warranted.


• Christopher Pearse Cranch, caricature of lines from Emerson’s *Nature* [ca. 1838]. Poet and artist, Cranch combined wit and art in a series of caricatures based on passages from Emerson’s writings. This one, the most famous pictorial image relating to the Transcendental movement, draws on the famous passage from *Nature* about Emerson’s epiphany while crossing the Boston Common: “Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.”

• Letter to his publisher James Munroe & Co. of 18 April 1839 about sending review copies. Unpublished.

• *The Dial* (1840–1844). The Myerson Collection contains two complete runs (including the set of William Batchelder Greene, a contributor), plus a number of individual volumes and issues. On display is the issue of July 1842 with Thoreau’s “Natural History of Massachusetts.”

Emerson published many of his most famous works during this period, including his address on “The American Scholar,” which called for American literary independence; the “Divinity School Address,” warning of the dangers facing the ever-more-conservative Unitarian church; and addresses on “Literary Ethics” and “The Method of Nature.”
• An Oration, Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837. Boston: James Munroe, 1837. Wrappers. A 5.1. 500 copies printed. This was later titled "The American Scholar." Also on display are the partial proof sheets for the second edition (A 5.2) and Man Thinking (London: C.E. Mudie, [1843]), an unauthorized or pirated edition (A 5.3.a, cover title).

• Christopher Pearse Cranch, caricature of lines from Emerson's "American Scholar" address [ca. 1838]. Cranch illustrates the passage "The poor and the low find some amends to their immense moral capacity, for their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified."


• An Oration, Delivered Before the Literary Societies of Dartmouth College, July 21, 1838. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1838. Wrappers. A 8.1. This was later titled "Literary Ethics."


The publication of Emerson's first two volumes of essays firmly established him in the literary and cultural worlds. Essays (1841) includes "History," "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Spiritual Laws," 👇🏻
“Love,” “Friendship,” “Prudence,” “Heroism,” “The Over-Soul,” “Circles,” “Intellect,” and “Art.” ("Self-Reliance" is Emerson’s most famous essay and the one most widely reprinted.) Essays: Second Series (1844) expands on the ideas of the earlier volume, with “The Poet,” “Experience,” “Character,” “Manners,” “Gifts,” “Nature,” “Politics,” “Nominalist and Realist,” and “New England Reformers.” The last essay in the volume shows Emerson’s interest in and involvement with practical affairs, as does his stinging attack on slavery, An Address ... on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies (1844). The many British authorized and unauthorized editions of Emerson’s writings that appeared during this period attest to his increasing international stature.

- Manuscript page from Emerson’s lecture, “Man the Reformer” (1841). Emerson delivered this lecture on 25 January 1841. The manuscript for the entire lecture is now lost.
- Emerson’s handwritten pass for admission to one of his lectures, signed on the verso. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
- Essays. London: James Fraser, 1841. A 10.2.a. 750 copies printed. The preface by Emerson’s friend Thomas Carlyle was intended to boost sales, but to many it was the endorsement of a confusing writer by an utterly mystifying one. In a time when British publishers regularly published editions of American authors’ works without compensating them, Emerson received—thanks to Carlyle—half the profits after expenses had been recouped.
- Orations, Lectures, and Address. London: H.G. Clarke, 1844. Wrappers. A 14.1.a. The Myerson Collection has one of the four known copies. Also on display is the 1845 printing (A 14.1.b) with a variant wrapper bound in.
Essays: Second Series. Boston: James Munroe, 1844. A 16.1.a-b. 2,000 copies printed, most being composed of mixed sheets from the first and second printings. The Myerson Collection contains all four known binding variants. On display is a copy inscribed by Emerson to his sister-in-law, Lucy Jackson Brown. Also on display is a copy of the 1845 printing (A 16.1.c) in wrappers. The Myerson Collection contains three (A, B, C) of the five binding variants of the 1845 printing.

Letter to his publisher James Munroe & Co. of 18 October 1844 about sending review copies. Unpublished.


An Address Delivered in the Court-House in Concord, Massachusetts, on 1st August, 1844, on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies. Boston: James Munroe, 1844. Wrappers. A 17.1.a. Also on display is the British edition, The Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies. An Address Delivered at Concord, Massachusetts, on 1st August, 1844 (London: John Chapman, 1844), A 17.2, rebound without the original wrappers.


This period also saw Emerson's personal life flourishing as well. His son Waldo was born in October 1836, followed by daughter Ellen in February 1839, Edith in November 1841, and Edward in July 1844. But when young Waldo died from scarlet fever in January 1842, his father was devastated, and he recounted his attempts at coming to terms with his grief in the poem "Threnody."

FRIENDSHIPS

During the heady years between 1836 and 1844, when the people known as Transcendentalists were at their most cohesive, Emerson formed friendships with many of the major figures of the movement, including Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau, as well as lesser personalities, such as Christopher Pearse Cranch (whose poetry he published in the Dial), Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (to whose journal Aesthetic Papers he contributed), and Jones Very (whose Essays and Poems he edited in 1839).
• Bronson Alcott, *Emerson*. Boston: [privately printed], 1865. 50 copies printed for Emerson's birthday on 25 May. Alcott wrote this appreciative work, the first book-length study of Emerson, for his Concord neighbor and friend. On display is the copy inscribed by Alcott to Benjamin Marston Watson, a friend of Thoreau's.

• Letter from Fuller to Elizabeth Hoar of 16 January 1843 commenting on Emerson, "whose playful grace seems to say that this journey will do him good, heaven bless him!" Hoar had been engaged to Emerson's brother Charles. After his death in 1836, she never married and was treated as family by the Emersons.

• Letter from Fuller to Emerson of 21 January 1849. Writing from Rome, Fuller laments "A year and no letter from Elizh, six months and no letter from Waldo," and "As to persons, I have made acquaintance this past year mostly with thieves and prostitutes, and must say my faith in the hopes of Lazarus are shaken."

Personal collection of Joel Myerson.

• *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*. Edited by William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. F 4. The first biography of Fuller attempted to sanitize her for public consumption by making her conform to what the editors considered to be the model of a woman writer, and thus a passionate and questioning individual was changed into a somewhat prim and proper lady. On display are the first American and British editions: Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1852 (2 vols.) and London: Richard Bentley, 1852 (3 vols.).

• Christopher Pearse Cranch, manuscript letters to Emerson of 2 March 1840 and 12 September 1841. When the *Dial* was established, Cranch wrote Emerson about contributing, enclosing some of what became his most famous poems, including "To the Aurora Borealis," "Inworld," and "Outworld."

• *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1862. Wrappers. E 160. This issue contains Emerson's essay on Thoreau, in which he views Thoreau's literary career as less than successful, complaining that "instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party." This essay was interpreted by many as being so negative that it kept people from reading Thoreau's writings for many years.

• *Aesthetic Papers* (1849). Wrappers. D 18. The first and only issue of this magazine, known for publishing Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" (more popularly known as "Civil Disobedience"), contained Emerson's "War."

YEARS OF FAME

By 1844 whatever unity had existed among the Transcendentalists was gone, and they pursued separate careers. Emerson's own career blossomed, and he became a literary man of renown, known as "the sage of Concord." In 1846–1848 he visited Britain and gave a series of lectures to great acclaim. The publication of his Poems (1847) allowed him to put into practice his idea of the poet as liberating god or truth-speaker. In 1849 he published Nature; Addresses, and Lectures, which revised and reprinted a number of his earlier pamphlet publications and added some unpublished lectures. He also published in 1849 Representative Men, in which he describes Plato as representative of the philosopher, Swedenborg as the mystic, Montaigne as the skeptic, Shakespeare as the poet, Napoleon as the man of the world, and Goethe as the writer.

- Advertising broadside for the Massachusetts Quarterly Review. Emerson is erroneously (and without his permission) listed as an editor. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.

- Poems. London: Chapman, Brothers, 1847. A 18.1.a. The Myerson Collection contains both binding variants, which indicate the change in publishers of this book from the goldstamping of their names at the base of the spine.


- "First Leaf from the Journal of the East-Riding Union of Mechanics' Institutions," dated January 1848. An advertising flier for Emerson's British lecture tour. This is the only known flier for Emerson's lectures. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
• Letter to Thomas Carlyle of 2 March 1848 about a visit to his house in London, along with the envelope addressed in Emerson’s hand.
• Letter to Alexander Ireland of 3 May 1848 about visiting London and Paris.
• Nature; Addresses, and Lectures.
• Miscellanies; Embracing Nature, Addresses, and Lectures. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1857. A 21.1.c. 500 copies printed. This unique copy is the only evidence of how the title was sold in England: American sheets were sent to England and bound there by Bone & Son, whose label is in this copy.
• Program for the opening of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord on 29 September 1855, listing Emerson as the main speaker. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.

Emerson’s lecturing career continued to flourish, and his series describing his last visit to England was published in 1856 as English Traits. The book had a mixed reception, with American audiences complaining that he was too friendly to the English,
and the English feeling he was too critical of their customs and culture. Emerson championed Walt Whitman’s poetry by writing him a congratulatory letter on receiving a copy of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (“I greet you at the beginning of a great career,” he wrote), but later withdrew his support when Whitman included the sexually charged “Calamus” poems in the 1860 edition of *Leaves*.

- *English Traits*. London: G. Routledge, 1856. A 24.2.a. 6,000 copies printed. The Myerson Collection contains one (B) of the two binding variants and a possible remainder binding. Cloth and glazed boards. The clothbound edition, for which Emerson received royalties, was intended for a more “serious” audience than was the other, which, in its gaudier glazed boards, was intended for general sale and especially to be read on railways.
- *Leaves of Grass*. Brooklyn: [Fowler and Wells, 1856]. Possibly 1,000 copies printed. After Emerson wrote Whitman a letter praising the 1855 edition of *Leaves*, Whitman emblazoned “I Greet You at the Beginning of A Great Career R.W. Emerson” in goldstamping at the foot of the spine; Emerson, who was not consulted, was not pleased.
- Letter to Charles Francis Simmons of 29 September 1859 about Emerson’s changing publishers.


- Program for the Grand Jubilee Concert in Boston on 1 January 1863, celebrating Abraham Lincoln’s signing of the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, showing Emerson as a participant. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
• Program for the graduation ceremonies at the Ripley Female College, Poultney, Vermont, where Emerson lectured on “Resources” on 26 June 1865. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.

• Report on the Permanent Memorial. Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1866. D 62. Head title. This was one of the many fund-raising projects for Harvard on which Emerson worked.

• Royalty check from Ticknor and Fields of 13 August 1867, endorsed.

• May-Day and Other Pieces. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867. A 28.1.a. 2,000 copies. The Myerson Collection contains both binding variants. On display is one of 100 copies specially bound, this one inscribed by Emerson to Grindall Reynolds, his minister in Concord. Also on display is a copy specially bound in leather by the publisher for presentation—in this case, by Emerson’s wife Lidian.


AUTUMNAL YEARS

Emerson’s health began to fail as his mental faculties gradually diminished and a type of aphasia, in which he could not remember the names of people and common objects, affected him. The publication of Society and Solitude (1870) represented the last book for which he was solely responsible. A twilight, reflective volume, its essays include “Society and Solitude,” “Civilization,” “Art,” “Eloquence,” “Domestic Life,” “Farming,” “Works and Days,” “Books,” “Clubs,” “Courage,” “Success,” and, appropriately, “Old Age.” A strenuous course of lectures at Harvard, “Natural History of Intellect,” in 1870–1871 exhausted him physically and intellectually. To recuperate, in the spring of 1871 he visited the West Coast, where he met the naturalist John Muir.
After a fire partially destroyed the Emerson house in 1872, further accelerating Emerson's mental decline, he and his daughter Ellen visited Europe and Egypt while the house was being rebuilt (mainly through monies contributed by Emerson's friends), but he was never the same after returning to Concord. His daughters Ellen and Edith Emerson Forbes helped Emerson complete a poetry anthology he had been working on for years, Parnassus (1875). James Elliot Cabot, a longtime family friend, was recruited to help put Emerson's other literary manuscripts in order. With the assistance of Ellen Emerson, Cabot arranged a final volume of essays, Letters and Social Aims (1876); some of the essays were reprints (“The Comic,” “Quotation and Originality,” and “Persian Poetry”), and others were creatively drawn from Emerson's manuscripts (“Poetry and Imagination,” “Social Aims,” “Eloquence,” “Resources,” “Progress of Culture,” “Inspiration,” “Greatness,” and “Immortality”). Also in 1876, the publisher James R. Osgood initiated the first real collected edition of Emerson's writings, the Little Classic Edition. Cabot and Ellen Emerson also put together other former lectures for periodical or separate publication, such as Fortune of the Republic (1878) and “The Preacher” (1880). Emerson died quietly in Concord on 27 April 1882 and was buried at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, close to the graves of the Alcotts, Hawthornes, and Thoreaus.

- Society and Solitude. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1870. A 31.2.a. The Myerson Collection contains all three binding variants. On display are copies bound in cloth and paper-covered glazed boards, the latter aimed at a more popular market.
- Remarks on the Character of George L. Stearns. [N.p.: n.p., 1872]. Head title. A 32.1. This memorializes a friend of Emerson's who was active in the abolitionist movement. The Myerson Collection also contains a letter of condolence from Bronson Alcott to Stearns' widow.
• Stock certificate for the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Co., purchased by Emerson 20 January 1872. Personal collection of Joel Myerson.
• Letters to Welch, Bigelow of 13 August 1875 and to James R. Osgood & Co. of 30 [May?] 1877.

Emerson's contract with his publishers gave him the right to set printing runs and dates, and these letters show him exercising that option.

• *Letters and Social Aims*. Boston: James R. Osgood, 1876. A 34.1.a. 5,000 copies printed. Also on display is Boston: James R. Osgood, 1876 (A 34.2.a) in the "Little Classic Edition."
• *Letters and Social Aims*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1876. A 34.1.a2. 500 copies issued. These are the sheets from the first American printing along with a new first gathering also printed by Osgood.
• *Letters and Social Aims*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1877. A 34.4. 3,000 copies printed. *Golden Library*. The Myerson Collection contains all four known copies in publisher's binding. The bindings may or may not have the number "5" on the spine, indicating its number in the *Golden Library* series. Copies were bound up over the next five years, which explains why the publisher's catalogues bound in at the back of three different copies are dated October 1876, October 1877, and February 1879.
• *Fortune of the Republic*. Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1878. Cloth and wrappers. A 36.1.a. 800 copies printed, 500 of which were bound in cloth and 300 in wrappers. The Myerson Collection has both bindings. The lecture was in fact delivered on 25 February 1878, not 30 March 1878 as stated on the title page.
Emerson's enduring fame and lasting influence has resulted in many different posthumous editions of his works: some repackagings of his earlier writings, others new editions edited from manuscript.

THE ICONIC EMERSON

Images of Emerson began appearing in the 1840s, when his reputation was being established, as engravings in journal articles about him and his works and later in anthologies in which his work appeared. The development of photographic processes meant that cartes-de-visite and cabinet photographs of Emerson became available for the public to purchase, and after his death busts were offered for sale. As Concord assumed its place as a major historical and literary tourist shrine, postcards of Emerson, his house and study, and his grave in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery all became popular with visitors who wished to mail evidence of their pilgrimage to friends and neighbors at home. In 1940, Emerson was honored with a United States postal stamp, and this spawned a host of first-day covers bearing it. His image was even appropriated by a cigar company.

Emerson's position as one of the leading figures in American literary and cultural history has ensured him a place in any series of doodads or gewgaws of famous Americans, and he has appeared on medals, playing cards, coins, dinner plates and creamers, ingots, commemorative plates, stamps, trading cards, and Toby jugs. The fame of his writings—and especially so many of his apothegms—has meant that "gems" from Emerson have appeared on calendars, blotters, bookmarks, advertisements for products such as soap and coffee, numerous inspirational plaques and samplers, and even on those terminally cute Mary Engelbreit products. On display here are but a few of the many items in the Myerson Collection using Emerson's image or writings.
I am to offer you, may I say, of each young man in this society is the very highest that belongs to a rational mind. Let it be granted that our life is common, that some of these offices of nations for which we were mainly created are becoming so rare that the memory of them is only alive in old books to their traditions. That poets that beautiful feet—men are not more