

The Walden Woods Project

Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill

Onsite Quotations

Key

E	Exhibit Marker
M	Entry Map
T	Threshold
Q	Interpretive Path
C	Reflection Circle
L	Alternate Loop Path

Note: With the exception of those at the Reflection Circle, all quotations are by Henry D. Thoreau.

Exhibit Markers

E-1

“Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.”

Walden, The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau, Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co, 1906. (henceforth referred to as *Writings*). Volume 2, page 313.

E-2

“Nature will bear the closest inspection; she invites us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain.”

“Natural History of Massachusetts” (*Writings*) Volume 5, page 107.

E-3

“I have great faith in a seed.”

“The Succession of Forest Trees” (*Writings*) Volume 5, page 203.

Entry Maps

M-1

“Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness ...”

Walden (Writings) Volume 2, page 349.

M-2

“No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert ... Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer?”

Walden (Writings) Volume 2, page 123.

M-3

“I seem to see somewhat more of my own kith and kin in the lichens on the rocks than in any books.”

Journal:12/15/1841 (*Writings*) Volume 7, page 296.

Thresholds**T-1**

“I wish to speak a word for Nature ...”

“Walking” (*Writings*) Volume 5, page 205.

T-2

“Down the road ... on Brister’s Hill, lived Brister Freeman ... slave of Squire Cummings once – there where grow still the apple trees which Brister planted and tended ...”

Walden (Writings) Volume 2, page 284.

Interpretive Path**Q-1**

“I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil, – to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society.”

“Walking” (*Writings*) Volume 5, page 205.

Q-2

“America is said to be the arena on which the battle of freedom is to be fought; but surely it cannot be freedom in a merely political sense that is meant ... Do we call this the land of the free? What is it to be free from King George and continue the slaves of King Prejudice? What is it to be born free and not to live free? What is the value of any political freedom, but as a means to moral freedom?”

“Life Without Principle” (*Writings*) Volume 4, page 476.

Q-3

“The hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men.”

“Walking” (*Writings*) Volume 5, page 224.

Q-4

“The snow falls on no two trees alike, but the forms it assumes are as various as those of the twigs and leaves which receive it. They are, as it were, predetermined by the genius of the tree. So one divine spirit descends alike on all, but bears a peculiar fruit in each.”

Journal: 1/30/1841 (*Writings*) Volume 7, page 185.

Q-5

“It is now one of those frosty hollows so common in Walden Woods, where little grows, sheep’s fescue grass, sweet-fern, hazelnut bushes, and oak scrubs ... At length I see a few birches and pines creeping into it, which at this rate in the course of a dozen years more will suggest a forest there.”

Journal: 10/26/1860 (*Writings*) Volume 20, page 177.

Q-6

“Saw a large hawk circling over a pine wood ... Travelling ever by wider circles. What a symbol of the thoughts, now soaring, now descending, taking larger and larger circles, or smaller and smaller. It flies not directly whither it is bound, but advances by circles, like a courtier of the skies.”

Journal: 12/20/1851 (*Writings*) Volume 9, page 143.

Q-7

“My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature ...”

Journal: 9/7/1851 (*Writings*) Volume 8, page 472.

Q-8

“Every part of nature teaches that the passing away of one life is the making room for another. The oak dies down to the ground, leaving within its rind a rich virgin mould, which will impart a vigorous life to an infant forest. The pine leaves a sandy and sterile soil, the harder woods a strong and fruitful mould. So this constant abrasion and decay makes the soil of my future growth.”

Journal: 10/24/1837 (*Writings*) Volume 7, page 3.

Q-9

“No wonder, then, that the white birch is so prevalent and characteristic a tree with us and that the seedling birches spring up every year on so many neglected spots, but especially where the surface has been cleared or burned.”

Faith in a Seed, ed. Bradley P. Dean. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993. page 45.

Q-10

“I see in the open field ... a few pitch pines springing up, from seeds blown from the wood a dozen or fifteen rods off ... in a few years, if not disturbed, these seedlings will alter the face of nature here.”

Journal: 11/26/1860 (*Writings*) Volume 20, page 269.

Q-11

“The very uprightness of the pines and maples asserts the ancient rectitude and vigor of nature. Our lives need the relief of such a background, where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams.”

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (Writings) Volume 1, page 179.

Q-12

“What though the woods be cut down, this emergency was long ago foreseen and provided for by Nature, and the interregnum is not allowed to be a barren one ... she not only begins instantly to heal that scar, but she consoles and refreshes us with fruits such as the forest did not produce.”

Journal: 2/30/1860 (*Writings*) Volume 20, page 301.

Reflection Circle**C-1**

“Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?”

Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden (Writings)* Volume 2, page 11.

C-2

“The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost ... His soul was made for the noblest society ... wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

R.W. Emerson, *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1904. page 484.

C-3

“Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –
I keep it, staying at Home –
With a Bobolink for a Chorister –
And an Orchard, for a Dome –

...

God preaches, a noted Clergyman –
 And the sermon is never long,
 So instead of getting to Heaven, at last –
 I'm going, all along."

Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Boston: Little, Brown, 1890. #324

C-4

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

John Muir

John Muir, *John Muir in His Own Words: A Book of Quotations*. Compiled and ed. by Peter Browning. Lafayette, California: Great West Books, 1988. page 73. (from *John of the Mountains*, 1938, previously unpublished writings by Linnie Marsh Wolfe).

C-5

"What is faith if it is not translated into action?"

Mohandas K. Gandhi

Mohandas K. Gandhi, *100 Volumes of the Collected Works of M. K. Gandhi*, Volume 76; ch. 505, "Discussion with a friend," page 402.

C-6

"That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics."

Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold, *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries*. ed. Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. page 278. (from Aldo Leopold's foreword to *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949).

C-7

"The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart, away from nature, becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too."

Chief Standing Bear

Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1978. page 197.

C-8

“There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.”

Rachel Carson

Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*, New York: Harper and Row, 1965. page 88.

C-9

“It is our task in our time and in our generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours. To do this will require constant attention and vigilance – sustained vigor and imagination.”

John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy, Remarks at the Dedication of the National Wildlife Federation Building, March 3, 1961. The American Presidency Project: americanpresidency.org – The Public Papers of the Presidents. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, University of California, Santa Barbara: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/index_pppus.php

C-10

"We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world ...

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to co-operate in its processes, and to yield to its limits ... For I do not doubt that it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it.”

Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry, “A Native Hill,” in *The Long-Legged House*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1969. page 196.

C-11

“A freedom ride into Mississippi, a peaceful protest in Albany, Georgia ... are outgrowths of Thoreau’s insistence that evil must be resisted and that no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson. New York: Warner Books. 1998. page 14.

C-12

“Henry!

You searched for essence at Walden and, whether successful in your own mind or not, you hit upon an ethic with a solid feel to it: nature is ours to explore forever; it is our crucible and refuge; it is our natural home; it is all these things. Save it, you said: in wildness is the preservation of the world ...

... Surely our stewardship is its only hope. We will be wise to listen carefully to the heart, then act with rational intention and all the tools we can gather and bring to bear.

Affectionately yours,

Edward”

Edward O. Wilson

Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. pages xxiii-xxiv.

For children – near the Reflection Circle (with accompanying images of the Lorax and Truffula Tree)

"But now," says the Once-ler,
 "Now that you're here,
 the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.
 UNLESS someone like you
 cares a whole awful lot,
 nothing is going to get better,
 It's not.

“ So ...
 Catch!" calls the Once-ler.
 He lets something fall.
 "It's a Truffula Seed.
 It's the last one of all!
 You're in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds.
 And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs.
 Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care.
 Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air.
 Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack.

Then the Lorax
and all of his friends
may come back."

Dr. Seuss

Giesel, Theodore Seuss, *The Lorax*. New York: Random House, 1971. Last two pages (unnumbered).

Alternate Loop Path

L-1

"Die and be buried who will,
I mean to live here still;
My nature grows ever more young
The primitive pines among."

The Maine Woods (Writings) Volume 3, page 90.

L-2

"If I am not I, who will be?"

Walden (Writings) Volume 7 page 270.