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Concord Migrations

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1.

Human movement concerns at once large numbers of people changing location, whether temporarily or for the long term, and individual transits, alone or aggregated, from one place to another. The movement of people, whether en masse or individually, usually leads to encounters with other people, because for at least 20,000 years few parts of the globe—Antarctica is the exception—have been uninhabited by humans. People who move meet others whose cultures are unfamiliar to them. What follows may be benign mutual incomprehension, or the growth of shared understandings that lead to exchanges of things and people. Alternatively, encounter can lead to conflict, even resulting in the apparent extinction of one people through destruction or cultural absorption.

Most societies craft elaborate material things, whether portable, as in the case of nomads, or immovable, in the form of fixed abodes of varying size and complexity. Few peoples leave no material traces. At the very least they leave fire hearths and middens. All these things, from palaces to dumps, play roles in defining the cultures of the societies that created and in many cases inherited them, whether intact and in continuous, if changing, use, or excavated following abandonment and burial. Insofar as an article of clothing or a building type is distinctive, it is a marker of cultural community permitting identification, and the acceptance or exclusion of those who conform or differ in their usages.

What might be the consequences for relations among social groups of this general observation regarding identification, acceptance and exclusion based on the making and use of material things of many kinds? These are temporal relationships—they take place over time—so are marked by instability, and are properly subjects of history. In this chapter, I shall examine some questions raised by these considerations in the context of a large complex society that has changed through human movement on an enormous scale in a very short period of time: the movement of peoples to North America from Europe and Africa between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹ I shall do this through the lens of just one settlement in northeast North America, the town of Concord, settled and incorporated by English colonists in 1635 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which had been chartered in 1629. This was a relatively late date in the history of human occupation of the grassy plain and low hills at the confluence of what came to be called the Sudbury

¹ I acknowledge that people moved to North America from Asia and Oceania during this period, but such emigration is beyond the bounds of this study.

and Assabet Rivers to form the Concord River. That this was so was only too well known to the Concord native and resident to whose concerns regarding human migration I shall appeal in particular, Henry David Thoreau.

2.

Thoreau was born in 1817 in Concord, where his father was a pencil manufacturer. He attended Harvard College, graduating in 1837. Thereafter he led a somewhat improvised life, at times teaching, land surveying, and improving processes in his father's pencil works. Encouraged by fellow Concord luminary, Ralph Waldo Emerson, thinking and writing were at the core of his activities. Natural history and the human condition were his major concerns, notably human relationships with the natural world. Although best known for his reflections derived from his sojourn in a one-room cabin he built near Walden Pond, just south of Concord, between 1845 and 1847, *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854), the heart of his writing is his journal, which he kept for some twenty-four years until his death from tuberculosis in 1862 at the age of forty-four.

As a white person, Thoreau was a descendant of recent arrivals in that patch of North America its settlers called New England. Although he may have shared at least some of the assumptions regarding the relative standing of various ethnic and cultural groups held by many of his contemporaries, somewhat unusually for a white man he was conscious of the equivocal position he and his fellow settlers occupied. This can be seen, for instance, in his idiosyncratic take on the myth of the Pilgrim Fathers found in his account of his walking tours of Cape Cod, the large peninsular to the south of Massachusetts Bay where the Pilgrims first landed in 1620. They subsequently founded Plymouth Plantation on the mainland opposite Cape Cod, and soon expanded their settlement. Writing of the acquisition of the lands north of the area at the top of the lower cape settled by the inhabitants of Plymouth in 1644 as Eastham, Thoreau expressed his skeptical attitude:

When the committee from Plymouth had purchased the territory of Eastham of the Indians, "it was demanded, who laid claim to Billingsgate?" which was understood to be all that part of the Cape north of what they had purchased. "The answer was, there was not any who owned it. 'Then,' said the committee, 'that land is ours.' The Indians answered, that it was." This was a remarkable assertion and admission. The Pilgrims appear to have regarded themselves as Not Any's representatives. Perhaps this was the first instance of that quiet way of "speaking for" a place not yet occupied, or at least not improved as much as it may be, which their descendants have practised, and are still practising so extensively. Not Any seems to have been the sole proprietor of all America before the Yankees. But history says that, when the Pilgrims had held the lands of Billingsgate many years, at length "appeared an Indian, who styled himself Lieutenant Anthony," who laid claim to them, and of him they bought them. Who knows but a Lieutenant Anthony may be knocking at the door of the White House some day? At any rate, I know that if you hold a thing unjustly, there will surely be the devil to pay at last.²

² Henry David Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (New York: Penguin, 1987 [1865]), pp. 49-50.

The circumstances of the founding of Concord were equally open to question. They were well known to Thoreau, and available to any of his fellow townsfolk in the version told by Boston politician, historian, and publisher, Lemuel Shattuck in his *History of the Town of Concord*, published in 1835.³ Drawing on sources that include the records of the General Court (the legislative body of the colony), and the journal of the early governor of the colony, John Winthrop (1587/8-1649), Shattuck mentions the devastation of the Indian population by smallpox, the ostensible Indian name of the place, Musketaquid, the allegiance of its inhabitants to the widow of the Massachusetts (or Massachuset) sachem, Nanepashemet, and the local sachem, Tahattawan, when the English arrived. “Both assented to the sale of Musketaquid,” asserts Shattuck. The sale of some or possibly all of the land took place in 1637, it having been incorporated by act of the General Court in New-Town (Cambridge) in September 1635.⁴ These circumstances gave rise to the notion that the new name, Concord, specified in the 1635 act, commemorated its peaceful purchase, though Shattuck doubts this explanation. He plausibly prefers the idea that it refers to the ideal of harmony among the English settlers.⁵ Further, he notes how prosperous Musketaquid had been, its lands highly suitable for the agrarian cultivation practiced by the Native inhabitants, as well as hunting and fishing. These advantages clearly made it desirable to the English settlers, too.

Archaeological evidence confirms the prosperity of Native peoples in Musketaquid over a long period. Varied foodstuffs were apparently plentiful over a considerable period of time—from up to about 5,000 years ago onwards—as suggested by bivalve, bone, and turtle remains at sites such as that beside the Sudbury River known as Clamshell Bluff, a place familiar to Shattuck and to Thoreau.⁶ Shattuck notes that the principal English negotiators who led the settlement were the religious leader, Peter Bulkely, and the merchant and army officer, Simon Willard. They induced new colonists to leave England for Concord, then the first English settlement beyond tidal waters, and, at the time of the purchase, still entirely surrounded by Indian lands. The major commercial attraction was the availability of beaver pelts, traded by the Native inhabitants for metal, woolen, and linen items.⁷

Shattuck wrote of the continuing Indian presence, though it diminished steadily and, at times, precipitously as a result of English incursions. Ever-increasing numbers of mainly English colonists wanted land. They pressed westwards, creating new settlements. They brought diseases with them to which the Native inhabitants had no resistance, causing devastation. The beaver population was over-hunted and declined wherever Indians trapped these animals and traded their pelts to the colonists. Religious conversion efforts led by the Puritan missionary, John Eliot and others acculturated—at least in part—those Algonquian communities that converted to Christianity and inhabited the towns of so-called “Praying Indians.” Most destructive were the wars, notably that between various colonies with their Native allies and the Pequots between 1634 and

³ Lemuel Shattuck, *A History of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts: From its Earliest Settlement to 1832* (Boston: Russell, Ordione, & Co.; Concord: John Stacy, 1835).

⁴ Shattuck, *Concord*, pp. 4-6.

⁵ Shattuck, *Concord*, p. 5 n. 1.

⁶ Shattuck, *Concord*, p. 3; Shirley Blancke, et al., *Clamshell Bluff, Concord, Massachusetts* (*Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 52, 2, 1995).

⁷ On early Native uses of European metal objects, see Laurier Turgeon, “The Tale of a Kettle: Odyssey of an Intercultural Object,” *Ethnohistory* 44, 1997, pp. 1-29.

1638, and—most far-reaching of all—the mutually devastating conflict known as King Philip’s War between 1675 and 1678.⁸ The early predominant Algonquian Indian strategy of allying with the various groups of settlers on the New England littoral to support them in their inter-communal hostilities gave way to what turned out to be a climactic fight for survival. The wars led not only to the deaths of many of the Native inhabitants of southern New England, but to the enslavement and deportation to the West Indian colonies of many of the survivors. It is important to state, though, that the Indian presence in Massachusetts, although diminished, was never expunged.

In Shattuck’s day, the Indian presence as an independent cultural entity in southern New England, though not entirely absent, was growing increasingly hard to discern. The impact of the European colonists on Native lifeways had been all but overwhelming, at least on the surface. A continuing Indian presence in Massachusetts was limited in the eyes of most settlers to a few small communities. Those Indians who did not move northwards or westwards were to a greater or lesser extent acculturated. A report to the governor of Massachusetts in 1861 recorded that the population of Indians and Indian-descendants was 1,610 persons.⁹ Most were members of ten recognized groups with lands, funds, or government support, though not all inhabited Native enclaves. Some lived in or near coastal ports.¹⁰ The settler authorities regarded them as wards of state. In 1869, the Massachusetts Enfranchisement Act extended citizenship to its Indian inhabitants. Although apparently a progressive move, this had a further acculturating consequence, for it led to the sale of most remaining communally owned Indian lands. In the words of the historians who have studied the act and its consequences: “Ironically, the offer of full citizenship carried the price of relinquishing Indian identity—Indian ‘peculiarity.’”¹¹

Indians in Massachusetts may have seemed to “vanish” in the decades following the 1869 act, but their resurgence in recent decades suggests otherwise. One measure of resurgence is the acquisition by Native communities of federal government recognition as self-governing, sovereign tribal nations by an arduous administrative process. As of February, 2015 there are 566 federally recognized tribal governments in the USA.¹² In Massachusetts, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) gained federal recognition in 1987, and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe acquired federal recognition in 2007. In addition, four further Wampanoag bands and two Nipmuc bands have gained Massachusetts though not federal recognition. There are also organized but governmentally unrecognized groups claiming Massachuset(t) or Praying Indian

⁸ See, in particular, Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) on the 1636-1637 conflict; and Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

⁹ John Milton Earle, “Report to the Governor and Council Concerning the Indians of the Commonwealth under the Act of April 6, 1859” (Boston: William White, Printer to the Senate; Senate Document no. 96, Massachusetts State Library, Special Collections, State House, Boston, MA, 1861), p. lxxviii, cited in Ann Marie Plane and Gregory Button, “The Massachusetts Indian Enfranchisement Act: Ethnic Contest in Historical Context, 1849-1869,” *Ethnohistory* 40, 1993, p. 589.

¹⁰ Plane and Button 1993, pp. 589-90.

¹¹ Plane and Button 1993, p. 588.

¹² National Conference of State Legislatures website: Federal and State Recognized Tribes: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/state-tribal-institute/list-of-federal-and-state-recognized-tribes.aspx> (accessed by the author February 9, 2016).

identity.¹³ Casino gambling has seen a huge change in the fortunes of federally recognized sovereign tribal nations in states where gaming is permitted. Although this is not the case in Massachusetts (though it is in the process of limited introduction), casino gambling in neighboring Connecticut has led to the spectacular economic resuscitation of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and the Mohegan Indian Tribe thanks to their respective casinos, Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun.

Another measure of resurgence is language recovery, exemplified by the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project. Wôpanâak is the language of the Wampanoag peoples of southeastern New England that until recently was dormant. The revival of the spoken as well as written language since 1993 as a result of the work of Mashpee Wampanoag tribal member, Jesse Little Doe Baird, represents a determination not to acquiesce in the submergence of Native cultural identity in that of the dominant society.¹⁴

Along with resurgence come challenges to white versions of the past. The Mashantucket Pequot have expended considerable resources on revising history through the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, challenging white stereotypes and assumptions, especially with regard to Indian survival after the conflicts in the seventeenth century. The example of this institution for research and public education prompts the question of what should become of the plethora of material culture items, many of them archaeological, acquired by generations of settlers and their descendants, large numbers of which are to be found in settler institutions, which include the vast majority of American museums. Among them is the greater part of the collection of Indian artifacts acquired, mostly during his habitual walks in Concord, by Henry David Thoreau.

Thoreau was well aware that the inhabitants of Concord of European descent were newcomers.¹⁵ Referring to land, we have seen him state his belief that “if you hold a thing unjustly, there will surely be the devil to pay at last.” In 1835, Shattuck had brought the antiquity of human habitation to his readers’ attention with a certain admiration: “Many hatchets, pipes, chisels, arrow-heads, and other rude specimens of their art, curiously wrought from stone, are still frequently discovered near these spots, an evidence of the existence and skill of the original inhabitants”¹⁶ Thoreau, too, was consistently aware of how the land he walked had been inhabited by Indians for many generations. In 1842, echoing Shattuck, he wrote in his journal:

When I walk in the fields of Concord and meditate on the destiny of this prosperous slip of the Saxon *family*—the unexhausted energies of this new country—I forget that which is now Concord was once Musketaquid and that the *American race* has had its

¹³ These include the Neponsett/Ponkapoag Tribe, and the Praying Indians of Natick and Ponkapoag, both of which maintain websites: <http://www.neponsett.org/> (accessed by the author February 9, 2016); <http://natickprayingindians.org/history.html> (accessed by the author February 9, 2016) respectively.

¹⁴ See the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project website: <http://www.wlrp.org/> (accessed by the author August 27, 2014).

¹⁵ Some of what follows on Thoreau’s collection of Indian artifacts is derived from my “‘Making a World’: The impact of Idealism on Museum Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts,” in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, gen. ed. Nicholas Boyle, and Liz Disley, vol. 3: *Aesthetics and Literature*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Ian Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 245-263.

¹⁶ Shattuck 1835, p. 3.

destiny also. Everywhere in the fields—in the corn and grain land—the earth is strewn with the relics of a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth.

I find it good to remember the eternity behind me as well as the eternity before. Where ever I go I tread in the tracks of the Indian—I pick up the bolt which he has but just dropped at my feet. And if I consider destiny I am on his trail. I scatter his hearth stones with my feet, and pick out of the embers of his fire the simple but enduring implements of the wigwam and the chase— In planting my corn in the same furrow which yielded its increase to his support so long—I displace some memorial of him.¹⁷

Writing of his bean field in *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854), he states, “in the course of the summer it appeared by the arrowheads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelled here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land.”¹⁸ The writer Nathaniel Hawthorne noted that Thoreau had “a strange faculty of finding what the Indians have left behind them.”¹⁹

Thoreau recorded his observations and reflections on Indian artifacts in his journal. For instance, in his entry for August 22, 1860, he described finding thirty-one pottery shards, some decorated, in a recently washed out section of Clamshell Bluff on the bank of the Sudbury River, plus, in another area of the site, “a delicate stone tool ... of a soft slate stone,” which he sketched.²⁰ The implement remained in his collection, and is now in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. (How this, and other Indian items collected by Thoreau, entered the Peabody Museum is described below.) It is a single stone, delicately fashioned so as to consist in what appears to be a gently flaring handle and a wider flat flared blade. Thoreau suspected that it was used for opening clams, and it is currently described in the online collections database of the Peabody Museum as a “clam-shell opener.”²¹ Thoreau expressed a deep respect for the makers of such implements, and the many stone projectile points he found: “It is a matter of astonishment how the Indians ever made them with no iron or steel tools to work with— And I doubt whether one of our mechanics with all the aids of Yankee ingenuity could soon learn to copy one of the thousands under our feet.”²²

¹⁷ Journal entry for March 19, 1842: Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, gen. ed. John C. Broderick, *Volume 1: 1837-1844*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell, William L. Howarth, Robert Sattelmayer, and Thomas Blanding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 380-81.

¹⁸ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. 147.

¹⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Old Manse,” *Mosses from an Old Manse*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), p. 19.

²⁰ Journal entry for August 22, 1860: *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., Peregrine Smith Books, 1984; reprint of Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), vol. 14, pp. 58-60, ill. p. 59.

²¹ Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology 69-34-10/2405: [http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/view/objects/asitem/search\\$0040/0?t:state:flow=8409644f-1efd-4e60-b0d4-cff3bf485b47](http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0?t:state:flow=8409644f-1efd-4e60-b0d4-cff3bf485b47) (accessed by the author December 31, 2014).

²² Journal entry for October 30, 1842; part of a lengthy consideration of Indian lithic tools: Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, gen. ed. John C. Broderick, *Volume 2: 1842-1848*, ed. Robert Sattelmayer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 58-59.

Although most of the Indian artifacts Thoreau gathered were chance surface finds, he knew the value of digging. He conducted no proto-archaeological investigations of the kind made famous by Thomas Jefferson, who reported on his excavation of an Indian burial mound on the south bank of the Rivanna River in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).²³ However, Thoreau did occasionally dig. His early though not always reliable biographer, Franklin B. Sanborn, reports him finding an Indian hearth site during one of his many expeditions with his students when, between 1838 and 1842, he ran a school in Concord with his brother, John. Drawing on an account told to him many years later by one of the students, Henry Warren, Sanborn relates that the school party had observed a place on the bank of the Concord River from their boat where Thoreau thought Native peoples might have lived. They returned the following week with a spade.

Then, moving inland a little further, and looking carefully about, he [Thoreau] struck his spade several times, without result. Presently, when the boys began to think their young teacher and guide was mistaken, his spade struck a stone. Moving forward a foot or two, he set his spade in again, struck another stone, and began to dig in a circle. He soon uncovered the red, fire-marked stones of the long-disused Indian fireplace; thus proving that he had been right in his conjecture. Having settled the point, he carefully covered up his find and replaced the turf, —not wishing to have the domestic altar of the aborigines profaned by mere curiosity.²⁴

The last observation—perhaps stressed by Warren to Sanborn—reveals, if reliable, an attitude on Thoreau's part that is wholly in character. Thoreau was consistently reluctant to be intrusive, whether observing humans, their traces, or the natural world. He would seem to have placed a human value on the ancient Indian hearth, and taken care to see it honored.

Thoreau's curiosity about the long-term inhabitants of New England led him beyond their material remains. He took pains to gather information first-hand from such Indians as he met. One example occurred during a visit to his friend Daniel Ricketson in New Bedford, Massachusetts in June 1856.²⁵ The two men "heard of, and sought out, the hut of Martha Simons, the only pure-blooded Indian left about New Bedford," as he recorded in his journal.²⁶ Alluding to his cabin at Walden Pond, where he had lived between 1845 and 1847, he describes in searching detail their visit to her in her "little hut not so big as mine" near the shore. He describes her appearance, and her "peculiarly vacant expression" as she answered their questions "listlessly," though he attributes this not to stupidity, but to cultural habit. He writes a dispassionate account of an elderly woman who has lost her language. He reports that her grandfather, who had lived on the same spot, was the last who could speak the native tongue, and that she had heard him praying, but could only understand "Jesus Christ." She had gone out to service at the age of seven, and now lived alone with only a "miserable tortoiseshell kitten." However, she identified

²³ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Library of America, 1984 [1785]), pp. 223-26.

²⁴ Franklin B. Sanborn, *The Life of Henry David Thoreau: Including Many Essays Hitherto Unpublished, and Some Account of his Family and Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 206.

²⁵ For an account of their friendship, see Earl J. Dias, "Daniel Ricketson and Henry Thoreau," *New England Quarterly* 26, 1953, pp. 388-396.

²⁶ Journal entry for June 26, 1856: *Journal*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, vol. 8, pp. 390-92.

the specimen of *Aletris* that Thoreau had collected as “husk-root . . . good to put into bitters for a weak stomach,” thereby demonstrating her herbal knowledge. This is an unusual description of cross-cultural encounter—from the white point of view only, of course—between a Native person and a third generation immigrant. While Martha Simons’s grandfather had come from that very same spot on the south coast of Massachusetts, Thoreau’s grandfather, Jean Thoreau, had emigrated to America from the Channel Island of Jersey as recently as 1773.²⁷ From an Indian perspective, Thoreau, like all whites, was a newcomer.

There are many other instances of Thoreau’s questioning of Indians, for instance in the course of his visits to the northern Maine wilderness with Indian guides in 1846, 1853, and 1857, and during a visit to the Dakota peoples in Minnesota in 1861.²⁸ He compiled a series of twelve manuscript notebooks under the title *Extracts Relating to the Indians*, now in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, perhaps with a book in mind that he did not live to write.²⁹ What Thoreau’s mature beliefs about the character and future of Native peoples in America might have been is a matter of controversy. However, it seems likely that he shared at least some of the emerging ethnological assumptions that Indians were for the most part unwilling or unable to adjust to the new circumstances that had been introduced by settlers, and were fated to disappear, as he believed they all but had in New England (“ . . . a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth”).³⁰ Yet he clearly valued the Indian artifacts he collected, and the skills they represented.

In the year in which Thoreau died, 1862, the Boston Society for Natural History, of which he had been a member, began building its new museum.³¹ Thoreau bequeathed his natural history and Indian artifact collections to the society. Just four years later, in 1866, the London based banker George Peabody donated funds to Harvard College that led to the founding of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.³² Jeffries Wyman, Hersey Professor of Anatomy at Harvard since 1847, and president of the Boston Society

²⁷ “Family Tree of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862),” The Thoreau Society website: <http://www.thoreausociety.org/life-legacy/family-tree> (accessed by the author August 28, 2014).

²⁸ See Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, III The Maine Woods* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1906). See also Timothy Troy, “Ktaadn: Thoreau the Anthropologist,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 15, 1, 1990, pp. 74-81, and Corinne Hosfeld Smith, *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau’s Last Journey* (Winnipeg, Man. and Sheffield, VT: Green Frigate Books, 2012).

²⁹ See Richard F. Fleck, *The Indians of Thoreau: Selections from the Indian Notebooks* (Albuquerque, NM: Hummingbird Press, 1974); Richard F. Fleck, *Selections from the “Indian Notebooks” (1847-1861) of Henry D. Thoreau* (online edition: Lincoln, Mass.: The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, 2007): <http://www.walden.org/documents/file/Library/Thoreau/writings/Notebooks/IndianNotebooks.pdf> (accessed by the author August 28, 2014); Robert F. Sayre, *Thoreau and the American Indians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

³⁰ See n. 14 above; see also Joshua David Bellin, “In the Company of Savagists: Thoreau’s Indian Books and Antebellum Ethnology,” *The Concord Saunterer*, N.S. 16, 2008, pp. 1-32. Bellin argues that Thoreau shared many of the emerging racist beliefs about the supposed intractability of Indians.

³¹ Richard I. Johnson, “The Rise and Fall of the Boston Society of Natural History,” *Northeastern Naturalist* 11, 1, 2004, pp. 81-108.

³² Franklin Parker, *George Peabody: A Biography* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1995). See also Curtis M. Hinsley, “The Museum Origins of Harvard Anthropology, 1866-1915,” in *Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Clarke A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992), pp. 121-145.

for Natural History since 1854, chose to become its first curator rather than assume the directorship of the newly built New England Museum of Natural History, founded by the Boston Society of Natural History.³³ The society thereupon divested itself of its archaeological collections, sending them with Wyman to the new Peabody Museum. Among them was Thoreau's collection of Indian artifacts, which entered the museum on its completion in 1869. Its receipt was announced in the third annual report of the museum, where it is described as comprising about nine hundred objects: "over one hundred specimens of axes, pestles, gouges, mortars, chisels, spear points, ornaments, etc, and a larger number of arrow points of very varied patterns and materials."³⁴ In his description of the galleries published in 1898, the curator, Frederic Ward Putnam, notes that in the north room of the third floor: "The wall cases on each side of the fire-place contain several lots of stone implements from Massachusetts; among them are those picked up by Thoreau in his rambles along the Concord river."³⁵

What has been the fate of Thoreau's collection of Indian stone implements? In the twentieth century and beyond, items from the collection have found only occasional use within the museum, whether for research or display. This is largely because, from an archaeological point of view, they are orphans. Thoreau gathered them casually, coming across them by chance during his regular hikes around the Concord countryside, so not many can be definitely associated with a particular site. Only in a few instances can a mention of a find in the journal be associated with a particular item in the collection. The so-called "clam-shell opener," found by Thoreau at Clamshell Bluff on the Sudbury River, described in his journal entry for August 22, 1860, discussed above, is a rare example of the identification of an implement with a site. The collection has not been comprehensively studied to establish the character of each piece beyond basic classification. Their principal scholarly interest is therefore their association with Thoreau. Indeed, his name is inscribed on several items, though presumably Thoreau himself did not do this. For instance, the collection includes an atlatl weight, or bannerstone, made of drilled stone, used as part of a spear-thrower.³⁶ Some bannerstones, up to six thousand years old, are among the most sophisticatedly fashioned stone implements from ancient North America. Several are displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York for their striking aesthetic qualities reminiscent of twentieth-century modernist sculpture.³⁷ The example that once belonged to Thoreau is not so immediately evocative of modernist forms as the New York bannerstones, but its grey stone is streaked with darker parallel bands perpendicular to the drilled hole, so its maker presumably chose it for its visual qualities, and aligned the hole deliberately to accentuate

³³ Toby A. Appel, "A Scientific Career in the Age of Character: Jeffries Wyman and Natural History at Harvard," in *Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Clarke A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992), pp. 96-120.

³⁴ Jeffries Wyman, "Report of the Curator," in *Third Annual Report of the Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Presented to the President and Fellows of Harvard College, Dec. 1, 1870* (Boston: A.A. Kingman, 1870), pp. 6-7.

³⁵ Frederic Ward Putnam, *Guide to the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, with a Statement Relating to Instruction in Anthropology, Complementary to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Fiftieth Anniversary* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum, 1898), p. 16.

³⁶ Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology 69-34-10/2412.

³⁷ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York has five bannerstones in its collection, three of which are on view at the time of writing: 1979.206.1129, 2011.154.14, and 2011.154.15.

them. Yet Thoreau's name inscribed on this bannerstone in black literally overlays any other significance it may hold.

Items from Thoreau's collection of Indian stone implements have only rarely been exhibited in recent years. A stone pestle with a carved bird's head was included in an exhibition at Harvard about the categorization of material things in museums and elsewhere, *Tangible Things*, in 2011.³⁸ It was among the very varied items gathered to exemplify the category "archaeology and anthropology," and is discussed briefly and illustrated in the subsequent publication.³⁹ Three stone projectile points from Thoreau's collection fashioned from rhyolite, a volcanic stone prized by Native Americans, are included in the Peabody Museum exhibition, *The Legacy of Penobscot Canoes: A View from the River* (2014-16), which examines the intercultural significance of birchbark canoes from Maine.⁴⁰ Thoreau describes the Penobscot and their canoes in *The Maine Woods* (1864).

In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. This strong legislation mandates the repatriation on demand from institutions in receipt of federal funds to federally recognized tribal nations of human remains and certain kinds of cultural materials. The items in Thoreau's Indian collection would seem not to be subject to repatriation under its terms. As far as can be ascertained, they are not grave goods, nor would they be used in the practice of Native religion, nor are they objects of cultural patrimony within the meaning of the act. Further, it is doubtful whether a viable federally recognized direct successor community could be identified after a lapse of up to eight thousand years for things found in Musketaquid-Concord. This does not mean that their guardians can treat them casually, though they are not likely to as the scholars at the Peabody Museum have a track record of respect for Indian sensibilities. For instance, the Harvard Yard Archaeology Project, five seasons of excavation in search of traces of Harvard's Indian College in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2014, saw the site opened and closed with blessings and invocations by local Indian leaders in recognition of Native moral claims to the land, as well as acknowledgement that the object of research was Harvard College's attempt to educate young Indian men between the opening of the Indian College in 1655 and 1670, when the building was adapted to house the first printing press in the colony.⁴¹ Anthropological scholarship in museums has changed greatly since the entry of Thoreau's Indian collection into the Peabody Museum. This occurred at a time when, as Steven Conn has shown, white American immigrants and their descendants were writing Indians out of history and relocating them within an emerging anthropological schema in which they were

³⁸ Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology 69-34-10/2382; included in *Tangible Things*, Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments and other Harvard venues, February-May, 2011, organized by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Ivan Gaskell, with Sara Schechner and Sarah Anne Carter.

³⁹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Ivan Gaskell, Sara J. Schechner, and Sarah Anne Carter, with photographs by Samantha van Gerbig, *Tangible Things: Making History through Objects* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 25, 79 fig. 65.

⁴⁰ Three projectile points for spear or arrow fashioned from rhyolite from Mount Kineo or from another of two outcrops of the same rock in Maine, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 69-34-10/2424.39.3; 69-34-10/2424.39.6; 69-34-10/2424.40.3. Tools up to and over 10,000 years old made by Indians from this Maine rock have been found across New England and beyond, and in Canada.

⁴¹ See the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology online exhibition *Digging Veritas: The Archaeology and History of the Indian College and Student Life at colonial Harvard*: <http://www.peabody.harvard.edu/DV-online> (accessed by the author September 12, 2014).

described in terms of unchanging ethnicities tied to the natural world.⁴² Even Thoreau was not free from the taint of such ethnological racism.

3.

If Thoreau was keenly aware not only that “an extinct nation had anciently dwelled here,” and that that nation was not entirely extinct, as mentioned above, he was also keenly aware of his own status, and that of all other white people in New England, as relative newcomers. But, as Thoreau acknowledged, not all newcomers were white.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Massachusetts had been a slave colony. Unlike in the Caribbean and southern plantations, most enslaved people from Africa or of African descent in Massachusetts lived and worked individually in farming or artisanal households.⁴³ The numerous black slaves kept at his estate in Medford, Massachusetts by Isaac Royall, the wealthiest man in the colony before independence, were an exception, being in this respect a cultural extension of his family’s plantation in Antigua.⁴⁴ Elise Lemire has given a detailed account of slavery and its aftermath in Concord in her book *Black Walden*.⁴⁵ She shows that the end of slavery in Massachusetts was confused and uncertain. It turned on several factors: abandonment by owners (sometimes engineered by slaves themselves), military service in the Patriot cause by slaves, and the interpretation by the Massachusetts Superior Court of the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution. This document did not mention slavery explicitly, and asserted at the beginning of its first article: “All men are born free and equal.” Lemire demonstrates how abandoned, self-manumitted and other formerly enslaved blacks and their descendants continued to live in Concord. If slavery in Massachusetts ended during the turbulent times of the Revolutionary War, the plight of those once enslaved did not. “Warning out,” by which strangers who might become a charge on the public purse could be expelled from towns to which they tried to move, ensured that many former slaves, unable to leave their own towns, continued to work in much the same way as they had previously. They either endured domestic or farm service little better than the formal slavery that the change of government had tacitly brought to an end, or they lived independently on marginal land that they acquired or on which they squatted with the permission of the owner.

Thoreau was one of many active abolitionists in Concord at a time of rising tension between free soil and slave states in the Union that would lead to the Civil War in 1861, the year before his death. He expressed his anti-slavery stance in published writings, notably *Resistance to Civil Government* (1849)—better known as *Civil Disobedience*—and *Slavery in Massachusetts* (1854). In *Walden*, Thoreau evokes the memory of former slaves: “For human society I was obliged to conjure up the former occupants of these

⁴² Steven Conn, *History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁴³ See, for example, Joyce Lee Malcolm, *Peter’s War: A New England Slave Boy and the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁴⁴ Alexandra A Chan, *Slavery in the Age of Reason: Archaeology at a New England Farm* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007); C.S. Manegold, *Ten Hills Farm: The Forgotten History of Slavery in the North* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ Elise Lemire, *Black Walden: Slavery and its Aftermath in Concord, Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

woods.”⁴⁶ His choice of words, with their associations of ghostly invocation, is quite deliberate. He describes one black woman, who lived independently by making baskets and spinning linen for over forty years in a small hut near to the site of Thoreau’s own, in witch-like terms: “One old frequenter of these woods remembers, that as he passed her house one noon he heard her muttering to herself over her gurgling pot, —“Ye are all bones, bones!”⁴⁷ Thoreau identifies her as Zilpha, though her name was Zilpah, and, when she was obliged to take a second name, she chose White, probably because of the support she received from John White, Concord’s deacon between 1784 and 1830.⁴⁸ Thoreau also evokes Brister Freeman and his “hospitable wife, Fenda, who told fortunes, yet pleasantly.”⁴⁹ Freeman had been the slave of the wealthy John Cuming. Rather than continue in service tantamount to slavery after his military service in the Revolutionary War, Freeman broke away to live independently on a single acre of land near Walden Pond, having chosen his name deliberately when he reenlisted for military service in 1779.⁵⁰ Thoreau mentions his obscure grave marker on which he is described, in Thoreau’s scathing words, as “‘a man of color,’ as if he were discolored.”⁵¹ A third former slave whom Thoreau mentions who lived nearby was Cato Ingraham, abandoned by his former master, Duncan Ingraham, when in 1795 Cato married Phyllis, the daughter of another former slave.⁵²

Lemire surmises that these inhabitants may well have been following African precedents in clustering small dwellings together.⁵³ By Thoreau’s time, few traces of their former existence were extant. He noted that “Cato’s half-obliterated cellar hole still remains, though known to few, being concealed from the traveller by a fringe of pines.”⁵⁴ Brister Freeman’s property was marked only by the “apple trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now.”⁵⁵ Thoreau neither explicitly suggests nor denies that by choosing to live in a small cabin on marginal land long associated with impoverished blacks that he was presenting himself as little better, as his fellow townsfolk might believe, than his black predecessors at the site. Yet by conjuring up these former occupants, Thoreau was implicitly identifying as their successor. In doing so he certainly laid himself open to such an accusation by his many suspicious or hostile contemporaries in Concord.

Concord, an almost wholly white and increasingly wealthy town, has largely ignored its African and African American past. I know of no archaeological excavations of sites associated with former slaves and their descendants. Recently, however, the Drinking Gourd Project, a charitable organization dedicated to raising awareness of Concord’s African, African-American, and anti-slavery history, was able to rescue a house that had been built in the early nineteenth century by another former slave, Caesar Robbins. It had

⁴⁶ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 241.

⁴⁷ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 242. Lemire identifies the “old frequenter” as George Minot (Lemire, *Black Walden*, p. 135).

⁴⁸ Lemire, *Black Walden*, p. 136.

⁴⁹ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 243.

⁵⁰ Lemire, *Black Walden*, p. 108.

⁵¹ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 243.

⁵² Lemire, *Black Walden*, pp. 110-11.

⁵³ Lemire, *Black Walden*, pp. 141-42.

⁵⁴ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 242.

⁵⁵ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 242.

originally stood on marginal land to the north of Concord, but had been moved to another site in the late nineteenth century. In 2009, it was threatened with demolition, but was saved thanks to pressure from the Drinking Gourd Project and others, with the financial support of the Town of Concord Community Preservation Fund. In 2011, the house was moved to a site near the Old North Bridge where it has been restored as the Robbins House Interpretive Center. It now draws the attention of the many visitors to this section of the Minute Man National Historical Park to African American history in Concord.⁵⁶ Although scarcely an archaeological undertaking, the rescue of the Caesar Robbins House demonstrates the value of another layer of long-ignored immigrant history in Concord: that of African slaves as involuntary immigrants and their descendants, whose existence—even as “human society” to be “conjured up”—Thoreau was one of the few to acknowledge. Thoreau was among those who drew attention to the African American presence in his town, a presence that, despite considerable local support for abolitionism, was even then being progressively expunged from communal memory and the received historical record.

4.

If Thoreau was aware of himself and his fellow whites as immigrants and descendants of immigrants in relation to the Algonquian peoples they had for the most part displaced, and of the descendants of African slaves as another category of relative newcomer, he was also well aware of the most recent immigrant group with its own distinctive culture to have arrived in the Boston area from the 1840s onwards, Roman Catholic Irish. While many Irish women worked in domestic service, Irish men found employment in Concord as farm laborers, wood and ice cutters, ditch diggers, and, most notably, as railroad construction workers on the Fitchburg Railroad laid through Concord between 1842 and 1844. Fleeing oppression and starvation in Ireland, they arrived in considerable numbers, prompting hostility on the part of some existing inhabitants that found expression in stereotypes of the Irish as feckless, dirty, illiterate, and prone to excessive drinking. Although Thoreau clearly had sympathetic relationships with several Irish immigrants, Helen Lojek has argued convincingly that he “shared, apparently without thought, most of his society’s prevailing anti-Irish sentiments,” though more by acquiescing in and repeating accusations of thoughtlessness and squalid living than by active hostility.⁵⁷

In April 1845, when the work on the Fitchburg Railroad had moved on from Concord, Thoreau bought for \$4.25 what he describes as the “shanty” that the Irish railroad worker, James Collins, and his family were about to leave behind.⁵⁸ Thoreau used it as a source of boards for the cabin he was building on Emerson’s wood lot beside Walden Pond. In his description of the hut as inhabited by the Collins family, Thoreau contrasts its “dirt floor for the most part dank, clammy, and aguish” with what he implies were unnecessary luxury possessions within: “a silk parasol, gilt-framed looking glass, and a patent new

⁵⁶ Faith Ferguson, “Who was Caesar Robbins and why is his house so special?” Drinking Gourd Project website: <http://drinkinggourdproject.org/blog/who-was-caesar-robbins-and-why-is-his-house-so-special/> (accessed by the author December 31, 2014).

⁵⁷ Helen Lojek, “Thoreau’s Bog People,” *New England Quarterly* 67, 1994, p. 280.

⁵⁸ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 40.

coffee-mill nailed to an oak sapling.”⁵⁹ The Collins family took these things with them, so Thoreau’s exercise in recycling building materials—or rescue archaeology—was confined to the fabric of the cabin itself. However, he reports being “informed treacherously by a young Patrick” that a neighbor and compatriot of Collins indulged in his own nefarious reclamation work, stealing usable nails from boards from the disassembled cabin while Thoreau was away carting others.⁶⁰

At the end of his residence at Walden Pond, in 1847, Thoreau consigned his cabin to Emerson, who in turn sold it to his gardener, Hugh Whelan, an Irish immigrant. Whelan removed it to the nearby site of Thoreau’s bean field, planning to add an extension.⁶¹ In a letter to Emerson, then in England, Thoreau describes Whelan as unable to raise a crop in the sandy soil near the pond. He criticizes Whelan as “Irish-like” for having dug a new cellar for the extension too close to the original cabin, causing one end of it to collapse. Thoreau stated that he had contributed \$16 for stone for the cellar.⁶² Whelan left Concord, selling the cabin in 1849 when it was moved once again.⁶³

Before turning to the rediscovery of the original site of Thoreau’s cabin, we should note the circumstances of the publication of what would become Thoreau’s best known work, his account of his sojourn in the cabin at Walden Pond, *Walden; or Life in the Woods* in 1854, and the appearance of the article that would subsequently constitute the first chapter of the book, *Cape Cod*, published posthumously in 1865, edited by Ellery Channing and Thoreau’s sister, Sophia. Both have a bearing on Irish immigration when that huge movement of people contributed to a radical reshaping of the political landscape of Massachusetts and beyond.

Thoreau’s article addressing an Irish tragedy was published with the title “Cape Cod” in *Putnam’s Monthly* in June, 1855.⁶⁴ Its first section deals directly with the fate of Irish immigrants lost in a shipwreck during a storm just off the coast of Massachusetts on October 7, 1849. When, two days later, Thoreau and Channing visited Cohasset, the coastal town south of Boston near where the disaster had occurred, up to 28 bodies had been recovered. Many anxious Irish relatives of the vessel’s passengers were on the same train as Thoreau and Channing, who were bound for Cape Cod. The sea would continue to throw up bodies for weeks afterwards. Some 99 lives were lost, many of passengers from County Galway and County Clare in the west of Ireland. The British brig, *St. John*, which had been bound for Boston from Galway, was a typical so-called “famine vessel,” its passengers fleeing from hunger. Many were women, “who probably had intended to go out to service in some American family,” as Thoreau surmised when describing one female corpse he saw.⁶⁵ His firsthand descriptions of the dead are vivid but all the more affecting for being dispassionate. Of the corpses in makeshift coffins laid on the ground near the beach, he wrote:

⁵⁹ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 41.

⁶⁰ Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, p. 42.

⁶¹ *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau, Volume 1: 1834-1848*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 320 n. 19.

⁶² Letter dated January 12, 1848: *Correspondence*, pp. 337-39.

⁶³ The purchaser was James Clark, who moved it to the Carlisle Road: *Correspondence*, p. 335 n. 8.

⁶⁴ [Henry David Thoreau], “Cape Cod,” *Putnam’s Monthly: A Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art* 5, No. 30, June, 1855, pp. 632-640. No contributor was accorded a byline.

⁶⁵ “Cape Cod,” *Putnam’s Monthly*, p. 633.

Sometimes there were two or more children, or a parent and child, in the same box, and on the lid would perhaps be written with red chalk, "Bridget such-a-one, and sister's child." The surrounding sward was covered with bits of sails and clothing. I have since heard, from one who lives by this beach, that a woman who had come over before, but had left her infant behind for her sister to bring, came and looked into these boxes, and saw in one, —probably the same whose superscription I have quoted, —her child in her sister's arms, as if the sister had meant to be found thus; and within three days after, the mother died from the effect of that sight.⁶⁶

Thoreau made two particular points: that the dead had "emigrated to a newer world than ever Columbus dreamed of, yet one of whose existence we believe that there is far more universal and convincing evidence—though it has not yet been discovered by science—than Columbus had of this,"⁶⁷ and, second, noting that local inhabitants did not scruple to gather the sea-weed cast up by the storm for manure, regardless of the tragedy: "This shipwreck had not produced a visible vibration in the fabric of society."⁶⁸

Yet a great deal happened to engender a visible vibration in the fabric of American society—and notably in Massachusetts—between the loss of the *St. John* in 1849, and the publication of *Walden* in 1854 and "Cape Cod" in 1855. The huge influx of Irish Roman Catholic immigrants had contributed to the sudden growth of what is usually described as nativist sentiment among established settlers: an anti-immigrant wave of hostility on the part of large numbers of American born Protestants. Fraternal societies espousing nativism that were vehemently anti-Catholic as well as anti-slavery sprang up. They maintained strict secrecy, their members being instructed, if questioned, to respond, "I know nothing." These Know Nothings, as they swiftly came to be called, soon organized politically, and in 1854 had their greatest success in Massachusetts where they swept the elections for governor, the commonwealth legislature, and the US House of Representatives winning all eleven electoral districts.⁶⁹ It was in these political circumstances that Thoreau's comments on Irish immigrants appeared in print. Indeed, *Putnam's Monthly*, in which Thoreau published his account of the wreck of the *St. John*, took a decidedly anti-Know Nothing line concerning immigration. Associate editor, Parke Godwin published denunciations of Know Nothing hostility to immigrants in the January and May, 1855 issues, the second of which also appeared in his *Political Essays*, published the following year.⁷⁰ Nationally, the Know Nothings were to split along sectional lines, North and South, and be overtaken by events as immigration declined

⁶⁶ "Cape Cod," *Putnam's Monthly*, p. 633.

⁶⁷ "Cape Cod," *Putnam's Monthly*, p. 635.

⁶⁸ "Cape Cod," *Putnam's Monthly*, p. 634.

⁶⁹ There is a considerable literature on the Know Nothings. For a succinct account, see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 135-144. For the Massachusetts election, see Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 87-94.

⁷⁰ [Parke Godwin], "Secret Societies—the Know Nothings," *Putnam's Monthly: A Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art* 5, No. 25, January, 1855, pp. 88-97; [Parke Godwin], "America for the Americans," *Putnam's Monthly: A Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art* 5, No. 29, May, 1855, pp. 533-541; Parke Godwin, *Political Essays* (New York: Dix, Edwards, & Co., 1856), pp. 175-209.

dramatically in the second half of the decade, while the issue of slavery came inexorably to the fore.⁷¹

During this period of rapid and vigorous political and social change even before the yet more tumultuous events of 1861-65—and Thoreau's death in 1862—Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond had become no more than a memory. Although local inhabitants led by Bronson Alcott recalled its approximate original location, once the cabin had gone its precise site during Thoreau's stay was lost for the better part of a hundred years. Inspired by the centennial of Thoreau's arrival to live at Walden Pond, a local amateur archaeologist, Roland Wells Robbins, researched the area in the summer and fall of 1945. He discovered the chimney foundation of Thoreau's cabin and other items, establishing its exact location, which is now marked by granite posts and an inscribed stone. Robbins published his findings in 1947 as *Discovery at Walden*, prompting considerable interest.⁷² This short book helped to launch Robbins's long career as a historical archaeologist. His subsequent book, written with Evan Jones and first published in 1959, *Hidden America*, brought his pioneering excavation of historical sites in New England and New York to even greater public attention.⁷³ Historical archaeology, as it came to be known, was then a new practice. Historical archaeology was subsequently established in the USA as an academic discipline, championed most conspicuously by James Deetz, author of the hugely influential book, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (1977).⁷⁴ In the face of this academic takeover, Robbins lost credibility, though somewhat unfairly. The current prevalence of public and contract archaeology has revived the status of non-academic archaeology, and Robbins's career has recently been positively reevaluated.⁷⁵ In this context, though, just as the material culture of the early inhabitants of Musketaquid-Concord underlies the collection of Indian stone artifacts in the Peabody Museum compiled by a third generation immigrant, so the material culture of Thoreau's grandfather's successors as immigrants, the Irish who arrived in Concord in the 1840s, underlies the site of Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond. And very close to this now celebrated site are others, as yet ignored, that if excavated might furnish much information about another immigrant group, people brought against their will from West Africa, and their descendants.

⁷¹ The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 marked the end of the compromise affecting those areas of westward expansion where slavery could or could not be introduced, while the presidential election of 1856 (won by the Democrat James Buchanan) saw the emergence of the new Republican Party, which was to triumph with the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860. This, in turn, precipitated the secession of eleven slave states, the foundation of the Confederate States of America, and the disastrous civil war that ensued. The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified in December, 1865.

⁷² Roland Wells Robbins, *Discovery at Walden* (Stoneham, MA: Barnstead & Son, 1947; reprint edition, Lincoln, MA: The Thoreau Society, 1999).

⁷³ Roland Wells Robbins and Evan Jones, *Hidden America* (New York: Knopf, 1959; second edition 1966). He retells the story of his discovery of the Thoreau cabin site, pp. 16-35.

⁷⁴ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977; revised and expanded edition, 1996).

⁷⁵ Donald W. Linebaugh, *The Man Who Found Thoreau: Roland W. Robbins and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England/University of New Hampshire Press, 2005).

5.

The United States is often described as a nation of immigrants, but this is only partly the case. The cultural values of the dominant immigrant group—whites of European origin—generally prevail, only selectively accommodating the cultural values of other immigrant groups. Thoreau had recognized this immigrant group—the “prosperous slip of the Saxon *family*”—as having a destiny associated with the “unexhausted energies of this new country,” though he stressed that the “*American race*” that it had displaced had had its own destiny too.⁷⁶ From the perspective of that “*American race*,” though, all those who have arrived from elsewhere since the sixteenth century, whether voluntarily or by compulsion, are recent arrivals. By assembling a large collection of ancient stone implements made by Native peoples in an area recently settled by waves of newcomers—English, other Europeans (such as Thoreau’s Channel Islander grandfather), Africans (involuntarily), and Irish (fleeing starvation and oppression)—Thoreau provides a benchmark by which to measure the incidence of human arrival in a part of the world often misperceived as “new.”

Migration in the Musketaquid-Concord area and beyond on which Thoreau reflected clearly has ethical implications. As I have observed elsewhere, if to establish grounds for judgment is among the duties of the philosopher, among those of the historian is to ensure that none should be too comfortable in its exercise.⁷⁷ I shall look at some ethical ramifications of the cases of Native peoples, Americans of African ancestry, and Americans of Irish ancestry in turn.

The treatment by settler societies over many generations of the Native inhabitants of North America is clearly shameful, and the cause of continuing resentments that have led to occasional violent confrontations.⁷⁸ In 2007, the prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, formally apologized for the abuse of Native peoples, specifically the abduction of tens of thousands of children for acculturation in residential schools. Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) set up to investigate Indian residential schools, called this policy an act of cultural genocide.⁷⁹ The TRC issued its final report in December, 2015.⁸⁰ Many in Canada believe that more action should follow. The United States has been even more hesitant than Canada to express remorse for its shameful conduct towards Indians and other Native peoples within its borders. In 1993, a joint resolution of the US Congress acknowledged US complicity in the overthrow of the Hawai’ian monarchy one hundred years previously, and the unlawful US annexation of the Hawai’ian Islands (Nā Mokupuni o Hawai’i) in

⁷⁶ See n. 14 above.

⁷⁷ Ivan Gaskell, “Historical Distance, Historical Judgment,” in *Rethinking Historical Distance*, ed. Mark Salber Phillips, Barbara Caine, and Julia Adeney Thomas (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 34.

⁷⁸ Among the most widely reported incidents are those at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (Wazí Aháŋhaŋ Oyáŋke) of the Oglala Lakota in South Dakota in 1890, and the St. Regis Mohawk or Akwesasne Reservation, New York and the Akwesasne Reserve, Ontario and Quebec (an Indian entity that spans the US-Canadian border across the St. Lawrence River) in 1990.

⁷⁹ In conversation at the Harvard University Native American Program, Cambridge, Massachusetts, [date TK].

⁸⁰ See <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890> (accessed by the author, February 16, 2016).

1898. Buried in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010, signed into law by President Barack Obama in December, 2009, is the first “apology to Native Peoples of the United States” for “years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes,” and “for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States.” However, the text specifically states that this admission is not intended to support any legal claims against the government.⁸¹

If the ethical state of affairs regarding relations between Native and settler peoples remain at best equivocal in both Canada and the United States, the same can be said of slavery in the United States. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery may have been ratified in 1865, but the consequences of slavery resonate to the present. The House of Representatives and the Senate passed different resolutions apologizing for slavery in the USA in 2008 and 2009 respectively, but they have not been reconciled and signed by the president. Advocates regularly and prominently make a strong case for reparations.⁸² One wonders whether the majority of the people of the United States will ever fully face the ethical implications of their ancestors’ actions, or their own individual and communal responsibilities regarding either Native or African American fellow citizens.

The case of the Irish is somewhat different. Although members of the majority US population have discriminated against Roman Catholic Irish immigrants since at least the days of the Know Nothings, most Americans see the United States as a haven to which many oppressed and starving colonial subjects fled. It was not for any US president to apologize to the Irish, but for a British prime minister to do so. In 1997, prime minister Tony Blair expressed regret for Britain’s role in the famine that killed over a million people between 1845 and 1852 in a letter to the organizers of an event commemorating its 150th anniversary, but stopped short of apologizing.⁸³ Commemoration of the famine has grown in US cities in recent years, at times not without controversy. An early example of a memorial is a large Celtic cross dedicated in 1914 to the victims of the *St. John* disaster in Cohasset Central Cemetery by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a fraternal organization of Roman Catholics of Irish birth or descent. A more recent is the Irish Hunger Memorial, completed in lower Manhattan in 2002, designed by artist Brian Tolle and landscape architect Gail Wittwer-Laird.⁸⁴ Entertainments for popular consumption, though, continue to perpetuate the stereotype of Irish immigrant propensity to gang violence and political corruption from the mid-nineteenth century to the present,

⁸¹ John D. McKinnon, “U.S. Offers an Official Apology to Native Americans,” *Wall Street Journal*, online edition, December 22, 2009: <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2009/12/22/us-offers-an-official-apology-to-native-americans/> (accessed by the author, February 16, 2016).

⁸² For example, Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June, 2014, online edition: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/> (accessed by the author, February 16, 2016).

⁸³ Sarah Lyall, “Past as Prologue: Blair Faults Britain in Irish Potato Blight,” *New York Times*, June 3, 1997, online edition: <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/06/03/world/past-as-prologue-blair-faults-britain-in-irish-potato-blight.html> (accessed by the author, February 16, 2016).

⁸⁴ Roberta Smith, “Critic’s Notebook; A Memorial Remembers the Hungry,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2002, online edition: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/16/arts/critic-s-notebook-a-memorial-remembers-the-hungry.html> (accessed by the author, February 16, 2016).

as can be seen in such American movies as *Gangs of New York* (2002), and *Black Mass* (2015).

All too often, the established members of the settler majority—which includes enculturated members of minorities—perpetuate distrust or outright hostility, whether subtly or crudely, towards Native peoples or other immigrants and their descendents. The cultural values of the settler majority may predominate, but we can appeal to Thoreau’s own practices, in particular as a collector and as a manipulator of material things, including his own cabin at Walden Pond, to evoke an alternative view of immigration in Musketaquid-Concord and beyond. If we are not to be too comfortable in the exercise of our ethical judgment with regard to migration we might take notice of the long-term view prompted by a consideration of Thoreau’s observation that new immigrants from wherever they may have come, from the seventeenth century onwards, are just that: newcomers to a very old place.⁸⁵

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