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<td><strong>Wet &amp; Dry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Furnace</strong></td>
<td><strong>Water &amp; Steam</strong></td>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Temperature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pressure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fuel</strong></td>
<td><strong>Efficiency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Output</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remarks</strong></td>
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**Notes:**
- Wet & Dry: Water and steam properties.
- Furnace: Temperature and pressure readings.
- Water & Steam: Efficiency and output calculations.
- Position: Geographical location of facilities.
- Time: Duration of observation or operation.
- Fuel: Type and quantity of fuel used.
- Efficiency: Percentage of energy conversion.
- Output: Quantities of water and steam generated.
- Remarks: Additional observations or notes.
The November 29 events marked in the Journal, and one piece of information about November 26 recorded on the 29th, all of which were transferred to the list, appear in this chart. The events are “Get in Boat” (first image, line 4 of the events; marked through with a wavy line), “F. H. Pond skimmed over” (second image, line 10 of the events), “River skimmed over” (second image, line 11 of the events), and “Skating” (second image, line 18 of the events; marked through with a wavy line).

I’ve counted seventeen such charts: there are fewer charts than lists, either because the process of making them helped Thoreau winnow the events he wanted to focus on, or because he didn’t live long enough to finish. I suspect it was some of both.

Now you see how extensively and thoroughly Thoreau prepared himself to really see nature. Even with this small sample of the work that was involved—and there are about 1800 pages of notes, lists, and charts—you can also see what a discipline of the mind would be required to move continually from the parts to the whole, from the view of the scientist to that of the poet.

Thoreau didn’t live long enough to make full use of what he was still learning about nature from the charts he created—he died on May 6, 1862. But the combination of precise, deep knowledge and poetic insight informs such late essays as “Autumnal Tints” and “Wild Apples,” as well as “Huckleberries” and “The Dispersion of Seeds.”

In closing, I want to return to the object of Thoreau’s intensive preparation: he was to be the hunter “that shoots at beauty.” In July 1857, he got a letter from Charles C. Morse, who asked him if he could be engaged to “deliver two or more lectures upon scientific subjects” to members of the Rochester Atheneum and Mechanics Association, just up the road from here (the document is at the Huntington Library in San Marino,
CA, accessioned as HM 20592). Thoreau drafted his response in pencil on a blank page of the bifolio containing Morse’s letter:
Henry D. Thoreau

Dear Sir,

I have been unable to obtain from our bookellers your "Dake in the Woods" and "Walden II". I send you the "Transcendentalist" and thank you for the "supposed" free. You will please post it to my address by hand.

I would also inquire if you are in the lecture field and whether you intend to obtain to deliver two or more lectures upon some scientific subject before our Association this coming winter.

Yours Respectfully,
Cha. C. Worth
To Artemesia
Cured Dec 12th 1863

To Charles O. Morse

Dec 12th

I want you to have my wish to go to

England. In the letter that at

this subject was attached

made to understand I

realized. The sentiment of the

above wrote by me is that a "walking a in the
"outward limit" of the

the above which I stated

of my wish to go to

England. In the letter that at

understand I mean to do

other, wish be fulfilled and

Yours truly

P.S. Morse
Here’s a line-by-line transcript of the second and third paragraphs of that draft:

I am in the lecture field—

— but my subjects are not scientific
— rather transcendental &
aesthetic— I devote myself to the
observation of nature generally—

Such as "Walking or the Wild"
"Autumnal Tints" {illegible} &c &c. Even
if the title were scientific— the treat-
ment would hardly be so—in a
& affecting— rather than useful
popular sense— If you think
merely—
that your audience will incline
or erect their ears to such themes
as these— I shall be happy to read
to them.

In revising his draft, Thoreau removed two sentences that he may have thought were too idiosyncratic. One is easy to read because he simply lined it out: “I devote myself to the observation of nature generally—”

The other, hidden more effectively because he wrote right over it (it’s transcribed above in smaller gray type), speaks directly to Thoreau’s self-identification as a hunter of beauty: “It [the subject of his lectures and his investigations] is nature as She is beautiful & affecting— rather than useful merely—”

At the last, this is the Thoreau I have been pursuing for over forty years, and the Thoreau who captured Walt from his first reading of Walden. How lucky for both of us!

I want to thank you again for inviting me to speak— and for giving me your attention on this night in particular.
Sources Quoted or Mentioned


  Volume 1: 1834-1848 (2013)
  Volume 2: 1849-1856 (in press)
  Volume 3: 1857-1862 (forthcoming)


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