

2017 SUMMER CONVERSATIONAL SERIES AND TEACHER WORKSHOP
“Noble Companions and Immortal Labors”
The Alcotts, Thoreaus, and the Quest for Social Justice

BIOGRAPHIES OF OUR DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS

MICHELLE BLEES - *National Park Service*

Michelle has been a Park Ranger for fifteen years, working at Saugus Iron Works National Historical Site, Salem Maritime National Historical Site, and Minute Man National Historical Park. She oversees operations of Minute Man NHP’s interpretive division staff, including training, and also supervises operations of The Wayside.

JEFFREY S. CRAMER - *Walden Woods Project*

Jeffrey S. Cramer is the Curator of Collections at the Walden Woods Project’s Thoreau Institute Library. He is one of the world’s leading Thoreau scholars, about whom Jim Flemming, of *Wisconsin Public Radio*, said: “Jeffrey Cramer lives and breathes Thoreau. He may know more about the bard at Walden Pond than anyone else alive.” Jeffrey is the editor of *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* (Yale University Press, 2004), *The Quotable Thoreau* (Princeton University Press, 2011), *The Portable Thoreau* (Penguin, 2012), *Essays by Henry D. Thoreau: A Fully Annotated Edition* (Yale University Press, 2013), and other works. He has appeared on various radio and television programs, including NPR’s “On Point with Tom Ashbrook,” *WUMB-Boston’s* “Commonwealth Journal,” *Wisconsin Public Radio’s* “To the Best of Our Knowledge,” and *C-SPAN’s* “Book-TV.”

CATHLIN DAVIS - *California State University-Stanislaus*

Cathlin is a Full Professor in the College of Education who started reading Louisa May Alcott’s books at the age of 11, and never stopped. Among her collection of Alcott works is a first edition of *Little Women*, which she has actually read with cotton gloves on. In 2011, as part of her research interest in Orchard House, she fulfilled a long-held dream to conduct a tour, and collected data about visitor experiences as well; she continues to volunteer as a guide during the time she spends here for the Series. Cathlin has presented at the Conversational Series for over a decade, and published an article based on a Series presentation, with several others in the works. She specializes in Alcott’s juvenile fiction, particularly in its connection to education and the depiction of the lives of children.

GABRIELLE DONNELLY - *Author / Journalist*

Gabrielle was born in London and had known that she wanted to be a writer for as long as she can remember. She graduated with a BA from London University at the age of 22 and has made her living

as a journalist ever since. In 1980, Gabrielle moved to Los Angeles for a six-month stint and never left. She writes about show business for a variety of periodicals and is a member of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, but is also a novelist. *The Little Women Letters* is her fifth work (and the first published in both Britain and the States) after *Holy Mother*, *Faulty Ground*, *All Done With Mirrors*, and *The Girl In The Photograph*. Gabrielle and her husband, Los Angeles-born computer specialist Owen Bjornstad, are both Corporators of Orchard House.

MICHAEL FREDERICK - *The Thoreau Society*

Mike has been Executive Director of The Thoreau Society since 2006. He holds a BS in Finance from Suffolk University, an ALM in History from Harvard (focused on Thoreau's ethics and social philosophy), and a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. His fields of study include Thoreau's social philosophy and ethics, and he has an interest in Transcendentalism as it developed among European philosophers and writers. Mike served as assistant editor of Henry David Thoreau's *Wild Fruits*, as well as a collection of essays on the Maine Woods entitled *Wildness Within, Wildness Without*. He has also worked with several non-profit Boards, including the Thoreau Farm Trust, the Walden Pond Advisory Board, and Friends of the Middlesex Fells.

JASON GIANNETTI - *Philosopher*

After twenty years of teaching at various institutions including Dean College, Regis College, Stonehill College, Wheaton College, Framingham State University, Brandeis University, and Binghamton University, Jason recently took a sabbatical to work on various projects, including a book on comparative East/West philosophy. His academic training has primarily been in Ancient Greek Philosophy and Biblical Studies, and he has applied this crucial background to his work on the New England Transcendentalists. This fall, Jason will be returning to the world of academe at Wheaton College. A veteran Presenter and attendee at the Summer Conversational Series, he looks forward every year to July in Concord, MA.

MEGAN MARSHALL - *Emerson College / Pulitzer Prize Winner*

Megan is the author of *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life*, which won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Biography and Memoir. Her first biography, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*, received the Francis Parkman Prize, the Mark Lynton History Prize, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2006; both books won the Massachusetts Book Award in Nonfiction. Megan is the Charles Wesley Emerson College Professor at Emerson College, where she teaches nonfiction writing and archival research in the MFA Creative Writing Program. A recipient of fellowships from the *John Simon Guggenheim Foundation*, the NEH, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center of the New York Public Library, Megan recently published a third biography, *Elizabeth Bishop: A Miracle for Breakfast*, about the 20th-century poet who was also her professor at Harvard.

SANDRA HARBERT PETRULIONIS - *Penn State Altoona*

Sandy is Distinguished Professor of English and American Studies at Penn State Altoona. She is the author of *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord*, the editor of *Thoreau In His Own Time*, and co-editor, with Laura Dassow Walls, of *More Day to Dawn: Thoreau's Walden in the 21st Century* and, with Laura Dassow Walls and Joel Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*. She is also the editor of *Journal 8: 1854* in the Princeton University Press edition of Thoreau's Journal. Sandy's current work includes two long-term projects -- with Noelle Baker, she is producing *The Almanacks of Mary Moody Emerson: A Scholarly Digital Edition*, sixteen folders of which have been published in *Women Writers Online*, and is also underway on a cultural biography of 19th-century reformer and author-editor Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

JANE SCIACCA - *Historian*

Jane has studied the Concord authors and their associates for over thirty years as a Park Ranger at Minute Man NHP, a docent at the Old Manse and Orchard House, and as a tour guide. She has written several guides to The Wayside as well as the exhibit panels in the Wayside Visitor Center. Jane also proposed and wrote the grant that resulted in The Wayside being listed on The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

JENNIFER GOODWIN SCHÜNEMANN - *Durga Tree International NE Chapter*

Jennifer is an entrepreneur and a modern-day abolitionist who has long sought to help the disadvantaged in the world. In 2004, she founded a publishing company which connected more than one million medical practitioners in 90+ countries to life-saving advances in medical research. Translated into more than sixteen languages, the publication collaborated with in-country teams to overcome technical, linguistic, and geographic barriers to this vital information to practitioners in the developing world. In 2016, Jennifer started the New England Chapter of *Durga Tree International*, a global charity organization that fights human trafficking through educating and economically empowering survivors of modern slavery. This unique approach combines the entrepreneurial spirit with a genuine passion to make the world a better place; she further leverages this to mentor young people to teach effective organization for change in the world around them. Jennifer holds a dual BA from the University of Pennsylvania, speaks four languages, has traveled to 48 countries, and studied and lived in Paris, France.

LAURA DASSOW WALLS - *University of Notre Dame*

Laura is the William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, where she teaches courses in early American literature and the environmental humanities. She has published widely on 19th-century American literature and intellectual history, particularly on Emerson, Thoreau, and related figures. Her essay on "The Cosmopolitical Project of Louisa May Alcott" was included in *Towards a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism*, edited by Jana Argersinger and Phyllis Cole (Georgia, 2014), while her most recent book is *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (University of Chicago

Press, 2017). Laura's earlier books include monographs on Thoreau (1995) and Emerson (2003), as well as *Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America* (2009), which received the James Russell Lowell Prize from the *Modern Language Association* and the Merle Curti Award from the *Organization of American Historians*.

KRISTINA WEST - *University of Reading (UK)*

Krissie is a lecturer in English and American Literature at the University of Reading, where she researches Transcendentalism, childhood, and 19th-century fiction, but particularly the works of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Krissie chaired a panel on "Louisa May Alcott and Education" at the *American Literature Association* conference in San Francisco last year. She also lives just across the River Thames from the site of Alcott House, a school in Ham, Surrey established in honor of Bronson Alcott, which he visited in 1842. This is only Krissie's second time presenting at the Summer Conversational Series, but the latest in many visits to Orchard House -- both on research trips and vacations with her family -- and she is delighted to be back once again.