Henry David Thoreau kept a Journal (estimated at about two million words) from 1837-1861. Around 1849-1850, Thoreau’s studies in natural history and science intensify. And about this time, Thoreau begins to conceive of his Journal as “an imaginative document in itself” (Princeton edition of the Journal, III 489, 479ff.). Moreover, Thoreau begins to add drawings to his Journal. Only occasionally does one find a reference to the drawings in studies of Thoreau; no study of the drawings has ever been published.

Under the supervision of Professor Kathleen Kelly (English) and with an Undergraduate Research Initiative Grant, we have begun to create a public, online, searchable and annotatable database of all the drawings that Thoreau included in his Journal in order to facilitate studies of the drawings. Our research, a combination of traditional literary study and digital humanities methodology, examines the interplay and interrelatedness of text and image in the Journal.

In our presentation, Nicholas D’Amore will discuss a few of the drawings. These drawings find Thoreau considering, with great reverence, the meticulous process of rendering a canoe from simple, natural products. In observing this process, Thoreau seems to be cataloguing the steps in hopes of, perhaps, replicating it on his own. But the drawings don’t exactly achieve the level of a detailed, comprehensive schematic. They are basic, unmeasured, vague; and, as such, they strike us as quintessentially Thoreauvian. In fact, the approximated illustrations of this canoe—itself constructed, as it were, according to Penobscot traditions rather than some detailed blueprint—are crafted in much the same way as his drawings of flora, fauna, and the like. We can trust that word and image correspond (to varying degrees), and we can trust that the illustrations are the result of Thoreau’s fascination with a given object. We can also trust that they will be rough-hewn, leaving us to wonder why he drew them in the first place and why we should be interested in them.

For all of the attention that Thoreau gives to the objects that he draws, mostly natural ones, it would be more accurate to describe him as an observer than solely a naturalist. On the one hand, his illustrations lack an exactness of form that seems the goal of a naturalist. On the other, and such is the case with this particular episode in the *Journals*, Thoreau turns his eye towards manmade objects. This, in some sense, disrupts his reputation as Thoreau-the-hermit. Instead, we see Thoreau-of-Concord, a man often engaged in a community and interested in cultural development. (It should be said that the *Journals*, as a whole, do well to paint this picture of Thoreau. So, we can say that he is interested in both natural and manmade objects; yet, he observes each in isolation—he *only* looks at the canoe or *only* looks at a flower.

This passage, logged September 22, 1853, breaks down that separation. While he describes and draws the manipulation of natural materials into manmade objects, he focus alternates between the canoe and the surrounding landscape. The entry, fittingly culminates in an image of two figures paddling a canoe, with their image reflected in the water—a neat blending of natural, fabricated, and abstracted forms. Mr. D’Amore’s presentation explores the separation of and interplay between various objects in this unique passage, while considering the ways in which Thoreau’s multimodal representation of them (in word and image) make us reconsider his motivation for writing.

Matthew Harty will discuss some of the challenges involved in creating the database (five minutes).