

# EMILY DICKINSON AT POETS HOUSE

## MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE DONALD & PATRICIA ORESMAN COLLECTION

OCTOBER 20, 2011 TO JANUARY 28, 2012

Poets House celebrates the life and work of iconic poet Emily Dickinson in a groundbreaking exhibition of original manuscripts from the Donald & Patricia Oresman Collection. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see a beautiful and rare selection of original manuscripts, letters, fragments, books, and even a recipe for coconut cake belonging to Emily Dickinson. The Oresmans are also devoted readers and art collectors, and have previously exhibited their collection of prints, drawings and photographs of people in the intimate act of reading at Poets House.

The Donald and Patricia Oresman Collection is one of the larger holdings of privately owned Dickinson manuscripts; many are on view for the first time to the public in this special exhibition curated by poet and visual artist Jen Bervin. Dickinson scholars will find letters that were missing at the time of the Johnson and Ward edition accompanied by new, corrected transcriptions. Many of the manuscript letters in the exhibition have ties to New York or Brooklyn, past and present, and were accompanied by a gift of flowers from plants she tended in her own garden, while others were delivered with homemade baked delicacies.

Dickinson called “affection the Germ of the little note,” (L 960) but even a stray note travels through the deepest reaches of her poetry to find the recipient. From the poet who wrote “I’m Nobody!” consider how, in this letter/poem (L 1563) the poet defines “Nothing”: By homely gifts and hindered Words / the human heart is told /of nothing - /Nothing is the force / that renovates the World – ”

### *Exhibition Checklist*

- Case 1. Three letters from Dickinson to Mrs. Henry Hills: 595, 623, and 847.
- Case 2. Coconut Cake Recipe and The Grolier Club publication written by Donald Oresman.
- Case 3. Letter 146 from Dickinson to Emily Fowler Ford.
- Case 4. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* with letters 1010 and 1011 from Dickinson to Sara Colton.
- Case 5. *Adam Bede* by George Eliot. Harper and Brothers, 1860. Book open to dedication inscribed in pen by Dickinson to Abby Maria Wood (Mrs. Daniel Bliss).
- Case 6. *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* edited by R. W. Franklin, displayed with private correspondence from Ralph Franklin to Donald Oresman.
- Case 7. *Emily Dickinson's Herbarium: A Facsimile Edition*. Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Case 8. Letter 681 from Dickinson to Mrs. Henry Hills with books from the Oresmans' library.
- Case 9. Original manuscript of Letter 803 from Dickinson to Forrest F. Emerson.