

# DUBLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DUBLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03444 • FOUNDED 1920

Newsletter No.12 August 1989

## NEW LIGHT ON THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

by W.L. Bauhan

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In February, John Harris went to the state archives in Concord where he found the first and second Town Clerk's Books, covering town meetings from 1778 to 1822. From them he transcribed dozens of warrant articles and other items about the First Meeting House. With these in hand, we asked Peter Benes, an authority in the field and once a teacher at the Dublin School, to help interpret some of the records. Benes is the author of *New England Meeting House and Church, 1630-1850* and director of the annual Dublin Seminars for New England Folklife.

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The most revealing clue in the records is a Pew Plan for the second floor gallery of the meeting house

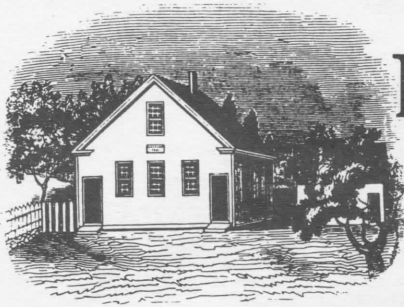


*First meeting house would have looked like this building in Rockingham VT, a typical 18th century "twin porch" meeting house.*

laid out about 1795. Its purpose was to raise money by selling pews to the subscribers named on the plan. The pew plan of the first floor has not come to light, nor has any picture of the building, but from the gallery layout the features of the overall plan can be visualized. It gives the first proof that the meeting house was two stories high and that it measured approximately 38x50 feet (the dimensions given in the Town History). It was oriented with the gables on an east-west axis (confirmed by the width of the cellarhole), and it had twin stair

porches at each gable end. These were enclosed two-story porches with stairways to the gallery (the doors from the gallery to the stair porches are shown on the plan). The main front doorway, would have been centered on the long wall, facing south toward the road and cemetery, according to Peter Benes, and opposite on the north wall was the pulpit or "desk".

The photo of the Rockingham, Vermont meeting house (built 1787 to 1800) gives a good idea of the appearance of the old Dublin Building,



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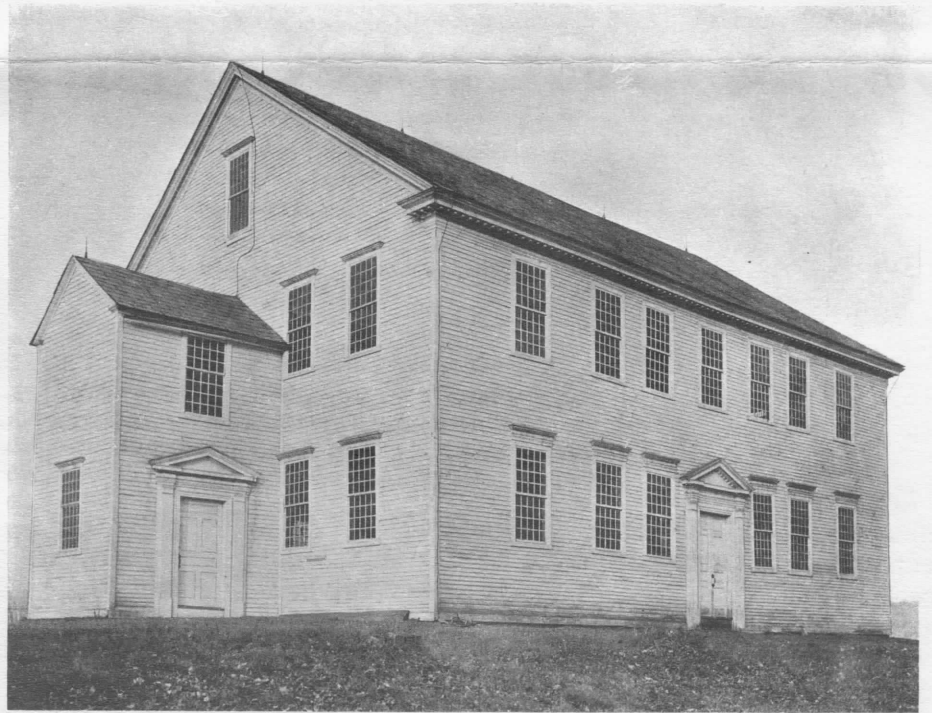
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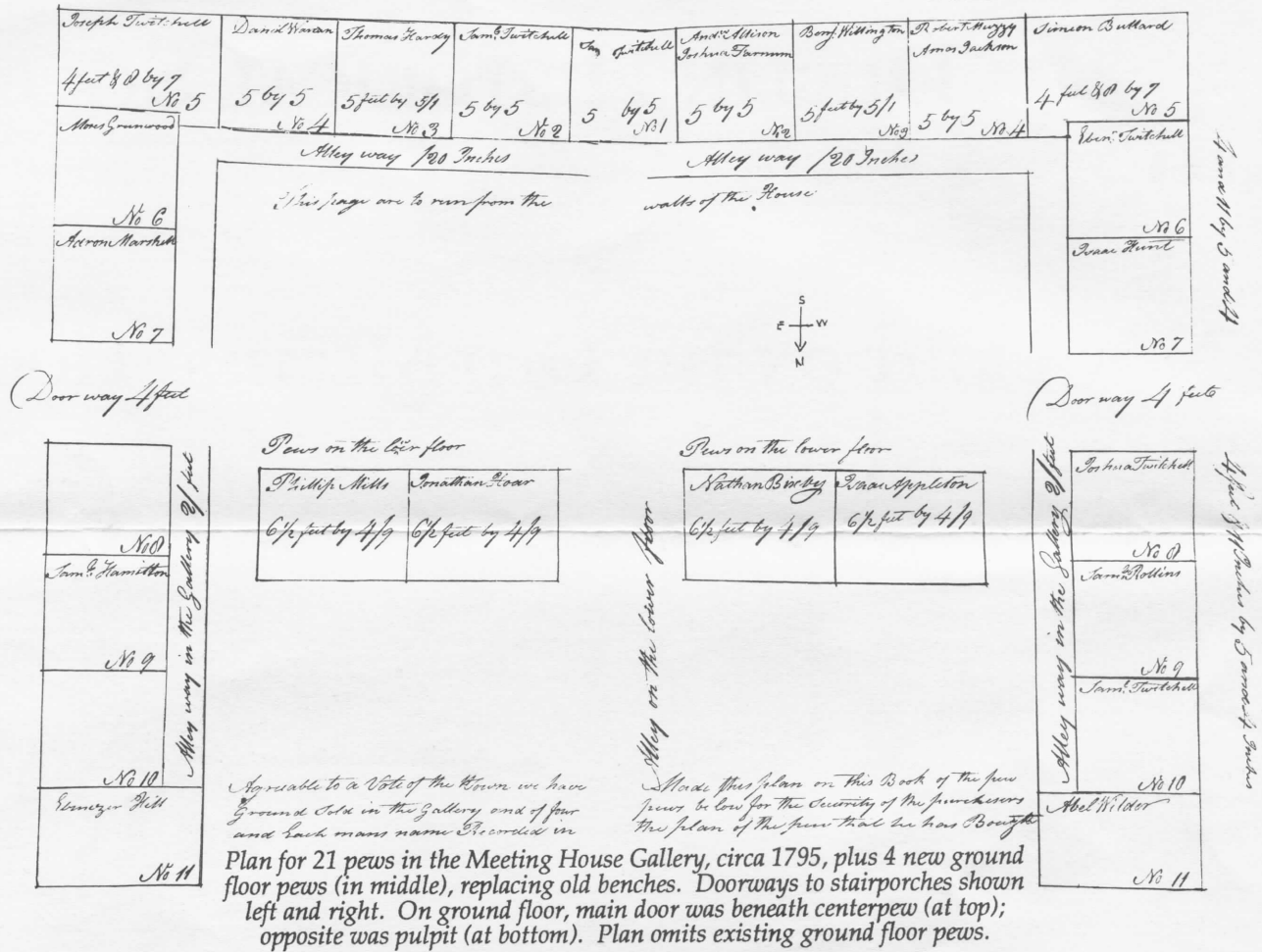
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although Rockingham was about 7 feet longer. It would also have closely resembled the Jaffrey Center meeting house (1775) before the tower was added—about 50 years later.

Like many meeting houses in pioneer communities, our first church was built piecemeal; in fact it took about 25 years to “finish”. This is understandable when you consider the small population and scarcity of resources. In September 1771 at the first town meeting in the “new house” there were only 54 taxpayers on the rolls.

It was not for lack of trying however. Although the town increased rapidly in population over the next quarter century, constant refrains in the warrant articles, year after year, “to see to finishing the Meeting House” were usually passed over.

Not until the mid-1790’s is there evi-

dence that the work was finally accomplished, at the same time that the gallery pews were installed. The first floor pews, on the other hand, appear to have been finished in 1784 at the same time other improvements were made.

Once the Meeting House was completed, however, the subject at ensuing town meetings changes to “see if the Town will repair the old Meeting House or build a new one,” a controversy that went on for over a decade. There was also a recurring problem of vandalism; in 1800 for example “broak out” windows had to be repaired.

It was supposed until now that the First Meeting House was probably torn down in 1818 when the Second Meeting House was built on the hill, and some of the materials “recycled” (as was done in 1852 when the present Community Church was built using parts on the Second

Meetinghouse.)

The Town Books tell a different story. Town meetings—though not church services—continued in the old building until at least the March meeting of 1822, when it was “voted to have the old meeting house sold.” This was the year before a new brick town hall was built by the Old Common (now site of the Pillsbury house).

The division of church and town functions locally resulted from the Supreme Court’s landmark Dartmouth College decision (1819) affirming the separation of church and state. Curiously, it coincided (within a year) with the changeover in Dublin from the old meeting house to the new. The demise of the First Meeting House, the plain and simple structure in use for over half a century, represented the end of Dublin’s era of settlement and pioneer life.

## SCHOOLHOUSE OPEN HOUSE

Approximately 150 people attended the Open House at the Old Schoolhouse on Sunday, July 2. It was a beautiful day and everyone enjoyed looking at the exhibits that Linda and Rusty Bastedo had arranged, as well as partaking of the strawberry shortcake and other refreshments organized by the Egan family. Nine people signed up to be members of the Society and several people donated artifacts and shared information with the Curator.

*Many thanks to the following people for their help in making the Open House such a success:*

- Mary Mckee for donating the bunting.
- Beekman Pool for donating the flags which were given to the children.
- Vanderbilt's Countryside Gardens for the geraniums.
- Charlie Pillsbury's House Care for mowing the lawn.
- Mary Ann Egan for the refreshments.
- Kei Egan for stenciling the old apple sign.
- Rusty Bastedo, Linda Bastedo, Patrick Egan, and Stephen McLellan for getting the building cleaned and the exhibits set up.
- Diana Shonk for the open house flyer and the sign.
- Sarah Bauhan and David Surette for the wonderful music.

## SCHOOLHOUSE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

A campaign to raise \$30,000 was begun following the Open House. Everyone could easily see the need for



*There was perfect weather and a grand turn-out for the Open House festivities.*

restoration work on the building. The foundation, particularly in the back corner needs work and the roof needs to be reshingled. Both the interior and the exterior of the building need to be painted. Once these repairs are made, we can use the

building on a seasonal basis as a museum and meeting place. It will also be an excellent educational center (with the elementary school right next door).

We anticipate having revolving ex-



*Everyone at the Open House enjoyed the delicious strawberry shortcake prepared and served by Mary Ann Egan.*

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting will again be a breakfast, (back by popular demand), held on Sat. Sept. 9, 1989 at 8:30am at the Town Hall. Following the meeting there will be an Open House at the Archive Room in the Post Office building to allow members to see both the town and historical Society Archives.

hibits making use of the artifacts and pictures which the Society already owns, as well as having exhibits where objects are on loan to the Society. We are always in need of more volunteers so if you are interested, please call Linda Bastedo or Lucy Shonk.

### BUILDING COMMITTEE

The building committee met recently to organize the renovation work. We decided to tackle the foundation first, then the roof, followed by a complete extermination of the powder post beetles. Painting will be done when all the other work has been completed.

George Bogosian  
Dan Scully  
Tom Seaver  
Lucy Shonk

### TRUSTEES MEETING

The next meeting of the Trustees and the steering committee will be held on Monday, August 21 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Linda Bastedo.

### CEMETERY PROJECT by *Laura Scott*

Work is progressing slowly, but steadily on the project to document Dublin's Cemetery. Stage one, the collection of materials from Dublin's own records as well as those found in neighboring towns is complete. In stage two we will be collating this information for the computer.

The final stage will be verifying computer information with the actual cemetery stones. Lots of volunteers will make this stage move quickly. When we are finished we hope to have a readily available record which will be both a resource for genealogists and historians as

well as an ongoing working records system for the Town of Dublin.

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

by *John Harris- Archivist*

The following are among recent gifts to the Society's archives:

From Carol Kraichnan, copies of ten photographs of her house ("Far Horizons", National Register no. 97). The photographs show the exterior, interior and surroundings of the house shortly after its completion in 1899. Included are pictures of Henry Dwight Learned (1849-1923) and his family, for whom the house was built. These are of particular interest, since Mr. Learned was the first president of the Dublin Historical Society.

Another important group of photographs has been furnished by the Historical Society of Cheshire

### A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been a year since I last did a newsletter and I would again like to express my gratitude to John Harris for all his work this year on the other newsletters.

*Thank you, John!*

County in the form of 67 prints from glass negatives in their collection. The photographs were taken around the turn of the century by Mary Emerson Robbe (b. 1878), who lived at Bond's Corner in a house no longer standing.

Many of the pictures are of Dublin houses and people, not all of whom have been identified as yet. There is an interesting research project here for a good historical detective.

Nicholas Benton, who is Vice President of the New England Historical Genealogical Society, has kindly given us a photocopy of a booklet published in Keene in 1907, recording the ancestry and descendants of Bethuel Harris, from whom Harrisville got its name.

Through the kindness of Mary Meath, we have received from Historic Harrisville, Inc., an unusual double postcard showing a view of Beech Hill and the Lake. The card was published by George W. Gleason and sold at his store, probably around 1920.

From the Archivist comes a pamphlet containing the Confession of Faith of the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Dublin, and a list of its officers and members as of 1848, when the pamphlet was printed in Keene.

The Society records its grateful thanks to all of the foregoing donors.

### IN MEMORY

Recently we have lost three dear friends:

Aimee Lamb  
Rosamond Lamb  
Glen Scribner

Each contributed in their way to the Society and will be greatly missed.