



Dublin Historical Society

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THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON (1823-1911)

When he was in his early twenties Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote in his journal words that very accurately prophesied his future:

"What destiny is intended for me, I cannot tell - not to go the beaten track, I am sure. I cannot express how strongly I long to come out and obtain a working place among men. How my ability will second my wishes I know not, but some things are in everyone's power - to live a true, sincere, earnest, independent life.

"I feel there is no man too small to be useful so he be true and bold . . ."

His enthusiasm and desire to be "true and bold" led him off the beaten track into fighting for such causes as education of the disadvantaged, abolition of slavery, and women's rights. He also was a friend and mentor of Emily Dickinson.

Higginson, who was born in 1823 and was the youngest of ten children, entered Harvard at age 13 and graduated four years later.



After teaching for a brief time he returned to Harvard to study at the Divinity School and was ordained in 1847. He enjoyed preaching and used his sermons to express his ideas on current as well as theological issues.

Higginson knew and was greatly influenced by the leading New England intellectuals and abolitionists of the day - Emerson, Thoreau, Theodore Parker, Hawthorne and Longfellow, as well as Edgar Allen Poe, Lucy Stone and John Brown.

Abolitionist

AUGUST QUARTELY MEETING

The August meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 15, from 4 to 6 pm at "Glimpsewood", the home of Mr. and Mrs Edgar Harrell on East Lake Road. The program will mark the hundredth anniversary of the building of "Glimpsewood" by Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Refreshments will be served.

At Newburyport where he served from 1847 - 1850, Higginson became an ardent champion of the abolition of slavery and because of his zeal was dismissed as minister of the church. He never took another pulpit but more than ever continued to write and speak against the institution of slavery and in particular against the extension of slavery into Kansas and the enactment of the fugitive slave law.

On the passage of that law in 1850, he wrote to a friend:

"... I almost feel as if the nation of which we have boasted were sunk in the dust forever, now that justice and humanity are gone; and as if the 19th century were the darkest of all ages."
*

He admired and befriended John Brown, and, like Brown, his commitment to the cause of abolition led him beyond mere speech. He made one of a group attempting the forcible release of fugitive slaves from a jail in Boston.

During the Civil War, he was appointed Colonel of the first regiment of freed slaves in the Sea Islands of South Carolina.

Col. Higginson took and held Jacksonville, Fl, but was wounded in August 1863 and, in October 1864 resigned due to his injuries.

After the war, Higginson continued his efforts on behalf of

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to report that Tom Wright has been elected as a Trustee of the Society, filling Parker Leighton's unexpired term.

Since the August quarterly meeting will be held at the house built by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, it seems appropriate to devote this issue of the newsletter to him. The following article focuses on some of the causes to which he devoted his life.

blacks, as chairman of the School Committee in Newport, R.I., succeeded in integrating the local schools.

Women's Rights

As in his sympathy for blacks, he was far ahead of his time in his views on women's rights. In 1844, at the age of 21, he wrote to his fiancée:

"I think it a monstrous absurdity to talk of a democratic government and yet exclude one-half the inhabitants . . . I have no doubt we should have much more principle in politics if woman had more share... her standard of right being higher than that of man. I think there is no possible argument on the other side excepting prejudice."

In 1870, Higginson became assistant editor of the newly founded weekly, "Women's Rights", for which he wrote many of the editorials. He also did his best to keep peace in the women's movement by mediating between the National Association, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the rival American Association under the leadership of Henry Ward Beecher.

Emily Dickinson

Higginson is best known in the field of literature as the discoverer of Emily Dickinson.

Higginson in Dublin

A century ago Thomas Wentworth Higginson, famous in his day as a preacher, author, and social reformer (see Lucy Shonk's Article), built "Glimpsewood," his shingle-style summer cottage near the east shore of Dublin Lake. The house still stands and is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Harrell.

Higginson and his second wife Mary Thacher, came to Dublin over a period of more than 30 years. Beginning in 1879, the year he first spent the summer here, and for a decade thereafter, Higginson rented rooms at the John Mason farm, a popular summer boarding-house northwest of the lake. The farmhouse was sold and taken down in 1890 when Daniel Catlin built the present Blagden house on the site, no doubt prompting the Higginsons to build their own permanent summer home.

Higginson was a outgoing man and became well-liked in the community. He took an active role in the life of the town. An ordained Unitarian minister, he spoke frequently at the Community Church and the Grange, and was a leading member of the Village Improvement Society.

Throughout his long life, Higginson made many friends, and he may be seen as an important link between the early literary visitors to Monadnock, such as Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne and writers and artists of a later period like Abbott Thayer and Mark Twain who came to live in Dublin. Until his death in 1911, "Glimpsewood" was visited by many prominent public figures of the day.

-WLB

Higginson was a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic Monthly*, which in 1862 published his "Letter to a Young Contributor", in which he discussed the formation of a writing style. The result was a letter from the then-unknown, Emily Dickinson enclosing four of her poems.

The ensuing correspondence lasted till Dickinson's death, twenty-five years later, during which time the two met only twice. She destroyed all his letters, but he kept hers to him, and these have helped biographers piece out the details of her reclusive and secretive life in Northampton, MA.

In one collection of her poems, the editor, Thomas Johnson declares "The importance of the correspondence with Higginson... cannot be exaggerated.

It was not until after her death, in 1886, that Higginson was finally able to have Dickinson's poems published, and insure her

place in American literature.

Higginson was a prolific writer and had always wished he had the gifts of a poet. He continued to lecture and write until his death.

His biographer (Anna Mary Wells) summed up his work by this phrase:

Never in Mr. Higginson's long life did he abandon his custom of fearless protest by voice or pen against anything which seemed to him wrong or unjust."

Though not as famous as many of his contemporaries, he is a fine example of a man who followed his conscience.

*Quotes were taken from Mary Thacher Higginson's book *Thomas Wentworth Higginson, The Story of His Life*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston MA 1914.

-LCS

Recent Accessions

Since the beginning of the year, the Society's archives have received several important gifts.

The Brush Family Papers have been generously given by the estate of the late Thea Brush Cabot. This collection consists of over 1,000 documents, and includes over 80 letters from George de Forest Brush (1855-1941) to his wife, Mittie Taylor Brush. Also included are materials relating to Brush's work as an artist: two diaries, manuscript notes on his thoughts about paintings and lists of his paintings and drawings at Brush Farm in 1928, before the studio fire in which much of this work was destroyed.

A most interesting gift from Margaret B. Cross is the last register of the Leffingwell Hotel, covering the period from the spring of 1907 to the night in November, 1908, when the hotel was destroyed by fire. The register includes the names of many persons who were, or became, significant in the history of Dublin.

Sam and Jessie Hale have given the Society a colored copy of an 1888 Smith family album, with illustrations by Joseph Lindon Smith (1863-1950) for verses by his father and mother.

Other welcome additions to the archives have come from William L. Bauhan, Ann Biklen, Peter F. Carleton, and Jean A. Eaves.

Many thanks to all!



Glimpsewood, Residence of Col. T. W. Higginson, Dublin, N. H.
Published by H. D. Allison, Dublin, N. H.

In Memoriam

HILDRETH MASON ALLISON (1896-1990)

With the death of Hildreth Allison on July 19, The Dublin Historical Society has lost not only its oldest, but one of its most learned and generous members. He joined the Society in the early 1920's, and was elected the Society's Historian in 1930, and also served as Secretary from 1930 to 1936. He was elected an honorary member in 1986. Throughout his life, Mr. Allison was a prolific writer of both verse and prose, the latter mainly on historical topics.

Mr Allison was also a collector of Dublin artifacts and memorabilia. Many of the objects in the Society's collection in the old school house are the result of his generosity in the 1920's and 30's. More recently, he presented to the Society's archives manuscripts and copies of over ninety articles, essays and short stories written by him. Among these were his autobiography, *So Well Remembered*, and his book of poems, *Ornaments of Rhyme*.

His many published articles include "Parson Sprague of the Monadnocks", (*Americana*, 1943), "Some Painters of the Grand Monadnock" (*Appalachia*,

1963), and "Dr. Amos Twitchell, Pioneer Surgeon" (*Historical New Hampshire*, 1978). One of his reminiscences, "Archibald and the Colonel", was published in the Society's Newsletter for October, 1988, "the Colonel" being Thomas Wentworth Higginson.



Hildreth Mason Allison was born October 1, 1896, the eldest child of Henry Darracott and Florence Gowing Mason Allison. His Dublin ancestry stretched back, through his Gowing grandmother, to Henry Strongman (c. 1717-1786), the Town's first permanent settler, and in the male line to Captain Andrew Allison (c.1754-1841), among many others.

He prepared for college at Keene High School ('14) and Phillips Exeter Academy ('15). He entered Dartmouth with the Class of '19, but left in 1918 to volunteer for army service. By taking extra courses after his discharge in early 1919, he graduated with his class in June of that year, being elected Class Poet.

After graduation, Mr. Allison

returned to Dublin, where he was associated with his father in the latter's store and real estate agency. He served as a selectman from 1931 to 1934, and as Moderator from 1936 to 1943.

During World War II, he moved to Hingham, Mass., for a war-related job as rate setter at the shipyard there. After the war he entered the Civil Service, serving at the Veteran's Administration in Washington, D.C., from 1948 to 1966. While in Washington, he earned a Master's degree in History from American University.

In 1952, Mr. Allison returned to Dublin to give the historical address at the Dublin Bicentennial. After retirement from the Veteran's Administration, he stayed on in Washington for a further thirteen years, working for most of that time at the American Security and Trust Bank. In 1980, he moved to Keene, and in 1988 to Peterborough.

His last appearance in Dublin was at this year's Memorial Day observance. He was Dublin's only surviving veteran of World War I.