

Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 22 – April, 1992



Thayer and his circle. Mural by Barry Faulkner in the State House, Concord, N.H., 1942. Left to right: Daniel Chester French, Emma Thayer, George de Forest Brush, Faulkner, Alexander James, Abbott H. Thayer, Mary Thayer.

An Evening with the Dublin Art Colony

Please mark your calendar for Friday, April 24. Tom Seaver and Steve McLellan will be presenting, "An Evening with the Dublin Art Colony," at 7:00 PM at Brush Farm (East Harrisville Road). This will be a lecture/discussion about the remarkable number of celebrated artists who have made the Dublin area their home during the last century. We are privileged to have the presentation take place at the former home of George de Forest Brush, one of Dublin's best known artists. Mr. Seaver and Mr. McLellan have recently opened an antique store, Seaver & McLellan Antiques, across from the Church and adjacent to the Dublin Town Hall.

As parking is limited, you may wish to carpool for this special evening. With the presenters' permission, we have included brief biographies of two of these artists in this newsletter.

Need to Update Dublin's History

"It has become quite common at the present day, especially in New England, to publish histories of towns. The practice is a good one. The traditions of past events are always fading from the memories of successive generations, and, unless they are written and printed, many of them will be lost beyond recovery."

These words were written by Rev. Levi W. Leonard, D. D., for the Dublin Town History of 1855. They are as true today as they were then.

Dublin's last town history spanned the period from 1749 through 1917 and was published by the Town of Dublin in 1920. Entitled *The History of Dublin, New Hampshire*, it comprises 1,042 pages and is available at the Dublin library.

Our town's 250th anniversary will occur on June 17, 2002, a relatively short ten years from now. To most, ten years might seem a very long time, but for those who are interested in continuing the valuable tradition of recording events of our town's rich heritage, the time is short, if we hope to complete an update of our town's history in time for the 250th anniversary. So many events affecting our town and its residents, past and present, have occurred since 1917 that it fairly boggles the mind to contemplate

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George de Forest Brush

(1855-1941)

A Dublin resident from 1901 until shortly before his death in 1941, George de Forest Brush was an outstanding painter and recipient of fourteen major awards and honors for his work. Also, he was admirably unusual in that he possessed not only extraordinary artistic talent, but also a personality and values that enriched the lives of those around him.

George deForest Brush's works are displayed in more than nineteen museums in the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of the American Indian, in New York, and the National Collection of Fine Arts, in Washington. Numbered among his awards are five gold medals including one received from the Exposition Internationale, in Paris. He also received an Honorary M. A. Degree from Yale University in 1923.

Born in Shelbyville, Tennessee, in 1855, he began his formal study at age 16 at the National Academy of Design in New York. Three years later, he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, in Paris, and completed his apprenticeship in about six years, before returning to the United States.

In 1881 he and his brother traveled West where he lived and painted for several years among members of the Arapaho, Shoshone and Crow



Mother and Child, by George de Forest Brush, c. 1895, Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The models are Mrs. Brush and their daughter, Tribbie.

Indian tribes. He had great respect for the Indians, their beliefs and their customs, and expressed this in his many paintings of Indian life. His reputation as a painter, however, centered primarily on his many portraits, and mother and child compositions. The principal subjects for his mother and child paintings were his wife and children.

At age 30 he married Mary Taylor Whelpley. They had six daughters and two sons. Through his friendship with Abbott Thayer, he visited Dublin in the early 1890's. The family first summered in Dublin in 1899. Two years later bought their only permanent residence, Brush

Farm, where the artist had his studio. The substantial revenue from his paintings allowed the entire family to travel extensively, and for many years they lived a nomadic, but comfortable life-style, traveling mostly to Europe where Brush derived much knowledge and inspiration studying the styles and methods of the early masters. When in Dublin, the family was active socially, and frequently entertained their many friends at their home.

In many ways, George deForest Brush was a person to emulate. He displayed a genuine love and respect for life, family, and friends. His high degree of integrity, constant pursuit of excellence, and strong sense of purpose, coupled with a good sense of humor, personal warmth and many and varied interests attracted many friends.

One of his mother and child paintings can be viewed here in Dublin, at the Seaver & McLellan Antique shop. Four paintings are in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. A very enjoyable book about Brush, his family and friends, entitled *George de Forest Brush—Recollections of a Joyous Painter*, written by his eldest daughter, Nancy Douglas Bowditch, is available at the Dublin Public Library.

— Bernie Vigneault

Need to Update Dublin's History *continued from page 1*

the effort that will be required to organize for the task, clearly define it, gather all the ingredients, record them in an orderly way, and finally publish the finished product. Let it be known, however, that prelimi-

nary planning for the task is already underway by our Historical Society trustees.

Successful completion of the task will require great effort by many people. However, many of us can help much, with little effort, and we can begin immediately. Our task is merely to locate and to deliver to our

Town Archivists whatever old documents, photos, personal letters, or other printed matter about Dublin residents (past or present) or our town, that we think might be used in updating our town history. ❖

Please phone the Archives, if you wish, at 563-8545.

Abbott Handerson Thayer

(1849-1921)

Abbott Thayer was the first of several widely recognized artists to settle in Dublin, and his presence drew others to the town. Thayer was born in Boston, but from an early age he knew the Monadnock area well. His mother was from Keene and his parents were married there. After an initial period in Massachusetts and Vermont, Abbott's family moved to Keene when he was seven years old. As a youth he was a keen outdoorsman, an avid fisherman, and he took particular pleasure in observing birds and wildlife, making sketches and watercolours of his observations. When he was fifteen he transferred to Chauncy Hall School (founded by his grandfather) in Boston, where he studied animal painting with a local painter. When his family moved to Brooklyn at the end of the Civil War, Abbott continued his studies at New York's National Academy of Design, where he also began what was to prove a long friendship with George de Forest Brush.

In 1875, at the age of 26 he married Kate Bloede, and one week later they sailed for Paris. They were to remain in Paris for four years, Abbott studying at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts, as did Brush. The Thayers' lifestyle in Paris is described as stable, eccentric, happy, and poor. Crackers, jam, olives, and tea often sufficed for an evening meal. In a letter to a friend Abbott described, "the splendid art that keeps us in a beautiful glow from day to day."¹

Returning to America in 1879, the Thayers lived in various locales, raised their three surviving children, Mary, Gerald, and Gladys (two others had died in infancy), and Abbott's professional reputation grew steadily. In 1887 they moved



Angel, by Abbott H. Thayer, c. 1988. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The model is his daughter, Mary.

to West Keene, New Hampshire, where Abbott worked and taught painting. One of his pupils, Mary Amory Greene, a descendant of the painter, Copley, lived in Dublin and, sensing the Thayer family's need for more permanent shelter, offered to build a summer house for them on her land in Dublin on the south side of the lake.

Thus it was that the Thayers came to settle in Dublin. Unfortunately his wife, Kate, whom "he worshipped with all the intensity of his highly emotional and ardent nature,"² died in 1891, after a long illness. While no doubt shocking to some, four months later Abbott married Emma Beach, a family friend and a frequent housekeeper to the Thayers, who was a loyal and devoted friend to Kate.

From this time, until his death in 1921, Dublin was the Thayers' principal home. Painting in a studio near his house, and using most often his daughter, Mary, and neighbors as models for his work, Thayer

created his best-known, and often hauntingly beautiful paintings. His winged portraits of timeless beauty, his beloved Monadnock, and his studies of natural camouflage, especially of birds, were among his central themes. It is said of Thayer that for him, "art was a means of conversing with Paradise."³

Some eccentricities of the Thayers were legend. For example, they did not insulate their house and, thinking it more healthy, would keep their windows open much of the year, except during storms. At bedtime family members would often retire to sleep outdoors in rustic, Adirondack lean-to's, even in deepest winter. There is remarkable correspondence between Thayer and Theodore Roosevelt, wherein each disputes the other's interpretation of concealing coloration among birds.

Abbott Thayer passed away in May, 1921, and his ashes were scattered by his son, Gerald, at the top of Monadnock. In commemoration of his life and work, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York organized a major retrospective exhibition in March, 1922. In 1940, a number of Thayer's Dublin friends created a memorial on the site of the studio, consisting of a plaque let into a large boulder. Joseph Lindon Smith wrote that it should be "a simple, but adequate and lasting memorial to Abbott H. Thayer."⁴ ♦

— Terry Dwyer

¹ Quotation from *Abbott Handerson Thayer*, Ross Anderson, 1982, pg. 15

^{2,3} Quotations from *Abbott H. Thayer, Painter and Naturalist*, Nelson C. White, 1951., pgs. 57, 205

⁴ Quotation from a Joseph Lindon Smith letter in the Dublin Historical Society archives.



PRESIDENT

Despite the long cold winter, the Dublin Historical Society has been very active!

Fifty members attended a potluck supper in February and listened to an informative and entertaining talk by Mike Worcester on the early days of the automobile in Dublin.

The Board of Trustees meets monthly to keep on top of all the issues facing the Society and one in particular that has been of utmost importance is the archives building project. Most of you should have received a letter from me regarding the vote that was to take place at the Town Meeting. I am pleased to report that the article passed! We have already received a pledge of \$50,000 towards the building, leaving approximately \$38,000 to be raised. This will be a joint project with the town.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the members of the Town Archives Building Committee, including: Chairman Dick Hammond, Jill Lawler, Lu Hewitt, Bruce Fox, John Harris, and Ned Whitney. They worked long and hard to come up with a solution to the problem and did an admirable job. Thank you from all of us.

The 150th Anniversary fund-raising campaign for the Schoolhouse restoration was a great success. I am pleased to report that 111 donors gave \$25,521. We were able to do the needed repairs to the building (under the expert guidance of George Bogosian and Dan Scully) and look forward to seeing the building used as a museum this summer. Thank you again to all who gave so generously to this worthy campaign.

Finally, we believe the Dublin Community Church is planning to renovate the old stagecoach barn behind the parsonage. The barn was part of the *Dublin Stage Company*, which brought mail and passengers to Dublin from the railroad station in Harrisville. This is a very worthy project and we hope that you would all be supportive of the Church's efforts in this regard.

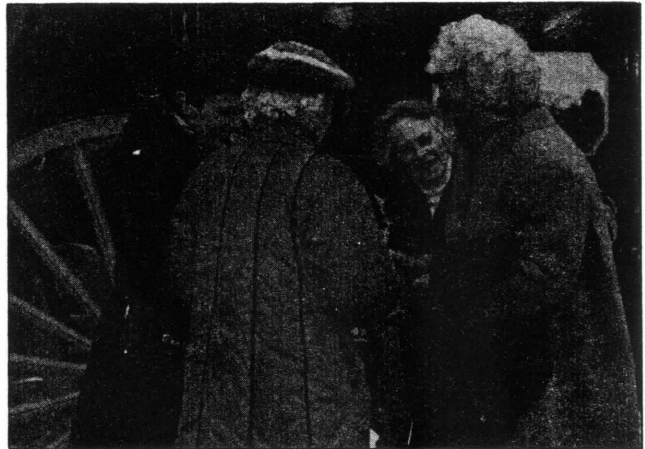
— Lucy Shonk

First Lady Visits Dublin

Barbara Bush, wife of President George Bush, received a warm reception outside Town Hall on Thursday, January 23, as she campaigned for her husband's re-election in New Hampshire's upcoming primary vote. Despite the cold, rainy weather, about 200 people, including town officials and many students from Dublin Consolidated School and Dublin School, turned out for a brief, early afternoon meeting with her.

Mrs. Bush made no speech, but rather spent most of the time just shaking hands and exchanging greetings with many of the students and others. The faces in the crowd clearly

reflected her warmth and friendliness. After accepting a Dublin School sweat-shirt, and signing the Dublin Historical Society's guest book, she and her entourage continued on their way to more campaigning in Keene. ❖



Exchanging greetings with Mrs. Bush (left to right): Mrs. Augusta Petrone, Mrs. Lucy Shonk, Mrs. Nancy Lehmann, Mrs. Bush.

Accessions to the ARCHIVES

A number of important items have been given to the archives since the beginning of the year. Tom Seaver, adding to his past generosity, has given us two books of class notes taken by Curtis Augustine Wood, M.D., (1846-1902) while he was a student at the Dartmouth medical school in 1875 and 1876. Dr. Wood was a Dublin native, who returned here to practice as town physician for many years. He lived in what is now the Summers' antique shop on Route 101.

Marguerite Bemis Turner, of Chesham, has given a collection of photographs and memorabilia of the Esquimo Lodge, which was operated by her parents from the 1920's through the 1950's. (After several changes of hands, it is now the Ebony Hill restaurant.) Older members will remember

that behind the restaurant there was for many years a dance hall, the scene of much merriment on Saturday nights.

Photographs of the tragic fire at High Wells have been donated by Bill Gnade. Augusta Petrone has sent us a videotape of Mrs. Bush's February visit and Betsey Bernier has allowed us to make copies of portrait photographs of her grandparents, John Lawrence and Isabel Mauran. From Ruth Hammond have come two postcards, one showing the Monadnock post office (the late General White's house) as it was in 1910.

Our thanks to all these generous donors. May they be an example to us all! ❖

—John Harris

CREDITS

The editors of this newsletter are
Bernie Vigneault and Terry Dwyer.

Photograph of Mrs. Bush
courtesy of Ruth Hammond.

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