

# Dublin Historical Society

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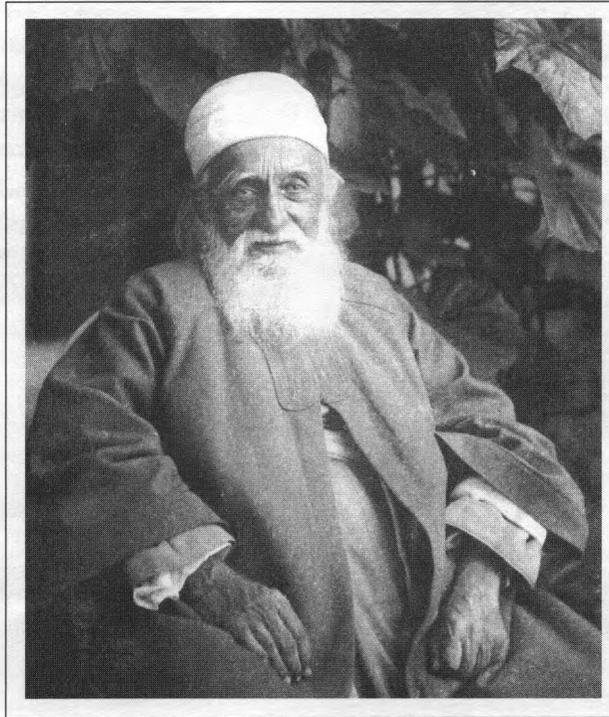
## ABDU'L BAHA IN DUBLIN

**T**he recent purchase of French's Tavern by members of the Baha'i Faith rekindles interest in a somewhat obscure but nonetheless intriguing chapter of Dublin history. This was a three-week visit to Dublin in the summer of 1912 by Abdu'l Baha, the son and chosen successor of the Founder of the Faith. Of the several places in Dublin where Abdu'l Baha is known to have stayed, French's Tavern, then called "the Dublin Inn", is the only one surviving.

The new owners, Gisu Mohadjer and her husband, Robert Cook, who live in Washington, D.C., have changed the name back to "the Dublin Inn". They intend to maintain it, at least in part, as a place of historical importance, in honor of one of its most illustrious guests.

Abdu'l Baha was the son of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet/Founder of the Baha'i religion, and succeeded his father as spiritual leader. He visited Dublin from July 25th to August 16th, 1912, at the invitation of Mrs. Agnes Parsons, a member of the Baha'i faith and a summer resident of Dublin. Mrs. Parsons had entertained Abdu'l Baha at her home in Washington, D.C., and invited him to visit her summer estate in Dublin.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Jeffrey Parsons owned several houses along Windmill Hill Road, as well as a large tract of land running down to the great barn by Nellie Crossley's house at the foot of Parsons Road. The main house was "Ty-ny-maes" (Welsh for "house in the meadow"), which stood at the east end of the open field where the Sistares now live. Further east, and used by the Parsons as guest houses, were "Stonehenge", now belonging to Professor Kilson, and



*Abdu'l Baha in Dublin, August, 1912.*  
Photograph by Elise Pumpelly Cabot.

"Dayspring", later "Jubilee Farm", which burned down in 1982. Abdu'l Baha and his retinue were initially quartered at "Dayspring", but later moved to the Inn, then called the Dublin Inn, but known to us as French's Tavern.

Abdu'l Baha was in the midst of a grueling, 239 day tour of the United States that would encompass most of the major cultural areas. He was 68 years old at the time, 40 of which he had spent in prison, a victim of religious persecution by the Turkish authorities in Palestine. He accepted Mrs. Parsons' invitation to Dublin, but the visit was to be on his terms. "We have come for work and service," he said upon arrival, "not for amusement and pleasure." Every afternoon he would walk up from "Dayspring" to hold public meetings at the Parsons' main

house, "Ty-ny-maes". In these talks, Abdu'l Baha discussed the basic tenets of the Baha'i faith: unity of the world's races, equality of men and women, elimination of prejudice and universal compulsory education.

Many members of Dublin's summer colony met Abdu'l Baha during his stay. Joseph Lindon Smith invited him to the annual summer theatrical fete at his summer cottage at Loon Point on Dublin Lake. The play, entitled "The Wrong Mr.



*Abdu'l Baha and his retinue on the lawn at "Ty-ny-maes". The children in front are Elizabeth and Pauline Cabot and Jeffrey Parsons (the child at right is unidentified). Photograph by Elise Pumpelly Cabot.*

Wright", attracted a large crowd. One of the cast of the comedy was Nancy Brush Pearmain, eldest daughter of the artist George deForest Brush and later Mrs Harold Bowditch. She remembered that in the midst of the performance,

"I happened to look up, and there before my eyes was a person who made me stand still and gaze. Approaching was a majestic figure in snow-white oriental robe, a white beard and a head crowned with a small white turban. Everything faded from my mind as I gazed, spellbound - for this figure, moving quietly over the emerald green lawn, seemed like something from another world."

Nancy Bowditch later became a life-long and devout Baha'i.

Raphael Pumpelly, a world traveler, entertained Abdu'l Baha and recounts the following tale in his autobiography.

"Abdul Baha was one of the distinguished visitors to Dublin. One day he gave a talk at our house and, after lunch, feeling tired, he was shown to

my wife's room to rest.

"Not long after this when on our way to Burlington we stopped at a summer resort for lunch. A lady, seeing our name on the register, introduced herself, saying: 'Oh, you are from Dublin! Did you see Abdul Baha?'

" 'Yes, he lunched with us the other day and he rested on my bed.'

" 'He lay on your bed. Oh, how wonderful!' and she came and reverently kissed the skirt of my wife's dress."

Two of Pumpelly's children eventually adopted the Baha'i religion.

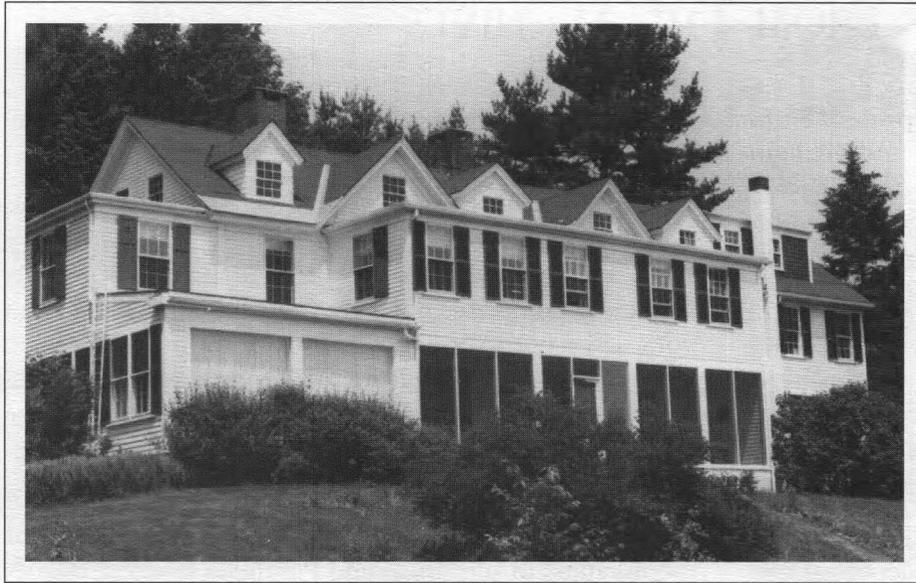
After a spell as Mrs.Parsons' guest at "Dayspring", Abdu'l Baha moved to French's Tavern (then called the

Dublin Inn). Early one morning, as he was coming out of the Tavern, he encountered an old man who was dirty, disheveled and wearing patched clothes, although the man was actually said to be quite well-to-do. Abdu'l Baha, obviously unaware of this New England irony, reached under his long robe, removed his Oriental trousers and handed them to the man.

Another curious event occurred during Abdu'l Baha's stay in Dublin. He was often seen riding around town in a hired carriage and he would exuberantly wave to people as he



*"Ty-ny-maes", Agnes Parsons' house, where Abdu'l Baha gave many of his talks. Photograph by Henry D. Allison.*



*"Jubilee Farm", known as "Dayspring" when Abdu'l Baha stayed there in 1912. Photograph from the Crocker family album.*

passed by. One day the carriage in which Abdu'l Baha was riding passed another that was driven by Hiram Carey, a popular livery stable owner in town. He stopped the other carriage, reached in his pocket and handed Mr. Carey a large amount of money. At no time in his travels to America did he accept money from local followers, obviously choosing to enlighten, rather than lighten, the people he encountered.

During his visit, Abdu'l Baha also spoke at the Dublin Lake Club and preached one Sunday at the Unitarian Church (now the Dublin Community Church). Elliott Allison, who was eleven at the time, was sent by his father, the local grocer, to

raise my voice to deliver the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Abha."

George deForest Brush invited Abdu'l Baha for tea and he arrived at Brush Farm on foot. The afternoon was filled with joking and swapping of humorous stories. Abdu'l Baha apparently liked to laugh and to make others laugh. Afterward Brush remarked, "That old Saint had wonderful things to tell me."

- Walt Schnabel

## ABDU'L BAHA AND THE BAHA'I FAITH

When Abdu'l Baha came to Dublin, New Hampshire, in August of 1912, he was sixty-eight years old. Most of his life had been spent in prison with his family, because his Father, Baha'u'llah ("The Glory of God"), a Persian nobleman by birth, had proclaimed Himself God's Messenger for this age, a Divine Teacher bearing a Revelation from God that addressed humanity's present-day needs, a Revelation meant to unite the peoples of the world. Baha'u'llah explained that the founders of the major religions were all a part of a single process by which God revealed His will for humanity and that the teachings of these Messengers of God have

always been the cause of human progress and the advancement of civilization.

This Revelation of Baha'u'llah was either ignored or rejected by the Persian authorities and religious leaders of His day and so He, with His family, was exiled, eventually to the Holy Land, Palestine, where they were imprisoned for forty years until they were freed by the young Turks in the Revolution of 1908.

Baha'u'llah designated his eldest son, Abdu'l Baha, the Perfect Exemplar of His teachings and the Perfect Interpreter of His Words. Abdu'l Baha lived a life of service to his Father and proclaimed the basic principles of the Baha'i Faith (as it is known today) to be: the oneness of God; the oneness of mankind; the common foundation of

the church to listen to the speech. He recalled Abdu'l Baha saying that the world is a rose garden and all of the people of the world are flowers in that garden.

Howard Colby Ives, a Unitarian Minister who stayed with Abdu'l Baha at the Dublin Inn, later wrote a book about the experience called "Portals To Freedom". Ives referred to him as a "spiritual warrior" and went on to say, "He mingled easily with everyone. No matter what subject was brought up, he was perfectly at home in its discussion, yet always with an undercurrent of modesty and loving consideration for the opinion of others." As new friends in Dublin bade him farewell and wished that he might stay longer, he replied, "I too had the intention of staying longer, but I must go to other places. .. as the days of my life are limited in this world. I must go many places and

all religions; the independent investigation of truth; the elimination of all prejudice; the equality of men and women; a universal auxiliary language; universal education; and the harmony of science and religion. When asked about his purpose for traveling in America, Abdu'l Baha said, "I have come to America to raise the standard of universal peace and to bring unity among mankind."

Worldwide, there are today some five million adherents to the Baha'i faith and approximately 142,000 in the United States. The faith is guided by a nine-member House of Justice at the world headquarters in Haifa, Israel. The United States headquarters are in Wilmette, Illinois.

- Nancy Marlowe Aldrich

# NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Allison Glass Negatives.** A major project at the Archives this winter has been the copying and cataloguing of over 250 glass negatives taken by Henry D. Allison around the turn of the last century. These were given to the Dublin Public Library a number of years ago by Allison's son, the late Elliott Allison.

Cecily Bastedo, a Society member and Library Trustee, undertook the yeoman task of making positive copies from each glass plate, using our computer and scanner. She made two sets of digital images, one for the Library and one for the Historical Society.

The next step was to prepare a descriptive catalogue. Because of Henry Allison's rather casual identifications, this turned out to be something of a challenge. Of course, he was familiar with all the people and places and saw no need to be very specific in describing them. A hundred years later, however, there is no one left who remembers. Let it be a lesson to us all!

Nevertheless, with a certain amount of sleuthing, the Society's archivists were able to identify many of the images. There remains to be prepared an index of the persons and subjects portrayed. When that is finished, the photographs will be a major resource for Dublin studies.

**Richard Meryman's History.** The archivists have also spent considerable time - and derived considerable knowledge and pleasure - in supplying facts and photographs for Dick Meryman's forthcoming history of the Dublin summer colony, due out next summer to mark the Lake Club's hundredth anniversary.

## ACCESSIONS

The winter has also brought us a wealth of new historical materials from over twenty individual donors. Notable among these is **Nancy Aldrich's** gift of papers and photographs relating to the Brush and Pearmain families, from whom she is descended. This collection includes materials on Abdu'l Baha's visit to Dublin in 1912 which Nancy inherited from her grandmother, Nancy Brush Bowditch. These materials furnished the sources for this newsletter's leading article, including the photograph on page one.

Through the good offices of Jud Hale, **Nancy Shook Bender** has added to her many previous gifts of materials relating to the Allison and Shook families. **David Godine** has most generously made us a present of *The Sporting Art of Frank W. Benson*, a handsome volume recently published by his firm. In addition to having been Joseph Lindon Smith's roommate in Paris in the

1880's, Frank Benson painted in Dublin for several summers.

**Doris Haddock** has selected our archives as the repository for the records of her epic cross-country walk, as "Granny D", for campaign finance reform. This collection comprises not only Doris's diaries, but a large volume of correspondence, press clippings, citations, photographs and miscellany. When processed and catalogued, this collection will be an important resource for students of twenty-first century politics, women's studies and the exploits of a remarkable woman.

**Edie Sabine Powell** has given us several items of memorabilia of the Brush and Pumpelly families, including a photograph of Mark Twain taken by her great-grandmother, Elise Pumpelly Cabot.

Elise Cabot (Mrs. Thomas Handasyd Cabot, Sr.) was a talented photographer who was active in Dublin and elsewhere early in the last century. A large collection of her photographs, many of members of the Pumpelly family, have been contributed by her four Cabot granddaughters: **Thea Sabine, Georgia Fletcher, Elise Beecher** and **Elizabeth Haddock**.

Other donors of material, to all of whom we are most grateful, include:

Cecily Bastedo  
P. Russell Bastedo  
Karen Bunch  
Barbara Hale Clark  
Donors to the Archives Fund  
Matt Feehery  
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The Monadnock Ledger  
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Peterborough Historical Society  
Elizabeth Pool

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## C R E D I T S

This issue of the Dublin Historical Society Newsletter was edited by John Harris.

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