

# Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 52 – July, 2001

## THE DAY THE PRESIDENT CAME

**T**he date was Saturday, August 27, 1910. Everyone in Dublin was aware that the President was coming, but no one knew just when. An American flag had been hung from a line stretched across Main Street near where the Oval is now. At “exactly 5:40”, according to the *Keene Evening Sentinel*, an open touring car passed under the flag, a large man in the back seat raised his hat, and everyone knew that President William Howard Taft had arrived.

In the subsequent news accounts much was made of the speed of the President’s journey over the unpaved roads from his summer White House in Beverly, Mass. The following is from a contemporary clipping from an unidentified newspaper:

“DUBLIN, N.H., Aug. 27. – President Taft motored from the sea level to one of the highest towns in New Hampshire today, over hubbly roads but through an invigorating atmosphere that had a touch of autumn in it, and through which the motor car carried him at a speed which covered the 85 miles from Beverly to Dublin in 3 hours and 28 minutes.”

“Hubbly” is an apt word for dirt roads. Perhaps we should revive it. The time and distance work out to an average speed of 24 m.p.h., but some of the travel was much faster:

“The greater part of the speeding was done among the foothills of New Hampshire over which the President coursed at nearly the car’s top gait and during which time the speedometer often registered between 30 and 35 miles an hour. This gait was sufficient to shake off all pursuers, including the secret service men, who limped into Dublin an hour later.”

The Secret Service did better on the return trip the following day. Under the headline, “WHIRLS BACK FROM DUBLIN”, the *Manchester Union* reported that “the President was whirled along in his high-powered automobile at a speed of from 30 to 35 miles an hour.”

“His car was followed the entire distance by two others and the dust the three left in their wake resembled the passing of a whirlwind.

“Today, however, the secret service men had no difficulty in keeping close to the President’s machine. Tire trouble put them out of commission for half an hour yesterday on the way to Dublin and although they speeded up to 50 miles an hour in an effort to overtake the President, they were unable to do so.”

The *Union*’s article concluded: “The Dublin trip was the longest and most picturesque the President had yet taken in an automobile.”



President Taft

From an engraving in his inaugural souvenir booklet, 1909

### THE PRESIDENT AT KNOLLWOOD

Upon arriving at Dublin village in his motorcade of one, the President did not stop, but continued to the Upper Jaffrey Road and thence to Knollwood, the summer home of Secretary of the Treasury Franklin MacVeagh. In a story run two days earlier, the *Keene Evening Sentinel* had speculated on the reason for the visit.

“It is reported that rumors have become noised about that President Taft would not be displeased to have Secretary MacVeagh resign from the cabinet, and it is thought that this visit will be to show openly that the story is unfounded and that the chief executive is pleased with

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Secretary MacVeagh's work."

Whether the visit was prompted by political or purely social motives, President Taft did not come alone. He was accompanied by his wife, his daughter, Helen, Mrs. Taft's sister, Mrs Moore, and the President's ever-present aide-de-camp, Capt. Archie Butt. Fortunately, Knollwood is a large and commodious house.

So large, indeed, that Secretary and Mrs. MacVeagh were able to send out invitations to the whole of Dublin, summer and winter people alike, to meet the President. Here is part of the account in the *Peterborough Transcript*:

"About 400 invitations were extended to the townspeople to attend a reception at Knollwood between the hours of 9 and 11 Saturday evening, which [were] generally accepted. Fully 500 were present, including the boys and girls of the town, and men and women in all walks of life. No distinction was made as to position or dress; all were received and given a cordial shake of the hand by the President.... The receiving line also comprised Mrs. Taft, Secretary and Mrs. MacVeagh, and Governor and Mrs. Quinby, the latter two being in town as guests of Col. and Mrs. George B. Leighton."

Among the boys present was Ernest Henderson, Jr., a later owner of Knollwood, whose reaction was less than ecstatic.

"My earliest recollection of the MacVeagh home is of a reception tendered President Taft in 1910. All Dublin

was invited – even I, a thirteen-year-old. After standing for nearly two hours in a slowly moving line, I considered it a matter of great import when the President's huge hand – Taft weighed some three hundred pounds – was finally extended to me. Unfortunately he was looking in the other direction; the occasion was perhaps less momentous in his life, for a passing acquaintance engaged his attention until I

was swallowed up in the receding line. He did not even look down to see whose hand he had shaken. At a tender age I thus discovered that to a United States President the experience of meeting a thirteen-year-old was not necessarily of world-shattering importance. Unfortunately

*To meet The President and Mrs. Taft,  
The Secretary of the Treasury and Mrs. MacVeagh  
request the pleasure of  
Mr. and Mrs. N. E. Fiske's company  
on Saturday evening, August, twenty-seventh,  
nineteen hundred and ten,  
from nine to eleven o'clock.  
Knollwood, Dublin.*

*Invitation to Meet the President* (Gift of Alice Fiske Ellis)

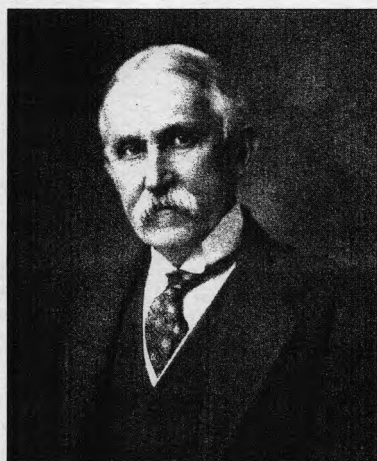
I was too young to cast a vote of protest for any political opponent." [Ernest Henderson, *The World of "Mr. Sheraton"*, New York, 1960.]

## THE PRESIDENT GOES TO CHURCH

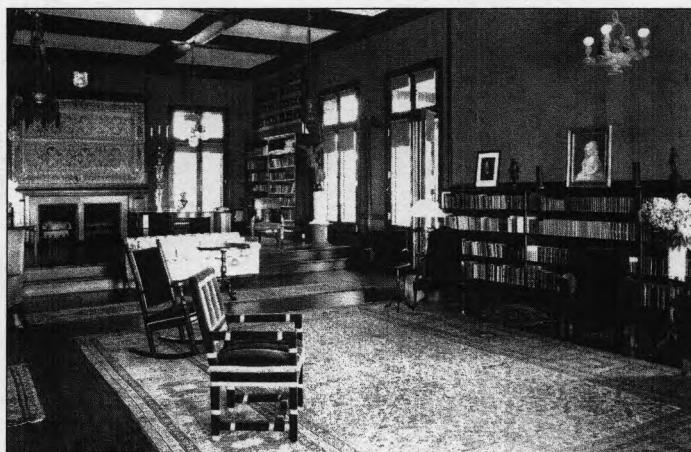
From the *Keene Evening Sentinel*:

"On Sunday morning, the President attended the Unitarian Church [now the Dublin Community Church]. An audience had assembled quite filling the church, excepting the pews reserved for the presidential party. ... The service regularly begins at eleven. The President arrived promptly at 10.55. As he was escorted up the aisle, the audience rose, while all joined with the choir in singing the first stanza of America. The President was seated in the second pew from the pulpit, on the right of the broad aisle, as one enters the church."

The minister, the Rev. Josiah Seward, preached from Genesis II, 3, "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." He did not refer directly to the President (not a notorious sabbath-breaker) in



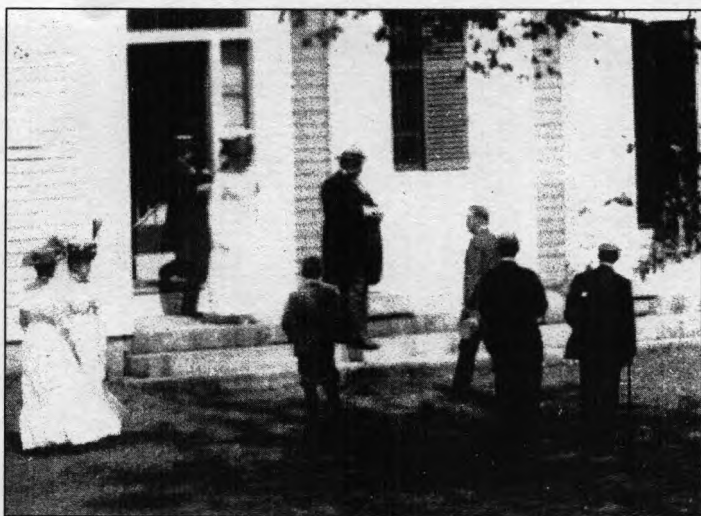
*Franklin MacVeagh in 1909*  
Illustration from Amelia Gere Mason,  
*Memories of a Friend*, Chicago, 1918.  
(Gift of William L. Bauhan.)



*The Great Room at Knollwood*

President Taft received the citizens of Dublin on the dais at the far end.  
(Gift of Richard & Ruth Hammond.)





*President Taft Leaving Church*  
Detail from a photograph by Henry D. Allison.  
(Gift of Hildreth M. Allison.)

his sermon, but included him in the customary prayer for the President of the United States and all in authority.

After lunch at Knollwood, the President and his party were driven round the Lake, stopping at the Leightons' house – later the Brewsters' and now the senior Loring Catlins' – to call on Governor Quinby, who was staying there. Then they were whirled back to Beverly.

## A DIPLOMATIC FOOTNOTE

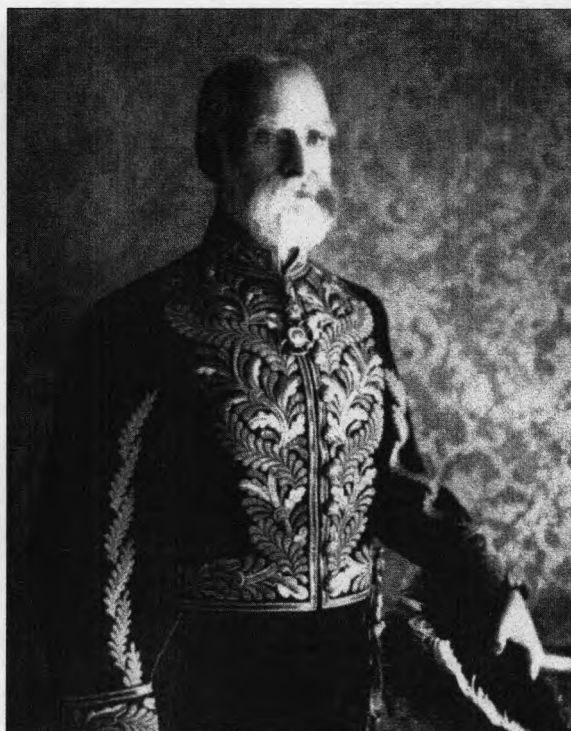
Late on the Saturday afternoon, soon after the President's arrival, Knollwood was the scene of a curious diplomatic ceremony. 1910 was one of the summers that the British summer embassy occupied the house on Snow Hill that now belongs to the Pools. The Ambassador was James Bryce, already well-known as the author of *The American Commonwealth*, and later raised to the peerage as a viscount. King Edward VII had died in early May, a fact certainly known to President Taft and anybody else who read the papers, but apparently diplomatic protocol required the Ambassador to deliver an official notification. As the *Keene Evening Sentinel* reported:

"In accordance with a custom of the olden times, the British

Ambassador, Hon. James Bryce, in full court dress, called upon President Taft, and presented him a letter from King George V, written in a medieval style, informing him officially of the death of King Edward VII and the accession of George V. The function was not public and was witnessed by a few only."

We may be reasonably confident that King George never knew that his letter had been delivered in Dublin, any more than his ancestor, George III, was aware that the Town's charter was granted in his name. Still there is interest, or at least entertainment, in these unexpected connections with the wider world.

After the ceremony, the President and the Ambassador each planted a commemorative tree. Unfortunately, neither tree survives.



*Ambassador James Bryce "in Full Court Dress"*  
Illustration from *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes*, issued by the State Board of Agriculture, Concord, 1908. (Courtesy of the New Hampshire Historical Society.)

## SUMMER EXHIBITIONS AT THE MUSEUM

Curator Barbara Schnabel has arranged three special summer exhibitions at the Schoolhouse Museum.

The Museum will be open  
from 1 to 3 p.m.  
on each of the following days:

- Sunday, July 15 – Early Dublin postcards from the Society's collection.  
*If you have old postcards of Dublin, bring them along!*
- Dublin Day – Saturday, July 21 – Hats, including Mark Twain's.
- Sunday, August 19 – Regalia and other memorabilia of the Dublin Grange.

# NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Through the marvels of modern technology, we are able to reproduce and preserve records and photographs as digital images on paper or CD or both. This makes it possible for people who quite understandably don't want to part permanently with their family's records to allow us to make copies for the archives.

In such cases we try to remind ourselves that, as archivists, it is information we are collecting, rather than relics or artifacts. Of course we always prefer originals, and a scanned image does not convey the atmosphere of an old sepia photograph. Still, it preserves a record of what Uncle Algernon looked like.

So we are grateful to:

- **Richard and Ruth Hammond**, who let us copy six snapshots showing their house in the process of reconstruction in the 1940's. In a variation of the pattern, they also asked us to copy seven old photographs of "Knollwood" for them, allowing us to keep the originals for the archives;
- **Millicent Hawkins**, who allowed us to copy pictures and documents relating to her grandfather, Francis E. Frothingham;

■ **Robert James**, who let us copy snapshots of his grandmother, Frederika James, and his father, Alexander R. James, Jr.;

■ **Dan Parish**, who let us copy photographs of his great-grandparents, George and Mittie Brush, his grandparents, Gerome and Louise Brush, and his parents, Edward and Joan Parish. He also let us copy the script of a play, *The Bluebird*, produced by Elizabeth Pool in 1951, together with several cast photographs.

In cataloguing the *Bluebird* pictures, we asked **Elizabeth Pool** for help in identifying members of the cast. As a happy consequence, she has given us a fine gouache painting by the late Gouri Ivanov-Rinov of the performance of the play. This very generous gift neatly fits our criterion for collecting works of art: that both artist and subject be Dublin-related.

We have also been given a number of interesting books, documents and photographs by **Gus and Julie Crocker**, who are clearing out their house on Lake Road in preparation for their move to Peterborough.

We are grateful to all these generous people, as well as to **William Bauhan, Nancy Campbell, Peter Shonk and Paul Tuller**, for their welcome additions to our collections.

## SUMMER MEETING AND DINNER

The Society's summer meeting (which is also the Annual Meeting) will be held at the Dublin Consolidated School on Wednesday, August 15, at 8:00 p.m.

### SLIDE TALK ON THE ART OF FRANK W. BENSON

The speaker will be Faith Andrews Bedford, who will give a talk, illustrated with slides, on the art of Frank W. Benson. Frank Benson (1862-1951) is recognized as a leader of the school known as American Impressionists. Like all aspiring artists of his day, he studied in Paris, where in 1883 and 1884 he shared rooms with Joseph Lindon Smith. As a result of the friendship thus begun, Benson came to visit Smith in Dublin in the summer of 1889. Liking what he saw, he rented houses here for the succeeding four summers, during which he made several paintings of Mt. Monadnock and other Dublin scenes. Faith Andrews Bedford has written extensively on Frank Benson, who was her great-grandfather, including *The Sporting Art of Frank Benson*, published last year by Society member David Godine. Her talk will stress Benson's Dublin period, and his friendships with Joseph Lindon Smith, Edmund Tarbell and Abbott Thayer.

### DINNER TO BENEFIT THE SCHOOLHOUSE FUND

Before the Annual Meeting we will try to repeat the very successful dinner of two years ago. As last time, the dinner will be catered by Fiddleheads Café, and held on the lawn of our Schoolhouse Museum. Tickets to the dinner will be \$25 per person, and proceeds will be used to continue the preservation work on the Schoolhouse. Money raised at the 1999 dinner paid for a new breaker box and electric wiring in the schoolhouse, thereby eliminating a serious fire hazard.

Invitations to the dinner will be mailed later in July. Space being limited, members would be well advised to save the date and make their reservations early.



*Frank Benson and Joseph Lindon Smith*

Sketch by Joseph Lindon Smith of Frank Benson and himself in Paris, 1883. On the back Smith wrote, "This portrays Frank and myself as we look when we are on our way to the atelier in the morning." Benson, who was very tall, and Smith, who wasn't, were sometimes known as "the long and the short of it". (Gift of Jessie Taylor Hale.)

## C R E D I T S

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

Design & layout by Heidi Thomas of Little House Graphics.