



# Dublin Historical Society

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## HILDRETH ALLISON'S EARLY MEMORIES



*Hildreth Allison delivering the  
Bicentennial Address, 1952.*

Many of us remember Hildreth Allison, who died in 1990 at the age of 93. He was for many years the leading authority on Dublin history, much of which he carried in his own memory – a memory that went back to the turn of the last century.

He was born in Dublin in 1896, the eldest child of Henry Darracott and Florence Mason Allison, and grew up living across the street from the Town Hall over what was then his family's general store. His early education was at the one-room school-house which now houses the Society's museum. After Keene High School and a year at Exeter, he entered Dartmouth, graduating, after war service, in the class of 1919.

Writing, especially historical writing, was his avocation, and many of his articles were published in *Appalachia*, *Historical New Hampshire*, *New Hampshire Profiles* and other periodicals. As shown in the accompanying photograph, he wrote and delivered the principal address at the Town's Bicentennial in 1952. He was an early (1922) member of the Historical Society and a

generous donor to the Society's archives of his published and private papers, including sixty-three years of his diaries.

Round about 1960 he wrote a book of reminiscences entitled *So Well Remembered*. Perhaps he hoped to publish these recollections in emulation of his father, whose *Dublin Days Old and New* had been published in 1952. Or perhaps he wrote them for his own pleasure. In any case, they remain a manuscript in a green spiral notebook which he gave to the Historical Society in 1988. (The Dublin Public Library has a photocopy.) The following are lightly edited excerpts from the book's opening chapters.

### EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS

The spot where my consciousness first evolved was a part of the farm owned by my great-grandfather, Captain Dexter Mason. Dexter Mason, who owed his title to having been a captain of the Dublin Grenadiers of the old New Hampshire militia, had at first owned a farm on the Old Harrisville Road, but moved into the village about 1859 and took over the operation of the old Union Store. An addition to the store was built, forming a new

front on the street, while the old Union building became the present back store. G.W. Gleason in the meantime constructed a store of his own on the opposite side of the street (1868).

The Mason store was operated under the firm name of Dexter Mason and Son in 1869, and in 1871 my grandfather took it over

under his own name: Milton D. Mason. Thus for the span of time between 1869 and 1927, when my father sold the store to Clarence D. Scribner, the business was for fifty-eight years in the ownership of the same family.

The Ebenezer Greenwood house was situated to the west and just above the Union store. After the death of Dexter Mason it was rented out to a number of tenants. Miss Dorothy Dodge of Nashua and afterwards Mrs. Nettie Collins ran the “Blue Dragon” Tea Room there for a number of seasons. Some years ago it was purchased by Robb Sagendorph and became the business office of *Yankee Magazine*.

Until my father and mother owned a place of their own, they lived over the store with Grandpa and Darda Mason.<sup>1</sup> When it was apparent that there would be an increase in the family, Grandpa



*Main Street, Dublin, c. 1900, when Hildreth Allison was young. At right is his grandfather's store, next is the Greenwood cottage (now Yankee) and on the hill in the background is the Horace Hamilton house, where young Hildreth visited his “Aunt Susie”.*

Mason built an addition onto the north part of the house over the back store which consisted of two bed chambers and a bathroom. It is said that he owned the first bathroom in town, outside of those of the “city folks.”

I occupied the room at the extreme north end of the addition and it was decorated with wallpaper depicting characters from Mother Goose and nursery rhymes.

I remember going on walks with my father – they must have taken place on Sundays when he was not in the store – into the woods above Hiram Carey's, long before the W.B. Cabot house was built.<sup>2</sup> We sang such songs as “The Bowery”, “Bicycle Built for Two”, “Little Annie Rooney” and other lilting Broadway melodies. Once he carved my initials on a beech tree there, and again did the same on another beech at the left hand corner of the Jaffrey Road

“Aunt Susie” Hamilton<sup>3</sup> lived in a large house on Leffingwell Hill, opposite the hotel, which had been built for his parents by Horace Hamilton, who had been quite successful as a commission merchant in New York after the Civil War. He said that his parents had lived in one of the poorest houses in town – now they would have the best! I can remember going up there with my mother and Darda Mason one summer afternoon and having sponge cake and lemonade on the broad, covered piazza. I could not have been above two years old at the time, for Aunt Susan died on January 3, 1899.



*Hildreth with “Darda” Mason, 1898.  
(Dublin Public Library – Henry D. Allison  
Glass Negative Collection.)*

<sup>1</sup> “Grandpa” and “Darda” were Milton Dexter Mason (1850-1920) and his wife, Ella Gowing Mason (1851-1930).

<sup>2</sup> Hiram Carey (1860-1960) lived in what is now The Corner House at the Dublin School. William B. Cabot, of Boston, built what is now Main House in 1905.

<sup>3</sup> “Aunt Susie” Hamilton was Susan Perry (1813-1899), the wife of Charles Augustus Hamilton (1815-1888) and mother of Horace Hamilton (1847-1917). Her sister, Lydia Perry Gowing (1829-1917), was Hildreth Allison's maternal great-grandmother.





*Left to Right: Almerin Gowing, Helen Morse, Hildreth Allison, c. 1906. (Gleason Family photographs.)*

I remember going down to Dr. Wood's<sup>4</sup> for vaccination for small pox at an early age, the incision he made on my left arm, and the pink vaccine which he injected. It was not long before a scab formed, and I was intensely proud of it. It fell off one day in the tub while I was taking a bath and I was sorry to lose it.

The Dublin Public Library was located in the Town Hall as I first remember it, with Minnie E. Leffingwell the librarian, which post she had occupied since its organization in 1884. I used to go over there with my mother and we would take out children's books. I remember the stories about Chicker-Chawker, especially the one about the monkeys whose "poor little heads were turning to shreds" until Chicker-Chawker provided them with palm leaves as a protection. I was present at the laying of the cornerstone of the present town library on July 10, 1900, and heard Dr. Robert Collyer give the dedicatory address. Emily E. Derby composed and read an eighteen stanza poem, which is recorded in full in the *Dublin Town History*. I still remember the sweet fragrance of the pond lilies which were deposited in the cornerstone.

On the afternoon of April 18, 1901, Elliott was born. I was at Darda Gowing's, who was reading to Almerin (Gowing) and myself.<sup>5</sup> We had each just received a felt cavalry helmet with a yellow horsetail plume which had become an obsolete item of the uniform of the Peterborough Cavalry. I was very proud of this possession. My father called me on the phone to tell me that I now had a brother. "How do you like it?" he inquired. My answer was, "What, my cavalry hat?"

When I was very young there were several pairs of oxen in Dublin. Frank C. Moore, I think, owned the last yoke of these.<sup>6</sup> Roads were broken in the winter time by snow rollers, and there were several of these in town which crushed the snow flat for sleighs. Previous to the snow rollers, ploughs had been attached to sleds to break the snow, fashioning paths for the sleighs to run through.

I have a small recollection of the Boer War and the "Oom Paul" (Kruger) hats popular with the ladies at that period; the America's Cup race, Reliance vs. Shamrock in 1903; the death of Pope Leo XIII in 1903; great disasters such as the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902, the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago, December 30, 1903, and the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. I very well remember the Russo-Japanese War.

I can remember when my grandfather first installed electric lights, which was about 1900 and quite a blessing; also driving along the Jaffrey Road with my parents to watch the lights there which had been newly installed. And when the town clock was installed on the Unitarian Church about 1900, I was there. In later years I wound it.



*More than one yoke of oxen hauling a snow roller, c.1900. The man on the right, identified only as "C. Moore", is probably Frank Moore's son, Charles Edson Moore. (Historical Society of Cheshire County, Mary Emerson Robbe Glass Negative Collection.)*

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Curtis Augustine Wood (1846-1902) lived and practiced in what used to be the Summers' house on Route 101.

<sup>5</sup> "Darda" Gowing was Hildreth's great-grandmother, Lydia Perry Gowing (1829-1917), who was grandmother to Almerin Gowing (1896-1968), Hildreth's contemporary and playmate. Almerin, later known as Gene, became a well-known square dance caller. He was the subject of the Society's newsletter for May, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Clifton Moore (1851-1922) lived at what is now Stonewall Farm, straddling the Jaffrey line in the southeast part of town.

# SOCIETY NEWS

## THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's annual meeting on August 15 was preceded by another very successful dinner on the lawn of the old schoolhouse, attended by 65 members and friends.



*Some of the diners at the old schoolhouse before the annual meeting. (Nancy Campbell photo.)*

The meeting itself took place in the new schoolhouse gymnasium. During the business part, President Paul Tuller thanked retiring trustees Ruth Hammond and Sharron Monaghan. Elected as new trustees for three-year terms were Anne Anable, Linda Oja and Nicholas Thacher.

Paul Tuller and Bob Weis were re-elected President and Vice-President, and Jane Keough was elected to take Ruth Hammond's place as Treasurer. At a later meeting the Trustees elected Marsha Whitney as Secretary and re-elected Barbara Schnabel and John Harris as Curator and Archivist, respectively.

The evening's business completed, Faith Andrews Bedford, gave a talk, illustrated with slides, on the work of the American impressionist painter, Frank W. Benson. In reviewing Benson's career, she focused on the five summers (1889-1893) that he spent painting in Dublin and his friendship with Joseph Lindon Smith. Mrs. Bedford has written two books on Benson, who was her great-grandfather.

The following morning Mrs. Bedford and her husband, Robert, visited the archives, where they examined Joseph Lindon Smith's diary for 1886, when he and Benson shared a flat in Paris, as well as a book of Smith's sketches from that period. We are fortunate in having these materials, which have been useful to several scholars, through the generosity of Smith's granddaughter, Jessie 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.

# NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Since the last newsletter we have received a number of important accessions, for which we are duly grateful. Through the good offices of the author, **Dick Meryman**, the **Dublin Lake Club** has given us a copy of his superb *Centennial History* of the Club. It was the Archivists' pleasure to have been able to contribute nuggets of information, as well as a number of the photographs used in the book.

The publication of Dick Meryman's history of the Dublin Lake Club prompted **Carol Parsons Byron** to send us copies of family photographs that she had dug out for Dick, including some that were published in the book and – more valuable for our purposes – a number that weren't. We hope that other Lake Club members will be similarly inspired.

**George Leffingwell**, a descendant of the hotel-owning family, has given us copies of a number of his family photographs, including pictures of the Leffingwell Hotel and the Leffingwell Inn, known to most of us as French's Tavern, which became the replacement for the larger hotel after its destruction by fire in 1908.

From **Ann McClellan** has come a copy of Doris Russell Jackson's *Reminiscences*, which includes descriptions of her Dublin childhood.

**Dick Meryman** himself has given us – or allowed us to copy – many of the clippings and photographs exhibited as background material with his father's pictures at the Thorne-Sagendorph Gallery earlier in the summer. In addition, he has given us some Abbott Thayer magic lantern slides along with a copy, exhumed from the Archives of American Art, of Mary Amory Greene's 1887 letter to Thayer, offering to build him a house in Dublin.

Other generous donors include **Karen Bunch**, **Gus** and **Julie Crocker**, **Mary G. Doyle**, **Allan** and **Mary Alice Fox**, **Millicent Hawkins**, **William Morgan** and **Connie Oliver**. Our grateful thanks to them all!

## IN MEMORIAM

We record with sorrow the passing of two former trustees and officers of the Society:

**Ruth Hammond** was a trustee and Treasurer of the Society from 1998 to August of this year. Before taking on the job of Treasurer, she acted for several years as informal auditor. Always dependable and meticulous, she made the Society's financial affairs run smoothly and intelligibly. Along with the rest of the Town, we shall miss her sorely.

**Nancy Handy** was a trustee and Secretary from 1995 to 1999. Her wit and way with words made her minutes not only accurate but entertaining.

To Dick Hammond and Albert Handy the Society extends its deepest sympathy.