

Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

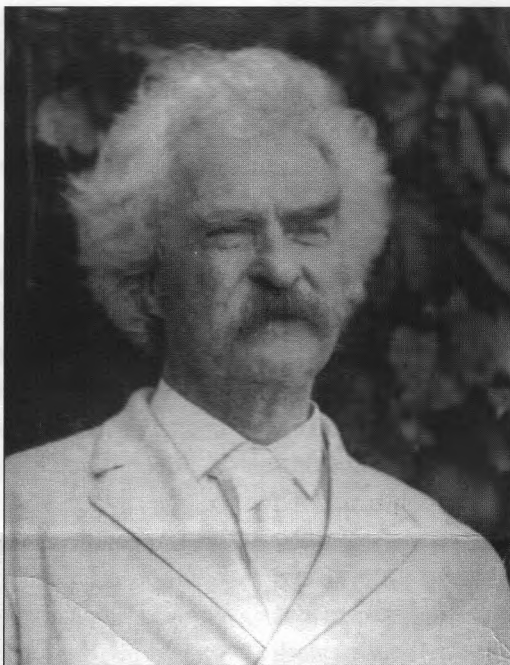
Newsletter No. 55 – June 2002

TWO SUMMERS WITH TWAIN

In March of 1905, Dublin's storekeeper and real estate agent, Henry D. Allison, received a telephone call from Emma Beach Thayer, wife of the noted artist Abbott Thayer. She suggested to Allison that he come to their house, as the message she had for him was so confidential that it could not be discussed over the telephone. When Allison arrived, Mrs. Thayer told him that an important visitor was coming to Dublin for the summer. After reviewing the necessary real estate requirements, she revealed that the eminent author Samuel L. Clemens, better known by his pen name of Mark Twain, was to be that visitor.

Clemens was unable to get to Dublin himself so he sent his devoted housekeeper of thirty years, Katy Leary, ahead to scout houses for him. The house that Allison showed her was "Lone Tree Hill", built about 1900 by Henry Copley Greene of Boston and now the summer home of Coleman and Susan Townsend. Mr. Allison and Miss Leary needed snowshoes to traverse the 30 inches of snow that were still on the ground in late March. She apparently found the house to her liking and returned to New York without looking at any others. A letter of acceptance from Mr. Clemens soon followed.

On May 1st, Katy Leary and Clemens' younger daughter, Jean, arrived in Dublin. Mr. Clemens did not leave New York until May 18th because his older daughter Clara had to be operated on for appendicitis.



Mark Twain photographed by Elise Pumpelly Cabot (1905 or 1906).

Poor health prevented her from ever coming to Dublin.

"Mark Twain" was more than a pen name gleaned from Clemens' days working on Mississippi riverboats. Twain was an alter ego that gave expression to the duality of Clemens' personality. If Sam Clemens was the family-oriented Southern gentleman; then Mark Twain was the billiard-playing, razor-tongued vagabond. The people of Dublin would encounter both Clemens and Twain during his stay.

The Summer of 1905. The house in which Clemens spent the summer of 1905 was in a section south of the Lake known as the "Latin Quarter". The studios of Abbott Thayer and Joseph Lindon Smith were located in this area. Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, author, friend of Emily Dickinson and the first editor of

The ANNUAL MEETING will be held on Thursday, August 1, 2002, at 7:15 p.m. in the Consolidated School. **James L. Garvin**, Architectural Historian for the State of New Hampshire, will speak on the history of one-room schoolhouses in New Hampshire. Our 1841 Schoolhouse museum will be open from 6:00 p.m. for those interested in seeing how the proposed move will work.



Postcard published by Henry D. Allison showing the Upton house described as "Mark Twain's Summer Residence, Dublin, N.H." (1906).

her poetry, was also a neighbor. Clemens and his daughter Jean (who was in her mid-twenties, tall, pale and classically beautiful) immersed themselves in the Dublin summer colony. He was often seen at "Loon Point" (the home of Joseph Lindon Smith and his wife, Corinna) wearing his trademark white flannel suit. A three-inch black armband encircling the left sleeve was in memory of his beloved wife, Olivia, who had passed away only a year earlier. Smith described him as having a great shock of white hair back from his forehead and brilliant dark eyes.

Corinna Smith described Clemens' social side in a letter to the late Luetie Close [Eaton]: "He was also often with the Brushes in their home and would persuade Uncle Joe [Smith] to arrange charades at the Pumpellys in which he loved to perform. His favorite part was being a baby with a bottle which he insisted on repeating. He was less often at Abbott Thayer's. Formal dinners he either refused or shut up like a clam when the hostess tried to make a lion of him and draw him out to talk. But as I say, he came frequently to family supper (self-invited) on Loon Point, or at the Brushes."

When Clemens arrived in Dublin in late May of 1905, he was in the twilight of his life and the twilight of his literary career as well. Other than a travelogue, he had not published a major work since 1894. However, he apparently found Dublin's mountain air conducive to hard work. From late May through June, he wrote for 35 successive days - a feat that he had never before attempted. He was working on a story called "Three Hundred Years Among the Microbes" which he eventually lost interest in, but not before it reached book length. He also completed two stories: "A Horse's Tale" and "Eve's Diary".

Mark Twain's view of Dublin. Clemens wrote as a press release, "The summer homes . . . are sprinkled, a mile apart, among the forest-clad hills, with access to each other by firm and smooth country roads which are so embowered in dense foliage that it is

always twilight in there, and comfortable. The forests are spider-webbed with these good roads, they go everywhere; but for the help of the guide boards, the stranger would not arrive anywhere.

"The village - Dublin - is bunched together in its own place, but a good telephone service makes its markets handy to all outliars. I have spelt it that way to be witty. The village executes orders on the Boston plan - promptness and courtesy."

That summer as "Mark Twain" he was asked to speak at the Dublin Lake Club to benefit charity. In what has become an infamous incident, Twain walked out half-way through his lecture because Margaret Higginson (daughter of the Colonel) was

knitting a pair of socks. He said, "I have never played second fiddle to a sock..." He suggested that all who were present should knit stockings and sell them to raise money for charity. With a terse "good afternoon", he left the room.

The Summer of 1906. Clemens returned to Dublin for another season on May 15th of 1906 with his daughter, Jean, and his secretary, Isabel Lyon, renting George and Alice Upton's house, then known as "Mountain View Farm" and now owned by David and Sara Godine. He chose it as more secluded and further from the social center than "Lone Tree Hill". He felt that parties and social events had consumed too much of his time the previous summer. The Upton house was located about 2 miles from the village in Dublin's "law and science quarter" to differentiate it from the "art, literary and scholastic groups" he had dwelt with in 1905. Never at a loss for a quip Clemens wrote, "The science and law quarter needed improving this good while."

Albert Bigelow Paine appeared in town from time to time that summer as he was working on a biography of Clemens. This took the form of dictation given by Clemens from his bed, where most of his business and literary endeavors were conducted. Clemens enjoyed riding around the countryside with his daughter and two secretaries. He frequently hired horses and a carriage from Hiram Carey, owner of a local livery stable. Carey remembered Clemens telling some Mark Twain stories from his past to amuse the group around the stable.

"Sackcloth & Ashes". Clemens had a great affection for cats and he rented three kittens that summer from his neighbors, the Pellerins. He named them Sackcloth and Ashes. Since two of the kittens looked exactly alike, he reasoned that one name was enough for them. He took great pleasure in watching them scamper about his feet while he sat out on the porch enjoying the spectacular view of Mt. Monadnock that the house offered. Not wanting to take the kittens back home to New York, nor to abandon them, he returned

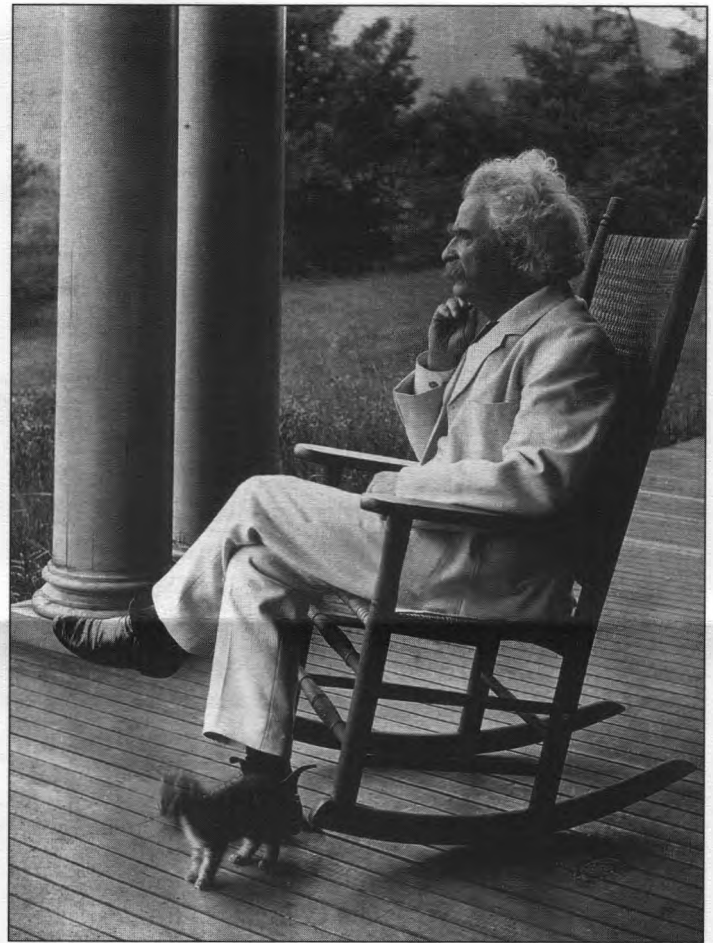
his feline guests at the end of the season. Clemens once said, "If a man could be crossed with a cat, it would improve the man but it would deteriorate the cat."

Clemens' second summer in Dublin began with diligent literary work, but then he caught a cold and began having problems with his teeth. Neither of these distractions improved his productivity or his increasingly cantankerous disposition. He completed a brief short story called, "A Fable", but aside from the dictation of his autobiography, his literary accomplishments that summer were meager.

The Upton house offered a beautiful view but its isolation only served to augment the growing feeling of loneliness that was beginning to permeate his life. He attended several plays at Loon Point (one starring a young Ethel Barrymore) but for the most part his social activities were severely curtailed. This was probably more a reflection on his disintegrating personal life than on Dublin society.

At the Unitarian Church. Before leaving in October, Clemens accepted an invitation to speak at the Unitarian Church after one of its monthly suppers. By all accounts, he was in top "Mark Twain" form, evoking thunderous bursts of laughter from those gathered in the church vestry. He concluded the evening with a ghost story, "The Golden Arm". The audience was spellbound, inching closer and closer to the edges of their folding chairs as Mark Twain drew them into the story. Just as the ghost of the murderer's wife was about to throw back his bedclothes, Twain let out a blood curdling scream which was followed by a collective scream from the audience and the noisy collapse of folding chairs as several people fell on the floor. Mark Twain walked away chuckling.

Clemens passed away four years later at the age of seventy-five. Most critics considered "Mark Twain" a literary genius. The use of vernacular language in his masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn*, elevated American literature to a new level. More importantly, he put



Mark Twain (and friend) on the porch of the Upton House, 1906.
Photograph by Albert Bigelow Paine.

a human face on the most divisive issue in U.S. history: slavery. He brought literature to the masses because his writing entertained and enlightened. Twain captured not only the heart of America, but its soul as well. But Clemens, despite all his professional success, walked a precarious line between triumph and tragedy his whole life. Financial problems, the deaths of his wife and two of his daughters and estrangement from the third embittered his final years. It was as if providence had rewarded "Mark Twain" by picking Clemens' pocket. He once wrote, "Ah, well, I am a great and sublime fool. But then I am God's fool & all His works must be contemplated with respect."

Mr. Clemens left behind two items in Dublin that are part of the Historical Society's permanent collection: a sun hat made of reeds and the name "Mark Twain" carved into the wooden bench which did duty as a visitors' book at Loon Point. In reality, he left behind much more than that. People are interested in the artists that have spent time in Dublin because they illuminate its beauty and power as a muse. Mark Twain was among the brightest of those lights. He once said that Dublin was the "one place he had longed for but.... had never hoped to find." For two summers, in the early 1900s - he did.

— Walt Schnabel

INDICES TO THE LAKE CLUB HISTORY

The Society's archivists have prepared an index to Richard Meryman's Centennial History of the Dublin Lake Club, primarily for the use of future researchers. This index — or rather indices: an index to persons containing over 2300 entries, and a separate index to subjects — are currently on our computer, which is the medium in which, for our purposes, they are most conveniently consulted.

If an owner of the book were interested, and had the right equipment, it would be a relatively simple matter to copy the indices onto a CD. Creating hard copies would be something more of an operation, but could be done, especially if a number of people wanted one.

Any owner of the book who would be interested in purchasing an index can call the archives at 563-8545.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dublin's 250th Anniversary year is proving to be a busy time for the Historical Society, which is as it should be. We have begun fundraising for the renovation of our 1841 Schoolhouse Museum. I hope everyone has taken a moment to send in a donation or pledge, because the \$60,000 goal is going to take our best effort to attain. If we are going to begin work this year, we will have to have the funds committed by the end of August.

As part of the Town's 250th Anniversary celebrations, we will be presenting a number of different activities. On July 20 there will be two trips of our ever-popular bus tour of Dublin's historic sites, one at 11:00 a.m. and a second trip at 2:00 p.m. The tours will be free but be sure to sign up at the information booth ahead of time because the spaces fill up quickly. Bob Weis is working on a Dublin Historical Society float for the parade on July 21.

The schoolhouse museum will be open from 10-2 on Saturday, July 20, and we will be explaining the proposed moving of the

building. There will be a special exhibit of Civil War artifacts at the archives building, also from 10-2. A Dublin Civil War quilt made by the ladies of the Unitarian and Trinitarian Churches, will be the centerpiece of the exhibit. The quilt belongs to Jan Dodge, of Berkeley, California, who is kindly lending it for this exhibition. Nancy Campbell will be selling the new town history books at the archives as well.

You may have noticed that some aging maple trees were removed from the schoolhouse yard. This work was done for safety reasons, as they were becoming dangerously split and rotten. Dead branches were trimmed from the remaining trees as well. We are also working with the town to restore the pound, next to the cemetery. This early town structure, which housed stray farm animals until their owners could reclaim them, has fallen into disrepair. The stone walls will be rebuilt and years of leaf debris removed from the interior.

— Paul Tuller

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Dick Hammond has built, with his own hands, a two-seater bench from split cedar and placed it in the porch at the entrance to the Archives as a memorial to his late wife, Ruth. The words "In Memory of Ruth Hammond", and the year of her death, 2001, are carved into the bench's back.



The Ruth Hammond Memorial Bench.

We all remember with gratitude and affection Ruth's contributions as Trustee and Treasurer of the Historical Society. Not everyone knows that Dick was the designer of the Archives Building, which will stand, in a sense, as his monument. The association of the Hammond bench with the Hammond building is both moving and appropriate.

Recent Acquisitions

Peter Shonk has given us a number of items relating to his late brother, H. Bronson Shonk, Jr., who was killed during service as

a U.S. Navy pilot during World War II. These include Lt (j.g) Shonk's naval officer's sword, as well as photographs and other memorabilia.

A number of photographs of Clukay's Garage, as it was in the 1940s and 50s have been given by **Isabel Clukay**, widow of the late Harold Clukay, who for many years ran the garage and dealership in the building now occupied by the offices of High Standard. In addition, Mrs. Clukay has given to the schoolhouse museum a loom for weaving rag rugs. This loom originally belonged to Mary Rebecca Eaton Richardson (1838-1921). It descended from her to her daughter-in-law, Jennie Richardson (1888-1970), from whom Mrs. Clukay bought it in the 1950s.

Material on the career of the late Dr. Kenneth Warren has come from his son, **Thomas T. Warren**. Dr. Warren was a distinguished Boston surgeon who had a summer house on Charcoal Road.

Through the good offices of Selectman Bill Raymond, **Michael Saunders**, manager of Timoleon's Restaurant in Keene, has given us a photograph of one of the bedrooms at "Knollwood", said to be the one in which President Taft stayed during his visit in 1910.

Other thoughtful and generous donors include **William N. Banks, Rusty Bastedo, The Monadnock Ledger, Elizabeth Pool, and Jo Radner.**

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.