

# Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 58 – May 2003

## A HISTORY OF THE DUBLIN WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CLUB



*The Women's Club beach and bath house as they are today.  
(Dublin Day, 2000)*

philanthropic and educational". Membership was open to "all women of Dublin and vicinity who are in sympathy with its purpose". This is still true today, although men can and do join the club.

### Meetings

For many years, in the early days, meetings were held twice monthly on Thursday afternoons from September to May in members' homes or in the Church vestry. Hats and gloves were worn. Tea, tea sandwiches, cake or a jelly roll were served. Members tried to

**T**he Dublin Women's Club was born on November 4, 1920, when Mrs. Isabelle Brockway, wife of the Rev. Thomas C. Brockway (minister of the Community Church from 1920-1924) invited the women of the town to her home "to see if they would like to form a society to meet once a month". Forty-five ladies showed up and every one of them was in favor of the idea. Mrs. Brockway was elected President (a post she would continue in until 1925). Other officers were: Anna Childs (the doctor's wife) and Alice Gowing, Vice Presidents; Grace Scribner, Secretary; and Gertrude Thomas, Treasurer.

The next meeting in December set annual dues at 50 cents and voted to give the organization the name "Women's Community Club". The purpose of the Club was, and continues to be, "to promote all forces working for community betterment along lines

outdo one another with the refreshments. Social events included military whist parties in the vestry and gentlemen's night once a year. During the war years members sent boxes of food and small gifts to our servicemen, and wrote letters and remembered birthdays with cards to these brave men. Vitamin pills were given to

### SAVE THE DATE

The Annual Meeting will be on  
Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Dublin Inn  
(formerly French's Tavern).  
Further details will be mailed later.



*The beach property bought from Mrs. Field, with an old bath house at the back. In the foreground are Nonie Scribner and her niece, Becky McQuillen. (1957)*

schoolchildren. At meetings, a penny collection was always taken to be used as a flower fund when a member was ill, for the mother of a new baby, or when there was a death in the family.

In an oral interview with Linda Van Wyk in 1989, long-time member Dorothy Worcester recalled a meeting at her house when Public Service Company brought a refrigerator to demonstrate at the meeting. "We borrowed some of the church's folding chairs. But my house isn't that big. People were sitting all the way up the stairway. I think there were probably fifty people. It was one of the largest, best attended meetings, possibly because of the subject.

"This was a time when very few people had refrigerators. We were totally dependent on the ice man or the food would ruin. It was a pain. Well the Public Service Company was just starting to sell refrigerators – you know that one with the funny motor on top? Well, they moved a refrigerator through my front door. One of their people was going to talk about the new refrigerator – oh, the wonderful things you could do with the new refrigerator. And they asked me if they could put it right there in my living room.

"When the meeting was over, we had the tea. And of course the women were opening the refrigerator and looking inside. This Mrs. – I'll call her Jones – came over to me. And she said what a nice meeting it was and all. And then she said, 'Aren't you a lucky woman to have one of the first refrigerators in town? But why do you keep it in your living room?' "

## Beach Property

Since 1935, the Club's main service project has been to provide and maintain a beach on Dublin Lake for all townspeople. At the March 5, 1935 meeting, the Club appointed a committee, comprised of Belle Gowing, Frederika James, Martha Olsen and Jennie Richardson, to "investigate available bathing property". The committee reported back to the Club membership on May 16th that 50 feet of lake front, owned by Bertha Farnham Field (sister of Horace Putnam Farnham, the doctor whose widow donated the land and money for our present Library building) could be rented for five years for the taxes (\$5.00 at that time) and \$5.00 rent a year. The Club accepted the proposal at this meeting and on April 16, 1936 elected a Beach Committee of Belle Gowing, Jennie Richardson, Margaret Beaulieu, Marion Andrew, Frederika James and Martha Olsen.

In April 1940, largely due to the efforts of Belle Gowing, the Club voted to give the Beach Committee authority to buy the property for

\$300. If the price was more than that, then each member would have to vote on the purchase. The Women's Club minutes for September 19, 1940 record that "Mrs. Gowing and Mrs. Worcester called on Mr. Field the owner, and were able to purchase the same for the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars, the owner willing to sell at this price as Mrs. Field had always wanted the children of the town to have a bathing beach". The \$150.00 purchase price was the assessed value of the property in 1940. The taxes paid for that year were \$3.30. The deed to the property was finally executed on April 17, 1941. On that same date, the Beach Committee was authorized to spend up to \$100.00 for a bath house (which was built by volunteer labor) and a raft. 1941 was a banner year for the Club - it was now incorporated and it was honored by the New Hampshire Federation of Women's Clubs, commending this act of the Club as the outstanding civic work of any club in the State that year. Thus, the beginning of the swimming program for Dublin youth as we know it today.

The property would triple in size in 1958 when Oscar and Patricia Sewall gave the Club their adjoining lake front property, a bath house, and \$1,000.00 to renovate and center the bath house on the two pieces of property. Belle Gowing was again instrumental in acquiring this additional property.

In that same oral interview with Linda Van Wyk, Dorothy Worcester described Oscar Sewall's feelings about donating the property to the Women's Club: "He said that in all the years the Women's Club had the beach next to him – there was a fence – they had never jumped the fence. The water belongs to everyone.



But they'd never gone in front of his lot to swim or do anything harmful. And he said he was so pestered to death by people wanting to buy that piece of property. He didn't in any way need the money. And the proper thing to do was give it to the Women's Club".

In 1959 a concrete slab was poured and the bath house moved to the center of the two lots, where its still sits. A gathering place for children and adults, so accurately described in a 1958 letter from Belle Gowing to the Sewalls on behalf of the Club, "The view from the boat house is beautiful and I feel when we get it fixed up, the older people will like to sit there and watch the children or just rest. Thanks again and the children should bless you both for your thoughtfulness for many many years to come. One of the nicest things that has come to Dublin".

The Sewall gift was officially recognized with an appreciation and dedication ceremony at the beach on August 28, 1966 with a swimming program and the dedication of a stone marker with the following inscription:

"In appreciation of the generosity of  
Patricia and Oscar Sewall  
Who gave this land and building to the  
Dublin Women's Community Club 1958"

During the early 1970s, the Town Recreation Committee explored the possibilities of a Town beach at the Women's Club property. The Club was willing to lease their property to the town as a town beach for a period of fifteen years as long as seventeen conditions were met before an eighteen month period expired. The town was unable to acquire all abutting properties to the northwest, south and southeast, so the idea never came to pass.

In 1986, thanks to the efforts of Beekman Pool and Lucy McDonald, the lake front property was further increased when Beech Hill Hospital gave the Club the cove area to the northwest. This property once belonged to the Frothingham family and had been leased to the Club by Jane Frothingham Hawkins.

### **The Trinitarian Church Building**

The Club also wanted to own a building for its meetings. At the March 17, 1932 meeting the membership voted to look into the possibility of acquiring schoolhouse number 2 (the house just east of Carr's Store, now owned by Curt and Kathy Merrick) for a clubhouse. The Committee reported back at the April 7, 1932 meeting that "the building was in excellent condition but not in a central location". The Committee suggested a location near the center and they had looked at the Trinitarian Church

building (now the Post Office). Nothing appears to have happened until the April 15, 1948 meeting, when a committee of three was appointed "to look into the matter of procuring the Church building and how much the cost would be". Again nothing was done about acquiring the building. There is no mention of it in the minutes until July 7, 1950 when the Club, after much discussion of the pros and cons of the building, voted to accept the building as a gift from the remaining members of the Trinitarian Society. This gift included the Trinitarian communion pewter service (on display at the library) and the church organ.

Much work needed to be done to the property, including a new roof, furnace, plumbing, sewer, wiring, a coat of paint (\$252.00, including blinds), foundation work and a well. The Club would spend over \$5,700.00 for these items, just to get the building back in usable condition. The Garden Club of Dublin landscaped the grounds as their project for the Club and cared for the grounds for many years thereafter.

In November 1951, discussion started about adding a fully equipped kitchen and bathroom facility to the building. Work on the addition didn't begin until April 1954 and was completed by the following December, when it was reported in the December 16, 1954 minutes that "refreshments were served from the new kitchen". The spirit of volunteerism was alive and well then. At the January 6, 1955 meeting it was reported by Belle Gowing "that the men finished the kitchen for us in spite of the lack of funds". From the Treasurer's report of the "Building Fund" it appears that \$3,244.47 was spent on this project.



*Moving the present bath house, the gift of Oscar and Patricia Sewall, onto its foundation. (1959)*

# A HISTORY OF THE DUBLIN WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CLUB

*Continued from page 3*

Volunteer labor and generous contributions by dedicated members and friends resulted in a well-appointed meeting-house in an architecturally pleasing building. The building would serve as a clubhouse and meeting facility (wedding receptions, a meeting place for the Boy and Girl Scouts, The Dublin Pre-school, art exhibits, etc.) for the town until 1978. By then the Club could no longer afford the maintenance, insurance and property taxes on two buildings. Choosing to keep its beach property and program, the Club deeded the Trinitarian Church property to the Town.

## The Present Day

Today the Club has over 140 members. Due to changing lifestyles, two regular meetings a year are held, in March and April. The April dinner meeting is the annual business meeting. The Club is now governed by a nine member Board of Directors which meets as necessary to conduct any business that does not need a membership vote. The beach property is still overseen by a Beach Committee

and remains the Club's main community service for all Dublin residents.

The Club became a member of The General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1923 and remained a member until the late 1980s. Membership in the federation entailed being involved in community service projects. Over the years the Club has sponsored the Girl Scouts, organized children's health clinics, and made two maps of the town. The Club continues to support special projects, such as the Town of Dublin signs recently placed on Route 101.

The Club also provides scholarships to families who cannot afford the \$75.00 annual membership dues and helps the children of the Consolidated School and the summer playground with field trips or other things they might not be able to afford. With the interest from a bequest of Frederika James, we have, among other things, been able to send students to performances of "The Nutcracker", go to the Montshire Museum in Norwich, Vermont, buy a VCR for the school and playground program, sponsor a fly fishing class and jewelry making at the playground. All these things continue the Club's proud tradition of service to the community.

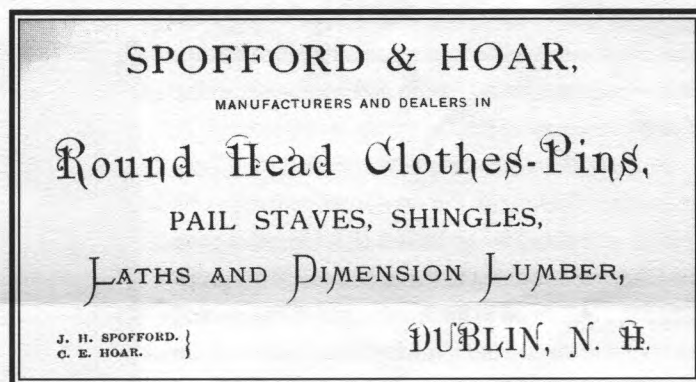
— Nancy E. Campbell

## ACCESSIONS AT THE ARCHIVES

**T**he Archives Accessions Book (actually a computer document) records 26 new items received since the February newsletter. A number of these are Parish family and other photographs given by **Suzannah Parish**. Others are collections of photographs recording current events, such as Town Meeting, the Historical Society's ice-cutting demonstration and Willie Oja's party. We are grateful for these, since an important part of our job is recording Dublin's history as it goes by. Donors of "current events" material were **Nancy Campbell, Jill Lawler, Bruce & Mary Elizabeth McClellan, Lesley McCord, and John Nelson**.

Another source of material is E-bay, the internet auction site. Nancy Campbell keeps an eagle eye on this site and in the past couple of years has picked up a number of pieces of Dublin souvenir china. Since the beginning of the year we have purchased a small dish with a color picture of "Monadnock Lake and Mountain, Dublin, N.H."

A somewhat unusual find on E-bay was a pair of business cards of "Spofford & Hoar, Manufacturers and Dealers in Round Head Clothes-Pins" and other wooden ware.



From tax records we were able to identify the site of the mill as on Stanley Brook near the entrance to Stonewall Farm, and to date the partnership to 1875.

## Summer Hours at the Schoolhouse Museum

The Schoolhouse will be open on Sunday afternoons in July and August, from 1 to 4 p.m.

## CREDITS

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

Design & layout by Heidi Thomas of Little House Graphics.