



# Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

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## THE WAY WE LIVED THEN

### *Hildreth Allison Remembers Holidays In Dublin*

Many of us remember Hildreth Allison (1896-1990), who was for many years Dublin's 'Mr History'. Somewhere around 1960 he wrote a memoir which he called "So Well Remembered". In it he records his experience growing up in Dublin, starting with his earliest recollections and going up through his time at Phillips

Exeter Academy, Dartmouth College and as a soldier in World War I. He gave the manuscript to the Historical Society in 1988. A photocopy is in the Dublin Public Library.

The following extracts from Hildreth's manuscript describe holidays as seen by a small boy in the first decade of the 20th century. They are of interest in two ways: as showing what has changed in a hundred years, and what has remained the same.



*Hildreth Allison with his grandmother, Ella Gowing Mason, c. 1897.*

Dublin Public Library, Henry D. Allison Glass Negative Collection.

## DECORATION DAY

Decoration Day was perhaps the most outstanding of all the holidays in Dublin. It was rather similar to Old Home Day, observed in other towns though not in Dublin, for former residents would come in from distant localities to place flowers on family cemetery lots, attend the exercises in the Town Hall, visit with friends and listen to the band concert....

The Town Hall's interior was always well decorated with a large American flag spread at the back of the stage, and the platform was banked with spruce boughs and numerous bouquets of flowers. The air was usually heavy with the scent of lilacs.

Dwight Learned, Willard H. Pierce and Henry N. Gowing

## Annual Potluck Supper

February 11, 2005 – 6:30 p.m. • Vestry of the Community Church

(Snow date: February 18)

The speaker will be Peter A. Wallner, author of the recent biography *Franklin Pierce – New Hampshire's Favorite Son*, published last year. What most of us think we know about Franklin Pierce, the only President from our state, is that he generally gets a bad press. Mr Wallner's book, timed for the two hundredth anniversary of Pierce's birth in Hillsborough, casts new light on Pierce's character and political principles.



were fixtures on the Memorial Day Committee with Dwight as the presiding officer. There were recitations by the school children and a speaker who gave a Memorial Day address. In 1908 the speaker was the Hon. Carroll D. Wright, a former colonel of Fourteenth New Hampshire Regiment in the Civil War in which numerous soldiers from Dublin served. I recall the date perfectly as I remember him saying that "the war was forty-seven years ago."

Charles R. Fiske, Asa Knowlton, Charles S. Hazen and Dr. Henry H. Smith are the Civil War veterans from Dublin whom I remember, and they were always present at the exercises, being seated in chairs of honor in front of the wooden settees. . . .

After the exercises in the hall at which the band would play a few interspersed selections, the musicians would adjourn to the Unitarian Church lawn, where a concert would be played. Annually for many years the Munsonville Chair Shop Band played on decoration Day, . . . The East Sullivan Band played in Dublin after the Munsonville Band disbanded, and they, too, were

very good. . . . [W]hile the band was preparing for its outdoors concert, the veterans and others would be driven to the cemetery to decorate the flag-marked graves of the Civil War soldiers who were buried there, . . . [A]t the command of Henry D. Learned . . . , "Repeat the formula," we would recite in unison the following:

"Sacred to the memory of these our fallen comrades these flowers we dedicate."

After this, the decorators would proceed to vehicles and drive downtown to decorate the Soldiers' Monument [then at the intersection of Main Street and Monument Road] , repeating as they did so:

"Sacred to the memory of these our fallen comrades whose bodies lie on Southern soil these flowers we dedicate."

Then back to the village to hear the last of the band concert.



L-R: Hildreth's cousin, Almerin (later Gene) Gowing, Helen Morse, Hildreth, c. 1904.  
Dublin Historical Society, gift of John R. Gleason, Jr.

## MAY DAY

On the night of May 1 we went to the houses of our friends to hang May baskets. These were made by rolling sheets of foolscap into cornucopias, . . . and decorating them with strips of variously colored crimped tissue paper. We filled the May baskets with candy, peanuts and similar edibles. Some of the baskets were very tastefully made, and the color combinations often quite pleasing to the eye and striking.

## CHILDREN'S DAY

Children's Day was an event sponsored by the Grange which was held in June after school was out for the summer. The children were given the freedom of the Town Hall where games were played, and in the afternoon there was a program of recitations and songs with Dwight Learned presiding. I remember that I often spoke pieces here as well as at the aforementioned Memorial Day exercises. It was one time in the year when the children from the five school districts got together.

## THANKSGIVING

*The scene described took place at the home of Hildreth's great-grandparents, George Almer in and Lydia Sheldon (Perry) Gowing, who lived in the house owned by the Lehmanns, next door to what used to be Worcester's Garage and is now Alex Vogel's. "Grandpa and Darda Mason" were Milton D. and Ella Gowing Mason. Clesson and Clifford Gowing were sons of George and Lydia, and Hildreth's great-uncles. Clesson's son, Almerin (later Gene) Gowing, was thus technically of a different generation from Hildreth, although they were contemporaries and playmates.*

At Thanksgiving the family was always invited for dinner and to visit afterwards. There was always Grandpa and Darda Mason, Uncle Clesson and Aunt Kate Gowing with Almerin, Uncle Clifford and Aunt Lizzie Gowing with Marguerite and cousin Mildred Willard. Perhaps cousin Helen Hamilton from Grafton, Vermont, might be present, or occasionally Horace Hamilton from New York. Under no circumstances would she [great-grandma Gowing] have thirteen seated at the table.

The Thanksgiving dinners were plentiful with generous servings of white and dark turkey, carved in the kitchen before the meal, dressing, cranberry sauce, celery, olives, etc., and of course apple cider. There was



**"She wouldn't have 13 at table"** Hildreth's great-grandmother,  
Lydia Sheldon Perry Gowing (1829-1917).

Dublin Historical Society, gift of Hildreth M. Allison.

always a chicken or two served along with the turkey, and everyone had some of both. For dessert there were several kinds of pie, with cake and usually pudding, besides.

After the table was cleared away and the dishes washed, we would go into the parlor at the front part of the house and play such games as 'Button, Button, who's got the Button?' and "Simon says 'Thumbs up!'" or listen to gramophone records. Marguerite played the piano very nicely and would entertain with popular songs. It was at the Thanksgiving Day dinner that I first heard "Pretty Molly Shannon", featured by Anna Held, "Because You're You" from Victor Herbert's "Red Mill", and "Sympathy" from Rudolf Friml's "Firefly".

## CHRISTMAS

The annual celebration at the Town Hall brought out townspeople from all sections. There were usually two trees, whose height appeared enormous to me, filled with Christmas gifts and well decorated. Strings of popcorn were used then as well as silver and gold tinsel. John E. Baldwin was sometimes the Santa Claus, and he must have roasted, appearing as he did in a buffalo coat. Before calling off the presents, he gave a little talk reciting incidents concerning his trip down from the North Pole; and after going off stage when his labors for the evening were completed, there was heard the jingle of sleigh bells as he undertook the beginning of his homeward flight.

No boy or girl needed to go without a present at the town Christmas Tree celebration, as the question, "Is there any child here who has not received a present?" was put at the end of the evening; . . .

It was the custom to canvas the house up and down the village street for funds to buy candy for the Christmas celebration. This was a mixture of many varieties served in striped paper bags to all present. Several times I was one of those soliciting these funds, and almost everyone was willing to contribute a quarter. In later years, too, I became the Christmas Santa Claus.



*Hildreth at the time of his graduation from Dartmouth, 1920.*

*Dublin Historical Society, gift of Hildreth M. Allison.*

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## SOCIETY NEWS

### ACCESSIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

We have for some years exchanged information and documents with the very active **Bethel Historical Society** of Bethel, Maine. Dublin has a connection with Bethel, several of whose 18th century settlers came from here. Among them was Dr. Moses Mason (1789-1866), who is considered one of Bethel's founding fathers. In the most recent exchange, the Bethel H.S. has sent us six issues of their newsletter, the "Bethel Courier" with articles on Moses Mason and his wife, Agnes Straw Mason, together with postcards showing the Moses Mason house in Bethel (which serves as the Society's headquarters) and portraits of Moses and Agnes Mason by Chester Harding.

Continuing our purchases on e-Bay, made possible through the **Archives Fund**, we have acquired a medical curiosity. It is an order from the late Dr. Alfred H. Childs (1876-1922) for 40 quarter-grain tablets of morphine, dated 1919. From the same source we have acquired 65 negatives taken at the Dublin Horse Show in 1952. If any of our members with long memories thinks they might be able to identify some of the riders, we should be glad to hear from them.

Other recent donors to the archives have been Anne Anable, Nancy Campbell, Hal Close, David Elder, Clara Grant, Betsey Harris, Bruce Hunter, Sharron Monaghan and the Town of Dublin. Our thanks to them all.

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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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