

Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 64 – May 2005

A HISTORY OF THE GARDEN CLUB OF DUBLIN

PART I

What are those ladies in wet suits doing in Dublin Lake? Well, they are testing the water for pollutants and removing milfoil – in clothing hardly envisioned in 1928 by the founders of the Garden Club of Dublin. It has come to this because of the last question in the application for the Club's membership in the Garden Club of America, which asked what the club had done for its neighborhood.

It Began with Mrs. Brewster

The organizing force behind the Garden Club of Dublin was Margaret Fitch Brewster (1884-1963.) A child of the Gilded Age, whose mother died when she was twelve, she was brought up by her father "to be a proper wife for a man of substance." When M.B. (as she referred to herself and liked to be called by her younger friends) married Frederick F. Brewster, she had been admirably trained to be the chatelaine of two vast establishments, "Edgerton", the house they built in New Haven, and their summer home in Dublin.

She was forty-one years old when they bought the George B. Leighton property at public auction in the summer of 1925. It consisted of 850 acres, much of it heavily timbered, several farm houses and dairy barns. They named it "Morelands." The house, built in 1888, had been unoccupied and neglected for a long time. As she later wrote "... the grounds, which had become hayfields and rotating crops of potatoes and corn, presented a great problem, and the deciduous planting was beyond retrieving." But the site made up for it, overlooking Dublin Lake from the west with a superb view of Mount Monadnock. Remodeling and restoration began immediately, and in the summer of 1926 the Brewsters moved in.

Now began M.B.'s life's work: the development of a country place worthy of the Garden Club of America. She possessed considerable knowledge about landscape history and design, a botanist's knowledge of horticulture, and limitless energy. She engaged George M. Finnie as superintendent and head gardener, and she consulted the distinguished Massachusetts landscape architect, Arthur Shurcliff. She herself, however, designed the



Margaret Brewster in her garden in 1963, shortly before her death.

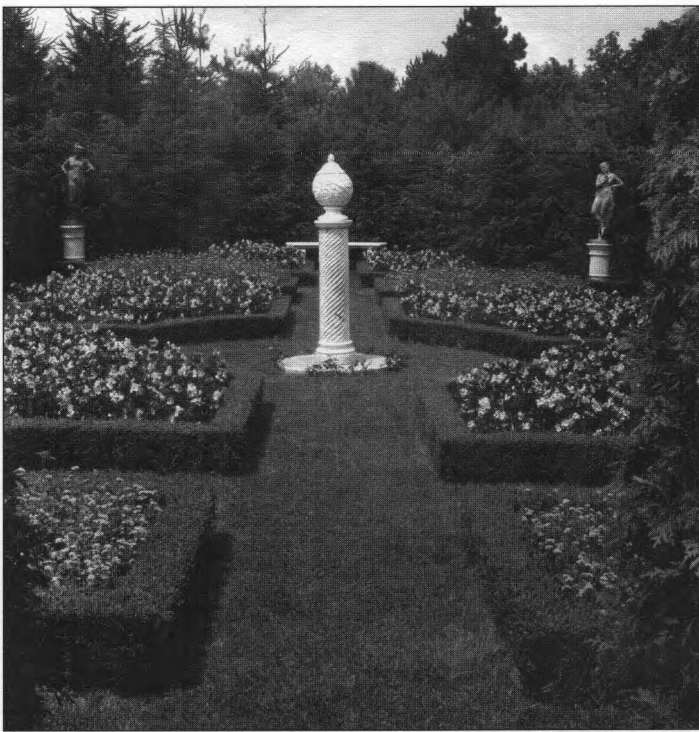
Dublin Historical Society - gift of Elizabeth Pool.

SAVE THE DATES

There will be members' meetings on

July 1 and August 26.

See the President's letter (page 4) for details.



One of the rooms in the "Morelands" garden in 1940.
Dublin Historical Society.

twelve acre great lawn rolling down the hill toward the lake with flowering shrubs along the borders. She explained that her thinking was greatly influenced by "The Art of Landscape Gardening" by that master of English landscape design, Humphrey Repton (1752-1818). Mr. Shurcliff's designs called for a 300 foot long terrace on the east side of the house facing the lake, a walled garden, and additional planting along the main driveway. She reported that the first bloom in the garden appeared in the summer of 1927.

After that she was on her own. In 1928 and 1929 the rock garden was built and planted. In 1930 she planned a series of six little garden rooms with a mall down the middle ending in an English plaisance and a fern lined path to a sanctuary dedicated to St. Francis.

In her "Factual History of Morelands" she wrote that, "The greenhouses produce almost all the material, perennial and annual, that is used in the borders and cutting gardens." The goal was continuous bloom. Under her supervision a clear white poinsettia and the begonia "Edgerton Purity Perfection" were developed, and she managed to acclimate the wild jasmine of South Carolina and adapt it to green house culture.

It doesn't take much imagination to understand that the development of a country place could absorb the same kind of drive and discipline that a captain of industry would devote to his business affairs. A great many women of means and energy, who were M.B.'s contemporaries, did exactly that, and all she had to do in Dublin was to look around her to find them. What was needed was a garden club worthy of membership in the Garden Club of America. It would be made up of like minded persons of taste, love and knowledge of horticulture, and interest in landscape design.

The Founding of the Garden Club

On Thursday, August 16, 1928, M.B. invited eight ladies to a meeting at her house to organize the Garden Club of Dublin. They

were Mrs. Charles F. Aldrich, Miss Mary Lincoln Aldrich, Mrs. S. Parker Bremer, Miss Rebecca Caldwell, Mrs. Arthur E. Childs, Miss Muriel Childs, Mrs. Thomas McKittrick and Mrs. Jasper Whiting. Under the constitution discussed and adopted at that meeting, active membership was limited to landowners and their households, with a certain number of associate members elected for a season at a time. Qualifications for membership were, "possession of a flower garden, active personal supervision therein, the standing of an amateur and willingness to share in the work of the Club." Two dissenting votes would exclude a candidate.

Annual dues were set at five dollars, with a five dollar initiation fee. Committees were to be established on admissions, flower shows, nominations, plant and seed exchange, and "topics and activities", with others to be formed as the need arose. A slate of officers was presented and adopted. Mrs. Brewster was, of course, elected President, and Mrs. George D. Markham Secretary.

Joining the G. C. A.

On September 11, 1930 Mrs. Markham wrote to the secretary of the Garden Club of America that "in the opinion of some of the members, the Garden Club of Dublin might be eligible [for] membership in the Garden Club of America. It has thirty Active Members and about fifty others, known as Sustaining and Associate Members." She explained that "As it is composed mainly of members who are in Dublin only in the summer time, it naturally functions four or five months of the year. In the two seasons of its existence, it has held two very successful flower shows, had five lectures, and held various other meetings. Also it has awakened general interest in gardens and there is a marked improvement in the appearance of grounds and gardens. It has a small but good library." Mrs. Markham then asked, "What are the conditions of becoming Members of the Garden Club of America; if we would be considered eligible and what would be the advantages to us of becoming members."

Eleven days later came the official, but only three sentence, reply:

"Dear Mrs. Markham,

I enclose one of our new blanks which will give you all necessary information. I will add that a club must now have been in existence five years before it applies for membership. [The last sentence softened that blow.] Several of your members are friends of mine so when the time comes for you to apply, I am sure you will be most welcome as members of the GC of A.

*Yours sincerely,
Helen Suzette de Gersdorff".*

In certain circles the world was still very small.

The Garden Club of America had been founded in 1913. Its objectives, as stated in the application for membership, included:

"To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs, to share the advantages of association through conference and correspondence in this country and abroad, to aid in the protection of native plants and birds, and to encourage civic planting."

After a number of routine questions the application asked (in bold face):

"What contribution has this club made to the neighborhood or neighborhoods in which its members live?"

In April, 1935 the Garden Club of Dublin was admitted as a member of the GCA.

Dublin Gardens on Show

In the 1930's, despite desperate economic conditions and gathering war clouds abroad, members of new clubs were expected to open their gardens to GCA members. In 1936 six Dublin members agreed to open their gardens on Monday afternoons in July and August from three to six o'clock. The gardens were:

- Mrs. Brewster's "Morelands" (now the home of the senior Loring Catlins) - a series of rooms, a great lawn, with commanding views of lake and mountain. Mrs. Brewster reported that over 500 persons visited her gardens that summer.
- "Homewood" - a small walled garden with herbaceous borders in the English manner, then owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Lawrence Mauran and now by George and Leigh McLean.
- "Loon Point" - a formal flower garden with fountains, statues, urns, pergolas, gilded iron gates, and a Chinese garden viewed from a "Moon Gate" on the porch, owned by Mr. and



*Although the Garden Club of Dublin was organized by women, men were members too. Among them was **Joseph Lindon Smith**, seen here in 1929 in the garden he created at Loon Point.*

Dublin Historical Society - gift of Jessie T. Hale.

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WHO DID THE DIGGING?

The development and maintenance of a fine country place with distinguished gardens required a large outdoor staff. A head gardener presided over his garden with considerable power and prestige, for he recommended to the owners the peo-

ple he wished them to employ each season. (In some years Mrs. Brewster had as many as fifteen.) Frequently he trained farm boys who after an apprenticeship of many years went on to become landscapers or nursery men.

It is worth recording who some of these key men were. In 1929 the Dublin Garden Club made the following list of "Private Estate Owners and their Gardeners."

Mrs. Charles F. Aldrich
-James Gallagher

Mrs. John H. Bennett
-Walter Rowe

Mrs. S. Parker Bremer
-Ralph Harling

Mrs. Frederick F. Brewster
-George M. Finnie

Mrs. T. Handasyd Cabot
-John Lindgren

Mrs. R. High Carleton
-Lendell Fiske

Mrs. Daniel Catlin
-Raymond Beaulieu

Mr. Arthur E. Childs
-George Burgess

Mrs. Grenville Clark
-Fred Emery

Mrs. Guy Currier
-Fred H. Balch

Dublin Inn
-Thomas Moody

Mrs. George L. Foote
-William Coutts

Mrs. Louis C. Gerry
-Martin Early

Miss Belle Greene
-Elmer Oya

Miss Mary Lionberger
-Merton Woodward

Mrs. Charles MacVeagh
-Fred Nettleton

Hon. Franklin MacVeagh
-Carl Mackie

Mr. George D. Markham
-Peter Naylor

Mr. J. Lawrence Mauran
-Robert Woodward

Mrs. Clarence C. Pell
-Percy L. Dennett

Mrs. Winslow Pierce, Jr.
-James Venable

Mr. Harry Seaton Rand
-Anthony Dowling

Mrs. Theodore Schurmeier
-Morris Edmondson

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph L. Smith
-Sidney Brown

Rev. Lucius Thayer
-Aubry Adams

Mrs. Edric Weld
-Fay Armstrong



SOCIETY NEWS

President's Letter

This message is written on April 20, 2005. Three days ago the last ice disappeared from Dublin Lake and away from the west wind the ice and snow have disappeared for most of us over the past week or so. Bulbs donated by the Garden Club of Dublin to the 1841 Schoolhouse and planted last fall are well up and should be blooming in the next week or so.

Over the winter your historical society has suffered the (we hope temporary) loss of two trustees. Nick Thacher is the new headmaster of a suburban Boston school, and Anne Anable is a new member of our Board of Selectmen. We wish Nick and Anne well, and they will be welcomed back when and if. Never let it be said that your historical society is not a nurturing agent for greatness! Or that we are uncaring! We are delighted to welcome Lee Noël (Mrs. Andrew) Porter to the board, in time for our gearing up for the summer mix of first-time and old-time friends and neighbors.

The Historical Society **summer fundraiser** is scheduled for Friday, July 1, at the start of the July Fourth Weekend. 2005 marks the twentieth anniversary of the 1985 publication of "A Circle of Friends," a landmark museum exhibition and catalogue about the Dublin and Cornish, N. H. art colonies of a century ago. In honor of the twentieth anniversary we have asked Dr. Barbara Buff, organizer of the exhibition, to reprise her history of the Dublin art colony for our members and friends at a lecture followed by dinner and drinks at "Thornehill," the Bastedo house on Old Harrisville Road. You will be learning more about this event soon; please mark the date on your calendars and help us celebrate the start of summer 2005. Funds raised will help complete our handicapped access ramp and staircase at the 1841 Schoolhouse.

On Friday, August 26 Bill Veillette, the new Director of the New Hampshire Historical Society, will address our **Annual Meeting**. Mr. Veillette is also a Trustee of Historic New England (formerly S.P.N.E.A.) and of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, and a Director of the Amherst Historical Society.

We hope you will plan to be with us for both events.

— Russell Bastedo, President

Accessions to the Archives

From time to time we acquire interesting material from quite unexpected sources. We were able to supply **Mary Molloy**, a researcher in Chicago, with some information about "Knollwood", now owned by Joseph & Augusta Petrone. As a pleasant and unexpected consequence, she kindly sent us a collection of material, including copies of the original drawings, that she had gotten from Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott, successors to Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, designers of "Knollwood" in 1899.

A similar pleasant surprise was the opportunity to purchase from a dealer (thanks to the **Archives Fund**) a 1911 list of all the automobiles registered in Dublin, giving the owner's name, along with make and horsepower. (John A. Gleason, had a 30 hp. Hudson, while his competitor, Henry D. Allison, had two 25 hp. Overlands.)

John and Alice McKenna have given us a number of papers and objects, including permission to make copies of fourteen snapshots of the Bi-centennial parade in 1952.

Other welcome donations have come from **Nancy Campbell, David Rollins** and **William Veillette**.

A History of the Garden Club *continued from page 3*

Mrs. Joseph Lindon Smith. The property is now owned by the Smiths' great-grandchildren, sons and daughters of the late Jessie Hale, but neither the house nor the gardens any longer exist.

- "Fasnacloich in New Hampshire" - a Tudor garden of several rooms containing statues and a fountain and with terraces appropriate to an English manor house of that period, owned by Mrs. Charles MacVeagh. "Fasnacloich", in Harrisville, is now owned by Molly Vogel.
- "Pompilia" - an Italian villa on a hill with gardens overlooking the lake and distant hills, owned by Mrs. T. Handasyd Cabot. "Pompilia", built by Mrs. Cabot's father, Raphael Pumpelly, was destroyed by fire in 1979.
- "Tiadnock" - a house and garden on the spur of Monadnock with a unique and beautiful view of the mountains, owned by Mrs. Edward Thaw. This house is now owned by Coleman and Susan Townsend, who have revived and extended the gardens of Mrs. Thaw's time.

The last question on the application makes plain that sharing one's garden with GCA members was only one condition of mem-

bership. The more important condition was that clubs must look beyond the comfortable enjoyment of beautiful gardens, and contribute in some way to their neighborhood. One's neighborhood in 1928 translates today to one's world: - environmental issues, endangered species, clean air, clean water The GCA has become, through its members, a powerful advocate on these issues. members are treated with great respect by Congressmen on whom they call each year in February.

More of this later.

— Ellen MacVeagh Rublee

TO BE CONTINUED

C R E D I T S

This issue of the Dublin Historical Society
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