

Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 80 – November 2010

Seventy-Five Years Ago: The Dublin School's Beginnings

As we reported in our last issue in the article on Yankee magazine, bad times don't seem to discourage people with ideas. 1935 was a pivotal year in Dublin with Yankee starting and the Dublin School being launched by Paul and Nancy Lehman. Historically speaking, we are very lucky that Paul chronicled the beginning of the school in his book *Dublin School 1935-1970* and lucky also that it was published by Bill Bauhan of Dublin. His daughter, Sarah, who now runs Bauhan Publishing, has kindly allowed us to use large excerpts from the book.

—The Editors

SEPTEMBER 1935. We opened our doors; eight students; six faculty—full or part-time; and a single commodious house with a panoramic view of the hills of southwestern New Hampshire . . .

The Great Depression [had] cut short my career [teaching] at Fessenden after three years. . . . In the spring of 1933 . . . there were no jobs to be had. Teachers were in abundance. Seemingly a catastrophe at the time, but then if it hadn't happened, the dream of Dublin might never have been realized.

One day in May 1934, Dean Holmes called me to his office [at the Harvard School of Education, where PL was enrolled after being laid off from Fessenden]. Mr. Henry James, nephew and namesake of the celebrated novelist, and a member of the Harvard Corporation, wanted a competent instructor to tutor his young nephew. The tutoring was to be done during the summer, and I agreed then to meet Mr. James's brother, Alexander, and his family at their home in Dublin, New Hampshire.

I liked Alec James and his wife Frederika at once, and all of their three sons, unaware at the time that this meeting would be the seed of a happy life-long association—and would change the course of my life. An artist and painter, Alec also maintained a house and studio at a remote and secluded farm in Richmond, New Hampshire—where he and his family would retreat for



The Main House, now known as Lehmann House. Originally the Cabot-Richards house, where the school was established.

the summer to escape the social distractions of the Dublin summer colony.

Thus the summer of 1934 passed happily and successfully for me and my mother in a pre-Revolutionary farmhouse in Richmond, which Alec had rented for our use. Sandy, his eldest son, prospered academically—later to become a student at the Dublin School and a suc-

It's that time of year again: membership renewal. We are enclosing our annual dues envelope for you to fill out and send in to us with your generous contribution. Thank you!

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Paul and Nancy in 1984. Photo courtesy of Michael James.

successful practicing architect. But most eventful of that eventful year, I met Nancy Metcalf at a square dance in the region, and in the fall of 1934 we were married.

One day [that] August, Alec James invited me to drive to Dublin with him just to see the town and stop at his home there. It was my first chance really to see the place. The countryside was heavily wooded, but occasionally vistas of lakes and mountains, especially Mount Monadnock, appeared—and it was all pleasant enough. But it didn't "grab" me, and I had no thought of locating a school there.

Upon reflection some months later, I surmised: (a) that Alec and Freddie, his lovely wife, had learned, not from me but from their son Sandy, that I intended some day to establish a school; (b) that without any mention of my intent on the part of the Jameses, they had planned that I should simply be exposed to the Dublin they loved; (c) they hoped possibly to glean an enthusiasm on my part for the area as a likely one for the school. But not so. Nary a word. For I had none. How disappointed they must have been! Because they thought Dublin a most likely and perfectly ideal place for a school in the country—as I found out later when, at the end of the summer at the time of my return to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, they casually remarked: "When you feel you're ready to establish a school, we'd like to show you a place which we feel would be ideal for the purpose."

And so in January of 1935 I called the Jameses and indicated that I'd be pleased to look at the site they had in mind. . . .

The snow was deep that January. And since the Richards' house, now the Main House, was closed for the winter, the driveway was not plowed, and Freddie and I donned skis and snowshoes. Alec had a heart condition so he and Nancy remained at the Jameses'.

As we walked up the driveway, the beauty of the new-fallen snow, crowning the dense evergreens and bending to form a heavenly canopy overhead, was breath-taking. The silence was religious. No word was spoken. I'm sure my heart thumped in anticipation of finding the unexpected, the unbelievable. Evidence of man was minimal. The unpaved road could barely accommodate a Model T. And the turn-around in front of the house could do no more. Sun shone through the snow-laden branches, and the beech trees emitted startling, sharp cracks as if in objection to man's intrusion to this silent, serene and beautiful haven. And there stood a house, large and attractive, clothed in snow-laden bittersweet—and silence.

Freddie had a key. We entered a cold and sparsely furnished house. The immediate appeal of the living room to me was well fortified by the ample and attractive second and third floors. And six fireplaces. And then the clincher: surrounded as the house was, closely and almost completely, a view to the east through a slot cut in the dense woods suddenly and almost miraculously appeared! In the gray light of this seclusion, there appeared in the distance the sunlit hills of Peterborough and the Temple Range, some twenty miles away. What a prospect! And what a potential! It would be the most beautifully located school in the world! Every hope, every qualification had become a realistic prospect.

We left the Jameses early that evening clutching the name and address of Dr. Loren F. Richards, of Nashua, New Hampshire. Freddie had called him to say we'd stop. Dick was not only a superb doctor and surgeon, but one of the most understanding people in this world. He knew we really wanted a school and had no evident support; yet, he readily agreed to rent his Dublin house for a year with an option to buy if the school survived. We left for Cambridge, wondering, but not aloud, how we'd live; whether I could find work—any work; would any parent entrust his child to us? Was this an insane adventure?

We returned to Dublin in May 1935 and, as it developed, for the rest of our lives. Freddie James arranged with her neighbor Mary Pierce for the rental of her home for the summer. The Richards house was not to be available to us until after Labor Day, allowing little time for the preparations incumbent upon the opening of the school.

Mary, wife of the inventor Winslow Pierce, had clear ideas concerning one's education—and often

unorthodox. Actually, she did not believe in schools as they were then established or in the goals they professed. Hers was a non-school education acquired at home, based on values gleaned from her eminent artist father and mother, "Pa-Pa-pa," and "Ma-mama", George de Forest and Mittie Brush. And reflecting the simplicity of living practiced by Abbott Thayer, another noted artist in this artist-starred community of Dublin. So Mary and I had perforce, whenever we met, endless discussions, let me be brief, of values. Especially so when her children were enrolled at Dublin.

During the summer we met everyone in the community, thanks to Freddie and Alec. We not only felt that we were scrutinized but that we were also accepted. Alec thought that we should make some sort of announcement relative to the opening of the school and accordingly we had a simple 3x5 card printed and distributed. We left a few at the Schaff's studio in Fitzwilliam where Mrs. Neil Head noticed it; dropped in thereafter to meet and talk with us and accordingly enrolled the first students (aside from the Jameses), their children Peggy and Billy. Tommy and Jimmy, younger sons, in due course attended Dublin. Co-ed? Not in the original plan, but accepted if girls would accept the same provisions as the boys. All girls became "boys" to us and during the years we had fifteen or twenty of them. All very welcome additions to the school.

The Community

THE HIGHEST VILLAGE in New Hampshire, 1493 feet above sea level, population 600 in 1935, is Dublin, a village admirably adapted to the many facets of pleasant, creative, and instructive living. All of these circumstances created an ideal location for a boarding school, and because of the instructive possibilities, upon which we capitalized at every possible turn, the students experienced a way of life, an insight into the democratic process, a contact with many diverse people, a participation in the social process, possibly never before, or again, available to them. Dublin provided an opportunity to distinguish among values, an insight to the wholesomeness of the growing-up process for young people. Almost at once we sought areas where we could participate and contribute. The grounds of the staunch Community Church offered that opportunity. A work day was organized involving the school and the townspeople—and at the end of a morning's work, the grounds and the horse sheds shone again with Yankee simplicity and the beauty of cleanliness and order.

But especially we found a welcome among the townspeople.

Our church associations continued by attendance at the Sunday services, singing in the choir, passing the plate—and receiving a warm welcome from traditionally tight-lipped Yankees. And their respect.

The boys presented plays and the school glee club sang at church suppers in Dublin and surrounding towns. They entertained and played games with the children at Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center, and later at the New Hope Center in Keene. Old-timers liked to play whist after the suppers and they were very glad to have the boys join the game.

Episcopalians attended All Saints Church in Peterborough and there took part in the choir and as acolytes. Murder in the Cathedral was [performed] by the boys in the apse of that very attractive church.

Town Meeting was a holiday from the routine of the school, and provided an eye-opening experience in the democratic process for the boys. Bill North was for several years a supervisor of the check list of the registered town voters. But the boys gained a further insight to the participation of the process when they saw and listened to the skill with which Bill, as moderator, conducted the School Meeting, following the Town Meeting. And punctually at noon a recess was declared whereupon a delicious home cooked dinner awaited everyone at the church. What pies!

The 1938 hurricane toppled the landmark of the community, a principal point of reference for climbers as seen from the top of Monadnock, the church steeple—right through the roof where it rested in the pew of Mrs. Andrew, the minister's wife. A colored picture in the *National Geographic* of that time records the event—and the presence of Peggy Head and Ben Wallace, two students, viewing the scene.

"What's to be done about the steeple, Ben?" I asked our minister, Mr. Andrew.

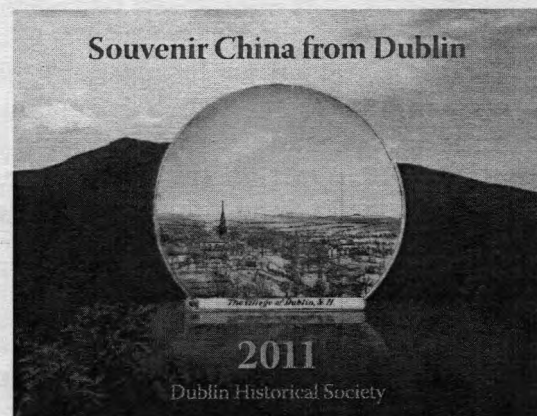
"Well, we've got to have it fixed."

"How?"

"Will you form a committee to see to it?"

So with the aid of several people, the committee decided, against some opposition from without, to rebuild the steeple exactly as it had been and to raise the money for the purpose. One mimeographed letter brought responses from a multitude of people. It seemed as though everyone who ever knew Dublin contributed. Mr. G. [Mr. Gillespie] was treasurer. And

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Available soon: the 2011 calendar!

Please go to our website for details: www.dublinhistory.org

SOCIETY NEWS

2010 Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting was held on August 20 at Holly Nagy's barn at Stonlea. Holly has replaced the old barn at what was once the Catlin house with a very imaginative meeting space, and the Society is most grateful to her for allowing us to meet there.

The Society is also grateful to our speaker, Jamie Trowbridge, for an entertaining account of the first 75 years of *Yankee* magazine, and a preview of its future.

The president announced Dick Meryman's election to honorary membership of the Society, in recognition of his scholarship as a historian of Dublin and his generosity in sharing the fruits of his research with the Society's archives, and presented him with a handsomely mounted citation.

In the business meeting, President Henry James thanked Trustees Rusty Bastedo and John Harris, who are leaving the board, having reached their term limits. Matt Wagner was re-elected to a second 3-year term. Henry James and Bill Goodwin were re-elected for 1-year terms as President and Treasurer.

Accessions to the Archives

In furtherance of the Society's efforts to catch history as it goes by, Sally Shonk Carey has provided digital images of a number of town events of 2010. In the same vein, Karen Bunch has given us images of the dedication of the Anne Anable memorial tree at the Post Office, and Sharron Monaghan has supplied pictures of the celebrated rock in the Oval, showing its condition after being run into. Our diligent photographers are recording the construction on Rte. 101 as part of the traffic calming project.

We were fortunate in being able to purchase on eBay two 19th century photographs of the Dexter Derby farm, which was on Page Road near the head of Thorndike Pond. These are the first images we have seen of this house and barn, of which only cellar holes remain.

Other welcome acquisitions have been received from John McPeake, Richard Meryman and Edie Powell.

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the steeple was rebuilt, precisely as it was, and so it stands today—not only a landmark again, but an inspirational force as it had been.

Mutual difficulties, not to say tragedies, draw people together in a bond of mutual aid, tolerance, and affection as never otherwise experienced. Hence, the atmosphere in the school was perfect. We were truly one body moving in one direction. And the boys loved it, especially the voluntary evening study periods. How do you study by the light of a candle? Well, some did.

We helped extinguish fires. Norm Wight was forever a regular volunteer fireman—and we became associates on several occasions. The first was the house of Charlie Thomas, our perennial Selectman, affectionately called The Mayor. In this instance all movables were saved: clothing, furniture and kitchen equipment.

One Sunday afternoon we hastened, at the call of the fire whistle, to the Brush farm. The fire department was already there, but soon their efforts were of no avail for they had exhausted their supply of water. And the fire continued. It would be too late when they returned with water, so impulsively we returned to the school, gathered our supply of sugar buckets and more students—and returned to help keep the fire contained by forming a chain gang from the neighboring brook. Nancy Bowditch, Mr. Brush's daughter, in her book

George de Forest Brush—A Joyous Painter, records her thanks to the Dublin boys for having saved the shed containing many of her father's paintings.

The community always had a place in our thoughts. Employees from cooks to carpenters were engaged locally whenever available—possibly as many as fifty people over the years, and some of them for many years. The boys arranged baseball games with the town team, and the ski slopes were open to—and popular with—everyone. As a result of these contacts we gained rapport and the respect of the local residents and consequently as many as twenty local boys or more attended the school over the years.

Town and Gown never existed at Dublin.

In Memoriam

Word has been received of the death of Ellen Lee Kennelly, long a generous member of the Society. Mrs. Kennelly was one of the eight life members of the Society who made possible its revival in 1986.

For many years Mrs. Kennelly maintained her summer home at "Windswept," the house on the north side of the Old Common, now owned by Susan Peters and Steven Levene. She later moved to smaller quarters on Charcoal Road, while continuing to winter in Santa Barbara.

The Society extends condolences to her family.