

# Dublin Historical Society

DUBLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03444

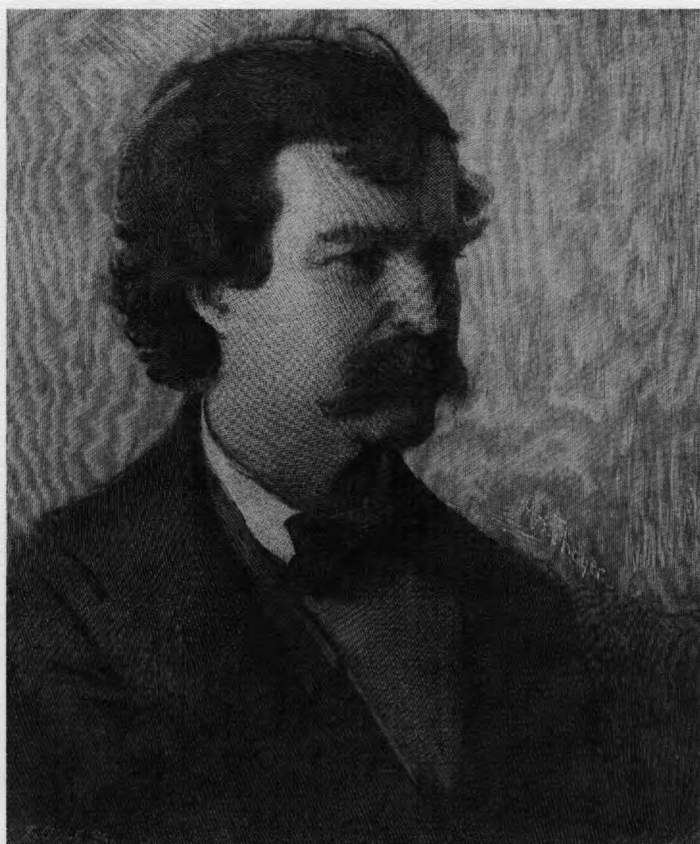
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## *Mr. Twain Goes to Dublin*

by Ian Aldrich



*Mark Twain*

Engraving by Timothy Cole from a painting by Abbott Thayer.  
It appeared in the September, 1882 issue of *The Century Magazine*.

By the early 1900s, Dublin had emerged not only as a popular summer destination for wealthy Bostonians, but also as home to a varied group of artists. For the first few decades of the century, Dublin attracted a wealth of talent. The names included painters like Abbott Thayer, Joseph Lindon Smith, and George deForest Brush, writers Winston Churchill and Amy Lowell, and musicians Edward Burlingame Hill and George Luther Foote, among many others.

Among this group, nobody had more clout or name recognition than Mark Twain, the acclaimed author of such American classics as *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. While the writer's time in Dublin amounted to just two long summer stays, in 1905 and 1906, his visits proved to be an important chapter in his life.

He had discovered the region through the Thayers, close friends of his who had settled in Dublin in 1901 and often talked up the benefits of living in the "New Hampshire highlands." Typically, summers had been a "working time" for Mark Twain, the pen name Samuel Langhorne Clemens concocted for himself. But in early 1905 the writer, now living in New York City, knew he needed a change. His wife, Olivia, had passed away the previous year and Twain, still reeling from her death, wanted a proper country retreat; a place that was both remote and connected, where he could rest, work, and socialize. Dublin suited his needs perfectly. "Any place that is good for an artist in paint is good for an artist in morals and ink," he wrote.

The Historical Society's Annual Meeting will be held on  
**Friday, August 12 at 7 p.m. at Knollwood Farm**

(see enclosed invitation for details)

"I hope for frequent intercourse between the two households."

Not all social interactions, however, lifted Twain's spirits. During one speaking engagement at the Dublin Lake Club, the writer grew quickly insulted and abruptly went home.

"Soon after he began speaking he saw Margaret Higginson knitting a pair of socks," recalled Dublin resident Elliot Allison. "Stopping abruptly, he asked her what she was doing, and when she told him he replied that he had never before played second fiddle to a sock. He then suggested that all who were present knit more stockings and sell them for their local charity. And with a 'good afternoon,' he left the room."

Twain's public schedule also included periodic readings in the homes of his neighbors. Some went better than others, recalled summer resident Ernest Henderson. "He liked to read from his manuscripts to large audiences assembled at the homes of neighbors in order to test the reaction to some of his latest chapters," Henderson said. "Occasionally annoyed when passages predestined for peals of

laughter somehow misfired, he was even more exasperated when audiences were sometimes convulsed over situations supposed to elicit more sober responses."

### Summer of '06 and Twain's Autobiography

Despite those bumpy encounters, Twain clearly loved staying in Dublin. Even before he concluded his first visit, he arranged to return to the region the following summer. Unable to again rent the Greene home, Twain secured Mrs. Upton's Mountain View Farm (now owned by David and Sarah Godine) off Upper Jaffrey Road for his 1906 stay. The large, handsome home, with its long veranda and impressive view of Monadnock, catered perfectly to Twain, who intended his visit to be a working summer.

Much of the work was focused on Twain's autobiography, a giant of a project he'd begun in Florence in 1904, just before his wife's death, and picked up again in early 1906 in New York City. In addition to his daughter Jean and his secretary, Twain brought to Dublin a stenographer and typist named Josephine Hobby, and the writer/editor Albert Bigelow Paine, who'd successfully lobbied Twain to work on the book with him.

Each morning Hobby and Paine, who were staying closer to town, drove out to the Upton House to begin the day's work. "He was generally ready when we arrived, a luminous figure in white flannels, pacing up and down before a background of sky and forest, blue lake, and distant hills," recalled Paine. "When it stormed we would go inside to a bright fire. The dictation ended, he would ask his secretary to play the orchestrelle, which at great expense had been freighted up from New York. In that high situation, the fire and the music and the storm beat seemed to lift us very far indeed from reality. Certain symphonies by Beethoven, an impromptu by Schubert, and a nocturne by Chopin were the selections he cared for most, though in certain moods he asked for the Scotch melodies."

By all accounts the work seemed to go smoothly. Twain had made the decision to dictate his opinions and recollections rather than write them down. It was an approach, he argued, that would allow the writing to sound more natural and honest. It certainly granted Twain the kind of productivity he sought. During one single-month stretch, Twain calculated that he'd added 60,000 words to his manuscript. "It's a plenty, and I am satisfied," he wrote a friend. But the book, a mix of his own personal story and his unique opinions about the world around him, was sharper and more pointed than anything he'd ever published. Twain worried that if it all came out at once, his reputation could be per-



Photograph by Elise Pumpelly Cabot





Twain at Lone Tree Hill, 1905

Along with his younger daughter, Jean, and his secretary, Isabel Lyon, Twain arrived in Dublin on May 18, 1905. He took up residence in the Henry Copley Greene house on Lone Tree Hill (now the home of Coleman and Susan Townsend) on the south side of the lake. Twain loved cats and for the summer he rented three kittens from Sam Pellerin, a local farmer. Two of the cats were identical and the writer named them both Ashes. The third, a brown kitten, he called Sackcloth.

As Thayer had said he would be, Twain was immediately struck by Dublin's beauty. "The summer homes are high-perched, as a rule, and have contenting outlooks," Twain wrote a friend. "The house we occupy has one. Monadnock, a soaring double hump, rises into the sky at its left elbow—that is to say, it is close at hand. From the base of the long slant of the mountain the valley spreads away to the circling frame of hills, and beyond the frame the billowy sweep of remote great ranges rises to view and flows, fold upon fold, wave upon wave, soft and blue and unworldly to the horizon fifty miles away."

Beyond the region's scenic wonder, the company it attracted also impressed Twain. He gushed over the fact that he shared the same small village with so many other well-known people. "Paint, literature, science, statesman-

ship, history, professorship, law, morals—these are all represented here," Twain wrote.

He also found the nature of Dublin itself—its rural character, its grand architecture, its proximity to Boston—much to his liking. "The summer homes of these refugees 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 guideboards, 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 those outliers. . . . The village executes orders on the Boston plan—promptness and courtesy."

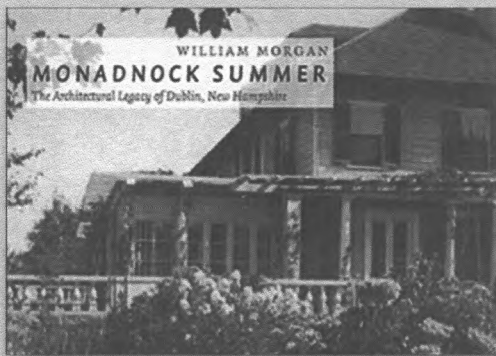
By all accounts, Twain's first Dublin stay was a productive one. Much of his time, at least early on, was spent on a book-length manuscript entitled "Three-Thousand Years Among the Microbes" that centered on the wild tale of a microbe that had previously been a man. The project at first enthralled Twain, but eventually he grew bored with the story and abandoned it, never to finish the project. Instead, Twain turned his attention to other work. Most notably he composed the short story "Eve's Diary" and took on a longer-term project, "The Mysterious Stranger," a story he'd started several years before and would continue tinkering with until his death at his home in Redding, Connecticut, on April 21, 1910.

### Around Town

Of course, not all of Twain's time was spent working. His first stay in town actually extended into November and his visit left a complicated impression on the locals. One of his biggest fans was Hiram Carey, a livery stable operator, who was hired by the author to chauffeur him around. Right up until he passed away in 1960, Carey often boasted about his work for Twain.

There were visits with the Thayers as well as another friend, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a writer and ardent abolitionist who had commanded a black regiment in the Civil War. Over the years, Higginson, who lived in Boston and summered in Dublin, cultivated friendships with a number of prominent writers, including Twain. When word reached Twain that the two would be in Dublin together, Higginson's friend was delighted.

"I early learned that you would be my neighbor in the summer and I rejoiced, recognizing in you and your family a large asset," Twain wrote Higginson on March 26, 1905.



## BOOKS ARRIVING SOON!

*Monadnock Summer, The Architectural Legacy of Dublin, New Hampshire*, by William Morgan and published by David R. Godine, will be available for pick up (or purchase) at our Annual Meeting on August 12<sup>th</sup>.

We are delighted that Will Morgan will be at the meeting and will sign copies. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may pick up your copy at the Dublin Archives after August 1<sup>st</sup> (please call 563-8545 to arrange). Pre-ordered books will be mailed after the meeting to those who requested shipping.

(*Twain continued*)

manently harmed. So fearful was he of the impact his views might have that Twain decreed that the full, complete version of his autobiography not be published until 100 years after his death.

"Tomorrow I mean to dictate a chapter which will get my heirs & assigns burnt alive if they venture to print it this side of 2006 A.D.—which I judge they won't," Twain wrote his friend William Dean Howells on June 17, 1906. "There'll be lots of such chapters if I live 3 or 4 years longer. The edition of A.D. 2006 will make a stir when it comes out. I shall be hovering around taking notice, along with other dead pals. You are invited."

A week later, he wrote Howells again about the progress of his book. "I have been dictating some fearful things...for no eye but yours to see until I have been dead a century—if then. But I got them out of my system, where they had been festering for years—and that was the main thing. I feel better now."

Twain's decree held. In November 2010 the University of California Press published the first of three volumes of the writer's 500,000-word *Autobiography of Mark Twain*. While only a portion of the book was created in Dublin, its very existence stems in no small part to that key second and final summer Twain spent in the shadow of Monadnock. The Thayers were right, Twain confirmed toward the end of his first visit: Dublin truly was a magnificent place to get some work done.

"It is claimed that the atmosphere of the New Hampshire highlands is exceptionally bracing and stimulating, and a fine aid to hard and continuous work," Twain wrote in the autumn of 1905. "It is a just claim, I think. I came in May, and wrote 35 successive days without a break. It is possible that I could not have done it elsewhere. I do not know; I have not had any disposition to try it, before. I think I got the disposition out of the atmosphere, this time. I feel quite sure, in fact, that that is where it came from."



Dublin village as Mark Twain would have experienced it during the summer of 1905