

Dublin Historical Society

DUBLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03444 •

FOUNDED 1920

Newsletter No. 84

Winter 2012

Mountain Vistas

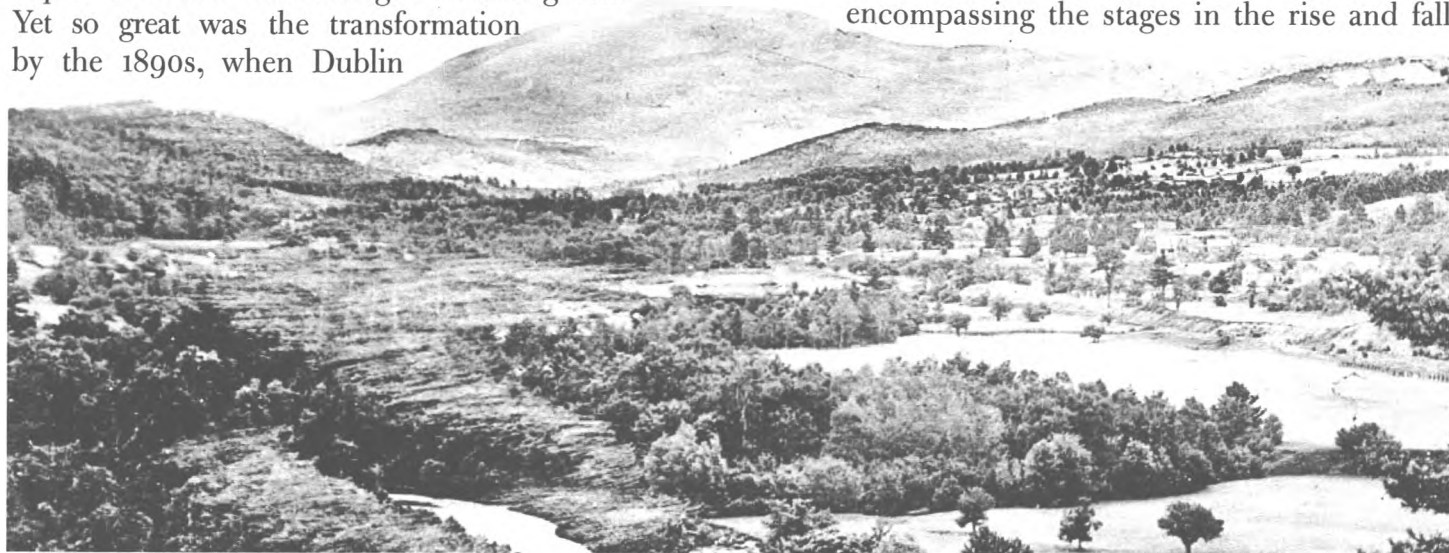
by William L. Bauhan

Among the papers of the late (and much lamented) William L. Bauhan were found the first two chapters of an uncompleted history of Dublin, apparently written in the early 1980s. In the last newsletter we reprinted a section from chapter one. The remaining text from chapter one was primarily architectural history and has been covered well in Will Morgan's book Dublin Summer, since Will and Bill Bauhan worked together on this history over many years. The following is from chapter two, originally called "Mountain Vistas and Summer Boarders." Again, Will Morgan covers the second topic—summer boarders—in Dublin Summer. We thought it would be interesting to reprint the part of Bill's chapter two about the allure of Mount Monadnock in the nineteenth century for writers and poets. Bill explains how they preceded the artists and their wealthy patrons.

"DUBLIN WAS NOT UNLIKE the average small New England town," wrote local historian Henry D. Allison, "up to the time of the coming of summer guests." Yet so great was the transformation by the 1890s, when Dublin

was approaching its height as a fashionable watering place, that a state tourist booklet described it as "the Newport of New Hampshire." Allowing for local pride, and while its smaller, more conservative New Hampshire neighbors viewed it as pretentious and "snobbish," Dublin never developed on the grand scale of Newport or even Bar Harbor. Nor did it wish to. In the words of counter-culture politicians a century hence, "small is beautiful" might have been Dublin's answer. In almost every degree, socially, economically, architecturally, it was lower keyed, more modest, and less obtrusive. Even the resort's evolution, like that of its early settlement, came slightly later than that of its grander coastal counterparts. Nevertheless, it shared many of the same characteristics and conformed to a pattern of development very similar to other New England summer colonies.

In his book *The Last Resorts*, Cleveland Amory, Proper Boston's irreverent chronicler of manners and morés, put forward a "Gresham's Law of Resorts" encompassing the stages in the rise and fall



Monadnock in the 19th century. Note the openness of the landscape. Image by W.B. Hale, Williamsville. From the Keene and Cheshire County (NH) Historical Photos' photostream < <http://www.flickr.com/people/keenepubliclibrary/> >

of such major summer bastions as Newport, Bar Harbor, and Lenox, Massachusetts. Abbreviated, Amory's progression runs like this:

1. "Artists and writers in search of good scenery and solitude."
2. "'Solid people' in search of the simple life"—professors, doctors, clergymen, and the like.
3. "Nice millionaires" looking for the simple life for their children— "as lived by the 'solid people.'"
4. The new-rich seeking to associate with the "nice millionaires," build million-dollar cottages and clubs, give white-tie dinners—and utterly destroy the simple life.
5. "Trouble"

Allowing for Amory's poking a little fun, his progression has been borne out only too aptly, though neither Dublin nor dozens of other New England resorts fitted the pattern in every respect.

Not only the Newports and Bar Harbors, but scores of smaller summer retreats nestled in the mountains or scattered along the coastline had their own special variations and peculiarities. In Dublin, for example it was the writers who discovered the town and its environs before the Civil War, rather than the artists who bypassed the region for the more dramatic scenery of the White Mountains. And it can be argued that Dublin never really reached stage four of Amory's law, at least not on the scale of the large resorts. Others, like Dublin's southern neighbor, Jaffrey, viewed themselves—thankfully—as never having advanced beyond the "solid people" of stage two. North Haven, Maine, prided itself on maintaining a Spartan simplicity; and Nahant, fifteen miles from Boston, remained for generations the exclusive refuge of "Cold Roast Boston" and "low-scaled high living." Other places came closer to filling the prescribed stages of summer resort evolution. If Newport developed its marble palaces and merchant princes and Bar Harbor its sprawling chateaux and Morgan partners, Dublin in a quieter way eventually acquired its commodious if unobtrusive Shingle Style mansions, China-Trade heiresses, and a few railroad magnates; the simple life gave way to greater formality as the New Hampshire resort developed. Newport, Bar Harbor, and Lenox, as Amory points out, each passed through an "intellectual phase," but Dublin—even at its zenith as a resort—retained the elevated intellectual aura that characterized its origins. In the earliest stages of resort development, the so-called "boarding house period"—in many ways the most

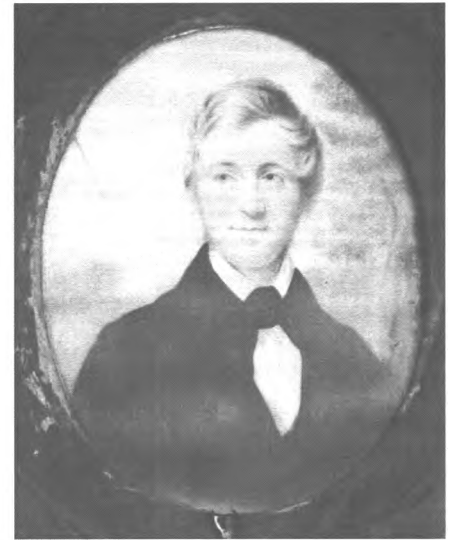
innocent and appealing of them—while it was artists such as Thomas Cole and Frederick Church who were discovering Bar Harbor, it was primarily the writers who "found" Dublin. Or rather, they found Dublin by first exploring its backdrop and great natural landmark, Mount Monadnock.

The Grand Monadnock, at slightly over three thousand feet, is scarcely "grand" as eastern mountains go, but its lonely "dark brow" exerted—and still exerts—an almost magical fascination far beyond its relatively modest elevation in the Appalachian range. It is the only point where on a clear day all six New England states are visible at once. Visible also to Bostonians as a distant and brooding landmark on the horizon, Monadnock came to loom large in the consciousness of the mid-nineteenth century writers who were in the forefront of the literary "flowering of New England." The Transcendental poets of the 1840s, Emerson, Thoreau, Channing, and others, "discovered" Monadnock, as they were freshly discovering the romance of rural life and the idyllic and picturesque in Nature. Not only did the mountain fit into the Transcendentalists' romantic view of the inherent harmony of all things in the life of Nature, but its majestic isolation seemed to embody their mystical belief in individualism and the indwelling of God in Nature. In a philosophy that regarded individual intuition as the highest form of knowledge, the presence of Monadnock became a manifestation of "the soul's sense of things divine."

As the poets publicized the mountain—



Cheshire Railroad Locomotive, the "Jaffrey." From the Keene and Cheshire County (NH) Historical Photos' photostream:
< <http://www.flickr.com/people/keenepubliclibrary/> >



Photos from left to right: Henry David Thoreau,
William Ellery Channing II, Ralph Waldo Emerson

unintentionally perhaps—their contemporaries were improving roads and building railroads. The Boston and Albany line was completed through Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in the 1840s, thirty miles from Monadnock. An extension, the Cheshire Railroad, was opened northwest through Winchendon and Troy to Keene in 1848, carrying weekend and summer excursionists virtually to the foothills west of the mountain.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, as early as 1838, saw distant Monadnock as “a sapphire cloud against the sky.” Henry David Thoreau was struck by its “masculine front” and “mystic solitude” when he climbed the mountain in 1844, the first of four walking expeditions he made there. Ralph Waldo Emerson, spare apostle of the Transcendentalists, published his epic poem “Monadnoc” in 1847, two years after he first ascended the summit: “where the airy citadel o’erlooks the surging landscape’s swell.” Both Emerson and Thoreau were inveterate walkers and hikers, who viewed the poet in the abstract—and themselves in particular—as Adam in the Garden, his power awakened by the tonic of Nature. For the creative man seeking real intellectual and artistic achievement, Emerson in his epic poem saw Monadnock as a magnet of unparalleled power.

The mountain indeed figured in the poems, essays, and journals of almost all the eminent New England writers of the day. John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem “Monadnock from Wachusett” appeared in 1862; James Russell Lowell spoke of it in his poem

“Appledore” in 1851, Oliver Wendell Holmes in his breakfast table essays, and in *Moby Dick* Herman Melville likened it to the White Whale’s hump. Thoreau’s friend and biographer, the poet William Ellery Channing, nephew and namesake of the founder of Unitarianism, included several poems to Monadnock in his book *The Wanderer*, published in 1871. Thoreau himself spoke from the vantage point of one who must have been familiar with the mountain from birth, as his mother Cynthia Dunbar was a native of neighboring Keene, where his grandfather had been a Congregational minister. In a later day, Rudyard Kipling, gazing at Monadnock from his Vermont retreat, found it “healing and full of quiet.” As a young clergyman, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, one day to become a grand old man of the Dublin summer colony, viewed the mountain at close range—and may have climbed it—when he came to preach at nearby Walpole, New Hampshire, in 1847 or during his “botanical walks” of the same period. But it was due primarily to Thoreau’s journals and Emerson’s widely read epic that the mountain owed its notoriety. Two decades after the publication of “Monadnoc,” the abolitionist preacher, the Reverend Thomas Starr King, chronicler of the White Mountains, claimed that “the genius of Mr. Emerson made it the noblest mountain in literature.”

Well before its literary eminence and easy accessibility by railroad, hardy hikers and climbers came to scale its summit—and it was only the hardest. To reach Monadnock from Boston, travelers had to

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The Halfway House hotel on the Jaffrey side of Monadnock, built in 1858 by Moses Cudworth of Rindge



A party on top of Monadnock c.1890

endure an arduous expedition, either on foot—as Thoreau did on his first journey—or by horseback over the rough terrain of the Third New Hampshire Turnpike through Jaffrey. An early guidebook, James G. Carter's 1831 *Geography of New Hampshire*, included "the celebrated Grand Monadnock," but added discouragingly that "it is very tiresome to walk to the top of it, though people often do, for the sake of the wide prospect which they can there behold." Before the railroads made it a tourist attraction, Monadnock was already a favorite place for Sunday outings by parties of local young people carrying picnic lunches and blueberry baskets. And there were other more daring diversions. In 1823, one Josiah Amidon advertised the "Grand Monadnock Hotel" near the summit, or, as he added ingenuously, "something like a hotel"—townspeople called it a "shantee"—where he was licensed to "mix and sell all kinds of Spiritous liquors." Blueberries must have been more popular, because the venture lasted no more than a year or two. The carved graffiti on boulders at the top can be dated as far back as about 1802, and fifty years later

Thoreau lamented the proliferation of "engravers" as he called them. By the summer of 1859, the editor of the *Peterborough Transcript* reported, "parties are visiting old Monadnock more than usual this year. We understand there are nearly a hundred per day who ascend to the top."

The idealization of Monadnock was only one small manifestation of the widespread cultural and literary awakening of the first half of the 19th century, that "flowering of New England" centered in Boston and Concord, but prevalent to a lesser extent in the rest of the country as well. It was part of America's growing up, of finding its own particular national identity, not only in the intellectual realm, but in almost every aspect of civilized life—education, the arts and architecture, industry, in the improvement in the comforts and amenities of life and of greater wealth and leisure to enjoy them. Dublin's own awakening, referred to by past orators and town historians as its "Golden Age," paralleled both that of New England and of neighboring New Hampshire towns.

"Kipling in Vermont" a talk by our own John W. Harris



WINTER POTLUCK SUPPER

Friday, March 2nd at 6:00 pm

in the Vestry of the Dublin Community Church

Please bring a main dish,
vegetable dish, salad or desert.

Snow Date: March 3rd