

# Dublin Historical Society

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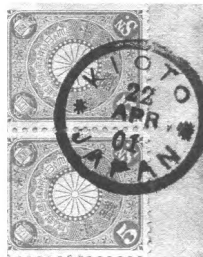
August 2014

## Joseph and Corinna Smith in Japan

Compiled by Lisa Foote

Some projects await attention for a long time. In 1990 Jessie Hale gave DHS the letters and diaries written by her grandparents, the Joseph Lindon Smiths, during their four month stay in Japan in 1901. We heartily thank Rosemary Mack for cheerfully volunteering her time and effort over the last year to decipher and transcribe the cramped handwriting and the phonetic spelling of Japanese terms and names therein, giving us the opportunity to share the following excerpts.

*Joseph Lindon Smith, a member of the Dublin Art Colony, and his wife Corinna traveled to Japan in 1901; the trip was not a conventional grand tour, visiting historic and scenic sights, but rather a working "vacation." As evidenced by a clipping in the diary, listed among the passengers arriving in Yokohama on the ocean liner S.S. Nippon Maru were a "Mr. Jas [sic] Smith and wife. Mr Smith is a Boston artist who comes to make studies of the temple architecture of Japan . . ."*



Postage stamp from one of Joe's letters.

*Joe and Corinna would make extended stays in Kyoto, Nara, Kamakura, and Nikko in order for Joe to paint local artwork and architecture. In each place the routine of their days followed a predictable pattern. Joe would paint in the morning, often accompanied by Corinna; they would return to the hotel for tiffin (lunch); Joe would paint again in the afternoon, usually at a second location, then return to the hotel for dinner. Every night curio dealers would visit their hotel room, offering items for sale. Many of the articles purchased would decorate the house on Loon Point in Dublin for the rest of their lives.*

(All images are from JLS/CHS diary/album at archives, unless otherwise noted.)



Joe Smith traveling by rikisha in Japan, 1901.



Joe (far right) and Corinna Smith (third from left) pose for a professional photo taken in Kamakura with friends Mr. Payne, the Whitneys, and their friends the McGraths. Joe bought the hats for the occasion.

## PURCHASES

March 28 [1901]

... Corinna begins to pick up the language just as she did Arabic, the same methods, when an unfortunate Antiquity, silk or bamboo merchant, appears in our rooms after dinner to sell his wares. She takes scant notice of his things but opens her book and launches out at him, question upon question, as she used to do with Dowe. She is already of great assistance in parting with one's money in fascinating shops we have visited.

Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>

Our steady evening antiquity man turned up as usual. Corinna played him as a fisherman does a salmon and landed a fine hair pin at a great reduction. She caused him to laugh outright at some of her sallies. She picks up the language amazingly.

March 30

Good dinner and pleasant company. Silk merchant calls with dainty rolls of crapes [sic] to be seen by lamplight and the faithful antiquity vendor to wind up the day. We fall victim to a very good Kakemono [hanging scroll] and go to sleep under the protecting influence of the gay-god Hotei portrayed upon it.

Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>

We walked home and stopped half an hour at our friend's the screen Antiquarian, who was glad to see us. ... He continues to harp on "One price only" but as he of his own accord has come down on the big screen we want so much. "Things will mend" we feel sure. Corinna kept track of the time and dragged me forth without a bargain culminating and with the now familiar remark of "Myonichu" (tomorrow) we took our departure.

After dinner "He" appeared but we were firm in refusing to trade though he offered more tempting bargains than usual. This refusal is for the good of both parties, to keep him from considering us "dead easy" game and us from a habit of nightly purchase.

Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>

We hung up some of the draperies which we bought last night and the room gets more tone to it every day. The color of the big Moronubu screen, the Kakemonos on the walls transform the room entirely from its original aspect.

Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup>

Bought ... for myself a Buddha, a Kakemono, a Kimono, a Chinese bell, a pipe, 3 old combs and a sword guard in

spite of having resolved this morning to buy nothing more in Kyoto.

Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>

I drifted down the long street after work was over, scented an Antiquity shop and bought some nice prints and three splendid Kakemonos, which have this minute arrived. The shop keeper coming in with a lighted lantern with my purchases wrapped up carefully in newspapers to keep them from the rain.

May 26

We have found some paper fish that are used on all holidays in Japan which are strung on a pole and the wind fills their mouths and moves them through the air as if they were swimming. They take up no room and we have bought quite a number. They will be just the thing to fly the afternoon of our play and in Kyoto with our friend at the Yaami, Ishigawa, we will buy the native costumes and local things we need. We have made a list and keep adding to it.

Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>

... A grand collection of antiquities of various sorts was brought in by Kawamura who has gotten a new lease of [sic] life during our absence and staggers up the hill with heavy laden handkerchiefs. Tonight we purchased some theatrical properties for plays in Dublin. Corinna made her usual heartless attack on his asking price for these masks and Daimyo's cap and succeeded in getting him down two thirds.

Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup>

Kawamura came and for the first time in his experience with us left our door with his handkerchiefs undone, much to our regret.

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*Their letters and diary entries are effusive in describing the local color.*

## YOKOHAMA

We were warmly welcomed here at the "Grand Hotel". . . the nicest little room in the house was given us—No. 40—where from its four sunny windows we see a thoroughly Japanese scene, like a picture—a Temple, an old tree, a canal, mountains, boats and people!

March 12

Rows of these shoes or sabots lie in pairs before the low ceilinged shops—like the Cairo shops—and dealer and purchasers squat around on the straw mats, in the semi darkness of the immaculate and orderly interior. All the shops are at-



Yokohama Archives of History

The Grand Hotel in the seaport town of Yokohama.

tractive, the wares most becomingly arranged and tempting, like the Orient everywhere. I always want grain, glue—spices, twine, pottery and meats when displayed with such art and skill as the oriental shows. Fluttering paper signs, with great black, broadly executed lettering give wonderfull [sic] piquancy to the scene and I blush to think of similar signs at home at our grocer's and butcher's doors and how poor and mean and inartistic they are in comparison.



Wooden shoes of theater patrons left in pairs outside a theater in Tokyo.

## KYOTO

Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>

9 A.M. arrived in Kyoto. Took rikishas and came up steep hill to Yaami's Hotel. A splendid situation. Were given a corner room on the 2nd floor with a balcony. Kyoto spread out below us and mountains beyond. Magnificent old trees to right of us with the roof of Temple Chion-in showing. Pretty garden belonging to hotel. Gold fish in the pond. Kyoto streets and the general appearance of people and houses seems untouched by any foreign influence. Gay with flags and fluttering signs. Full of crowds, it is all most



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

A curio shop circa 1900.

picturesque. Curio shops abound and like all their shops are most inviting and tempting. Few if any English signs greet the eye and few foreigners are seen. We are objects of great curiosity and amusement apparently. I make a sketch from our balcony. Temples and pagodas dot the hillsides of the town and across the plain at the base of the opposite hills lie others nestled in the woods

Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>

Just over the bridge we came up with a procession, semi-civic, semi-official, entirely ridiculous. Men bearing crimson banners in costumes of crimson rags and long fluttering rags of the same color on their hats proceeded others in rikishas clothed in pale lavender robes. Other men with high banners led the procession and in the middle cavorted a weird vermillion caterpillar with a truly hideous head, 10 human legs appearing below. Little paper flags with bamboo handles were carried in great bunches by boys and men and distributed freely to the outstretched hands of the populace and we came in for a share. Corinna gave her flags away to two little women with back babies who looked wistfully at them. Our talkative waiter at the hotel told us the holiday was in celebration of the first Emperor Jimmu's accession to the throne.

Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>

The streets were gay and pretty with lanterns as we came home [from dinner at a Japanese merchant's home] and the full moon rode in the sky. Round the budding [cherry] tree stood many people and again the braziers were burning. In what other land would crowds of people be pleased and contented in enjoying the natural phenomenon of Spring? . . . we go to bed agreeing that life would soon become extinct in us if we persisted in dining out frequently in Kyoto a la Japanese.



[no date]

In the morning I am working at a Temple called Nishi Hongwanji in the so called "State Apartments" where are some of the finest examples of the "Old Masters" of Japan. In the largest room, . . . I am painting a study of almost the entire length of one side, a series of splendid panels, deep gold background with an enormous rugged pine tree and storks by Kano Hidenobu . . .

Sitting on the clean matting in the stillness of the empty deep toned room, with a faint sound of far off chanting by the priests and in an enchanting little garden, the song of birds, I feel that my life is as happy as possible to imagine. It is good to sit and work there in this retreat and to hear Corinna turn the leaves of her Arabic books as she sits studying in the sunlight of the little garden.

**Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>**

After tiffin went with Miss Wales and Mrs. Noyce to see a great procession at Higashi Hongwanji of 1,000 Buddhist high priests from all parts of Japan, including Count Otan who corresponds to the Pope in position. It was really a superb sight. The extensive temple grounds were packed, 10,000 people or more. We were fortunate in being admitted to the temple itself by the priests as their guests and were given good seats, from which we saw the procession in all its details. Costumes of splendid brocades! After this came an interesting dance performed by some male dancers of the Imperial household who alone do this particular performance and were contributed to the festival by the Emperor. . . . on the outskirts where a procession of the swellest geisha girls was taking place in a narrow street lined with temporary stands the whole length . . . with their doll like faces expressionless and hardly human. Men walked behind them holding great paper umbrellas over their heads and amas walked beside them perfecting the details of their costumes with a pinch here and a pull there and the crowd looked on quite fascinated apparently. The girls looked like great beautiful moth millers or butterflies.

**NARA**

**May 8**

We are now in Nara, living in a native inn, and it is a delightful experience only I cannot get use[d] to the nightly caperings and gnawings of the rats.

Nothing but paper divides ours from our neighbor's rooms and if he has a mind to smoke or sing at wee small hours of morning, we share the pleasure with him as we do his pretty snoring. His rats are ours, too, it is all simple commonism, which would so please George Brush . . .

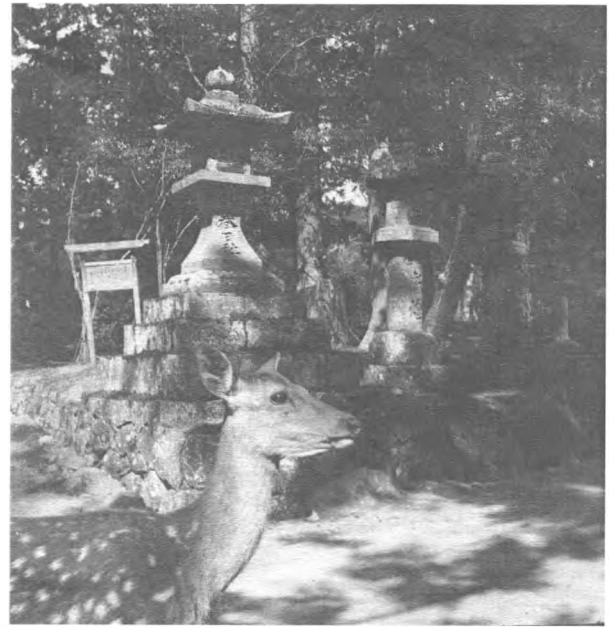
**Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>**

Was bitten by a rat in the early hours of the morning. These night parties of rats are getting serious.

On our way home we were invited to join in a game of tennis being played on the common by some professors of the Normal school here. Of course we accepted and enjoyed it very much. Their balls were heavy rubber ones, the rackets fairly good and the court passable. We did not understand their scoring but they used the English terms. We received considerable applause from some boys watching, especially Corinna, for it seemed to surprise them that a girl could put the ball where a man could not return it.

**Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>**

Shall we ever forget the beautiful long avenues of stately cryptomeria with the groups of deer under them and the multitudes of moss covered lanterns which line the way? Or in the dim light of the Museum the ancient idols of remote antiquity, with the placid expression and wonderful inward look of the eyes, the sweet curve of the mouth and the sentiment expressed in the graceful fingers?



A deer seeking the shade of cypress trees in Nara.

**NIKKO**

**Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup>**

Today after sixteen days of gloom the sun shone again at Nikko, it certainly makes a difference but I am not at all sure that the landscape is not more imposing when the mists simplify the forms . . . After tea I took a walk along the river to see the 100 Buddhas, a furry lot of old fat toads, the moss-growing in great profession on the top of their

heads and shoulders and in their laps. They looked like disreputable old creatures with green hair, and wearing fur capes. The landscape at this place was very fine and the river rushes through walls of rock of beautiful color.

## EVENTS

*A break in the Smiths' routine was usually precipitated by an invitation to an event from one of their many acquaintances, both Japanese and Western.*

*Baron Kuki, former director of the Ueno Museum in Tokyo, invited Joe to the Koya-San Monastery during the Crown Prince's visit when the monks displayed their finest treasures from their storehouses.*

*En route Joe and Baron Kuki stopped at an inn.*

May 23

At Hashimoto we took lunch at the inn, receiving callers in a steady stream. . . . Such fun it was to have these bowing visitors seated in rows before us while we plied the merry chopsticks and partook of rice, fish, fish soup, fried fish, sake, rice, raw fish, chopped up seaweed, rice, sake, baked fish, cold flabby gobs of mush made of beans, acorns and a variety too numerous to mention and too dreadful to eat, inviting only to the eye.

*[later, at the monastery where the monks were vegetarian]*

More distinguished callers while we ate our dinner, so many in fact and so constant that it was with the greatest difficulty that Kuki San and I were able to smuggle into our mouths some forbidden sustenance in the form of tinned hashed beef which with forethought he had brought up with him from Nara.

*Friends from the US included the Schuylers, Mitchells, Perrys, and Mrs. Franklin MacVeagh and her son Eames of Dublin who were. . .*

"on their way home from India etc. They about gobbled us up so glad to see friendly faces and almost every evening we have spent in their rooms talking of Dublin and Constantinople." Mrs MacVeagh sent a telegram "urging us to come to the [Emporer's] Garden party and suggesting another picture. She has already given me an order to paint Fugi.[sic]"

*The Schuylers and the Mitchells included the Smiths in a river rafting trip.*

Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>

. . . took rikishas for Nijo station where we were to meet the Mitchells and Schuylers for the excursion to the Rapids . .

. . We were in the train about an hour up the narrow gorge down which we were to plunge in the turbulent stream and we watched with interest the great dragon like rafts of logs and the boys skillfully guiding them in the foam. Upon dismounting from the train we walked through pleasant fields of barley. The hills all about bathed in a most beautiful blue haze and everything very fresh and sweet. Without delay we scrambled down the bank when we reached the river and over the high sides of the boat awaiting us.. About 20 feet long and flat bottom. We sat in chairs in the waist and the steersman in the stern, three men forward completing the crew, two rowing on the starboard side and the other in the bow with a long bamboo pole. For ¼ of a mile the river ran smooth until we got past the green fields and turned sharp to the left down into the gorge and down it was! The first plunge was very thrilling and more exciting became each succeeding one. The skill of the boatmen was very great. The power of the water, the noise and the flying foam, the ugly looking rocks appearing on all sides of us and very close, lent a feeling of danger which of course added to our pleasure. We enjoyed this sport for an hour and a half and where we were not in the midst of some particularly turbulent water found time to admire the beautiful precipitous slopes of the mountains on either side. Exquisitely colored rocks running over with lovely mosses, fern and a great variety [?] of other plant life. Azalias [sic] in partial bloom, armies of cryptomeria marching in stately ranks to scale the heights and here and there the picturesque and wayward pine tree . . .

*The Perrys—"Took tea with the Perrys. Strange to see a Cabot face way off here!"—made arrangements to attend the Shinto fire walking ceremony.*

Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>

At breakfast we invited Eames MacVeagh to go with us to Tokio . . .

At four we took the carriage . . . to Kanda, that part of the city where the temple was in which the Shinto miracle of fire walking was to be performed. The small temple yard was very crowded already but we pushed manfully through the outskirts of the throng and the magic name of "Perry San" immediately gave us access to the presence of the high priest who received us graciously and invited us into an enclosure reserved for infidels. Here we sat a long long time and were joined finally by the Perrys with the Mitchells and Schuylers. A few other foreigners straggled in. Immediately before us on the ground lay the materials arranged for a fire—charcoal, wood and brush—about 4 feet wide by 16 long, and as an extra treat in the line of Miracles

was placed a ladder made of sabre blades. A priest walking up, this opened the festivity, then the dangerous looking ladder was removed and the fire lit. . . . The fire had been burning steadily and when it was quite dusk and the flames had for the most part disappeared the Miracle was about ready to be performed. Men holding fans with long bamboo handles kept the coals aglow and patted down the surface and at last when our patience with the Shinto gods was becoming somewhat exhausted six priests in long white robes, after a noisy prayer within the temple swaying back and forth the while as if to hypnotize themselves for the ordeal, slowly walked about the glowing bed of coals and with their incantations and uplifted arms striking fire from flint they were a weird enough spectacle. What looked like salt was thrown in small quantities at the fire and then the head priest, quite slowly with his arms held out before him, walked across the middle of the fire, followed by the other priests. The dense crowd by this time was surging back and

forth much excited. . . . After doing this three or four times the faithful, women and children as well as men walked across apparently without hurt. Just as a person started on his fiery promenade two of the priests struck fire from flints in front of his face shouting and two more at the opposite end gave him a little printed prayer to serve as balm for any inadvertent burn. At last an American went and this was too much for Corinna, who whipping off her shoes and stockings, stepped upon the glowing pathway amid gleeful cheers from the crowd and an especial fanning of the embers by the priests for her benefit she slowly marched across and so elated that at the end she turned and started back, but met in the middle some other pilgrims and had to retrace her steps. This gave her considerable experience and by the regular route she repeated her walk followed by her proud master and Eames. As a foreign lady had not before taken part in the Miracle it was a unique spectacle for the multitude who seemed to appreciate it.

### DHS UPCOMING EVENTS

(A POSTCARD REMINDER WILL FOLLOW)

- AUGUST 24:** Annual Meeting at 4 p.m. in the Fountain Arts Building at Dublin School: "Joseph Lindon Smith in the Valley of the Kings, 1905-1907," presented by Dennis O'Connor.
- AUGUST 25:** Private tour of the Joseph Lindon Smith art collection at Fitchburg Art Museum led by Dennis O'Connor. Please call 563-8545 to support DHS and participate in this special event. \$35
- SEPTEMBER 5:** Celebration of the gift of a cherry tree from the Japan-America Society as a living memorial to Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905.

### ACCESSIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of new material from generous donors.

Cheshire Medical Foundation presented an oil portrait, painted by Richard Whitney in 1978, of John Supple, founder of the precursor to Beech Hill Hospital. John Harris contributed a pastel rendering of Stonewall Farm by Roberta Ernst, as well as a book about the Sewall family's 19<sup>th</sup> century ties to shipping in Maine. Liz Meryman sent a new publication about Abbott Thayer and his coloration theories. We gained a wide array of photographs from Sharron Monaghan, Rusty Bastedo, Emmanuel Church, Pat Walker, Nancy Reimer and Susannah Parish.

Jud Hale has donated the handwritten manuscripts of his three books: *Inside New England*, *The Education of a Yankee*, and *Discovering Our Faraway Brother*. Will Schaefer shared the collection of information he has gathered about Col. F. E. Adams, a WWI veteran buried here. William Morgan supplemented the collection of his publications. Julie Crocker gave us vintage photographs of Jubilee Farm and postcards of the village. Jacqueline Cavanaugh contributed

*The Dunlap Cabinetmakers* with measured drawings by John Nelson. A copy of the new book, *Stonlea*, is in our collection thanks to Bauhan Publishing, LLC.

Purchases include 4 postcards from Christine Shook to her father Hildreth Allison; an envelope showing the letterhead for Appleton House, aka the Leffingwell Hotel; and a menu of the Blue Dragon Food Shoppe, in which a cup of coffee or a ham sandwich cost 10 cents.

Please consider sharing Dublin-related materials with DHS. If you are unsure, bring it to the archives to show us. We can scan photos, if they are mounted in scrapbooks or albums or if you wish to keep the originals.

### IN MEMORIUM

The Society reports with great sorrow the recent loss of **Brian McDonald** and **Story Wright**, and we extend our condolences to their families.