

Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444

• Founded 1920

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SUMMER MEETING

Friday, August 11.

Henry Lee, a member of the Dublin Historical Society who is also President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, will be the speaker at our summer meeting on the evening of Friday, August 11.

Reminders giving time and place will be mailed later, but please save the date!

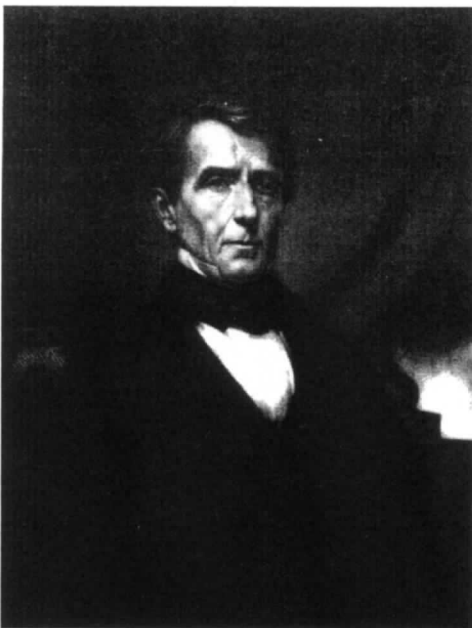
Levi Leonard and the Dublin Schools

"If I am not mistaken, Mr. President and friends, it was in this town that the boy in the field, when tauntingly interrogated by a passing stranger with the inquiry, 'What do you raise on these barren hills?' aptly responded, 'Our soil is rather hard and cold and broken, and we can raise little else; so we build schoolhouses and raise men.'"

So said one of the speakers at the Centennial celebration in 1852. Another speaker compared the schools of 1852 to those of 1817, when he had been a Dublin student. He credited the improvements to the leadership of the Rev. Levi Washburn Leonard, to whose knowledge, character and exertions he ascribed the rise of Dublin's schools "to their present eminent condition."

Levi Leonard had come to Dublin in 1820 as the Town's third minister. His entire ministry - over 33 years - was spent here, during which he must have spent as much of his time on the improvement of education as on a clergyman's ordinary duties. From 1821 to 1853 he served as chairman of the Superintending School Committee, in which capacity he not only interviewed and examined prospective teachers for the summer and winter schools, but was a frequent visitor to all ten of the one-room schoolhouses. The preacher at Leonard's funeral said of him:

"For more than thirty years, alike in summer's heat and winter's cold, he saw these children in their several schools. He knew what they studied; he watched their progress; he cared for them with a parental solicitude, as though in some sense they were a household entrusted to his influence. Every child knew him and was glad to see him - for he never went away without leaving some word of encouragement."



The Rev. Levi Washburn Leonard D.D.
(1790-1864)

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Leonard was born in Bridgewater, Mass., in 1790. He graduated from Harvard in 1815, and received his divinity degree there in 1818. For the next two years he taught at Bridgewater Academy, so that he came to Dublin with some practical teaching experience. He was much influenced by Horace Mann, the educational reformer, and quoted frequently from Mann's annual reports as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education.

Levi Leonard as a Clergyman

In addition to his educational work, Dr. Leonard served as minister of the First Congregational Church. His religious views, formed at the Harvard Divinity School, were those of a Unitarian, who believed in the perfectibility of man, and rejected the traditional Calvinist dogmas of original sin ("total depravity") and eternal punishment. Some of his flock, clinging to the old doctrines, seceded in 1827 to form the Trinitarian Congregational Church, which survived as a separate body into the 1950's.

In addition to his preaching, Dr. Leonard started a Sabbath School in 1823.

Throughout his years in Dublin, Dr. Leonard lived in what is now the Wenigmann's house at the east end of Old Common Road. It was there that he founded, in 1822, the Dublin Juvenile Library, the first free public library in the United States. (The Peterborough Library, founded in 1828 by the Rev. Abiel Abbot as the Juvenile Library, was the first free public library to be supported by taxation.)

At the celebration of Dublin's centennial in 1852, his services to the Town as minister, teacher and friend were extolled by many of the speakers. He subsequently wrote the first history of Dublin, published in 1855.

Leonard's own theories of education are set forth at length in the annual reports of the Superintending School Committee, which in those days were read aloud at Town Meeting. The surviving reports (they were first printed in 1843) are also replete with comments and statistics on the state of the schools in Dublin, derived from records kept by individual teachers. The earliest of these teachers' records date from 1822, the year after Leonard's appointment as chairman of the school committee. From the coincidence in dates, and from his known fondness for lists and statistics, we may infer that it was Leonard who instituted the keeping of these records and prescribed their form.

Among the things he cared about was the choice of textbooks. The Superintending School Committee recommended books for the various grades and subjects, but, since each child had to supply his own books, not all were studying the same ones. In the annual report of the Superintending School Committee for 1843, Leonard wrote,

"The want of uniformity in books, is a hindrance to progress that we have long labored in vain wholly to correct. Other books than such as have been recommended have been approved for pupils in the higher branches, but different books on the same subject should not be tolerated."

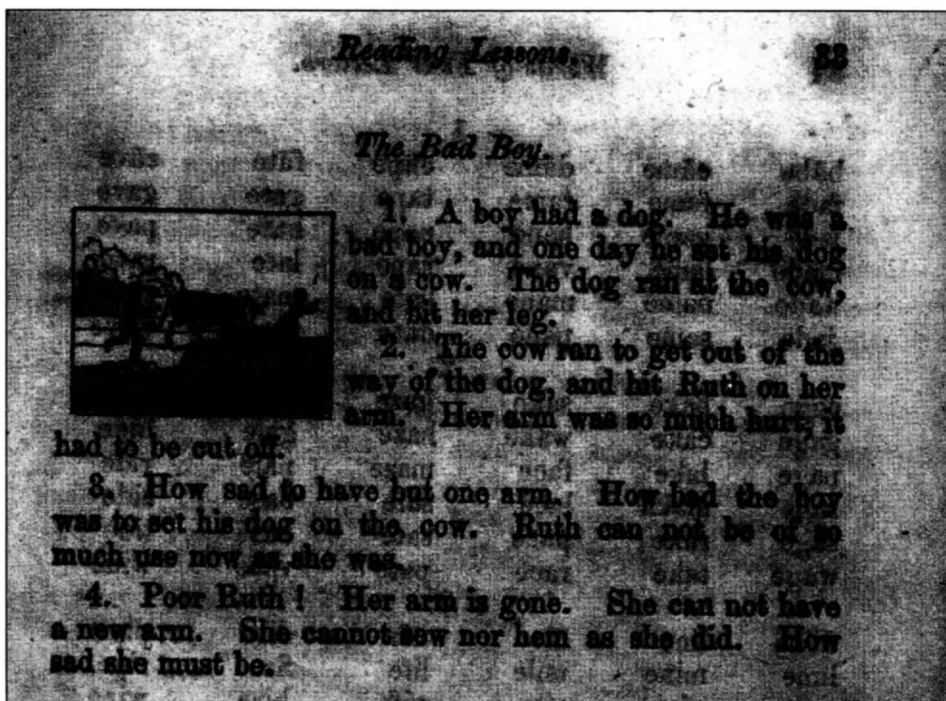
When acquiring the recommended textbooks threatened hardship to some of the poorer families, Leonard would often supply the books himself.

In addition, he was himself an author of text books. In 1826, he compiled *The Literary and Scientific Class Book*, a selection intended to combine instruction in literature and science with practice in reading. This was followed in 1829 by the *Sequel to Easy Lessons*, a reader aimed at younger children.

In 1835 he first published *The North American Spelling Book*, his most commercially successful work, which was widely used throughout New England. It went through many editions, and was

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An excerpt from Levi Leonard's *North American Spelling Book*. All the words are of one syllable, but it's not quite *The Cat in the Hat*.



still being used in the Dublin schools in 1893. The *Spelling Book* was really a first reader, beginning with two-letter words, then moving to three-letter words and so on to words of five and six syllables. Phonetics and correct pronunciation were stressed throughout.

His recommendations to teachers strike us as rather progressive. For very young children, he preferred blocks or cards to books, and did not believe in teaching the alphabet by rote.

"Show the child one letter, o, for instance, and when it can be readily distinguished, take x. As soon as both have become familiar, place them together, o at the left hand of x, and say, o x, ox; then require the child to repeat both the letters and the word, looking at them with close attention. Next take the letter b, and when the child can distinguish it from o and x, place it before those letters and say, b o x, box."

His interest in education led to the founding of the Dublin Common School Association, a sort of forerunner of the PTO. He was also among the moving

spirits of the Cheshire County Common School Association, which in 1845 began a series of teacher training Institutes, the first in the state and probably in the country.

The high standard to which Levi Leonard had brought the Dublin common schools was publicly recognized at the celebration of the Town's centennial in 1852. Solomon Piper, Dublin's Horatio Alger, contrasted the Dublin of 1852 with the town he had known in his youth, then best known as the home of the eccentric Parson Sprague:

"Now it is said that Dublin is the residence of Dr. Leonard, - Father Leonard, as some familiarly call him. They go on to say, that Dr. Leonard has done more to improve the moral and intellectual condition of those under his influence than any other clergyman within our knowledge. . . The common schools and schoolhouses are a model for all others."

— Nancy E. Campbell & John W. Harris

Note: An annotated version of this article is on file at the archives.

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL HOUSE

The Historical Society has arranged with Laura Scott, Curator at the Peterborough Historical Society and a former trustee of this Society, to catalogue the schoolhouse collection, so elegantly organized by Marney Bean last summer. This project is scheduled to start in late May or early June, depending on when the weather warms up.

We hope to be open again this year on Sundays in August, and by appointment on weekdays through October for interested schools and organizations.

Museum Accessions

We would like to thank **Robert McQuillen** for two recent gifts to the Society: a mess kit (folding knife, fork and spoon) and a wooden-handled knife 11-1/2" long, with leather sheath. Both were once owned by Cpl. Malachi Richardson and carried by him in the Civil War before his death at the battle of Cold Harbor in 1864. Malachi was a great-grandson of Abijah Richardson, builder of the Richardson homestead (now Ron and Cathy Lamontagne's house) on the Hancock Road.

The Society has purchased a small souvenir creamer with a scene of the Leffingwell Hotel. Souvenir china of this sort was popular around the turn of the century. This example was made for Henry D. Allison, and presumably sold at his store opposite the Town Hall.

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Recent Accessions

Jane Frothingham Hawkins has again added to our collection of Frothingham family papers, family photographs and other miscellaneous photographs. Jane has been most generous to the Society in the past 12 months.

Jill Nooney, a garden designer, who has been researching Dublin gardens for a number of months, recently sent us some photocopies of Dublin buildings for our historic house collection.

Other welcome gifts have come from **Marney Bean, Roy Behrens, Jerald Brown, Nancy Campbell, Myrtle Carr, Henry Lee, Philip Tussing** and **Linda Van Wyk**.

Credits

This issue of the Dublin Historical Society Newsletter
was edited by John Harris.

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