



Dublin Historical Society

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THE ORIGINS OF THE DUBLIN SUMMER COLONY, 1850s – 1890s



The only known photograph of the Abbott Thayer house. The gathering was for the wedding of Thayer's son, Gerald, in 1911.

Photograph by Henry D. Allison

DON'T FORGET...

The Annual Meeting will be on Thursday, August 14, at 8:00 p.m. at "Knollwood" (corner of Windmill Hill and the Upper Jaffrey Roads). Rusty Bastedo, a Society Trustee who is also N.H. State Curator, will speak on "New Hampshire Treasures Unearthed".

Over 50 members and guests gathered for William Bauban's talk at the Society's ninth winter potluck supper of the Dublin Historical Society, held this year on February 21. Bill was the principal author, fifteen years ago, of the nomination of some 150 Dublin houses to the National Register of Historic Places.

Highlights from Bill's talk follow.

Dublin's earliest summer residents were searching for the simple life. An extreme example, perhaps, was Abbott Thayer, Dublin's first significant artist. His cottage, was built for him (1888) by a pupil, Mary Amory Greene, on the site of Rosemary James' house. All-out exposure to fresh air, Thayer believed, was necessary for the health of the family.

Muralist Barry Faulkner, who lived and studied there, described the house as "a thin summer cottage, unsheathed, unplastered, with neither cellar nor plumbing, except a hand pump in the kitchen. . . . The family slept outdoors, winter and summer, under Adirondack shacks concealed behind bushes. The windows of the house stood open at all seasons except in blizzard or driving rain storm. In winter ice formed around the vegetables on the table, unless they were carefully drained." Faulkner went on: "Thayer shaped his life and the life of his family on Emerson, Audubon, and Monadnock. Monadnock was



Early simplicity: Dr. Hamilton Osgood's house, 1878. Dublin.
Photograph by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation

their totem, their fetish, the object of their adoration.”

Indeed, the summer colony traces its roots to an earlier period, when Emerson and other transcendentalist writers in the 1830s and 1840s came from Concord and Boston, from where Monadnock was visible in the distance (and vice versa). To them Monadnock had an almost mystical attraction alongside the peaceful expanse of Dublin Lake, the beautiful open countryside, and bracing fresh air. Thoreau climbed the mountain several times. To Hawthorne it was a “sapphire cloud against the sky.” Following on the heels of the writers, other professionals – doctors, professors and ministers – who yearned to get away from city life and return to all that was healthy and simple, were drawn to Mt. Monadnock and Dublin Lake.

After Thoreau and Emerson

Dublin's summer colony can trace its beginnings to a lack of water power to drive a mill economy. Summer boarders were the only means of increasing income for local farm families. Among these were the Townsends, who in the 1850s and 1860s owned what is now Brush Farm (bought in 1901 by the painter George de Forest Brush and still in his family.) One of the most popular boarding houses opened in 1857, at the Eli Morse Farm on the lake, now Louisa Spencer's. It is noteworthy

that Mrs. Morse – born Serena Appleton – was a cousin of two of the earliest summer visitors: Mrs. Copley Greene and Mrs. Caspar Crowninshield.

The Jackson Greenwood House on Main Street, now Dr. Hacker's, was an important boarding house. Greenwood's wife, born Hannah Piper, was one of a prominent family in 19th century Dublin. In 1854 and 1855 Mrs. Greenwood had as her summer boarder the Rev. Theodore Parker, a friend of Emerson and Thoreau and all the Boston-Concord Transcendentalists. Parker was a very important figure, kind of a Billy Graham of his day, and he was the first of a series of well-known writers, artists, and so forth, who were to summer in Dublin.

Across the road from Hannah Greenwood's was the house of her brother, Solomon Piper. His was technically the first “summer” house in Dublin. Solomon Piper was a local boy, a Horatio Alger type, son of a Dublin farmer. Solomon went down to Boston and made his fortune. He became head of a bank and a prosperous businessman. But Dublin drew him back for its magical summers. The old house in the village which he renovated for summer use for his family, is now the General Store.

A fashion for private summer houses grew out of the boarding house era, prompted by the prosperity just after the Civil War. In the late 1860s, Prof. Lewis B. Monroe of Boston was the first out-of-towner to buy his own summer house, a farm on the Old Harrisville Road.

The Earliest Summer Cottages

In 1872 Mrs. John Singleton Copley Greene built the first cottage for summer use, also on the Old Harrisville Road. Mrs. Greene was a young widow when she first came to Dublin as a friend of the Monroes. She eventually built four houses in Dublin, the last three after 1880. In that year she made a purchase which was to provide a focus for the growing summer colony. She acquired the old Phillips farm, comprising most of the land on the south side of Dublin Lake. This was a huge tract, and what Mrs. Greene did was to parcel out pieces of it to her friends for a dollar each.

Dr. and Mrs. Hamilton Osgood, friends of Prof. Monroe and Mrs. Greene, built the second summer house in Dublin (1878), now the Colliers'. In style these 1870s houses were very simple – a home-

grown adaptation of Greek revival. Mrs. Osgood, born Margaret Pearmain, was the daughter of a wealthy banker in Boston, and the Osgoods, unlike their Dublin summer house, were cosmopolitan people. One Osgood daughter, Molly, married Robert Erskine Childers who wrote *The Riddle of the Sands*. Childers became involved in the Irish civil war of the early 1920s, and was captured and executed. Ironically his son, Mrs. Osgood's grandson, became President of Ireland.

Julien and Mary McKee's house (1873), also of this period, was never mentioned in the old history of Dublin as one of the key, early, summer houses, perhaps because it had "commercial" overtones. It was opened as a B & B called "Lakeview" by a man named James Josselyn who ran ads in the local papers for "excursions and boating" on Dublin Lake. Neither Josselyn nor his mentor, Livingston Stone, were considered part of the local "establishment."

"Lakeview" was moved four times: from the lake down the Old Marlborough Road, near where the Brooks' house "Owlwood" is now. Prof. Ernest Henderson moved it to its present location when he built "Owlwood" (1888), and changed its name to "Redwood Cottage". It is a basic summer cottage, vernacular, of the period. The local carpenters were just building what they knew. But as a gesture to the Gothic, which was just coming in, the gable is a little more pointed, sharper, than you see, for example on the Scribner house on Main Street.

The Eighteen-Eighties and after

The turning point both in the summer colony and in architectural style came in about 1880 and the decade that followed. For a gothic confection, we have to look to the Town Hall (1881-1882), which was in the forefront of its time in more than architecture. Mrs. Greene, her friend General Crowninshield, and other summer residents all contributed to the cost. To design it, they hired a young Boston architect, Arthur Rotch. This was the beginning of a trend to more ambitious buildings, often designed by well-known architects



The much-moved "Lakeview" before the last remodeling.
Photographer unknown

from Boston or New York.

"Auf der Höhe", or "On the Heights", (1883) was the first house built by Raphael Pumpelly on the site of "Pompelia". A mining engineer and Harvard professor, Pumpelly came to Dublin probably because of his friendship with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the famous minister, writer and friend of Emerson and the Transcendentalists, who introduced Emily Dickinson's poems to the world.

Before departure on one of his expeditions to Central Asia, Pumpelly picked his site above the lake, drove in stakes to mark the outline, and on his return found the home finished with dinner on the table. "Auf der Höhe", possibly designed by the noted architect Charles E. McKim, burned down in 1918. It was replaced by "Pompelia", designed by Boston architect Walter Atherton as a Tuscan villa — totally impractical for the climate, but wonderful and romantic when seen from across the lake. This was the last big summer house (1926) built in Dublin.

Nearby on Snow Hill is the imposing "cottage" of Beekman and Elizabeth Pool, built in 1888 by the Misses Ida and Ellen Mason of Newport, Rhode Island. The architect of this house was A.W. Longfellow of Portland, Maine, nephew of the poet. The Mason sisters were ardent admirers of Professor Pumpelly, who had a long beard

and looked a bit like Santa Claus. To watch him out strolling, they put in a bay window. Later, when the Pools moved here year-round, they took off the third floor to meet the realities of winter heating.

"The Thistles", until recently Lorna Trowbridge's, was built in 1888 by Mary Bradford Foote, headmistress of a Cambridge girls' school. She built it not for herself but for her infant nephew, George Luther Foote, later a prominent musician and composer. Miss Foote got her friend, the English architect Henry Vaughan, to design it. The house was in the Foote family for many, many years.

Among other stylish Victorian summer "cottages" of the 1880s were "Fairview", the Meryman house (1883); "Pinehurst" (1886), west of the lake, now Peter Pap's; and on the eastern hills "Stonehenge" (1889), now Professor Kilson's. Two of the most ambitious, signaling greater wealth on the summer

scene, were "Morelands" (1889), now the Loring Catlins', and "Knollwood", built in 1899 by Franklin MacVeagh, later Secretary of the Treasury, and now the Petrones'.

As the cottages grew larger and more elaborate, the original attractions – fresh air and open hill-sides – were not forgotten. Margaret Pearmain Welch, niece of Mrs. Hamilton Osgood, wrote of long-ago memories: "As the carriage from Harrisville depot came up the long hill toward the . . . house, the longed for, unforgotten sight of Monadnock spread before us, a paradise where summers seemed to stretch timelessly, a wonderful world without boundaries."

— William L. Bauban

The author wishes to thank Nancy Handy for her help in the writing of this article.

Society News

From The Schoolhouse Museum . . .

The museum will be open every Sunday during the month of August from 1 to 4 p.m.

Nancy E. Campbell has given the museum another piece of **souvenir china**. This is a decorative plate showing Dublin Village, Monadnock Mountain and Dublin Lake from the air. The plate was made for "The Dublin Hill Billies", Dublin's 4-H Group. Does anybody know anything about the group?

From the Archives . . .

Raymond and Alice Fiske Ellis have continued their generosity to the Society, with items relating to the Ellis family, the Town's Bicentennial, and post cards and photographs of Dublin people and buildings.

The Jaffrey Historical Society has given us the papers and photographs relating to Gene Gowing's World War I service which were the basis of an article in the May newsletter.

Louisa Spencer has added to her previous gifts a book, *World Peace Through World Law*, of which her father, Grenville Clark, was co-author; an article from *Fortune Magazine* about her father and his accomplishments; and miscellaneous correspondence, early photographs and plans of the Eli Morse property.

An 1862 keepsake album has been given to the Society by **William E. Yoc**. Other welcome gifts have come from **Nancy E. Campbell, Loring Catlin, Jr., David Godine and Clarissa M. Silitch**. To all of them our thanks.



C R E D I T S

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

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