



# Dublin Historical Society

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*Henry Darracott Allison*

## ENTREPRENEUR AND PUBLIC SERVANT

Henry Darracott Allison (1869-1963) was a master of old-school penmanship, as the above example shows. According to one source, he was "New Hampshire's outstanding calligrapher" in the early 1960's, and it is doubtful whether anyone could match him today. He was teaching handwriting in Dublin in the 1890's, and for the rest of his life was in demand as calligrapher for citations and the like. He was proud of this skill, and had his signature, complete with flourishes, cast in bronze on his headstone in the Dublin cemetery.

Penmanship, however, was one of Henry Allison's minor accomplishments. Were it not for him, the history of Dublin in the last hundred years would be the poorer. His book, *Dublin Days Old and New*, records the events and personalities observed by him in the course of a long and active life. In addition, his many, many photographs, mostly taken on glass plates in the late 1890's and the early 1900's, record the look of the Town and its buildings at a time when photographers were few.

In addition to his views of Dublin scenery, and of many of the summer houses, he took a number of pictures in Abbott Thayer's studio. Some of Allison's photographs of Thayer's models enabled Thayer to paint in the sitter's absence. A collection of glass negatives taken in Thayer's studio was later given by his son, Elliott, to the Currier Gallery in Manchester. Both the Dublin Public Library and the Historical Society also have collections of his photographs and other memorabilia, thanks largely to the generosity of his sons, Hildreth and Elliott and of his granddaughter, Nancy Shook Bender.

Henry Allison was born on the family farm off the Old Troy Road, the seventh of nine children of James and Sarah Jane Darracott Allison. His great-grandfather, Andrew Allison, had come to Dublin from Londonderry, New Hampshire, in 1783. Andrew, in turn, descended from Samuel Allison, who came to Boston in 1718 from Londonderry, Ireland.



Writing School at the District No. 1 Schoolhouse. Henry Allison is at bottom left.

(ARCHIVES FUND PURCHASE, 1992)

Don't Forget... the Society's Annual  
Pot-Luck Supper at 6:30 p.m. on Friday,  
February 20, in the Church Vestry  
(Snow date: February 27.)





"The village executes orders on the Boston plan - promptness and courtesy."  
A delivery wagon outside Allison's store, c. 1905.  
(ARCHIVES FUND PURCHASE, 1992)

In 1891 Henry married Florence Gowing Mason, a descendant of two other early, prominent Dublin families: the Gowings and the Masons. Florence and Henry would have three children of their own; Hildreth Mason, Elliott Sheldon and Christine. Since Elliott's death in 1994, there have been no Allison in Dublin.

At the time of Henry's marriage, his father-in-law, Milton D. Mason, was operating the store opposite the Town Hall. Henry joined the business, and in 1901 became its owner. Dublin in the nineties was in its heyday as a summer resort. In addition to the many summer "cottages", the Leffingwell Hotel flourished as accommodation for transient visitors. Sensing a market for keepsakes, Henry published a slim volume, *Souvenir of Dublin, N.H.*, in 1891, for which he wrote the historical and descriptive text. The 12 full-page illustrations were supplied by Keene photographer J.A. French. Allison soon began taking his own photographs, some of which were appearing in print in the early 1890's. They were also used on souvenir china that Allison had made in Austria and Germany, and on postcards specially printed for sale in his store.

Allison's next venture into historical writing was at the age of 83, when he set down his recollections of Dublin in *Dublin Days Old and New*, which he published privately in 1952. A rich potpourri of description, anecdote and reminiscence, it remains

the only published source of Dublin history after 1916.

### Business Ventures

After taking over from his father-in-law in 1901, Allison ran the store for twenty-five years, dealing with the varied demands of the summer colony, as well as of the permanent population. As a sideline he acted as a real estate broker, arranging summer rentals for a number of well known visitors, including Admiral Byrd, Senators Beveridge and McCormick, and Mrs. Marshall Field. Presumably his rental customers became grocery customers as well.

One of his brokerage ventures was to arrange for the British Embassy to occupy the Misses Mason's house, now the Pools', for the summer of 1910.

This prompted a letter to Allison from Mrs. James Bryce, the Ambassador's wife.

"Can you tell me if there is a Laundry in the village where my menservants can get their linen washed? . . . Will you also tell me who will open the house for us, & arrange to put in a supply of coal & ice for us beforehand, & who could receive the food & groceries that would be ordered to be sent in to be ready for my servants when they arrive?"

Those were more spacious days. Mrs. Bryce added:

"With regard to the number of eggs required, I should say that we should require about 4 dozen delivered 3 times a week: we might sometimes want rather more than this for extra use. As to chickens, I think 10 chickens a week as a rule would do, but we might want another extra couple from time to time."

Another satisfied customer was Mark Twain, for whom Allison had found "Lone Tree Hill", now the Townsends', for the summer of 1905. In his description of Dublin, Twain wrote:

"The village - Dublin - is bunched together in its own place, but a good telephone service makes its markets handy to all those outliars. I have spelt it that way to be witty. The village executes orders on the Boston plan - promptness and courtesy."



The next summer, Allison arranged for Twain to rent the Upton house, now the Godines'. At the end of that summer Twain gave Allison a complete set of his works, "In appreciation for what you have tried to do in making my Dublin stay comfortable".

From 1914 to 1922 the Dublin post office was in Allison's store and he was Postmaster. In the Fall of 1925, he announced that he was closing the store for the Winter, because of his "business and interests in Florida". Judging from business papers in the Society's archives, he operated Henry D. Allison, Inc. in Miami Beach from 1925 to 1942. He appears to have run a successful brokerage business in Florida real estate, serving, among others, family, friends and acquaintances from New Hampshire. Familiar local names among his customers include Robert C. Woodward (father of Frank and grandfather of Frederick), Lewis Burpee, Wilfred Fiske (uncle of Alice Fiske Ellis) and Maurice Nichols of Peterborough. In fact, the store never reopened under Allison's ownership, having been sold to Clarence Scribner.

According to the Town tax records, Allison owned the property known as "The Emerald" from 1931 to 1950. It is not clear whether he bought an existing business or started a new one. The Andrew Rajaniemi family rented the property from Allison from 1934-1947. From an oral interview with Nelma Rajaniemi and Alene McLean, we know that the business started as a gas station and that the restaurant was added by the Rajaniemi family. In 1951 Allison sold the property to his daughter, Christine, and her husband, Harold Shook. They continued the business until 1966, when it was sold to Yankee and demolished.

#### A Progressive Politician

Allison first ran for political office in 1913, when he was elected as a Republican Representative to the General Court. In that year the Republican party was still split between its Progressive, or Bull Moose, wing, loyal to Theodore Roosevelt, and the regular organization, which had supported President Taft in 1912. As reported in the Granite Monthly for March - April of that year,

"While elected on the Republican ticket as Representative in the present Legislature, Mr. Allison's Progressive tendencies were so well known to his constituents that, after his overwhelming nomination at the Primary, he was opposed by the Republican Club of his town, as

well as by a member of the State Committee, and has the distinction of being the only member of the present House who was elected in opposition to the efforts of a cabinet official."

The cabinet official was Treasury Secretary Franklin MacVeagh, whose summer house, "Knollwood", now belongs to the Petrones. According to an article in the Manchester Leader, Secretary MacVeagh missed Vice President Sherman's funeral to come to Dublin and try to persuade voters that Henry Allison was not the man for them.



Henry Allison as a State Legislator, 1913.  
(GRANITE MONTHLY, MARCH-APRIL, 1913)

"MacVeagh warned the Dublin voters that Henry was an abandoned Bull Mooser, although a likable fellow otherwise. Concord was no place for Henry, declared the Secretary. George Leighton said the same thing and so did all the lesser lights of the machine crowd, but somehow the voters did not scare, and Allison was elected two to one, over the man MacVeagh and Leighton and the others put up to trim him."

While serving in the Legislature, Allison was Chairman of the Progressive Party and Chairman of the Committee



on Public Improvements.

In 1914 he was the Progressive Party's nominee for Governor, but lost in the ensuing three-way race. He again ran unsuccessfully for State Senator in the Republican primary of 1932.

#### Other Interests

After his wife's death in 1937, he ran successfully for Selectman, serving from 1938 to 1943. Other public service included being Treasurer of the Dublin Town Improvement Society, Secretary of the Society for Betterment of Child Labor Conditions and a member of the Association to Protect Mt. Monadnock.

He was also Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements for the Dublin Bicentennial in 1952. As a prelude to the Bicentennial celebration, he was instrumental in having seven historical markers placed at various locations in Town. At the time of his death in 1963 at the age of 92, he had been Cemetery Superintendent for over fifteen years, keeping meticulous records in his elegant handwriting.

— Nancy E. Campbell

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

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## Society News

### From The Schoolhouse Museum . . .

Thank you to Marney Bean for her years of service as Museum Curator. Largely due to Marney's efforts, the Museum has been arranged in a coherent and aesthetically pleasing manner.

Thanks also to Dick Hammond and Hank Campbell for their emergency repairs to the roof of the building after the recent ice storm.

The Society has bought two more pieces of souvenir china. These are small plates, made in Austria for George W. Gleason, with views of the Lake and Mountain.

### Recent Accessions to the Archives

Sylvia Thomas Bowden, the daughter of Charles and Gertrude Thomas, has given the Society photographs of her parents and her aunt Louisa; a citation given to Charles Thomas on his retirement after more than thirty years' service to the Town as Selectman, Moderator, Town Clerk and State Representative; copies of obituary clippings for Charles, Gertrude and Louisa Thomas; and biographical notes compiled by Sylvia on Charles, Gertrude and Louisa.

Hal Close has given the Society photographs of his late mother's house (NR-96) off Upper Jaffrey Road and an inscribed copy of Grenville Clark's book, *Peace Through Disarmament and Charter Revision*.

Augusta Henderson Petrone has added to her previous gifts: her father's book, *The World of Mr. Sheraton*; a pamphlet by Albert Annett, "The Grand Monadnock"; a typescript entitled "Tour of Dr. George Stewart / 1949-1950 / Among His Majesty's Forces, the British Army and the R.A.F."; various correspondence relat-

ing to Dublin people and more miscellaneous papers relating to the Henderson family.

The National Bahá'í Archives has kindly supplied a catalogue of the Agnes Parsons papers in their collection. We learned the whereabouts of these papers from a visitor doing research on Agnes Parsons, who was 'Abdu'l Bahá's hostess in Dublin in 1912. With the help of Nancy Marlowe Aldrich, we have secured a copy of Agnes Parsons' diary of that visit. The National Bahá'í Archives has also sent a list of their holdings of the papers of the Nancy's grandmother, Nancy Brush Bowditch.

Other welcome gifts have come from Anne C.S. Anable, John Harris, Bruce and Mary Elizabeth McClellan, Peter Shonk and Ann Walsh. To all of them our most grateful thanks.



### DUES for 1998

Our thanks to members who have paid their 1998 dues. For those who haven't yet paid, we enclose a second dues envelope as a gentle reminder.



### 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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