



Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

Newsletter No. 47 – November, 1999

BENCHMARKS

Jessie Hale has donated to our museum a Dublin icon, the famous Loon Point bench, onto which a half century of guests of Joseph and Corinna Smith signed, printed or carved their names. The bench is five feet long and nearly six feet high, with a shelf along the top. The back is constructed in vertical matchboarding and there are curved arms and wings. The wood is Southern hard pine, painted various shades of light grey. Its rather piebald look results from past attempts to repaint between the signatures.

The story of the bench is told by Corinna Smith in her book, *Interesting People*:

"As a family, we seldom did anything in the customary way, and so it was with the recording of visitors. Signatures of the Smith house guests were carved on the front and sides of a tall, old-fashioned American settee which stood on the porch leading into the garden."

The **winter Pot-luck Supper** will be in the Vestry of the Community Church on Friday, February 18, 2000 (snow date February 25). **Howard Mansfield** will speak under the auspices of the New Hampshire Humanities Council. His topic will be "The Same Ax Twice – Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age".

Many members will remember Mr. Mansfield as the very amusing speaker at our 1995 supper.



*The bench as it is today in the Schoolhouse Museum.
The purpose of the bit of carving nailed onto the left
of the back is unknown.*

Among the names still legible today are those of Mark Twain, General Pershing, Isabella Stewart Gardner (Mrs. Jack), Abbott Thayer and his daughter Mary, Raphael Pumpelly and his daughter Elise, and Amelia Earhart, Corinna's cousin by marriage. Another signer (in both English and Japanese) was Baron Kaneko, the Japanese representative at the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. Others mentioned by Corinna Smith include Ethel Barrymore, Augustus St. Gaudens and two British Ambassadors who summered in Dublin, Lord Bryce and Sir Cecil Spring-Rice.

continued on page 2



This 1929 photograph shows the bench against the east wall of the south porch. It stayed in that spot until the 1970's, when it was brought indoors to protect it from further weathering.

BENCHMARKS

Continued from page 1

The origin of the bench is uncertain. If Baron Kaneko signed in 1905, the bench must have been in place soon after the house was built in 1903. Jessie Hale thinks it may have come from the Smiths' ancestral home in Pawtucket, when her great-grandparents, Henry Francis and Emma Greenleaf Smith, acquired the Loon Point property in 1889.

Many of the guests signed with only their initials, thereby tantalizing the modern historian. Our museum being unheated, close study and cataloguing of the signatures must await warmer weather. In the meantime, we are most grateful to Jessie Hale for this reminder of the many distinguished visitors drawn to Dublin by the charm and fascination of her grandparents, Joseph and Corinna Smith.

—J.W.H.

Abbot Thayer Recalled

On the evening of August 19th, an even hundred members gathered for dinner on the lawn of the 1841 schoolhouse. The combination of perfect weather with fine food provided by Steve Zacon's Fiddleheads Café made the dinner a great success, and raised just over \$2,000 for the Schoolhouse Maintenance Fund.

At the end of the meal, the diners walked over to the new auditorium at the Consolidated School next door, where they were joined by another thirty or so members and friends. It being the Society's annual meeting, there were brief reports and elections, at the end of which incoming President Paul Tuller took over from outgoing President John Harris. Richard S. Meryman, Jr., then spoke on the life and work of one of Dublin's foremost painters, Abbott Thayer.

Dick Meryman, Society member and Dublin summer resident, is a distinguished biographer, having two published two books on his friend, Andrew Wyeth. He also wrote an article on Abbott Thayer for the April issue of *Smithsonian* magazine in connection with the Smithsonian's recent exhibition of Thayer's work. The Society's summer meeting seemed a logical occasion to ask Dick Meryman to speak about Thayer to a Dublin audience.

Meryman's account of Thayer's life, with slide illustrations, was enlivened by anecdotes handed down by his father, Richard Meryman, Sr., who was one of Thayer's student assistants in the early years of this cen-

tury. The elder Meryman, who went on to become a distinguished artist in his own right, was present when Thayer was working out his ideas on animal protective coloration – ideas which developed into the science of camouflage for soldiers and military equipment in World War I.

The newly expanded and refurbished Dublin Consolidated School was the perfect site for our meeting. Dick Meryman noted that he had acted in the first play performed in the old gymnasium, so it was appropriate that he inaugurate the new stage. We are grateful to David Rollins, the Principal, for allowing us to use it.

—Russell Bastedo



Diners on the Schoolhouse lawn. L-R: Dorothy Worcester, Mary Weis, Bob Weis, Jim Guy, Edgar Harrell

President's Letter



President Paul Tuller

Since being elected President of the Society in August, I have been thinking about goals for the coming year. But before I can talk about new ideas, I need to thank several people. I thank the trustees who have just rotated off the Board, Rusty Bastedo, Bill Bauhan, Thea Sabine and Secretary Nancy Handy for their

hard work on our behalf over the last three years. I extend special thanks to past president and newly appointed archivist, John Harris, for his superhuman effort in all areas of Dublin Historical Society business. We all know that without John's hard work the whole organization would not be in existence today. Thanks to them all!

As for goals for the coming year, there are three I would like to mention now. The first is planning spring and fall field trips in addition to our summer and winter meetings. These events would be to a historical site of note and give us a chance to get together in exploring our town and neighboring towns as well.

The second is to increase our use of Dublin's historic one room schoolhouse. With the help of curator Barbara Schnabel and other society members, I hope we can complete the cataloguing of the collection the schoolhouse and plan some programs to focus on various groups of items in that collection. There is a good opportunity to include students from Dublin Consolidated School in these presentations as well as the public at large. This will give non-members a chance to learn more about the Society and Dublin History.

The final goal is to make improvements to the schoolhouse such as a new electric service and to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for maintenance of that property. I think that that is enough to keep us busy for the next few months at least.

— Paul Tuller

Thayer Relations Visit

Abbott Thayer being the subject of much interest nowadays, we are pleased to record a visit by his great-granddaughter, Melanie Mongelli, whose grandmother was Thayer's elder daughter, Mary. An earlier visitor was the Rev. Forrest Beach, a great-nephew of Thayer's second wife, Emma Beach.

Both wanted to see the Thayer material in the Society's archives and also the memorial rock on what is now Rosemary James's land. Fortunately, the Archivist has discovered a way of approaching the rock from the back, which involves a minimum of trespassing.

IN MEMORIAM

The death of Nancy Perkins has left us all with a sense of sadness and shock. Although she repeatedly declined to join the Historical Society's board, she was the organizing and energizing force behind the successful fundraising efforts for repair of the old schoolhouse in 1989 and for construction of the archives building in 1997. She worked for all good causes and will be sorely missed.

The Society extends its condolences to her daughters and grandchildren.



We also note with sadness the passing of Elizabeth Weis, one of the Society's few remaining Life Members. In 1986, she was one of the eight Life Members who made it legally possible to revive and reorganize the Society, which had been dormant since the early sixties.

Our sympathy goes to her son, Robert Weis, who has just joined the Society's board, thereby carrying on a family tradition.

Recent Acquisitions

A major acquisition at the **Schoolhouse Museum** is the autographed bench from Loon Point, described elsewhere in this newsletter, the generous gift of Jessie Hale.

The museum continues to collect, through purchase, examples of souvenir china with Dublin scenes – a type of artifact very popular around the turn of the century. We badly need a tall glass display case for this growing collection, so that visitors can see it all together, and without getting down on hands and knees.

The **archives** continue to receive gifts from many generous people. We have added 72 new accession numbers in the year to date, so there is room to describe only a few items. **Nancy Aldrich** has given us a collection of letters to her grandmother, Nancy Brush Bowditch, from Hildegard and Gerard Henderson. Most of the letters are (alas!) undated, but show summer teenage acquaintances growing up to be lifelong friends.

James Guy and **Rosemary Mack**, the Archives' new neighbors, have given us the original drawings by Frederick W. Stickney for their house, which he designed for Mrs. Joel Hayden in 1888.

Lorna Trowbridge continues her long series of benefactions with more than a dozen gifts of papers and photographs from the Yankee archives. **Linda Van Wyk** has given a collection of material relating to Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Other recent donors include:

Russell Bastedo	Michael King
Patrick Bauhan	Brenda Korpi
Sarah Bauhan	Marian Latti
Nancy Campbell	Henry Lee
Barbara deMarneffe	Bruce McClellan
Fitchburg Art Museum	Richard Meryman
Edward Gienty	William Morgan
Jessie Hale	Richard Murray
John & Elizabeth Harris	John Nelson
Elizabeth Hoekstra	Nancy Powell
Paul Johnson	Edward F. Whitney

We are grateful to them all for their thoughtfulness and generosity in helping us collect information on the history of Dublin.

A New Cast of Characters

The annual meeting on August 19 produced a number of new faces. Three trustees – Russell Bastedo, Bill Bauhan and Thea Sabine – rotated off the board, having completed three-year terms. New trustees elected to three-year terms were Jane Keough, Barbara Schnabel and Robert Weis.

Paul Tuller was elected President, replacing John Harris. Ruth Hammond was re-elected Treasurer.

The trustees later elected Ann Walsh as Secretary, John Harris as Archivist and Barbara Schnabel as Curator. Jane Keough has agreed to take on the job of Membership Chairman, having had successful experience in the same position at the Exeter Historical Society. Her opening salvo is enclosed.

Other Events

The **Fitchburg Art Museum** (185 Elm Street, Fitchburg, Mass.) has a most entertaining an exhibition entitled "**Mt. Monadnock**", which will be open until January 6th.

The show includes all aspects of the mountain, from oil paintings by William Preston Phelps, Abbott Thayer, Joseph Lindon Smith, Alexander James, Rockwell Kent and others to examples of turn-of-the-century souvenir china with images of Monadnock. Some of the latter were lent by the Dublin Historical Society.

In a lighter vein is a wall of objects left on the mountain by climbers. As the accompanying sign asks, how could anyone leave their pants on the mountain? There are also several single shoes, raising the image of their owners hopping down the trail.

Well worth a trip to Fitchburg!

C R E D I T S

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