

Changing Places: The Bonnettstown Photographs of Andrew Bush

Evidence in photographs of time passing often evokes a sense of place. Such evidence is, of course, what is carefully removed from a building photographed to celebrate its design.

An additional sense of place has come from a custom that developed beginning in the 1930s, but that mostly took hold in the 1950s, of identifying not just in what year a picture was taken but where its subject was found. Before that photographers (like painters) tended to think that their art, not their subject, was the whole point. In titling a picture they might generalize and say what they thought its meaning to be—but not what its subject was and where they had found it (or where it might still be found).

Remarkable evidence of these changes was a book of photographs, from which the pictures reproduced here are out-takes, taken between 1978 and 1982, by one Andrew Bush,

an American in his mid-twenties with a masters degree in photography from Yale. The book, *Bonnettstown: A House in Ireland*, was published by Harry N. Abrams in 1989 and was soon remaindered.

Bonnettstown Hall was a house built in 1737. In it, when Bush photographed it, lived four elderly people who had earlier had varied careers in other parts of the world. The photographs showed the house and its rooms, including private rooms with the possessions of the tenants, and the rooms where food was prepared, with signs of its preparation. Interestingly, only one picture included one of the tenants, a retired Royal Navy Commander. Nevertheless, Bush's photographs showed time passing in the life of the house, in the lives of the tenants, in the seasons, even the household appliances. (The kitchen range was an AGA, a make celebrated in the 1930s by the British

Architectural Review, a range that was installed in Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water.)

One thing that impelled Bush to take the photographs was learning that the house had sold and would be renovated by new owners. In the pictures in the book there is no sign of the household's end; that is only mentioned in the book's preface. The final picture reproduced here is of parked vehicles outside the building seen out a window at the time of a final auction of some of the tenant's belongings.

—*Cervin Robinson*

1. Bonnettstown, Entrance Hallway.
2. Bonnettstown Hall, oblique view.
3. Drawing Room Fireplace.
4. Laurence's Bedroom.
5. Lower Kitchen.
6. Auction Day, view down avenue.



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