
LONGYEAR FOUNDATION

Quarterly News

AUTUMN, 1965

From Ephesians 3

I was appointed . . . to declare to the Gentiles the utterly inexpressible bounty, wealth and goodness of the Christ. Light came on them through me, light bursting through the veil of mystery which had so long hidden all this away from the sight of men, hidden it in God as an unrevealed secret.

St. Paul from the Trenches
Rendered by Gerald Warre Cornish

Exhibitions

Special Exhibition Gallery:

THE PRINTED WORD — A display of the published writings by Mary Baker Eddy together with examples of the periodicals and *The Christian Science Monitor*, established by her. Supplemental material showing centers of publication, editors, printers, and publishers.

Gallery 2: CONCISE OUTLINE OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MOVEMENT from 1866 to 1910.
A CABINET OF MINIATURES and small photographs of Mrs. Eddy.

Rotunda: PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION of life at the Chestnut Hill home from 1908 to 1910.

Gallery 8: PORTRAITS OF EARLY WORKERS associated with Mrs. Eddy at Pleasant View and the Chestnut Hill home.

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A Valued Heritage

THE LITTLE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE church in Oconto, Wisconsin — now First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Oconto — is a treasured inheritance of every Christian Scientist. The Oconto church was not called forth by building activities elsewhere, but grew out of the spiritual need of a small group of early Christian Scientists. It was the first edifice in the world erected for Christian Science services. Other churches had been organized but none had an edifice of its own as early as 1886.

The growth of Christian Science in Oconto began with a healing. In 1883 Mr. Hugh McDonald, a prosperous saw-mill operator of Green Bay, Wisconsin, had heard of Christian Science healing through a business friend

belief of a broken ankle which had been keeping her in bed.

Six months after the healing of Mrs. McDonald and Mrs. Laura Sargent, Mrs. Eddy taught her first and only class in Chicago. Four students from the Oconto area entered this class of May, 1884 — Mrs. Emma McDonald of Green Bay, Mrs. Laura Sargent, Mrs. Lovina Millidge, and Miss Elizabeth Beyer. In December of the same year, several of these students — Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. Sargent, Mrs. Millidge, Mrs. Victoria Sargent — and Mrs. Almeda Pendleton of Oconto attended Mrs. Eddy's Primary Class in Boston. On their return home, they began to heal the sick. Mrs. Eddy's teaching had fallen on fertile ground



Built in 1886, First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Oconto, Wisconsin was the first edifice erected for Christian Science services.

whose wife was improving markedly under Christian Science treatment. Mr. McDonald urged his fast failing wife to try this new treatment and she consented to go to Milwaukee where she, too, soon began to improve under Christian Science treatment by a practitioner. She urged a friend, Mrs. Laura E. Sargent of Oconto, to join her. Mrs. Sargent was threatened with invalidism. Both were healed and they acquired the textbook, *Science and Health* with a *Key to the Scriptures*, as the seventh edition was then called.

When they returned home, Mrs. Sargent soon interested her sister, Mrs. Victoria Sargent, in the book and they asked their mother, a serious student of the Bible, for her approval of the book. When she had read it she said "I believe it is 'the second coming of the Christ'. I want you to study it." She herself was healed at that time of the

among an intelligent, cultured group.

In 1884, Oconto, Wisconsin, was a prosperous lumbering town of over 5000 population, located on the edge of the pine belt. As the number of Christian Scientists increased in the community, informal meetings were held in the double parlors of the home belonging to one of the leading merchants, Mr. Thomas Millidge. During the week a dispensary or reading room was maintained daily in these rooms from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and meetings were held there on Sunday afternoon. As these accommodations became inadequate a Christian Science Association of Oconto was formed on June 10, 1886, by five prominent business men — Messrs. James and Henry Sargent, C. T. Pendleton, Thomas Millidge, and Edwin Hart; and that afternoon articles of incorporation were executed.

Mrs. Laura Sargent wrote Mrs. Eddy

asking if it were too soon to build. Mrs. Eddy replied, "Go right ahead and build." Thus fortified by Mrs. Eddy's approval, funds and gifts were provided as needed and the church held its first service at 10:30 a.m. on October 31, 1886. Dedication followed in February when the small remaining indebtedness had been paid. The total cost of the church was \$1197.79.

The church stands today much as it was in 1886. The surrounding trees have grown tall and thick, shading the building from highway traffic which passes on two sides of the triangle of land on which the edifice stands. This land was a gift in 1886 from Mr. Henry Sargent, husband of Mrs. Victoria Sargent. It is located at the end of Oconto's "Avenue of Elms" at the intersection of Main and Chicago Streets.

The auditorium of the church now seats seventy people and the old birch chairs, lightly stained mahogany, make comfortable provision for the congregation of today. Sixteen silver lamps, copies of old kerosene lamps, are mounted on two circles of silver each suspended by four silver chains. The original carpet has been suitably replaced, but for the most part the furnishings are original. The warm tones of the original Kimball reed organ are heard at every service. The most extensive changes were made in 1916 when a basement was added to provide a place for a Reading Room and Sunday School, and a furnace. During late spring and summer the front of the church is gay with boxes of old-fashioned flowers and vines at the windows.

The church had no pastor in 1886 and the early services were conducted by Mrs. Laura Sargent and Mr. Edwin Hart. A visitor to the Oconto church gives this order of service in *The Christian Science Journal* for June 1887: "Silent Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer; Singing; Scripture-reading conducted by the venerable Edwin Hart; Bible-lesson with explanatory remarks by Mrs. Laura Sargent. The Sunday School followed in which general interest was manifested."

On September 2, 1888, Reverend Lanson P. Norcross became the first pastor of the church. It was during his tenure that he performed the wedding ceremony of Will McDonald and Minnie Sargent in the Oconto church, one of the few marriages ever to take place in a Christian Science church.

Reverend Norcross served for about a year when Mrs. Eddy's great need of a pastor to carry on the church at Boston from which she had just resigned as Pastor led Mrs. Laura Sargent to write Mrs. Eddy of the availability



LAURA E. SARGENT
Companion to Mrs. Eddy, 1890 to 1910. A First Member elected September 23, 1892.

of Reverend Norcross. Mrs. Eddy's appreciation of this unselfish action of the Oconto church is recorded in her letter to the church appearing on page 149 of *Miscellaneous Writings*.

After Reverend Norcross' acceptance of the Boston call, Mrs. Victoria Sargent was elected Reader of the Oconto church in 1889 and served to 1894 when she resigned in preparation for her teaching which was to begin in Green Bay in 1895. When visiting Mrs. Eddy soon after she began to read, Mrs. Sargent told her of their use of the Bible and Science and Health for the sermon. Mrs. Eddy said to her, "This is of God," and her face lighted up as she said, "Oh! You have the divine and right idea." In 1895 this Impersonal Pastor became the Pastor for all Christian Science churches.

In reviewing the experiences of the Oconto church in the early days, one is impressed by the wisdom of its members in the ways of church building. Their use of selections from the Bible and Science and Health for the sermon anticipated by almost nine years the Impersonal Pastor of The Mother Church; they were among the first of the Christian Science churches to hold services in the morning at the customary church hour of the period; they early associated the dispensary or reading room with the activity of the church; and their deference for their Leader and obedience to the laws of Christian Science revealed a capacity to listen for God's direction.

Christian Scientists throughout the world are increasingly grateful for this legacy of the first Christian Science building in the world.

The Sargent Sisters

IN THE ANNALS of Christian Science two luminaries shine forth clearly across the years — Laura and Victoria Sargent.

Although living in Wisconsin as early as the late 1850's, they came of New England background. Their father, Samuel Adams, was first cousin to Samuel Adams of Revolutionary fame, and their mother came of the Purring-ton family, who also served this country with distinction. Victoria Hortense Adams was born in 1848 in Bowdoinham, Maine, the third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, and a fourth little girl, Avesta, was also born in Maine. Late in 1856 the family travelled by rail and sled to their new home in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and here in 1857, Laura Ella was born. Their father was a ship builder and he supervised the construction of the first ocean-going schooner built in Green Bay, the Pamela Flood, and captained it across the Atlantic for delivery to its British purchaser.

Our history of Laura and Victoria Sargent begins in Oconto, Wisconsin, about 1884. The family had moved from Green Bay to this prosperous community after both Victoria and Laura had studied in the public schools of Green Bay. Laura, some ten years younger than Victoria, entered Miss Hall's private school in Oconto and later attended the Young Women's Academy in Green Bay. Laura seemed to have little aptitude for mathematics, an argument which was met by Mrs. Eddy some years later when Mrs. Eddy asked her to take care of the household bookkeeping. Laura demurred and said it was not along her line. "Laura," said Mrs. Eddy, "God is a business God. He attends to the business of the universe, and you reflect His business ability." The books were thereupon posted and balanced.

Victoria and Laura were both sisters and sisters-in-law. Victoria married Henry Sargent in 1866 and some ten years later, Laura married his brother James. These brothers had come from New Brunswick, Canada, to engage in the lumber business in Oconto.

When Laura Sargent and her friend Emma McDonald of Green Bay were healed in 1883, they brought Christian Science to Oconto and Green Bay. The rapid progress of this spiritual teaching in the area has been traced in the accompanying account of the Oconto church and the contributions made toward its establishment by Laura and



VICTORIA H. SARGENT

Teacher, practitioner, and faithful follower of Mrs. Eddy.

Victoria Sargent. Larger fields of attainment, however, lay ahead of both sisters. Their human paths diverged almost from the first, but spiritually they travelled hand-in-hand.

Laura attended a second class with Mrs. Eddy in 1884 in which Victoria joined her. In 1886 she was a member of Mrs. Eddy's Normal Class, which Victoria also attended some six months later. Both received the degree of C.S.D. Laura taught her first class in Marinette, Wisconsin, in 1887 and about a year later was sent by Mrs. Eddy on a mission to St. Paul, Minnesota. When Mrs. Eddy gave her momentous address, "Science and the Senses," in Chicago in 1888, Laura was close at hand. She made a number of trips to Boston to see Mrs. Eddy and in 1890 she was invited to become her companion. For twenty years she was our Leader's close friend and helper. Except for occasions at Communion Seasons when she served as Hostess in the Mother's Room of The Mother Church, her life was spent almost entirely at Mrs. Eddy's side. She was entrusted with the most delicate and confidential missions and gave of her unselfed love without stint. To her it was a sacred post she had been called upon to fill, a post supporting her Leader and lending help in times of stress. In the environment of Mrs. Eddy's homes, first at 62 North State Street, Concord, and later at Pleasant View and Chestnut Hill, her spiritual under-

standing unfolded under Mrs. Eddy's guidance and her own unselfed service.

She taught a second class in Wisconsin in 1892, but did not teach again until 1913 when she conducted the Metaphysical Class of the Board of Education.

Meanwhile, Victoria, in her early years as a Christian Scientist, maintained a busy home, caring for the needs of her husband and two daughters, Minnie and Bessie. More and more she turned from social demands to the practice of Christian Science. Her husband encouraged her in this new work and the family life was grounded in the truth of Christian Science. After reading in the Oconto church from 1889 to 1894, she began her long and fruitful work as a teacher of Christian Science, with her classes based in Green Bay. From 1899 to 1902 she read with Hugh McDonald in Green Bay, whose wife, Emma, was healed in 1884. In her practice she had many inspiring healings, and she sent her students out from her classes prepared to work for Christian Science. She was a frequent visitor at Mrs. Eddy's home, refreshing and extending her understanding of this Science.

Mrs. Eddy appreciated Victoria Sargent's clear mental work and in 1907 she called her to Concord to do metaphysical work during the Next Friends lawsuit. Near the end of her stay in Concord while visiting with Mrs. Eddy she was asked to shorten a table scarf because it was too long at each end. When Mrs. Sargent returned the altered scarf, Mrs. Eddy observed that she had cut it off on only one end. Mrs. Eddy approved the work in these words: "That is right, dear. Your idea of rightly doing material things registers your ability to heal." In her classes, Victoria Sargent taught her students to be practical as well as inspirational.

When Mrs. Eddy passed on she left provision for Laura to remain at the Chestnut Hill home where she received visitors and "witnessed" for Mrs. Eddy in every way possible, as she had been enjoined by our Leader to do. For a year she served on the Bible Lesson Committee. When she passed on in September 1915, Victoria Sargent was appointed by the Board of Directors as Custodian of the home. Accompanied by her daughter, Minnie, Victoria came to Chestnut Hill in October

1915. She continued to teach in Green Bay until her retirement in 1925, and in 1928, her Association was moved to Boston. On her passing in March 1930, she was succeeded at Chestnut Hill by her daughter, Minnie Sargent McDonald, who was Custodian until her passing in 1950. She records that her mother's last admonition was, "Work for our Cause."

These three members of the Sargent family were in Mrs. Eddy's home a total of sixty years, passing on to fellow Christian Scientists something of the radiant love which touched the thought of Laura in 1884.

* Quote from "A Biographical Sketch of Victoria H. Sargent, C.S.D., and Laura E. Sargent, C.S.D.," Victoria H. Sargent's Students' Association, 1953.

The Published Word

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION in Gallery 13, THE PUBLISHED WORD, announced in the last *Quarterly*, is now open to visitors. It is a chronological display of all of Mrs. Eddy's published writings, showing the first appearance of each book, pamphlet, or periodical and its final revised form. Printers and publishers as well as publishing centers, and the list of editors of the periodicals, and of the *Christian Science Monitor* until 1911, are given, with a number of photographs. The Exhibition gives impressive evidence of Mrs. Eddy's tireless work in bringing Christian Science to the world through the written word.

Notes

AN EXCELLENT PORTRAIT of James A. Neal has been presented to Longyear Foundation by members of Mr. Neal's Association. It was painted by Erik Haupt of New York and replaces an earlier portrait acquired some years ago.

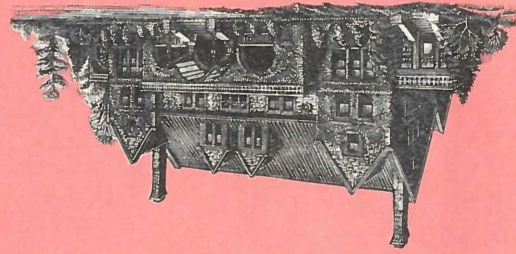
THE ASSOCIATION OF ELLA W. HOAG has also presented a most welcome portrait of Mrs. Hoag, painted by Virginia W. Emmons of Dover, Massachusetts.

THE TRUSTEES OF LONGYEAR FOUNDATION are grateful for recent gifts of valuable biographical notes about a number of early workers, contributing as they do to the more complete picture of the early history of Christian Science.

LONGYEAR FOUNDATION: Board of Trustees: C. Earle Armstrong, Robert Hall Collins, Mrs. Marian H. Holbrook. Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Charlis F. Vogel; Director of Research, Mrs. Anne Holliday Webb. QUARTERLY NEWS is published four times annually, in the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, at the Headquarters of Longyear Foundation, 120 Seaver Street, Brookline, Massachusetts 02146.

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August 2015: Minor edits have been made to this newsletter to reflect new
information that has come to light since the original publication.