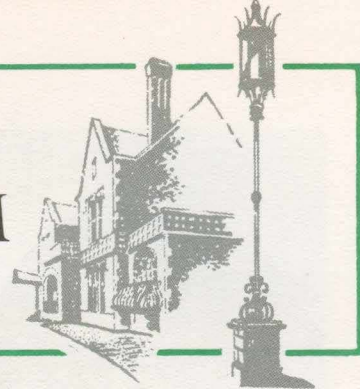


QUARTERLY NEWS

MARY BAKER EDDY MUSEUM

and Historic Sites



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SUE HARPER MIMS, C.S.D.

Sue Harper Mims was first attracted to Christian Science when Julia S. Bartlett visited Atlanta in 1886. Miss Bartlett addressed an interested group on the teachings of this new religion at the home of Mr. & Mrs. H. I. Kimball. Miss Bartlett, herself a devoted pioneer worker, was a practitioner, and by 1884 had become an authorized teacher. Mrs. Mims began to study the textbook of Christian Science, and turning to Miss Bartlett for help was healed of a chronic illness. Mrs. Mims embraced her new-found religion wholeheartedly and began its serious study.

Little Sue Harper had grown up in Brandon, Mississippi, a typically picturesque country town with streets bordered by large shade trees. She was the daughter of Mary Caroline and William Harper, a lawyer, whose forebears had moved gradually westward from Virginia. There were seven children in the family including Sue. Four were from a previous marriage of her mother. Her uncle, Andrew Harper, was the founder and editor of *The Brandon Republican*, a journal well known in its day.

Sue's early education was probably by private tutor. She attended Dr. Savage's Episcopal College at Pass Christian, Mississippi and spent several years abroad studying and traveling.

She was basically a religious young girl. She later wrote: "The religious element in me was very strong, inherited doubtless from this old Scottish strain and I could not be happy until when quite a young girl I united with the Episcopal Church, being con-



Sue Harper Mims shown in her home in Atlanta.

firmed by that holy and devout man Bishop Green of Mississippi, who always reminded me of the apostle James." Her father had educated himself as a Presbyterian minister, but later repudiated this religion. The Harper home was, however, open to ministers of every religion and the home atmosphere was such as to inspire a sense of religious freedom.

She later wrote further about her early religious experience: "The church greatly disappointed my hopes that it would bring me to realize the peace and satisfaction for which my deepest nature was hungering, for unlike most young persons, my taste in reading, which my father constantly stimulated, included in it a great deal that was deeply spiritual, and I often think that it became somewhat morbid.

Failing to find all that I had longed for, I gradually drifted into a kind of worldly intellectual life, but I did not myself realize how like a strong and ever forcing undercurrent was my instinctive longing for the spiritual until in later years."

Livingston Mims, a business man from Jackson, Mississippi came to Brandon, met Sue Harper and in 1866 they were married. Major Mims had served on the staff of General Joseph E. Johnston for the Confederacy during the Civil War, and afterward General Johnston became his business partner. Prior to the war Major Mims was a member of the Mississippi legislature. They lived in Brandon briefly, moved to Jackson, and then to Savannah, Georgia in 1876. During this period they entertained a great deal and entered into the social life of



the cities they lived in.

Mrs. Mims visited Atlanta and liked the city so well she convinced her husband he should move his successful life insurance business there. They established a residence in 1879 at the corner of Peachtree Street and Ponce de Leon Avenue, and named their new Queen Anne-style house "Heartsease." Its twenty by sixty foot drawing room was ideal for entertaining, and from the small tower on the house they could watch the sunset, or the moon rise over Stone Mountain.

The Mims became leaders in the social and public life of Atlanta. Major Mims was president of the Capital City Club for a number of years and in 1901 became Mayor of the city. President Cleveland visited the city twice, and during the second visit, as a guest of the Atlanta Exposition, ended a short acknowledgment speech with the words, "I congratulate Atlanta on her great exposition, her beautiful women, the Capital City Club and her Major Mims."

Sue Harper Mims had many social and intellectual interests of her own. She was one of the founders of the Shakespeare Club. Her concern for deserted and unhappy children led her to become the first president of the Home for the Friendless, which became one of the foremost charities of Atlanta. Mrs. Mims was Georgia's representative on a commission that raised funds to erect a monument in France in appreciation of General

Lafayette's services to the United States.

It is said that Mrs. Mims had beautiful jewels and enjoyed wearing them. In her will she arranged for their sale in order to finance the erection of a marble monument in Piedmont Park, Atlanta to the poet, Sidney Lanier. Lanier was then and is now considered one of the greatest American poets; often his poems expressed the then current social concerns.

We can learn much of the Mims' life in Atlanta and particularly of their social activities from a diary Mrs. Mims kept from 1875 to 1887. This diary, edited somewhat, appeared in the city newspaper, the *Atlanta Constitution*, between February 1 and March 22, 1914. Visitors to their Peachtree Street home included many famous personages. They entertained at various times Jefferson Davis, President McKinley, President Cleveland and General Joe Wheeler. On President and Mrs. Cleveland's first visit to Atlanta, a ball was given in their honor in the Mims' home.

At the time of her attendance at the talk given by Miss Bartlett, Mrs. Mims had been ill for some fifteen years. She said, "At that time I could not walk two blocks — often not one — without great pain and exhaustion." She began to study the Christian Science textbook, her health quickly improved and she reported, "In three weeks I was walking a mile without fatigue."



GROVER CLEVELAND
1885-1889 1893-1897

President Cleveland was a guest in the Mims home.

Her gratitude for her healing led her to want to be of service to the Cause of Christian Science. In spite of the opposition of family, friends and church she broke her social ties to follow what she felt to be the Truth. A small group interested in this new religion began to meet in Mrs. Mims' home, and, enlarged by new recruits, they began to hold formal meetings on the sixth floor of the Grand Opera building. A building fund for a church was started in 1897 and in 1899 a new church edifice was dedicated on West Baker Street, Atlanta. Mrs. Mims as First Reader delivered an address of welcome at the dedication. The Second Reader, Mr. E. H.

(Continued on page 196)



Present edifice of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Atlanta

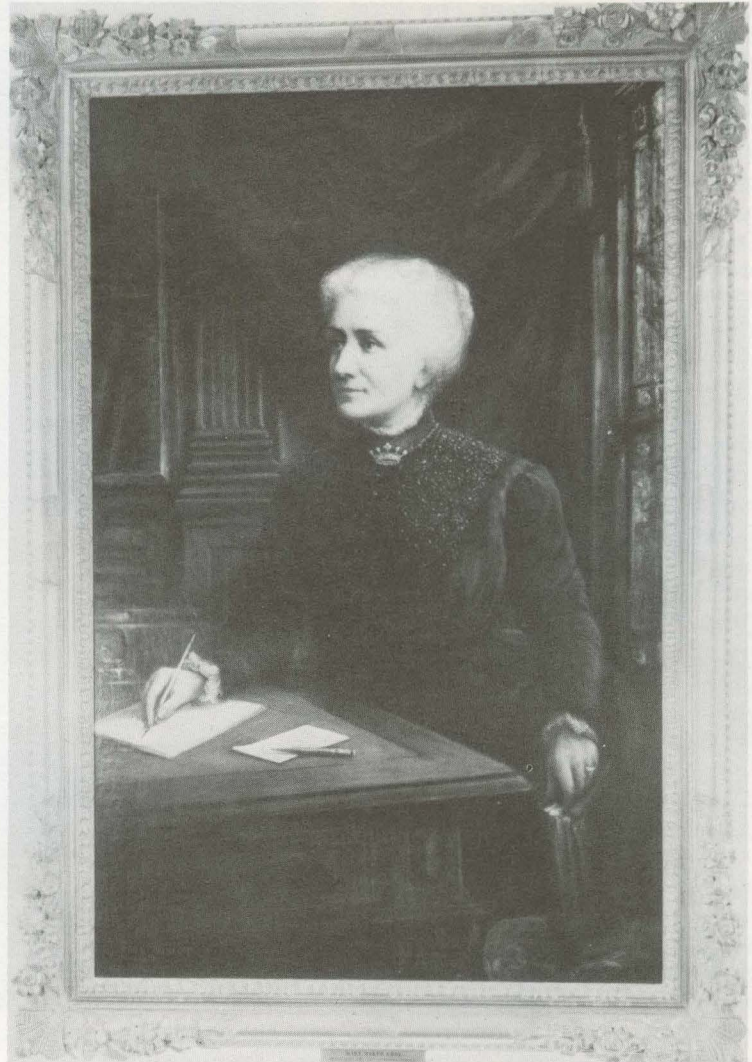
James Weston Portrait of Mrs. Eddy

A well-executed portrait of Mary Baker Eddy by James Weston was purchased in 1975 by the Mary Baker Eddy Museum for its portrait collection. The purchase was made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor. It is 33 by 51 inches and depicts the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science in a red velvet gown writing at a desk.

James Weston, A.R.C.A., of Boston, was a Canadian artist, born in England in the mid-19th century. According to available records he studied at the Royal Academy, the National Gallery and with Sir Edwin Landseer.

When Mr. Weston moved to Boston from Canada, he set up his studio near where Captain Joseph Eastaman had an office at 3 Park Street. It is said that Captain Eastaman, a member of the first Christian Science Board of Directors, urged Mr. Weston to paint this portrait of Mrs. Eddy, which took several years for its completion in 1913.

At an exhibition of Mr. Weston's paintings in Boston, an individual from New York purchased the portrait. This individual later asked the artist to change the painting by replacing the cross shown at Mrs. Eddy's throat with a crown, which may explain this unusual detail noted by Museum visitors. At the time of this change Mr. Weston dated the canvas "1916." The painting came through a succession of later owners to Longyear and the Museum collection.



Bicentennial Plaque

The Mary Baker Eddy Historic House at Amesbury, Massachusetts was presented with a commemorative plaque in 1975 by Francis E. Condon, Chairman of the Town's Historical Commission. Squire Lowell Bagley was the owner of this house until he passed on in 1863. Mrs. Eddy, then Mrs. Glover, stayed briefly here with Squire Bagley's daughter, Sarah, for two brief periods between 1868 and 1870.

Nearly forty historic signs have been used to mark historic buildings in Amesbury during the Bicentennial celebration.

SUE HARPER MIMS (Continued)

Carmen, gave a brief history of the Atlanta Church. The highlight of the occasion was the reading by Mrs. Mims of a message from Mrs. Eddy which is to be found in *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany* beginning on page 187. Later, when this church had been outgrown, the West Baker Street site was sold and one was purchased at Peachtree and Fifteenth Streets for the present First Church edifice.

Mrs. Mims became a busy practitioner and was listed in *The Christian Science Journal* in 1891. Later, she became a Christian Science teacher in Atlanta, one of the first in the Southeast.

Mrs. Mims occasionally wrote to the newspapers recording or providing information regarding some occasion relative to the activities of Christian Scientists. She attended the dedication of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Chicago, Illinois in 1897 and reported on Mrs. Eddy's dedicatory message read by Edward A. Kimball. She also answered in the columns of the local newspaper attacks on or misunderstandings about Christian Science.

In 1898 she attended Mrs. Eddy's last class, which is recorded by her in *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy, Second Series*. On a Wednesday, Mrs. Mims received a letter from Mrs. Eddy requesting her to meet her at Christian Science Hall in Concord, New Hampshire the following Sunday afternoon. On a Friday morning Mrs. Mims left Chattanooga, arriving in Boston Saturday night at nine. Being impatient to be in Concord, she left Boston on a paper train at two in the morning and arrived there at five. The class began promptly in Christian Science Hall at four that afternoon when Mrs. Eddy appeared. There were 65 students in her final Normal class. It included many who were destined to provide outstanding service to the Christian Science movement.

In this same year, 1898, Sue Harper Mims and Annie M. Knott were appointed to The Christian Science Board of Lectureship, the first women to serve as lecturers. Mrs. Mims lectured over much of the United States and was on the lecture platform for about fifteen years. After a lecture in Detroit before several thousand people, when a reporter asked her



Two portraits of Mrs. Mims in the Longyear collection

how a woman of her age could make her voice carry to the rear of the upper gallery of the large auditorium, she answered, "The voice of Truth knows no bounds."

In addition to the healing work, teaching and lecturing, Mrs. Mims also found time to write for the Christian Science periodicals. More than a score of articles, other than her own lectures, appeared in the *Journal* and *Sentinel* between 1903 and 1912.

Major Mims became more sympathetic to her work as time went on. He eventually performed essentially as her secretary, answering letters and arranging her lecture tours.

In 1894 when the Original Edifice of The Mother Church was being built, Mrs. Eddy called upon a number of her students, including Mrs. Mims, to donate a thousand dollars. When she read Mrs. Eddy's letter to her husband, Major Mims promptly replied that she should make this contribution. As his wife did not have the thousand dollars in her personal account, he gave it to her out of his own account to send to Boston. She was touched by his ac-

tion, (Major Mims was not a member of the church), and wrote Mrs. Eddy to ask if she could be listed as "Mrs. Livingston Mims" when her name was placed in the cornerstone of the new church. Mrs. Eddy apparently granted her wish.

It seems particularly fitting to close this account of the dedicated and unselfish work of Sue Harper Mims for the Cause of Christian Science, by quoting from a biography read before the Atlanta Historical Society on November 26, 1938. "Recorded in its history as a pioneer worker she will stand always as having organized and established Christian Science in Atlanta and the South, which work she achieved through humility, consecration, and unerring, intelligent and inspired loyalty to and recognition of the place which the history of this planet must accord to Christian Science and its Revelator, Mary Baker Eddy."

Richard C. Molloy

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