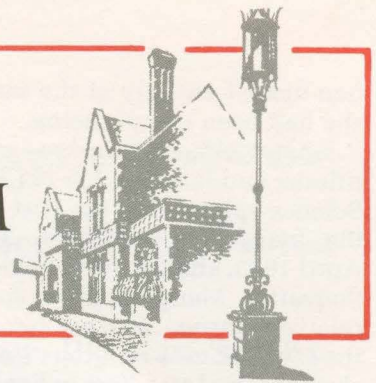


## QUARTERLY NEWS

# MARY BAKER EDDY MUSEUM and Historic Sites



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### JANET T. COLMAN, C.S.D.

In October 1885 a woman set out alone from Boston bound for Omaha, Nebraska. She was Janet T. Colman, a pioneer headed west to sow the seeds of a new religion — to teach the first class in Christian Science held west of Chicago. She was one of the first to introduce Christian Science in the Middle West.

Janet Colman was brought up on Martha's Vineyard, in Edgartown, Massachusetts. Her mother, Janet Turner, came from Scotland at nineteen and married Edgar Marchant, a native of the island. In 1846 Mr. Marchant founded the local paper, the *Vineyard Gazette*, and was elected to the Massachusetts legislature in 1862. Mrs. Colman later wrote of her parents: "I have much to thank God that my father and mother were honest and upright in all their dealings with others. My mother taught me what was right. I can see that her daily life was what led me to accept Christian Science when it was first presented to me."

The Marchants moved to the Boston area about 1863. There Janet met Erwin L. Colman of Allston, Massachusetts; they were married in Edgartown on December 5, 1876. It is believed that he worked for his father at N. H. Colman & Sons, 101 Court Street, Boston, who were "Wholesale Dealers in Hats, Furs, Straw Goods, etc."

After her marriage, Mrs. Colman became an invalid, suffering from many ailments, and found no relief in drugs or other treatment. Toward the end of 1882, Christian Science was brought to her notice. Two of Mr. Colman's aunts were receiving



Janet T. Colman, C.S.D. Photo taken on south porch of Longyear home about 1918

treatment in Christian Science. He finally consented to let his wife be treated, too. She went to a practitioner in Somerville, a Mrs. Childs, who told her about Mary Baker Eddy and advised that Mrs. Colman go to her.

Mrs. Colman always treasured the memory of that first meeting with the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science. She and her mother went to see her together. Janet later recalled

that she had never before been in such an atmosphere of thought and told Mrs. Eddy she would like to study with her. Then, thinking of her own unworthiness, added that she probably wasn't good enough. Mrs. Colman and her mother were both accepted for the January 1883 Primary class, which began six weeks later. Through the understanding she gained from this instruction with Mrs. Eddy, Janet Colman was able to

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free herself entirely of the many ills she had been experiencing.

Janet Colman's card as a practitioner and later teacher of Christian Science appeared in the first issue of the *Journal of Christian Science*, April 1883, and for thirty-seven years thereafter. Many of her friends and relatives turned against her at this time for her new religious stand; but she remained steadfast in her convictions. Her husband also became a serious student of Christian Science. His name was listed with hers in the *Journal* for nine years.

After Mr. and Mrs. Colman had moved to the Middle West from Beacon Hill in Boston, Mrs. Colman was called back to be a member of the second Normal class at the Massachusetts Metaphysical College, in February 1885. By June the Colmans moved back to Boston. Later that year Mrs. Colman received an invitation from one of Mrs. Eddy's students, Mrs. Jennie B. Fenn of Omaha, to teach a class in Nebraska. After discussing the invitation with Mrs. Eddy, she went.

Upon reaching Omaha, Mrs. Colman discovered the class was to be held further on, in Beatrice (pronounced Bee-at'-riss). After teaching the class she stayed in the Omaha area for several months. According to Mrs. Colman, when the birth of her child was imminent, she became unconscious and the doctor was summoned. He did what he could, but could not save the child, and said



Janet Colman as a young woman

there was no hope for the mother. Mr. Colman was in Boston taking a class with Mrs. Eddy, when he received a telegram about the situation. He told Mrs. Eddy of his wife's condition. By the time Mr. Colman arrived in Omaha a few days later, Mrs. Colman was able to sit up and sing hymns with him. Two weeks later they returned to Boston.

The Colmans were continually on the move for the next four years. They hoped to settle in the Middle West, and lived for a time in Chicago, Illinois; St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; and St. Louis, Missouri. Mr.

Colman received Normal class instruction and he traveled with his wife throughout the area, healing and spreading the teachings of Christian Science.

Mrs. Colman taught classes in Christian Science in towns and cities in Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Kansas during this period. (At the time there was no restriction of teacher's classes to one particular city, so classes were taught where and when there was the interest.)

Many of Janet Colman's students were also pioneers in the Christian Science movement. Among them were: Alfred and William Farlow, Joseph and Mary Armstrong, Ezra and Elizabeth Buswell, Mary and Willis Gross, Thomas Hatten and James Neal.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Colman later wrote, "My first thought whenever I taught a class was to tell them of our Leader, and advise them to go to her. In the last class she taught in the College, there were 9 students that had been mine."

In 1888 the Colmans attended the National Christian Scientist Association meeting in Chicago and heard Mrs. Eddy give her extemporaneous address to the enthusiastic audience of four thousand at Central Music Hall.<sup>2</sup>

The Colmans often managed to get

1. See *Quarterly News*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1972; Vol. 12, No. 2, Summer 1975; *Pioneers in Christian Science*.
2. See *Quarterly News*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Autumn 1972.



Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Looking east from the intersection of Court and 4th Streets in Beatrice, Nebraska, about the time Janet Colman taught there



back to Boston during their travels. 1889 found them finally settled down at 274 Western Avenue in Allston, not far from the Charles River.

In 1890 a little girl was born to Janet and Erwin Colman. They named her Ruth Eddy Colman. She kept her mother very busy for several years, but Janet continued to teach classes periodically in the Boston area. In September 1891 she taught a class in Quincy, Massachusetts and donated the proceeds to The Mother Church Building Fund.

Though still very young, Ruth did her part as a Busy Bee.<sup>3</sup> In a June 1891 letter to Joseph Armstrong, Janet Colman described her daughter's participation in the activities: "The children are all doing what they can do down here for the Church fund. Miss Campbell gave three months ago to 56 children an envelope with 10 cents in it. They are all to meet next Sunday at Mrs. Nixon's and bring in what they have made from it. Ruth has a little stone pig bank and I am going to carry her, and let them break the pig and see how much there is in it up there. Every piece of money she has, she wants to put it in the bank."

3. Organized by Miss Maurine R. Campbell, Christian Science youngsters from all over the United States and Canada worked and saved to donate the furnishings for the Mother's Room in the Original Mother Church edifice.

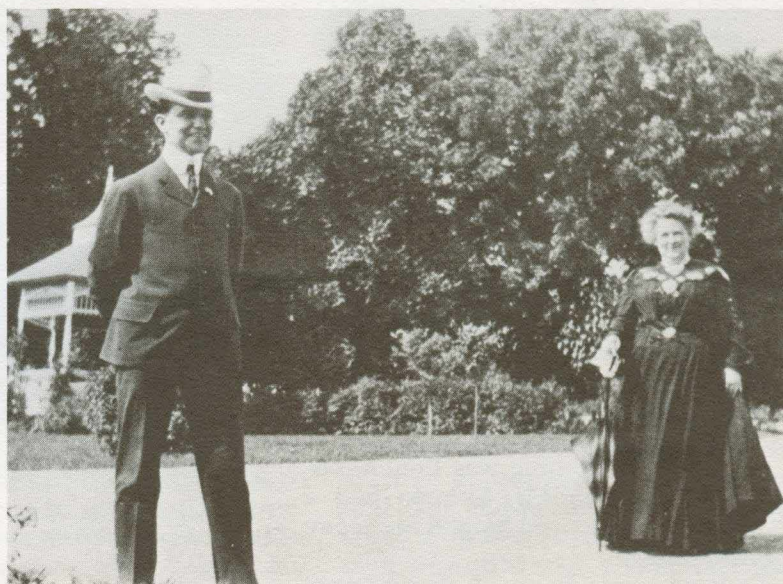
Rejoice Always.  
Sing the song "Rejoice Always"  
Sing it strong and clear;  
Sing the words our Master spake,  
Son be of good cheer."  
Sing it when the world seems  
dark,  
Sing it when the world seems  
dreary;  
Then sing it when the sun  
shines bright,  
And all the world seems cheery.

Janet T. Colman

Mrs. Longyear received this poem as a Christmas greeting from Mrs. Colman.

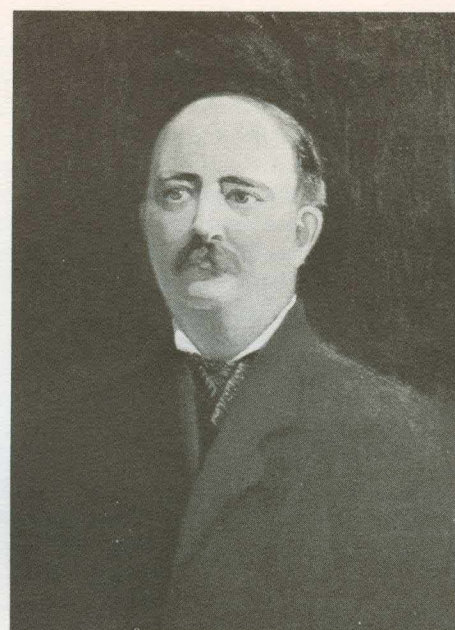
At this time Mrs. Eddy lived in Concord, New Hampshire at 62 North State Street, except for a month, between May and June of 1891, when she lived across the street from the Knapp family in Roslindale, Massa-

chusetts. Mrs. Colman took Ruth to visit there on Mrs. Eddy's invitation. Janet later recalled that Ruth was very taken with their hostess. Mrs. Eddy closed one letter to Janet sending her love and a kiss to Ruth.



Janet Colman sometimes visited Mrs. Eddy at Pleasant View. She is pictured there, left, in the summerhouse (now on display at the Mary Baker Eddy Museum) and right, with John Lathrop.





Left to right, Janet T. Colman, C.S.D., Ruth Eddy Colman, Erwin L. Colman, C.S.B. Ruth painted these portraits of her parents for Mrs. Longyear's collection about 1919.

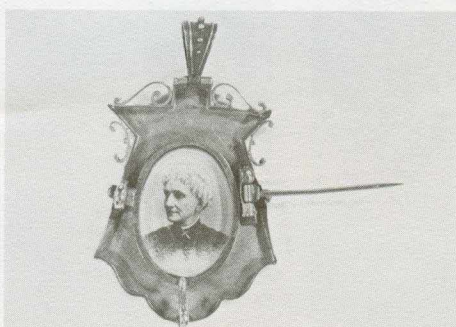
In 1892, when The First Church of Christ, Scientist, was reorganized, Janet Colman was invited by Mrs. Eddy to be one of the twelve First Members.<sup>4</sup> She later wrote of her teacher: "When our Leader would tell us there was something to do, she would always tell us with so much love, there would come a strong desire on my part to do it as she had said. It did not come hard, my heart was willing. I would like to state here that I thank God I studied with Mrs. Eddy. I gained the blessing of God, that flows from Love for so doing."

Another special opportunity came to Mrs. Colman two years later. When the Original Mother Church edifice had just been started, Mrs. Eddy invited forty of her students to contribute \$1000 each to the building fund. The names of these forty were to be placed with Mrs. Eddy's in the cornerstone of the church. Mrs. Colman was overjoyed to have been chosen but her husband did not see it as she did. However she was able to borrow the money from two friends and repay them within five months. She said that the Bible verse that gave her courage at this time was Deuteronomy 8:18. Later Mr. Colman had a change of heart and helped her repay the loans.

Janet and Erwin Colman were among those present on April 1, 1895 when Mrs. Eddy visited The Mother Church for the first time. Mrs. Col-

man recalled that her husband was put in charge of the Mother's Room, where Mrs. Eddy would stay the night. He himself cleaned the room in preparation for her arrival. Mr. Colman was greatly moved by his Leader's visit to her Church, particularly her repetition from the Reader's desk of the hymn "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!" Mrs. Eddy later sat down with him and talked over old times.

Janet Colman ran the Suffolk Christian Science Institute in Boston in 1897. She taught classes periodically in Boston through 1908, including one class the proceeds of which she again donated to the Church, this time to benefit the building fund for the Extension of The Mother Church.



Pendant pin worn by Janet Colman, with a picture of Mrs. Eddy on the reverse

Mrs. Colman also wrote several articles for the Christian Science periodicals.

Butterflies had a special significance to Janet Colman because of some insights she received while thinking about them. She had a special butterfly pin designed and made — in gold with blue and white enamel — to remind herself of these inspiring revelations. She is pictured wearing this pin in her portrait, painted by her daughter Ruth, which may be seen in the Mary Baker Eddy Museum. On display in the Artifacts Gallery of the Museum is another pin worn by Mrs. Colman. It is a pendant pin with a small picture of Mrs. Eddy on the back.

Janet T. Colman's unswerving dedication and loyalty to her Leader and the Cause of Christian Science were important qualities in her role as pioneer. She once wrote to Mary Beecher Longyear, "Oh how much we owe to our blest Leader, who has given us the true understanding of God." Much is also owed to Janet Colman for helping to sow the seeds of Christian Science throughout the Middle West.

Marylee Hursh

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4. See *Quarterly News*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1 and 2.