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Mrs. Eddy's carriage entering Pleasant View grounds

NEW SHOES FOR MARY BAKER EDDY

The following article was first published on December 28, 1950 in The Hampton Union and Rockingham County Gazette (Hampton, New Hampshire), in James Tucker's "Our Town" column. Mr. Tucker worked at W. E. Thompson's store in Concord, New Hampshire at the time of the incident he describes, and he took part in the elaborate preparations which preceded Mrs. Eddy's visit to the shoe store. Reprinted with permission.

One never knows his exact destination when he boards a "train of thoughts." For instance, we were thinking about the poet Whittier and ended up with Mary Baker Eddy's new shoes. It was this way: Whittier seemed like an ideal subject for an "Our Town" column. He had written many poems which related to Hampton. One of these poems had to do with General Moulton. The Moulton house is one of the finest examples of early American architecture and a Hampton landmark. It was rehabilitated by its present owner, Mr. Harlan G. Little. Before he retired, Mr. Little manufactured Sorosis shoes for women. William Thompson of Concord, sold Sorosis shoes many years ago at retail.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder and head of Christian Science, was one of his customers. Her shoes were made to order on a special last and they were very small — size 2 AA, if I remember correctly — and they were very pretty. One day, Mrs. Eddy paid Mr. Thompson a very special compliment. Her secretary, Mr. Calvin Frye, telephoned that she would come into the North Main Street store to try on a new pair of shoes that had just been received from the manufacturer. It turned out to be a very special event. We know, because we were in Mr. Thompson's employ at the time and we helped to arrange the interesting details of that unusual visit. So, that's how we started a train of thoughts with the

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poet Whittier and ended up with Mary Baker Eddy's new shoes.

Mary Baker G. Eddy lived for some years in Amesbury. She probably visited Hampton Beach on many occasions.¹ She may have been as impressed as Whittier was with our town. However, many important years of that great woman's life were spent at her Concord home, "Pleasant View." As a working newspaper man in Concord, a native and a resident of the Capital City for forty years, we had many opportunities to observe Mrs. Eddy and were well acquainted with her personal attorney, Mr. Frank Streeter. She was indeed a remarkable woman. But we were just out of High School when the interesting episode of the new shoes occurred.

In the early 1900's, William E. Thompson had one of the largest retail shoe stores in New Hampshire. Previous to graduating from High School in 1904 we had been employed by the Thompson firm at such hours during the week as did not interfere with school hours. After graduating we were permanently employed there for over a year before entering college. It was sometime during this period that Mr. Thompson got the unusual message from Mr. Frye that on a certain afternoon of that week, around two o'clock, Mrs. Eddy would be in to try on her new shoes. Now, except for an occasional visit to Derby's Jewelry Store, Mrs. Eddy never entered Concord business places, although she patronized many of them generously. William Thompson, conscious of the unusual honor which the gracious lady was paying him, began immediately to make unique preparations for her visit.

All of the store woodwork was scrubbed and polished. The floors were washed, up stairs and down. Every one of the thousands of shoe boxes was dusted and rearranged meticulously on the shelves. The show-windows were thoroughly cleaned and redecorated. But particular attention was paid to the ten foot square office which had been partitioned off for Mr. Thompson's private use with nine foot-high siding in one corner of the back of the store.

A roll-topped oak desk and chair — about the only articles of furniture in



A shoe which belonged to Mrs. Eddy inscribed 'Rev. M.B. Eddy'

the place — were polished and an accumulated litter of newspapers, trade magazines, shoe lasts and samples were cleaned out completely. For, in this sanctum sanctorum, Mr. Thompson would try on Mrs. Eddy's new shoes. The entire emporium, including the office and the basement where lumbermen's shoes, felts and rubbers were sold, was made spick and span.

On the morning before the visit of this world famous woman, Mr. Thompson and the oversigned visited Norris Dunclee's Livery Stable on Pleasant Street, now the site of the Star Theatre. We went into the tack room and came out with our arms filled to overflowing with the multi-colored, fluffy mats which were used in those by-gone days to cover the floors of buggys, carryalls and other types of horse-drawn vehicles. These were used — and this is a true story — to cover the floor of Mr. Thompson's private office.

An express team brought a few pieces of horse-hair furniture from the front parlor of Julia Bolger's home and these were carefully placed on the gaudy mats that covered the office

floor. Julia was the cashier and bookkeeper of the Thompson firm and like all of the other employees, she was glad to help out the boss on this auspicious occasion. One of Julia's best pieces, a low-seated, high back chair, was placed in the middle of one side of the office opposite the roll-top desk. Sofa pillows, also loaned by Miss Bolger, were placed on the chair seat and against the chair back to assure maximum comfort for Mrs. Eddy.

When we left for home that night at the end of a particularly grueling day, Mr. Thompson told all of us, clerks, bookkeeper and the colored shoe-shine boy, that we must wear our "Sunday clothes" to work the next day. So, the next morning we all came to work dressed in our Sunday best. Mr. Thompson wore a frock coat with striped gray trousers and carried a bouquet of two dozen carnations which he carefully placed in a vase on top of his oak desk. Lunch-time came and passed quickly and at two o'clock we were all at the special places which had been assigned to us along the counters on either side of the big store.

Promptly, as the bell in the Town Clock at the corner of School Street

chimed the hour of two, the Eddy coach drawn by a beautiful pair of matched bays, was driven to the edge of the sidewalk opposite the store entrance. Mr. Calvin Frye climbed down from the coachman's box where he sat beside the driver, and opened the carriage door. He offered his arm to the tall, stately lady with the beautiful, serene countenance and they were met at the door by Mr. Thompson. The boss bowed low and remarked concerning the high honor which Mrs. Eddy had conferred on him by coming personally to his store. The proprietor escorted his visitors to his private office and closed the door.

We have wondered a thousand times since what that good woman must have thought as she entered that strangely decorated office and seated herself on the becushioned horse-hair chair arranged like a low throne in the center of one side of the little room. We know not what her thoughts were but of one thing we can be absolutely certain. Her composed, regal-like demeanor was not in the least changed although she most certainly must have been amused by her incongruous surroundings and perhaps touched by the obvious attempt to provide for her an entirely suitable place in which to try on her new shoes.

In a half hour the door opened and out came Mrs. Eddy, again on the arm of Mr. Frye. Now, she was holding in her left hand, the stems dripping water, the bouquet of carnations which Mr. Thompson had plucked from the vase and thrust into her hand. But if she was in the least perturbed or embarrassed she certainly did not show it, for her really beautiful face broke into a kind smile and she nodded pleasantly to each of us as she passed by our appointed stations on her way back to the entrance door.

And so, Mrs. Eddy tried on her new, satin-lined kid shoes with her initials "M. B. G. E." embroidered in silk on the lining. And they must have fitted perfectly for on the next day they were sent to "Pleasant View" by special messenger.

James W. Tucker

FRANK SHERWIN STREETER

In the article, "New Shoes for Mary Baker Eddy," the author, James Tucker, refers to his acquaintance with Mrs. Eddy's personal attorney, Mr. Frank Streeter. A brief biography of Mr. Streeter follows.

Mary Baker Eddy engaged Frank Sherman Streeter as a personal counsel at various times between 1890-1910. Perhaps his most notable contribution was his role in the Woodbury libel suit brought against Mrs. Eddy in 1899, and in the "Next Friends" suit in 1907. Michael Meehan, Editor of the New Hampshire Concord Patriot, wrote of him, "Mr. Streeter has been favored by

many audiences with Mrs. Eddy and thus has had opportunity to learn much of this wonderful woman; and as a result, though a widely experienced and conservative man, in speaking of those characteristics that mark her personality and that are the result of a lifelong devotion to a spiritual purpose, he deals only in superlatives."¹

Son of Daniel and Julia W. Streeter, Frank was born in East Charleston, Vermont, in 1853. After graduating from St. Johnsbury Academy in 1870 and Dartmouth College in 1874, he headed west, serving for a brief period as principal of the Ottumwa, Iowa,



Attorney Frank Streeter

1. Mrs. Eddy lived in Amesbury for parts of 1868 and 1870. See *Quarterly News*, Winter 1980-81 and Spring 1981. It is not known when, or if, she visited Hampton Beach.



RECENT ACQUISITION



This gold locket is a recent addition to Longyear's collection; a gift of Mrs. Adelaide Anderson



Frank Streeter

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High School. His career changed directions, however. Following the urging of those who recognized his ability and promise as a lawyer, he returned to his native New England to study law with Alonzo P. Carpenter of Bath, New Hampshire, remembered for having one of the best trained judicial minds on the New Hampshire bench and as Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Frank Streeter was married to his mentor's daughter, Lillian Carpenter, in 1877. They had two children, Julia and Thomas.

Admitted to the bar in 1877, Frank Streeter began his practice in Orford, New Hampshire, soon moving to Concord where he entered into a series of legal partnerships with lawyers of distinction. Specializing in corporate law, his practice grew rapidly and he went on to become known as one of the most respected attorneys in New Hampshire. A gentleman of commanding presence, moral courage, remarkable perception, and full voice, General Streeter was an able debater, had a firm understanding of the law, the rights of citizens under the law, and was ever ready to make sacrifices for his clients.

Closely identifying himself with his home city of Concord and its affairs, he was a director of the First National Bank and the Concord Electric Company. The Boston and Maine Railroad

used his services as their New Hampshire counsel for many years. General Streeter's genial personality won him many friends whose companionship he enjoyed at the Snowshoe and Woonancet Clubs of Concord.

Although the Republicans lost the White House to Grover Cleveland in 1885, the same year found General Streeter, a Republican, serving on the Judiciary Committee in the New Hampshire Legislature. He was to continue combining the law with politics when in 1896 he became President of the New Hampshire Constitutional Convention and in 1907-08 a member of the Republican National Committee. As time went by, his desire to preserve world peace brought him into active support of such organizations as the National Security League and the League to Enforce Peace.

A Unitarian by religious belief, General Streeter was also a 32d degree Mason and member of the Odd Fellows. The interests of his alma mater, Dartmouth College, were close to his heart, and he served on the board of trustees for over 17 years. In spite of the wide variety of his business,

professional, and political activities, Frank Streeter found time for extensive reading and study. He was thoroughly familiar with both the classics and modern literature, although history and biography were his favorites. At one time he prepared and delivered a paper on Bismarck and the foundation of the German Empire, and one on Cecil Rhodes.

For many years Frank Streeter kept a file of newspaper clippings from all over the United States on Mary Baker Eddy and the court cases in which he served as her personal counsel. This file in the form of a series of scrapbooks, was donated to the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, where Frank Streeter was a member for many years.

Joan Latady

1. Michael Meehan, *Mrs. Eddy and the Late Suit in Equity*, p. 335.

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