

QUARTERLY NEWS  
MARY BAKER EDDY MUSEUM  
*and Historic Sites*



VOL. 19, NO. 2

PUBLISHED BY LONGYEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 1982



Mr. and Mrs. George Kinter and their niece out for a leisurely ride in Mrs. Eddy's boat

## MARY BAKER EDDY'S ST. LAWRENCE SKIFF

In September, 1892, the members of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Toronto presented Mary Baker Eddy with a handsome rowboat as a gift to use on the newly enlarged pond at her home "Pleasant View," in Concord, New Hampshire. The preceding summer, the members of the church, led by John and Isabella Stewart, had commissioned the pleasure boat from Canadian boatbuilder D.G. Lorsch.

The boat, restored and owned by Boston's Museum of Transportation (MOT), is an elegant version of the St. Lawrence Skiff, the indigenous boat to the Toronto region. In that area of few inland roads during the late 19th century, the skiffs were used as water taxis and delivery boats to visit neighbors and transport goods.

The more decorative models of this versatile, utilitarian boat were called "ladies' skiffs" and were used mainly for pleasure outings. According to Paul Lipke, Boatshop director of the MOT, Mrs. Eddy's boat ranked among the best of the ladies' skiffs with its high degree of finish and upholstery; "There were

none quite this fancy," he says.

At Pleasant View, the boat served as a relaxing diversion for household members and guests. Although there is no known record of Mrs. Eddy actually having used the boat, the gift touched her deeply. In a letter of gratitude to the Toronto church members she wrote: "... your dear hearts expressed in their lovely gift such varying types of true affection, shaded as autumn leaves with bright hues of the spiritual, that my Muse lost her lightsome lyre, and imagery of thought gave place to chords of feeling too deep for words."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Eddy's boat reflects not only the

Quarterly News Summer 1982  
© Longyear Foundation 1982 Vol. 19, No. 2  
Subscription, \$6.00 Annually  
(Includes Activities at Longyear)  
Sent without charge to Members of Longyear

generosity of the Toronto Church members, but also a way of life and the standard of luxury in the 1890s.

A period photo of Mr. and Mrs. George Kinter and their niece out for a leisurely ride in the boat gives a revealing glimpse of the Victorian lifestyle. Mr. Kinter, secretary and metaphysician in Mrs. Eddy's household, rows at the center. His niece, seated in the bow, peers out from under a graceful parasol while Mrs. Kinter sits in the stern with her hands quietly folded in her lap, shaded from the sun by her wide-brimmed, flowered hat.

A boathouse on the edge of the pond was completed in July 1893. The quaint structure decorated with latticework, rounded windows, and gingerbread trim on the roof and under the peaked gables was a perfect addition to the pastoral scene.

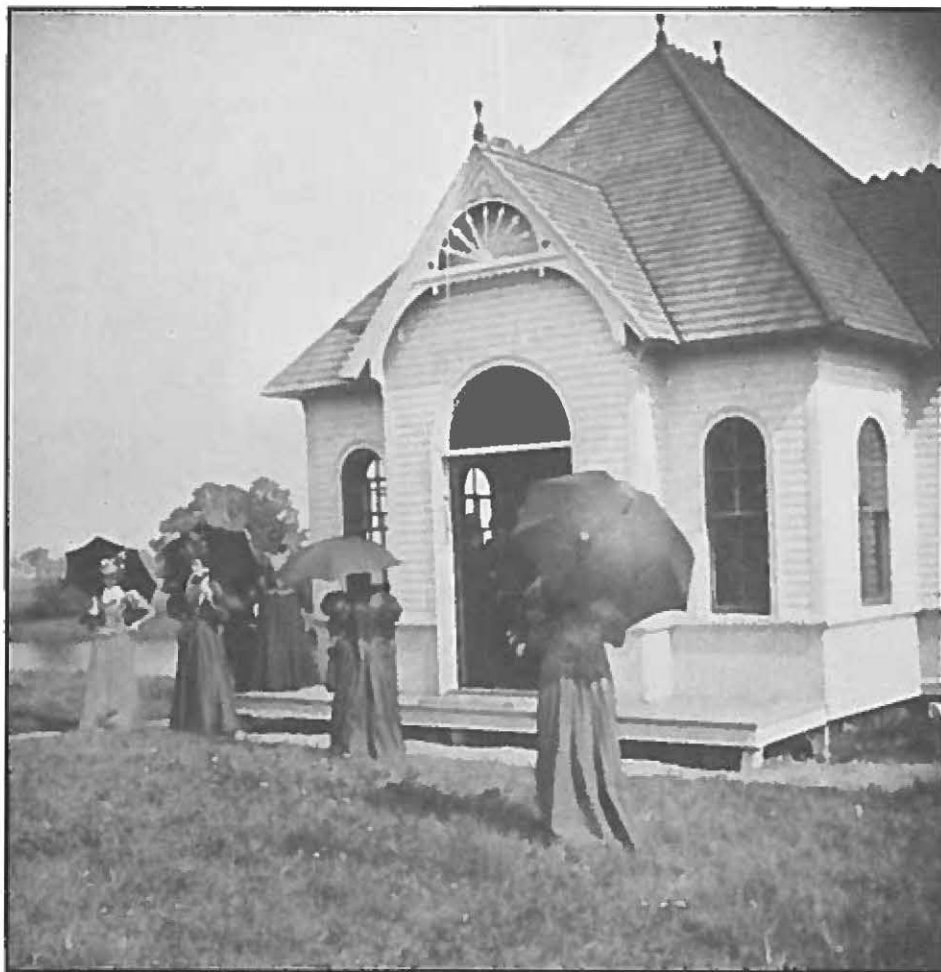
After a visit to Pleasant View, Ernest Fisk, a young friend of Mrs. Eddy's, described the lavish details of the rowboat in a letter to his father: "In the stern is a lovely seat designed for Mrs. Eddy with deep pockets on both sides and velvet carpet on the floor of the boat. Silk cords and tassels to steer by . . . There are two parasols, one at each end and suspended over the two seats, one at the bow and one at the stern leaving the center one clear for whoever rows."<sup>2</sup>

In general construction, Mrs. Eddy's boat is a classic St. Lawrence skiff; a double ended rowboat with lapped planking, narrow or fine ends, and short decks, fore and aft. Measuring 16 feet 5¼ inches in length and 3 feet 9 inches in width, the skiff is made of cedar planking on an oak and ash frame with walnut decks.

The basic hull is embellished with nickel-plated brass rails and plush seats upholstered in a deep red wool/mohair material. According to Paul Lipke, one unusual feature of the boat is that it is varnished both inside and out rather than painted. This is a nice feature when the boat is on display because the construction is clearly visible.

A seven-pointed star of inlaid wood set into the after deck represents the seven Canadian Provinces in 1892 (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island). A ¾ inch diameter hole at the center of the star holds a compass.

A glass plaque with masonic symbols painted on the underside is set into



The boathouse with latticework and rounded windows, completed in 1893

the foredeck and surrounded by a cherry frame. The symbols consist of a gold-leaf cross and crown emblem inside a silver-trimmed white triangle with rays beaming out from its base against a black background. Around the emblem a Greek and Latin inscription reads: "EYPHNAMEN . INVENIMUS . CULTOR . DEI . CIVIS . MUNDI" Mrs. Stewart wrote Mrs. Eddy that the inscription meant "We have found the worship of God, O citizens of the world."

Although the emblem at the center of the plaque is a cross and crown, it is more closely akin to the Knights Templars symbol of the Masons than to the Christian Science cross and crown. The emblem on the boat differs from both symbols, however, in that the cross tilts to the left rather than the right.

Mrs. Eddy thought highly of the Masons. Many years before, when her first husband passed on in Wilmington, North Carolina, the Masons saw to it that the young Mrs. Glover was safely returned to her family in New England. Afterwards she always remembered

their kindness and considered them to be an honorable group.

This memory was reflected in Mrs. Eddy's thank-you letter to the Toronto church members when she wrote: "The symbols of freemasonry depicted on the boat wakened memory, touched tender fibres of thought, and I longed to say to the masonic brothers: 'If as a woman I may not unite with you in freemasonry, nor you with me in Christian Science, yet as friends we can feel the touch of heart to heart and hand to hand, on the broad basis and sure foundation of true friendship's 'level' and the 'square' of moral sentiments.'"<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Eddy had a great deal to look back on from her vantage point in September 1892, the month she was given the boat. The beginning of the month marked the legal establishment of the Christian Science Board of Directors and, a few weeks later, the founding of The Mother Church when, on September 23, 1892, Mrs. Eddy called 12 of her most trusted students together to vote themselves and 20 additional stu-



dents "First Members of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Mass."

Referring to this period in her career one of Mrs. Eddy's biographers, Robert Peel, writes: "On a quiet summer afternoon at Pleasant View, Mrs. Eddy could feel that she had come home to a familiar world. Here were the broad vistas, the gentle contours, the green tranquilities of her childhood. Enhanced, to be sure, by additional minor charms, like the rambler roses spilling over the gazebo and the small pleasure boat on the pond."<sup>4</sup>

Jane Anderson

1. Miscellaneous Writings, p. 142, by Mary Baker Eddy.
2. Letter of July 20, 1893 to his father Winslow C. Fisk, C.S.D. Longyear Collection.
3. Miscellaneous Writings, pp. 142, 143, by Mary Baker Eddy.
4. Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority, p. 19, by Robert Peel.

## THE BOAT RESTORATION

After a long period of storage and non-use, Mary Baker Eddy's boat was recently restored to its original condition by Boston's Museum of Transportation.

In February 1976, The Christian Science Board of Directors gave the Mary Baker Eddy boat to the Museum of Transportation (MOT) with the stipulation that it be restored.

In late 1979, the MOT received a joint grant from the Maritime Division of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to establish a boat restoration shop in conjunction with the New England Historic Seaport. At Boatshop director Paul Lipke's recommendation, The National Trust designated Mrs. Eddy's rowboat as one of the five boats chosen for initial projects under the grant.

Aside from its connection to Mrs. Eddy, Paul Lipke says the rowboat is historically significant in its own right as one of the relatively few boats from the 1890's with the builder's emblem intact and with a documented history.

Members of the Boatshop staff and trainees restored the rowboat from November 1980 to May 1981.

Because the boat was extremely dried out and had lost some of its shape, a rehydration process was used to replace the natural oils and make the wood more flexible. The original varnish was stripped and the boat was bathed in a solution of linseed oil and preservatives. As the boat became more limber, Mr. Lipke explains, temporary bulkheads were installed while the boat was gently pulled back to its proper shape.

During the restoration process, three whole planks were replaced as well as the sections of two others. Fifteen transverse ribs were also replaced. The brass rails were renickedled and the wool/mohair upholstery on the seats was restored at a cost of \$65 per yard. The custom-ordered maroon and gold fringe to edge the seats cost \$95 per yard.

As an indication of the sometimes





**Mrs. Eddy's skiff during restoration process**

tedious nature of boat restoration, the exact size of copper rivets used in Mrs. Eddy's skiff are no longer manufactured. Consequently, the restoration crew had to grind rivets down by hand one by one to the right size.

The total cost of the boat restoration was about \$12,000. Approximately half the expenses were met by the National Trust Grant.

According to Mr. Lipke, Mrs. Eddy's rowboat was well-built by Victorian standards and is exceptional by today's standards: "The number of examples of what competent woodworkers can do are very few," he says. "There are not many opportunities to study the workmanship of (Victorian) times in that kind of detail."

The Museum of Transportation and the Maine Maritime Museum also par-

ticipated in a two-day "lines-taking" seminar to document the measurements and details of the boat. Mr. Lipke says the resulting renderings by master draftsman Dave Dillion of Auburn, Maine are "extraordinarily well-drawn."

Although the restoration is complete, there are still some lessons to be learned from the boat. First, it is difficult to determine where the basic construction of the boat ended and the custom work began. The MOT staff is still not certain whether all the work was done in one shop or whether certain elements were added later. Mr. Lipke speculates the members of the Toronto church may have bought the basic hull and contracted out the

emblems and other accessories themselves or they may have commissioned the builder D.G. Lorsch to complete the entire project.

Second, it is not yet known how much the Toronto church members paid for the boat. Judging from the prices of similar boats at the time, it is believed Mrs. Eddy's skiff probably cost in the vicinity of \$300. The Toronto church records are still being investigated for more specific information.

Although all the details surrounding the boat have not been discovered, there is no doubt Mrs. Eddy's boat was, says Paul Lipke, "a significant gift."

Jane Anderson

LONGYEAR FOUNDATION: Board of Trustees: Robert C. Dale, Chairman; Marian H. Holbrook; June A. Austin; John E. Auchmoody. Director: Constance C. Johnson. QUARTERLY NEWS is published four times annually by Longyear Historical Society, 120 Seaver Street, Brookline, Massachusetts 02146 U.S.A. (617) 277-8943. Inquiries about membership and activities are welcome.