

PLEASANT VIEW — A HOME FOR MARY BAKER EDDY



Mrs. Eddy's residence on Pleasant Street in Concord, New Hampshire

Mary Baker Eddy, Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science writes on page 58 of her major published work Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, "Home is the dearest spot on earth, and it should be the centre, though not the boundary, of the affections." On another occasion she was heard to say to members of her household, "Home is not a place but a power. We find home when we arrive at the full understanding of God. Home! Think of it! Where sense has no claims and Soul satisfies."¹

This June, 1992, marks one hundred years since Mary Baker Eddy moved to the home she was to occupy longer than any other in her experience. For fifteen and one-half years this quiet, rural setting on the outskirts of Concord, New Hampshire, which she named appropriately "Pleasant View" would, along with a household of dedicated workers, enable her to accomplish what would advance her and her discovery from national to international recognition.

Of this significant part of Mrs. Eddy's life the world has today only the historic record — including photographs, postcards, first-hand recollections, and a book of photos and engravings that was prepared by James Gilman and a colleague during

and after his collaboration with Mary Baker Eddy on *Christ and Christmas*.² These are indeed valuable resources in this centennial year considering that the home itself was taken down in 1917 to be replaced by the structure that remains there today. The new building was constructed and used for many years as a sheltered care institution for Christian Scientists, and was named Pleasant View Home. In more recent years, there has been some confusion between these two "Pleasant Views."

To gain an understanding of what Mary Baker Eddy's "Pleasant View" meant to her and to history it is important to examine briefly some events leading to her residence there. Most importantly, why had Mrs. Eddy felt the need to move from Boston, the center of activity for the religious movement she had founded?

Biographer Clifford P. Smith writes, "As reasons for this change and its incidents, she spoke of desiring to live apart from the world, of transferring many tasks to others, and of taking more time for her writings."³ Another biographer, E. Mary Ramsay, likens the experience to that of a "wise mother" who "saw that the time had come when her students must carry on the work on the lines laid down by her, with less supervision, depending less on her and more on God. She longed to retire from the pressure of the life she had been leading, to revise *Science and Health*, to have time for meditation, to learn more of the life of the Spirit, to be able to see the future steps which must be taken to safeguard and establish the cause of Christian Science."⁴ Mrs. Eddy herself writes, "I left Boston in the height of prosperity to *retreat* from the world, and to seek the one divine Person, whereby and wherein to show others the footsteps from sense to Soul. To give me this opportunity is all that I ask of mankind."⁵

Mary Baker Eddy's first residence upon leaving Boston was 62 North State Street in Concord, New Hampshire, to which she moved in June of 1889. She needed the distance from Boston in order to rethink Christian Science teaching and the church organization, and by October had closed and dissolved her thriving Massachusetts Metaphysical College⁶ and by the end of the year had formally disorganized the church (although services continued to be held).⁷ She needed quiet in order to undertake a major revision of her book *Science and Health*, the 50th edition published in January 1891. There was a brief period of residence in Roslindale, Massachusetts in May 1891, but then back to 62 North State Street in Concord until she could find a more tranquil solution.⁸

Then in the Fall of 1891 while out on one of her daily drives, Mrs. Eddy came upon a farm site on the rural outskirts of Concord. The group of buildings was in need of repair but had a pastoral setting and long view of woodlands, meadows, and the hills of her childhood home of Bow, New Hampshire. It was a scene that immediately appealed to her sense of "home." By December she had purchased the property and begun plans for the necessary adjustments that would accommodate her own needs and those of her household.

Irving Tomlinson, student and biographer of Mary Baker Eddy later relates, "'A home should be something more than four walls,' Mrs. Eddy said to me. 'There should be about it noble trees, beautiful shrubbery, flowers, vines clambering over the house, and a rose garden.' And that is what she made of the desolate spot transformed into Pleasant View..."⁹



Front entry gate at Pleasant View

Of the physical changes made to the original structures, another biographer says, "The original house was quite small and commonplace, but Mrs. Eddy added bow windows and wide verandas, built a *porte-cochere* at the front of the house and a tower room with a balcony at the south-east corner, whence the best view of the hills and valleys was to be had. Later on she bought more land, built a gardener's cottage, stables and out-buildings."¹⁰

There were other smaller changes and alterations to be made over the years there, and among those there would be several exterior color schemes. The most frequently described is a pale, light, or soft gray green. This description is supported by a recent paint analysis done of the Pleasant View summerhouse (gazebo) that presently sits on the front terrace at the Longyear Museum, undergoing restoration. Since out-buildings were customarily painted to match the main one, it is highly probable that the paint colors found on the summerhouse were the same

as those on the main house: "...an original polychrome scheme in yellows and yellow-oranges... followed by two polychrome schemes in green and white, then a scheme with gray..."¹¹

Even with the improvements and additions, though, the dwelling place of this remarkable religious leader was to maintain the humble atmosphere

that reflected her concept of home. Arthur Brisbane, a writer who had occasion to interview Mrs. Eddy and later wrote of his experience describes the house as "extremely simple and unpretentious, a plain, little frame dwelling, situated rather close to a country roadway on the side of a most beautiful New Hampshire valley."¹²

The house was actually situated about a mile southwest of Concord on the south side of Pleasant Street, on acreage that sloped gradually down to a river. In addition to the house itself there were other features to this home, including two summerhouses (gazebo-like structures, one on the front lawn and one in the rear), a fountain with fish, gardener's cottage and greenhouse, stone entrance and gate, stables with carriage house, and flower gardens, orchards, and lawns.¹³ There was a lovely pond that had been the gift of grateful students, with a windmill, footpaths, and boathouse; and a boat that had also been a gift to Mrs. Eddy.¹⁴ Also of note was a working farm and dairy that provided fresh vegetables and dairy products for the



Stables with carriage house and garden

household. A *Concord Monitor* article reprinted in the *Christian Science Sentinel* of August 29, 1901, mentions that Pleasant View had "one of the best equipped model farms in New England" utilizing the latest of methods, and that "every department of the estate of the modest owner is looked after with great care."¹⁵

Most descriptions of the house and daily life at Pleasant View seem to include a consistent impression of simplicity, order and comfort. Sibyl Wilbur, sent to interview Mrs. Eddy by *The Boston Herald* in 1905, writes of her visit to the home of this world religious figure, "There is no great palace at Pleasant View, such as is the Vatican at Rome... There is only a simple cottage home set in a few acres of low-fenced ground. A ring of the front door-bell means that every member of the house is disturbed, and the entrance of a visitor into the cottage hallway means an actual intrusion upon a family whose chief member is the most influential woman living in the world to-day."¹⁶ In the same article Miss Wilbur describes her experience as she walked up the driveway to approach the front door, "I heard the piano, which some one was playing on softly, and just before my ring a ripple of laughter. All the foolish fears of a great secret at Pleasant View suddenly dropped from me like a hateful cloak. I perceived the beauty of a happy home life, being lived naturally and agreeably here in this well-ordered, well-kept country residence."¹⁷

For descriptions of the interior set-up of the house we have to rely heavily on the aforementioned photos

and first-hand accounts by members of the household and visitors. Calvin Hill, who later became a trusted worker for Mrs. Eddy, made his first visit to Pleasant View as a carpet salesman in the Spring of 1899. After being encouraged by Mrs. Eddy to be straightforward in his advice on what *he* would choose, he responded "In your front parlor, Mrs. Eddy, you have very fine Brussels net curtains, beautifully upholstered chairs, and a couch with a delicate covering; but in this rear parlor you have black walnut furniture with portieres and wall-paper which do not go together very well. A fine quality plain carpet, green or old rose, would look well in these double parlors.' ...Of course I did not intend to be critical of Mrs. Eddy's home, which was in shining order. But I felt it was only right to give an

honest opinion when she had asked for it... Later I had the privilege of helping Mrs. Eddy in the work of re-decoration."¹⁸ It is interesting to read a description of these same rooms six years later in Sibyl Wilbur's 1905 account: "I have spoken of the modest dimensions of the house, but the double parlors, which occupy the eastern half of it on the ground floor, are so arranged as to give an effect of stateliness. They are hung in rose-pink silk brocade, carpeted with white velvet, and curtained with filmy lace at the windows. They are full of sunlight..." And of the library, across the hall, she notes, "The furniture is of leather upholstery, and it is a comfortable, livable, old-fashioned sort of room." Later she adds, "We passed through the dining-room and kitchen, giving me the opportunity to see that, to the last corner of this house, order, simplicity, and absolute daintiness prevailed."¹⁹ And according to floor plan drawings done in the 1950's from the recollections of several individuals who had been members of Mrs. Eddy's household, other rooms on that first level included a kitchen, bath, pantries, laundry, and hallways.²⁰

Mrs. Eddy's rooms were on the second floor to the rear of the house. They consisted of a bedroom and a study from which she could walk out onto the veranda which ran the length of the rear of the house, and onto the balcony which surrounded the tower. By many accounts, we know that she was accustomed to using the veranda for walks, with its views out over the valley and hills. It was from that



Rear view of Pleasant View as seen from boathouse and pond

balcony that Mrs. Eddy on several occasions addressed large groups, the most notable being 10,000 on June 29, 1903.²¹

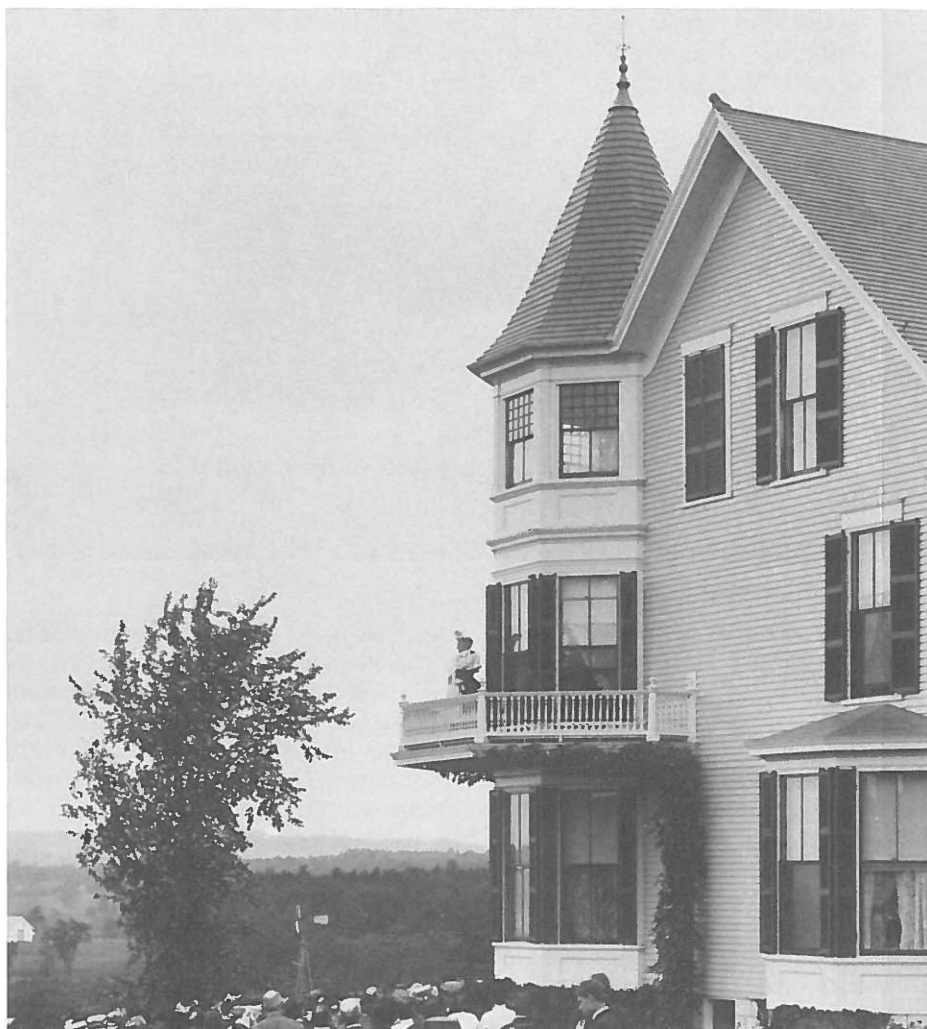
A further description of the study according to one of the household workers reveals that it was variously known as Mrs. Eddy's living-room, or sitting-room, and also work-room, where she spent the greater part of her workdays. He describes the room: "This remarkable apartment, about 18 × 20 feet, had two doors, the one opening from her bed-chamber, the other into the main hall. Its walls were covered with light, cheery wall-paper; it was carpeted with a good body-brussels of light but serviceable shade. Its furniture of walnut and quartered oak, . . ."²²

Another interesting feature of the second floor was a swing room located in the structure protruding out over the front entry. In it was a chair swing in which "she liked to sit on summer evenings, rocking back and forth, while passing in review for the entertainment of her house friends various episodes of her earlier days."²³

Also on the second floor were 5 rooms for members of her household, a lavatory, hallways, and a storage room. The third floor contained several more rooms for the workers and storage areas.²⁴

From all accounts, it is evident that Mrs. Eddy sincerely enjoyed her home at Pleasant View. One of her students relates "'The strongest tie I have ever felt,' said Mrs. Eddy one evening, after we had been singing hymns, 'next to my love of God, has been my love for home.'"²⁵ Another student, Joseph Mann, who served as superintendent at Pleasant View for several years comments, "It is not an exaggeration to say that without doubt in her time Mrs. Eddy was the busiest woman on earth."²⁶ Yet he later recalls of her involvement with her home, "Mrs. Eddy had the keenest interest in and the most loving appreciation of everything on her estate, from the least to the greatest, within her home or over the many acres that needed care." He then goes on to tell of Mrs. Eddy's recognition of a haying job well done and how her compliments encouraged and inspired the workers.²⁷

Not only did Mary Baker Eddy care deeply about her immediate environs, but she also contributed to the good of her community and was considered one of Concord's most distinguished citizens. Among other things, she was



Mrs. Eddy addressing crowd of 10,000 from her balcony on June 29, 1903

known to have provided shoes for needy children, contributed funds for street paving, patronized local merchants, and helped in the development of the State Fair Grounds which adjoined her property.²⁸ She also gave Christian Science Hall as a meeting place for Christian Scientists of Concord, which was later replaced on the same site by First Church of Christ, Scientist, Concord.

It is not possible to think of Mary Baker Eddy's life at Pleasant View without considering her many significant footsteps during that time toward establishing and furthering the religious cause of which she was leader. This setting of serenity and retreat served to facilitate those accomplishments. The organization of her church in its present form began at her direction in 1892,²⁹ followed by the ordination in 1894 of its "impersonal pastor," the Bible and *Science and Health*, and the publishing of its by-laws in the *Church Manual* in 1895. Other milestones included formation of the Board of Lectureship and Board

of Education in 1898, and Publication Committee in 1899 (to become the Committee on Publication in 1900).

She established The Christian Science Publishing Society in its present form by Deed of Trust in 1898, and through it began to publish *The Christian Science Weekly*, renamed the *Christian Science Sentinel* in 1899. There had already been printed Christian Science Bible Lessons since 1888 based on the International Series used by Protestant churches. These first appeared in *The Christian Science Journal*. Later they appeared in a monthly and subsequently a quarterly publication. But in 1898, Mrs. Eddy instituted her own series of 26 subjects from which Bible Lessons were to be prepared and printed. Within a year, the International lessons were dropped and the *Christian Science Quarterly* had evolved to a form similar to the one in use today.³⁰

In the relatively short period of about four years, Mary Baker Eddy had published *Christ and Christmas* (in December 1893), *Pulpit and Press*

(in April 1895), the *Church Manual of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts* (in Fall 1895 as mentioned before), and *Miscellaneous Writings* (in February 1897). By 1902 another major revision of her textbook *Science and Health* was published (226th edition) and in 1903 the first foreign language periodical of Christian Science was launched in German, *Der Herold der Christian Science*.³¹

Also at Mrs. Eddy's direction The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts was built, and then dedicated on January 6, 1895. The young church attracted many, and at the 1902 Annual Meeting of the members it was voted to begin plans for another building with an increased seating capacity. The Mother Church Extension was dedicated June 10, 1906.

Ironically, it was the need for the organization and nurturing of her church that took Mrs. Eddy away from Boston in 1889, and it was further steps in that direction that brought her back to the Boston area in January of 1908 to a new residence in Chestnut Hill. Arthur Brisbane relates in his book *Mary Baker G. Eddy*, "When she left Boston to take up her abode there [Concord] the religious movement of which she was the founder was represented by 45 churches with a membership of 450. At the time of her return, the number of churches had grown to 1059, the membership of the Mother Church had increased over one hundred fold and the number of adherents was estimated to be one million."³²

The move back to Boston had been contemplated for some time, and trusted workers were given the task of finding a suitable location, with more space for her growing household. Archibald McLellan recalls "A set of plans of the new home had been kept at Pleasant View, and she [Mrs. Eddy] had personally suggested and worked out many necessary changes, keeping in close touch with the progress made, through daily reports and countless photographs, just as she had during the building of The Mother Church and its magnificent extension. As much as was possible she wished the arrangements and furnishings to conform to those at Pleasant View..."³³ However, upon arrival she found the house too grand in scale and proceeded to have further adjustments made.³⁴

During Mary Baker Eddy's residence at Chestnut Hill, her Pleasant View estate was left intact, as though awaiting her return. A newspaper

article of October 4, 1911 mentions a letter from Mrs. Eddy to Archibald McLellan dated March 7, 1908, in which she states her desire to



Interior views of the back parlor (top), dining room (middle), and Mrs. Eddy's study (bottom) that were published in *Pleasant View, Twenty Plates of the Home Surroundings of Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science* by J. F. Gilman and H. E. Carlton in 1894.

retain her "beloved residence in Concord..."³⁵ She would not return, though, and passed on at her Chestnut Hill residence in December of 1910.

Pleasant View was occupied temporarily by Professor and Mrs. Hermann Hering, who were asked to do so when Mrs. Eddy's household moved to Massachusetts. They were to superintend and send items as needed on to the Chestnut Hill residence. Then in 1917 the house was taken down to make way for the construction of the new Pleasant View Home, which opened in 1927 as a gracious retirement facility for Christian Scientists. In 1975 the property was sold to the state of New Hampshire and used as a residence for adult mental patients of the state hospital. It was subsequently sold and in 1984 renovated and re-opened as a private retirement condominium community.

After having worked very closely with Mrs. Eddy for many years at her Pleasant View and Chestnut Hill homes on the printing and publishing details of *Science and Health*, William Dana Orcutt writes, "...when I think of her, it is not as a world celebrity or as the founder of a great religious movement. Instead, it is that earliest impression at Pleasant View that comes back to me — acres of green grass, a placid little lake, a silver strip of river, and a boundary line of hills. And within the unpretentious house a slight, unassuming, kindly woman — very real, very human, very appealing, supremely content in the self-knowledge that no matter what others might think, she was delivering her message to the world."³⁶

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1. Rev. Irving C. Tomlinson, *Twelve Years With Mary Baker Eddy* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1945), p. 156.
2. The name of the book referred to is *Pleasant View, Twenty Plates of the Home Surroundings of Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science*, published by J. F. Gilman and H. E. Carlton in 1894.
3. Clifford P. Smith, *Historical Sketches* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1941), pp. 124–125.
4. E. Mary Ramsay, *Christian Science and Its Discoverer* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1955), p. 107.
5. Mary Baker Eddy, "Personal Contagion," *The Christian Science Journal*, Vol. XXIV, No. 5, August 1906, p. 310. See also Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany* (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1913), p. 117.

6. See Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Trial* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 251–253.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 255–256.
8. See *Quarterly News*, Special Edition 1989, "62 North State Street," pp. 391–394 for more information about this residence and period of time in the life of Mary Baker Eddy. This property now owned and maintained by Longyear Museum.
9. Tomlinson, p. 157.
10. Hugh A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Mrs. Eddy* (San Francisco: The Farallon Press, 1947), pp. 378–379.
11. Longyear. Letter/report dated September 30, 1991 from the Architectural Conservator, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities to Longyear Museum.
12. Arthur Brisbane, *Mary Baker G. Eddy* (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1908), p. 14.
13. The two summerhouses, fountain, and gate were later given to Longyear Museum. They are on exhibit on the Longyear grounds.
14. Mrs. Eddy expresses her gratitude for the gift of the pond in her article "Pond and Purpose" which first appeared in *The Christian Science Journal* of August 1892 and was later published in her *Miscellaneous Writings* (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1896), p. 203. Mrs. Eddy's letter to those who gave her the boat appeared first in *The Christian Science Journal* of July 1893 and then in *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 142, "To Donors of Boat, From Toronto, Canada." The boat, a St. Lawrence Skiff which has been restored by the Museum of Transportation (of Brookline, Massachusetts) and is on loan to and exhibited by Longyear Museum, is the subject of an article in *Quarterly News*, Summer 1982, pp. 293–296.
15. *Christian Science Sentinel*, Vol. III, No. 52, August 29, 1901, p. 826, "Harvesting on the Rev. Mary Baker Eddy Place."
16. Sibyl Wilbur, "An Interview with Rev. Mary Baker G. Eddy," *Christian Science Sentinel*, Vol. VII, No. 42, June 17, 1905, p. 667, reprint of article in *The Boston Herald*.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 670.
18. *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, third series (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1953), pp. 11–12.
19. Wilbur, *Christian Science Sentinel*, p. 669.
20. Archives of The Mother Church. Floor plans of Mary Baker Eddy's house at Pleasant View prepared by Rollin Chapin, Architect, of Seattle, Washington under the direction of Frances T. Hill with information furnished by Adelaide Still, Minnie A. Scott, and Gilbert C. Carpenter, Sr., October 22, 1959.
21. See Jewel Spangler Smaus, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Golden Days* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1966), photo on frontispiece and pp. 13, 166–168.
22. Longyear. George H. Kinter reminiscences, p. 19.
23. Lyman P. Powell, *Mary Baker Eddy, A Life Size Portrait* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), p. 87.
24. TMC Archives. Floor plans of Pleasant View, 1959.
25. Tomlinson, p. 158.
26. Longyear. Joseph G. Mann reminiscences, p. 10.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
28. More information on Mrs. Eddy and the Concord State Fairs, as well as a tribute to her contributions to the local economy and community appeared in the Winter 1970–71 issue of *Quarterly News*, pp. 109–111.
29. See Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), pp. 29–34.
30. See the two part series entitled, "Christian Science Bible Lessons" in the *Quarterly News*, Autumn 1964, pp. 9–10 and Winter 1964, pp. 13–14.
31. It is indeed remarkable that there were only eleven years between the publishing of the 50th edition of *Science and Health* in January of 1891 and the 226th edition in January of 1902. An "edition" meant 1000 copies, and not all editions were major revisions of the text. William Dana Orcutt, one of the world's distinguished makers of books, was personally involved in the printing of *Science and Health* after the first 48 editions. In the Foreword to his book, *Mary Baker Eddy And Her Books* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1950), he writes "With the exception of the Holy Bible, the Christian Science textbook, 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures' by Mary Baker Eddy, holds every printing and publishing record. Written by an unknown author, privately printed in 1875 without benefit of publishers' promotion or even booksellers' interest, this volume has gone through hundreds of editions, comprising several million copies, bought by individuals all over the world."
32. Brisbane, p. 58.
33. Longyear. Reminiscences of Archibald McLellan, p. 19.
34. See Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, pp. 299–300.
35. Longyear. Armstrong Collection, newspaper clipping (no source), October 4, 1911, "Liked Concord, and Mrs. Eddy Wouldn't Sell Pleasant View."
36. Orcutt, p. 188.

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