

# Longyear Historical Review

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Longyear Museum preserves material that relates to the life of  
Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science.

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## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE IN CHICAGO IN THE LATE 1800s

Mary Baker Eddy in Chicago, 1884 and 1888	<i>Susan E. Schopp</i>	3
Mrs. Eddy visits Chicago a second time, 1888	<i>Susan E. Schopp</i>	5
The most rapidly growing city	<i>Susan E. Schopp</i>	6
The World's Columbian Exposition, 1893	<i>Susan E. Schopp</i>	7
Christian Science at the World's Columbian Exposition	<i>Stephen R. Howard</i>	8



LONGYEAR MUSEUM

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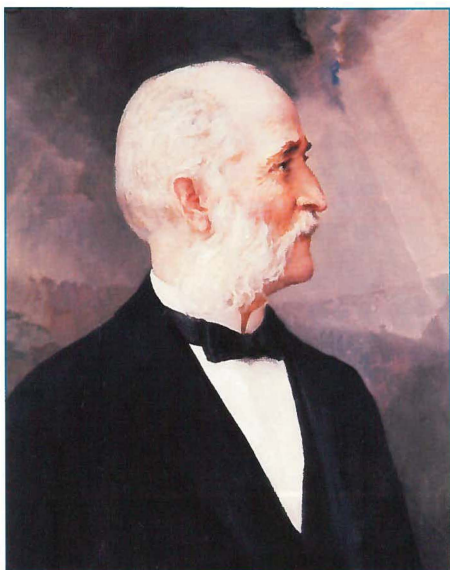
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## Introduction

Chicago figured prominently in the history of Christian Science. Mary Baker Eddy twice visited the city, lecturing both times and teaching a class there in 1884.

The 1884 class included Laura Sargent and Silas and Jennie Sawyer. Judge William and Ruth Ewing, who became interested in Christian Science slightly later, also made solid contributions to Christian Science in Chicago.

Laura Sargent



Silas and Jennie Sawyer

William and Ruth Ewing

Shown here in front of  
Mary Beecher Longyear's  
residence in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Photographs and portraits from Longyear Museum Collection



Judge Ewing, C.S.B. Mrs. Ruth Ewing, C.S.D.



## Mary Baker Eddy in Chicago, 1884 and 1888

Chicago, which at the time of Mary Baker Eddy's discovery of Christian Science in 1866 had a population of only 300,000, had grown greatly in importance to the United States in less than twenty years. Mrs. Eddy visited the city twice: in May 1884 to teach a Primary class in Christian Science, and in the summer of 1888 to attend the annual meeting of the National Christian Scientist Association.

The decision to teach a class in the Midwest was prompted partly by the enthusiasm of several of her students from the center of the United States and partly by her recognition of the growing interest there in Christian Science. She had had a handful of students from the Midwest, most notably from Chicago and Milwaukee, in her classes in Boston in 1883 and early in 1884, and they were eager to have her teach in their part of the country. On April 7, 1884, she signed a contract with one of her students, Dr. Silas J. Sawyer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who had been a skilled dentist with a flourishing practice, which he abandoned to practice Christian Science. Mrs. Eddy authorized him to announce a class in Milwaukee and to make arrangements for it.

On further reflection, however, she decided that Chicago — already a hub of transportation and commerce — would be a more suitable location, and it was here, at 470 West Randolph Street in a pleasant residential section of the city, that the class was held in May. Of the twenty-five persons enrolled, sixteen were from Illinois, fifteen of these from Chicago, and seven, including Dr. Sawyer and his wife Jennie E. Sawyer, from Wisconsin. Three of the Wisconsin students came from the town of Oconto, which would later be the site of the first building ever constructed for Christian Science worship. Among the Oconto students was Laura Sargent, whom Mrs. Eddy met for the first time in Chicago and who would prove a valuable helper to her. Mrs. Sargent served in Mrs. Eddy's household for several months in 1890, and after that, off and on over a period of twenty years.

At the close of the class in Chicago, in accordance with a recommendation from Mrs. Eddy, the students formed a branch of the Christian Scientist Association. On May 25, shortly before she returned to Boston, Mrs. Eddy addressed an audience of four hundred people in Chicago's Hershey Hall on the subject "Whom do men say that I am?"

Also from Chicago were Judge and Ruth Ewing. She served as pastor and then as Second Reader of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Chicago, while he later became a lecturer for the Christian Science Board of Lectureship. 🌿

470 West Randolph Street, Chicago, where the class of 1884 was taught. Photograph, Longyear Museum Collection



National • Christian • Scientists' • Association.

CENTRAL MUSIC HALL,

June 14th, 1888.

VOLUNTARY,

SCRIPTURE READING,

SILENT PRAYER.

HYMN.

"NEARER MY GOD TO THEE."

1 NEARER, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee !  
Ev'n though it be a cross  
That raiseth me !  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee !

2 Though like the wanderer,  
The sun gone down,  
Darkness be over me,  
My rest a stone,  
Yet in my dreams I'd be  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee !

3 There let the way appear,  
Steps unto heaven ;  
All that thou sendest me,  
In mercy given ;  
Angels to beckon me  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee !

4 Or if, on joyful wing  
Cleaving the sky,  
Sun, moon and stars forgot.  
Upward I fly,  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee.

ADDRESS.

Rev. Mary B. G. Eddy.

DOXOLOGY.

BENEDICTION.



## Mrs. Eddy visits Chicago a second time, 1888

Mrs. Eddy returned to Chicago in 1888 for the annual meeting of the National Christian Scientist Association. In an article which she wrote for the June 1888 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*, she encouraged Christian Scientists to attend.

The second day of the meeting was held in Central Music Hall. On that occasion, Mrs. Eddy addressed an audience of some 4,000 people. Her talk, which led to a number of healings in the audience, was all the more remarkable because it was extemporaneous. The event attracted considerable attention from the press, not only in Chicago but in Boston as well. The report which was published in the *Boston Traveller* was also reprinted in the July 1888 issue of the *Journal*.

Mrs. Eddy went to Central Music Hall unaware that the organizers of the day's session had named her as the speaker. Without time to prepare an address, she spoke extemporaneously, taking as her subject "Science and the Senses." She stated:

Christian Science and the senses are at war. It is a revolutionary struggle. We already have had two in this nation; and they began and ended in a contest for the true idea, for human liberty and rights. Now cometh a third struggle; for the freedom of health, holiness, and the attainment of heaven. [*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 101]

The substance of Mrs. Eddy's talk was featured as the lead article of the *Journal's* August 1888 issue and reprinted in her *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 98.



Central Music Hall, Chicago, where Mrs. Eddy spoke in 1888.  
Photograph, Longyear Museum Collection



## Chicago, the most rapidly growing city in the United States in the nineteenth century

"I wish I could go to America if only to see that Chicago!" exclaimed German statesman Otto von Bismarck in 1870. He was not the only one who desired to see the city that would be described by Carl Sandburg as "a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities." ("Chicago," 1916)

Mary Baker Eddy, after her 1888 visit to Chicago, wrote, "Chicago is the wonder of the western hemisphere." (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 275) Famous for architecture and manufacturing, Chicago demonstrated almost from the very beginning a brashness and energy that would set it apart.

Situated on the southwest corner of Lake Michigan, the second largest of the Great Lakes, the city profited from its location on the edge of the greatest inland waterway of North America. In 1803, Napoleon sold the area known as Louisiana to the fledgling United States. With the Louisiana Purchase, the territory of the United States doubled, for the land acquired included far more than the present-day state of Louisiana; at its farthest, it stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border.

That same year, the U.S. military established what was then the country's westernmost military post, Fort Dearborn, on a site that is now one

end of the Michigan Avenue Bridge in Chicago. In 1833, the community living there was incorporated by thirteen electors as the Town of Chicago; the town became a city in 1837. Following the arrival of the railroad in 1852, Chicago developed into the largest rail center of the United States, a position paralleled a century later by its principal airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, for many years the single busiest airport in the United States.

Chicago grew rapidly and by 1870 was already suffering from overcrowding. Then, in 1871, a third of the city was destroyed in a great fire. The quick rebuilding which followed was characteristic of the energy of the Chicagoans, who redesigned the city as they rebuilt it, and who, having few or no models to emulate, were not limited to what had been done in the past.

The city continued to grow, with the result that in 1890, it had a population of over one million — nearly 77,000 times as many people as had voted for incorporation only 67 years earlier!

Architectural firsts, industrial growth, labor unrest and social reform were all part of the scene in the vibrant city that Mrs. Eddy visited in the 1880s. In 1884,

the year that Mrs. Eddy taught her only Chicago class, the tallest building in the city was the three-year-old, ten-story skyscraper called the Montauk Building. Chicago, where new styles of construction had been appearing since the 1830s, was already establishing its place at the forefront of the evolution of the skyscraper. Skyscrapers increased several stories in height every several years; in 1892 the Masonic Temple set a new world's record at twenty-one stories.

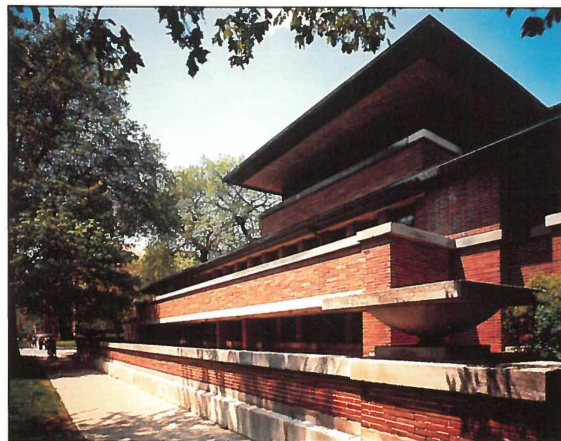
Mrs. Eddy returned to Chicago in 1888. The following year, the area of the city quadrupled when Chicago annexed a number of the neighboring suburbs. By 1890, the population size was second only to that of New York City.

Christian Science flourished in Chicago. On the occasion of the dedication of Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Chicago, Mrs. Eddy wrote to its members:

My heart hovers around your churches in Chicago, for the dove of peace sits smilingly on these branches and sings of our Redeemer. [*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 192]

The Robie House, at the corner of 58th Street and South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, remains one of the most famous of Frank Lloyd Wright's many houses, and an outstanding example of his "Prairie style." Its original owner, Frederick C. Robie, lived in the house for only a year. The longest owners of the house were Isadora R. and Marshall B. Wilber, who purchased it in 1912 and kept it until 1926. Mrs. Wilber was a Christian Scientist, as was her mother, Mary E. R. Drake; both studied Christian Science from Edward Kimball, one of Mrs. Eddy's well-known Chicago students.

Photograph, courtesy of Jon Miller at Hedrich Blessing Photographers for the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation





## The World's Columbian Exposition, 1893

The World's Fair which was held in Chicago in 1893 was known as the World's Columbian Exposition; it commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the Americas. As a forerunner of the world's fairs of the 1900s, it was international in scope. Exhibits of commercial, industrial and scientific interest were housed in buildings constructed specifically for the occasion.

Each building was designed by a different architect. The exteriors of many were white, giving the fairgrounds the nickname "the White City." The Women's Building was the only one designed by a woman, a 21-year-old graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology named Sophia Hayden. Mary Cassatt, an American artist who later exhibited with the French Impressionist group of painters, was commissioned to paint one of the decorative murals.

### Some innovations introduced at the 1893 Exposition

☞ Cracker Jack (a molasses popcorn snack) was introduced at the Fair.

☞ The Ferris Wheel, invented by the engineer George Ferris, was the winner of the competition sponsored by the Fair for something "novel, original, daring, and unique."

☞ A special commemorative coin, the Isabella quarter, was minted for the Fair. Issued in recognition of the support given to Christopher Columbus by Queen Isabella of Spain, it was the first U.S. coin to bear the portrait of a woman.





# Christian Science at the World's Columbian Exposition

## Christian Science Exhibit

Christian Science was well represented at the World's Columbian Exposition and related activities. An exhibit of Christian Science literature occupied a choice location at the top of a staircase in the Publisher's Department in the huge Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. Several thousand copies of Mary Baker Eddy's writings and other pieces of literature were exhibited.

## World's Parliament of Religions

As an auxiliary to the World's Columbian Exposition, a World's Parliament of Religions, also called World's Congress of Religions, was held. As plans evolved, questions were raised whether religion should have a place at the Exposition. But as the Reverend John Henry Barrows observed:

Why should ... the silk weavers of Lyons and the shawl makers of Cashmere, the designers of Kensington, the lace weavers of Brussels ... be invited to a World's Exposition, and the representatives of those higher forces which had made civilization be excluded? .... [*The World's Parliament of Religions*, 1893, Vol. I, p. 4]

Christian Science figured in two meetings under the World's Congress of Religions: at a "denominational congress" and at a presentation at the ecumenical session of the Parliament.

## The Denominational Congress

The "denominational congress" was held on September 20, 1893, in Washington Hall, a large room in the Exposition's Palace of Fine Arts. (This building, which is still standing, is today the Museum of Science and

Industry.) The meeting was opened by the President of the World's Congress Auxiliary, Charles Bonney, who commented:

No more striking manifestation of the interposition of divine Providence in human affairs has come in recent years, than that shown in the raising up of the body of people which you represent, known as the Christian Scientists....

The common idea that a miracle is something which has been done in contravention of law is to be wholly discarded and repudiated.

There is not one miracle recounted in the sacred Scriptures which was not wrought in perfect conformity to the laws which the divine Creator had established. It is mere ignorance of those laws that leads men to think that miracles are acts in contravention of them.

To know the law is to see that the wonder is wrought by means of law, and that the only miracle consists in the wonderfulness of the act which is done.

Who can doubt, in witnessing the tremendous events that are now transpiring in our midst, that the day of miracles is as surely here as it was eighteen centuries ago.

To restore a living faith in the efficacy of the prayer—the fervent and effectual prayer of the righteous which availeth much; to teach everywhere the supremacy of spiritual forces; to teach and to emphasize the fact that in the presence of these spiritual forces all other forces are weak and inefficient—that I understand to be your mission. [*The Christian Science Journal*, Vol. XI, pp. 339–340; see also Mrs. Eddy's response, *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 312.]

Bonney's introduction was followed by readings from the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, and papers by sev-

eral of Mrs. Eddy's students, including Chicago resident Ruth Ewing.

At the end of the Christian Science Congress, at Mrs. Eddy's request, the National Christian Scientist Association held an adjourned meeting (*Journal*, Vol. XI, pp. 345–346).

## The Parliament of Religions

Two days later, on September 22, 1893, an address on Christian Science by Mrs. Eddy was read before the Parliament. Mrs. Eddy carefully selected extracts from her writings for her paper at this ecumenical session. Entitled "Unity and Christian Science," her address was read by Judge Septimus J. Hanna, editor of *The Christian Science Journal*.



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