

Gilbert C. Carpenter CSB Gilbert C. Carpenter Jr CSB

Biography and History

ABOUT THE CARPENTERS

Books published by the Carpenters are unique because they include Mrs. Eddy's *unpublished* writings. Mrs. Eddy wrote prolifically on Christian Science. Her students kept diaries and records of what she taught them. They wrote memoirs of her, and metaphysical papers based on her teachings. Through the selfless work of Gilbert C. Carpenter and his son, Gilbert, Jr., many of these writings were collected, published, and excerpts incorporated into their own works.

In their own quiet, loving way, the Carpenters were among the first to resist the Church organization in Boston. The scope of their work places them among the great pioneers of the Cause. They gathered a large collection of material by Mrs. Eddy, and from this, they printed books of her unpublished writings. They printed manuscripts by her students, and also wrote a number of books themselves that are invaluable as records of the early days of the movement.

The Carpenters paid a high price for defying the Directors' policy of 'authorized literature.' They were ostracized by their branch church in Providence, Rhode Island and misunderstood by the Field in general. The Board of Directors tried to suppress their books and discredit their work by spreading many false rumors about them, such as: they were not loyal to the Board of Directors; their names had been dropped from membership in The Mother Church; they deviated from Mrs. Eddy's teachings and put forth a spurious form of Christian Science; they wrote several books and signed Mrs. Eddy's name to them.

None of these rumors were true. Those who knew the Carpenters always spoke of their integrity and loyalty to Mrs. Eddy and the Church. Their healing work was outstanding. The love and spirituality they expressed made a deep impression on many who met them. A careful study of their books indicates that the Carpenters were not only loyal to Mrs. Eddy and her teachings, but they recognized the importance of her unpublished writings. They had an understanding of her teachings on animal magnetism and malicious malpractice

that was exceptional.

Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter; Sr. came into Christian Science in 1894. Mr. Carpenter served Mrs. Eddy in many special ways. He was an Executive Member of The Mother Church, and chairman of the building committee for the Extension. From March 1905 to March 1906, he served her as an Associate Secretary at Pleasant View. Because of family demands, he could serve her for only one year; but when he left, Mrs. Eddy granted him the degree of C.S.B. — the only one conferred upon a student after only one year of the Divinity Course with her. The Carpenters were charter members of First Church in Providence, Rhode Island. Mr. Carpenter was at one time Committee on Publication for Rhode Island, and his practice was worldwide. His son, Gilbert, Jr., was raised in Christian Science. After becoming a practitioner listed in the *Journal*, Gilbert, Jr. attended the Normal Class in 1928 with Irving C. Tomlinson, and became a teacher in Providence. For seven years he was Committee on Publication for the state of Rhode Island.

The Beginning of The Carpenter Work

The independent work of the Carpenters really began when Mr. Carpenter served Mrs. Eddy at Pleasant View. While he was there, her secretary, Calvin Frye, gave him a number of Mrs. Eddy's books that were first editions, along with letters and articles by her. Later Gilbert, Jr. found them and took an interest in them. He began to search for items to add to the collection. His father knew many of the early workers, and so as Gilbert's interest in these early papers and books became known, some of Mrs. Eddy's students gave or bequeathed their papers to him, especially when they learned that Boston was calling in and locking up these papers and records in the Church archives, and denying the Field access to them.

The Carpenters also added to their archives copies of Mrs. Eddy's letters to the Board and other important documents that belonged to John Dittmore. Mr. Dittmore had been a Director and Clerk of The Mother Church from 1909 through 1919. During that time he collected letters by Mrs. Eddy and other historical papers for the Board. He also made copies of these for himself. When he was forced off the Board in 1919, he kept his copies. Mr. Dittmore turned against Mrs. Eddy, and used this material to coauthor a book with Ernest Sutherland Bates, attacking her.

He then offered the letters for sale, asking \$10,000 for them. The Carpenters, recognizing the worth of this material, could not raise the money to buy it, but

they did pay Dittemore \$400 to let them copy and photostat much of it. The Directors, realizing that these letters could fall into the wrong hands, finally paid Dittemore his price for the letters, and they became part of the archives in Boston. (Just before his passing, Mr. Dittemore read the Carpenter's *Mary Baker Eddy: Her Spiritual Footsteps* and recanted, saying that had he read that book sooner, he would never have cooperated in the book attacking her.)

The Story behind "Spiritual Footsteps"

In the late twenties, Clifford Smith, then head of Committee on Publication in Boston, asked Mr. Carpenter to write his memoirs, which Smith planned to use in a book he was writing about Mrs. Eddy. Until then, Mr. Carpenter had said very little about his year at Pleasant View. But the time had come when he felt he understood Mrs. Eddy sufficiently to talk about his experiences with her. He began holding morning talks daily at his home in Providence. The talks were open to anyone who wanted to come and usually six to twelve Scientists attended. One reason for these talks was to counteract the criticism and misinformation circulating about Mrs. Eddy. There were many rumors claiming she had been tyrannical, overly fussy, materially-minded, and sometimes lacking in kindness and consideration. Mr. Carpenter's talks brought out the spiritual reason and motive behind the things she said and did, and thereby helped to curb the rumors.

These talks were transcribed by Gilbert, Jr., and then edited. As he worked with these transcripts, he realized that he had the basis for a book that would do much to provide a better image of Mrs. Eddy. As a result, the Carpenters published *Mary Baker Eddy: Her Spiritual Footsteps*. A hundred copies of this first edition were privately printed and protected by copyright.

When Gilbert, Jr. took the book to Boston and presented it to Mr. Smith, he assumed that Mr. Smith would be pleased with the book. Instead, Mr. Smith was incensed that the Carpenters had written it, because he had wanted to use the Carpenter material for his own book. Because of this reaction to the book, Gilbert decided not to advertise it. Although he did not promote it, "Spiritual Footsteps" became rather well known. People came from all over the world to read the copies of it at the Library of Congress.

The Carpenter Foundation

From their collection of manuscripts, Gilbert and his father published a number of books of Mrs. Eddy's writings, memoirs of her students, and their notes of her teachings. They also published their own books.

As his collection grew in value, Gilbert, Jr. established the Carpenter Foundation in 1945 in order to protect and preserve these priceless papers and books when he would no longer be here. By then the collection included complete sets of the *Journals*, *Sentinels*, and *Quarterlies*, and all 431 editions of *Science and Health*. The activity of the Carpenters eventually cost Gilbert Jr. his *Journal* listing as teacher and practitioner. His work was beginning to be known throughout the Field, and there was a growing demand for his books. There was nothing the Board could do legally to stop him. But the Directors did bring false charges against him, claiming he had proselytized students for his classes in the city of another teacher. He was put on probation and his card removed from the *Journal*. At the end of the probationary period, the Directors decided not to reinstate him. He passed on soon afterward.

At his passing in 1952, the control of the Foundation passed into the hands of the Trustees. But without Gilbert's guiding hand, it did not prosper as it had. In 1962, the Trustees took out a suit against Richard Oakes. Mr. Oakes had known the Carpenters very well and at one time had been a distributor for their books in England. Before Gilbert's passing, he had worked closely with Mr. Oakes, preparing material for publication in England. Mr. Oakes produced three volumes in 1951. A few years later he republished these in two volumes and included further material from that originally published by the Carpenters. The Trustees claimed that he did not have Gilbert's approval in publishing this material, and that he had only been trusted to distribute their books, not to publish them himself. The Trustees sued Mr. Oakes on the grounds that he was guilty of a breach of trust and confidence. The Foundation won the lawsuit, but found itself bankrupt as a result.

With no funds on hand, the Trustees entered into negotiations with the Board of Directors in Boston to put the Carpenter material in the archives of The Mother Church. The Board signed an agreement that the material would be available to "qualified Christian Scientists" who came to Boston and requested to see it. The entire collection disappeared into the archives. Following this, the Board refused to let anyone other than select members of the Church hierarchy have access to it, contrary to their agreement. Had it not been for the books printed by the Carpenters, we would not have the invaluable instruction that Mrs. Eddy left us in her unpublished writings and those of her students.

The Carpenters' Great Contribution to the Cause of Christian Science

The Carpenters were exceptionally intuitive and courageous in saving and publishing Mrs. Eddy's written and recorded words. It is not too well known

among Scientists that, after Mrs. Eddy's passing, the Board would not let her close students talk about their Leader or quote from her. To do so could cost them their position in the Church. Mrs. Eddy's students were forbidden to publish memoirs or notes from her teaching. If the Carpenters had not collected these early papers and printed their books, we would never have had this priceless material by and about our Leader.

As the Carpenters have pointed out, these unpublished writings were too advanced for many Scientists in Mrs. Eddy's time. She could not give them out publicly. But these teachings were given to a select few to be brought out when the time was right. The Carpenters have been the connecting link between that holy time when these ideas were first put forth and today when many can understand and benefit from them.

There has been some confusion concerning the books by the Carpenters and Richard Oakes' two books, *Divinity Course and General Collectanea* (often referred to as the "Blue Book") and *Essays and Other Footprints* (often referred to as the "Red Book"). These were compiled by Richard Oakes, mainly from Carpenter material. The Blue Book has selections from *Watches, Prayers, Arguments, and Collectanea*, as well as other Carpenter books. It includes the complete Lida Fitzpatrick notes on the Divinity Course, and the notes of Dr. Alfred Baker. The Red Book includes selections from the Carpenters' books, mainly *Essays and Visions*. But it also includes many of Mrs. Eddy's early writings, such as "The Science of Man." Mrs. Eddy also wrote and copyrighted a record of her early history that was never published. It is titled "Footsteps Fadeless," and is found in this book. The Oakes' books have long been studied by practitioners and teachers in the movement.

Although nothing can substitute for the study of Mrs. Eddy's published writings, the books published by the Carpenters are indeed priceless in helping dedicated students to better understand the divinely inspired revelation that she left us, and to see her in her proper light as the Woman in Prophecy.