

## **Christian Science** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by Tess Bradstreet, 2006



Christian Science Reading Room, Raleigh NC. Image available from Christian Science churches in North Carolina.

<sup>[2]</sup>Christian Science, or the Church of Christ, Scientist, was established in Boston in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy, whose theology evolved from her study of the Bible and her belief that she herself was healed through faith in God. Her subsequent writings defined the church's doctrines, which are based on the principle that God alone encompasses everything that is real; what is not of God—evil, sin, sickness, and suffering—is therefore unreal and able to be eliminated through wholly spiritual means.

The Christian Science Church first came to North Carolina in August 1894, when Mary Hatch Harrison <sup>[3]</sup> of New Bern was reportedly healed of a paralytic affliction through her study of the Bible and Eddy's writings. Harrison began holding meetings in her home but later secured a meeting room. In August 1902 a church was organized with 18 members, and its edifice, the first of the denomination to be built in the state, was dedicated in 1907.

Eddy, who lived in Wilmington <sup>[4]</sup> for a brief time in 1844, seems to have been particularly interested in the establishment of her church in North Carolina and participated actively in the building of the New Bern church. At her behest, John Swinson, owner of a quarry in Concord, N.H., cut and donated the granite block for the cornerstone. Eddy sent copies of all of her writings to be placed in the stone, as well as a gift of \$3,000 for the building fund.

Meanwhile, in 1897 seven Christian Scientists held their first service in Asheville <sup>[5]</sup>, and in 1912 their church edifice was completed. Elizabeth Earl Jones was one of the seven charter members; she became a Christian Scientist practitioner, devoting much of her time to the public practice of healing through prayer.

The Christian Science Society in Chapel Hill was recognized in May 1956; the well-known bandleader James K. "Kay" Kyser was one of the 16 charter members and eventually became a Christian Science practitioner, teacher, and lecturer. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were 29 Christian Science churches in North Carolina.

### **References:**

Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (1973).

Anne Russell, Marjorie Megivern, and Kevin Coughlin, *North Carolina Portraits of Faith: A Pictorial History of Religions* (1986).

### **Additional Resources:**

Christian Science Churches & Reading Rooms in North Carolina: <http://christiansciencenc.org/churches/> <sup>[6]</sup>

### **Image Credit:**

Christian Science Reading Room, Raleigh NC. Image available from Christian Science churches in North Carolina.

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