

Hardy Pond Hermitage: “The Satsanga Summer Home”

Paramahansa Yogananda’s first hermitage in America was located on Hardy Pond in Waltham, Massachusetts. It was built during the summer of 1922.¹ The building no longer exists.

“In 1922 we bought a few lots and built a little cement-block hermitage at Hardy Pond near Waltham, Massachusetts,” said Paramahansa Yogananda, in a talk he gave December 26, 1944 at a banquet at Mount Washington honoring the visit of two of his first disciples in the United States, Alice T. Hasey, a.k.a. Sister Yogamata, and Dr. Minott W. Lewis. “Sister helped to finance it. There we and a few other students enjoyed many happy hours of Kriya Yoga meditation. This humble beginning was part of the education that God was giving to us.”²

Mildred Lewis, the wife of Dr. Lewis, and one of Paramahansa’s first disciples, said of the Waltham Hermitage, “On Sundays we always went to Waltham, where quite a group of students assembled, and Master gave a lecture followed by a dinner of curry. Of course in the winter months the Waltham property had to be closed.”³

During the summer of 1923, from August 5 to September 16, seven weekly advertised Sunday Satsanga⁴ meetings were held at this location, which was referred to as the Satsanga Summer Home. The Sunday meetings were held at 3:00 pm. They were advertised in the Boston Evening Transcript on each Saturday before. All of these meetings were about concentration, as the following list of the advertised titles⁵ shows.

- Concentration
- Concentration and Its Use
- The Newer Aspect of Concentration
- Practical Concentration
- Concentration and Art
- Concentration and Discipline
- Concentration Applied to Personality

According to personal notes written by Mildred Lewis about Paramahansa Yogananda’s early years in Boston, “Sister Yogamata was instrumental in helping Master build his first hermitage in Waltham, Massachusetts. She served him and his friends during three summers that he stayed there. It was at this time that he bestowed upon her the monastic name of Sister Yogamata.”⁶

¹The filing date for the proposed construction was June 13, 1922, according to records in the City of Waltham, Massachusetts.

²“A Time for Remembering,” pages 10-11, Self-Realization Magazine, Summer 1995 (Self-Realization Fellowship).

³*Treasures Against Time*, by Brenda Lewis Rosser (Borrego Springs 2001), page 15.

⁴ During the early years in Boston, Paramahansa Yogananda referred to his meetings and organization as “Satsanga.” (In the early years it was spelled three ways: Sat Sanga, Sat-Sanga and Satsanga.) The glossary on the SRF website <<https://yogananda.org/self-realization-fellowship-glossary#T-Z>> defines Satsanga in the definition of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India as follows: “*Satsanga* is composed of *sat*, truth, and *sanga*, fellowship.” Paramahansa Yogananda further explains satsanga in his book *The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of The Christ Within You* (Self-Realization Fellowship, 2004), on page 1399: “During times of divine fellowship (satsanga) such as Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples, those who are receptive feel transported into a higher consciousness of God-perception pouring into their hearts and minds as the Master speaks. This attunement imbues the devotee’s consciousness, in the highest way, whenever he summons the guru’s grace in the inner temple of deep, worshipful meditation.”

⁵ Advertisements in the Boston Evening Transcript, an afternoon newspaper published from 1830 to 1941.

⁶ John Rosser, the husband of Brenda Lewis Rosser, the daughter of Dr. Minott and Mildred Lewis, provided transcribed notes written by Mildred Lewis about Paramahansa Yogananda’s early years in Boston to a devotee in 2006. These notes are now part of the Boston Center of SRF archives. The reference to “three summers” would be 1922, 1923 and a few weeks in 1924.