

Vivekananda back in Chicago ...to stay

Since Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda's epic visit to Chicago in 1893, local residents have made many efforts to keep his message in the public eye. A plaque has been installed at the Art Institute of Chicago where he once spoke. A part of Michigan Avenue has been renamed "Swami Vivekananda Way." And, on July 12, 1998, a 10-foot high statue of the holy sage was erected outside the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago.

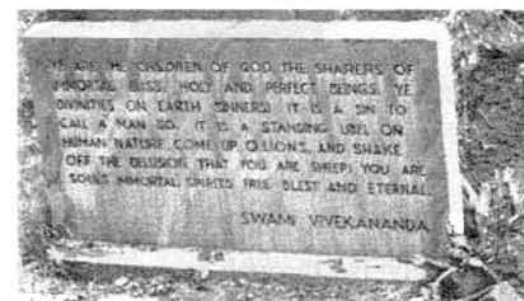
Although numerous statues of Svāmi Śrī Vivekānanda can be found throughout India, the replica in Chicago, created by Calcutta sculptors G. Paul and Sons, is the first statue of him to be erected in North America.

More than 1,000 people including representatives of the Jewish, Sikh, Jain, Catholic and Protestant faiths, attended the unveiling ceremony.

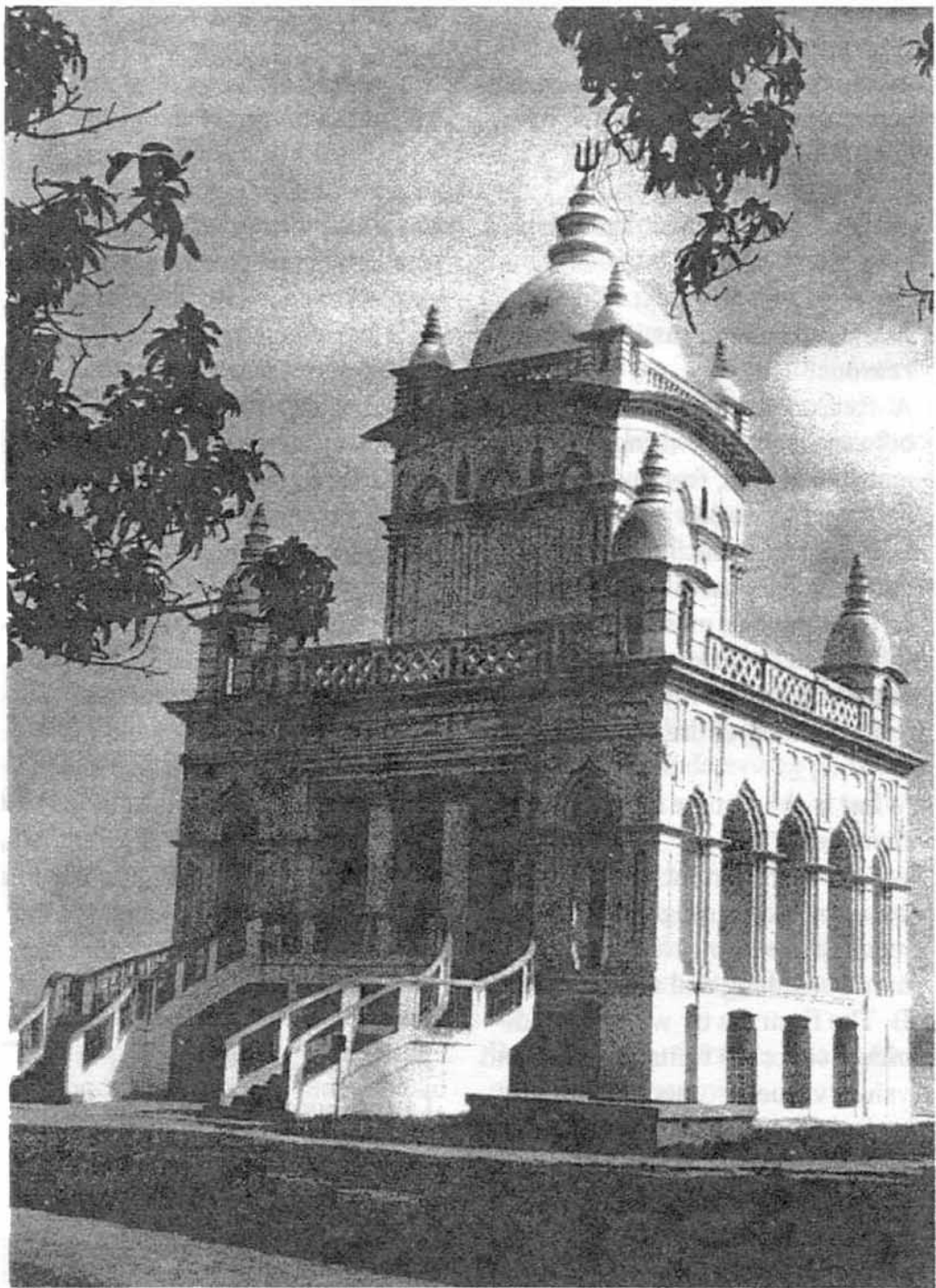
"He opened the door in the West for Eastern philosophies," said Shiva Singh Khalsa, a Sikh minister in the audience.

The plaque below the statue reads that he was the "first spiritual and cultural ambassador to the West and introduced Hinduism to America."

The statue of a man who moved mountains to unite valleys of understanding now stands on "Vivekanda Hill."



Although the Chicago statue is the first in North America, there are many such monuments in India. Shown above is the plaque under a statue in Mumbai.



Just days before giving up his mortal body, Swami Vivekananda pointed to a spot on the banks of the Holy River Gangā and said:

"When I give up the body, cremate it there!"

The place Swamiji chose was close to the Bilva tree under which he used to sit and talk to the inmates of the monastery and to the visitors.

After Swami Vivekananda's disembodiment, devotees built the temple shown above on that very same sacred spot.