

# John Lawson Stoddard

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Born April 24, 1850 - Brookline, Massachusetts, US

Died June 5, 1931 (aged 81) - South Tyrol, Italy

Occupation : lecturer, author, photographer

Education Williams College / Yale Divinity School

Genre travelogues

Notable works John L. Stoddard's Lectures

The Stoddard Library

Rebuilding a Lost Faith

Children Lothrop Stoddard

John Lawson Stoddard (April 24, 1850 – June 5, 1931) was an American lecturer, author and photographer.[1][2] He was a pioneer in the use of the stereopticon or magic lantern, adding photographs to his popular lectures about his travels around the world.[2] Because he published books related to his travels, he is credited with developing the genre of travelogues.[3][4]

In 1935, Daniel Crane Taylor wrote, "Stoddard's rise to fame was spectacular and unprecedented in the annals of American entertainers. No American lecturer, musician or actor has ever won so large a following in so short a time. From his second season, almost every lecture was sold out...He filled Daly's Theatre, one of the largest in New York, fifty times a season for ten years. ...This would mean that Stoddard alone drew approximately one hundred thousand persons in New York each year." [5]

## Early life

Stoddard was born in Brookline, Massachusetts to a wealthy family.[1][5] He was the son of Sarah Lothrop and Lewis Tappan Stoddard.[6][7][1][2]

He was educated at private schools in Boston.[1] He attended Williams College, graduating with an A.B. in 1871.[1] At Williams he was a member of the fraternity Delta Psi (aka St. Anthony Hall).[8] He studied theology at Yale Divinity School for two years, but left before he graduated.[1][2]

## Career

During the 1873–1874 academic year, Stoddard taught the classics at Boston Latin School.[1][2] Between 1874 and 1876, Stoddard began traveling around the world, mostly to Constantinople, Egypt, Greece, and Palestine.[2][5] After two years of traveling, he returned to teaching.[2]

In 1879, Stoddard turned his travel experiences into a series of popular lectures delivered throughout North America.[9][2][5] He pioneered the use of the stereopticon, also known as the magic lantern, which gave his lectures the "gimmick" of a visual component—the black and white photographs Stoddard took on his travels.[2][5][3] His lectures were so popular that he soon became a household name.[2] Stoddard also continued to travel and gather new content for his programs, going to as he said, "nearly every part of the habitable globe." [2] He would return to the United States in the winter, providing lectures in major cities on cities, life, and scenery of the Italian Lakes, Milan, Paris, the Orient, Rome, and even the United States.[10][2] The demand for his lectures was so high that in New York City alone, he would give fifty sold-out presentations each season.[5]