



visited the Brittinghams there and deepened their knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith.

In September 1901 Isabella Brittingham went on pilgrimage, visiting `Abdu'l-Bahá for several days. The knowledge of the Faith she gained helped her complete a book, *The Revelation of Bah-Ullh in a Sequence of Four Lessons*, published by the Bahai Publishing Society of Chicago in 1902 and subsequently issued in at least nine editions through 1920. The lessons were Brittingham's own expansion of the last four lessons Kheiralla taught, but with some important additions. Brittingham was a theological liberal; she praised new religious movements that Kheiralla condemned, indicated belief in the theory of evolution (which Kheiralla rejected), and accepted higher biblical criticism (which Kheiralla never understood). Much of the book is a compilation of biblical prophecies that Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá claimed to fill; it also offered the American Bahá'ís one of the first accurate summaries of the life of Bahá'u'lláh available in English.

In addition to her book, Brittingham became an early traveling teacher for the Bahá'í Faith, making her perhaps the most prominent American Bahá'í woman in the 1900-12 period, and a prominent and highly respected American Bahá'í teacher right up to her death in 1924. Many of her talks were preserved in typed form; they reveal a consistent focus on the spiritual growth of the individual, and a desire to combat misunderstanding of the Bahá'í teachings, such as psychic interpretations of spirituality. She was also in frequent communication with `Abdu'l-Bahá; the Bahá'í National Archives in Wilmette, Ill., contains about fifty-five tablets addressed to her.

In 1905 Brittingham attended the first Nineteen-day Feast held in North America, sponsored by the New York City Bahá'í Board of Counsel. In early 1906 she traveled to every major Bahá'í community in the Midwest to promote the new institution of the Nineteen-day Feast; in early 1907 she traveled over eight thousand miles in four and a half months, visited twenty Bahá'í communities, and as she herself noted, "slept in over forty beds" in order to establish Feast on the Pacific coast and in the Mountain states.

In 1910 Brittingham began to correspond regularly with Bahá'í women in Iran, encouraging them to strive to become equal to Iranian men. Her indirect role in the development of the Iranian Bahá'í community has not previously been recognized. She played a major part in bringing into the Faith three of the four American Bahá'í women who settled in Tehran between 1909 and 1911: Dr. Susan Moody, who became a Bahá'í during Brittingham's 1903 visit to Chicago; Brittingham's sister's daughter, Elizabeth Stewart; and Lillian Kappes, one of the former members of Grace Episcopal Church.

Throughout the 'teens Brittingham traveled to teach the Faith, especially in the Pacific states and the Southwest. In Douglas, Arizona, she established an active Bahá'í community; there she brought back into the Bahá'í Faith Mrs. Nellie Stevison French, who had become disillusioned with it as a result of the moral conduct of Ibrahim Kheiralla. Mrs. French later became an

important writer, editor, administrator, and teacher of the Faith. When Brittingham's health began to decline she settled in Philadelphia, where the Revell family cared for her; in their home she died of a heart attack on 28 January 1924. Her husband remained an active Bahá'í in the New York City area until his death on 24 July 1940.

**Bibliography.** No lengthy biography has yet been written of Isabella Brittingham, although her importance and the archival resources warrant such a work. A short biographical essay on her has been published in O. Z. Whitehead, *Some Early Bahá'ís of the West* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), 131-38. Additional information about her conversion is available in Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Origins, 1892-1900, Volume One* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 117-21. Her book, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in a Sequence of Four Lessons* (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Society, 1902), is described in Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Early Expansion, 1900-1912, Volume Two* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995). Her ancestry is explored in a genealogical article about her family in the *Kittochtinny Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1905) (copy in author's personal papers) and in an unpublished paper "The Family Background of Isabella D. Brittingham" (author unknown; copy in author's personal papers). Her obituary, a hasty work that contains some inaccurate information, was published in *Star of the West*, vol. 14, no. 12 (March 1924), 376-77. The National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill., and the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Archives, contain collections of papers of Isabella and James Brittingham; the New York City Bahá'í Archives also contain some papers of James. Typed talks of Isabella Brittingham are scattered in various archival collections, notably the Thornton Chase Papers, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

## METADATA

Views10412 views since posted 2010-05-24; last edit 2022-02-04 23:08 UTC;

previous at [archive.org.../stockman\\_brittingham](https://archive.org.../stockman_brittingham)

Language

English

Permission

author

Share

Shortlink: [bahai-library.com/3888](https://bahai-library.com/3888)

Citation: ris/3888

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books  
Chronologies  
Compilations  
Compilations-NSA  
Compilations-personal  
Documents  
East-asia  
Encyclopedia  
Essays  
Etc  
Excerpts  
Fiction  
Glossaries  
Guardian  
Histories  
Introductory  
Letters  
Maps  
Music  
Newspapers  
NSA-documents  
NSA-letters  
Personal  
Pilgrims  
Poetry  
Presentations  
Resources  
Reviews  
Scripts  
Software  
Statistics  
Study  
Talks  
Theses  
Transcripts  
Translations  
UHJ-documents  
UHJ-letters  
Video  
Visual  
Writings  
  
home  
  
sitemap  
  
series  
  
chronology

search:

author

title

date

tags

adv. search

languages

inventory

bibliography

abbreviations

links

about

contact

RSS

new

— Brittingham, Isabella (Used by permission of the curator)