



that she had worried a great deal, small as she was, for fear that there might not be enough money to pay the rent.

After her graduation from high school (at the head of her class), she taught in a country school to earn money to go to college. With scholarship help, she was able to enter Wellesley College, but after a few weeks she had to return home and give up all study because of an attack of typhoid fever. Faced with the task of beginning again, she persevered. Again she taught school and re-entered Wellesley, from which she was graduated in 1902.

To appreciate more fully with what mental capacity Mabel was endowed, a capacity she later devoted wholeheartedly to the Bahá'í Faith, it is interesting to look into a number of letters which she preserved, signed by celebrated teachers known to all Wellesley women: Katherine Lee Bates, Sophie C. Hart, Margarethe Mueller, Charles Lowell Young, and Ellen Fitz Pendleton.

Professor Bates commented on her exactness and "her unusual brilliancy of mind and strength of character." Professor Young wrote the following, which throws light on her acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith and the kind of work she did for it:

"Her progress was almost extraordinary; yet there was nothing about it of the merely clever or superficially brilliant. It came, rather, of solid attainments, of the most intense and absorbing interest in her subject-matter, and the most serious effort to come to clearness with herself about it. She grew steadily toward an unusual originality and independence of thought, and a rare power of handling facts in the mass, as well as in detail. Her work always gave earnest of still further growth."

More than fifty years later this statement might be applied almost exactly to Mabel Paine's Bahá'í life, with the essential addition of her deep devotion to Bahá'u'lláh, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to the Guardian.

For all her seriousness, Mabel had a quick sense of humor. Her eyes would light up with merriment and appreciation of anything witty, and she was not above laughing at herself. In a group of reminiscing friends she told with amusement of the first time she had gone buggy riding with a certain young man. She brought some reading matter along and remarked: "If we get bored with each other, we can read this." That young man, who later became her husband, said that he definitely was not bored.

She was married, in 1908, to Ellery Burton Paine, of the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Illinois, and came to live in Urbana, which was to be her home until the end of her life. Her marriage was a singularly happy and harmonious one. Once when she asked the Guardian whether she ought to put her husband's happiness or the Faith first, he answered, "Both," and this she was able to do, for Professor Paine was to say, "I cannot imagine two people who ever lived more happily together." Their tastes were similar and there was a great love between them. Professor Paine's ideals were always in close harmony with the Bahá'í ideals, and he had a deep respect for his wife's

devotion. He remained until his death a firm friend of the Faith and of the Bahá'ís.

It was in Urbana that Mabel Paine first heard the Bahá'í Message. In writing to one of her friends about the Bahá'í history of Urbana, she said: "My memory begins with Mrs. Getsinger's (about 1912) and Mr Remey's (1913) speaking at the Unity Club." She attended classes on "The Art of Living" and on Bible study from a Bahá'í point of view, which were conducted by Albert Vail, then minister of the Unitarian Church. In 1915 she became a Bahá'í and began her long service to the Cause.

In September 1920, with her daughter, Sylvia, she visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, and for the rest of her life she was to share with the Urbana friends the great deepening and confirming Power that was poured out on her there. Indeed, that young community was blessed by the number of its members who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá at this time, or had visited Him earlier: Marie Hopper, the Mattoon family, and Anna Kunz, all contributed a sense of closeness to the Master, and later to the Guardian, that went into the very blood and bones of the community. Mabel Paine and Sylvia made another pilgrimage to Haifa in 1931, this time to see the Guardian. One could always feel, when she mentioned the Guardian or recited the prayers for him, the great depth of her love.

After returning from her pilgrimage to 'Abdu'l-Baha, she made a teaching trip to Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. She enjoyed this very much, but ill health prevented her from going on with this kind of teaching. During the first quarter-century of her marriage, she had three major operations, and much of the time was unable to go out much or be very active physically, but she used her enforced leisure for a thorough study of the Bahá'í Writings, bringing to it all the mental acumen she had shown in college. She became, indeed, a Bahá'í scholar. If any of us wanted to know, at any time, where to find a certain quotation, we had only to ask Mabel Paine and she could tell us almost at once.

She wrote articles for "Star of the West" and later for the Bahá'í magazine under its various names, served on national editorial committees, and was for years a member of the Reviewing Committee. I worked with her on Bahá'í World and on the World Order editorial committee and know the industry, the patience, and the conscientious thought she devoted to the work, part of which was drudgery. Perhaps she is best known now as the compiler of *The Divine Art of Living*, a book that is unique as an introduction to the Faith and as a source of meditation for Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike.

Mabel Hyde, in her youth, must have been impressed by Christ's admonition, "Be ye perfect," for throughout her life she showed a great longing for perfection. In her home she tried to keep perfect order, and her husband told how she used to try to make perfect bread. To him it seemed perfect, but she could never be quite satisfied with it.

So it was in spiritual matters. Her daughter writes:

"In her quiet way, she stuck to whatever she thought right and saw it through to completion. Nothing ever seemed to upset her daily routine, which included prayer, reading, meditation, and then an hour or so desk work on whatever writing project was under way. . . I remember years ago, when I was quite a young child, how, before going to a Feast or Bahá'í gathering, Mother would go up to her room and pray." Again she writes: "One of the ways Mother helped me most was in showing how one can rise above personalities. She really was above gossip, and if she ever discussed a person with me, it was in such a way as to increase my love for that person."

Her insistence on perfection showed itself in her editorial work, in her teaching, and in her administrative service. She was often troubled by careless writing submitted for publication, for she wished the Cause to be represented, only by the best. One could always rely on the accuracy of her work, and to read proof with her was to know what it is to be exact.

In teaching the Faith, she was especially good at preparing new believers for membership. She was careful that they should know the basic teachings well and be quite ready to accept them. She was rather retiring by nature and preferred not to do a great deal of public speaking, but she would never refuse to do anything that might further the Cause. Her talks were always clear, thought-provoking, and impressive with their strong spirit of sincere devotion. When she made her last talk, she was really too weak to stand, but, having undertaken to do this thing for Bahá'u'lláh, she carried it through to the end.

In spite of the undoubted importance of her literary and editorial work for the Faith, I think that one of Mabel Paine's greatest contributions was administrative. She was a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Urbana from its formation, in 1920, until her last illness, in 1955. She was many times its chairman, always one of its officers, and several times a delegate to the National Convention.

In that period when the letters of Shoghi Effendi, now published in Bahá'í Administration, were being received in America, Mabel Paine, and that rather remarkable group of believers who were her colleagues, mastered these letters and set about conscientiously to put them into practice. With her exact knowledge, her perseverance in what she believed to be right, and her insistence on perfection, in the administration of the community as well as in her private life, she was a great influence in making the community function in the way outlined by the Guardian. "But is it the Bahá'í way?" she would often ask in consultation, and she could always point to a passage in the Writings to help solve a problem.

Her support of Bahá'í institutions was steadfast in every way, especially by means of the Fund. Her contribution was always regular and generous to the point of sacrifice. She had the good fortune to begin her Bahá'í life in the Apostolic age, to serve through the 25 years of the formation of the Administrative Order in America, to see the dedication of the Temple, and the

beginning of the Ten Year Crusade. She died on August 15, 1955.

Bahá'u'lláh has said that he who quickens one soul in this Cause is like one quickening all the servants. When one remembers the number of well-grounded believers that have gone out from Urbana, one might almost conclude that, if we strengthen on Bahá'í community, we strengthen them all. And it is to Mabel Paine's everlasting credit that, without thought of praise for herself or personal recognition, she so used her qualities, merging them with those of her fellow-workers, as to build a strong Bahá'í community. In this, and in many individual Bahá'ís, her character lives on.

As to her soul, in a letter to her daughter written by Leroy Ioas on behalf of the Guardian, he says:

"The beloved Guardian deeply values the long and devoted services of your mother in the pathway of the Cause of God. She has ascended to the Abha Kingdom and is now receiving a rich reward, from the Master whom she served so efficiently and so diligently."

#### METADATA

Views6633 views since posted 2012-07-16; last edit 2022-03-06 21:53 UTC;

previous at [archive.org.../paine\\_obituary\\_bahainews](https://archive.org.../paine_obituary_bahainews)

Language

English

Permission

fair use

History

Typed 2012-07 by Don Calkins; Proofread 2012-07 by Jonah Winters.

Share

Shortlink: [bahai-library.com/1984](https://bahai-library.com/1984)

Citation: ris/1984

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](#)

— Paine, Mabel Hyde: Obituary (Used by permission of the curator)