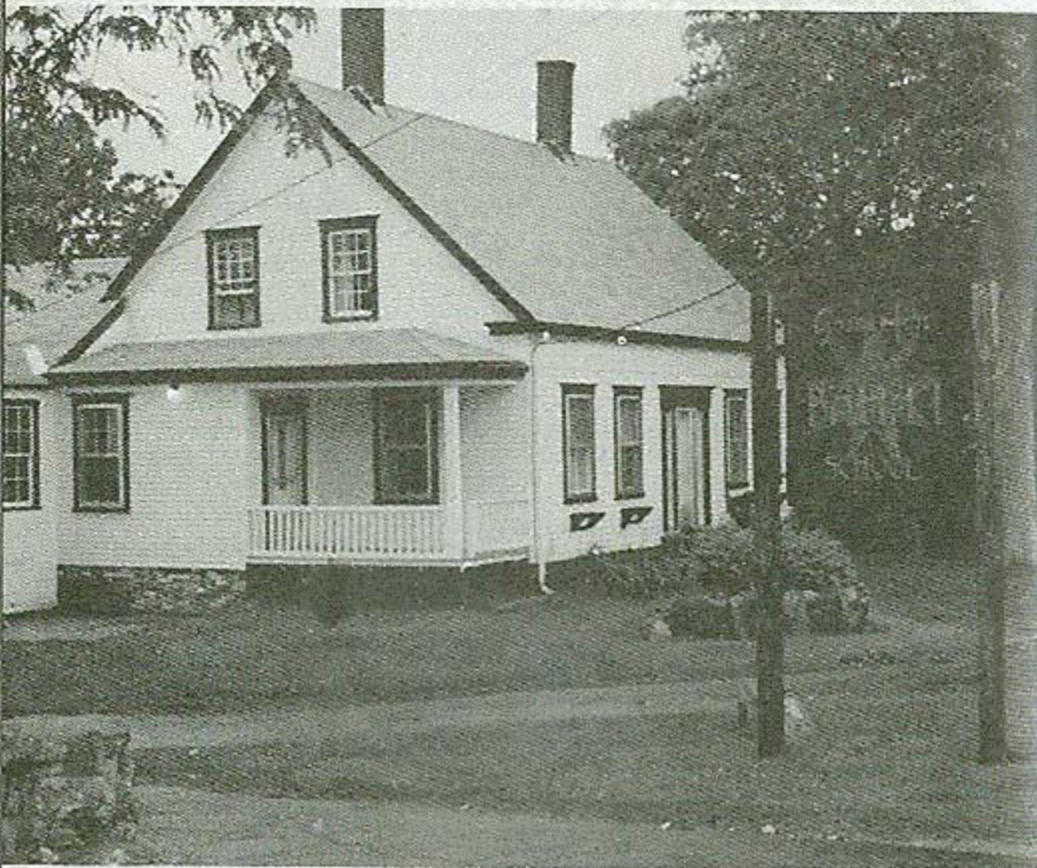


## The Green Acre School and the Baha'i Faith

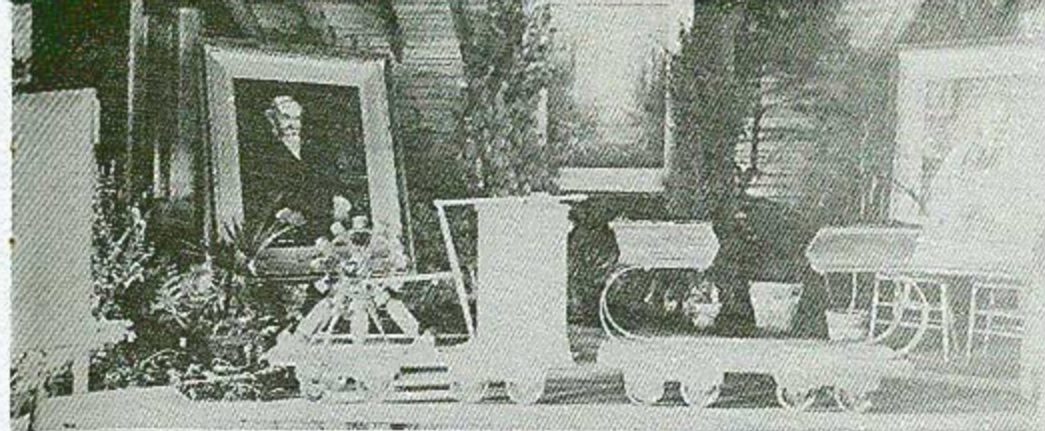
### Its history

Nestled in the woods of Eliot, Maine, just off Route 103 and next to the Piscataqua River is a very interesting little summer school and historical landmark. It's called the "Green Acre School" and it has quite a story to tell.

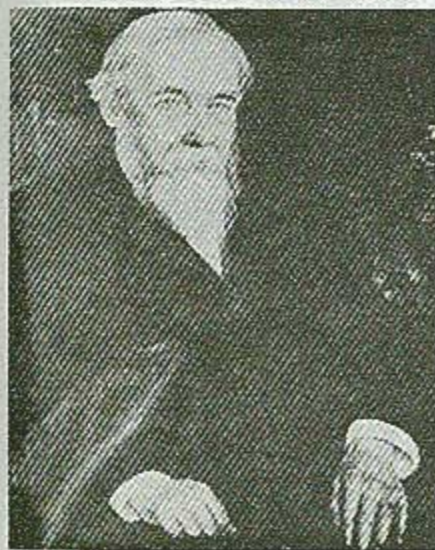
In 1882 a Transcendentalist and electrical pioneer named Moses Farmer moved with his family from Newport, Rhode Island to Eliot, Maine. It is claimed that this man had developed a set of electrical lamps to light his home when Edison was yet



The Administration Building and entrance to Green Acre



Moses Farmer's electric train, it's reported to be the first one ever built. Displayed first at Green Acre.



Moses Farmer

twelve years old. Farmer never patented his inventions because as a Transcendentalist, being greatly influenced by Emerson, he believed that he did not have a personal right to his inventions. He believed he was merely a sensitive mind who could perceive the thoughts of God existing in the universe, and that his purpose was to translate these thoughts into practical inventions

for the benefit of humanity. Many of these inventions fell into the hands of others who turned them to their own profitable uses.

Moses Farmer's daughter, Sarah Jane, was raised in a vigorous intellectual community and had a great deal of intellectual and spiritual curiosity herself. She was



Sarah Farmer

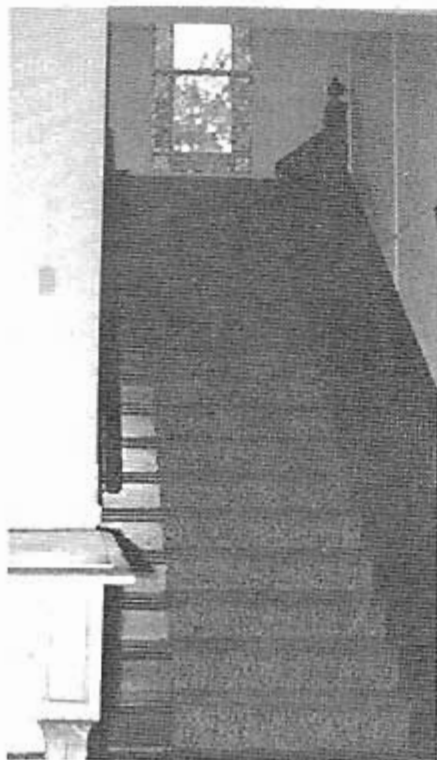
instrumental in the founding of the Eliot Library, and she also entered a business venture with four gentlemen and built a summer resort for Massachusetts and Connecticut residents. During its first season, in 1889, Sarah's friend John Greenleaf Whittier paid a visit. It was during his stay that the Inn gained its name. As Whittier sat before the big fireplace in the main lobby of the Inn he declared, "Some people have called this God's acres, but I call it Green Acre." The well-known poet also wrote two poems on the premises.



**The Fireplace in the Main Lobby**

One of them was for Sarah's birthday, and the other he wrote beside a beautiful little spring which today bears the name of the poem: "Maude Mueller."

In 1894 Sarah Farmer started the Monsalvat School of Com-



**The Main Staircase**

parative Religions at Green Acre. Thousands flocked to see reknowned intellectual and spiritual lecturers of all faiths. It was a novel experience for people of that day to see a podium shared by Buddhists, Moslims, Hindus, Zorastrians, Jews and recognized scholars in the various fields of Christian theology.

Sarah began to suffer from ill health in 1899 and was convinced to take a Mediterranean cruise. It was during this cruise that Sarah met Abdu'l Baha and recognized him as the fulfillment of the hopes of all the religions she had worked with. She returned to Green Acre in 1901 and eventually made it over into a Baha'i school.



**The Sarah Farmer Inn.**



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The Summer of 1912 was an exciting one for the School because Abdu'l Baha visited and lectured at Green Acre and left a lasting impression. The room where he stayed is now used by the Baha'is as a prayer and meditation room.

Sarah Jane Farmer died in 1925, but all of her hard work and unrelenting faith live on today in the Green Acre Baha'i School. From that

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Residential summer cottages on the Green Acre School grounds.



Portsmouth Information Center

school have grown study groups in Portsmouth, Kittery, Durham, York and Dover out of which local spiritual assemblies have formed. All of these assemblies sponsor an information center located in Portsmouth.

### its theology

Baha'is believe that God is an invisible spiritual essence; that he is the Author and Creator of the entire universe: and that he is all-knowing and loving.

They believe that God, from age to age, sends spiritually perfected beings to Earth to teach and help mankind unfold spiritually. Among these spiritual teachers of "Manifestations", as they are known to the Baha'i are included: Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Bah'u'llah. When they follow the teachings of these "Manifestations" and when they purify their lives through prayer

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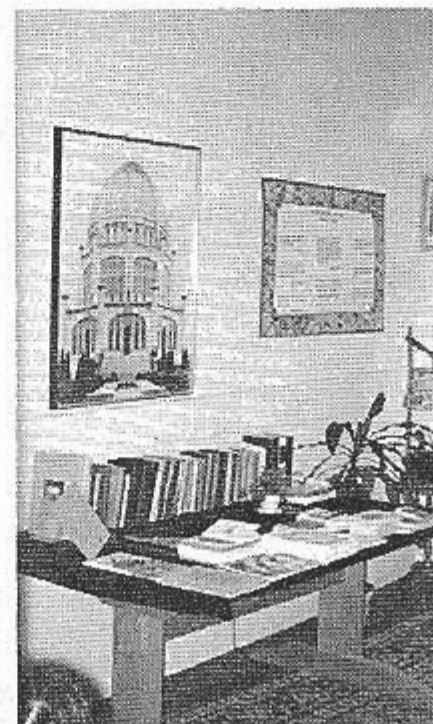
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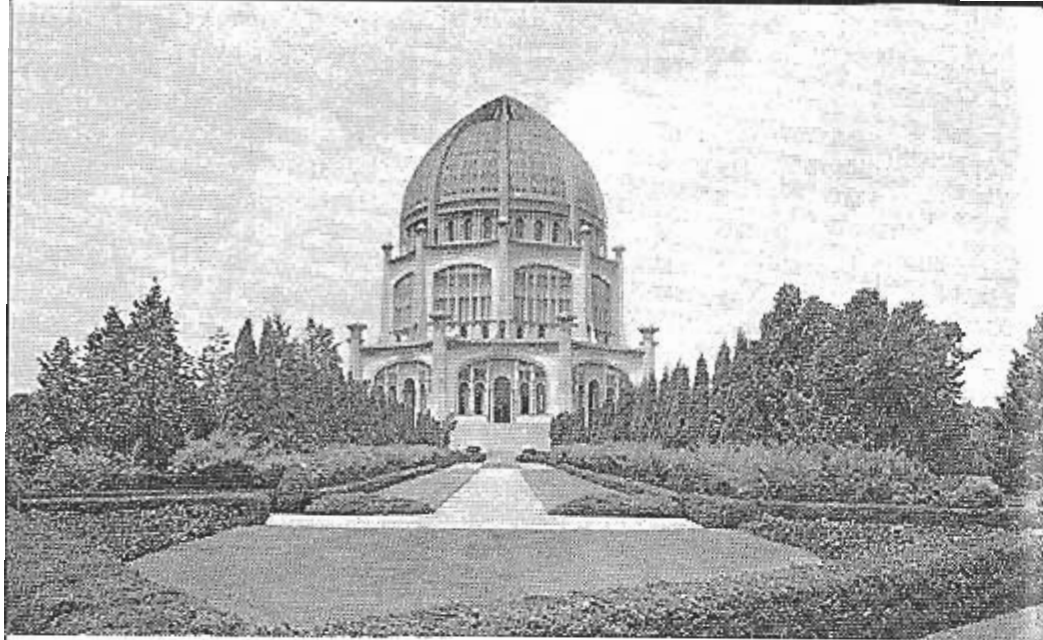
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Interior shot of the Administration Building.



Information Center Interior



**The Baha'i House of Worship, Wilmette, Illinois.**

and service, they advance spiritually and they gain in understanding.

The Baha'is believe in an afterlife, that there are spiritual worlds beyond this physical one, but they do not believe in reincarnation.

There is also a distinction made by them between spiritual teachings and social teachings given by a "Manifestation". Moses put forth the social teachings applicable to his day and society, Jesus to his, and Mohammed and Buddha to theirs. The followers of Baha'u'llah believe that he gave the pattern for social order today through observing these principles:

*The oneness of mankind*

*Independent investigation of truth.*

*The common foundation of all religions.*

*The essential harmony of science and religion.*

*Equality of men and women.*

*Elimination of prejudice of all kinds.*

*Universal compulsory education.*

*A spiritual solution of the economic problem.*

*A universal auxiliary language.*

*Universal peace upheld by a world government.*

The spiritual teachings, however, are unchanging and are always the same no matter which Manifestation gives them. Some of these are, basically:

*God is the author and creator of the universe*

*He is all-knowing and loving.*

*He wishes us to seek to emulate certain spiritual qualities, so that we shall grow spiritually.*

*There is a life which we continue to live consciously even after death.*

The different religions have used different analogies to explain the spiritual teachings, but they all come from the same God.

## **the founder and the organization**

There is no clergy in the Baha'i Faith. The organization is maintained through a different system.

Baha'u'llah is the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, the way that Jesus is the Founder of the Christian Faith and Mohammed is the Founder of the Muslim Faith. When Baha'u'llah died, he appointed his son, Abdu'l Baha to be the center of unity to which the Baha'is could turn so there wouldn't be a lot of little splinter groups with varying or clashing interpretations of Baha'u'llah's teachings. This is the Baha'i covenant, which is to preserve unity. Abdu'l Baha was extremely important in that respect, for that was his function. He was not a Manifestation. He was a man who attained a high degree of spirituality through his love and service, and Baha'is revere him, but they're careful to draw a distinction.



**Abu'l Baha**

After he died, he appointed his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as the center of unity. His task was to bring into being the administrative order that Baha'u'llah had written about. This administrative order is an integral part of the Baha'i Faith. A Baha'i, or follower of the Faith, needs to participate in the administrative order, be obedient to it, be supportive of it, and needs to make whatever contribution he can to it.

The administrative order essentially consists of communities containing nine or more Baha'is. They elect what is called a local spiritual assembly. The assemblies gather annually throughout a nation and elect a national spiritual assembly which has national administrative functions. The next step is for the national assemblies to gather and they elect the Universal House of Justice consisting of nine members. This election is held every five years, and was first held in 1963. The Universal House of Justice is located in the Baha'i World Center at the foot of Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel and it directs and coordinates the affairs of approximately 130 national spiritual assemblies.

The American Center is in Wilmette, Illinois. There are other centers located throughout the world in Frankfurt, Germany; Kampala, Uganda, Africa; Sydney, Australia; and there's one in Panama.

