



SHINING LAMP

A Bahá'í who served humanity with radiance

Amelia (Milly) Collins (1873–1962)

As a kid, Amelia (Milly) Collins loved fancy gates. She tried to make them for her doll house and dreamed of one day having a beautiful gate of her own.

Born in Pennsylvania, U.S., in 1873, Milly was the middle of 14 kids. When she grew up, she married Thomas Collins, a mining engineer. His work was successful, and they grew wealthy.

Milly learned of the Bahá'í Faith from a friend and became a Bahá'í in 1919. The Faith's leader, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, wrote to her of his "hope" that she would become "heavenly" and "erect a structure that shall eternally remain firm and unshakeable . . ."

A Loving Friendship

Tom joined Milly on her first visit to what is now Haifa, Israel, in 1923. They began a strong friendship with Shoghi Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson and the leader of the Faith after his passing.

One day, Shoghi Effendi invited Milly on a walk. She hoped he would explain mysteries about prayer. Instead, he talked about helping Bahá'í communities grow. She was disappointed but did her best to learn from him.

When Milly returned to the U.S., she realized Shoghi Effendi had actually given her a priceless gift. His insights helped Milly assist fellow Bahá'ís and deepen their understanding of his guidance.

For over 20 years, Milly served on the national governing body for the Bahá'ís of the U.S. and Canada. She traveled across the United States and was one of the first Bahá'ís to share the Faith with Indigenous peoples of America.

In the years following Tom's passing in 1937, Milly visited and encouraged Bahá'í communities all over the world. Her friendship and service were a great support to Shoghi Effendi and his wife, 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum. With no children of her own, Milly said she loved Shoghi Effendi like a son.

A Generous Spirit

Shoghi Effendi gave Milly the title of Hand of the Cause of God* and invited her to work in Israel. Milly lived in a single room so she could give as much as possible to the Faith. Her donations helped build the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa and Bosch Bahá'í School in California. She supported many other projects, too. Shoghi Effendi wrote to Milly that he was "deeply touched" by her "great devotion" and "shining spirit of self-sacrifice . . ."

In the 1950s, Milly tried to give Shoghi Effendi money for his personal needs. Instead, he used the funds to buy a lovely gate for the entrance to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. He surprised her by calling it the "Collins Gate." Milly was greatly moved that he had fulfilled her childhood dream.

Shoghi Effendi passed away in 1957, but the inspiration he left for Milly and others lived on. She said, "Whatever step I took in my life . . . I would first ask myself whether my vote, words, trip or thought would make him happy. When I was sure, then I would take action without fear."

Despite painful arthritis, Milly served tirelessly until her death in 1962 at age 88. Bahá'ís around the world honored the beloved friend whom Shoghi Effendi had called the "outstanding benefactress of the Faith."