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THE HOUSE OF 'ABDU'LLÁH PÁSHÁ

THE renovation of the House of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá, a building whose acquisition was a supplementary achievement of the Five Year Plan (1974-1979), was completed by Ridván 1983. Thus the delegates to the fifth International Convention in the Holy Land were privileged to be the first pilgrims to visit this historic site and enjoy the meticulous work of restoration, and the refurbishing, beautifully and faithfully accomplished under the supervision of Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khánum.

In its cablegram of 14 January 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies the Universal House of Justice informed the Bahá'í world:

JOYOUSLY ANNOUNCE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION LENGTHY DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS RESULTING ACQUISITION BY PURCHASE HOLY HOUSE CENTRE COVENANT ABDULBAHA BIRTH-PLACE BELOVED GUARDIAN SHOGHI EFFENDI HISTORIC PROPERTY ADJACENT BARRACKS MOST GREAT PRISON COMPRISES LAND AREA APPROXIMATING SEVEN THOUSAND SQUARE METRES INCLUDES OTHER STRUCTURES WITHIN COMPLEX ASSURING PERMANENT PROTECTION HOUSE VISITED BY MANY PILGRIMS TURN CENTURY SCENE HISTORIC VISIT FIRST GROUP WESTERN PILGRIMS. PLANS BEING PREPARED RESTORATION HOLY HOUSE BEAUTIFICATION GROUNDS AS .ADDITIONAL PLACE PILGRIMAGE WORLD CENTRE WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES FUNDS PERMIT. OFFER HUMBLE THANKSGIVING BAHAUULLAH THIS GREAT BLESSING.

The poignancy of the role of Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khánum in refurbishing the house of 'Abdu'llah Páshá is heightened when it is called to mind that her mother, the illustrious May (Bolles) Maxwell, was a member of that first party of Western pilgrims who in 1898 were received by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in that house, and that it was the birth-place of Shoghi Effendi whose 'helpmate', 'shield' and 'tireless collaborator' she was to become.

Indeed, as the Universal House of Justice reminded the Bahá'í world, 'some of the most dramatic and historically significant events of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Faith are associated with the house of 'Abdu'llah Páshá which derives its name from the Governor of 'Akka who built it and used it as his official residence during his term of office from 1820 to 1832 . . . In this house, fifty lunar years after the Bab's martyrdom, in January 1899, the casket containing His sacred and precious remains was received by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who successfully concealed it until it was possible to inter it, with all honours, in its permanent resting-place in the bosom of Carmel. In this house 'Abdu'l-Bahá was confined during the period of His renewed incarceration . . . and from this house He directed the construction of the Bab's sepulchre on Mount Carmel, erected under its shadow His own house in Haifa, and later the Pilgrim House, issued instructions for the restoration of the Báb's holy House in Shiráz and for the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the world in the city of 'Ishqábád . . . It was in this house that His celebrated table talks were given and compiled, to be published later under the title *Some Answered Questions*. In this house and in the darkest hours of a period which the beloved Guardian describes as "the most dramatic period of His ministry", "in the hey-day of His life and in the full tide of His power" He penned the first part of His Will and Testament, which delineates the features and lays the foundations of the Administrative Order to arise after His Passing. In this house He revealed the highly significant Tablet addressed to the Báb's cousin and chief builder of the 'Ishqábád Temple, a Tablet whose import can be appreciated and grasped only as future events unfold before our eyes, and in which, as testified by Shoghi Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Baha "in stirring terms proclaimed the immeasurable greatness of the Revelation of the Báb, sounded the warning foreshadowing the turmoil which its enemies, both far and near, would let loose upon the world, and

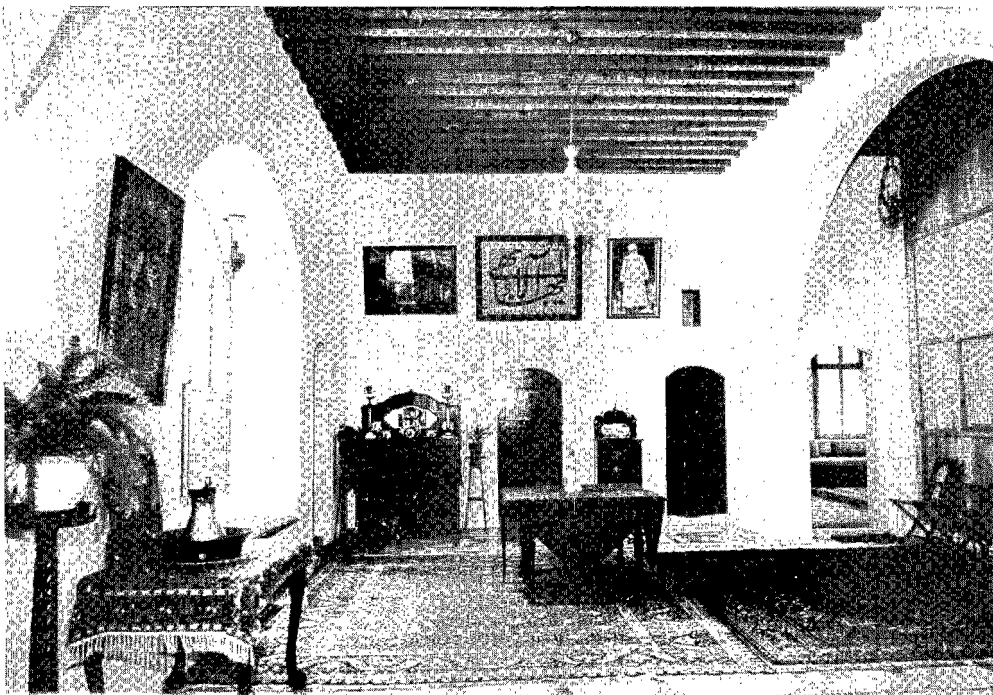


Exterior view of the House of 'Abdu'llah Páshá in its restored condition; 1983.

prophesied, in moving language, the ascendancy which the torchbearer of the Covenant would ultimately achieve over them" . . . It was to this house that the historic first group of pilgrims from the West came to see the Master in the winter of 1898–1899, and in which many more from both East and West sought His presence . . . In this house was born the child ordained to hold the destiny of the Faith in his hands for thirty-six years and to become its "beloved Guardian", the child named "Shoghi" by his Grandfather, who grew up under His loving and solicitous care and became the recipient of His Tablets.'

Barely five years after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh it became apparent that the portion of the House of 'Abbud available for occupation was inadequate for His enlarged family. In the autumn of 1896 'Abdu'l-Baha 'with characteristic vigour' took action and, in the months preceding the birth of Shoghi Effendi, arranged to rent the main building, and subsequently the subsidiary wings, of the house of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá in the Mujádalih Quarter in the north-western corner of 'Akká. He established it as His official residence, and also as a home for His daughters, their husbands and families. Thus it came about that in March 1897, in an upper room of the wing facing south, Shoghi Effendi was born in that house which was to witness so many events of vital importance to the Faith and to the future of mankind.

In September 1977 the Universal House of Justice approved the plans for restoration prepared by Mr. Riḍvānu'lláh Aṣhráf, a young Persian Bahá'í architect. The actual work was started three months later by a team of Persian Baha'is with experience of reconstructing certain of the Holy Places in Írán. Some of the work was let out on contract. The task of renovation was extensive and was pursued steadily with a view to hastening the time when this priceless residence would be opened for pilgrimage. No less than two hundred and sixty doors and windows, patterned on the originals, had to be made and installed. The roof had to be reconstructed and surfaced



Main hall of the quarters of the Holy Family in the House of 'Abdu'llah Páshá; 1983.

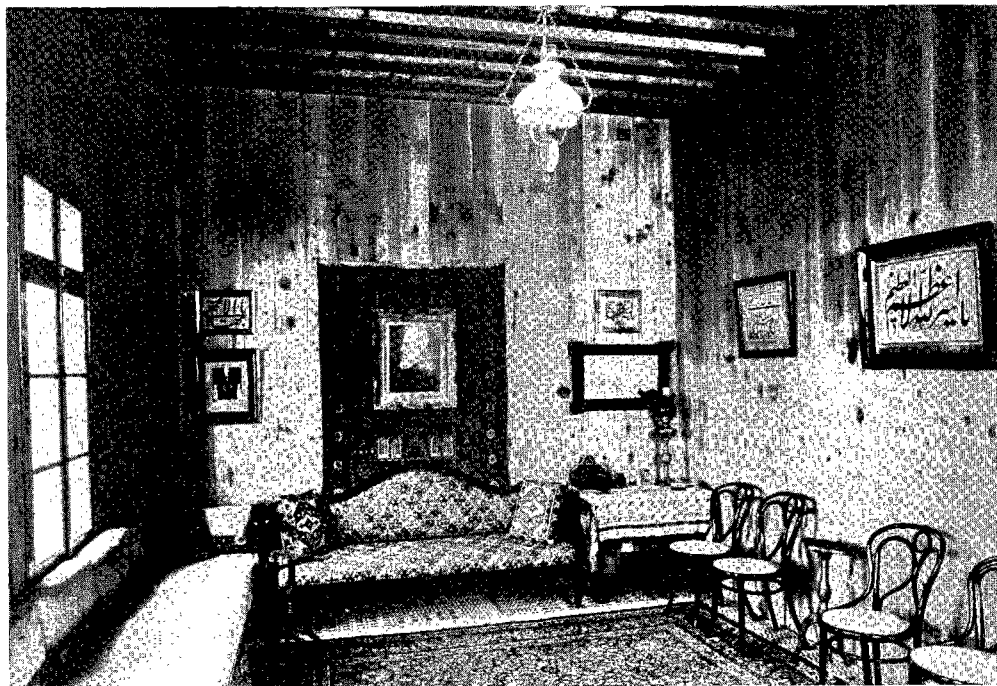


The room in the House of 'Abdu'llah Páshá in which Shoghi Effendi was born in March 1897.

with red tiles purchased in France; new ceilings were assembled and installed, the latter utilizing one hundred and twenty cubic metres of Katrina wood, purchased in Turkey, which was the material of which the originals were made. In addition to repairs to the interior and exterior structure, it was necessary to repair the south and west walls surrounding the property, a project which called for approximately seven hundred cubic metres of stone and cement. Plans have also been prepared to lay out the garden, repair the pool in the central yard and to re-floor the entrance.

No effort has been spared in faithfully restoring this historic building to its condition at the time when it was occupied by the Master and the Holy Family. All available documents and photographs were closely studied, and the remains of the old building were carefully traced. Of inestimable value to the project were the detailed personal memories of the late Mrs. Zeenat (Zinat) Baghdádí, who was a member of the household in the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The upper rooms of the house were, at the request of the Universal House of Justice, exquisitely and carefully furnished in the style of the period by Amatu'l-Bahá Ruhíyyih Khánum whose successful effort will inspire, no less in future pilgrims than in the fortunate first, profound reverence and heartfelt gratitude.



The room in the House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá would receive His guests.