



## CHASE, THORNTON

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**CHASE**, thornton (b. Springfield, Mass., 22 February 1847), regarded by Bahais as the first American Bahai and the first Bahai of the West. He was educated at Brown University and was a veteran of the American Civil War. After being attached to the Swedenborgian Church for a time, he became a Bahai through the lessons given by Ibrahim Kheiralla (Ebrāhīm Kayr-Allāh; q.v.) in 1895. Although three others became Bahais before him, they later left the religion and so Chase is regarded as the first Bahai. He was a leading figure in the Chicago Bahai community until he moved to Los Angeles in 1909. He gave lectures on the Bahai faith and was one of the principal advocates of organization in the Bahai community. Since his work as an insurance executive necessitated much travel he used this as an opportunity to spread the new religion. In 1907 he traveled to 'Akkā and met 'Abd-al-Bahā'. He died in Los Angeles on 30 September 1912, less than three weeks before 'Abd-al-Bahā's arrival there. The visit of 'Abd-al-Bahā' to his grave is still commemorated annually by the American Bahai community. Chase's papers at the National Bahai Archives in Wilmette, Ill., are an important source for early American Bahai history. His book *The Baha'i Revelation* was a significant early attempt to make a systematic presentation of the Bahai religion.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(Moojan Momen)