

## **Ehringhaus, Matilda Bradford Haughton** <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Governor J. C. B. Ehringhaus and his wife Matilda Bradford Haughton Ehringhaus in Elizabeth City, May 30, 1933. Image from the Carolina Digital**

**Ehringhaus, Matilda Bradford Haughton** Library and Archives. <sup>[2]</sup>

by Marie Sharpe Ham, Debra A. Blake, and C. Edward Morris. Excerpted from *North Carolina's First Ladies, 1891-2001*, copyright 2001. Reprinted with permission from [North Carolina Historical Publications](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

**23 Oct 1890 - 16 Jun 1980**

See Also: [JCB Ehringhaus](#) <sup>[4]</sup> - Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, [Governor J.C.B. Ehringhaus](#) <sup>[5]</sup> - Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History.

Outgoing and cheerful, Matilda "Tillie" Ehringhaus was a breath of fresh air in the depression-era administration of [Governor J.C.B. Ehringhaus](#) <sup>[4]</sup>. With unflagging wit and good humor, she represented a pleasant diversion from the stress and strain of public life. Matilda Bradford was born to Episcopal minister Thomas Benbury Haughton and Susan Elizabeth Lamb Haughton on October 23, 1890, in Williamston, Martin County. When Matilda was four, her father died, and the

family moved to Washington, North Carolina. She later attended St. Mary's Junior College <sup>[6]</sup>, from which she received a business certificate in 1908 and worked as a secretary until her marriage. On January 4, 1912, she married John Christoph Blucher Ehringhaus at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Washington, North Carolina. Following their marriage they lived in Elizabeth City, where her husband practiced law.

Three children were born to J. C. B. and Tillie Ehringhaus. John Christoph Blucher Ehringhaus Jr. was the oldest, born March 8, 1913; he later married Margaret Irwin Peoples. He was followed by twins, Matilda and Haughton, who were born September 5, 1916. Daughter Matilda subsequently married James Telfair Cordon and had three children; son Haughton later married Johnny Walker and had two children.

Because of the financial strain of the Great Depression, the inauguration was very simple. The legislature appropriated only six hundred dollars for the event. The new governor and his wife welcomed the simplicity of the ceremony inasmuch as he had only recently been released from the hospital after having undergone treatment for a kidney infection and had to return to bed immediately afterward. While living at the Executive Mansion, Tillie Ehringhaus hosted many musical evenings during which her husband played the piano and the family and guests gathered around and sang. One of the first things Governor Ehringhaus did to help the depressed economy was to reduce his own salary.



Dress worn by Tillie Ehringhaus, wife of JCB Ehringhaus, at his inauguration in 1933. H.1954.30.1. Photo from the North Carolina Museum of History. Used courtesy of the North Carolina Department of

Natural and Cultural Resources. <sup>[7]</sup>His wife immediately followed suit by lowering the wattage in the chandeliers and almost halving the electric bill at the mansion. In order to have enough silver to serve guests, Tillie Ehringhaus, like other first ladies, brought her own to the Executive Mansion.

Tillie Ehringhaus was never a particularly political person, though she enjoyed her years at the Executive Mansion. An article published in the Raleigh News and Observer on February 8, 1957, quoted her as remarking: "It's an experience I'm glad I had, but I wouldn't want to be a governor's wife two terms." In a later article that appeared in the Greensboro Record (February 13, 1962), she noted that she had viewed with alarm her husband's decision to run for governor inasmuch as she did not enjoy the limelight. In spite of her reservations, the charming Tillie Ehringhaus performed her duties with great style and made many lasting friends in the capital city. In its issue of August 26, 1933, The State magazine said: "[I]f they ever have a beauty contest among governors' wives, our Tilly will take the loving cup, or the medal, or whatever it is that they give as first prizes in contests of this nature."

While Mr. Ehringhaus was serving in the General Assembly in 1932, the family had lived at the Sir Walter Hotel in Raleigh. At the conclusion of his term of office as governor in January 1937, he and his family moved to a house on Fairview Road in Raleigh. In 1946 they returned to the Sir Walter Hotel. There the former governor died in 1949. Tillie Ehringhaus remained at the hotel for several years. Along with a friend, she edited the North Carolina Almanac and compiled the State Industrial Guide. In 1954 she moved to a small farm outside Edenton, where some of her family resided. She remodeled her house, and for a time two of her grandchildren lived with her and attended school in Edenton. She remained on her farm for twenty years before moving back to Raleigh, where she lived until her death.

Matilda Ehringhaus died in Raleigh on June 16, 1980, at the age of eighty-nine. She was buried beside her husband in the Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery in Elizabeth City.

## References:

Ham, Marie Sharpe, Debra A. Blake, and C. Edward Morris. 2001. *North Carolina's First Ladies, 1891-2001*. Raleigh, N.C.: Executive Mansion Fine Arts Committee and Executive Mansion Fund.

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"John Christoph Blucher Ehringhaus (1882-1949)." Photograph. The Carolina Story: A Virtual Museum of University History. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Carolina Digital Library and Archives. [http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/vir\\_museum/id/831](http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/vir_museum/id/831) <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed April 23, 2013).

Ehringhaus, Mrs. "Dress, Accession #: [H.1954.30.1](#) <sup>[7]</sup>." 1933. North Carolina Museum of History.

## Subjects:

[Biography](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[Governors](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[Women](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

## Authors:

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## Origin - location:

[Beaufort County](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

[Washington](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

[Chowan County](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

[Edenton](#) <sup>[17]</sup>

[Martin County](#) <sup>[18]</sup>

[Williamston](#) <sup>[19]</sup>

[Pasquotank County](#) <sup>[20]</sup>

[Elizabeth City](#) <sup>[21]</sup>

[Wake County](#) <sup>[22]</sup>

[Raleigh](#) <sup>[23]</sup>

## From:

[North Carolina's First Ladies: 1891-2001, North Carolina Historical Publications](#) <sup>[24]</sup>

## Years:

1890 - 1980

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