

JULIA'S JOURNEY

A LIFE ILLUMINED BY THE LIGHT OF AKKA

After reading with great interest *Ten Days in the Light of Akka*, the account of an American woman's early pilgrimage to the sacred center of the Bahá'í Faith, I noted with surprise this statement found in the foreword to the 1979 reprint:

“In spite of considerable effort of research, we know practically nothing about the life of Julia M. Grundy.”

What was her background? How did her life change after her encounter with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? In her book, she wrote, “Now it seems that never again can I go back to the life which is so trivial, unsatisfying, and without eternal purpose.” Where did her newfound purpose take her?

The following pages are written to share such answers as I could find.

R. Gregory Shaw
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Julia Margaret Kunkel was born on the 27th of November. Though various later records, some in her hand, record the year as 1874 or 1875, her Manhattan NY birth certificate reads 27 November 1873. She was the daughter of German-born immigrants, Valendies “Valentin” Kunkel (born 1826) and Christina Hairer (born 1838). The pair married in August of 1866. Valentin was a 36 year-old widower; Christina was 26. Julia was the youngest of five children at home, including 3 half-siblings born to Valentin’s first wife, Maria Stein.

A city directory lists Valentin as a “chairmaker”. In the early years of Julia’s life, the family lived on Rivington Street, then Delancey Street. Before the Lower East Side became a jam-packed tenement district in the late 1800s, this was 300 acres of farmland owned by James DeLancey, acting colonial governor of New York in the 1750s who staunchly supported the British during the Revolutionary War. It stretched east of the Bowery, covering most of what is today the Lower East Side. Once known as Kleindeutschland, or 'Little Germany', the Lower East Side was home to a large German population which began growing rapidly around 1840. Over the next forty years, it would evolve into a community boasting the third most German speakers in the world. The German presence within the historic district reached its zenith in the 1870s as numerous cultural institutions moved to or were established in the neighborhood. Delancey Street became a major shopping street – fairly upscale in the early part of the 19th century and much more immigrant-friendly in later years, serving Chinatown, the Lower East Side and Little Italy. In the 1880s, the notorious gang, The Short Tails, terrorized Delancey Street, and were such a fearsome group that the NYPD took to patrolling Delancey Street in twos so that one cop would always have the protection of another.

In 1886, the family was living on Forsyth Street, still in the Lower East Side. That year, Valentin Kunkel died, and a year later, “Christiana” filed for a pension as the widow of a Mexican War veteran of the 10th US Calvary. In 1892, the year that Julia married, Christina was living on Henry Street, just a block away from Delancey.

Census records indicate that Julia completed just 8 years of schooling. On the 27th of October 1892, 18 years old, she was wed to John George Grundig. John was born in Maryland on the 24th of January 1870 and, like Julia, also was the son of two German immigrants, John George and Ernestine Auguste Grundig. It is interesting to note that these parents of an early American Bahá’í immigrated from Langenhain, the small village that became the home of the first Bahá’í House of Worship in Europe.

Though she became known in Bahá’í circles as Julia Grundy, the married surname most often found on her official documents was Grundig, with occasional variations.

The young couple soon settled on Patchen Avenue in Brooklyn, which remained their address for the length of their marriage and for some years after John’s death. John’s mother, Ernestine, resided with them for many years. John worked as a salesman (“butter and eggs”), a clerk, a bookkeeper, and in real estate. In later years, his census record indicates he was a printer for a newspaper.

In November of 1904, Julia filed a passport application, with the note: “I intend to return to the United States about April 1905”. She is described as 30 years old, 5’8”, blue eyes, light brown hair, and complexion fair.

Seeking a passport for a voyage to the Holy Land was the first step for a spiritual journey that would forever change the life of Julia Kunkel Grundig, a journey that would inspire one of the early written accounts of the life and Teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and then in future years take the young woman of New York’s Little Germany across the U.S. to carry the Message of a new Revelation from God.

As she wrote in the opening page of *Ten Days In the Light of Akka*:

“I realize that the doors of a new Life are opening within me and that I have been awakened as if from a sleep. Now it seems that never again can I go back to the life which is so trivial, unsatisfying, and without eternal purpose.”

The story of Julia’s introduction to and acceptance of the Bahá’í Faith is not available, but it is known that in 1904 regular meetings had been established in the home of Howard and Mary MacNutt, then living in Brooklyn, about two miles from the Grundigs. It is also known that Julia’s relationship with the MacNutts and their shared travels to teach the Faith continued up to the year of their deaths.

In December of 1904, the renowned Bahá’í scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, who had traveled to America to instruct the early believers in their Faith, returned to Syrian Palestine and nine Bahá’ís accompanied him on pilgrimage on the RMS Majestic: “Isabella Brittingham, Lua Getsinger, the MacNutts, Julie Grundy (Julia Grundig), Mr. and Mrs. Percy Woodcock, Miss Woodcock of Montreal, Canada, and Mrs. Mary H. Lucas of Boston.”

In his foreword to the 1979 reprint of the account of Julia’s pilgrimage, Howard Garey writes:

Ten Days in the Light of ‘Akká gives us a glimpse into the life of the Holy Household and introduces us not only into the presence of the Center of the Covenant but also into that of some other persons of lesser degree...

The central object of this account—which appears to be daily notes only slightly organized and barely rewritten for publication—is to enable the pilgrim to share with fellow believers the lessons she heard from the lips of the Master Himself. At this point we must sound once again the customary caveat: “Pilgrims’ notes” convey, not the words of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, but the pilgrim’s memory and understanding of those words....

...these pilgrims’ notes... constitute a personal, though not intimate, record and, at the same time, a document of considerable historical value. In them we hear the voice of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá through the mind and heart of a good and simple person and once again appreciate His ability to teach anyone right to the limit of his spiritual and intellectual capacity to learn.

Today, readers can find the complete text of *Ten Days in the Light of ‘Akká* available on internet sources. This “document of considerable historical value” was an important literary contribution to the fledgling American Bahá’í community and remains a heart-stirring description of sentiments that modern pilgrims will readily recognize.

Of particular interest here are those passages where ‘Abdul-Bahá is providing guidance that will directly inspire Julia to arise in service and expand her personal efforts to devote her life to the Bahá’í Cause. Though the words were received through the softening effect of an interpreter’s delivery, the towering presence of the Master Himself ensured that the message left an unforgettable impression.

“These are precious and wonderful days in ‘Akká. Each day is as a year. Your visit cannot be measured merely by the length of time you have been here. The real spiritual visit will be after you have gone. Some who remain but one day go away filled and enkindled with the Spirit of God. They are like the dry wood which bursts into flame as soon as it touches the fire. So it is

with a lamp; the oil within it responds instantly to the fire and gives forth light. The soul which possesses sight can see in a moment, while the blind never see. An awakened soul is like a precious pearl in the midst of a load of pebbles which have but little value. To some it is given to hear and know the Message of Life in a short time, while others hear and receive nothing even though they make a long stay in this holy place.”

In a series of encounters over the days in Akka, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá built Julia’s confidence as a herald of the Cause.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent for me (Julia). I found Him in a little room opening from the courtyard. He was sitting upon a raised chair, His beautiful face, majestic in repose and strength, turned toward the only window. He greeted me joyfully. Both the daughters were present. He said, “*I want you to carry away from ‘Akká the joy and peace of the spiritual life.*” I answered, “It would be impossible for me to be in this atmosphere of Spirit as I have been and not receive wonderful benefit.”

I answered, “Now that you have shown me the way, I wish to walk in this heavenly path.” He said, “*You are near to God, and day by day you will progress by the knowledge of God toward spiritual joy. Then you will be a source of guidance to others. In you they will now behold another person; in fact, everybody will witness the change in your life. You must develop spiritual love in yourself and in them. Physical love is very different from spiritual love. To awaken spiritual love in others is to attain peace and joy for yourself.*”

I said, “I will pray to be assisted and strengthened.” He replied, “*God will help you in this.*” Then He continued, “*Do everything in your power to help the poor and needy. Serve God in this way. The poor are the trust of God. Give the Message to every listening soul. Give them whatever they can take of it. In Persia there was a man who could not read or write, yet he was the cause of guidance to many great men in this Truth by his pure love of God. If you will turn to God, He will turn to you and assist you. He will make you eloquent. He will make you irresistible by His Wisdom. The tongue speaks from the heart, and if you are sincere, God will speak for you. Help and assist others to see this Truth as you do.*”

I said, “I wish to teach this Message of Light and Truth, but I feel that my efforts are small and unimportant.” He answered, “*The mountain is large, but it has no intelligence. The diamond is small, but it is filled with light. The elephant produces no melody; the nightingale’s song is like the music of Heaven. I will pray that you may become the recipient of the Bounties of God. You will be filled with power because the Spirit will speak through you. You must not bring unhappiness to others. In the future sacrifice yourself more and more in the Cause of God. Then the Love of God will grow and grow in your heart.*”

“My greatest wish is to teach this Message.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “*I will pray God to assist you. It has often happened that one who is not able to teach would be sent forth, and when the time came, that one would be found powerful and eloquent.*”

When does our responsibility cease in giving the Message?

“*When we give the Message, we develop ourselves. Our own heart is opened when we teach the heart of the listener. The more we give, the more we get. Therefore, as this is the means of our own development we should never cease teaching. Our responsibility remains as long as we have a listener.*”

In these years, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was still a prisoner of the Ottoman government, yet as always, occupied at every hour with tending to the various needs of the local populace, believers and Muslims alike, as well as with the leadership of the Cause around the world. Thus the western pilgrims eagerly anticipated the hours when He could meet with them, while filling the remaining time with visits to Bahji and Bahá’u’llah’s tomb (where restrictions prevented ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from joining them) and other holy sites.

Julia recorded her impression of “the holy yet unholy” environs the travelers passed through.

‘Akká is the home of exiles and prisoners of the Turkish Government. A few merchants and bazaars comprise its present meager commerce, although in former times it was an important market for Syrian products. It is the residence of a governor and various officials. The inhabitants generally are poor and wretched, evidences of poverty and squalor everywhere. Haifa has absorbed the business vitality of ‘Akká. The city looks like a catacomb with the roof lifted up, heavy walls, a labyrinth of passages, narrow streets, and dark alleys leading in every direction. But the spiritual atmosphere which surrounds us here is unmistakable and uplifting. Here in this unholy yet holy place we have been taught that the Peace, Power, and Knowledge of God can only be attained by severance from the things of earth and freedom from the influences of transitory surroundings. ‘Akká is to us a gateway of Heaven.

The women of the Master’s household were especially attentive and welcoming to the Western women. “The ladies of the Household showed us how to cook the Persian pilau. They gave us many gifts and presents, everything haloed with words of love.”

Julia shares the words of Munírih Khánum, wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which reinforced the encouragement given by the Master.

“The garment with which God will clothe you when you teach will be an armor of protection against all assault. The teachers in this Cause will be as planets in the heavens, illuminating the great world of the West. Teaching is the crown of action. This was the Crown Jesus bestowed upon His disciples.”

One significant outcome of this historic pilgrimage was the adoption of an ongoing monthly practice in the American Bahá’í communities. One special evening in Akka, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá invited the pilgrims to gather at His table for a spiritual feast of unity.

“Tonight there will be a Meeting of the believers here. At the table they will be gathered together from all parts of the world. This is the reason of My happiness, seeing the East and the West joined in the Kingdom of God. May all the believers in the world be so joined until the whole world shall come under one rule and all nations be as one family. This will surely come to pass.”

Julia described the memorable scene:

Tonight we met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a large number of believers from all parts of the East at the Feast, or Supper, under the shadow of the Blessed Perfection. As we entered the large hall, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá greeted us, extending both hands and bidding us, “Welcome! Welcome!” His face aglow with light. Then He helped us to our seats and gave us our napkins. As the

believers came in, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá clasped each one in a loving embrace and gave them their places at the table. Then He passed around the table anointing each one with attar of rose, sometimes upon the cheek, again upon the forehead, or over the heart. Some of the believers kissed His hand or touched His garment in loving appreciation. As He walked about, He spoke beautiful spiritual words: *“This Meeting is through the Love of the Blessed Perfection.” “In the sensibility of the heart is this realization.” “God is Love!” “May spiritual fragrance refresh thy soul as this perfume refreshes the nostrils.” “The Beloved of God have gathered together to partake of material and spiritual food.” “You are in prison here—My partners in imprisonment—prisoners of love—God be praised!”*

The food, pilau, made from Persian rice, was brought in, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served each one, again speaking heavenly words. *“This is the blessed supper of the Lord, for we have gathered under the shadow of the Blessed Perfection.” “We are the lambs of the Blessed Perfection. Jesus said to Peter, ‘Lovest thou Me—feed My lambs.’ Christ said, ‘I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven; he who eats of this Bread shall live forever.’” “The Heavenly Books prophesy that they shall come from the East and the West to sit down in the Kingdom of God.” “In the last day all the sheep shall be gathered together.”* As He passed around the table serving the brethren, He said to Taqí Manshádí, who has a particularly dark face, *“Eat plentifully dear brother; you are pale with hunger.”* Throughout the supper, which was very simple in its character and appointment, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the Servant of the believers. This was indeed a spiritual feast where Love reigned. The whole atmosphere was Love, Joy, and Peace.

The next morning at breakfast, the Master indicated that similar *“divine meetings”* should be instituted in America.

He said, *“How are you?”* in English. Then He spoke of the feast, saying, *“I have been taught the lesson of servitude and sacrifice in these meetings where the believers come together in spiritual joy and fragrance. My heart is touched with pity as I look upon the discord and lack of unity among men. But when the people of God, the children of the Kingdom, meet together, we find the true peace, the real Unity, and the Love of God manifest.”*

He continued, *“The cause of My happiness is meeting you here and seeing your faces filled with the Light of God. I shall never forget the beautiful meeting last night. You must meet together in this way in America. Be true, loyal servants of God. Arise to serve His Cause. These are divine meetings, and the Bounties which surround the Kingdom of Heaven will descend upon you. The same Spirit of Love and Life which fills the Supreme Concourse will fill your meetings.”*

Upon the pilgrims’ return to their homeland, they carried the story of the feast within the walls of Akka to the friends. The Chicago “House of Spirituality” received a message from Isabella Brittingham:

“I have just received from Mr. MacNutt a copy of the Master's Tablet to Mr. MacNutt received during this winter in which He blesses the establishment of the Feast of the Lord, calling it ‘the Supper of the Lord’..”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had told Julia that *“These are precious and wonderful days in ‘Akká. Each day is as a year.”* But, as every pilgrim today that visits Mt. Carmel and Akka discovers, the “years” must reach an end, and the time comes to take the spiritual gifts received back into a needy world.

The last page of the book Julia would write ends with a final meeting and the last words that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to her.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent for me. I went to Him in the little room where He writes. He said, “*Be strong! Be firm! You are not leaving Me; it is only your body that is going away. Your spirit will always be here. I shall always see you. There is work for you to do in the West. You must teach your husband the Way to God. Then you will both grow spiritually and be one in His Kingdom. I hope you may come again to ‘Akká and remain with Me a long time. You will always be here in the spirit. Think of this wherever you are, and happiness will come to you.*” I held His hand a long time, asking that I might receive Light and Guidance.

On the 25th of April 1905, traveling separately from their fellow pilgrims, Julia and the MacNutts arrived in New York City on the ship Kroonland from Antwerp.

The book, *Ten Days In the Light of Akka*, with the author listed as Julia M. Grundy, would appear two years later. The August 1907 minutes of the Chicago House of Spirituality note: “Mrs. Grundy’s pilgrim notes are approved and will be published.”

At this early stage of the development of the Cause in America, Julia’s book was an important addition to Baha’i literature and her recollection of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s guidance and example would find a welcoming audience among the wide-spread groups eager to learn more of the new Revelation. Five years after publishing, the book was on the list of literature in *Star of the West*, 111 pages available for 25 cents. In 1915, Agnes Alexander, a future Hand of the Cause, saw its effect on one young man attending her meetings in Japan:

“Another student ‘copied the entire book, *Ten Days In the Light of Akka*, writing in a beautiful fine script in a notebook. When it was completed he had it bound and brought it to me to write on the flyleaf. It was just nineteen pages. I wrote a prayer that all his family might become illumined by the Light of the New Day.’ The student later wrote to Agnes saying, ‘I can only see God through spirit and Truth which comes out of the lines of that religious book.’”
(from *Agnes Baldwin Alexander*, by Earl Redman and Duane Troxel)

Julia was just entering her thirties when she traveled to Palestine. She would live to be 96. Though extensive details of her middle and later years are lacking, there are records enough to establish that she took up the mission ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had given her and was quite active in the Bahá’í teaching work, often traveling with the MacNutts. New York and Florida were particularly blessed by their support, but in time their travels stretched across the country, reaching the West Coast.

Brief, but revealing, glimpses may be quoted from newspapers and Bahá’í sources:

1908

A “Feast of Rejoicing” was arranged on August 30 upon news of the release of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the restrictions in Ottoman Turkey following the Young Turks rebellion. Howard also arranged for an event at their home at 935 Eastern Parkway in early September and presented a summary of the event held August 30. William H Hoar and Mrs Brittingham presented, Julie Grundy and Mary spoke of the hopes the spread of the Cause and the purposes of suffering.

1912

During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's immortal voyage to America, He went to Brooklyn, where John Grundy and Howard MacNutt made a short film of the Master walking and speaking to the Bahá'ís. Though not identified, it seems very probable that Julia was present for the occasion. John and Howard wrote an article for *Star of the West* that spoke of "never to be forgotten scenes" and the impression left on witnesses that "will treasure the memory of it forever." The film is a precious relic that is still presented at special events for the believers, achieving their goal to present 'Abdu'l-Bahá "for the benefit of the coming generations."

1913

Luther Burbank was one of those to whom John (Bosch) gave the Bahá'í Message. In 1907 John asked him for an appointment to tell him something, new; he said to John and Mrs. Brittingham, 'I can only give you five minutes.' 'We were there an hour and a half,' John told me. Burbank read the books, and was addressed jointly with John in at least one Tablet (June 24, 1912). Another visit to Burbank which John remembered took place March 30, 1913, when he called on the scientist with the Howard MacNutt and Julia Grundy. The Governor of Colorado and his wife were there, sitting in the parlour; Mr. Burbank took the Bahá'ís through folding doors into an adjoining room, and an hour later he was still carrying on an animated conversation with them. John glanced into the other room and saw the Governor and his wife fast asleep in their chairs.

1917

In March Mary (Macnutt) was at a club function joined by fellow Bahá'í Mrs John (Julia) Grundy performing. (Julia was frequently called upon to sing in gatherings.)

1919

Mason Remey visited Bahá'ís in Miami in 1919 and reported meeting local believers, including "Julia G."

1922

Howard (MacNutt) began to be visible in the local newspapers from early January 1922 in a series meetings in Fulford, today's North Miami Beach, Florida, as well as the Atwater home at 619 SW 2nd St. This series of public meetings varied in location and tone and topic and continued to late February - some were centered on their travels and musical entertainment. Julia Grundy was with them at first at the Hotel Alabama, and coverage noted Howard was a good piano player himself....The MacNutt, Julia Grundy and Mary Ethel Hosier stayed in Tampa, Florida, October 25, presumably on their way south.

1924-1925

In the spring of 1924 Fazel Mazandarani joined in the activity in Miami along with Howard MacNutt, Julia Grundy, and a "Edelmira Roe" reportedly in from South America. It is possible Mazandarani inspired Howard to undertake a national tour promoting the religion which Howard undertook with Mary and Julia Grundy coming along as well. They left Miami north with stops in St Augustine and Jacksonville and Augusta GA. They then left NY July 13, 1924, towards Buffalo and Toronto, then on to Detroit, Lansing MI, Muskegon, Racine, Milwaukee, St Paul and Minneapolis where they were visible in local newspapers in August. In September the MacNutt and Julia Grundy gave a series of talks in Portland, Oregon, while on tour going to a conference in San Francisco at the end of September. MacNutt and Grundy were profiled -

that they had written/compiled books, gave a talk at the first Race Amity Conference and spoke at the Bahá'í Center, the Portland Library, First Divine Science Church and Bethel AME Church in town. MacNutt's talk at the Bethel AME Church had additional coverage. He was introduced by Latimer, gave a talk on 'rightful reconciliation' between views, rather than argument: "When argument creeps in, the Word of God and the Spirit of God goes out" he said and then Grundy sang 'Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen'. They were also in Butte, Helena and Great Falls, Montana, Spokane, and Seattle, Washington, and then they were visible in local newspapers in Medford, Oregon in mid-September. Then they were on to Alameda and San Francisco California. Still in September they went through Los Gatos, Palo Alto, Santa Barbara, Santa Paula, and Geyserville, where the MacNutts and Grundys were guests of the Bosch family for two weeks. While there Howard was credited by Marion Carpenter with "activation" of her brother Howard Carpenter, whom Marzieh Gail later married, circa November 1924 in Santa Paula and Hollywood and worked with a college group Then they pressed on through Santa Rosa, La Jolla, San Diego, Los Angeles, where they were visible in late November, where Howard visited the gravesite of Thornton Chase, and on to Hollywood, California, Phoenix, Arizona, and planning to be back to DC in May. They were indeed visible in newspapers in DC in early May. By later spring 1925 the MacNutts and Grundy are in Pasadena, FL. They had traveled some 25,000 miles and visited more than 100 communities.

1925

This Southern Regional Committee reports says in part: "Mr. and Mrs. MacNutt and Mr. and Mrs. Grundy reached Florida last November (1925) after touching Bahá'í centres in Athena and Augusta, Ga., Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Stuart, Orlando, Lakeland, and Indian Rocks, Fla, ... where, after reaching Miami with the cooperation of the Atwater family, Mrs. Kretz, Miss Sunshine and other friends, established a new spiritual assembly in that city. Fine meetings for inquirers have been held in their home throughout the entire Winter, and a weekly meeting is now being conducted regularly at the Dorsey Hotel..."

This report of a spiritual assembly established in 1925 followed a letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá written earlier calling on the friends in Miami that they "*may hold luminous meetings in their house and through thy help teach the Colored.*" Five years later, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá had hoped, a racially-integrated Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Miami was duly elected. "Mr. and Mrs. John Grundy" were among the nine Bahá'ís needed to form a Baha'í Local Spiritual Assembly, which included two African American members. As author Dr. Christopher Buck notes, "the Miami Baha'is made notable and noble efforts to cross the racial divide under highly adverse and even dangerous circumstances."

Sadly, a double tragedy would rob Julia of her long-time partners in Bahá'í activities across America.

1926

Mary Stokes MacNutt fell down some stairs November 3 and died November 27, "despite weeks of round-the-clock nursing by Julia and Howard. During the long ordeal Howard lost forty pounds and ...[he] had grown 'silent and absent-minded.'" News of the death was published in local and New York newspapers the following weeks. In events that are not entirely transparent, Howard died December 26, 1926, following a motorcycle impact on the way to a Bahá'í meeting, possibly an assembly meeting, on the black side of town. It was decided that the as yet unburied Mary, and Howard, would be transported back North accompanied by George and Julia Grundy news of which was carried in various places.

In Akka, the Master had given Julia a specific task: *“You must teach your husband the Way to God. Then you will both grow spiritually and be one in His Kingdom.”* It is clear that the couple became true spiritual partners in their life goals. As noted above, John Grundig played an important role during Abdu’l-Baha’s visit to New York, which included taking the notes for some of the published talks. The report from 1925 tells that John was a participant in visiting Bahá’í communities in Georgia and Florida and a spiritual assembly member. (See attached Appendix) In 1925 and again in 1928, the couple traveled together to Germany. Perhaps the trips provided opportunities to plant seeds of spirit in their parents’ homeland.

After 39 years of marriage, John George Grundig died of pulmonary edema, uremia, and chronic cardiovascular disease on the 13th of April 1932. His death certificate lists burial in Lutheran Cemetery (today, All Faiths Cemetery) in Queens, New York.

Now entering her sixties, Julia nearly disappears from public records. She was listed as a Bahá’í in Brooklyn, New York, as late as 1944. In a 1946 census, she is found in Brevard County, Florida. In 1952, her address is Cocoa, Florida. At her death, 31 Oct 1970, she was resident in Bayville, Ocean County, New Jersey.

No official record has been found, but a personal page on the Ancestry.com website places her burial in New York. The All Faiths Cemetery in Queens, where her husband and mother-in-law both are known to rest, today holds over a half a million graves. It remains to be investigated whether Julia Margaret Kundel Grundig, a Bahá’í to be remembered, is buried alongside her family.

During her days in Akka, a veteran Persian believer described the significance of Julia’s journey:

“Many people of the world have been awakened by the New Daylight, but they do not know from whence it came, nor can they tell you what they are in search of. They simply know that a Light has come and disturbed their slumber. So they are filled with uncertainty and unhappiness while seeking. When they meet the Light of the New Day of God, it is like a man having thoughts and hearing statements he does not understand the meaning of. You from America have been awakened by the New Day; you have heard the Call of God.“

APPENDIX

Letter from John Grundy to Shahnaz Waite (*extracts*)

Miami, Florida

Dear Mrs Waite and dear Baha'i Friends:

How to write you!! It is a difficult task—details and memories flood in. How to tell you and the beloved friends in Hollywood and Los Angeles and its environs of the passing of that great soul and teacher, Howard MacNutt, is a difficult and sad task, a doubly hard task, for the eyes fill with tears, the pen refuses to cross the paper, but duty is duty and God's work must be done. Allaho Abha! May His blessings be showered down upon us and His strength ours. His arms are about us.

Howard and myself were on our way to a tabooed colored meeting in Colored Town, to which place white men are forbidden by the city authorities and K.K.Ks. At 8 o'clock p.m. we were within 500 feet of our destination when Howard was struck down by a motorcycle driven by a messenger boy, and fatally injured. His right arm was broken, his abdomen crushed (his death was caused by a crushed intestine). I obtained instant surgical and medical help. The bones were set 10 minutes after the accident and he was X-rayed and back in our home at 236 N.E. Terrace 40 minutes after the accident, in his own bed. Within 60 minutes more two of the ablest specialists were summoned who located the trouble and decided an operation was immediately necessary but, owing to Howard's weak heart, it was impossible to operate. It would have been medical murder to cut Howard. They decided best to leave him to nature to correct the damage, but after six hours of agony he died practically in our arms and passed to the Abha Kingdom where he no doubt has been met and taken into the arms of the Blessed Perfection and the Center of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Baha, His spiritual work was great and will endure through generations, helping to make the world better for humanity. He had no peer. Where are his equals?....

Much work was laid out here to be done. Julia, Howard and myself arranged and spoke at many colored meetings, in churches, schools and homes; perhaps thousands of colored people have come to our meetings. 'Abdu'l-Baha personally and strikingly instructed us that we must make every effort to help the colored man. Howard died a martyr to the Cause of God—May the Abha Glory enshroud him!

We had services at Comb's funeral home. It was indeed a very sad sight to see the caskets of Howard and Mary side by side. Their countenances were serene and both had a smile on their lovely mortal temples. Within 30 days we lost our friends of 30 years. We served for love as he did without pay or profit. Our loss is much, but the Cause demands that we carry on. We will carry on the work here with white and black to the end, and our home, quite a large one, is open to all races and creeds.

The services were simple. I (John) read from the Bible—St Matt. 5th ch., verses 1 to 18; ch. 6th, 9th to 13th incl.; Revelation, ch. ? vs. ?; Hidden Words 19 and 50, Arabic, also prayer for the dead by Baha'u'llah; also Springtime Tablet, 'Abdu'l Baha, page 57, 'Ten Days in the Light of Acca'; also the Ali Akbar Tablet; also the famous Breakwell Tablet by Abdu'l Baha—the finest piece of reading for the dead I have ever heard, eloquent and massive.

We used the ring with Greatest Name on Howard's finger, also placed it for all time on Mary's finger. The caskets were shipped to his sister's house....

During Howard's service we had many colored folk present. For the first time in history the doors of Comb's funeral home were opened to the colored man. It seems Combs knew Howard and when I approached him he said: 'Howard MacNutt can have as many colored friends to see him as want to, and in future this door will never again be closed to them despite all prejudices and ostracisms.' SOME PROGRESS!! Many came and saw their friend. We were the first to open our doors and give a seat at our table to a colored man in Florida. The service was enhanced further by beautiful lauditories....

Then Julia sang your Benediction and a last look was had before the casket was closed. We have much more to write, but we are too filled with grief. Ask us for any details you want. Spread this letter over Hollywood and nearby, especially Mrs French. With all Abha love, blessings and greetings, your brother and sister in the Cause of Baha'u'llah and the Center of His Covenant, 'Abdu'l Baha.

John and Julia (Mr and Mrs John Grundy)