

- Whittelsey, Harry & Susan

- Williams, Margaret

INTRODUCTION TO PROFILES

The following profiles of members of the Topeka Bahá'í community are of necessity incomplete, a work in progress. Not even every member of the community could be included here. Those who are included are those whose active membership in the community exceeded five years, or they played some unique role in the community. Some members of the very early years are included simply because information from those years is so scarce. As in all groups of people, some are more involved than others. That is also a factor for inclusion.

ANDERSON, Lucille

She was known as Lucy Anderson, and all the records in the Topeka Bahá'í community refer to her as "Lucy," but when investigation into the site of her grave was made, it was discovered that her name was "Lucille." She was the widow, according to her obituary, of "Square" Anderson. But that is likely a typo for Squire, his actual name. He was born in and died in and is buried in in Scranton. No obituary for him has been found.

Lucy was born 1 January 1866 in Lawrence, Kansas then lived most of her life in Topeka. She became Bahá'í in the 1940s and remained active until her death in the 1950s. She also, as was not uncommon at the time, maintained membership in a church; in her case Calvary Baptist.

She died at age 89 on 30 September 1956 after a hospital stay. She is buried in Mt. Auburn Cemetery, historically the African-American cemetery in Topeka, just east of Topeka Cemetery.

AMOS, Nellie

A "Mrs. Amos" was mentioned by "Abdu'l-Bahá as being a believer in Topeka in 1919. A "Nellie Amos" is among the believers later in Topeka in the 1930s. A search of city directories found several women who would be "Mrs Amos" during this time. The only one who appeared consistently each year was the wife of William S. Amos. Therefore we can conclude that this Nellie Amos is the believer in both periods of time. Several of the early members did continue their relationship through the years despite a lack of consistent community activity or records.

To securely establish the identity of the Mrs. Amos of 1919, the name of the husband of Nellie Amos was needed. In the local Bahá'í records her own name of Nellie Amos is used exclusively. Her husband's name is not found until an article was published in the Topeka newspaper in 1941. That article listed the names of the members of the Topeka Bahá'í community. There "Mrs. W. S. Amos" is listed and she is the same Mrs. Amos who is consistently in the city directories for the early decades of the century, so her identity is confirmed.

Nellie Amos was an active believer in Topeka for many years and, from 1907 till sometime after 1916, lived at 1425 College, not far from the Hydes and

Kirkpatrick's. This proximity to Bertha Hyde, another early believer, could explain her connection to the Bahá'í community. To get a larger view of her life, the life of her husband has to be looked at.

William S. Amos first appeared in the Topeka city directories in the 1890-91 edition. At that time he was a "machinist" and lived on Kellam Ave in Oakland. The next directories show that he worked at several different jobs and lived in different places until 1902 when he was settled in real estate. That year his profession is listed as "real estate agent" and the next several years as "solicitor" for a real estate agency. He might have gotten into the field as early as 1899 when his profession is listed as "clerk," but we cannot know for sure where he was a clerk at.

He worked for three different companies in real estate. At first with the George M. Noble & Co. (they advertised as "financial agents, real estate and insurance"), then with the Merriam Mortgage Co. (as a "land examiner" then "land inspector"), and finally with the Central Trust Co. (as a "land expert"). After his years with Central Trust (1921-24) his occupation is variously listed as "traveling inspector," "land examiner," or "travelling salesman." He may have been free-lancing on assignment.

Nellie first appears in 1916 as his wife. No occupation is listed for her, so we can assume she did not work outside the home. The 1924 city directory published by Halls provides her maiden name of Miller, and the family's phone number: 22227. After listing Williams employer, gives the dates: 1899-1923, as if to say that he worked in that field for that length of time.

There is a gap in the directories from 1944 to 1948 and after that Nellie Amos is listed as "wid Wm S.," so apparently he had died in that time. She remained from then till the rest of her life at the home they had acquired by 1924 at 1914 Huntoon.

Nellie was the Chairman of the Topeka Baha'i Assembly in 1938-39. After the list of Baha'is in Topeka appeared in the newspaper in 1941, with her name included, her name does not appear in the local Baha'i records. She did not leave town, so it is apparent that she removed herself from the Baha'i community. Might there be a connection between her name being made public and her withdrawal? No answer or other explanation has yet been found.

No obituaries for either William or Nellie Amos have yet been found, nor are either of them buried in any Shawnee or Osage County cemeteries.

Sources of information:

Topeka Bahá'í Archives

Hall City Directory, 1924

Radges City Directories, 1890 – 1958

BOYD, Anna & Jennie

Anna Boyd was crossing the street with her sister Jennie, and a niece, on 25 April 1923 when a car turned the corner too swiftly and struck her, knocking her down, breaking her neck and causing other fatal internal injuries. They

were walking west on 10th street when the car came up Kansas Ave. The driver was arrested (despite helping to carry her to the drugstore on the corner where she died) and an inquest was scheduled. The news article reporting the accident was carried on the front page of the Topeka State Journal one column from the photograph and news of the death of Sarah Burnhardt. Anna was 55 at the time she died.

Anna and Jennie Boyd were sisters with family roots going back to the earliest days of the city of Topeka. They lived most of their lives with their father, Benjamin Boyd, at 1114 Taylor. Their father came to Topeka in time to be included in the 1871 city directory (the second one ever issued), there he is listed as a "laborer." His residence at that time is listed as being on the east side of Taylor between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, house numbers were not used yet. Later his address is given as 376 Taylor, but that may be due to an early number system, instead of a change of residence; house numbers in Topeka were not finally determined until the 1880s, then his address was 1114 Taylor.

His occupation, according to the city directories, changed over the decades from "laborer" to "Contractor" to "teamster." This may have been due to age more than any other factor. As a young man he would have worked for hire, hence a laborer. Later, after he had more experience, he could have been in charge of work projects and been considered a contractor. As an older man he could have simply driven a team of horses or mules for someone else who had all the headaches of supervising a project, and so he was a teamster. In the _____ directory he is listed as a teamster for the city.

According to Rose Hilty both Anna and Jennie Boyd attended the 1918 Bahá'í classes in Topeka. At that time such attendance was all that was necessary to be considered a member of the Bahá'í community, the definition was quite fluid. And they are included in the list from 'Abdu'l-Bahá as being believers in Topeka.

The sisters lived together with their father until his death after which they continued to live at 1114 Taylor. In the city directory for 1893 their address is different than his, 1214 Taylor, while he remained at 1114. No occupation is noted for either of the sisters in any of the city directories except 1921 when Jennie is noted as "sams." A "sams" would most likely have been a seamstress doing custom sewing. Generally the sisters are listed as "residents" at their address, which indicates ownership, not boarders or roomers, so they may not have had to work to pay the rent. Their brother, T.B. Boyd, was, in 1923, the Shawnee County Treasurer. They had one other brother and another sister.

Jennie Boyd died on 29 Dec 1924 a year after Anna, at age 63. Her address had changed to 2012 Topeka Blvd, it's obvious she didn't need the big empty house.

Anna and Jennie are buried near each other in Topeka Cemetery, Section 67, lot 153.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Topeka State Journal, 26 Mar 1923, p. 1 & 27 Mar 1923.

GRANT, Ernest & Betty

Ernest and Betty Grant entered the Topeka Bahá'í community in . Betty was his second wife, his first wife had died in . Both Ernie and Betty were active in the Bahá'í community and were often elected to the Spiritual Assembly.

Betty was born Mary Elizabeth __ on 11 March 1873 in __ .

She died on 5 March 1955.

Ernie continued to be active into 1960, he was elected to the Assembly that Ridvan. When he married __ he withdrew from the community for her sake. He died.

HARDY, Mrs.

A "Mrs. Hardy" is mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá among the believers in Topeka in 1919. In the 1916 and 1926 Topeka city directories there are six Mrs. Hardy's, but only three are the same in both years. They are: Minnie, wife of Arthur Hardy (who had died between the dates of the two directories); Lida, Wife of Charles F. Hardy, a special agent for Hartford Fire Insurance Company, who lived at 1731 Lane; and Grace, wife of Dennis Hardy (who also died between the dates of the directories). With no further information, and none has yet been found in the Bahá'í community, there is no way to know which one of these "Mrs. Hardy's" is the one that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was referring to.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Topeka State Journal, 26 Mar 1923, p. 1 & 27 Mar 1923.

HERRMANN, Duane L.

The first contact between Duane and the Bahá'í community came at his birth. Friends of his family announced his birth to a co-worker, who happened to be Bahá'í. Duane learned this, to his great astonishment, many years after he had been Bahá'í. He entered the Bahá'í community in 1969 at the age of 17, one of the younger members of that time.

He learned of the Faith through his first college instructor, Gary Larson, who was teaching a summer English composition class the summer after Duane graduated from high school. The ideas Duane expressed in his papers and the

responses formed a conversation that prompted Dr. Larson to risk giving him an invitation. This was 1969 when talking about religion was not a socially acceptable topic between teachers and students.

The invitation was to a fireside at May & Paul Brown's home. As he approached the house Duane felt a powerful force emanating from the house and knew he wanted to be part of it. His emotional commitment was made at that moment. For the next six months he studied the Bible and Bahá'í teachings by himself and became convinced that the Bahá'í explanation for Biblical concepts was far more accurate than anything he had heard in any church. He then told the Bahá'ís that he wanted in. The night of his first fireside was the night that men first walked on the moon. He was more impressed with the love and acceptance he found at the fireside.

Within a few months of entering the Bahá'í community Duane offered to serve the Assembly and, despite tests to the contrary, he never found a reason to stop. A year later he pioneered to Hays, Kansas where he attended university and founded the first Spiritual Assembly. To do his student teaching he pioneered briefly to Garden City and helped the little community there.

When his degree was finished the only job he could find was in Topeka, so he returned and was soon elected Chairman of the Assembly. He served in that capacity until a husband and wife couple were elected to the Assembly which he did not feel he could keep order between, so he resigned in order to avoid conflict.

He married Susan Roth in 1975, they divorced in 1993. They have four children: Hilari Ann-Laurince who married Ramon DeLarosa and they have three sons: Justice Ray, Xavier Lorenzo and Sebastian Kaiser; Justin Duane-Jinabi, Trosten Bijhan-Alaric and Corinne Marie-Parvani.

In January 2001 he was elected President of Interfaith of Topeka, a singular evidence of the level of acceptance of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the city. During his term American soil was attacked for the second time in the history of the nation. In the immediate memorial services, as well as several events commemorating the first anniversary of the attack, he was able to reassure the public that the whole world is in a time of global transition to a greater level of inter-connectedness, and this process is guided by God. Such events are likely to be part of this transition. It is not a cause for alarm but for patience and awareness.

Also during his term neo-Nazis held a rally at the Statehouse. He and Interfaith were able to offer an alternative to protest through a dawn to dusk prayer vigil at the Quaker Meeting House. The forty people who came greatly appreciated the opportunity to pray instead of protest. For his efforts, Duane was quoted the next week in the most prominent editorial of the Topeka newspaper – and the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh was mentioned in the quotation!

Duane L. Herrmann traces his family name to Germany where his great grandfather

(Andreas, the son) was born in the Bavarian village of Reckendorf where some of his family continued to live. His writing has helped bring together the German and American branches of the family after decades of not knowing if each other had survived. He has written of the family history giving both sides a glimpse into their shared past, and subsequent trips by both sides have cemented the reunion. A news article about his research was published in the local German newspaper which was read by the “Bibliotekdirektor” (Librarian) of the “Bambergstaatsbibliothek” (Bamberg State Library) who requested a copy of the family history book. This is very likely the first book in that library (or any library in that part of Bavaria) to mention the Faith of Baha’u’llah. His writing (Bahá’í history, poetry & fiction) has been published in a dozen countries and translated into German, French and Dutch. The most widely circulated material is very likely the books containing children’s stories published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States. They are being used in many countries.

HILTY, Rose

She was born Rosa Abbuehl on 3 December 1863 on the banks of Coal Creek not far from Grasshopper Falls, Kansas. Her parents were Kasper Abbuehl who had come as a child with his family to the US from Switzerland and Christina Reichart, a German born immigrant. On , at age 18, she married Leonhard Hilty, a childhood friend, and moved to a farm north of Enterprise, Kansas. Leonhard had grown up in Enterprise after a childhood near Grasshopper Falls.

Over the years several names were changed. Rosa became Rose, Leonhard, Leonard and Grasshopper Falls became Valley Falls.

On 12 Jan 1883 their first child was born, a daughter, Louella Barbara (Barbara after his mother Barbara Ehrsam). Two years later a second daughter, Iona, was born. She died within the year and is buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery in Enterprise. A third daughter was born on 17 Oct 1888. She was named Lovelia Rose. Her nickname soon became “Lovie” or “Lover.”

Lovelie had vision problems which were mentioned in a news article when she was eight. That summer of 1897 her grandmother had a visitor from Chicago to teach about a new religion. He refused to say the name of the religion which proved very frustrating to reporters and others. Before teaching this new religion he had set himself up as a doctor or “healer” of some sort. His “medical” diploma had been purchased through the mail with no requirements except payment of a fee.

His medical practice consisted mostly, and was described as, “laying on of hands.” He was able to provide enough relief to earn an income in this way. He gradually learned there was a greater interest in spiritual matters and began teaching the religion which he had adopted shortly before coming to the US. He was invited to Enterprise to teach his religion but he also gave a “treatment” to Lovelia for her eyes. One newspaper reported that as a result, “she can now distinguish light from darkness and note the difference in colors.” {“Teaches Strange Things,” Abilene Weekly Chronicle, July 16,

1897, p.1}

Both Rose and Leonard attended the religion class held in the parlor of his mother's home. There is no evidence that he became a believer, but she did. Several others in Enterprise also accepted this new religion and were referred to as, "A little band of believers here." {Barbara Ehram to Maud Lampson, 13 May 1899, text found in World Order, Winter 1996-97, p.35.}

Because of the distance between Enterprise and Chicago, and the fact that the group of believers in Enterprise was only the second group in the western hemisphere, contact with other Bahá'ís was non-existent except through correspondence. Rose planned a trip to Chicago in 1899, but the need for surgery prevented it.

Interest and commitment of many of these believers faded but in 1905 Rose and another Enterprise believer, Mary Miller, and 420 other American Bahá'ís signed a petition to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Several times such petitions circulated through the American Bahá'í community for believers to sign. No other believers in Enterprise signed it suggesting they were out of town, as Rose's mother-in-law often was, or not interested.

The text of the petition has not yet been identified but the reply to it was printed as a pamphlet with the names of signatories on it. 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed these believers, "O ye my divine friends!" He called upon the believers to improve the moral character of their lives, "The hearts should be purified and cleansed from every trace of hatred and rancor and enabled to engage in truthfulness, conciliation, uprightness and love toward the world of humanity; so that the East and the West may embrace each other like unto two lovers, enmity and animosity may vanish from the human world, and the Universal Peace be established!"{3.}

He closed the tablet with this exhortation: "Shine ye like unto the Sun and roar and move like unto the Sea, impart life to mountain and desert like unto clouds; and similar to the vernal breeze, bestow freshness, grace and elegance on the trees of human temples."{4.}

The tablet was translated (and dated 3 January 1906) by Ali Kuli Khan, a member of the Persian legation to the United States, who, twenty-five years later, after retiring from the diplomatic corps, would stop in Topeka and speak on the Bahá'í teachings.

By the time the city directory for 1906 was published, the Hilty family had moved to Topeka and lived at 518 Polk. Leonard's occupation was listed as an "organizer," whatever that might have meant then, and Lovelia was attending Topeka High School. Lovelia's cousin, Barbara Lombard, recalled that Lovelia's attendance at the larger high in Topeka was the reason for the family's move from Enterprise. She also related that younger members of the family would call Lovelia, "Aunt Lovie," and for family dinners Rose would make lots of pies."{5.}

Life for the Hilty's in Topeka was apparently uneventful until the close of

1911. In the December issue that year of the magazine, *Everybody's*, appeared an article entitled, "The Light in the Lantern." This article was written by Ethel S. Stevens, the maiden name of Lady Drower a Middle Eastern and Mandaean scholar, listed in *Who's Who*. She had lived for many years in the Middle East and apparently spent time with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In addition to this article, she wrote another published earlier that year in *The Fortnightly Review* and a novel title, *The Mountain of God*.

Rose received a letter dated the 4th of that month from her mother-in-law in *Enterprise*. She wrote, "I don't think Baháism was meant to be secret. I read the nice article about it in the *Everybody's*." {6.} And in another letter two weeks later she specifically asked, "Did you read a big article in *Everybody's* about the Bahai movement?" {7.} The return correspondence has not been found but these letters show continued interest on the part of Barbara Ehram who had hosted the first Bahá'í teacher to Kansas.

In a letter the next year, written 21 May, Barbara related to Rose, "Mrs. Frey (a neighbor and co-believer) was here last Sunday. She is so happy that she could see Abbas Effendi and could have a few words with him. He can really inspire and impress the people with the desire and feeling of the truth of a higher life. He would give private blessings to all the Delegates that came from afar off." {8.}

Mrs Frey and her daughter, Elsbeth Renwanz had traveled to Chicago from *Enterprise* to attend the 1912 annual Convention and witness the dedication of the cornerstone of the House of Worship. Some photos of the dedication show Elsbeth near 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Her letter continued, "The believe in tests too, if you really wish to enter into a higher life." She then related the tests Corinne True faced with the sequence of deaths of her children and husband. This account correlates well with the events of Corinne True's life as related in her biography.

'Abdu'l-Bahá commented about these tests, "Be thou not sad, neither be thou unhappy; although the divine tests are violent, yet they are conducive to the life of the soul and the heart. The more often the pure gold is thrown into the furnace of test, the greater will become its purity and brilliancy and it will attain a new splendor and brightness. I hope that thou art thyself in such a position." {9.}

By 1916 the Hilty's were back in *Enterprise* though Lovelia remained in *Topeka* giving violin lessons. Rose took with her news of contact with the larger Bahá'í community. There was another Bahá'í in *Topeka* by the time she left. This was Bertha Hyde who had learned of the Faith from other family members who lived in *Urbana, Illinois*. This family contact brought more news and activities to *Topeka*.

In December 1920, Janabe Fazel, the last teacher sent by 'Abu'l-Bahá to North America, came to Kansas. His only stop in the state was in *Topeka* and Rose came to help with preparations for the visit. A report of the event later

said, “Also, Mrs. Rose Hilty of Enterprise, a believer for many years, spent several days in Topeka and together with her daughter, Miss Hilty, who lived there, rendered valuable assistance.” {10.}

The 1921 Topeka city directory indicates that the Hilty’s were again living in Topeka, this time at 626 Topeka Blvd. Leonard’s occupation is listed as, “farmer,” Lovelia’s as, “music teacher.” The family remained together in Topeka. By 1926 they had moved to 309 Van Buren were, two years later, Leonard died.

Also in 1921 the Bahá’ís of Topeka took their first steps toward administrative organization. The national teaching committee had urged small groups of Bahá’ís to help support construction of the House of Worship and the fledgling network of traveling teachers that would benefit them all. If they could not elect a full set of officers, at least a Treasure could be elected to channel contributions to these two projects. In Topeka a Treasurer was elected. Later that year Bertha left town and the remaining believers in Topeka were once again alone.

Nothing more has been found in Rose’s life until 14 February 1934, Olive Kaley and Phinny Wiley, two members of the newly organized Topeka Baha’i Fellowship, called on Rose to learn about the early days of the Bahá’í Faith in Kansas. The Fellowship had been recently organized with a few believers of the 1920s and a couple dozen new people who had been recently attracted to the teachings by a traveling teacher who had come in the fall of 1933.

The record of the meeting of these new believers with Rose introduces her as, “...Rose Hilty being an acknowledged believer in the Baha’i Movement for a great many years.” And states, “This is her story of the appearance of the movement in Kansas.”

“About the year 1900 Abraham Keihralla an Egyptian came to Enterprise, Kansas. Mrs. Rose Hilty was residing there at the time. Mr. Kheiralla brought his wife and son from Chicago to Enterprise for a vacation. While there he gave the Baha’i Message including the ordinances and instructions. And healed some people while there. He also organized a group of 40 member in Enterprise before leaving.

“This is the first time Mrs. Hilty had heard of the movement but she said she was fully convinced from the very first that it was a message of Truth and she became a believer as soon as possible.

“Later after Mrs. Hilty and her family had moved to Topeka to live she helped to organize a group of about 12 or 14 people in the year of 1912. This was the first appearance of the movement in organized form in Topeka.

“In time the interest lagged and only 2 or 3 loyal believers succeeded in keeping the group alive. They were Mrs. Hilty, her daughter Lovelia and Miss Berth Hyde who later married Prof. Kirkpatrick of Washburn College and later went to live in Michigan.

“Through the years following Mrs. Hilty met and corresponded with several of the outstanding Baha’i teachers: Albert Vail, George (Louis) Gregory, Thornton Chase and Mason Remey. Mrs. Hilty also told us about seeing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a vision about the year 1912.

“This closed our interview and we certainly were inspired with the story.”{11.}

This account was, for several decades, the only information about the early years of the Bahá’í Faith in Kansas. Interest in this account was minimal until 1975, the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Topeka. As part of that celebration a brief historical sketch was created and interest continued to grow from there. This eventually led to celebrations of the centennial of the Kansas Bahá’í community in Enterprise in 1997.

Later, after the interview with Rose, the Bahá’ís of Topeka voted to send a note of thanks to Rose for sharing her memories, but before the note could be sent, she died. Flowers were sent to her funeral instead and several believers attended her funeral. They did not know yet, that they could do the funeral themselves. Rose Hilty died on 5 September 1934 and is buried beside her husband in Topeka Cemetery.

Sometime after her death, Lovelia gave her mother’s collection of Bahá’í books and magazines (a complete set of Star of the West to that date) to the Bahá’ís of Topeka, being blind she could not read them herself. This gift formed the basis of the Topeka Bahá’í, at one time one of the most complete in the region. Lovelia never married and died in Council Grove, near her niece and family, in 1969.

Through the life of Rose Hilty the Topeka Bahá’í community has not only been continuous since 1906, but has roots reaching to the second Bahá’í community of the western hemisphere, that of Enterprise, Kansas in 1897.

Notes:

1. “Teaches Strange Things,” Abilene Weekly Chronicle, 16 July 1897, p. 1.
2. Barbara Ehram to Maud Lampson, 14 November 1899 (see also: Duane L. Herrmann, “Letters from a Nineteenth-Century Kansas Bahá’í,” World Order, Winter 1996-97, pp.27-35.).
3. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “To the Beloved of God in General in American,” translated by Ali Kuli Khan 3 January 1906, Topeka Bahá’í Archives.
4. Ibid.
5. Barbara Lumbard interview with Duane L. Herrmann
6. Barbara Ehram to Rose Hilty, 4 December 1911, copy in possession of the author courtesy of Constance Downs, grand daughter of Rose Hilty.
7. Barbara Ehram to Rose Hilty, 28 December 1911, copy in possession of the

author courtesy of Constance Downs, grand daughter of Rose Hilty.

8. Barbara Ehrsam to Rose Hilty, 21 May 1919, copy in possession of the author courtesy of Constance Downs, grand daughter of Rose Hilty.

9. Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp.303-4.

10. Bulletin "A," Teaching Committee of Nineteen, January 1921, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette Illinois.

11. History of the membership in the Topeka Bahá'í Community, p. 1.

born

July 1897 attended Bahá'í class in mother-in-law's home, Enterprise, Kansas

Sept 1906 moved to Topeka where Leonard had found a job

1917 moved back to Enterprise

1920 returned to Topeka to help with Bahá'í teacher and stayed

1934 visited by new Bahá'ís in Topeka

5 Sept 1934 died in Topeka, buried in Topeka Cemetery

HOWARD, Fern & Scott

Fern Latimer Howard was born in Kansas on 31 August 1903 to Lafayette and Loretta Latimer. She had one brother, Lane Latimer. While a young child the family moved to Abilene where she attended school and, after her father died, obtained her first job in a dentist's office. She was not yet 18 and supported herself and others for the rest of her life.

In the late 1920s, Fern and her mother moved to Topeka where Fern was employed by the Santa Fe Railroad. In 1933 she and her mother accepted the Bahá'í Revelation as true and it became the major focus of their lives. Both Fern and her mother were elected to be members of the Topeka Spiritual Assembly. Fern was several times elected its Secretary and, in 1944 and 52, she was elected Delegate from Kansas to the Bahá'í National Convention.

Her intellectual capacity was more limited than average, but neither her mother or husband, nor the Bahá'í community, gave her any awareness of that fact. She was elected to the local Assembly, and even to various offices despite her inability to keep any records. Her full participation in community life was seen as being far more important than her ability to perform specific tasks. She did participate in Assembly and committee meetings and dutifully reported as expected. The reports were lovingly accepted.

In 1950 Fern married Dr. Scott Howard of St. Louis in the first Bahá'í wedding in Kansas. He was born on 20 December 1910 and adopted by Charles and Anna Howard of St. Louis and Mexico City. He was a chiropractor and moved his practice to Topeka so he and Fern could take care of her mother. He continued his practice until his death on 31 August 1975. They had no children. Fern died

on 11 February 1999, the last survivor of the Topeka Bahá'ís of the 1930s.

Fern had a very unique teaching method. While attending a conference out of town, and she attended as many as she could get a ride to, she would take a break from the conference, maybe at lunchtime, and find a store that carried sewing supplies. She would walk in the aisles for a time until a clerk asked to help her. At that time Fern would ask if the store carried such-an-such item. The clerk would inevitably not be familiar with the item and would go looking and asking other staff if they had it somewhere.

The item was never found and the clerk would apologize. Fern would accept that result pleasantly, then explain that she was in town for a Bahá'í conference, "Have you heard of the Bahá'í Faith?" And she would teach a little about the Faith.

Once when the person accompanying her asked about the item that she had asked for, Fern replied, "Oh, I knew they wouldn't have it. No one has made them for fifty years; I don't have any use for one anyway, but it did give us an opportunity to talk about the Faith didn't it?"

Yes, indeed!

Her obituary was another opportunity. It mentioned more of her Bahá'í activities than any obituary of any of the other believers who had died in Topeka up to that time. She was able to teach about the Faith until the very end.

Both Scott and Fern and buried, side by side, in Topeka Cemetery west of her mother.

Sources of information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, Topeka Bahá'í archives, manuscript, p.1.

Radges Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1883-1924.

Topeka State Journal, 2 September 1975 (obituary)

Topeka Capital Journal, 13 February 1999 (obituary)

KALEY, Frank & Olive

Frank Kaley was born in Mount City, Missouri on 22 December 1884 and came to Topeka in 1918 where he lived the rest of his life. He was a streetcar "motorman" for the city of Topeka and when the streetcars were discontinued, he drove a bus. He retired in 1949 and the next year decided to enter the Bahá'í community. Four years later he died at age 69 on 26 May 1954. He is buried in Memorial Park.

Frank married Olive on . They lived at 1267 Washburn where they raised two daughters: Marcelyne Fyffe and , who married Merle Deal and remained in Topeka. Marcelyne lived her adult life in Hollywood and Los Angeles, then returned to Topeka after her father died, to care for her mother.

Olive was born 28 October 1883 in or near Stockton, Kansas and moved to Topeka in 1918. Her obituary states that she had entered the Bahá'í community in 1935, but she had been an original member of the Bahá'í study group that was formed in 1933. She helped form the Bahá'í Fellowship the next year and was elected to the Spiritual Assembly when that was formed in 1936. That first year, and for all but five of the next twenty-two, she was appointed community historian. She died on 7 April 1972 at age 88 and is buried beside Frank.

Olive was the first historian of the Topeka Bahá'í community. As such she kept yearly records of community activities. These consisted of annual lists of the dates and hosts of the Nineteen-Day Feasts and the number who attended each one, lists of the dates and hosts of each holy day observance and the names of those who attended, descriptions of other special events and names of attendees. In addition she carefully clipped and pasted onto notebook paper not only every newspaper article about the Bahá'is in the city's main two newspapers, but also each three line weekly notice in the church section which announced discussion topics. These enable us to gain a fairly complete picture of what the Bahá'is in Topeka did in those decades.

These meticulously kept records may be unique in the American Bahá'í community, maybe in the entire Bahá'í world, since the Topeka Assembly was among the first 200 to be formed anywhere on the planet.

These records have enabled this history to be based on a nearly unlimited wealth of detailed information. At the end of every year these records (all hand written) were presented to the community and corrections were made, so we know the accuracy was assured.

We thank you, Olive, for this gift.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

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Topeka Daily Capital 27 May 1954 (obituary).

Topeka State Journal 8 April 1972 (obituary)

KREAGE, Louis & Nina

KIRKPATRICK, Bertha Hyde

She was born in Rockville, Connecticut, on 16 June 1874 into a devout Christian family. Her father was the Rev. Henry F. Hyde, pastor of Rockville Congregational Church. Bertha learned that belief must be backed by actions and that one's initial understanding of a subject usually revision as a person matured and gained more knowledge and experience.

When she was six her father died. The family, with five children, was left destitute and survived by taking in boarders. Despite the struggle, four of the children eventually graduated from college, a significant achievement in a time when few people even went to college. Bertha graduated from Holyoke in 1898. For the next ten years she taught science in schools in Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania.

Late in 1908 she came to Topeka where her brother, Arthur Hyde, taught history at Washburn College. He was the first full-time professor of history at Washburn. His wife had died in September that year leaving him on his own with a young son. Bertha came to help. That next fall she secured a position to teach science at Central Park elementary School, not far from their home near the college. She taught there for the next eleven years.

In late summer of 1908 a second professor had been hired doubling the history faculty at Washburn. This was Dr. John E. Kirkpatrick. He was a Congregational minister (an early church had been Seabrook Congregational) with family in Topeka (his brother was President of Security Benefit). Being the only two members of the history faculty, Kirkpatrick and Hyde came to know each other well. Kirkpatrick even bought a house next door to the Hydys.

Bertha's mother and sister in Urbana, Illinois heard of the Bahá'í Faith in 1912 when they attended a talk given there by Lua Getsinger. It is likely that they shared the information with her a very shortly after that. Her niece recalled that Bertha had been attracted to this new faith, but puzzled. Finally she realized: here was the return of Christ.

With this realization Bertha Hyde became the second Bahá'í in Topeka. It is not known when she made contact with the first believer in Topeka, Rose Hilty. Rose and her family moved back to their home in Enterprise in 1916, so Bertha was on her own from that time on. She invited Bahá'ís from other places to come to Topeka and share the news and teach her more.

One of the people who came was Albert Vail, the minister of the Unitarian Church in Urbana that her mother and sister attended. He had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Head of the Bahá'í Faith, when He visited this country in 1912. Vail began to teach a class about the Bahá'í message at his church. Eventually he and half the congregation left the church and began the Bahá'í community of Urbana.

At the "second Bahá'í Teaching Convention of the Central States," in 1919, Vail reported on "new and joyous groups" of believers in several cities, including Topeka. The group was sufficiently involved with the life of the larger national Bahá'í community that, at the suggestion of the national organization, the group in Topeka began to organize. A treasurer was elected to help facilitate contributions to building the House of Worship near Chicago and help with expenses of travelling teachers such as Mr. Vail.

Also in 1919 Bertha and other believers in Topeka signed a "supplication" to 'Abdu'l-Bahá along with more than 1000 other Bahá'ís in America.

His response listed those believers providing the only surviving list of believers in Topeka of that time. He promised them all a “spiritual victory.” Bertha’s became realized a decade later.

In December 1920 an exceptional visitor came to Topeka. He was Jenab-i-Fadil, the last teacher sent by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to America. To make arrangements for this special guest, Rose came from Enterprise to help and then decided to say. Sites were arranged for lectures, advance notices were given to the newspapers and people invited to meet him. Five meetings and a reception were held in the space of two days. It was the most involved period of activity the Bahá’ís of Topeka had yet undertaken. The positive responses that were generated gave the believers renewed confidence to carry on.

The year of 1921 was a traumatic one for Bertha. John Kirkpatrick was dismissed by the President of Washburn for his ideas about college government. They were more progressive than the president could accept. The dismissal created a great deal of controversy. In support of Kirkpatrick, Arthur Hyde also resigned. There was no other college in Topeka so everyone left town. Bertha left after school was out in 1922. The next fall, for two years, she taught at Monticello Seminary in Godfrey, Illinois.

She stayed in touch with Kirkpatrick and they decided to marry (his wife had died in an automobile accident in 1911). In April 1924 they were married in Urbana, Illinois by Albert Vail. They settled in Olivet, Michigan where John had obtained a position with Olivet College.

Being a congregational minister, Kirkpatrick was uncomfortable about his wife’s religion. It was too new and unknown. He wrote to a colleague in Palestine, going to the source, so to speak. The first letter in response gave fantastical information that no one could believe. A second letter gave more factual information. It is fascinating to read the latter letters because they provide the same information as standard Bahá’í sources, yet the information comes from different places – independent confirmation as it were.

There is one point on which the correspondent was not clear and into that he provided his own erroneous conclusions which lead him to condemn the entire religion. This was regarding the election of the international council to guide the affairs of the Bahá’í community. He assumed that this council would be self-perpetuating by the sitting members selecting or grooming their successors. This he described as vile and, in response, condemned the entire religion.

It was his own fantasy. Members of the international council are elected by all the members of every national council around the world. Newly elected members of the international council don’t even know the other members of the council. Nepotism is impossible.

This negative judgement turned Kirkpatrick against his wife’s religion and created tension within the marriage that was not resolved until the very end. In the late 1920s he became ill. Kirkpatrick traveled to Topeka to the

hospital run by his brother's insurance company. In the hospital they continued their family practice of daily Bible study. In addition, Bahá'í scriptures were also studied, specifically from a compilation her sister was creating.

"Before dawn on the day before his ascension," Bertha later wrote to a friend. "I was called to his bedside. He signified his desire for pencil and paper. Slowly his weakened hand, unable to hold the pencil without aid, formed the almost illegible words, "One thing only, to be a good --" Then for a moment there seemed to be a great influx of strength and spirit as with firm hand he completed the sentence with the word, Baha'i, in large clear letters." {1.} She was sure this was her "spiritual victory."

He is buried in the Kirkpatrick family plot beside his first wife in Mt Hope Cemetery in Topeka. Bertha was elated with his indication of belief and was now free to give more time to Bahá'í activities with a joyous heart.

In the mid 1920s she had begun to write for the Baha'i magazine, "Star of the West;" now she could give more time and attention to that and widen her involvement otherwise. That summer she became one of the group of local believers who started what is today the Louhelen Bahá'í School and Retreat Center in Davison, Michigan. She was elected secretary of the group and carried out a great deal of correspondence with the head of the Bahá'í Faith and others regarding the starting of this center. That winter she moved temporarily to Ann Arbor, Michigan as a "resident teacher" to assist that Bahá'í community.

In 1927 she had been appointed "assistant editor" of "Star of the West." She continued with this magazine for the next twenty years as its name was changed to "The Bahá'í Magazine," then to "World Order." In addition to articles, she wrote many editorials simply signed "B.H.K." Other editorial work was unsigned.

The range of topics she wrote about for this "religious" magazine may be surprising. They were not religious articles of a devotional or sentimental or dogmatic nature – it is not that kind of magazine, not that kind of religion. The subjects could have been taken from current headlines: economic disparity, labor disputes, uses of atomic power, the quality of education, etc. Readers who were members of the Bahá'í Faith were not surprised to read about such matters, the Bahá'í scripture addresses them all and more.

In May 1948 an article of hers appeared with the title: "Chaos in the Home." She begins with a current assessment of the American family: "Educators and clergy, sociologists and psychiatrists are in disagreement concerning the most fundamental relations and virtues upon which the home and family life are based – marriage, divorce, chastity, monogamy, the function of the parent, the place and duties of the child." {2.}

She then lists some of the contemporary consequences of this lack of common understanding and expectations, then proposes a basis for a solution: "Does it not seem that what is needed to restore the stability of the family is

strength of character, pure love, unselfishness?"{3.}

She concludes by presenting a solution based on Bahá'í scripture quoting: "The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed..."{4.} From there she states other Bahá'í teachings that are also helpful in family relationships, such as the equality of women and men. Her article presents a vision of possibility.

The December 1942 issue carries an article that is more recognizably "religious," titled: "Creation and Revelation." She begins by stating the relation of creation to the Creator, "...creation reveals God, but not His fullness. He who worships God in nature contemplates the quiet beauty of trees and flowers, the majesty of mountain and valley, the splendor of sunset and the glory of the distant stars. Thus he knows something of the beauty, the majesty, the bounty, the power of God."{5.}

Because creation is less than the Creator, creation cannot reveal all that is possible to know about God. She states: "The revelation of God in His creation is not enough. It does not bring man close to Him, neither does it teach him how to behave towards his fellowmen."{6.} Nor does it tell of the human relationship to God.

These are sufficient reasons for her to conclude that, "Man is in need of fuller revelation, and God gives it. It comes in the Divine Revealer, the Christ, the Moses – who speaks for God and teaches man by word and by acts how to live with his fellowman. We are now living in a time of a fresh revelation of God given by such a Divine Being."{7.} She then proceeds to tell very briefly about the Revealer of the Bahá'í Faith in a simple, detached, matter of fact manner.

These two samples of her style and method are representative of her writing for this magazine. She remained on the editorial staff of the magazine until 1940 when she accepted to assist in the production of a series of books called *The Bahá'í World*. The volumes in this series appeared at irregular intervals of two to five years. They chronicled the activities of the world-wide Bahá'í community. It was an international endeavor with international complications and setbacks.

In 1947 she was asked to accept responsibility for "Bahá'í News," the news organ of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. She held these latter two positions at the time of her death.

On Sunday, 15 May 1948 she was on her way home to Olivet from a meeting at Louhelen when the driver of her car lost control and hit an approaching car. Bertha died of injuries a few days later. She is buried in the Olivet cemetery, just across the street from the college where her husband had taught.

Her life was one of dedication and perseverance. She adopted a religion that was little-known at the time and lovingly made room for her husband to find his own way there. She supported her new religion with her pen and thereby added to the literary history of Kansas, her adopted home for a significant part of her

life.

Notes:

1. Bertha H. Kirkpatrick, "Excerpts from a letter about John to a friend," typescript dated 20 December 1931 enclosed with a letter to "Arthur and Clara and Margaret," typescript holographically signed and dated March 13, 1945, in possession of the author courtesy of Sylvia Parmalee, niece of Bertha H. Kirkpatrick.
2. Kirkpatrick, "Chaos in the Home," *World Order*, May 1938, p.43.
3. *ibid.* p.48.
4. *ibid.* p.48.
5. Kirkpatrick, "Creation and Revelation," *World Order*, December 1942, p.315.
6. *ibid.* p.315.
7. *ibid.* p.316.

Articles:

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"A World Faith: The Fulfillment of Religion," *World Order*, April 1936, p. 25.

"Signs of the Times," (compendium series of excerpts in eighteen issues) *World Order* April 1936-May 1938.

"Chaos in the Home," *World Order*, May 1938, p. 43.

"The World of Tomorrow," *World Order*, May 1939, p. 53.

"Is Pacifism the Answer to War?" *World Order*, June 1939, p. 104.

"How Can Capital and Labor be reconciled?" *World Order*, July 1939, p. 135.

"Can Education Bring World Peace?" *World Order*, August 1939, p. 176.

"Has America International Responsibilities?" *World Order*, September 1939, p. 225.

"The Fruit of Existence," (editorial) *World Order*, December 1939, p. 321.

"How Are Religions Born?" *World Order*, January 1940, p. 379.

"Is There Division of Race?" *World Order*, February 1940, p. 414.

"The Path to Belief," (editorial) *World Order*, February 1940, p. 441.

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World Order, April 1940-May 1945.

“America’s Destiny,” World Order, March 1941, p. 413.

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“The Source of Freedom,” World Order, August 1942, p. 159.

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“The Cornerstone Itself,” World Order, April 1943, p. 30.

“A Call to Greatness,” (book review) World Order, June 1943, p. 92.

“Good Deeds and Religion,” World Order, July 1943, p. 121.

“The Destroyer of Society,” (editorial) World Order, October 1943, p. 238.

“He Calleth the Nations,” (editorial) World Order, February 1944, p. 389.

“New World A-Coming,” (book review) World Order, April 1944, p. 28.

“1844 – Orient and Occident,” (editorial) World Order, June 1944, p. 90.

“The Gifts of God,” (editorial) World Order, September 1944, p. 190.

“Prayer of Desperation,” (editorial) World Order, October 1944, p. 215.

“Understanding the Bible,” (editorial) World Order, February 1945, p. 344.

“The Search for Truth,” (editorial) World Order, May 1945, p. 45.

“The World Without Nations,” (book review) World Order, September 1945, p. 184.

“Greater Than Atomic Power,” (editorial) World Order, October 1945, p. 207.

“Women and Bahá’í Ideals,” (editorial) World Order, December 1946, p. 271.

“Bahá’í Answers,” (book review) World Order, March 1947, p. 423.

“A Bahá’í View of UNESCO,” World Order, May 1947, p. 61.

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LARSON, Gary & Nancy

Dr. Gary & Nancy (Arnett) Larson came to the Topeka Bahá’í community in 1966 from Atlanta, Georgia. Both were originally from Kansas (he from Clay Center, she from Wellington) and had graduated from the College of Emporia in 1959 & 1960. Both embraced the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh while students at the college, Gary giving up his plans to become a Presbyterian minister when he did so. He had received some scholarship money to study for the ministry, and repaid it all.

After graduating they lived for a time in Atlanta. While there Nancy had attended the Bahá’í World Congress in London in 1963.

In Topeka both served on the Spiritual Assembly, Gary was elected Chairman for

several years, and its various committees. Gary taught English at Washburn University and Nancy helped start "Inscape," a local literary magazine. Their two children, Dawn and Marc (Marcus), were active in the Bahá'í children's classes.

Nancy died in November 1972; the following year Gary accepted a position at Wichita State University briefly then moved out of the area. Looking back Gary reflected that, "my years in Topeka were the happiest years of my life. The Topeka Bahá'í community was loving, supportive, and uplifting."

LATIMER, Loretta

Mrs Latimer and her daughter, Fern, moved to Topeka from Abilene about 1925 sometime after the death of her husband. Before this she had worked in Industry, Kansas as the secretary of the Rebekah Lodge. In Topeka, she and Fern attended the lectures given by Orcella Rexford in the fall of 1934 and decided to study the Baha'i Faith further. Both became devoted believers for the rest of their lives.

Loretta had been born in Iowa on 19 July 1870 and married Lafayette Latimer. He had been born in Illinois and came with his family to Kansas in 1870 when he was 15 years old. By 1880 his family was farming in Center Township in Dickinson, County, near Enterprise. His family was French. Though his father, Joseph Latimer, was born in New York, his paternal grandparents had been born in France. His mother, Elizabeth, and her parents had been born in Canada and could likely have been French-Canadians. They had two children and named them Napoleon and Lafayette. Napoleon was two years older.

Lafayette and Loretta married in the last years of the nineteenth century. They lived in or near Industry, Kansas (north of Enterprise) for a time but moved to Abilene before the 1920 census. At that time they lived at 221 NE Third Street. There, the family took in a boarder: Edwin R. Garrett.

They had two children, Fern and a son Lane, who distanced himself from his mother and sister sometime after his enlistment in the navy, very likely after they had become active in the Bahá'í community.

Lafayette died in the early 1920's, necessitating his daughter getting a job to support herself, her mother and brother. Fern was not yet 18 at the time. She worked the rest of her life.

Loretta lived with Fern even after Fern's marriage in 1950 to Dr. Scott Howard, a Chiropractor. She was elected to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Topeka from time to time.

She was in poor health the last eight years of her life and died on Tuesday, April 20, 1954. She is buried in Topeka Cemetery in section 50, on the eastern edge near California somewhat midway to the north boundary. Her gravestone is flat on the ground and marked with the Ringstone symbol.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka

Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Topeka Daily Capital 21 April 1954.

1880 Federal Census – Dickinson County, Kansas: indexed by Earl G. Darly, 1975.

LOVELESS, Floyd & Marguerite

Floyd Loveless had a very brief role in the Bahá'í community. He joined the community in June of 1954 and died three months later, on the first of September. He had been born in Golden, Colorado on 29 August 1889 and came to Topeka after service in World War I. He first appears in the 1916 city directory as a lawyer with offices at #21 in the Crawford Building. He roomed at 621 Harrison. By 1927 he and Marguerite had married and lived at 1701 Belvor. He had moved his practice to #501 in the Mulvane Building. Ten years later the family had moved to 1361 Wayne and Floyd's occupation was given cryptically as "oil leases." By 1950 his occupation was "oil operator" with offices at 2306 west 10th St and the family lived at 920 Cambridge.

At the time of his death he was described as an "independent oil operator" and tax consultant.

The informal membership record book for the Topeka Bahá'í community mentions that "Mr & Mrs Jack Loveless became members of our community on June 27, 1954." No further mention is made there of either one. In the case of "Jack" this is understandable: he died later that year. He, his wife and at least one son are buried in Mt Hope cemetery in Topeka. Because of family duties, she was only minimally involved in the Bahá'í community.

Marguerite Nicholas Loveless was born in Topeka on 1 May 1894 to James A. and Tilletta S. Nicholas and lived here all her life. James Nicholas was first listed in the Topeka city directories in the 1893-94 edition. Following him through subsequent directories reveals an interesting career path. In the 93-94 directory his occupation was a "machinist" and his residence at that time was 523 Topeka Ave. Two years later his address had not changed but his occupation had, to: "crayon artist." Two years after that he and his family had moved to 520 west 7th and his occupation was simply "artist." In the 1902 and 05 editions his occupation is again a "machinist." In the same time the family had moved two more times: first to 306 Harrison, then to 812 Buchanan. By 1910 he is the owner of "Nicholas Auto Company," at 514 Jackson which he operates for quite a while. By 1916 he had moved his family to 1315 Buchanan.

Margaret is first listed separately in the 1910 city directory as are her two sisters: Elmira and Nina; all living at home at 812 Buchanan. Two years later she and Nina are listed as "students" and remained at home.

She married Floyd... They had five children: Lawrence, Lowell, Phillip, Carolyn

and Norma.

Lawrence, or Larry, as he was known, was severely disabled to the extent that he could not move unaided or control his bodily functions. Marguerite spent her life caring for him. When he died at age 44 his obituary said he had been "ill all his life." His life though was, able to proclaim the Cause of God. His obituary stated that "He was a member of the Baha'i Faith." May Brown doubted that he was sufficiently aware to make any such decision, but in his mother's eyes there was no question. He died 17 May 1974.

Due to the time consumed by giving round-the-clock care to her son, Marguerite was not able to participate in Bahá'í events but other family members did. The membership book states that Jerry Loveless, "a Bahá'í youth," became a full voting member and was welcomed at the state convention in Topeka on 2 December 1956. He later decided not to be involved with the Bahá'í community.

Floyd, Marguerite and Larry are buried near each other in the Veterans section of Memorial Cemetery.

Sources of information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Personal recollections of the author

Topeka State Journal, 2 Sept. 1954 (obituary).

Topeka (obituary).

Topeka (obituary).

NEWBY, Donald R.

He was born in Junction City, KS on 21 Jan 1925 and grew up attending elementary and high schools there. He attended Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina, 1942-43 before enlisting in the U.S. navy and attending Quartermaster School. He was then assigned to the USS West Point where he served until 1945. After the navy he attended Rochester Institute of Technology Art School, Rochester, NY for three years. In November 1948 he declared his belief as a Bahá'í in Tucson, AZ where he worked for a time before returning to Kansas and pioneering to the goal town of Emporia in 1954. While in Emporia he attended Emporia State Teachers College and finished obtaining his teaching degree.

For one year, 1956-57 he taught Retail Merchandising Display at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, then returned to Kansas. He found a job in Topeka teaching art and theater at Roosevelt Junior High School. Though he had not lived in Topeka before the Bahá'ís knew him and were delighted to have him with them. The next two years he pioneered in Managua, Nicaragua teaching the

same subjects in the American School there. The second year in Nicaragua he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Nicaragua.

He returned to Kansas in the summer of 1963 to attend class at KU to renew his teaching certificate and the next year taught art in a junior high school in Salina as a pioneer there. The next year he returned to Topeka to teach art and theater at Topeka High School. He remained for six years. During this time he served on the Topeka Assembly, often as Chairman, and was appointed a member of the Kansas State Goals committee by the National Spiritual Assembly and was elected delegate from Kansas to the National Bahá'í convention.

During this time the Topeka Bahá'í community undertook several activities that it had not ventured to before. The Assembly worked for passage of amendment to state law to allow the state to recognize Bahá'í marriage, the Assembly was legally incorporated, and major proclamation efforts were undertaken. Don participated in and supported all of these efforts.

During the years he served on the Kansas State Goals Committee, and as Kansas delegate to the National Bahá'í Convention, Don traveled constantly throughout the state. He traveled to visit believers, encourage them, help them increase their understanding of the Faith and its administrative order, help with teaching projects and report on the National Convention. From time to time he created displays that were used in various county fairs across the state. Once when he was on such a trip with another believer, they came across a hitch hiker and decided to give him a ride. Don and his companion continued talking about their various Bahá'í activities with the new-found passenger. When the passenger arrived at his destination, he expressed his appreciation as he left the car saying, "Thank you Father; Sister."

Don and the other Bahá'í were stunned for several moments then burst into gales of laughter when they realized their passenger had mistaken them for a priest and a nun!

Don would often take new believers with him on teaching trips to deepen their understanding through hours of conversation, help them get acquainted with other believers and strengthen the ties binding the believers to each other. Some considered these trips nice excursions, others took them as a pattern of behavior to emulate and would begin their own teaching trips. This constant flow of people, affection and activity was a significant part of many people's lives even after Don left Kansas.

In the summer of 1970 Don participated in a consolidation team in Jamaica to visit as many people as possible who had recently entered the Bahá'í community to deepen their understanding of the Faith they had embraced. This experience brought back to him the thrill of pioneering and he determined he would leave the states again. When this happened his marriage ended.

The next fall he was in Valencia, Venezuela as a pioneer teaching English as a Second Language at the University of Carabobo. He next secured a more familiar position teaching art and theater, along with English, at the elementary, junior high and high school levels at Coleigo International DeCarabobo (the

American school) in Valencia. He taught there three years before moving on to teach elementary and junior high art & theater at Escuela Campo Alegre in Caracas. Here he remained for eight years. During this time he was appointed a member of the National Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Venezuela. Both before and after that appointment he traveled throughout the Caribbean promoting the Faith of Bahá'ílláh.

In 1983 he returned to the states one last time, but this time settled in Florida. After so much time in the tropics, the midwest winters were more than he wanted to deal with. From 1983-95 he served as a member of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Polk County, Florida. In Florida he founded NewMark Productions to design and produce movie sets – putting into practice the skills he had been teaching for decades!

His last visit to Kansas was to join in the celebration of the Kansas Bahá'í centennial in Enterprise in 1997.

Sources:

Information from Don Newby

Personal recollections of the author

NYE, Katie A (Ellinger)

Katie Nye was born to Dr. George W. Ellinger and his wife, near Harrisburg, PA on 24 November 1865. When she was a young child the family moved to Kansas where they settled in Silver Lake where her father practiced medicine. In 1920 she married Samuel W. Nye who had two daughters. Katie and Samuel had no children. He died 1935.

Katie entered the Bahá'í community but retained her membership at First Methodist Church, not an uncommon action at the time. She died in the Security benefit Association hospital in Topeka on 24 January 1941 at age 75. She is buried in Topeka Cemetery surrounded by Nye and Ellinger relatives. Her funeral was conducted by Rev. Ormal L. Miller.

STANLEY, Mahin Omidvaran

Mahin was born in Hamadan, Iran in 1938, the fourth child of Unis and Saltanat Omidvaran. Her parents had accepted the Baha'i Faith shortly after they were married about 1920 so she considers herself a second generation Baha'i. Her father was the first. He investigated the Faith after their rabbi declared his own acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh. Her family lived next door to the synagogue, so this was a big event.

Her father was hesitant about investigating this new religion then he saw a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Not long after that he had a dream in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to him and told him the Faith was true. He was convinced and declared his belief.

Mahin's father was the first in the family to marry. After marriage the couple lived with his family (it was a large house, seven siblings lived there too) and all of his brothers and sisters, and all of his wife's brothers and

sisters (also seven), also accepted the Faith. His youngest sister was the last to join. She was the most careful in her investigation, took the longest time and only joined after a special speaker came travel teaching. As a result, Mahin is sure, she was the most deepened believer in the family. All of the children of all of these brothers and sisters became Baha'i, except the children of the one girl who was deaf. Her spouse, as well as the spouses of a few others was Jewish (because they retained close ties and friendships with those members of the synagogue who did not become Baha'i). Her father's mother became Baha'i a little later than her children.

When Mahin was five years old the family moved to Tehran, not because of any persecution but because jobs were better there. She retains one memory of the time in Hamadan. She remembers looking through a window and seeing people praying inside. Someone probably held her up to look in a window of the synagogue.

The first house the family found in Tehran was small and they lived there only until they could find a bigger house for everyone. Her great grandmother died while she lived with them there.

The second house was larger and soon became the site of neighborhood children's classes for the Bahá'í community. This house was close to the Bahá'í National Center, but children's classes were not held there, neither was Feast. These events were held simultaneously in individual neighborhoods all around the city. The National Center, in addition to office space, was a recreation center for youth. There was also space for art exhibits.

Mahin and her family went regularly to events at the Bahá'í National Center. The Bahá'í Faith was the center of their family life.

In 1953 religious radicals went on a rampage and, among other things, seized the National Center. Mahin's family lived close enough, just down the street, that they could watch and hear the destruction of the dome. It was one of the landmarks of the city. It's existence infuriated the fanatics.

At the time of the seizure of the National Center Mahin had a pencil drawing on exhibit in the gallery there. The picture was most likely destroyed along with the rest of the contents and records.

In 1955 the National Spiritual Assembly decided that youth in Bahá'í families should be registered if they wanted to be part of the Bahá'í community. Mahin did so at that time, she was seventeen.

When the Guardian was building the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb her father, a jeweler, created a plaque of solid silver about a foot in size. In the center he engraved the Greatest Name. The Greatest Name he gilded with gold. When this was perfect he sent it as a gift to be used in the Shrine. The guardian placed this offering above the spot where the coffin of the Báb is located.

An unexpected treat was offered to Mahin in 1958. She and her father had had an argument, as a peace offering he asked if she would like to go to the continental conference in Kampala when the cornerstone of the House of worship would be laid. She accepted and was amazed by the experience.

In December 1959 Mahin was planning to come to the United States to study (all of the children left Iran after high school to study elsewhere) when her family learned that a couple were unable to go on their pilgrimage scheduled then. Mahin was able to go in their place. From Israel she continued on the United States. She stayed with her sister in New York then went on to Lawrence, Kansas where her brother Cyrus was attending KU. He was finishing his second year at KU. They shared an apartment until he continued his degree elsewhere. After he left, she moved to a dorm, later she found someone to share an apartment.

Mahin's parents pioneered to Italy in 1962 and she visited them there, flying by way of Bonn, Germany.

In 1960 the Lawrence Bahá'í community was beginning to grow. Jan Conley and Jean Randazo had just moved to town from Independence, MO. They were sisters. Jan's husband had just died and Jean wanted to make a new life after her divorce.

They continued their jobs in Kansas City but opened an evening coffee house in downtown Lawrence, in a basement on 7th St, just off Mass. Sunday evenings they held firesides and fed hungry students because the dorms did not serve supper those nights. Their firesides were very popular!

By Ridvan 1964 the Lawrence Baha'i community had grown large enough that the first Assembly could be formed there. The members of that Assembly were Jan, Jean, Mahin, Ed and Laquetta Karch, Winn Etzenhouser, Chris Ruhe, Jim Burges and one other.

Mahin and Winn were married in April of 1964. He had been introduced to the Faith (and Mahin) through his roommate Chris Ruhe the fall before. Mahin's father was able to come from Italy to attend the wedding.

When Winn graduated that spring they moved to Independence, Missouri briefly before he found a job with the state of Kansas. In 1971 he obtained a grant in order to work on his degree so they returned to Lawrence where he began to work on his Ph.D. He worked on it diligently until the committee could not agree on a topic for his dissertation. In 1974 he accepted a position at the state hospital in Topeka and the family moved, by this time they had two children: Gail and Shane, each have gone on to make their contribution to the Baha'i community. The family moved north of Silver Lake in 1976. Six years later the marriage ended. After the children left home Mahin returned to Topeka.

Gail, who had been Secretary of the Shawnee County Bahá'í community, was appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly a member of the National Baha'i Youth Committee in 1984, she was 17. She remained a member of the National Youth Committee while she was in college. When she graduated she was invited by the Universal House of Justice to work in Haifa, which she did from 1990-95.

She worked as Administrative Assistant in the Office of Social and Economic Development. While working at the World Center the House of Justice appointed her to Chair the Haifa Youth Committee.

In 1995 she was in Topeka a few months when the House of Justice asked her to go to Tanzania to start computer education classes. This she did for a year, “in the center of nowhere.” Snakes and chickens were plentiful!

At the end of that year she went to the American University in Washington D.C. and obtained a masters degree in International Development. The next year she married Zalalem from Ethiopia. They had met while she was travel teaching during a school break the year she taught in Tanzania. She took a land rover and drove cross country in Kenya. It was true cross country travel, the “roads” were merely tracks in the grass.

Gail and Zallelem were married in 1997 and their daughter, Jasmine, was born 19 Dec 2000.

Shane, who had been Treasure of the Shawnee County Bahá'í community at age 12, began working in the Treasurer's Office at the National Baha'i Center in Evanston upon graduating from high school. From there he spent a year of service in Guyana, South America. His service was based in “Village 55,” it did not have a name, just a government number. He held children's classes, taught and deepened believers in surrounding villages among other activities.

After the year was completed he spent half a year back in Kansas and attended college one semester in Kansas City. Then he resumed international pioneering, this time in Czechoslovakia. He was the first Baha'i to live in the city, raised a Baha'i community there and helped establish Townshend International Baha'i School there. He learned to speak the language and attempted to attend the university there, but the language remained a problem. After five years he returned to Kansas.

He attended K-State for two years then moved to California where he worked for a year then entered the University of California at Berkeley and obtained a degree in Computer Engineering.

STEVENS, Hester & Irene

Mr & Mrs Stevens attended the Baha'i classes in the 1930's and remained believers the rest of their lives. Hestor Cyrus Stevens was born in Lima, New York on 22 May 1863 and came with his parents to Kansas when they homesteaded near Meridan. The family later moved to Vinland, south of Lawrence. He moved to Topeka and, on 10 June 1896, he married Irena Babcock. They had two children: Ruth and Francis. He worked for decades as a proofreader for Western Oddfellows.

Irena Babcock Stevens was born in Eskridge, Kansas on 16 June 1873 and moved with her parents to Topeka when she was a small child. She lived here the rest of her life.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Topeka Daily Capital 16 February 1943 & 19 December 1942.

TUCKER, Noel

Noel Keahi Tucker was not a member of the Topeka Bahá'í community for very long, but in the brief time he was here he became the most visible member in its entire history – thousands and thousands of people saw him five nights a week.

Noel was born into a Bahá'í family in Hawaii. His middle name (Key-ah-he) is Hawaiian for “fire fish,” referring to a native method of night fishing in which fire is used to attract fish to the surface of the water where they could be easily caught. He came to Topeka when he was hired as a reporter for Channel 27, KSNT. It was his first professional job with his new journalism degree. He had begun broadcast reporting while a student in high school in Hawaii. One of the early stories he covered here was the crash of a helicopter at Forbes Field. In Topeka he also learned about cold and snow.

Less than two years after Noel began here the nightly news anchor left town and Noel, on a whim, applied for the position. To his own astonishment, he was hired. The contract was for two years and during that time he was the most visible member the Topeka Bahá'í community has ever had.

Noel stayed a few months longer than the contracted time, his high school sweetheart was in Washington D.C. and he joined her there. They married a few months later. He obtained a job in the D.C. area with CNN, as a reporter again, but with greater possibilities than the Topeka market provided.

His acquaintance with and adjustment to a temperate climate, after being raised in the tropics, was a constant source of entertainment for him and longtime residents here.

“Gloves?”

“Heavy coat?”

Once, as he helped a resident plant flowers in the early fall, knowing they would die in a few short months, he remarked in complete bewilderment, “How can anyone live in a place where flowers don't bloom all year long?” He found the starkness of winter simply incomprehensible.

And the surf wasn't satisfactory in Kansas.

TRUMP, Etta

“Etta Trump” was actually Henrietta Trump, wife of Charles P. Trump, yard foreman for the J. Thomas Lumber Company. Before coming to Topeka in 1910 (but too late to get listed in Topeka city directory for that year) the family had

moved to Concordia when Charles was 24. Before that he had lived in Mankato. The family had moved there from Iowa when Charles was 12. He had been born Baltimore, Maryland.

Charles and Etta had lived in Topeka for twelve years before Charles died at age 68. The first address found for them was 634 Fairchild, then 634 Garfield (was the street name changed since there is no longer a Fairchild street and the house numbers are the same?). Charles had always worked in the lumber business from Mankato to Topeka. He was buried in Concordia.

Sometime after her husband's death, Etta moved to California and was settled in Los Angeles by 1935 when her sister, Margaret Williams, died. The extent of Etta's involvement with the Topeka Bahá'í community is unknown, whether she continued the affiliation in California is also unknown, but for a brief time in Topeka she and her sister were part of the Bahá'í community.

Etta Trump was born Henrietta Harrison but little more than that is known of her life, no obituary was found in Topeka.

Sources of Information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá'í community, manuscript, Topeka Bahá'í Archives, p.1.

Radges' Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1871-1924.

Topeka State Journal, 26 Mar 1923, p. 1 & 27 Mar 1923.

WALSTRUM, Fred & Ruby

Ruby Sinell entered the Bahá'í community with her parents,

Fred was born 30 October 1915 and entered the Bahá'í community in . He died 16 August 1969. His obituary was brief. In the Sunday paper it simply stated: "Fred Walstrum, 53, 2345 Kentucky, was dead on arrival at a Topeka hospital late Saturday night. He had a heart ailment. Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Ruby Walstrum. McElfresh Mortuary at Osage City is in charge of arrangements." This is about as brief an obituary as one can get. It might possibly have been provided to the newspaper by the hospital. Being "dead on arrival" from "a heart ailment" would most likely mean a heart attack, in which case such a sudden death would mean that his wife would not have been in any condition to write the story of his life for an obituary. It was a tragedy.

In the late 1970s Ruby remarried and withdrew from participation in the Bahá'í community.

WHITTELSEY, Harry R. & Susan

"H.R. Whittelsey" was Harry R_____ and "Miss Susan" was his daughter. At the time of the first Bahá'í classes in Topeka in the 1910s, he was the President and Treasurer of Whittelsey Mercantile Company which owned and operated the chain of seven Owl Grocery stores in Topeka. There were _____ children in the family.

The grocery business had been started by William C. Whittelsey, the father of Harry R. He had died by 1893 and his wife a few years later. The 1883 city directory lists the original store as being “on Madison at the corner of second.” Later it was given the address of 135 Madison. The residence address of the family was the same so it is likely, and typical of the time, that the family lived above the store. By 1916 H.R. had established his own family in their home at 1000 Topeka Ave., one of the grand homes on “The Avenue.”

Sue Whittelsey was first mentioned in the 1887-88 city directory as “Susie,” a clerk at the store on 135 Madison. She continued to be listed with the same information in most directories for the rest of her life. Harry R. Whittelsey is first mentioned in a city directory in 1893-94 when he is listed as a “clerk” at the grocery store and lived at the same address as the store. By 1899 their father, William C. Whittelsey had retired. In 1896 Harry is listed as President and Treasurer of the company and retained those positions the rest of his life. In the early years the city directories indicated that the family sold groceries, feed and dry goods – a normal general store. The family was progressive though, by 1888 a telephone was in the store. The phone number was 292.

The decade between 1905 and 1916 were years of expansion for the company and the family. During this time the company specialized in groceries and began operating under the name “Owl Grocery Stores.” They eventually expanded to seven locations around the city. The stores were at 206 east 4th, 111 Kansas Ave, 505 west 10th, 1013 west 6th, 1004 north Kansas Ave., 306 Wabash and 1414 west 15th. Advertising in 1916 boasted a “fireproof warehouse on the track,” an indication of responsibility, quality and service. By this time the main offices of the company had been moved to 204 Kansas. The business also demonstrated its commitment to progress and service by having two phones, the numbers were: 3805 and 3805.

By 1921 Harry is “Manager” of the grocery stores and Sue is an “Assistant.” They still live together but in a smaller house, at 1119 west 10th. They have a telephone at home, the number is: 7564.

The only evidence found to date of their connection to the Bahá’í community is the recollection of their name by Rose Hilty in her memories related in 1935, and the list of names of those who signed a letter to ‘Abd’ul-Bahá in 1919. Harry died in and Susan in .

Sources of information:

History of Membership of the Topeka Bahá’í community, Topeka Bahá’í archives, manuscript, p.1.

Radges Topeka City Directories, Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1883-1924.

WILLIAMS, Margaret

In the 1919 letter from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá containing a listing by Him of believers in Topeka is the name of “Mrs. Williams.” Margaret Williams was also one of the names of those whom Rose Hilty recalled as having attended the

1918 Bahá'í class in Topeka. In the Topeka city directories for the years closest to 1918 (which are 1916 and 1921) only one Margaret Williams is listed, so her identity is not in doubt.

Margaret Williams had been born in Mt Pleasant, Ohio in 1847. Her husband, Barker Williams, had died by 1916. That year she is listed in the city directory as a boarder at 1120 Tyler. Four years later the federal census lists her as "living alone" at 504 west 10th. The city directory for the next year lists her as the "Librarian" for the Metaphysical Library at the same address on west 10th street.

The Metaphysical Library of Topeka claimed to have a complete selection of Bahá'í books at this time. This was mentioned in a report in the Central States teaching bulletin covering the trip to Topeka of Jenabi Fazel, the last teacher sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to teach and deepen the believers in America. He was in Topeka for several days near the end of December, 1920. One comment reported from the President of the Metaphysical Library, at the close of a public lecture by Jenabi Fazel at the Library, was, "Our library contains a full set of Baha'i literature and a good deal for sale. Anyone can borrow or buy or come and read the books." The Metaphysical Library and Bahá'í community had some supporters in common at that time.

The 1924 city directory lists Margaret Williams at the west 10th address, continuing as the Librarian and the Library continued to be in her home. By now she had a boarder, another widow: Mrs. Julia Dyer. The two ladies even shared a telephone now, the number was: 8168. Two years later Margaret moved to the Ingleside home and lived there the rest of her life. She died on June 24, 1935 at age 88, and was buried in the Topeka Cemetery in Section 91, lot 49. Her marker is flat with the ground along the north side of that section.

In addition to her involvement with the Bahá'í community and Metaphysical Library, she remained a member of the Presbyterian church. But she was not the only family member to be affiliated with the Bahá'í community; her sister, Henrietta Trump, was also.

Sources of information:

'Abdu'l-Bahá to Albert Vail, 24 July 1919: Albert Vail Papers (National Bahá'í Archives).

Central States Teaching Bulletin, Jan 1921 (National Bahá'í Archives).

History of Membership of the Topeka Baha'i Community, 1934-1970, manuscript: p.1.

Radges Topeka City Directory (Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library): 1916, 1921, 1924.

Topeka State Journal (Topeka-Shawnee Co. Public Library): 25 June 1935, p.5, c.5.

United States 1920 federal census (Kansas State Historical Society).

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