

BAHA'U'LLAH'S GARDEN

Jacksonville, Fla.

1919 - 1969

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On September 29, 1919, Dr. and Mrs. Walter E. Guy came from Boston, Mass. to make their home in St. Augustine, at which time they immediately began to spread the Baha'i teachings.

During their first winter as residents of the South, 1919-1920, they invited Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford, New York lecturer, to be their guest. She came, remained a month and during that time delivered Baha'i lectures in St. Augustine. Her visit was repeated in 1921, at which time more lectures were given.

In 1922 Miss Leona Barnitz, Washington, D.C., spent seven weeks as their guest. During that time she came with them to Jacksonville and gave two Baha'i talks at the home of Mrs. Sylvanus H. Hart, 500 W. Ashley Street. The fact that Dr. Guy had previously given Mrs. Hart the Baha'i message, while on a visit in St. Augustine, made these Jacksonville meetings possible. Previous to that time the Doctor had also given several Baha'i talks at the Edward Waters College in Jacksonville.

It was likewise during this same period that a Baha'i lecture was delivered to the Jacksonville Theosophical Society by Dr. Guy.

Mr. Howard McNutt, Brooklyn, N.Y., complying with the request of Dr. Guy, came to Jacksonville during winter of 1923. His visit to this city was repeated for several years thereafter, he also speaking at the Edward Waters College as well as to other audiences.

In 1924, at the request of Dr. and Mrs. Guy, the noted Persian Baha'i teacher and lecturer, Janabi Fazel, came to Jacksonville. Unity Center was thrown open to him and there six lectures were given; three at one time, three at another. He also carried the message to the colored people.

In March, 1932, Dr. and Mrs. Gayne V. Gregory came to Jacksonville and after a series of free lectures (health) by Mrs. Gregory (Orcella Rexford) she opened her health classes, 100 persons attending. At close of the classes she announced another free lecture to be held in the ballroom of the Seminole Hotel (corner Hogan & Forsyth streets), and at that lecture she presented the Baha'i Faith, giving many proofs. At the conclusion she announced another Baha'i lecture to be held the following week and introduced Walter B. Guy, M.D., from St. Augustine, as the speaker.

The writer of this report, Kathryn L. Vernon, did not attend any of Orcella's lectures or classes, but when an acquaintance met me on the street and informed me there was to be a free lecture at the Seminole Hotel that evening, "something about a new religion", curiosity compelled me to attend. It was the evening Dr. Guy gave his first Baha'i lecture - "The Solution of the Economic Problems" - and as he told of how Bible prophecies had become fulfilled, a spiritual force seemed to emanate from him. I felt sure he was sincere and believed everything he was telling us. But with the closing of lecture came this startling announcement: -

"If you accept this Revelation I am not promising you health, wealth and happiness, as most of the lecturers do, but you will have tests, you will have trials and persecutions, and possibly even martyrdom."

Martyrdom did not sound at all inviting to me but I could not forget his claim that the Promised One of God had come, known by the name of Baha'u'llah, the Glory of God. The first thing in morning, the last thing at night, all through the day that thought was there - it would not leave me. Over and over I kept thinking, "If it is the truth, I have got to find it - I have GOT to find it." Two days later, walking through Hemming Park during a lunch hour, I asked myself a new question: "If this is the truth, why have I not heard it before?" Instantly I heard a still small voice saying, "That is no reason - it IS the truth." Then my soul whispered back - "It IS the truth" and at that moment that precious truth found a lodging place within my heart and has never left.

That introductory lecture was the beginning of a series of delightful weekly ones by both Dr. and Mrs. Guy. From seeds sown in those lectures a Jacksonville Baha'i community was born and those of us who found the truth of the Baha'i message, so lovingly given, received a precious gift that never can be repaid.

After the opening of the weekly lectures Dr. Guy wired to Miss Alma Knobloch, Cabin John, Md. to come and work in Jacksonville. She had just returned from teaching in Germany and Doctor knew she was longing for another place to go. It is told that she started without even taking time to pack all her clothes - so happy are true Baha'is to be able to serve their Lord. At the April 4th, 1932, public meeting Mrs. Guy introduced Miss Knobloch who remained in Jacksonville for nearly ten months, lovingly giving all of her time to the teaching of the Baha'i Faith.

I told my Mother of the wonderful truth I had found but alas! she was bitterly opposed. Each day I told her a little more, some Bible interpretations, some part of the new teachings, but the prejudice did not lessen. Day after Day, week after week I tried to bring through the truth until finally I became utterly discouraged. That night, when I went to bed, I prayed to Baha'u'llah for help. I explained the situation to Him, acknowledged that I could do absolutely nothing by myself, and asked Him to please open her heart and mind so she

could find the truth. The next day I did not mention the Baha'i Faith to her, but that night I again prayed to Baha'u'llah for help. The second day passed without my mentioning it in any way but at night I again turned to Baha'u'llah for help. The third day came and lo, I discovered that a miracle had happened. Mother began asking me questions, all antagonism put aside. Then, when she began attending the lectures, meeting Dr. and Mrs. Guy and travelling Baha'is, she discovered that they were really very nice people, even though Baha'is, and she willingly listened.

This incident is included as it should prove to all of us that the promises found within the Baha'i Sacred Writings hold true for all time - if we love enough and have faith enough we shall be helped.

Weekly classes in charge of Miss Knobloch were weekly held at 30 E. 4th Street from June 13, 1932, through Sept. 26th when, account of illness of hostess, they were transferred to 707 Post Street.

Weekly hotel lectures were continued for about a year, first at the Seminole Hotel, then transferred to the Carling Hotel (name changed later to the Roosevelt) where, through the courtesy of the Management they were continued until January 29, 1933. Miss Alma Knobloch acting usually as chairman, Dr. or Mrs. Guy lecturing, with the exception of Dec. 4th and 5th, 1932. On those dates Miss Fannie Knobloch, sister of Miss Alma, stopped in Jacksonville and gave two interesting lectures, relating some of her experiences as a Baha'i teacher in Africa. She was accompanied by Mrs. Georgia Brown Wiles, of Nashville, Tenn., who greeted us at the December 4th meeting. Miss Fannie Knobloch again came to Jacksonville the following month, at which time she talked to the study class.

About the middle of January, 1933, Miss Alma Knobloch left Jacksonville to return to Washington - a beautiful example of untiring efforts in the service of her Lord.

On Sunday evening January 29, 1933, after an inspiring Baha'i lecture by Dr. Guy in Parlow B of the Seminole Hotel, a business meeting was held, Mrs. Guy acting as chairman, all those interested in the Baha'i lectures invited to remain.

At that meeting Dr. Guy introduced Mr. Walter L. Bacon, an elderly Baha'i gentleman, born in Watford, Hertfordshire, England, then living in Jacksonville. It was decided to form a group to be known as the Jacksonville Baha'i Branch. Mr. Bacon was elected Librarian, Kathryn L. Vernon appointed to act as Corresponding Secretary. Thus was formed Jacksonville's first Baha'i Group with two believers: Mr. Walter L. Bacon who, while living in New York City in 1901 heard the Baha'i message from Mr. Mountford Mills (one of the early and staunch believers), and one new believer, the Secretary, whose knowledge of Baha'u'llah came with the first of these series of lectures. So, with only a couple of "twigs" but with a great deal of love and faith, Baha'u'llah's Jacksonville "Garden" was dedicated.

The Secretary was then instructed to write to Miss Alma Knobloch and inform her of the meeting and what had been accomplished.

Dr. and Mrs. Guy, being members of the St. Augustine Community as well as its Founders, were elected honorary members of the Jacksonville Baha'i Branch.

Two more lectures were held at the Seminole Hotel, Feb. 5th and 12th, 1933, but they were not attracting outsiders.

Then Doctor suggested that less formal home meetings might be productive of more good, if possible to hold them. I sat hoping and praying. When I heard Mother offering the use of our home, another prayer had been answered. Offer was accepted and thus 707 Post Street became the location where Baha'i public meetings were first held in Jacksonville, Florida.

At 707 Post Street also were held the 19-Day Feasts and other activities, including anniversary celebrations, to which were invited friends and acquaintances, feeling <sup>ing</sup> sure, in those early days, that all would quickly recognize the truth, as I had done. Alas, Alas.

Miss Mabel Sawyer was one of the large number listed in Orcella's health classes; she also attended Orcella's last public lecture when Orcella gave the Baha'i message and introduced Dr. Guy. Mabel did not attend Dr. Guy's first lecture the following week but thereafter she attended meetings faithfully and in April of the year 1933 we were happy to add her name to our Group of two, she acknowledging her acceptance of Baha'u'llah as God's divinely appointed Messenger. Happy me - I had a Baha'i "sister".

To the Sunday meeting of April 16, 1933, Dr. and Mrs. Guy brought 3 visitors:- Mrs. Lorol Schopflocker, Montreal, Canada; Mr. Lionel Loveday, Elliott, Maine, and Mr. Wm. Bidwell, Orlando, Fla. After an introduction by Mr. Bidwell, Mrs. Schopflocker gave a much enjoyed Baha'i lecture. Due to an accident, she was unable to show any of her motion pictures at this meeting, as originally intended, but at the request of the 25 persons present she returned on the 18th when we enjoyed another lecture, illustrated by her beautiful travel pictures, many connected with the Baha'i Revelation.

After the forming of the Group we were frequently invited to Feasts held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Guy in St. Augustine. In May of 1933 they opened their home to the Jacksonville believers and friends, and 14 Jacksonville guests enjoyed their first Baha'i public Feast - the Ridván. There not only did we enjoy the delicious material Feast, but learned how truly spiritual and beautiful a Baha'i Feast could be.

Nov. 12th, 1933, was our first public meeting after the return of Dr. and Mrs. Guy from a summer vacation in the North, and a Feast in commemoration of Baha'u'llah's birth was held, at

707 Post Street. Twenty-four were present. That Doctor was able to return to us, after a very serious accident in Washington, D.C., added extra joy to the occasion.

A Sunday in November, 1933. Doctor had arrived from St. Augustine and we were hopefully waiting when the door bell rang. There stood a lady who introduced herself as Mrs. Carol Falin, a Baha'i, having seen newspaper notice, and great was our delight when we learned that she had received the Baha'i message in 1910 from Mr. John Harrison Mills, a Baha'i in Buffalo, N.Y.: she believed but had never previously enrolled in any Baha'i group. Thus our membership grew to four.

Another Baha'i guest during November 1933 was Miss C. Mae Thitchener of St. Augustine who never knew, when she first went to Dr. Guy's office for a pill that he always mixed his material remedies with liberal portions of "Baha'i Truth". His first prescription took effect immediately.

### 1934

On Easter Sunday, 1934, we were invited to St. Augustine where a Baha'i meeting was held in the afternoon at the Guy home, afterward we drove to the Florida Normal & Industrial Institute and witnessed the presentation of an Easter play written by Dr. Guy.

It was during the spiritual program of the 1934 Feast of Ridván, enjoyed in St. Augustine, that my Mother acknowledged her belief in and acceptance of Baha'u'llah. My Beloved had not failed me, my prayers had been answered.

Dr. and Mrs. Guy continued to come each meeting night to Jacksonville and as they lectured their sincerity and faith in the Baha'i message and love for Baha'u'llah was evident. So it continued throughout the years with the exception of their summer vacation periods in New Hampshire. During their absence certain interested ones continued to meet as a class, studying a course of lessons and reading the Sacred Words.

Two more friends, Mrs. Charles Davies, and her daughter Miss Gertrude Davies, declared their desire to become registered Baha'is on October 7th, 1934.

Then came another time we like to recall, in November, when we were celebrating the birth of Baha'u'llah. Our guests always seemed to enjoy our public celebrations, they never refused an invitation, and this was a happy gathering. After a beautiful spiritual program Mrs. Falin, her eyes sparkling with happiness, came rushing out into the kitchen to tell Mother and me that her friend, Mrs. Pearl Rozear, had just announced - "If ever anything was the truth, this is." At that time also our friend Mrs. Lida S. Marryott, acknowledged her acceptance and so, on His birthday, Baha'u'llah brought in two more believers, making a total of nine, but we had to wait until April 21st 1935 election for recognition of Assembly strength by the National Spiritual Assembly.

Visitors to Jacksonville meetings during 1934 were:

Miss Alma Knobloch ( February)

Mrs. Nell Heath, Evinston, Ill (April 22) who spoke to us  
of the Wilmette Temple.

Mr. Hiram James, Racine, Wisc (April 29) -who spoke and  
sang for us - and

Mrs. Ripley and daughter Miss Bessie Ripley, Orlando, Fla.  
(May 27th) -(Mrs. Bessie Ripley Wigfall.)

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1935

In January our fine Baha'i gentleman Walter L. Bacon made me a gift of some of his cherished Baha'i books and I then decided to start building a Baha'i library.

From 1932, nourished by the words of Baha'u'llah, lovingly and faithfully given by Dr. and Mrs. Guy, the Jacksonville Branch began to grow, slowly but surely. Then came the eventful day of April 21, 1935, when four more indicated their desire to be recorded Baha'is - Mr. and Mrs. M. Q. Arnold (Bessie Nagel Arnold) from Fernandina Beach, Fla.) and Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Couch. How happy we were on election day, our goal won, Jacksonville numbering among its charter members three who had learned of and accepted the Baha'i truth many years before in other localities, and ten new believers. So the Jacksonville "Garden" of Baha'u'llah was formed, and every heart seemed to feel the love coming down to us from our Beloved.

Before the election Dr. Guy spoke to us of the importance of the occasion, in that -

"The time has come to do for Jacksonville what perhaps is the kindest and biggest thing that is possible; to organize and establish a Baha'i Assembly, a focal center for the teachings of the Manifestation of God that alone can bring peace and hope and security to the World. We must be careful that a light shines freely in every heart (he reminded us) because when we are united in His love and spirit this cause will go surging forward. The power is in God's hands; we are and can be but His servants."

We were, indeed, blessed in having such faithful servants of Baha'u'llah who pointed out to us the Gate and the Path which led us to this Truth. Great, indeed, was our blessing when the Lord and Owner of this Garden, Baha'u'llah, graciously permitted us to enter.

To our Guardian - Shoghi Effendi - went the following message -

Beloved Guardian:

It is with humbleness that we, the undersigned, send you our names as the charter members of the Jacksonville Baha'i Community, and we herewith pledge to you our support.

We beseech the blessing of your prayers in our behalf at the Holy Shrines, that Divine Guidance may lead and direct us, and that day by day we may more fully realize how great is the gift which brings the privilege of serving in the glorious Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Marvin Q. Arnold

\* Mrs. Marvin Q. Arnold Vice-Chairman

\* Walter L. Bacon

B. D. Couch

Mrs. B. D. Couch

Mrs. Charles Davies

(Miss) Gertrude Davies

\* Mrs. Carol Falin

(Mrs.) Lida S. Marryott

(Mrs) Pearl Rozear

(Miss) Mabel B. Sawyer Treasurer

(Mrs) Marion L. Vernon Chairman

(Miss) Kathryn L. Vernon Secretary

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\* - Believers for many years, having received the Baha'i message in other states, or localities.

The remaining ten are all new believers.

Jacksonville, Florida. U S A  
April 21, 1935.

WHAT SHALL WE MENTION OF SIGNS,  
TOKENS, APPEARANCES AND SPLENDORS  
ORDAINED IN

T H A T C I T Y

BY THE COMMAND OF THE KING OF  
NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES!

B.Sc. Pge 51.

O NEW AND BRILLIANT ASSEMBLY OF OUR GUARDIAN IN JACKSONVILLE!

CONGRATULATIONS AND DEEPFELT SALUTATIONS! El-Abhá: IS WITH YOU!

You have entered that City, where milk and honey flow!  
You have attained unto the Glory you yearned for!  
How we prayed and Baha'u'llah heard our prayers!  
An Assembly stands upon your shores, a Victory for your town!  
You have entered the Spiritual City of Unity, you have beheld  
The New Jerusalem in your midst!  
You have accepted, with helping hands, the New World Order!  
You shall no more thirst, nor hunger in those streets of gold!  
That City of Light is yours!

"IT QUENCHES THIRST WITHOUT WATER-  
AND INCREASETH THE HEAT OF THE LOVE OF GOD  
WITHOUT FIRE!"

Pge 51.

O God, merciful art thou to Jacksonville!  
Gratitude to Thee, O Baha'u'llah, King of All Hearts!  
It has reached Thy City where everything testifies of Oneness!

"THE IDEAL CONSUMMATE WISDOM IS HIDDEN IN EVERY PLANT-  
AND A THOUSAND NIGHTINGALES OF SPEECH ARE IN ECSTASY  
AND RAPTURE UPON EVERY ROSE BRANCH!  
THE MYSTERY OF THE FIRE OF MOSES IS REVEALED  
IN ITS WONDERFUL TULIPS -  
AND THE BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF JESUS  
EMANATES FROM ITS FRAGRANCES OF HOLINESS!  
IT BESTOWS WEALTH WITHOUT GOLD  
AND GRANTS IMMORTALITY WITHOUT  
DEATH!  
A PARADISE IS CONCEALED IN EVERY  
LEAF AND A HUNDRED THOUSAND  
WISDOMS ARE TREASURED IN EVERY  
ONE OF ITS CHAMBERS!" B.Sc. Pge 51

O, Loved Ones:

You have at last been lifted up into that City of Glory-  
You are now a part thereof-  
You walk in its beautiful Streets of Gold and bask in the Sun of Truth  
on the Shores of its Crystal Waters!  
You are studying the Laws of Abhá in the Shade of the Tree of Life!  
You have opened the Book of Command and have quaffed from its Reality!  
Blessed are you, in Administrative Guidance,  
in our Guardian's Service.

Blessed are you! Richer are  
you than kings and queens of  
earth! You are Princes!  
E T E R N A L !

Auntie Victoria

(copy of message received from Auntie Victoria)

On May 5th, 1935, Dr. and Mrs. Guy held a "birthday party" in St. Augustine, honoring the new Jacksonville Assembly and community members.

Also from St. Augustine came a cordial invitation to celebrate with them their Nov. 12th Feast, in memory of the birth of Baha'u'llah. What made it exceedingly interesting was that the Feast was held at the Florida Normal and Industrial Institute.

This School for colored youth was started by the Ladies Baptist Missionary Society of New York City and supported by them with many little churches throughout the State also contributing. The School was moved from Jacksonville and, upon invitation of the St. Augustine Chamber of Commerce, established its head quarters upon an old slave plantation grounds on the outskirts of the city.

Soon after Dr. Guy moved to St. Augustine he was asked by a well-to-do patient to visit the School, as he desired advice in regard to a medicine cabinet which he wished to give to the School. In that way Dr. Guy first became acquainted with Nathan W. Collier, Principal of the School, and Miss Sarah A. Blocker, Assistant Principal.

Upon his first visit Dr. Guy found the main house (not large) being used as an administration building, around which were clustered several small wooden buildings, erected by the students, under supervision; a boys' dormitory, a girls' dormitory, a dining room which was also used as a class room and for Sunday religious meetings; a laundry and a kitchen. From that beginning the property grew to an estimated worth of about one-half million dollars.

Dr. Guy was attracted by the singing of the students, for which the School later became famous, and he and Mrs. Guy frequently attended their Sunday afternoon Song Services.

Both Professor Collier and Miss Blocker were members of the colored St. Augustine Baptist Church and it took many years of patient instruction before they understood the beauty of the message of Baha'u'llah. When they finally understood that the Baha'i teachings were not antagonistic to the Christian teachings but were the fulfillment of Christ's message and Bible prophecies, Professor Collier did all that he could to spread the Baha'i message, and the School's platform was always open for visiting Baha'i speakers.

St. Augustine Naw-Rúz Feasts were always held at the School, Dr. Guy furnishing the spiritual and material portions and, with the consent of Professor Collier, the School members of the Domestic Class providing the service. It was there, at that School, that the Jacksonville believers met Professor Collier and Miss Blocker, two sincere Baha'is, who were most gracious to us.

I once heard Professor Collier say, "I decided if the Baha'i Faith was good enough for the Doctor, it was good enough for me," which proved his love for and faith in Dr. Guy but in no way detracted from his love for and faith in Baha'u'llah. They remained true Baha'is throughout the remainder of their lives.

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While Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Couch announced their belief in Baha'u'llah on April 21st, on September 26th they moved to Birmingham, Ala., thereby reducing our membership to eleven.

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Out of town guests during this year included - Miss Josie Pinson, Georgetown, N. C., and Miss Alma Knobloch who came in January and April, 1935.

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During our Naw-Ruz Feast President Collier expressed his appreciation for the valuable aid from Dr. Guy. He said:-

"Dr. Guy has won the hearts of all who know him. He is, indeed, a blessing to St. Augustine Negroes and the Florida Normal. He is like a man who forgets himself in his thoughts of others. His (medical) discoveries have helped Dr. Collier (baby brother of President Collier). He gives away his gifts. You find a man like that once in a lifetime."

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1936

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I am taking the liberty of recording these reports according to our regular 12-month per year calendar, as I have found it is frequently less confusing to the reader than if the Baha'i 19-month system were used.

January 7th a letter was sent to the Library Division, Baha'i Publishing Committee, to see if they had any books which they could donate to our public libraries. One library only had a few books, and those published and donated long before. In February a wonderful gift arrived - 17 books which were distributed to our 3 Public libraries.

In February came letter from Regional Teaching Committee, Chicago, Ill., advising of intended trip to Florida of Mr. Arthur Agnew, one of Chicago's very early believers, and asking if we could arrange a meeting, the letter further stating they were sure we would have a delightful evening with him, "as his has been a rich and serviceable life in the Cause of Baha'u'llah." We contacted Mr. Agnew and meeting was arranged for 8 o'clock Thursday evening, March 5th. We invited friends, also advertised in papers but only four outsiders came. The others indeed missed a fine meeting.

Our April 21st election still showed Jacksonville retaining eleven of her original believers, with the following elected to serve in various capacities:

Mrs. Marion L. Vernon, Chairman.	Mrs. M. Q. Arnold, Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Lida S. Marryott, Treasurer.	Kathryn L. Vernon, Secretary
Walter L. Bacon, Librarian	Mrs. Carol Falin, Feasts
Mrs. Charles Davies, Music.	Mabel B. Sawyer, Publicity
	Mrs. Pearl Rozear, Hospitality.

It was this year, 1936, that we had the great pleasure of writing a letter of introduction for our sincere and beloved Mr. Walter L. Bacon, a believer from the very early days, to take with him on his first trip to the Baha'i Temple to attend the 28th Annual Convention of the Baha'is of the USA and Canada, in Wilmette, Ill - our first delegate from the Jacksonville, Fla., Community. Being unable to travel alone, his son, Herbert, drove him - a trip which brought great joy to Mr. Walter L. As his father was hard of hearing, Herbert was permitted to accompany him in the business sessions and upon their return Herbert presented Jacksonville with two single-spaced typed sheets of notes taken - a thoughtful, gracious service.

Jacksonville today treasures a bottle containing sample of quartz as used in the building of the Temple, which Mr. W.L. proudly presented to us.

Naw-rúz Feast was held at 707 Post Street. We always tried to make our public Feasts gala events and our guests always seemed to enjoy them. It was our hope that some of the beautiful spiritual truths, given out during our spiritual programs, would find a lodging place within their hearts.

In June Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi was a guest at 707 Post for about two weeks. What a fine compliment when some one attending a meeting was overheard to say - "He does not seem to want to talk about anything but the Baha'i message." Sometimes people seem to forget that is what all Baha'i meetings and Feasts are for.

One evening when I asked Dr. Bagdadi to sign my Baha'i guest book he asked permission to take it to his room. Of course I consented, although wondering why he needed so long to sign his name. To my delight, next morning I found a long message written in Arabic with (lucky for me) the English translation.

While in Jacksonville I took Dr. Bagdadi to call upon Mr. Bacon. He pulled Mr. Bacon to him, kissed him on the cheek, then they had a nice visit. I told Mr. Bacon I would drive over for him and bring him to my home for supper with Dr. Bagdadi and Dr. Guy, the night Dr. Bagdadi was to be our speaker, but Mr. Bacon thought he better not try to come. To my surprise when I reached home from office that evening there was Mr. Bacon, having walked the entire two miles or more in the hot sun. Of course he got a scolding (in a nice way) from both Doctors for they felt his pulse and knew he was not equal to such an undertaking, but it showed the power of a kiss of brotherly love.

From Jacksonville Dr. Bagdadi went to St. Augustine, having received permission to use Dr. Guy's home while they were at their New Hampshire summer camp. On July 26th I filled car with non-Baha'is, picked up Dr. Bagdadi in St. Augustine, then over to St. Augustine Beach for a dinner, after which we sat upon the porch and watched the waves. All seemed to be greatly enjoying the ocean breeze and the friendly visit - all but me. "Why doesn't he begin talking about Baha'u'llah?" I wondered, "He knows that is why I brought them over, WHY doesn't he begin?" Then suddenly, without effort, without anyone realizing what he was going to do, Dr. Bagdadi WAS talking about Baha'u'llah as only one whose heart is full of love can talk. Such was his way; he would gently slide into a Baha'i subject, take his audience with him and hold their attention.

On August 9th Dr. Bagdadi invited the Jacksonville believers to St. Augustine for a "Persian picnic", and there, with Zeenat, his wife, and Parvene, his daughter, seated under shade of some trees on the banks of the ocean, he piled our plates with real Oriental pilau which he, himself, cooked - a real love feast.

He came back to Jacksonville on August 14th and at 5:15 A M August 15th we (mother and I) drove him to Augusta, Ga., where he remained until his passing. It was, indeed, a great privilege to have known such a staunch Baha'i.

1936

Dr. Zia Bagdadi's grandfather, Shaykh Muhammad -i-Shibl, a disciple of El Bab, was murdered. He was placed upon horse back, forced to ride in front of his escort and, upon reaching the desert, was shot. The family never knew where the body fell.

His father and mother were both born in Baghdad. His father, Muhammad Mustafá, was a merchant of Baghdad; was a disciple of Baha'u'llah and at one time the trusted custodian of the sacred remains of El Bab.

Zia was born in Beirut, where he attended the American University. The memory of Beirut was particularly dear to him because it was there that the body of that great martyr, El Bab, was kept in their home for some time before it was delivered to Abdu'l Baha in Akka by an escort of Baha'is, including his father and himself. Dr. Zia told me that he remembered a large, long box in his home which, as a child, he was never permitted to touch, and not until long years afterward did he learn that it held the Sacred Remains of El Bab and His martyred companion, rather than Sacred books.

Twenty-three friends greeted Dr. Guy October 1st, upon his return from their summer vacation. His subject - "Do you think it is a small thing to be a Baha'?" is a good question for everyone to ponder.

Within the Baha'i Sacred writings there is a statement that those living in the early days of the appearance of a Divinely appointed Manifestation of God and who find and accept Him are truly blessed because in those early days His love can the more easily flow to us. There is also another statement - a very powerful one.

"Love me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O Servant."

We who in these early days have found and accepted Baha'u'llah have been accorded a great bounty. The value of our reward is entirely up to each one of us.

We were again guests of St. Augustine for the November 12th Feast, and again enjoyed a real Baha'i fellowship at the Florida Normal and Industrial Institute.

Out-of-town guests during 1936: Mary E. Coffin, M.D., Pittsburg, Pa. Jan. 2; Winifred Richards, Brooklyn, N.Y. March 5, and on Nov. 20th Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Edsall (Leonora), from Montclair, N.J. He was in very ill health and she feared he would experience one of his usual sleepless nights. How happy they both were the next morning; he had slept soundly all night, awoke refreshed, was happy and jolly and better health followed for some time thereafter, a gift and a blessing which, she wrote, she felt sure had come from Baha'u'llah during that Baha'i meeting of November 20th, 1936.

1937

A busy year. A delightful house warming by the Jacksonville Baha'is was held on January 15th at the home of Herbert E. Bacon, son of Mr. Walter L. Bacon, in South Jacksonville. Twenty persons were present. First there was a get-acquainted social time, followed by refreshments furnished by the well-wishers. Then, after inspiring Baha'i talks by Dr. W. B. Guy of St. Augustine, and Miss Jean Anthony, from New York City, came the good-nights and good wishes for the occupants of the new home, with Mr. Walter Bacon's parting advice - to "Act right, do right, live right and stay right, then all will be right."

Mr. Arthur S. Agnew, Chicago, paid Jacksonville another visit in February, when a special meeting and social hour was held at the home of Miss Margaret Hass, at which time he told of his visit to Acca and Haifa, and the never-to-be-forgotten impressions made by those sacred surroundings.

Naw-Rúz Feast at 707 Post - a happy event with many outside guests.

Although our 19-Day Feast of April 9th was held at 707 Post, we were the guests of Miss Winifred Richards, a visiting Baha'i friend.

April 17th 707 Post was favored with a visit with Miss H. Emogene Hoagg and Miss Josephine Kruka, two fine Baha'is and teachers of Esperanto, who stopped while passing through Jacksonville to keep appointments elsewhere. As they had given no advance notice, it was impossible to hold meeting for them.

On April 21st the following were elected Assembly members: Mrs. M. L. Vernon, chairman; Miss Margaret A. Haas, Vice-Chairman (a new believer, enrolled Jan. 21, 1937). Mrs. Lida S. Marryott, Treasurer. Kathryn L. Vernon, Secretary. Mrs. Charles Davies, Music. Mabel E. Sawyer, Publicity. Gertrude Davies, Feasts. W. L. Bacon, Book Custodian. Mrs. Carol Falin.

Kathryn was elected delegate to Wilmette Convention, thereby having privilege of attending in person or mailing ballot. Working people cannot always leave when they would like, nor do pocketbooks always say "go", but "Uncle Sam" carried the vote.

On March 27th cablegram was received by NSA, signed by Zia'iyyih, Mother of the Guardian, announcing his marriage to Ruh'iyyih Khanum, Miss Mary Maxwell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland Maxwell, Montreal, Canada.

Secretary was requested to write a letter to be sent to the Guardian, expressing the love and well-wishes of the Assembly, so to Him went the following message: -

Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.A.

To His Honor Shoghi Effendi.

Our Beloved Guardian:-

As we partake of this 19-Day Feast, our hearts turn with loving wishes to you and your honored bride. May the blessings of Baha'u'llah rest upon you both and give you strength and courage to "Carry On."

Members - Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is  
of Jacksonville, Florida.

Walter Lewis Bacon

Mrs. Charles Davies

Margaret A. Hass

Mabel B. Sawyer

Gertrude Davies

Mrs. Carol Falin

Mrs. Lida S. Marryott

Mrs. Marion L. Vernon

Kathryn L. Vernon

Visiting Member of the New York City community

Winifred Richards

Visiting Baha'i from Portsmouth, N. H.

Florence E. Steedley

April 28, 1937

To Jacksonville came the following:

May 23rd 1937

To the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is  
of Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Baha'i Friends:

I am instructed by our beloved Guardian to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your message of the 28th of April, written on the occasion of the celebration of the Nineteen Day Feast in Jacksonville, and to reciprocate the greetings and good wishes you have so kindly conveyed, to him on that occasion, all of which he very deeply values and appreciates indeed.

He wishes me to take this opportunity for conveying to you and through you to the friends in your Centre, the expression of his profound and loving appreciation of the efforts you are strenuously exerting for the promotion of the Faith in Florida. He is praying from the very depth of his heart for the confirmation of your fondest hopes and highest aspirations in the Service of our beloved Cause.

With loving Baha'i greetings,

Yours ever sincerely -

H. Rabbani.

May the Beloved bless you and keep you,  
brighten your hopes, cheer your hearts,  
and aid you to attain your noblest goal  
in the service of His Faith.

Shoghi

In November Miss Winifred Richards transferred from the New York City Baha'i Community to reside permanently in Jacksonville, bringing our membership again up to thirteen. To our happy surprise she located in an apartment at 628 Post Street, almost across from 707, so it was very easy to join forces for all activities.

Weekly meetings and study classes were held at 707 Post until Dec. 17, 1937, when they were transferred to Winifred's where held until April, 1938, account of illness of my Mother.

As Winifred had started to study Esperanto, a free Esperanto study class was advertised in November, with Winifred as teacher. First class was held at 707 Post, thereafter at 528 Post. To first class ten outsiders appeared but almost immediately dropped out.

Our Nov. 12th Feast was again a very special one, celebrating the Anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah, in St.

Augustine as guests of that Assembly.

Besides Dr. and Mrs. Guy our out-of-city guest speakers included: W. T. Bidwell, Augusta, Ga. Jan.21.  
Miss Jean Anthony, New York City, Jan.28. Dr. A.L. Morris, Chicago, Ill, June 24th. Dr. Morris also went to Fernandina Beach, to visit our staunch Baha'i friend, Mrs. Anne Nagel, where 2 public meetings were held in her home.  
Mrs. Olga Breymann, Burlington, Vt., Dec. 2nd, who spoke on "Haifa" - the Holy Land."

On Dec.30th Mr. and Mrs. Calhoun (Ward M. and Sylvia) entertained and instructed at 628 Post while showing movie pictures of Baha'i groups and picnics.

Other Baha'i visitors - Mrs. Florence Steedley, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Mrs. Bessie Wigfall, Orlando. Edward H. Young, Bristol, Fla. Mrs. Myrtle Parker, Bristol. and Mr. and Mrs. Layman (Claude and Gladys) who never missed joining with us if in our city. (Miami believers)

During this year our Baha'i meetings and activities were called to the attention of the Jacksonville public by over three hundred inches of column newspaper notices and write-ups, which should prove that we were not trying to keep our Pearl of Great Price hidden under anything. Outsiders seldom came from newspaper notices.

April 11th of this, the year 1937, American Baha'is celebrated the 25th anniversary of Abdu'l Baha's arrival in America. On that date in 1912 an ocean steamer brought him to the New York harbor and here, in America, he remained until December 5th, carrying the Baha'i message from coast to coast. The writer was living in New York state at that time. Why did I have to wait twenty long years before hearing of the Baha'i message in the city of Jacksonville, in the state of Florida?

In strange ways does God work, but more blessed to have longer waited than to have heard and denied.

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Dr. Guy was our first speaker; starting off the new year in the right way.

Our January 13th meeting was held at Winifred Richards', Mrs. Guy our speaker, subject - "The New Day." There, also, our Naw-Rúz Feast held; there, too, we celebrated the Anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah.

A pleasant surprise in January: the information that Mr. Charles Reimer, Milwaukee, Wisc., a fine Baha'i, would be in Jacksonville and available for a lecture, if desired. If desired! Whenever any outsiders did come, they were always considered by us as a special gift from Baha'u'llah, and so we hustled, phoned all our friends, placed newspaper notices in three papers announcing to the public that there would be a Baha'i lecture in Parlow B of the Roosevelt Hotel, 3 P.M. Sunday, January 23, Mr. Reimer, the speaker, to tell them of "The Cause and Cure for Present Day Ills." Jacksonville must have been a very healthy city at that time, at least very, very few seemed interested in making it better.

Upon arrival of Mrs. Mamie L. Seto, San Francisco, Calif., Feb. 23rd, a special meeting for the believers was held at home of Miss Margaret Haas. At that meeting Mrs. Seto spoke to us of the importance of the 7-Year Plan, having as its goal the completion of the Wilmette Baha'i Temple in that period of time and, of course, reminding us of the great privilege that was ours to contribute our "mite". As Baha'i Temples are built only with Baha'i dollars, so each Temple erected stands as a testimonial of our love for God and our faith in Baha'u'llah.

April 21st election resulted in the following: Winifred Richards, Chairman: Marion L. Vernon, Vice-Chairman: Mrs. Lida S. Marryott, Treas. Kathryn L. Vernon, Secretary. In January we sent in the name of a new member - Mrs. Louise B. Fender, which brought our community up to 14.

Winifred was delighted to attend the Wilmette Convention as Jacksonville's delegate. When Ridván Feast was held at her home in May she gave an interesting account, but it also included report of cablegram received from Shoghi Effendi with sad news of passing of the Holy Mother, Munirih Khanum, wife of Abdu'l Baha. Instead of our Ridván Feast observance, memorial services were held.

As the Assembly felt it would be convenient to own a rubber stamp showing address, I took the order to J.H. Mallett, 111 W. Ashley Street. Going back to receive and pay for stamp, what was my surprise when told it was given "gratis" - a friendly gesture to a religious organization.

Jake's Newstand, the largest in Jacksonville, gave us permission to place copies of "World Order" magazines upon his shelves, which we did during May, June, July and August. During that time only one copy was sold, in July. During September and October they were also placed in the St. James building

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newstand but none were sold.

First meeting of the winter season, Nov. 5th, was held at home of Mr. Walter L. Bacon, So. Jacksonville, other meetings at 707 Post Street. The 19-Day Feasts, as well as various public Feasts during this year were given by - Mrs. Louise B. Fender, Miss Margaret Haas, Miss Winifred Richards, Miss Mabel B. Sawyer, Mrs. Marion L. Vernon, Kathryn Vernon.

Eight non-Baha'is attended our Dec. 11 meeting when Mrs. Guy explained the question - "What is a Baha'i."

Guests during the year - Mr. Robt. L. Gulick, Paradise, Calif. Feb. 14. Mr. Charles Graham, from South Carolina, brother of Mrs. Guy, Jan. 26. Our two sincere Baha'is from Miami, Claude and Gladys Layman on Nov. 4th, and on November 21st Mr. and Mrs. Thurston H. Vaughn and Mr. Philip A. Marangella, from New York City.

For some time I had wished for a great big sign which would advertise that there were such things as Baha'i meetings being held in Jacksonville. Many Churches were using billboards furnished to them by Funeral Directors. Should I ask them to give one to me? The idea did not appeal. Our Baha'i message is a message of pure light. Should we, while advertising our meetings expressive of God's light and love, always remind the people that a grave awaits them where we must remain, as so many believe, until the last trump is sounded? No. I would have to go on wishfully wishing for a while longer.

December 25th came, - Christmas Day, and to my surprise my Christmas gift from my precious Baha'i Mother - money enough to purchase an electric "Baha'i Center" sign - money she had saved through self denials. It was indeed a most happy day; a happy and a thankful time because Mother seemed so well on that day. Friends came to call upon her; she was her bright and cherry self and her eyes shown and sparkled with the light I had always loved - that inner light, a gift from God which shines through when hearts are filled with love for Him and for humanity.

Very early, 3:15 A.M., December 30th, Mother left me to meet her Beloved, Baha'u'llah.

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The following year the sign was purchased and placed in a window - a symbol of that radiant spiritual light and glory which my Mother had been privileged to find.

Who can tell - possibly if we strive hard enough we may be able to plant seeds which will produce wondrous fruits after we pass on. At least we can try and as our efforts, though feeble, are discerned by Baha'u'llah, He will love us the more and draw us closer to Him, and we shall be assisted, as He has promised, by a company of His chosen angels.

We should never forget: as our love and faith, so shall our power and blessings be. Our future station depends entirely upon our own efforts. So it is recorded within the Baha'i Sacred Writings.

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It was a clear, cool day, that first Sunday of the year 1939. The gentle afternoon breeze scattered more leaves over the freshly swept walks, a reminder that all things have a life cycle - even a human being.

Inside the house at 707 Post Street an unusual kind of a Baha'i meeting was being held; in memory of Mrs. Marion Lucy Vernon. In our sorrow, we called upon Dr. Guy to officiate, expressing our desire to dedicate that sacred time not only to the memory of Mother but especially to the memory of her Beloved, Baha'u'llah. And so it was.

Dr. Guy told how the Baha'i Faith is not a new Faith, but a renewal of the ancient Faith of God, Whose Messengers appear from age to age to call humanity back to God; how those Messengers willingly suffer persecutions to prove God's love for His children; how we, in turn, must prove our love for God and how, for a Baha'i, death is but a going away to a fuller, better life.

Later a "pillar" of a fashionable Church said, " I wish the Churches would hold services like that - it was so beautiful. " Many, indeed, were the beautiful Baha'i truths presented during that service.

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After that day the home was again thrown open for Baha'i uses, as opportunities presented.

Robert L. Gulick, from Paradise, Calif, a staunch Baha'i of many years, was our guest at the 8 P.M. meeting, Feb. 5th; Kathryn the speaker. 10 non-Baha'is present, 5 Baha'is.

St. Augustine had the great distinction of having several members of the Negro race and we who previously had been privileged to attend their meetings knew what a truly spiritual Feast they had to offer, so when the Jacksonville believers and their friends received St. Augustine's very cordial invitation to join them in their Naw-rúz Feast, we planned Naw-Rúz for 707 Post Street at a non-conflicting hour, and happily accepted their invitation.

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Our April 21st election showed the following members:  
 Mr. M. Q. Arnold; Mrs. M. Q. Arnold ( Bessie Nagel Arnold);  
 Walter L. Bacon; Mrs. Davies; Gertrude Davies;  
 Mrs. Falin; Mrs. Fender; Miss Margaret Haas; Vice- Chairman;  
 Mrs. Marryott, Treasurer; Mrs. Rozear; Winifred Richards,  
 Chairman; Mabel Sawyer, Publicity; Kathryn Vernon, Secretary.

Again we numbered THIRTEEN.

Letter from Mr. Bacon expressed his appreciation of his appointment as a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly for that Baha'i year, with the hope that it would be possible for him to be of some service to the Assembly, adding - "My mind is continually with you." This we did not doubt for no more sincere a Baha'i ever lived than that fine elderly gentleman- Mr. Walter L. Bacon, who told me how in the early days of the introduction of the Faith in New York City at times he even went hungry in order to be able to purchase a Baha'i book, and he never could understand why Jacksonville people were not willing to read and investigate, especially with free books athand.

In his home in South Jacksonville a nice public meeting was held during this year, some coming from St. Augustine to attend.

Winifred Richard was our delegate to the Wilmette Convention. Upon her return she, as Chairman, called a meeting of the Board members and gave a short talk on some of the Baha'i duties, as explained in Wilmette; then shared with us her Convention experiences while we enjoyed her fruit punch and cakes.

We particularly wish to mention how Orcella Rexford again returned to Jacksonville in April and, after a series of health classes in food science at the Oak Street Friday Musical Club, gave another of her fine Baha'i free lectures at 8 P.M. April 23 in the ball room of the Seminole Hotel. At that lecture she brought out how religion is progressive and, using blackboard, showed how the time prophecies given to Daniel in a vision foretold our calendar year 1844 when El Bab, the forerunner, as did John the Baptist, proclaimed the appearance of the Promised One in the years 1653 and 1963, as likewise proclaimed in Bible prophecies. Beautiful slides of Baha'i interests were also shown.

200 Baha'i pamphlets were distributed; also lists of Baha'i books in the three public libraries. Announcements were made of the Wednesday afternoon fireside inquiry classes at Winifred Richards', 628 Post Street, and the Thursday night firesides together with the weekly Sunday meetings at 707 Post. Two more free lectures in the Hotel were also announced by Orcella and no lecturer could have received a finer credential than she gave for Dr. Guy, the following week's speaker.

During Orcella's health lectures cards were passed around which all signed, 216 non-Baha'is attending. Out of this 216 only about 50 attended her Baha'i lecture, together with a possible additional 25 who had not heard her previously. It

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might be interesting to future generations of Baha'is to note that out of this 241 total, less than a dozen attended the following Baha'i Hotel lectures, proving beyond a doubt that many spiritually DEAD people were walking the Jacksonville streets. Twenty-five attended Dr. Guy's Hotel lecture on April 30th, composed of 7 Baha'is, one lady and two men from Orcella's lecture, the remainder strangers. On May 7th the third Baha'i lecture was held at the Hotel, when Mrs. Guy gave a beautiful talk on "The Path to God," after which several questions were asked by non-Baha'is. Then Mrs. Guy introduced Mr. E. H. Young, a Baha'i guest from Bristol, Florida, who gave a short history of the Faith. Present at this Hotel lecture - seven Baha'is, five nons.

Mr. Young attended the May 10th Wednesday afternoon class at 628 Post, and the Thursday evening and Sunday meetings at 707 Post. Although we always awaited the coming of some inquirer on these dates, they arrived but seldom.

We observed all 19-Day Feasts and we tried to make our public Feasts real festive occasions. The spiritual program of the 19-Day Feast held at Winifred's was conducted by Mrs. Fender. (May 17th).

Our May 21st meeting, dedicated to commemorating the declaration of El Bab, was an interesting one as so many took part. Mrs. Fender read something she had written on the subject; Mabel Sawyer read something out of a book; Winifred Richards spoke; Kathryn used blackboard to show geneology of the Bab, and layer cake was furnished by Miss Haas which was enjoyed by all, including our two guests.

A 19-Day Feast of particular note was held at home of Miss Haas, 1008 Barrs Street, on August 20th, when each one attending was presented with a 6-page pamphlet made by Miss Haas; each page covered with Baha'i selections, the cover decorated with Baha'i pictures -an undertaking which had taken much time.

During this period Mrs. Cooper, A Baha'i from Freemont, Ohio, called at the Baha'i Center, asking that some one call upon Mr. B. F. Cooper in Green Cove Springs, stating that they would form a study class there. Consequently in accordance with this request, Mrs. Harryott, a sweet Jacksonville Baha'i, and the writer one day set out for Green Cove Springs, Several miles away. There we found a cordial welcome from a most kindly gentleman. We left several Baha'i Pamphlets, also a New Era which seemed to delight him, and during our hour's visit most of the talk was on Baha'i subjects; he wishing to learn more of the Faith as his son, daughter-in-law and their two sons in Freemont, Ohio, were Baha'is.

The second visit with Mr. Cooper was on May 28th when, after dinner in St. Augustine, Mrs. Guy and the writer started

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back to Jacksonville via Green Cove Springs, when he had the opportunity of conversing with Mrs. Guy; we arriving in Jacksonville in time for evening meeting. The study class never materialized, account of ill health. What a happy thought; that for those who wish to find the truth the way is always open, no matter where they may be.

Mrs. Guy again invited Jacksonville and friends to share with them a Feast on Sunday, June 4th, her farewell party before leaving for the North. Fifteen happily accepted the invitation. The St. Augustine members present were Mrs. Shaw, Mr. Calhoun, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Larsen, C. Mae Thitchener, her brother Clarence Thitchener, Dr. and Mrs. Guy - a grand total of twenty four. After a delicious material feast, served at 1 P.M., Mr. Walter L. Bacon took pictures of the group. Then the Baha'i spiritual meeting was held, a memorable meeting in many ways, everyone taking part. We arrived back in Jacksonville 6:20, turned on the lights, dusted off the chairs and hopefully waited but no one came.

Outside of a very short period during the hot summers, while Dr. and Mrs. Guy were vacationing in their New Hampshire summer camp, and several of the local members were likewise vacationing roundabout, Jacksonville held weekly public meetings, perhaps it would be better to say that weekly public meetings were always advertised in newspapers, many times including selections from the Sacred Writings; advertised several times by radio, hundreds of times by postal cards; yet while the few strangers or acquaintances who did come liked us personally, although Baha'is, yet their love for God Almighty was not strong enough to make them willing to open their hearts and ask Him to guide them to the truth. Only once in a very great while did a stranger come from seeing newspaper ad, but the meetings were carried on. That Dr. or Mrs. Guy continued to make the almost weekly trips from St. Augustine to us, their spiritual children, throughout the years, proved their great love for Baha'u'llah.

Fall meetings were started October 1st, and happy was Jacksonville to again welcome Dr. Guy - returned from his northern vacation. Nine Baha'is and nine non-Baha'is greeted him. I, for one, always sat spellbound as he talked, listening to the glorious Baha'i truths as they rolled forth, easily, lovingly, so you never could doubt his love for Baha'u'llah. Never any outlines, the thoughts poured out in orderly succession. Frequently I took shorthand notes, hoping thus to impress some of the truths more firmly upon my mind. Looking back, I find I have five pages of single space typed notes from this evening's lecture. How often I wished that I had such a wonderful mind and memory, but all I could do was to pray and hope for improvement. I remember that always before a meeting he would sit quietly in a chair for a few moments, eyes closed. It was too sacred a time for one to intrude. Surely he was asking for help, that his message would sow seeds worthy of these latter days of God.

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At the following (Sunday) meeting Mrs. Guy was our guest speaker. At this meeting, also, was Miss Rina Gordon, a Baha'i from Montreal, Canada. Rina played some beautiful, appropriate selections, followed by an opening prayer read by Miss Haas, selections from Baha'i Scriptures and the Gleanings, then a lovely talk by Mrs. Guy with St. Luke 18:8 as her theme: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Then meeting was opened for questions and many were those asked by the ten "Nons" present. Most of them had attended many meetings before, and as they did not leave until 10:30 it proved again that they at least liked us, even though we were Baha'is.

When outside speakers were not available, Winifred and Kathryn took turns. We much preferred to sit and listen but Doctor never permitted us to forget that the more loving efforts we put forth, the greater the flow of love from Baha'u'llah to us.

Our Nov. 12th Feast, held at 707 Post Street, revolved around the divine station of Baha'u'llah and many of His statements and Bible prophecies fulfilled by His coming. Refreshments included cakes decorated with red roses, place cards showed red roses, His favorite flower, and everyone went home, but not until 11 P.M., with a beautiful red rose - as a reminder of Him.

One of our guests, a lady from Pittsburg, Pa., made us happy when she said, "This is the first time I have heard the Baha'i message, the meeting has been a revelation to me and when I reach home I will not forget, I am going to search to find the truth." We never heard more; we trust those were not idle words because a great joy awaits all those who do search and find.

Other visiting Baha'is during the year included Dr. Gayne V. Gregory, San Francisco, Calif; Helen S. Anderson (Joy B. Elgar) New York City; Mr. Walter Goodfellow, Newark, N.J; E. H. Young, Bristol, Fla; Mrs. Iva Smack, Muskegon, Mich.

Our hearts were saddened this year by the loss of two of our faithful and very sincere Baha'is:

Baha'i services October 19th for Mrs. Charles Davies, a musician of great natural ability, an organist for 25 years in Jacksonville's First Presbyterian Church, who so willingly and beautifully played at our meetings, dedicating her God-given gift back to Him, and proving her faith in Baha'u'llah in so many other ways.

Mrs. Carol Falin also passed on in October. I well remember one Sunday in 1933 when in answering door bell we found her standing there. How happy we were when she said she had heard of the Baha'i message in Buffalo, N.Y. 25 years before. Had heard and believed but had never joined any group, and then she happily expressed her desire to join in Jacksonville. And now, Mrs. Falin also had left us.

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Within the Baha'i writings we are told that death has been made a messenger of joy for us, therefore we must not grieve. Rather it is ours to carry on, each in his own way, dedicating any gifts given to us by God to His service; never forgetting that in serving humanity we are serving God.

My Baha'i electric sign was shining brightly from its window each time there was to be any Baha'i activity. Then Winifred thought it would be nice to have it turned on every evening, she making the suggestion that I be allowed \$1.00 per month toward electricity. So this arrangement was put into practice for a short time and although for long afterward the little sign did its best, shining forth from dusk to almost midnight each night, the number of inquirers was not increased.

Winifred did her best to keep the home fires burning. A meeting held at her apartment, 628 Post Street, on Dec. 31st, although in reality the observance of a 19-Day Feast, was turned into a "Baha'i Tea" - which several outsiders enjoyed while they listened to the Baha'i message.

It was my privilege to spend the New Year season, December 30 and 31, in Miami, Fla. The friends who invited me, feeling it might be a lonely anniversary date for me, although not Baha'is made me feel free to attend Baha'i activities. So on Dec. 30th I enjoyed a friendly Saturday supper with a Baha'i couple, who afterward took me to the 19-Day Feast, where about 32 were present. Seeing a Baha'i from another locality, they requested that I be their Sunday evening speaker. It is never right to refuse, so I made my first appearance outside of Jacksonville and St. Augustine. About 35 were present at the public meeting. Afterward, an elderly Baha'i gentleman said, "I was thinking, as you were speaking, if Baha'u'llah, when He was in the dungeon that you spoke of, could have looked forward and heard you tonight, how happy it would have made Him."

It is my hope that in the years to come Baha'u'llah may be made VERY happy with the Jacksonville community.

A new year is always associated with hopes for happy days and new opportunities, so most appropriate was Dr. Guy's lecture theme for Jacksonville's January 7th meeting - "The hope of the World."

As was their custome since 1932, Dr. and Mrs. Guy came together or took turns, weekly coming the 40 miles from St. Augustine, cheering and encouraging the struggling Jacksonville believers.

But January was not all bright and sunny - for during this month our dearly loved and respected elderly Baha'i Mr. Walter L. Bacon passed away. He frequently was unable to attend meetings, but a more staunch Baha'i or one with more love in his heart for Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha never lived. Truly one of God's gentlemen - the one who willing many times went hungry, in order to be able to purchase another Baha'i book. As I think back I still can see him gently turning their pages with, oh, such a loving touch.

At our February 2nd public meeting Winifred gave talk on "The Oneness of the Prophets", followed by one on "The Price" by Dr. Guy who had unexpectedly arrived.

As members of the Regional Teaching Committee, Mrs. Guy, Winifred and Kathryn opened a series of four weekly Sunday afternoon meetings at the Green Tree Inn, Daytona Beach, beginning March 31st. Meetings were advertised in the Daytona Beach papers and by mailing specially printed attractive cards. First speaker, Mrs. Guy, followed by Winifred Richards, Charles Mason Remy, and Kathryn Vernon. Audience - 2 or 3 at a time.

In the spring, when Miss Margaret Haas formed a public speaking class at her home and invited Winifred and me to attend, we gladly accepted as each one was permitted to choose her subject, therefore an opportunity to broadcast some one of the Baha'i truths.

New-Rúz Feast was held at 707 Post Street but Winifred Richards was hostess to 15 non-Baha'is and 7 Baha'is. Yellow daffodils and jasmine decorated the tables. Upon arrival of all guests Winifred explained the Baha'i calendar. After all were seated we enjoyed a regular dinner party from delicious chicken salad, potato chips, hot rolls, tomato frozen salad, olives -ripe and stuffed, etc., etc., ice cream and pretty blue and yellow flowers decorating the individual square cakes. Afterward we adjourned to another room, each guest read their placecard selections from "The Gleanings", then Kathryn told of God's spiritual Feasts, spread out anew for all humanity.

This just shows what our public Feasts were like- plenty of material refreshments, always topped off with the choicest brand of God's spiritual food. We tried to make these public Feasts a joyous spiritual occasion for non-Baha'is, inviting all acquaintances whom we hoped might become further interested. Never did they refuse our invitations.

For Ridván we were again guests of St. Augustine, where a real spiritual feast was always held after the material.

Kathryn was hostess for the May 23rd gathering held in memory of the Declaration of El Bab, about 40 present. Center piece was an open gate; place cards with drawings of an open gate, the word "B A E" over it, and selected Baha'i quotations for each.

On April 21st the following were elected members of our Assembly: Winifred Richards, Chairman. Mrs. Lida S. Marryott, Treasurer. Mabel B. Sawyer, News Service. Miss Margaret Haas, Chairman of Feasts. Gertrude Davies. Henry Frederick Blackstone, (a new member- Jan. 19th) Mrs. Louise B. Fender. Mrs. Pearl Rozear. Kathryn L. Vernon, Secretary.

Mrs. A. M. Powell was received into membership on May 17th. Two of our members, Mr. and Mrs. M. Q. Arnold, left Jacksonville during the year to reside at Fernandina Beach, Florida, so our membership by end of the year was 10 (ten).

Winifred was our elected delegate to the Annual Convention in Wilmette, Ill. As usual, we later received a good report of same.

Under the faithful direction of our News Service Chairman, Miss Mabel B. Sawyer, weekly notices appeared in our principal newspaper, the Florida Times-Union, fully covering all Baha'i activities. In fact, during the previous seven years they never refused to publish our notices nor the quite lengthy excerpts from the Baha'i sacred writings which were usually included. Thanks to them, the Words of Baha'u'llah were distributed, free of charge to us, over approximately one-half of the state of Florida.

After one of our Sunday meetings a Jewish friend, who attended frequently, offered me some money. I explained there was never even a collection, all a free offering of love for God. At next meeting I was much surprised to find that the lady had brought a large package of ice cream. Abdu'l Baha tells us to refuse a gift would wound a gracious heart. We had no desire to hurt anyone, so the meeting ended in a real happy party for all, including the eleven "nons" attending - thanks to a friendly friend.

As previously recorded, it was Orcella Rexford who came to Jacksonville in 1932, held health classes, afterward gave a free Baha'i lecture in the Seminole Hotel, at which time she introduced Dr. W. B. Guy, who then opened a series of Baha'i lectures. I did not attend Orcella's Baha'i lectures nor her classes, but I was told one hundred people were enrolled in her classes. June 5th of this year, 1940, she returned to Jacksonville and at the same Hotel gave another free Baha'i lecture. Meeting was well published via 3 newspapers, 200 invitations mailed out, and many personal phone calls made. Her lecture - "What all the

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World Waits For," as usual was fine, only 30 non-Baha'is attended. Most of them handed in their names with the promise that they would attend other meetings. Although they were later extended both personal and written invitations no further interest developed.

As usual, Dr. and Mrs. Guy spent about two months each summer in New Hampshire and during that time we, in Jacksonville, had to shift for ourselves.

During this summer word came that Doctor was seriously ill, a heart attack, and not expected to live. We prayed and waited, and prayed, and in some miraculous way he managed to return but never again was he able to come to a Jacksonville meeting.

Just before the Sept. 27th 19-Day Feast Mrs. Guy phoned that Doctor wanted us all to celebrate the Feast with him in St. Augustine. So there we held our holy Feast, he joining with us from his cot. Just before we left he said, "I have seen Baha'u'llah; I am going." Trying to dispel the gloom I said, "If you have seen Baha'u'llah that must mean that you will get better." "No," he replied, "I am going."

When I answered the phone early the evening of October 3rd it was to learn that the greatest joy bringer for all true Baha'is, DEATH, had removed from our midst our beloved friend and spiritual leader, Dr. Walter Bryant Guy of St. Augustine, Fla.- the truest friend that any Jacksonville Community will ever know. His knowledge of the Baha'i teachings and their spiritual significance was profound. We, indeed, lost a great teacher.

Born in Henley, England, Dr. Guy migrated alone to America when 19 years of age. In 1919, giving up a fine medical position with brilliant prospects for future advancements in Boston, Mass. he came to Florida, his great desire that he might give the Baha'i message to the Negro race. In the early days, because he did give the message to Professor Collier and also Miss Blocker, the very refined and cultured members of the Florida Normal & Industrial Institute, then located in St. Augustine, and to many other refined and educated members of that race, he was threatened by the KKK with tar and feathering if he did not stop. Because he did not stop, Baha'u'llah protected and favored him in many ways, and he continued to spread the Baha'i message wherever he found anyone willing to listen.

It was in March, 1932, that Dr. Guy gave his Baha'i lecture which I heard. During a great part of the following years weekly trips were made by him to attend our Jacksonville meetings, years of tiresome but loving service on his part in the service of his Lord, that Jacksonville might share with him the delight and honor of Knowing his Beloved; years which would have brought discouragement to many others when frequently, at the end of the journey, only empty chairs were found. But what a gloriously happy night it was when, on April 21, 1935, he helped us to organize the Jacksonville Baha'i Assembly. Then more years of patient teaching and counselling, for Dr. Guy always was anxious that Jacksonville learn to "stand firmly upon its own feet."

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It was a beautiful service at the home in St. Augustine. The Baha'i sacred words and the soulful music of the choir from the Normal School filled the rooms; then a drive to Jacksonville. I owned a burial plot, needed only one side, and had once offered the other half for use by Dr. and Mrs. Guy if ever they desired. So we drove to Jacksonville and there Baha'i prayers were held at the graveside.

That was all we could do. So very little for one who had done so much for Jacksonville.

Later Mrs. Guy and I erected a Baha'i monument, a memorial not so much to Dr. Guy and my Mother as to their Beloved, Baha'u'llah, so that all who saw it would know that some one in Jacksonville in those early years had love for Baha'u'llah and faith in Him - the Promised One of God.

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On October 26th I had the honor of giving the first Baha'i Jacksonville broadcast. The 15 minute time, furnished by courtesy of WJAX, the city owned station, was the reward of a year of effort. It was listed as a "Baha'i program," I asked the radio station to please not follow by any jazz music, as was frequently done and, to my delight, when I finished I heard the soft, sweet strains of "Ave Maria", then the announcer was most gracious, referring interested inquirers to the Center for further information. The newspaper ads called attention to program and time and we know it was heard as far away as Daytona and New Smyrna Beach, but no inquiries were received from anyone.

The following year we inquired again if they had time to spare but was told that all free religious time had been assigned and was under the direction of the Ministerial Alliance. They gave me the name and address of the director, with the assurance that if the Ministerial Alliance was willing to let us use some of their time, the radio station would be very glad to list us. So I called upon the Ministerial Alliance representative, with a heart full of that feeling called brotherly love and a brand new copy of "New Era" as a gift for him, feeling sure that he, a minister, would want to learn the truth about God's latest Revelation.

Yes, he had heard something about the Baha'i so-called Religion, it was some form of yogism; he had never read any of the writings and neither did he intend to. He showed very plainly that he did not desire to talk to me and when I

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offered to leave the "New Era" with him he positively refused to accept. So I left, fully realizing that only God is capable of handling such prejudices.

Shortly after I accepted the Baha'i Faith Dr. Guy asked me to contact the leading Jewish Rabbi, hoping that possibly he would plan a time when Doctor could address his congregation. It is nice to remember that the Rabbi was very courteous, even though not interested in investigating.

Jacksonville tried to sow seeds and we were always grateful for outside helpers, as on Nov. 10th when we were honored by presence of Louis G. Gregory, Eliot, Maine, that fine Baha'i of whom Abdu'l Baha spoke so highly. He stayed with his friend, Rev. Ford, Pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church on Hogan Street. A Sunday morning sermon in that Church was delivered by Mr. Gregory and the Baha'i message was given "straight from the shoulder." He afterward told us that when he saw five members of the Baha'i Assembly in the audience it had inspired him to do so, even though the Pastor had cautioned him against it. At the close of the service, however, the Pastor, Rev. Ford, invited anyone interested to meet with Mr. Gregory at 3 P.M. in the office of Dr. C. Frederick Duncan, for a round table discussion.

Two years previously we had contacted Dr. Duncan, one of the leading Negro physicians of Jacksonville, had been to his home for a Baha'i discussion, and he afterward read the "New Era". Upon informing him of the coming of Mr. Gregory he said he would be welcome to come to his office on Broad street for a Sunday afternoon meeting.

At that afternoon meeting were 3 Jacksonville Baha'is: Winifred Richards, Mrs. Powell, and Kathryn, together with 5 friends of Dr. Duncan, including Eartha White of the White Mission, Dr. Waters, a dentist, and a Puerto Rican whom I had met previously at a Baha'i meeting in St. Augustine, and whom I overheard telling Dr. Duncan, his friend, "This is the message I was telling you about; I believe it is the only way out for us."

If anyone accepts Baha'u'llah for merely what they themselves can get out of it, little will be their gain. Only when we love Baha'u'llah with all our hearts, sincerely believing in Him, that He is the Promised One of God, and then trying to prove their love by service to Him, will blessings flow to us. Mr. Gregory that afternoon explained the teachings lovingly, beautifully, but no one was sufficiently interested to accept the Jacksonville's Assembly offer of further inquiry classes.

8 P.M. that evening the Jacksonville public meeting was held at 707 Post Street, Mr. Gregory our speaker - a full day and a very happy day, having such a sincere Baha'i as our guest.

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We like to remember, also, other out-of-town guests during the year: the visit of Mr. Voost, Chicago, Ill, Jan.7th: how at our Jan.14th Sunday meeting Dr. and Mrs. A. M. Shields, from Nebraska, told of what the Baha'i Faith meant to them: Mrs. Grace Geary, Moncton, N.B., Canada:Feb. 25th: Mrs. Elva H. Peebles, Nashville, Tenn: Miss Rinal Gordon, Montreal, Canada May 4th, Wm. de Forge, Teaneck, N.J. March 24th, on his return from teaching trip to Cuba; and the fine spiritual talk Sunday evening Dec.1st by Mr. Frederick Kluss of Detroit, Mich. Monday evening he came again to 707 Post and at that time several, including Mr. and Mrs. Claude Layman, from Miami, had the pleasure of viewing about 50 pictures taken in Texas during his pioneer work there.

It had been Dr. Guy's custom each year to have a dinner party on Thanksgiving, celebrating his birthday and the Day of the Covenant, in memory of Abdu'l Baha. This year, in memory of the Doctor, Mrs. Guy extended an invitation to the Jacksonville Baha'is for a Christmas dinner and, as her special guests, she sent a letter to the Army Camp, asking them to extend her invitation to 20 of the boys who might be in St.

Augustine on that day, thereby hoping to make some of the privates who came every week to St. Augustine a little less lonely over the Christmas season.

Christmas day came. In the parlor was a pretty lighted Christmas tree, with favors for all the boys. All was in readiness and each Baha'i awaited her opportunity to serve. The dinner hour arrived but no boys, so we waited, waited and waited. Finally, after an hour and a half of waiting, especially since the invitation had not been acknowledged by anyone, Mrs. Guy decided no one was coming and we might as well eat our own dinner. So the Baha'is sat down to the well-laden table and enjoyed themselves. I was going to write "to the full" and why not? We were literally just that- with turkey and all the fixings.

While we were eating the last bits of our dessert, the door bell rang and there stood - not the privates we had expected -but 20 hungry officers and behind them one little private who had overheard the officers talking and had followed. They were our guests, even though two hours late, so were invited in.

Then what hustling there was, clearing table, washing dishes, resetting table and, happily, finding enough of everything for their plates. They all seemed to heartily enjoy it and ate until every turkey bone was picked clean. Then each went back to duty with a gift from the Christmas tree and a little Baha'i booklet in his pocket.

January 18th, 1941

Dear Baha'i Friend:

The Guardian has just received the copy of the Resolution passed by the St. Augustine Baha'i Assembly, deploring the loss of our distinguished co-worker & pioneer, the late Dr. Walter B. Guy, & wishes me to hasten in conveying to you, to your fellow-members & to all the believers in St. Augustine the expression of his heartfelt sympathy in the heavy & indeed cruel blow sustained by your Community,

The death of Dr. Guy is undoubtedly a severe loss to the Cause not only in St. Augustine, but throughout the States, inasmuch as through his long standing & invaluable services in the teaching field he had come to occupy a very high rank among Baha'i teachers & pioneers in North America, by all of whom he was greatly loved & respected.

It is your Assembly, however, that feels most particularly the departure of this great soul, as it was through his efforts that it was first established, and now that he is no longer in your midst, leaving behind such an aching void in your Community, you should take courage & comfort at the thought that his memory is still, & indeed will ever remain, fresh in your hearts, thus sparing you to faithfully walk in his footsteps, & carry further the great task to which he had so nobly & so resolutely dedicated his entire life.

The Guardian will fervently pray that the friends in St. Augustine may live up to those high expectations and that as a result the Cause in that Center may be further extended and consolidated, & your community develop into the most prosperous & leading Baha'i center in the South.

Wishing you & them all hearty good wishes & greetings,

Yours in His Service

H. Rabbani

Copy of letter written to  
Miss C. Mae Thitchener  
St. Augustine, Fla.

Copy of Tablet translation to-

Dr. Bryant Guy,  
Roxbury, Mass.

Upon him be Baha-O-llah El Abha!  
He is God.

O thou who are firm in the Covenant:

Thy letter contained most cheering good news and indicated the oneness of spiritual state that exists amongst the believers. His Holiness Baha-o-llah- may my life be a ransom to His believers- spent the days of His life amidst infinite hardships and afflictions. He quaffed from every cup of trial and tasted every poison of persecution, so that the Flag of the Oneness of the world of humanity may wave over all the regions, especially amongst the believers.

Now, because in Boston the Candle of Unity and Concord is ignited, it has become the means of the commendation of the dwellers of the Kingdom of Abha and the cause of the happiness of my heart. I hope that through the Bestowals of the Beauty of Abha this love and unity may become more revealed day by day, confirming thee to become the bright candle of the assemblage of Unity and assisting thee to raise the call of the Kingdom of God.

The friends of God must sacrifice their lives for the sake of each other, to such an extent that the people may become astonished and exclaim: What love and amity flow from the hearts of the Baha'is for each other!

Upon thee be Bahá-El-Abhá!

(signed) Abdul Baha Abbas

(Translated by Mirza Ahmad Schrab, April 20, 1914.)

Home. Abdul Baha, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

On Thursday evening, Feb. 26th, Mrs. Dorothy Beecher Baker, Lima, Ohio, great-granddaughter of Henry Ward Beecher, gave a lecture in Jacksonville. The Windsor Hotel granted us the use of their charming parlow for this lecture. It was advertised in three newspapers, the Times-Union running two lengthy notices, it was also broadcast over three separate radio stations, and over 200 invitations mailed out.

Mrs. Baker's lecture - "After the War - What?" was followed by four others at the Windsor: they were likewise advertised through newspapers and radio. Mrs. Frances Guy, St. Augustine, began the series by lecture - "What is a Baha'i?" Second week, Kathryn Vernon, "Are Bible Prophecies Being Fulfilled in This Day?" Third, Winifred Richards, "The Promise of the Ages." Fourth and final lecture was delivered by Mrs. Guy, using as her subject "The Valley of Search." An average of 19 people, including Baha'is, attended each lecture, but each evening showing practically a different group. After close of lectures no further interest was evidenced.

As of possible interest to future Baha'i generations: When thirteen Dorothy had the privilege of meeting Abdu'l Baha during his visit to America. The majesty and kindness of that great person made a deep impression upon her and affected the entire course of her life. She was an ardent Baha'i from her youth. When she grew up she was appointed one of the first Hands-of-the-Cause in America. She, her husband, Frank Baker, and her mother, "Aunty Lou" Beecher, had planned to pioneer in Grenada during 1954, and they were on their way to meet Dorothy in Trinidad, on her return from teaching tour in India, when they learned that on Jan. 10, her plane had exploded and crashed into the Mediterranean Sea. They briefly returned to Lima, Ohio, then left with his two children, William King and Winifred Louise. Reaching Italy he hired a boat, went out to the approximate spot where plane went down, near the island of Elba, and there they read prayers and cast flowers upon the waters. A memorial service also was held in Rome. The body was never recovered.

Kathryn's 35 guests at Ridván enjoyed a jolly supper, followed by an impressive spiritual hour, Mrs. Guy our honored speaker. Many times our guests assured us of their enjoyment of this and many similar occasions, but they proved by their absence from regular meetings that the material feasts were what filled their hearts with joy.

On April 21st our elected officers remained the same. Winifred was our delegate to the 33rd Annual Convention in Wilmette, feeling sure she would attend and bring us back a fine report, which she delivered on May 1st.

Baha'i fellowships meetings were organized by Winifred and Kathryn in May at Jacksonville Beach, 18 miles from city of Jacksonville, where we met weekly for a month at the home of an inquirer. Regular attendance totaled 4 or 5 each week although meetings were advertised in the Jacksonville Beach newspaper.

A letter of June 23rd from Mrs. Lucille H. Buffin, Miami,

informed us of appointment on Regional Teaching Committee of Mrs. Guy, Winifred and Kathryn, along with two Miami believers. In July the two Jacksonville appointees spent three days in Miami, in order to consult with the other members of the RTC.

Mrs. Eliza S. Marryott, who accepted Baha'i even before the Assembly was formed, and who had lived at 707 Post for several years, was in hospital when I left, evidently recovering from operation. When I returned I found she was not expected to live. She passed on July 10th. Winifred and I conducted her Baha'i services on the 12th. But it was hard to realize she had left us. Why, she was our May 17th Feast hostess. Such a sweet, sincere Baha'i, always ready and willing to help in every possible way. 707 Post was lonely without her.

In July Herbert E. Bacon, son of that fine Baha'i gentleman, Mr. Walter L. Bacon, signed membership card.

Letter from Doris Lohse, Washington, D.C., asked me to meet her Sept. 1st as her boat from Baltimore to Miami stopped at Jacksonville. A nice visit at 707 Post Street resulted before she continued on her trip.

On Oct. 27th Miss Jeanne Negar Bolles was in Jacksonville, addressed our public meeting and showed movie pictures of her 16-months trip through So. America. She remained for a 19-Day Feast when she took charge of the spiritual program. She also showed her pictures at the home of Mrs. Sylvanus Hart, 100 W. Ashley Street, the gathering composed of about 20 of Mrs. Hart's colored friends and the Baha'i message was indirectly given during the showing of the pictures.

If, as Jeanne wrote in my Baha'i Guest Book, it was a joy for her to meet the Jacksonville believers in a Baha'i home, she tripled the joy for us with her sincerity and radiance at that time.

Although Jeanne was born in Washington, Conn., we found out she had not stayed there all the time when she told that she and her mother had travelled in 21 countries of Europe, the Balkans and the near East for 2 years, also in Iceland, Borneo, Central and South America. Her mother, J. Rúh-ánquíz Bolles, is an aunt of our Guardian's wife, Rúhiyyih Khánum, Jeanne a cousin.

A get-together Sunday supper was held at the Center in December, to which event outsiders were invited.

Other visitors during 1941: Miss Josie Pinson, Georgetown, S.C.; Sgt. Joel Marangella, Company A., 88th Medical Battalion, then stationed at Camp Elanding, Fla. (our speaker on Dec. 21st); Miss Nell Payne, Lima, Ohio; Frederick A. Cluss, Detroit, Mich. (our speaker Dec. 19th) Never were our visitors permitted to just sit and rest, they all were called upon to do their part.

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Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Tainter and Mrs. Loulie Mathews, Colorado Springs, Colo, were our guests in November and on Sunday afternoon the 16th Mrs. Mathews gave a lecture in the Roosevelt Hotel. Only about 6 non-Baha'is attended and these came rather through personal invitation than from newspaper notices. In the evening Mrs. Mathews spoke at the home of Mrs. Guy in St. Augustine and most of the Jacksonville believers drove down to attend. Mrs. Mathews' sincerity was felt by all.

As noted, several public lectures were held in Hotels during the year; other public meetings, weekly study or inquiry classes at 628 Post or 707 Post. In December three of the public meetings were transferred to 628, to escape "flu" epidemic at 707 Post. With exception of about three months in Summer, papers carried invitation to anyone wishing to investigate to attend Wednesday afternoon inquiry meetings and "tea" at Winifred's - 628 Post St. These were eventually discontinued as Winifred said she "was tired of drinking tea all by herself."

All meetings were regularly advertised, the meeting places kept open. We still carried on although often only the Baha'i "faithful few" attended.

Thus rounded out another year with our membership -  
Ten. (10).

In January a series of six lectures were started in the Casa Marina Hotel, Jacksonville Beach, the room graciously donated by the Hotel Management. These lectures were given by members of the Regional Teaching Committee - Mrs. Frances M. Guy, St. Augustine, Winifred Richard and Kathryn Vernon, Jacksonville, and were, in reality, a follow-up by the two last named of lectures held by them the previous year. They were advertised weekly in the Beach newspaper, as well as under Jacksonville Beach meetings in the Times-Union, and by personal invitation. Six people attended the lectures faithfully - three ladies from the previous year's classes, and three new ones. When the lectures closed the six expressed a desire to continue the study, so five weekly classes were conducted by Winifred and Kathryn, with two of the Jacksonville believers, Miss Margaret Haas and Miss Mabel Sawyer, frequently attending.

January 28th H. Frederick Blackstone Jr., transferred to Ft. Pleasant, N.J.

In January of this year there came to our door Private Clyde W. Everett, Army Air Base and 78th Bomber Squadron Barracks #62, Jacksonville, Fla, formerly an isolatee believer in Kingston, N.Y. As he thought he might be here some time he asked to join and of course it was our pleasure to welcome him.

During first week of March, the St. Augustine W U T U held a Peace Forum in their Civic Center. As Mrs. Guy presided over the forum, she invited me to be one of the speakers. Just another chance to spread the Baha'i teachings.

Our Naw-Rúz Feast, held at the Baha'i Center, was given by the Jacksonville members of the Florida Teaching Committee with particular thought to the Beach friends. It was their first Baha'i Feast. The event was a happy and spiritual one. Thirteen non-Baha'is were numbered among the guests.

Our nine Assembly members elected on April 21st were:  
 Gertrude Davies & Mrs. Fender, Feasts; Herbert Bacon;  
 Clyde Everett: Miss Margaret Haas, Treasurer;  
 Mrs. Pearl Rozear: Mabel Sawyer, Publicity;  
 Winifred Richards, Chairman: Kathryn Vernon, Secretary.

December 12th Feast was held at Winifred's. We arrived early and after the spiritual Feast enjoyed Winifred's hospitality, - really a supper; then all went across street to 707 Post for the regular Sunday advertised meeting. No outsiders came, but meeting was carried through.

The spiritual program for our Dec. 31st Feast (held at 628 Post) was conducted by Private Everett in a manner which proved that he was proud to be an enlisted soldier in the ranks of Baha'u'llah.

At this Feast also we were especially happy to have with us Mrs. Sylvanus H. Hart (Emma T. Hart) of 500 W. Ashley St.

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our first believer from the Negro race. We do not, however, take this credit to ourselves, for Mrs. Hart, long years ago, away back in 1922, received the Baha'i message from Dr. W.B. Guy of St. Augustine. She was a friend of Prof. Collier and Miss Blocker of the Florida Normal & Industrial Institute in St.

Augustine and through that contact Dr. Guy opened Baha'i meetings in Mrs. Hart's Jacksonville home. She accepted and held firm although the only member of her race in Jacksonville. She was at one time recorded as a believer but through some misunderstanding her name was dropped. We were happy for the privilege of reinstating it.

The material Feast was contributed by various believers and we all went home inwardly satisfied - both materially and spiritually.

During year we were honored by visits from the following Baha'is: March 14th- Mr. & Mrs. Hansen (D. Irving & Florence) Eaton Rouge, La. June 12th - Mrs. Charlotte Z. Gillen, from Chelan, Washington. June 14th- Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Babo, Atlanta, Ga. The fact that Mr. Babo was a nationally known speaker and commentator on international affairs enabled him to secure time for a fine Jacksonville broadcast which he closed with "Prayer for All Nations."

During the year our 19-Day Feasts were observed and, with the exception of a brief period during the summer, weekly Sunday even meetings, also study classes held. One public meeting was held at home of Miss Haas, Barrs St., the remainder at 707 Post St. Mrs. Frances B. Guy from St. Augustine was frequently one of our speakers; at other times we all attempted to do our bit.

At end of the year we numbered - eleven.

When we looked back over year April 21, 1942 to April 21, 1943, with its labor strikes, its rationing, food shortage and intense starvation on the other side of the ocean, the conflicts of its World War, with the majority of the peoples of the world not realizing what it was all about, we could indeed say - "How nice it is to be a Baha'is", for in our hearts we knew that "these strifes, these ruinous wars shall cease, and the most great peace shall come."

Amidst this world turmoil our little community of Jacksonville Baha'is "held firm." Our 19-Day Feasts were observed at home of Miss Margaret Haas, Barrs Street, or at 628 or 707 Post Street, the various members contributing to the material and spiritual portions. A Tuesday evening study class was held at Winifred's; public meetings each Sunday evening at 707 Post, with exception of a summer vacation.

To these public meetings came sailors and soldiers. Some were Baha'is, some were not. Some came often, some came but once, then, with courageous hearts, went their way to do their part in the line of duty.

During January 19th Feast letters from the N S A received (Read) since our last 19-Day Feast, all in reference to cablegrams from our Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, expressing his great pleasure and appreciation of the efforts of the American believers in completing the exterior of the Wilmette Temple even before the end of the allotted 7-year plan in 1944.

January 19th Eulalie Haas signified her desire to become enrolled as a believer and our spiritual Feast Feb. 29th was so beautifully conducted by Eulalie you might have thought that she had done it many times before.

Winifred was again elected our delegate to the National Convention. Our officers remained the same. The enrollment of Rollie Merritt on April 29th again brought our number to 13. It was interesting to look back to the night when our Assembly was first formed in year 1935 - with 13 members. Many the changes since that first enrollment, and we were once again back to 13 community members. But we were not superstitious; we were waiting to see if 13 was to be our lucky number.

At one Feast Louise Fender donated a pound of coffee, a great treat for the coffee lovers in those days of rationing, a treat which they enjoyed during many following Feasts. Likewise greatly appreciated her homemade ice cream - even though there was a shortage of ice in Jacksonville and commercial ice cream seemed to be "out" for the duration.

Feb. 7th 19-Day Feast was held 5 PM at Winifred's. Present: Winifred Richards, Claude Everett, Mrs. Fender, Miss Margaret Haas, Eulalie Haas, Gertrude Davies, Mabel Sawyer, Kathryn Vernon. Mrs. Fender in charge spiritual Feast. During business section Gertrude made motion that the spiritual programs of the 19-Day Feasts be hereafter in charge of and lead by those believers who

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do not or have not as yet taken part as speakers at the regular weekly public meetings - her idea being that the members, by taking charge of those spiritual programs would gradually gain courage enough so they would be willing to take their rightful places in the public meetings. This motion brought forth quite a discussion, some thinking that the "public meeting speakers" possibly might be trying to shirk their duty at the 19-Day Feasts - or might it have been the non-public meeting speakers were trying to shirk their duty ?? The motion was, however, eventually carried, each person realizing the blessed promise of help given by Baha'u'llah to all those who arise to do their bit. Refreshments among other things again contained cups of that **relished** item - coffee.

Clyde Everett, speaker for Feb. 21st public meeting, told of the various "Cycles of Civilization" down to present time, and how the coming of Baha'u'llah ushered in a new civilization. This was Clyde's first talk at a public meeting. He confessed afterward he "felt nervous" but "not as nervous" as he had when he took charge of his first 19-Day Feast spiritual program. Had he not told us his secret, we would never have known it. Clyde also gave talk July 23rd on "The Hidden Words."

It was decided not to make our Naw-Rúz Feast a big affair as in former years, for we had sadly discovered that people cared more for the material feast and the social contacts than for the all-important spiritual Feast, so we planned this year to make it a special occasion for our Jacksonville Beach friends who were interested in the Baha'i teachings. Three of them attended.

Shortly before the appointed hour, Gertrude Davies phoned that a soldier, a stranger, had come to her door, she had given him the Baha'i message - could she bring him to the Feast? He came - a Mexican. He stayed very much within himself at first, as he later explained not knowing what to expect, "whether he was being taken in." Almost his first statement was "I never could accept your religion, my people are Catholics." We told him he did not have to accept anything. During the material repast he began to thaw out, talking of his home, his people, his work.

Afterward we sat around in a circle, each in turn read the Baha'i selection from his placecard, then we went around the circle again, each one explaining their understanding of their placecard message, or enlarging upon it. Our Mexican friend would not read until he had been assured that his doing so would in no way bind him to anything. Then he read and asked a question, followed by intelligent question after question, until finally, before the evening was over, he said - I LIKE your religion, now that I understand about it." and we, as Baha'is know that so would everyone like our religion, if they only "understood about it."

On April 21st our elected members remained the same.

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June 24th Feast, held at Winifred's. Present: Gertrude Davies, Clyde Everett, Mrs. Fender, Margaret Haas, Eulalie Haas, Mabel Sawyer, Kathryn Vernon; Mrs. Fender our hostess. Her spiritual Feast consisted of selections from the Hidden Words and the Gleanings; her material feast cake and a ginger ale soda with homemade icecream.

Dr. Guy use to tell us that even though we served only a glass of water and a toothpick in Baha'u'llah's name, it would be accepted by Him as a Feast in His honor. At some of our meetings or Feasts we even had a punch bowl filled with punch, but without intoxicants, in accordance with the commands of God as found within the Baha'i sacred writings; and never did we imbibe a cocktail or such on the side. They were God's Feasts, a time dedicated to His holy memory.

During business meeting Mabel made motion that the public Sunday meetings be continued throughout the summer. The public would thus be reminded of the Baha'i Faith, through the weekly newspaper notices, and it would give the believers an opportunity to turn the meeting hour into a study class, provided no outsiders arrived. Motion was carried, thus we were provided with plenty of study time. If Feast days fell on Sundays we would hold them early at 628, then adjourn at 7:30 and over to 707 for the public meeting. During this year Winifred also advertised Tuesday night inquiry meetings.

At one Feast Gertrude Davies showed a little note book which she said she always carried with her, in which she jotted down names and addresses of those strangers met on bus, or in other places to whom she had given the Baha'i message and later sent them meeting notices. Gertrude did not expect to have her name recorded here, but her method shows the persevering attitude of one of Jacksonville's "pioneer" members.

No outsiders came for the Sunday, July 11th meeting, so we, among ourselves, enjoyed the beautiful selections which Eulalie had chosen on the power of the word of God, Afterward, as our hostess, we were served limeade and cake. Meeting was held on the porch of 707 Post Street where, after a sultry day, the breezes were greatly enjoyed - but not the mosquitoes.

Sunday, Aug. 15th public meeting date but no outsiders; this time we held a study class. For our September Feasts Mabel chose for all beautiful and instructive selections from "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah."

In October I received a card from a Georgia Baha'i advising that one, Pacora Blue Mountain, a Peruvian of Inca ancestry, was to be in Jacksonville with the Ringling Brothers Circus. So on October 30th I took Winifred and Louise to the circus grounds and in the sideshow tent we located Blue Mountain with his Brazilan group. They were in the midst of their act when we entered so, while waiting, I spoke to a very sweet faced young girl, Fredda, born without legs, only a trunk, no hands, and parts of arms only to elbows. Her sweet, refined mother was with her.

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To the tent I had taken a big, pretty red, juicy apple, which was to be my Baha'i love offering to Blue Mountain. But Freida won my heart. When I asked if she liked apples, her face lighted up as she said "Oh yes." so to her mother went Blue Mountain's apple for Freida. When I mentioned I had brought the apple for Blue Mountain they both smiled and said- "He is so kind. He is always doing a kindness for us. Whenever we make a change he always carries Freida and he once gave us his room, when we could not find one, and he went without." It is my pleasure to mention Pacora Blue Mountain here, as his many kindnesses to a sweet, unfortunate girl proved him a true Baha'i, living his life as Baha'u'llah wishes us all to live ours.

Blue Mountain mentioned he was going to St. Augustine, so via phone to Mrs. Guy arrangements were made for a Baha'i meeting at her home, he to be the guest speaker. A carload from Jacksonville also greeted him at that meeting. The following Sunday he was also our guest speaker for our Sunday public meeting. In my Baha'i guest book he wrote -

"It was a glorious night - Nov.11,1943- thanks to Miss Vernon."

Two years later, in August 1945, while in New York City, I attended a Baha'i meeting at Mr. and Mrs. Saffa Kinney's.

There I again met Blue Mountain, and many were the kindnesses he showed to me during my New York stay. The following day I was his luncheon guest and when I mentioned I would like to go to Macy's store but it was pouring and no taxi would stop, Blue Mountain said he could get me there without getting wet. So we went down into subway, rode, changed cars, more riding and changing until finally we arrived at Macy's; then to railroad station without a drop of water touching my new hat. He knew his way around, there was no doubt but it had me worrying:

What must his Inca ancestors be thinking of him, trotting around in that unwholesome subway air rather than among the trees and birds. Another proof that he was a true Baha'i.

Among my Baha'i books is one greatly treasured by me, his parting gift - a copy of "The Chosen Highway" by Lady Blomfield, within which he had written -

"To my dear Baha'i friend Miss Vernon. with sincerity  
Blue Mountain

New York City 8/6/45 "

Mr. Paul Pearsall, Long Island City, N.Y., was our guest on Nov. 7th, and Mrs. Marion Little, Covington, La., was in Jacksonville for about a week in that month. The treasurer's report of Miss Margaret Haas being read, it was found that after paying out \$24.50 to the Windsor Hotel, one week's room rent for Mrs. Little, we still had a balance on hand of \$27.22. The Assembly was not asked to bare this expense, neither by Mrs. Little nor the Teaching Committee, but it was felt that it would be a nice way to show our appreciation of Mrs. Little's efforts in behalf of the Jacksonville community.

1943

December 11th Feast at 628 Post St. Present, Winifred Richards, Margaret Haas, Gertrude Davies, Mabel Sawyer, Louise Fender, Kathryn Vernon. Selections from "Promulgation of Universal Peace" were used by Gertrude for her spiritual program.

It was in 1942 that Clyde M. Everett, an isolated believer from Kingston, N. Y., came to us, liked us, joined our Community, and for over eight months he belonged to us while stationed at the Jacksonville Air Base. December 8th of this year the Government transferred him to Mitchell Field, Long Island, N.Y., but he wrote that he looked back with happiness to the time spent with the Jacksonville Baha'is and of the spiritual help he had gained from that contact. This brought our membership down to 12, but more than that Jacksonville regretted the loss of such a fine, sincere believer.

A happy occasion was when we were able to send in the names for enrollment of Mrs. Marie Holts in July and Mrs. Estelle Hudson in September - even though they were isolated in Jacksonville Beach.

Our hearts were grieved to learn that Miss Alma Knoblock, who, at the request of Dr. Guy, had come to Jacksonville in 1932 and remained for several months before our Assembly was formed, had suffered a heart attack the night of Dec. 22-23, 1943, and passed on in less than an hour. With my Baha'i books is a copy of "Baha'i Scriptures" which had belonged to Miss Alma and which she had used while in Jacksonville in those early days - sent to me after her passing by a sister.

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January 19th Feast held at 628 Post. Present: Winifred Richards, Margaret Haas, Mabel Sawyer, Louise Fender, Gertrude Davies, Kathryn Vernon. After spiritual program the treasurer, Miss Haas, rendered her report; then Winifred suggested that as the 19-Day Feasts are so important, possibly we could think of some way to induce the other believers to come more often. Gertrude suggested that possibly if different members at different times especially invited them, it might have desired effect. However, in justice to our absent friends we undoubtedly should state that oftentimes there was a satisfactory reason for their absence.

An important letter from NSA received since our last meeting informed us that Mrs. Lorol Schopflecher, Montreal, Can., would soon be in Jacksonville to assist with our teaching work.

Phone from Orlando on Feb. 14th informed us that Meta and Hilbert Dahl, settlers in Charleston, W. Va., would arrive in Jacksonville the following evening with time between train connections to show a few slides of our Wilmette temple and other Baha'i subjects, if we do desired. Then began another one of those hurryup meetings for Jacksonville, gathering together all the friends we could on so short a notice. Meeting opened with brief talk by Mr. Dahl, after which slides were explained by Mrs. Dahl as shown, and all too soon, with many, many slides still unshown, they had to rush to the depot.

On Feb. 26th the Secretary received a caller from Camp Blanding - Joseph M. Tierno, a New York City Baha'i. Two Sundays later he came to our meeting, and happy were we to welcome him at other times.

When Winifred Richards held the Naw-Rúz Feast at her apartment, both Paul and Joe were present, as well as Mrs. Hudson one of our new believers from the Beach, and four non-Baha'is. An exceedingly happy occasion.

On April 9th, 1944, there was inaugurated, by the command of our Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, the system of state-wide election of delegates to the annual Wilmette Convention. This was undoubtedly one of the most important events of the year, inaugurating, as it did, a new manner of voting, a new step forward in Baha'i progress, changing from the previous method of assembly by assembly elections of community members only, to this state-wide system including every Baha'i within each State.

As years go by and the majority of Florida's population become Baha'is and as State-wide Baha'i delegate elections become impressive, outstanding events, the question will undoubtedly arise - when was the first one held, and where? Jacksonville was appointed by the NSA as headquarters for holding this first State-wide election; all Florida Baha'is to attend in person, if possible, otherwise to mail in their vote.

Kathryn L. Vernon was designated Temporary Chairman by the NSA and the time set by them for 11 A.M. Sunday, April 9th.

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The Temporary Chairman selected 707 Post Street, Jacksonville, Florida, as the place of meeting. Upon this occasion Florida Baha'is were to select three Baha'is from among their registered members to act as delegates to the Wilmette Convention. The number each State could appoint was assigned by the NSA, based upon a percentage basis of the total registered Baha'is in each State.

Present at this first State-wide election: Miss Margaret Haas, Miss Gertrude Davies, Mrs. L. B. Fender, Miss Winifred Richards, and Kathryn L. Vernon - all of Jacksonville, and one interested Baha'i visitor, Joseph M. Tierno from New York City.

After "Convention Call" from the N S A was read by the Temporary Chairman, ballots were taken for election of a Permanent Chairman and a Secretary. This resulted in the appointment of Winifred Richards as Permanent Chairman and Kathryn Vernon as Secretary.

Meeting was then turned over to the Permanent Chairman who took up the suggested order of procedure from the N S A, beginning with the selected prayer, followed by the readings. The Chairman, in accordance with instructions, then appointed Mrs. L. B. Fender and Miss Gertrude Davies as tellers, and during the time the ballots were being counted by the tellers in a separate room, the remainder of the group read selections from the Gleanings. Tierno, having no right to cast a vote, as not a Florida Baha'i, was appointed "honorary supervisor" of the tellers.

In this first State-wide election, ballots were received from only a few of the formerly designated "isolated" believers (hereafter to be known as "Florida Baha'is"). Many Miami believers did not vote, and no ballots at all were received from the St. Augustine Assembly. In all, a total of twenty-eight (28) ballots were received. One, containing only two names, had to be discarded in accordance with election instructions. From the remaining 27 ballots, containing 3 names each, the following were elected from among Florida believers as State delegates to the Centenary Convention in May:

Miss Winifred Richards,	Jacksonville,	14	votes
Miss Kathryn L. Vernon,	"	13	"
Mrs. Emily Bethel,	Miami, Fla.	10	"

A statement of election returns, signed and certified to by the tellers was then mailed by the Permanent Chairman, together with all the ballots which had been received, to the N S A, Wilmette, Ill. The same day the Secretary sent the N S A her report of the meeting.

In order to gain extra "publicity" the May 18th Times-Union "personal mention" column stated that Miss Winifred Richards, as delegate, and Mrs. L. B. Fender, as visitor, were leaving that day for Wilmette, Ill, to attend the Centennial Convention and dedication of the Wilmette Baha'i Temple. (It was necessary for

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Kathryn to remain in Jacksonville and mail her vote).

This was a very important year, the 100th Anniversary of the Declaration of El Bab, the Forerunner who, in 1844, proclaimed the coming of Baha'u'llah. (The Baha'i Faith was first mentioned in America during the World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, Ill, during 1893, in connection with the Columbia Exposition. In a 2nd-hand book store one day I found Vols, 1 and 2 -records of the World's Parliament of Religions; Vol 1 showing Art Institute where the Parliament held, Vol 2 -reference to the Baha'i Faith. They seemed interesting, to be placed in my Baha'i library. There they can be found. ) Attending that 1944 Convention was Ruhyyih Khanum, wife of our Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.

We were surprised but happy that, through no effort of ours, the Times-Union carried a 5-1/2" AP Chicago report re dedication of our beautiful Wilmette Temple built, the article stated, "on pay as you go plan at a cost of \$2,600,000." True, only they should have stated cost of \$2,613,012. and every penny of it donated by Baha'is, even from across the seas, many who had only a mat to sleep on and little to eat- their gift of love to their Lord.

Winifred, who never missed a National Convention, told how this was an outstanding one, hundreds of Baha'is from various countries of the world, including 21 honorary delegates from Central and South America. At a later meeting Louise Fender gave her impressions of her first visit to the Baha'i House of Worship.

Our April 21st Jacksonville election showed: Winifred Richards, Chairman and Publicity; Gertrude Davies, Vice-Chairman; Margaret Haas, Treasurer; Kathryn Vernon, Secretary. Other members: Mrs. Fender, Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. Rozear, Eulalie Haas, Herbert Bacon, Rollie Merritt, Mabel Sawyer who although transferred by the Government to Washington, D.C., desired to remain a member of the Jacksonville community, promising to send in her votes, and Horace McAbee having joined in June, Mamie McAbee, a transfer from Georgia in January, a total of 14 by end of year.

In December one person came from newspaper notice, a professor from University of Florida, and with his permission we were able to place Baha'i books in the University library. At that meeting W. T. Bidwell, Greenville, S.C., told of what the Baha'i Faith had done for him. In March our guest was Hart Friedland who signed our guest register - "Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta." Luckily we did not need to contact him in a hurry. Winifred's afternoon inquiry classes were unattended by the public at large.

Winifred was our Naw-Rúz hostess and there, at 628 Post, we were happy to have with us two Baha'i soldiers, Joseph M. Tierno, N.Y.C ity, and Paul Pearsal, Long Island City, N.Y., but our group did not seem quite right without Mabel Sawyer, then working in Washington, D.C.

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Mrs. Fender was our spiritual leader and hostess for the July Feast. A few days before Feast the Secretary received a phone call from her, wanting to know if Secretary would come after her and an ice cream freezer on Feast night. The thought of an ice cream freezer at a 19-Day Feast sounded extremely interesting, so throwing caution to the winds in connection with "2-gallons-per-week gasoline ration", the answer was "yes" and Feast night saw us with dishes piled high with homemade ice cream. Another Baha'i spiritual and material Love Feast.

To our August 1st Feast, held at home Miss Margaret Haas, Barrs Street, came Sohayl C. Hannen, Wilmette, Ill, whose great aunt, Miss Alma Knobloch came to Jacksonville in 1932 and remained some time. It was a pleasure to have Sohayl with us. That he was a sincere Baha'i no one could doubt, he radiated such pleasure at being once more in the midst of Baha'i activities.

The middle of August a letter came to Secretary from Auntie Victoria (Mrs. Bedekian) As letter was sealed, I felt pretty sure there was a special message inside. This time a \$1.00 bill rolled out. At the first following Feast I read the talk Abdu'l Baha gave at the New York Bowery Mission, when he handed to each one a silver dollar. Then Auntie Victoria's dollar was presented, to be used as a nest egg for a fund to help the poor and needy. It was a very loving thought and gift from a very sincere Baha'i.

Our August 20th Feast date fell upon a Sunday but Gertrude wanted to bring a Mrs. Somebody who seemed interested in learning more, also Secretary had met somebody who seemed of an inquiring mind. So we turned our Feast into a meeting in order to pass the Baha'i message on to two who knew very little about it. Has not Abdu'l Baha told us that "Every day which man passes in the mention of God, the diffusion of the Fragrances of God and calling the people to the Kingdom of God, that day is his feast." Refreshments were afterward served, to create a friendly feeling. Happy to report, the conversation all continued to revolve around the Baha'i revelation.

It was our intention to observe Sept. 8th Feast at Gertrude's but Mr. Horace McAbee, our newest member, was to go soon to hospital for serious operations and he wanted exceedingly to participate in a Baha'i Feast, or sacrament, before he went. So Feast was changed to 707 Post, that location being the nearest for him. But on Feast night Mrs. Mamie McAbee appeared alone, Mr. McAbee too ill to come, so for him went our healing prayers.

In November we once again enjoyed a happy get-together with Winifred, after her long summer vacation.

As the majority of people are not eager to search for the "light", although several have said they prefer not to be out in the dark, it was decided to change the regular weekly meet-

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ings from Sunday evening to 4 o'clock Sunday afternoons. It was also decided to conclude our Sunday gatherings with a tea, to spread the feeling of Baha'i unity and friendship.

Among several Feasts held at Gertrude Davies' was one on Nov. 23rd. Present: Mrs. Hudson from Jacksonville Beach, Gertrude, Louise Fender, Winifred Richards, Margaret Haas, Kathryn Vernon. During business session Miss Haas gave report of money in treasury and from the funds a check was given for flowers to be sent to Mrs. Frances M. Guy, who was then seriously ill in a St. Augustine Hospital.

It was also decided to see if we could get 9 Christmas stockings from the Red Cross, to fill for nearby recuperating war soldiers.

After conclusion of our meeting Gertrude took us all to the "Fresh Maid Food Products" restaurant where we had a grand time sitting on stools, watching them make their famous donuts which we afterward enjoyed with coffee, hamburgers, etc. The waitress complimented Gertrude on the "nice looking ladies" she had brought with her, whereupon Gertrude laughed and said she would tell her all about them at some future time. We know Gertrude, so we were sure she did not lose her opportunity to spread the news that within the city of Jacksonville people were living known as Baha'is.

The business portion of our December 12th Feast was devoted to filling 9 red or green tarleton Christmas stockings, furnished by the American Red Cross, which were later given to returned War Veterans in nearby hospitals. Present at this Feast were - Mrs. Hudson from Jacksonville Beach, Gertrude Davies, Winifred Richards, and Kathryn Vernon.

At the request of the American Red Cross into each stocking went candy, nuts, orange, wash cloth, package of playing cards, a pocket-size story book, cigarettes and matches. Hoping the wounded veterans might wish for something to satisfy a deeper longing than could mystery stories, into each stocking also, from the Jacksonville Baha'is, went a little blue booklet of Baha'i truths, a Temple postal card, and a Christmas greeting card.

Although this incident refers only to the stockings and not to the Feast it is interesting to note that when Secretary returned stockings to the Red Cross and gave name of organization the lady at receiving desk looked up and said, "Oh, yes, I know." Secretary was thinking - "Well, at least one Jacksonville person has seen newspaper notices even though they do not come to meetings", when again the lady (Mrs. Wolfe, from New York City) spoke: "I have two daughters who are Baha'is." So Secretary told of little blue books in stockings, to see if permissible, and the reply was - "I think it was a lovely idea, the teachings are so beautiful."

1944

As the year 1944 draws to an end our thoughts turn back to our Nov. 26th Sunday meeting; Winifred Richards, speaker. Subject, Abdu'l Baha, the Center of the Covenant. Present, 5 Baha'is and one friend. At 6 o'clock, while we were closing our 4 P.M. meeting a man came to door in search of meetings, so we brought him in, Winifred began practically all over again, and no one left until 7. Our caller was a polished gentleman, said he had travelled practically all over world, Holy Land, etc., had seen our Wilmette Temple many times while passing by, wanted to learn more. He took several booklets and was loaned a "New Era", saying he would be glad to read it and would probably be able to stop some afternoon as his work often carried him by. As I was not home during day, he was referred to Winifred's address. We found out later he was a minister with a Church outside of the city. Another mystery!! Why-Why do Ministers continue to deny the Lord?

At 4 o'clock the Dec. 31st Spiritual Feast was held at 707 Post, then at 6:30 all to Winifred's as her supper guests. Among those present - Mrs. Hudson from Jacksonville Beach, Dr. and Mrs. Bidwell of Greenville, S.C., and again our two Baha'i soldiers - Tierno and Pearsall - and so ended another year.

Some of this year's days were very happy, like the one a letter came from Manuel L. Lutz, Sqdn T-3 AAF Base, asking for explanations to some Baha'i questions to which he had never been able to find answers. I wrote as my heart dictated, hoping to be of some help. Later came another letter, this time postmarked Camp Pinedale, Fresno, Calif. with thanks for the "explanations which no other Baha'i had ever given" and which, he wrote, had shown him the light, so he had written the NSA (as he was isolated) that he desired to become a registered Baha'i. How blessed are those who hold something hidden within their hearts which leads them to the truth of the Light.

As the years go on we can only keep trying, hoping and knowing that in some way and at some time those whom Baha'u'llah desires for His very own will search and find Him.

Once more, in February, Mrs. Lorol Schopflocher came to Jacksonville, remaining for two meetings and a 19-Day Feast, before continuing her trip to Nassau. When asked if she was again going to show us some of her interesting motion travel pictures, she replied - "Something better this time, word pictures." How nice it would be if we could paint such beautiful "word pictures" of Baha'u'llah that our love for Him would clearly shine through, so all would have to say - "She believes it with all her heart - It must be true - I will investigate."

As a new year begins, we often wonder how it will end; what services for Baha'u'llah will the love within our hearts show forth.

In February the National Library Committee, at our request, presented the University of Florida, Gainesville, with copies of Baha'u'llah and the New Era, World Order of Baha'u'llah, Some Answered Questions, and a volume of the Baha'i Centenary record. During this year also the "World Order Magazine" was placed in three of the Jacksonville public libraries, also the Jacksonville Beach library, for one year each.

On April 21st each year, as the 9 duly formerly elected Assembly members completed their elected term, Jacksonville again held its annual election to choose 9 believers from the city's membership list whom the voters felt qualified to fill the positions as members of the Assembly for the coming year - April 21st to April 21st - voting by secret ballot, no electioneering permitted.

By our 1945 election Winifred Richards was appointed to act as Chairman; Gertrude Davies, Vice-Chairman: Margaret Haas, Treasurer: Kathryn Vernon, Secretary; other Assembly members - Herbert Bacon, L. B. Fender, Eulalie Haas, Mrs. Sylvanus H. Hart, & Mrs. A. M. Powell, Other community members; Mrs. Pearl Rozear, Mabel Sawyer (in Washington), Mrs. Mamie McAbee, Horace McAbee, Rollie Merritt, and a transfer from New York City in November, Miss Clairnel Collins, brought out membership by end of 1945 up to 15.

During this year also Mrs. Guy, Winifred and Kathryn were appointed by NSA on the Regional Teaching Committee. Mrs. Guy and Winifred worked faithfully, travelling to fulfil their duty, but Kathryn, ah me, was of no help, tied down to Jacksonville home duties.

Throughout the year the 19-Day Feasts were regularly observed, the various Baha'is taking turns in acting as hostess and/or preparing the spiritual programs. These were happy events.

Gertrude, as hostess, started the year off for us in fine shape with a 19-Day Feast supper celebration at the Main Street Donut Shop, spiritual program following at her home.

Miss Margaret Haas presided during our spiritual program 4 P M Sunday, February 18th at 707 Post. Of special interest at this meeting was a card of greeting - "Joyous greetings" and "Hearty Wishes" - so the message read; mailed to us from the N S A of the Baha'is of Iraq, the birthplace of the Baha'i Faith, in commemoration of our 100th Anniversary. How blessed each Baha'i is - knowing that we have friendly friends all over the world.

One day Gertrude Davies decided a brilliant idea had popped up in her head - to hold our Naw-Rúz celebration at the Windsor

Hotel, each Baha'i to pay for his own and for his invited guest's dinners. That Hotel was one of Jacksonville's early landmarks, an aristocratic looking structure, its broad veranda facing Hemming Park, a block square park in the center of the city, a building which seemed to impress you with the fact that Jacksonville had something noble to offer. Long since has it been torn down, the block turned into other uses, one - a 5&10¢ store, "a sign of progress" so the city fathers tell us. We are glad we held several Baha'i meetings in the Windsor Hotel, and in 1945 our Naw-Rúz Feast.

Dinner was served at 8 P M to eight Baha'is and five guests and was greatly enjoyed by all, even the soldier boy whom Gertrude brought from the Army Recreation Center and who ran off immediately after his dessert. The rest stayed for the Baha'i meeting following, held in one of the Hotel parlors. Winifred had copied Baha'i selections upon small cards which were passed around and as each read their card they or some one else explained the meaning. It was a happy time for all, a Naw-Rúz to be remembered.

It was an unusual event when, on May 16th, Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Holtz from Jacksonville Beach, Gertrude Davies, Margaret Haas, Louise Fender and Kathryn Vernon trotted over to Winifred's to listen with her to the Baha'i 8 PM one-half hour broadcast, over WJHP. In the past WJAX had donated two 15-minute broadcasts but in this war year of 1945 we found all radio time engaged far in advance, and Winifred felt exalted when WJHP finally consented to give us the one-half hour - for a price. We received too short notice of our listing to advertise the broadcast in papers, but the Station gave us a fine introduction, with announcement at the conclusion that it was a transcription by NSA of the Baha'is of America and Canada, under auspice of the Jacksonville Baha'i Assembly, then followed music of a rather martial strain. Then we listened to how "World Order is the Goal" - a transcription from the San Francisco Security Conference of the Great Peace Conference of Nations and Religions, including a Baha'i message given by the California Attorney General and other prominent speakers. To us it was a momentous holy half-hour, well worth the \$37.00 we had to pay for it, but we know not whether anyone else in the city listened in, it was never mentioned to us by any outsider, neither did new inquirers come to the meetings because of it.

With exception of short summer vacation period, newspapers carried weekly notices of our regular Sunday public meetings. During part of year they were held in evenings, then changed to 4 o'clock Sunday afternoons, to see if change of time would increase attendance, after which tea was served. We had to come to conclusion that Jacksonvillians spent their Sunday afternoons at the Beach, 18 miles away, washing away their sins in the Atlantic ocean.

1945

A Wednesday evening study and inquiry class held by Winifred and open to all was also regularly advertised. During the year only a very few times did strangers appear.

Public meetings during the year were held at 707 Post St. On April 15th John Adrian Verheeven, from Miami, was our speaker. His subject - "Spiritual Evolution." We placed newspaper notices, we personally invited friends. Only one invited outsider came. Visiting Baha'is were always gladly welcomed. Miss Clairnel Collins was our Nov. 25th speaker.

When outside inquirers present and no Baha'i visitors, then Winifred and Kathryn took turns throughout the years, believing that Baha'u'llah would prefer a poor attempt rather than no attempt at all.

Another year with so little accomplished. We wondered whether our feeble attempts at service had been acceptable to Baha'u'llah. We only knew that if we continued steadfast in our love for Him, lovingly doing our bit day by day as opportunity presented, through continued study to the better prepare ourselves for the broader activities which would eventually come in the years ahead and then, through prayer, draw closer to Him, that renewed courage and increased knowledge would be ours, for such is the promise for all who truly love and arise to serve His Cause.

1946

Another year in which to serve our Lord. For our January Feast Gertrude was our hostess at Thompson's Restaurant, 5-Points, two blocks away, then all to Winifred's, 628 Post St., for our spiritual program. At other times various believers acted as hostess or took charge of the spiritual program. To these Feasts have often come Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Holts, our believers, living 18 miles away. Surely this bears witness that the words of Baha'u'llah do have the power to attract and to hold.

At this January Feast a letter was read received from John Eichenauer III, a Baha'i then stationed with the U.S. Army occupational force in Germany, in which he told of the need of both food and clothing by the Frankfort Baha'is. It was voted that the Jacksonville Community send a box of groceries to our German friends. Winifred Richards and Rollie Merritt were selected to buy the provisions and attend to the mailing, the money to come from our treasury account, box to be as large as Postal authorities would accept, to contain as many concentrated foods as possible, in order to save space; box of clothing to be sent at a later date.

At our March 2nd Feast Winifred gave report. She and Merritt went on their shopping tour and carefully, so they thought, estimated the weight of each article bought, so package would not exceed the Government regulations of 11 lbs. When package, all nicely packed and wrapped, was taken to postoffice it was found to weight 12 lbs., so back home it had to be taken, wrappings torn, some portion taken out and placed in separate package. Then back to postoffice they went only to have second package refused on the ground that letter from Eichenauer had already been stamped by Post Office and a separate request was needed as their authority for each package sent. So second package was taken back home, to await a second letter from John. Package sent contained coffee, tea, canned tongue, soup, muffin mix, shelled nuts, cocoa, soup mixes, Junket mix, Royal pudding, powdered milk, dried apricots, etc. Parcel post charge -\$1.28.

At this March Feast a \$1.50 check was handed to Secretary, to mail to Publishing Committee, covering a year's subscription of the "World Order" magazine to be sent to the Jax. Beach library, subscriptions for the three city libraries having previously been sent in.

On Saturday evening March 18th we were privileged to have with us Mr. and Mrs. Wm. deForge of Englewood, N.J. We had no time to advertise or plan a special meeting, so brief was the time between notice of their coming and arrival. Baha'is and friends reachable by phone were notified and the few who came greatly enjoyed his heart-to-heart talk. Early next morning they left for Miami and Cuba, but with the promise of a return visit in three weeks and they made good their promise on April 7th, a well advertised meeting but no outsiders were attracted.

In March Mrs. David Earl (Joy Hill Earl), from Cleveland, Ohio, an attractive, talented young Baha'i, very active in Baha'i teaching work for several years, spent three days in Jacksonville. On the 3rd she addressed a Sunday afternoon meeting at 707 Post, then five members of the Jacksonville Assembly went with her to Mrs. Hart's where Mrs. Hart had assembled seven friends. Joy spoke beautifully. Although we were not with Joy in the evening we afterward learned that she had met with a group of 30 young negroes at Mrs. Hart's, to whom she talked of the Baha'i way of living until one AM.

April 28th came, a Feast as well as a public meeting date. Very seldom outsiders come to our public meetings but as a precaution it was decided to hold our Feast at four o'clock. In order not to retard publicity, a regular meeting notice was placed in newspaper. Five Baha'is were present. We were about to begin our spiritual program when two strangers came, recent Jacksonville arrivals and their first Baha'i meeting. They made the statement - they felt there was nothing the Churches could give them, they thought perhaps they could find it in the Baha'i teachings. She had been studying Rosecrucian beliefs, He use to be a Congregational minister but interested in all religions and had studied practically all of them, so he said, They knew practically nothing about the Baha'i teachings; asked many questions and seemed to be truly searching. They were in no hurry to leave, stayed until quite late, and promised to come again. They must have lost their way.

Via State election Mrs. Chester M. Davison, Jr., Miami, Winifred Richards and Kathryn Vernon were elected delegates from Florida to the National Convention in Wilmette. As usual, Winifred personally carried her vote. As usual, Kathryn's vote had to go via mail.

Our April 21st election installed Winifred Richards as Chairman, Clairnel Collins, Vice-Chairman, Louise Fender, Treasurer, Gertrude Davies, Margaret Haas, Eulalie Haas, Rollie Merritt, Mrs. Powell, Kathryn Vernon, Secretary. No one ever seemed anxious to do the secretarial work. A total membership of 15.

In May Clairnel Collins married Wm. Henry Strothers. She wished a Baha'i ceremony but as Jacksonville was not invested with such authority, a civil marriage ceremony took place, then to Winifred's, 628 Post Street, where - in the midst of beautiful flowers and candles - the marriage Tablet and prayers were read and the Baha'i wedding service held, followed by a reception and refreshments - all a loving service from Winifred to the bride - a most festive occasion, the first of the kind in Jacksonville.

Winifred was hostess for June 5th Feast, held at 628 Post. Present: Clairnel Collins Strothers, Margaret Haas, Louise Fender, (In charge spirital program), Kathryn Vernon. Several letters from NSA were read, also one from the Phillipines, the writer stating she was a Baha'i and asked for clothing for

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family. As we did not know the writer it was thought best to send letter to the NSA, which secretary was requested to do.

Winifred left Jacksonville the middle of June for New York state, where she always spent three or four months each year "enjoying" herself, so this was her last Jacksonville Feast until fall.

June 24th Feast; held at 707 Post, with Louise Fender in charge of spiritual program, Clairnel Collins Strothers, hostess. Only three of us attended; Gertrude, one of our very faithful, sick in bed with hard cold.

Clairnel Strothers was in charge of July 13th Feast, Louise Fender, hostess.

We received invitation from Mrs. Estelle Hudson to celebrate August 1st Feast with her "if we cared to", so we packed our Baha'i jitney full and happily went to her Jacksonville Beach home.

With Gertrude as hostess we enjoyed a supper at "Woodie's Place" on Pearl Street for our Sept. 27th Feast- six present. After supper we went to Gertrude's home, she acting as our leader for spiritual program; discussion period presided over by Clairnel, Vice-Chairman. It was then decided to hold first fall public meeting at 4 Sunday afternoon, October 28th. Clairnel took notices to newspapers.

Weekly public meetings throughout the year were held at 707 Post. To the Oct. 20th meeting came Mrs. Emmalee Rice, a Baha'i from Hamilton, Mass., who told us of her home there turned into a Baha 'i Center.

I well recall the first public meeting after Winifred returned in the fall from her summer vacation, how nice she looked in her little new hat with its pretty red roses, and how happy we were that all the summer wanderers were again in Jacksonville.

Shortly after her return she attended a Saturday and Sunday Regional Teaching Conference in Atlanta, Ga. I did not hear from her as soon as she returned, which was unusual as she usually wanted to come right over, and then we would talk for hours. When I phoned her voice shocked me, it sounded so weary and far away, so we talked little, although she did say she had notes in her book and as soon as she felt able to get them together, she would tell me all about the convention. She complained of feeling so very tired.

About two weeks later she came Sunday afternoon to 707 Post, in order to meet a visiting Baha'i. She phoned me afterward that when she reached home it was all she could do to get up the stairs and that she had gone immediately to bed. A few days

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after that she phoned requesting me to please ask others not to come to see her, as she was too ill. Shortly thereafter her sister-in-law, Mrs. George H. Richards, and niece, Mrs. Wm. E.(Jr.) Young (Elizabeth Young) insisted that Winifred be moved to their home, where everything possible was done for her comfort.

Our December 31st Feast was held at 707 Post. Present - Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Holtz from the Beach, Gertrude Davies, Louise Fender (hostess) and Kathryn, but it was not a very joyful gathering, knowing of Winifred's serious illness and that we were powerless to help. All we could do was to pray.

And so ended the year 1946.

1947

It was about 6 o'clock of this New Year's evening, Wednesday, January 1st, when Mrs. Elizabeth Young (Mrs. Wm.B. Young, Jr.) phoned that Winifred was not expected to live through the night. At 1:30 P M January 2nd she again phoned - Winifred had left us, after an illness of several weeks. They asked us to hold funeral services at 4 o'clock on the 3rd, as they knew that was Winifred's wish. Services were conducted by Miss Margaret Haas and Kathryn, the body was then forwarded to New York for burial.

For almost ten years Winifred lived among us and never once did she neglect an opportunity to be of service to Baha'u'llah. We feel sure He never had a more willing servant. She once told me that it took her six years of constant reading and studying before she realized the truth of the Baha'i Revelation, but once found she was most faithful. Would that all were the same.

On January 15th Mrs. Richards phoned - it had been Winifred's wish that all her Baha'i books be given to me, and delivery was made on the 25th. I then made a pledge with myself that those books, along with those given to me by Mr. Bacon and Dr. Guy, would be held in trust and for enjoyment of future Baha'is, so eventually, when these books along with others are passed on to a larger Jacksonville Baha'i community, you may realize that we, the forerunners, lovingly thought of you, we knew you were coming and our hearts went out to you.

You will find some very old and worn, but with all go our love and hope that as you handle and read them they may help you, travellers in the pathway opened by us, to faithfully carry on to the end.

We discovered, through experience, that it's very easy to borrow a book and forget to return it. We, therefore, feel that - especially the early Baha'i books which cannot be replaced - should not be allowed to go beyond the Baha'i reading rooms. This particularly has reference to the early Baha'i "Year" books and a copy of "The Dawnbreakers" from Winifred's collection which bears the personal signature of our beloved Guardian of the Faith- Shoghi Effendi. Only a few copies of this valuable book were so autographed and sold at a greatly increased price, a friendly gesture on our Guardian's part, to help in the erection of our Wilmette Temple.

A letter from Attorneys notified us that Winifred had left \$100 to the Jacksonville Assembly (our first money bequest) and \$1000 to the NSA, Wilmette, Ill. I am happy to mention these gifts as it was only through the kindness of her brother and other non-Baha'i relatives that this, her verbal wish, was carried out. In August checks were received from attorneys (legal expenses having been deducted); \$800 for Wilmette, and \$80 for Jacksonville, Winifred's last earthly love-offerings to the Baha'i Faith which she loved so much.

1947

While Winifred was living we would hand her our remittances for NSA. She, in turn, would mail Wilmette her personal check to cover. Quite a convenient arrangement when most of us had no banking accounts. Now we were rich - Eighty whole dollars, so we used opportunity to open a bank account in the Atlantic National Bank, stipulating our checks should always be signed by Chairman and Treasurer ; the Bank agreeing, as this a religious organization, there would be no carrying charges.

We resumed our public meetings January 16th, turning time into a study class if no outsiders arrived. We used phone or written notices to notify believers of activities; placed newspaper notices when visiting Baha'is to be present. Many times there were only three Baha'is present, so they gained name of "the faithful few".

Jacksonville helped to arrange for a lecture by Harland Ober on March 5th in the Monson Hotel parlow, St. Augustine. Although advertised in that city's newspaper, the St. Augustine members and the four carried from Jacksonville were practically the only people attending.

In April, on her way home to Miami from the Wilmette Convention, Mrs. Ester Davison stopped in Jacksonville for a couple of days. As she was a member of the Regional Teaching Committee and had never met any of the Baha'is living in or near Jacksonville, the Secretary drove her one evening to St. Augustine where she met Miss C. Mae Thitchener and Mr. Robt. Larsen of the St. Augustine community. On the next evening we filled the car and drove to Jacksonville Beach where a fireside meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Estelle Hudson; Mrs. Holts, another Jacksonville Beach Baha'i attending, as well as two non-Baha'is.

From the beginning our 19-Day Feasts were held at various homes but the public feasts and meetings were usually held at 707 Post, because of the larger space. When gatherings were large and I ran out of cups and saucers and silverware, Winifred would bring hers over; afterward we would laugh as we checked and counted, to be sure each had their rightful pieces. Our friends seemed to greatly enjoy these festive occasions, never once did they refuse the invitations, but rarely ever did they come of their own accord to a meeting afterward.

First Feast of this year, January 19th, held at 707 Post, when it was our privilege to welcome into our membership Mr. A. Frederick Collins, an isolated believer from Congers, N.Y. Others attending: Mamie McAbee, Margaret Haas, Gertrude Davies, Louise Fender, Mrs. Hudson from far-off Jax. Beach, and Kathryn, the hostess. Only Mr. Collins, Gertrude and Kathryn were present for the Feb. 7th Feast, others prevented by sickness.

1947

On April 21st Jacksonville still had 15 believers, as shown by our election returns:

Gertrude Davies, Chairman; Clairnel Struthers, Vice-Chairman; Louise Fender, Treasurer; Margaret Haas, Eulalie Haas, Mrs. S.H. Hart, Mamie McAbee, A. Frederick Collins, and Kathryn Vernon, Treas. Other community members: Herbert Bacon, Horace McAbee, Rollie Merritt, Mrs. Powell, Pearl Rozear, Mabel Sawyer (still in Washington)

In June "Auntie Victoria" (Victoria America Schanabel Bedikian) musician and artist, came to Jacksonville and remained 3 days. As there was no way to accommodate her at 707, we secured hotel room and during that time she was feted and dined. Sunday afternoon a public meeting was held at 707 Post, Auntie Victoria the guest speaker, two non-Baha'is attended. Following our meeting the Baha'is drove downtown for supper, then up to Auntie Victoria's room where she sketched the ones present - Miss Margaret Haas, Mrs. Clairnel Strothers, Gertrude Davies and Louise Fender and Kathryn Vernon. The next afternoon we drove Auntie Victoria to St. Augustine where we called upon Miss C. Mae Thitchener, our staunch Baha'i friend, recuperating in a hospital.

After hospital visiting hours we drove to Mrs. Frances A. Shaw's, one of St. Augustine's so-called colored believers for many years. We finally located her out walking, but she returned home and with one of her neighbors, also a Baha'i, we held a spiritual feast although not a 19-Day one, Jacksonville offering to go down any time Mrs. Shaw could arrange a meeting for us. Auntie Victoria and I arrived back in Jacksonville about 2 A.M. Later that morning we drove her to bus station, from where she departed for Augusta, Georgia.

We wish to mention our July Feast. Gertrude had selected messages from the "Gleanings" which were read by those present. Our material Feast consisted of Pineapple juice, sent by an absent believer, Mrs. Estelle Hudson, who so frequently came from Jacksonville Beach to attend our gatherings. At time of this Feast she was taking a summer art course at the Ringling Art School in Sarasota, Fla., but her gift of 3 cans of Pineapple juice for use by the Jacksonville believers was a token of her friendship for her comrades in the faith of Baha'u'llah. Please note: - 3 believers attended this Feast - Gertrude Davies, Louise Fender, Kathryn Vernon - and we did not empty the 3 cans, only one. The other 2 were placed in Baha'i "storage" - ready for future use. At a later date Mrs. Hudson showed us a lovely picture she had painted of a house where Abdu'l Baha had once lived.

Our Chairman, Gertrude Davies, asked permission to be our hostess for October Feast. Arriving at her home she asked that we drive to Biser's restaurant in South Jacksonville, where we were her guests. We then returned to her home and continued our Baha'i reading (of the "Ighan").

1947

Clairnell's husband, Wm. N. Strothers, was in Lake City Hospital. A wire from her Feb. 24th advised that he had passed away on that date. She returned to Jacksonville, then on Sept. 11th we were obliged to remove her name, she moving to Shreveport, La, - reducing our number to 14.

Visitors included (Jan. 26) Purvis Tavana, a Persian living in USA and member of N Y City community; and (May 11) Hart Friedland again came to Jacksonville, giving us report of the Wilmette Convention, from notes he had taken.

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Although Mrs. Anna Nagel, of Fernandina, Fla., (mother of Mrs. Bessie Nagel Arnold, a former Jacksonville member) was never connected with the Jacksonville community, I do lovingly record her passing on December 28, 1947. I have been in her home and learned how, years before, after the death of her husband, Mr. Otto Peter Nagel, she found some Baha'i pamphlets and books among his papers. She told me she sat up all night reading, - reading. She then knew that was what her husband had believed and felt that was what he wished her and his family also to believe. She did believe and she accepted and until the time of her passing, through lonely years of isolation, she never waivered, showing forth a sincere love for and faith in our Beloved, Baha'u'llah. Joy seemed to fill her being when, upon a visit, we would talk of Him and of all He stands for.

Because I know there were no Baha'i records kept in Fernandina, Florida, I am including this tribute to the other early Baha'is: - Mr. Gordan Hall. Mr. James Stone, and Mr. Gus Smith - all friends of Mr. Otto Peter Nagel. The Baha'i message was first spread in Fernandina during the visit of some Baha'i in the early days.

The following is a copy of note received by Dr. W. B. Guy, who frequently visited with the Fernandina Baha'is.

---

Dr. W. B. Guy,  
Kind Friend

Our old friend Gordon Hall passed away this morning, a noble fellow gone to his rest.

Gus Smith and Mrs. Nagel send hearty Greetings also yours

humbly  
J. S. Stone

Fernandina, 5, 26, 36.

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I was never acquainted with these gentlemen but when I drove over to visit with Mrs. Nagel and her daughter Grace, they frequently referred to Mr. Stone as "a devout Baha'i, and many people love him because he is, indeed, a friend of man."

Re: Fernandina, Fla..

I was told that upon a wall of a building in Fernandina at one time there was a large painting of the ancient Fernandina Harbor, the work of Mr. James Stone. Whether it still remains I do not know.

I was in hopes of meeting Mr. Stone whenever I went over but he was always working, so I never had that privilege.

On November 19th, 1939, Mr. James Stone passed away suddenly, falling forward in his chair with the Greatest Name upon his lips.

For such as these, we are told, a great blessing awaits them when they reach God's Spirit World.

\* \* \* \* \*

1948

On January 1st, after a noonday meal at Morrison's cafeteria, Gertrude and Louise and Kathryn walked to the Roosevelt Hotel and engaged Parlor C for a Regional lecture to be held 7 o'clock Saturday evening, January 24th.

Our 19-Day Faasts were observed regularly, sometimes at Miss Gertrude Davies; sometimes at 707 Post, interspersed with real gala events as when we enjoyed our material feasts at a cafeteria or hotel, frequently with Gertrude or Louise as hostess, then on to Gertrude's for our spiritual program. In January, after dinner at a South Jacksonville restaurant, we drove to the Beach and there, parked upon the ocean shore, we three read from the Baha'i sacred writings, then held our consultation period, completing plans for the Regional public meeting which Mr. and Mr. Chester Davison, Jr., and Dr. and Mrs. Edward Wilber, from Miami, had written they wished to hold on the 24th.

At that meeting they took full charge. Olive Alexander, Miami, was supposed to act as their Chairman, but the Roosevelt Hotel, drawing a color line, would not admit her, so Mrs. Wilber acted as Chairman, with Ester Davison the first speaker, then Dr. Wilber giving a talk, after which Chester Davison said a few words in lieu of colored slides which they had promised to shew but did not receive in time.

Although newspaper ad advertised meeting, it was also announced over radio, and many written notices mail out, the attendance total was 18, 9 Baha'is including the speakers, 5 of the non-Baha'is were friends of ours; of the 4 unknown guests 2 refused to sign a "guest list" for anyone interested in future meetings. So ended the meeting which the Regional felt would be of great value.

In January the Jacksonville Public Library passed on to us a request for reading matter from a Raiford, Fla. prisoner. Among various pamphlets sent was a copy of "Hidden Words", hoping that their beauty might open the door of his heart to God's eternal truths.

We wondered if some day the recipient would call upon us. Such was not the case, but it reminded me of one evening in the 30s when the maid told me there was a man in reception hall who wanted a Baha'i prayer book.

He was medium height, very mild mannered, and he told, while he was a prisoner in San Quintan prison, he had heard of the Baha'i message and wanted, so very much, a Baha'i prayer book.

Asking why he had been in prison, he dropped his head and meekly said, "I killed some one." The cold shivers began running up and down my spine. I heard Mother and the maid in the kitchen talking, all the doors were shut, and I thought - "Little does my supposedly doting Mother worry about her daughter; here I am all alone with a murderer, so close I could easily be his next victim." I glanced at him again; he did not appear at all aggressive. I looked into his mild, faded, little blue eyes. The shivers began to subside and I mustered up courage to ask "Whom did you kill, your wife?" Never did anyone look more contrite as he quietly replied, "No, a man." "You do not look like a murderer, why did you do it?" Again he hung his head and meekly said, "I was insanely jealous. Jealousy will sometimes make one do terrible things." Then he humbly said he could look back and realized how wrong he had been, for he had recently experienced religion and it had completely changed his whole life.

The chills were gone but a doubt persisted, so I decided to send him away with what he had asked for - a Baha'i prayer book, hoping it would in some way do him some good and not merely be used at his next stop to gain favors. Later I heard that some one with the same story had appeared in various other Baha'i communities, even in Pennsylvania, peddling the self-same yarn for what gains it might bring to him from kind-hearted Baha'is.

At an earlier date a gentlemanly stranger called upon Miss Winifred Richards, claiming to be a Baha'i. She took his word as truth and gave him the loan asked for, then stranger and money disappeared forever more. So it is well that we now have membership cards and have been told to ask for that identification whenever strangers appear.

Each year brings its disappointments. When I called upon Mrs. S.H.Hart in February she advised a relative was coming from Washington, D.C. that week and anxious to have Mrs. Hart, who was in very poor health, go home with her. On April 16th came letter from Mrs. Hart stating she had decided to remain in Washington, making her home with her grandson. So-- Jacksonville lost another fine and steadfast Baha'i.

During our April election Gertrude Davies was chosen Chairman, L. B. Fender, Treasurer, Kathryn Vernon Secretary. Again our membership was - 13.

In May, picking up Gertrude and Louise, we went to cafeteria for breakfast, then to Trout River picnic grounds where we observed our Spiritual Feast under big moss covered oak trees. They declared it so nice they did not want to wait another 19 days, so the next Sunday we returned. We arrived early, the birds our only companions, and there again we held communion with God, reading from Gleanings, Hidden Words and prayers, while enjoying the shade of His beautiful trees, trees such as only God can make.

1948

In June a letter from Mrs. Estelle Hudson, who had gone to Los Angeles, Calif. on a visit, informed us she was going to make that her home. Although not a member of our community, living at the Feach, she was as one of us, so frequently coming alone the 18 miles for our meetings and Feasts.

A letter August 29th from Miami asked us to secure hall where whites and colored could gather for meeting by Lucille Buffin, Ed Schlessinger and Dr. Edward Wilber. A mixed audience was out of the question. A group had attempted such a meeting in February. Newspaper reports called it "a disguised communist front", and some prominent whites left when they saw 10 or 12 negroes arrive. But the Seminole was most kind, permitting us free use of a room for our meeting, which was held 8 o'clock Sunday evening, Sept. 19th. Mr. Schlessinger's talk was fine - "A Pattern for Future Society," but the result was the same, no interest developed to learn more of the Faith.

Later in September Gertrude, Louise and Kathryn drove to St. Augustine and again we enjoyed one of Ed. Schlessinger fine talks.

Letter from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Sawyer, Sr., Greensboro, N.C. was received Oct. 17th, asking date of Baha'i meetings, as they were coming to Jacksonville to visit their son, Joseph, Jr., a student at Bolles School. We had become acquainted with Joe Jr, having frequently gone after or taken him back to the school or bus from Baha'i meetings. He was, in fact, at our 19-Day Feast of the 16th, held at 707 Post. When Gertrude, Louise and I drove over to the School, to make further inquiries regarding arrival of his parents, we found he had left suddenly, as the parents, on way to him, had been in auto accident. His fine Baha'i father was killed, his mother seriously hurt but did recover. Such are the sad happenings of life.

Conference of the National Teaching Committee of the Southern States in Atlanta, Ga. during November was attended by Gertrude. The fact she had to sit up all night - going and coming - in a bus did not dim for her the joy of being among that group of sincere Baha'is.

November 7th a friend brought to Jacksonville C. Mae Thitchener of St. Augustine and Miss Leona Barnitz, from Washington, D.C., who was at that time visiting Mae. Leona wished to visit the cemetery, she as well as her parents having known Dr. Guy for many, many years. There she anointed each of us with attar of roses which had been blessed by Abdu'l Baha. Then prayers were read for Dr. Guy and for Mother, while standing at their respective sides of the Baha'i monument.

1948

The Barnitz family were among the early Baha'is. It is told how Leona, when Abdu'l Baha was in Washington, had begged him to permit her to do some special work for Him. She had a great longing to serve. When he finally placed her in the attic, to sew on buttons and make other minor repairs on some clothing belonging to those travelling with Him, she was not at all pleased. Her desire was for a more glamorous position. Such are the tests which teach us "radiant acquiescence".

Afterward Leona discovered how blessed she had been for there, to that attic, Abdu'l Baha went several times to personally visit with her, - while she sewed and pressed.

1949

During this year Miss Gertrude C. Davies opened her home, 1524 Laura Street, in the service of her Beloved, Baha'u'llah, and there most of the Feasts and class or Fireside meetings were held. At infrequent times, when seekers came, we shared with them the glorious Baha'i truths, but at the end of year we had no new names to report.

Gertrude was our elected Chairman, Louise Fender, Treasurer, Kathryn Vernon, Secretary. One enrolled name, Rollie Merritt, removed upon his request.

Our Feasts were regularly observed with one exception - Sept. 27th. Louise phoned she was sick and could not go and, sad to report, Gertrude and Kathryn both overlooked date in rush of earning daily living. We shared the honor acting as hostess. Frequently we enjoyed the informality of the Donut Shop, at other times we relinquished the material portion while partaking freely of the spiritual.

January 13th we received notice that Mr. and Mrs. Crane (Arthur and Ethel), Baha'is from Hackensack, N.J., were to be with us. Upon arrival they stayed in Jacksonville for awhile; then in April started living in a St. Augustine trailer Camp; from there they made 13 trips to Jacksonville for the purpose of holding Baha'i study classes or meetings. Our records show an attendance of six (6) non-Baha'is for the total weekly meetings.

3 o'clock Sunday afternoon February 6th Mrs. Ethel Crane gave a lecture at the Seminole Hotel on "Prayer and Healing." Six non-Baha'is attended, two of those were Jacksonville friends. To this lecture came three faithful Baha'is from St. Augustine - C. Mae Thitchener, Robert Larsen and Mr. Wagner.

Observance of our 19-Day Feast was held 8:15 that evening at 707 Post Street. Among the 12 attending were the 3 from St. Augustine and Mrs. Maude Barnes, our Nashville, Tenn. Baha'i friend. Mrs. Crane was in charge of the spiritual program. Before leaving Mae remarked that "the vibrations during the Feast were lovely." Over the years several people attending Baha'i meetings at 707 said that they always felt peaceful vibrations when they entered. If we can resign our will to the will of God that peace will surround us. After our St. Augustine friends left, then the Baha'i jitney carried the others to their various doors - a busy day.

Mr. Arthur Crane also gave a talk at the Seminole hotel, 3 P M the following week, Feb. 13th.

It was while the Cranes were in Jacksonville that Mrs. Maude Barnes visited her daughter, Mrs. Vanorian Barnes Schell, wife of Dr. W. W. Schell, Jr., and during that time, upon Mrs. Barnes' invitation, 3 meetings were held in Dr. Schell's home, under supervision of the Cranes.

1949

Feb. 11th Mr. and Mrs. Crane were invited for dinner there, followed by evening meeting. On Sunday evening, Feb. 13th another meeting, but no one sufficiently interested to desire to learn more.

Dr. Mary E. Coffin Ketcham and Mr. Ketcham stopped in Jacksonville on March 1st, on their return from an Area Teaching Conference in Memphis, Tenn. After giving us resume of that Conference, we all went to the "Donut Shop" for refreshments.

Gertrude was not home when Louise and Kathryn arrive on May 17th but she always left her door unlocked and standing permission had been given to enter, so we walked boldly in and there observed our spiritual Feast.

Mrs. Crane's study class May 21st (at Gertrude's) was attended by Louise Fender, Mr. A. Frederick Collins, and the writer.

Saturday, June 25th, was the Cranes last summer class prior to their driving North, returning in the fall and again locating in the St. Augustine trailer camp. During their absence regular weekly study classes were continued, except in the very hottest summer weather. If sometimes a friend or two attended, we then tried to speak of subjects which might be of interest to them. More frequently only the Chairman, the Treasurer and the Secretary were present.

July the 5th we enjoyed the pleasure of an informal get-together at Gertrude's with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Ford (Harry and "Bahiyih").

This year Louise Fender was appointed a member of the Regional Teaching Committee and in October (the Cranes having returned) she rode with the Cranes to a Miami conference.

During that time for 3 nights Kathryn sat with Mamie McAbee in a hospital by the bedside of Horace McAbee. He passed away about 8:20 Saturday evening, October 15th. On that date our membership fell to eleven (11).

Dec 31st Feast was attended by Gertrude (at her home), Louise and Kathryn.

In July A. Frederick Collins, one of our elderly members, went to New York state to visit his son. When he returned in November he made us happy when he said he "felt as though home again - among friends." "Among friends" - what a joyous feeling it gives to be among friends, but where can we find an earthly friend to compare with our Beloved, Baha'u'llah, and the more we love, trust and obey Him, the greater will be the outpouring of His love and help to us, for such is His Promise.

We write of the important happenings:

Our 19-Day Feasts were always observed. Sometimes the "faithful three" would meet at a cafeteria or restaurant for the material feast, then on to Gertrude's for our Spritual Feast. One unusual exception: our April Feast when Louise invited us to her home for a waffle breakfast.

Study or inquiry classes and most public meetings were held at Gertrude's. Attendance straggling, frequently no outsiders.

For "World Religion Day" -January 15th - several notices were placed in Jacksonville's two leading newspapers of the services to be held at 707 Post St. In attendance; Gertrude Davies, Louise Fender, Kathryn Vernon; no outsiders.

When letter came from Mrs. Mabel E. Eastman, Park Ridge, Ill., announcing she would arrive in Jacksonville on Jan 18th and would be glad to give a book review on "The Heart of the Gospel" by George Townshend, M.A., Cannon of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and Archdeacon of Clonfert, we advertised the meeting (held at Gertrude's) in our 2 leading newspapers. Baha'is present - G.D., L.F., Mamie McAbee, K.V., but no outsiders.

We hired room in Seminole Hotel for Feb.14th lecture by Mrs. Harry Ford (Mrs. Margaret Randal "Bahiyiyih" Ford) on "A Visit to the United Nations." Notice of this lecture was spread by paid advertisement, also 2 publicity write-ups in the two leading newspapers, and by postcard notices to many. Mr. Harry Ford acted as Chairman. Those who attended enjoyed the fine, interesting lecture, and her charming manner was a delight. Out of a city of about 200,000, five was the sum total of non-Baha'is who attended; of those five one was a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Ford, one was a friend of Gertrude, and two friends of the Secretary. Small attendances like this at hotels in the very center of the city proved that the location of the meetings was not a stumbling block in the growth of the Community.

March 15th was a rainy night. When the Secretary went to garage, intending to hurry and pick up Louise Fender for weekly ride to Gertrude's for our study class, she discovered the garage was empty - having driven the car to office in morning and, in eagerness to reach home to go to Baha'i meeting, had forgotten the car. It was near time for meeting; what to do was a problem. Suddenly doorbell rang and there, in the rain, stood a friend of all the Baha'is for many years, intending to ride with us to meeting. He proved himself a friend in need, rushing back four blocks, soon returning in his car and taking the two of us to parked car; then off we went to Gertrude's, a "motorcade" of an Austin and a 1940 Ford.

Our April election resulted in re-appointment of Gertrude Davies as Chairman; Louise Fender, Treasurer; Kathryn Vernon, Secretary; most of our members decidedly inactive, either account of distance or ill health.

Saturday, April 22nd, Gertrude, Louise, Mamie McAbee and I drove to St. Augustine where, we had been informed, a Regional meeting was to be held. There we met Mr. and Dr. Ketcham, Clive Alexander and Lucille Buffin Maxwell, all from Miami, their first stop on way to Wilmette Convention. We left meeting at 11 P.M., 4 on back seat, 3 on front, and after delivering Mae and Mr. Larsen to their home, started for Jacksonville. Fog was so thick cars showed down to a crawl, but Jacksonville safely reached, then Mamie was delivered, 5 miles out from town, then Gertrude, then Louise, then we delivered ourselves to 707 Post.

Sept. 7th I met Mrs. Edward G. Moore, Sr., a staunch Baha'i from Columbia, S. C., while on a visit to relatives in Jacksonville. I invited her to go to Feast with me, she gladly accepted and all down through the years when in Jacksonville we have enjoyed Baha'i get-togethers.

Sept. 20th Mr. & Mrs. Crane were again in Jacksonville, their first meeting since going North in the summer. They continued to come from St. Augustine for meetings until moving to Orlando the first of 1951.

On October 14th Gertrude and I met Miss Haworth of California and Mr. and Mrs. Davison, Sr., from Miami, in the Mayflower Hotel for a Baha'i visit, then on Oct. 22nd the Davisons attended a meeting at Gertrudes.

During October 20th class we - Mrs. Crane, Gertrude, Louise and I, read from new study book on Administration, while we nibbled on Gertrude's sandwiches and sipped tea from her grandmother's beautiful antique cups.

How little we know of what lies ahead. Our hearts were filled with grief when it was found that early the morning of December 15th Gertrude Davis, our sincere Baha'i, while in her home alone, had passed on to God's spiritual world.

My Mother and I were living in Vineland, N. J., when Gertrude was born there. We had been friends ever since, and truer friends no one ever had. Gertrude and her Mother came to their first Baha'i meeting because we invited them, and from the moment they accepted Baha'u'llah to the end they were staunch in their love and faithful in their service for Him. Two noble souls.

It was a Baha'i service on December 23rd; a beautiful Baha'i service. There was music as Gertrude, a graduate of the Musical Conservatory of Rollins College, Deland, Florida, loved music. Then Mrs. Crane beautifully read selections from both the Bible and the Baha'i Sacred Words. As I sat and listened, it seems that a hush of holiness was there - a blessing. I could not help but feel that Gertrude was glad her suffering of years was over.

1950

As a last love offering to Gertrude, I carried three passengers, all life-long friends of her family, with no means of transportation, to the Oaklawn Cemetary. There, in that quiet, peaceful spot, again prayers were read - Baha'i prayers for the departed.

Coming home we crowded in two young girls, one a former pupil.

That was all we could do. Our very sincere Baha'i - Gertrude Carolyn Davies - had left us.

Our membership was ten.

\* \* \* \* \*

1951

On April 21st Mrs. Louise B. Fender was reelected Treasurer, Kathryn Vernon Chairman and Secretary, with the following on our community list: Mabel Sawyer, still in Washington but mailing in her remittances, Herbert E. Bacon, Margaret Haas, Eulalie Haas, Mrs. Mamie T. McAbee, Mrs. A. M. Powell, and Mrs. Pearl Rozear. Mr. A. Frederick Collins, who went back to his home in Congers, N.Y. each summer, was not physically able to return to us this year, thus reducing our membership to nine.

7 P M May 22nd, picking up Louise Fender we drove downtown to call upon "Auntie Victoria", stopping at a hotel over night, on her way to Orlando. Victoria America Schanabel Bedikian, lovingly known as "Auntie Victoria" was then 72, had the fair skin of a young girl, was born in Boise, Idaho, on Feb. 9, 1879. During 1945-1952 she traveled 4 times around the United States, visiting every state in the Union, contacting the members of the Baha'i faith. She was a musician and an artist. It was she who sent to all the assemblies, groups or individuals 19-Day Feast letters of love, words from the sacred Baha'i writings, each time the sheets decorated with a different colored original design, year in, year out, from the early days to the last, they never failed to arrive for the 19-Day Feasts, a work of love, indeed, for her Lord. Within the Jacksonville Baha'i library will be found many copies of these love letters from Auntie Victoria. To her we were the flowers in her Garden - the "Garden of Baha'u'llah."

During this evening's visit she suggested writing a letter to her and our dearly loved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. I was delegated, so she and Louise talked while I wrote, she saying she would add a few lines later, as she wrote to him every day, which she did for over a quarter of a century. No wonder, when she passed on in Atlanta, Ga. in 1955, that Shoghi' Effendi's cablegram mentioned her as a "indefatigable wholly consecrated promoter of Faith, her services unforgettable."

While in office August 9th I received a phone informing me that she, Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, a Baha'i from Denver, Colo., and son Jim Clark, who was with the U S Navy, Memphis, Tenn., were in Jacksonville and would like to meet the Baha'is. So we hustled and phoned and swept and dusted and at 8 P M all was in readiness with icecream and cake waiting in kitchen. Mrs. Clark, sweet and sincere, kept all interested while giving the Baha'i message in various ways, Jim also doing his part. About 12 were present to greet them and that no one left until after 11 P M should be proof that it was a Baha'i party enjoyed by all.

On Oct. 18th Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gilman (Ruth) called at 702 Post. We phoned Louise Fender, living four blocks away, but she could not come to meet them, so we three talked and read from Gleanings and News Letters, ending with Ruth reading Tablet of Ahmad. They were living at Jacksonville Beach, having just moved from Wisconsin.

1951

About this same time, through phone call, we learned that Mr. and Mrs. Ward N. Calhoun (Ward and Sylvia) were also staying at Jacksonville Beach, and that they would probably be in Florida for sometime, as they were members of the Contact Committee.

Invitation came from Mae Thitchener, St. Augustine, for Jacksonville believers to share the Nov. 4th Feast with them. Only Mamie McAbee and I could go. Eleven were present at the Feast, including the Gilmans from the Beach, Mr. Robert Larsen, Mae, and five St. Augustine colored believers.

On November 11th, with Mamie McAbee, Louise Fender and a box of sandwiches, we again started for St. Augustine. Nine white and two colored believers present on that occasion, and a real feast it turned out to be - - roast duck and rice and cold cuts and all the extras.

November 25th we celebrated the Day of the Covenant also at Mae's in St. Augustine; this time adding another Jacksonville passenger, Mrs. Pearl Rozear. Total this time was ten, including the Gilmans from Jax Beach and Mr. and Mrs. Crane from Orlando. Mae and Mr. Larsen were the only St. Augustine believers. We waited 45 minutes to give others chance to arrive, but none came, so Baha'i readings were begun, then hot chocolate and cookies, and at last safely back to Jacksonville.

Jacksonville continued to try to carry on for Baha'u'llah - doing the best we could with the "faithful few."

1952

On April 21st Louise Fender, Mamie McAbee, Mrs. Pearl Rozear and I went to St. Augustine for a social gathering held in the home of C. Mae Thitchener in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Crane and Ruth and Bud Gilman, all leaving for the Wilmette Convention.

On March 9th we also enjoyed a Sunday meeting at the Thitchener home.

During this year Louise Fender continued to act as Treasurer for Jacksonville, Kathryn Vernon as Secretary.

In September we were obliged to write NSA that Herbert E. Bacon was not desirous of being listed as a Baha'i at that time, no antagonism, just too many conflicting duties. This was, indeed an unpleasant duty, as Herbert was the son of Mr. Walter L. Bacon and there never was a finer, more sincere Baha'i gentleman than Mr. Walter L. Bacon.

On December 31st the city of Jacksonville, Florida, only had an enrollment of eight Baha'is.

During this year the Gilmans lived at Jacksonville Beach six (6) months, Mr. and Mrs. Ward Calhoun three (3) months, but they left absolutely no interested seekers.

1953

In March we received a card from Mrs. Arthur Crane stating that a meeting of the Area and the Regional Teaching Committees was called for Jacksonville on Sunday, March 15th, and asking us to contact hotels for meeting place.

We believe it interesting to note that some of the hotels definitely refused when told we might have with us a believer of the so-called colored race; one stated they would prefer not to have us meet there. Upon phoning the Windle Hotel, on East Forsyth street (later torn down to erect new Jacksonville public Library) we found the Manager most gracious. When told the name of our group, he extended to us the use of a room free of charge if some of our members remained over night, stating he had seen "the beautiful Baha'i Temple in Wilmette."

So at 9:30 AM Sunday, March 15th, in accordance with the call from the Teaching Committees, we met at the Windle Hotel, and at that time the Jacksonville believers were most happy to learn that three Baha'is - Mr. and Mr. J. Reed Barrett, Jr., and Mrs. Minnie LaFont, had moved to Jacksonville from Atlanta, Georgia - giving Jacksonville the needed number to continue with an Assembly status.

Present at that meeting were -

Mr. & Mrs. Ben Weeden, who had the great  
privilege of spending four years in Haife.

Mr. John C. Inglis, Birmingham, Ala.

Mr. Raymond W. Lindsey, Atlanta, Ga.

Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Crane, Orlando, Fla.

Mr. & Mrs. Louis, Keller, Orland, Fla.

Mr. & Mrs. J. Reed Barrett, Jr., Jacksonville, Fla.

Mrs. Louise B. Fender Jacksonville

Mrs. A. M. Powell Jacksonville

Kathryn L. Vernon Jacksonville

Mrs. LaFont, mother of Mrs. Reed, was ill and unable to attend.

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Inglis, Chairman, and we, in turn, introduced ourselves. A Baha'i prayer was then read by each, thereafter various phases of the Baha'i teachings were discussed by all members, under the topics of what the Baha'i Faith meant to the individual, to the city of Jacksonville, to the world at large: the true meaning of Unity in a Baha'i Community, its value to the Community, and how Baha'i

1953

local communities can sow an influence for good in their cities, eventually to extend throughout the world.

During the discussions Mrs. Weeden told how the Baha'i teachings had brought to her the realization that the heart must be filled with love for all creatures, else one cannot radiate the true Baha'i spirit.

Mr. Weeden told how one serving in Haifa is "on call for duty" at all times of day or night, and reminded us that Baha'is also should be ready for service at any time.

The Chairman concluded our meeting by stating that Jacksonville at that time had been given an opportunity for a new beginning, henceforth the responsibility was ours, success or failure was in our hands, and he reminded us that one of the best ways to spread this truth of God is - to "Live the Life."

We adjourned at 2 PM - the end of a friendly and spiritual conference.

The Jacksonville believers were invited by Mr. and Mrs. Barrett to be their guests for the Naw-Rúz Feast, Saturday, March 21st. Three were able to attend:- Mrs. Fender, Mrs. Powell, and Kathryn Vernon.

After the evening meal we read from the Baha'i words and, as the Naw-Rúz day was past, talked of plans for the future. Mrs. Barrett graciously suggested that Jacksonville accept the use of their home, 4362 Gadsden Court, as meeting place for the 19-Day Feasts, and during the years which followed many were the happy meetings enjoyed there.

A reorganization election was called for Saturday, March 28th at the Barrett home. Upon arrival we found Mr. and Mrs. Crane who informed us they had discovered that the Barrett home was located just outside the Jacksonville city limits, therefore they could not belong to the Jacksonville community - that they would have to form a group of their own, to be known as the Duval County Group. So, on April 21st Jacksonville was still a group of eight (8).

Within this, the Jacksonville, Florida, Baha'i Record mention is made of Baha'i activities enjoyed jointly with the Duval County believers; not in any way trying to keep their records but in grateful acknowledgment of all the cordial hospitality extended to Jacksonville city by the Duval County community. While we felt that in years to come Duval County might be annexed, in 1953 we each had our own responsibilities. County activities not attended by any of the Jacksonville members are not mentioned herein.

1953

Sunday, Sept. 13th a State Convention was held at the YWCA, which some Miami and other Baha'is attended. Lunch was served by the Jacksonville and the Duval County Groups.

An advertised public meeting was also held in the Seminole Hotel at 8 PM that same date. John Inglis of Birmingham, Ala. was supposed to be our guest speaker but he did not arrive, so Reed Barrett took his place. Pictures of Temple were shown by a Baha'i from Miami. About four non-Baha'is present.

On October 19th I received a telephone from Mrs. Beatrice R. Alexander and learned that she and husband, Jesse J. Alexander, had come from Budd Lake, N.J. to live in Jacksonville. They remained until September 30, 1956, when they moved to Tampa. During their stay in Jacksonville they alternated in acting as secretary and chairman for the Group, but as they left no records for the Jacksonville archives, I am taking the liberty of mentioning the important happenings, so future Baha'is can have an unbroken picture of how Jacksonville's Baha'i Garden grew. Their arrival brought our membership up to ten.

The following, copied from the Friday, October 23rd edition of the "Chronicle", a Jacksonville paper, might be of interest:

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**Chicago Gets A Taj Mahal**

A Taj Mahal has been built on Chicago's North Shore. It has taken 50 years to build it. It had its formal dedication in May, 1953. It is the Baha'i Temple. It is the Baha'i House of worship. What is the Baha'i movement? It is one of those modern religious movements which consists of a lot of sweet scented words with no substance. The Basic teaching is the oneness of mankind. Don't be carried away by this Baha'i movement. It is another one of those inter-faith, inter-racial and inter-national movements which spells no good for Christianity and the United States.

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How blessed are we who have found the truth; that this, The Baha'i Faith is the changless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. How blessed are we, indeed, to be living in this - the New Day of God.

1954

The evening of January 30th three Baha'is called at 707 Post Street with cards to be signed, furnished by the Regional Teaching Committee, as a means of tracking down the "inactives." Cards read - "I am of this date not interested in the Baha'i religion." Mrs. Powell, a French Canadian, a cripple, was then living with me, where she remained until obliged to go to hospital some time later. Once before, when living in her own apartment, she had been interviewed by a visiting Baha'i, trying to ascertain the reason for her inactivity. At that time she definitely did not deny Baha'u'llah, neither did she this time but she signed the card. Had the card read "I am at this time no longer a believer in Baha'u'llah" the interview would have had a very different ending. Belief is one thing; there can be many good reasons for the inactivity.

Miss Margaret Haas was another member called upon by the visiting Baha'i; she also received letters of inquiry regarding her inactivity. Feeling I was a friend, she frequently called upon me. Late in November, 1953, I drove her on a necessary errand; she was at that time very ill. She joined, declaring her belief in Baha'u'llah in 1937, never once did she deny Him.

We are glad the Writings point out that Disbelief is the only reason for name removal, outside of willful acts detrimental to the Faith, etc.

Area Teaching Committee called a conference for Sunday, Oct. 10th, which was held 1-5 PM at the YWCA, 325 E. Duval St. Theme - "Faith in action." - a box supper available afterward. Following the Conference a Fireside at the Barretts, the believers furnishing transportation for friends without cars.

Later in October Sunday afternoon meetings, under supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, were begun at the YWCA. Although held for several weeks they failed to bring to either of the Groups any new members or seekers. In fact, those advertised meetings attracted practically no outsiders.

It was in October that the NSA was mailed a check, signed by Louise Fender, Treasurer, and Kathryn Vernon, Secretary, in amount \$32.12, as contribution for Temple use, which closed out the "Jacksonville Baha'i Assembly" Atlantic National Bank checking account. Thus did the last of Winifred's bequest to the Jacksonville Baha'i Community enter into service for Baha'u'llah.

During their stay in Jacksonville the Alexanders took charge of all meeting arrangements and our Feasts were celebrated in their home, they our host and hostess, except on those occasions when the Jacksonville and the Duval County Groups combined.

A special meeting was called by the Alexanders Feb. 4th to meet Miss. Olive Alexander, Chairman of Area Committee, and Miss. Ida Solomon, Secretary, both from Miami. At another time Mr. Wm. DeForge was present.

One Christmas the Barretts and the Alexanders held a Christmas Baha'i party at the Clara White Mission (colored) There was music. A large Christmas tree stood upon the platform, its shining decorations despeaking a welcome to all, The hall was filled with children and their parents and there the Baha'i message was presented. Then candy, fruit and a gift for each child, with refreshments for all. A great deal of time, work and money went into that Baha'i effort, and I am not exaggerating when I report that all the material portions were greatly enjoyed by the guests.

This year the Alexanders enrolled John and Willie Mae Tobe, with their daughter Margaret and two younger children as Baha 'i youth. When Margaret graduated from high school she joined the "Waves" and shortly after moved to California.

Our last meeting with the Alexanders was on Sept. 29th, they moving on the 30th to Tampa, Fla., Mr. Alexander having been transferred to that city. Kathryn was appointed by them to act as Secretary and Louise as Treasurer for Jax. until the next regular Baha'i election, April 21, 1956.

A Fireside was held Nov. 18th at Mrs. Fender's; another shortly thereafter at 707 Post.

During this year the name of one very sincere Baha'i had to be removed - Miss Mabel E. Sawyer because she was held in Washington, D.C. by her position and no prospects of returning soon to Jacksonville. As long as she remained in Jacksonville Mabel was faithful to her trust, doing everything possible for Baha'u'llah, frequently stopping at 707 Post after her day's work, to use typewriter and prepare her "copy" for that week's newspaper. The papers were very generous to us in the early days and weekly carried meeting notices together with Baha'i quotations, but rarely did anyone attend a meeting as a result of newspaper notice.

December 31st showed us with membership of six: one lost by death, Miss Margaret Haas, and Miss Eulalie Haas having moved to country and could not be located. Once again the "faithful few" settled down to keeping the Feasts and spreading the Baha'i message whenever opportunities presented.

1956

January 30th of this year Mr. and Mrs. Abel (Harvey and Florence) Baha'is from Astoria, Oregon, came to Jacksonville, boosting our membership to eight.

In their Belmont Terrace home, South Jacksonville, we enjoyed, during their stay in this city, many Feasts and Baha'i gatherings.

1957

Many were the Baha'i activities by the Duval County Group. I am including those of which I, as a participant, have knowledge, in order that the Jacksonville report may be continuous.

January 24th we were invited to home of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett. There five Jacksonville Baha'is with 11 others met Mr. and Mrs. J. Svendsen, Madison, Wisc. and Mr. Winsted Evans, and all enjoyed a wonderful spiritual feast along with the Barrett Baha'i hospitality. We met there again the following evening with Mr. Winsted Evans, and in February with Mr. and Mrs. Svendsen.

We were invited Sunday, January 27, to the home of Dr. and Mrs. Otto Zmeskal, Gainesville, Fla., for a regional teaching conference with Mr. and Mrs. Svendsen and Mr. Evans. Conference from 10 in morning to 4 in afternoon, recess for lunch, everyone carrying their own. Twenty-three were present at that gathering, coming from Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, Pinocastle, Orlando, Ormond, etc. and two from Canada. Through courtesy of ride with Barretts, I was able to attend. Many were the courtesy rides extended by them over the years.

6:30 PM January 30th Jacksonville received a phone call from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Harris of Mattoon, Illinois. They were at the George Washington Hotel, expecting to have a meeting that evening. We had received no previous notice of their coming and it was impossible to arrange for a meeting on such short notice, so we missed the still pictures of Haifa which they had intended to show.

On February 15th Mrs. Louise B. Fender, one of the "faithful few" moved to Arlington, and while only across the St. Johns River it was far enough to take her from the Jacksonville membership and into the Duval County Group.

Later in the year Miss Maria LaFont, sister of Mrs. Barrett, joined the Baha'i ranks. Living inside the Jacksonville city limits she belonged to us. It is interesting to note that while her sister and Mother had been Baha'is for several years, Maria said she never found the truth until she read "Gleanings" - the sacred words of Baha'u'llah.

Sunday, April 14th we were again invited to the Zmeskel home in Gainesville: the honored guest - Zabih Shahidzadeh, a Baha'i from Isfahan, Iran, a polished gentleman, in the USA for a year as an exchange student. Again a gracious offer of a ride with the Barretts. That was a spiritual treat long to be remembered: first-hand information of the early days of martyrdom, and of the steadfast faith of the believers. We wanted to stay on and on, but Jacksonville was a long ways away. We made it by 1 AM.

On April 21st it was again our privilege to meet Zabih at the Barrett home.

During the year our Jacksonville Feasts were observed

1957

at homes of Mr. & Mrs. Abel or Miss Maria LaFont, (Jacksonville Group): or- by frequent invitation with the Duval County Group. Our guests - Mrs. E. C. Moore, Columbia, S.C., and Mrs Maude Barnes, Nashville, Tenn.

Both Florence Abel and Maria LaFont held positions which kept them travelling a great part of the time, so seldom in Jacksonville for Feasts and meetings.

The evening of November 18th both Groups combined in holding Memorial Services for our Beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. The Jacksonville members unable to attend were given selected readings which they read in their homes at eight oclock of same evening.

On December 31st our listed members were - 8. -  
Harvey Abel, Florence Abel, Maria LaFont, Mrs. Mamie McAbee  
Britt, Mrs. Pearl Rozear, John Tobe, Willie Mae Tobe,  
Kathryn Vernon.

As we look back over the year 1958 we particularly recall the Sunday February 16th Conference held in the Barrett home, under leadership of Mr. Wm. deForge, of Hackensack, N.J., member of the Auxiliary Board of the Cause. 18 attended the Conference, representing 8 localities - Jacksonville, Duval County, Arlington, Wesconnett, St. Augustine, Gainesville, Daytona Beach, and Key West. Conference lasted from 1 PM to after 5:30, then buffet supper, after <sup>which</sup> the friends from distance felt they must leave. Those remaining again gathered around Mr. deForge for an informal talk and question period until evening, when we settled down to a "Fireside" meeting with 10 Baha'is and 3 friends. Refreshments again at 10:30 - truly a busy day under the friendly Barrett roof.

Mr. deForge spoke to us of the passing of our dearly loved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi on November 4th, 1957, and what we could do to prove our love for him and for Baha'u'llah. For 36 years Shoghi Effendi's life was one of consecrated, constant service, and we had wondered why we had been deprived of his guidance. We were told we were then called upon to attain to our maturity, not to lean upon a Guardian and hence this Conference - to help build a greater unity and gather strength for the coming years.

And so we pledged anew to carry on, realizing that God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform; that the Hands of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, appointed by Shoghi Effendi, are a part of God's divine plan for this, His New Age, and that if we pray in sincerity for guidance we shall be shown the way to do our part in the days and the years to come.

Joe J. Sawyer, Jr., who was in Jacksonville the latter part of 1957, for a short time, returned to South Carolina in March.

April 20th we received letter from John and Willie Mae Tobe resigning from Baha'i membership, stating they were "well satisfied with their own church." We tried to point out to them that our love for Baha'u'llah was the all-important thing, not the church, but they preferred their accustomed activities, and in July the NSA removed their names.

On April 21st Kathryn was again appointed to act as Secretary for another Baha'i year - April 21, 1959.

During business portion of June 4th Feast, held at the Barrett home, Mrs. Barrett stated she had opened Baha'i meetings in the Clara White Mission, situated in Jacksonville city. One meeting had been held, eight attended; next to be Wednesday evening June 11th. On that evening Lucille Barrett and Harvey Abel stopped for me and I went with them to the meeting. It was held in office of the Mission. Present: 4 Baha'is and Miss Eartha White, daughter of the founder of Mission. 2 women (one who worked for Mrs. Barrett) and 2 men (one the elderly janitor.) Mrs. Barrett (Lucille) was speaker and announcement was made of meetings to be held every other Wednesday.

1958

The next meeting, June 25th, Lucille again picked me up. When we reached the Mission Eartha was going home - had forgotten that was the meeting night; Janitor also had forgotten. We waited until 9:30 but no one came. Lucille then decided the meetings might as well be discontinued. So ended that project.

For the November 4th Feast we were guests of the Abels.

November 24th John C. Boylin transferred from Nashville, Tenn. to Jacksonville so on December 31st our membership was seven. (7)

On July 5th, while I was visiting with C. Mae Thitchener in St. Augustine, we went to call upon Mrs. Frances A. Shaw, almost 90 years old, their staunch colored believer who was at that time in a nursing home. When we entered her room she was fast asleep. In the bend of her left arm, which was folded across her breast, was the latest copy of our "Baha'i News" publication. When she awoke, how happy she was to see us; said she had been thinking of Mae and praying she would come. That she recognized me could not be doubted when she smiled, then told Mae - "She looks just like herself."

Many Baha'i meetings I had attended with Mrs. Shaw in St. Augustine but I shall always cherish the remembrance of this visit - she with the "Baha'i News" hugged close to her heart.

1959

As both Jacksonville and Duval County Groups were small, we continued to hold practically all of our activities together. Study classes were started, to be held each Monday evening, unless conflicting with 19-Day Feasts, and some times the 19-Day Feasts developed into real festive occasions, as the time we adjourned to their pretty shade garden and, seated at a long table we enjoyed a bountiful supper, ending with a birthday cake in honor of Mrs. LaFont.

A National Spiritual Conference with Mrs. Mottahedah was held at the Barretts on Feb. 22nd. Meeting lasted from 10:30 AM to 4 PM, with intermission to partake of a box luncheon. Twenty-one were present, including representatives from St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Ormond, etc.

This was followed on the 23rd by Fireside to which I took three non-Baha'is. There, also, Naw-Rúz was observed, with several outsiders present.

April 13th was a meeting for Baha'is only with Mr. Wm. Sears, Hand of the Cause in Africa.

On April 21st, election date, we were all at the Barretts. Each Group chose a corner in which to hold their own election, and at that time John C. Boylin was elected Secretary for the Jacksonville Group.

Aug. 30th, when Mrs. Anna Mikuriya was in Jacksonville, the County group advertised and sponsored a meeting for her at the Jacksonville colored branch YWCA, 582 W. 8th St. Attendance: 7 Baha'is and 4 or 5 others. No further interest developed and later, when Duval County requested privilege of holding "mixed" meetings there, it was refused; too fearful of reprisals.

Another meeting was planned by the County Group for Mrs. Mikuriya on the 31st at home of a colored family. Thirty-three were present. As I talked to them later, all declared they had enjoyed a wonderful time, not because of the Message from God, but because of the marvelous repast - a regular feast, plates heaped up with everything from meat to dessert, furnished by the Duval County Group, and, as the guests expressed it to me - "It is so nice to be together like this."

Two other times I attended similar meetings sponsored by the Duval County Group for out-of-town speakers. The attendance was large, the refreshments, furnished by the County Group, bountiful. It was never hard to get such a group together when refreshments were served.

During this year Mr. and Mrs. Abel moved to the West, which reduced our Jacksonville believers to five (5).

1960

April 21st John C. Boylin sent letter to secretary of the Teaching Committee that I, Kathryn L. Vernon, had been re-elected secretary of the Jacksonville, Florida, Group "after a year's rest." So John fulfilled his secretarial term (although no records were left for posterity), and so I once more took up the burden.

Later, October 20th, John Boylin advised he was moving outside of Jacksonville city limits, so his name had to be transferred to the Duval County Group, even though he had to drive through

Jacksonville to reach Duval County meetings. This reduced the Jacksonville Group to four (4).

To 707 Post Street - came,

On June 14th Mr. and Mrs. Wm. T. Spell, he in army service, located in Panama Canal zone. There he heard of the Baha'i message from a neighbor and he accepted. A young girl, Alda R. Rendina, in Chicago, Ill, felt the call to pioneer in the Canal Zone. She bought a one-way ticket and landed there with \$15 in pocketbook. She suggested that all pioneers buy only a one-way ticket, else they might do as some she knew; when they found food not good and many other unpleasant things, the easy living of America left behind, they immediately used their return ticket. But Alda stuck it out although it was 15 weeks before she found work. The two met and married and they stated their one desire was to always teach.

In 1960 Mr. & Mrs. Ellingham (Ciff & Margaret) transferred from Memphis, Tenn, purchased a house outside of City limits, therefore belonging to the County Group. August 13th the Barretts invited Jacksonville members to their home, to meet the Ellinghams, and on Aug. 20th we were invited by the Ellinghams to their own home for 19-Day Feast, followed by cordial invitations whenever meetings held in their home.

Nov. 7th Mr. Wm. deForge was at the Ellingham home,, 11 non-Baha'is present at that meeting. Mr. deForge gave interesting short talk, bringing out points of interest to those not familiar with the Baha'i Faith, then evening opened for questions.

The following evening a meeting for Baha'is only was held at home of Maria LaFont of the Jax. City Group, when Mr. deForge gave us references for future study.

We well recall the many times in years previous when he came to the Jacksonville meetings and how his pleasing personality and sincerity were always enjoyed by all.

1961

During this year Mrs. Vivian Fellows of Milwaukee, Wisc., came to the Duval County Group and with her we studied 'Local Spiritual Assembly Questionnaire!' ( Mrs. Fellows was also speaker at Group meeting, attended by 32, followed by refreshments-courtesy of Duval County. )

In August a Baha'i gathering was held at the Barrett home, with Dr. Allen L. Ward, professor of Speech at Lane College, Jackson, Tenn. the speaker. The following evening he met at 1531 W. 3rd St. with a colored group of 13 non-Baha'is plus 8 Baha'is. Refreshments served by the Duval County Group.

Also in August, through efforts of Mrs. Lucille Barrett, Dr. Ward was guest speaker in the Unitarian Church, Jacksonville. A goodly number of their congregation attended.

At another time, under Duval County sponsorship, Dr. Nelson Brown of Atlanta, Ga. was speaker at a Unitarian regular Sunday service. Room was filled with members of their congregation.

These contacts did not bring any interested seekers to Jacksonville.

1962

Throughout this year, to the Jacksonville believers came cordial invitations from the Duval County Group to attend their Feasts, study classes, or other meetings.

In January I attended meeting at the Ellingham home, in Duval County, when Mrs. Bobo was guest speaker. Several non-Baha'is were present.

After 27 years the city of Jacksonville listed only four (4) members:-

    Maria LaFont; Mrs. Mamie McAbee Britt McClinton,  
Mrs. Pearl Rozear, and Kathryn L. Vernon.

SAD - BUT TRUE'

World Religion and World Peace Days were observed by the Duval County Groups at the Ellingham home.

To World Religion Day came a visitor from the University of Florida, Gainesville - Ruhullah K Radyar, a Persian Baha'i from Bombay, India, and after our buffet supper he told of the many meetings in Bombay and surrounding villages, of the sacrifices made and of one Baha'i bringing 2,000 people into the Faith.

Perhaps here we have the answer to success - we do not love enough to sacrifice enough.

Mrs. Pearl Rozear, a member of the Jacksonville community since 1934, and living at 707 Post for many years, on account of ill health moved to a Gainesville, Fla. nursing home on December 13th. This brought our membership down to three (3) but on December 31st Mr. and Mrs. Walter Kiser came to Jacksonville from Fairbanks, Alaska, boosting our membership up to five (5),-

Miss Maria LaFont - Mrs. Mamie McAbee McClinton - Mr. and Mrs. Kiser - and Kathryn L. Varnon, the latter acting as secretary.

1964

Friday evening January 3rd I drove to the Barretts, they having invited me to ride the rest of the way with them to Ellinghams, where an enjoyable evening was spent, Mrs. Ledmiller VonZiebeck, from Durham, N.C., showing beautiful slides taken during a trip abroad, among them picture of Marian Elizabeth Jack's grave in Sophia.

I had often heard Dr. and Mrs. Guy speak of "Jackie", as they called her, who, before I heard of the Baha'i Faith, spent some time in St. Augustine where she had a studio. In their dining room hung a picture of the Acca fortress, painted by "Jackie".

A Mrs. Beal from England also attended that meeting.

The 5th was also a most enjoyable evening; a fireside at the home of Duval County member Henry Markot, honoring Mrs. VonZiebeck, from whom Henry had received the Baha'i message. Henry, a musician, favored us that evening with piano selection; We also heard a beautiful Baha'i song by one of his pupils.

Our sincere Baha'i, Maria LaFont, held a position which kept her travelling almost constantly, so although living within the city limits we seldom saw her - much to our regret. In February of this year she moved to Arlington, which placed her in the Duval County Group.

After the Kisers' arrival in Jacksonville, December of last year, I contacted them several times; they always seemed happy to talk of the Baha'i Faith. On March 4th, thinking Mrs. Kiser and the three children might enjoy a ride to a pretty park, the weather was so beautiful, I was greatly surprised to have a strange woman appear at the door of the apartment they had rented, who stated the Kisers had moved two days before, going to some other Florida town. Jacksonville never heard anything from them thereafter. This brought our membership down to two (2).

Jacksonville papers graciously carried our Baha'i meeting and activity notices - free of charge - continuously from January, 1934 through 1950. Gone now are those happy days of free advertising. Once when I asked the Duval County Community if they were still placing ads in the papers, as I had failed to locate any, I was told that as ads "seemed unproductive of results" they were discontinuing for the time, - sending that extra money to Wilmette instead. We, of Jacksonville, can testify as to the "unproductiveness" up to that time, but those years proved to us one great truth - that those in charge of our Publicity notices had a great love in their hearts for Baha'u'llah to be willing to wear out so many pairs of shoes delivering those notices to the various newspapers.

1965

1965 began in a wonderful way. I had the great honor and pleasure of a visit with Mrs. Marguerite Sears, wife of Mr. William B. Sears (Hand of the Cause of God), who came to 707 Post Street on January 5th. My hope was that we might meet many times in the future, such was her sincerity and sweetness. We, of course, spent the time talking of "Baha'i Interests" and the visit was all too short.

Next evening a meeting was held for Baha'is only at the Ellingham residence, Mr. Sears the honored guest speaker, and, as John Boylin phoned and offered to take me, I had the privilege of attending that meeting. I was able to drive a car but with this world in such an unsettled condition it was safer not to drive alone late at night.

Mamie McClinton had been in very ill health for many months and for some time I attended no outside Baha'i activities, keeping the 19-Day Feasts with Mamie and together studying when she was able. On July 24, 1965, because of her exceedingly poor health, she moved to Augusta, Georgia, to be near her daughter, and on that date the Jacksonville Baha'i membership slid down to ONE (1) - Kathryn Louisa Vernon - the first to accept in 1932.

At least I can truthfully report that she remained steadfast.

1966

Away back on April 21st, 1935, at a wonderful meeting presided over by Dr. and Mrs. Walter B. Guy of St. Augustine, Jacksonville claimed its right to Baha'i Assembly status, with thirteen (13) believers. We were very happy; it seemed that this city would soon have a flourishing Baha'i community. The years passed quickly and with them came many changes: removals from the city, many deaths. If, within the city there were searchers for the truth, they failed to read our weekly newspaper notices, or else were blinded to the beauty of the sacred Baha'i quotations contained therein.

On this day, April 21st of the year 1966, in the city of Jacksonville, Florida, with a population of around 500,000, I, Kathryn Louisa Vernon, stood alone in the Garden of Baha'u'llah - alone for the first time in 31 years on Baha'i community election day.

How we hated for Jacksonville to lose her Assembly status, but as we turned to Baha'u'llah we were comforted when we read- "The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials." Was this one of his tests, to prove our love for Him? "Love me that I may love thee," He has said, "if thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee."

We had loved ever since the moment in 1932 when we accepted Him. We could only try to prove our love by holding firm. We knew that if Baha'u'llah desired Jacksonville to have a worth while Baha'i community at His own time, in His own way, He would bring it to pass for God, indeed, works in mysterious ways His glories to unfold.

So, on this the 21st day of April, 1966, we decided to hold our election anyway. Jacksonville still needed a recording secretary, that future generations might have an unbroken report of how Baha'u'llah's Jacksonville Garden grew. The thought came- "Remember, the command, Kathryn, no electioneering. Vote only for the one you feel best fitted for the position. ----- U-u-m-m Now let's count the votes. Why, Kathryn, you are elected ! "

And so, as His secretary until He desired otherwise, I made a promise to keep His records. As a tree is cut back, that it may gain new strength and beauty, so I was confident that at long last God's glorious truths, as recorded within the Baha'i Sacred Writings, would eventually take root and bring forth beautiful flowers and fruits within the city of Jacksonville, Florida.

It had to be so for God is always victorious.

1966

Answering telephone call on July 30th I was surprised to hear Mrs. Mamie McAbee McClinton's voice. She had returned from Augusta, Ga. the previous day and intended to remain, hoping the Florida climate would be more beneficial, but she was far from well and did not improve. She was taken to hospital in November and, although suffering great pain, told me on the 19th that she was holding fast to Baha'u'llah. She passed away the following morning, Sunday, November 20th. Once again Jacksonville dropped down to one isolated believer.

Just before leaving St. Augustine in November, after a visit with my sincere Baha'i friend, Miss C. Mae Thitchener, she said - "If you will go back into your room you will find something which I hope you will be as happy to take home with you as I am to give it to you."

My heart skipped a beat when I found it - something I had frequently seen and admired hanging in Dr. Guy's home - a painting of the fortress prison of Akka where our Beloved, Baha'u'llah, was imprisoned for over two years, painted by Marion Elizabeth Jack who, as before mentioned, at one time had a studio in St. Augustine and who, in 1908, was at Akka as English instructor for the children of the Holy household.

The painting shows some greenery and palms, the artist's desire to beautify the spot, but when Baha'u'llah was sent there it was forlorn and desolate. To that prison the government sent its worst criminals because it was an acknowledged fact that rarely did they survive a year. A common say was that even a bird could not fly over Akka and live, so unhealthy was the atmosphere. To the fortress prison of Akka was Baha'u'llah sent, with the expectation that He, also, would die within a year, but such was not God's plan. Baha'u'llah survived.

When account of ill health Mrs. Guy moved from St. Augustine to live with one of their sons, in Maine, she gave the picture to Mae. Mae gave it to me because, I feel sure, she knew I loved Baha'u'llah enough to treasure it - a daily reminder of Him. So when I pass on to God's Spirit World I, in turn, shall pass that picture on to the future generations of Jacksonville Baha'is; and when you find it hanging upon my wall, even though faded with age, know that it was one of my choicest possessions. And as you pause to meditate upon Baha'u'llah's forty long years of banishments, imprisonments, sufferings and tortures, may it bring you closer to Him and to the realization of His great love for humanity; and yet that love may never reach us. The reason is found within the Hidden Words. Only as we send to Him love and more love, will it bring Him very near to us. We must PROVE our love for Him through deeds.

1967

Nothing of great importance to report. Whenever callers came, a "fireside" developed, furnishing books for those who would read.

Whenever phone call was made or received, some Baha'i truth was included.

Thus we carried on during 1967.

1968

October 1st, 1968, was a very important day. On that day the city of Jacksonville, Florida, located in the County of Duval, and practically all the rest of Duval County, became consolidated into what was proudly declared "the Bold New City of the South." - a city of 840 square miles, with a population of over 500,000.

The consolidation also brought a change in Baha'i activities. Whereas heretofore there was a Jacksonville city and also a Duval County Baha'i Group or community, we were now one, to hereafter be known as the Jacksonville, Florida, Baha'is. We had a membership of only eight but we looked forward to our official Baha'i election date, April 21, 1969, hoping at that time to be able to qualify for the National Spiritual Assembly's official recognition as a Local Spiritual Assembly.

A phone call Oct. 8th from Mr. Reed Barrett advised of a special meeting, their home, 4362 Gadsden Court, 2 PM Saturday, Oct. 12th. Refreshments were served 6:30 - 7 PM, then an open meeting 8 PM, attended by 11 Baha'is and 3 non-Baha'is. Our out-of-city Baha'i guests were Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Entzminger (Betty A) and Dr. Leonard J. Hippchen; Dr. Hippchen our afternoon and evening speaker, Mr. Entzminger also extending greetings.

Mrs. Lucille Barrett phoned Nov. 10th, telling of a study class being formed, to be held weekly 11 AM to 2, each to bring sandwich for noontime lunch, if desired, hostess furnishing coffee or tea. On Nov. 14th the first session of the study class was held, 7 Baha'is attending, one absent, detained by work. Subject - Administration.

1968

On December 19th all were invited to the Barrett home to welcome Dr. Pirooz Khorvash, a Persian Baha'i to be stationed at a Jacksonville Hospital for about one year. During the evening he received phone that his wife's plane from New York City was due in about 20 minutes and thus ended the party- the Doctor's face beaming with happiness as he rushed off to meet her.

From Consolidation date to year's end study classes were continued and all Feasts observed.

A particularly festive occasion was the December 12th Feast, enjoyed as guests of Mrs. Joh Gainey in her new Mandarin home.

1969

It was on January 2nd that Mrs. Maria LaFont Klemmt picked me up for a ride to home of Mrs. Clarise Stephens, and there we met Dr. and Mrs. Khorvash (Pirooz and Nayirih), their 4-1/2 year old son, and the Doctor's brother, a college student from California who was visiting them for a few days, three very sincere Persian Baha'is.

After our February 7th Feast, observed at the Barrett home, a special party was enjoyed honoring the Doctor's wife-Nayirih.

Special meeting, Baha'is only, also at the Barrett home, on Sunday, Feb. 10th, our guest Allah Kuli Kan Kalantar. For the open meeting the following evening a large \$52.92 ad was placed in the Times-Union newspaper which brought unexpected results - four young people, strangers, with inquiring minds., among them two High School boys.

To that meeting also came Mrs. Ludi M. Spears, a Gainesville, Fla., Baha'i, with 4 Baha'i youths. The non-Baha'is and the Baha'is listened intently to Mr. Kalantar's talk, then several questions were asked and explanations given. After refreshments, served by the Barretts, Mr. Kalantar rode with Mrs. Spears to Gainesville, where he was scheduled to meet with a Youth group 8 o'clock the following morning.

Eleven Baha'is enjoyed the March 2nd Feast.

Thinking more benefit might be obtained from our study classes if from 10AM to 12 noon, with no break taken after first hour, the March 5th class began on new schedule, those wishing to do so still bringing sandwich for a friendly get-together lunch at noon.

March 20th was a date of note for St. Augustine - their first Baha'i marriage. At 7 o'clock of that evening in the coquina walled garden of one of the late 17th Century houses, under light from wrought iron chandeliers hanging from the trees and the moon shining from above, Jeanne Frankel ( a Connecticut Baha'i) was married to Jack Benjamin Cook, a non- Baha'i. First there was a civil ceremony, performed by Judge Weinberg Later, after hearing bride and groom repeating the Baha'i words - "We will all verify abide by the will of God" then, in the twilight, came the chanting of the Baha'i Wedding Tablet in Persian by Dr. Khorvash of Jacksonville.

To the Naw-Rúz Feast ,March 21st, came 7 non-Baha'is, including for the first time 2 young girls- High School students. We trust history will prove that 1969 was the turning point in attracting Youths.

It was on Saturday, April 5th, that Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey

1969

(Raymond and Estelle) came to Jacksonville to review with us instructions on procedure requirements for holding local elections, and duties of a Local Spiritual Assembly. It was a subject close to our hearts for long had Duval County and the city of Jacksonville been listed only as Groups, and we were looking forward to our election when we could once more send in to the NSA the glad tidings of our Assembly status. Nine believers were able to attend. Meeting lasted from 2 to 9:30 PM, interspersed with a delicious repast at 6:30: then the following morning (Sunday) we again met from 10 -to- 1, thereby completing study program.

To a meeting called for Sunday evening, April 20th, in order to elect our Assembly members, came Dr. Leonard J. Hippchen from Florida State University, He congratulated us on Assembly status attainment and presented us with 2 portfolios, gifts from the National Spiritual Assembly, one pertaining to latest procedures to be followed by Assembly Secretaries, the other by Assembly Treasurers. On that election date our total listed Baha'is were eleven (11); the ones with \* before names indicate those elected to serve as members of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

- \* J. Reed Barrett, Jr.
- \* Lucille L. Barrett -Mrs.
- \* Louise Fender -Mrs.
- Joh Gainey - Mrs.
- \* Willie A. Hodge
- \* Maria LaFont Lemmt - Mrs.
- \* Dr. Pirooz Khorvash
- \* Mrs. Nayirih Khorvash
- \* Eloise Mitchell (transfer from Hollywood, Fla.)
- \* Clarise Stephens - Mrs.
- \* Kathryn L. Vernon

A meeting was then called for Friday, the 25th, to appoint the special duties for each Assembly member and I am happy to be able to report that Mrs. Lucille Barrett, who had so faithfully served as Secretary for the Duval County Community for the past sixteen years, since transferring from Georgia in 1953, was our appointed Secretary of the new Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Jacksonville, Florida, and I, Kathryn L. Vernon, after thirty-seven years, was privileged to lay aside my secretarial pen.

For me that did not mean to simply sit still and grow old for I had had a dream - a wonderful dream for the city of Jacksonville, Florida - a Baha'i membership of one thousand (1,000) and then, when the first one thousand reached, why not dream again?

1969

I spoke of this dream to several. The only response I received was a - "Oh y-e-s ?? "

There is only one God, we are all His children. He wants us all to know Him and to love Him. Surely, in a city of over 500,000 the goal is not too high for a starter.

The Lord, long ago, spoke unto Jeremiah, saying - "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there any thing too hard for me?  
(Jer.32:27 )

Baha'u'llah has said, "Verily, We behold you from the realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels."

Our loved Master Abdu'l Baha told us - "As ye have faith, so shall your powers and blessings be. "

When our hearts are filled to overflowing with love, as was Nabil's when he prayed; "Oh my God, amid my want and suffering, I tell of Thy hidden treasures. Withhold not Thy Grace and aid me to bring forth deeds worthy of Thy Day," then, as promised, will help from the Supreme Concourse come to us; we shall be able to continue to press forward and that dream shall come true, the fulfillment of which will bring blessings not only to the Baha'i believers but also to the city of Jacksonville, Florida.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is just a little report that future generations may know how Baha'u'llah's Garden in Jacksonville, Florida, was started - away back in 1919 - and of the loving care given to it by our teachers in those early days. Future reports, from county and city consolidation, belong to the official files of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Jacksonville, Florida.

Looking back over the past I can truthfully record that my greatest gift ever received was when Baha'u'llah permitted me to enter into His Garden, and I am exceedingly grateful for the many blessings He has bestowed upon me all along the way.

1969

No, I do not intend to just sit still and grow old. I may wander around a bit but always with the aim in view of serving our Beloved - Baha'u'llah.

I quote here from a letter received many years ago from Dr. Guy, because his words still hold a truth:

"Tell them all (Jacksonville Baha'i believers) from me that if the Radiance of the Beloved does not shine in their hearts, all their words, deeds, plans and aspirations shall come to naught."

My sincere love goes to all working in this, Baha'u'llah's Jacksonville Garden.

Hold fast to your love and your faith, and then the VICTORY will be HIS.

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Kathryn Louisa Vernon

The files on this disk are from Kathryn L. Vernon's (1885-1983) history of the Baha'i Faith in Jacksonville. The book is titled "BAHA'U'LLAH'S GARDEN Jacksonville, Fla. 1919 - 1969". The pages were scanned from the copy of the book in the Jacksonville Baha'i Library. The copies in the "Originals" folder were as scanned from the book, including a copy of the book's cover, which is the only place the title appears. In the "Edited" folder are copies that removed the scanning artifacts, and were centered. A few page numbers were chopped in the scans and had to be restored. Several pages were straightened, but as that process reduced the quality slightly it was used minimally.

Jacksonville Beach

Florida

October 3, 2009