

Helen Frances Grand (1865-1944)
Traces of a Bahá'í Life
by Marlene Macke

Abstract

In future decades and centuries, Bahá'í historians and scholars will be pleased to uncover stories of the first members of the Bahá'í Faith. In 2020, save for a few Canadian Bahá'í historians, the name of Helen Frances Grand remains unknown. This short biographical essay illuminates with a glimpse of one small facet of the Bahá'í Faith's beginnings in cities like Toronto in the early decades of the 20th Century through the life of Helen Grand. Despite the few disjointed fragments we have of her, the traces of Helen remain worth knowing and preserving for future generations.

Beginnings

On one of those perfect mornings at sea, a middle-aged Canadian enjoyed her last day on a passenger ship about to dock at Alexandria in Egypt. Reclining on a deck chair, Helen Frances Grand observed a sun softened by the clouds that caressed the calm sea. She felt a nearness to something that she could not define, a stillness that she didn't want to dispel by engaging in lunchtime chat.¹

After the rest of the passengers had retired to the dining salon, a deck steward approached her. "Miss Grand," he said, "Are you not going in to dine?"

"Yes," Helen replied, "I suppose I had better go."

In the dining room, she joined an attractive, animated American woman, Louise (Lua) Moore Getsinger,² who opened the conversation by sharing her travel plans.

"I'm going to visit a great personage in the East who has been a prisoner for forty years," she confided.

But why forty years? Helen wondered.

Lua told Helen about the life of how He and His father had suffered. Helen commented, "What a very remarkable story; do many people know this great person?"

"Oh yes," Lua replied, "a great many people know 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

Finishing their meal, the women went their separate ways. That was the first and last time Helen saw her compelling lunch companion. However, the next morning before the ship docked, Helen received a note delivered to her cabin. It read: "Goodbye; try to love my teacher. I feel someday you will be one with us. Faithfully in His service." [signed] Lua Moore Getsinger. January 25, 1910.

The note included a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Glancing at the photo, Helen thought what an odd story Lua Getsinger had told her. For six months, Helen continued her travels and never met a Bahá'í or anyone who knew about the Faith.

Two years later, however, Helen learned that Grace Robarts Ober was a Bahá'í. As youngsters, Grace and Helen had been friends in Toronto, possibly at the private Anglican school for girls, Bishop Strachan School. Grace had just married America Harlan Ober, a

marriage suggested to them by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when He was in New York City. Lua had opened the door for Helen. After talking with Grace, Helen stepped through it and espoused in the Teachings of this new Faith.

Living in England

Helen’s mother and father were born in England, and many relatives still lived there. By 1916 or possibly earlier, Helen had settled in London, England and remained there for approximately six years. During World War I, Helen volunteered with blind soldiers,³ by reading to them, listening to their stories, writing letters for them. During the war years, eminent British Bahá’í, Lady Sara Blomfield,⁴ also served as a wartime volunteer comforting wounded soldiers evacuated to England. In a letter dated July 1917, she described their volunteer service:

Some of those who come to us, afflicted with the loss of their sight, are pleased to speak of Holy things – which gives them solace in their darkened world. Will the kind and benevolent one pray for them and for Miss Helen Grand who has brought them to us, and whose life is spent in their welfare and whose heart is set on bringing them into the Kingdom of Glory?⁵

Three years later, in July 1920, Shoghi Effendi, the eldest grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, arrived in England to study at Oxford University. On the last Wednesday of July, Shoghi Effendi journeyed to London to attend the weekly public Bahá’í meeting at Lindsay Hall in Notting Hill Gate. Ethel Rosenberg⁶ welcomed Shoghi Effendi, Dr. John Esslemont,⁷ who was visiting from Bournemouth, and – a special treat for Helen Grand – her friends and teachers, Grace and Harlan Ober from the United States. After short introductory remarks from Miss Rosenberg, both Grace and Harlan Ober spoke. Shoghi Effendi chanted a Persian prayer.⁸

“We had a real Bahá’í meeting,” Miss Rosenberg remarked, “with both East and West well represented.”

Teaching activities were pursued vigorously in those days in London. On the Friday following the public meeting, Shoghi Effendi, Dr. Esslemont and Ethel Rosenberg repaired to Helen Grand’s home in Eccleston Place, Belgravia for a fireside. Located in a posh neighbourhood, Helen’s home was steps away from Westminster Cathedral, Buckingham Palace, theatre and shopping.

Later, in November 1920, Claudia Coles, Helen’s American friend who lived for several years in London, described their joint efforts in teaching the Faith: Helen invited people to her home, and Claudia spoke about the Faith. Claudia recounted that they seemed to be attracting confirmations from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá because doors opened in unexpected ways, and “ready hearts” flowed to them in happiness.⁹

English Bahá’í Council 1920–1922

A Bahá’í Council¹⁰ functioned in 1914 in London, but, due to World War I’s

challenges, its activities ground to a halt. Six years later, when Dr. Esslemont had been on a pilgrimage in Haifa to the holy places associated with the Bahá'í Faith and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home, He told him that the Bahá'ís should reactivate their Bahá'í Council.

The London friends gathered on 22 October 1920, to consult on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's directive, and six weeks later, on 7 December 1920, they met at Helen Grand's home for the first formal meeting.

Helen must have intended to travel back to Canada in the spring of 1921. At the Council's third meeting on 22 March 1921, her fellow Council members bade her a formal farewell. Helen, however, did not leave London for another year. A letter that same year from Claudia Coles to Shoghi Effendi mentioned that Helen suffered a significant illness (not described), which appeared to explain why she delayed her return to Canada until 1922.¹¹

When Ethel Rosenberg had been on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1922, Shoghi Effendi gave her specific instructions to call for an election of a Spiritual Assembly whose boundaries would reach beyond London. And so the "All-England Bahá'í Council" was created. The All-England Council met for the first time on 17 June 1922, with a membership including Lady Blomfield, Mrs. Claudia Coles, Miss Ethel Rosenberg, and others from London – as well as Dr. Esslemont from outside London. Helen Grand was also elected. This country-wide council evolved the following year into the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles.¹² Helen's name, however, did not appear on the Voters List for the 1923 election.¹³

Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away on 28 November 1921, at the age of 77. When Shoghi Effendi learned of the death of his beloved Grandfather, he collapsed with shock. The Bahá'í friends took him to the home of Helen Grand, where he remained bedridden for several days.¹⁴ Then Shoghi Effendi roused himself to begin the preparations for winding up his affairs in England and returning to Haifa as soon as possible. Due to some delay in securing the necessary visas, he finally sailed from England on December 16.

Before Shoghi Effendi's departure, the Bahá'í friends in London summoned Dr. Esslemont from his home in Bournemouth. He wrote to a friend describing the scene in a letter saying,

... I found poor Shoghi in bed, absolutely prostrate with grief. At first he seemed absolutely overwhelmed by the loss, unable to eat, to sleep, to think. During the day, however, he recovered, and after tea he got up and came through to the drawing room where we had a little meeting – Miss Grand, Lady Blomfield, Mirza Dawud, Ziaoullah and myself. Shoghi read and translated to us the last tablet he had received from the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá], and chanted for us. These four friends I have just mentioned and Mr. Tudor Pole have all been exceedingly kind, and were of the greatest help to Shoghi in his hour of need. [T]he following day we all gathered at Miss Grand's again. We decided that Lady Blomfield would go

with Shoghi and Ruhangiz Khanom¹⁵ [sic] to Haifa, as soon as the journey could be arranged.¹⁶

This whole episode left Helen Grand with a profound connection to Shoghi Effendi and a lifelong supporter of the Guardianship, his role as Head of the Bahá'í world community delineated in the Will & Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Helen Grand's deep affinity with the Bahá'ís of England resulted in her generous contributions to the maintenance of the Bahá'í Centre in Upper Regent Street.¹⁷ Some ten years later, she again sent money to the London Bahá'í community for two years.¹⁸

Bahá'í Activity in Toronto in the 1920s

On 10 November 1921, Lizzie Cowles, a Bahá'í living in Montreal, compiled a list of Bahá'ís in Montreal and included five names for Toronto: Miss Dora Clapham, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nichol, Dr. Albert Durrant Watson and Helen Grand, in care of Mrs. Joseph (Alice Margaret Grand) Kilgour.¹⁹ Helen might have written to May Maxwell²⁰ in Montreal the year before to say she was returning to Canada, or she may have been using Alice Margaret's address to receive her mail while she was out of the country. This paltry list for Toronto also illuminates the lack of administrative functioning and cohesion of the Bahá'í community in the early 1920s.

A list dated just a year later includes 20 names of Bahá'ís in Toronto, several of whom had declared during Martha Root's visit in the spring of 1919. Oddly enough, neither Helen nor Alice Margaret Grand Kilgour appeared on the 1922 list.²¹

The roster in 1928 reverted to a limiting list of seven Bahá'ís living in Toronto, two of whom were Helen and Alice Margaret Kilgour.²² (Dr. Watson had passed away in 1926, and most of his family members and close friends who had declared themselves as Bahá'ís in 1919 drifted away after he had died. Others like Violet Rumney and Laura Davis (née Rumney) not on the 1928 list definitely considered themselves members of the Bahá'í Faith.)

Furthermore, Laura Davis knew of Helen Grand. Laura's unpublished "History of the Toronto Bahá'í Community" mentions that Helen returned from England during an unspecified year in the early 1920s; Laura's history also reported that Helen hosted Bahá'í meetings in her home to teach the Faith.²³

A letter from American Alfred Lunt, in care of Alice Margaret Grand Kilgour in December 1922, confirmed that Helen Grand had returned to Toronto. Mr. Lunt, serving as the secretary of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, a forerunner of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, referred to their mutual friends, and Harlan and Grace Ober, and discussed the lack of organization throughout America in collecting contributions for the building of the Bahá'í Temple in Wilmette, Illinois. The letter also mentioned Helen being acquainted with Dr. Albert Durrant Watson.²⁴

In March 1924, Helen Grand sailed from New York City for a pilgrimage in the Holy Land.²⁵ She was likely the first Bahá'í from Toronto to travel to Palestine to world centre

of Bahá'í Faith. Dr. Watson asked Helen to take to Shoghi Effendi a letter mentioning that Helen, a “beloved and faithful friend” would be bringing to Haifa “my loving greetings in the name of the Beloved.” She also carried a gift copy of Watson’s latest book, a collection of poetry entitled *The Poetical Works of Albert Durrant Watson* that included Bahá'í poems such as ‘The Dream of God.’²⁶

Helen arrived in the Holy Land on March 14, where she met her friend from London, Claudia Coles. While they must have been disappointed that the Guardian was away from Haifa, they nonetheless had a rewarding, profoundly spiritual experience. Helen wrote,

I shall never forget our first walk through the Master’s garden, where He had spent so many hours making it beautiful with every flower one could imagine, arbored walks, growing with exquisite white and yellow roses, trees bearing golden fruit... The garden is steeped with memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and one feels His continued Presence, making it truly a Holy Garden, where prayers, night and day, have been offered to God for the “Brotherhood of the World” and the unity of the nations. We had no desire for sightseeing. Our one desire was to get into harmony with the surroundings... Every evening during our visit we walked upon Mount Carmel to the Tomb of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and spent an hour or more in the twilight; the great silence and peace was deeply wonderful. The air was always heavy with the scent of flowers growing in profusion in the gardens of the Tomb. Of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s beloved family and their great kindness to us no words could possibly begin to express, and to their wonderful charm of personality and the unsurpassed beauty of their daily lives no word of mine could do justice. The memory of these beloved souls sinks deeper and deeper into my heart as the time passes.²⁷

Helen Grand seemed very attuned to broader activities in the Bahá'í world. The British Empire Exhibition, to be held in London, England in September 1924, featured a conference on the “Living Religions within the British Empire.” Shoghi Effendi invited the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada to write a paper for presentation at the conference. He noted that Helen Grand suggested Dr. A. W. Watson and Mr. J. O. McCarthy of Toronto represent the Canadian Bahá'ís at the conference.²⁸ (Sources examined to date remain silent about whether Watson or McCarthy attended.)

Likely because of her acquaintance with May Maxwell, who served on the National Teaching Committee of Canada, Helen was appointed to the Regional Teaching Committee. Siegfried Schopflocher, also a member of the committee, and Helen reported in a *Bahá'í News Letter* on nine addresses made by Earnest V. Harrison in Montreal over five days.²⁹

During this time, Helen sent the Guardian a copy of Queen Marie of Romania’s written appreciation of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi conveyed this news to Martha Root in a letter in May 1926. His letter also mentioned that Helen Grand was well known

to Lady Blomfield and Claudia Coles.³⁰

A Bahá'í membership list in 1928 revealed one of those oddities where Helen connected with several well-known Bahá'ís in America and England but seemed to have no on-going relationship with the Bahá'ís in her own city. Only seven Bahá'í names appeared on the 1928 list for Toronto. Known Bahá'ís, such as Violet Rumney, a dressmaker, and Laura Davis, the bookkeeper in her husband's jewellery and optometry business, as examples, were not listed. Laura and her husband, Victor, lived in the working-class Cabbagetown neighbourhood, where they hosted Friday night gatherings for Bahá'ís and their friends. Helen's social circle may well have been several rungs higher on the ladder of social class than Violet's and Laura's, but would social status alone account for this seeming discrepancy?

Bahá'í Activity in Toronto in the early 1930s

This mystery of Helen's isolation within her own community deepens with a May 1933 letter Helen wrote to Horace Holley, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. She recounted that she was the only Bahá'í in Toronto, "at least as far as I know." Helen also mused that it was a hard hill to climb when one is alone. "Toronto needs a great teacher but the people are so satisfied with what they believe—they simply stare at me & I believe they think I am crazy. So one must just live this life & go on."³¹

Author and sociologist Dr. Will van den Hoonaard calculated that until 1935 some eleven people in Toronto had become Bahá'ís for brief periods. Another eleven individuals could be named whose average length of membership in the Toronto Bahá'í community over their lifetimes was ten years or so. He observed that only four individuals (Dr. Albert Durrant Watson, Helen Grand, Violet Rumney and Laura Davis) remained Bahá'ís until the end of their lives.³² One might note that Dr. Watson died in 1926 and that Victor Davis, husband of Laura, should be added to the list of lifelong Bahá'ís.

Systematic Beginnings of the Bahá'í Administrative Order

God's Messenger for today, Bahá'u'lláh, designated the Administrative Order as the bedrock of the nascent Bahá'í community and one of its most distinguishing features. He envisaged a worldwide governing council. His Son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, took the first steps by penning the Tablets of the Divine Plan, a series of letters meant to direct the early Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada toward spreading the teachings of His Father through the Americas and around the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's successor, Shoghi Effendi, realized, however, that national spiritual assemblies needed to be created as the pillars upon which the international council could be established. Moreover, sufficient local spiritual assemblies had to be elected in every land to buttress the national spiritual assemblies. The process of systematically building up the local and national spiritual assemblies found expression in Shoghi Effendi's Seven Year Plans (1937–1944 and 1946–1953) released to the Bahá'ís in Canada and the United States.

Strategies soon were implemented by the Bahá'ís to bring the first Seven Year Plan's goals to fruition. Prominent among them was the movement of Bahá'ís into cities and towns to build up new Bahá'í communities. Some came for a few days or weeks, while others relocated on a more permanent basis.³³

In Toronto, the latter group, who came to be known as Bahá'í “pioneers,” started with Gerrard Sluter-Schlutius³⁴ from Montreal. He provided the impetus to activate the teaching work. William (Bill) Suter³⁵ and George Spendlove³⁶ joined Sluter-Schlutius, and the three of them were appointed to serve on the Regional Teaching Committee of Ontario.

In 1930, May Maxwell wrote to her daughter, Mary, who was travelling to Toronto, asking her to spend an extra weekend to call on Alice Margaret Kilgore [sic] who “would be charmed to meet you” and “Helen Grand ... a sister of Mrs. Kilgore [who also] would be delighted to see you”.³⁷

The scanty traces of Helen Grand continue. Sluter-Schlutius met with Helen in 1935, but she did not play an active role in the community. Bill Suter reported Helen an “official Bahá'í” in 1936 was “sick and incommunicado.” She was 71 years old and may have been suffering an accident that she had mentioned to Horace Holley three years earlier³⁸ or from the illness she suffered in England in 1921.

In 1937, Toronto formed an eight-member Bahá'í group with Helen as one of its members.³⁹ The following year saw the election of the first local spiritual assembly of the Bahá'ís of Toronto, although Helen was not elected to it.⁴⁰ Her health and general lack of participation in the community may account for it. However, annual community voters lists in 1939, 1940 and 1941 continued to include her name.

Helen Frances Grand passes away

On 11 February 111944, Helen died in her 79th year. The “In Memoriam” of the *Bahá'í News*⁴¹ and *Bahá'í World, 1940–1944*⁴² included her name.

Her Will bequeathed gifts of money, furniture, family heirlooms and jewelry to nieces and nephews, friends, maids and \$25,000 to the Bahá'í Temple of Chicago. This last bequest was worth approximately \$377,000 in 2020 dollars. Several calls on the value of the estate included payment of debts, succession duties and the fees of three different sets of lawyers. The Estate Trustee lawyers, for instance, quibbled over the legitimacy of the Bahá'í bequest which required the Bahá'í-hired lawyer in Montreal to out source to another lawyer in Toronto for the hearing. These calls reduced the Bahá'í portion to \$17,998 or just over \$271,000 in 2020 dollars.⁴³ Two and a half years after her death, the Bahá'í Temple Trustees, at last, received the money. Despite an exchange rate of 10% to convert the bequest to American dollars, a new building fund to complete the Temple's interior benefitted handsomely from Helen's bequest.

The Legacy of Helen Frances Grand

Three aspects of Helen's life as a Bahá'í are especially noteworthy.

First, courage. Helen Grand chose to ally herself with the Bahá'í Faith in 1912,

possibly the first person born and raised in Toronto.⁴⁴ More than a few early Bahá'ís had no family endorsement or sympathy – and in some cases, indifference, and in others, downright hostility – for a family member who embraced a new faith. Except for a sister, Alice Margaret Grand Kilgour, who followed the Bahá'í Faith for a few years, Helen was alone in her family. Her letter to Horace Holley in 1933 alluded to her loneliness.

Second, steadfastness. Helen Grand lived through the earliest years of the Bahá'í Faith, a new religion in the West. For the first decades in the 20th Century, the few Bahá'ís were highly individualistic, usually espousing the Bahá'í Faith because it harmonized with their own liberal and disparate views or ideals. In Canada, they spread in ones and twos across the country. They did not tend to know one another. A paucity of literature denoting accurate Bahá'í teachings contributed to this fragmentation, as did the differing opinions of their first teachers. While the teaching content of Helen's teachers – Lua Getsinger and Grace and Harlan Ober – was likely to be accurate, the whole era was defined by individualistic activity, or, the case of some of the new Bahá'ís, no real activity at all.

When Helen was at home in Toronto, her level of activity appeared sporadically. She seemed more in tune with English Bahá'ís (Lady Blomfield, Dr. John Esslemont), American Bahá'ís (Claudia Coles, Grace and Harlan Ober) and Montreal Bahá'ís (May Maxwell) than with those in Toronto. The key seemed to be whether the community was large enough to drive activity. London had a large, active, capable cadre of believers. Toronto did not.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in North America in 1912 succeeded, among other results, in introducing Bahá'í community building. This development proceeded unevenly and slowly in the next 20 years, at least in Toronto. Cities such as Montreal, Vancouver, New York and Chicago with large numbers of Bahá'ís were among the first to create rudimentary administrative structures. Toronto was not among them because of the ebb and flow of Bahá'ís in that city in the first three decades of the century, and because there were no individuals who had the vision, drive and capability to galvanize the local Bahá'ís.

To reiterate, membership rolls in 1921 named five Bahá'ís, including Helen, living in Toronto. The membership roll of 1922 was much more reflective of the community; 20 believers were named, although Helen's name was not included. The membership roll of 1928 reverted to a questionable level of just seven Bahá'ís with Helen's name included. These figures alone illustrate the lack of any cohesive community building within Toronto in its early years.

Third, perseverance. Helen Grand grasped the overall purpose of the Bahá'í Faith. She accepted the Stations of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She had a personal connection with Shoghi Effendi from his days as a student in England and especially because she hosted him in the week or so after his collapse over his beloved Grandfather's death. Her subsequent devotion to Shoghi Effendi was unshakeable and continued unabated when he became the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

Poor health seems to one of the factors that prevented her from actively involving

herself in the building of the Administrative Order. Another factor suggests that Helen seems to have remained an individualistic Bahá'í rather than actively involving herself in the embryonic Bahá'í community of Toronto. Nevertheless, the traces of her life indicate that she considered herself a Bahá'í until the end of her life, not the least being the generous bequest in her Will to the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois.

If Helen were a member of the Bahá'í community today, her legacy would seem negligible but in the earliest days of the Bahá'í Faith in Canada, she avowed belief in the Faith until the end of her life. It would have been so easy for Helen to slip away but she deserves to be remembered for her place as one of the first believers in Toronto and in Canada.

Endnotes:

1. Helen F. Grand, "How I Became a Bahá'í", *Star of the West*, March 1925, 363-364
2. In 1897, Louisa (Lua) Getsinger declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, the founder/prophet of the Bahá'í Faith. She came to know 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His son, well through her pilgrimages to the Holy Land where He lived and through His travels in America in 1912. Lua herself travelled extensively to introduce the Bahá'í teachings in America, France and India. She died in Egypt in 1916.
3. Letters from a young blind Japanese Bahá'í, *Star of the West*, April 28, 1917, pp 34-35
4. Lady Sara Blomfield accepted Bahá'u'lláh in 1907. A fearless teacher of the Bahá'í Faith in her English social circles, she also possessed a highly developed aptitude for humanitarian causes. 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived in her home in 1911 and 1913 during His visits to England.
5. Robert Weinberg, *Lady Blomfield Her Life and Times*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2012, p 184
6. In 1899, Ethel Rosenberg, the first woman residing in her native England to accept the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh remained steadfast in her commitment to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. She played a leadership role in teaching and administrative work.
7. Dr. John Esslemont joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1914. He was active in Bahá'í activities in England. Dr. Esslemont is honoured today for his book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, one of the most widely-read introductory books about the Bahá'í Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá approved the first nine chapters of the book during Esslemont's visit to the Holy Land in 1919–1920. In 1925, he returned to Haifa at the request of Shoghi Effendi and died there later that year.
8. Robert Weinberg, *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1995, p 173
9. Letter from Claudia Coles to Shoghi Effendi, 15 November 1920, Bahá'í World Centre Archives

10. This Bahá'í Council was the embryonic form of the future National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom.
11. Letter from Claudia Coles to Shoghi Effendi, November 11, 1921, Bahá'í World Centre Archives
12. *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg*, p 211. A year later the first “Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly” was elected. p 228
13. *Ibid.*, p 225
14. *Ibid.*, p 189
15. Ruhangiz Khánum was a sister of Shoghi Effendi. She was also studying in England.
16. *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg*, pp 191-192
17. H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, George Ronald, 1987, 2nd Edition, p 478
18. Letter from Helen Grand from Horace Holley, May 19, 1933, Office of the Secretary Records, Files on Individuals, 1931–1939, National Bahá'í Archives of the United States, Wilmette, Illinois
19. Office of the Secretary Records, Bahá'í Membership Lists Files, National Bahá'í Archives of the United States, Wilmette, Illinois
20. American-born May Maxwell embraced the Bahá'í Faith in the late 1890s and met 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the first pilgrimage of Western Bahá'ís in 1898–98. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked her to remain in Paris to establish the Faith in that city. In 1902, she married Canadian William Sutherland Maxwell and they moved to Montreal. May was an indefatigable teacher and administrator for the Faith until her passing in 1940.
21. Office of the Secretary Records, Bahá'í Membership Lists Files
22. *Ibid.*
23. Laura Davis Papers, “History of the Toronto Bahá'í Community” November 1951 (unpublished), National Bahá'í Archives of Canada, Thornhill, Ontario
24. Alfred Lunt Papers, National Bahá'í Archives of the United States, Wilmette, Illinois
25. O. Z. Whitehead, *Portraits of Some Bahá'í Women*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1996, p 42
26. Letter from Albert Durrant Watson to Shoghi Effendi, February 20, 1924, Bahá'í World Centre Archives, Israel
27. Helen F. Grand, “How I Became a Bahá'í”

28. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968, p 60
29. *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 10, February 1926, p 10
30. Letter from Shoghi Effendi to Martha Root, 29 May 1926, Bahá'í World Centre Archives
31. Office of the Secretary Records, Files on Individuals, 1931–1939, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois
32. Will van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898–1948*, Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, p 101
33. For more detail on these exciting days in the mid-1930s when several noteworthy American Bahá'ís travelled to Toronto, see *Faithful Friends, Founding the Toronto Bahá'í Community 1919–1938* by Marlene Macke.
34. Gerrard Sluter-Schlutius, a German immigrant, declared his allegiance to Bahá'u'lláh in Montreal in 1932 and moved to Toronto in 1935. Just four years later, alarmed by the anti-German sentiments of many Canadians, he relocated to Guatemala. Shoghi Effendi eventually named him a Covenant Breaker and expelled him from the Bahá'í community due to inappropriate political activities that actively and knowingly opposed the institutional authority of the Bahá'í Faith that cast a bad light on the Faith.
35. William (Bill) Suter, a Swiss immigrant, settled in Toronto in 1936 and soon after meeting Gerrard Sluter-Schlutius, joined the Bahá'í Faith. During the midst of the Depression, Bill sold books and kept bees on the Toronto Islands. In addition to serving on the regional teaching committee, he was elected to the first local spiritual assembly of Toronto in 1938 but economic conditions were such that he relocated to Montreal in July 1939.
36. Francis St. George Spendlove (known primarily as George Spendlove) adopted the Bahá'í Faith in 1919 in his native Montreal. An art historian, writer and curator in Washington D.C., he relocated to Toronto in 1937 to accept a position in the Royal Ontario Museum. For the last 25 years of his life, his Bahá'í study classes and teaching efforts were much admired within the Bahá'í community.
37. Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal, Middle Years 1930–1934*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2012, p 141
38. Office of the Secretary Records, Files on Individuals, 1931–1939
39. *Baha'i News*, April 1937, p. 11
40. According to the “History of the Toronto Bahá'í Community” by Laura Davis, the members of the first local spiritual assembly were Gwen Cayley, W.J. Christie, Eve Cunningham, Laura Davis, Victor Davis, Georgina Lockhart, Violet Rumney, Bill Suture and William Wynn. For more detail of the first local spiritual assembly in Toronto, see *Take My Love to the Friends, the Story of Laura R. Davis*, p. 59. The membership in Laura's records varies from that found in *The*

Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada 1898–1945 which included Helen Grand. See p 106-107. However, there are other errors in that list, notably the inclusion of Audrey and John Robarts who did not formally adopt membership in the Bahá'í Faith until the fall of 1938.

41. *Bahá'í News*, No. 171, November, 1944, p 20

42. *Bahá'í World* Vol IX, 1940–1944, p 647

43. All dollar figures are in Canadian dollars.

44. Jane T. Hall is usually named as the first resident of Toronto as she is listed on a membership role in 1897 in Chicago and lived in Toronto in 1896. Further research, however, has been fruitless thus far in trying to track the birth or family or any other details about Jane, and she did not appear on any subsequent membership lists. Dr. James Oakshette, born in England, emigrated to the United States where he joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1897. He lived briefly in Toronto for less than two years around 1908 before returning to the United States.

Author's Note: More traces of Helen Grand and even photographs are likely to be found in the British Bahá'í Archives but are not, as of 2020, catalogued or accessible. I thank Anne Gordon Perry, Jaine Toth and Dr. Will van den Hoonaard for their enthusiasm, advice and support to me in writing this short biographical essay. I acknowledge with thanks the American Bahá'í National Archives for sharing their papers for Helen Grand's Will and correspondence relating to her and the Bahá'í World Centre Archives for sharing some excerpts of correspondence about Helen.

Marlene Macke lives in St. Marys, Ontario, Canada and joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1972. She has written two books about the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in Toronto, *Take My Love to the Friends, The Story of Laura R. Davis* and *Faithful Friends, Founding the Toronto Bahá'í Community 1919-1938*.