

“Waded through sorrow and affliction”

The story of Julia Ann Haight Van Orden from the time of the death of her husband, William, in 1844 until her own death in 1865

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A great-great-grandson

Written in 2004 in commemoration of the
200th anniversary of William’s birth

The horse-drawn wagon, carrying the body of Julia Ann Van Orden, moved slowly up the hill to her final resting place in Salt Lake City Cemetery on that cold January day almost a century and a half ago. She had drawn her last breath in mortality on Monday, January 23, 1865, in Provo, Utah, probably at the home of her daughter, Marie Antoinette Peck. Cemetery records state that Julia died and was buried on the same day, which was not uncommon at the time.



Julia Ann’s death came as the Civil War was still being fought in the East after four long years and just 2 ½ months after Abraham Lincoln was elected to his second term as the 16th

president of the United States. The war was front-page news in the Utah Territory, and on the day Julia died “5,000 [Confederate] deserters from Lee’s army” passed through Washington D.C.¹

Only a small death notice on February 8, 1865, in Salt Lake’s frontier newspaper, the weekly *Deseret News*, drew any public attention to Julia Ann’s passing. Under the small heading, “Died,” were listed the names of 16 persons who had died within the previous couple of weeks. Julia’s death notice was brief and to the point, as were most of the others in the newspaper that day. It simply stated: “At Provo City, Jan. 23, of typhoid fever, JULIA ANN VAN ORDEN, aged 59 years, 3 months and 17 days.”²

Julia was laid to rest in a burial lot owned by her brother, Hector C. Haight, who had purchased the lot in the Salt Lake City cemetery prior to June 1851. It was then that their father and the family patriarch, Caleb Haight, died and was buried in the cemetery – a 300-acre plot of land set aside by pioneer planners on the hills in the northeast part of the city. The Haight lot eventually grew to 15 graves. Julia was the seventh person to be buried in the lot – five of the first six were children. Undoubtedly, some kind of marker, probably made of sandstone, once graced Julia’s grave, but over time it may have disintegrated. Or the marker may have been destroyed in some other way, but in any event, the final resting place of Julia Ann Haight Van Orden was for many

¹*Deseret News* February 1, 1865 (Vol. XIV, No. 18).

²*Ibid.*, February 8, 1865 (Vol. XIV, No. 19) p. 152.

years hidden from the world in an unmarked grave, as were many of the others in the Haight family lot.³

Julia's unmarked grave, in some ways, seems to symbolize the difficulty to retrace, with any degree of detail, her steps through mortality nearly 140 years after her death. A great many of the pieces of her life are hidden in history, but, fortunately, the sands of time have not totally erased the footprints she left behind.

She was born into a close-knit family nearly 2,500 miles away in the obscure Catskill Mountain village of Windham (also historically spelled Wyndham), New York, on October 6, 1805, the third of nine children born to Caleb and Keturah Horton Haight.⁴

Obviously unbeknown to the Haight family at that time, another birth occurred in the region, just 48 days later, which resulted in their lives being forever changed. Joseph Smith Jr., was born December 23, 1805, in the tiny village of Sharon in east-central Vermont, less than 200 miles away, and through him the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored. The gospel message had a deep and profound effect on the Haight family, including Julia and her husband, William Van Orden, whom she married March 12, 1827. The Haight family and Van Ordens and others in the town of Moravia, New York, where they were then living, wholeheartedly embraced The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, circa 1839, after the missionaries came through the previous year.

This led to them pulling up stakes, selling their farms and "gathering" in Nauvoo, Illinois, where the church was headquartered. It was in Nauvoo that William and Julia became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and the prophet was in their home many times, remembered their daughter Mary Helen. "It seemed so wonderful," she said, "for a prophet of God to be in our home."⁵ These "glory days" of Nauvoo had to be pleasant days for William and Julia. But the Nauvoo period was also filled with grief and sadness for Julia. It was in Nauvoo that "the grim reaper," who often stalked the streets of the city on the bend of the Mississippi, claimed the lives of her mother in 1843, and her husband and her youngest son only months later in 1844.

(For the story of William and Julia in New York and in Nauvoo up to the time William was buried in the Old Nauvoo Burial Ground outside of town, see Bruce A. Van Orden's article on this CD).

When her husband died, Julia Ann – widowed at age 38 – was faced with the heavy task of alone providing for her seven children, ranging in ages from 3 to 16. Especially daunting was taking care of 3-year-old William Arthur who was very sick with what his sister, Mary Helen, said was intermittent fever caused by malaria. "Dear little fellow," remembered Mary Helen, "he kept saying he didn't want to get well."⁶ Within a month after Julia buried her husband in July 1844, Arthur died and was buried alongside his father in the Old Burial Ground.⁷ One can only imagine the grief that Julia Ann must have felt that summer. She not only suffered deep, personal losses,

³In a project spearheaded by the author, Haight and Van Orden descendants installed a granite monument at the Haight lot with the names of all 15 people buried in the lot. The monument was dedicated October 9, 1993, by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve.

⁴Ancestral File, on Internet at www.familysearch.org

⁵Mary Helen Grant, "Incidents in the Life of Mary Helen Grant," *Journal of History* 10 (April 1917), p. 174.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 175.

but the entire church was collectively hurting immensely because of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

As administratrix of William's estate, Julia had the responsibility of settling his estate – one of the first things she did after his death. On August 20, 1844, she filed a bond with probate judge David Greenleaf and paid the \$6.00 probate fee. Her brother Isaac C. Haight and Joseph Horne Sr. served as “sureties,” responsible for any unpaid debts or obligations.

Next, Hiram Kimball, William Marks and Orson Spencer inventoried William's personal assets on September 24-25, 1844, and placed a value on the various items he owned. The total came to \$1,581.85, and, in addition, he had on hand \$303.68 in cash (called specie). William's assets were sizable for those frontier days in Nauvoo, indicating he was a man of considerable means. At the time of his death, he also held two mortgages, for \$100 against Alfonso Green and \$500 against Brigham Young.

William's inventoried estate included.⁸

1 Bureau	\$4.00	23 yd g. fulled Cloth	\$18.40
Cherry Table	3.00	7 yds Grey F Cloth	8.00
Maple Stand	1.50	2 ½ yds G. Brd Cloth	4.25
2 H. Post Bedsteds	5.00	Blk Cloth	3.50
1 L.P. Bedsted	1.00	1 Mirror	1.00
1st best Bed and bedding	12.00	6 plain Chairs	1.50
2nd best Bed & bedding	10.00	1 Lot Books	.50
3rd other beds with bedding	15.00	Shovel & Tongs	.50
Trundle bed and bedding	.50	Cooking Stove & fixtures	10.00
3 Chests	3.00	Lot of Tin	2.00
1 Trunk	1.25	Lot of Crockery	2.00
Carpeting	2.00	Cupboard	1.25
Buffalo Robes	.50	2 Brass Kettles	.50
3 Table Cloths	1.00	Shovel	.50
1 Clock	4.00	Hoe	.50
1 Watch	17.00	Chain	1.00
1 Gun	5.00	Wedge	.50
Blue Broad Cloth Pantaloons	3.50	pr Springs	.50
Blue Broad Cloth Coat	7.00	Wash Tub	.25
Blk pantaloons	1.50	Umbrella	.75
Grey coat	1.00	Lots of Barrels	1.00
1 Vest	1.75	14 lb Tallow	1.12
Hat	1.75	25 lb Sole leather	5.00
6 Shirts	1.75	2 Sides Upper Leather	4.00
2 pr Stockings	.70	1 Calf Skin	.75
1 Box Coat	5.00	1 brass Kettle	1.50
2 pr Boots	3.00	small Kettle	.25
spider	.37 ½	Axe	1.00

⁷The *Nauvoo Neighbor* of August 21, 1844 (Vol. 2, No. 17), said Arthur died the week ending August 19, 1844, of bloody flux, the same condition that took his father.

⁸Hancock County (Illinois) Records Office, Estates File 13, Tract Wells 28-1.

1 Milk cow and calf	5.00	2 Stocks of Oats	7.50
7 acres in N. field of corn	14.00	4 acres in S. field of corn	16.00
1 pr Horses	30.00	1 Double Harness	10.00
1 Saddle & bridle	3.00	1 plough	.50
1 Cast Iron Plough	2.00	1 pitch-fork	.25
2 Horse waggons	40.00	1 Lot Flax	.50
70 Bushel Wheat	26.25	1 Auger	.25

After William's estate was inventoried and valued, Julia affirmed in a handwritten note on October 29, 1844, that the inventory was a "true and perfect inventory . . . so far as the same has come to my hands or knowledge."⁹

William and Julia Ann may have had one of the first cooking stoves in Nauvoo, or at least they owned a stove while cooking in an open fireplace was still common. Prior to cooking stoves coming into existence in the mid-1800s, food generally was cooked over an open flame in pots or kettles that were hung from a "spider," which is a trivet or tripod that was placed over the fire. The inventory of William's estate shows that Julia Ann had all the necessary equipment to cook either in an open fireplace or on a stove. According to a typescript paper, unfortunately not authored or sourced, titled "William Van Orden, the Squire of Moravia," Julia may have brought the stove with her to Utah, but "this interesting story" has not been confirmed by research.

In October 1844, Julia placed an ad in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, running in two consecutive issues on October 2 and 9, announcing a sale of part of William's estate. The ad stated a public vendue [auction] would be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on two days in November. The first day of the auction, on November 2, would be at Julia's home on Mulholland Street and would include "two horses, one wagon and harness, household furniture and about sixty bushels of wheat." The second day of the sale would be the next day, on November 3, at their farm about five miles northeast of town and would include the "residue of said estate consisting of about twelve acres of corn, a quantity of oats, three cows and a quantity of farming utensils."¹⁰

In the newspaper ad, Julia also stated the terms of the sale. All sums under five dollars, she said, would have to be paid in cash. For all sums over five dollars, she would extend credit for six months, providing she received from the purchaser "bonds and security," which she had to approve.

Interestingly, in the October 2, 1844, issue of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* containing Julia's sale notice was also an ad announcing a sale of part of the personal property of the Prophet Joseph Smith, to be held Friday, October 25 at the Nauvoo Mansion and Saturday, October 26 at the home of Cornelius P. Lott on Carthage Road.

On October 11, 1844, Julia began paying off debts incurred by her husband's death. She first paid two medical bills, totaling \$32.50, to Dr. John M. Bernhisel, a prominent Nauvoo physician who had attended to William just prior to his death and to the family in the sorrowful days after his death. The first bill was for \$14.25 and was charged to the "Estate of William Van Orden, deceased, for medicine and attendance in July 1844." The second bill, for \$18.25, was addressed

⁹The handwritten note was filed with Probate Judge David Greenleaf on October 30, 1844, and is part of William Van Orden's estate papers in the Hancock County Recorder's Office.

¹⁰*Nauvoo Neighbor*, October 2, 1844 (Vol. 2, No. 23) and October 9, 1844 (Vol. 2, No. 24).

to “Mrs. Van Orden” and covered “medicine and attendance for self and family” from July 15 until October 11, 1844. ¹¹

In December 1844, Julia once again placed an ad in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, this time calling for claims against her husband’s estate. The ad, which ran in two separate issues of the paper, stated, “All persons having claims against the estate of William Van Orden, late of Nauvoo City, Ill., deceased, are hereby requested and notified to exhibit the same before the Probate Justice of said County on the first Monday of February next 1845, for adjustment and allowance. . . .” The ad also sought immediate payment from “all those indebted to the said estate”¹²

On December 30, 1844, Julia paid \$4.25 to John Taylor for the administratrix’s notice that ran in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* in October. On January 10, 1845, she paid \$1.25 to tax collector J.H. Hale for his services in collecting “six dollars 12 ½ cents in city taxes” for 1844. The taxes were assessed on a valuation of \$400 for her home and lot on Mulholland Street, for which the estate had to pay \$2.00 in taxes, and for William’s personal property, valued at \$825, for which the taxes were \$4.12 ½. Julia also paid \$1.25 to Orson Spencer on March 12, 1845, for appraiser’s fee; \$5.37 on April 14, 1845, to I.C. Haight for his services as agent; and \$5 to G. Edmunds Jr., her attorney from Keokuk, Iowa, for attorney’s fee.¹³

Later in 1845, Julia received her patriarchal blessing from John Smith, uncle of the Prophet Joseph Smith. “Sister Julia,” the patriarch said as he began the blessing, which he gave on June 4, 1845, “I lay my hands upon thy head by the authority vested in me to bless the fatherless & seal upon you a father’s blessing. Thou art a daughter of Joseph through the family of Ephraim & thou hast a right by inheritance to all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant; thou hast waded through sorrow & affliction but thou has not fainted, & the Lord is well pleased with thee and hath given his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall hold thee up, in thine afflictions thou shalt be comforted & all things shall work for thy good & thou shalt see the day when thou shalt know that these words are true; thou shalt find friends wherever thy lot is cast who will delight to assist thee in all times of need; thou shalt be blest in thy family, they will delight to do thee good, they will comfort thy heart, & thou shalt rejoice because of them; thou shalt have plenty of the fruits of the earth, thy table shall be well supplied at all times, there shall be no lack in thy house, thy posterity shall be numerous and thy years shall be multiplied upon thy head; you shall enjoy every blessing which you desire in this world & in the world to come, eternal life; if you endure in faith to the end these words shall not fail, even so amen.” – Albert Carrington recorder.¹⁴

Just as the patriarch said that Julia Ann had already “waded through sorrow and affliction,” little did she know that she would yet endure much sorrow in her life.

In 1845, Julia married her doctor, a bachelor six years her senior. Dr. Bernhisel had joined the church in New York in 1841 and arrived in Nauvoo in 1842, just a year before Julia Ann and William arrived. Dr. Bernhisel had become a personal attaché and close friend of the Prophet, and at the time of the martyrdom, he was a boarder in the 22-room Mansion House, which

¹¹J Malan Heslop and Dell Van Orden, *How To Compile Your Family History* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1978), pp. 29-30.

¹²*Nauvoo Neighbor*, December 18, 1844 (Vol. 2, No. 34) and December 25, 1844 (Vol. 2, No. 35).

¹³Heslop and Van Orden, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴Patriarchal Blessings, 4 June 1845, Volume 9, p. 218, No. 662, LDS Church Historical Archives.

doubled as a home for the Prophet and his family as well as a public hotel. After his marriage to Julia, Dr. Bernhisel moved out of the Mansion House and moved in with her and her family in her home. It was a marriage that had little chance for success. In the tumultuous days following the death of the Prophet Joseph, Brigham Young and the other members of the Twelve were anxious that all widows be cared for. They were particularly concerned about widows, such as Julia, who had lost their husbands in connection with the martyrdom. William died after he had become seriously ill after catching a cold while he and other members of the Nauvoo Legion guarded the bodies of Joseph and his brother Hyrum following their return from Carthage. President Young directed that Bernhisel marry Julia Ann and then enter into the practice of plural marriage.¹⁵

Meanwhile, work continued on the Nauvoo Temple, the crowning jewel in the City of the Saints, located only a half mile to the west of the Van Orden home. Because of the race against time to complete the temple before the Saints were forced to abandon their beloved city, portions of the temple were dedicated and used as soon as they were completed. By December 1845, the temple was far enough along that endowments could be performed in the holy edifice. On December 10, 1845, Church leaders began giving the endowment ordinance in the unfinished temple to vast numbers of worthy members, and before the work ceased nearly two months later, on February 7, 1846, about 5,600 members had received their endowments.¹⁶

Just nine days after the first endowments in the temple were performed, Julia and her father, Caleb, and her two brothers and their wives, Hector and Julia Haight, and Isaac and Eliza Haight, received their endowments in the first session on December 19, 1845.¹⁷ Lorenzo Snow, who later became an apostle and president of the Church, was among those in that session, which undoubtedly began very early in the morning because of the push to have as many members as possible endowed prior to the Exodus. (Dr. Bernhisel had received his endowments on December 11, 1845.)¹⁸

A month later, on January 20, 1846, Julia Ann, then 40, returned to the temple, this time to be sealed to Dr. Bernhisel. One of ten physicians in Nauvoo, he had received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1827. However, on the day that Julia was sealed to Dr. Bernhisel he was also sealed to six other women, ranging in ages from 15 to 50: Elizabeth Barker, 15, and her mother, Catherine Burgess Barker, 36; Melissa Lott Smith, 22 (for time only); Fanny Spafford, 43; Dolly Ranson, 44; and Catherine Paine, 50.¹⁹ Elizabeth became Dr. Bernhisel's favorite wife and she bore him nine children.

¹⁵Bruce A. Van Orden, "William Van Orden and Julia Ann Haight Van Orden" (typescript, June 1993), p. 4.

¹⁶David R. Crockett in "Saints in Exile," (Tucson, Arizona: LDS-Gems Press, 1996), p. 148, lists the number at 5,615; the *Deseret Morning News* 2004 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City, Utah, 2003), p. 190, has the figure at 5,595.

¹⁷"Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register," compiled by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Temple Records Index Bureau (Salt Lake City, Utah., 1974).

¹⁸Index Card to Nauvoo Temple Records, No. 1717, Book A.

¹⁹George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46, A Preliminary Demographic Report," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Spring 1994), Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 39; also Index Card to Nauvoo Temple Records, No. 1717, Book A, page 167, which lists Melissa Lott Smith as Elizabeth Lott Smith.

This was a time of great anxiety in Nauvoo. Preparation for the massive exodus of the entire city of Nauvoo, with few exceptions, had been taking place for several months, but the threat of increased mob violence forced the first group of refugees to leave their homes on February 4, 1846, in the dead of winter. By the end of the month, 3,000 souls, braving freezing temperatures, had left Nauvoo and crossed the Mississippi River into the wilderness of the Iowa Territory.

Julia Ann and her family were not among them.

On March 13, 1846, the *Daily Missouri Republican* described the scene in Nauvoo: “The city and country presents a very altered appearance since last fall. Then, the fields were covered with, or the barns contained, the crops of the season. Now, there are no crops, either growing or being planted. In many instances, the fences have been destroyed, houses have been deserted, and the whole aspect of the country is one of extreme desolation and desertion. At nearly every dwelling, where the owners have not sold out and moved off, preparations were making to go. Nearly every work-shop in the city has been converted into a wagon maker’s shop.... Every mechanic appears to be employed in making, repairing or finishing wagons, or other articles necessary for the trip.”²⁰

Julia was still in Nauvoo when the temple was completed and publicly dedicated May 1-3, 1846, just a few days after it was dedicated in private ceremonies on April 30. It’s probably safe to say Julia attended the public dedication. She had a vested interest in the holy edifice that stood on a high bluff so short a distance from her home. Undoubtedly, she and her family had watched the progress of construction as the temple took shape, and William had worked on the building prior to his death. And twice so recently she had received sacred ordinances in the temple.

During April, May and June 1846, another 9,000 refugees poured out of the city, leaving less than a thousand people behind, including Julia and her family. The once-proud city that rivaled Chicago for prominence in Illinois was fast becoming vacant.

Residents sold their homes and farms for whatever they could get for them. “In the city, house and lots are selling at from two to five and ten hundred dollars, which must have cost the owners double that sum,” the *Daily Missouri Republican* reported. “They are willing to sell for cash, or oxen or cattle, or to exchange for such articles of merchandise as they can barter or carry away with them.”²¹

Although Mary Helen remembered that her mother exchanged “our beautiful home and furniture in Nauvoo” for a gun, which they called “old Quimbly,” and the farm property for two ox teams and two wagons,²² Hancock County Grantor/Grantee records show that Julia actually sold the properties.

She sold her home in Nauvoo on July 13, 1846, to James O. and Abigail Smith for \$250, which sale was “authorized by the court” and signed or witnessed by Julia Ann and her six children, including 18-year-old Charlotte, who by then was married to Ira E. West. On the same day, she also sold two pieces of farm property in the county to Abigail Smith for \$175. Both sales were

²⁰Quoted in E. Cecil McGavin’s *Nauvoo the Beautiful*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1972, c. 1946), p 229.

²¹Ibid., p. 230.

²²Grant, p. 176.

acknowledged by Isaac Higbee, Hancock County justice of the peace, a week later on July 21, 1846.²³

Because Julia's husband, Dr. Bernhisel, was obligated to stay in Nauvoo in 1846,²⁴ she had the burden of evacuating her family from the beleaguered city. However, two of Bernhisel's plural wives, Elizabeth and her mother, Catherine, did stay behind with him in Nauvoo, traveling with him to Winter Quarters in the fall of 1847.²⁵

Added to the heavy load of what Julia Ann had to carry to be able to leave Nauvoo, she was also expecting a child. In August 1846, her opportunity to leave the city came, only a month before the "Battle of Nauvoo," in which mobs drove the remaining members – often referred to as the "Poor Saints" because of their inability to outfit themselves with the necessary means to leave – from their homes. Julia made an agreement with Hyrum D. Bassett who didn't have a wagon, and he, along with his wife and three-week-old son, needed transportation. Julia had a second wagon but needed a driver. Julia's son, 16-year-old Peter, could have driven the wagon, but he had previously left Nauvoo. So, in exchange for Bassett's service as a driver, Julia permitted his young family to travel with her own.²⁶ However, Bassett was of little value to Julia as he was sick most of the way, dying soon after they reached Winter Quarters. Daughter Mary Helen recalled in her history that she, then 14, drove one of the ox teams.²⁷

Who knows what emotions Julia Ann may have felt as her wagon was ferried across the Mississippi on August 5, 1846,²⁸ and she turned her back on the nearly empty city to face the vast frontier of America that stretched out ahead.

By early September 1846, Peter was in Cutler's Park²⁹ in what is now Nebraska. At an early-morning high council meeting on September 12, with Brigham Young and Willard Richards in attendance, the plight of the members still in Nauvoo was discussed. The leaders called for volunteers to return to Nauvoo as teamsters to help bring out the Poor Saints. Peter was one of ten men to volunteer.³⁰ While heading east back to Nauvoo, Peter met his mother and family on the trail heading west. He turned around and accompanied them to Winter Quarters, arriving on September 20, 1846³¹ – three days before the formal beginning of the city.

²³Hancock County 1846 Grantor/Grantee records, Book Q, pp. 319, 329.

²⁴Dr. Bernhisel was a member of a committee of five left in Nauvoo to help dispose of property of the Saints.

²⁵Gwynn W. Barrett, *John M. Bernhisel: Mormon Elder in Congress*, doctoral dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968, p. 49.

²⁶Kate B. Carter, "Graves Along the Trail," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1973), 16:423

²⁷Grant, pp. 176-177

²⁸Carter, p. 423. This is the only firm date found by the author of when Julia actually left Nauvoo. Some other references just say summer.

²⁹According to an article by the author in the *Church News* on April 26, 1997, Cutler's Park, named after Alpheus Cutler, was settled in August 1846 by the advance pioneer company that moved from Kaneshville, Iowa, onto the western bank of the Missouri River. But the town, which had a mayor, city council and police and fire guards, lasted only a little more than a month before being abandoned in favor of a new location three miles to the east, which became Winter Quarters.

³⁰*Journal History*, No. 52, September 12, 1846, p. 1.

³¹Grant, p. 176.

With a company of others, Julia and her family had traveled the 330 miles across the prairies of southern Iowa to Winter Quarters in just a little over six weeks. There in Winter Quarters, Peter, with assistance from Mary Helen's future husband, George R. Grant, built a log house for his mother and the family. Some say the house even had glass windows. However, the house apparently was not finished by December 21, 1846, when Julia gave birth to her infant son, the only child she had by Dr. Bernhisel. The boy, named John Milton Bernhisel Jr. after his father (but he went by Milton), was born on the raw frontier of the Omaha Indian Territory in a cold, drafty covered wagon just as winter was setting in.³² Julia and her family, however, were not alone in living in a covered wagon as hundreds of tents and covered wagons, all neatly arranged, dotted the Winter Quarters landscape as crude log and sod houses were being built.

During the winter of 1846-47, 3,483 displaced Mormon refugees called Winter Quarters home. Another 3,500 were living on Pottawattamie Indian lands on the east side of the river in Kaneshville, Iowa, and in other settlements in the Middle Missouri Valley.³³ Thousands of others were still strung out across southern Iowa and at Mr. Pisgah and Garden Grove, the two main settlements established by the Mormons along the trail.

Sickness and death were no strangers to the scattered refugees, many of them living in the bleakest of conditions in often bitter cold weather. In January 1847, the temperature at Winter Quarters was frequently below zero, plummeting to 13 degrees below on January 10.³⁴ Mary Helen Grant remembered that people were dying by the hundreds.³⁵ She said during the winter of 1846-47 her mother and her sister, Charlotte, were very ill with scurvy, or "black leg," as the disease was often called. "This disease would start with dark streaks in the ends of the fingers and toes, which increased and spread until their limbs were almost black, causing such intense agony that death would be welcomed as a relief from their suffering," described Horace K. Whitney, whose wife was inflicted with the illness.³⁶

"Charlotte's limbs were stiff and as black as a stove and we despaired of her life as well as mother's," Mary Helen recalled. "I used to go out on the prairie and gather wild onions and segoes, as soon as they came up in the spring [of 1847], for them to eat raw. As soon as the roads would permit teams going to Missouri, several teams went for provisions, mostly potatoes. We purchased one half bushel, which were used only for the sick ones, bathing their limbs in the water they were cooked in, binding the skins on to take out the black."³⁷

For the Saints in exile, Winter Quarters was not a haven, but a refiner's fire. The mostly unmarked graves of some 350 Latter-day Saints in the Winter Quarters cemetery are a silent, poignant testament of the sorrow and grief of the Saints, but the graves don't tell of the anguish suffered by so many who were near death from hunger, cold and sickness.

Julia Ann and Charlotte recovered from the scurvy, but Julia took sick again in the fall of 1847. Once again, she expected she would die, and, knowing that Mary Helen was engaged to be

³²*Conquerors of the West: Stalwart Mormon Pioneers*, edited by Florence C. Youngberg, 4 vols. (Agreka Books, 1999), Vol. 1.

³³David R. Crockett, "Report shows 3,483 in Winter Quarters," *Church News*, December 28, 1996, p. 12.

³⁴Alexander L. Baugh, "Freezing weather hits Winter Quarters," *Church News*, January 11, 1997, p. 12.

³⁵Grant, p. 177.

³⁶Conrey Bryson, *Winter Quarters*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1986), p. 163, cited in Gordon W. Romney, "Winter Quarters: A Refiner's Fire," *Church News*, February 1, 1997.

³⁷Grant, p. 177.

married to George Grant, she expressed the desire that her daughter be married before she died. On December 10, 1847, at Julia Ann's bedside in her log house in Winter Quarters, Elder Ezra T. Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve performed the marriage of her almost-16-year-old daughter.³⁸

Meantime, Brigham Young had returned to Kanesville, where the First Presidency was reorganized on December 5, 1847, and he, as president of the Quorum of the Twelve, was named president of the Church, with Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as his counselors. The three were sustained at a conference, attended by some 1,000 members of the Church, which was held 22 days later, on December 27, 1847, in the newly constructed Kanesville tabernacle.³⁹ Julia Ann, undoubtedly, was too sick to attend that conference. Mary Helen said her mother was bedfast all that winter.⁴⁰

By the summer of 1848 – 21 months after she arrived in Winter Quarters – Julia was well enough to travel to the West, but still very weak from her long illness. That summer, members of the First Presidency led three divisions of Saints to the Salt Lake Valley. Julia and her family⁴¹ were in the second division, led by first counselor Heber C. Kimball, which left June 7, 1848, from the staging area on the Elkhorn River, some 20 miles west of Winter Quarters. The first wagons pulled out at 9 a.m. Dr. Bernhisel was the physician for the huge traveling company that consisted of 662 souls and 226 wagons – along with 737 oxen, 57 horses, 25 mules, 284 cows, 299 chickens, 243 sheep, 96 pigs, 150 cattle and an assortment of dogs, cats, ducks, doves and even three hives of bees and one squirrel.⁴² Included in the vast group was Mary Fielding Smith, widow of Hyrum Smith, who had been slain with his brother Joseph in the Carthage Jail.

On the second day on the trail, June 8, 1848, President Kimball called for a reformation among the travelers. He exhorted them to have prayers with their families at least twice a day, “to pray for our cattle, for our wagons, for our stock, for the camp, and the presidency. If we will do this, the Lord will remember us,” said President Kimball, “and we shall go safely and have the blessings of the Lord with us day by day, but if we do not we shall have trouble by the way.” President Kimball also asked the brethren to refrain from swearing and using profane language and not to abuse their cattle, nor get angry with them or with each other. He further asked the brethren to cease murmuring and control angry feelings, and advised them not to sit up late at night but to go to bed early and see that their families observe good hours. He also asked that the sisters to not “ramble away from camp, nor go visiting from wagon to wagon.”⁴³

The company was barely on the trail a week before it ran into a “tremendous storm” on June 16, which continued the entire evening. “The wind roared so [much] that it almost drowned the noise of the thunder,” said one observer.⁴⁴ A month later, on July 17, the company passed Chimney Rock in western Nebraska, the psychological halfway mark of the trek, and by August 17, as they

³⁸Ibid., p. 178.

³⁹*Deseret Morning News* 2004 Church Almanac, p. 514.

⁴⁰Grant, p.178.

⁴¹In records of the various pioneer companies, only 14-year-old Everett and 18-month-old Milt are listed in the 1848 Kimball company, but undoubtedly 12-year-old Sarah Louisa and 9-year-old Marie Antoinette also traveled with their mother in the company.

⁴²*Journal History*, No. 68, June 16, 1848, p. 2.

⁴³Ibid., June 8, 1848, p. 1-2.

⁴⁴Ibid., June 16, 1848, p. 1.

began ascending the high plains of central Wyoming they reached Independence Rock, which clerk William Burton described as “a great curiosity,” and nearby Devil’s Gate.⁴⁵

Julia Ann’s son Everett, although only 14 years old, was one of the guards at night on the trek. He served under Norton Jacob, the captain of the guards of the First Fifty [wagons] who was making his second trip across the plains, having been in the Vanguard company the year before.⁴⁶

On Sunday, September 24, 1848 – 109 days⁴⁷ after they had left the Elkhorn River – the Heber C. Kimball company popped out of the Wasatch Mountains and into the Salt Lake Valley below. They had traveled anywhere from five to 18-20 miles a day. “We arrived at the Great Salt Lake City about 2 p.m. and were joyfully received,” said William Burton.⁴⁸ For Julia, the arrival in Great Salt Lake City marked the end of an epic journey of tremendous courage and faith.

When she entered the Salt Lake Valley with her family, about 5,000 people were already living there, 1,229 of them arriving with the Brigham Young company just four days earlier. Much had already been accomplished by the earlier-arriving pioneers. A large fort, with the backs of log or sun-baked adobe brick houses forming the east wall, had been erected at the 10-acre site of present-day Pioneer Park. However, with all the pioneer companies pouring into the valley, the fort had to be enlarged as additional houses within it were continually being built. Eventually, the fort grew to four forts, covering about 47 acres, or nearly five city blocks. It extended from present-day 600 South on the south to what is now Pierpont Avenue on the north, and from 300 West to 400 West.⁴⁹

By the time Julia arrived in the valley, a large section of the city had been platted, although only a very few people were permitted to live outside the fort. In addition, a public bowery had been erected at the temple site (which later became Temple Square) and a huge farm south of the city, called the “Big Field” and measuring 12 miles in length and from one to six miles in width, had been planted “with an extensive variety of seeds.”⁵⁰

It was at the fort that Julia and her family spent the winter of 1848-49.

In 1849, Julia’s husband was dispatched to Washington, D.C., to lobby for statehood for the Mormons, something that didn’t happen for another 47 years. Instead, Congress created in 1850 the Territory of Utah and Dr. Bernhisel became the territory’s first delegate to Congress, serving five terms, a service for which he earned praise from Church leaders. At a meeting in the old abode tabernacle that once stood on Temple Square, on June 19, 1855, Brigham Young said of Dr. Bernhisel’s service in Washington: “I very much doubt whether we could find another man,

⁴⁵Ibid., No. 70, September 24, 1848, p. 12.

⁴⁶“The Record of Norton Jacob,” edited by C. Edward Jacob, Jacob Family Historian, and Ruth S. Jacob, published by the Norton Jacob Family Association.

⁴⁷By comparison, the Vanguard Pioneer company that left in 1847, took 111 days to reach Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

⁴⁸*Journal History*, No. 70, September 24, 1848, p. 16.

⁴⁹R. Scott Lloyd, An “insurance that our journey was practically at an end,” *Church News*, December 4, 1999, p.10.

⁵⁰“First General Epistle of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from the Great Salt Lake Valley to the Saints scattered throughout the Earth,” issued April 9, 1849, *Messages of the First Presidency*, six vols., with introduction, notes and index by James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1965) 1:351.

belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who could go to Washington and do as much for this people, in the capacity of a representative, as the one we have sent for [six] years past.”⁵¹

“Until 1860,” wrote Gwynn M. Barrett in his doctoral dissertation, “Dr. Bernhisel had not spent a full year in the territory since he arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the fall of 1848.”⁵²

With Dr. Bernhisel being sent to Washington just months after he and Julia Ann arrived in the valley, it was only natural for her to settle—probably in 1849⁵³—in Davis County, north of Salt Lake City, where her father, Caleb, and brothers, Hector and Isaac, were already living with their families. The two Haight brothers and two other men had taken cattle to graze on Herd Creek (which later became Haight Creek) on the shores of the Great Salt Lake in the fall of 1847. In the spring of 1848, the two brothers were joined by their families, and that fall a Church conference created an option for permanent settlement in Davis County.⁵⁴ Isaac later returned to Salt Lake City, eventually moving to southern Utah, but Hector remained in Davis County.

When the 1850 U.S. census was enumerated in January 1851, Julia and her family were counted among the 1,134 persons in Davis County.⁵⁵ (The 1850 census does not include the town or precinct in which residents lived, only the county, but Mary Helen’s history confirms her mother lived in Kaysville, about three-fourths of a mile from her home).⁵⁶ Interestingly, Julia Ann’s age in the 1850 census is listed at 15, rather than 45. Undoubtedly, this error was made when whoever entered the census information into the official record couldn’t read the handwriting of the census enumerator.

For various reasons, Julia’s marriage to Dr. Bernhisel crumbled in the early 1850s. In his doctoral dissertation, Gwynn Barrett wrote that a permanent separation took place in 1851.⁵⁷ It was also in 1851, according to sealing records in Special Collections of the LDS Church’s Family History Library, that another of Bernhisel’s plural wives, Catherine Burgess, “was freed from”⁵⁸ Dr. J.M. Bernhisel.” Historian Samuel W. Taylor wrote that Julia left Bernhisel and when she did, he reverted to monogamy with Elizabeth.⁵⁹

In all probability, Julia, now once again known as Julia Van Orden rather than Julia Bernhisel, was still living in Kaysville in September 1853. On September 18 of that year, she received a second patriarchal blessing, at her request, from itinerate patriarch Charles W. Hyde. A second

⁵¹*Journal of Discourses*, reported by G.D. Watt, 26 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1966, originally published in Liverpool, England, by F.D. Richards and London, England, by Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855) 2: 318.

⁵²Barrett, p. 158.

⁵³The Salt Lake fort began to be dismantled in 1849 as the pioneers started to move onto their city lots that had been allocated to them in the fall of 1848. When Salt Lake City became incorporated, the first order of business, according to an interview by the author with the staff of the LDS Church Historical Department, was to tear down the old fort. By 1851, it had been totally torn down.

⁵⁴Glen M. Leonard, *A History of Davis County*, County Centennial Series (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah State Historical Society, Davis County Commission, 1999), pp. 17-18.

⁵⁵1850 U.S. Census for Davis County, Utah.

⁵⁶Grant, p. 182.

⁵⁷Barrett, p. 185.

⁵⁸“Freed from” was a term used by Church leaders to indicate the termination of a marriage.

⁵⁹Samuel W. Taylor, *Nightfall at Nauvoo* (New York City, the Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 355.

blessing was not uncommon in those days. On the same day she received a second blessing, her son Everett also received a second patriarchal blessing from Patriarch Hyde.

In her second blessing, the patriarch told her, “Julia, I place my hands upon thy head and I seal upon you a father’s blessing, for thou art a lawful heir to all the blessings that have ever been sealed upon the head of the daughters of Joseph, and thou shalt have power to rebuke diseases in the name of Jesus Christ in thine own household, although you have come near the gates of death, while the arm of Omnipotence is over thee and did save thee from the grasp of the enemy, and thou shalt live if thou desire it untill [sic] thy hair is white as wool, and age shall not affect thee, and [you shall] redeem the dead with thy companion in the Temple, which [is to] be reared in this generation; and they in the morning of the resurrection shall call thee blessed, and if thou desire it, thou shall live to see Zion redeemed in peace and set in council with the Ancient of Days [Adam], and thy companion shall lead you through the gates into the celestial Kingdom, and there you shall reign forever and ever; and this blessing I seal upon you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.”⁶⁰

Sometime in the 1850s, Julia moved to Salt Lake City. In an old ledger book tucked away in a metal cabinet deep among the records in the Salt Lake County Recorder’s Office, is an isolated entry that confirms that Julie was living in Salt Lake City at the time of the entry, but neither the book nor the entry have a date on it. The entry merely states, “Julia Van Orden Block 52 Lot 2,” without any explanation. Without a date, it is impossible to determine when Julia was living at that location, but it is safe to say it was before 1855.

Block 52 is included in Salt Lake City’s Plat B, which was platted in 1848. The block covers from Fifth East to Sixth East, from First South to Second South and was included in the 12th Ward when the original 19 wards were created in Salt Lake City in February 1849. Lot 2 was on the southwest corner of the block. Julia may have been the original occupant of the property, as her name appears first at that lot in a book of Salt Lake deed records on microfilm in the LDS Church Historical Archives. Julia transferred the property to Edward Hunter, presiding bishop of the Church, but there is no date for the transfer of the property, nor is there an amount that Bishop Hunter might have paid for it. Bishop Hunter then sold the property to Robert C. Sharkey, a Salt Lake businessman, for \$150 on October 15, 1855. The next day, on October 16, Sharkey sold the property to Joseph V. Vernon of Sugar House for \$150.⁶¹ Additionally, in an alphabetical index to city lots, Julia Ann Van Orden is listed at Block 52, Lot 2.

It’s evident that at some time in the 1850s, Julia was living on the southwest corner of Fifth East and Second South, but at least by October 1855, she was no longer at that location.

In the 1856 Church census,⁶² Julia is not listed in the 12th Ward, but in the 17th Ward and, oddly, not as Julia Van Orden, but again as Julia Bernhisel. This raises an interesting question. Why did Julia again use the surname of Bernhisel if she had previously, since the breakup of her marriage, gone by Van Orden? Records of the 17th Ward from this period also list her as a

⁶⁰Patriarchal Blessings, 18 September 1853, Vol. 70, p. 33, LDS Church Historical Archives.

⁶¹Book A, Deed Records, page 58; Book B, Index to Mortgage Records, p. 2229, microfilm on file at LDS Church Historical Archives.

⁶²Utah pioneers petitioned for statehood a second time in 1856. To show that Utah territory had enough population to become a state, a census was taken in January and February of that year. The census showed 77,000 people in the territory, which was undoubtedly inflated. The 1850/1851 U.S. census shows 11,380 residents in Utah and the 1860 U.S. census shows 40,273.

member of the ward, under the name of Julia Ann Bernhisel.⁶³ At this time, she may have been living with her daughter, Charlotte Amelia Peck. Charlotte and her husband, Martin Horton Peck, are listed in the 1856 census as living in the 17th Ward. Martin owned two lots on First West Street (now Second West), across the street west from where the Greyhound Bus Depot is located today. Dr. Bernhisel also owned a choice lot in the ward on the southwest corner of the block where the Conference Center now stands. He had he acquired the lot early on as a member of the Council of Fifty.⁶⁴ However, because of his duties in Washington it was more than ten years before he could complete construction of his home.⁶⁵

By the spring of 1858, Julia Ann and most, if not all, of her children and their families relocated to Utah County in north-central Utah during the so-called “Utah War.” The move was in compliance with Brigham Young’s directive to abandon the northern Utah communities prior to the arrival of the advancing federal troops of Johnston’s Army. In fact, most of the residents of the territory north of Utah County – numbering 30,000 – moved southward as part of Brigham’s “scorched earth” policy, which was to put the torch to the towns if the army sought to occupy them.⁶⁶ Although the Saints were later allowed to return to their homes, Julia possibly lived in Utah County the rest of her life, and three of her children stayed there for a period of time.

When the 1860 federal census was enumerated, Julia (again using her Van Orden surname) was living in Springville, Utah County, with her 23-year-old daughter, Sarah Louisa Curtis, the plural wife of Dorr Purdy Curtis, and their two children. According to the census, Julia’s oldest son, Peter, and his family were living in Provo Valley, and her oldest daughter, Charlotte Amelia, and her family were in Provo. Julia’s youngest daughter, Marie Antoinette, and her family were living in Salt Lake City’s 17th Ward.⁶⁷ Two other children were out-of-state, at least they were living in areas which later became parts of other states. Son Everett Clark had moved to Franklin, Idaho, with his family. Daughter Mary Helen and her family were in Washoe Valley, Carson County, Nevada,⁶⁸ on her way to California, where she joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which caused her mother, Julia, to be “dreadfully wrought.”⁶⁹

Interestingly, in 1860, Julia’s 13-year-old son, Milt Bernhisel, was not living with her in Springville, but was living with his father and step-mother, Elizabeth, in the 17th Ward in Salt Lake City.⁷⁰ Since arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Dr. Bernhisel had acquired considerable wealth. His personal estate, as reported in the 1860 census, was valued at \$3,270 and the value of the real estate he owned was \$4,050, sizeable amounts for those pioneer days. Julia’s assets, if she had any, were not reported in the 1860 census, but her daughter Sarah, with whom she was

⁶³Record of Members, 1856-1872, Book 6300, Salt Lake City 17th Ward, Salt Lake Stake; microfilm on file at LDS Church Family History Library.

⁶⁴The Council of Fifty was a secular committee, founded in 1844 in Nauvoo, designed to relieve the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve of temporal responsibilities, according to James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1976) p. 199.

⁶⁵Barrett, p. 50.

⁶⁶Allen and Leonard, p. 315.

⁶⁷The 1860 federal census in Salt Lake City was enumerated according to LDS wards.

⁶⁸Franklin, Idaho, and Washoe Valley, Nevada, were both part of Utah Territory in 1860.

⁶⁹Grant, p. 190.

⁷⁰1860 U.S. Census for 17th Ward, Great Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah, enumerated July 17, 1860.

living, had personal wealth of \$100 and the value of the real estate she owned was \$150. The 1860 census did not list an occupation for either Julia or Sarah.

From the 1860 census until her death five years later in 1865, Julia's footsteps in life seem to be totally covered over by the sands of time. By 1861, Marie had moved from Salt Lake City to Provo, and in 1862 Charlotte moved from Provo to Hoytsville, Summit County, Utah. Sometime during this early 1860s period, Sarah moved from Springville to the Bingham Canyon area in southwestern Salt Lake County and Peter also left Provo Valley Perhaps when Sarah moved from Springville, Julia Ann moved in with Marie, but this is only speculation as, so far, research has not uncovered her whereabouts during those years.

After arriving in Utah, Julia Ann likely had to pretty much make her own way through life, and, at least in her later years, probably lived with her children. The fact that she was never provided with a home of her own by Dr. Bernhisel is underscored in a letter written by her son, Milton Bernhisel, to his half-brother, David Bernhisel (son of Elizabeth) in 1910, several years after their father's death. In the original decree of distribution of Dr. Bernhisel's estate, filed in Third Judicial District in Salt Lake City and dated May 19, 1910, Milt was conspicuously left off. In a handwritten letter to David M. Bernhisel, dated June 14, 1910, Milt, seeking redress, wrote that he "was told years ago that when [Dr. Bernhisel] died he was financially ruined through some mining speculations, but your mother was provided with a house...."

Milt continued, "... If your mother did not have an absolute title to her little home she had ought to have had for I know she must have appreciated it as my mother would have done had she ever been provided with one by my father, but she never was."⁷¹

In spite of the many hardships that Julia Ann had to face, she performed her part on the grand stage of life in faith and courage, not under the bright lights of fame but in virtual obscurity. On that cold day in January in 1865 when she was laid to rest in Plat C, Block 7, Lot 7 in the Salt Lake City Cemetery there, undoubtedly, was little fanfare, but just as she was told in her first patriarchal blessing: "the Lord is well pleased" with her.



⁷¹From John M. Bernhisel's papers on file in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

The final resting place of Julia Ann Haight Van Orden is in Salt Lake City Cemetery. Headstone names the 15 persons buried in the plot that was owned by Hector C. Haight.

EPILOGUE

Twenty-eight years after Julia had died and a dozen years after the death of Dr. Bernhisel in 1881, their Nauvoo Temple sealing was cancelled by President Wilford Woodruff on April 13, 1893. Peter E. Van Orden had requested the sealing be cancelled so his mother could be sealed to his father, William. President Woodruff wrote a letter, dated that same day, to Logan Temple President Merriner W. Merrill explaining: “Dear Brother; this is to inform you that I have released Sister Julia Ann Haight (deceased) from all former covenants and you are at liberty to seal her to her husband William Van Orden (deceased); their son, the bearer, will act for his father, and their daughter Charlotte Van Orden Peck for their mother.”⁷² That fall, on September 28, 1893, in the Logan Temple, William and Julia Ann were sealed by President Merrill with Peter and his sister, Charlotte, acting as proxies for their parents.⁷³

While there are many questions about Julia’s life that cannot be answered, there is a mystery that shrouds her death and burial. Salt Lake County Death Register⁷⁴ has Julia buried as Julia Ann Van Orden. But the Salt Lake Cemetery Location Report Index and the name on the cemetery’s computer files is Julia Ann Jarvis Van Orden. Where does the name Jarvis come from and why is it listed between her first and last names? Was it just a clerical error or is there more to the story? While those questions beg to be answered, research has not yet provided any answers. The answer to this mystery may not come until all things are revealed.

⁷²Barrett, pp. 51-52.

⁷³Logan Temple Records, Sealings for the Dead, 1891-1896, Book D, p. 232, microfilm on file in Special Collections, LDS Church Family History Library.

⁷⁴Microfilm on file in LDS Church Family History Library.