

... description: 1931, Nancy Bowditch
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title: Pilgrim Notes notes: ...

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Visit to Bahjí

Between the sand dunes and sea runs a road, wave-washed and uncertain, which lead from Haifa to the ancient city of ‘Akká in Palestine. Here Richard the Lion Hearted fought across the mighty ramparts, against whose side the persistent onslaught of the sea still makes war. Near here Napoleon laid siege from an artificial hill, which he constructed in order to reach over the double walls of the city. There still remains the moat through which the strength of the sea used to be turned in times of war. It is outside of the walls of this town that the ‘Most Great Prison’ stands, bleak and forbidding, and in this place Bahá’u’lláh and his family and followers were imprisoned. One can see the windows from which he gazed at the first pilgrims, who could only look at him from a distance and be content to return many miles on foot with that precious memory. In a courtyard near the prison building is the long staircase up the outside of the house which leads to some rooms where the family were permitted to move later. Here came the first European visitors to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and it was here that “Some Answered Questions” were written. There is another house in ‘Akká where they were moved later, but this is a different story from the one I want to tell, for mine deals with the aftermath of these terrible and uncomfortable years, and, it is with great comfort and joy that one can now turn toward Bahjí.

After driving through the country outside of ‘Akká, and _____ under an old arch of a Roman Aqueduct and through a forest of eucalyptus trees, we at last arrive at the place where Bahá’u’lláh spent his last and happiest days. On the left, as we approach, is a walled-in area with cypress peering over the _____, and a cluster of old farm houses; on the right, a lovely sweep of cultivated fields and a distant range of mountains. At this point the old mansion at Bahjí looms into view. Indeed it

PILGRIMAGE TO HAIFA APRIL 15 - 23, 1957

by Alice Dudley

I took off from Orly Field, Paris, at 1:00. a.m. April 15, with a 45 minute stopover in Rome, the next stop being Lidda Airport, Israel. My seat companions during the night were a Jewish couple from Chicago who had been to the Temple on 2 occasions – once to a lecture. They asked me to tell them more about the Faith. They had dreamed for years about coming to Israel and as the plane landed on Israeli soil, tears flowed down their faces. The official welcome to Israel was a delicious glass of orange jive which is served to all incoming passengers. From the weather man we got a searing welcome of 98 degrees with a hamseen blowing.

As I sat waiting my turn to go through customs, LeRoy Ioas came into the room. He had come to meet Mrs. Collins who was arriving from the States on another airline. As he did not know I was coming, he was terribly surprised. Sylvia Ioas was in the waiting room and we had a lovely visit while waiting for Mrs. Collins' plane. When the officials at the airport learned I was a Bahá'í they gave me a special welcome and one said, "Why didn't you say you were a Bahá'í in the first place, we wouldn't have kept you waiting. Another said when I wrote down #10 Persian Street, Haifa, as my address, "You are a Bahá'í!"

Presently Mrs. Collins arrived after a journey of many tiring delays and we started for Haifa in the Guardian's car (a Chrysler) driven by his chauffeur Carlo. Never did I dream that when I arrived at Lidda I would be taken to Haifa in the Guardian's own car. Along the highway to Haifa there were orange groves in blossom, the scent filling the air. Cypress, Eucalyptus and 'Akkássia trees stood in rows and farms and orchards and olive groves dotted the landscape. Although the wild flower season had passed its peak, there were many scarlet poppies, golden buttercups, marigolds and white daisies dotting the hillsides and roadside.

Along the highway were all kinds of transportation – trucks, cars, donkeys, bicycles. We passed by an Arab village and people along the highway waiting for transportation were dressed in garments of all descriptions – flowing Arab robes and colorful garments worn by people from Algeria, Morocco, and other eastern, countries.

LeRoy pointed out the beginning of Mt Carmel which is a very low mountain about 25 miles long. Just as we came to the outskirts of Haifa I had the first glimpse of the Dome of the Shrine of the Báb. The gold was gleaming against the blue and white sky. Presently we arrived at the beautiful western pilgrim house which was designed by Mason Remey. The outside is of yellow sandstone and the interior is Oriental in design, with white and black marble pillars circling the large central room – Moorish arches, high ceilings, with small circular windows near the top to let in light. Beautiful Persian rugs cover the marble floors and a series of sitting rooms branch off on 3 sides from the large central hall. Beautiful

silken hangings are on the wall as well as Japanese etchings and other paintings.
Beautiful object d'Art