

# GRANT

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Grant Monument  
Association

### GRANT

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## 1902 JULIA DENT GRANT 2002

**D**ecember 14, 2002, will mark the Centennial of the death of Julia Dent Grant, wife of Ulysses S. Grant. Julia Grant is the often forgotten half of the answer to the question "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" Besides being a devoted wife to our nation's 18<sup>th</sup> president, she is regarded as one of the more active first ladies in our nation's history — the first to be known by the title "First Lady" and someone who elevated the national standing of her position. A charming and affable presence, she shared in her life her husband's setbacks along with his successes and was a reliable source of comfort, cheerfulness, and grace no matter



what the circumstance. As First Lady and afterwards, she supported the cause of women's suffrage and aided the National Women's Suffrage Association.

Following her husband's retirement from the presidency, Julia joined former President Grant on a tour around the world in which she became a good-will ambassador and enjoyed a warm reception in foreign countries that reflected the unprecedented standing of the United States. After her husband's death, she became the first First Lady to write her memoirs. She played an instrumental role in choosing New York as the site of Grant's Tomb and defending that decision when opponents sought to have the Tomb located elsewhere. This issue of "Grant" is dedicated to her.

## THE OTHER ONE IN THE TOMB: REMEMBERING ULYSSES' ONE TRUE LOVE

**I** can't tell you the number of times I've heard the old Groucho Marx joke about who's buried in Grant's Tomb. If I have the presence of mind, I usually respond wryly, *Mrs. Grant*. It startles me that people are not as moved and impressed as I am by the physical fact that my great-grandmother Julia's great red granite sarcophagus is right next to my great-

grandfather's, and is just as large as his is. She was not tucked into a little niche off to the side. In the theater of Eternal Rest, Julia gets equal billing with her heroic husband. The Tomb is *theirs*, not *his*, and that is a fact often forgotten.

Oddly enough, I didn't learn a great deal about my great-grandmother and namesake, either from my father, Ulysses S. Grant III, or his sister,

my Aunt Julia. Both my father and my Aunt knew their grandmother well and spent a great deal of time with her as children. She was a devoted and doting grandmother, to be sure, but she was never the same after her beloved Ulyss died in 1885. More significantly, she was very careful, always,

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## THOUGHTS FROM A BIOGRAPHER

Q & A WITH BIOGRAPHER  
CAROLE E. ADAMS

*Carole Elizabeth Adams, Ph.D., is author of the forthcoming biography Julia Dent Grant, which will appear in 2003 as part of a series on First Ladies, by Nova Humanities Press. Scott Berman of the GMA asked her about her work with her subject:*

**Q: What brought you to Mrs. Grant as a subject?**

A: My field is women's history, and I have long been interested in women and politics. I became fascinated by the Grants' marriage and relationship.

**Q: Although it's a big question, how would you describe the character of**

**Julia Dent Grant?**

A: I would characterize her as a woman who completely accepted that men and women were meant to be complementary in their roles, and who was certain that women possessed key strengths.

**Q: What surprises did you encounter in your research?**

A: I was a bit surprised to learn of Julia Grant's importance in assessing persons with whom USG worked, such as staff members. I was also surprised to learn of the extent of her philanthropy and her support for women's suffrage.

**Q: Do you think she is a**

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### JULIA: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not to push herself forward. Even her memoirs were never published in her own lifetime, owing in part to her fear that they might draw attention away from her husband's memory.

To be honest, all through my childhood and young adulthood, I downplayed my own connection to my famous family, precisely because the name "Julia" was, to most people, just as famous as the name "Ulysses." Hearing that my name was Julia Grant, people instantly inferred that I was related to the president. Grant is not a rare name, and it always struck me that the name Julia was—and even is today—immediately associated with Ulysses in people's minds. Few presidents' wives' names—Martha Washington, Mary Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy—are so well known and so closely paired with their husbands'. This alone might suggest what a powerful influence she was in his life.

Ishbel Ross wrote the first real biography of Julia Grant (*The General's Wife*,

published in 1959). I have always felt that it offers one of the best overall portraits of Julia's personality. We all know from photographs that Julia was not a beauty, and I think that her plainness has historically overshadowed the plentiful evidence that she was bright, witty, quick-minded, and a great deal of fun to be with.

It was her personality that captivated the young and handsome Ulysses S. Grant in the 1840s. It was her wit and social skills that helped her taciturn (and sometimes painfully shy) husband through countless social events that became part of their public life after 1865. And, of course, it was her unflinching love of and belief in

her Ulys that served as the rock upon which he leaned in times of stress and pain throughout their life together.



Julia Grant with her son Fred at the dedication of Grant's Tomb, 1897.

Julia's own memoirs, published in 1975, are another great source of insight into my great-grandmother's personality. The fact that she was the first First Lady to write her own life story says a great deal. Of course, she never

writes directly about her own personality, and you need to read between the lines, in the tone of her words and in the topics of interest to her, to begin to understand her better. I can remember leafing through the typed manuscript to these memoirs, before they were published,

and looking at the captions in her own distinctive handwriting on the backs of the photographs that she had selected for the book. Even here, in a book that was supposed to be about *her*, her real focus is on how Ulysses entered her life, how she made a home for him and their children—again and again as they moved around—and how he was the center of all her attention throughout their married years. Ultimately, that was probably why she never published the memoirs in her lifetime; because Ulysses' legend had not yet begun to fade by 1902, and thus they weren't necessary.

Julia's interment at the Tomb on Riverside Drive was as modest and unheralded as her own life was. She didn't need the fanfare and the attention that the General had gotten in 1885, and again in 1897, when the Tomb was first dedicated. Knowing that she would be right there, at his side, in death as in life, was glory enough.

—Julia Grant Dietz

## ADAMS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

### good role model for 21st century girls and women?

A: I think not, because she can only be understood in the context of the values of the 19th century.

### Q: What perception of U.S. Grant do you take away from your project?

A: The more I study USG and research original documents, the more I admire him as both a public and a private figure, while also recognizing that he was human. His sense of humor, for instance, usually delightful, could take on an edge of cruelty. And the other side of his loyalty to friends showed itself in an unwillingness to accept apologies once he be-



lieved that he had been deceived or betrayed.

### Q: What's next in terms of your research?

A: I also plan to write a book on the entire Grant family, from grandparents to children of the president and Julia Dent Grant.

*Carole Elizabeth Adams, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at the University of Central Florida, Orlando. Professor*

*Adams will be speaking at the December 14 commemoration of the Centennial of Julia Grant's death at Grant's Tomb. For more information on Dr. Adams and her work, see <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~cadams/>*

*I would characterize her as a woman who completely accepted that men and women were meant to be complementary in their roles, and who was certain that women possessed key strengths.*

### The GMA Mission:

- To commemorate and perpetuate the accomplishments of Ulysses S. Grant and Julia Dent Grant and their memory.
- To undertake educational activities and ceremonies as they pertain to President Grant's service to his country.
- To cooperate with public and private parties to insure the repair, maintenance and upgrading of Grant's Tomb in New York City.
- To raise funds to accomplish the foregoing purposes.

## PLEASE SUPPORT THE JULIA GRANT CEREMONY

The Grant Monument Association is seeking financial support in its efforts to organize a fitting commemoration of the Centennial of Julia Dent Grant's death on December 14. If you are able to assist us, please take a moment to fill out the form below. Patrons of the event who donate \$25 or more before the printer's deadline (November 27) will be acknowledged in commemoration programs. Your generosity is appreciated.

### Donation Form

Please consider supporting the December 14 Julia Grant commemoration with a donation\* of \$25 or more. You may indicate your gift below:

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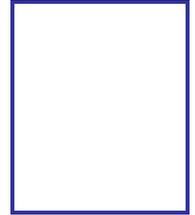
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If you or your organization is interested in placing a wreath at Grant's Tomb for the December 14 ceremonies, please contact Frank Scaturro at (212) 504-6476 or email [gma1897@yahoo.com](mailto:gma1897@yahoo.com).

## Volunteer Needed

The Grant Monument Association is in need of assistance from a volunteer who can serve as assistant secretary. Duties consist of coordinating membership rolls and assistance with correspondence. Computer and proficiency with Microsoft Word preferred. For more information please contact:

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September 11, 2001 