

From the latter half of the 1960s into the 1970s, a number of pioneers came to Barbados from the United States and the United Kingdom. Among those were: Carol and Walter (Wally) Haynes who arrived in the parish of St. Michael in 25 May 1966 from the United Kingdom. (Wally was a native of Barbados, both now deceased. Philip and Karen Wood arrived 9 October 1967; Frank and Patricia Paccassi, with their two daughters Lynn and Judith, together with Patricia's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Elsie Mollie Snyder, aged 86, arrived in Barbados in 1971 (until 1976). Elsie died in Barbados 17 November 1975; Shirley Yarbrough arrived in 1972 to the present; Laurie Fanning (later Sealy) also arrived in 1972 to the present; Roy and Cynthia Carlton arrived in 1974, where Roy died in 1981.

The first Barbadians to enroll were Mr. Howard Mozart Newton and Mr. George Pilgrim in late 1964 or early 1965. The first youth to become a Bahá'í was Hazel Elaine Beckles of the parish of St. Michael. All three have remained in the Faith, and Miss Beckles and Mr. Newton both have served on the National Spiritual Assembly. Others soon enrolled and Bahá'í communities were established in the parishes of Christ Church and St. Michael.

The late 1960s was a time of great activity. Belle Lennox, a visiting Bahá'í from Puerto Rico, was interviewed on the radio by Olga Lopes Seales in January 1966. In March and April 1966 quotations from the Bahá'í scriptures were inserted in the Barbados Sunday newspaper by the local community. Articles were also published about the visits of travel teachers.

2. Institutional development and later history. Barbados was under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assemblies of: South America in 1953; the Greater Antilles in 1957; Brazil in 1962 and of the United States in 1964. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Leeward, Windward and Virgin Islands was formed in 1967. In April 1972 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Windward Islands was formed with its seat in Barbados (in 1975 the name was changed to the National Spiritual Assembly of Barbados and the Windward Islands in order to assist with the process of incorporation). In 1981 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Windward Islands was formed with Dr. Varqá being the Universal House of Justice Representative and its seat in St. Vincent, with Barbados having its own National Spiritual Assembly.

Unlike the majority of the West Indies islands, which have local Spiritual Assembly boundaries that coincide with town or village boundaries and making possible a large number of assemblies, Barbados has a total of eleven areas of local government jurisdiction, the parishes. The parishes of Christ Church and St. Michael each formed a local Spiritual Assembly at Ridvan 1965. These lapsed in 1966, but were reelected in 1967.

In January 1967 there were 32 Bahá'ís in Barbados in two localities. By June 1971 there were 47 Bahá'ís in six localities. Barbados was chosen as the site of the first mass teaching effort in the West Indies. In August 1971 a team of international and regional teachers, with Auxiliary Board member Ruth Pringle, working with the local pioneer families Woods and Haynes, and

coordinated by Patricia Paccassi, started a six-month long project based in Parish of St. George. There were 500 enrollments in the first three weeks, and over 2200 by the end of the project. Some of these converts fell away and thus, by 1973, there were 1590 Bahá'ís living in 11 localities, of which 9 had local Spiritual Assemblies. By 1979 all 11 local government area had local Spiritual Assemblies and there were about 2700 Bahá'ís.

The first Auxiliary Board member resident on Barbados was Shirley Yarbrough from 1972 to 1985. Yvette Clarke was the first West Indian Board member in Barbados while Errol Sealy was the first native Barbadian appointed to the Auxiliary Board, and was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors in 1989. The first national Hazirat'l-Quds (q.v.) was acquired in 1974 in St. Michael. The second national Haziraut'l-Quds located in Bridgetown, as well as ten acres of land in St. Lucy parish as a Temple site, were acquired in 1976.

1. Official recognition. The National Spiritual Assembly was incorporated by the Companies Act in 1972; the first local Spiritual Assembly to become incorporated was in St. Michael Parish in 1975.

The Governor-General, Sir Winston Scott, received a delegation of Bahá'ís in October 1968, and again in August 1970, when Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga (q.v.) made a courtesy call. The relationship of the Barbadian Bahá'í community with officials has always been cordial. Ministers of the government and/or prominent Barbadian opened the Women's Pathway to Peace Conference of 1988, the Caribbean Youth Conference in 1990, and presided over the presentation made to prominent persons in 1992. The Bahá'í community of Barbados received permission to name marriage officers to conduct legally recognized marriages in 1980.

Sources

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Leonora Holsapple Armstrong, taped interview with Maxine Roth.

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