

In April 1967 Mr. William “Bill” Nedden, also from the United States arrived from Dominica to pioneer in Barbuda. He was married in the Virgin Islands and returned with his wife, Lynda Reed, to Barbuda. They moved to Antigua in 1988, where Mr. Nedden still lives. In the years following the visit of David Schreiber and McKenzie Edwards in 1965 to Montserrat, a number of other Baha’is, a number of Bahá’í teachers including Bill Nedden, also visited there. The first pioneers to Montserrat were Mr. Derek and Mrs. Sally Dacey, Americans resident in Canada, who stayed for two years 1972-73.

Responsibility for the Bahá’í administration of the East Leewards was passed to a succession of national Spiritual Assemblies: that of South America in 1953; the Greater Antilles in 1957; Jamaica, for Antigua and Barbuda & the Dominican Republic for Montserrat in 1962; the United States in 1964; the Leeward, Windward & Virgin Islands in 1967; the Leeward & Virgin islands in 1972; and the Leeward Islands in 1981. From the 1970s onwards there were many more pioneers who stayed for varying lengths of time.

By 1966-67 there were fourteen Bahá’ís in the East Leeward Islands, with a group at St. John’s in Antigua one in Barbuda, and two groups on Montserrat, at Salem Village and at Plymouth. The first local Spiritual Assembly in the East Leeward Islands had been formed by June 1969 in St. John’s. In 1971 two local Spiritual Assemblies had been formed on Montserrat, Salem Village and Plymouth. The local Spiritual Assemblies of Plymouth and St. John’s had obtained legal incorporation by 29 March 1979 and 1981 respectively.

During the 1970s there was much growth with the number of Bahá’ís increasing from 14 in 1969 to 631 Bahá’ís and 21 local Spiritual Assemblies by 1980. Most of the Bahá’ís were from the villages. The number of Bahá’ís remained fairly constant in the next decade, and in 1992 there were 595 Bahá’ís in 39 localities, with 20 assemblies. The National Spiritual Assembly of the East Leeward Islands was formed in 1991 with its seat in Antigua.

Other achievements: In 1967 ZAL-TV station of Antigua broadcast the CBS film “And His Name Shall Be One”. And conducted an interview with visiting Auxiliary Board Member Ellsworth Blackwell of Haiti. From the 1970s Bahá’í employees were able to include some Bahá’í programming on Radio Antilles, in Montserrat, until 1984 when the high cost of broadcast time ruled this out.

By 1979 a local Haziratu’l-Quds (q.v.) had been acquired at Plymouth, Montserrat, and both a local and a National Haziratu’l-Quds at St. John’s, Antigua. By January 1973 a national endowment had been acquired in Olveston, St. Peter, Montserrat. A local endowment was acquired on Barbuda by 1986. The first summer school in Antigua was held in 1975. In 1984, the first Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Honourable Vere C. Bird, Sr. received an official delegation of Bahá’ís.

In 1990 Errol “Bobbie” Martin, a West Indian Bahá’í on Montserrat, was awarded a British Empire Medal for his efforts during Hurricane Hugo in November 1989. Operating a ham radio for 50 hours straight, Mr. Martin enabled

the island to call for help and keep in touch with the outside world.

In 1988 the first Caribbean Bahá'í Women's Conference was held on Antigua. On 24-27 January 1991 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Leeward Islands and the Bahá'í Community of Antigua held a forum on "Raising the Environment Consciousness of Our Youth". During the event, which received radio and television publicity, a talk was given at the National Museum to the Environmental Association of Antigua by Bahá'í environmentalists (BINS May 1991, 247:2-3)

Sources

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