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The Newsletter of the Barbados Genealogy Group (BGG)

# Connections



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"A forum for family researchers in Barbados and the diaspora to stay connected through news, articles, tips and tricks."

## BGG Objectives

- Encourage and promote family research.
- Foster communication, cooperation, mentorship.
- Educational talks, discussions and workshops.
- Share resources.
- Develop presentation skills.
- Advocacy in family research.
- Provide encouragement and support to young people in researching their family history.

## Mission Statement >>>

*"To inspire and encourage Barbadian-related family history research and to foster the development of individual and shared identities."*

## Family History Project in New York

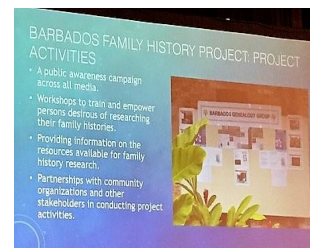
The Barbados Genealogy Group promoted the **Barbados Family History Project** at the Cultural Extravaganza on September 30, 2017 in Brooklyn, New York. This event was sponsored by the Consulate of Barbados at New York.

The BFHP was promoted using a Power point loop, a live Powerpoint presentation and the distribution of literature. The opportunity was also taken to promote the recent publication of the BMHS "**Of Halls, Hills and Holes, PLACE NAMES OF Barbados**". The presentations and literature were well received by persons attending the event even though the audience was not as large as the organizers anticipated. The publication also caught the attention of persons. In addition, some persons provided email addresses in order to receive the quarterly publication of the Group.

Copies of the literature were given to the St. Philip and St. Gabriel Episcopalian churches when the project coordinator attended services at these churches. Finally, the Consulate agreed to distribute the remainder at the launch of

its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence Commemorative Book "Celebrate Barbados" and the documentary "Big City Dreams" on November 12, 2017.

- Martin Cox, Chairman, Sub-Committee



## The Phoenix Rises: Part 2

David O'Carroll

In 2006, I visited Barbados and it was then that I first met Harriet Pierce at the Shilstone Library. I was hoping to find some information about my great uncle who had been Commissioner of Police in the 1940s but there was no information about him. As an afterthought I asked Harriet if there was anything on the Gall family. She dived into the metal four drawer filing cabinet which I later learnt contained the Shilstone Papers; and with a few huffs and puffs she produced a buff folder with 15 sheets of typed carbon copied paper. She had struck a seam of gold for me. These were the results of the research carried out by Eustace Shilstone in 1952 into the Gall family at the request of Mr. Cook. I only later found out that Mr. Cook was acting on behalf of a Mr Wilson of Canada. The papers listed the baptisms, marriages and burials he had found and extracts of a number of wills at the Barbados Department of Archives at Black Rock.

The earliest will was dated 1759 but the baptisms, marriages and burials went further; back to 1662. So suddenly there was a

prospect of extending my mother's family tree from the beginning of the 19th century to the mid 17th century. But I faced a jigsaw of names and dates with few clues as to who was related to whom; and how to complete this puzzle? It appeared from the covering letter that Eustace Shilstone wrote, that he had some personal knowledge of the Galls and indeed a family connection. This all left me with the intriguing possibility that Henry Beckles had not been born in England after all. Was he descended from an early Barbadian family? Confusingly, Shilstone wrote that Henry Beckles Gall "seems to have had earlier connections with British Guiana, and I should imagine that he married there". The key to unlocking this conundrum was held by the Wilsons as I was later to find.



Henry Beckles Gall



## Speaking History: Barbadians on Migration to Cuba

Sharon Marshall



It is a generally acknowledged truth that anywhere in the world you go, you'll find a Barbadian. The migration tradition of Black, working-class Barbadians began in the post-Emancipation period, when recently freed slaves embraced the right to offer their labour in markets that would give the highest returns.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Cuba – the Pearl of the Antilles – was a magnet which attracted thousands of workers not only from Barbados, but also from many other British colonies in the Caribbean. My maternal grandparents were among them. Tell My Mother I Gone to Cuba: Stories of Early Twentieth-Century Migration from Barbados is my tribute to their memory.

The book is divided into two parts: Part I gives the historical context of the migration; while Part II is a collection of personal

histories in which some of the Barbadian migrants – including my mother – share their experiences of life in Cuba. My mother and most of her siblings were born in Cuba at Central Hershey, an estate owned by chocolate manufacturer Milton S. Hershey of Hershey, Pennsylvania. He was one of hundreds of American entrepreneurs who invested in sugar plantations in Cuba. After working on the Panama Canal, my grandfather had moved his family to Cuba, where he was chief blacksmith at Mr. Hershey's estate.

I interviewed some of the migrants and their descendants in Barbados and Cuba. All of the interview subjects featured in Part II of the book are now dead. I am grateful that I was able to help these brave, resilient ancestors tell their stories, in their own words.

Tell My Mother I Gone to Cuba was a finalist in the 2016 Foreword INDIES Book of the Year awards. It is available at the Barbados Museum shop.



# It All Started with a Question

Adam Taylor

It all started with a question — “what was my grandfather like?” Sitting with my maternal grandmother in the kitchen, I began to ask about the family history. I never knew my grandfathers, they’d both died before I was born, and so all I could do was ask. Dredging up the past will sometimes reveal unsavoury things, of course — but dredge we must. It has always been my opinion that we need to take the good and the bad, because the truth is what’s important. You either want to know, or you don’t.

My love for family history began there in the kitchen on a warm afternoon in Barbados, and it has taken me all over the world — figuratively speaking. Some of them came from Europe; England; Ireland, and Scotland. France, Germany and Spain. Some came willingly, others were forced and enslaved, and others were tricked - West Africa and India. Some were already here when the colonists arrived, Kalinago. Arawak. I love it because it is a microcosm of this place that is home, so-called the West Indies. A convergence of all kinds of people, all kinds of stories, tragedies, pains, joys, victories and hopes. You are here because you need to know. The very fact that you are reading this newsletter says that you are a particular type of person, with particular interests. Maybe you have already begun your journey of discovery — perhaps it has

been years since you started, years of shuffling through the archives and deciphering old handwriting and interviewing relatives who have since passed on. Perhaps you are now beginning to ask questions, to wonder like so many of us have — Who am I? Who are my people? Where do I come from?

The thing about Genealogy is that it’s not just a study of the dead — those faceless names and dates hidden away scribbled in old inks. It’s also a gift to the living, and an heirloom for the future. The work that you do now will live on after you are gone and you will be more than just a name on a page. You will be The Family Historian! The one who pieced it all together. It is a way to achieve that thing which the ancients have always yearned for — a kind of immortality.

Families are ancient stories passed down through time, the family historian’s job is to put all of those stories together into one cohesive whole, to bring to light the joys and the pains of people who would otherwise be lost to the pages of worm-eaten books.

As you continue your discovery, I hope that you will uncover all that the art of genealogy has to offer, and by the end of your searching you will know who you are, and where you come from.



## Upcoming Talks

**15 March** - Researching my Barbadian Roots: DePeiza, Osbourne & Francis families by Rashaun Allen

**16 May** - East Indian / Barbadian Connection – Sabir Nakuda “Workshops”

**19 July** - “Archiving Oral History Collections: Exploring the Main Legal and Ethical Issues” – Dr. Cherri-Ann Beckles

**19 September** - Open Session

**15 November** - TBA



## November & December Activities

The last Group Meeting for 2017 was held on 16 November. Entitled DNA Testing for Genealogy—Our Experiences., presenters were Mr Martin Cox, Mr Thomas St John and Ms Marie-Claire Lyder. The presentations were followed by a lively Question and Answer session. Prior to the meeting members were emailed a copy of an eBook explaining DNA Genetic Genealogy testing.

The Genealogy Group Bus Tour took place on 2 December with a tour of places of interest in the parish of St Thomas. Our guides for the day were Trevor Marshall and Patricia Stafford, with a special presentation at Rock Hall Freedom Village by Sir Woodville Marshall. Ms. Ione Gibson, a bus tour regular also shared her experiences working at Vacluse Estate. Lunch stop was at the Flower Forest.

The Christmas Social was held at the Barbados Museum on the evening of 13 December. Despite limited numbers, an enjoyable evening was had by all. Lots to drink and eat and of course Genealogy discussions in informal groups.

# The St. John Genealogy Barbados 1640 - 1850

>>> Thomas St. John

The St John family's earliest appearance in Barbados was around 1680 - 1700 in the person of Henry St John Esq. He was born in England on July 23, 1640, the son of Elizabeth and Henry St John. He married Susanna Barrett on October 30, 1682, in London. Susanna was born on June 14, 1664, in Barbados to Martha Beek and Richard Barrett. The union produced five children. Henry St. John Esq was a Judge, and he provided legal counsel to his clients in Barbados. He died on July 16, 1695, in Barbados at the age of 54.

Henry's son John, who was born in 1685 was the father of Charles St John who married Isabella Clark in St Philip, Barbados on October 12, 1721. Charles and Isabella had three children Elizabeth, Charles Sr and John. Charles died in 1776. Charles Sr married Frances Christie on December 13, 1778. The couple had six children: Martha Christie, Eliza Ann, Charlotte, Charles Jr, Sarah Maria and Frances.

They lived on a sugarcane plantation called Content in St Thomas from about 1802 until 1815. This is the earliest plantation ownership in Barbados by the St John family. His daughter, Charlotte, married a prominent man by the name of Jonas Wilkinson and that union produced eleven children. Charles' son, Charles Jr, carried on the plantation ownership by acquiring many plantations during his lifetime. These plantations included: Bagatelle, Fortress, Newstead, Farley Hill and other land holdings in St Thomas, St Peter and St Lucy. Charles Jr's best friend was Joseph Briggs and they were part owners in Welch town, Grenade Hall and Farley Hill plantations.

Charles Jr fathered a male child in 1827 from a black slave woman named Kitty Ann (Research is ongoing on Kitty Ann), the boy was named Charles Henry and was born into slavery. He is the forerunner of all the current St Johns in Barbados. Some ten years later Charles Jr married Ruth Yearwood on May 2, 1837 at St Lucy's Parish church and had seven children from that union. One of them was named after his best friend Joseph Briggs (Thomas Briggs Saint John) All the children lived at Farley Hill including Charles Henry.

Charles Jr was a bit of an entrepreneur, he was a founder and director of the West Indian Bank which opened in Bridgetown in 1840. He died in 1850 at the family home, Newstead, in St Peter.

Charles Henry (Kitty Ann's son) was recognized in Charles Jr's will of 1850 which provided for his education and his inheritance. Charles Henry assumed the St John name on the death of his father. Charles Henry St John being the eldest son provided help to his half brothers and sisters in the estate operations, settlements and security interest. On February 22, 1857 Charles Henry St John married Mary Elizabeth Brathwaite. This union linked the Brathwaite family's and the St John family's, they lived at Cane Garden



St John Coat of Arms



## Executive of the BGG >>>

NAME	ROLE
Harriet Pierce	Facilitator
Dr. Patricia Stafford	Deputy Facilitator
Marie-Claire Lyder	Secretary
Lynda Lewis	Information Officer & Editor
Angela Skeete	Education Officer
Francine Bradshaw & Betty St. John	Event Coordinator
Penny Hynam	Floor Member

The Barbados Museum and Historical Society was established in 1933 by an Act of Parliament. It is housed in historic buildings which were originally used as the military prison of St. Ann's Garrison. The Shilstone Memorial Library is a research library. It is open Monday to Friday and every 2nd and 4th Saturday 9am - 1pm.



Contact Harriet Pierce, Librarian for further information.

Address: St Ann's Garrison, St Michael, Barbados.

Phone: 1 246 538 0201

Email: library@barbmuse.org.bb

