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The Newsletter of the Barbados Genealogy Group (BGG)

Connections

THE NEWTON PLANTATION COLLECTION ON THE LOWCOUNTRY DIGITAL LIBRARY

“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.”

In 2012, the Barbados Museum & Historical Society signed an MOU with the College of Charleston, South Carolina. This agreement provided the framework for the digitization of several Newton Plantation Account books and their availability, for public access, on the Lowcountry Digital Library site.

This collection comprises seventeen account books covering the period 1849-1973 and a list of the enslaved for 1828. The account books consist of:

- Day books – 1854, 1864, 1865, 1870 & 1872
- Sugar book – 1849
- Rents books – 1857, 1862 & 1868
- Money renters – 1862
- Stock keepers and Watchmen Book – 1862
- Plantation Inventory - 1866
- Plantation Report Book – 1867
- Cash Books– 1869-1873

These records, which provide an intimate view into the operations of a plantation of a little over 400 acres, are a valuable resource for persons not only researching Newton Plantation, but aspects of the plantation system in post emancipation Barbados.

Researchers may access this collection at the following site: [https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog?f\[collection_titleInfo_title_facet\]\[\]=Newton+Plantation+Collection](https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog?f[collection_titleInfo_title_facet][]=Newton+Plantation+Collection)



My Barbados, My Crozierville

By

Ambassador Lorenzo Witherspoon

My Bajan Ancestry

John Prince Porte: Great-great grandfather (1815 – 1890) Born in Barbados

Rev. Conrad Coslet Porte: Great grandfather (1878 – 1926) Born in Crozierville, Liberia

Lilian Porte – Best: Grandmother (1907 – 1976) Born in Crozierville, Liberia

George Stanfield Best: Grandfather (1894 – 1945) Born in Trinidad

Beryl Inez Best-Brewer: Mother (1936 – 2003) Born in Kakata, Liberia

My Barbados

At the urging of my daughter, who was conscripted by friends to the Caribbean Club while studying at McGill University in Montreal on the sheer basis of her looks and diction, I began researching my family's Bajan ancestry and doing DNA-testing in 2019. Although we knew our family's origin, no one in our family had attempted this feat. A startling early finding was that both my earliest forebears were mixed race. Another was that, prior to being taken to Barbados, my forebear's ancestor was of Nigerian origin! Because I was focussed on Barbados, I decided to park that, momentarily.

One hundred and fifty-five years after my family arrived in Liberia from Barbados, my brother and I set out on a pilgrimage to Barbados in July 2021 to "find" and "reconnect" with our family there. In spite of very good intentions, none of our forebears in Liberia had ever made the journey back since 1865. During my research, I was fortunate to have encountered Prof. Matt Reilly, an American anthropologist who, in addition to writing extensively, had studied and done great excavation work both in Barbados and Liberia for several

years, and who, is well *au courant* with the Barbados-Liberia story. My research paper can be found *here*.

https://www.bahaliberia.com/_files/ugd/4ea5f7_bcf7a404801d486ca51d347d01e8e094.pdf

On the island, Prof Reilly availed my brother and I of his time and knowledge without hesitation. He drove us throughout the length and breadth of the island, taking us to the part of Irish Town inhabited by the so-called "Poor Whites" where, our research revealed, my forebear was last known to have lived and worked as an apprentice during the post-emancipation period. We saw old farm implements and chattel houses, and felt an instant connection with the area, as though we were in Crozierville. We also visited the Church of the Holy Innocents in St Thomas where he was married and two of his sons baptized. Sadly, the records at the Barbados Archives were not in a state of enablement to further our research while there. We also visited the Barbados Museum where we did succeed in obtaining some very useful information.

The highlight of our visit was a rare audience with the Prime Minister, the Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, facilitated by the Barbadian Ambassador to Switzerland and the UN, Chad Blackman. PM Mottley was as welcoming as she was enthusiastic about our visit, wondering why there was no relationship whatsoever between Barbados and Liberia. She expressed the desire for exchange visits of diaspora Bajans and Barbadian citizens to acquaint and reunite both in a common fraternity of Africanness. I promised to ensure the organization of a visit of West Africans to Barbados in the near-term.

My Crozierville

Crozierville, called "Up the River" because of its location on the banks of the St. Paul River, is the settlement near the capital city of Liberia, Monrovia, selected by President Daniel E. Warner and gifted to Barbadians who arrived on the Brig Cora in May 1865. It was selected because it comprised rich, fertile lands where the Bajans could deploy their farming skills and cohabitate as a community. Many were farmers. By the time I was born, my grandparents had long left Crozierville; first to Kakata (where my grandfather died and was buried), and thereafter to Monrovia. Crozierville was and remains an important Liberian township, as it



was founded by Barbadian families, including my ancestors, in 1865.

The Porte homestead in Crozierville was both a grounding and finishing school for multiple generations. At no time was there less than 20 occupants residing there. The Best home in Monrovia would eventually mirror that image. While many Barbadian families would eventually leave Crozierville, it remains a pilgrimage site for services on Sundays and for family gatherings.

My Barbados, My Crozierville

Cont'd

My upbringing

My great-grandfather was a strict disciplinarian, and the sacrosanct role of preparing the families' offspring to contribute to society and nation-building by embedding "wholesome qualities" was bequeathed to uncle Albert (Porte).

Christianity, Respect, Hard work, Honesty and Courage were the hallmarks of Bajan ethical culture, and this left little doubt that "Up the River" kids were of such exemplary breed that suitors would travel there in search of spouses.

Crozierville was arguably a big village. Everyone knew everyone, and every elder was an "uncle", "aunt" or "cousin". All were related! Each elder had the moral authority to discipline a Bajan child found to be misbehaving while out of the home.

The majority of the Bajan families were Episcopalians, and others were Methodists. Most of the 346 Bajans settled in Crozierville, while some stayed in Monrovia. A number of Porte siblings later moved south to Grand Bassa County (which is believed to host the largest cemetery of Bajans, in the city of Edina).

The names of the families that remained in Crozierville can be found on the ship manifest for the *Cora*, which left Bridgetown in 1865. The Barclays, Grimes and Wiles chose to live in Monrovia.

Regardless of where in the country the families settled, they knew and kept in touch with one another. On arrival in Liberia, each family head and each individual received 25 and 10 acres of fertile land, respectively, from the government.

The erection of Christ Church, named after the church most had attended in Bridgetown, Barbados, Christ Episcopal Church, was one of the first orders of business for John Prince

Porte and other Episcopalians in Crozierville.

Farming & Agriculture

I have now come to understand that much of what we learned about farming and agriculture came from my family's roots in Barbados. My great grandfather, Conrad, planted many fruits on his 25-acre plot in Crozierville, including **banana, Arkie (ackee), breadfruit, coconut, citrus fruits, coffee, cocoa, golden plum, mango, papaya, and soursop**. He also planted **tubers** such as **cassava, eddoes and sweet potato**, as well as sugar cane and green vegetables.

One can say that Barbados was implanted into Crozierville. The emigrants brought to Liberia **Lemongrass** which, in addition to being a delicious tea, has medicinal properties. We grew it, and it served as the go-to headache medicine of choice. The main street in Crozierville, **Lemongrass Street**, is named in honor of this Barbadian wonder!

Perhaps Crozierville's greatest Bajan mainstay input was and remains **rum**, made from sugar cane. Called "cane juice" in Liberia, it was never exported (until recently, that is). Uncle Albert distilled his brand, "PORTE & SONS", on Porte Hill but only sold it locally. It is reported that in the 1880s Liberia exported sugar from sugar cane to London and Liverpool. Syrup was also made but not commercially exploited.

Happy 157th Birthday, Crozierville

This year marks 200 years since free Black Americans began arriving in what would become Liberia, and May 10, 2022 marked 157 years since our Bajan forebears arrived in Liberia and established Crozierville. I believe the time has now come for the establishment of formal ties between the two countries, and cementing

Barbados' historical relationship with Crozierville.



Ruins of the Porte family home in Crozierville

Back to Barbados

True to a commitment made when I met with Prime Minister Mottley last year, I am planning a pilgrimage by Africans of Bajan ancestry from the global diaspora in July, 2023, currently dubbed **Back to Barbados – Remembering the Centuries of Atlantic Slave Trade & the 1865 African Emigration**. It is expected that the government will join with me to support this premier event and make it a huge success. Eventually, I would like to also organize, as also promised to Prime Minister Mottley last year, pilgrimages of Barbadians to Liberia in the near-term.



Lorenzo with his cousin, Rodney, near Irish Town in St. Thomas, Barbados

Online Resources – Monumental Inscriptions of Barbados

By Lynda Lewis

In this issue, we look at two books on monumental inscriptions in Barbados. The first book is “Monumental Inscriptions of British West Indies from earliest date” by Captain J. H. Lawrence-Archer. This was published by Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, London in 1875. These were chiefly collected on the spot as he sailed throughout the islands. It covers Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Dominica and Monserrat.

These were carefully collected from earliest period to 1750. Also included are a few extracts from collections of other papers. Example “Order of March from Fontabell to ‘Town of St Michael’s’ on 23rd April 1685” for proclaiming King James II. This list includes Commanders, Regiment of Horse etc. It also includes some monumental inscriptions on some estates such as Adams Castle and Hannays.

The second book is “Monumental Inscriptions in the Churches and Churchyards of Barbados” by Vere Langford Oliver MRCS. Published in 1915 by Hughes and Clarke, London, this includes

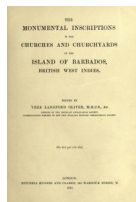
those inscriptions occurring in Churches and Churchyards but “not dissenting Chapels and modern Cemeteries.”

Listed by parish and church, the actual monumental inscriptions are recorded, as seen, with blank spaces where the writing had worn away and could not be deciphered.

Both books are in the collection of the Shilstone Memorial Library at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society. They can also be found and read online at the Digital Library of the Caribbean (DLOC) and on www.archive.org



<https://dloc.com/UF00067430/00001>



<https://archive.org/details/monumentalinscri00olivrich>

NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1 — 18th -21st Century Sources Reveal Connections — Marcia Nurse

January 2023— Barbadians in Australia - Dr. Roslyn Russell

BGG Past Presentations on YouTube—Playlist

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWhAN50mfrKE94fiTPncultFGUu5FRidg>

Submission of articles for our upcoming newsletter are welcomed and can be submitted via email to

library@barbmuse.org.bb

Executive of the BGG >>>

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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, which is open to the public Monday to Friday from 9 am until 4:30 pm, by appointment only. Appointments are in 2 hour slots.

For further information contact Harriet Pierce, Librarian .

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

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