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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
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Guide to the

**Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society records**

1934 - 1984 [bulk 1940 - 1966]

Sc MG 856

Processed by Tanya Desdunes with assistance from Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, Aileen Bloise, and Steven G. Fullwood.

## Summary

**Creator:** Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society (New York, N.Y.)

**Title:** Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society records

**Date:** 1934 - 1984 [bulk 1940 - 1966]

**Size:** 6.2 linear feet (13 archival boxes)

**Source:** Gift, Antigua & Barbuda Progressive Society, November 2011

**Abstract:** The Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society was established on August 22, 1934 by a group of 22 Antiguan in New York City under the leadership of Bishop James P. Roberts. The Society provided charitable assistance to Antiguan, Barbudans and the neighboring community, as well as lent assistance to institutions on the home island. In the early 1960s the Society purchased a brownstone on 122 Street in Harlem which still functions as the Society's headquarters. The Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society Records, 1934-1984, contain correspondence, membership application forms, meeting minutes and financial documents which offer views into the running of the Society, members' lives and the practical assistance disbursed such as "sick aid" and help with burial costs. Of particular interest are several letters, such as the 1938 and 1949 recommendations sent to the Royal West India Commission and Secretary of State for the Colonies respectively, which divulge immigrants' political sensibilities, diasporic sympathies and nascent pan-Caribbean identification. Letters from Antigua, including two from V.C. Bird, the first prime minister of sovereign Antigua, while commending the Society for the work it pursued for citizens at home, also outline conditions on the island. The collection also documents the interactions between the Society and other Caribbean associations in New York such as those founded by immigrants from Anguilla, Bahamas, Dominica, Montserrat and St. Vincent.

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**Preferred citation:** [Item], Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society records, Sc MG 856, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York

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**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Tanya Desdunes with assistance from Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, Aileen Bloise, and Steven G. Fullwood.

## **Creator History**

The Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society was established on August 22, 1934 by a group of 22 Antiguan in New York City under the leadership of Bishop James P. Roberts. The Society provided charitable assistance to Antiguan, Barbudans and the neighboring community, as well as lent assistance to institutions on the home island. In the early 1960s the Society purchased a brownstone on 122 Street in Harlem which still functions as the Society's headquarters.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society Records, 1934 - 1984, contain correspondence, membership application forms, meeting minutes and financial documents which offer views into the running of the Society, members' lives and the practical assistance disbursed such as "sick aid" and help with burial costs. Of particular interest are several letters, such as the 1938 and 1949 recommendations sent to the Royal West India Commission and Secretary of State for the Colonies respectively, which divulge immigrants' political sensibilities, diasporic sympathies and nascent pan-Caribbean identification. Letters from Antigua, including two from V.C. Bird, the first prime minister of sovereign Antigua, while commending the Society for the work it pursued for citizens at home, also outline conditions on the island. The collection also documents the interactions between the Society and other Caribbean associations in New York such as those founded by immigrants from Anguilla, Bahamas, Dominica, Montserrat and St. Vincent.

**Arrangement:** Arranged into three series: I. Administrative; II. Membership; III. Committees.

## **Key Terms**

### **Geographic Names**

Antigua and Barbuda -- Social conditions

### **Subjects**

Antiguans -- New York (State) -- New York -- Societies and clubs  
Blacks -- New York (State) -- New York -- Societies and clubs  
Blacks -- Services for -- New York (State) -- New York  
Fraternal organizations  
Immigrants -- New York (State) -- New York -- 20th century  
Immigrants -- New York (State) -- New York -- Societies and clubs  
Immigrants -- New York Metropolitan Area -- Social conditions  
Minorities -- Political activity -- United States  
West Indians -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women in charitable work -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Names**

Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society (New York, N.Y.)

## Container List

### Administrative

This series consists of correspondence, financial documents, and meeting minutes organized into five sub-series. The governing documents and Executive Board sub-series outline the establishment, early goals, and development of the Antigua Progressive Society.

The general office files provide a portrait of the scope and breadth of the organization's activities. Of particular interest are several letters, such as the 1938 and 1949 recommendations sent to the Royal West India Commission and Secretary of State for the Colonies respectively, which divulge immigrants' political sensibilities, diasporic sympathies, and nascent pan-Caribbean identification. Also significant are several letters from Antigua, including two from V. C. Bird, the first prime minister of sovereign Antigua. While these letters commend the Society for the work it pursued for citizens at home, they also outline conditions on the island. Evidenced in the Junior League file is the Society's concern with grooming its younger members for the responsibilities of fundraising and administrative work. Also evident is the intent to develop among Junior League members a connection with, and sensitivity to, the histories and cultures of the African diaspora of which they were a part.

Included in the organizations sub-series are letters; invitations to events; and programs that document the interactions between the Society and other Caribbean associations in New York such as those founded by immigrants from the sister island of Barbuda, Anguilla, Bahamas, Dominica, Montserrat and St. Vincent. In addition to showing how the migration experience birthed a burgeoning pan-Caribbean identification among immigrants, this sub-series also gives evidence of the Society's commitment to the well-being of the community and city in which they lived.

The substantial financial records sub-series provides a fairly comprehensive look at the Society's financial development and health over the span of four decades as the group built its membership and purchased a building on which it conducted extensive renovations in the late 1960s. Although the majority of the Society's financial records are in this sub-series, financial reports and other documentation can be found elsewhere in the records, in both the Membership and Committee series. The bulk of the records include disbursements and receipts ledgers which give a daily accounting of the Society's business activities including banking, insurance, taxes, building expenses, and general operations. These ledgers also capture the organization's fundraising efforts and contributions to other benevolent societies. Complementing these ledgers are handwritten and typed reports (1934 - 1940), check receipt books (1959 - 1966), bank statements (ca. 1940s - 1970s), and miscellaneous receipts and notes that, in some cases, fill in gaps from the journals.

b. 1 f. 1     **Governing documents 1934 - 1975**

Includes certificate of incorporation, by-laws, and constitution, among others.

#### Executive Board

b. 1 f. 2     **Correspondence 1938 - 1984**

b. 1 f. 3     **General meeting minutes 1936 - 1984**

b. 1 f. 4     **Executive Board meeting 1971 - 1973**

b. 1 f. 5     **Events and affair 1936 - 1984**

b. 11        **Officers' roll call**

Included in a ledger in box 11; replaces folder 6 of box 1.

b. 11        **Minutes log**

Included in a ledger in box 11; replaces folder 7 of box 1.

#### General office files

b. 11        **Address book**

Included in a ledger in box 11; replaces folder 8, box 1.

o. flat file     **Blueprint 1967**

Located in flat file drawer A-B.

Administrative (cont.)  
General office files (cont.)

Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 9 1936 - 1971
- b. 1 f. 10 Eaton rental space 1953 - 1956
- b. 1 f. 11 To and from Antigua 1935 - 1981
- b. 1 f. 12 Political concerns 1938 - 1973
- b. 1 f. 13 Community involvement 1968 - 1979
- b. 1 f. 14 Junior League 1941 - 1981
- b. 1 f. 15 Heritage and culture
- b. 1 f. 16 Antigua research

Organizations

- b. 2 f. 1 32nd Precinct Coordinating Council 1953
- b. 2 f. 2 A 1938 - 1983
  - Aegis Society Inc 1967
  - African Academy of Arts and Research, Inc 1954 - 1955
  - African Nationalist Pioneer Movement 1959
  - African Orthodox Church of New York, Inc 1953
  - L'Alliance Hatienne de New York, Inc 1955
  - The American Aid Society for the West Indies, Inc undated
  - American Virgin Islands Civic Association 1958 - 1959
  - Anegada Progressive League, Inc 1955 - 1983
  - Anguilla Benevolent Society 1938 - 1959
  - Antillean League of New York 1942 - 1958
  - Association for the Advancement of Caribbean Education, Inc 1953 - 1955
- b. 2 f. 3 B 1939 - 1959
  - The Barbuda Benevolent Society of America, Inc 1955 - 1957
  - The Bermuda Benevolent Association, Inc 1955 - 1958
  - Beulah Wesleyan Benevolent Society 1953 - 1955
  - Boys Town, Nebraska 1955 - 1957
  - British Guiana Benevolent Association 1955 - 1956
  - British-Jamaicans Benevolent Association, Inc 1939 - 1959
  - British Virgin Islands Benevolent Association of New York, Inc 1945 - 1958
  - The British West Indies War Veterans Association, Inc 1940 - 1955
- b. 2 f. 4 C 1940 - 1979
  - Caribbean League of America, Inc 1957 - 1959
  - Church of the Good Shepherd 1940
  - Club Las Servidoras, Inc 1966
  - Communion United Benevolent Society of America, Inc 1945 - 1954
  - Contigua Progressive Society, Inc 1959
  - Corinthian Lodge No. 23, Inc 1955 - 1957
  - Creative Vest undated
- b. 2 f. 5 The Dominica Benevolent Society of New York, Inc 1939 - 1976

Administrative (cont.)  
Organizations (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 6 E 1954 - 1957
  - Eaton Benevolent Society, Inc 1954 - 1957
  - Elizabeth Kenny Foundation undated
- b. 2 f. 7 Holy Cross Church 1943 - 1951
- b. 2 f. 8 Industrial Home for the Blind 1955 - 1957
- b. 2 f. 9 J 1955 - 1982
  - Jamaica Benevolent Association, Inc 1955
  - Jamaica Development Committee, Inc 1956
  - Jamaica Progressive League 1955 - 1982
- b. 2 f. 10 M 1939 - 1983
  - Manhattan Citizens Committee undated
  - Metropolitan Section – ASCE 1973
  - Montserrat Progressive Society of New York, Inc 1939 - 1983
  - Morningside Community Center 1956
  - Mount Morris Park Hospital 1955 - 1957
  - Mutual Society of French Colonials, Inc 1953
- b. 2 f. 11 N 1940 - 1971
  - NAACP, New York Branch 1959
  - Nassau Bahamas Association, Inc 1955 - 1959
  - National Maritime Union 1943
  - New York City Cancer Committee 1954 - 1957
  - New York City Mission Society 1955 - 1958
  - New York Tuberculosis and Health Association, Inc 1956
  - New York Urban League 1940
  - Nevis Benevolent Society 1955 - 1956
- b. 2 f. 12 O 1953 - 1959
  - The One for All Club 1953
  - Orange Benevolent Society No. 1, Inc 1954 - 1959
- b. 2 f. 13 P 1938 - 1958
  - Pan Euro-Carib Tours 1958
  - Phoenix Triangle Lodge No. 34 1938
  - Police Athletic League, Inc 1955
- b. 2 f. 14 Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled ca. 1971
- b. 2 f. 15 S 1940 - 1966
  - The Salvation Army 1955
  - Samuel's Shipping Agency undated
  - The Schubert Music Society 1955
  - Senior People's Community Activities 1956
  - Slimline International undated
  - Small's Paradise 1956

Administrative (cont.)

Organizations (cont.)

S (cont.)

Sons and Daughters of Barbados, British West Indies Benevolent Society of America, Inc 1955

St. James Mutual Aid Society, Inc 1953 - 1958

St. Lucia Benevolent Association 1941

St. Martin's Episcopal Church 1940 - 1959

St. Vincent Benevolent Association, Inc 1955 - 1957

b. 2 f. 16 V 1943 - 1959

Victoria United Benevolent Society, Inc 1943 - 1956

Virgin Gorda Mutual Society of New York 1956 - 1959

b. 2 f. 17 W 1945 - 1971

W. C. Handy Foundation for the Blind, Inc 1956

West Indian-American Day Association, Inc 1971

West Indian and American Friendly Society, Inc 1955

West Indian Students Association, Inc 1956

Windward Islands Progressive League 1945

Financial

b. 3 Check stubs logs 1945 - 1964

Check receipt books

b. 4 f. 1 1959 February 8 - May 24

b. 4 f. 2 1959 July 6 - 1960 January 24

b. 4 f. 3 1960 January 24 - May 8

b. 4 f. 4 1960 July 10 - November 13

b. 4 f. 5 1960 November 13 - 1961 March 12

b. 5 f. 1 1961 March 12 - September 10

b. 5 f. 2 1961 September 24 - 1962 November 14

b. 5 f. 3 1963 January 13 - May 12

b. 5 f. 4 1963 May 12 - October 12

b. 5 f. 5 1963 October 13 - December 22

b. 5 f. 6 1963 December 22 - 1964 March 8

b. 6 f. 1 1964 March 8 - July 12

b. 6 f. 2 1964 July 12 - November 8

b. 6 f. 3 1965 December 12 - 1966 May 8

b. 6 f. 4 1966 May 22 - October 9

b. 6 f. 5 1966 October 23 - December 12

b. 6 f. 6-8 Banking information 1940s - 1970s

b. 7 f. 1-2 Building expenses 1963 - 1984

Disbursements and receipts ledgers

b. 12 1948 - 1961

Box 12 replaces folders 3-6 in box 7.

b. 13 1961 - 1983

Box 13 replaces folders 7-9 in box 7.

b. 7 f. 10 General receipts and disbursement ledger 1940 July 10 - 1948 January 28

Administrative (cont.)

Financial (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 11 Insurance 1943 - 1977
- b. 7 f. 12-13 Reports 1934 - 1979
- b. 7 f. 14 Tax 1946 - 1980
- b. 7 f. 15-16 Miscellaneous receipts and notes 1939 - 1974

Membership

The membership applications and correspondence contained in the Membership series most vividly bring the immigrant experience to life and allow a reconstruction of Antiguan immigrants' lives in New York, including where they lived, who their family and friend networks were, what they did for a living, and even where they received health care. Also evident in the correspondence is the high regard that Society members generally had for each other and the officers. For example, in Robert Parker's 1955 letter to the membership upon the death of his aunt, he commended them for their kindness further adding: "As a Society, you have done your part very well; as humanitarians you are wonderful." Equally significant in this series are the beneficiary correspondence and financial records, which detail the nature and amount of assistance the Society gave members.

Applications

- b. 8 f. 1 undated
- b. 8 f. 2 1934
- b. 8 f. 3 1935
- b. 8 f. 4 1936
- b. 8 f. 5 1937
- b. 8 f. 6 1938
- b. 8 f. 7 1939
- b. 8 f. 8 1940
- b. 8 f. 9 1941
- b. 8 f. 10 1942
- b. 8 f. 11 1943
- b. 8 f. 12 1944
- b. 8 f. 13 1945
- b. 8 f. 14 1949
- b. 8 f. 15 1950
- b. 8 f. 16 1951
- b. 8 f. 17 1952
- b. 8 f. 18 1953
- b. 8 f. 19 1954
- b. 8 f. 20 1955
- b. 8 f. 21 1956
- b. 8 f. 22 1957
- b. 8 f. 23 1958
- b. 8 f. 24 General correspondence 1935 - 1970
- b. 8 f. 25 Sick correspondence 1937 - 1968

Beneficiary

- b. 8 f. 26 Correspondence 1935 - 1959



Membership (cont.)  
Beneficiary (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 27 Death certificates 1936 - 2001

#### Financial

- b. 9 f. 1 Miscellaneous 1935 - 1966
- b. 9 f. 2 Membership dues notebook 1943 - 1945
- b. 9 f. 3 Membership dues ledger 1934 - 1950

#### Committees

Highlighting the means by which the Society sought to promote social and intellectual activities among its members, the Committee series contains correspondence, minutes, and reports created by the various committees that operated as the membership's vehicle of service to their community and training ground for civic service.

- b. 10 f. 1 Administrative 1950 - 1973
- b. 10 f. 2 Advisory Board 1935 - 1955
- b. 10 f. 3 Anniversary 1938 - 1957
- b. 10 f. 4 Auditing 1937 - 1956
- b. 10 f. 5 Banking 1940
- b. 10 f. 6 Carnival 1972
- b. 10 f. 7 Christmas Cheer 1950 - 1959
- b. 10 f. 8 Dance 1936 - 1957
- b. 10 f. 9 Economic development 1966
- b. 10 f. 10 Education undated
- b. 10 f. 11 Entertainment 1971 - 1982
- b. 10 f. 12 The Luncheon 1971
- b. 10 f. 13 Newsletter 1967
- b. 10 f. 14 The Program 1936 - 1966
- b. 10 f. 15 Recommendations 1940
- b. 10 f. 16 Scholarship 1966 - 1973
- b. 10 f. 17 Senior citizen housing 1971
- b. 10 f. 18 Sick 1956
  - b. 11 Sick committee logs  
Box 11 replaces folder 19, box 10.
- b. 10 f. 20 Thanksgiving 1953
- b. 10 f. 21 United Emergency Ambulance 1955 - 1956
- b. 10 f. 22 Post 1984 1996 - 2000