

A Brief History of the Foundation Schools

Tradition has traced the history of Foundation School to a bequest of Francis Williams who left 100 acres of land in the area now known as Parish Land in Christ Church, for the education and maintenance of 26 boys and 14 girls, the children of poor white parishioners.

There is some evidence to suggest that the school was functioning before the end of the 18th century. However, it was largely during the rectorship of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Harrison Orderson (1803-1833), that the school showed signs of progress.

Attempts were made to put the school on a firm base on 10th July, 1809, when the Honourable John Spooner, President of the Legislative Council, laid the foundation of a building called the Foundation School or the Parochial School for boys. The school was built through the aid of voluntary contributions from parishioners and other well-wishers.

The first Headmaster of the school was the Rev. John Packer who later built St. Patrick's Boys' School and was a Rector of St. Patrick's Church. He was followed by a Mr. Fennel in 1819. In 1820, Dr. James Evelyn Fitzpatrick came to the headmastership, and with a few interruptions, kept that post until his resignation in 1860. It has been reported that the school experienced temporary closure in 1825 owing to a lack of funds. It is entirely possible that the costs of running the school including the Masters' and Matrons' salaries, the maintenance of the boarders, and repairs to the school, would have been a severe drain on the limited finances of the school.

The devastating hurricane which swept Barbados on the 11th August, 1831, spared neither church nor school. For a while, both were housed at the Fort in Oistins, now used as the district hospital.

After the hurricane, Bishop Coleridge, assuming that the Vestry would rebuild the boys' school, for such it had been, offered £300 to build a girls' school, if the Vestry would also play their part. The Vestry counter-proposed that they would rebuild a school for boys, but would make provision for 12 girl boarders, and day girl scholars, if the Bishop would be prepared to contribute to the estimated cost of £1,000. A school committee was appointed to look after plans for the building. The Bishop was persuaded and offered £750 to aid in the building.

Captain Edward Senhouse, a member of the School Committee was awarded the tender to build the School building of fifty-four feet square, nine feet high.

An impressive ceremony of laying the corner stone was performed on 1st June, 1832, with the Governor Sir James Lyon and several other dignitaries in attendance.

The new school was provided with rules of Government devised by the Vestry. These rules provided for the education of 18 boys and 12 girls as boarders, and as many male and female day scholars as could be admitted. The movements of the scholars were restricted. Discipline was clearly a concern, and punishment by the rod was allowed for boys, with solitary confinement for offending girls. It was clearly stated in the rules that there was to be no "familiar intercourse" between the two schools, and that "they be kept as distant apart as the nature of the school will allow". The schools, therefore, while sharing geographical proximity, were always separate and distinct. The children were housed separately, taught by different teachers, and could not mix, even though many of them were blood relatives.

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The new school was opened on 19th September, 1832, with 45 students, 30 boarders, and 15 day students. Shortly after the opening, Dr. Fitzpatrick resigned owing to his wife's health, and was replaced by Mr. Nathaniel Fitzpatrick. The death of Dr. Orderson in 1833, led to the appointment of Rev. Christopher Charles Gill, who was to remain as rector for many years, showing interesting education in the parish.

By 1835, progress was so good that it was decided to increase the number of boarders to 24 boys and 18 girls. The school had been able to attract a parliamentary grant of £50, which was used to make alterations to the building. However, by 1837, there were reports that parents were withdrawing their children from the school without giving notice to the teachers. One problem was that they were disappointed at the level of their children's education. One parent complained that his son was not adequate in five rules. In 1839, an attempt was made to stem the flow by granting each student five shillings each quarter, as an encouragement for them to attend school. In August, 1839, Mr. Nathaniel Fitzpatrick explained that he was to succeed his father-in-law as Clerk at the Cathedral and therefore submitted his resignation. Dr. James Fitzpatrick and his wife again filled the vacant position of master and matron.

The times were difficult for the planters, coming after emancipation, and also accompanied by a period of severe drought. In the light of waning economic circumstances, the Vestry took a decision to cut back on the expenses of the school. In a report on the progress of the school since its re-opening in 1832, it was stated that 48 boys and 28 girls had passed through the school. Of these, three boys were known to have done well - E.H. Kirton, a school master, N.A. Cave, working at Seawell Estate and J.A. Nightingale, a clerk in a Bridgetown store. None of the girls had reportedly done well. The committee decided that the school would be thrown open as a day school and a meal provided daily for thirty scholars.

In March 1853, the Rev. Charles Gill was forced to go to England for medical reasons. The Rev. Abraham Reece, an ardent educationalist, came up with the idea of starting a Middle or Commercial School, to co-exist with the Foundation School. As he saw it, the Foundationers would continue as they were, receiving a basic education. However, two classes at a higher level would be started - a class for commercial education, and at a still higher level, one for classical education. The parents of the children in the higher classes would be expected to pay a fee. Foundationers could be accepted in the higher classes if they were recommended by the Master of the Foundation School. Reece's experiment was started and for a while the school had two masters, the Rev. Laurie and his son. By 8th September, 1853 the school had 38 students, 12 of the upper classes, and 26 Foundationers.

The experiment was short-lived, however, and by October 1854, Rev. Gill, who had resumed duties, suggested another scheme. Eventually the Vestry was persuaded to grant £50 to support ten middle-class white scholars at a Middle School to be built apart from the Foundation. This was to lead to the Pilgrim Place or Middle School, opened on 23rd April, 1855, which was to be a serious challenge to the Foundation School until its closure in the late 1880's. It robbed the school of much needed financial support, as well as of prospective students.

The Rev. Nathaniel Heath Greenidge who took up the Mastership of Foundation School, in 1860, was a bright and dedicated classical scholar, whose two sons were to win Barbados scholarships, a great distinction. During his regime he challenged the Middle school and tried to ensure that Foundation scholars rivaled those of the Middle school in the quality of their work. This rivalry was continued through the regime of Rev. W.M. Springer who was headmaster in 1874.

In 1874 there were 24 boarders and 18 day students. Rev. Springer also had about eight or ten private pupils, two of whom were coloured. There were no regular examinations facing the students at the end of their school careers. Some went on to the Middle School and thence to Codrington College. Among these were

Rev. I.N. Roach, Rev.J.S.E. Walcott, and Mr. W.B. Robinson. Generally, the boys who left school became clerks in stores and clerks to planters, while the girls tended to become seamstresses.

After Springer, the mastership fell to Mr. E.R. Laurie who was head in 1877. He was followed by James N. Gibbs up to 1898, when Percy Goodman took up the school. Pupil teachers were employed from the 1870's to help the headmaster.

The Middle School had achieved second grade status by an Act of 1880. As a result , the school had obtained a grant of £ 100 per annum from the government in the first year, and £200 each year thereafter. When the school was closed, the way was open for Foundation to pursue a second grade status.

The Christ Church Foundation School Act was passed on 10th July, 1894. It became necessary when the lease for the Parish Land was about to expire, and doubts had arisen as to the proper persons to execute a new lease. The Act vested the land to the rector and members of the Assembly for Christ Church and appointed a Committee of Management for the school.

The Act further provided that boys of any complexion should be admitted to the school as day pupils in payment of the fee for tuition to be fixed by the Governing Body and approved by the Education Board.

The newly formed Committee of Management in 1895 took the decision to move the girls away from the environs of the boys' school. In 1898, the Committee purchased, for the purpose of the girls' school, a house not far from the boys' school, and appointed a headteacher, Miss M.E. Tynes, at £50 per annum and an assistant at £10 per annum, to be in control of instruction at the school. This was to launch the girls' school on a separate pathway from that of the boys for a considerable time.

The Committee of Management of the boys' school decided to fill the vacuum created by the closure of the Middle School. New subjects were added to the curriculum, and paying pupils, irrespective of colour were admitted to the school. In 1898, the Trustees of the Pilgrim Place School decided that it would provide exhibitions to the Foundation School to pay the term fee of £ 6. The Committee of Management, intent on having a second grade school wrote the Pilgrim Place Committee in 1902, requesting that they be granted the use of the Pilgrim Place School, to help them achieve their aim.

Continued pressure by the Committee of Management on the Government ensured that the school was awarded second grade status in 1906. A scheme for its establishment and management was gazetted on 14th January, 1907. The scheme provided for a Board of Governors with extremely wide powers. The state would grant Second Grade Exhibitions, but no grant in aid was provided.

The Governing Body petitioned the Swaby Commission for a grant from the public treasury to the school. The Commission recommended a grant of £200 per annum which was accepted by Government. The first grant was made on 1st June, 1911.

There were, essentially, always two Foundation Schools. This was only changed with the amalgamation which came into effect during the administration of Lewiston Wellington. The differences in the schools were distinct, even though they shared a common Governing Body for several years. It is because of these differences that there are present fears about the future functioning of the school under the present system.

Robert Morris



School Principals of Foundation

After 183 years and more than twenty principals, the Foundation School continues to provide outstanding service to Barbados, the Caribbean and the World, by providing citizens of outstanding quality, character and integrity.

In 1809, the first school roster contained the names of 26 boys and 14 girls, children of poor whites. By 1992, the roster had increased to over one thousand boys and girls from many social economic and ethnic background.

The Rev. John Packer was the first headmaster for the boys in 1809. In 1898, the girls' first headmistress was Miss M. E. Tynes. Every headmaster/headmistress and subsequently, principal had his/her particular hurdle to climb, whether it was fighting for voluntary contributions from parishioners, for maintenance funds for building new facilities, or for acquiring second grade status for the school. Some of them had to deal with blacks and whites accepting studying together, the interaction of boys and girls, and the merits of amalgamation.

~ Headmasters / Principals of the Boys' School ~

1809	Rev. John Packer	1890	Mr. James N. Gibbs
1819	Mr. Fennel	1898	Mr. Percy Goodman
1834	Rev. Laurie	1926	Mr. W.H. Carter
1853	Rev. Abraham Reece	1934	Mr. Herbert A. Talma
1854	Rev. Christopher Charles Gill	1944	Mr. Hilton W. Antrobus
1860	Mr. Nathaniel Heath Greenidge	1950	Mr. Lee Harford Skeete
1874	Rev. R.M. Springer	1970	Mr. Lewiston S. Wellington
1877	Mr. M.E. Laurie	1982	Captain Hugh R. Barker

~ Headmistresses / Principals of the Girls' School ~

1898	Miss. M.E. Tynes	1958	Mrs. Enid Lynch
1922	Miss Marion Bradshaw	1976	Mrs. Beryl Sealy (Acting)
1938	Miss Helen Inniss		

*by
Covey Carter*

History of School Songs

The school songs of Foundation have a long and interesting history.

The lyrics of the boys' school song were written by Mr. Roy Millington. He came from a family, who up to this day, has produced a long line of outstanding musicians. He worked at the school as an English teacher and was very much a part of its various extra curricular activities. He was President/teacher responsible for the Glee Club. It was during this time that he composed the lyrics of the song: "Built on a Sure Foundation". Pupils from that era recalled that the song was very much liked and was sung with gusto.

Unfortunately, for a number of years the original score was misplaced and the tune to a popular hymn was submitted. However, through the diligence of a couple of school teachers, they were able to reconstruct the score.

The person responsible for writing the music to Mr. Millington's lyrics was Mrs. Muriel Hinds (now Payne). She is an accomplished piano player and is the mother of the popular Barbadian calypsonian "Bumba". While visiting the school one day, she composed the music.

Mrs. Hinds-Payne went one step further by composing the music to what became the girls' school song "Non Sibi Sed Omnibus". The music for this piece was considered by many to be a masterpiece.

The lyrics of the girls' school song was composed by the popular teacher, Ms. Joan Barker. Her sharp wit and humour underscored the creativity of this composition.

After the amalgamation of the Boys' Foundation School and the Girls' Foundation School in 1976, it became obvious that a single song was necessary to bind these two bodies. Submissions were solicited but the response was not overwhelming. As time passed, the lack of a school song became untenable and the search was stepped up.

The long search bore fruit in September 1991. The new school song "Foundation (The light in our eyes)" was composed by Mr. Charles Cooke. He attended Foundation school from 1959 to 1967. He lives in Toronto, Canada and is the Secretary of the Foundation School Alumni Association there. In addition to song writing, he is a classical guitarist who has performed at the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA) in the mid 1970's prior to emigrating. He works as a computer systems consultant.

THE LIGHT IN OUR EYES

The light in our eyes a reflection
Of courage we have shown
In pursuing with bold direction
A path our very own
The formulation of our being
The charting of our lives
Eventually
Is instilled in all as we heed the call
To reach the heights above
It's a challenge made the foundation laid
With compassion, care and love.

With pride we look back on our hist'ry
Achievements in ev'ry sphere
One reason for success- no myst'ry
Dedication in work and play
The spirit of those years continue
To guide and educate
Encouraging
Is a school with heart that will play its part
To keep the beacon bright
In this atmosphere students everywhere
Won't fail to see the light

The school of today a feature
 Of progress, change and time
 If history should be our teacher
 Success is yours and mine
 The combination of two bodies
 With single-minded drive
 Untouchable
 As our minds explore ev'ry open door
 Unafraid and strong
 Capturing each scene in the lighted beam
 The memories abound.

The future of our institution
 Is assured in ev'ry way
 The essence of its constitution
 Knowledge and truth hold sway
 So hand in hand we go together
 To build a greater land
 Exceptional
 Is our foundation all for one
 And one for all. Agreed?
 Through these portals come in the morning sun
 And together we'll succeed.

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 Music and lyrics by Charles Cooke 1991

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