

Hamilton, Roderick S. J. (1886–1968) and Inez (Casebeer) (1888–1965)



R. S. J. Hamilton

From Glenn Philipps, *The Making of a Christian College: Caribbean Union College 1927-1977* (Maracas Valley, Trinidad: College Press, 1977).

VERNON E. ANDREWS, AND GLENN O. PHILLIPS

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Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

Roderick Sydney James Hamilton was the third

president and longest serving president of the East Caribbean Training School (now University of the Southern Caribbean) located in the British Caribbean colony of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hamilton served as school's principal from 1930 to 1938¹ and had previously worked as a pioneering Adventist educator, first in the American northwest before coming to Trinidad where he arrived with his wife and mother on the first day that school began on August 28, 1927. He also served briefly as the president of the West Indies College (now North Caribbean University) in the Jamaica between 1938 and 1939² and was later, during the mid-1940's, the secretary-treasurer of the Leeward Islands Mission headquartered in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Hamilton and his wife Inez played very critical roles in shaping the early direction of the early-college experience for students attending the school in Trinidad, and their impart remained on the campus for decades after their departure. Inez Hamilton's 1965 obituary in the *Caribbean Union Gleanings* remarked, "Her memory is loved by a host of her former students. If a short evaluation of her life was given, it might well be, 'She lived to serve

others.' ”³

Professor Hamilton, as he was called during his leadership of the college in Trinidad, was born on October 22, 1886, in Christ Church, Folkstone, England, to Sydney Robert and Catherine Alfreda Louisa Hamilton. For his early education, he attended the Bedford Modern School from the age of seven until he completed his primary and secondary education, 1893-1900.⁴ He migrated with his parents from Kent to the U.S. in June of 1901, leaving from Liverpool and settling in California.⁵ His high school and college education was obtained in America. He was baptized in May 1905 in Roseburg, Oregon, by Elder F. S. Bunch. He married Inez Casebeer on June 26, 1922, in Lane, Oregon.⁶

Inez Casebeer was born in Hay Springs, Nebraska, on July 7, 1888. She finished high school in 1913. Her parents attended Walla Walla College and so did she. However, she graduated with her first bachelor's degree from Pacific Union College in 1917. Yet, she returned to study at Emmanuel Missionary College with her husband in 1926.⁷ She became the creative leader among the small group of pioneering educators on the campus. She composed several songs about the Caribbean and the young college that brought alive an extraordinary school spirit that lasted for decades.⁸

The Hamiltons taught at two Adventist academies; namely, Sutherlin (1919–1920) and then at Lodi in California, 1924–1925. Wanting to serve their church further, the Hamiltons matriculated at Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) in 1925 and 1926 where they both received bachelor's degrees in 1926.⁹

Immediately the couple accepted the invitation from Professor C. J. Boyd to assist in the establishment of the East Caribbean Training School in Maracas Valley, Trinidad. He left Caribbean Training College in Jamaica, where he spent one year as president. He afterwards worked in the eastern Caribbean with a former teacher at Caribbean Training College, Elder A. E. Hempel in the 1940's to promote church growth in this region.

As the third and longest serving president of the East Caribbean Training School, now the University of the Southern Caribbean, his contribution were remarkably significant for the numerous ways his vision and work helped to transform the former cocoa farm into a co-education Adventist college campus. He and Inez arrived on the premises with his wife the day on which commencement started on August 28, 1927. In one account of his leadership stated,

Hamilton was an excellent financier and having served in the United States Army for several years, had the experience necessary to become an effective administrator. For eight years (1930–1938) during his leadership, most of the plans of the early Adventists were fully implemented, and the college became characteristic of its motto: 'Where the Practical Predominates.'¹⁰

Hamilton's legacy included both spiritual and physical development. In late 1932 the Hamiltons returned to the U.S. for one year as he completed a master's degree at Stanford University. Floyd Greenleaf observed that he was the first educator in the Inter-American Division to obtain a graduate degree.¹¹ On return he also served as

the editor of the *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, the publication of the Caribbean Union which served to provide information to the membership of the territory regarding events and developments. Hamilton also began publishing an insert, *The College Tidings*, which gave an account of the progress of the college that began in June 1934.¹² Also covered in this newsletter were details regarding the industries, enrolment statistic that included the numbers of students coming from each territory of the Union, and local and regional outreach activities.

One of the remarkable experiences in the tenure of R. S. J. Hamilton was the divine intervention that saved the leg of a female student from being amputated after gangrene had set in. Hamilton called for prayer at 11:00 a.m. Later it was discovered that her heart stopped beating when the prayer began and the amputation could not be done as a result. The doctors had to reconsider the procedure and, in the process, both her leg and life were eventually saved.¹³

Hamilton was the consummate leader whose life and service significantly impacted the mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of the institution. He left in December 1938-eight years after his arrival-for West Indies College (now North Caribbean University), where he served as president for one school year (1938–1939). On returning to the U. S. the Hamiltons joined the staff at Walla Walla College. The Hamiltons next received a call to return to the eastern Caribbean. Elder Hamilton was elected the secretary-treasurer of the Leeward Islands Mission of SDA between 1944 and 1946 with headquarters in Bridgetown, Barbados.¹⁴ He had worked closely with the mission president A. E. Hempel. The Hamiltons brought their talents and experience to assist in the church's efforts in the eastern Caribbean.

The Hamiltons retired to California. Inez Casebeer Hamilton passed to her rest on August 30, 1965, in San Luis Obispo, California.¹⁵ She had spent 42 years teaching and influencing hundreds of Adventist youth to better serve their church and wider community.

Roderick Sydney James Hamilton died on April 18, 1968, at Morro Bay, California,¹⁶ having served as leading pioneering educator both in the U.S. and the Caribbean for over 60 years. Roderick and Inez Hamilton left wonderful memories in the minds and hearts of the youth that they taught and guided during the years that they spent in the eastern Caribbean.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. “Hamilton, R. S. J.,” General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Personal Information Forms and Biographical Material, Department of Archives, Statistics and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland, Retrieved on December 11, 2019; Glenn O. Phillips, *The Making of a Christian College: Caribbean Union College 1927–1977* (Maracas Valley, Trinidad: The College Press, 1977), 17.
2. Anthony C. Francis, “The Development of West Indies College, 1907–1960, A Historical Study,” (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Unpublished Dissertation), 1984.
3. “Mrs. Inez Hamilton,” Obituary, *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, January/February 1966, 4.
4. “Hamilton, R.S. J.”
5. See Hamilton, R. S. J. and Hamilton, Inez C. on the *List of Manifest of Alien Immigration for the Commissioner of Immigration list*, No. 4, 1901, NO. 2995, U.S., 1895–1960.
6. See Hamilton, R. S. J. and Inez Casebeer, June 26, 1922, *The Oregon Marriage Indexes, 1906-2009*, <http://www.AncestryLibrary.com>.
7. “Hamilton, R.S. J.”
8. Phillips, 32.
9. “Hamilton, R.S. J.”
10. Philips, 29, 30.
11. “Hamilton, R.S. J.”; Floyd Greenleaf, *The History of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, Vol II* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1992), 77.
12. Phillips, 32.

13. This story is described in Roselyn Ward, *A Mountain to Climb* (2012), 44.

14. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), 121.

15. "Mrs. Inez Hamilton."

16. "Hamilton, R. S. J.," *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), 434.

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