

Cave, Mabel Louise (Skerritt) (1877–1970)

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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."

Mabel Louise Skerritt Cave was an Antiguan Battle Creek Sanitarium school-trained registered nurse and administrator who worked in Barbados from early 1908 until her death in 1970.¹

Between the mid-1920's and the death of her husband, Dr. Charles J. B. Cave, in 1939, Mabel Cave trained dozens of nurses and directed the day-to-

day-operations of their Barbadian sanitarium facilities and nursing home. After his death she directed for 30 years—from mid-1939 to early 1970²—the operations of the nursing and midwifery facility and arranged in 1955 to have the facility gifted to the East Caribbean Conference of SDA, located in Barbados after her passing.

Mabel Louise Skerritt Cave was the daughter of Samuel and Grace Hosier Skerritt of English Harbor, Antigua, and was born in 1877. She was the second wife of Dr. Charles J. B. Cave of Bridgetown (1924–1939) who had been married previously to her older sister, Grace Eudora Skerritt, between (1907–1921) when she died. The Skerritt's were among the earliest Antiguan families to formally become Seventh day Adventists when in April of 1891 Elder Dexter Ball baptized the first ten members.³ Both Skerritt sisters were graduates of the nursing school at the Battle Creek Sanitarium and Hospital and accompanied Dr. Cave on his return to Barbados in 1908 to establish the colony's SDA operated sanitarium located in the Hastings, Christ Church, area.



Mabel L. S. Cave

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During her early years in Barbados, from 1908 to 1921, Mabel Cave worked under the supervision of her older sister and brother-in-law and became increasingly more involved in the work of the sanitarium and activities of Seventh-day Adventists. On September 30, 1911, she was baptized and became a member of King Street SDA Church, in Bridgetown, Barbados, and remained an active member of that church until her death in January of 1970.

After the almost sudden death of her sister, Grace Eudora, in December of 1921, Dr. Cave embarked on an expanded medical practice that intensified his medical outreach to include the formal training of government-registered nurses. In order to accomplish this, he asked for his sister-in-law to marry him and to accompany him as he continued his medical studies in Scotland. After their marriage in 1923, they traveled to Trinidad. Her husband served there briefly as head of the church's medical department around the eastern Caribbean. In 1924 she traveled to Scotland where he studied at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow for two years, while she worked closely with the Adventist believers in those cities promoting healthful living programs.⁴

On the Caves' return to Trinidad, Dr. Cave soon became ill, and she nursed him back to health for almost four years. During 1928 they reestablished their sanitarium work in the Hastings, Christ Church, area.⁵

During most of the 1930's Mabel Cave worked with her husband at the sanitarium, as well as helped him conduct annual home health and nursing classes for interested students that were especially from various churches around Barbados. Their last collaborative class began in early 1939, but he suddenly fell ill, and his health declined rapidly. He died in April 1939.⁶

Mabel Cave immediately worked incredibly hard to ensure that this large group of nursing students were able to complete the course. Elder A. E. Hempel, who presented the eighty graduating students with home-nursing certificates issued by the General Conference of SDA Medical Department on July 9, 1940, wrote in the *Adventist Review and Herald*,

After the death of Doctor Cave his companion, Mabel Cave, a graduate nurse, determined to see the class carried on to a successful finish. Two doctors and a dietitian not of our faith and Sister E. Moe, a nurse, assisted her. Of the class of more than a hundred who started, eighty successfully passed the examination.⁷

Mabel Cave also worked as an advisory nurse at times at The Barbados General Hospital in Bridgetown but primarily over the next thirty years operated the nursing home, moving to its permanent site at the Culloden Road, St. Michael location, where it operated for almost thirty years. During 1955 she deeded the operation to the Leeward Islands Mission of SDA. In the later years, she was ably assisted by Richford Codrington, who had been working at the nursing home since the mid-1930's.⁸

Mabel Louise Skerritt Cave died on January 24, 1970, and her funeral service was held at the King Street SDA Church in Bridgetown, where she was a member for almost sixty years. She was buried with her sister and

husband at the Westbury Cemetery, St. Michael, Barbados.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Data accessed via *Caribbean Family History*, reference: 68/75, <http://www.caribbeanfamilyhistory.org/burials/search.aspx>; Glenn O. Phillips, "Barbados' Battle Creek Doctor: Charles J. B. Cave, 1879-1939," *A Journal of Adventist Heritage* 5, n. 2 (Winter 1978): 22-33.
2. Wesley Amundsen, *The Advent Message in Inter-America* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 197; Floyd Greenleaf, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean* Vol. I (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 153.
3. *Antigua Observer*, July 23, 1891; "Record of the Members of the King Street SDA Church, Bridgetown, Barbados, 1891-1932," Year 1932, Vol. I, (The Holdings of the King Street SDA Church, Bridgetown, Barbados).
4. Glenn O. Phillips, "Barbados Early 'Wellness Living' Physician: Dr. Charles J. B. Cave, 1908 -1939," *Journal of the Barbados and Historical Society*, Vol. LXIV (December 2018): 42-63.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

7. A. E. Hempel, "Leeward Islands," *ARH*, September 12, 1940, 13.

8. Richford Codrington, interview by the author, on December 26, 1976 at Pilgrim Road, Christ Church, Barbados.

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