

T.N. Kirnon History

T.N. Kirnon School is one of the oldest and largest government schools in Antigua and Barbuda. It was established in the early 1900s and, since then, it has provided the basic education to political leaders, sportsmen, and many well-known leaders in our society.

T.N. Kirnon School started as "Boys' School" and was formally located in Buxton Grove, now the Antigua Girls' High School. In those days, it provided education to children of both genders and was considered the only Primary School in St. John's.

With the growing roll of the school and the decision of the Anglican Church to utilize the buildings to facilitate a boarding school for girls, the Boys' School or then the Mixed School had to be relocated. The new building, which was located on Queen Elizabeth Highway, was owned by the Anglican Church also. It housed the old Administration building and now houses the Ministry of Agriculture. This building was known as the Bishop Mather School Room. The boys were transferred to the new school, while the girls were located elsewhere.

The school began in January 1914 in its new site, with Mr. A.E. Stevens as headmaster. In 1921, Mr. Stevens was transferred to Greenbay School to be Head of this school and Mr. Thomas Noel Kirnon, a Montserratian by birth, succeeded him. The school remained on the site until 1926, when they relocated to what was then a vacant building on Parham Road, known today as Old Parham Road. It should be noted that upon the moving of the boys to this new site, the girls moved into the old site at Queen Elizabeth Highway. The school became known as the St. John's Girls School.

In 1926, the new St. John's Boys' School had a roll of 300 to 400 boys. The staff comprised the Head Teacher, First Assistant Teacher, Assistant Teachers and Pupil Teachers.

The building which the boys occupied was rich in history. During the period 1899-1902, a war broke out between Britain's two Boer States in Africa, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. British soldiers who were injured in this war, were sent to Antigua to be rehabilitated and their hospital still remains. Presently, the hospital is used by the Junior Secondary Department of the T.N. Kirnon School. The old Civil Service Training Centre located on Factory Road, and now the present site of the

Sagikor Complex, was the camp for the Prisoners of War.

When the war ended in 1902, the hospital building was used as a home for delinquent boys and this home was known as the Boys' Training School. After the boys were moved to another site, the Boys' School replaced it in 1926. The building that once housed the Women's Desk and the Langhorne Reading Clinic, was the residence of the master of the St. John's Boys' School.

Mr. T.N. Kirnon was known to be very proud of his black heritage. He introduced the House System for sports at the school and named them after persons that he considered to be black heroes; James Aggrey, B.T. Washington, and A.E. Stevens. For Friday afternoon games, the three houses were merged and two groups emitted from this union. They were Trojans and Spartans which were the legendary rivals of ancient Greece.

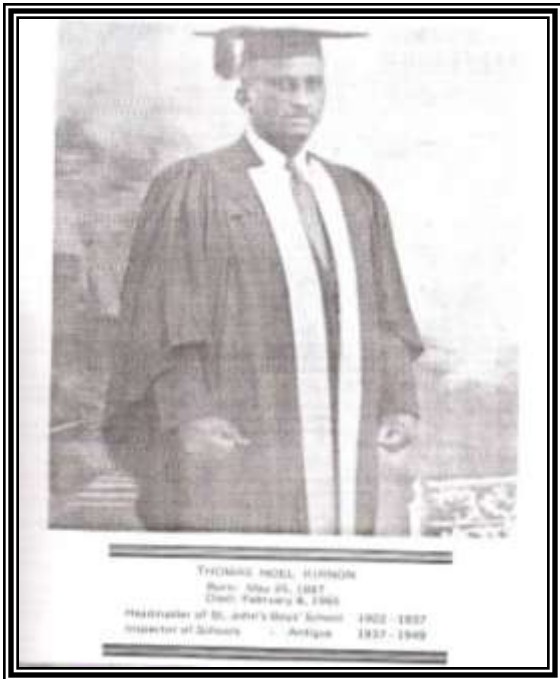
When Mr. T.N. Kirnon's stint as Head had ended, there followed a stream of heads in the persons of: Mr. J.T. Ambrose, Mr. McClean Mathias, Mr. Peter Parker, Mr. Christopher O'marde, Mr. Norman Southwell, Mr. Cuthbert Prince, Mr. Charles Roberts, Mr. Joseph Hampson, Mrs. Hyacinth Walter. Several prominent persons within the society have passed through the hall of the St. John's Boys' School, such as: Sir V.C. Bird Sr. - former Chief Minister, Premier, and Primer Minister; Sir Vivian Richards - former captain of the West Indies Cricket Team; Sir. Sidney Walling; Mr. Oscar Bird; Mr. J. Oliver Davis; Dr. Ashley Bryant; Mr. Ferdie Shoul. The school was renamed on March 22, 1984, with an elaborate ceremony. It bears the name, T.N. Kirnon Primary School, after the longest serving headmaster of the school at the time. It was also the first school in Antigua and Barbuda to be named after an educator.

The school continues to boast the House System as was introduced by T.N. Kirnon years ago. The names of the houses have changed to reflect the names of educators who have given years of service to the institution. They are: **Edwards "Red" House;** **Bachelor "Yellow" House;** **Sutton "Green" House.**

Other Serving Principals to the School include: Mr. Leroy Sutton, Mrs. Georgette Webson - Acting Principal, Mr. Howard Warner, Ms. Irma Bachelor - Acting Principal, Mrs. Idona George - Acting Principal, Mrs. Emerald Warner, Ms. Nolda Carr, Mrs. Goldene Simon, Mr. Rolston Nickeo.

The school's motto is "DEDICATION TO ACHIEVE" words by Jacintha Browne-Christian, a former teacher of the school. It speaks of aspiring to the highest heights possible, using education as the vehicle to success.

MR. THOMAS NOEL KIRNON



Thomas Noel Kirnon was born at Judypiece in the Northern District of Montserrat on the 25th of May, 1887. He was the second child and second son of David and Ann Kirnon. As a child he attended the Cavella Hill Wesleyan School in the District. The privilege of a secondary school Education was then unknown, unless parents were sufficiently wealthy to send their children aboard.

The possibility for higher learning rested in the Pupil Teacher System — open to the most brilliant boys and girls who had successfully passed the Seventh Standard Examination — the highest grade attainable at Primary School and depended on the choice of the Headmaster endorsed by the Minister of the Church.

Young Tom was chosen and proved himself worthy of the selection. A pupil-teachership was for three years, and Tom won the distinction of winning first place on the list of passes in each year — a distinction enhanced by the realization that the examinations were held between the pupil teachers of the Leeward Islands Colony then consisting of Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, Montserrat, Dominica and the British

Virgin Islands. As a result, he won the two year scholarship for training as a Primary School Teacher, and was sent to the Mico Training College in Jamaica. He graduated in 1908. His first assignment on graduation was as Headmaster of the Freetown Wesleyan School here in Antigua.; he later taught at Sawcolt's and the Seaton's Wesleyan Schools until 1914 when he returned to his native land—"The Emerald Isle" - to take charge of the Bethel Wesleyan School.

He remained at Bethel until he was offered and accepted Headmastership of the St. John's Boys School, then sited at the Bishop Mather building at the Country Pond. In 1920 Mr. Kirnon married Sarah Mabel Greer. The union produced six children—one girl and five boys- Violet, Herbert, John, Paul, David and Knox. Thomas Noel Kirnon took up the Headmastership of the St. John's Boys School in January 1922. Mr. Kirnon was a known intellectual, an associate member of the College of Preceptors and a registered member of the Teaching Profession with the Teachers Registration Council of Great Britain. He was an efficient and competent teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian, emphasizing truth and honesty among his pupils, and inculcating in them a high standard of morality and integrity. He was appointed inspector of schools for Antigua in 1937—a post he held until he retired. He then served as a Master at the Antigua Grammar School, and for a short while as Editor of "The Star" newspaper.

Sir Keg as he was familiarly known to all, was a man of indomitable will and courage. No problem remained unsolved, provided that the solution was within his power. Thomas Noel Kirnon was a man of high and noble principles and integrity, who refused to compromise his convictions for expediency, irrespective of the prospects of immediate reward and gain, a man of honour and fairplay and justice. Mr. Kirnon was a Christian gentleman. A Methodist by conviction, he served his church throughout his lifetime as a Sunday school teacher., Circuit Steward and Lay Preacher. "Sir Keg" was a friend indeed, A FRIEND, in all that the word connotes — staunch , reliable and true whose opinion and help could always be sought with the assurance that right would be strengthened and wrong admonished, that help would be forthcoming irrespective of the personal sacrifices involved, a loving and revered husband and father, a Christian GENTLEMAN. He lived a full life.