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DATE OF SETTLEMENT.

To the Editor of the Barbados Advocate.

Sir,—

1. In the Mail Edition of the Advocate, of 6th inst., you have published a statement by Mr. C P. Clarke, in which the date of the actual settlement of Barbados is correctly given as having been made in February 1626, Old style, or 1627, New style.

2. In support of Mr. Clarke's view numerous additional authorities might be quoted. Some are herewith given.

3. Mr. Clarke has quoted Captain Henry Powell, who commanded the William and John, which carried out the first lot of colonists, as having on various occasions sworn that his voyage was made in 1626 (old style). Powell's statement is supported by the heirs of Sir William Courteen, by whom the William and John was set out. In folio 602 of the Egerton M.S.S., preserved in the British Museum, is a document entitled: A true state of the case between the Heirs and Assigns of Sir William Courteen, Knight, Deceased, and the late Earl of Carlisle, and Planters in the Island of Barbadoes, annexed to the Petition of William Courteen, Esquire, and others, exhibited in Parliament.

In this paper submitted to Parliament, it is stated that one of Courteen's privateers had in 1625, "in the beginning of the Reign of Charles the First," discovered Barbados, which is described as being then "an island not inhabited by any nation, of a good soil, and very fit for a plantation." The Petitioners proceed to say that Sir William Courteen thereupon set forth the William and John, by whose company possession was taken of Barbados "in the Month of February 1626," (O.S.) The Petition mentions further that captain John (?Henry) Powell "in the year 1627 fetched several Indians from the Main Land, with divers sorts of seeds and roots, and agreed with the Indians to instruct the English in planting cotton, tobacco, indigo, etc." And it was in the very same year the first settlement was made at Barbados, that Captain Powell went on to the Main and fetched the Indians and seeds and plants, which were so vitally necessary to the continuance of the Colony. This statement confirms the fact of the year of the arrival of the William and John being 1626, Old Style, and 1627, New Style.

4. The foundations upon which those rely who hold to the year 1625, as that of the First Settlement, are mainly:—

a. 1625, is given as the year of settlement in the Memoirs of the First Settlement of the Island of Barbados, etc., (1742.)

b. The Act of the Legislature of Barbados of 22nd March, 1667, appointing commissioners to compile the statutes that were then in force, and in which it was declared that all statutes made by virtue of any Commission from King James or Charles I, or from his then present Majesty (Charles II.) and which stood unrepealed were to be in full force.

c. An erroneous statement that the first settlers gave the name of Jamestown to the Hole.

5. As regards the statement of date given in the Memoirs of the First Settlement, published only in 1742, it should be noted that in publications of earlier date the correct year, 1627, is given. The following are instances:—

Speed's Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, London, 1676. It is herein said (p. 48) "The first Colony planted in this island was in the year 1627, and

that by the English, who have all along kept continual and undisturbed possession."

Chronological Observations of America, from the year of the World to the year of Christ 1673, (London, 1674).

1627 "A colony of English planted upon the Island of Barbados which in a short time increased to 20,000, besides negroes,

Ogilby's America, London, 1671. In this book it is stated that the island was planted by the English; Anno 1627, (Section XXIII, p. 377.)

America Painted to the Life (by Ferdinando Gorges) London, 1659 (p. 4.)

"On the East side of St. Jean, Porto Rico, lye the Islands called Canibales or Caribs, which are also severally named by the above mentioned Author, the last of which towards the East called Barbados, or Barbudos, was possessed by a Colony of Englishmen, in the year 1627."

6. The Barbados Act of 22nd March 1667, refers to "any Commission" issued by King James. There is no such commission on record. In the first commission issued to Sir Thomas Warner, by Charles I for the Government of St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, and Barbados, there is no reference to any earlier Commission. It is dated the 13th September, 1625. In it, is the statement that Warner "made entrie into the said Islandes for and on the behalfe of our deare Father", (James I.) Sir Thomas Warner's son, Colonel Philip Warner, has left it on record that his father did not make a settlement at Barbados on account of the scarcity of water there. It should be observed that this reference in the Act of 1667 is to any "Commission" of James I, not to any Law of the time of James I. No support for the theory of the year 1625, is to be found in Acts and Ordinances of Barbados, London, 1654 New Catalogue, folio 100.

7. As regards the name of the place having been called James Town, the case is very clear. The place was not called James Town by the first settlers. It was long afterwards called St. James's Town as being the Town of the parish of St. James, and came afterwards to be called James Town, for short. Writing on the 31st May, 1670 to Ogilby, whose work on America has already been quoted from, Colonel Robert Rich, who had lived eleven years in Barbados said: "The third Road and Town is lately called St. James's, formerly The Hall (sic). Oldmixon, (Vol. II, p. 100, London 1741) says of the Hole: "It has a regular and handsome Church dedicated to St. James from whence it is sometimes called James Town."

8. In Southey's West Indian Chronology Vol. I, pp. 257, 258, under the year 1625, it is erroneously stated that the Revd. Nicholas Lewiston in that year, removed to Tobago, disliking the profligate manners of the inhabitants of Barbados. The authority given for this statement is Palmers edition of Dr. Calamy's Non-conformist's Memorial Vol. I p. 371. A reference to the authority shows that there has been an error in the quotation.

9. The late Mr. Seale Yearwood—Nomen venerabile—is said to have never forgiven my indiscretion in putting back the date of the settlement of Barbados by two years. Requiescat.

Yours truly,

N. DARNELL DAVIS.


Georgetown, British Guiana.  
26th November 1906.

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