

# BAHAMIAN EDUCATORS

## NAOMI IRENE BLATCH



**Naomi Irene Richardson Blatch**, the youngest of the late Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Richardson's ten children, was born in a house which is still in good condition, adjacent to Woodcock Primary School on Hospital Lane.

At the age of five years, she went to school along with her sister Eunice. The school was situated on Hospital Lane hill and the headteacher was Mrs. Cato, who retired shortly after.

When Naomi was about eleven years old, co-education began. Boys' Central School and Girl's Western School amalgamated to form Western Senior School under the headmastership of the late Mr. T. A. Thompson.

At this point, Naomi's parents transferred her to St Francis Xavier's School as a fee-paying pupil. Here, she had a wonderful teacher in the person of Sister Helen Mary and it was here that she was really inspired to become a teacher.

In June 1927, she was the Valedictorian at the graduation exercises which were held in St. Benedict's Hall. She and two others, were the only ones to graduate at that time. The three received diplomas.

In September 1927, she began teaching as a Grade One Pupil Teacher at the Quarry Mission School of which the late Mr. E. P. Roberts was headmaster. Here, she was put in charge of Grade Three, then Grade Four and she also assisted with Music at the piano.

In 1930 upon recommendation by Mr. Roberts, she was transferred to Western Senior School. The late Mr. T. A. Thompson was headmaster there and it was through his encouragement, guidance, and example that she made such steady progress. By this time, she had become an Assistant Teacher and attended night classes held at the same school and conducted by Mr. Thompson.

In 1932, she sat and successfully passed the Cambridge Junior Examination. Twice during the period 1934-1938, she acted as head teacher of Western Preparatory I.

In August 1938, she was sent to The Bluff, Eleuthera as headteacher, and the following year, she was awarded a scholarship to Tuskegee Institute where she spent a year, resuming duties at The Bluff in September 1940.

During the early part of 1942, she was recalled to Nassau and became First Assistant to the late Mr. Paul Albury at Southern Primary School where she also acted unofficially as Head when Mr. Albury was engaged in Tomato Canning operations during World War II.

In 1945 when Southern Senior School was started in what was formerly the Technical Building on

# BAHAMIAN EDUCATORS

## NAOMI IRENE BLATCH

Wulff Road, Naomi Blatch was appointed First assistant to the late Mr. Harold Nash.

Other headteachers under whom she taught were Mr. Carlton Francis, Mr. Guy Pinder, and Mr. R. N. Sawyer, all of whom are deceased.

When the post of Headteacher for a new Southern Preparatory School was advertised, Mr. Sawyer encouraged Mrs. Blatch to apply and she was successful.

She was appointed Acting Headteacher of Southern Prep. III in January 1959. During the same year, she sat and successfully passed the Professional Examination for Teachers which achievement confirmed her in the post of Headteacher.

This school (Southern Prep. No. III) was housed in the Abaco Association Hall on Fowler Street South, in unsanitary conditions. Until changes were made to remedy the situation there were about 160 pupils and six teachers, but in a short time the one-room structure was over-flowing. It was a strenuous task in some respects, but the teachers worked harmoniously together and, by God's guidance, brought order and happiness out of what could have been chaos and frustration. It was a joyous day when the prefab building on Windsor Lane, the site of which is now occupied by Stephen Dillet Primary School, was completed and the children were transferred there. The change was fantastic! Mrs. Blatch kept her post as Headmistress there until she retired in 1970.

In 1981, Mrs. Blatch was rehired and stationed at Willard Patton Primary School on Augusta Street. The five years she spent at Willard Patton, where she taught some of her former student's grandchildren, were interesting, enjoyable and rejuvenating.

This grand dame of education was honoured by the Bahamas Government when a local Primary School was named after her.