**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF EDWARD K. BIDDY AND HIS FAMILY**

**and commentary on his appearances in Roger Casement’s 1911 journals (extracts at end)**



Edward Kay Biddy was born October 11, 1895 in Kingstown, St. Vincent, Windward Islands, British West Indies. His father, Benjamin Kay Biddy, was a native of St. Vincent, born in 1860 either in Kingstown or on the nearby island of Bequia, where both his parents were born. B.K. Biddy was the great-grandson of William Rose, a Scotsman from Aberdeen who left home as a captain of merchant ships, and settled on the island of St. Eustatius (“Statia”), Netherlands West Indies, where along with a partner, Isaac Arrindell, he became a dry goods merchant. Statia was largely English-speaking despite being a Dutch-ruled island but had the reputation of a haven for renegades, and sided with the American Colonies during the Revolutionary War. The British Navy under Admiral Rodney occupied and devastated Statia in 1781, cutting off its historical trade with North America, and Rose and Arrindell moved, apparently continuing as business partners. They ended up on the island of Bequia, one of the Grenadines. St. Vincent and the Grenadines were ceded by France to Britain by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, but had never really been under French control, and remained largely occupied by the Caribs. By the end of the 18th Century these islands had finally been placed under the *de facto* as well as *de jure* control of the British Empire, after the defeat of the Garifuna (or “Black Caribs”) in the Second Carib War (1985-1797), the First Carib War (1769–1773) having been won by the Caribs. These islands were the last of the West Indies to be occupied by Europeans, and briefly became a magnet for migrants from other, longer colonized British islands, particularly the Leeward Islands (of which Statia is geographically one), seeking open land to make their fortunes as planters. Bequia is a small island, about seven square miles, and was originally heavily forested. Upon expelling the Garifuna, the British decided Bequia was ideal for planting sugar cane, so they cut down the forests, imported African slaves, and planted the whole island, which resulted in the elimination of the rainfall caused by the forest and created the semi-arid and eroded environment that exists today. For a while, however, Bequia was highly fertile rain forest land and there was a great deal of money to be made in the sugar trade. Unlike St. Vincent, which is very mountainous with relatively little flat land suited for plantation agriculture, Bequia is largely flat. Rose and Arrindell apparently liquidated their holdings on Statia and used the proceeds to buy newly-cleared land on Bequia. By his death in 1812, Ted Biddy’s great-great grandfather William Rose and his partner, through various partnerships, owned most of the island of Bequia and most of the people on it.

William Rose’s son William Rose (Jr) inherited from his father the Union Estate, one of the larger sugar plantations on Bequia. William Rose Jr. had 11 children, four with his wife and the rest with various women who were his slaves. His youngest child, Favorita Rose, daughter of William and “Margaret, a Slave,” was B.K Biddy’s mother. She was born about 1835 on the Union Estate. Favorita’s face shows unmistakable Indian ancestry, and for various reasons (including Spanish names; hers and two relatives’, and her grandson’s claim she was born in Venezuela), it seems likely that Favorita’s mother, Margaret, was bought as a slave on the Northern coast of South America and was of mixed Indian and African ancestry. In the early 19th Century, Britain had outlawed the Atlantic slave trade, but it was common for British planters to buy slaves in the Spanish territories. Favorita’s father died in 1839, and despite the fact that her father acknowledged her, left her a substantial legacy in his will, and tried to provide for her education, she and/or her mother seem to have been sold into slavery in the Dutch Antilles as part of the disposition of the estate by her father’s first cousin and Executor William Rose Scott. Favorita grew up on Saba, Netherlands Antilles, apparently in some form of enslavement. Saba is the closest island to Statia, and it seems likely the Rose family’s connections played a role in this destination. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in a phased process starting in 1833 and ending in 1840, but it was not uncommon for unscrupulous planters in the British islands to sell their slaves in places where slavery was still legal rather than freeing them. Favorita and her mother seem to have been victims of this practice. Nonetheless, Favorita resurfaces as a young adult on Bequia, free and seemingly prosperous. Possibly she succeeded in obtaining part of her legacy from her father’s estate from her older siblings.

Sometime in the late 1850s, Favorita married Benjamin Biddy (Sr.), who was born on Bequia to one Margaret Herbert, who seems to have been poor and illiterate but who may have been white. Benjamin is described as “coloured,” and his biological father was probably William Biddy, born at Clare Valley St. Vincent to Benjamin and Rachel Biddie on May 6, 1810. The surname Biddy is an unusual variant on Beatty, of Scottish origin. Most of the Biddys in the world today seem to descend from a family originating in the Southern United States (founded by one John “Bide,” who settled in Virginia from either Scotland or Northern Ireland in the mid-1600s). St. Vincent, in the early phase of British occupation, has several ties with North America, and the first “British” colonists were brought there from Virginia and the Carolinas, where the American Biddys were most concentrated at the time. Some of them had intermarried with Indians, and could have been described as “coloured.” Benjamin Biddy Sr.’s ancestry may well have traced back to what is now the United States. There is even a Benjamin Biddy “missing” from the American Biddys’ family tree who could be one and the same with his grandfather Benjamin Biddie. But there is no proof. Certainly the Biddy line goes back to St. Vincent’s earliest days as a British colony, as does the Rose line.

Benjamin Biddy Sr. was a pharmacist. The only plausible explanation for how he acquired this trade was through his stepfather George Medike, who married his mother when Benjamin was 14. George Medike was the son of a British Army doctor who settled on Bequia after resigning his commission as Assistant Regimental Surgeon for the 60th Regiment of Foot. Ferdinand Medike was probably a German-speaker from Silesia, of Jewish origins, who was impressed into the French Army, captured, then “volunteered” for the British Army. Much of the 60th Regiment of Foot was recruited that way at the time. As slavery was gradually abolished in the British Empire, legislation was passed requiring all slaves to receive medical care, for a fixed fee (the original “capitated” health insurance), and there was something of a gold rush of doctors to the West Indies to take advantage of this opportunity. Dr. Medike must have had little formal medical training, having been promoted from “hospital mate” and commissioned as an officer during his British military service. In those days much of a doctor’s business was selling drugs, and the line between doctor and pharmacist was not clear. It seems likely Dr. Medike passed his pharmacological knowledge down to his son and step-grandson. When Ted Biddy and his younger brother Francis (“Bobby”) worked as pharmacy clerks on Barbados and in the United States, they were carrying on a long-standing family trade.

Benjamin Biddy Sr. and Favorita Rose Biddy settled in Kingstown, where they operated a pharmacy and dry goods store and seem to have lived prosperously. B.K. Biddy was their first child, of six. Four of their children are identified as “white” in public records; two as “coloured.” B.K. Biddy was European in appearance and was officially classified as “white.” At the age of nine, his parents sent him to be educated in England, where he attended the University College School, operated then by University College London, and may have attended University College for a year or two as well. He lived and studied in London for ten years, returning home upon the death of his father at age 19. Benjamin Biddy Sr. had died of tuberculosis at 44 in 1879.

B.K. Biddy took over his father’s business, and in partnership with his brothers Charles and Ernest, expanded it greatly as well as engaging in other enterprises. At the height of his career, which coincided more or less with the birth of his son Ted, B.K. Biddy owned drugs and dry goods stores in Kingstown and Georgetown, St. Vincent and a warehouse and wholesale merchant operation in Kingstown. He was also the manager and part-owner of two plantations, the Evesham Estate and the Owia Estate. His entrée into the landowning class came through the Beach brothers, Edward McIntire Beach and William Henry Beach, grandsons of a Scotsman who had come to St. Vincent to manage a planation and ended up owning it. The Beach brothers were among the larger landowners on the island, and owned or controlled at least four or five plantations. They may have been cousins to the Biddys, and William Henry later married B.K. Biddy’s sister Alice, so the Beaches and the Biddys were related twice over. (Cousin marriage was common in the West Indies at the time). Feeling financially established, B.K. Biddy married in his mid-30s, having already fathered at least two children. According to family tradition, he “went to England to find a wife.” It seems likely there was some commercial connection between him and his future in-laws and it was not a random encounter.

Ted Biddy’s mother was Jessie Hill, of Woodford, Essex. Her father Edward Hill was in the maritime insurance business, and was very wealthy, although he was probably born working class, in London. His wife’s family were wealthy with some social pretensions and roots in Pontefract, Yorkshire. The family had servants and two large homes, one for the parents and one for the children. The two oldest children, the daughters, were in charge of the three sons and the second household. Edward Hill gave his daughter and son-in-law fifty thousand pounds sterling, a large sum in the 1890s, upon their marriage (it was lost to B.K.. Biddy’s creditors.) Edward Hill was an energetic man who lived to be nearly 100l. Supposedly in his 70s he read Jules Verne’s “Around the World in 80 Days” and decided it was a good plan for a vacation. He and his eldest son Ted (Ted Biddy’s uncle and namesake) traveled entirely around the world by steamship, train, and horse carriage in the early years of the 20th century, and his grandchildren collected some of the postcards they sent from exotic places. Father and son also each had a large summer home in Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk, and the family had business interests in Hong Kong, where Ted Hill lived for a number of years. Ted Biddy’s other uncle Roland Hill lived permanently near Gorleston in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, so when Casement’s German allies shelled Great Yarmouth in 1916 to provide a “diversion” for the Easter Rising, they were shelling Ted’s uncle Rollie and his family. Ted Biddy’s mother Jessie Hill was brought up as a Victorian lady and educated in what were considered the useful arts for a woman of her station. She was well read and a witty conversationalist, could sing and play the piano, and paint. She had few practical skills however and was a poor money manager, which proved unfortunate later on because she didn’t have much of it to manage.

St. Vincent, Ted Biddy’s birthplace and homeland, is very different from Barbados. Barbados is an ancient coral reef, low and flat, well-suited for plantation agriculture, and easily controlled militarily, with good natural harbors. St. Vincent is volcanic, mountainous, and rugged, with few flat spaces, few accessible beaches, and no natural harbors. Barbados has been colonized for centuries, and at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, was stable, well-ordered, and as Casement noted, very “Britannic.” As recently as the mid-19th century it had had a white majority. St. Vincent was the last large Caribbean island to be colonized, due to its inaccessibility and the native inhabitants, the Caribs, who were warlike and reputed (probably correctly) to be cannibals. From the time of Columbus to the late 18th century, St. Vincent was a haven for pirates, outlaws, and runaway slaves. So many Africans escaped to St. Vincent that the majority society became the Garifuna, or “Black Caribs,” (as distinct from “Yellow Caribs”) a people of largely African descent speaking the Indians’ language with a culture amalgamated from West Africa and native America. The French colonized part of the island in the mid-18th century, but never really controlled it. The British, after losing one war to the Garifuna, finally defeated them, rounded them up, and deported them to Central America, where their descendants live today, except for a handful who managed to hide in the mountains and stay on St. Vincent. The “Yellow Caribs,” by then a small minority, hid themselves in the Northeast corner of the island, behind the volcano, in and around the Owia Peninsula, and stayed. The British expanded slave-based plantation agriculture on St. Vincent (stated by the French) shortly before the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed, and only decades from the abolition of slavery. There were a few decades of prosperity, and then the abolition of slavery threw the economy into depression, as the freed slaves refused to work the plantations. Contract laborers were brought in from India and the Azores, but agriculture never really paid well again, especially as the bottom also dropped out of the world sugar market. There was an exodus of whites from St. Vincent by the mid-Century, and the island was a backwater of the British Empire. Late 19th century St. Vincent was primitive, isolated, poor, socially unstable, and often dangerous. A small class of wealthy whites lived uneasily among Yellow Caribs, Asian Indians, freed African slaves and their immediate descendants, and people of mixed race, most of them very poor, little influenced by European culture, and not speaking standard English. There were a lot of paupers, and probably a few prigs, but it wasn’t a very “Britannic” island.

The Biddys lived in a large house in Kingstown which was probably Montrose House, the plantation house for the old Montrose Estate, which was swallowed by an expanding Kingstown (the Montrose district of Kingstown today is mostly the old Montrose Estate.) The Montrose Estate was founded by one James Rose, who was probably a brother or cousin of William Rose Sr. Montrose is obviously a play on words, being not only a Scottish place name but also meaning “Rose Mountain.” So knowingly or not, the Biddys were living their ancestor’s house. The Biddys had servants and classic colonial life, very comfortable and privileged. When Ted Biddy was born, his mother’s sister Frances Hill came to visit to help with the baby, and ended up marrying B.K. Biddy’s brother Ernest and staying. Frances had been living in Hong Kong with her brother Ted and evidently got bored when she went back to England. Ted Biddy’s early childhood would have been surrounded by this extended family, B.K. Biddy’s five siblings and their spouses, and his grandmother Favorita. On July 19, 1900, his brother Francis Thurnell Biddy, known as Bobby, was born.

Kingstown in the 1890s and first years of the 20th century was a sleepy colonial town in a beautiful natural setting backing up to jungle-covered mountains. A short walk from the Biddys’ home was the oldest botanical garden in the Americas, where Captain Bligh’s breadfruit was first planted, as well as the sea shore and Kingstown Bay. The bay was too shallow for deep-sea vessels, however, and one wanting to leave would have to take a boat to a deep-water port like St. George’s, Grenada, or Port Elizabeth, Bequia (then known as “Bequia Town”). There was also a European-style stone cathedral built in the early 19th Century, St. George’s, serving the Anglican population, and the Biddys were parishioners, as they had been going back at least to the 1860s. It was probably a good place to be a child of relative privilege; not such a good place to lose one’s fortune. Ted’s cousin Ena Biddy (daughter of his father’s brother Ernest and his mother’s sister Frances), born in Kingstown in 1906, remembering her childhood, spoke of her uncle William Henry Beach putting her in front of him on his saddle and riding around the plantations he owned or managed for the better part of a day. Ted probably had similar experiences, possibly with the same uncle, who he knew well.

B.K. Biddy’s businesses seem to have been fueled by extensive borrowing from the Colonial Bank of St. Vincent, and his legal papers show that his father-in-law was already concerned about creditors levying on the fifty thousand pound dowry when the couple were married. Mr. Hill’s London solicitors drafted an elaborate trust agreement which was intended to protect the money but in the end did not. The Biddys’ fortunes began to decline with a hurricane in 1898 which destroyed B.K. Biddy’s crop of Sea Island Cotton, the get-rich-quick scheme of the 1890s in the West Indies. Like many commercial farmers, he had mortgaged his properties to finance planting, and with no crop was in serious trouble. The hurricane must have been a vivid early memory to Ted Biddy, who was about three. Then in 1902 the island’s volcano (unoriginally named the Soufriere) erupted, eventually resulting in a similar event to the more famous eruption of Mt. Pelée on Martinique at nearly the same time. There were months of volcanic activity leading up to a catastrophic explosion. The sudden eruption vaporized the crater lake and sent a superheated cloud down the mountainside, annihilating everything in its path. As in Martinique, this was a very similar phenomenon to the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum. Kingstown was out of range of the worst of it, but pyroclastic ‘bombs’ rained down there, and Jessie Hill Biddy told in later years of clearing inches of volcanic ash off every surface before breakfast as part of her daily routine. When I was all over, about ten percent of the island’s population had been killed and there was a lot of damage from lava flows and ash deposits. This, along with financial troubles, prompted the Biddys to leave St. Vincent. Ted Biddy must have remembered the eruptions vividly and it would have been a terrifying experience. The Owia Estate, which was managed by his father and which he may have visited, was near the epicenter. Whether he knew it or not, he had a half-brother there who somehow survived the blast. (Many Biddys can be found today near Owia). Ted’s uncle Arthur Biddy died February 11, 1902, of tuberculosis possibly complicated by inhaling volcanic dust. He was 32. Ted’s aunt Alice Biddy Beach would die of tuberculosis in her mid-30s only a few years later.

B.K. Biddy handed over what was left of his business to his brother Ernest, and moved his family to Bridgetown, Barbados. The Biddys must have been relieved to live in a place without a volcano. The family rented Bishop’s Court House, the official residence of the Anglican Bishop of Barbados. Apparently the Bishop at the time was a single man and had no need of a large house intended for a family. It was on Bishop’s Court Hill, on high ground which was sought after in the era before air conditioning. Their neighbors were a family from St. Vincent and Bequia, whose association with the Biddys went back at least two generations. B.K. Biddy set up shop as a “General Commission Agent; West Indies, Guianas, and Venezuela.” He also wrote a column for the local newspaper and may have worked as a reporter. The Biddys had four more children in Bridgetown during the ten years they lived there, Jessie in 1902, Violet in 1905, Ida in 1907, and Ben not long before they departed in 1912. Favorita Rose Biddy accompanied them to Bridgetown, and lived with them the entire time. Ted must have known his grandmother very well, and must have heard many stories about her childhood on Saba and her life on Bequia, and he probably knew a great deal about his West Indian family background and the realities of the society his grandmother grew up in.

Early 20th century Bridgetown was a small, sleepy place that did not attract tourists or travelers. The sugar trade was vastly less profitable than it had been before the cultivation of sugar beets in North America and Eastern Europe, and the island once known as a “jewel in the crown” of the reigning British monarch was by now poor and isolated. Most people with the means were thinking about emigrating if they had not already done so, and the white and/or well-off people who remained all knew each other and were probably bored with each other’s company. Roger Casement would have attracted a lot of attention, and many people would have sought him out just to meet him and get news of other places, probably much to his annoyance. Ted Biddy was a largely unsupervised teenager who traveled around Bridgetown on his bicycle and spent hours away from the houseful of much younger siblings that he lived in. Entertainment was in short supply. The Biddys were all avid readers, and he probably was too (Kipling was a great favorite and his mother’s favorite book was “The Moonstone” by Willkie Collins; both indicating a taste for exotic imperial adventure), but undoubtedly he got tired of reading and spent a lot of time roaming around. He probably knew just about every place and person in Bridgetown, and must have gotten up to many things that his family did not know about. The family also visited Kingstown frequently and maintained contacts there. By the time he was a teenager, Ted was working as a clerk in a Bridgetown pharmacy and helping to support the family. His father must have been away often, as his business entailed traveling around Caribbean making sales calls, and he made a least a couple of visits to England during that period. It does not appear that Ted joined him, or that Ted ever visited the United Kingdom or Europe.

Ted seems to have been a confident, adventurous and outgoing young man. He was four years older than his next oldest sibling, and nearly old enough to be a father to the younger ones. In some ways he seems to have been a second father to them, as their father was much older and often absent. He was intelligent, mechanically inclined, and intellectually curious. One interest he had in common with Roger Casement was photography. He owned one of the early portable box cameras, and took photos of people and places in and around Bridgetown, some of which still exist. He was also interested in music and an early adopter of recorded music. His one patented invention (co-patented with Henry Sturtevant) was “a device for holding up the cover of a talking machine, trunk, or other device,” designed with the old Victrola phonograph in mind. His mother was an amateur painter and like several of his younger siblings (one of whom became a professional artist) he may have had an interest in the visual arts.

The Biddys did not particularly prosper in Bridgetown. They were not, as Casement wrote, “beggars.” But they may have lived a life of genteel semi-poverty, relieved by subsidies from their Hill relatives in England or their Biddy relatives in St. Vincent. B.K. Biddy did not earn a good living from his business as a general commission agent. The Biddys were no strangers to the United States; B.K. Biddy’s father had come through the Port of New York as long ago as the 1860s, and B.K. Biddy was a frequent visitor. As early as the 1890s it appears he had secured American citizenship (while it was easy and could be done through a local court in New York), and must have to some degree planned to emigrate if things ever got bad enough. According to family tradition his brother Charles, who by 1906 was living in New York and married to an American, was urging him to leave the West Indies and come live in the U.S. He visited or passed through New York in 1903 and in 1906, and on November 1, 1911, he entered the US for the last time, to stay. So, he was present in Bridgetown for Casement’s visit earlier in 1911.

The rest of the Biddy family arrived in New York on l June 23, 1912, on the SS Clement, from Bridgetown. As the wife and children of a US citizen they did not go through the Ellis Island immigration facility but sailed directly to the port of New York and debarked. The family lived in New York briefly, probably in Brooklyn, but Jessie did not like New York City and so the family shortly moved to Hartford, where they lived in a rented apartment while B.K. Biddy lived in Brooklyn in another rented apartment, an arrangement which lasted the rest of his life, as he worked as a bookkeeper for a coal company headquartered in New York. Generally he would take the train from New York to spend weekends and holidays with his family, but during work weeks he was usually absent. In 1914, the Biddys rented a large old house in Glastonbury Connecticut, and the family moved there. Ted lived in that house for the remaining four years of his life, and died there. This house is now a registered historic site, being one of the first houses built in Connecticut, but at the time it was just a dilapidated old house owned by a family who lived elsewhere and wanted to get some income from their vacant property.

Ted Biddy finished high school in Connecticut and may have graduated from Glastonbury High School, although he would have been 18 or 19 when the family moved to Glastonbury and he may have finished school somewhere in Hartford. After completing high school he enrolled in what was then Connecticut State Agricultural and Mechanical College, now the University of Connecticut campus in Hartford. Evidently he was able to afford a college education through the predecessor of the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) program, and after graduating he became a member of the US Army Reserve, probably ranked as a Lieutenant. His degree was in Mechanical Engineering, and after graduating he worked as an engineer in Hartford, continuing to live in the family home in Glastonbury. Ted seems to have been the only Biddy who really took to being an American. The others long had a sense of not belonging but he was enthused about building a new life, and as in Barbados made friends and spent a good deal of time away from home, although he also remained very much a part of the family and contributed his income to their support. In some ways he seems to have filled the traditional role of the eldest child in an immigrant family, being a bridge between the family and the “new world,” although of course the Biddys spoke English and were not in the same position as most immigrant families of the day.

Ted attended Army training exercises on weekends, as was (and still is) required for reservists. The family must have been relieved that he was not called up for active duty, as he very well could have been. His three Lewis cousins (sons of his father’s sister Julia), Howard, Frank, and Harold, had been serving in the British Army on the Western Front, and the youngest, Harry Lewis, born in Kingstown in 1898 and probably well known to Ted, was killed in the Passchendaele offensive on October 23, 1917, serving as a Second Lieutenant in the Tyneside Irish Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers. Frank, although serving in a noncombatant role as a conscientious objector, had also been wounded and suffered from tuberculosis, and he did not survive the War by many years. Whether he knew it or not, Ted’s half-brother Ainsley Biddy and cousin Claude Biddy were both serving in the British West Indian (“Coloured”) Regiment, in Palestine. And his youngest uncle, his mother’s brother Wilfred, was serving on the Western Front as well.

Unfortunately Ted did not really escape the War. The “Spanish” flu’s epicenter in the United States was Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where returning soldiers brought it back from the trenches in 1918. Attending a training exercise shortly after the Armistice, Ted either was at Fort Devens or in contact with men who had been there, and he came home with a headache and malaise which quickly turned into influenza. He survived the flu, fighting for his life for a week, but then developed pneumonia. His mother had kept him in isolation from the rest of the family, nursing him and refusing to let anyone but herself have contact with him. But he became delirious and began struggling to get out of bed, saying he needed to get some air. (This was apparently a common symptom of the 1918 flu; as their lungs filled up with liquid victims would feel like they were suffocating and if not prevented, would stagger outdoors for “fresh air” and die of hypothermia.) His mother could not restrain him and called his brother Francis, who held him down as he shouted “let me up; you’re killing me.” Shortly afterwards he lapsed into a coma and died. Francis, who could not be persuaded that he had not killed his brother, shot himself just about a year later when some friends who had been in the Army Reserve with Ted foolishly invited him target shooting and left him alone with a rifle. He and Ted are buried next to each other, now alongside their parents, in the Episcopalian Cemetery in Glastonbury. Their sister Violet joined them in 1990.

Ted lived and died a long way from Casement’s world, but his extended family were not strangers to Britain. His cousin Edward Balfour Lewis (born in England, unlike his older brothers) was Vicar of Ashford, Kent, for many years. The oldest Lewis brother, Howard, served in the Army in both World Wars, worked as a banker and retired to a home in Bray, becoming the only Biddy an Irish connection. Another cousin, William Vincent Beach (son of Alice Biddy and William Henry Beach) was orphaned and sent to live with his aunt Julia in London at age 13 in 1916. While Casement was getting himself hanged, Bill Beach was driving a London bus. Later he joined the Navy, studied medicine, and eventually retired with the rank of Surgeon Rear Admiral. Descendants of Ted’s half-brother Ainsley Biddy migrated to Leicester after the Second World War, where some of them still live today.

It is probably futile to speculate on the sexuality of someone who died a century ago and did not leave a diary or letters to shed light on his private life. I can say that although I heard a lot about Ted Biddy from his surviving siblings, nobody ever mentioned a girlfriend, and he was 24 when he died. The only close friend I ever heard named was Henry Sturtevant, a college classmate. Henry and Ted were very close, and Henry became a regular at the house in Glastonbury and was almost like another one of the Biddy children. After Ted’s death Henry maintained his relationship with the Biddys for the rest of his life and was like an uncle to my mother and her sisters. My grandparents and their three daughters spent most part of most summers at Henry’s vacation home on Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire, which had been in his family for years and was a favorite spot of Ted’s. I have often wondered why a college friend of Ted’s would have kept such a close relationship with Ted’s family, but perhaps their relationship was more than friendship. Henry married later on, but he and his wife had no children, and he acted like a surrogate parent to my grandparents’ children. Especially given Casement’s account of their encounters, it seems likely that Ted Biddy was gay.

It is obvious from the 1911 Black Diary that Casement already knew Ted, and must have met him during his previous stay on Barbados in 1908 in August-September 1908. Ted would have been somewhat short of 13 when he first met Casement. With no sources it’s impossible to know how they met, and whether Casement met Ted or Ted’s family first. Casement’s behavior does look a lot like “grooming,” but Ted was not really prepubescent even in 1908, and may have appeared older than he was. It was a world in which everyone knew everyone else’s business, there wasn’t much law and order, and a “white” person, especially one with money, could do pretty much whatever he wanted. Ted would not have been naïve or sheltered, even by his early teens. He was free to wander Bridgetown from childhood and there would have been little to stop him from ‘cruising’ or stopping by the hotels to see who was in town, or both. He probably didn’t need Roger Casement to introduce him to gay life. At least by 1911, it’s quite possible he could have shown Casement around gay Barbados. And it’s possible that Casement had actually met him at a gay hangout like Hastings Rocks Park in 1908. The fact that Casement wrote Ted’s full name and address (“Master Edward K. Biddy, Bishop’s Court Hill) in the front of the 1911 diary tends to indicate that he had not known where Ted lived, and had asked someone, perhaps at the Sea View Hotel, and then written it down to remember it. If he’d already known, this would probably not have happened, and if he had written to Ted before 1911, he would presumably have had the address somewhere else. This was the same place Ted had lived in 1908, so it was not a new address. It would seem from the Diary that Casement sent for Ted, and would have had to do so by employing a messenger to go to his house and possibly sending a note. Casement must not have gone to Bishop’s Court House himself, or gotten a report back from a messenger, because his diary shows he’s not sure Ted is even on Barbados or will come to meet him. It also shows that he already knows enough about Ted to wonder if he’s away on St. Vincent. It’s pretty obvious that Casement expects Ted to be a willing sexual partner so it’s difficult to believe nothing happened between them in 1908.

Assuming Ted was gay, whether his family knew and when they may have realized it (and whether they had any clue of the reasons for Casement’s interest) is impossible to say, but it’s hard to believe they never had an inkling. Having attended an all-boys school in England, his father could not have been unaware of homosexuality or the possible reasons for an older man’s interest in a teenage boy. And there is reason to believe that Ted’s uncle Wilfred Hill was gay. “Uncle Wilf” never married, and spent his career teaching at an all-boys school in Colchester, England. A comment from a relative who met him in later years strongly implies he was gay. Wilfred was a great favorite of Ted’s mother, and her youngest sibling. In a photo of her living room taken in the 1920s, his photo in British Army uniform sits on her mantle. It may never have occurred to her that her brother was gay, but that seems unlikely. Despite her sheltered childhood, she was not particularly naïve. In later life she often ranted to her grandchildren about how “immoral” West Indians were, and how they thought nothing of having a child with a person they were not married to. The grandchildren were unaware that she was talking (at least in part) about her husband and brothers-in-law. The Victorians were not always as Victorian as their descendants imagine. Nonetheless, if they thought Casement was molesting their son, it is very doubtful they would have tolerated it, let alone dropped by to wish him a happy birthday.

Casement’s cryptic remarks about a visit from “the BIddys” on his 46th birthday, September 1, 1911 seem surprising. “The Biddys” would likely have been the whole family, Benjamin K., Jessie, and their (then) five children including Ted, possibly even the grandmother Favorita as well. The visitor couldn’t just have been Ted, or there would be no plural, and the parents would probably not have left the children behind. Also, it seems unlikely the children would have been allowed to go by themselves; Except for Ted they were quite young. This kind of visit may have been something of a local tradition, as I have a letter from their former Bridgetown neighbor Millie Simpson dating from the 1930s reminiscing about holiday visits from the Biddys. Presumably the visit took place where Casement was staying, at the Sea view Hotel in Bridgetown. For one who so often professes a love of humanity and sympathy for the downtrodden to profess to be “very sick at the sight” of people coming to wish him a happy birthday, and then to sneer at them as “beggars,” seems out of character, especially as many of those “Biddys” were young children and all would have been close relatives of Ted Biddy, of whom he was fond enough to have remembered him from 1908 and sought out.

No doubt when one is introduced to the family of a teenage boy one is molesting, there are many opportunities for discomfiture, especially when one is an internationally prominent diplomat normally given to anonymous sex and sufficiently devoted to anonymity to have tried for years to keep his photo out of the papers. Casement does not, however, seem like a man much troubled by shame or guilt, or even self-awareness. And he was happy enough to socialize with Millar Gordon’s mother. It seems to me likely that something happened to offend or irritate him. It’s impossible to know what it was, of course. The Biddys were certainly quite British, with Jessie a product of the English upper class and B.K. Biddy a British education. Perhaps it was just his Anglophobia talking. The Biddys knew, and probably cared, little of Ireland and had no sympathy for Irish nationalism, so they could easily have said something to offend him. Maybe he just hated children, although there is no indication of that in his diaries.

It seems most likely that the source of any offense was B.K. Biddy. He was soon to leave Barbados but had not yet done so, and would likely have been part of any visit. In 1911 B.K. Biddy was 51, just a few years older than Casement. Like Casement he was very much a man of the world, having traveled extensively in Europe and the Americas, and speaking good French and Spanish. Having traveled in South America he might even have been considered a good source of information for Casement. Although he never graduated from University he was well educated and well read, knowing Latin and some Greek, and until recently had been in charge of quite a large business enterprise which he had built. If he had spoken of his experience running the Owia Estate, with a largely Carib workforce, he might have struck Casement as not much better than the rubber barons of Putumayo. But he should have been an interesting and potentially valuable connection in what Casement obviously viewed as a godforsaken place.

B.K. Biddy was beloved by his wife and daughters, who always spoke admiringly of him. His relationship with his youngest son seems to have been more problematic, fraught with resentment and unreasonable expectations. B.K. Biddy struck some people as pompous and self-important, and no doubt, at some times at least, he could accurately have been described as a “prig.” Some thirteen years after his birthday encounter with Casement he met his prospective son-in-law (and my grandfather) Harry McCluskey and made a distinctly negative impression. He invited Harry to his Brooklyn apartment, which Harry later described as a “rathole” with hardly any furniture, and ceremoniously served him (to quote my grandfather) “a fucking boiled egg.” He then began “so you want to marry my daughter….” And then blurted out “do you have fifty thousand dollars?” Harry responded “no, I don’t have fifty thousand cents, and obviously neither do you.” Decades later he told this story to his own new son-in-law (my father, as it happens) and pronounced B.K. Biddy a “fourflusher.” (Late 19th/early 20th Century American slang for a phony, literally one who bluffs at poker). Possibly this was the B.K. Biddy that Casement encountered at the Sea View Hotel in Bridgetown in 1911.

B.K. Biddy may have had something specific to ask Casement for. In recent years the Biddys had been able to gain some minor government posts, possibly due to the influence of the their Hill in-laws. B.K. Biddy’s brother in law Edward C.L. Lewis (husband of his sister Julia) had been appointed Assistant Postmaster of Hong Kong, and his brother Charles Biddy had obtained a concession of some kind to supply the Army in Capetown during the Boer War. B.K. seems to have had his eye on something similar. On March 15, 1911, he had published an opinion piece in the local Bridgetown newspaper which was picked up and printed in the New York Times (and is still available from the Times’ archive), entitled “Our West Indian Trade Threatened” (by bilateral tariff reductions negotiated between the United States and Canada.) The article recites the recent history of the sugar trade, with the United States acquiring the Philippines, a sugar-producing colony, and ending its favorable trading relationship with the British West Indies as a result, and the West Indies, in turn, cultivating replacement trade relationships with Canada. The impending lowering of trade barriers between the US and Canada now threatens that comparative advantage for the West Indies if something is not done. The article states that the British Foreign Office has proposed the appointment of a trade representative to advocate for West Indian merchants in Canada, with the aim of negotiating preferential trade relationships and avoiding having West Indian merchants shut out of Canada by now-cheaper US goods, including Filipino sugar. Biddy opines that “if the right man were selected” this could be easily done. But he goes on to say that “the British Colonial Office... does not show a vast amount of business ability in its methods, as witness the present fiasco over the mail contract, and it would occasion no surprise to see an appointment of one absolutely innocent of all knowledge of the history, conditions and requirements in the circumstances, whose wisest course would be to accept a decent retainer from an enterprising New York firm to report adversely and thereafter pose in a comfortable downtown office as manager, or other figurehead, at a good salary.” It sounds very much as if he thinks “the right man” would be himself. Most likely he would not have been averse to arranging employment with such a New York trading firm. Within months of writing those words, he was in a New York office, minus the “good salary.”

Meeting Roger Casement, B.K. Biddy may well have thought this was an excellent opportunity to lobby a man with connections in the Foreign Office for this post of West Indian trade advisor, possibly after boring Casement to tears with a detailed history of the West Indian sugar trade. If Casement had told Biddy that he himself had held similar trade posts in Africa, that might have encouraged him even more. It would probably have been annoying to Casement to be pestered for a Foreign Office job even in this remote place, and Biddy’s combination of neediness and arrogance may have grated on Casement as much as it later did on his son-in-law. To make matters worse, Casement may have wondered if this importunate Mr. Biddy knew of his relationship with his son, and whether this was some kind of blackmail, or worse. I doubt very much that was the case, but it could well have looked that way to Casement, who must have always feared blackmail and a ‘set up.’ This is all speculation of course but it seems something unusual must have happened to provoke such vehement disgust from Casement and to merit a diary entry about it. In any event, the disgust must have been mutual because as far as I know none of the Biddys ever spoke of Casement again, even though he was likely the most famous person they had ever met. They would certainly have read of his arrest, trial, and execution in the newspapers, and it is inconceivable that they would not have remembered him or realized he was the same Roger Casement they had met in Bridgetown.

****



**MENTIONS OF BIDDYS IN ROGER CASEMENT’S BLACK DIARIES**

**1911 LEDGER**

Master E.K. Biddy.

Bishop’s Court Hill.

Bridgetown.

Barbados…

Monday 28th AugustArr. Barbados and landed. Wine a/c Barman for Boys 1.0.9. Steward 2nd Class for boys 5.0 **[Casement went 1st class while the two Indian boys who were being returned home after what must have been the experience of a lifetime, travelled 2nd class. Nina described them as “light‑mahogany coloured, their skins smooth as satin; extremely clean they would bathe if permitted half a dozen times in a day.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Happy and well‑looked after, as they were in England (particularly by Casement’s women) re‑entry to a dangerous and primitive existence after such cultural novelty and material wealth might have been very unsettling.]** Evening in Barbados To Club and Pier.

Tuesday 29th AugustAt Barbados. At Sea View Hotel…Boy to bathe 6d. **[In margin] X** 6d. …2 boys to swim today. Expect Teddy at 4. At 4 he has not come so I fear he is away in St. Vincent.

Boys R. and O. for spending 3.0.

Teddy came, met on bicycle and back to room and dinner. After dinner to room and he looked and looked. I saw his big huge and felt mine and he looked all the time and back on bicycle…Teddy to come tomorrow at 5 to bath. Then will see and feel. **[This day’s entry is marked on the government’s typed copy with a forest of crosses. Teddy Biddy, a previous acquaintance, must have been summoned immediately on arrival. The youth has a never-before noticed, or revealed history, dating three years back to the two month convalescence Casement spent, in 1908, in Barbados, when suffering terrible gastritis. In another cash ledger, a *Cyclopean Exercise Book*, inscribed “Notes at Barbadoes” he merited his own entry headed “Teddy a/c.” Casement carefully recorded eight different items in it amounting to “1.3.0”. They included “4.2” for a “Ticket” which from the price of four shillings for his own “Bath Ticket” suggests it too was a season entry to a swimming pool.[[2]](#endnote-2) This item is compelling, corroborative evidence of the authenticity of the Black Diaries.]**

Wednesday 30 AugustTo Hastings Bath 7.50 and several and then nice fair haired boy, blue pants and thick and stiff. To bath together 11.30. Bath 3**[d.]** Cgttes 1/‑. Bath (11.30) 5d. He then glorious form and limbs and it…Teddy and “Budds” at 5.30. Latter lovely and huge one too. Only 11 years old on 17th July. **[Details underlined in the police‑typed copy. Indeed Home Office markings here become febrile with Casement heading into under-age territory.]** Bath Budds present 5/-…

Seen to‑day 1 oldish man huge one

 2 clergyman small

 3 lovely youth thick fine one

 4 big youth nice clean one

 5 lover, only top stiff and lovely **[presumably Teddy]**

 6 Budds beauty

**[The ten days on board ship crossing the Atlantic were followed, as on other occasions, by an explosion of sexual activity with frequent visits to a local seaside park, Hastings Rocks, to scrutinise boys – some of them disturbingly young, if apparently sexually mature. For another brief period, Casement’s erotic musings obliged him to write‑up his accounts in the extended form of diary entries – which duly caught the attention of his enemies.]**

Thursday 31 AugustTo Hastings Bath 5d, clergyman there told me was father of beauty. Returned 11 and beauty came glorious limbs but did not show it alas I love him…Walked to Father Smith and the Convent and then to Club. **[Father Frederick Smith S.J. of St. Patrick’s Church, near the Ursuline Convent, had been made guardian of Ricudo and Omarino in Barbados. Casement forwarded regular cheques from England during their stay. On the island, Frederick Bishop, a Barbadian whom Casement came to trust, despite his cruelty, when working for the Peruvian Amazon Company, had on 16 December 1910 – the day before Casement’s departure for Europe – been given £22 to look after the boys. Within a fortnight, according to Father Smith, Bishop had squandered half of what was then a considerable amount of money.]** Heavy rain all night. Got wet twice…

September 1911.

Begins at Barbados in Seaview Hotel.

Friday September 1st My 47th Birthday!

To Bath at Hastings to meet Beauty for last time. Bath 5d. His name is Hughes. Born March 16. (Did not come) Stamps 1/- Cg’ttes 1/10 Sweets 2/9. 5 7 Trams 8d. - Lunch with Crawford. Then a lovely Meztise boy **[a Mestizo is a person of mixed race, born of Indian and Iberian parents]** of 16 or 17 in blue at Church Sq.Longed for & talked to & asked to come to bath Sunday & was most willing. The Biddys at 6. Teddy looking often – They went 6.40. **[The reference to “The Biddys” is only explained by inspection of the inside cover of this journal. Alongside addresses for other sexual partners such as “Jean of Algiers” and “Amron Kali” is one for “Master E.K. Biddy”. These notes were not published in *The Black Diaries* and can only be detected in the original journal. (See also the 1911 Diary on this date: “The Biddys came at 6. Very sick at sight of them. They are beggars like all here.”) These Biddys were not Irish or some form of Barbadian street youths but a local family he had befriended, possibly to gain access to Teddy, who when met three years earlier in 1908 must hardly have been pubescent. From Casement’s scornful remark, the Biddys appear to be poor whites although his address was the former Bishop’s Palace. The same boy, Edward Kay Biddy, a clerk, born in 1895 in St. Vincent is recorded as travelling from Barbados to Hartford Connecticut in 1912, with his mother and five siblings. By 1917, he was an officer in the US Army only to die in the 1918 flu epidemic. He was an engineer with at least one patent to his name.]** To Hastings Rocks & then to town. Club 1/-. Darkie guide 1-. Trams 2d. 2 2 £0 8 2 **[This day’s entry in Scotland Yard’s typed copy is marked with two large crosses by the Home Office reader.[[3]](#endnote-3)]**

Saturday 2 Sept. 1911

Trams 6d. Paper 1d. Cgttes 3/8 Club waiter 4/- 8 .3

Cotton wool 1/. Beads for Nina 3/-. 4

Passage to Pará by Boniface **X**  16.13. 4

**X** St. John’s poor white boys **X**  6.10

Clothes for Ricudo and Omarino 1.17. 6

To waiter 3/**-** Tel 1/- Trams 1/- 5 0

Coleridge King. **[a line with an X connects his name to the above “poor white boys”]**

£23. 9. 2

 6.10

 23.16. 0 **X** Coleridge King **[37th sex costs accumulation]**

Sunday 3 Sept 1911Spent in Barbados…Still at Barbados. £20.3.1 “Boniface” not in during night. Hair cut 1/6 Cocktail 6d. Bathed at Light House. Fine big Darkie 1/-. Trams 6d. Club 1/6. Saw several beauties. Sundry 1 …

Monday 4 SeptOut to Light House & saw a nice boy. Asked him to bath & he came on bone. Stanley Weeks 20. Stripped. Huge one – circumcised – swelled & hung 9'' quite & wanted it awfully – asked come at 11.30. Boniface arr. & out at 12 & Stanley again & wanted it fearfully. His stiff & mine stiff. Then had to leave. Farewell to Stanley! **[“Stanley Weeks” is also written in both margins and once underlined while Xs appear in a snowstorm around the description. Connected expenditure of two and then three shillings is set within it. The whole entry is a classic stream of consciousness of which James Joyce would be proud. The late and badly-timed arrival of Casement’s ship, the *Boniface*, intruded in fact, and in mid-memoir, on the frustrated opportunity for significant sexual contact with the apparently eager Stanley Weeks.**

 **There then follows the usual rush of items of expenditure to do with departure – the hotel bill, customs charges, tips, the luggage car and porters (with nine shillings going on chairs for the two Indian boys). Finally there is a record of an assignation made the day before:]** Coleridge King 5/- who left his address with Mrs Seon **[note, as in this case of leaving an address with the hotel proprietor, the cool demeanour of Casement and so many of his casual partners, who assume correctly that others are oblivious to anything untoward going on.]** – I want Stanley Weeks **[phrase underlined by the Home Office on their typescript.]** Left Barbados at 4 p.m £28 15 4…

23.16.0

 5.0 Stanley Weeks 5/- **X X**

24 1.0 **38th sex costs accumulation]**

**1911 DIARY**

29 TUESDAY In Barbados. **[Casement knew Barbados well having recuperated there for two months in 1908 after one of the most serious of his myriad illnesses, acute gastritis. One author aptly described Casement as “a connoisseur of fevers.”[[4]](#endnote-4) On 20 August 1908 he had complained of Barbados to Bulmer Hobson, calling it “This ghastly little Britannic island of prigs and paupers.”[[5]](#endnote-5)]** Wrote Spicer about O’Donnell. **[The entry for 30 August is simply “Do.”.]**

31 THURSDAY Called at Ursuline Convent on nuns & Father Smith.

**September**

1 FRIDAY My Birthday 47 today. Nina is over 55! At Barbados. The Biddys came at 6. Very sick at sight of them. They are beggars like all here.

2 SATURDAY In Barbados. Tried to get Dudley Stanson by telephone from Bathsheba. Poor boy could hear nothing of him. Saw Coleridge King & the other poor white boys.

3 SUNDAY Bathed & read novels.

**[At top of page:]** 4 Sept. Met Stanley Weeks at Barbados. Came back from Trinidad by “Voltavia” on 28 August & is looking for work at the electric. 20 years old.

4 MONDAY Out at 8.30. Met Coleridge King & took his a/c at Mrs Seon’s. **[She ran the Sea View Hotel in Hastings. Her letterhead read “Proprietress Mrs I. Seon. Cuisine properly attended to. A well stocked Bar.”[[6]](#endnote-6)]** Gave him 5/-. **[In margin: X** 5**]** Then to Bath & met Stanley Weeks 20 years. Has certificate from Trinidad Electrical concern – trying to get work here at the Electrical. Bathed together first 9 a.m. Huge one & then 12.45 – Huger still. Hung down curved & swollen & wanted awfully. **[In margin: X** 5**]** Poor boy. Wished I had taken him. Will try & get him to Iquitos **[Casement’s fantasy collecting syndrome again.]** Was waiter once in a B’bados Hotel. Two scars on face from fall. One on thigh too – & it – off in Boniface for Pará with Ricudo & Omarino.

1. B.L. Reid p. 142 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. NLI 13089/6 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. TNA HO 144/1637/139 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Costigan p. 292 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. NLI 13158/4 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. NLI 15138/3/9, bill dated 4 September 1911 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)