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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

National Spiritualist Association of Canada

From 1928 until 1974, the National Spiritualist Association of Canada (NSA), Inc., was one of two Canadian parent organizations that provided leadership to Spiritualists across Canada, including instruction, education and licensing of lecturers, and the ordination of pastors, within the religion of SPIRITUALISM. Headquartered at Toronto, the NSA was incorporated by the Government of Canada on 5 July 1928. During the 1940s and 1950s, the NSA was largely governed by its members in Canada's Western provinces.

By 1937, there was sufficient membership to warrant the formation of a British Columbia Council to guide the selection of delegates to the national convention. When Reverend WILLIAM CHARLES PARTRIDGE toured Canada in 1944, he found no less than ten NSA churches in British Columbia, and served most of them. At the October 1951 convention, the NSA reported 308 members, including 28 ordained ministers, in 18 branch churches across Canada.

Canada's unique geography with a small population spread over a long southern border presented East-West problems within the association. In October 1957, the 29th annual convention held in New Westminster was well attended by delegates from all British Columbia points, but no Eastern representatives were able to attend. The *NSA News Review*, first published during 1956, was proving a valuable instrument in assisting the churches of East and West to reach a better understanding of each others' needs and aims.

In British Columbia, before 1940, the NSA obtained full ministerial rights and privileges for its ministers, including the right to solemnize marriages. In February 1940, the first Spiritualist marriage ceremony in British Columbia was performed at Victoria by Reverend Walter L. Holder. Following much correspondence between NSA board members and officials in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, ministerial rights were granted to NSA ministers in those provinces in 1957, and the board had begun work on obtaining the same recognition in the other provinces. It was anticipated that, with this recognition, Spiritualism would grow and gain strength throughout the Dominion of Canada.

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During the 1950s, under the charismatic leadership of Reverend BEATRICE GAULTON BISHOP, more churches were seeking affiliation, and some who had allowed their membership to lapse were renewing. By 1957-58, the NSA executive was comprised entirely of individuals living in British Columbia, with Reverend Mrs. Bishop as President, and Reverend Dr. John Horning and Reverend Doris A. Horning as Second Vice-President and General Secretary respectively. The Ontario Council of Churches was in the process of being reorganized through the untiring energy of the NSA Eastern representative, Reverend Mrs. Nancy Barker, who was for many years its Secretary or President. Because of the growing amount of work falling on the shoulders of the Eastern representative, an Assistant Eastern representative was appointed in the person of Reverend Beryl Moss.

During late 1957, there was discussion of how the churches of the NSA and Spiritualists' National Union of Canada (SNU - see SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF CANADA) might be brought into closer touch, in order to give the Spiritualist movement added strength and fuller representation throughout Canada. Based apparently upon the SPIRIT plan given to Mrs. Bishop, the proposed "Assembly of Canadian Spiritualist Churches" would provide a single umbrella organization to host an annual convention, to publish a directory of the churches and ministers affiliated with each organization, and to facilitate visits by Spiritualist missionaries whose services could be engaged by all *bona fide* churches.

Laudable as was the vision of NSA President Beatrice Gaulton Bishop and SNU past-president William C. Partridge, who were among the chief proponents of amalgamation, it is probable that the practicalities proved to be insurmountable. Just over a year later, at a SÉANCE held in January 1959, the spirit communicators outlined to Gaulton Bishop's group a program for the formation of an international organization. Meetings were held, and in September 1959 the INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE was formed at Vancouver with NSA leaders Gaulton Bishop and the Hornings as founding members.

The loss of Gaulton Bishop and the Hornings, combined with the affiliation of some Canadian Spiritualists and churches with the new organization, must have served a death blow to the NSA. In 1974, most of the remaining NSA churches (about 11 by then) amalgamated with the SNU of Canada. Latterly, the NSA was headquartered at Niagara-on-the-Lake and was formally dissolved on 16 December 1980.

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Further Reading:

Joy Lowe and Walter Meyer zu Erpen, "The Canadian Spiritualist Movement and Sources for its Study," *Archivaria* 30, edited by Debra Barr (Summer 1990): 71-84.

Photocopy of Charter of National Spiritualist Association of Canada in possession of Survival Research Institute of Canada.

NSA News Review 2, no. 2 (November 1957) and no. 3 (December 1957).

"Canada's Spiritualists Unite!," *Psychic News*, no. 1328 (16 November 1957), pp. 1, 8.

International Spiritualist Review 5, no. 9 (April 1966).

William C. Partridge, "History of Canadian Spiritualism," copy of 1975 manuscript in possession of Survival Research Institute of Canada.