

A Historical Survey of the Buff Bay River Valley

Introduction

English occupation might have commenced in 1655, but the process towards their true settlement of the colony only began to take shape about six years later. Settlement and expansion were at first thwarted by the ongoing battles with the remnants of the Spanish settlers and later by the persistence of buccaneering activities – a lifestyle which did not promote the establishment of permanent homes. In addition, the Maroons who dominated the hilly interior areas of the colony made expansion in these areas a daunting task.

When civil government was finally established in 1661 under Governor Edward D'Oyley, a part of the transformation from military rule was the surveying and division of the island into twelve districts. The number of districts corresponded with the number of council members. The divisions were Port Royal, Clarendon, St. Andrew, St. David, St. Catherine, St. James, St. John, St. Thomas, St. Mary, St. Ann, St. Elizabeth and St. George.¹

The establishment of these parochial divisions did not however mean that the colony was fully settled. Successive governors struggled with this mandate. When Governor Henry, the Duke of Portland took office in 1722, his duty was to bring about the completion of

¹ George W. Bridges. *The Annals of Jamaica*, 2 vols. (1827-1828, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968) 1:246.

this process by encouraging the settlement of the final frontier - the northeastern part of the colony which was then under the control of the Windward Maroons.²

When the battle for the northeast finally ended by treaty³ in 1738, white settlers streamed into the area. They established sugar estates in the coastal regions and coffee, pimento and cacao plantations further inland. These settlements co-existed peacefully alongside Maroon settlements – Charlestown in the Buff Bay River Valley and Moore Town further east.

The Parish of St. George

The parish of St. George was one of the eight parishes created by Sir Thomas Modyford. It was bounded by St Mary, St. Andrew, Port Royal, St. David and St Thomas-In-The-East. Areas such as Annotto Bay and Buff Bay, including the Buff Bay River Valley then comprised portions of St. George.

The size of the parish decreased in the 18th century as portions of St. George along with portions of St. Thomas were combined to form the parish of Portland. However, the parish of St. George ceased to exist in 1867 when the number of administrative divisions was reduced from twenty-two to fourteen.⁴

² Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 1722-July 1724, MS 60 National Library of Jamaica.

³ The treaty was signed on March 1, 1738 on the battlefield in Trelawny Town between the British and the Maroons who were represented by Captains Cudjoe, Accompong, Johnny, Cuffie, Quaco and several others. See Copy of Actual Treaty signed in 1738 on the Battlefield by Both Parties. MS260 National Library of Jamaica.

⁴ <http://www.jnht.com/heritage_site.php?id=90>

Prominent features of the parish during the 1800's were the St. George's Anglican Church and Court House in the town of Buff Bay – their importance marked by their liturgical and judicial functions, cornerstone elements of colonial society.

The Formation of the Parish of Portland

The parish of Portland was formed in 1723 by virtue of the Windward Law⁵ and comprised sections of St. George and St. Thomas. Some areas were added to the parish years later. For example, in 1779 Manchioneal was given to the Portland Vestry and 88 years later, when Governor Sir John Peter Grant reduced the number of parishes from 22 to 14, Buff Bay, which was originally a part of St. George, became a part of the parish of Portland.⁶

The parish was named after the Duke of Portland who was Governor of Jamaica from 1722 until his death on June 20, 1726.⁷ As Governor Portland's principal mandate concerned the "better peopling and settling [of] the island" the greater part of his tenure was spent trying to suppress the Maroons (sometimes also referred to as "Rebellious Negroes") who made mountainous areas their stronghold. The Maroons reportedly raided white settlements constantly and in general thwarted the development of such settlements in that section of the island. Surveyors, Mr. Brown, Mr. Thackery and Mr. Rivers, contracted by Governor Portland to survey 30,000 acres at or near Port St. Antonio, were

⁵ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 1722 – July 1724. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

⁶ Beryl Brown. *A Short History of Portland* (Kingston: Ministry of Education, 1976) 9.

⁷ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 20. April 1724 – July 1727. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

fearful of carrying out work in that area due to the numbers of Maroons that inhabited those parts and requested armed security. In one of the Governor's communications to the board, he explained:

And whereas it hath in all times been a very great hindrance to the peopling and settling of our said island, that large tracts of lands have been engrossed by particular persons, a great part whereof still remains uncultivated whereby the island is deprived of many inhabitants that would otherwise have settled there, and have greatly contributed to the security, wealth and defence thereof. Now having taken the said inconvenience into our princely consideration and being especially minded to provide against so great an evil for the future. We do hereby in a very particular manner recommend to you to use your best endeavour to get a law past in the most effectual terms, for obliging all persons already possessed by lands in our said island to plant and cultivate the same, within the space of three years or to dispose of the same to such persons as will undertake to do it and in default thereof that such lands may revert to us to be regranted as we shall see cause.⁸

The acquisition of lands held by the Maroons was integral to the colonial authorities for ensuring security of tenure for white settlers; taking advantage of the best agricultural lands, which they believed were occupied by Maroons and minimizing transportation costs as white settlers sought longer, sometimes more arduous routes to avoid these "hostile" territories. Further, it was also symbolically important to gain possession of these lands as a show of the true conquest of the island.

Several measures were used in an effort to induce white settlement in the area albeit with little success. Incentives included allowances of beef and flour to planters awaiting first harvest, land grants, freedom from all suits, actions, arrests and public taxes for three

⁸ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 22 – July 1724. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

years for residents as well as newcomers and seven years relief from land tax with the exception of quit-rents.⁹

Frustrated, Governor Portland sought assistance from King Jeremy, King of the Musketto or Musquetto Indians in Honduras. A section of his November 1, 1723 letter to King Jeremy read,

*The assembly of this Island had addressed me to apply to you for such a number of your people as you can be able to spare to be assisting in destroying the rebellious negroes here who make great depredations in the settlements and are very destructive to the plantations, and as their abode is generally in the mountains and the most inaccessible parts, I must desire you to make choice of fourscore at least, but rather a hundred of such persons as are best qualified for the undertaking that difficult service, I have this assurance to give you that as the Assembly has promised to make a full provision for all manner of expenses that shall attend their expedition hither and during the execution of this affair...*¹⁰

However, by July 9, 1724 it was clear that King Jeremy was unable to assist. It was noted at Council that

*In apprehension of an invasion from the Spaniards, [King Jeremy] thought it required at home all the strength he was master of, for his own defence and preparation and hoped that would be sufficient excuse for his not complying with what he had given his Grace grounds to hope for, and his Grace recommending it to the Board to think of proper methods for keeping out of parties to suppressing rebellious and runaway slaves.*¹¹

Governor Portland thereafter raised parties that comprised of members of the regiment (detached from St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland and Clarendon), free mulattoes and free Blacks. This mix was necessary principally due to the shortage of white men.¹² Several parties were sent out during his tenure and even after, but all failed to return the Maroons

⁹ Rhett S. Jones “White Settlers, Black Rebels: Jamaica in the Era of the First Maroon War, 1655-1738” Thesis, Brown University (1976).

¹⁰ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 1722 – July 1724. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

¹¹ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 1722 – July 1724. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

¹² Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 19. April 1722 – July 1724. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

to the plantations, though they managed to destroy a few Maroon settlements. The parties failed as many men deserted the service, fell ill or were simply out-witted, out manoeuvred and overpowered by the Maroons.

The pressure applied to the Maroon communities that inhabited the north-eastern mountains escalated after the death of Governor Portland as the Legislative Council received reports that the Maroons were forming an alliance with the Spaniards to overthrow the British. A Spanish Jew who was questioned by the Council noted that:-

*He heard that the Spaniards were still in expectation of hearing from the Rebellious Negroes of this Island, and of the return of the East Indian Negro whom they had sent to treat with them and that the affair was suspended till that time. And also told the board that he was informed by the Spaniards that there were several Spanish White men, mulattoes and Negroes amongst the rebellious negroes in this island.*¹³

This was bolstered by two Colonels, Sandys and Valleth who claimed that “it was the general report of all the traders to the South Keys that there was such a design on foot”.¹⁴

The intensified war against the Maroons is today popularly recognized as the 1st Maroon War, 1731 – 1738. It culminated in 1738 with the historic signing of a treaty between both parties.

Buff Bay River Valley

The valley is today located in the parish of Portland, however prior to the establishment of the parish of Portland, it was a part of the parish of St. George. Stretching from the town of Buff Bay, the valley follows a narrow, winding road along the Buff Bay River to

¹³ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 21. July 1727 – October 1731, MS 60, National Library of Jamaica.

¹⁴ Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 21 April 1727– July 1731. MS 60. National Library of Jamaica.

the boarder of St. Andrew. In the 19th century, *the river valley contained a number of estates* which engaged in the cultivation of various crops including sugar cane, coffee, pimento, cocoa, coconuts, and much later bananas. These included Rose Hill, Orange vale, Tranquility, Coolshade, Fairfield, Bangor Ridge, Mount St. Bernard, Balcarres, Mullet Hall, Avocot, Silver Hill, Birnamwood, Spring Hill, Wakefield, Cedar Valley, Green Hill, Cascade and the Maroon community of Charlestown.

The Economic Development of the Buff Bay River Valley

English settlements across the island largely patterned those of the Spaniards. Expansion into the hinterland was sluggish, especially those regions occupied by communities of Maroons. Nowhere was this more evident than in the north-eastern section of the island. Development in this region did not commence until the latter part of the 18th century. Late 17th and early 18th century maps reveal only a small number of properties scattered along the coast and in close proximity to the Dry and Swift Rivers and on the Western side of the Annotto Bay River. The maps of James Moxon Sculp (1671-1680), Charles Harper (1684) and H. Moll (1728) suggest that these early settlements possessed cocoa walks, indigo works and/or livestock. The hilly inland region was noticeably devoid of white settlements – being after all the domain of Maroons who had established independent communities in the innermost areas.¹⁵

¹⁵ Charles Harper. “A New and Exact Mapp of the Island of Jamaica with the True and Just Situation of several Towns & Churches & Also the Plantations with their Names & the Names of the Properties with Amendments of Great Part of the Sea Coast, but more especially the Harbours of Port Royal by Actual Survey to Satisfy Such as Desire to Know the true Longitude and Latitude of any Places Mentioned in this

The growth of white settlements in the northeast became apparent in the period following the Maroon Treaty of 1739. The establishment of peace with the Windward Maroons enabled white settlers to occupy undisturbed the lush hilly interior sections and by 1754 there were a total of fifty-two landowners registered in the parish of Portland with a total of 24,324 acres of land.¹⁶ This change in the landscape was apparent in cartographer, James Robertson's 1804 map. His map of the County of Surrey showed a number of settlements dotting the town of Buff Bay and spread all along the Buff Bay River Valley. A number of these properties included Bell's, Woodstock, Fitzgerald's, Kildare, Craigmill, White River, Charlestown, Buff Bay River, General Churchill's, Donaldson & Meeks', Gowie's, Psychoreds, Gillespies', Mores, McLary's, Hossack's, Meek's, the Earl of Balcarres', Hamilton's, Bernie's, Corboran's, Bern Shirley's, Forsyth's, Stamp's, Aikman's, Lungren's, J. Smith's, Looseley's, Sutherland's, Todd's, Burton's, Dodd's, Wallen's, Wray's, Cold Spring, Roy's, Bret's and Dallas'.¹⁷ Although many of the properties bore the names of their owners in the early period, this trend later became less evident.

Not only does Robertson's map indicate the extent of settlements in the area, but it also shows that these settlers had moved beyond the indigo works that had earlier been attempted. He suggested that while most of the settlements were devoted to coffee and grass pens, Woodstock, Spring Garden, Kildare, White River and Buff Bay River were

Mapp"; HMoll. "The Island of Jamaica Divided into It's Principal Parishes with the Roads etc"; James Moxon Sculp. "Jamaica According to the Last Survey" (NLJ).

¹⁶ Rent Books in the Year 1754. MS 1987. National Library of Jamaica.

¹⁷ James Robertson. Map of the County of Surrey in the Island of Jamaica. 1804. National Library of Jamaica.

sugar estates that operated water mills. The shift in economic activities may be attributed not only to the overall failure of indigo production island wide, but also the attempt of the planters in adapting to the topographical and ecological conditions of the region while at the same time drawing on the agricultural skills at their disposal and taking advantage of lucrative export markets that opened up towards the close of the 1700's.

The upper Buff Bay River Valley and its neighbouring communities along the mountain ridge fast emerged in the latter part of the 18th century into the Mecca of the coffee industry in the island. This was significant, considering that as revealed by maps that emerged in the latter part of the 17th century and early 18th century, the area during that period had boasted no major developments. The mushrooming of coffee plantations in the Valley in the latter to early part of the 18th and 19th centuries respectively very noticeably coincided with the Haitian Revolution of 1790 that brought about the decline of the Haitian coffee industry and increased the numbers of French émigrés to Jamaica, as well as to other territories such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Louisiana.

The numbers of émigrés to the island was not great. Of the over 1,000 who came, only 200 remained in Jamaica. Despite the small numbers however, their contribution to the development of the coffee industry was by far significant. This was after all what the Jamaican Assembly had hoped in encouraging the establishment of French planters in the island. They brought not only their enslaved charges, who were adept in the cultivation practices of coffee, but their own knowledge of the industry.¹⁸ The true extent of the

¹⁸ Kathleen Monteith. "The Coffee Industry in Jamaica, 1790-1850", Thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona (1991) 70.

population of émigrés from Saint Domingue to the region is however clouded considering that not all émigrés established plantations. According to David Geggus, many of those who came to Jamaica were non-plantation owners. Further, many of them were not financially able to establish plantations. They did however make up an important part of the skilled white labour force on many coffee plantations. A survey of the archival records of the parish of St. George reveals a number of family and places names supporting the presence of these French émigrés to the area. Some of these names included Malabre, Roux, De Chevannes, Delafitle, Desgouttes, Bourdett, La Selve, Montague, Coberand, DuLauzon, Avocat. Names such as Desgouttes are still evident in the area today. Interestingly however, some émigrés bore German names as a number of Germans had established themselves in the French colony of St. Domingue and were amongst the numbers of those who fled during the revolution led by Toussaint Louverture.¹⁹ Given their German names, these émigrés are likely not to be counted amongst those from St. Domingue, thus giving an incomplete picture of the extent of the impact of émigrés from St. Domingue on the expansion of the Jamaican coffee industry in the latter part of the 18th century.

Though coffee production in the north-eastern section of the island grew exponentially in the latter part of the 18th century and 19th century, the crop had been in the island from 1728 when it was first introduced by Sir Nicolas Lawes, then Governor of the island. However, the high rates of duties levied on imported coffee by the United Kingdom and the stiff competition faced from French coffee growing colonies of which Saint Domingue was the highest exporter deterred earlier growth in the cultivation of coffee.

¹⁹ Augusta Elmwood. "The Germans in St. Domingue" ,<<http://www.agh.qc.ca/articles/?id=40>>

The successful revolt of the enslaved masses in Saint Domingue in 1791 brought about the almost total destruction of the plantation economy thus causing the coffee exports to plummet.²⁰

Jamaican plantations responded quickly to Haiti's economic downturn which had commenced in 1790 with the revolt of the free coloureds under the leadership of Vincent Ogé. Kathleen Monteith noted in her study of the Jamaican Coffee Industry that exports of coffee from Jamaica jumped from 850,000lbs in 1783 to 2,783,800lbs in 1790. This trend continued into the early 1800's and "led to the Jamaican coffee industry becoming the second most important sector within the Jamaican economy."²¹ Despite the success experienced in the coffee market, not all properties were geographically suited for coffee cultivation. Coffee after all required cool temperatures and so was largely confined to areas that were considerably elevated above sea level. This explains why despite the ninety-three plantations identified in the parish of St. George in the latter part of the 18th century, only 14% of these concentrated on coffee. Some of these plantations included Mount Holstein, Mount Pleasant in Balcarres, Tranquility, Lancaster and Cedar Valley all situated in the Buff Bay River Valley. Other key coffee areas in the island were St. Andrew, St. Ann and St. Elizabeth and Manchester after it was established in 1814.

Success was however short-lived for many of these large coffee planters. They were unable to withstand competition from foreign countries that after 1832 still produced

²⁰ Kathleen Monteith. "The Coffee Industry in Jamaica, 1790-1850" Thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona (1991) 16.

²¹ Kathleen Monteith. "The Coffee Industry in Jamaica, 1790-1850" Thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona (1991) 16.

coffee using enslaved labour, and more so were admitted into the British market at much lower duties. The result was wide scale abandonment of coffee plantations between 1832 and 1848, which prompted an enquiry by a Parliamentary Committee in London in 1848.²²

This however was not the death of the industry. Though it experienced significant decline during this period, recovery was on the horizon. Many ex-slaves upon fleeing the plantations established themselves on small landholdings upon which they cultivated not only crops for local consumption, but traditional staples such as sugar and coffee, as well as other minor crops for the export market. It was this class of people who were instrumental in keeping the coffee industry alive in the late 19th century. Veront Satchell noted that “coffee production increased among the peasants to the extent that they produced approximately two thirds of the total coffee export which stood at an annual average of 81,000 cwt between 1866 and 1900.” Satchell went on to explain that by 1900, these small farmers were the principal producers of coffee in Manchester, Clarendon, St. Andrew and Portland.²³

The dominance of peasant farmers over coffee along with ground provisions (which prior to emancipation were commonly found in the gardens of enslaved people) continued into the twentieth century. The significance of the industry to coffee growers in the Buff Bay River Valley led to the formation of the Portland Blue Mountain Cooperative in 1952.

²² Kathleen Monteith. “The Coffee Industry in Jamaica , 1790-1850” Thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona (1991) 9.

²³ Veront Satchell. *From Plots to Plantations: Land Transformations in Jamaica, 1866-1900*, (Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research) 1990, 55.

Founding members included Joseph Oscar Baugh, Arthur Vivian Magann, John McIssacs, Reginald Sutherland, Edgar Augustus Carby, Alva Sharpe (from Lennox, located close to Orangevale), Keble Aubrey Munn (from St. Andrew, then Minister of Agriculture) and Alice Elizabeth McCleary, who served as Secretary. The Cooperative was registered in 1954 and it sought to provide a support system for coffee growers outside of that offered by the Coffee Industry Board. Through the initiative of its members the Cooperative was able to purchase the Silver Hill Factory for £3,250 with the profits they made from coffee. Payment was completed by 1954. This was by far no small feat for the young co-op, and they were touted by Willie Henry, Chairman of the Coffee Industry Board at a meeting of the Cooperative in Bangor Ridge on September 21, 1954 as “the greatest local co-op”.²⁴ The success of the coffee growers continued into the post independence period.

These glory days of coffee in the Buff Bay River Valley still live in the memories of elderly residents of the area. In Ellerslie, Kenneth Campbell, who is said to be the oldest male in the community, recalled that while coffee had always been a stable crop of the area, it experienced a boom in the 1960’s. He fondly recalled the role of the Munn family and their factory in Mavis Bank in the years prior to the establishment of the factory at Silver Hill. Other Buff Bay residents, like Winston McCleary (son of Alice Elizabeth McCleary and Napair McCleary, Jamaica Agricultural Society Officer), age 65 of Coolshade, spoke proudly of his parents’ role in the nascent period of the Portland Blue Mountain Coffee Cooperative and afterwards. He was keen to point out also that outside

²⁴ “Coffee Groups called ‘greatest local co-op.’ ” *The Daily Gleaner*, September 24, 1954, 16.

of the large factories, small farmers like his grandfather also engaged in their own coffee pulping. McCleary said,

My grandmother used to have a coffee pulper too so he always pulp coffee for himself and pulp for other people as well. So they have like a small barbeque in there where they dry the coffee, but they didn't have like a drier, like how you'd see if you go to the different coffee processing place now.²⁵

While coffee was prominent and even today is still grown in parts of the valley, it was not the only focus of property owners in the River Valley. Other key export crops included pimento, coconut and banana. Properties such as the Buff Bay River Estate engaged in the export of both pimento and coconut.

Pimento export prospered into the 20th century, but it was not without its ups and downs. In the 1930's the Jamaican industry was badly affected by disease, falling prices, and the restrictions on imports by a major market – Germany.²⁶ Recovery was brief. Trouble arose again in the 1950's, but this time the problem was low prices. Pimento growers were disgruntled with the prices offered by the Government who acted as their agents. It was widely felt that while the sum paid pimento farmers was reduced, the Government was making the lion's share of the profits by selling the crop abroad for significantly higher prices than that which they offered to the growers.

Today, memories of pimento's heyday in the Buff Bay River Valley still linger. They are centred mostly on the Buff Bay River Estate, one of the few pre-emancipation properties that remained in operation up to the 20th century. This was evident from several

²⁵ Interview with Winston Roy Lloyd George McLeary. June 19, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1909.

²⁶ "Review of Jamaica Pimento Situation and German Trade," *The Gleaner*, July 12, 1935, 10.

interviews notably those with Nollings Christie, 96, of White River, but formerly a resident of Tranquility; Winston McCleary, 64, of Coolshade, William George Martin, 82, and Enoch Desgouttes, 80, of Plum Valley. While all of the men were acquainted with the crops planted on the estate, Martin and Desgouttes worked on the property as young men. Martin recollected that pimento was popular in the valley, but spoke more extensively about the Buff Bay property on which he once worked.

There was a property over there, this property here, Buff Bay River Estate, I was in charge of that property for about five years. The owner was from (pause), an Englishwoman named Benbow Miller and I was working with the Walkers them who bought the property, who was the busha in those days and then I used to reap the pimento, truck load of pimento used to come off that property there, but now I tell my grandson last week that people coming in now wouldn't even know pimento because them cut them out - coal burners. Them cut them out and burn charcoal, but it was very expensive in those days – pimento, very expensive. All now it expensive.²⁷

He went on to describe the preparation of the crop for sale and also highlighted some of the uses of pimento in the community.

They use the ripe one (pimento berries) to make pimento jam, jelly or whatever you call and house people use it, the green one to preserve meat and so...When it ripe on the tree now and you pick out the ripe one now, the housekeeper them use it and make drink, pimento drink, very nice.²⁸

As valuable as pimento was to the community, it is more likely that the Buff Bay River Estate has remained memorable because of the number of persons in the Valley whose economic livelihood was tied to the property. Desgouttes for example explained that as a young boy of about 11 years old, he worked on the Buff Bay River Estate in an effort to supplement the meagre wages of his mother and stepfather, both of whom were cultivators. Desgouttes recalled:

²⁷ Interview with William George Martin. June 27, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1911.

²⁸ Interview with William George Martin, June 27, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1911.

Sometime a go school, sometime I don't go. I have a rough time because through grow without a father and most hardly go to school because I have to go and hustle for myself sometime, you know. Because...you have a property over there Buff Bay River, so I have to go and pick coconut fi mek money when Friday come you understand and sometime, when mi pick it mi can't even peel it mi get somebody peel it and then we get a mule and carry it out to the depot.²⁹

Besides those, who like Desgouttes, served as field hands engaging in the picking, husking, drying and other processes associated with pimento and coconut, others held leases for sections of the property. These persons were either landless or did not have enough land on which to grow crops that would satisfy the needs of their kitchens as well as for sale at the market and thus leased/rented sections of the property for such farming purposes. As a result, a variety of crops were planted on the estate by various farmers. This attitude towards land tenure is one of the post-emancipation phenomenon that developed in response to declining profits of many former sugar estates. Desgouttes, whose parents farmed on the property, explained that the arrangement was slightly different for those who engaged in the cultivation of banana.

When you plant the banana now you doesn't pay rent nor lease the place. The owner for the property gi you and you plant the banana on half. That time them usually sell it to the railway station. So maybe you cut a ten bunch and then get a five out of it, you know and you get the rest cause you don't pay no rent.³⁰

Banana after all had emerged as an important export staple from the latter part of the 19th century. No longer viewed as the crop of 'back woods nigger business', a total of 191 former sugar estates were converted into banana plantations by 1900.³¹ These were

²⁹ Interview with Enoch Desgouttes. June 17, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1908.

³⁰ Interview with Enoch Desgouttes. June 17, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1908.

³¹ Veront Satchell. *From Plots to Plantations: Land Transformations in Jamaica, 1866-1900*, (Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research) 1990, 41, 48. According to Satchell, sugar planters were at first reluctant to engage in wide scale banana production as it was viewed as a crop of the lower classes. Banana after all was traditionally found in the provision grounds of enslaved people and after emancipation its

mostly concentrated in the eastern parishes of the island – St. Catherine, St. Mary, St. Thomas and Portland. The entry of large scale banana producers had a significant impact on small producers as increasingly preference was given to their goods. Further, many small farmers were subjected to the paying of high rents on land. Despite the setbacks, there was profit to be gained from banana cultivation and thus many small farmers persevered. In the Buff Bay Valley, many residents engaged in the cultivation of the crop for the export trade up into the 20th century. Nollings Christie noted that when he was growing up banana cultivation was very popular throughout the Buff Bay Valley and was done by small farmers. Farmers paid carts or trucks (only a few were in the Valley) to take their banana to the railway station in Buff Bay from where it was transported to Port Antonio for shipment.³²

The cultivation of banana in the Valley had its rewards (real or imagined) considering the perceptions that residents of the Valley had of those who were banana growers. Lyn Campbell, a 91 year old resident of Charles Town in her lighthearted manner recalled that

*All those days, the big men, the money people were banana people and them ride horses. We had a man named Brammy Anderson...his horse was [named] Pretty Polly...and he had a big house up that way, so Randy [a friend] say to me, Ms. Lyn when we pass Brammy house we couldn't look in there you know, you have to look like this [holding her head askance in imitation of Randy]. You can't turn you head and look in a it, you know, but when he died I go in a it and dance some mento you see.*³³

cultivation was primarily by small farmers (blacks). It was not only perception however that dissuaded many, it was also the matter of high land taxes to consider.

³² Interview with Nollings Christie, June 27, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1912.

³³ Interview with Lyn Campbell. April 17, 2009. ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape # 1905.

Road Network

Given the importance of the export trade to the Valley and vice versa from the mid eighteenth century, the internal road network system was of vital importance. Not only was connection with the town of Buff Bay vital, but access to the parish of Port Royal which extended into much of present day St. Andrew was of equal importance. However, it was not until the latter part of the 19th century that this stretch of road was given serious consideration in terms of a major redevelopment plan by the government to link the area to St. Andrew to facilitate the movement of goods to and from ports and markets in the south-eastern section of the island.

Much attention was placed during the pre-emancipation period to the maintenance of the then existing roadways to facilitate the movement of goods to and from the Valley. There was lesser emphasis on the establishment of new roadways. It was the enslaved people from various plantations in the Buff Bay area, in addition to those who were confined to the workhouse were made to effect repairs to these roads and when necessary construct new ones. However, as these roads were built to facilitate buggy traffic, they proved woefully inadequate in accommodating motorized transport towards the close of the 19th century and even more so had failed to provide the interconnectedness needed to facilitate access to markets and ports outside of the parish.

Though it is clear from the records based on activities throughout the Valley that roads existed from the mid 18th century throughout the Valley connecting the communities along the banks of the river, not much is known about when this roadway which

essentially consisted of bridle tracks was established. The development into a “driving” road and extension into the parish of St. Andrew was orchestrated by Governor Henry A. Blake in 1896. The newspaper report noted that,

*The road that they are now about to begin was the first carriage road in that range of the mountains and the east end of the island and should be the means of communication between the north and the south of the island. It ran from the Cooperage below Gordon Town to Buff Bay and it was a coincidence that the distance from Kingston would be almost exactly the same as going round by Stony Hill and Annotto Bay. In this case they were over a pass 4,000 feet above sea level, whereas in the other case it was under 2,000 feet... The road with the branch from Silver Hill would serve as an outlet to about 30 square miles of land, most of it he believed capable of growing good coffee and many other products. He believed it would be of immense benefit to the people even at the present time...*³⁴

Despite these efforts, the new road was not completed until the early 20th century. Work begun in 1865, but halted in 1891 or 1892 and again in 1896.³⁵ Resumption of road work in 1908 was through the efforts of Governor Sir Sidney Oliver and several proprietors of the Valley who had as early as 1895 petitioned the Colonial Secretary for the continuation of the project.³⁶ Amongst the petitioners were the proprietors of Mount Holstein, Spring Hill, Shantomee, Cedar Hurst Plantation, Wallenford and Birnamwood.³⁷

Today, the road still offers a scenic tour though the valley, but sections have eroded and are undergoing repairs.

³⁴ “Mountain Roads”, *The Daily Gleaner*, January 9, 1896, 6.

³⁵ “Portland Roads”, *The Daily Gleaner*, February 25, 1898, 1.

³⁶ “Opening Up Hill Treasures”, *The Daily Gleaner*, July 28, 1908, 3.

³⁷ “Public Meeting at Birnamwood”, *The Daily Gleaner*, February 8, 1895, 6.

Church History of the Parish of St. George

Churches were common features of the public landscape throughout the colonies, and in Jamaica there was no exception. Areas that were successfully settled by whites boasted churches that sought to meet the social and spiritual needs of the community. In the parish of St. George, the first church – the Saint George’s Parish Church was built in 1802. Chapels of Saint George were by the mid 1800’s established in Hope Bay, Birnamwood and Scott’s Hall. Other denominations also started to appear in the parish during this period. The Blue Books of 1856 and 1866 reported Wesleyan Missions in Hope Bay and Buff Bay; a branch of the Jamaica Baptist Union in Buff Bay; a Roman Catholic Church called Avocat Stace/Rose at Mount Holstein; and American Christian Missions in Pleasant Hill and Black Hill.

St George’s Anglican Church

According to the records, Saint George’s Anglican Church which was formerly known as the Saint George’s Parish Church began in the late 1750’s as a chapel.³⁸ However, by 1802 the first church was built by contractor, Thomas Williams at a cost of £2,300.³⁹ This was a paltry sum in comparison to the £47,000 that was expended on the St. George’s Cathedral, built in 1820 in Kingstown, St. Vincent.⁴⁰ The wooden structure bore features such as a bull’s eye window with wooden shutters. This early building

³⁸ *The 175th Anniversary of the St. George’s Anglican Church, Buff Bay, Portland 1814-1989*. Jamaica Archives. 5/10/28.

³⁹ Vestry Minutes 1801 – 1816. (2/18/1) Jamaica Archives.

⁴⁰ Basil F.L. Clarke. *Anglican Cathedrals Outside the British Isles* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958) 78.

however was no match for the earthquake which severely damaged it in early 1813. Despite the poor state of the building, it was not until January 15 of the following year that the Vestry paid an official visit to the Church. Subsequent to their visit, the Vestry concluded:

That the church of the parish has been so much damaged by the last severe earthquake and from the original workmanship and construction having been defective, that it hath in consequence become dangerous to perform divine service therein. It is therefore the unanimous opinion of the Vestry that the Church should be wholly taken down and a new Church erected on the same site with the addition of an aisle to the southward, similar to the northern aisle, so as to form a complete cross.⁴¹

It was further agreed that the new structure was to be “a stone building with a steeple to be elevated twenty five feet above the ridge of the roof.”⁴² Historian, David Buisseret noted that this was not a common feature of Caribbean churches and suggested a North American influence owing to the strong trading links developed with New England.⁴³ The second construction was completed by mason, James Giscombe in July 1815.

As the size of the population expanded and the community prospered, there was a need to enlarge and enhance the appearance of the edifice. Twenty-two years after the second construction, the church committee approached the Vestry with a plan for renovation. At the Vestry meeting on July 14, 1837, the committee put forward the following recommendation,

That the present Church be enlarged by lengthening the east end of the church 35 feet within the walls, north and south wings 10 feet each within the walls to raise the present walls 6 feet with proper spaces for gothic windows according to the plan and specifications to be drawn by Mr. Schoberg.⁴⁴

⁴¹ St. George's Vestry Minutes 1801 – 1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁴² St. George's Vestry Minutes 1801 – 1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁴³ David Buisseret. *Historic Architecture of the Caribbean*, Heinemann: London, 1980, 72.

⁴⁴ St. George's Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. Jamaica Archives.

This was not a hard sell for the church committee as the Vestry had already been contemplating such a project. Nevertheless, the matter of renovation was not revisited until 1841. The answer to the delay may be found in a letter to the Lord Bishop two months prior to the Vestry hearing the recommendation of the committee. In the letter, the Vestry committed the sum of £500 towards the expansion project, but explained that they were unable to provide further funds due to the financial constraints of the parish.⁴⁵ However, when the matter again reappeared on the agenda, there was division amongst the Vestrymen as to whether there was more work required than just a mere alteration of the present structure. William Hossack proposed “that the alteration of the old church in conformity with the plans of the late Mr. [Anmesley] Voysey be accepted.”⁴⁶ However, the proposal by Dr. William Robertson for erecting a new Parish Church was preferred by vote. In response to this development, the church committee recommended,

*That the new church be built in the centre of the south-east end of the churchyard. That the building be of an oblong shape capable of containing 1,500 people including the galleries. The side windows facing the street to be of a more ornamental character. That the architecture be of a chaste and simple style either of brick or stone.*⁴⁷

Although this resolution was made in 1841, the building was not contracted for demolition until August 1851. However, the records of the Blue Book suggest that up until 1856 the work on the new church was unfinished. The 1852 report noted that the

⁴⁵ Vestry Minutes 1836-1841. 2/18/3 Jamaica Archives.

⁴⁶ St. George’s Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁴⁷ St. George’s Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

contractors abandoned the work.⁴⁸ It has been suggested however that the building was completed in 1859.⁴⁹

Almost half a century later, the 1907 earthquake which changed the face of Kingston and brought about new developments in the construction business was also responsible for the destruction of a portion of the St. George's Parish church. Restorative work took place eleven years later at which time a clock was installed in the tower.⁵⁰

St. George's has remained a prominent feature in the streetscape of the busy town of Buff Bay. The oldest building in the town, St. George's boasts architectural details such as white sash windows and modest brickwork, reminiscent of the Georgian period (1714-1830).

Notwithstanding its aesthetic appeal however, the Church and its few remaining gravestones are mute witnesses of an era of opulence that was sustained by the perpetuation of race and class injustices against blacks during and after the period of plantation slavery. Although the doors of the Parish Church were opened not only to whites, but the wider community which included the Maroons (inclusive of Moore Town Maroons), forty of whom were baptized by the church in 1818,⁵¹ the religious institution - while claiming to uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ - also profited from the labour of

⁴⁸ The Blue Book of Jamaica 1852, 92; The Blue Book of Jamaica 1856, 45.

⁴⁹ *The 175th Anniversary of the St. George's Anglican Church, Buff Bay, Portland 1814-1989*. 5/10/28 Jamaica Archives.

⁵⁰ *The 175th Anniversary of the St. George's Anglican Church, Buff Bay, Portland 1814-1989*. 5/10/28 Jamaica Archives.

⁵¹ Baptisms of White Persons, Free Persons of Colour and Maroons 1818. 1B/11/8/12 Jamaica Archives.

enslaved Africans as it too was a slaveholder. Further, in the post-slavery period the church sought to entrench class distinctions in the church by classifying seats and offering them for rent. First class seats were proposed for 12 shillings, second class for 8 shillings and third class for 4 shillings.⁵²

Today, the St. George's Anglican Church is a historic landmark in the Parish of Portland.

“Glebe Land”

In Anglican tradition, a glebe describes the land assigned to support the priest as a part of his benefice.⁵³ It included a wide variety of properties such as farms, houses, factories etc. In the parish of St. George, the glebe land was situated in the town of Buff Bay and extended to Annotto Bay. Seventy acres of this land was laid out in 1803 for the construction of a parsonage house and office. It was the property on which the Church was built, as well as the houses of the people enslaved by the Church. The rest of the land was at times encroached upon by others such as the Charles Town Maroons, who in 1801 were given twelve months to rid the land of everything they had planted. The situation however continued until 1804 when further complaints to the Vestry led to the appearance of Major Grant of the Charles Town Maroons before the Vestry at which time he promised to comply, but requested a dividing line between the Maroons and the Glebe land.⁵⁴

⁵² Vestry Minutes 1842-1847. 2/18/4 Jamaica Archives.

⁵³ Patrick Hanks. *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.)1979.

⁵⁴ *St. George Vestry Minutes*. 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives

“Glebe Slaves”

The Vestry Minutes provide a brief insight into the lives of these enslaved people. While the size of the group is unknown, the records suggest that they occupied at least two or more houses on the Glebe land, which was situated 8 miles from the church and parsonage house. An additional four “negro” houses were located in close proximity to the rectory. All the houses were built by these enslaved people. In fact, the houses near the rectory were built by George, Hope, Belinda and Emily, who were to be paid by the churchwardens the sum of 6s 8d each for their labour according to an order of the Vestry on October 18, 1809.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, there are no records confirming whether this amount was actually paid.

Apart from their living arrangements, the records also shed some light on the state of the relationship between the Rector, C.T. May. It was apparent from communications with the Rector that all was not well between both parties. As such, on October 16, 1813, the Glebe Committee⁵⁶ advised the Vestry that on,

*Finding the slaves belonging to the Rectory have given great cause of complaint to the Rector. We your committee beg leave to recommend that the said slaves should be rented out to the best advantage till a Bill can be laid out before the Honorable House of Assembly to enable the Vestry to dispose of the Glebe Lands and slaves thereunto belonging either together or separately as may appear most to the benefit of the Parish.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ During the pregnancies of Hope and Emily, midwife, Mimba was paid to take care of them and their children for one month. See *St. George Vestry Minutes* 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁵⁶ The Glebe Committee was set up to about 1804 to deal with matters related to the glebe property. They supervised the construction of buildings on the property, made recommendations relating to improvements to buildings, investigated complaints related to the Glebe.

⁵⁷ *St. George Vestry Minutes*. 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

It is not known how soon this recommendation was put into effect, but on July 18, 1815 the proposal of Mr. R.G. Kirkland to hire out the Glebe Slaves to True Blue Plantation was accepted at a rate of £105 per annum.⁵⁸

Buff Bay Court House

The importance of the administration of Justice to political stability made the hall of judicature a focal feature in colonial society and a prominent landmark in most parochial divisions. The building facilitated several hearings. In Buff Bay, these included the Court of Quarter Sessions, the Court of Common Pleas, Slave Court and Maroon Court.⁵⁹ The community was made aware of the various sittings by the Crier of the Court who between February 24, 1841 and April 15, 1842 was Henry Burke.⁶⁰ Fittingly, as the seat of justice, the building was also the meeting place of the Parish Vestry and as a stark expression of colonial justice its dungeon was used for the confinement of prisoners and in its yard a workhouse was established.⁶¹

Although the date of first construction is unknown, it is evident that the Court dates back to 1801 from the earliest surviving Vestry Minutes found at the Jamaica Archives. Consideration was however given in 1815 to erect a new building as a storm that year rendered the Court House “very unsafe and the buildings in a ruinous state” and

⁵⁸ St. George Vestry Minutes. 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁵⁹ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions. 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives. Maroon Courts were set to deal with crimes committed by Maroons under the 1791 *Act to Repeal* “An act for the better order and government of the negroes belonging to the several negro-towns, and for preventing them from purchasing of slaves; and for encouraging the said negroes to go in pursuit of runaway slaves; and for other purposes therein mentioned;” and for giving the maroon negroes further protection and security; for altering the mode of trial; and for other purposes. They were to be tried before three Justices of the Peace and a jury which consisted of twelve white men.

⁶⁰ Vestry Minutes. 1836-1841. 1/18/3 Jamaica Archives.

⁶¹ St. George Vestry Minutes. 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

occasioned a petition by the Vestry to the House of Assembly on November 6, 1815 requesting tax reliefs.

*The grievous disasters which have happened in this parish from the effects of the late severe storm, and soliciting the Honourable House to grant relief to the Parishioners from the Public taxes and to afford other assistance in repairing the damages sustained by the roads and bridges of this parish, and also stating the situation and condition of the Court house jail and workhouse, and the necessity of those purposes...*⁶²

Subsequent to this the Vestry began to seek suitable land on which to erect the new court house, jailhouse and workhouse. When no fitting lot was found by 1816, the decision was made to effect temporary repairs until an eligible spot was found. The lot of land was not acquired until 1837 – a year prior to the declaration of full freedom. The repairs must have sufficed as the matter was not revisited until August 29, 1834 at which time the decision was taken that the “south cellar of the Court House [be] converted into as many solitary cells as it will admit as agreeably to Lt. St. John’s plan submitted by the Governor to the Special Magistrate.”⁶³ Although unspoken, their actions suggest that they were bracing for an outpouring of disruptive conduct from the newly apprenticed masses. In addition to increasing the number of cells, they also resolved to “surround the premises with a mortar wall ten feet high capped and heaped with broken bottles and to make the foundation for the treadmill” which was to be modelled off those found at the Brixton prisons and houses of corrections in England. While it is not clear from the records whether the proposed perimeter fence was ever erected, a treadmill was in fact imported from Great Britain in 1837 capable of working ten people.⁶⁴

⁶² St. George’s Vestry Minutes. 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁶³ *St George Vestry Minutes 1829-1835*. 2/18/2 Jamaica Archives.

⁶⁴ St George Vestry Minutes. 1829-1835. 2/18/2 Jamaica Archives.

If the modifications called for in 1834 were acceded to they were still not considered sufficient. Three years later the clerk of the Vestry was ordered to enquire into the ownership of the land at the back of the Court House for the purpose of procuring one or two acres for the erection of a house of correction.⁶⁵ The land was purchased from Samuel Daniells for the sum of £150 in 1837 however up until October 1840 no construction had taken place on the land despite the reports of “dilapidation and decay...[and] the number of prisoners who have died” as a result of the poor conditions.⁶⁶

The Workhouse

Modelled after the British workhouses where indigent people were afforded food and shelter in exchange for labour, workhouses established throughout the British Caribbean during the 18th and 19th centuries functioned as places of punishment for enslaved people who were convicted by the Slave Courts, as well as those detained pending further investigations. A list of items purchased in 1806 for use in the workhouse in Buff Bay serve as powerful testimonies of the extent of the cruelty visited upon those unfortunates who were confined to the wretched facility.

Table 1 – Workhouse Implements

Implements of torture	Implements for manual labour/other uses
2 bilboe rods	2 dozen hoes
1dozen shackles	2 dozen bills
1 dozen chains	1 dozen axes
2 dozen collars	6 dozen iron pots
1 dozen padlocks	baskets
Supple Jack	-

⁶⁵ Vestry Minutes. 1836-1841. 2/18/3 Jamaica Archives.

⁶⁶ Vestry Minutes 1836-1841. Jamaica Archives (2/18/3)

Those confined to the workhouses may be divided into three groups (1) those committed for life;⁶⁷ (2) those serving a short sentence; and (3) those committed until the completion of requisite investigations. Regardless of the purpose for commitment, however, all carried out the same functions. The St. George's Vestry Minutes provide some insight into the types of work that these enslaved people were compelled to perform. They were mandated to cut the grass of the Court house and church yard, as both places had to be in pristine state for public meetings and weekly services, respectively. In addition to this, they worked along with gangs from other plantations in maintaining the parochial roads.⁶⁸

Uprisings in the Parish of St. George

As resistance was a constant feature of plantation Jamaica, it is of no surprise that the parish of St. George experienced their share of uprisings. The records of the period revealed three prominent revolts in the parish. One occurred at Eden Estate in 1812,⁶⁹ another in 1816, while the last one took place in 1823 in the Buff Bay River Valley and involved enslaved people from several of the surrounding estates.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Slaveholders who lost slaves by way of life sentences to the workhouse received monetary compensation.

⁶⁸ St. George's Vestry Minutes. 1801-1816; 1829 -1835. 2/18/1. Jamaica Archives.

⁶⁹ St. George's Vestry Minutes. 1801-1816; 1829 -1835. 2/18/1. Jamaica Archives.

⁷⁰ St George's Slave Court Trials. 1822-1831. 2/16/6 Jamaica Archives.

Eden Estate was a sugar estate located along the Swift River. It was owned by David and Charles Bernard⁷¹ and had over 200 enslaved workers.⁷² According to the records, on April 15, 1812 the enslaved people at Eden attacked the overseer, W. Borrowdale and the bookkeeper, W. John Dixon. Details of the events leading up to the attacks were not provided, however, both men were rescued by William Thomas Dixon, the overseer of Paradise Estate (a sugar estate situated on the opposite side of the Swift River) and assistance in quelling the revolt came from those enslaved people who remained loyal to their white enslavers, as well as a free man of colour, Edward Skyers.⁷³

The Vestry did not fail to shower praises upon those who helped to thwart the uprising. Thomas received a letter of praise that sought to assure him that he held “a distinguished place” in their esteem. Ann Edwards, an enslaved woman and July, the chief driver - both of Eden Estate - each received a doubloon (gold coin) for their efforts. Skyers was awarded “a gold medal weighing eight pounds with the following inscription engraved thereon, “A tribute on approbation from the Vestry of Saint George to Edward Skyers, a free man of colour for his good conduct in assisting to quell a rebellion on Eden Estate, 15th April 1812.” The arms of the island were engraved on the reverse.⁷⁴

Four years later, there was another disturbance. According to a letter sent to the Custos by a number of residents, “a numerous gang of armed runaway slaves [were] concealed

⁷¹ Kenneth Ingram. *Manuscript Sources for the History of the West Indies: with special reference to Jamaica in the National Library of Jamaica and supplementary sources in the West Indies*, North America, and United Kingdom and elsewhere (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, c2000).

⁷² Givings-In. 1821-1836. 2/18/5 Jamaica Archives.

⁷³ The Vestry Minutes fail to identify Skyers' property status.

⁷⁴ Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

in their neighbourhood and commit many depredations and are the source of great uneasiness to them, that they have sent out frequent parties of Maroons without much effect and praying to have the benefit of the [Act] 54th Geo. 3rd C. 17...to fit out and provide parties of confidential slaves...”⁷⁵ The rebellion was not quelled until the end of the year when two parties were fitted out, one of which was commanded by Robert Baugh with Edward Skyers, the free man of colour who was awarded for his role in the 1812 rebellion on Eden Estate appointed a non-commissioned officer. The other party was commanded by William Espeut with James Pickersgill, a free man of colour, a non-commissioned officer.

Perhaps mindful of the failed attempts at revolting in 1812 and 1816, the enslaved people in the Buff Bay River Valley sought to lay the proper ground work that they thought would ensure victory in the next revolt. The plot of 1823 involved both enslaved and free people of colour. Conspirators were from all over the valley Balcarres, Lovely Grove, Silver Hill Plantation, Galloway, Mullet Hall Plantation, Birnamwood, Mount Pleasant. According to the court records, secret meetings were arranged sometime between October 4 and December 25, 1823 in order to not only discuss their plot to murder whites as well as set fire to their houses, out houses and other buildings, but most importantly, the gatherings were training sessions in the art of using the arms they clandestinely attained.

Despite their training the conspirators went a step further in trying to guarantee success by involving a local Obeah man, Jack, who helped to bolster the confidence of the party.

⁷⁵ Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

Jack was owned by Jennet Johnston Lyons, a free woman of colour. He convinced the conspirators that the bush he rubbed on them not only strengthened them, but also made them so invulnerable that their opponents were weakened and their eyes darkened. In an effort to secure their plot, the men took a solemn oath of secrecy and fidelity to each other by drinking human blood mixed with rum and gunpowder.⁷⁶

Despite the level of organization displayed by the conspirators, the revolt was foiled by the authorities. Though the records failed to provide any detail regarding the uncovering of the plot, it may be inferred from the list of Crown witnesses that enslaved persons who were quite possibly amongst the ranks of the conspirators were responsible for informing the authorities.

Those found guilty of involvement in the plot were dealt with severely as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 2 - Results of Trials held in 1824 against Enslaved Conspirators

<i>Enslaved People</i>	<i>Estate/Owner</i>	Transportation (subjected to enslavement on another colony)	<i>Hanging</i>	<i>Owner's compensation</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Henry Oliver	Balcarres	X		£100	
Richard Montagnac	Balcarres	X		£ 70	
Dennis Kerr	Balcarres	X		£100	
James Thompson	Balcarres	X		£ 70	
John McFarlane	Balcarres	X		£100	
James Manhertz	Balcarres	X		£ 80	
John Spaulding	Balcarres	X		£100	
John Brame	Elizabeth Muir, free woman of colour	X		£100	
Samuel Haughton, alias Samuel	Elizabeth Muir, free woman of colour	X		£100	Guilty of having arms, but not with

⁷⁶ St. George's Slave Court Trials. 1822-1831. 2/18/6 Jamaica Archives.

Harrison					evil intent
Leon	Lovely Grove		X	£100	
George	Silver Hill Plantation		X	£100	
John Smith	Galloway Plantation		X	£100	
Samedi	Mullet Hall Plantation	X		£100	
George Taylor	Biramwood	X		£100	Guilty of attending unlawful meetings
John Wray	Mount Pleasant Plantation		X	£100	
Jack	Jennet Johnston Lyons, free woman of colour		X	£80	Guilty of Obeah and conspiracy
Prince	Paul Lathathe Carwin	X		£ 50	Guilty of conspiracy, not Obeah

Data extracted from St. George Slave Court Trial 18221831. Jamaica Archives (2/18/6)

Buff Bay River Valley and the 1938 Labour Riots

Emancipation may have achieved an end to the institution of forced labour, but the political and social injustices of the past persisted into the 20th century and thwarted in many respects the economic and social rise of many of the descendants of former enslaved class. Nowhere was the disparity more evident than in the workplace. The economic depressions that gripped the nation in 1929 only served to further exacerbate the poor conditions of the labouring class. This culminated in an island wide unrest in 1938, spurred on by the worker's riots at the Frome Estate in Westmoreland.

As frustrated workers across the island openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo, the newspapers reported the spread of unrest. In the Buff Bay River Valley, the Daily Gleaner reported,

Over 300 labourers from Rose Hill, Plum Valley, Charles Town and White River marched through this town, compelling Chinese shopkeepers to close up and forcing workers on Kildare Farm and Woodstock Estate to cease work, also the Buff Bay Bakery. Stones blocked main road to Craigmill and angry crowds damaged motor cars. The Custos' home was visited by a peaceful crowd asking

*advice. Police were early on the scene and several arrests made. Telegraph wires were cut.*⁷⁷

The militancy of the Jamaican workers did not bring an end to British Colonial rule, but it was a turning point in the political history of the island. It precipitated the rise of labour unions, which today are the driving forces in bargaining process of the workers and added fuel to the burgeoning nationalist agenda.

Select Estates in Buff Bay

Buff Bay River Estate

The Buff Bay River Estate was owned by the Hossack family during the period of plantation slavery. Ownership changed from John Hossack in the early 19th century to Alexander Hossack.⁷⁸ Other members of the Hossack family included Jane and William Hossack. Between 1821 and 1831, the property accounted for between 137 and 164 enslaved workers and approximately forty stocks (farm animals). By the time of Apprenticeship, the number of workers on the estate declined. In 1836, only 90 apprentices were reported.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ “Buff Bay Trouble”, *The Daily Gleaner*, June 3, 1938, 7.

⁷⁸ *St. George's Vestry Minutes. 1829-1835.* 2/18/2 Jamaica Archives.

⁷⁹ *Givings-In 1821-1836.* 2/18/5 Jamaica Archives.

The property was established as a sugar estate from the early 19th century,⁸⁰ however these activities ceased by the mid nineteenth century with the economic crunch that faced many sugar estates in the island. By 1872 the property was sold and it became the site of what was to be a model school that was established with the Charles Merrick Trust. The funds were bequeathed from 1821 with the stipulation that the sum of £2,069 be invested as follows:

*£1,000 of the sum be put out on good security, and the interest arising there from to be applied towards the poor and indigent of every description of colour of the parish of St. George, and £1,000 to be invested in like manner for the express purpose of educating one poor boy, either white or free boy of colour for three years.*⁸¹

The school was attended principally by the children of the Charles Town Maroons. It was abolished in 1888.

The property changed ownership again in the 20th century. Oral sources confirm that at this time the proprietor of the estate was Mr. Benbow an Englishman who prior to becoming the proprietor of the Buff Bay River Estate and two other properties in St. Mary sold course salt and herring at the Annatto Bay market. When Melvina Lucilla Wallen, aged 90 from Charles Town was interviewed by the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/ Jamaica Memory Bank in 1985 she noted that the property once boasted a beautiful house, but contended that the people from the community pillaged it, taking even the nails.⁸² A younger resident of the community, William George Martin, 82 who

⁸⁰ James Robertson. Map of the County of Surrey in the Island of Jamaica. 1804. National Library of Jamaica.

⁸¹ "Government Measure to Deal with the Merrick Charity". *The Gleaner*. February 3, 1915, 3.

⁸² Interview with Mulvina Lucilla Wallen, January 8, 1985, ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape 818 No. 1.

once worked on the Buff Bay River Estate noted that there were several buildings on the property and provided descriptions.

The Buff Bay River Estate, I tell you is really shocking to me now. There was a slavery house. It was a school, one that the slavery people them build up and even the building that was there, is slavery build it up – thirteen apartment house upstairs. I was living there...Big building...I was living there for a while. I was sort of responsible for the property there in those days in my twenties there and I was in charge of the property there. Big, huge building there, built by slavery. There was a school. Downstairs was a school – upstairs and downstairs. Thirteen apartment upstairs and... But there was no, it's just recently they had the sewer pit there, it was just water- no water system wasn't there. It was just pit latrine toilet that they used until recently when it sold to one Walker.⁸³ The Walkers them bought it now and they build up sewer system over there. But it all demolished now. There is nothing at all there. People go in and just do as you know, the house break down and all them things, you know. It ruin, it ruin, it ruin, it ruin, it really ruin.

There was about three other building temporary outside, you know. Away from the main building, you have the bookkeeper's house and the servant quarters different.

The thirteen apartment one was... it build out of...not concrete, we call it concrete, but is not really concrete, like what we have cement, it's a compoundment of white lime and marl together. White lime mix up with marl, like how we would have cement. A that they use and build it up. It was really a slavery building. They never had the cement in those days. They make their own cement- white lime and I understand they used molasses sugar to put it in to make it wall... Some parts of it was brick. Where the school – downstairs was brick...

I don't know why they demolish that building...

[The bookkeepers cottage was a] wooden structure. I occupied both of them too, cause I was living in the bookkeepers house and then I went over to the thirteen apartment house...

[The bookkeepers house had] three bedrooms upstairs and downstairs – dining hall down stairs.

[The servants' quarters], two room apartment...

⁸³ Property was owned by M.E. Walker who died in the early 1960's. See "For Sale", The Daily Gleaner , October 31, 1962, 20.

Another description of the property came from Lyn Campbell, who noted that access to the Estate in the old days was by a swinging bridge that was close to the mile post in Charles Town – and also a fording that facilitated vehicles.

They had a big nice house at Buff Bay River there, you know. A big house...People used to live there. They have a Busha(overseer), they have the owner and they have the Busha house - that is when I was a child you know. The Busha, and they have pimento, coffee. They make copra – coconut that make the soap. Then they pull out those drawers in the sun and in the evening they push it in back. [In the drawers] they put pimento, they put coffee, they put chocolate – that's where they dry the things. That's pimento house, that's copra house. The last person [owner] was Morris Parking. He was the last owner and he married to my husband's sister, so I know a lot about it. He died... He had changed the name and called it Hacienda, but people could know it as Buff Bay River.

The Benbows (were the owners when she was a child).

They ha[d]what I think they called it wagons that the Indians hold the cow head and pulled...They had barracks there, you know. You know what is a barracks? The workers lived there [Buff Bay River]...Indians and others, everybody - coloureds, black people [lived there] because they worked on the property and they have a busha house down the bottom – no busha, headman they call them now and the busha lived in a bigger house...

It was a cow property, pimento, coconut, they all chip all logwood. You know they chip logwood to make dye... They chip the log and sell...⁸⁴

These oral accounts of Buff Bay Estate are confirmed by a description of the property offered in a Notice for sale that appeared in the Daily Gleaner on March 3, 1962.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Interview with Lyn Campbell, April 17, 2009, ACIJ/JMB Audio Tape 1905, No. 1.

⁸⁵ "For Sale", *The Daily Gleaner*, March 3, 1962, 24.

FOR SALE

BUFF BAY RIVER ESTATE — BUFF BAY

Property of 610 Acres with Coconuts, Pimento, Coffee, Cattle, River and Springs through property. Rainfall excellent. 18th Century Great House, with necessary ancillary buildings. Municipal water supply. Asphalt road to gate, 2½ miles from town and rail-centre. Ideally suitable semi-retired person. Price reasonable.

Apply: **D. A. WALKER**
 2 Merrick Avenue,
 Kingston 10.

Telephone 66227.

Fourteen years later the property was again put up for sale. Additional crops listed at this time were limes and soursop, as well as “Macadamia (California Nuts), timber including bitter damsel, logwood and Spanish Elm.”⁸⁶

The estate therefore formerly thrived as a diverse agricultural unit that provided labour for the community. It managed to stay afloat after the Emancipation, transforming itself principally as a pimento and coffee producer and becoming a valuable asset to the community as a provider of employment. Workers at Buff Bay River were engaged in tending cattle, picking and husking coconuts, as the property offered for lease land on which farmers in the Valley cultivated a variety of cash crops and in the case of banana farming the estate engaged in the practice of sharecropping.

⁸⁶ “Buff Bay River Portland”, *The Daily Gleaner*, April 21, 1976, 13.

Buff Bay River property suffered decline in the latter part of the 20th century however and today, is overgrown with wild shrubbery – with little or no evidence of its historic past.

Names of Slaves on Buff Bay River Estate found in the Record Books

- Old Robin alias Burrows
- George Jaquet
- John Prince – received Certificate of Freedom in October 1816

Lancaster

Situated in the Buff Bay Valley on the mountain road from Newcastle to Buff Bay near the source of the Buff Bay River, the Lancaster Plantation once formed a part of the parish of St. George. The property was owned by John Thompson, an Englishman from Holm Island, Lancaster, and the plantation derived its name from the birth place of its owner.⁸⁷

Like many of the estates in the Valley, Lancaster was a coffee plantation, and it spanned approximately 532 acres.⁸⁸ Considering its acreage, the plantation was small in comparison to others in the Valley such as Birnamwood – 993 acres, Balcarres – 1,360 acres, Buff Bay River – 820, Cedar Valley – 1,358, Orangevale – 1,217 and Spring Garden Estate – 2,660 acres. However, it managed a much similar size labour force as

⁸⁷ The Gleaner, September 7, 1868.

⁸⁸ Thomas Harrison. Plan of Portland District of St. George. December 1876. 1B/21/1/5 Jamaica Archives.

many of these larger properties. In the mid 19th century, for example, Lancaster reported between 124 and 134 enslaved workers and no more than 12 farm animals.⁸⁹ In addition to the enslaved workers there were a number of white employees amongst whom were John Fargie, manager; Mr. Davis, attorney; Thomas Tyrrell, John Edwards, Hugh Williams.

By 1868, Lancaster was an abandoned coffee plantation. The plantation failed to adjust to the changes that the mid-nineteenth century brought – the admission of foreign coffee at a low duty into the British market and the Apprenticeship system which brought about the decline in the number of black workers as reported during the period. Furthermore, the death of proprietor, John Thompson in the mid 1800's and the absence of a proprietor for a number of years drove the plantation into further ruin. Between 1868 and 1870, the property was offered for sale in the *Gleaner*.⁹⁰

Lovely Grove

Not much is known about this plantation. It shared joint ownership with the neighbouring Alexander Garden. Both plantations covered approximately 495 acres.⁹¹ Two known owners of the plantations were Colin Chisholm and John Marston both of whom died by the latter part of the nineteenth century.

⁸⁹ Givings-In 1821-1836. 2/18/5 Jamaica Archives.

⁹⁰ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions. 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.; *The Gleaner*, July 27, 1868; *The Gleaner*, June 18, 1870, 1.

⁹¹ Thomas Harrison. *Plan of Portland District of St. George*. December 1876. 1B/21/1/5 Jamaica Archives.

Colin Chisholm possessed three fifths estate and interest in Lovely Grove and Alexander Garden and he was also the owner of Ginger Hill Plantation in the parish of St. Thomas-In-The-Vale. John Marston owned two-fifths of properties in addition to two-fifths of Trinity Valley. Both men died by the latter part of the nineteenth century according to advertisements for sale of the properties which appeared in 1866 and again in 1870.

Following the death of Marston there was a controversy surrounding the rights to the sale of Lovely Grove and Alexander Garden. The properties were advertised for sale by William Bell, who described himself as a “Qualified Executor”, however Benjamin Crossely from Buff Bay who was then in possession of the property protested against the sale “upon legal grounds”.⁹²

It is not known how the legal matter was finally resolved. However, the property continued to be considered important. So much so that in 1902 when the Parochial Board was petitioned by Robert Carby and others for a road leading from Berwick Spring to Lovely Grove, the Board considered to partially fund the construction with a grant of £2 “provided the petitioners would expend a like amount.”⁹³

Names of Workers on Lovely Grove in the 1800's

- *Leon* – enslaved labourer
- Louis Germain – white employee
- Louis Delafitte – white employee
- Thomas Higson – white employee
- John Edwards – white employee
- Dennis Sullivan – white employee

⁹² The Gleaner, July 9, 1870, 4. For more on Crossely see section entitled Nineteenth Century Owners of Spring Garden Estate.

⁹³ The Gleaner. September 11, 1902, 14.

- George F. Bourdett – white employee
- William Hurt – white employee

Spring Garden Estate

One of the most vivid accounts of Spring Garden in the 1800's came from Lady Nugent.

Of her tour of the garden, Nugent wrote:

[It] is an excellent one, and kept in good order. Saw a great number of trees and plants, amongst which are the chocolate-tree, &c. I found five or six strawberries, some roses, and a variety of beautiful flowers.

She went on to describe the rest of the property:

This house is a very good one, placed at the top of a hill, at the bottom of which, on one side, are the negro houses, neatly laid out into a street, with a stream running through the vale, plenty of cocoa-nut trees and plantations. The vale, on the other side, contains the garden, which is also well watered by a river that comes from the mountains; and the gardener told us that alligators often appear on its banks, which rendered it dangerous for bathing. In front is the sea, sugar works, cane pieces, &c. While we were in the garden this morning, two poor negroes, who had been in chains nearly a year, came to General N. to ask him to intercede for them, and they were accordingly released in the evening.⁹⁴

Spring Garden was one of the largest sugar estates in the parish of St. George containing 2,660 acres of land according to the Givings-In report of 1836. It was bordered by Kildare Estate and the Spanish River.

During the heyday of sugar, the property had several owners and managers. Prominent nineteenth century owners of Spring Garden were John R. Grossett, Custos of St. George,

⁹⁴ Lady Nugent. *Lady Nugent's Journal: of her residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966) 73-74.

Quintin Hogg and Willaim Bancroft Espeut.⁹⁵ One of the earliest managers was identified by Lady Nugent as Mr. Shirley of whom nothing further is known. There was also Benjamain Crossley who was in charge of the estate in 1819 during which time the enslaved people on the estate were described as “in a state of turbulancy [sic] and insubordination, and divers of them to the number of seventy have absconded from the said estate...” for four weeks.⁹⁶

Quintin Hogg was the senior partner of the sugar merchandizing firm of Hogg, Curtis and Campbell.⁹⁷ He also served as Deputy Chairman of the West India Committee⁹⁸ a position which he used to push for state aided immigration from India. His interest in commerce led to his purchase of the trade journal, “European Mail” which was started in 1868 by the brothers, S.V and O.V Morgan.⁹⁹ Notwithstanding his plantation interest in Jamaica, Hogg’s principal sugar connections were with Demerara¹⁰⁰ and today, his memory is commemorated by Hogg Island in Guyana.¹⁰¹

Outside of his sugar interest, Hogg also founded the London Polytechnic which is today the University of Westminster. He has also been described as a Christian motivated philanthropist.

⁹⁵ The Blue Book – Colony of Jamaica 1838, 60.

⁹⁶ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions. 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives. Like many propertied white colonial men, Crossley served in various capacities in the parish. He was appointed to the Vestry as a Justice of the Peace in March 14, 1804 and two years later on May 17 he was elected Magistrate. In May of the following year Crossley added the title of Treasurer of the Workhouse to his credentials. See also St. George Vestry Minutes 1801-1816, 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

⁹⁷ Philip Wright et al. *Exploring Jamaica: A Guide for Motorists*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1969, 106.

⁹⁸ The Gleaner, February 28, 1890, 2.

⁹⁹ The Gleaner, October 4, 1892, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, 106.

¹⁰¹ <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quintin_Hogg_\(1845-1903\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quintin_Hogg_(1845-1903))>

Hogg's attorney, William Bancroft Espeut, later acquired the property. Espeut was a member of the municipal board, as well as, the Island Legislative Council.

By 1885, Spring Garden was one of three sugar estates remaining in Portland. This was in great measure due to the efforts of Espeut who tried to keep the estate afloat by introducing various measures aimed at increasing efficiency and productivity. Not only did Espeut author the Institute of Jamaica's Popular Lecture Series Number 4 entitled "The Advantages to Result from Railway Extension,"¹⁰² but he believed enough in its rewards to build a tramway to transport canes to the factory as early as 1868.¹⁰³ This was the first such initiative in the parish. It was 4½ miles long up the Spanish River Valley to Chepstow where evidence of the railway might still be found today. Another first was the success of the 4 male and 5 female mongooses, which he imported directly from India to eliminate the problem of rats on the estate. Previous attempts in the island to breed mongooses from cage bred animals imported from Britain failed. So successful were the mongooses in controlling the rats that in 1880, the Gleaner suggested that Espeut recommend their introduction to planters in Trinidad who were struggling to control the pests in their cane fields.¹⁰⁴ The population of mongooses in Jamaica today is believed to be descended from the nine animals brought by Espeut.

¹⁰² <<http://openlibrary.org/b/OL6983051M/advantages-to-result-from-railway-extension>>; The Blue Book - Island of Jamaica, 1866 reported that W. Bancroft Espeut was appointed to the post as First-Class Clerk on October 1, 1866 and earned an annual salary of £340.

¹⁰³ "Spring Gardens" <http://www.discoverjamaica.com/gleaner/discover/tour_ja/tour19.htm>

¹⁰⁴ The Gleaner. April 28, 1880, 2.

Further, it is evident from Espeut's notification of his intention in accordance with the Patent Law Amendment Act, 1857 to apply for Letters Patent for his invention of "Improvements in the method of Hanging the Coppers or Open Vessels used to Evaporate Cane Juice in the Manufacture of Sugar"¹⁰⁵ that he was keenly considering all aspects of the production process. It is not known, however, whether his invention was indeed patented or more so, implemented in any way.

Despite his valiant efforts however, he later resolved to lease the property to the United Fruit Company.

Enslaved People on Spring Garden Estate

According to the returns submitted for Spring Garden Estate during the period 1821 - 1836, there were over almost 600 enslaved people on the estate. The number of blacks reported was lowest during the apprenticeship period when the number dropped to 428 in 1836.¹⁰⁶

Below are the names of some enslaved people at Spring Garden found in the Court Records of the parish of St. George:

1. David Gray alias George
2. Richard Gale alias Russell
3. Joseph Jepson
4. Robin alias William
5. Nancy Thompson

¹⁰⁵ The Gleaner, July 9, 1870, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Givings-In 1821-1836. 2/18/5 Jamaica Archives.

Cascade

Situated in the Buff Bay Valley boarding the Parishes of Portland and St Andrew, the community of Cascade once totalled 230 acres.¹⁰⁷ It was at one time owned by Lady Hemming, wife of Governor Augustus William Lawson Hemming who came to the island in March 1898. The property was however managed by a Mr. Landale. According to the Minutes of the Surveyor General, the property was available for sale in 1911 at £1 per acre.¹⁰⁸

Birnamwood

This was once an estate owned by Alexander Aikman in 1800.¹⁰⁹ Aikman was appointed magistrate on May 17, 1806.¹¹⁰ The Vestry Minutes of the parish of St. George suggest that Aikman owned a printery and handled all such matters for the Vestry.¹¹¹

By 1852, the St. George's Anglican Church had a chapel in Birnamwood.

The community at this time also boasted a school that had a total of 33 students.¹¹² It was operated by B. Bell and funded by both the parochial and Bishops funds. The school followed the national mode of instruction.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Harrison. *Plan of Portland District of St. George*. December 1876. 1B/21/1/5 Jamaica Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Jamaica Forest Report. 1886. 1B/5/76/3/34 Jamaica Archives.

¹⁰⁹ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.

¹¹⁰ Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

¹¹¹ Vestry Minutes 1801-1816. 2/18/1 Jamaica Archives.

¹¹² The Blue Book of Jamaica 1852, 217.

By 1856, however, H. Foster and his wife were in charge of the school and the population was almost five times its size of 1852. Sixty-one of the students were girls. The school fee was 12 shillings per week. The school population marginally decreased in 1866 under the leadership of J. Murray. The size of the female population however showed a marked increase.¹¹⁴

The Curate in Birnamwood in 1866 was D.B. Panton. Panton was appointed to the post in 1860.¹¹⁵

Plum Valley

According to the a Gleaner report in 1898, the main road up the Buff Bay River Valley between Charles Town and the cave in Plum Valley was the only outlet of the valley which produced a large quantity of fruit and on which there was considerable amount of wheel traffic.¹¹⁶

An oral source in the community believes that the area derived its name from the large numbers of plum trees, popularly referred to as “red plums” that were once common in the area.¹¹⁷ This claim however, is unsubstantiated.

¹¹³ The Blue Book of Jamaica 1852, 225

¹¹⁴ The Blue Book of Jamaica 1856, 114; The Blue Book, 1866, S5.

¹¹⁵ Blue Book, 1866, L44.

¹¹⁶ The Gleaner, Friday, December 16, 1898, 7.

¹¹⁷ Interview with William George Martin. June 27, 2009. ACIJ Tape # 1911

Avocat

Not much is known about the history of Avocat. However, the area was known for the Roman Catholic school known as Avocat Stace. According to the commemorative plaque at the Avocot Primary and Junior High, the Catholic Mission started in the area in 1842 at Mount Holstein and the first catholic school in the area was started about 1850 near Lucky Grove (Lovely Grove).

The catholic school comprised 32 students in 1856 and the teacher at this time was J. Terrelong.¹¹⁸ By 1866, however the teacher was W. Terrelong and the name of the school had changed to Avocat Rose. The student population showed a marginal decrease.

Silver Hill

This was once a coffee estate of 700 acres owned by Paul Delamotte in 1803.¹¹⁹

The estate possessed a much smaller number of enslaved people than other coffee estates of comparable or even lesser acreages. Plantation returns during the period 1821 -1836 reported that there never more than 89 enslaved people reported.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Blue Book of Jamaica 1856, 114.

¹¹⁹ Blue Book of Jamaica 1856, 114.

¹²⁰ Givings-In 1821-1836. 2/18/5 Jamaica Archives.

In the 20th century, the estate remained committed to coffee production. However, ownership passed to the descendants of former enslaved people, who established the Portland Blue Mountain Coffee Co-op in the 1950's. The Silver Hill Coffee factory thus served coffee farmers, large and small in and around the Blue Mountain area.¹²¹

Spring Hill

The overseer on this plantation in 1827 was Bernard Conahan.¹²² A map of St. George in 1840 identified the owner as J. Smith.¹²³

Charles Town Maroons

History

The word Maroon is the anglicized version of what is believed to be the Spanish word cimarrón and it describes communities of blacks who escaped plantation slavery and established settlements in hilly or mountainous regions. Such communities existed wherever Europeans established colonies; and in Jamaica major Maroon settlements were found in the Leeward and Windward sections of the island. The Leeward Maroons included Trelawny Town and Accompong Town; while the Windwards encompassed Scott's Hall, Nanny Town, Moore Town and Charles Town.

¹²¹ "Coffee Co-op Members Repair Roads", *The Daily Gleaner*, August 27, 1983, 9.

¹²² *St. George's Vestry Minutes. 1829-1835. 2/18/2* Jamaica Archives.

¹²³ Map of St. George, 1840 727.44fa 1840. National Library of Jamaica

According to Werner Zips, the Windward Maroons date back to the “Spanish” Maroons of Juan Lubolo and Juan de Serras. These “Spanish” Maroons along with freedom fighters from Madam Grey’s plantation in Guanabola Vale and a shipwrecked group from Madagascar¹²⁴ possibly along with some Tainos were the genesis of the Windward Maroons.

These Eastern Maroons by all accounts appeared to have united under a supreme spiritual leader, Queen Nanny or Grandy Nanny, although their settlements were dispersed, each under its own leader. The fragmentation of the group appears to some extent to have been a strategic plan, whereby the group could guard against total destruction in the event of discovery as was the case when the residents of Nanny Town retreated to Guy’s Town after being attacked by the militia in 1734.¹²⁵ On the other hand, dissention amongst the group was a very real factor as it had led to the establishment of communities such as Scott’s Hall in 1750’s and later occasioned the migration of the Crawford family to New Nanny Town (Moore Town). It is not clear whether or not these breakaways were due to ethnic differences.

One of the Windward Maroon communities was Charles Town founded by Quao, who is today recognized by these Maroons as “the invisible hunter”. Quao appeared to have been one of the right hand men of Nanny and lived at Pumpkin Hill with the great leader. According to Bev Carey, he established temporary villages in the parish of St. George

¹²⁴ Werner Zips. *Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999, 58.

¹²⁵ Werner Zips. *Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999, 58.

including the more settled Charles Town. However, the settlement was never named in honour of Quao, or even led by him. Instead Captain Ned Crawford was in charge of the group and the settlement was referred to as Old Crawford Town. By the latter part of the 18th century the settlement moved closer to the town of Buff Bay and was referred to as New Crawford Town.¹²⁶ The records fail to address the rise of Crawford, but his ascent clearly displeased Quao who sought to unseat him and in so doing brought about Crawford's death, the temporary isolation of the community and later the move of the Crawford family to Moore Town. Quao's action against Crawford found no favour in the eyes of the colonial Governor and the New Nanny Town Maroons. New Nanny town joined forces with detachments of regulars sent out by the Governor to quell the dispute and neutralize Quao. The two succeeded by killing Quao.¹²⁷

The Origin of the Name Charles Town

While the settlement at one time bore the name of one of its leaders, Ned Crawford, there is little information on the origin of the name Charles Town. Inez Sibley claims in her Dictionary of Place-Names in Jamaica that the settlement was named after Captain Charles Cudjoe, leader of the Trelawny Town Maroons.¹²⁸ However, so far no other records have been found to support her claim and even more so to indicate that Cudjoe's first name was Charles. There have been speculations in the community however that it

¹²⁶ Thomas Craskell and James Simpson. Map of the Island of Jamaica, 1783. National Library of Jamaica.

¹²⁷ Bev Carey. *The Maroon Story: the authentic and original history of the Maroons in the history of Jamaica 1490-1880*, Agouti Press: Gordon Town, 1997.

¹²⁸ Inez Knibb Sibley. *Dictionary of Place-Names in Jamaica*, Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1978, 34.

got the name from the Charles family who once resided in the community.¹²⁹ However this claim has yet to be substantiated.

What is evident however from the records and in particular, Robert Leslie's 1791 map of Orange Vale Plantation is not only that the maroon settlement was in existence in the Buff Bay River Valley at that time, but more so was recognized by the name Charles Town.¹³⁰

Curiously, however, a plan of Portland District by Thomas Harrison for the Survey Department almost a century later in 1876 suggested that Charles Town extended beyond the Maroon community and comprised 890 acres. Harrison identified about a quarter of this property of Charles Town as Maroon settlement. Notwithstanding, no land patents have yet been found naming a grantee for this property or suggesting a possible origin of the name.

Certificates of Freedom

The Treaty signed by Cudjoe with the English in 1739 gave Maroons across the island one thousand five hundred acres of land.¹³¹ However, in an effort to control the growth of Maroon communities, the British crafted the Maroon law entitled "An Act to repeal *'An Act for the better order and government of the negroes belonging to the several negro-towns, and for preventing them from purchasing of slaves; and for encouraging*

¹²⁹ This information was gathered from discussions with the Colonel Lumsden.

¹³⁰ B.W. Higman. *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation maps and plans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, Institute of Jamaica Publications Ltd: Kingston, 1988, 165.

¹³¹ Copy of Actual Treaty signed in 1738 on the Battlefield by Both Parties. MS260 National Library of Jamaica.

*the said negroes to go in pursuit of runaway slaves; and for other purposes therein mentioned;” and for giving the maroon negroes further protection and security; for altering the mode of trial; and for other purposes’.*¹³² This act stipulated that Maroons who settled outside of their community had to resign their lands at Quarter Sessions. In light of this, many Charles Town Maroons possibly in search of greener pastures made applications on behalf of themselves and their children for Certificates of Freedom which were granted in the Court of Quarter Sessions.¹³³ These certificates were even requested for children.

*Abbreviated List of Maroon Recipients of Certificates of Freedom
(Information extracted from the St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-
1834)*

- Mary Hunter, a mulatto girl
- Quasheba, a black woman
- Ann Crawford, a black woman
- James and Alexander, two mulatto children of Ann Crawford
- Jenny Campbell, a black woman
- Ann Richards, a black woman
- Jenny Crawford, a black child of Ann Richards
- Kitty Gordon, a black girl, the daughter of Major John Gordon of Charles Town by a negro woman named Yabba
- James Walsh, a mulatto boy son of Elizabeth Bucke, deceased

¹³² Laws of Jamaica 1760-92. Jamaica Archives.

¹³³ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.

Charles Town in the 1800's

When Lady Nugent visited Charles Town in March 1802 she noted that the community was “situated between two high hills with coconut trees &c. up to the very tops, with little huts up the sides of the hills, each having a piazza in front, and a little garden, looking really picturesque.”¹³⁴ Nugent’s party was warmly welcomed by the Maroons

The Maroons received us as if they were much pleased with our visit; the women danced, and the men went through their war exercise for us. The dancing was exactly like that of the negroes at Christmas, and their military manoeuvres [sic] seemed to consist entirely of ambuscade; taking aim at their enemy from behind trees, leaping up, and rolling about, to avoid being wounded themselves. Although it was so savage and frightful, that I could not help feeling a little panic, by merely looking at them.

The women were dressed with a variety of trinkets and finery, and many not unbecomingly, though very fantastically. Their band was composed of all sorts of rude instruments, neither very musical, nor with much variety of cadence. The Coromantee flute is a long black reed, has a plaintive and melancholy sound, and is played with the nose.

Livelihood

Those who chose to remain in Charles Town engaged in subsistence farming, as well as, the planting of export crops pimento and coffee.¹³⁵ Other sources of income however came from assisting the colonial government in accordance with the Maroon Law by returning runaway’s who wandered into their community.¹³⁶ They also formed parties upon the request of the superintendent who was put in charge of the Maroons to seek out

¹³⁴ Maria Nugent. *Lady Nugent’s Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (Kingston: University of Jamaica Press, 2002) 75.

¹³⁵ Thomas Craskell and James Simpson. *Map of the Island of Jamaica, 1783*. National Library of Jamaica.

¹³⁶ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.

runaways and performed guard duties at the Buff Bay Jail.¹³⁷ The accounts for 1829 show that while Charles Town Maroons earned a total of £24 10d for the labour of eleven men who worked a combined total of 13 days¹³⁸ the Superintendents of the Charles Town Maroons in 1838, James Baugh and Edward Ramsay, each earned £214 5s 7½d in addition to the house they were given.¹³⁹

Other Charles Town Maroons, like Edward Gray Ball sold kegs of arrowroot at 5 shillings per keg as well as liquor.¹⁴⁰

Land Issues

According to the Gleaner reports, “About a hundred Maroons from Charles Town marched to Gibraltar Pen and Fyfes Pen and have entered upon these estates which for some reason they consider belong to them... .”¹⁴¹ It was claimed by the Maroons that Colonel Fyfe held the land on behalf of the Maroons.¹⁴² While this event failed to bring about a more colourful confrontation between the Maroons and the authorities much to

¹³⁷ Laws of Jamaica, 1760-92 and St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.

¹³⁸ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. 2/18/7 Jamaica Archives.

¹³⁹ The Blue Book – Colony of Jamaica 1838, 62 & 86. Baugh was appointed on June 2, 1836, while Ramsay was appointed on June 11, 1838. An earlier Superintendent of the Charlestown Maroons was Robert Gray – 1825. Outside of their Duties as Superintendents, these functionaries could hold other offices. Gray for example was a Justice of the Peace hearing cases at the Court and he was also the Collector and Inspector of the Duties on Spirituous Liquors for the Parish. See St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions

¹⁴⁰ St. George General Court of Quarter Sessions 1799-1834. Edward Gray Ball was owned money for arrowroot sold to Bernard LaSelve. The matter was hear at the Buff Bay Court on December 1826 and judgment was rendered in Ball’s favour. He was not so fortunate however the next time he appeared in Court as he was charged for selling liquor without a license. The records reveal that other Charlestown maroons were also fined for selling liquor without a license. (No Quarter Sessions were held in St. George in 1799)

¹⁴¹ The Gleaner, Saturday, October 1, 1898, 7.

¹⁴² The Gleaner, October 15, 1898, 8.

the disappointment of some,¹⁴³ it did occasion a number of articles to the Daily Gleaner and was dubbed the “Battle of Annotto Bay”. The matter brought about Court proceedings which resulted in the “ringleader”, William Rushford, the Maroon Major being fined. The matter was thereafter referred to the Supreme Court.¹⁴⁴

Colonial Churches in Charles Town

While Lady Nugent resided in Jamaica, she recorded a visit to a church in Charles Town where a Maroon clergyman, according to her, “preached for us, as he called it...”¹⁴⁵ – The denomination was not identified by Nugent.

However, in 1833 there was an unlicensed Baptist Church in Charles Town. The preacher, Josias Barlow was also unlicensed and preached to a mixed congregation of free persons, Maroons and slaves. The existence of the church was brought to the attention of the Court by Constable Edward Cooper Burgess on March 5, 1833. It is likely that the church continued to operate as a map dated 1840 recorded the existence of a Baptist Church in Charles Town.¹⁴⁶

In 1867, the Honorable James Robert Mann, major general, Royal Engineers and director of the grounds at Charles Town gave directions for the survey of 4 acres of land for a

¹⁴³ This assumption was drawn from the article by the author of the Gleaner Article, “The Maroon Adventurer” who referred to himself as an unharmed Adventurer. The Daily Gleaner, Monday, October 17, 1898, 7.

¹⁴⁴ The Gleaner, October 15, 1898, 8.

¹⁴⁵ Maria Nugent. *Lady Nugent’s Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (Kingston: University of Jamaica Press, 2002) 75.

¹⁴⁶ Map of St. George. 727.44fa 1840. National Library of Jamaica

church and school room in the community. The building committee comprised James Oakley, John Sheckleford and Mr. Cargil.

Colonial Education in Charles Town

According to Carl Campbell, the activity of white missionaries in Maroon settlements dates back to the early 1800's. From the late 1820's a school was set up in the community, but it is unknown which religious body was responsible. However, Campbell noted that about 1827 or 1828, the Church Missionary Society began visiting Maroons and sent religious schoolmasters into not only Charles Town, but Accompong Town and Moore Town.¹⁴⁷ In Charles Town, the Society had difficulty finding a "regular schoolhouse" and by 1839 the school was closed. A report by Edward Fishbourne, Stipendiary Magistrate in 1840 cited dissatisfaction with the standard of teaching offered by white tutor, William Findlay and the subsequent withdrawal of students from the school as the reason for the school's closure.¹⁴⁸

The School founded by the Church Missionary Society served not only the children of Maroons, but also those of ex-slaves, forty-nine of whom travelled from Buff Bay.

¹⁴⁷ Carl Campbell. *Missionaries and Maroons: A Note on Accompong*, Charlestown and Mooretown (Jamaica) 1837-1838 (Mona: History Department, University of the West Indies, 1979) 41.

¹⁴⁸ Carl Campbell. *Missionaries and Maroons: A Note on Accompong*, Charlestown and Mooretown (Jamaica) 1837-1838 (Mona: History Department, University of the West Indies, 1979), 44.

Findlay claimed that Maroon parents resisted his efforts to integrate both sets of children.¹⁴⁹

Later, another school was set up in the community, this time by the Anglican Church. The exact date of its establishment is not certain however, in 1856 the Blue Book showed that the school was being operated by William Edwards with a total of seventy-seven scholars, thirty-four of whom were girls.¹⁵⁰

The Anglican school did not last very long. However, sixteen years later the Buff Bay River estate was purchased and a model school was established. The school was chiefly attended by children of the Charles Town Maroons. However, much like the schools that predated this model institution, the Buff Bay River school was short-lived. It was abolished in 1888.

Sambo Hill

Place names in Maroon communities tell stories about the past in as much the same way that this is true in many districts across the island. Sambo Hill is important in Maroon History, as it was believed to be the place where their ancestors met to discuss battle strategies. But how did the name Sambo come about? Was it a reference to a member of the Maroon party or instead the free African, Sambo who assisted the British in the battle against the Maroons. The latter is indeed conceivable considering that Sambo was skilled

¹⁴⁹ Carl Campbell. *Missionaries and Maroons: A Note on Accompong*, Charlestown and Mooretown (Jamaica) 1837-1838 (Mona: History Department, University of the West Indies, 1979), 46.

¹⁵⁰ Blue Book of Jamaica 1856, 114.

at locating the Maroon tracks and indeed did lead the British to Old Nanny Town. Awareness of their opponents knowledge helped to direct the plans implemented as was evident from Nanny's decision to station one of her three groups, according to Maroon oral history, on Abraham's Mountain (Carrion Crown Hill) in the Blue Mountains, from where she expected Sambo to approach the town.¹⁵¹

Sambo's assistance to the British was not unusual. In fact, Blacks joined either under duress of law or with the promise of monetary rewards to join in the war from the very commencement of the initiative.¹⁵² Sambo was next in command to Roger Homes and he and Homes even attended one of the Council meetings and gave their accounts of what took place on the battle field.

Conclusion

The History of the Buff Bay River Valley is very much entrenched in the struggle between the English colonial authorities and the Windward Maroons for rights to the northeastern section of the island. Maroon occupation of the area dated back to the era of Spanish occupation and the Maroons fought valiantly to maintain control. The Peace treaty signed with the Windward Maroons ensured peace and led to the influx of white slaveholders to the area. The advent of white settlers and their agricultural pursuits

¹⁵¹ Bev Carey. *The Maroon Story: The Authentic and Original History of the Maroons in the History of Jamaica 1490-1880* (St. Andrew: Agouti Press, 1997) 249.

¹⁵² In response to this action by the Island Legislature a scandalous libel was posted on White tavern doors discouraging black enlistment and when Captain Soaper tried to find free Blacks in Kingston to join the effort he reported that "there was scarce a free negro to be seen at that Town having... withdrawn themselves on account of the late Act for making Free Negroes and mulattoes more useful" Jamaica Council Minutes Vol. 21, July 1727 – October 1731, MS 60, NLJ Collection.

redefined the area as not just the home of a set of maroons, but as part of the coffee centre of Jamaica in the early nineteenth century. The termination of the evil institution of slavery and the decline of large scale coffee producers in the 1800's saw the rise of peasant farmers, who not only played an important role in keeping the coffee industry alive, but further diversified the valley engaging in mixed methods of agriculture and changed the pattern of land holdings in the Valley.

Today, the Valley remains a farming community dominated by small farmers, who are taking steps to once again bring about further transformations in their community through a marriage of agriculture and community tourism.

