

The Georgian Society of Jamaica



Newsletter

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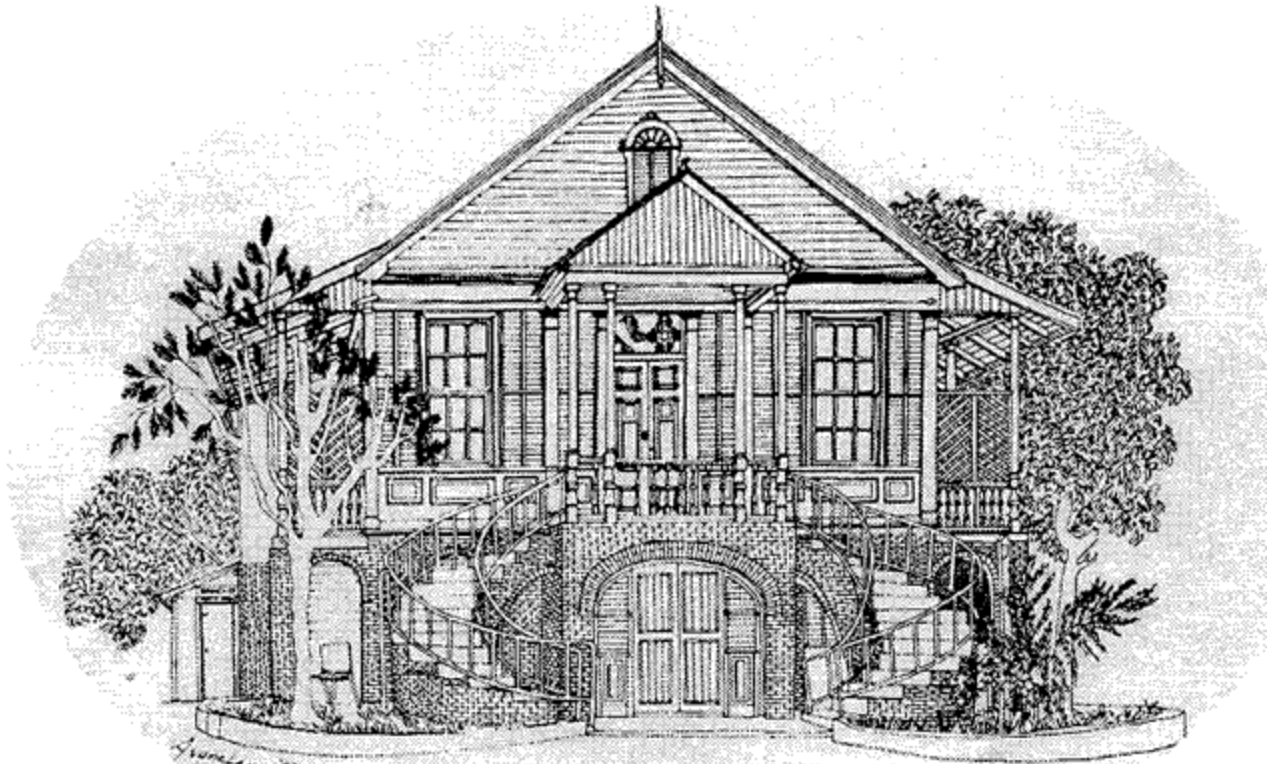


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Our Island Heritage

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
GEORGIAN SOCIETY OF JAMAICA

Oakton House, Half-Way-Tree, St. Andrew



This fine residence was probably built around the middle of the 19th century. Soldiers marching from Spanish Town, the capital, to their camp in the Blue Mountains to escape malaria on the plains, would halt for a rest in the shade of the 'half-way-tree,' a few chains from the residence.

No record has been around to indicate who was the original owner but at one time it was

an exclusive school run by Miss Bovell and Mrs. Van Kaylenburg ran it as a guest house in the 1920s. It then became the home of W.E. Powell whose famous bakery was a few chains up the road, near to the present clock tower. In the 1930s his heirs sold it to the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation and it was used as a fire station until the 1960s.

This wooden house with its gracefully curving
Cont'd on pg. 2

NOTICES

FALMOUTH 1791- 1970

Please note that copies of this booklet are still available from the GSJ office at a price of Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars per copy (J\$250.00)

NOTELETS

A selection of notelets are also available from the Office at One Hundred (\$100.00) per pack of four.

T-SHIRTS

White T-Shirts with the Georgian Society's logo are still in stock and can be purchased for Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars each (\$250.00) or Five SHIRTS for One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00)

MEMBERSHIP FEES-GEORGIAN SOCIETY

Supporting Corporate Member-	\$5,000.00 per annum
Corporate Member	\$2,500.00 per annum
Ordinary Member	\$500.00 per annum
Pensioner (completely retired)	\$200.00 per annum
Student	\$100.00 per annum
Overseas member	US \$20.00 per annum

New Book Special Offer to Members!

"GONE IS THE ANCIENT GLORY"
Spanish Town, 1534-2000

by James Robertson

This fascinating book provides us with a detailed account of the life of the town: it also captures some of the aura of the ancient capital. It covers not just the history but town planning and plot layout on Spanish lines, construction methods and usage of the buildings. The arrival of the railway also looms big, also tourism and the early labour movement. This excellent book is really a biography of Spanish Town.

MEMBERS PRICE Ja\$1,600
which includes a donation to GSJ Publications Fund

Oakton House- Cont'd

dual stairway, supported by red brick arches, is particularly well designed. Another of similar design on East Race Course in Kingston is better known but lacks the delicate lines seen here. The fretted transomes, inside and outside, over the doors, are of unusual geometric pattern and are very clean cut.

The balance of this building is very pleasing but it is also thoroughly functional with its louvred walls and its side verandahs with wide overhangs to keep off the sun and rain. The red brick undercroft was originally open, with arches on all sides, to create natural ventilation beneath the wooden floor of the living quarters above. When converted to offices, the ground had to be excavated to create adequate headroom and steps to lead down to the lower floor level inside.

The house which was in dire need of restoration was in 2003 leased by the KSAC to the Lake family - Mrs. Lois Lake-Sherwood, Artist; her sons Michael, Architect and Richard, Contractor have been overseeing the total restoration of the property which is nearing completion.

Plans are well advanced to use the house for an Art Gallery and an Entertainment Centre.

Oakton House is a declared national heritage property and is listed by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

Preservation/Restoration

Are you planning on restoring a house, saving a landmark or helping to revive your neighbourhood? Gain valuable information by joining The Georgian Society of Jamaica and support preservation/restoration efforts in Jamaica.

*Make preservation one of your
blueprints for the future*

S.O.S.

All members are reminded to look out for old buildings which seem worthy of preservation/restoration and for any buildings which seem in danger of being wantonly destroyed.

All such information should be sent to our National Headquarters at Richmond Park Great House, 58 Half-Way Tree Road, Kingston 10 so that the appropriate action can be taken.

Moneague College— ST. ANN

The Moneague College – formerly the Moneague Hotel – dates back to 1891 and is architecturally significant being built in the Georgian style with cut-stone and wood and having quoins on the sides of the building. The structure is enhanced with verandahs and solid wooden floors and staircases. The main structure remains pristine – a canteen has been constructed in keeping with the style of the main structure and has not compromised the integrity of the building.

The property on which the Moneague College is located was originally known as “Rose Hall” and at that time it was owned by an Englishman, John Hutchinson. He bequeathed the property to his two daughters who failed to pay their taxes and as a result, in the late 1880s the Government acquired the property.

The Hotel was built in 1891 to house the visitors to an Agricultural Exhibition which the Government was hosting. It was one of the six hotels first built in Jamaica.

The Hotel passed through many hands. It was originally run by a Mr. Ben Oliphant, an Englishman, then by Mr. Bobby Alexander, a Jamaican business man, and finally by a Mr. McCaulay who was reputed then to be the third best cook in the world.

The Hotel received many famous visitors among whom was the then Prince of Wales as it was noted for its food and rolling landscape green. All produce used by the hotel was grown on the hotel’s farm. It acted as the catalyst for the development of Ocho Rios as a resort town and then became a REST STOP rather than a final destination.

The facilities were later used to house the Royal Engineers from England and then became a camp for wayward girls, and during World War II, it became a soldier’s camp. A water well was installed to facilitate the use of the property as a camp.

In 1956, Dr. Aubrey Phillips founded the Moneague Teachers College. Today the building is used to house the student population but is also rented to groups for retreats and seminars.

The Moneague College building is important in establishing the history and character of St. Ann and is a distinctive example of the historic development and cultural heritage of the area.

The College building is in good condition, unaltered and still located on its original site.

Magdala House Black River, St. Elizabeth

Magdala House located on the High Street in Black River, was built in the late 19th century by Thomas Leyden of the Leyden and Farquharson Shipping Company. The building was constructed by Mr. Adolphus Williams for Mr. Leyden.

Thomas Leyden and William Farquharson were in their time regarded as two of the richest men in Jamaica.

The house is of a two-story design and had inside plumbing with running water for the main bathroom and lavatory upstairs.

It has concrete foundation walls which are rectangular and which rise two to three feet above the ground. The superstructure is made of wood with coolers at the windows. Liberal use of fretwork on facias and barge boards give the house an imposing appearance, set as it is in extensive grounds.

Mr. Donald Farquharson, who spent most of his boyhood days at Magdala House, wrote the following in 1981:

“The staircase was in every way of a fine design and construction but was a constant source of trouble as the Flemish Oak was not impervious to termites and bits from time to time had to be replaced. The arches in the hall were also, like the staircase of Flemish Oak. The pressed paper panelling in the dining room was I recall, in the opinion of my family, the epitome of Victorian nouveau riche bad taste!”

“The dining room had oak flooring. It was a big room with a bow window and no floor board was joined. Each board was cut in England to the exact length required from a length of oak. The verandahs were small and tiled in gaudy Victorian tiles of various mixed shades of brown and yellow. The outer board walls were painted and sanded with white sea sand for preservation.”

Magdala House was purchased from the late Dr. C.D. Johnson by the Roman Catholic Church in 1963 and was used by them as a church and school. The school and church were later closed and the Nuns who stayed there were sent to Mandeville and Kingston.

The building is again in use as an Orphanage— now called OUR LADY OF HOPE CHILDREN’S HOME. In recent years, a small Chapel and an additional dormitory to house the children, were constructed on the property.

Parish Church of St. John

Guanaboa Vale, St. Catherine

The Parish of St. John dates from the first partition of the island in 1664, under Modyford, and was merged with St. Catherine in 1847.

The Church comprises a rectangular nave and an altar at the eastern end which is almost square in dimension.

Access to the building is gained through doors at the western and northern sides. The door in the south wall opens in to the vestry. This wall is made of red brick and the interior is plastered. This simple structure, of no remarkable architectural merit, is a solid looking building, although not entirely the original since it was repaired in 1976 and some of the windows replaced by glass louvres.

In 1671, of the four Clergymen administering in Jamaica, there was at St. John's a Mr. Lemmings? Cundall writes "In 1675 Mr. Lemmon (evidently the same man), a sober young man and a very good preacher. He had one hundred pounds for the parish and about as much from Colonel Coape for keeping a free school he had established." This was one of, if not the first school established in Jamaica. Sir Thomas Lynch in a letter to the Bishop of London in 1682 writes — "For all I have heard, he is a very honest, sober, fair-conditioned man and esteemed the best preacher in the island. I think he has a parsonage but the church is decayed and he preaches in the school house."

This is the first direct reference/evidence to a church in Guanaboa Vale though it was probably one of the six churches existing in 1675. It was presumably in existence when Richard Guy was buried in 1681, the earliest dated tombstone in the church but it is curious that there is no mark for a church at Guanaboa Vale in the 1684 edition of Stanley's Map. However, elsewhere, Cundall giving a chronology states: "The church at Spanish Town is the oldest foundation in the Colony, dating from the year of British occupation in 1655, the next oldest being the St. Andrew's (Half-Way-Tree) dating from 1666, the Alley 1671 and St. John's, Guanaboa Vale which dates from 1699."

Whether the decayed church, referred to above, was rebuilt we do not know, but the present structure which probably incorporates the foundation of the original,

dates from 1845, the other building having been destroyed by fire earlier.

Near the west door is the tomb of Richard Guy (died 1681) who represented the parishes of St. Ann and St. James at different times, George Modd, who represented St. John in the Assembly in 1718, 1719 and 1722 and St. Catherine in 1721 in which year he was a Speaker.

Near the north door is the tomb of the Hon. Col. Charles Price (died 1730). In the middle of the church are the tombs of his children, two sons and six daughters who died between 1716 and 1727. They were probably victims of cholera. Other tombs there are to Whitgift Aylmer and Deborah Corker who died in 1727.

In the churchyard are also a number of tombs, many of which have succumbed to the depredation of the time. The most recent tomb is to Susan Reid who died in 1962, aged 92 years.

The Rectory is now used as the Teacher's Cottage for the Primary School which adjoins the Church.

The mother of national hero Norman Manley is buried in an unmarked grave in the churchyard.

F.H. Cundall—Historic Jamaica.

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