



National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago

# HERITAGE

Newsletter

• March 2016 •



Nelson Island Carnival Tour With Traditional Mas Characters

Welcome to this second issue of the Heritage newsletter. The Trust's recent activities have been focused on Carnival to ensure better understanding and appreciation of our culture. The National Trust screened a heritage film featuring traditional mas, hosted a Carnival tour on Nelson Island with performances from iconic traditional mas characters, took members on an historic tour of Port of Spain to showcase various aspects of Carnival as well as to view the Canboulay parade.

This year, members can look forward to the 2nd Caribbean National Trusts and Preservation Societies Conference in May, the Heritage Preservation Awards later in the year, as well as bus tours and Nelson Island events including tours for school children.

The National Trust is working to ensure that every citizen recognizes the importance of preserving our identity. In 2016, we look forward to the continued support from members and all stakeholders.

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# 1. DEVELOPMENT OF HERITAGE SITES

In 2016, the National Trust proposes to undertake development work at the Nelson Island Heritage Site and the Banwari Trace Archaeological Site, for which it has direct responsibility.

This development is geared to bringing both sites to greater prominence which would ensure that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are aware of the value and beauty of the heritage of the country, and that there is access to and enjoyment of these properties.

During a visit to Nelson Island in January, contractors were invited to view the ruins of the Guardhouse/Kitchen, and that of the Medical Officer/Gun Bunker for restoration of these buildings, and other remedial works to be carried out to existing structures.

The National Trust is seeking to improve facilities on the island, which would see the Guardhouse being restored for similar use, and establishment of an Information Centre/Gift Shop and Museum.

The development of heritage tourism is vital at this time given the slowdown of other sectors of the economy, increasing the need to diversify and the need for options beyond sun, sea and sand.

These restorative works will depend on budgetary

allocations from the Ministry of Planning and Development.

In the interim the National Trust is working to uncover all ruins on the island, while increasing the number of visits to the island, with regular cultural tours and new experiences.

The National Trust is therefore forging ahead to ensure that heritage sites in the country are fully recognized and utilised by citizens and visitors to Trinidad and Tobago.



**Valerie Taylor of the National Trust in discussion with contractors and a representative of Ministry of Planning, as they viewed the ruins for restoration.**



**Stakeholders viewing the Old Sangre Grande Post Office after discussions on restoring the building. The Post Office was built in the early 1900's.**

## Sangre Grande Post Office

The Concerned Citizens of Sangre Grande have been expressing the need to protect and restore the Old Sangre Grande Post Office for many years. Through contact with the National Trust, talks commenced with TTPOST towards preservation.

A ground breaking meeting was held in February with all stakeholders including the Concerned Citizens of Sangre Grande, National Trust, TTPOST, Lauriston Lewis Associates Ltd., Fire Services, Police Service and other community organisations.

An agreement was reached with TTPOST to work with the community. The building is to be cleaned and secured in preparation for exploring its future use.

Advocacy is a powerful tool, let us raise a voice and save our historic buildings.

## 2. PRIMARY SCHOOLS TOUR OF NELSON ISLAND



The National Trust hosted a primary schools tour of Nelson Island on December 8th, the goal was to bring to life the history of the island.

Schools participating were Don Miguel Hindu, Iere Government, Diego Martin Government, Arima Girls Government, Hope Academy Preparatory and Beetham Government.

Two hundred and thirty six students along with teachers were taken by water taxi to Nelson Island. The tour departed from the port of Port of Spain with information shared on the sights along the coastline and on the Five Islands.

Upon arrival students were divided into two groups, while some viewed the film *Changing Tides -The Making of Trinidad* in the Mess Hall, others went on tours and experienced re-enactments in the garden.



A worksheet was provided to all students and teachers. It was a fun exercise intended to stimulate the recollection of the important details of events that took place on the island.

The students viewed dramatic performances depicting portrayals of Tubal Uriah Butler, an Amerindian, Indentured Indians, enslaved Africans and a 1970 revolutionary. The intention was to impress upon the young minds the peoples that impacted the development of the country.

The students, teachers and parents alike were intrigued and impressed by this opportunity to make history come alive on Nelson Island. School tours will continue in 2016, as the National Trust aims to ensure that the student population understand and appreciate their heritage.



### 3. STAFF PROFILE, MARLON GREEN



#### **Marlon Green, Research Assistant**

Without doubt, Marlon as he is fondly called is the face of the National Trust. He has been employed with the Trust since 2007 as a Research Assistant, but has functioned in every portfolio and role, given the small staff complement at the Trust over the years.

Every one knows the name Marlon, as he sends out most communiques from the Trust and has been the point of contact for several years.

If you call for Marlon on the phone, it is always a cheery response of “wonderful and marvelous” as to how he is doing. That certainly personifies his outlook, always facilitative and willing to assist.

Marlon has been the backbone of the National Trust, thus he is key to working on the listing process for heritage sites. He is very involved in the overseeing of Nelson Island, he is part of the accounting team, he is the liaison for the Ministry to which the Trust is assigned.

It does not end there, he assists with promotion of events, he has been involved in the organization of tours throughout the country, he disseminates information to the membership on all heritage related activities, and knows someone in nearly every Ministry related to culture and the arts, as he has worked closely with most stakeholders in the promotion of heritage.

Marlon has a passion for the work of preservation of heritage, and identifies with the need to bring greater awareness to citizens as to the importance of history and identity. Being a past school teacher of history, the link is absolutely clear.

The National Trust has a most valuable employee in Marlon Green, as he is the base of the team that makes up the Trust at present.

A more dedicated employee one could not ask for, working tirelessly to bring the profile of the National Trust and heritage to the forefront, and getting the recognition it deserves.

## 4. HERITAGE LECTURE AND TOUR

During the Carnival season of Calypso, Pan, Mas and Fete, the National Trust hosted a Heritage Lecture and Film which profiled traditional mas characters. Pure intrigue, fascination, awe, reverence, engaging, a true perspective - the film can be described in so many ways.

The film "Our Soul Turned Inside Out" was written by Dr. Kim Johnson and directed by Mary Ann Brailey of The Carnival Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, and featured the Jab Jab, the Blue Devil and the Stickfighter.

While we all know traditional mas, the film brought clarity and a greater understanding of what goes into the portrayal of these unique and outstanding mas characters.

Everyone in attendance will never look at these characters in the same way, as an appreciation was gained of the preparation of the mind, body and spirit to become one with the character.

One of the roles of the National Trust is to ensure public awareness of the value and beauty of the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. The film served to educate on the cultural heritage given its applicability to Carnival.

Dr. Johnson and Ms. Brailey fielded questions from a packed audience who only had commendations for the work of these two talented producers.

Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago should make every effort to see this film and understand their cultural heritage.



**Dr. Kim Johnson fielding questions from the audience.**



**The audience is entranced by scenes in the film.**



**Richard Leera, wire bender, explaining aspects of making costumes at his workshop in Belmont.**

### Port of Spain Historic Carnival Tour

The National Trust hosted a Carnival tour which featured aspects of calypso, pan and mas.

The tour included visits to Rainorama, the home of the Grandmaster, Lord Kitchener; an exhibition on the Mighty Sparrow, Dr. Slinger Francisco; mas maker, Richard Leera and Trinidad All Stars Pan Theatre. The sites of Canboulay re-enactment, the statues of the iconic calypsonians Kitchener and Sparrow and a drive through Belmont were also included as part of the tour.

The Trust recognizes the importance of educating on our cultural heritage, and participants were able to view the memorabilia of iconic calypsonians, see a wire bender at work, and learn more about one of the oldest steelbands and the Canboulay riots associated with Carnival.

# 5. NELSON ISLAND CARNIVAL TOUR

Carnival on Nelson Island was “awesome” in the words of the students of Charis Works Christian Academy school. The National Trust continued its promotion of cultural heritage by having steelband and traditional mas characters perform on the island, along with the tour of the historic site.

The National Trust is ensuring that public access and enjoyment of the Nelson Island Heritage continues on a monthly basis, incorporating other elements of heritage.

The Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis was in attendance on this tour along with the Permanent Secretaries and other staff of the Ministry of Planning and Development. The Honourable Minister toured the island, and recognized and commended the work of the National Trust as it pertains to its role in the promotion of heritage.



A member of the Platinum Steel Orchestra greeted all as they came off the Water Taxi, after which tours were conducted of the island. A representative six piece of the orchestra entertained through the luncheon period.

The traditional characters of the Dame Lorraine, Pierrot Grenade, Blue Devil, Moko Jumbie, Bat, Midnight Robber and Fancy Sailor gave lively performances, and the school children on this tour were thrilled to see these characters in full portrayal. The adults were also quite pleased to learn of the origins of these characters. A good time was had by all on this very successful first Carnival tour of Nelson Island.



Top Right: Blue Devil, Ashton Fournillier on the Nelson Island Rock Formation

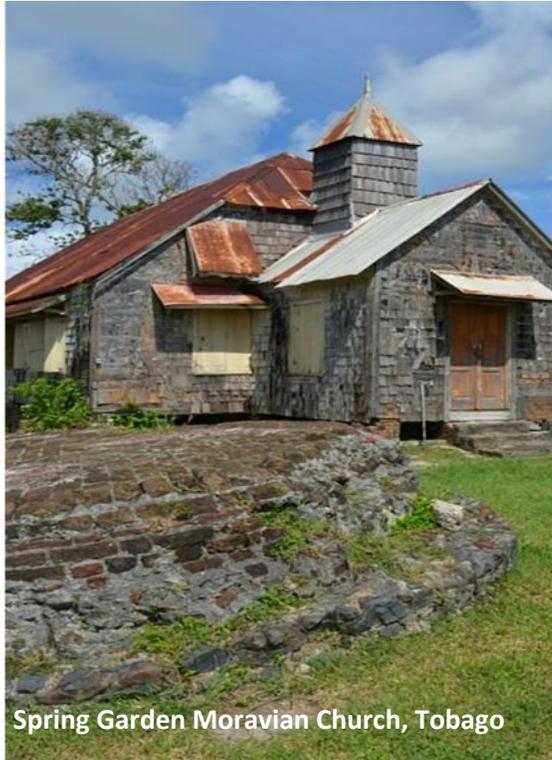
Above: The Platinum All Female Steelband.

Right: Iconic Pierrot Grenade, Felix Edinborough performing.

Bottom: The Bat, Rosemary Paul, hiding in the tree.



## 6. EDUCATING ON HERITAGE



Spring Garden Moravian Church, Tobago

### Teachers Credit Union 2016 Calendar

The National Trust collaborated with the Teachers Credit Union, providing information for the production of their 2016 Calendar. The Trust supplied briefs on historic sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago, as well as photographs of sites for each month of the year.

The collector's item calendar features: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Caurita Petroglyphs, Fort King George, Lion House, Caroni Swamp, Knollys Tunnel, Nelson Island and other well known historical locations.

The Trust distributed over 2500 calendars to Ministries, government departments and members, and the response has been very positive.

The National Trust was pleased to support the Teachers Credit Union with this venture, and wishes to thank to the membership for their support by collecting their copies throughout the months of December and January.

### Understanding Architecture

#### Fretting

Fretting is the repetition of a symmetrical intricate pattern and decorative design used as framing both in the interior and exterior of old wooden houses.

The beautiful designs are made of wood and can either be carved or cut out with a saw. They can be quite elaborate and add an element of charm to the houses that they adorn, reflective of an earlier colonial period.

Fretting can be seen in many of the galleries, stairway entrances, projecting front verandas or covered walkways of old houses in and around Woodbrook and Belmont.

It can also be observed while walking or driving through the streets of Port of Spain, away from the commercial centre along Oxford and Dundonald Streets among others.

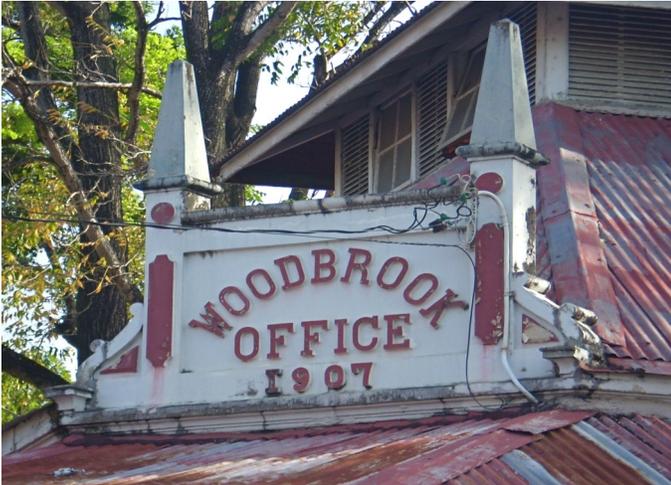
In the photos at left, fretting can be seen on old houses on Marli Street, Newtown and Ana Street, Woodbrook



## 6. WOODBROOK TAX OFFICE

The Woodbrook Tax Office had its origin as a small sugar estate office. When the Siegert family bought the Woodbrook estate, the sugar factory was demolished and the canefields laid out in lots for building homes. So the primary purpose of this office was to collect land rents.

The Woodbrook Tax Office was built in 1907 and stands at the corner of Murray and Baden Powell Streets. It is close to the Murray Street playground, which was formerly the site of the old sugar factory. This playground is now known as the Augustus Williams Square. The Woodbrook Tax Office is also close to the Woodbrook Police Station.



In the early 20th century the Woodbrook area was particularly desirable for home ownership, as it was identified as the new up and coming middle class area. The allocation of housing lots were then made on streets named after the Siegert family, namely Carlos, Alfredo, Rosalino, Ana, Petra, Alberto, Luis, and Gallus.

It should be noted that the country's first Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams was born in Woodbrook in 1911.

The Siegert family eventually sold part of the estate to the colonial government in 1911 and that is how the city gained ownership of the Woodbrook Tax Office. The property is now under the purview of the Port of Spain City Council.

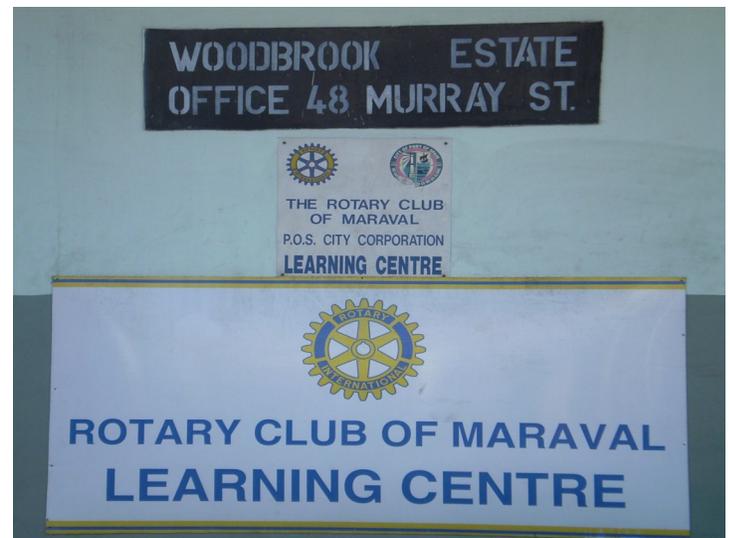
The Woodbrook Tax Office is used at present as a Learning Centre for special children and is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Maraval.



Its architectural features include a parapet wall with the markings: "WOODBROOK OFFICE 1907" with concrete finials at the top of the wall. There is also what is known as a clerestory structure with a finial at the top of the building.

Large wooden doors can be found on three sides of the building. The main entrance to the property faces the corner of Baden Powell and Murray Streets. Additions have been made to the building to cater for toilet facilities and a carport on the eastern side.

Unfortunately the Port of Spain City Corporation utilises the property for parking vehicles. Take the time to make a visit to Murray Street and view the Woodbrook Tax Office, a unique building of history past .



# 7. PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HERITAGE

## Canboulay Tour

The National Trust hosted a Canboulay Tour which gave members a 4.00 a.m. introduction to the history of the riots associated with the Carnival parade. The event took place on the Piccadilly Greens and afforded a first hand observance of the clash between the bois-men and women and the Police. The tour ended with a Creole breakfast which members thoroughly enjoyed.



**Photo: Members enjoying breakfast at the National Museum courtyard.**



## Trinity College, Connecticut

A small group comprising students and their professor from Trinity College, Connecticut, visited Nelson island to explore the history of the Heritage Site. It was truly an eye opening trip where they learned of the many events which took place at this historic site.

## Protection Of Listed Properties

In Abergavenny, UK, a Grade II Listed property, Llanwenarth House was “vandalized” according to a judge in the Newtown Crown Court. The developer was charged with carrying out unauthorized work on a listed building.

The property developer was accused of sacrilege by ripping up children’s gravestones from a nearby chapel to build a patio, decorate walls of the patio and use as flagstones.

The 150 year old gravestones were engraved with the names of three brothers and a sister all aged under four. Significant alterations were also made to the property without approval of the necessary authority.

The mansion is important as in 1848, poet Cecil Alexander wrote the hymn “All Things Bright and Beautiful” during a visit to the property.

It was a three year battle as the developer denied damaging the property, but changed his plea and admitted to five charges under the Planning Act 1990.

The developer was fined £60,000, ordered to pay the legal cost of the national park in the sum of €240,000, has declared bankrupt and has to restore the property to its former glory.

When protection is properly carried out and the law is effective, one is able to stand firmly in preserving one’s heritage.

This is surely a reminder of the destruction of the gravestones of three young children aged under five at Greyfriars church cemetery last year.

## 8. UPDATES AND APPRECIATION

### The National Trust Has Moved Office

The National Trust has relocated to Sterling Building, 68 - 70 Sackville Street, Port of Spain. The office is located on the first floor of the building upstairs the Mercedes Benz showroom.

With the assignment of the Trust under the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Trust will now be located in the city, closer to the offices of its line Ministry.

We look forward to welcoming members and the public to our new location in March.

### Membership Contribution

In seeking to keep members informed of all aspects of the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago, we invite suggestions on topics that members may be interested in learning more about, places you may wish to visit and guest speakers you would like to address the membership.

We also know that among our membership are many knowledgeable persons, who can share their expertise in fields related to heritage and we welcome your input. Volunteer to make a presentation in 2016. Contact us at [nationaltrust.tt@gmail.com](mailto:nationaltrust.tt@gmail.com) or call 277—6105.

### Appreciation

The National Trust has been pleased to cooperate with various stakeholders to continue to educate and create public awareness as to the preservation of heritage:

- Ministry of Education
- NIDCO—Water Taxi Service
- Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society
- Life Guard Services Division, Ministry of Tourism
- Teachers Credit Union
- Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry & Commerce
- The Carnival Institute of Trinidad and Tobago
- Dr. Kim Johnson
- Mary Ann Brailey
- The Ministry of Planning and Development, Communications Unit
- Russel Byer—Town and Country Planning Division
- Division of Culture
- Richard Leera
- Valerie Green—Rainorama
- All Stars Pan Theatre
- Beresford Hunte
- National Museum
- Mr. Lennox Toussaint—Chairman, Regional Carnival Commission
- TT POST—Dr. Kerry Sumesar-Rai
- Concerned Citizens of Sangre Grande
- Members for their support of all Carnival events.

Become a member today! Help Safeguard our Heritage!

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