

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA

Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture



Mary Seacole

Plaque Unveiling Ceremony and Display
Monday, November 21, 2005
at 3:30 pm.

Mary Seacole (1805 -1881)

Born Mary Jane Grant in Kingston, Jamaica, she was the daughter of a Scottish soldier and a mixed-race traditional healer and hotel keeper from whom she inherited a love of travel and nursing talents respectively. Much of her early life remains obscure; she had a local patroness and made two voyages to London in the 1820s. On 10 November 1836 in Kingston she married Edwin Horatio Seacole, who died in 1844. With her sister, Louisa, Mary ran the Grant family business, and then with her brother Edward traveled to Las Cruces in Panama to run a hotel; in both place cholera and yellow fever were endemic.

The Coming of war with Russia in 1854 prompted Mary Seacole to sail to London but her wish to join Florence Nightingale's vanguard of nursing sisters was refused. With a business partner she traveled nonetheless; arriving in February 1855 at Balaklava, were she set up a 'British Hotel' - an unofficial club and canteen for soldiers - halfway between the harbour and the military camp. Later, Nightingale would accuse her of 'making many drunk' (Claydon House Trust, MS9004/60), although alcohol was both the basis of many Victorian medicines and understandably valued by an ill-supplied army. 'Mother Seacole' became a familiar figure at the battle front, carrying medicines, food and wine to wounded troops, after the assault on the Redan and at the Chemaya. She was the first woman to enter the sacked city of Sevastopol on 9 September. The end of the war left her in financial difficulties and on returning to Britain in summer 1856 she was obliged to file for bankruptcy. However, military officers and Times reporter W. H. Russell rallied to her aid, encouraging the publication of her autobiography, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857) and a benefit concert which however raised very little.

She returned to Jamaica in 1860, remaining there until 1865, when she resettled in London. A 'Seacole Fund' raised by Crimean veterans secured her from destitution, and she appears to have continued her therapeutic career out of the limelight, acting for example as masseuse to the Princess of Wales. She died at her home in Paddington and was buried in Kensal Green Roman Catholic cemetery, where her grave was restored in 1973 by nurses from Jamaica, to commemorate care for the sick and wounded in the West Indies, Panama and the Crimea. Her life story was republished in 1984 (Alexander and Dewjee) and again in 2005 (Salih); her history included in the national educational curriculum and in 2002 she was voted 'Greatest Black Briton'.

Excerpt from: *Black Victorian- Black People in British Art 1800- 1900*

Edited; Jan Marsh, (Manchester Art Gallery)

Cover: 'Mary Seacole' by Count Gleichen - 1871
Institute of Jamaica Collection

Programme

National Anthem

Call to Memory (Reveille)

Corporal Omar Shaw (Bugler)
(With the kind permission of the
Jamaica Defence Force)

Chairman's Opening Statement

Hon. Barbara Gloudon, O.D., O.J.
Deputy Chairman of Council,
Institute of Jamaica

Unveiling of Plaque

The Hon. John Junor, M.P.
Minister of Health

Mrs. Edith Allwood-Anderson
President, Nurses Association of Jamaica

Dedication of Plaque

Most Rev. Lawrence A. Burke, S.J.
Archbishop of Kingston

Floral Tribute

Mr. Barrington Johnson, O.D.
The Jamaica Legion

Procession to the Institute of Jamaica Lecture Hall

Welcome

Prof. Barry Chevannes C.D.
Chairman of Council, Institute of Jamaica

Poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade"
A. L. Tennyson

Prof. the Hon. Hugh Wynter, O.J.

Greetings

The Hon. Maxine Henry Wilson, M.P.
Minister of Education, Youth and Culture

Jamaican Folk Songs
"Elina"
"Guava Root"

Shawna-Gay Turner
(Formerly of Mary Seacole Hall)
Ian Hird (Flute)

Reflections

Prof. Verene Shepherd
Senior Lecturer
Dept. of History and Archaeology
University of the West Indies

*Presentation of Mary Seacole Commemorative Stamps
to the Institute of Jamaica by Mrs. Carolle Hainsley, Deputy Postmaster General*

Acknowledgements

Mr. Vivian Crawford,
Executive Director, Institute of Jamaica

Retreat

Bugler

Reception and viewing of Display

National Library of Jamaica

Institute of Jamaica

African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/
Jamaica Memory Bank

Junior Centres

Liberty Hall

The Legacy of Marcus Garvey

Museums of History & Ethnography

National Gallery of Jamaica

National Library of Jamaica

Natural History Division



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