

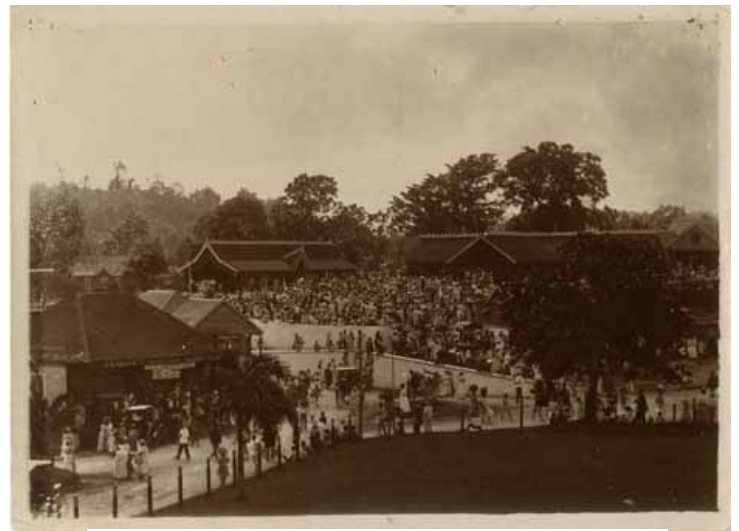
# History of Manchester



Manchester as shown on "Map of the island of Jamaica," Aston W. Gardner. 1884.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea that the hilly districts standing between the parishes of Vere and Clarendon in the East and St. Thomas in the West could become a parish was conceived. It was this idea that started the breaking up of the larger parishes – Clarendon, Vere and St. Elizabeth - to form the new parish of Manchester in 1814. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, coffee growing started and the suitability of the atmosphere and terrain in these hilly districts made coffee growing a success. It did not take long for many coffee growers to begin populating this area and coffee growing began on a larger scale. However, these coffee growers contended that they were isolated from the capitals of the surrounding parishes of Vere, Clarendon and St. Elizabeth.

So on November 29, 1814, the residents of Mile Gully, May Day and Carpenter's Mountain, brought a petition before the House of Assembly asking that a new parish be established. They further requested that the new parish be established with a town capital that could provide them with facilities to carry out their religious, civic, administrative and judicial needs, as the closest public building was 40 miles away. It was not until this petition was made by the residents that these districts became constituted as a



Market Day in Mandeville

separate parish, by law- Act 55 George III. c. 23, passed in 1814 to constitute into effect the said parishes. This act stated that the "hill country" comprising the Eastern portion of St. Elizabeth and the Western portions of the Parishes of Vere and Clarendon be constituted as a separate parish. Named after the then Governor of colonial Jamaica, the Duke of Manchester, the parish of Manchester finally came into being on December 13, 1814. The Manchester Vestry, the governing body of the Parish, met for the first time July 4, 1816, where discussions

were had regarding plans for the new parish as well as its capital. Their first order of duty was to begin plans for the layout of a parish capital.



## Mandeville – The Parish Capital

At a meeting held on August 27, 1816, a decision was made by the Manchester Vestry regarding plans for the new parish capital and its layout. The decision was made to build a Court House, Parsonage, Gaol or Workhouse and a Church. The construction was to take place in that order. Surveyors Messrs Pottinger and Green were given a contract for £240, to survey and lay down the South-eastern and Western boundaries of the parish as well as to begin preparing the diagram. They however failed and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1817, the Vestry ordered proceedings to be instituted against them. On March 17, 1817, the contract was awarded to Mr. John Gautier for £260.

It was now time to secure land for the layout of the town and to begin erecting the public buildings. Even though Joseph Russell offered 50 acres off his Gray's Hill property and Daniel Virtue timber from his Berwick property for the erection of the public buildings, the planning committee rejected these. Instead they accepted Robert Crawford's offer of 100 acres of his Caledonia Estate at £10 per acre. An additional 10 acres were bought from Robert Crawford and it was on these 110 acres that the capital of Manchester was built. On August 27, 1816, the site for the capital town was selected and named after the Duke of Manchester's son – Viscount Mandeville.

In the mid 1800s Mandeville was used as a garrison for English troops but in an outbreak of yellow fever, many died and their remains were buried in the eastern portion of the churchyard. Interestingly, Mandeville is located 2,061 feet above sea level, positioned in the centre of the Jamaica and is also in the centre of its parish.

## Economic Activity

Today Manchester produces a large amount of Jamaica's Irish potato crop and is also noted for its high quality production of citrus, bananas and ground provisions; dairy farming also takes place. The parish is still known for producing coffee particularly through the High Mountain Coffee Factory located in Williamsfield. Bauxite is mined on a large scale and much of Mandeville's development and economic prosperity is owed to this mineral as the bauxite companies had invested greatly in the development of Manchester. In the 1900s, Mandeville's population increased as a result of the number of foreign experts and Jamaicans in the bauxite field migrating to Manchester. Hundreds of persons from Kingston were also employed by the bauxite companies and

naturally became Mandeville residents. In 1957, the establishment of the alumina mining company, Alcan Bauxite, caused a population explosion and in the 1960s, Alcan and Kaiser bauxite companies employed well over 3,000 persons. As a result of this, Mandeville has been described as a town which grew on bauxite. Mention must be made of the popular Pickapeppa Sauce which has its factory in Shooter's Hill as well as the Pioneer Chocolate Factory in Williamsfield which have both received international recognition.

## Kendal Train wreck



[Aerial View of Kendal Train disaster, 1957](#)

of a b y installed. The train was approaching a small station at Kendal and was on its way back to Kingston from Montego Bay when tragedy struck. To date it is Jamaica's worst railway accident and one of the gravest in world railway history. The majority of passengers were members of a day excursion organized by St. Anne's Catholic Church in Kingston.

Outside of its economic development, the parish's history is also marked by tragedy. On Sunday September 1, 1957, the Kendal train tragedy claimed almost 200 lives and caused injury to an estimated 600 to 700 passengers. Kendal is a small rural community located in the north/central section of the parish and located 11km from the capital town of Mandeville. An inquiry into the crash found that it was caused by excessive speed coming down the hill from Greenvale as well as defective braking caused by the closing

## Historic sites/events in Manchester



**St. Mark's Anglican Church** - the Parish Church of Manchester was completed and consecrated in 1820 and for many years was the only church in the parish. During the slave rebellion of 1832 the organ loft was used as a jail.

[St. Mark's Anglican Church, \(1931\)](#)

**Mandeville Court House** - built in 1817 and constructed in the Jamaica Georgian style. It is built of limestone blocks cut by slaves and was completed around 1820. It now stands as one of the four original public buildings in the town. The first school in the parish was held on the ground floor of this building.

**Manchester Horticulture Show** – held each year in May on Labour Day. It is hosted by the Manchester Horticultural Society which was founded in 1865 and is one of the oldest such organizations in the world.

**Maidstone** – is among the first communities in Jamaica to be set up as a free village and was originally a coffee plantation owned by Thomas Frith. In 1840 the Nazareth Moravian Church, located at Adam's Valley, bought 341 acres of the estate and subdivided them into lots of 1 to 15 acres, establishing a free village for former enslaved Africans.

**Bloomfield Great House** - situated on a property formerly known as the Bloomfield Estate. Bill Laurie's Steak House is now operated at this property.

**Marlborough Great House** – said to have been built in 1795 and designed by a Scottish architect named Forsyth.

**Roxborough** - birthplace of National Hero, the Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley; it was originally a part of an estate recorded as "Roxbro Castle". It is now owned by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust and has been restored to accommodate a museum.

**Manchester Club Golf Course** - Built in 1865, is believed to be the oldest surviving club in the western hemisphere.

**Greenvale Railway Station** – was built around 1892.

**Williamsfield Railway Station** – was built around 1891 and has elements of the Jamaica/Georgian architectural style.

**Mandeville Jail and Workhouse** – among the first buildings erected in the parish. The police station is now housed there.

**Mandeville Rectory** – the private residence that now stands to the left of the Mandeville court house was originally the rectory. The oldest house in Mandeville was rented out as tavern in 1820 because it was felt that the location was too public for a rectory. Later it was used as a guest house called the Grove Hotel.

**Mandeville Hotel** – located on Hotel Street and was originally the barracks for English troops when Mandeville was a garrison. After the troops left in the 1890s the building was used as a hotel first called the Waverly, later Brooks Hotel then finally the Mandeville.

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