

When the English came to Jamaica they encountered the Maroons, a community which grew as slavery grew. The Maroons established independent communities in the mountains. One such was Accompong Town. Accompong still exists as a Maroon community. The English period of colonisation was marked by extensive sugar production. Some prominent estates were located in Holland, Vineyard and Fullerswood.

Currently, in Southern St. Elizabeth, there are some residents who are descendants of Europeans. One group is those that came to the area in the 17th century from a failed Scottish expedition, known as the Darien expedition.

Outside of sugar there was some diversification for example in 1770 Goshen was a cattle farm which sold livestock to neighboring estates. It is also recorded to have shipped over three thousand mahogany planks.

The Nineteenth Century

In 1893, at the efforts of two merchants the Leyden brothers St. Elizabeth became the first place in Jamaica to acquire electricity. The parish church of 'St. John the Evangelist' was also founded in 1837. The St. Andrews church outside of Gilnock was built in the 1840s by a Duncan Robertson originally a 'chief of the Scottish clan Robertson of Struan.'

The 1800 was a time of manufacturing as during that time the Lacovia Manufacturing Company was engaged in the manufacturing of paper from Bamboo. The Logwood industry gained prominence from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. The value of logwood was in the dye that was extracted from it. The dye was used for in the colouring of textiles. The logwood was harvested and shipped from inland through the waterways. For example in Elim Logwood was shipped by the connecting tributaries to Black River 20 miles away. While there was a steady demand for logwood, Black River remained a prosperous town. In 1893-94 the export value of logwood from Jamaica surpassed that of traditional leading crops of sugar and coffee. However, after some time the industry collapsed as a result of the discovery of synthetic dyes.

The parish was also the scene of a health crisis as there was the outbreak of a cholera epidemic in 1850. It was said to be very devastating and the manpower or coffins were insufficient to bury the fatalities. For fear of transmission the victims from the outbreak were buried in a specific part of the cemetery where penguin plants were planted to cover it.

The Twentieth Century

For Black River the nineteenth hundreds heralded a fire which damaged over half of the town's commercial district. In 1903 the first car to be brought into the island by MR. H. W. Griffiths of Hodges Pen – 'a four cylinder New Orleans' from England, came to St. Elizabeth. It was also in the 1900s that the bauxite industry was developed in the parish. Currently on a lull, it is a part of the mining activities throughout the country since 1943. In the parish it is manufactured by Alumina Partners of Jamaica (ALPART) headquartered at Nain in the parish. In 1980 the target they set was 1.3 million tones. Elsewhere in the parish there was another Bauxite Processing Plant Known as Revere which was closed in 1975.

In 1968 the port of Black River was closed which saw the town losing a commercialization atmosphere that it has not regained since. In the 1980s there was a proposal for a rice project under the Black River Upper Morass Project (BRUMDEC) which was hoped to suit domestic demand of rice. During the 19th century, Southfield cemented itself as a vegetable producing area despite the predisposition for drought. In 1949-50 they recorded a production output of 12 million pounds of tomatoes.

In June 1979, the town of Newmarket was the scene of a flood which resulted in the entire area being flooded for several days. This tragedy resulted in 85 billion gallons of water with area covered in up to 95 inches of water. There were forty one casualties and damage to property was estimated to be millions. It is said that this was not the first incidence of flooding which had occurred on at least four occasions the earliest being in 1899. In 1979 a new town was built a mile from the flood site to replace the old town.

Notable things about St. Elizabeth

- The Black River which is 44 miles is the longest river in the island. The path of the river intermingles with other parishes such as Manchester and Trelawny and re-emerges into what is known as the Black River.
- St. Elizabeth has 44 caves most notable are: - the Wallingford Caves where fossil remains have been found and the Peace Cave where Cudjoe on behalf of the Maroons signed Peace Treaty.
- Lacovia is the first capital of the parish. Courts were initially heard alternately in Lacovia and Black River until it was relegated to Black River.
- Uncertainty surrounds the age of the Parish Church of St. John the Evangelist/ The Black River Anglican Church. The church is the site of a monument belonging to Robert Hugh Munro and his nephew Caleb Dickinson the founders of Munro and Hampton College in the parish. The church also has a memorial tablet to Duncan Hook (1741- 1779) and four of his children by a free mulatto Elizabeth Duncan.
- The police station and the hospital are thought to be former sites of an army barracks.
- Black River constitutes the largest remaining crocodile refuge in Jamaica.
- Hampstead Great house ruins was once the site of summer residences of governors of Jamaica.
- The parish had a race track which was a mile long and attracted persons from all over the country; compliments of the Leyden brothers former plantation owners and planners of the town.
- Balaclava has a 70 ½ m 800ft tunnel; the area was a former coffee and ginger trade point..

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