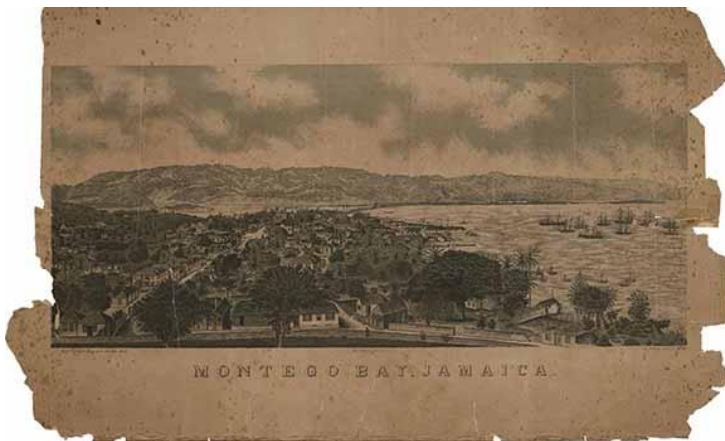# History of St. James

Named after James, Duke of York, by Sir Thomas Modyford, St. James was among the second batch of parishes to be formed in Jamaica in about 1664-1655; the others in this batch were St. George, St. Mary, St. Ann and St. Elizabeth. At the time of its formation, it was much larger than it now is, as it included what are now the separate parishes of Trelawny and Hanover. For many years after the English conquest, the north side of the island including St. James was sparsely settled and in 1673, only 146 persons resided in the entire parish. It was considered as one of the poorest parishes and in 1711-12, the citizens of St. James were excused from taxation because of its few inhabitants, the lack of towns and its modest commerce. In 1724, the first road Act for the parish was passed - the road going from *The Cave* in Westmoreland to the west end of St. James and a court of quarter sessions was established four years later.

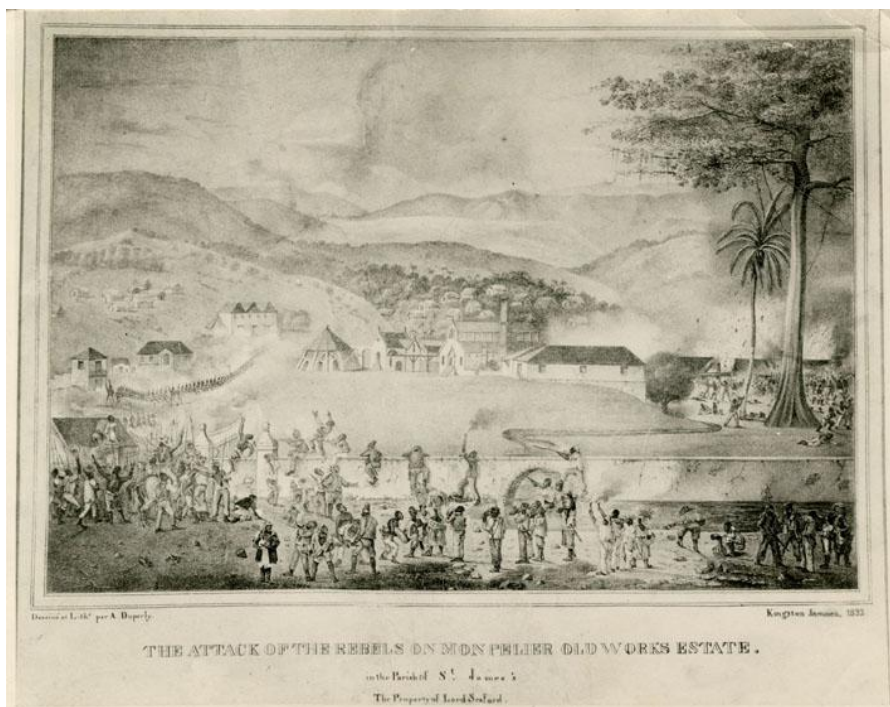## Montego Bay

Montego Bay circa 1910

Montego Bay ca.1910

There have been various explanations of how Montego Bay came by its name. Historians agree that the theory with the greatest probability is that the name "montego "was derived from the Spanish word "manteca", meaning lard or butter; an early map of Jamaica has the Montego Bay area listed as "Bahia de Manteca" or "Lard Bay". The region now known as Montego Bay had a dense population of wild hogs which the Spanish were said to have slaughtered in large numbers in order to collect hog's butter (lard) for export to Cartagena.

Before the development of Montego Bay, the north coast was far from the governmental scene in Spanish Town and the interior of the parish was occupied by the maroons. The roads were in a deplorable condition and communications were poor. The journey from Montego Bay to Spanish Town would have been a three to four day coach journey so the need to develop the town was indeed dire. In 1733, a bill was passed for appointing a proper plan for building a church and in 1738, barracks were built and were supplied by the churchwardens with a pack of hounds to be used against

THE ATTACK OF THE REBELS ON MONTPELIER OLD WORKS ESTATE.

revolted slaves; in that same year Montego Bay was made a free port. The parade in the town of Montego Bay was laid out by James Lawrence, custos of the parish in 1755 and son of John - who came to Jamaica in the time of Cromwell and next to the family of Barretts, was the largest landowner; the land remained in their family from 1676 to 1910. James Lawrence named the square Charles Square, after Sir Charles Knowles, Governor of Jamaica from 1752 to 1756. In 1795 and 1811, parts of the town of Montego Bay were destroyed by fire.

St. James was quickly developed by the sugar planters and grew to great wealth in the mid 18th century. By the 1780s the capital, Montego Bay, was regarded, next to Kingston, as the most flourishing town in the island. Montego Bay was granted city status on October 9, 1980 by an act of parliament and in 1982 it officially became Jamaica's second city. Interestingly, it was here that the third known book in Jamaica was printed - an almanack for the year 1776.

Christmas Rebellion (Baptist War)

St. James is also famous for the events that took place in 1831 – the Christmas Rebellion/Baptist War. Samuel Sharpe planned that after the Christmas holidays of December 25-27, 1831, the slaves of St. James would begin to rebel passively by refusing to work unless paid. This however did not go as planned, as a group of slaves became violent, setting fire to buildings and cane fields. This action spread from estate to estate and was violently suppressed by the government and white plantation owners. Sharpe was eventually hung in the Montego Bay market place on May 23, 1832. The Sam Sharpe rebellion was considered as one of the largest slave rebellions in the British Caribbean and was one of the longest and most influential of the emancipation revolts. (Craton 109).

Maroons

The maroons also played an important role in the history of St. James. During the 18th century when Cudjoe, maroon leader in the western part of the island, signed a peace treaty with the British in 1739, the maroons were given almost 1500 acres of land in St. James. The area was named Trelawny Town after the then governor – Edward Trelawny. Some fifty years later in reaction to the flogging of fellow maroon, who

Maroon Town in the Parish of St. James, Jamaica

had been accused of pig stealing, the Trelawny Town maroons rebelled. Thus began the maroon war of 1789 in which some 300 maroons fought against almost 1,500 English soldiers. The maroons have solidified their place in St. James' history and even today there is evidence of the survival of maroon culture in some communities such as Flagstaff and Maroon Town.

Tourism Industry and Economy

Sugar cane and bananas are the main crops planted in St. James; cattle-rearing is also done on a large scale. St James contains several manufacturing companies including garment, woodwork and food processing. Of great importance however, is the development of the tourist industry in Montego Bay, which is now widely considered as the main tourism area in Jamaica, contributing over one-third of Jamaica's tourism revenue; it is this development that has facilitated Montego Bay's vast growth.

The Development of Tourism

Montego Bay, and the entire parish of St. James by extension, is over 80 per cent dependent on the tourism industry for its economic survival. As one of Jamaica's leading industry, tourism is critical to Jamaica's growth and development and is one of the few sectors that has been growing since the 1990s. According to the World Bank, the GDP in the hotels, restaurants and clubs sector has grown 2.6 percent annually over 1991-2001 and direct employment at about 9% . Tourism also stimulates activity in other sectors such as food, manufacturing, construction, trade and transport. In addition to the various resorts, beaches and hotels in the Montego Bay area, tourists gravitate towards the many historic sites that tell a story about St. James' rich history.

Historic Sites & Places

St. James Parish Church

ST. JAMES CHURCH, MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

Built between the years 1775 and 1782, this Anglican Church in the capital of Montego Bay was dedicated to St. James the Great, the patron saint of Spain. In 1957 it was wrecked by an earthquake but was restored with few changes from the original.

The Creek Dome (The Creek) - The discovery of the Creek Dome was very valuable to the parish, as it became the village's first reliable supply of fresh water. The spring itself was entombed with a room above called the Dome, to house the keeper of the Creek.

Rose Hall St. James, Jamaica

Ruins of Rose Hall St. James, Jamaica

Rose Hall restored

Rosehall – is located about 10 miles from Montego Bay and was erected in 1760 by George Ash, the second husband of Rose Kelly. Her fourth husband was the Hon. John Palmer and Rosehall is said to have been the scene of a tragedy in the eighteenth century when the owner, Annie Mary Paterson, wife of John Palmer, was murdered by her slaves; it is this tragedy on which the legendary tale of the

white witch of Rosehall is based. The great house was restored and opened to the public on February 26, 1971.

The Cage – was built in 1806 as a wooden jail for runaway slaves, unruly seamen and other vagrants. It is now used as a tourist information centre and a small museum.

Old Court House – built around 1774 and is the site where national hero Samuel Sharpe was tried in 1832. It was destroyed by fire in 1968. The Montego Bay Civic Centre now stands at this location.

Samuel Sharpe Square - Montego Bay witnessed the final act of the last slave uprising, the Christmas rebellion of 1831-32 that engulfed the western parishes. Under martial law, the slaves were tried in the courthouse and over 300 of them were hanged at the parade where there is now a memorial to the leader, Samuel Sharpe.

Doctor's Cave - Dr. Alexander James McCatty was the first owner and gave the site in 1906 for the use of a bathing club. Doctor's Cave was so named because it was used by Dr. McCatty and his friends, who were mainly from the medical profession and, at that time they entered the tiny beach through a cave; the cave however, was destroyed by a hurricane in 1932. A plaque on the wall near the steps which go down into the cave has an inscription to his memory.

Old Slave Ring (Cotton Tree Lodge) – This semi-circular structure was where prospective buyers came to view slaves who were on parade. The structure is located on the grounds of the Rerrie's House in Montego Bay.

Sources

Craton, Michael. Testing the Chains: resistance to slavery in the British West Indies. New York: Cornel University Press, 1982. Print.
Cundall, Frank. Historic Jamaica. London: The West India Committee, 1915. Print.

Cundall Frank, and Joseph C. Ford. The Handbook of Jamaica. Kingston: The Government
    Printing Office, 1914. Print.

Jamaica Information Service. St. James. Kingston: Jamaica Information Service, 1995. Print

National Library of Jamaica. Historical Notes (H/N) – St. James, parish of

National Library of Jamaica – Photograph/Print Collection

"St. James Heritage Sites." Jamaica National Heritage Trust. N.p., 2011. Web. 21 Dec. 2014.
        <http://www.jnht.com/st_james.php>

St. James Parish Council
Senior, Olive. Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage. St. Andrew: Twin Guinep Publishers Ltd, 2003.
    Print.

World Bank. The Road to Sustained Growth in Jamaica. Washington : World Bank, 2004. Print.