

Historical and Archaeological Society The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

“Knowledge to be of any Value must be Communicated”

HAS Newsletter No. 159 October, November, December 2022



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The Women Behind Street Names (Part 5)

By Janice Augustin

Miss Hilda Davis

(This is the final article on women behind street names. This series has highlighted five women; however, there are several other streets in the city and in parishes with women's names. Others will no doubt research and record the lives of these women. History to be of value has to be shared.)



Hilda Davis Drive is a two-way street that runs north to south between Rowan Henry Street and Dickenson Bay Street. Princess Margaret Secondary is located at the corner of Hilda Davis Drive and Dickenson Bay Street.

Miss Hilda Davis was born on the 12 December 1910, the last child of her parents Joseph Davis and Rhoda Buckley. She had no middle names, but in jest she would add 'Agatha Dulcina' to the amusement of her family. The family house was the same house on Long Street where Dr. Charles later had his office, almost opposite the alley west of the Cathedral, now named Charlie Henry Lane. She attended the St. John's Cathedral 'Big Church' at both morning and evening services. As a girl, she helped to clean the church and also played in the churchyard with little friends.

Young Hilda attended St. John's Girls' School which was located where the Ministry of Agriculture is now located. The Headteacher was the legendary Mary E. Piggott. Having completed her education, Miss Davis continued to be trained as a teacher by her Headmistress. It was this training both in teaching and discipline that gave her such success when she opened her own school – Foundation Mixed School in 1939, which became known as 'Miss Davis School'.

(Continued on page 2)

The Women Behind Street Names

(Part 5)

(cont.)

Miss Davis and her brother Sir Oliver 'Pookie' Davis chose as the motto of the school – *Nothing But The Best Is Good Enough*. Miss Hilda Davis, as headmistress of Foundation Mixed, held firm to that principle for the next sixty-two years that she ran her school. She believed 'every child can learn', and always had a few children at her desk giving extra practice. More revolutionary, she admitted Rastafarian children more than 20 years before it became an issue. Her only rule was that the children's hair be neat and clean.

Miss Davis loved her profession and wanted nothing but the best for her pupils. She retired by degrees. She gave up attending school at eighty-eight, but continued to do the daily figures for attendance, without a computer, until she was 91!

In addition to being principal of Foundation Mixed, Miss Davis was involved in community activities. She was President of the Local Red Cross Society; an Executive member of the Executive Council of the Girl Guides Movement; a foundation member of the Victory Sports Club (one of the first organised net ball teams in Antigua & Barbuda.) Her awards included the Order of Merit, Silver (1988); an Honorary Graduate of Antigua State College; The Fourth Annual Leonard 'Tim' Hector Memorial Award (2008).

The Hon. John St. Luce as MP named the street in his constituency in honour of his former Headmistress, and she was particularly pleased about this honour.

Miss Hilda Davis attributed her long healthy life to her early sea baths at Fort James. She kept those up until she was 98! In addition, she lived a long life because of her deep love for family, pupils, community, and country. It was all love.

The Museum wishes to thank the following persons who assisted in providing information for this article:

Mrs. Yvette Davis-Francis, niece of Miss Hilda Davis

Ms. Janelle Gore

Mrs. Eloise Hamilton

Ms. Sitra Samuel, Office of Surveys Department

Mrs. Forbes Deputy Headmistress, Princess Margaret Secondary School

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Timeline

Antigua-Sauratown

100 Negroes

1775-1800

1775, September 1 - Embargo placed on all exports to Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies effective that date.

1777 - Early in the year Francis Farley predicted that three out of every hundred slaves on Antigua would starve and malnutrition was rampant. He was trying to supply his six plantations there and work in the Island's interests as Councilor to supply food from other Caribbean islands. He concluded it would soon be impractical to pay the inflated cost of the supplies to maintain the slaves. The implication was that slaves were becoming an economic liability on Antigua.

1779 - 7,600 blacks on Antigua, 20% of the population, died of starvation and dysentery.

1779 - Francis Farley, long a sufferer of gout, came down with dysentery.

1779, March 27 - As he was about to depart for Tobago to try to regain his health, he wrote his will. Not knowing the sex of his fourth grandchild by Elizabeth Farley and the late James Parke Farley, he said if this were a son he would inherit the *Land of Eden*, the Virginia plantations, the partnership in the Dismal Swamp Company, and the *Mercers Creek* Plantation on Antigua. The granddaughters were to receive,2,000 sterling each on reaching twenty-one. If this child was another daughter, the four daughters would inherit all, share and share alike.

1779, April 1 - Francis Farley died at sea. Because the ship bearing his body was being chased by a French frigate, it sailed into Sugar Bay, Montserrat and Francis was buried on Montserrat.

1787 - On Antigua about 15% of the slave population had joined the Moravian church.

1791-1807 - A slave insurrection inspired by slaves from the West Indies was most to be

feared in this period in America magnified by the insurrection in Santo Domingo in 1791.

1793, May 1 - Maria Farley, second daughter, married William Champe Carter after rejecting Lighthouse Harry Lee. *Mercers Creek* Plantation grossed ,10,341 for year.

1793 - As the Farley daughters came of age and married they each convinced their husbands that their step-father had been looting their inheritances. Arriving in VA without resources, Rev. Dunbar had married their mother and lived as a very wealthy man. Thousands of pounds sterling had come from their *Mercers Creek* Plantation where 200 slaves worked 165 acres. Rental income from the *Land of Eden* was \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year. The plantation agent at the *Sauratown* paid more than ,1,200 Virginia currency to Dunbars order over five years. Yet the old debts of James Parke Farley remained unpaid on the books of Dinwiddie, Crawford & Company.

1795, June 26 - Richard Corbin wrote to Thomas Shippen urging a sale of the A West-India property, as the only way to secure their interest in that property. Corbin planed a trip there in the fall or winter. He listed the various properties that now are belonging to us.

1799, May 25 - Mary Byrd Farley died at Williamsburg. Later in the year George Tucker went to Antigua and found his interest via a Deed of Trust did not conform to Antiguan law and they would not recognize his interest in *Mercers Creek*. He relinquished his claims to the Antigua lands forever.

1800 - Henry Benskin Lightfoot notified the Farley heirs of a successful crop year at the *Mercers Creek* plantation for 1799 and offered to buy that property for ,20,000. If the heirs thought it was too low, Lightfoot reminded them that abolitionists were trying to end the African slave trade.

1800, June - Champe Carter sailed for Antigua and sold the interests of the three surviving sisters to Henry Benskin Lightfoot for ,20,000.

The Names of Barbuda

The Amerindian name for Barbuda was "Wa'omoni", as seen in Father Raymond Breton's Island Carib Dictionary. It is thought to mean the "Island of Herons". Since the word could mean any large bird, this would include the Frigate or Weather Bird, so common in Barbuda.



In 1529, Diego Ribero named Barbuda in his early map of the Caribbees as "La Barbuda" and Antigua "Elagua". Another geographer, Cabot, called it "Baruada". The Descelius' map of the Indies (1546) shows Barbuda as "Barnada". Zaltieri's map of 1566 calls the island "Las Barbuda".

Historians in both Antigua & Barbuda and Barbados have no real solution to the origin of the names of these islands. Legend has it that both Barbuda and Barbados mean "bearded". This may refer to the occurrence either of bearded Indians that were found there or to the Wild Fig (*Ficus* sp.), which has a bearded appearance with its aerial roots dropping from lower branches. The latter is more likely explanation. In Sebastian Cabot's map of 1544, both islands, and these only in the Eastern Caribbean, have curious dots around them. It is believed by some that these dots represent reefs. So it may be that foaming breakers may have reminded early explorers of islands with beards. Take your pick on the origin of the name!

In 1628, settlers from St. Kitts knew Barbuda as "Dulcina" for its "excellence and pleasantness thereof", but it soon reverted back to Barbuda.

Barbuda has its share of names attributed to natural features and to its flora and fauna. Examples are Two-foot Bay, Pigeon Cliff, Pelican Bay, Palmetto Point, Oyster Pond, Cedar-tree Point, Goat Island, Kid Island, Hog Point and Tobacco Gut. There are several local names of a picturesque nature, as Tumbly Wood, Found Out, Spiney Hill Perk, Picus Well, Kakie Hill, Boney Mangrove, Box Cape and Benter Will.



Two Foot Bay Barbuda

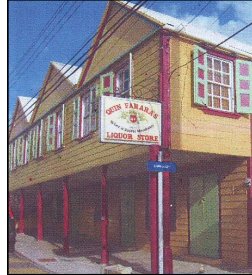


Aerial View of Palmetto Point dunes and dune vegetation Barbuda 1960

MUSE NEWS

17th-19th Century Architectural Features

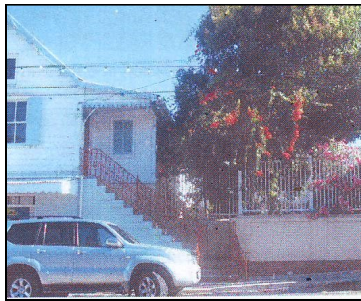
This building, although constructed in the late 19th century bears the distinctive design style of 17th century British colonial seaports. Features include a tripartite gable roof, wooden upper floor, shuttered doors and windows, as well as an arcade created by the projecting floor above. The structure combines residential and commercial use with a residence on the upper floor and a shop at street level.



The design style of this commercial building located in Redcliffe Quay is identical to the one above even though it was probably built 100 years earlier during the mid to late 18th century. Tell-tale signs of its age is the use of bricks



Oleanders and bougainvilleas cascade from the side garden of this 19th century building at the corner of Market and St Mary's



Streets. It is one of the very few remaining which has retained its floral garden and decorative iron railings. The top floor is still occupied as a residence

17th Century Architectural Design Styles

Many of the first buildings in St. John's must have been destroyed in the 1666 French invasion because the settlement had to be rebuilt in 1668. These early buildings were constructed of brick, limestone and wood. The design style of the 17th century buildings would have been similar to those found in British colonial seaport towns of the period such as Port Royal, Jamaica. The architectural style of buildings unearthed in underwater excavation of Lime Street, Port Royal, buried by the 1692 earthquake, are identical to several still existing in St. John's. In Antigua, architects preferred limestone and combined it with bricks as foundation stones because of the ease of availability and the fact that it proved to be more durable than bricks in the swampy, waterlogged soil of St. John's.

This design style was so popular in St. John's it continued to be copied until the 19th century mainly because of the ease of construction and the ready availability of local material, making construction costs cheap. In addition, architectural designs addressed commercial and residential needs and features took weather patterns into account. The distinctive features of this design style are evident in the two tops photos at left - the tripartite or bipartite gable roofs and street level arcade with the upper floor projecting, giving protection to pedestrians against horses, carriages and gigs, a very necessary feature since streets in St. John's had no sidewalks or pavements.

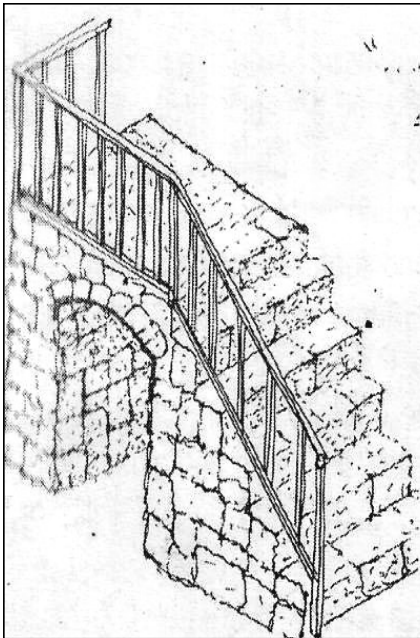
Ruins of the early 1700's still exist as free-standing brick walls and walls of several buildings, one of which is the brick -wall encircling the St. John's Cathedral, it dates from 1723, only 45 years after the 1668 establishment of the city. Others can be found in Point, Redcliffe Quay and on lower Nevis Street. Identifiable features which date all the structures are the similarities in the weathering pattern, colour and texture of the bricks.

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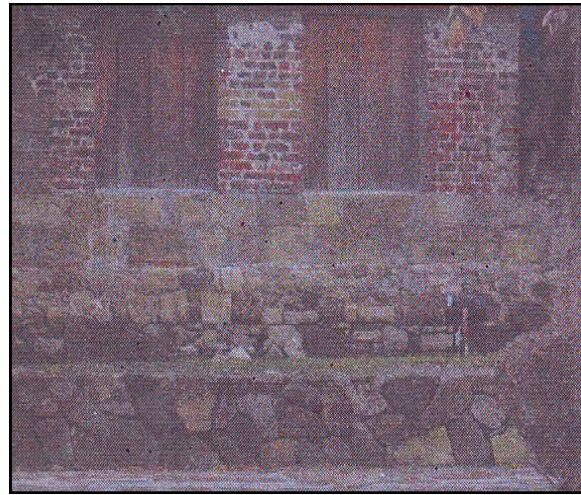
MUSE NEWS

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During the 17th & 18th centuries fire and earthquakes destroyed the town several times. When timber upper floors were destroyed by fires and foundations damaged by earthquakes, these could easily be repaired and life resumed rapidly after each catastrophe. For these reasons, a number of structures in St. John's have retained original designs and still stand on their 17th & 18th century limestone bases, now disguised as modern masonry.



This sketch by Paul Cloyd represents an example of 18th century naval architecture with an external limestone stairs and entryway built during the era of sailing vessels. Beneath the stairs was the usual half storey used a storage or shelter from hurricanes. When the character of the town changed from a naval port to one of land based enterprises, many of these lower floors became notorious grog shops, but have since been transformed into stylish boutiques.



This structure, now in ruins and hidden in the shadow of trees, may have originated from the 17th century, its limestone foundation shows evidence of layers of repairs over the centuries varying from common bond to random rubble.

The core of the city of St. John's rests firmly on limestone foundations erected in the 18th and 19th centuries by slaves. For more than 200 years, thousands of slaves, under the guidance of the slave drivers' whips, quarried limestone in off-shore islands for the construction of sugar mills, military forts, public offices as well as the underwater foundation of the Naval Dockyard. Slaves laboured in conditions that were far more dangerous and brutal than those in the cane fields. Some died, others received horrendous injuries, many tried to run away. Slabs of limestone quarried were placed on board boats, built and manned by slaves, and transported to St. John's where male and female stone masons at the work site shaped and trimmed them into the required measurements with consistency, precision and accuracy. A visitor, admiring the work of a slave, remarked on the "excellent smoothness of the joints of the walls....and....a very neat key-stone which he had sculptured".

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MUSE NEWS

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Eighteenth century stone masonry was a skill acquired from years of apprenticeship. The strength of the structure depended on the stones being held together more by the skill of the mason in the accurate measurement of each cut, than by mortar. The mortar used was said to be a mixture of 'white lime' and molasses.

In the 18th century a master stone mason was as important as the architect. In the case of the Court House, its mason, William Lowry was named along with the architect. An expert slave mason was an asset to his owner for he could be hired out at a minimum daily rate of one shilling per day. Land less poor whites in St. John's who had a slave. who was a skilled tradesman such as a carpenter or stone mason could collect enough money from the earnings of that one slave to support the entire household.

Stone masonry as a skill disappeared in Antigua by the early 20th century when more modern materials began to be used in construction. Today., historic limestone walls are not repaired, merely covered in layers of cement.

At left are 5 sketches reproduced from Paul Cloyd's book, *Historic Architecture; Design Guidelines for a Historic District, St. John's Antigua*, in which he identified the design patterns of limestone walls and foundations in St. John's.

“Knowledge to be of any value must be communicated”

West Indian Soldier Exhibition

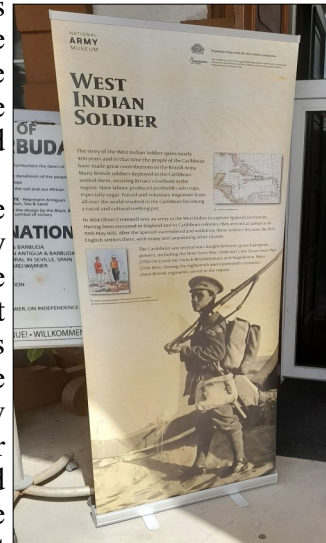
As Remembrance is celebrated on Sunday 13th November this year, The Museum and the West India Committee launched an exhibition " that highlighted the little-known military heritage shared between the U.K. and the Caribbean.

Encompassing more than 300 years of history, it tells the story of the recruitment and role of West Indian servicemen and women in the British Army, the experiences of British soldiers and officers in the Caribbean, and their combined service in various military campaigns.



Highlighted was the role of the British Army in the Caribbean and the difficulties it faced there.

Also indicated were some of the key moments in the history of the West India Regiments and persons were able to learn how the nature of their recruitment and service led to the unique position that these soldiers occupy in both the history of the British Army and the Caribbean.



This Exhibition you to understand the contributions made by West Indian servicemen and women over the centuries, including during both World Wars, and their continuing service across the globe today.

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MUSE NEWS

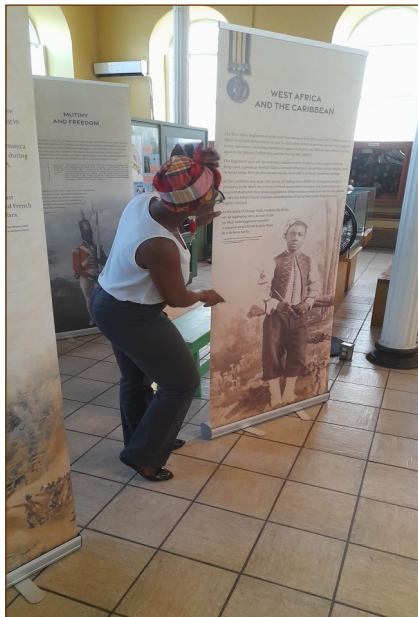
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The Exhibition also highlighted and included the Victoria Cross of Lieutenant Frank De Pass, the colours of the 4th West India Regiment, the war diary of the British West Indies Regiment and a rare portrait of a private soldier of the 8th West India Regiment, painted in 1804 and acquired by the National Army.

The Exhibition ran from the 11th November to 30th November.

What's Happening at the Museum

Special Independence School tour and display by Heritage Education Educator Ms. Mary Johnson.



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MUSE NEWS

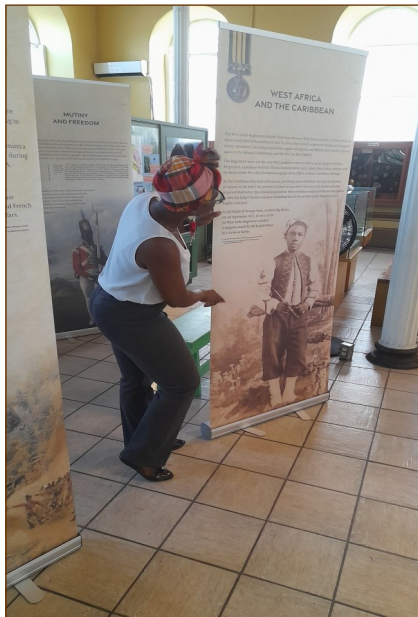
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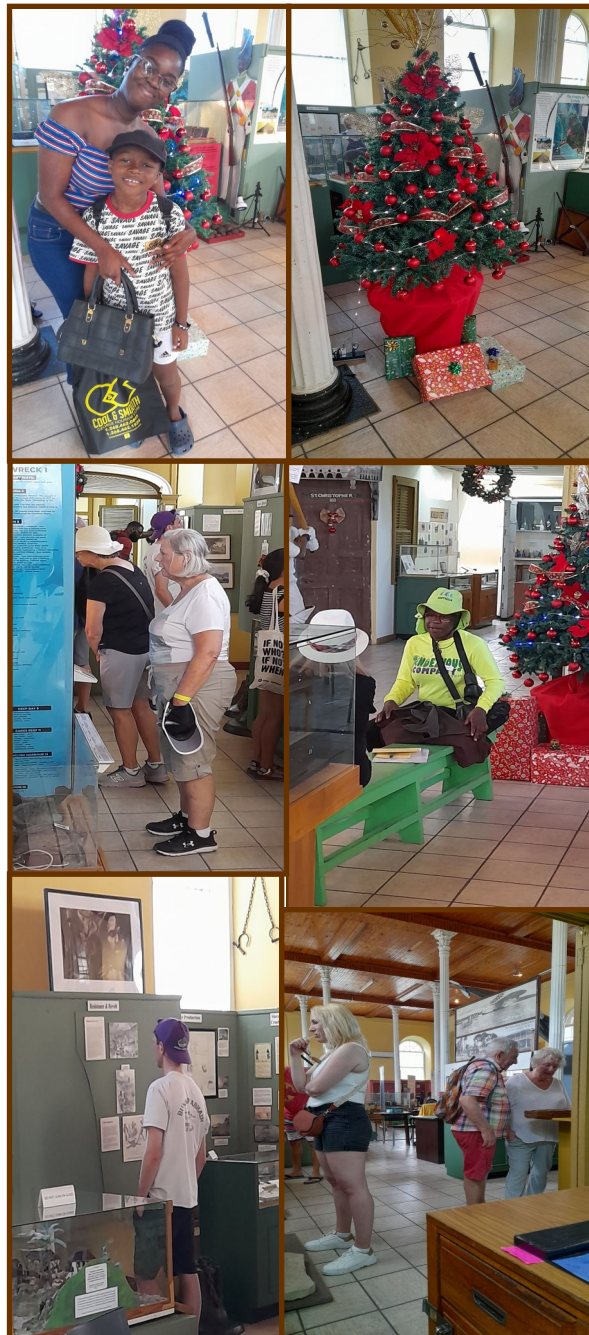


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What's Happening at the Museum

(Continued from page 9)

Visitors during the Christmas Season at the Museum



Friends and Members at our Museum Christmas Event



Jamaica Kincaid visit to the Museum

We welcome Jamaica Kincaid who is an Antigua American Author who was born in St. John's Antigua. Her highly praised books include the novels *Annie John*, *Lucy* and *At the Bottom of the River*, and *A Small Place*, an essay about the island of Antigua. She now resides in North Benningtons, Vermont in the United States.



The Historical & Archaeological Society Newsletter is published at the Museum quarterly in January, April, July and October. HAS encourages contribution of material relevant to the Society from the membership or other interested individuals.

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Historical and Archaeological Society

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2022 No. 159

UPCOMING EVENTS



Imagine St, John's in the year 1897. Your own vintage tour of then and now. Walk the streets as you compare the buildings of then and now, where was Gutter Lane and Crow Lane? Did you know that the Public Market was situated at the bottom of Long Street? There are so many secrets to reveal. Coming soon in 2023..QR Code friendly. Staff are presently researching street names and building for the exhibit. Stay connected for further information, by visiting our Facebook page, *The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda*. Also visit our website www.antiguamuseums.net

Join HAS! Discover & Preserve Antigua & Barbuda's Heritage

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