

Historical and Archaeological Society The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

“Knowledge to be of any Value must be Communicated”

HAS Newsletter No. 163 October, November, December 2023



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Curtains Open on New Space Exhibit at the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

By Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority

Space-lovers and fans of history, a new exhibit has been unveiled at the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda that celebrates the historic visit to space by Antigua and Barbuda’s Keisha Schahaff and Anastatia Mayers on August 10, 2023.

The “Antigua and Barbuda Goes to Space” exhibit, is a collaboration between the Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation and Investment, The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, and the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda.

The unveiling was performed by Astronaut Keisha Schahaff alongside President of the Historical and Archeological Society - Museum of Antigua and Barbuda Dr. Reginald Murphy, Chairman of the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda Walter Berridge, Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Tourism Director of Special Events, Promotion and Protocol



Annette Aflak and Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority Marketing Communications Manager Maria Blackman.

The guest of honour, Keisha Schahaff expressed her gratitude at being present for the reveal which was attended by her family, well-wishers, visitors to the museum and government officials. “I am deeply moved by the pride and humility that this moment instills in me. On August 10th, 2023, my heart swelled with pride as my daughter, and I etched our names into the pages of history.

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Curtains Open on New Space Exhibit at the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

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“Together, we embarked on an extraordinary journey, not only for our beloved nation and the Caribbean but for the entire human spirit.”

“Together, we proudly carried our national flag into space, marking a historic moment for Antigua and Barbuda as we ventured beyond our world. Our flag, symbolizing our unity, resilience, and unwavering spirit, soared above the earth, proclaiming to the universe that our nation had arrived among the stars.

“What makes this achievement even more profound is that our flag, having ventured into space, will find its final resting place in the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda, a symbol of our resilience and the realization of our dreams. Our story will forever resonate with the boundless dreams of every dreamer and the beating hearts of every adventurer” added Schahaff.

Dr. Reginald Murphy, President of the Historical and Archeological Society - Museum of Antigua and Barbuda said, “This is a very significant event for us at the Museum. It demonstrates that we are not only about old artifacts. We are about Antigua and Barbuda culture, Antigua and Barbuda history, present and past. We pledge to look after this very valuable artifact which we have acquired.”

The ‘Antigua and Barbuda Goes to Space’ exhibit is now open to the public.



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Early Aviation in Antigua

Extracted from 'The People's Point an Antiguan Waterfront Community with reference to Villa' By Joy Lawrence

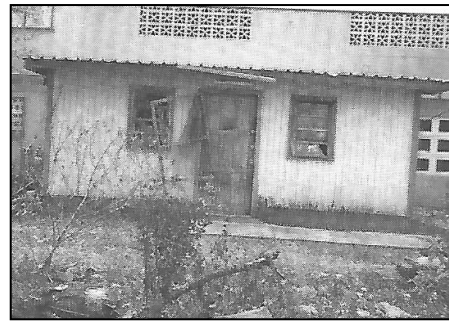
Sites of the First Land and Sea Planes - Point and Villa

Aviation in Antigua commenced when sea-planes began landing in St. John's Harbour. Vincent Simon, born on Wilkinson Cross in 1919, reported that he witnessed the first plane arrive in Antigua in 1929 when he was merely ten years old:

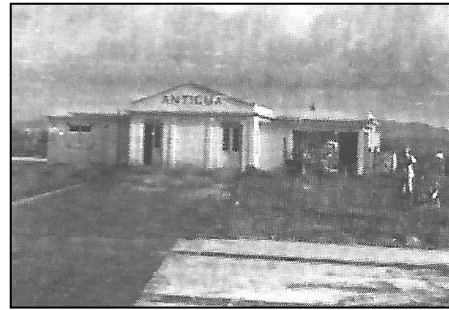
The plane landed where the Deep Water Harbour is now. It was a Pan American seaplane. Point people were so frightened to see this thing, they start running all about looking for parson, saying it was judgment day. You see, we had no communication at that time that this plane was on its way to make its inaugural flight here. The people came off onto a small boat that took them up to the jetty at the foot of High Street where was then the Market Wharf.

Famed aviator Charles Lindberg undertook several goodwill tours of the region between 1928 and 1931 with stopovers including Antigua, St Lucia, and Trinidad, often in his Spirit of St Louis aircraft that he used to be the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic (1927). He was advocating for airmail routes with the USA, South America, and between the islands on behalf of Pan Am which provided regularly scheduled flights into St. John's, using two-engine Consolidated Commodore seaplanes but landed with less and less excitement.

Then, on 20 August 1931, a huge 12-propeller seaplane sliced our harbour waves. Everyone came out to marvel at it.



Old Pan Am seaplane terminal



Villa Airport terminal

The Do X, produced by the Dornier Aircraft Company in Germany, was the largest, heaviest, and most powerful flying boat in the world. It provided the service and luxury of an ocean liner. This was the first of only three such planes ever made. It landed in St. John's Harbour carrying 70 passengers, a crew of 14, and mail. The flight, part of an epic ten-month-long promotional journey, originating in Germany, travelled south through Europe and Africa, crossed the Atlantic to Natal & Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, then north through the Caribbean to New York City. Nine months later, it returned to Berlin via the Azores.

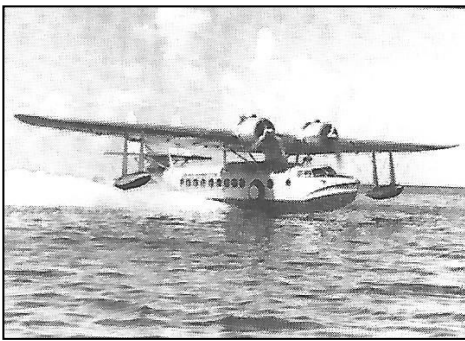
Pan American coordinated its seaplane activities with a terminal building on North Street close to the sea just south of Barry Stevens' residence. Joseph Davis erected the wooden building on an old stone foundation. From there controllers directed the planes and balloons served as wind-guides for pilots. Passengers would take a launch from the plane to the jetty at Kings Warehouse to clear immigration and customs.

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Early Aviation in Antigua

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The service changed over to regular wheeled -planes with the completion of a land-based airport in 1943. The first plane to land on the 3000-foot grass strip called Villa Field was a British West Indian Airways (BWIA) Lockheed Lodestar. Joseph Davis erected a new terminal building there, similar to the one at Point. That building now part of Tubby Derrick's Cockle Shell property is on the corner of Fort Rd and Cockleshell Ave. The proximity to surrounding hills made take-offs and landings problematic. So the location was used only for a short time. Villa Airfield land today is called Old Runway acknowledging the area's original function.



Pan Am 2-Engine Seaplane taking off

Eventually, businessman Luther George bought the seaplane terminal building that had had been standing empty. He moved it (c. 1951) to his Gambles Terrace home when he relocated his family from 48 North Street. The building can still be seen on Luther George Place off Rowan Henry Street. The stone building that had housed the seaplane aviation fuel still exists today in its original location near the Harmonites Pan Yard.

Relocation of Airfield from Villa to Coolidge

During World War II, the United States felt the need to protect its territories and shipping lanes from enemy attack, especially German U-boats.

It leased land on Caribbean islands to establish bases and install equipment to track planes, ships and submarines. Beginning in 1941, the British and Americans signed a 99-year lease for 500 acres of land in Antigua to allow the construction and operation of a Naval Base at Crabbs and an Army Base at Coolidge.⁸⁸ A letter from Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, to the Acting Governor and people of the Leeward Islands dated 27 March 1941 states:



Original Pan Am fuel storage building

"I have today signed the document implementing the Agreement of September last for the leasing to the United States of bases in Antigua ... " The United States gained the rights, power and authority "to inter alia construct (including dredging and filling) maintain, operate, use, occupy and control the said bases; to improve and deepen the harbours, channels, entrances and anchorages, and generally to fit the premises for use as naval and air bases; to control, so far as may be required for the efficient operation of the bases; and within the limits of military or naval necessity, anchorages, moorings and movements of ships and water-borne craft and anchorages, moorings, landings, takeoffs, movements and operations of aircrafts; to regulate and control within the leased areas all communications within, to and from the areas leased; to install, maintain, use and operate under-sea and other defences, defence devices and controls, including detecting and other similar facilities...

Part of the agreement included these land boundaries:

Beginning at a point on the east-west road five hundred yards West of High Point Factory;

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Early Aviation in Antigua

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thence north about five-eighths of a mile to the shoreline of Judge Bay; thence east, south and southeast along the shoreline to Barnacle promontory; thence south and west along the shoreline to the mouth of the unnamed stream South of Millars; thence west along the said stream about five-eighths of a mile; then north about nine hundred and fifty yards to the base of Date Hill and the eastern edge of Winthorpes Village (the village being excluded); thence due north about three-eighths of a mile to the point of beginning the entire tract containing about one and two-fifths square miles except and excluding from this construct the residential part of Millars Estate.

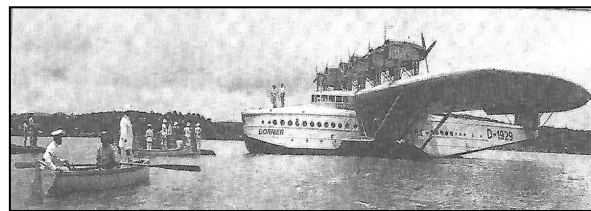
To extend the Army Base, US authorities decided, after much resistance from villagers, to relocate the entire village of Winthorpes (Winthorpes Farm) to a site on the Giles Blizzards Estate two and a half miles away. This was completed in 1942 and became New Winthorpes.

After WW II ended, the Americans no longer had need for all of the Coolidge Air Field. They surrendered portions of the land but maintained control over a few strategic locations: Crabbs Naval Base, the Air Force Base, the airstrip, Highpoint, Crabbs Peninsular and the Burma Quarry. On 21 June 1949, Coolidge Air Field changed from military to civilian control, thus allowing for commercial aircraft to land. Acknowledging this far more suitable landing strip, the British closed Villa airfield.

Pan American inaugurated direct flights from New York to Antigua in 1950 that continued on to Buenos Aires. When the Antigua Government, in 1952, decided to encourage tourism, it found Coolidge

inadequate to accommodate modern jet planes. They applied to the British for a grant to extend the runway. The British declined, stating that Barbados could be used to land jets then smaller planes used to transfer passengers to Antigua. Although not responsible for Foreign Affairs or Finance, VC Bird, as an executive elected member of the Legislative Council, placed himself at the forefront of this development. Refusing to accept such an arrangement, he held talks with Pan American Airways. They assured him that as soon as a suitable runway was built, they would introduce jet service into Antigua. Bird joined together with the director of Public Works to stealthily, for one year, use all grant funds allocated for potholing and drain building to extend the runway instead.

The British, concerned about a Pan Am monopoly, quickly negotiated a similar agreement accorded Pan Am. Recognition of the airport as a vital link between Antigua and Britain was just what Bird had originally sought. On 4th Oct 1958, BOAC landed its first direct transatlantic jet, the long-range Comet 4. This occurred three weeks before Pan American's first jet arrived on 26 October 1958. Enid Prince Mason, then living in the Point area, reports that she was one of the first Antiguans to take the BOAC flight from Antigua to London in 1958.



The Jumbo Dornier Do X 12-engine airship landed on 20 Aug 1931 with 70 people on board.

Dow's Hill Tracking Station

By Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

The planned launching azimuths for the Apollo space flights made it mandatory that a tracking station be established in the Eastern Caribbean to assure adequate tracking and communications coverage during the critical phases of liftoff and earth orbit insertion.

After investigating many islands, the NASA selection committee finally chose Antigua, and so a formal government agreement became effective January 23, 1967 for the building of the tracking station.

The specific site selected was the valley below Dow's Hill. Ideally situated, the valley was almost entirely surrounded by small hills that greatly reduced the possibility of locally generated radio signals overwhelming the weak radio signals received from a spacecraft. It was also remote from much-travelled roads and the airport. It was thus relatively immune from automobile and aircraft ignition noises, which could also make a spacecraft's transmissions unintelligible.

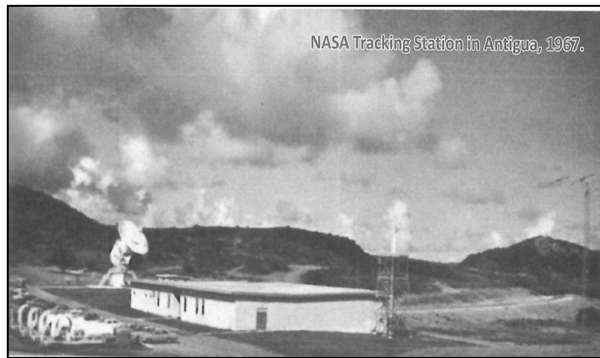


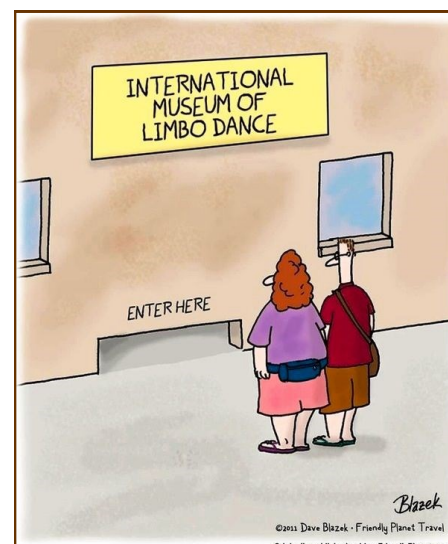
Photo taken from the book
'The Military Complexes of Antigua'
By Richard Dingwall

There was much trouble from local landowners in determining the correct compensation for their land. There were even stories of demonstrators laying down in front of bulldozers until the correct compensation had been paid, which was reckoned to be EC \$4,000 per acre. Later in the year, equipment for the Dow's Hill NASA Tracking Station was unloaded from a landing craft near the Pay Office in the Dockyard.

The heart of the station was the unified S-band equipment. This USB equipment was a unique tracking system. It utilised a single carrier frequency in the S-band frequency range to transmit and receive all information between the ground and the spacecraft. This arrangement was adopted to reduce the amount of equipment required aboard the spacecraft and most important, to reduce the amount of electrical power needed aboard the spacecraft. In addition to the 30ft diameter antenna, the Dow's Hill USB equipment included a unique timing system that would have taken over 200 years to gain or lose one single millisecond. On the hill overlooking English Harbour a tall alignment tower was built, used for lining up or "tuning" equipment.

About 1969, the tracking station was dismantled and in May 1973 the Antigua Archaeological Society and Yale University used it as a workshop for the excavation of the Indian Creek Amerindian site nearby. For the next seven years it was used by the Society to lecture schoolchildren and visitors on the artifacts of the earliest Antiguans. In 1982 the University of Health Services took over the abandoned station to be converted into a medical school.

Museum Humor



Reconstructing tropical cyclones and their consequences

Extracted from *'Extreme weather and society in Colonial Antigua and Barbuda: progress of archival research'*

By Alex Jorge Berland

During preliminary archive visits and research at the British Library, evidence has been uncovered that tropical cyclones affected Antigua and/or Barbuda in the years 1707, 1723, 1740, 1772, 1780, 1792, 1795, 1812, 1821, 1827, 1835 and 1848. References to each of these storms vary greatly in length and detail. For instance, all that is known so far of the storms of 1740, 1772, 1780 and 1792 is that they were among "the severest hurricanes [that] have occurred at Antigua" (Langham, 1844: 200) By contrast, other accounts provide comprehensive descriptions of cyclone characteristics, the losses they occasioned on land and at sea and their repercussions for different sectors of the human populace. Of the twelve storms listed above, that of August 12th 1835 is currently best documented and will thus receive special attention here.

It was "a violent a desolating hurricane," read one governmental account of the 1835 disaster, "such as has never before been witnessed, even by the oldest inhabitants [of the island]. A number of the consulted sources provided detailed descriptions of the development of atmospheric conditions during the event and the devastation that resulted, enabling certain synoptic-scale storm characteristics to be ascertained. Firstly, references to the passing of the eye of the storm - "a deep solemn silence" before "the wind returned with redoubled fury" (Langham, 1844: 201) or a "respite" during which the "hurricane was. only gathering breath"²³ - indicate that Antigua experienced a direct strike and would thus have been at the brunt of the greatest wind velocities generated at that stage of hurricane development. Secondly, reports of damage to man-made and biological features of the landscape (see Table 6) can be used as a

proxy of wind speeds; such descriptive extracts can be ranked in accordance with the storm intensity scale of Boose (2004), which has been developed specifically for this application. Many of the damage reports for the 1835 storm are consistent with damage, which is associated with wind speeds of up to 47 meters per second.

Naturally, historical documents emphasised the socioeconomic impacts of the hurricane. Governmental records were found to be particularly useful for documenting island-wide human and financial losses. One letter listed the thirteen individuals officially reported to have perished in the storm, while the 1835 Blue Book estimated that repairing the colony's forts had cost the treasury £3,400 sterling and that disruptions to trade had incurred a £5,000 drop in revenue. Conversely, the missionary correspondence described the injury sustained by specific properties belonging to the Moravian Church and its members.

A small number of documents provided insights into how certain institutions responded to the 1835 storm. An official proclamation issued by the Antiguan Governor announced that the colony would be opened to duty-free imports of provisions by "Vessels of all nations," in order to "avert as much as possible the evils of famine and despair, and enable the inhabitants to erect anew and repair their houses, buildings, and works." According to a second proclamation, a day of "Humiliation and Thanksgiving" was also to be held in acknowledgement of the divine origin of the storm. This second response is especially interesting as it sheds light upon the way in which Colonial West Indian society conceptualised extreme weather; like other natural phenomena that could produce profound human suffering, severe aberrations from 'normal' climatic conditions were seen as 'visitations' of God's providence. The climate researcher must be mindful of such historical perceptions, as they inevitably influence the ways in which specific events were experienced and, therefore, recorded.

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Muse News

What's Happening at the

Museum

New Space Exhibit at the Museum



Antigua and Barbuda celebrates the reveal of a new space exhibit. Astronaut Keisha Schahaff gave a speech on her experience up to space and being proud of herself and her daughter being the first Antiguan to visit space. She explained how she felt honored to be part of this event.



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Muse News



Unlock the Museum Event

A Night of History was hosted by the St. Paul's Anglican Church, Falmouth celebrating their 350 years Anniversary on Saturday 25th November 2023. This event took place at the American University of Antigua (AUA) campus.



Congratulations to Dr Reginald Murphy, the President of the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda on the occasion of the award bestowed upon him, "The Most Distinguished Order of the Nation (CN)" at the 42nd Independence celebrations of Antigua and Barbuda on the 1st November 2023. The award is most well deserved as a recognition of his selfless and dedicated work in research, preserving the history of Antigua and Barbuda and representing the nation both regionally and internationally over the past decades since the early 1980's. Your hard work and dedication has paid off. You are an inspiration! Once again, congratulations on your well deserved award. We wish you even more success in the future.



Dr . Reginald Murphy accepting his award from Antigua and Barbuda Governor General Sir Rodney Williams GCMG KGN KStJ MBBS PhD (h.c.)



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Installation of Domus Windows

Improving the air quality in the courthouse/ Museum of Antigua and Barbuda building, was undertaken in November'23 to install slide window panels in the fixed windows. Funding for this project was raised by the Unlock Museum fundraisers and donations. We thank the persons who contributed and the staff for their patience.



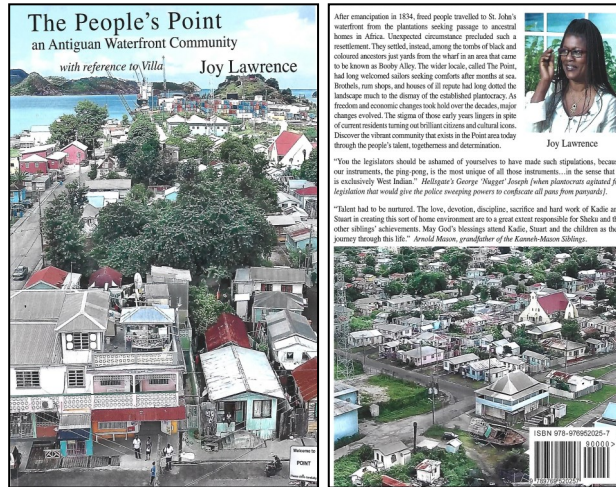
School Visit



Gospel Light Elementary Grade Two Class

Acquisitions

Special thanks to local author and friend of the museum, Joy Lawrence for donating her newest publication to the Museum Research Library, *'The People's Point an Antiguan Waterfront community with Reference to Villa'* Her contribution is greatly appreciated.



New Members

The Historical and Archaeological Society & Museum of Antigua & Barbuda would like to welcome our newest members:

Sloan Simmons of USA

Helen D Yeager of USA

Portia Moursy of Antigua

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.

Tel/Fax: 268-462-1469, 462-4930 E-mail: museum@candw.ag Website: www.antiguamuseums.net

Historical and Archaeological Society

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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 2024, QR friendly codes. 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

TO BECOME OR REMAIN A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY, FILL IN & SNIP OFF. Mail to P.O. Box 2103, St. John's Antigua.

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