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We Gatherin'
2025

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We Gatherin' in Barbados... to Celebrate who we are!

ST. PETER

With an impressive maritime history and an even deeper indigenous heritage, the Northern parish of St. Peter can claim to be one of the most historic large sites in Barbados. Named after **Simon Peter**, the Rock upon which the Christian faith is built, its chief landmass, Speightstown, was named after **William Speight**, an influential early settler upon whose lands the town was constructed.

TOPOGRAPHY of St. Peter

Sandwiched mainly between southern St. James and northern St. Lucy, it also borders part of easterly St. Andrew and boasts a seashore on the western and eastern coastlines of the island. The topographical features of St. Peter differ - from the placid west coast on former marshy wetlands which now attract first class visitor accommodation including two marina communities with Customs and Port accreditation and ever expanding ocean front hotels - to the spectacular coastal vista from high above at Cherry Tree Hill and its rugged east coast settlement at Boscobelle, just north of Morgan Lewis. The parish offers the best of three worlds: the serene west coast; an intricate gully system; and rustic east coast frontage shared with St. Lucy's Pico Tenerife.

History of St. Peter

The history of St. Peter is as complex as a black fowl-cock, and just as mesmerising: its secondary town; a unique battleground; two parish churches - almost; and people with an accented northern brogue, signify a special place of special interest. Its southwest boundary is three miles north of the 1627 Hometown Settlement, thus, unsurprisingly, settlement soon spread to this parish. **William Arnold**, the first English nobleman off Courteen's ship **William & John**, established his own plantation at Pleasant Hall. All Saints - the first Chapel after the eleven Parish Churches - was consecrated at Pleasant Hall where **Arnold** was buried in 1649. The 1629 timber-built Parish Chapel fell into disrepair and services were

then held at the 1649 All Saints until a new stone Parish structure was completed in 1665, during the golden age of sugar. That stone Parish Chapel at Church Street and Orange was badly damaged in the 1831 Hurricane, rebuilt in 1837 and served the parish until its interior was gutted by fire in 1980, one of three English chapels to suffer a similar or worse fate. St. Peter's has been pleasantly restored.

LITTLE BRISTOL Trading Town

Barbados' second town, Speightstown, enjoys a peculiar history. With placid waters and marshy river bed on lowlands downhill of very fertile black soil, the town would soon become an important entrepot for Colonial trade; and with forests to fell and lands to cultivate, Speightstown soon became the major point for exporting timber, cotton and tobacco as boats left this northern port town for direct sail to Bristol. In time the town was called 'Little Bristol' but it would become even better known as the port from which the Carolinas would become a virtual 'Colony of Barbados'.



CAROLINA Connection

With the consolidation of plantations into larger sizes to fit the new economies of sugar, many young men left Barbados for lands afar. Many ended in the Carolinas between 1660 and 1670, and many eventually became very involved, by Royal Prerogative, in the Proprietorship of lands and great wealth, especially in South Carolina, where former St. Peter residents like **John Collins**, **Philip Gibbes** and **John Yeamans** joined the trek westward. **Yeamans** had been accused of causing the death of his former business partner **John Berringer** of **Nicholas**. He then married **Berringer's** widow and reappeared in the Carolinas. Reports indicate that **Mrs. Yeamans'** children for **Mr. Berringer** would have absolutely nothing to do with their step father and his life was a rather miserable one. It was **Berringer's** offspring who changed the name of the local estate to **NICHOLAS** but **Yeamans** was wealthy and became a Proprietary Governor in the emerging Colony. In 1997, this northern town was twinned with Charlestown, South Carolina and many Carolinians now come to Barbados for heritage tours including St. Nicholas, whose great house is a major attraction with a plantation rum distillery, and a newly installed railway.



St. Peter FORTIFICATIONS

Speightstown loomed large in the economic fortunes of Barbados. As its second largest town, trade was both internal and heavily export oriented. It therefore had to be jealously guarded from invasion - even from aspiring English enemies. Therefore, the Parish Chapel sits opposite Orange Fort, a major emplacement of 24 guns. If its original location was as it now sits, the chapel would have been centred within the Fort's infrastructure and it would truly have been a Fort Chapel.

Most of St. Peter's coastal fortifications have degraded and, apart from the Orange Fort's vague outline at the Esplanade, only the 1818 Dover Fort, more a Signal Station than a major fort, remains. In days of yore however, St. Peter's west coast was protected by no less than 10 forts and batteries. They stretched from near the St. James boundary where Thornhill's Battery was located, onto Mullins and Road View where there were Fort Rochester, Hons' Battery and the Meeting House Fort (now Leamington House) opposite the former Quaker Cemetery which holds the remains of French born actress **Claudette Colbert**, her husband and mother. Fort Denmark with its belatedly installed swivel guns, west of the Alexandra school; Coconut Hall opposite Arlington museum; Heywoods Battery; Six Men's Fort and Fort Rupert (now Little Good Harbour) complete the shore batteries; but there were also at least two other hillside emplacements beside Dover.



SINGULAR Events

Throughout the history of Barbados, the Battle of Battaley's is remembered as the crux of the Royallist vs Republican war that killed **King Charles I** of England and enthroned Parliament. That war spread to Barbados and is epitomized by the 1651 landing of **Admiral Ayscue's** Republican forces guided by Barbadian planter and local militia Colonel, **Reynold Alleyne** of St Peter. His intimate knowledge of the parish's tight gun emplacements allowed him to point out the only possible location for a successful landing. The ensuing Battle of Battaley turned out to be brutal. Land they did, but it took over three hundred lives, including Alleyne's, in that one blood-drenched day, thus leading to the shipping blockade which, in turn, led to the historic Declaration of Oistins in 1652.

Nearly four hundred years later, Barbados is still discussing whether Alleyne should be considered a turncoat for switching from Royalist to Republican, or a hero for trying to end the stalemate that prohibited importation of accustomed luxuries and exportation of money-earning crops. He was the progenitor of a dynastic family, long considered the Royalty of Barbados. In 1813, those coastal guns would have been brought into use, for the final time, when, during the Anglo-American War, an American naval vessel launched an attack that killed six northern fishermen in their boats a few miles west of Speightstown, a small town which was big in fishing. From an important whaling station thru' flying fish sail boats, to the rhythmic Seine Boats, the town and parish are still important to the fishing industry of Barbados.



DUTCH Inspired Architecture

Surrounded by Dutch inspired architecture, Orange Street obviously benefited from The Netherlands culture, probably inspired by **King William** of Orange, which would suggest its name, and would also date those architectural features to the late 17th century. Rooflines at Church Street, Salt Pond bottom, Sand Street and Major's Walk are stark reminders of buildings in Orangestad, but there are other structures such as the 300 year-old Noel Roach Drugstore, Arlington House, the Methodist Chapel-School, the **Cheeseman's** home opposite Merton which suggest a variety of different cultures from which architectural designs came to the town.

The AMERINDIANS

One culture that is largely hidden is that of the Amerindian peoples, the 'Lokono'. No longer openly evident and largely forgotten through the centuries, recent construction on the west coast has unearthed substantial Carib and Arawak artifacts: and it is posited that names like 'Six Mens' and 'Half Moon' may have been crossovers from that ancient habitation. As well, the 'Indian trail eastward' which encompasses districts like 'the Indian Graveyard' north of Boscobelle; 'Indian Ground' south of Farley Hill; and even Nicholas plantation where Col. Cave collected a serious trove of ancient Indian conch-shell tools from his cane fields, has recalled the heritage of a substantial Amerindian presence in the parish.

ATTRACTIONS

St. Peter does not lack for attractions. Apart from those already mentioned, Arlington House on Queen's Street, once a ship chandlery, then the first Barbadian Public Health Centre, is now a delightful little Museum containing area artifacts; St. Nicholas Plantation House, one of only three surviving Jacobean period houses, links the history of Barbados with the emerging colony of the Carolinas. Then there is Farley Hill Ruin (the great house of Grenade Hall plantation) which played host to British Royalty, then to the movie *Island in the Sun* before being ravaged by fire. The Hill is the perfect link with other islands in the Caribbean to which the 19th century Briggs family relocated after the Confederation Riots. It offers spectacular coastal views and is a constant wedding and entertainment venue. And how about 'Camelot', the 19th century beach home of the titled **Haynes** family who owned several eastern sugar estates, and who donated the Mount Tabor lands and Chapel to St. John's Moravians. 'Camelot' was

converted in the 1960's into St. Peter's first 20th century coastal hotel, **Cobbler's Cove**.

We mentioned 'All Saints' 1649 chapel in passing. We did not mention its spectacular stained-glass windows nor the interior and cemetery statuary which includes memorials to **William Arnold**, the **Briggs** Family of Maynards, Farley Hill and Nevis, and the sad reminder of Barbados' most devastating road accident which occurred in August 1945. A truck transporting 58 plantation workers cross-country, plunged over the Lancaster Gully, just a few miles from home. Thirty of the labourers perished. Most of them had lived in districts surrounding All Saints Chapel where their mahogany memorial and list is hung on the west door.

Other parish features include many old sugar windmill structures which survive and which are sought and studied by locals and visitors: double mill walls at Portland and the large mill at the Convent; the long abandoned, unused, controversial Arnold Mill overlooking Whitehall Plantation tells its own singular story, separating it from the fifty-four other sugar plantation sites in this parish. There are numerous gullies including: Sailor's Gully, Whim Gully, the Amerindian/Catholic cave at Benn Hill and the old Sedge Pond Cut - all spaces to hike and explore in the parish.

On the dark side, the **Alleyne** family eventually, by marriage, inherited Cabbage Tree Hall which is now renamed Alleynedale Hall. It is said that one of the early owners of the house committed suicide in a servant's room and is buried in a leaden coffin in the house cellars. He is still often heard, usually at night, walking up and down the stairs and opening doors. Another strange story is that of the Arnold Mill. Reports are that the owner built this great new sugar mill but before he could use it, he lost it in a gamble. He became so angry that he dynamited the cliffside so close to the mill wall. that if it was ever started, its vibrations would cause the whole cliff to crumble, thus the mill would fall in and be destroyed. It was never used.



TRANSPORTATION

St. Peter also has a singular history in Barbados' transport. Following insufferable 19th century horse and carriage trails when even going to church was easier done by boat, Barbados started importing macadam (pitch-lake tar) and construction of roads began - from Speightstown to Bridgetown - thus, in 1907 the first Highway (H1 or Route 1) accepted its first horse-drawn buses, owned by the **Eckstein** Family of Whitehall Plantation, thus sparking the transport revolution in Barbados. Within five years, motors would be added to these buses, then there would be a scramble as many more Barbadian families joined the road transportation business.

EDUCATION

The arrival of Barbados' first Bishop, **William Hart Coleridge** in 1825, sparked the widespread school system that still exists. Schools were attached to all Anglican Communion in the parish: All Saints, Boscobelle, Parish Church, Nicholas and St. Boniface. Then came the Methodists who, just before Emancipation, established a Chapel School whose vacant building still stands on Chapel Street. The Coleridge Secondary School for boys, established ca. 1850, amalgamated with the Parry School in 1952/3 to form the Coleridge and Parry School at Ashton Hall overlooking Heywoods. The Alexandra School for girls was established in 1894 at West End (opposite Arlington House) before moving to its current site at 'Merton' in 1929. Both schools are now coeducational. There are four primary schools at Boscobelle, All Saint's, Bakers, and Roland Edwards near Battaley, which honours the composer of the music of our National Anthem. St. Boniface is now a nursery school and the 'Edna Nichols' is a remedial School, also located at Boscobelle.

These schools have produced great citizens of Barbados but would have been nothing without

dedicated teachers like **Alma Parris, Grace Thompson, Sybil Leacock, Urcil Osbourne and Edna Nicholls: Banfield and Evelyn McClean, Vinston Welch, Dayryll Jordan, Pedro Hinds, Harry Husbands, Jeff Broomes** and countless others who spent their lives educating the children of St. Peter, many of whom have become outstanding contributors to our Nation's development.

St.Peter PERSONALITIES

Count among them a Governor General, **Sir. Elliott Belgrave**; a Prime Minister, **The Right Honourable Professor Owen Seymour Arthur**; Vice Chancellor of University of the West Indies, Professor **Sir. Hilary Beckles**; first black Speaker of Parliament, **The Honourable Kenmore Husbands**; first black manager of a Barbados sugar factory, **Oliver Hinds**; the **Matthews** of Mortimer Hall; Ambassador **Bentley Gibbs**; Agriculturist, **Edward Robert Cumberbatch**; Family life Specialist, **Norma Scantlebury Roach**; Current Minister of Labour, **The Honourable Colin Jordan**; West Indies Cricketers: **Sir. Gordon Greenidge, Fidel Edwards, Pedro Collins and Corey Collymore**; Scout Master **Lavington McClean**, Trade Unionist **Levere Richards**; bankers **Anthony Cadogan and Reynold McClean**; business families: the **Rollocks, Atherleys, Jemmotts, Edwards, Estwicks** of Asta Cinema, **Gray Brome, Elmer Jordan** and siblings plus national athletes **Lorna Forde, June Boyce and Trevor Small**.

These have all contributed to the fabric of St. Peter and Barbados, but pride of place goes to the differently able like **Roland Edwards** who soldiered on despite his blindness; and to our centenarians among whom are **Mildred and Chester Cumberbatch** (wife and husband) of Black Bess, **Drusilla Browne, Enid Fredericks, Melville Williams and Leotta Worrell**. These loyal sons and daughters all do hereby make us proud - of our parish, and of our Nation.



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