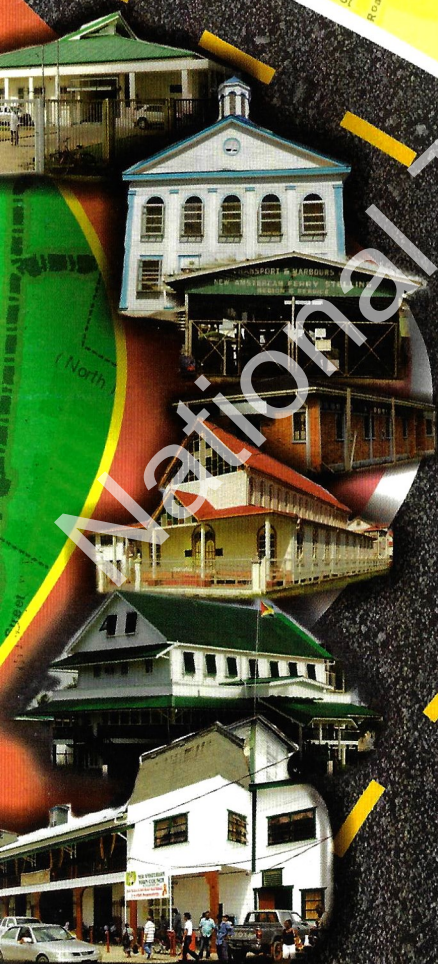


# New Amsterdam Heritage Trail



# Introduction

The National Trust of Guyana was established following the passage of the National Trust Act, Act No. 7 of 1972. The main responsibility of the agency is the preservation of the nation's monuments, sites, places and objects of historic interest or national importance.

As part of an ongoing effort to document and promote this nation's rich heritage, the National Trust continues its mission to conserve, preserve and promote the nation's patrimony by publishing this booklet, "The New Amsterdam Heritage Trail," so that the present and future generations will access and enjoy the richness of Guyana's heritage.

The town of New Amsterdam is a treasure trove of history spanning over a century. It was seen fitting to investigate this intriguing section of Berbice and locate significant heritage sites and landmarks in order to produce a map to aid visitors when touring and also to educate and remind the general public about the legacy of New Amsterdam. This booklet also features important buildings which are no longer a part of the town's landscape, but are cherished through photographs.

The communal culture of the New Amsterdam town is evident in its residents' helpful disposition of sharing knowledge about the rich history of the town, both lost and still standing. Thus, through interactions with residents, municipal and Governmental officials, extensive archival research and photography, the growth and development of historic New Amsterdam was successfully documented.

This publication now serves as a medium through which local, national and international counterparts can explore and rediscover New Amsterdam. Our journey will begin at the Berbice River Bridge, one main access point in travelling to historic New Amsterdam.

# History

## New Amsterdam

The town of New Amsterdam first developed as a settlement beside Fort Nassau, former seat of government of the Dutch colony of Berbice, some 55 miles up the Berbice River. This small Fort consisted of private homes, warehouses, shops, a repair dock, two smithies, a brick church, a Court of Policy building and an inn.

Around 1784, the Dutch relocated the settlement of New Amsterdam to the confluence of the Berbice and Canje Rivers. The name New Amsterdam was chosen because most of the colonists originated from the province of Amsterdam in Holland. Sometime between 1785-1790, New Amsterdam was established as the seat of Government for Berbice. At that time the town was little more than a forest settlement, with a few houses and no established roads or drains.

By the resolution of an Ordinance dated January 11, 1791, plots of land were awarded to settlers along the river front. Ordinances in October 1825 and September 1838, resulted in the establishment of a 'Board of Policy' to be responsible for the affairs of the Town. In 1844, a Board of Superintendence was established for this purpose. The town developed under the Board's guidance; this body lasted until September 1, 1891, when legislation was enacted to incorporate the town into a Municipality.

Today, New Amsterdam is a developed town with a number of business places, schools, churches, government offices, restaurants, hotels and other amenities. New Amsterdam takes up approximately 13.7 square kilometers and has a population of about 35,000 inhabitants. The town is bordered to the north by the Canje River; south by Doe Park; west by the Berbice River and east by Caracas (Angoy's Avenue).



**T**he Berbice River Bridge is said to be the sixth longest floating bridge in the world with a length of 1.5 kilometers; and stretching from D'Edward Village on the western bank of the Berbice River to Crab Island on the eastern side. This structure was constructed by the consortium of international firms, the Bosch Rexroth and Mabey and Johnson at an estimated cost of G\$ 8.2 billion. On December 23, 2008, His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo and Chairman of the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. (BBCI), Ms. Geeta Singh Knight, declared the Berbice Bridge officially opened. The Berbice River Bridge is constructed from Compact 200 Bridge system which is said to be the most modern steel panel bridge technology in the world. The surface of the bridge is also coated with an epoxy resin overlaid with calcined bauxite, making it skid free.

## The Berbice River Bridge







## 1 The Canje Bridge

**T**he Canje Bridge at Fort Canje, was erected at a cost of G\$ 13 million as a replacement for the Canje Swing Bridge. It was opened on February 23, 1978 by the then Minister of Works and Transport, Steve Naraine. A resident of Cumberland during that time, eighty-eight years old Ms. Hilda Shepherd, cut the ribbon to declare the bridge open.

Designed by American firm Raymond and Harris Corporation of New York, the bridge has a width of 10 metres (33 feet), a length of 527.9 metres (1,732 feet) and height of 12.1 metres (40 feet). It has 19 spans and was constructed from steel, concrete and post-tensioned beams. The bridge was designed with two traffic lanes and two pedestrian sidewalks, and can accommodate vessels with a maximum height of 21.3 metres (70 feet).

Pandit Ramsaroop Maraj, born on November 3, 1889, was the founder of the Dharm Shala, a humanitarian charity located in Albouystown, Georgetown. His main motivation was to provide the less fortunate with the basic essentials of life. Mr. Maraj turned his focus to Berbice, where four buildings were constructed at Fort Canje, amongst them is the Fort Canje Mandir. This temple was constructed during the 1920s. Built from timber, the Fort Canje Mandir exhibits much fenestration, fretwork, colored glass panes, front porch and central tower with spire. The style of the temple has been described as “colonial creole timber architecture.” One unique feature of this building is that at one time it accommodated the worship of the three main religions in Guyana; Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

## 2 Fort Canje Mandir





3

## The Psychiatric Hospital Queen Victoria Ward

The Queen Victoria Ward Building of the Psychiatric Hospital at Fort Canje, is said to have been constructed in the late nineteenth century. This wooden structure is three stories high, rectangular in shape and is raised on brick columns. At the center of the main façade there is an octagonal enclosure which encompasses the main access staircase to the first and second floors. Typical features of Guyana's traditional architecture are exhibited with the presence of timber louvers, Georgian six-paned windows, decorative fretwork, cornices and spandrels. The building has had its fair share of alterations over the years, firstly with the enclosure of the ground floor, preferably for provision of additional space. At the western side, a new block constructed in concrete was added for the provision of sanitary facilities. At present, the building is in a state of disrepair and in desperate need of restoration.



On April 2, 1968, the Government of Canada signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Guyana for a vocational school, making way for the construction of a suitable building.

The New Amsterdam Technical Institute, built at a cost of G\$ 6.5 million was handed over to the Government of Guyana on September 11, 1971. During that same year on November 15, the Institute was declared opened, accepting its first enrolment of 246 students, with access to all the basic trade studies.

The Technical Institute, located on Garrison Road, is a two storey building with a concrete ground floor and wooden upper floor. The timber lattices and louvers provide the main entry point for cross ventilation on the first floor. The first principal was Mr. Carter who was the Deputy Principal of the Georgetown Technical Institute at that period. He remained head until April 1973, when he was succeeded by Mr. A. Munroe.

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## The New Amsterdam Technical Institute





## 5 The Hospital

The old Public Hospital, built in 1884, was deemed unable to function as the primary hospital of the region. As a result, the Government of Guyana signed a grant agreement with the Japanese Government for the construction of a new hospital.

The project was carried out in two phases. The agreement for the first phase was signed in August 2001 for the construction of the complex and the second phase, the equipping of the hospital, was signed in July 2003. The works were managed by Japanese consultants from Yamashita Sekkei Inc. and Binko Ltd. The contractor was Kitano Construction Corporation and Nissho Iwai Corporation was tasked with equipping the hospital.

The construction of the Hospital commenced in March 2003 and was completed in October the following year, six months before the intended completion time. It was built for G\$ 2.3 billion and was commissioned by then President, Bharrat Jagdeo. The plaque at the hospital was unveiled by President Bharrat Jagdeo; then Minister of Health, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy and the Japanese Ambassador. The Hospital officially opened its doors to the public on November 1, 2004. Located on Main Street and Garrison Road, the hospital comprises contemporary concrete structures varying from one to two stories high, all being interconnected to each other. The main building at the front has a skylight integrated into the roof.

On September 5, 1916, the Berbice High School for boys was established on the lower flat at the residence of Reverend J.A. Scrimgeour. The school's first Headmaster was Mr. C.A. Pugsley. With the growing number of students, a separate building was needed for their accommodation. The project was initiated and through the cooperation from the public and the Government, the building known as the 'Boys Building' was completed in 1920. The Canadian Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church of Canada later established a school for girls. It was housed on the ground floor of the Missionary's Residence under the charge of Mrs. McLeod. These schools remained separate until 1941, when they were amalgamated and became formally known as the Berbice High School.

The government took full control and ownership of the Berbice High School in September 1966. The formal handing over ceremony was held at the Town Hall on January 16, 1967.

The Berbice High School is located at the junction of North and Princess Elizabeth Roads. The oldest structure in the compound is a three storey concrete and timber building. The other buildings are mainly one and two storey concrete structures that were built to facilitate the school over the years.

## 6

## Berbice High School







7

## Ramdeholl Memorial Church

In 1920, a high school for girls was established in New Amsterdam by the Canadian Mission. Ms. Clara Esther Ramdeholl, was a former student of the Mission School and after graduating, she became a teacher and extended her services to the school for many years. In 1932, she travelled to England to pursue her career in Law and after completing her Bar Finals seven years after, on November 14, 1939, Clara set sail to New Amsterdam on the S.S. Simon Bolivar along with her brother, Dr. Cecil Ramdeholl. Just four days after, the Simon Bolivar was destroyed by German magnetic mines. In spite of her zealous attempts to stay boarded on other boats, Clara died in the cold waters of the North Sea.

Soon after her death, the Canadian Mission had plans to construct a church and wanted to dedicate it in Clara's memory. With the consent of her family, a church was built with funds raised by the Canadian Mission and the Ramdeholls. A service of dedication was held on April 15, 1940.

This raised one storey timber structure, located on Princess Elizabeth Road, is formally known as Ramdeholl Memorial Guyana Presbyterian Church. The building is rectangular in shape, topped with a low pitched gable roof and has its windows crowned with Gothic arches. The centrally placed main entrance is covered by a simple projecting roof supported by two timber posts.

This elegant wooden structure built during the nineteenth century was chartered on December 29, 1896 and later consecrated on September 20, 1897. The Ituni temple is home to one of Guyana's oldest fraternity, the Freemasons. English Freemasonry started in Guyana during the nineteenth century but encountered many complications throughout its development. The majority of the nineteenth century Masonic members were highly educated, financially well-off, exerted great influence and power in the colony and were seen as elites of society.

This stylish wooden building located on Ferry Street, is noteworthy for its high tower with timber louvers and stained glass window. The building also has a fine display of intricately designed fretwork.

## 8 Ituni Masonic Temple





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## The Esplanade and Bandstand

During the late 1980s, the Mayor and Town Council and the Rotary Club came together to develop the Esplanade. The enhancement of the ground was completed in the early 1990s. The area is dedicated a botanical gardens for recreational purposes and now includes a Kiddies Corner that was sponsored by Courts Guyana Ltd. The esplanade situated on Esplanade Road, is densely populated with trees, has a canon overlooking the main road and football field that is sometimes used for other sporting activities by the town. Inside the ground also, is the bandstand, and just beyond the entrance a bust, erected to the memory of Governor Sir James Carmichael Smyth. The ground was renamed the Esplanade Recreational Park and Botanical Gardens.



The ornately designed bandstand has its roof mounted by hollow iron pillars fixed to a concrete platform. It is decorated with metal brackets and has an impressive grillwork surrounding the base. The bandstand was a popular entertainment spot with frequent performances by Mayor Henwood, the B.G. Police Force Band and Mr. Randolph Bennett and his affiliates.

## The Bandstand





## 10 The Prison

The Prison, located on Penitentiary Walk, was established under the prison ordinance of 1892. It was originally built by Dutch Settlers as a holding unit for slaves with a capacity for one hundred and seventy-five persons.

The Prison was declared a male and female facility on October 21, 1929. Currently, this facility remains the only male and female prison in Guyana.



## 11 All Saints' Presbyterian Church

Early reports indicate that the Dutch and English settlers had no church in which to worship and services were held in a house which was described as 'being in a most dilapidated condition.' In 1818, Governor Henry William Bentick was petitioned by members of the community for the erection of a Colony Church in which the Dutch and the English congregations would worship.

The Governor and his council agreed, and by October 1818, 25, 000 guilders had been raised through private subscription. A part of Governor Bentick's garden was selected as the site and Messrs. John Carruthers and Company was contracted to erect the building. The church was completed by April 8, 1820. The Colony Church, as it was then known, was blessed for the purpose of divine services by the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church and the English, alternately.

At some time the Scots began using the Church, and in 1835, there appears to have been a dispute between the congregations for whom the church was originally constructed and the Scots. Numerous petitions were sent to the Governor requesting his intervention to determine the rightful ownership of the structure. The ruling was later concluded in favor of the "Scots-cum-Hollanders." By 1838 the sharing of the building ended with the completion of another building for the Anglicans – All Saints' Anglican Church.

With its brick wall foundations and its durable frame of seasoned greenheart and other local hardwoods, All Saints' Presbyterian Church on Princess Elizabeth Road, is one of the oldest structures in New Amsterdam.



# Heritage Erased



12

## The All Saints' Scots Church Manse

**T**he Scots Church Manse, built in the year 1843, was one of the oldest homes in New Amsterdam and was acquired by the Scottish Kirk in 1869. The building over time has been erased from the town's landscape with only the historic site remaining.

Today, this site, located on Princess Elizabeth Road, is currently used by Mr. Alex Foster to facilitate his greenhouse project as part of a development strategy for New Amsterdam.



13

## All Saints Presbyterian Development Centre (ASPDC)

The All Saints' Scots Church was founded circa 1820 through the assistance of the Public Treasury. In 1838, the Scots acquired a plot of land for the construction of a church, and later a school, known then as the All Saints' Scots School, to cater for the population of New Amsterdam.

After falling into a state of disrepair, the building was rehabilitated in 2007, to make it more habitable. This two storey structure on Princess Elizabeth Road is built mainly from timber and once had an open ground floor, but was later enclosed with concrete walls as part of its rehabilitation. The lower level of the building is currently a day care centre called 'Little Angels Play Group' and upper level, a training centre for young people.

The school, which is now the All Saints Primary School, was removed to a newly built two storey concrete building alongside the ASPDC.

The High Court on Esplanade Road, replaced the old Colony House which was erected sometime between 1818 and 1820 on the same site. In early 1975, George Henry Associates was commissioned to design the High Court as a fully air-conditioned building. The contract in the sum of G\$ 1,889,220 was granted to Guyana Builders Consortium. Work started on November 27, 1975, but due to difficulties, ceased in August 1977.

The contract was revoked on January 31, 1978, and in 1985, George Henry Associates was once again contracted to prepare a modified design to exclude the air-conditioning. The contract was then handed to a Berbice firm of Contractors, Sigimond Lewis and Sons and work commenced in February 1986. The building was completed and handed over on December 22, 1983, at the cost of approximately G\$ 9 million.

This two storey concrete and brick structure houses three courtrooms for criminal, land and civil matters; Judges' chambers, an enormous Law Library and other amenities. The building is noted for its high ceilings, vented roof and walls. In February 1989, His Excellency President Hugh Desmond Hoyte, declared the High Court building officially opened.

## 14 The High Court







## 15 Winkel Settlement

In 1803, during the Napoleonic Wars, the British imperial government conquered the Dutch colony of Berbice and took control of a number of presumed government slaves. These were mainly artisans from estates in New Amsterdam and were referred to as Winkel (Dutch word for 'shop') slaves.

At the end of the war the British Government acknowledged the submission of the Netherlands government that the slaves truly belonged to the Berbice Association, a private shareholding company. However, the negotiation did not include the Winkel people since they were considered 'public' slaves, which meant, slaves of the colony's public works department. In 1812 the Winkel Department was established to deal with all repair works required by residents. The Winkel slaves were the ones responsible for executing these works. They remained the property of the British imperial government until their emancipation in 1831, three years before slavery was abolished. The newly freed slaves were given the priority to keep their houses in Winkel village. This is a little village in the residential section of the town just behind Queenstown. In 1890, their descendants appealed the Combined Court of British Guiana for grant land on which the houses stood and ownership was eventually granted to the Winkel heirs.



The State House on Strand Street, was once the old Dafson's Sugar Estate Manager's residence during the period when Mr. Dafson owned Blairmont and other sugar estates. It was also the temporary residence for Governors during their visits to the colony. This majestic timber building has its two upper floors elevated on large brick columns. One distinctive element of this building is the bifurcated stairs; a typical feature of Guyana's traditional colonial buildings. Other features include the skylights at the gable ends, elegant bargeboards, large open verandah and Demerara shutters.

Today, the building is still used as a temporary residence for government officials, and also for other ministerial functions.

16

## The State House





17

## Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company

**T**he Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company located at lot 1 Main Street, was once owned by Judge Fung-A-Fat who established his legal office on the bottom floor of the building.

This building is three stories high with the first and second floor built from timber and supported by brick columns on the ground floor. There is a graceful display of Georgian six-paned windows around the perimeter of the first floor. The building still serves as offices for the insurance company.

This residence at lot 2 Main Street was owned by Mr. Chet Bahadursingh at one time. The building is currently owned by the Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company. Three stories high, this compact timber framed building has a subtle hip roof combined with a steep gable roof and fixed with skylights at the gable ends.

Notable features are the well shaded verandahs on the first and second floors, and the fixed wooden louvers at the rear of the building along the second floor. The external walls are largely clad with lap edged boards with some parts having wooden shingles which probably could have been the original wall finish.

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## Residence (Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company)







## 19 Church View Hotel

Church View Hotel, located at lot 3 Main and King Streets, had its beginning during 1974. It is believed that before the hotel came into being, the building was used as a hospital, formerly known as Ramlall Hospital. Around 1974, the building was bought by the Bhookmohan family and the hospital was converted into a hotel, restaurant and bar and still functions as such today.

This two storey building is built primarily from timber with elegant Demerara shutters on the first floor and decorative vertical timber panels on its façade. The physical nature of the building suggests that there were many additions over the years.





20

## The Central Jama Masjid

The first masjid was erected in 1935 as a flat wooden structure. It was later replaced with a one storey concrete structure in 1969. From the period 1935-1969, the masjid was mainly used as a place for prayer. In 1994, a third structure was erected, which is currently the masjid at Lot 3 Main Street.

A private architect from Georgetown was responsible for the design and the construction works were executed by a local company, Raffik and Sons Construction Services. The Central Jama Masjid along with its library were declared opened by the late President Dr. Cheddi Jagan in 1995. The mosque has extended its functionality beyond just prayers and is now involved in social and charitable works.

This two storey concrete masjid illustrates features of Islamic religious architecture in the form of its enormous centrally positioned bulbous dome and large minaret at the side of the building which dominates the façade.

One unique element is the tomb at the front section of the compound which is said to be the resting place of the founding Imam who was buried there sometime during the 1940s. At the time, the Town Council objected to the burial as it was an infringement of the municipal laws. The matter was taken to court and the Town Council opted that the body be exhumed and taken to Stanleytown Cemetery. The case was later ruled in favor of the Imam's relatives due to a legal technicality and the tomb remained in the compound.

This building situated on LFS Burnham Street, is the Police Divisional Headquarters of Berbice. On Friday July 1, 1955, the building was declared officially opened by the then Commissioner of Police, Colonel C.H. Ward. This stylish two storey building exhibits fine craftsmanship of Guyana's timber architecture.

The tower which rises to the second floor is crowned by a square pyramidal roof with a pinnacle and has decorative brackets along the undersides of the roof. The two high-pitch gable roofs are accentuated with skylights and ornate bargeboards fixed to an elaborate gable post. Other prominent features are the raised decorations on the walls known as bosses, Georgian windows, fretwork at the wall plate, and fixed wooden louvers around the building.

## 21 The Police Station





22

## The New Amsterdam Ferry Stelling

The New Amsterdam Ferry Stelling is located on Stelling Road. This terminus was once the main mode of access to Rosignol on the west bank of the Berbice River. However, due to the construction of the Berbice River Bridge, traffic to this Stelling is not as vibrant as it once was.

The Stelling is constructed chiefly from timber and carries a two storey pavilion for the accommodation of pedestrians onto the ferry. It was built by Mr. Elder Chapman, a private individual in the field of building construction.

**A**ster Hotel at lot 7 Strand and Charlotte Streets, owned by Mr. Jamna Persaud, was previously a Staff House of S. Davson and Co. Ltd., a company which made a substantial contribution to the social and economic life of New Amsterdam and Berbice.

The ground floor of the building houses offices such as an ophthalmological center managed by Dr. Dionne Fries, a legal office controlled by Mr. Beard and the Berbice Cricket Board. The two upper levels which are constructed from timber, function as the hotel. The Demerara shutters, skylight at the gable ends and intricately decorated bargeboards with turned gable posts at the peak of the roof, are noticeable features of this building.

## 23 Aster Hotel





Dave's Television Channel 8 (DTV-8) is a subsidiary of Dave's Portrait Studio. Dave's Portrait Studio's Proprietor, Mr. David Rambarran (deceased) was regarded as a pioneer in the field of still photography in Berbice, having started business since 1947. The Video Production section was started in 1985 and DTV-8 was established on December 22, 1993.

This two storey structure located on Main and St. Ann Streets, consists of a concrete lower level and timber upper level. The building is highlighted by its high-angled gable roof pierced with skylights. DTV-8 is a television station dedicated to informing, educating and entertaining the community of Berbice.

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## Dave's TV Channel 8





## 25 The Ebenezer Lutheran Church

The Ebenezer Lutheran Church, reputedly the oldest Lutheran Church in South America, was first established at Fort Nassau, Berbice in 1742. Its growth was influenced by a planter, Lodewijk Abbensets who later became a member of the Berbice Courts of Policy and Justice. An application signed by sixty Dutch settlers was sent to the Berbice Association seeking endorsement for a church and school. On May 11, 1744, the Berbice Association approved their claim. Up until 1752, there was still no official church building for the Lutherans, but shortly after, at some point, they were given two lots at Fort Nassau. This first Lutheran Church, mainly funded by Lutherans in Berbice, was erected by enslaved Africans. The first service in this new church was held on August 5, 1753.

In 1803, the British took control of the colonies of Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara. The Lutherans applied for land in the recently laid out (1780s) new town of New Amsterdam, near the mouth of the Berbice River, and their request was granted. The Lutheran church at Fort Nassau, built from timber with Romanesque features, was dismantled and transported on punts to the new town at the present location of the Ebenezer Lutheran Church on Strand Street.

In 1964, the wooden church was replaced with a modern one storey concrete building, which is the current Ebenezer Lutheran Church. This new church is noted for its famous stained glass window with a depiction of Jesus Christ praying in the garden immediately after the Last Supper. The current church was designed by architectural firm Mence and Moore under the supervision of Mr. Patrick Barnes.

**D**uring the early nineteenth century the Anglicans (known as the Church of England) had no formal church building and services were held in the Lutheran Church and later in the Colony Church. In 1835, a newly appointed Presbyterian Minister instigated for use of the Colony Church, which was also being shared with the Dutch Reformed Church. The Rector at the time, Mr. Rochford Redwar, objected to the claim. The ruling was finalized by the Secretary of State, Lord Glenelg in favor of the Presbyterian Body after their appeal to the Governor Sir James Carmichael Smyth. This started a move by the Anglicans to build their own church where they can worship “without interruption after their accustomed form and apostolic order.” A subscription list was later prepared where His Lordship contributed 450 pounds and a compensatory grant of 15, 000 guilders was received from the Court of Policy. A plot of land was subsequently bought in the center of the town and the conception of the new building started.

The All Saints’ Anglican Church was constructed by the end of 1837 at a cost of 66, 000 guilders. It was later consecrated by Lord Bishop Coleridge on June 30, 1839. In 1844, Her Majesty the Queen contributed \$ 750 pounds through His Excellency the Governor to purchase a stained glass window for the eastern side of the church. The stained glass window was installed in 1852. The All Saints’ Anglican Church is located at the corner of Main and Trinity Streets. Some of the building’s noteworthy features are the fixed timber louvers and Gothic stained glass windows of St. George.





27

## Mission Chapel Congregational Church

**M**ission Chapel was founded in 1815 by Reverend John Wray, whose arrival in Demerara in 1808 marked the beginning of congregationalism in Guyana. In 1813 he arrived in Berbice and established Orange Chapel at Sandvoort on the West Bank of the Canje River. In 1818, after receiving 400 pounds retroactive salary, he purchased a plot of land, lot 12 of the first empolder of the town of New Amsterdam and began holding services under a tamarind tree on the site. Shortly after, the first Mission Chapel was constructed, and was consecrated in February 1819. The name of the church has its origins in the early history of the missionary work undertaken amongst the enslaved Africans in Berbice. In 1822, the building was enlarged and a school was also erected. However, these buildings were destroyed by arsonists.

Suspicion naturally fell on plantation owners because of their resistance towards the work carried out by the Congregational Church among slaves. Mission Chapel was rebuilt and consecrated for worship on June 12, 1825. This building soon became inadequate for the fast growing congregation. The foundation stone for the third and present building located on Chapel Street, was laid in 1841 during the ministry of Reverend Ebenezer Davies. It was the first church in Guyana that did not have separate pews for Whites and Blacks. Architectural features such as the octagonal roof lantern and decorative roundels give this edifice its uniqueness. Mission Chapel Congregational Church is one of the oldest extant church buildings in Guyana.





## 28 The Town Hall and Market

**T**his impressive timber building at lot 14 Strand Street, houses the offices of the Town Council which was established by a special ordinance in 1844. This structure, which was constructed circa 1868, is strategically located and can be easily seen from all directions within the town. The market, which is located on the ground floor, occupies an area of 2452.6 square meters (26,400 square feet).

This timber edifice includes an expansive council room and a large airy concert hall, naturally cooled by an open gallery on the eastern side. This hall was once the premier venue for cultural activities in the town. Almost a century and a half old, this building, described as having Tudor influences, is a typical example of Guyana's timber architecture.

Originally, the Town Hall had a 22.8 meters (75 feet) tower with a widow's walk; the tower was demolished on June 10, 2012, because of its severe state of disrepair.

In 1836, a committee was appointed to raise funds for a Catholic church. The property of one Mr. Harkman was bought for 13, 000 guilders and the building situated on it was used as a place of worship. The Committee later decided that the property should be sold and another land purchased on which a church could be built. This soon became a reality when the property at lot 20 Main and Pope Streets, with a small cottage at the back, was bought and the first church of the Ascension was constructed. This church is dated from as early as 1844.

In 1902, two towers, one on either side of the entrance, were erected by Father Gillet, one being built more sturdily than the other because it had to house the bell. The church was consecrated by Reverend Compton Theodore Galton that same year. Today the building stands without its towers as they were condemned and taken down.

The timber building has been described as being “of Roman style of architecture,” because of its classical Roman doors and windows. Further, the “ceiling is skillfully and beautifully finished so that it has no parallel in the colony.” The church boasts 50 exquisite stained glass windows. The most notable stained glass window depicting the Ascension was donated and unveiled by the Mendonca family on Christmas Eve in 1925.

29

## The Church of the Ascension





30

## Roman Catholic Recreational Hall (St. Theresa's)

In 1889, Father Baroni, an Italian priest, built a Convent at the back of the Church of Ascension. The convent was later used as a school and was referred to as the Roman Catholic Girl's School. It was later renamed St. Theresa's.

This two storey timber building on Pope Street, is elevated on brick columns. The building is noteworthy for its six panel windows, some flanked with fixed timber louvers on both sides, and decorated bargeboards along the steep gable ends. Today, the building is mainly used as a recreational hall for social activities.

In December 1943, the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, approached the 'New Amsterdam Library Committee' for the proclamation of library services in New Amsterdam. His attempt was unsuccessful, and such a request was not considered until January 1952, when Mayor C.P. Ferreira wrote the Public Free Library Committee appealing for the establishment of a branch.

The Librarian, Ms. Ruby Franker, inspected and approved the site, and the Committee tendered the project to the Government, specifying an estimate of BG\$ 24, 000. The library was declared officially opened on Thursday April 23, 1953, by Sir Frank McDavid, C.M.G., C.B.E., Chairman of the Public Free Library Committee, with a book-stock of 2000 volumes. This single storey brick and concrete structure with its symmetrical design is located at Vryman's Erven. The first librarian of the New Amsterdam Public Free Library was Ms. Edith Pieters.

## 31 The Public Free Library





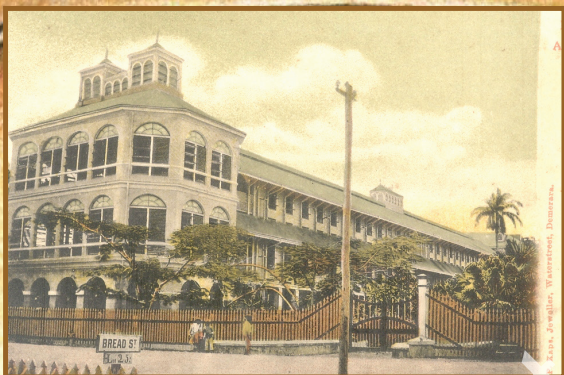


## 32 Frank Memorial Church

In 1911, the Independent Congregational Church was established after a rift between Reverend Robert T. Frank and the Congregational Union. Located at Strand and Charles Place, this single storey wooden building carries a high ceiling along the nave, lined with fixed timber louvers on both sides of the outer walls. The aisles which are located on either sides of the nave are covered by a lower level single-sloping roof. The main entrance is centrally placed with decorative double doors. There is also a timber louvered skylight finished with a fanlight at the gable end.

This Church was renamed Frank Memorial Church after the death of Reverend Robert T. Frank.

# Heritage Erased



33

## The old Public Hospital

**T**he old Public Hospital, one of Guyana's outstanding historic buildings now lost, was designed by well known architect Cesar Castellani, and was described as a "timber architectural masterpiece." Circa 1877, His Excellency the Governor appointed a committee with the task of selecting a site and drafting a plan for a new Public Hospital in the town of New Amsterdam. The initiative was much desired as the old hospital at Canje was unfavorable for treating acute disorders and was in urgent need of new facilities.

A plot of land, 2.5 acres, was bought at the southern end of the town and construction initiated in late 1881 with funds provided to the Public Works Department by the colonial administration. The structure was completed in 1884, but was not occupied until 1885.

The hospital with its impressive spans, displayed classically arched features that dominated the main façade. It measured 97.5 metres (320 feet) in length and was mainly of timber with little iron work used as ties to beams and joists in the roof. The old Public Hospital where it once stood at Charles Place, fell into disrepair and was much vandalized. Parts of the building collapsed and the remains were eventually demolished in 2012.



## 34 The Post Office

The Post Office situated at Vryman's Erven, is the main postal service provider in New Amsterdam. This one storey building demonstrates elements of a typical modern building; rectangular in shape, constructed from concrete and is completely devoid of ornamental features. Another distinct characteristic is the flat reinforced concrete roof heavily cantilevered at one section of the building and which is supported by hollow iron columns.

The first fire station was located in the compound of the Central Police station, but was later moved to its present location at Vryman's Erven, in the early 1960s.

The Fire Station is a modern concrete structure two stories high, rectangular in shape and capped with a gable roof. Cross ventilation is facilitated by the use of timber louvers and contemporary window styles.

## 35 The Fire Station







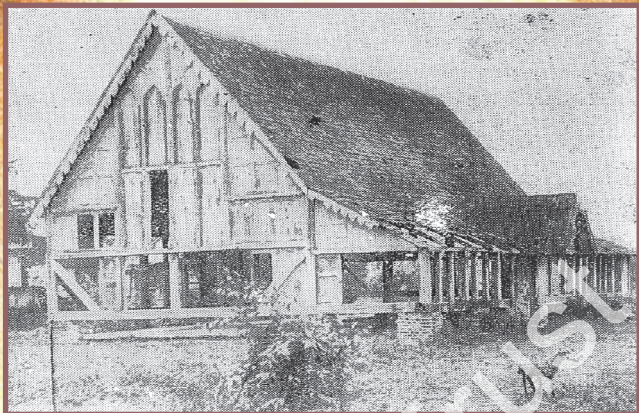
## 36 Berbice Educational Institute

**M**r. Alfred A. Ramlochand born in Berbice, on March 16, 1926, founded the Berbice Educational Institute, a then private entity, in 1949. He became its first principal. The Institute opened its door on Pilot Street on September 5, that same year.

In 1960, the school qualified to become a Government subsidized institution, and funds were now available to enlarge its facilities. However, the building was inadequate for any major expansion and there was also need for a sports and recreational playground. As a result, an application was submitted to the Town Council and approval was granted to lease a plot of land in Town Savannah. Within two years, after receiving government aid, construction began on the new school. This school was completed in 1962 at a cost of BG\$ 40, 000, and stands at its present location at Town Savannah.

This L-shaped building is two floors high and constructed from timber and concrete. In September 1976, the Government took full control of the Berbice Educational Institute and students were given access to the school for free.

# Heritage Erased



37

## The old timber St. Martin's Church

**T**he old timber St. Martin's Church was a handsome building erected during 1868 and served the function as both a church and school. For many years services were held regularly and this was considered a great benefit to the residents as was also the school. The closing of the school was instigated by the Education Department on the basis of retrenchment in 1925 along with a usual vacancy of parochial members which had led to the desertion of this centre of worship and education.

By 1940, St. Martin's Church in Stanleytown was in a state of disrepair. Mr. David Hemerding, a sexton, inspired a group of workers to salvage the church and as a result, St. Martins was rededicated on May 3, 1942. However, in 1978, a new single storey concrete church replaced the old timber St. Martin's Church.



38

## The Sri Krishna Mandir

**T**he Sri Krishna Mandir was declared opened on April 20, 2014, by the Hindu Society of Berbice, which was officially established on May 4, 2005. The Mandir was built to the designs of Hindu places of worship in Southern India. The structure is sited on a lot adjacent to an old mandir that was erected in the 1990s but which later became unsuitable. In 1994, Pandit Rajin Balgobind presented the idea of constructing the new mandir where he made the first contribution of G\$ 25, 000.

The Sri Krishna Mandir at Gay Park, has its main structure accentuated with a Maha Kali Mandir on one side and a Bhagwan Shiva Mandir on the other side. The ornate ceilings and intricate towering domes complements the beautiful interior and exterior designs.



# Heritage Erased



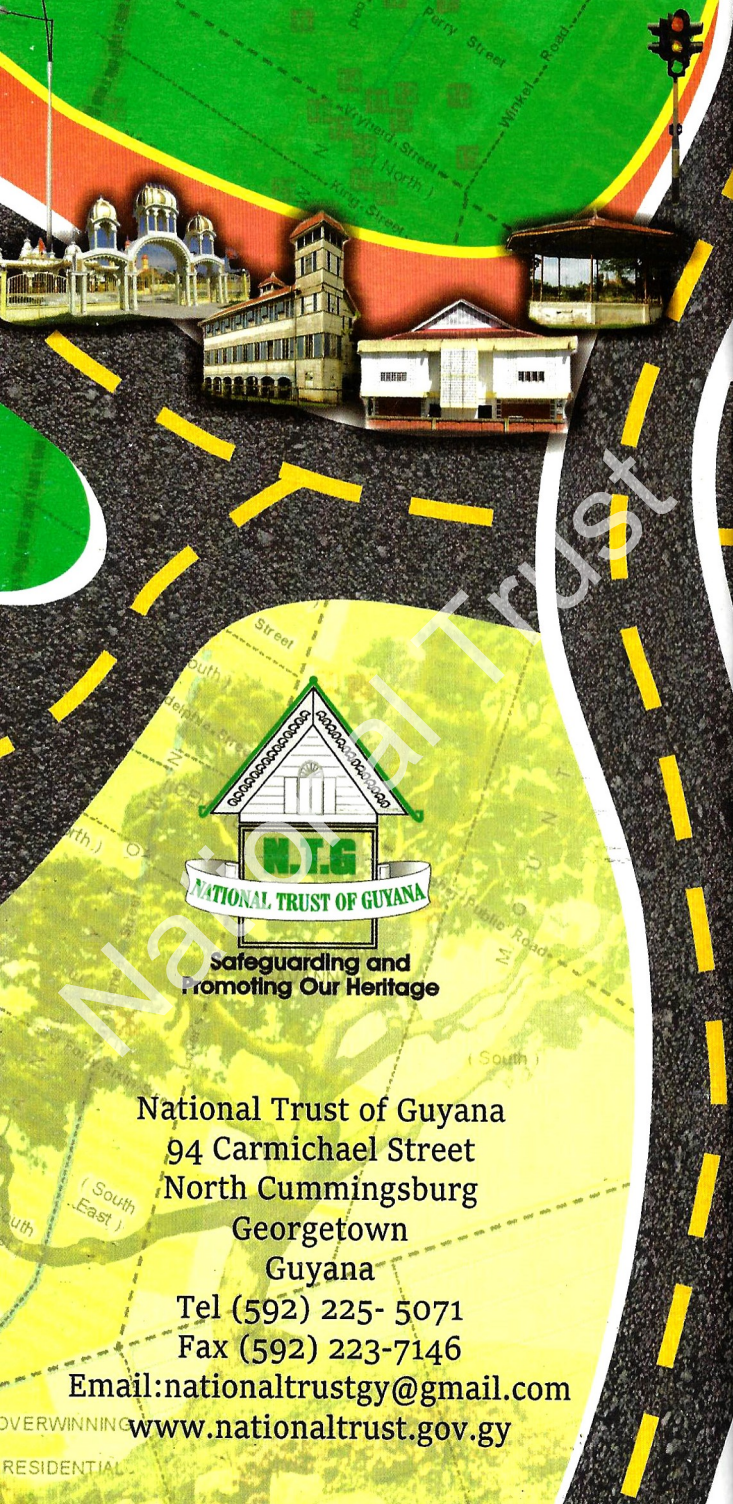
## 39 Canje Swing Bridge

The Canje Swing Bridge was constructed by London (England) contractors of Joseph Westwood and Company in 1891. Governor Lyght in 1846, declared ordinances permitting the issue of bonds totaling 80,000 for the erection of three bridges across the Mahaica, Mahaicony and Canje rivers. A portion of the funds was spent on the Mahaica and Canje Bridges.

According to a report by Ms. Flora Peters, the Canje Swing Bridge was built at an approximate cost of 25,000. The bridge was opened for about four times daily for public use. The center part of the bridge pivoted to allow ships to pass and the two sections of the bridge would then swing back together to its initial position. The 104.2 meters (342 feet) long bridge was constructed from concrete and iron and was said to be the only bridge of its kind in the world. The Canje Swing Bridge was dismantled in 1978 following completion of the new reinforced concrete Canje Bridge.



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**Safeguarding and  
Promoting Our Heritage**

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# New Amsterdam Heritage Trail Map



LEGEND	
	Region
	Sub-region
	Existing Sites
	Heritage Erased

## KEY TO HERTIAGE SITES IN NEW AMSTERDAM

- 1 The Canje Bridge (Canje Swing Bridge)
- 2 Fort Canje Mandir
- 3 The Psychiatric Hospital Queen Victoria Ward
- 4 The New Amsterdam Technical Institute
- 5 The Hospital
- 6 Berbice High School
- 7 Ramdeholl Memorial Church
- 8 Ituni Masonic Temple
- 9 The Esplanade and Bandstand
- 10 The Prison
- 11 All Saints' Presbyterian Church
- 12 The All Saints' Scots Church Manse
- 13 All Saints' Presbyterian Development Centre (ASPDC)
- 14 The High Court
- 15 Winkel Settlement
- 16 The State House
- 17 Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company
- 18 Residence (Nalico/Nafico Insurance Company)
- 19 Church View Hotel
- 20 The Central Jama Masjid
- 21 The Police Station
- 22 The New Amsterdam Ferry Stelling
- 23 Aster Hotel
- 24 Dave's TVChannel 8
- 25 The Ebenezer Lutheran Church
- 26 All Saints' Anglican Church
- 27 Mission Chapel Congregational Church
- 28 The Town Hall And Market
- 29 The Church Of The Ascension
- 30 Roman Catholic Recreational Hall (St. Theresa's)
- 31 The Public Free Library
- 32 Frank Memorial Church
- 33 The old Public Hospital
- 34 The Post Office
- 35 The Fire Station
- 36 Berbice Educational Institute
- 37 The old timber St. Martin's Church
- 38 The Sri Krishna Mandir
- 39 Canje Swing Bridge