

ABSTRACT

"The Shaping of a Town" The Historical Development of Port Maria 1821-1921

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The purpose of this research paper is to trace the historical development of Port Maria the capital of St. Mary over a century, from 1821-1921. The study begins with a brief history of the town and its immediate vicinity prior to 1821. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the laying out of Mannings Town in 1821, which marked a major change in the structure of Port Maria. As the study progresses it gradually traces the changes within the physical and social order of the town

This paper was written utilizing sources collected from the Archives of Jamaica, the Island Record Office, the Library of the University of the West Indies and the National Library of Jamaica. The administrative records of the parish were used as a historical source of data, as the combination of these historical records along with other sources such as maps and photographs will reveal a complete history of the townspeople of Port Maria.

The research revealed that the town of Port Maria developed as a thriving agricultural center based on the export from its harbour of various crops. From the period 1821-1880 the plantations in the immediate vicinity of the town participated in a mixed economy with sugar and rum as their main exports. However by the 1880's sugar cultivation was replaced by banana, which became the major export crop of the parish of St. Mary. As a coastal town the citizens of Port Maria benefited economically from the export trade, however through this contact with the outside world the townspeople soon found themselves vulnerable to various diseases which were brought to their port.

Throughout the period under study the landscape of Port Maria was altered to meet the needs of its citizens who participated in the export trade of the island. Since there are only few historical studies written about the smaller towns of Jamaica or the other British West Indian islands. The significance of this study is that it investigates the nature of small town life over a century.

Keywords: Michele Eaton; St. Mary, parish, Jamaican township.