

Abstract

This study seeks to document the cultural heritage of Bath Mineral Springs in St. Thomas. Historical Literature is reviewed and the revelations of oral testimonies taken into account. The application of audio-visual techniques aids the documentation process, capturing the state of the spring and its contemporaries on video and photographs.

Bath Mineral Spring discovered by a runaway slave in 1696 was to undergo significant development in ensuing years. The town was created to support the influx of European-white visitors. Over the years, development of infrastructure resulted in the construction of three bathhouses, a hospital, billiard room, courthouse and roads for quick access.

The second oldest Botanical Garden in the Western Hemisphere is to be found in Bath. It is also the site where the infamous Captain Bligh planted the first breadfruit trees on the island.

The spring has experienced periods of significant decline. The first of which can be attributed to periods of hostilities between the colonial

authorities and the Windward Maroons. In fact, the Bath Hospital at one point served as the barracks for the 56th Regiment of the British army.

The healing powers of the water have long been recognized. Soaking for short period, drinking and the sopping of joints have been proven to cure myriad complaints, ranging from belly-ache to rheumatism.

In the Twentieth Century there is evidence to suggest that faith in the healing powers have been passed from generation to generation. However, it is clear that the story of the Bath is at risk of being completely lost. The population of the town today is not reflective of Bath's past. The original families have either died out completely or have migrated to neighboring parishes.

The spring is a vital aspect of Jamaica's heritage and should be preserved for future generations.