

POINT FORTIN has a very strong claim as the birthplace of the steelpan, and when they piece the story together, it seems to make quite a lot of sense.

You see, in the 1930's Point Fortin was a place where people from far off places like Arima and Port-of-Spain would come to spend their weekends, relaxing on the beach, enjoying a good fete and participating in the joys of country life.

The version of the story of pan that is being proposed, is that some of the people who came from the North were introduced to the sound of the steel drum,

which they took back to Port-of-Spain.

This story seems credible, because Point Fortin, being an oil settlement, would have had enough steel drums available to encourage their use by persons involved in these early cultural developments.

And there are eyewitness accounts which clearly suggest that pan was actually being played in Fanny Village and on the beaches of Point Fortin long before it was known to be played elsewhere.

But pan is just one of the many claims to the rich cultural repository that is Point Fortin.

Point Fortin BOROUGH DAY

THEN, NOW & TOMORROW

Was the steelpan born here?

Take calypso for example. Can one determine why it is that so many of today's top bards like SuperBlue, Duke, Luta, Iwer and Devon George and Preacher (just to name a few) have grown

so popular? What is it about their music that so moves people, year after year?

It is suggested that the evolution of calypso and soca music are intimately linked to the rhythmic mu-

sic of the Spiritual Baptists, for which Point Fortin is widely reputed. It's the same way that many top black American soul singers developed out of church choirs in the southern states.

Similarly, the Spiritual Baptist faith had its effect on the music as it developed in Point Fortin.

In fact, so strong is the faith in this area, that the only "Spiritual Baptist Cathedral" in Trinidad is located in Cap-de-Ville, where there used to be locations in the high woods for secret practising of the faith during the period when it was prohibited by law.

The richness and uniqueness of Point Fortin culture is also strongly influenced by the nature of its history as a migrant community.

As already stated, people came to Point Fortin to enjoy their weekends, and it should be noted that some of the best dances, providing unforgettable experiences, were at Perseverance Hall and other popular dancehalls in the district. But people also came to Point Fortin to work and live, since many Trinidadians chose to stay away, because of the cramped existence which was an integral part of life for the oilfield workers.

Grenadians, Vincentians, St Lucians, Dominicans... you name it, they came.

So that, in a sense, Point Fortin had its own microcosm of Caricom long before many regional leaders even dreamt of the concept.

The evolution of the unique cultural characteristics of the area, was therefore inevitable.

In the 1930's and 40's and 50's and 60's people came, as today they do for Borough Day... all 35,000 of them... from Sangre Grande, from Mayaro, from Tobago, from Diego Martin... just as their grandparents and parents and uncles and aunts would have come 40 or 50 years ago.

So in essence, this year's Borough Day Celebrations are a natural evolution or, a modern day incarnation if you like, of the weekend fetes of the past, as those strong spiritual links keep people coming to this place of cultural significance.

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