

ABSTRACTTHE BOROUGH OF ARIMA: THE WAR YEARS
AND BEYOND, 1938-1988

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Before 1940 Arima was a sleepy, agricultural community, greatly influenced by the Spanish-Amerindian heritage, but also affected by the French immigrants who had settled there. It was a town developed through the adaptation of Amerindian influence. Out of a total of 1,909 dwellings in 1931 for example, 1,528 were made with Tapia walls and thatched roofs, the typical Amerindian practice.

The Second World War had a tremendous impact on Arima especially in terms of its social and economic development. The town made room for the American troops who constructed and occupied the Bases at Cumuto and the inhabitants responded to their presence, and adapted to the changes wrought through the exposure to modernization.

The Borough expanded in the decades following the war. The economic boost of the war-time activities caused by constructing and servicing the Bases saw an expansion both in the business sector, and in the population of the town. Several infra-structural changes took place in order to accommodate these expansions. Its boundaries changed, its streets in-

creased and lengthened as it enjoyed the amenities of modern living.

Adult franchise, extended to Local Government elections, brought party politics into the Borough Council and this affected its composition and its effectiveness as well as the quality of life of Arimians. The town was able to adequately house its expanding population, but accommodating its school age sector and providing a proper hospital facility were incessant problems.

The nature of the population changed over the years and although Arima remained basically a Roman Catholic town, its Amerindian base became very weak. Most importantly, having been awakened from its slumber, the town has never slept since.