

April 2024 - March 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

National Museum Jamaica is the national agent for the collection, preservation and documentation of Jamaica's material culture and aims to stimulate serious research and reflection on Jamaica's history and contemporary life. As the repository of Jamaica's National Collection, the National Museum Jamaica houses over 20, 000 historic, ethnographic and archaeological artefacts that are connected to Jamaica's

material culture from the prehistoric era to the contemporary. The work of the museum is focused in three areas: Preservation, Research and Communication through education programmes.

This newsletter will highlight the main events from each unit, to give you a snapshot of what we accomplished during the 2024/2025 financial year.



Above:
Institute of Jamaica's Youth Ambassador - Miss Kimya Anderson and a participant of the workshop wearing kimono, a traditional Japanese garment and the national dress of Japan.

NATIONAL MUSEUM JAMAICA'S SUMMER WORKSHOP PROGRAMME 2024 EDUCATION

The museum's Education Unit partnered with the Embassy of Japan in Jamaica, to conduct our annual free two-week summer workshop. Our summer workshop celebrated Japan's culture to compliment the Japanese travelling exhibition called "**Netsuke**," that was hosted by the museum from July 28-August 23, 2024. Participants explored Japanese culture through interactive sessions such as Shotokan Karate, Origami, Ikebana, Japanese Language, Games and Anime.

In total 11 students, ages 6-12 years, from the South Side Community registered and were actively engaged in every activity.

We especially would like to thank not just the Embassy staff but all the volunteers from the Japan Exchange and Teaching (J.E.T) Programme, Ms. Shiho Takamura (Foreign Assistant Japanese Language Teacher, UWI Mona), Ikebana International St. Andrew #156, and the International Shotokan Karate Federation, who gave their time and resources to teaching the students.



Above:
Miss Nadya Forbes, Public Relations and Cultural Officer, Embassy of Japan in Jamaica, engages participants in a learning how to make and then eat onigiri (Japanese rice balls).



Right:
Staff of National Museum Jamaica and the Embassy of Japan in Jamaica, cheer on one of our participants as she plays Suikawari. This is a traditional Japanese summer game that involves splitting a watermelon with a stick while blindfolded and at the end the smashed fruit is shared by all.

On February 26, 2025 National Museum Jamaica's hosted its annual free hybrid (face-to-face and online) PEP Lecture Series. It was presented by Dr. Ajani Ausaru under the theme "Math Review" exploring various topics in mathematics such a fractions, equations and statistics with eighty-six (86) face-to-face students and nine (9) teachers. Students participated from different schools namely St. Patrick's Primary, Spanish Town Primary, Rose Gordon Prep and Harewood Primary School.

Thanks to our online viewers of over 30 students and teachers from various schools including, Holy Childhood Prep, Providence Kindergarten, George Headley Primary, Morgan's Forest Primary and Infant, Kenliworth Campus, Hagley Park Prep and Boston Primary.



Above: Students from St. Patrick Primary working hard to calculate a math problem asked by our presenter Dr. Ajani Asuru.

PEOPLE'S MUSEUM

THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE & ART

PEOPLE'S MUSEUM
1961

CELEBRATES HERITAGE MONTH 2024

**ONE LOVE
ONE PEOPLE
ONE HERITAGE**

National Museum Jamaica

We offer: Temporary Display of 'select' Artefacts
Interactive Powerpoint Presentation – choose a topic
'One Love, One People, One Heritage'
Or
'Our Jamaican Cultural Heritage'

Book your school between the dates of
OCTOBER 28 TO NOVEMBER 1, 2024
Time: 11am to 1pm

First Come First Served basis- booking Spaces are limited

PEOPLE'S MUSEUM
Emancipation Square, King St, Spanish Town
Tel: 876 277-3239
Email: Curator_sptown@museums-ioj.org.jm

People's Museum is a satellite of the National Museum Jamaica which is a division of the Institute of Jamaica, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport

HERITAGE MONTH 2024 OUTREACH IN SCHOOLS

The month of October has always been a busy time whereby schools in Jamaica usually take the time to reflect, discover and engage with our history, heritage and culture. People's Museum located in the former capital of Jamaica is a unit of National Museum Jamaica (NMJ). During the month of October 2024 a selection of objects from the National Collections were displayed at the following institutions Dunoon Park Technical High School, IOJ: Portmore Junior Centre, Holy Rosary Primary School, Dupont Primary School and all the stakeholders learned

about the artefacts, the People's Museum as well as NMJ.

This type of 'Outreach' ensures that our past is remembered and the future generation can compare how 'the way of life' of our ancestors has evolved with time and technology. Both the tangible and intangible aspects of our culture were explored as an interactive presentation that was delivered by the Curator: Ms. Zayne-Ann Parkes.

RESEARCH & OUTREACH PROJECTS

- A new power point presentation was created for 'Outreach' in observation of Heritage Month 2024 'One Love, One People, One Heritage.' Schools in St Catherine and Kingston & St Andrew were written to and invited to participate in People's Museum Outreach projects whereby they could choose between 'Our Jamaican Cultural Heritage Presentation and 'One Love, One People, One Heritage.'
- A small selection of Jamaican Artefacts were temporarily displayed at the participating schools.
- The Objects displayed were:

Sad Iron, Self Heater Iron, Utility Basket, Chamber Pot, Sewing Machine, Kreng Kreng basket, Kimbo Pot, Meat Grinder, Bandana Skirt, Coconut Floor Brush, Packy, Kitchen Bitch Lamp, and Shet Pan. Total estimated 'reach' was 1,810 persons who participated in the Heritage Month 2024 Outreach that was organized and delivered by the People's Museum.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TEMPORARY MUSEUM DISPLAY AT THE RESPECTIVE INSTITUTIONS



Above:
Dupont Primary School



Above:
Dunoon Park Technical



Above:
IOJ Portmore Junior Centre



Above:
IOJ Portmore Junior Centre



Above:
Holy Rosary Primary School



Above:
Dupont Primary School

RESEARCH UNIT

Tours of the East Street exhibitions, Omenala, Taino as well as Treasures, Mysteries and Stories and, Port Royal (before they closed to facilitate the expansion and redesign of the interpretative display on Port Royal) were enlivened daily by the dynamic curators of the National Museum Jamaica who engaged their receptive audience with their profound knowledge of the subjects of each exhibition gallery.

The team of Curators and Researchers also worked on exciting initiatives such as an animated series, “**Market Day**” the brainchild of Zoie O’Sullivan which presented the history of the island in a playful, yet informative way to appeal mostly to children, and a wide cross-section of the public. The scripts they crafted and the characters they became

voice actors for were brought to life by the Division’s multi-talented, Graphic Artist, Roael Cooke. The YouTube series ran throughout the month of August and continues to be enjoyed by online audience.

Outside of preparing articles for the website and the Sunday Gleaner newspaper, Curators and Researchers also curated several displays for spaces such as Kings House; Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport; Office of the Prime Minister, Gordon House, Seville Heritage Park and CVM at Sunrise.

While the team is working on revitalizing permanent exhibitions such as that of the Taino and Port Royal, it is also actively conducting research for new exhibition offerings that will come to the fore in 2026.



ARTICLE OF THE YEAR

A Brief Reflection on the History of the Town of Black River after Hurricane Melissa

The town of Black River experienced a cycle of transformations in its over 270 years existence that differs from many of Jamaica's other urban settlements. It moved from a state of inactivity in the years preceding the English occupation of the colony, to an age of growth and prosperity in the late 19th Century, and thereafter became relatively quiet. Before Hurricane Melissa, the little town was an artifact of its past, with many historic buildings and landmarks that were reminiscent of the period of splendour, and of even the more distant past. These made up the priceless heritage and are part of the town's legacy. It was hoped that this legacy would have driven future development, preserving the town's unique character while fostering growth.

The town of Black River's layout has remained relatively unchanged over the centuries, retaining much of its 18th century pattern despite modern suburban growth. As a town founded by the English, there are no visible remnants of the Spanish era, reflecting Spain's lack of interest in the area. The Spanish focused on settlements like Bluefields (Oristan) and Negril Point (Punto Negrillo) when populating southwest Jamaica, with minimal presence in Pereda (Pedro) and Black River Basin areas. Street names, like Logwood Avenue north of the commercial centre and the river's name (formerly Rio Caobana, meaning Mahogany River) now serve as reminders of English conquest and settlement.

The town's history also came alive through its architecture, as many buildings pre-Hurricane Melissa had survived into the present century despite other disasters that the town experienced, such as, the fire of July 1932 which wiped out half of the business section of the town, and an even earlier, the Great Fire of 1749 of which absentee planter,

Matthew "Monk" Lewis heard when he visited the town in January 1816. Lewis wrote:

"It was (the town), as I understand, formerly one of some magnitude; but it now consists of a few houses, owing to a spark from a tobacco pipe or a candle having lodged upon a mosquito net during dry weather, and although the conflagration took place at mid-day, the whole town was reduced to ashes. The few streets – (I believe there were not above two, but those were wide and regular, and the houses looked very neat) – were now crowded with people."

Before Hurricane Melissa hit, Black River's historic landscape featured iconic buildings like St. John's Parish Church, the old Police Station and Waterloo Great House. St. John's Parish Church, the oldest structure, boasts a rich history dating back to 1767, with tombstones telling of an earlier structure which Lady Nugent described as "shabby and neglected" in her journal. A foundation stone tablet marks the current church's construction in 1837. The church's influence extended beyond town limits, attracting prominent members from afar, solidifying its prominent position in history.

The walls of the old Police station used to be another interesting feature in Pre-Melissa Black River. The building technology was said to have incorporated molasses, white limestone and broken bottles – characteristic of the "Spanish wall" method which the English continued. While the construction date is unknown, it is widely believed to have been done during the period plantation slavery. A section of the building became the office of the St. John's Parish Church, and another portion was occupied by a dressmaking establishment – an ironic transformation from its former role as a jail house.

In the 18th and mid 19th centuries, Black River's success hinged on exporting sugar, coffee and pimento. By the late 19th century, the logwood industry took centre stage, making Black River a primary shipment hub for dyewoods to key markets including the UK, US and Europe. This logwood boom sustained the town through Jamaica's economic crisis, triggered by declines in traditional crops such as sugar and coffee. The era of logwood dominance left behind notable architectural remnants, including Waterloo and Invercauld Great Houses. Waterloo Great House holds particular significance as the former residence of the Shakespeare family, descendants of the renowned English poet William Shakespeare, and later the home of the influential Leyden family. The Leydens, skilled builders, constructed numerous local houses, such as Invercauld Great House (formerly The Willows) and "Magdala House", which served as an orphanage – Our Lady of Hope Children's Home. Their legacy extends to the former Black River High School building, destroyed by Hurricane Melissa.

John W. Leyden played a prominent role in local governance, serving on the Municipal Board, as Chairman, from April 24, 1874 to July 28 1874 and as 'Keeper of the Fire Engines' until April 18, 1878. He partnered with another municipal member, C.G. Farquharson forming Leyden and Farquharson, a firm exporting logwood, fustic and pimento. After Leyden's death, the firm dissolved in December 1889, but the business carried on under the name 'Leyden Brothers' expanding into electricity and becoming agents for Edison Electric Company. They introduced electricity to Waterloo Great House and were instrumental in the installation of an electrical plant in Black River. Apart from their export business and electrical enterprise, the Leydens also owned a store called Nash and Company, which was among the first departmental stores in the island.

By 1895, Black River had become one of

Jamaica's most impressive towns, second only to Kingston. Its modern amenities, including electric light and water, reflected its thriving status. The town pulsed with cultural life, hosting dramatic performances, sacred concerts, and rifle matches at the Black River Range. In fact, a 1893 match was noted as the first of its kind in Jamaica, showcasing the town's pioneering spirit.

Black River's heyday ended in the early Twentieth Century when local industries began to feel the effects of the second phase of the industrial revolution which had taken off in Europe, and amongst other things transformed the textile industry. Synthetic dyes which were introduced from the 1850s gradually became the preferred alternative, and relegated natural dyes such as logwood to a limited use in dyeing processes. The boom that the logwood trade had brought manifested in the elegant Georgian style buildings that emerged in the latter half of the 19th Century and dotted the coastal town, along with the frequency of ships anchored in the Black River bay. Further evidence of 'good times' was the introduction of electricity, and the ownership of a motor car by the Griffiths of Hodges Pen in the late 20th Century.

Given its distinctive history and rich architecture, the Jamaica National Heritage Trust in 1999, designated the town as a Protected National Heritage District. Unfortunately, Hurricane Melissa's destruction in October 2025 has left many historic structures in ruins. As the town rebuilds, it is crucial to preserve its rich heritage, using it as a foundation for the next era of Black River. This will ensure that the town's textured history remains a vibrant part of its landscape, rather than being erased. Local historian, Allison Morris emphasizes the importance of preserving the town's historic structure, saying, "Their lives and what they built is just amazing to me...they left us so much to learn from and so much to draw strength from and it would be terrible for us to lose all of them." She expressed that she was hopeful that bits

of the old buildings can be preserved and incorporated into new constructions, serving as a reminder of Black River's past.

balance preservation with progress. By doing so, the town can retain its unique character and become a model for sustainable development in Jamaica.

As Black River moves forward, it is crucial to



*Left:
Invercauld, before and after
Hurricane Melissa*



*Left:
Waterloo Great House,
before and after
Hurricane Melissa*



*Left:
St. John's Anglican
Church Before and after
Hurricane Melissa*

COLLECTIONS UNIT



assistance of the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF), which provided the necessary manpower and specialized equipment to safely transport this significant artefact (see images below).

Research indicates that the marble bathtub originated from Government Pen (also known as Government Park), which served as the vacation residence of Governor and Lady Nugent between 1801 and 1806. The residence was known for hosting visiting dignitaries, including military officers, and held various social events such as dinners and balls. Government Pen was located approximately three miles southeast of Spanish Town, in the vicinity of Salt Pond and March Pen Road, near what is now the Phoenix Park housing scheme. The property was later owned by the United Fruit Company, which donated the bathtub to the Institute of Jamaica during the 1940s. The original estate was ultimately destroyed in 1951 during Hurricane Charlie.

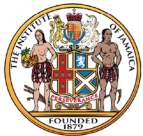
For the period April 2024 to March 2025, the Collections Unit continued its efforts to ensure that the National Collection was properly preserved and protected. In May of 2024 the Unit implemented the removal and relocation of the historic marble bathtub that had been stored in the Alfresco Lounge at the Institute of Jamaica. The bathtub, which weighs several tons, was transferred to the People's Museum in Spanish Town. The Unit sought the

NATIONAL MUSEUM WEST



NATIONAL MUSEUM JAMAICA ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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Institute of Jamaica, an
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National Museum Jamaica
is a division of the Institute
of Jamaica

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YouTube: [National Museum Jamaica](https://www.youtube.com/NationalMuseumJamaica)