

1891 Jamaica Exhibition

Opened 27 Jan 1891 by HRH Prince George of Wales

Closed 2 May 1891

The Jamaica National Exhibition was held from January 27, to May 2, 1891, in a building called Quebec Lodge. This site is now occupied by the Wolmer's School.

The area on which the National Heroes Park now stands was once one of the most popular spots in Kingston. For 101 years, the land was the centre for horse racing in Jamaica. It was also the site for other sporting activities such as cricket and cycle racing. Being a place where people naturally gathered, the area was also the venue for travelling circuses that visited the island from time to time.

In 1818, the Kingston Council purchased the property for £985 and 10 shillings. Back then it was part of a property called Montgomery Pen. It was later known as the Kingston Race Course because of its dominant activity and remained so until 1953 when horse racing was transferred to Knutsford Park.

Historical Events

In its long history, several interesting events are associated with the site. These include:

- August 2, 1838, grand festivities marking the end of apprenticeship and the beginning of full freedom were held here.
- Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees were honoured here in 1887 and 1897 respectively.
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- In 1953, the Kingston Race Course was renamed the George VI Memorial Park in honour of the late King George VI, father of Queen Elizabeth II. The grounds were prepared for the Queen's first visit to the island.
- In the same year, a War Memorial to honour those who died in the First World War was removed from its original location at Church Street and relocated here. Each year, on Remembrance Day, the first Sunday in November, veterans gather around the Cenotaph to honour the memory of those who died in World Wars I & II.

Jamaica Exhibition Images by Dr Jas Johnston 1891



The Site



The Main Building



JAMAICA EXHIBITION.

BULLETIN No. I.]

[22ND NOVEMBER, 1889.]

A Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Jamaica Exhibition was held on the 3rd October, 1889, under the Presidency of His Excellency the Governor, when the following business was transacted :—

A Secretary and ten Vice-Presidents were appointed and the following Committees were named by His Excellency the President :—

A General Purposes Committee to exercise a general supervision and control of all the arrangements of the Exhibition.

A Committee to draw up the plan and scope of the Exhibition.

A Building Committee to carry out all arrangements connected with the laying out of grounds, erection of buildings, &c.

A Finance Committee to transact all the financial business of the Exhibition.

A Committee of Statistics to collect statistics bearing upon the products of the island and the general condition of the Country.

Parochial Committees to collect guarantees and to collect and forward exhibits.

Committees in London, Scotland, Canada, and the United States to further the objects of the Exhibition.

It was also agreed that the Executive Committee should meet on the first Thursday of each month.

Upon the passing of Law 33 of 1889 the Executive Committee became "The Jamaica Exhibition Commissioners"; and the Commissioners met on the 7th of November, with His Excellency the Governor, as President, in the Chair. The Report printed below, summarizing the business transacted by the several Standing Committees, was read by the Secretary. It was agreed that a summary of the proceedings of the meetings of the Commissioners, and of the reports presented at such meetings, and of all other information bearing upon the progress of the Exhibition should be published monthly in the shape of a Bulletin for general circulation. The plans of the Exhibition Buildings were presented and adopted; and the Regulations for the Exhibition passed by the General Purposes Committee were agreed to.

The following additional Committees were appointed :—

A Committee to arrange for providing amusements during the Exhibition, such as fireworks, illuminations, entertainments of various sorts, and to formulate plans in regard to refreshments and charges for admission.

A Committee to enquire and report at what special rates of freight and of passage money, respectively, Exhibits and Visitors can be brought to Jamaica, and what, if any, special arrangements can be made for the conveyance of Visitors, and for the transmission of telegraphic messages on Exhibition business, at cheap rates.

A Committee to arrange a uniform plan for the conveyance of Exhibits from Parochial Centres to the Exhibition Buildings.

A Committee to enquire and report what accommodation is likely to be available for visitors during the Exhibition.

Ceremonial Committee.

A Committee to supervise the arrangement of Exhibits in Group I., "Raw Materials," in the Classification of Exhibits, and to determine awards therein.

A Committee to supervise the arrangement of Exhibits in Groups II. and III., "Implements for obtaining Raw Materials" and "Machines and Processes used in preparing and making up the Raw Materials into Finished Products," and to determine awards therein.

A Committee to supervise the arrangement of Exhibits in Group IV., "Manufactured Goods," and to determine awards therein.

A Committee to supervise the arrangement of Exhibits in Groups V. and VI., "Education, Fine Arts, Literature and Science," and to determine awards therein.

A Committee in the United States to further the objects of the Exhibition.

A Committee in Canada to further the objects of the Exhibition.

A Committee in Scotland to further the objects of the Exhibition.

It was agreed that a competent person should be appointed to proceed to New York and New Orleans to negotiate a contract for the supply and erection of the Exhibition Buildings, according to the approved design, for a sum not exceeding £15,000.

Secretary's Report of Proceedings of Standing Committees referred to above.

The Statistical Committee and the Committee to determine the plan and scope of the Exhibition met on the 17th of October; the Finance Committee met on the 18th of October; the Building Committee met on the 18th, 25th and 31st of October; and the General Purposes Committee met on the 4th November.

1.—STATISTICAL COMMITTEE.

The Committee agreed provisionally upon a scheme according to which statistics of the products of the Island should be collected, and decided that the functions of the Committee should extend to the collection of Statistics of every kind in regard to the Colony, including statistics of population, immigration, emigration, vital statistics, rate of taxation per head, estimated earnings of the agricultural population, &c., &c.; and it was arranged that in the interval before the next meeting of the Committee each Member should elaborate his views as to the exact lines on which the Committees' operations should proceed, when it might be possible to agree to the forms which should be used in obtaining the desired information, which would be eventually collated in a book with diagrams.

2.—THE PLAN AND SCOPE COMMITTEE.

The Committee appointed to determine the plan and scope of the Exhibition approved provisionally of a scheme submitted by Mr. Fawcett for a "classification of exhibits and arrangement of class," to be subject to such modifications as might thereafter be deemed expedient; and a Sub-Committee consisting of the Honble. W. B. Espeut, the Revd. W. Gillies, and Messrs. Fawcett and deMercado, was appointed to confer with the Building Committee on the basis of that scheme.

A suggestion by Mr. J. C. Ford that an Aquarium for Jamaica Fish should form a feature of the Exhibition was heartily adopted.

3.—FINANCE COMMITTEE.

The Finance Committee discussed the question of having an Act of Incorporation passed; of the form of Guarantee Bond that should be issued for signature by the Guarantors, and of the manner of obtaining the necessary funds to carry out the work of the Exhibition. The result of the discussion of the two former points was the introduction into the Legislative Council of the Bill which has now become "The Jamaica Exhibition Law, 1889;" and as regards the third point, a Sub-Committee was appointed consisting of the Honbles. J. H. McDowell, J. T. Orrett, V. G. Bell and Mr. C. E. deMercado (the latter acting as Secretary to the Sub-Committee) to approach the two Banks with the view of seeing what could be done in the direction of obtaining money. The Committee have reported as follows:—

"The Committee appointed by the Finance Committee to make the necessary arrangements for the obtaining of the Funds from the Banks for the purposes of the Exhibition have to report that they saw Mr. Hall, the Acting Manager of the Colonial Bank, as also Mr. Stavert, the Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia. Neither gentleman was prepared to give an answer without consulting his Head Office: both had however written and asked the Home Offices to reply by cable. Mr. Hall having written by the Mail which left here on Wednesday, 23rd October, it is likely that he will receive an answer some time in the middle of November."

"CHARLES E. DEMERCADO, on behalf of the Committee."

4.—THE BUILDING COMMITTEE.

This Committee at their first Meeting considered the various suggestions which had been made to them as to a Site for the Exhibition, and agreed that either "Quebec Lodge" or "Cavaliers Pen" would afford the most advantageous Site. A Sub-Committee was appointed to examine into and report upon the relative merits of these two Sites; whilst a second Sub-Committee was appointed to prepare a rough design of the Exhibition Building. At their second Meeting the Committee adopted the report of the Sub-Committee recommending the Site in the lower portion of "Quebec Lodge" lands, with a portion of the Water Works land, if found necessary; and inspected the rough sketches of a proposed Exhibition Building prepared by the other Sub-Committee. Another Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs. Bell, Latham, Dodd, Sant, Cox, Messiter and Bridges was appointed to prepare a design of a building with estimate of cost, on the basis that the maximum amount of space to be covered for all purposes should be 40,000 square feet. This Sub-Committee submitted to the Meeting on the 31st October the plans and drawings prepared by them, which were accepted by the Committee, subject to the approval of the Commissioners. The estimated cost of a Building such as contemplated by the plans was stated to be £14,300. An agreement will be executed by Mr. Bell, the City Council, the Commissioners, and Mr. Verley, in connection with the use of the Quebec Lodge lands for the purposes of the Exhibition. The Building Committee decided that the laying out and fencing of the grounds should be proceeded with at once, and appointed Messrs. Bell, Fawcett, Cox and Harris to be a Sub-Committee to carry out the work.

5.—GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE.

The General Purposes Committee at their meeting on the 4th November agreed to the Regulations for the Government of the Exhibition. It was deemed desirable that this Committee should pass the Regulations, in order that opportunity might be taken of sending copies away by the Royal Mail Steamer of the 6th November.

7th November, 1889.

LAURENCE R. FYFE, Secretary.

His Excellency the Governor, whilst presiding at the meeting of the Exhibition Commissioners on Thursday, the 7th of November, touched on several topics of interest. In connection with the date proposed for the opening of the Exhibition, His Excellency said that he had been induced to suggest a date late in January rather than in December, because he had ascertained from medical men that the former was the more healthy period of the year. And as regarded the question of the sufficiency of time for arrangements to be perfected, His Excellency had no fear on this point. He had the assurance of the Building Committee that there would be no difficulty as regards the erection of the Building, whilst the work of getting the grounds ready was already being pushed forward and would be completed in good time. The inhabitants of Jamaica and of the West Indies would have ample time for the collection of Exhibits, whilst as regards other places experience of Exhibitions had become so great that no fear need be entertained that Exhibits would not be forthcoming in good time. As regarded the probable financial results of the Exhibition the Governor, in the expectation that the cost of the Building would be about £20,000 and that the Exhibition receipts would probably be about £10,000, and the amount obtained from the sale of materials used in the Building would be £7,000, had at first anticipated a probable call on the Guarantors of about £3,000; but, inasmuch as the Sub-Committee appointed by the Building Committee to draw up the plans of the Building, had estimated the cost at only £14,300, he now felt that it was probable the Exhibition would fully pay its way. On a suggestion that a Committee should be appointed to supervise the structural improvements, and improvements in the sanitary arrangements, of the houses of the humbler classes, His Excellency feared that such a course might be regarded as an attempt to effect by compulsion what he was sure from his experience of the working classes in the Bahamas and in Newfoundland would be easily effected by personal appeal, and His Excellency would be glad to take the opportunity of meeting the people and speaking to them*; and he had no doubt that they would readily recognize the desirability for the sake of their own respectability and for the credit of the City and the Colony, of helping the Commissioners in their efforts to improve the appearance and sanitary condition of Kingston. The Governor in the course of the meeting took the opportunity of announcing that he had solicited the patronage of the Queen to the Exhibition and the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at its opening.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXHIBITION OF JANUARY, 1891.

"The Jamaica Post," 11th November, 1889.

Those who were present at the meeting of the Jamaica Exhibition Commissioners last Thursday cannot but admit that business was well done. The number of gentlemen present and their attention to business was all that could be desired.

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We believe that all left the meeting more than ever convinced that the success of the Exhibition was assured. The Governor estimate that there will be 200,000 visitors at a 1/ each, giving an income of £10,000. His management of the meeting was firm and fair, and his wisdom as a public man was conspicuous, when he spoke of the means to be used to get Kingston in order for the Exhibition. He believes in the people. He is sure they will do their part, when spoken to on the subject of the order and the cleanliness necessary for the reception of strangers. He sees order, repairs, painting, scavenging springing up rapidly under the self-respect and the public spirit that it will be easy to invoke. That is a wise man's outlook. It is a leader's hope. It goes deeper than the penalties of law and touches the springs of action, the perennial fountain of all the good there is in the body politic. It gives token of a true man.

FALSE RUMOURS.

"Daily Gleaner," 13th November, 1890.

Two extraordinary mare's nests have been discovered lately in Kingston.

1st. On the authority of "an eminent lawyer" it has been stated that the Exhibition Law would make guarantors responsible to *any amount*, if the losses on the Exhibition exceeded the total fund guaranteed, or if the guarantors themselves to any extent became defaulters. It was stated most confidently that the *bond* was such as to create a limitless liability, and that this was justified by section 12 of the Law, which says "no guarantor shall be liable to pay more than his ratable proportion (having regard to the total sum guaranteed by the several guarantors respectively) of the entire sum required to be raised for the purpose of discharging the difference between the aforesaid expenses and the liabilities of the Exhibition and the moneys received therefrom, or in connection therewith, and any calls to be made by the Commissioners under section 10 of this Law shall be made rateably accordingly." It was held by the eminent lawyer, that this "call made rateably" would involve a responsibility to the full extent of the losses, so that if £10,000 were guaranteed and twenty thousand pounds were lost, each guarantor might be called on to pay double the amount of his guarantee. This belief of the "eminent lawyer," whoever he may be, is absolutely contradicted by the terms of the law; for at the end of Section 10, which governs Section 12, just quoted are these words: "Each guarantor shall, etc., pay to such

* His Excellency the Governor held a meeting for this purpose at the Conversorium, Kingston, on the evening of Monday the 17th November, 1889.

persons, etc. such sum or sums of money *not exceeding in the whole, the sum for which he shall have become responsible.*" With such a clause like this in the law, how is it possible for any guarantor to be legally called on to pay more than the sum for which he agrees to become a guarantor.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS.

"The Jamaica Post," 14th November, 1889.

The Exhibition may confidently be expected to do here on a small scale what the Philadelphia Exhibition did on a large. There it gave such an impulse to art culture as had not been known in America before. The progress since made in art studies has been remarkable. It is to be seen in private homes and public galleries, in art shops, and in the rapid increase in the number of art students. This on a smaller scale is what we will see here. The Exhibition will take the innate love of art and give it such impulse and direction as will make 1891 the beginning of a new era in the culture of the Fine Arts.

In Literature and Science its help will be no less effective. We will not add more on this, however, at present. There will be other opportunities of doing so. Meanwhile we do not hesitate to say that the Exhibition will, whether we consider its material or its moral and intellectual results, be the most important and the most fruitful event in the history of Jamaica since the Emancipation of the people in 1838.

MONDAY'S ENTHUSIASM AT THE CONVERSORIUM.

"Jamaica Post," 20th November, 1889.

THE meeting in the Conversorium on Monday night was all we expected it to be. So much so that we might be considered as now discharged from the obligation to tell what it was by saying that it was all we said that it would be. But the matter is too important to be dealt with in that way. It has set in operation forces that will influence the condition of Kingston for many a day to come. The coming show will, as the Governor said, be the most important and the most instructive show that has ever been seen in the island. As its importance was realised, and as the tide rose higher and higher of intelligent realization of the resources of the island, the community as a whole would be carried upon its bosom and swing forward on the good river of progress. Kingston as the capital and as the centre of intellectual, commercial and social life must perforce come in for a large share of these summarised results, as stated by anticipation. And it will not be one class that will benefit but all classes. All classes in the city are, therefore, under the greatest obligations to further, to the utmost, the work of preparation for the show and the work of carrying it through. If it go abroad that Kingston is not in a sanitary condition, is rugged, dirty, and evil-smelling, people will be prevented from coming, and more than that, they will be prevented from showing, for all Exhibitors will wish to be present and will not remain away if they can help it. They will wish their friends to be present too. It is in this way seen to be vital that it should go abroad early that Kingston will be clean, tidy, "bright as a new pin" when the Exhibition comes. The men of Kingston should, accordingly, from pride of their city, from self-respect, and even under the influence of the motive of gain, go to work and sweep out all filth, brush away all cobwebs, mend decaying fences, touch up old paint, and bring about a state of things that will gladden the eyes of strangers and give their own fellow-countrymen and their own children a new view of the possibilities that are in them, show them in fact, that the "river of progress" that their Governor spoke of is not a distant, nor impracticable thing, but a river that already is deepening and expanding and rising higher and higher day by day. The meeting in the Conversorium was the latest and best proof we have had for a long time that the river rises steadily, irresistibly, and even rapidly. The eloquent touches of a capable leader only reveal what is already in the minds of others.

In this way it appears to us that there is a great work for the gentlemen who were nominated on Monday evening to do. They have to meet in their respective districts, and arrange for the holding of meetings in these districts, appoint their permanent Committees, each with its chairman to communicate directly with the Governor, and then go to work with a will. Their plans and their work will be of great interest to all concerned in the city's welfare. What they find, what they resolve upon, what difficulties they meet with and what on the whole they arrive at as best for us as a community will be of great interest to the press and the public, to the local and general Boards of Health, to the City Government, and to the Island Government, and to every other community in the island. It is to be hoped that they will have as their members the best in each of the fourteen districts and the most capable chairmen they can supply, for only in this way are we sure of a great and a permanent result. We have confidence in them. It was a genuine and a manly enthusiasm that showed itself on Monday evening in the Conversorium. Only let it now be turned into practical channels and it will sweep away all the dirt, debris, ugliness and deformity that so many complain of as distinctive marks of our city life. The fourteen local Committees have their spurs to win. We believe they will win them, and that they will have much honourable mention long before the Exhibition is opened.

The Mayor's contribution to the object of the meeting was all that could be desired. The lime, tar, and paint to those who could not purchase was just what was wanted, and his hearty support of the movement was invaluable. That promise substantially removed any real difficulty. The coast is now clear for the pilots of the fourteen districts and we do not doubt that their navigation will prosper.

POSITION OF GUARANTEE FUND ON 21ST NOVEMBER, 1889.

		£	s.	d.
Kingston	...	7,620	0	0
St. Andrew	...	1,110	0	0
St. Thomas	...	345	0	0
Portland	...	1,200	0	0
St. Mary	...	1,585	0	0
St. Ann	...	825	0	0
Trelawny	...	50	0	0
St. James	...	555	0	0
Hanover	...	80	0	0
Westmoreland	...	265	0	0
St. Elizabeth	...	150	0	0
Manchester	...	495	0	0
Clarendon	...	1,205	0	0
St. Catherine	...	2,080	0	0

SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM RESIDENTS IN ENGLAND.

Mr. C. Washington Eves	..	1,050	0	0
Mr. Alexander Turnbull	...	50	0	0
Messrs. Park, McFadyen & Co.	...	50	0	0
Mr. Henry Sewell	...	50	0	0
Sir A. J. Adderley	...	50	0	6
Major Coxhead	...	10	0	0
Major C. D. E. Ellis	...	10	0	0
Colonel Dawkins	...	10	0	0
Total	...	£18,845	0	0

Colonial Secretary Free



G. Furland Esq.
May Pen.