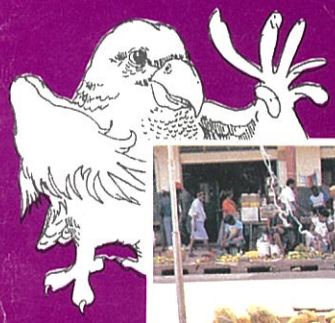
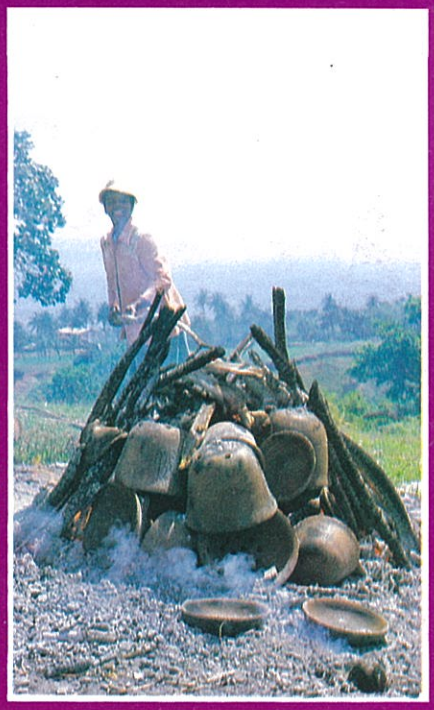
# BUSH TALK



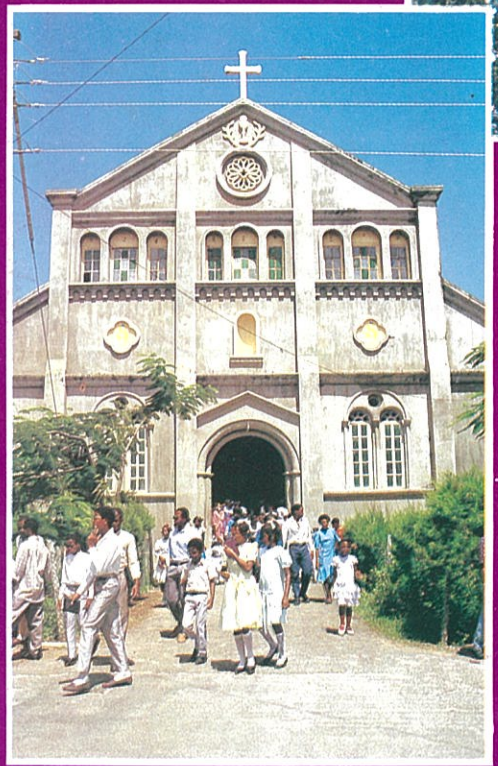
CASTRIES MARKET



FIRING LOCAL COAL POTS

VILLAGE CHOISEUL

GROS ISLET CHURCH



# SAINT LUCIA PEOPLE AND PLACES

Written and illustrated by Maria Grech
Cartoons by Alwyn St. Omer & Christopher Cox

# BUSH TALK

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# PEOPLE AND PLACES

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Saint Lucia Forest & Lands Dept. Environmental Education Programme

# BUSH TALK

Written by Maria Grech, Cartoons by Alwyn St. Omer and Christopher Cox, all other artwork by Maria Grech.
Published by the Forestry Management and Conservation Project Ministry of Agriculture, Saint Lucia, W.I.

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The Prime Minister, the Governor, several District Representatives and many other professional and business people donated their time and expertise by writing introductions related to their own particular field of interest. The Voice of Saint Lucia also helped tremendously by keeping printing costs to a minimum and often making no extra charge for printing additional supplements.

Finally, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), made it possible for Bush Talk books 1 to 6 to be published, each book containing six or more issues of the newsletter dealing with related topics. CIDA also provided the funding for the production of the camera-ready copy for this book "Saint Lucia - People and Places" and for "Planet Earth", number 7 in the school book series. The cost of printing "Saint Lucia- People and Places" and "Planet Earth" was borne by the Forest and Lands Department of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Forestry and Lands Department, who first produced Bush Talk as part of their Environmental Education Programme, wish to thank everyone who has helped them to achieve their goal of providing Saint Lucia's school children with material dealing specifically with their own unique environment.

# BUSH TALK

# SAINT LUCIA
# PEOPLE AND PLACES

# CONTENTS



# INTRODUCTION

Saint Lucia, like many of its island neighbours, has seen the introduction of many cultures over the course of its history. The combination of these cultures has shaped the way of life of our people, from the food we eat, to the way we live in our towns, villages and communities. Today, community life in Saint Lucia reflects influences from African, English, French, Indian and Amerindian cultures.

In the days before the arrival of the Europeans, the Amerindians who inhabited our island led a relatively simple existence, living in harmony with the environment. Settlements were small and scattered mainly along the coast, as they depended heavily on the sea for their livelihood. With the arrival of the Europeans and large-scale sugar production came the plantation system, supported by imported slave labour from Africa. The plantation system of agriculture brought with it major changes in land use, it also affected the way communities developed. Societies were centred around the plantation estates, since the slaves were forced to live in dwellings provided for them on the plantation itself. Following the abolition of slavery, the former slaves were free to settle where they pleased.

Settlements sprang up around the boundaries of the estates although many people moved away to establish communities along the coast. In most cases they built their houses within the sheltered river mouths. The rivers flowing through these villages provided a valuable source of fresh water while the bays associated with the mouth of the rivers provided safe anchorage for boats, the main means of transportation and communication in those days. Settlements on the coast relied on fishing and agriculture for subsistence while communities in the interior relied on livestock and agriculture.

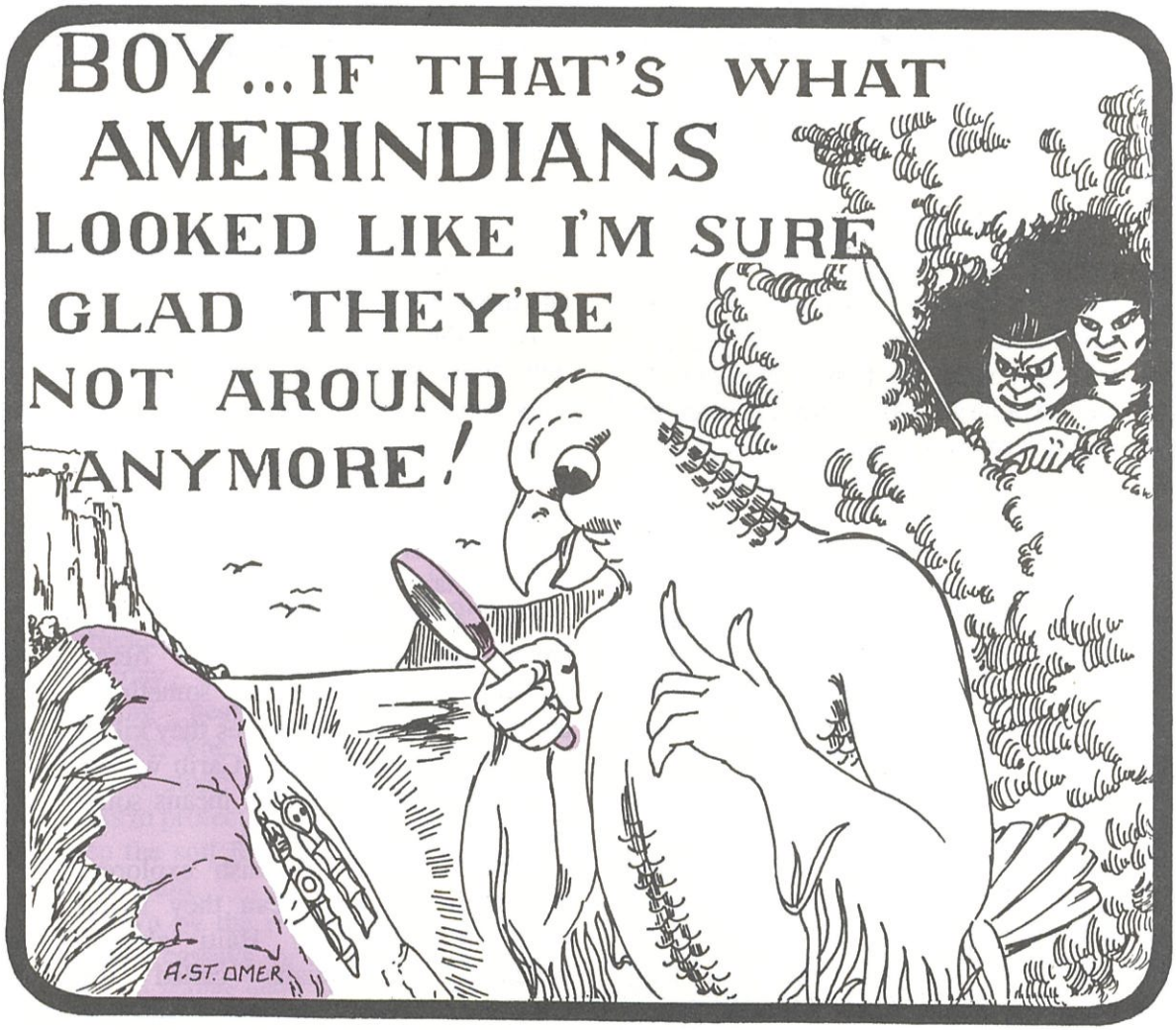
Because of the island's rugged terrain, many of these early settlements were relatively isolated. As a result, over time, each community developed its own character and culture. However, in more recent times, the linking of our settlements through roads and telecommunications has allowed for the free movement of people and ideas which today gives community life a distinct Saint Lucian flavour.

This collection of Bushtalk newsletters, published individually between 1980 and 1988, takes you on a tour of the towns, villages, communities and other points of interest around Saint Lucia. Readers will explore the fascinating history and culture that gave rise to the uniqueness of our present day communities. In addition to culture and history, matters relating to community development and environmental awareness at the community level are also touched upon.

So, take your time, relax and enjoy a tour of our towns and villages.

Christopher Cox
Assistant Chief Forest and Lands Officer
Forest and Lands Department
Ministry of Agriculture
SAINT LUCIA

# BUSH TALK




## AMERINDIANS IN SAINT LUCIA

1. Saint Lucia's First Settlers
2. The Arawak Village
3. The Carib Camp
4. Clash of Cultures
5. Archaeology Fills the Gaps

# SAINT LUCIA'S FIRST SETTLERS

Many people believe that Saint Lucia's history began in the middle of the 17th century. That was when the first French settlers began to arrive. It is true they were the first to cultivate the land on a large scale. They exported the produce of their estates. They were also the first to construct large solid buildings. Some of these buildings remain as proof of their early occupation even today.

This does not mean the French were Saint Lucia's first settlers. Indians from South America had come to the island by canoe many hundreds of years before.

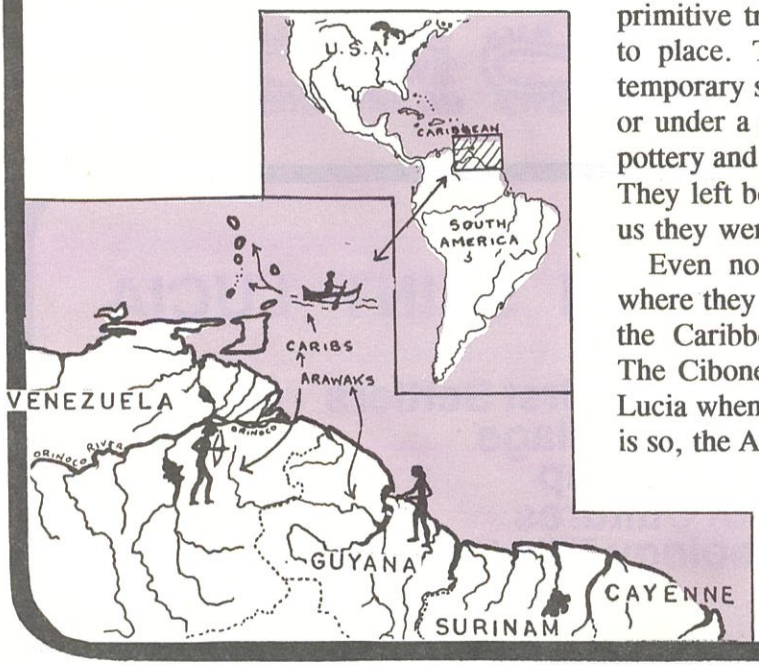
There were **Arawaks**, who came from Guyana and were a peaceful tribe. They hunted birds and small animals, using bows and arrows, and cultivated a few crops. One of their early settlements was just behind the long beach at Grand Anse. Modern dating methods have been able to prove that some of the artifacts discovered at this site are 1,500 years old.

After the Arawaks came the **Caribs** who lived beside the Orinoco River. This river runs for hundreds of miles from the east coast of Venezuela deep into the dense rainforest of the interior. It is fed by many tributaries and in some parts is wider than the island of Saint Lucia.

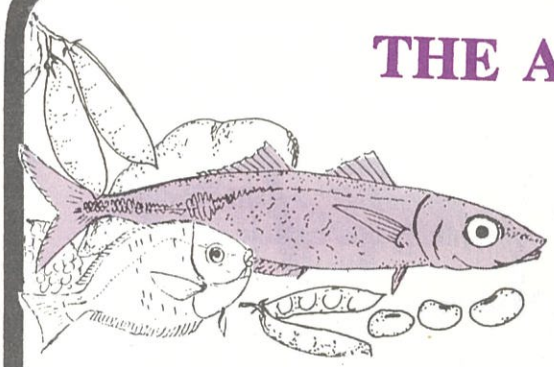
The Caribs cultivated no crops. They fished and hunted and were fierce fighters. It is said that they sometimes ate the bodies of the enemies they killed in battle. From the word Carib we get the term 'cannibal' which means some one who eats human flesh.

When the early Spanish explorers arrived in the Caribbean they found parts of Cuba and Haiti already occupied by Indians called the **Ciboney**. These Indians were a primitive tribe who moved from place to place. They made their homes in temporary shelters, some times in caves or under a rocky ledge. They made no pottery and used only very simple tools. They left behind nothing that could tell us they were here.

Even now, no-one knows for sure where they came from or how many of the Caribbean islands they occupied. The Ciboney might have been in Saint Lucia when the Arawaks arrived. If this is so, the Arawaks probably drove them out or used them as slaves.



# THE ARAWAK VILLAGE



Streaks of light were beginning to show in the eastern sky. In the big hut, the Arawak Chief was already awake. Swinging his legs out of his hammock he sat up and rubbed his hands over his wrinkled face.

Today the women would start planting beans, yams and sweet potatoes. The earth had been dug and the low stone walls built up with new rocks to protect the terraces. This would keep the soil from being washed away by the rain.

Down by the river they had already planted cassava or manioc. Now the delicate leaves were as high as a man's waist. The field was tended by the women who would harvest the roots of the cassava plants when they were ready. They would clean and grate the roots and pound them in a wooden tub or mortar to make a coarse flour.

The Chief lifted up his head and looked toward the boiling lakes where Yokahu, the God of Fire, slept. A thin cloud of smoke drifted up into the air. The light breeze carried it in wisps toward the sea. The Chief wrinkled his nose at the unpleasant sulphury smell. He did not want Yokahu to wake in his lifetime. He had all heard about the terrible things that could happen if he was disturbed.

Some of the women were shaping the flat cakes of cassava bread and baking them over the open fire. Others had gone to the river to fill calabashes with water. The rising sun was chasing away the night and soon the whole village would be awake.

Life was good in this place. The water was sweet and plentiful, the ground was fertile. There were birds and agoutis to be hunted for the pot and plenty of wild fruits. The river was full of fish and crayfish and on its banks lived a sleek brown rat that was good to eat. They caught shellfish, lobster and lambi and many kinds of fish in the sea. Some so colourful that the rainbow itself was no brighter. Who could ask for more?

The smell of food cooking reminded the Chief that he was hungry. He called out to one of the women. She brought him a bowl filled with a tasty stew of crab and green vegetables. He ate greedily, scooping the meat out with his fingers. Then he soaked up the gravy with big chunks of fresh cassava bread.

A flock of parrots flew overhead screaming and squawking. The Chief looked up. It was a good day to visit the sacred stones. He would make an offering to Yokahu so that he continued to sleep peacefully.

# THE CARIB CAMP

There was much noise and confusion in the Carib Camp. The men who had been away for several days, had just returned from a raid on a nearby Arawak village. Everyone crowded around to pinch and poke the sorry-looking prisoners they had brought back. There were no men, only a few women and young girls who looked very tired and frightened. Some of the women had babies slung on their backs and older children clinging to their legs.

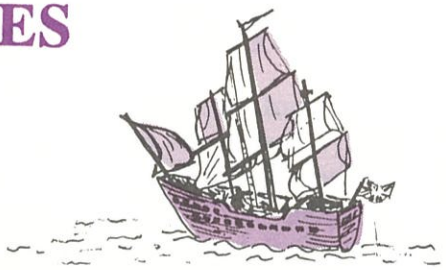
When the Caribs attacked their village their men had been away hunting in the forest. The few old men and boys that were there could not protect them. They were all killed.

The women and children who had been captured were pushed into a shack on the edge of the small clearing. From here they watched as the Caribs celebrated their victory. Beautifully woven baskets of soursop, guavas, and custard apples were laid on the grass. Beside them were placed calabashes filled with a drink made of fruit juices and honey. Big clay bowls of stewed iguana and turtle meat were also brought out and heaps of oysters gathered from the roots of the mangroves. There was fish baked in the ashes of the fire and the sweet, roasted flesh of little doves. For seasoning there were small dishes of hot pepper mixed with lime juice that was called coui.

Drinking and eating as they sat in the light of the dying fire, the Caribs looked truly frightening. Their bodies were smeared with a bright red paste made by mixing the seeds of the urucou tree with oil. Over this they had painted broad black stripes using the juice from a certain kind of berry. Pieces of shell were stuck through the holes in their noses, lips and ears. And round their necks hung ornaments made of bone and teeth.

The women were allowed to take their share only after the men had finished. The Arawak prisoners joined them, hungry after their long walk through the bush. Soon every single pot had been scraped clean. One by one, the figures around the fire slipped away to sleep. In the morning there was much work to be done. Two new canoes were being built from gommier trees cut in the forest. The vines and grasses for making baskets had to be gathered. New arrows also had to be made to replace those lost in the battle. There was always something to do.

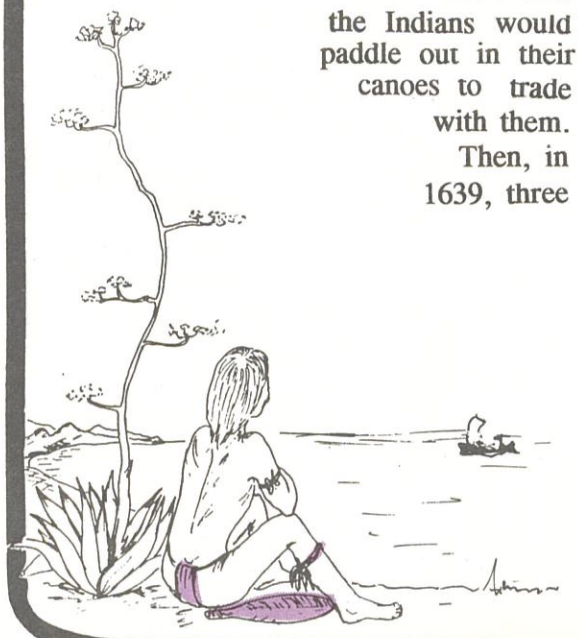
# CLASH OF CULTURES



The Caribs continued to raid the Arawak villages, killing the men and taking the women and children to their own camps. Finally, there were no more villages left to destroy. The Caribs ruled the tiny island. They called it IOUANALAO, the land of the iguana.

In 1603, a ship that had been blown off its course stopped there for supplies. The Indians were friendly. They willingly exchanged fruit and tobacco with the sailors for some of their cargo. Two years later an English ship, the Olive Branch or 'Oliph Blossome' as it is sometimes called, was also forced to anchor there. At first the Indians came every day to trade but they soon returned to their old ways. They ambushed the little camp and killed many of the sailors. Only a few, who set out to sea in a small, open boat, escaped to tell the tale.

Other boats came and the Indians would paddle out in their canoes to trade with them. Then, in 1639, three or four hundred Englishmen came to settle permanently on the island. For over a year they lived in peace with the Caribs. Then, news came from Dominica that an English ship had captured several Caribs there and taken them away as slaves. In revenge, Caribs from Dominica, Martinique and St. Vincent joined those in Saint Lucia and attacked the small colony. The few Englishmen who escaped fled to Montserrat to start a new life.



Soon after this, the French came to the island. They built themselves a fort and protected it with cannons. But they still lost three Governors to the clubs and arrows of the fierce Caribs. In 1663, a group of Caribs went to Barbados to negotiate the 'sale' of their island. The next year an army of 1,000 Barbadians and 600 Caribs came to claim Saint Lucia for England. They forced French Governor, Bonnard, to surrender. Sickness and wars with the Caribs how- ever eventually drove the British away. But not for long...

Soon, the English and the French began to battle in earnest for possession of the island. The Indians with their primitive stone weapons were no match for the guns and cannons of the invaders. The fierce Caribs who had earlier destroyed the peaceful Arawaks were now destroyed themselves.

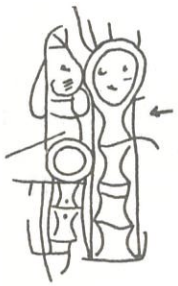
# ARCHAEOLOGY FILLS THE GAPS

The word 'prehistoric' means before history. That means before any records were kept to tell us what happened in years gone by. The people who dig up and study prehistoric remains are called archaeologists. They hope the broken pots, bones and ornaments will help them understand how prehistoric people lived.

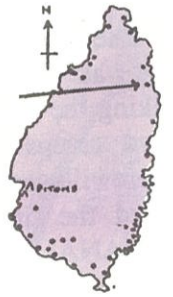
Amerindian remains or artifacts have been found all over Saint Lucia. Anse Ger, Choiseul, Grande Anse, Soufriere, Dauphin, Belfond and Choc are just a few of these sites. By studying the site and the artifacts, archaeologists can usually tell whether the village or the settlement was occupied by Arawaks or Caribs.

Arawaks planted crops so they needed to live where there was good soil and plenty of fresh water. They chose their sites carefully and were more likely to live inland than the Caribs who preferred the windswept headlands. Both made pots from clay but the work done by the Arawaks was finer. They often decorated their bowls by stamping designs or painting patterns on them. They also carved strange figures or emblems on rocks, like those at Dauphin, Choiseul, Balem-bouche and Soufriere. These rock carvings are called petroglyphs.

AMERINDIAN ARTIFACTS



PETROGLYPH AT DAUPHIN




IQUANALAO

• AMERINDIAN SITES

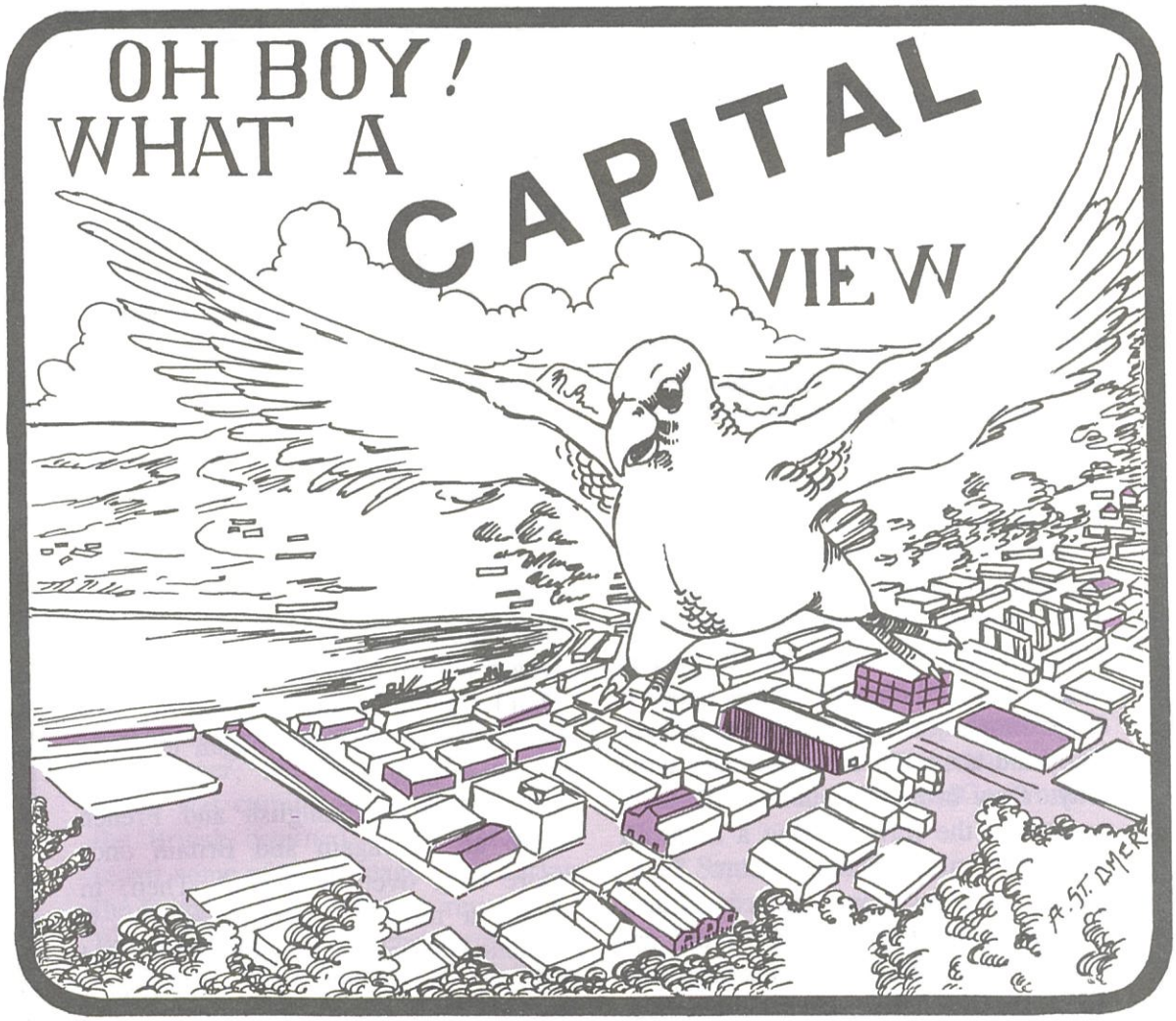
In 1983, archaeologists came from the University of Vienna to excavate a site at Pointe du Caille on the east coast. They found many thousand pieces of pottery and carved shell as well as stone axes and other tools. They fitted the bits of pottery back together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. From the shape of the pot and the decorations on it the archaeologists could then decide who made it and what it was used for.

They also found 54 human skeletons. Some held stone weapons and had been placed all in a line in one grave. Perhaps they were warriors who were buried after being killed in battle. Others, women and children among them, were in a larger pit nearby. This was probably the village burial ground.

The archaeologists got most of their clues from the village dump. Here they found sea shells, the bones of small animals and birds and fish bones. From these they were able to tell what kind of food the people ate.

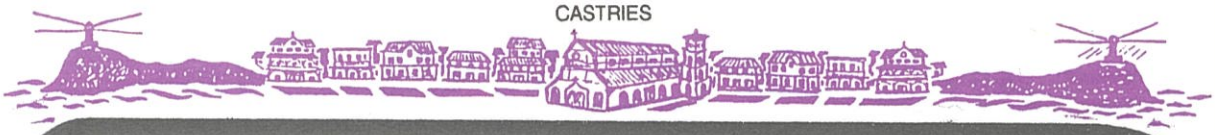
Many hours were spent patiently examining and recording this information. Their findings have helped us to learn more about the Amerindians and their part in Saint Lucia's history.

# BUSH TALK

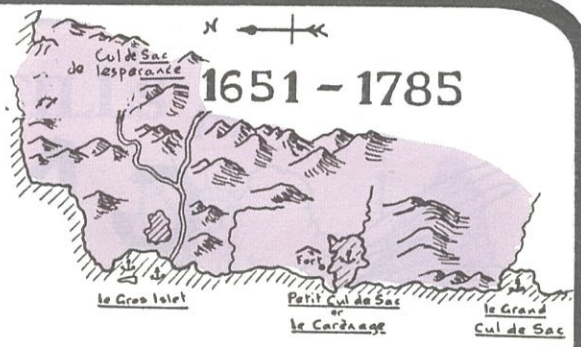



## CASTRIES

1. Le Carenage
2. Castries in the 19th Century
3. Ordeal by Fire
4. Port Castries
5. The City of Castries



# LE CARENAGE




Some old maps of Saint Lucia show Vigie, where the airport is today, to be the site of an old fort. Nearby in a small creek or inlet boats were once pulled up to have their bottoms cleaned or repaired. A place where this is done is usually called the CARENAGE. After a while, the inlet and the settlement that grew up around it, both became known by this name.

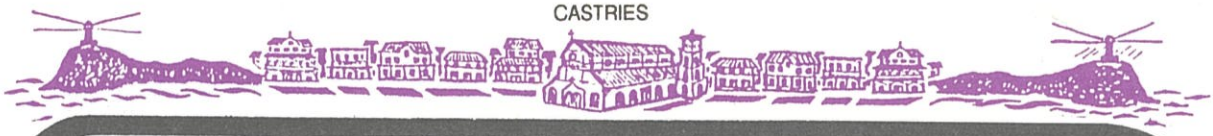
The fort had been built by a group of Frenchmen who came to Saint Lucia in 1651, hoping to make the island their home. They knew that the Caribs had wiped out a colony of several hundred Englishmen just eleven years before. They did not want to end up the same way. They brought cannons with them to protect the fort and dug a moat all around to make it more secure. Their leader, de Rousselan, married a Carib woman so at first the Indians did not trouble them. But, after his death in 1654, the treacherous Caribs killed three French Governors, one after the other.

Then the quarrels began between the French and the English over ownership of Saint Lucia. For 100 years or more they fought over the island. Finally, in 1763, the 'Treaty of Paris' gave Saint Lucia to the French. They immediately began to build roads and to establish plantations. They shipped sugar, cocoa, coffee, spices and the other crops they grew to markets in Europe.

It was decided to move the little town of Carenage to a more protected place. The townspeople chose a site on the banks of the river that flowed into the Petit Cul de Sac Bay. Warehouses and other buildings were soon put up and a wharf built so that canoes and longboats could tie up alongside. In 1767, the people of le Carenage began to move into their new home.

By 1778, the English and French were at war again and Britain once more took over the island. Then, in 1780, a terrible hurricane struck. It flattened crops, destroyed buildings and killed thousands of people. Only two of the houses in the old town were left standing

The Marquis de Castries advised King Louis XVI that he should get Saint Lucia back at all costs. In 1783 a new treaty was drawn up, the Treaty of Versailles. This forced the British to hand the island back which made the French colonists very happy. They wrote to the King asking him to reward the Marquis. In 1785, the King ordered the capital to be re-named Castries in his honour. However, on some old maps you will still see it shown as le Carenage, or le Petit Cul de Sac.



# CASTRIES IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Now came the period of the French revolution. In France, the King and many of his followers were beheaded. The revolutionaries even travelled overseas to continue their fight. In Saint Lucia, churches, estate houses and other buildings were destroyed and plantations were abandoned. Many of the slaves ran away. Their masters were forced to do the same, or to be killed by the soldiers of the New Republic. Castries was now given a new name, Felicite Ville. Some say the dreadful guillotine was set up in the Town Square which, in those days, was called the Place d'Armes. There was confusion and disorder everywhere.

However, the French hold on the island was coming to an end. In 1803 the British returned. They started to repair some of the damage done during the Brigand's War after the revolution. But the affect of the French occupation remained. There were 1,200 whites, 1,800 coloured and 14,000 slaves in Saint Lucia at that time.

Most of the whites were French-speaking creoles and their slaves spoke a patois based on that language. A few words of English crept into the patois, but even though English became the official language of the colony, patois remained the language of the people.

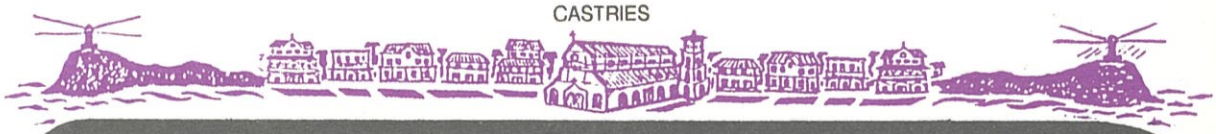
The new names given by the Republic did not last. Eventually, the towns, the villages and the estates, all went back to their old French names. Castries was once again Castries.

In 1817, another storm hit the island. This one did not do as much damage as the hurricane of 1780, but in Castries, Government House was blown down and Governor Seymour was buried in the ruins.

The town continued to grow. By 1840 there were about 600 houses and 4,000 inhabitants. In 1847, a convent and school rooms were built by the 'Filles de Marie'. Later, this convent was taken over by the nuns of the order of St. Joseph of Cluny. It became St. Joseph's Convent. Castries now had a library, a museum, its own Fire Brigade and a new system for bringing fresh water into the town. In 1885, the first copy of the 'Voice of St. Lucia' was printed and in 1894, the first stones were laid for the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and Government House.

In September 1898, just before the end of the century, another violent storm hit the island. Many buildings in town were damaged, but they soon went up again, stronger and better than before.

GRENADIER - 1794
CASTRIES REGIMENT

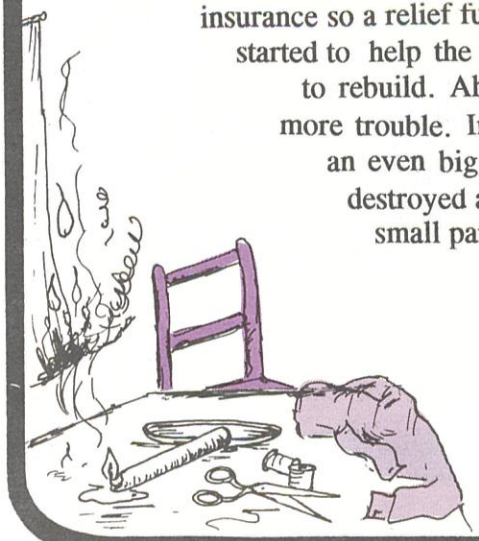


# ORDEAL BY FIRE

Most of the buildings in Castries were made of wood. Lumber was cheap and a wooden house could be put up very quickly. It was also easy to move! This was very important because not many people owned the land on which their houses stood. Wooden houses however, had their faults. They could be blown down in a hurricane or catch fire and burn to the ground in minutes.

Most cooking was done on an open fire and houses were lit by candles or oil lamps. There were often accidents. Fires would quickly blaze up out of control, destroying the house where they started as well as others nearby. As the town grew the houses became more numerous and more tightly packed. On the night of May 14th 1927, a fire started in the business quarter of Castries. It spread quickly from one building to the next until half of the town was a smoking black ruin.

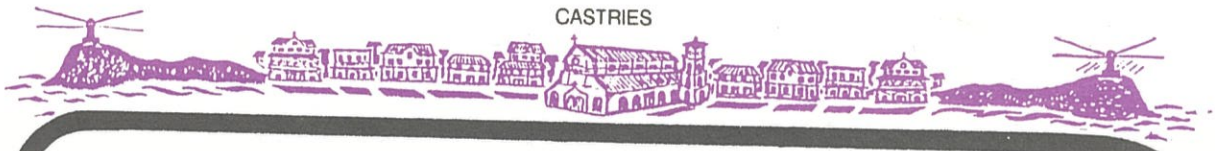
The Post Office, the Government Buildings and many private homes were all destroyed. So were most of the business houses. Very few people had insurance so a relief fund was started to help the victims to rebuild. Ahead lay more trouble. In 1948, an even bigger fire destroyed all but a small part of the town. This one started in a tailor's shop, perhaps from a candle that had fallen over. The flames consumed the tailor's small wooden shack and soon reached the buildings on either side. There was a strong wind that night. It fanned the fire and helped it to burn fiercer and faster.



When the sun rose on the morning of June 20th it shone down on a charred and smouldering wasteland. Just the day before, these ruins had been the town of Castries.

The Post Office and the Courthouse were once again demolished as well as most other government buildings. The books in the Carnegie Library were nothing but ashes, just like the goods in the burnt out stores. But the Cathedral was saved so was St. Joseph's Convent and St. Mary's College. The College moved to one of the old military barracks at Vigie. The Convent burned to the ground just eleven years later.

The fire left more than two thousand people homeless. Columbus Square was piled high with furniture and other belongings that had been snatched from the blaze. It took much longer for the town to recover this time, but it did. Like the mythical phoenix rising up from the ashes of its funeral pyre, Castries was built up once again.



# PORT CASTRIES

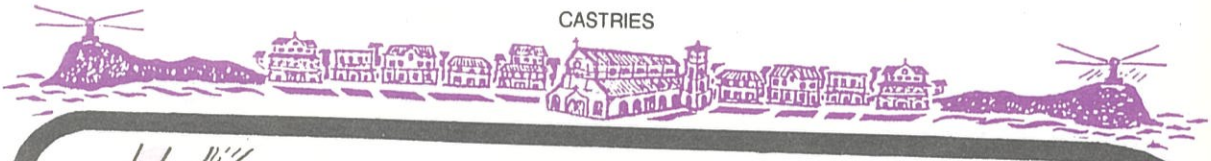
The harbour that the French called le Petit Cul de Sac, or le Carenage, soon became one of the busiest ports in the Caribbean. For years the only activity it had seen was the shoals of fish that swept in and out. Then the Amerindians came to fish in the bay and search among the mangroves for oysters. During wars between the French and the English, fleets of ships sailed into the harbour. They anchored in the deeper water and put longboats over the side for the men to go ashore and trade.

Castries was a busy trading centre. Merchant vessels brought passengers and goods to the island and left, loaded up with produce from the estates. They paid a tax of a penny a ton if they were 50 tons or more, four pence a ton if they were less. For water they paid two pence a trip. If they were under 50 tons or registered in Castries, they paid six pence for half a year. The taxes were collected by a Town Warden appointed by Government.

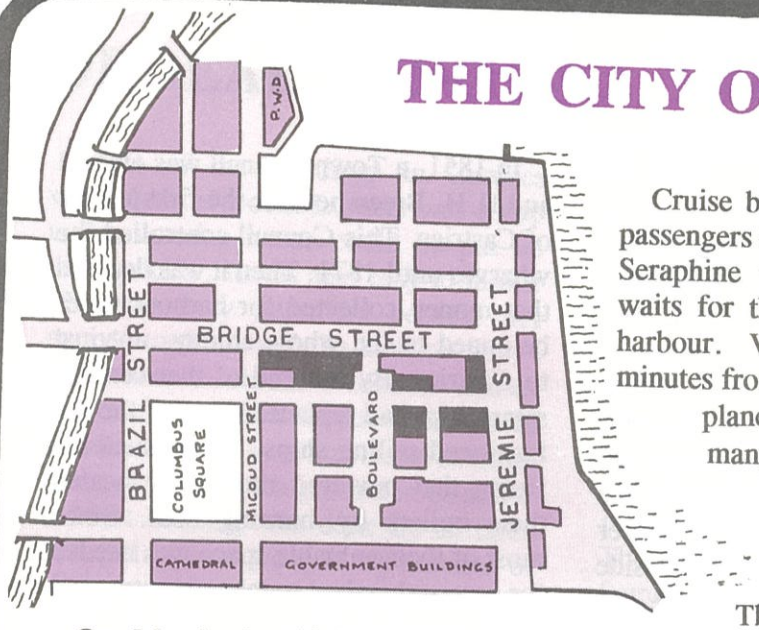
In 1851, a Town Council was elected and H.H. Breen became the first Mayor of Castries. This Council controlled the wharves until 1871. Then it was decided that money collected for harbour taxes belonged to the whole colony, not just to Castries. By the end of that century steamships had replaced many of the old fashioned sailing ships. To produce the steam that powered them they heated their boilers by burning coal. Since most of their valuable space was needed for cargo, they had to take on extra coal when ever they could. Castries became a coaling station and the docks and wharves became busier than ever.

Gradually, the need for coal became less. Now boats were usually powered by diesel. Women still hurried to the wharf when certain boats appeared. Only now they carried bananas on their heads instead of baskets of coal. Today the bananas are carried by machines.

As traffic increased, the harbour was enlarged and improved. The northern wharf had been built in 1886 to allow large freighters and cruise ships to come alongside. Now it was no longer big enough. On the western wharf where the Geest boats docked, there was no longer enough space for all the traffic on loading days. Even the Prince Albert Basin where schooners and coastal boats tied up, had outlived its us fulness. The Basin was filled in. New warehouses and docks were built and a facility for cruise ships on the other side of the harbour. Port Castries was keeping up with the 20th century.



# THE CITY OF CASTRIES




Cruise boats no longer unload their passengers on the wharf. Instead, Pointe Seraphine with its docks and shops waits for them on the far side of the harbour. Vigie airport is just five minutes from the centre of the city. The planes that land there bring in many visitors.

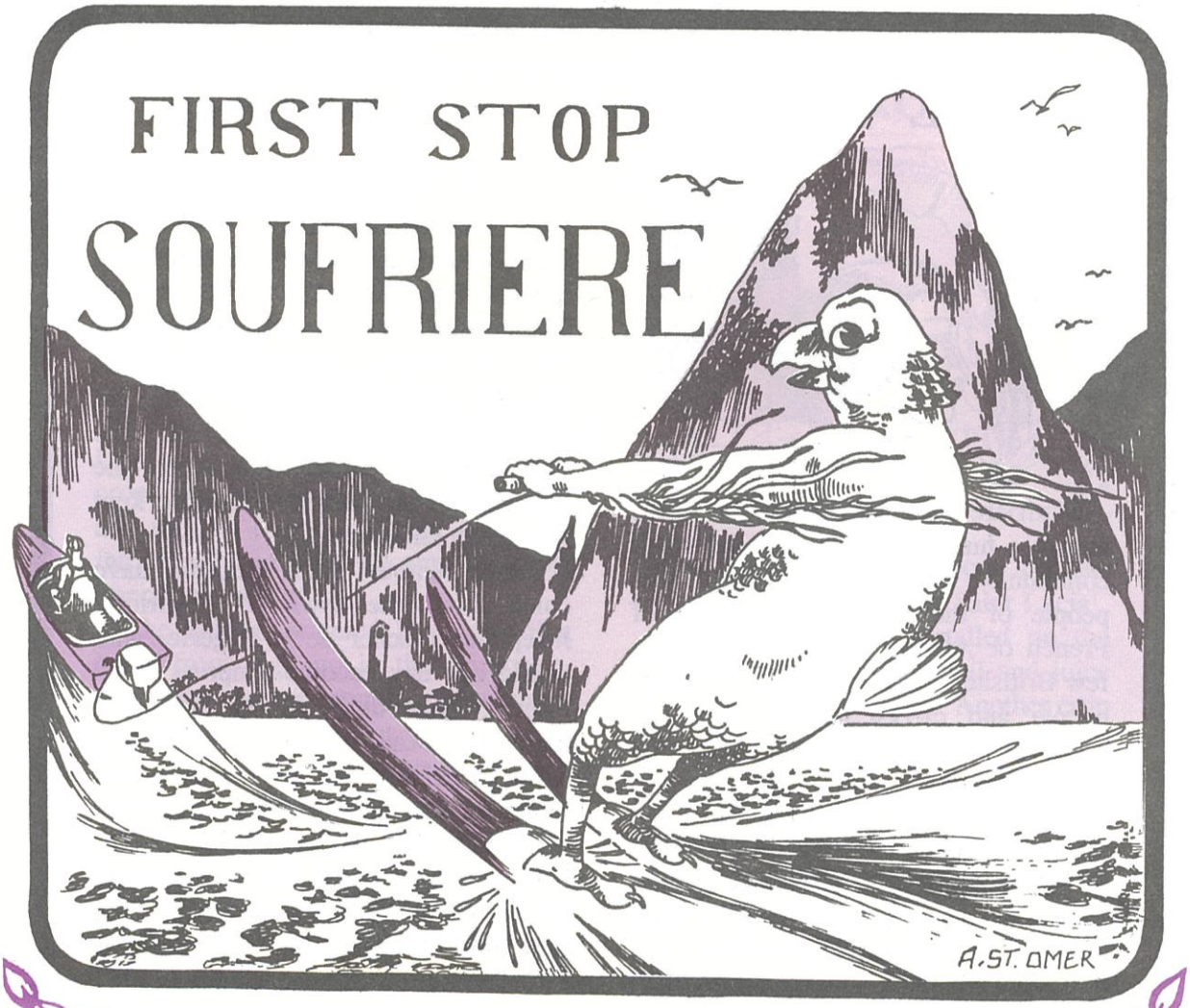
On March 1st 1967, Saint Lucia became an independent State. The English Administrator was replaced by Sir Frederick Clarke. He was the first Saint Lucian Governor to reside in Government House. In December of that same year, Castries became a city. It no longer had a Town Council and a Chairman, but a City Council and a Mayor. There had been Mayors before, starting with Mr. Breen, in 1851, but after twenty years or so the title had been dropped and 'Chairman' was used instead. The first Mayor of the City of Castries was Mr.J.H.Desir.

Le Carenage, with its 600 houses and 4,000 inhabitants, is buried in the pages of the history books. The old fort with its small band of Frenchmen is lost even further back in time. But they are not forgotten. Today the City of Castries completely surrounds le Petit Cul de Sac. Its streets stretch out in all directions. In each of its many districts are hundreds of houses and thousands of people. One third of the total population of Saint Lucia lives within the City boundaries.

They also provide good business links for Saint Lucia with the rest of the Caribbean. Because Castries is the Capital all the Government buildings are there. There are also churches and schools, too many to list. There are parks and playing fields where the people can play and relax. There are stores and supermarkets with goods from all over the world.

Yet still, all around are reminders of the past. There are military barracks on the Morne and at Vigie. The heavy buttresses that supported the railway up to Morne Fortune can still be seen half-hidden by bush. At La Toc, there are underground passages, ammunition stores and the remains of fortress walls. The battles are over but the buildings remain. Some are empty, covered with leafy green vines and pink coralita. Others are now classrooms, or offices, or homes. From the lookout opposite Government House, you look down on the city far below. Castries, with its busy streets encloses one of the most beautiful harbours in the Caribbean.

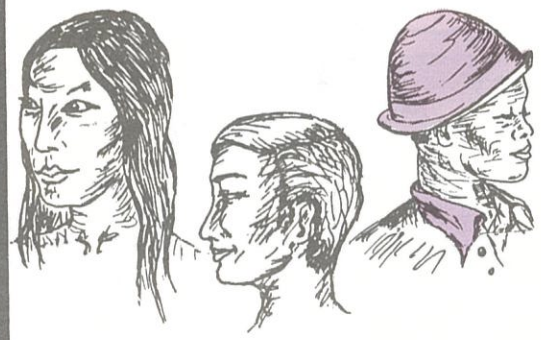
# BUSH TALK




## SOUFRIERE

1. The People of Soufriere
2. The Agricultural Environment
3. The Physical Environment
4. The History of Soufriere
5. The Wildlife and the Forest

# THE PEOPLE OF SOUFRIERE



Soufriere became a town in 1746, almost a hundred years after the small community was first established. The people of the town were mostly of French or African descent with just a few Britishers. The land owners, trades people and clerks were white. The domestic servants and the labourers on the estates were black. There were also mullatos who had mixed European and African blood.

The mullatos were the ones usually chosen to be overseers or to hold other positions of trust and responsibility. For this reason they were despised and disliked by the slaves. It was not until 1838, when emancipation freed them, that the slaves were able to own property and land of their own. Many continued to work on the estates where they had once been slaves. Others, wanting to be properly independent, tried to make it on their own.

The Caribbean Sea was full of fish and some of the former slaves became fishermen. Their life was hard, but at least their families had food to eat. When the catch was good they even had fish to sell. Others scratched a living from the land, growing vegetables and raising livestock. As the town grew there was more need for shops and other services. Some of the former slaves became merchants.

French and patois were the languages spoken. Even after the island became British, the descendants of the early French families continued to speak French. Although English was the official language of the island, the French-based patois remained the language of the people. Soufriere kept its French character.

Some famous Saint Lucians have come from the town of Soufriere. Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie, who would one day become Empress of all France, spent much of her childhood there. Dr. Beausoleil, the island's first Saint Lucian doctor, came from Soufriere, so also did the family of Mr.R.Belizaire who wrote Saint Lucia's first geography book. Queen Elizabeth II set foot on Saint Lucian soil for the first time in 1966. She landed, not in Castries, but on the jetty at Soufriere.

Before Soufriere was supplied with electricity from the power station at Vieux Fort, its residents had lights powered by a local hydro-electric system. It was operated by the flow of the water in the Soufriere River. Today there is a road running north through Canaries on to Castries. Before this road was completed a regular boat service left the jetty at Soufriere carrying people and their produce up to the City to do their marketing.

Soufriere has several small guest houses and hotels and some excellent restaurants. Each year more and more visitors make the trip, by road or sea, to this very special part of the island.

# THE AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture in Soufriere began with the arrival of the French in the middle of the 17th century. The Amerindians had tended their plots of corn and beans, their peppers and yams. But their gardens were planted for their own use, there was seldom any surplus. Now, large areas of land were cleared to plant crops like cotton and tobacco to be sold and shipped overseas. Sugar was later introduced and soon became the most important crop of all.

The land is watered by rivers that come from high up in the rainforest. The estate owners brought in machinery and built large water wheels that were powered by the flowing water of these rivers. As the wheels turned they operated mills that crushed the cane, squeezing out the juice. By 1842, there were twenty sugar mills working in the Soufriere area alone. The labourers who worked in them were paid one shilling and sixpence a day (36 cents).

Toward the end of the 19th century, the sugar market began to drop. The planters were forced to turn back to crops like cocoa and coffee that they had abandoned in favour of cane. New crops like citrus, nutmeg and coconuts were introduced, then later bananas.

Many workers on the estates had their own gardens. In them they grew fruit and vegetables for their own families and also to send to the market in Castries. Everything grew well. The soil was rich and well watered. From the estates came coffee, cocoa, oranges, limes, spices, coconuts and a variety of

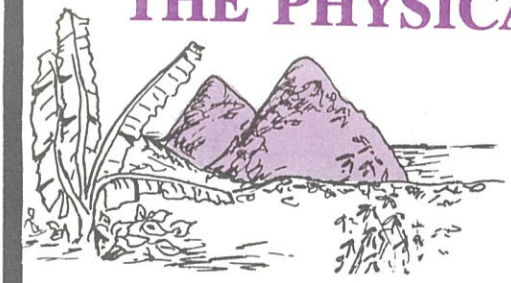

vegetables. Soufriere soon became known as 'The Garden of Saint Lucia'.

A lime press was installed on the Soufriere estate and lime oil and juice were exported to England. Another crop that was becoming more and more important was copra. In the early 1950s the Coconut Oil Factory started operating in Soufriere. For thirty years or so copra has remained an important crop for the area.

In 1980, hurricane Allen destroyed many of the coconut trees and those that were left were severely attacked by the coconut mite. Copra production dropped from 6,483 tons in 1980 to 2,433 the following year. By 1990, however, production was already back to 5,000 tons and still climbing. The factory still produces oil margarine and soap for local use and for export.

Today, the land around Soufriere is mainly planted up in bananas, cocoa and fruits like citrus and avocado. Although bananas are the island's main export crop, copra is still a major industry. In some places, especially on the windward coast, bananas are now being inter-cropped with coconuts.

# THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



Saint Lucia is a volcanic island. At Soufriere the signs of the tremendous activity still churning and boiling beneath us are clearly visible. Before man ever appeared on earth, this area erupted with a terrible force. The explosion left behind a crater many miles wide. From its still molten floor, rose two huge plugs of lava. These gradually cooled and took shape to become the Pitons. These Pitons, rising from the sea at Soufriere, are Saint Lucia's most famous landmark.

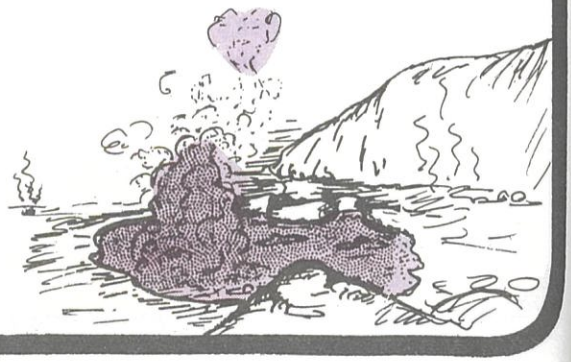
Not far away, hot gases bubble up through the thin crust, filling the air with clouds of steam. This is the spot we call the Sulphur Springs, Saint Lucia's 'drive-in' volcano. The water in the bubbling pools is full of minerals. The ground around them sparkles with crystals of silica, calcium carbonate and bright yellow sulphur. This sulphur gives the gas its horrible, rotten-egg smell, but it is also a valuable chemical and medicine. At one time it was mined and exported.

The Amerindians thought this was a frightening place with its boiling cauldrons and smelly steam-filled air. They called it QUALIBU, the place of death.

The French however, were more knowledgable. They understood the healing powers of the waters. King Louis XVI ordered baths to be built on Diamond Estate for his troops to soak in the mineral waters. The baths were fed by an underground flow that came directly from the hot springs. Behind them is a waterfall where the mineral waters, mingled with the water of the Diamond River, streak the rocks with patches of colour.

Soufriere lies in a wide, fertile valley. At the back are the mountains that form part of the island's central watershed. Their upper slopes are covered with tall trees. Their heads are buried in the clouds. From them spring many rivers, Soufriere, Troumasse, River Doree, Canelles, Choiseul and Vieux Fort. These rivers supply Soufriere and most of the southern part of the island with water.

Then there is Soufriere Bay! Wide and deep, its blue waters reflect the steep cone of the Petit Piton, rising from its southern side. Fishing boats and houses fringe the inner curve of the bay. Beyond the headland that marks its northern limit lies Anse Chastanet. The beach has sand that sparkles with silver and a fascinating underwater world of reefs and coral gardens. From the seashore to the rainforest, Soufriere is an area of unique splendour.

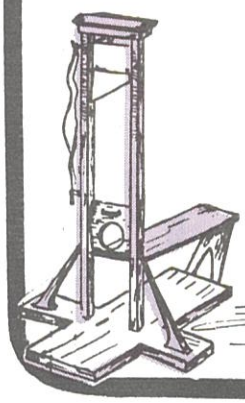


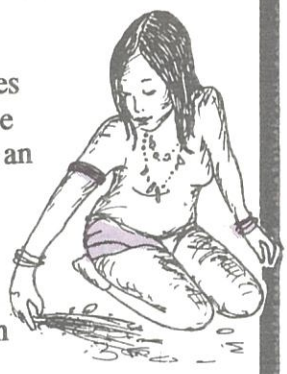
# THE HISTORY OF SOUFRIERE

Soufriere, like most parts of the island, shows signs of Amerindian occupation. Until recently however, there was little evidence to show that they had been there in any numbers. Now, the discovery of the terraces and carved rocks at Belfond and the exciting new find of the petroglyph near Jalousie indicate that Soufriere was perhaps one of the most important sites of all.

After the Amerindians, the first permanent settlers to arrive were the French who came around the end of the 17th century. Already well established in Martinique, they realised that the rich, fertile soil of Soufriere would be ideal for farming. The island changed hands fourteen times between the British and the French, but most of these early estates remained in the hands of the descendants of these French immigrants. They brought in slaves from Africa to work the land. In 1746, Soufriere was officially recognised by France as a town, the first in the island.

With the last years of that century came the French Revolution. Its effects were felt throughout the French islands of the Antilles. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, many royalists were beheaded. It is said that the ship carrying the dreaded guillotine sailed into Soufriere Bay. The machine was taken ashore and set up in the Town Square in front of the church, to continue its bloody work.





The revolutionaries declared slavery in the French islands was at an end. But the decree was ignored and under Napoleon slavery continued. The island was taken by the British again. Many of the freed slaves as well as French soldiers who had deserted, took to the hills. From their hideouts they organised raids on the town. They destroyed or damaged many buildings including the baths at Diamond Estate.

During Soufriere's history, the town has been shaken by storms many times. There was the 'Great Hurricane' of 1780, followed by others in 1817, 1831 and 1898. In 1839 an earthquake shook down the church steeple and more recently, in 1955, half the town was destroyed by fire. Hurricane Allen in 1980, was another blow. And, in 1991, Yokahu woke up, giving the whole island a good shake just to remind people that he was still around.

In spite of all these upheavals Soufriere continues to grow. It will never be the island's capital but it has produced men who have been important in the fields of law, commerce and politics. Towards the end of George Charles long term as Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, over half the members of the House of Assembly were Soufriere men, including him. Soufriere is still a centre for agriculture but tourism is now slowly gaining in importance.

# THE WILDLIFE AND THE FOREST

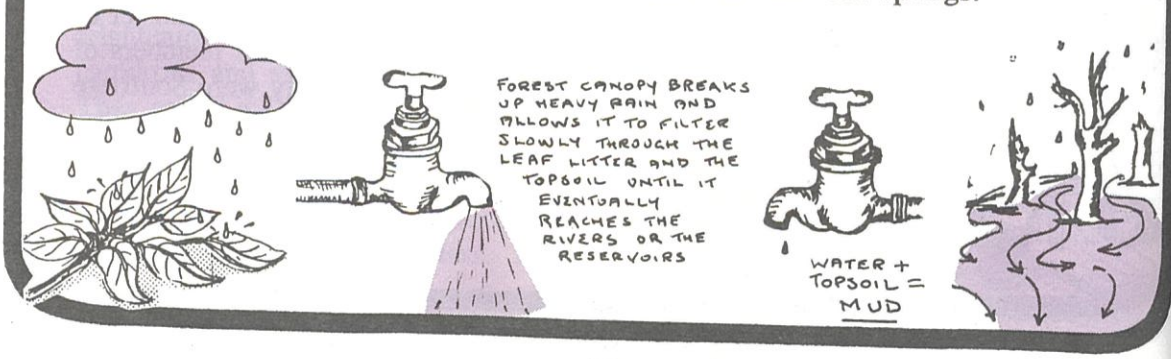
The Pitons and the Sulphur Springs attract many visitors to Saint Lucia, but more important than either of these are the forests that surround them. They provide much of the island's water supply. They are also the home of our national bird, *Amazona versicolor*. They also provide shelter for lesser known species like the Saint Lucia blackfinch *Melanospiza richardsoni* and the rufous-throated solitaire *Myadestes genibarbis*.

The Amerindians went to the forest to cut gommier trees to make their canoes. The settlers who came later, cut timber for houses, for furniture and for fuel wood. The freed slaves cleared the forest to plant gardens to feed their families. In 1887, over a hundred years ago, forester E.D.Hooper wrote a report that condemned the clearing of Saint Lucia's hillsides to plant cocoa and other crops.

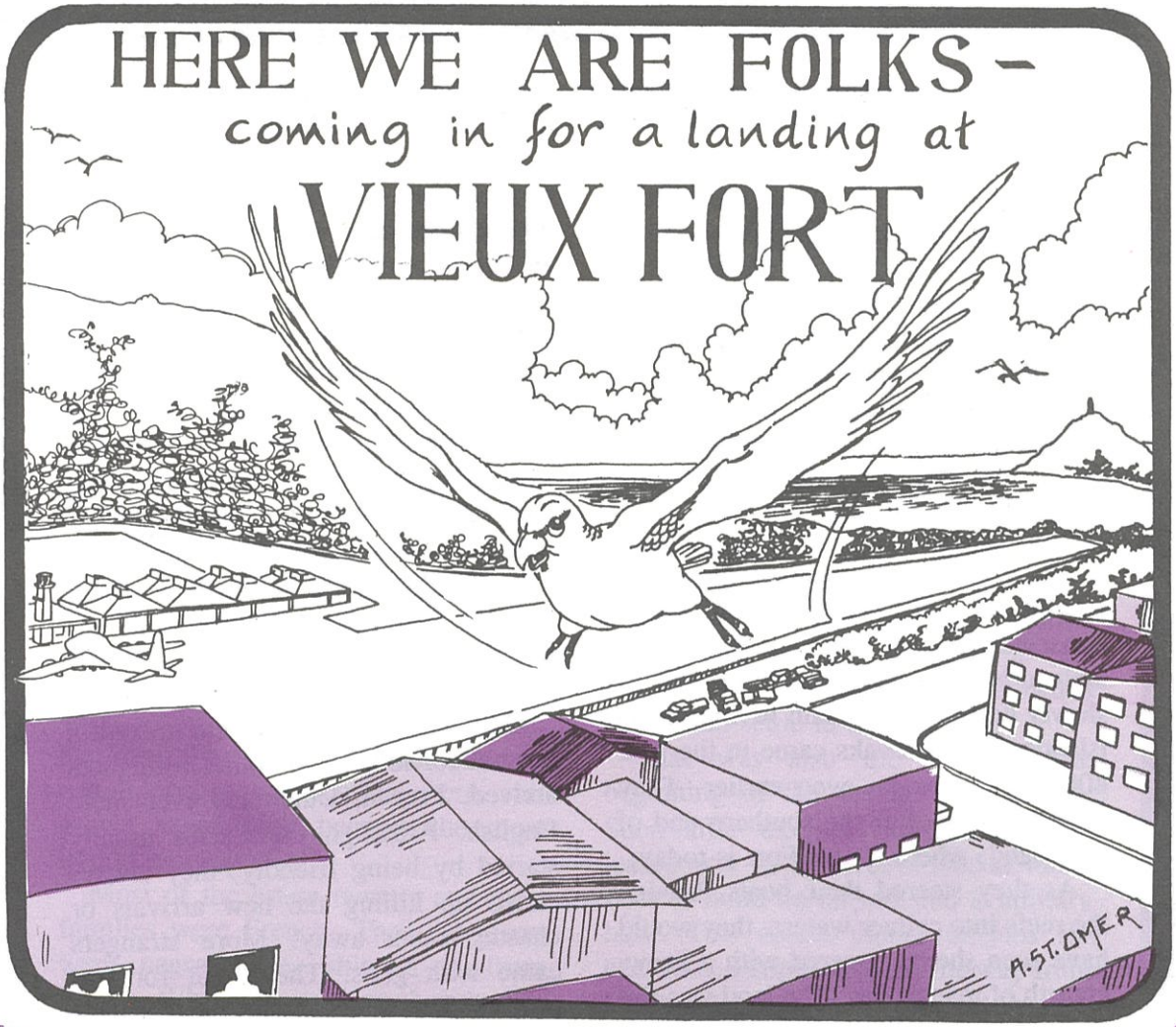
The Ministry of Agriculture was aware that the forest was being destroyed at an alarming rate. In 1938, they introduced mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla* to the island. Some trees were planted along the Murray Road, others were given to Andre Duboulay, owner of Soufriere Estate. Later, teak, *Tectona grandis* was introduced and in the early 1950s Mr. Duboulay planted this species all along the Anse Chastanet Road. But in spite of these efforts, there was no Forest reserve as we know it today.

No-one needed a licence to cut down a tree. People went freely into the forest chopping down the best woods like the gommier, the balata and the laurier and hauling them away. Then, in 1958, the Colonial Development and Welfare started a reforestation programme in the Edmund Forest. Areas that had been cleared were replanted with blue mahoe (*Hibiscus elatus)* and mahogany. The reforestation programme continued through the 1960s and the 1970s under Gabriel Charles, head of the Forestry Division from 1975 to 1990. Twenty-five years later those same trees were being harvested for fence posts, pickets and timber.

New trees are still being planted to replace those that have been cut. Trees are also put in to reclaim forest lands destroyed by people who think only of their own profit. The Forest Reserve today covers 16,388 acres. If the indiscriminate felling had been allowed to continue, what a sorry heritage we would have handed on to future Saint Lucians. The heart of Soufriere does not lie buried beneath the Pitons. It beats high in the rainforest where the water that is its lifeblood springs.



# BUSH TALK




## VIEUX FORT

1. The First Settlers
2. The First Sugar Mill
3. Boom Town
4. Vieux Fort Has It All
5. Future Growth

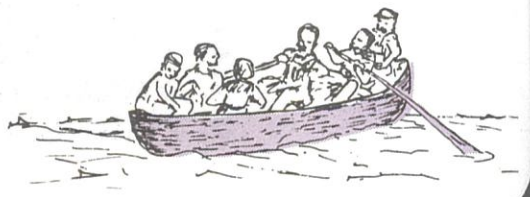
# THE FIRST SETTLERS

As far as we know, the first inhabitants of Saint Lucia were Amerindians from South America. They arrived in canoes after making their way slowly north up the chain of Caribbean islands. The Arawaks came in the year 400 AD or maybe even earlier. They probably landed at the southern end of the island, where Vieux Fort is today.

As they steered their boats through the reefs into calmer waters, they would have seen shores covered with a heavy growth of mangroves. The land was flat for at first but then, in the distance it rose up into jagged mountain peaks. From these mountains, wide, sparkling clear rivers ran down to the sea. There were fish, crabs and shellfish in the mangroves and flocks of very brightly coloured birds in the forest. Everywhere there were berries, fruits and roots that were good to eat. The Arawaks were only too happy to stay.

Unfortunately for the peaceful Arawaks, the Caribs who followed them were quite different. They waged war on the Arawaks, killing the men and taking the women and children into their own camps. For many years they ruled the island. Then, in 1605, a group of Englishmen came ashore in small boats in the area of Vieux Fort. Their ship had been blown off course and they needed food and water. At first the Caribs were curious. They went to meet the strangers carrying fruit and vegetables that they exchanged for knives, beads and other trinkets. When they realised the Englishmen intended to stay they were no longer friendly. They attacked the camp, setting fire to the rough shelters the men had built and killing many of them. The survivors were forced to escape in a small boat.

Once more the Caribs were in control but not for long. Soon other foreigners arrived, French, Dutch and even more English. Although the Caribs usually started by being friendly, they always ended up killing the new arrivals or chasing them away. More strangers came with guns. They built forts to protect themselves from the Caribs's raids. One of these forts was at Point Sables. It was built by some Dutchmen to protect their ships when they came in to get wood and water. After a while they abandoned it, but the ruins remained. That was how Vieux Fort got its name, for in English Vieux Fort means 'old fort'.



# THE FIRST SUGAR MILL

During the 17th century, the English and the French both tried to settle in the Vieux Fort area. They cleared land and cut trees to get timber to build their houses. They planted tobacco, cotton, cassava, ginger and other crops for their own use. They fought with the Caribs and finally defeated them. Then, for the next hundred years they fought each other for possession of the island.

In 1764, when Saint Lucia was made a dependency of Martinique the French planters introduced sugarcane to the island. The first sugar mill in Saint Lucia started working at Vieux Fort that year. By 1775, there were 61 estates in the Vieux Fort area alone and although cotton, cocoa and coffee were still grown sugar soon became the most important crop of all.

Most of the estate owners and their families were French. Their labourers were negro slaves shipped in from Africa. When slavery was abolished in 1838, many of the slaves left the estates. Some went to work in the town, others took up fishing or worked on their own small bit of land. The estate owners brought in people from India to replace them. By the year 1898, there were 336 East Indians working on the Vieux Fort estates. The Indians were not slaves but indentured labourers, contracted to work for the person who had paid their passage money. When their contract time was finished they were given the choice of money or a piece of land. Some took the money and went home, but most chose to remain.

Until the end of the 1914-1918 war, sugar was still an important export crop. Vieux Fort was one of the highest producing areas on the island. Then the world market price for sugar dropped. Vieux Fort's Central Sugar Factory, one of the first in the Caribbean, suffered badly. The estate owners, the workers, even the businesses in town saw some hard times. In 1939, the Saint Lucian Government sold about 700 acres of land belonging to the Sugar Company to the Government of Barbados. This opened the doors for quite a few Barbadians to leave their overcrowded island and settle in Saint Lucia.

That was also the year of the beginning of the second World War. Soon after the war started, America leased over 1,000 acres of land at Vieux Fort to build an airport and a military base. This meant plenty of jobs for everyone. People came all the way from Castries to work in Vieux Fort.

# BOOM TOWN

The American Base at Vieux Fort brought jobs and other improvements. A new dock was built for ships to tie up alongside. New, well-surfaced roads were constructed to service the base, and a big, modern hospital. Wounded servicemen were brought there, on their way back to the United States. In 1960, when Beanefield was handed over to the Saint Lucian Government, the hospital was included in the deal. Now it is run by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. People from Vieux Fort and the rest of the island go to St. Jude's for treatment.

By 1960, sugar had lost importance as a crop. The world market price was still low and most estates were concentrating on coconuts or bananas. In the Vieux Fort area there were many Indians whose ancestors had come to the island as indentured labourers to work on the sugar estates. Some now owned and worked their own land or had herds of cattle that provided meat for the local market and fertiliser for the gardens. A few grew rice for their own use.

For the small farmer, bananas seemed to be the best crop. They produced fruit all year round and brought in a regular income. The banana industry grew very quickly and Vieux Fort became the port for shipping all the bananas grown in the south. The Geest boats would come alongside the new dock to load before going on to Castries.

In 1961, the 'Heifer Project' brought in new cattle to improve the local stock. There were enormous red bulls of a breed called Santa Gertrudis. They had been chosen for the amount of beef they could produce. Others were handsome, white Brahmins with wide horns humped backs and long, loose folds of skin hanging down from their necks. Like the zebu cattle, already brought in by some of the estates, the Brahmins came originally from India. In that country they were not eaten but kept for their milk and as working animals.

The East Coast Road made transportation of people and goods between Vieux Fort and Castries much easier. This attracted more business to the area. With the help of two million dollars donated by Canada, the old Beanefield airstrip was re-constructed. In 1971, it opened as an International Airport and was re-named 'Hewanorra'. The biggest hotel in the island, the Halcyon Days, was built in Vieux Fort around this time. New buildings went up in town. New schools were built and factories opened, making clothing, electrical equipment, cardboard boxes and beer.

It looked as if Vieux Fort was all set to become the southern capital. Then, in 1980, hurricane Allen struck. The dock, the flour mill, the factories and many of the houses were badly hit. But, like Castries after the fires, Vieux Fort soon set to and started to rebuild.

# VIEUX FORT HAS IT ALL

As well as the growth in agriculture and business, Vieux Fort grew in other ways. People became aware that it was one of the truly unique natural areas in Saint Lucia. The Maria Islands, lie just off the coast. They are the home of a colourful ground lizard (*Cnemidophorus vanzoi*) and a harmless snake called the couresse (*Dromicus ornatus*). These creatures are found nowhere else in the world. To protect them, and the many seabirds that nest there, the islands have been made a Nature Reserve. On the beach opposite the Maria islands, is an Interpretive Centre with photographs and other exhibits of the area.

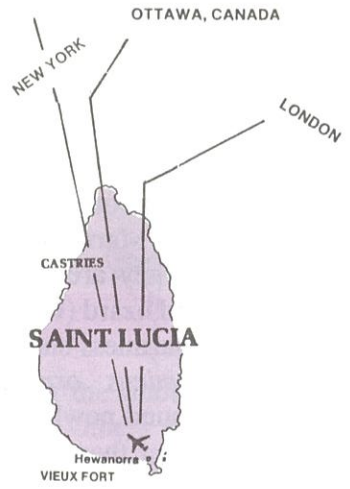
There are many reminders of the people who lived in Vieux Fort in the past. At Black Bay and la Tourney there are Amerindian sites. At Savannes Bay and Pointe Sables are the remains of estate houses. The ruins of old sugar mills can be seen at Pointe Sables, Anse Noir, la Tourney and Black Bay. Vieux Fort also has one of the last large mangrove swamps left on the island. At one time there was a danger of it disappearing like so many others, cut down for coals or development. It was saved by an OAS project, managed by the Forestry Department. At St. Urbain close by, *Leucaena* trees were planted. These trees grow taller than a man in one year, over 30 feet in three years! They provide quick growing timber for charcoal and so reduce the pressure on the mangroves. They also enrich the soil and their leaves are good animal fodder.

Fisheries also started a project at Vieux Fort. With a group of local fishermen they began to farm seamoss. It is grown on long cords attached to frames that float in the sea. When it is cut, the roots are left behind and so the seamoss grows back. It can be gathered from the same place again and again.

The seas around Vieux Fort are full of fish. But they still need to be 'farmed' if there is to be enough to feed the growing population. Mangroves and reefs are the breeding places and nurseries for many marine species. In the past they were often destroyed. Now, the fishermen understand their importance and are doing all they can to preserve them.

A community is made up of people who have different ways of earning their living. They have to understand and respect each other's needs if they are to live happily together. The Caribbean Natural Areas Resources Institute? (CANARI), the Saint Lucia National Trust, Forestry Department and the Department of Fisheries, are working together to teach the people how to manage their resources wisely for the future.

# FUTURE GROWTH



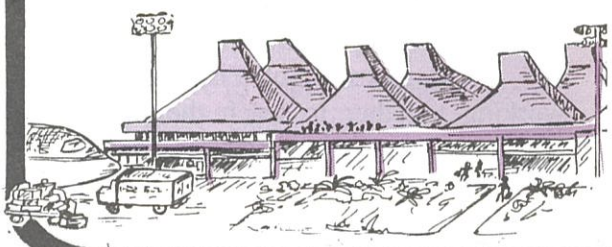

The early Amerindian settlers called Saint Lucia ***Hewanorra***. In their language it meant 'Land of the Iguana'. Today, iguanas, like the Arawaks, the Caribs and the sugar plantations have disappeared from Vieux Fort. The inhabitants of the town come from many places. Among their ancestors were English and French settlers, Africans slaves, East Indian indentured labourers and immigrant Barbadians.

The herds of cattle have grown and animals can now be seen wandering freely, even along the roadside. Not only cows but pigs, sheep, goats and horses. Among them move the cattle egrets, *Bubulcus idris*, long-legged, long-necked white birds that nest in the mangrove swamps. At Beausejour, the Government Agricultural Station, a small group of Taiwanese demonstrate new planting methods to local farmers. There is also a herd of black and white Holstein cows, imported in 1979 to improve the local milk supply.

Many visitors are attracted to Vieux Fort's beautiful sandy beaches. They come to swim in the sea, laze in the sun and enjoy the fresh seafood and the tropical fruits. Like the island's very first settlers, nearly all the tourists arrive at Vieux Fort. Most of them travel by road to stay at one of the hotels in the north. Wherever they stay, when they fly out of Hewanorra, their last glimpse of Saint Lucia will be the Maria islands and the lighthouse at Moule a Chique.

The money brought into the island by tourism is an important part of the economy. So is the growing foreign investment that is coming in from the development of Vieux Fort industrial estate. Large jets fly into Hewanorra international Airport every day. They bring tourists from Europe and North America and provide strong business links between Saint Lucia and the rest of the world. The new jobs that are being created will help the people of Vieux Fort build up their town and the communities around it. They will no longer have to move away from home to find work.

Vieux Fort has so much to offer; beautiful beaches, some of the world's rarest reptiles and room for industrial growth. There are also the people who can make it happen. People who are no longer French, English, African, Indian, Bajan or American but **Vieux Fortians** and proud of it!

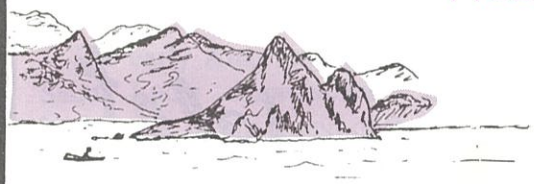


# BUSH TALK


## GROS ISLET

1. War From the Sea
2. Work on the Land
3. War in the Air
4. Land and Sea
5. From Sea and Sky

# WAR FROM THE SEA



For hundreds of years, the Amerindians were Saint Lucia's only inhabitants. They lived in small groups, usually on the coast close to a river. They made canoes, carved from the trunks of gommier trees. In them, they paddled around the coast fishing and gathering shellfish. Broken pieces of their pottery have been found around the village of Gros Islet. This tells us that they must at one time have had a camp here. In those days the hills would have been covered with trees. The large mangrove swamp would have taken up most of the flat land behind the bay. There were ducks and waterfowl among its tangled roots and herons nesting in the branches. Pelicans and boobys dived for fish in the bay.

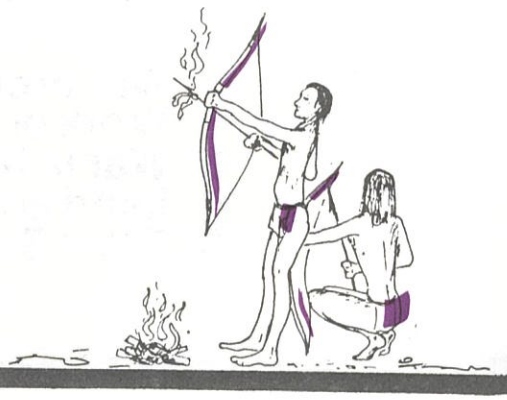
The island had once been a Carib Camp. Later it became a hideout for pirates. They would sail in and anchor in the sheltered waters close to shore. On old maps the place is marked 'le Gros Islet' which is French for the big island. When the English Admiral Rodney built his fort there the name was changed to Pigeon Island.

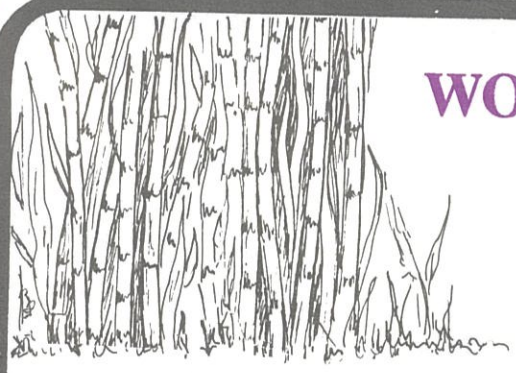
At first the Caribs tried to drive off the strangers who came to the island. They shot at them with poison-tipped arrows and with burning sticks but they could not win. The strangers came in tall ships with billowing sails. Their ships were armed with deadly cannons. For over a hundred years the invaders fought fiercely among themselves for possession of Saint Lucia. During that time the island was taken by first one then the other, fourteen times in all.

The bay at Gros Islet was a good anchorage and both, French and English ships sailed in and out. In 1781, French troops led by the Marquis de Bouille, captured Gros Islet. Rodney from his stronghold on Pigeon Island, forced them to retreat. Then, in 1793, the French Republic claimed all the French territories in the Caribbean.

The revolutionaries came to Saint Lucia bringing a guillotine with them to behead any Frenchmen who were still loyal to the king. They renamed all the towns and villages in the island. Gros Islet was called 'la Revolution'. Not too long after this, the British took over once again and the village went back to its old name.

Today the Indians would no longer recognise the place. The flat land is covered with small thorny bushes and dry grass. It is grazed by cattle and goats. The swamp is gone. In its place is a marina full of yachts and power boats. They motor through the narrow channel loaded with holidaymakers, not soldiers.





# WORK ON THE LAND

After the first French settlers arrived in 1651, Saint Lucia's landscape began to change. Large plantations took over most of the valleys, the plains around Vieux Fort, and all of the northern part of the island. A hundred years later, more than three quarters of the island had been claimed by private owners. By 1775, there were 802 estates, 47 of them in the Quarter of Gros Islet. They were large estates like Monchy, Bonne Terre, Morne Giraud, Marquis and Esperance. They stretched north to Cap, south to Bois d'Orange and Corinth and eastward to the sea.

Gros Islet now had a population of about 2,000. The 'Chemin Royal' or 'Royal Road' that circled the island, ran through the village. It came up from le Carenage, which would later be called Castries. Leaving the village it went out through Monchy and across the island to Marquis, Esperance and Dauphin.

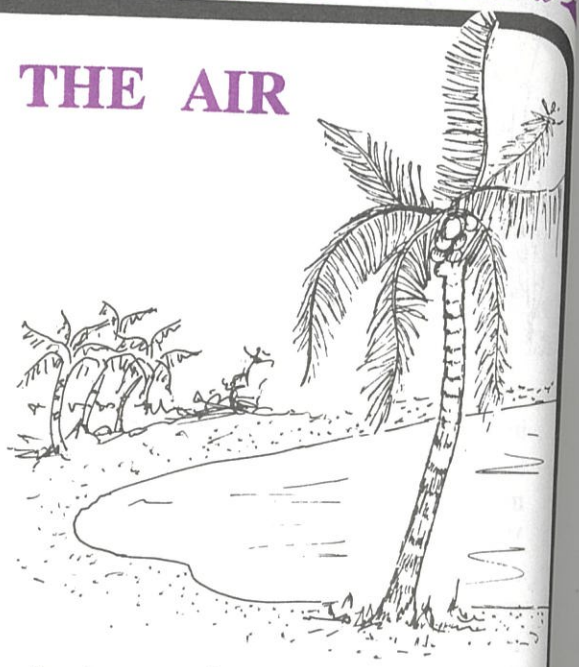
Sugar was the main crop throughout this period, although cotton, tobacco and spices were also grown. These crops fetched high prices in England and Europe and so the French and the English continued to battle for control of the island. Almost every estate had its own mill. The mills were usually powered by large water wheels turned by water channelled from a nearby river. The wheels turned heavy rollers that crushed the sweet juice out of the cane. The juice was then boiled in big iron pots, called chaudieres.

Gros Islet became a centre for all this activity. Then came the Revolution in France and everything came to a halt. In 1795, bands of brigands roamed the island destroying everything in their path. Eight of Saint Lucia's eleven parishes suffered badly. Gros Islet was one of the few to escape. But in 1817, a terrible hurricane hit the island. This time the village was not so lucky, the big wooden church was completely demolished. The one that replaced it was said to be "...the poorest in the island."

In 1838, the slaves who had been brought from Africa to work on the plantations were finally set free. Some still tried to make a living from the land, others became fishermen. The village continued to grow. Rows of neat wooden houses with wooden shutters lined the narrow streets. Fishing boats set out from the beach each morning to fish in the open sea.

In 1871, a new parish priest, the Abbe Chassang, came to the village. With the help of his parishioners and money from his estate at Monchy, he built a new church. It had three fine marble altars, but like the earlier churches it was still made of wood. In 1906, it was wrecked completely by an earthquake. Only the bells were saved. Twenty years later, in 1926, the foundation was laid for the Church of St. Joseph the Worker, where people worship today.

# WAR IN THE AIR



The sugar estates disappeared one by one. Sometimes the land was replanted with coconuts, citrus or cocoa but often it was abandoned. Land left without the protection of trees or crops quickly became dry and useless.

In 1939, there was a war between England and Germany. Soon it spread to include almost the whole world. When America joined in, they decided to use Saint Lucia as a base for their aircraft. A runway was built at Vieux Fort for the planes to land. At Gros Islet, 221 acres were turned into a naval air station. In 1941, the marines moved in. There was no runway at Gros Islet. The planes that arrived were flying boats and their landing strip was the sea. They were on the look-out for enemy submarines and they patrolled the Caribbean from Trinidad to Puerto Rico. They would fly in low over the water and land in a shower of spray. Then, with engines roaring, they would move toward the concrete ramp that had been built on shore.

When the war ended in 1945, these strange aircraft also disappeared. The base was closed, the marines went back to America and the buildings were dismantled. Bush grew back over the land. After a while, the ugly concrete ramp and the broken down jetties were all that remained. Today, on a small, paved area squeezed between the Yacht Club and a hotel, young men gather to play games where the seaplanes once roared ashore.

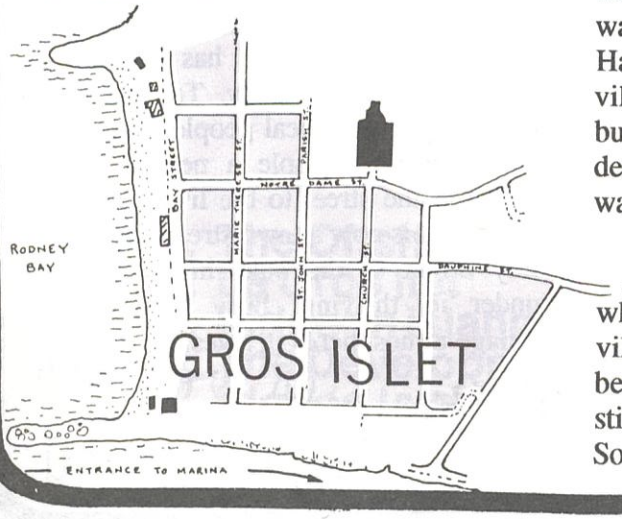
The long sandy beach at Reduit was one of the best in the island. On Sundays people drove out there from Castries in their small English Austins and Fords. The road was narrow, twisting and bumpy. After they left La Clery and Bisee behind they were really in the country with hardly a house to be seen. Before reaching Gros Islet the road passed through a thick shady grove of coconut trees close to the beach. Here they would turn off, to change their clothes in the wooden rest-house under the palms. Then they would bring out their picnics and their rum punch.

After swimming, they might stroll along the beach. They would walk past the ramp and the cemetery until they reached the shallow stream that marked the edge of the village. A bridge of wooden planks crossed the sluggish dribble of swampy water. It creaked and cracked every time anything drove over it. On the other side was Gros Islet, with its straight, narrow streets and neat wooden houses. Black and white ducks waddled along the beach where fishing nets were hung in the sun to dry.

# LAND AND SEA

After the Rodney Bay Development Project began, great changes took place in the district of Gros Islet. In 1970, the mangrove swamp that had spread from the 'Chemin Royal' to the hills at Bonne Terre, finally disappeared. The Americans had tried to fill it when they built their base there in 1941, but they had failed miserably. As fast as they pumped sand into it from the bay it sifted away again. The stagnant edges of the swamp were full of mosquitoes, but it was also an important nursery for fish. Birds fed and nested there and each year flocks of migrating ducks rested there on their way south.

Now it was gone for good. In its place was not land but water. Since it had been impossible to drain the swamp it was dredged and filled with water instead. A channel was cut to connect the new marina with the open water of Rodney Bay. The channel was deep enough for even large boats to go in and out. It passed right through the place where the rickety old bridge had crossed the muddy stream. Now there was no bridge and no road either.




A new road was built. Not a narrow, twisting lane but a wide, well-paved highway from Castries to the gates of Cap Estate. It passed east of Gros Islet, crossing the road that led from the village to Massade and Cas-en-Bas. Just before it reached Cap there was a turning. It went toward the sea, cutting across the old village road that had wandered up to Cap, and straight on across the bay to Pigeon Island!

The people of Gros Islet had watched for many months as this fantastic land bridge appeared. It grew, stretching and getting wider until it touched the island. Then the new road was built on it. All of a sudden the whole world seemed to be driving or sailing into Gros Islet.

But of course they weren't. The boats sailed on to their anchorages in the marina. The cars sped along the highway to Cap or to the new causeway. Hardly anyone turned off to go into the village. And that was not all! With the building of the causeway and the destruction of the mangroves, fishing was not as good or as easy as it had been. There were new jobs but it was not like before when the road had passed through the village. Regular bus services started up between Gros Islet and Castries but it still didn't bring people to the village. Something had to be done!

# FROM SEA AND SKY

The new road, the causeway and the marina were not the only changes that had been made. All around Gros Islet luxury hotels, private villas and neatly arranged housing estates were springing up. Tourists came by air and by sea to lie in the sun and enjoy the swimming and the scenery. It provided jobs for the village people and customers for the fish the fishermen were able to bring in.

After the Naval Air Base at Reduit had closed ten years or more went by before the first hotel was built. Jobs had been hard to find. Many men had left their families and gone away to look for work.

There was very little agriculture around the village so most of its income came from the sea. Nets were spread across the bay to come up bulging with shoals of blue and silver jackfish and sardines. When the boats went into deeper water the fishermen returned loaded with dolphinfish, kingfish and fine red snappers. At only 50 cents a pound, they still often had more fish than they could sell. Lobsters that they caught in fishpots sold for 40 cents a pound, but there was no-one to buy them! Now lobsters are a luxury and cost $20 or more for one that weighs no more than two pounds.

Lambi has also become expensive. Because they fetch a good price, fishermen sometimes bring up even the immature shells, something they would never have done before. The piles of queen conch shells with their brilliant pink lining, no longer litter the beaches.

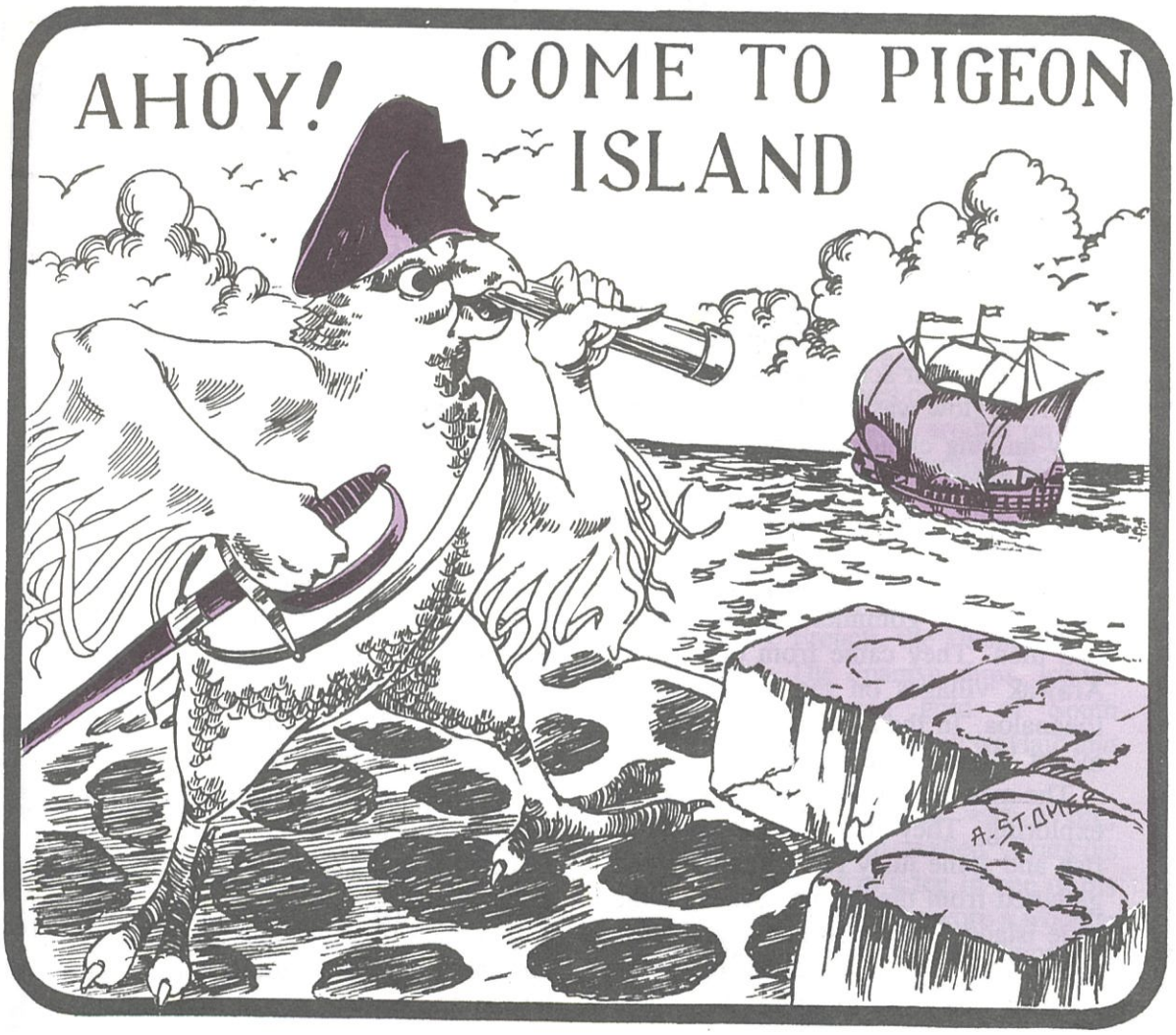

Even the small ones are too valuable to throw away. Instead, they are sold to the tourists as souvenirs.

The fresh fish, lambi and lobster have led to a new way of life for some of the people in the village. They have opened restaurants to tempt tourists and islanders with these local delicacies. Now, on a Friday evening when many other places are closing their shutters for the night, Gros Islet comes alive. Music blares out from dozens of bars and the smell of grilled lambi and fried fish is everywhere. There is a friendly, holiday atmosphere in the crowded streets. Even the roadside vendors with their coalpots and their barbecued chicken legs are busy.

Going to the village has become a regular weekend activity. Tourists mix and mingle with local people. They try a new drink, sample a new dish or dance in the street to the lively music. Gros Islet is now a town stretching from Bay Street to the busy highway, but under its thriving, busy surface the village atmosphere survives.

Wilkommen GERMAN
GRUEZI SWISS
Bem Vindos PORTUGUESE
BENVENUTO ITALIAN
BIEN VENIDOS SPANISH
Bienvenu FRENCH

# BUSH TALK




## PIGEON ISLAND

1. The Offshore Island
2. Le Gros Ilet
3. Pidgeon island
4. The Development of Rodney Bay
5. Pigeon Island National Park

# THE OFFSHORE ISLAND

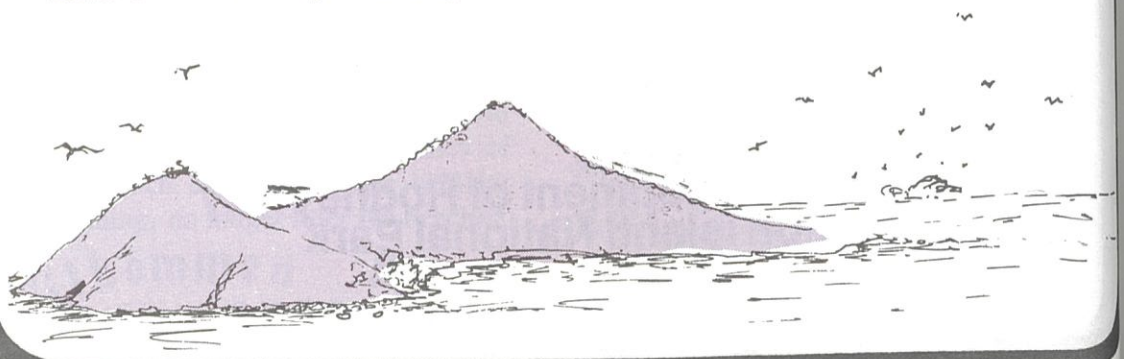
The small, narrow island lay just a short distance from the mainland. The two hills, one at either end, were lit by the fiery red of the setting sun as it spread its colour across the western sky. The rosy glow was caught by the puffy, slow-moving clouds and reflected onto the sea below. From the beach, a canoe slipped into the water and headed out into the bay.

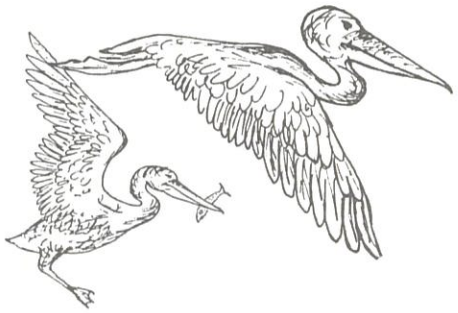
The canoe had been shaped from the trunk of a tall gommier tree. In it were two men. They came from one of the Arawak villages on the big island of Iouanaloa. In their language, the name meant 'Land of the Iguanas'.

The men had spent all day fishing and exploring. They had a small catch of fish and some juicy red fruits they had gathered from the cactus bushes on the little island. They also had a few large shells that they had taken from the seagrass bed close to shore. Now they were ready to go home. Their women would be waiting with a tasty stew made from the crabs they had caught in the mangrove swamps the night before. They would eat well. Then they would throw herbs on the fire, climb into their hammocks and sleep. The herbs would make a thick, sweet-smelling smoke that would drive the mosquitoes away.

Behind them in the dusk, the little island was only a dark shape against the darkening sky. Small, quick, black bats swooped from a cave high up on one of the slopes. They swirled through the sky, making a meal of the insects that were there in such numbers. The air was perfumed with the scent of wild frangipani and filled with the noise of crickets and tree frogs. Far out, in the dark waters of the channel, a school of porpoises passed, heading north. They leaped and turned, sometimes jumping clear out of the water, as they sped along. There was no one to see them.

The little island was uninhabited. There was no fire to cast its warm light against the shadows. Only the fireflies, flickering through the bush, lit up the scene with their pinpoints of light.





# LE GROS ILET

Another warlike tribe of Amerindians called Caribs came to Iouanaloa from the islands further south. Some of them made a camp at the southern end of the small island. From here they paddled their canoes across the bay to raid the Arawak villages on the mainland.

The Caribs were eaters of human flesh. Sometimes, after a battle, they would devour the bodies of the men they had killed. They forced the women to live and work in their villages with the Carib women. They continued their raids until all the Arawaks on Iouanaloa were wiped out. Then they moved on, to continue their ferocious practices elsewhere.

Their camp in the cave on the small island was abandoned. The bats that hung high in the craggy corners and the crabs that hid among the stones, now had it to themselves. Many years later some pieces of broken pots and a few discarded tools were found. These remains or artifacts are the only proof we have that the Caribs were ever there.

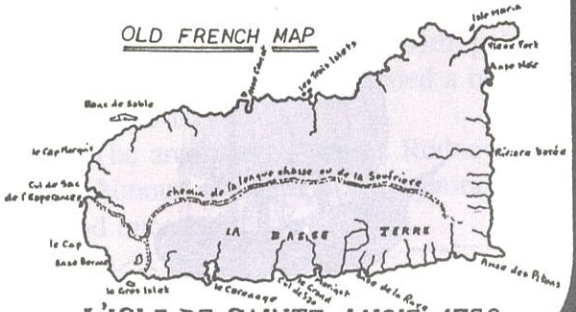
On some of the old French maps of that period, the little island is called 'le Gros Islet'. Many birds once nested on its steep cliffs. There were egrets and boobys, frigate birds, pelicans and long necked, long legged blue herons. The bay between the island and the mainland was full of fish. The boobys and pelicans could be seen swooping over the surface of the water and diving into its depths after them.

The herons and egrets preferred to fish in the mangroves on the big island. Here, they could walk around on their stilt-like legs sifting through the mud for tidbits.

In the 16th century the Spaniards arrived in their many-sailed galleons. Soon they were followed by the English, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Spanish ships, loaded with the plundered gold of South American cities, were often waylaid and boarded by pirates.

One of these pirates was a big, bearded Frenchman called Francois Leclerc. He had lost a leg in one of his fights and in its place he wore a wooden stump. Because of this he was known as 'Jambe de Bois'. One day he sailed into the bay and liked what he saw. He set up camp on le Gros Islet, in a cave on one of the hills. Then he posted a lookout to watch the channel.

Whenever a Spanish ship was sighted he would pull up his anchor, unfurl his sails and slip out from his hiding place ready to do battle.



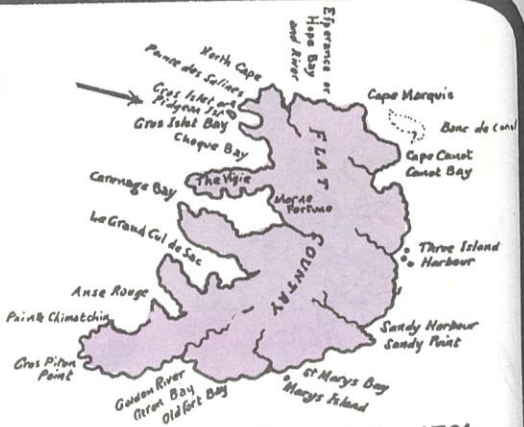
# PIDGEON ISLAND

Like the Caribs before him, Jambe de Bois eventually moved on. He may have decided to go somewhere else or he may himself have been overtaken by a bigger and faster ship. We will never know. Once more the bats and crabs took possession of the cave on the hillside. If the pirate left any treasure there no trace of it was ever found.

Fierce battles were now taking place between the French and the English. The booming of their cannons became a familiar sound. The big island that the French called Sainte Lucie, changed hands many times.

In 1778, after defeating the French at the Battle of Cul de Sac, the English established a base in Gros Islet Bay. They hauled guns to the small island making a fortress on the top of one of the hills. On their maps the main island was now marked Saint Lucia, while the smaller one was 'Pidgeon Island'.

In 1780, the island was struck by a terrible hurricane that sunk or damaged many of the English ships. But by 1782, there were so many boats at anchor in the bay, it was almost possible to walk across it without getting your feet wet!




ST LUCIA - 1781

When the lookout reported a fleet of French warships leaving Martinique, Admiral Rodney set sail with more than a hundred ships.

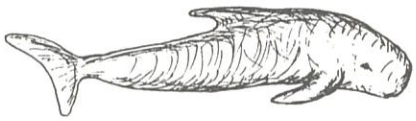
The two navies met in the historic Battle of the Saints. The battle was called that because it took place near the Isles des Saintes, just north of Guadeloupe. Admiral Rodney brilliantly outmanoeuvred the French and sailed back victorious.

Another hurricane hit the island in 1817. Some of the buildings on Pidgeon Island were damaged. They were later repaired and others added to make barracks for several hundred men. Many of the soldiers that occupied them died, not in battle but from disease. They died of malaria and yellow fever, carried by the bite of the mosquitoes that bred in the mainland swamps.

The garrison was finally abandoned and the guns removed. For a while the buildings were used to house East Indian labourers brought in to work on the estates. Then in 1901, troops from the Morne moved in, to escape yet another epidemic of yellow fever. When they left, the island was given over to the bats, the birds and the goats once again.

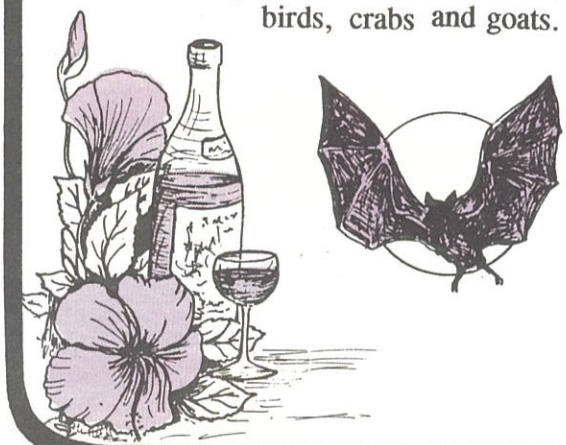
# THE DEVELOPMENT OF RODNEY BAY

During the early part of the 20th century a whaling station was set up on the island. The little dock where Rodney and his men had once stepped ashore now served a different purpose. There was bloodshed now of a different kind.



A small fleet of whaling schooners was based there. They would come in with their catch of porpoises or pilot whales. Sometimes they even managed to catch a gigantic hump-backed whale. These unfortunate, intelligent creatures were butchered on the beach. The water in the bay ran red with their blood. Their flesh was cut up and boiled in large vats to get out the oil. There was a heavy, unpleasant smell of whale oil everywhere.

Fortunately, this did not go on for long. The laws that controlled whaling were changed and the station was closed down. Once more the island became the peaceful domain of bats, birds, crabs and goats.



An Englishwoman called Josset Legh came to the island just before the Second World War. She had been an actress and was a lover of animals and plants. She had a vision of how beautiful the island could be. Soon, the green fronds of coconut palms shaded the sand. The brilliant blossoms of flamboyant and hibiscus coloured the landscape. Houses thatched with dry grass, were built upon the ruins of the old barracks. Once more the bay was filled with yachts at anchor.

At the back of the beach was a small restaurant where people ate meals of lobster or sea eggs or fish bought fresh from the fishermen's nets. They washed it down with bottles of wine brought over from neighbouring Martinique. At night the bar was lit by the soft light of hurricane lanterns. Bats swooped in and out of the open shelter and soldier crabs, clumsy in their borrowed shells, rattled about the floor.

After a while, Josset retired, to live in peace in her little house by the cemetery at the end of the beach. Then, in 1971, a causeway was built to carry a road from the mainland out to the small island. On the north, the new road was lined with boulders and feathery casuarinas. On the other side was a wide sandy area fringed with palms. Now people no longer needed a boat to visit the island.

The area was re-named Rodney Bay in honour of the famous Admiral who had once had his base there.

# PIGEON ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

The care and protection of the 40 acres that once made up Pigeon Island is the responsibility of the Saint Lucia National Trust. On February 23rd 1979, the first day of Saint Lucia's independence, the park was officially opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra. Now, visiting Pigeon Island National Park is like taking a step back in time. Paths have been cleared, steps repaired and a lookout point built on the way up to the fort. At the top, there are guns in place just as they might have been in Rodney's time.

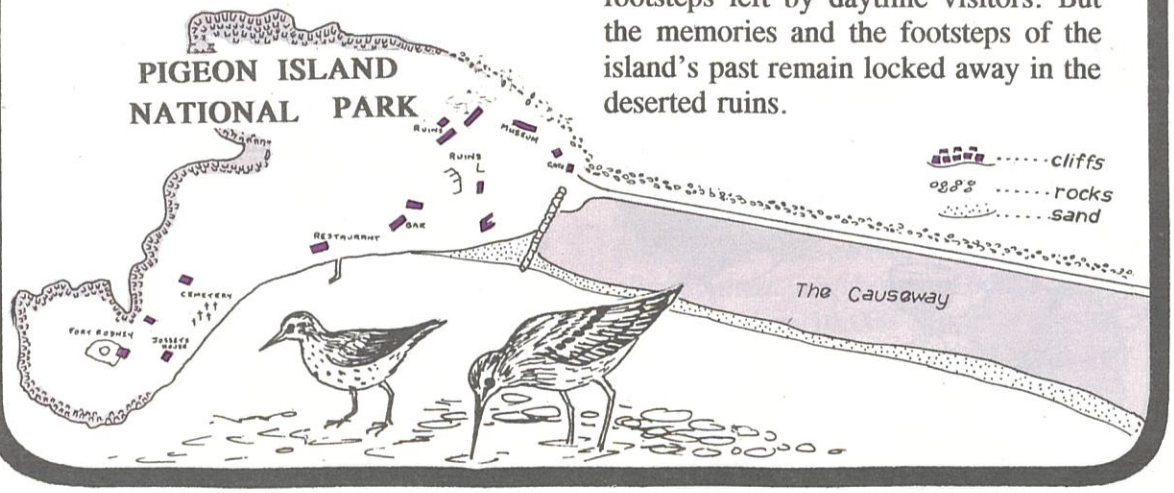
The remains of the old barracks, the kitchens and the guardhouse can still be seen. The Officer's Mess, built in 1808, became the foundation for a private home. It is now a museum, full of reminders of the island's past.

The cemetery, long neglected and weed-covered, is now well kept. On the crumbling tombs only two inscriptions remain. One records the death of a two-year old infant. The other is for poor Mary Nicholson, "Beloved Wife of Dr. Nicholson, who departed this world on February 5th, 1892 at the age of 29 years." No other stones remain. Some modern pirate, more interested in the marble slabs than the tales they told, has taken them away.

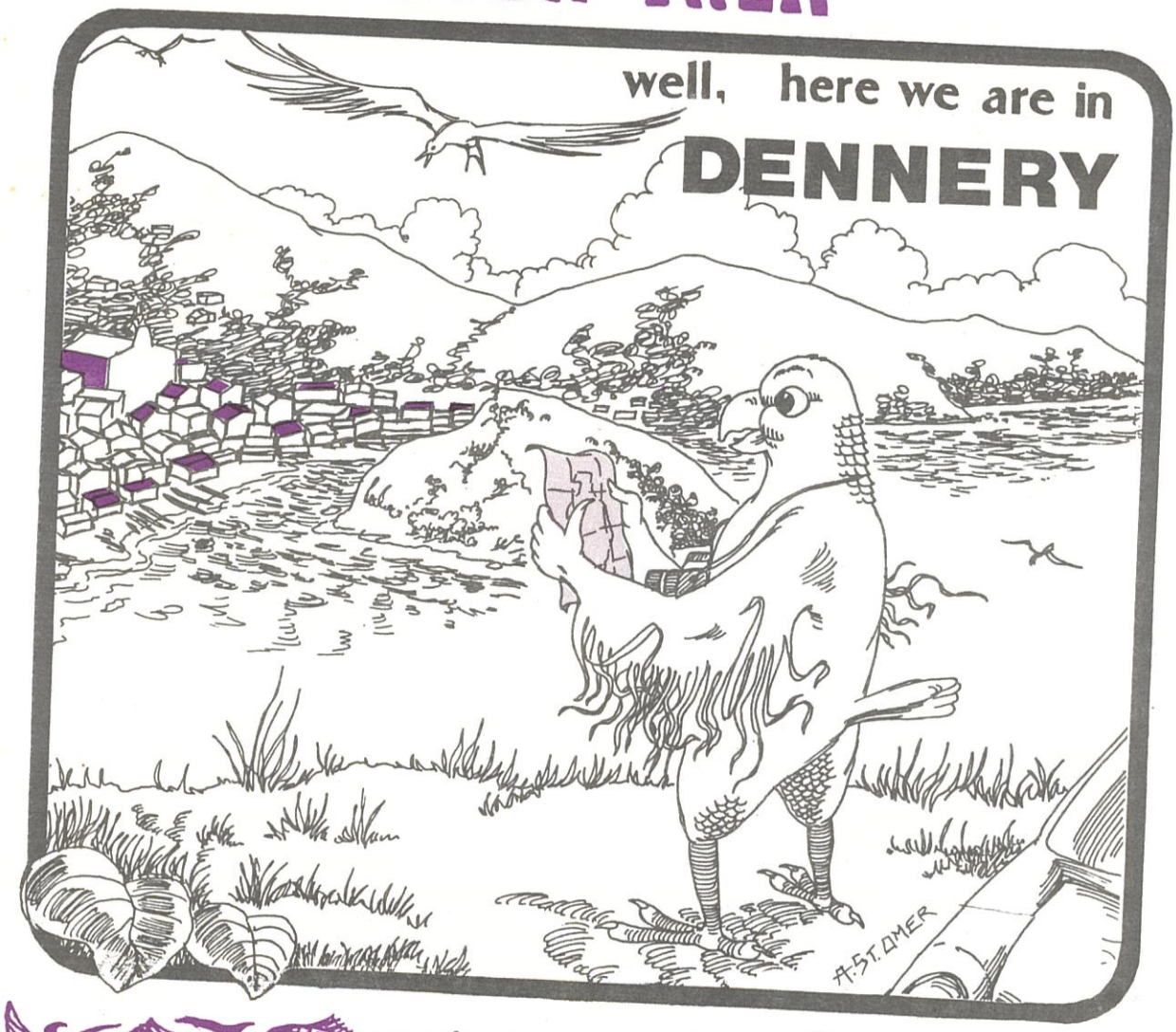
What is happening on the island today is every bit as important as anything that happened before. It is all part of Saint Lucia's history, part of her people's heritage. The Amerindians, the one-legged pirate, Rodney and his fleet, are all woven into that rich, historical tapestry.

The old stone walls are bright with splashes of bougainvillea. Pink and red oleander and hibiscus blossoms dot the pathways. Up on the hills, frangipani and 'eyelash' orchids cling to the bare rock, their perfume scenting the air.

Egrets and herons still nest on the steep cliff and boobys and frigate birds still skim the waters of the bay, but the pelicans have gone. Sometimes, as well as the sandpipers and turnstones an American dowitcher can be seen on the rocky shore. At night the soft shuffling of waves onto the sand sends little yellow ghost crabs scuttling up the beach. The waves wash away all the footsteps left by daytime visitors. But the memories and the footsteps of the island's past remain locked away in the deserted ruins.



# BUSH TALK




## DENNERY

1. How Dennery Got Its Name
2. Sugar and Slavery
3. Wars and Whirlwinds
4. Rum and Bananas
5. Dennery Today

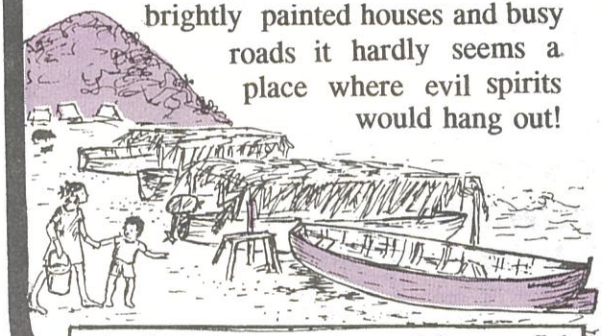
# HOW DENNERY GOT ITS NAME

Some of Saint Lucia's towns and villages have names that tell us something about them, Gros Islet, Soufriere and Vieux Fort, for example. Others, like Castries, Choiseul, Laborie, Praslin, Micoud and Dauphin were named in honour of Frenchmen who were important at the time. Dennery was named after the Count d'Ennery, Governor General of the French Windward Islands from 1766 to 1770.

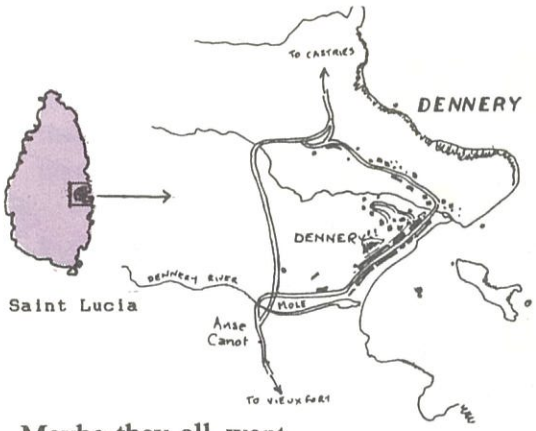
Before that time, the place had been called Anse Canot. Canoes, carved from the trunks of large trees like the gommier, were brought down the river to the coast here to be launched. There is still a place on the coast at Dennery today that is called Anse Canot.

Behind the village, is a wide valley that stretches back to the forest. This valley was called the Grand Mabouya. Mabouya is the local name for the harmless 'wood slave' or gecko. This little reptile hides during the day and comes out at night to hunt insects.

The word mabouya also means 'evil spirit'. In the old days most people believed in spirits, both good and bad. Perhaps they thought the thickly forested valley of the Grand Mabouya River was a good place for them to hide. Today, with its open fields, brightly painted houses and busy roads it hardly seems a place where evil spirits would hang out!



* kwibish is the patois word for crayfish




Maybe they all went back to 'Ravine tous les Diables' way up the Dennery River.

The French Revolution in 1791, gave d'Ennery a new name, 'le Republicain'. But as soon as the island became British once more the village went back to using its old name again. This time though it was spelled DENNERY.

In 1850 about 1,000 people lived in the district of Dennery. By 1900 there were 3,000. The village was a busy place with markets where meat, fish and vegetables were sold. On dark nights the streets were lit by Coleman lamps and at Christmas almost every house had a lantern lit by candles in the window. The water in the Dennery River was so clear you could see the kwibish* walking on the bottom. Children bathed in it and women did their washing on its banks.

On Sundays and holidays people came from all around to attend Mass at the Church of Saint Peter. And on Good Friday, the housewives fried accras to give to their neighbours. Today, there are more than 10,000 people living in the Dennery district. Many of them go to church at La Resource. The village is not as busy as before.

# SUGAR AND SLAVERY

When the French took over Saint Lucia, they divided it into districts called 'quartiers'. At first Dennery was part of the district or quartier called Trois Islets or Praslin. Later it became a separate district. Dennery was one of the eleven parishes that were listed in the records of the Catholic Church for 1775. The first village church was a simple, wooden building on the sea shore. It was dedicated to Saint Theresa of Avila. In it was a fine silver chalice given to the Dennery church by the Count d'Ennery.

The French already had large sugar estates on the next door island of Martinique. They saw the chance to start many more in Saint Lucia. They offered free grants of land to anyone who would come to settle. By 1760, there were already about 1,000 settlers spread all over the island. Most of them were French, but there were a few English and even some Irish among them. There were also about 4,000 slaves brought over from Africa.

The climate of the West Indies did not suit the Europeans. They found it hard to work in the heat. They were


also attacked by deadly diseases like malaria and yellow fever. Behind the small settlement of Dennery was a large mangrove swamp where the mosquitoes bred freely. Their bite spread these diseases and caused many deaths. The slaves who were brought in to work on the estates were better suited to the climate, but even they were not able to withstand the disease. During the epidemics of cholera, they also died.

By 1775, the Dennery district had 61 estates with more than 1,000 people living and working on them. Although sugar was the main crop, cotton, tobacco and spices were also grown. The estates did well. Most of the wooden estate houses were large and airy with high ceilings and shady verandas. The slaves were not as fortunate. After a long, tiring day on the land they would return to a small hut made of woven twigs, with a dirt floor.

When the French Revolution came in 1791, they were told they were free and would be paid for their labour. This never happened. In fact the revolution brought even more trouble to the island.

# WARS AND WHIRLWINDS

At the end of the 18th century Saint Lucia was hit by two disasters. The first was the hurricane of 1780. It ruined the sugar estates and destroyed every church on the island except the one at Dauphin. The second disaster was the Brigand's War that came after the French Revolution. Soldiers who had deserted from the French Army joined slaves who believed they had been set free. They hid in the forests and set up camp together. They cdame down from their hideouts they came to raid the estates and the villages, killing, stealing and destroying.

The great hurricane of 1780 blew Dennery's first church away. It had not been very grand. Soon, a much larger, stone church was built to replace it, but the new church did not survive the Brigand's War. This time, Dennery suffered more than any other village in Saint Lucia. Estate houses were burned and often their owners were killed. Fearing for their lives, over half the white population left the island. Many of the runaway slaves died in the bush, of hunger, disease or snakebite. By the time the war ended in 1797, Saint Lucia's population had dropped from 22,000 to 14,000.

The island was finally handed over to the British in 1815, and the wars between the English and the French ended. But the hurricanes did not. They kept coming. In 1831, a Dennery boat was lost and a fisherman drowned. In 1898, the sea broke down the houses along the shore as it crashed inland. In 1960, the villagers had to leave their homes because heavy seas threatened to carry them away. In 1980, Allen struck the island. Dennery suffered again from high winds and the surging, pounding sea that roared up the beach and into the streets.

This time the whole waterfront was a disaster. Houses were tossed upside down in the road, or left hanging on the hillsides where the wind had thrown them. Today, houses are built strong enough to stand up in a high wind, but the threat of the sea is always there. The fishermen of Dennery, just like fishermen everywhere else, know this. That is why the church on the hill is dedicated to Saint Peter, the Big Fisherman.

# RUM AND BANANAS

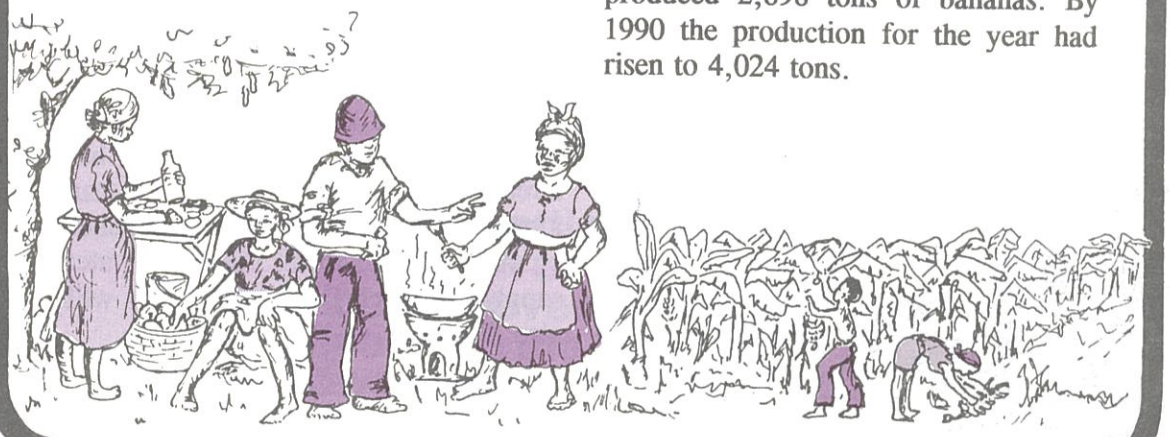
Dennery, like Roseau and Cul de Sac, had a factory where the sugarcane was taken to be crushed. When the cane juice was crushed from the cane by the heavy metal rollers of the mill, it was ollected in large vats. The cane juice was then boiled in big iron pans until the dark sugar crystals were formed. Treacly black, rich smelling molasses was left behind. From this molasses the sugar factories made rum.

The fires that kept the cane juice boiling were fed by wood. In no time at all, most of the forest on the hillsides close to the factory was cut down to provide fuel for the fires. Sugar was all that mattered. No-one realised that after a while, without the forest, their precious water supply would dry up.

At La Caye, on pay day, people would gather in the shade of the big tamarind tree. Here, vendors sold food and drink to the labourers who had come to collect their wages. The rum shops too, did good business selling the strong rum made at the factory, or the local 'Pirate' brand. Sugar was what kept the community alive.

In 1961, Saint Lucia's last field of sugarcane was cut. Dennery farmers, like all the rest, began to plant bananas in a big way. The Dennery factory was still making rum, but now the molasses that they used was shipped in from Guyana. Soon, bananas stretched out from both sides of the road for miles outside the village. They covered hundreds of acres. Dennery Estate alone produced 3,824 tons in 1975, more than 10% of the island's total production. This same year the rum making stopped and the factory finally closed down completely.

In December 1979, the 2,700 acre Dennery Estate was sold to the Government. It included lands at Perle, Montrose, La Caye and Fond d'Or. The land was leased to the Dennery Farm Company, in which Government had shares. Bananas remained the main crop, but for a while, a lot of the land could not be used. This was because of flooding caused by the silting up of the Mabouya River. A new drainage system was put in and eventually the flooded land was reclaimed. In 1984, the estate produced 2,898 tons of bananas. By 1990 the production for the year had risen to 4,024 tons.



# DENNERY TODAY

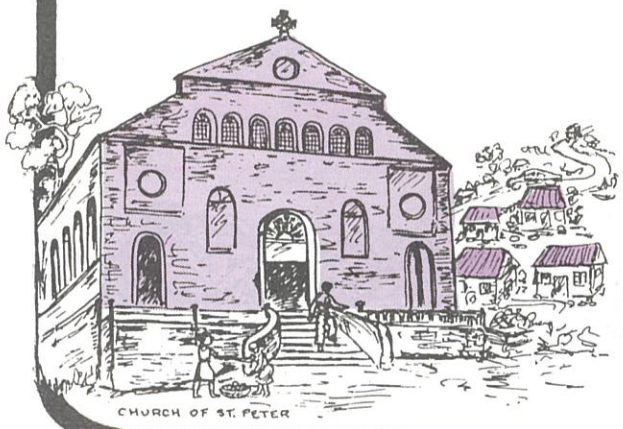
The Castries-Vieux Fort highway no longer runs through Dennery, it passes to the west of the village. At the entrance to the village is a sign that says "Welcome to Dennery". Unless people turn off here, they will just speed on past. They can see the big church and the hospital on the hill behind Bay Street. They can see the new school buildings and the playing field where the mangrove swamp used to be. They might even see the top of the radio tower by the Police Station, and the rocky island in the bay. But they will be too far away to see the fishermen hauling their boats up the beach.

Many of the boats are still carved from huge tree trunks. With modern tools this is now an easier job. Although the design has not changed much, something has been added. On the back of each canoe is an engine that runs on diesel or gasoline. There is hardly a sail to be seen. True, this means that the fishermen must charge more for their fish, but it also means they can go wherever they want. They no longer have to go only where the wind will take them. Even with no wind at all, they can still go out to sea.

Dennery has no Sulphur Springs like Soufriere, to attract tourists. There is no International Airport like the one at Vieux Fort, no harbour for shipping like Castries. Visitors to Dennery come to see the large, fertile valley that still has some of the island's most beautiful waterfalls and unspoiled rainforest.

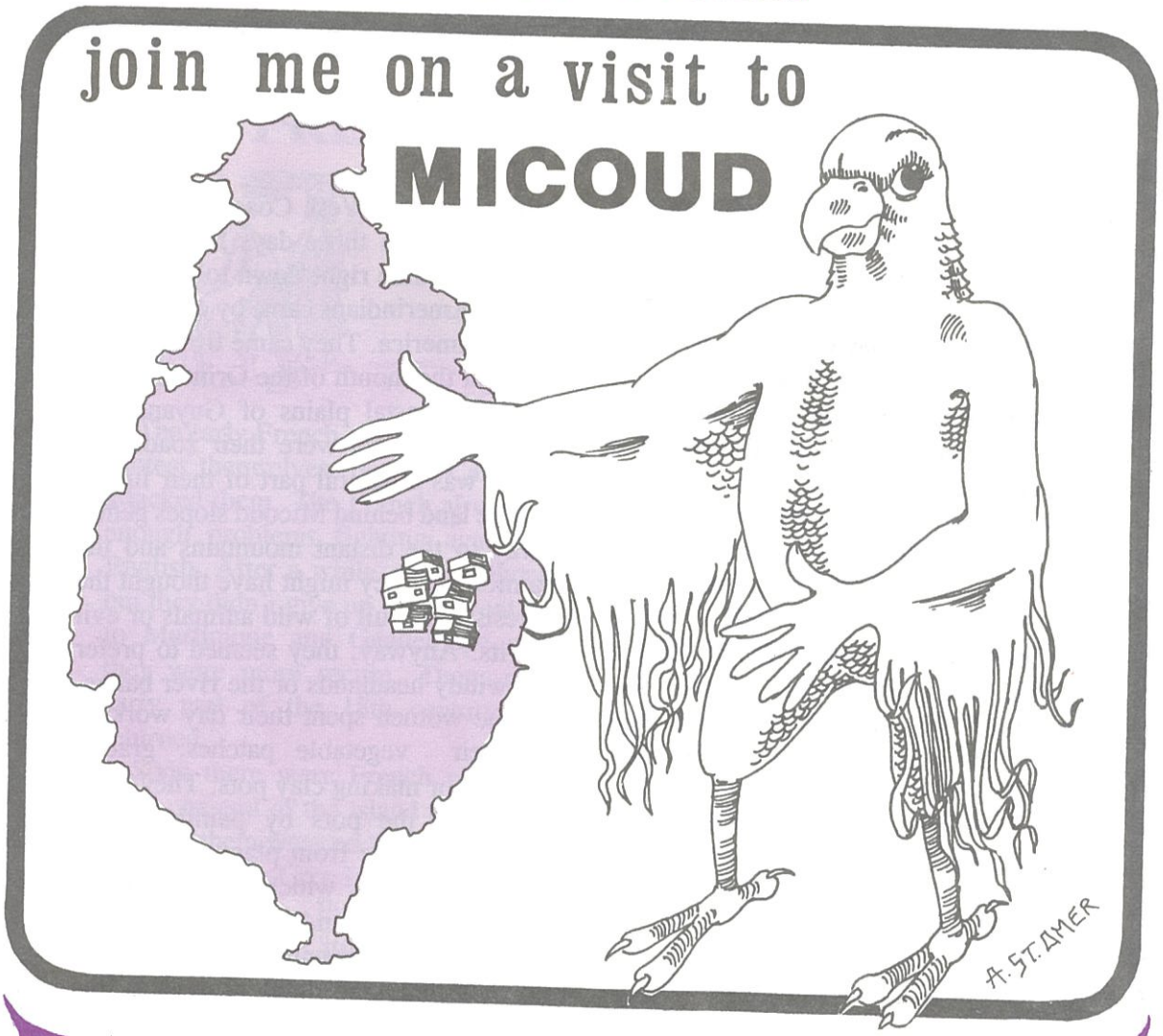
In the past, many small farmers in the Dennery district worked land to which they had no legal right. In 1985, the Land Titling and Registration Project helped some of them to get proper title. At La Perle, 'Roots Farming' has shown that with hard work and the right methods, many different crops can be grown. Not only corn and cabbage, but soybeans, rice, sweet peppers and eggplant. Perhaps if more of Dennery's farmers were able to farm small plots of land in this way, Dennery could become an important produce area.

Of course, it will take more than work to make this happen. A steady, reliable water supply is also important. Part of the Castries Water Reserve as well as the Dennery Water Reserve are in this district, so there should be no problem. But people still go into the forest to cut trees illegally. A few years ago, the Anse Canot River dried up completely. The Dennery River has already shrunk until it is no more than a muddy stream. Development depends on water. If the forest goes, the water supply on which Dennery depends will also disappear.



CHURCH OF ST. PETER

# BUSH TALK



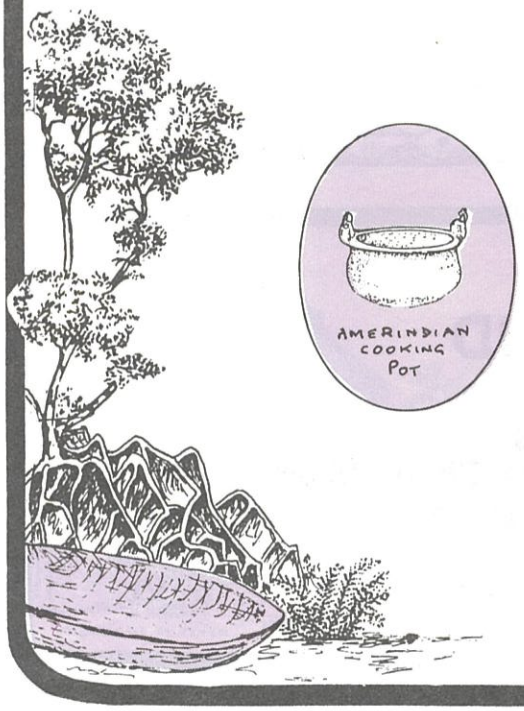

## MICOUD

1. The First Settlers
2. The French Leave Their Mark
3. Micoud Moves North
4. Micoud on the Map
5. Toward the Year 2001

# THE FIRST SETTLERS

Of all the places you might visit on your tour around Saint Lucia, Micoud is probably the richest in Amerindian history. Between Micoud and Canelles, archaeologists have found evidence of eight or nine settlements. Remains of cooking pits, stone and shell tools, pots and ornaments have been discovered at Troumasse, Anse Capitaine and Micoud Bay. Artifacts have also been found on the banks of the River Ger and the two headlands north of the Canelles River.

Why did the Amerindians come to this part of the island? Was it because of the large rivers full of fish and crayfish? Was it the sheltered bays where they could safely anchor their boats, or the strong, fresh wind that blew from the sea? Perhaps they stayed here because they had everything they needed in one place. Much of the land north of Micoud ends in high jagged cliffs. On the West Coast, the sea is calmer, but in those days heavy forest and bush came right down to the shore.




The Amerindians came by canoe from South America. They came from the flat lands at the mouth of the Orinoco River and the coastal plains of Guyana and Surinam. Rivers were their roads and water was a natural part of their life.

The land behind Micoud slopes gently away to the distant mountains and the rainforest. They might have thought the forests were full of wild animals or evil spirits. Anyway, they seemed to prefer the windy headlands or the river banks.

The women spent their day working in their vegetable patches, grating cassava or making clay pots. They often decorated the pots by painting them with dyes made from plants. They also gathered grasses which they dried and wove into mats and baskets. The men fished in the river with bows and arrows or collected crabs and oysters in the mangroves.

During the 17th century, Spanish, Dutch, French and English ships sailed the waters of the Caribbean. Saint Lucia with its rivers and forests must have looked very inviting to them. Sailors went ashore to trade for wood, water and fresh meat. Some of them thought the island would be a good place to settle and make a new life.

The Caribs did not want this. They attacked the new settlements. They even got Caribs from St. Vincent and from Dominica to help them. But their bows and arrows and axes were no match for the guns that they soon found turned against them.

# THE FRENCH LEAVE THEIR MARK

The early French settlers built forts to protect themselves, but the Caribs still attacked them. The French already had enough problems fighting against the English. After a while, they withdrew, but they didn't give up. They went back to Martinique and Guadeloupe where they were more secure. Then, in the early part of the 18th century, they returned.

Soon there were French settlements from one end of the island to the other. Most of them were on the west coast. In the north were Gros Islet, Carenage and Anse la Raye. Further south came Soufriere, Anse Citron (Choiseul) and Islet-a-Carret (Laborie). By 1760 the fierce Caribs who had earlier wiped out the peaceful Arawaks, were no longer a threat. Only two small communities remained. One at Choiseul and the other at Anse Louvet.

After two thousand years or more, the Amerindian occupation of Saint Lucia was finally over. Micoud's first inhabitants had vanished leaving hardly a trace. Some of the places where they had lived were already buried under bush. They would remain hidden, until archaeologists started to uncover them in the 1950s.

A new settlement grew up by the mouth of the Trou-Macé River. The settlement had the same name, but it was spelled 'Troumassee'. In 1770, this small community moved away from the marshy river mouth to the windy headland over-looking Anse Ger. Below them, to the south, the Ger River flowed through the mangroves on its way to the sea. On some old maps these names are written 'Angere' and 'Angere Point'.

Around that time, the French decided to re-name these places in honour of Monsieur de Micoud, Governor of Saint Lucia from 1768 to 1771. The small settlement at Angere became the 'bourg' or village of Micoud. There was also Micoud Point, Anse Micoud and the Micoud River. One name, however, did not change. The Amerindians who lived on the banks of the River Ger called that area Kajouka. Today, the people of Micoud still call it by that name.

In 1773, a church and a presbytery were built and Micoud got its first priest. Unfortunately, neither the priest nor the village lasted long. In 1780, a hurricane destroyed the church and the houses around it. The Priest died the same year. On an old plan of the site, a cross marks the place where the church once stood. On the headland traces of the building still remain.

Sugarcane, introduced by the French, quickly became a major crop. Slaves were brought from Africa to work the land. By 1775, one sixth of Saint Lucia was under cultivation. The district of Micoud had 84 estates. It was becoming one of the most important agricultural areas in the island. Some descendants of those slaves now own and farm their own land.

# MICOUD MOVES NORTH


After the hurricane of 1780, the village of Micoud moved once more. This time it went north. It moved beyond the earlier site at the mouth of the Trou-macé River to a small bay. The place where the village had been before the hurricane was now called Vieux Bourg. That is French for 'Old Town', the same name the site has today.

Even though the village was now more than a mile away, the bay, the headland and the river were still called Micoud. The new village of Port Micoud grew. Transport overland was slow and difficult. Produce from the estates around the village was brought to Micoud to be loaded onto ships and taken to the capital. In the old days several boats would sail up together as protection against the pirates who prowled the seas. By the end of the 18th century that danger was past, but another was about to begin.

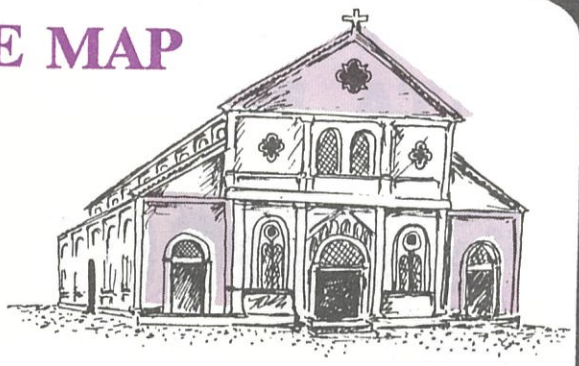
After the French Revolution began in 1789, Republicans came to Saint Lucia and freed all the slaves. They also gave all the towns and villages new names and so Micoud became l'Union. In 1794, the English took over the island. In 1795, the French took it back, but not for long. In 1796, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, with an army of twelve thousand men, captured Morne Fortune. Sir John Moore was made Governor of the island. He set out immediately to do battle with the Brigands.

The Brigands' 'Armée dans les Bois' was made up of escaped slaves and French soldiers who had deserted. They roamed the island, plundering and destroying. Micoud, like many other places, was burned and its fine estates destroyed. Sir John Moore, with just twenty men, met and defeated one band of brigands just outside Micoud.

The Brigands finally surrendered. Even the French and the English finally put an end to their fighting. Slavery was abolished, buildings were rebuilt, and Micoud became the busy centre of an important agricultural district once again. One problem remained however. Along the coast, especially at the river mouths, were large swamps swarming with mosquitoes. Their bite carried sickness and even death.

To protect themselves, the Indians rubbed their skin with castor oil mixed with the seeds of the urucou tree. They also closed up their houses as soon as it began to get dark to keep the insects out. Nearly all the priests sent to Micoud between 1838 and 1888 fell sick with malaria or yellow fever. Five of them died.

# MICOUD ON THE MAP



Micoud, a tightly packed mixture of old and new houses, lies close to the shore. At one time, the main road from Castries to the South ran through the village. Today the new highway, with its speeding traffic, swings by much further inland. Only the sign 'Welcome to Micoud' reminds you that the village is still there. Most Saint Lucians need no such reminder. Micoud was put on the map in 1964, when John Compton became Chief Minister.

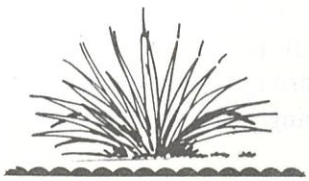
John Compton was leader of the United Worker's Party and representative for the district of Micoud. His estate, Mahaut, was once owned by Elwin Augustin whose sister Grace was the first Saint Lucian woman to study law. Grace owned Patience, an estate that is still known for its fine timber.

The estates around Micoud stretch from the coast to the very edges of the rainforest. Mahaut, Patience, Cannelles, Fond, Beauchamps, Troumassee, Volet, their names tell us that they were all established in the time of the French. In those days, sugar was the island's main crop. On some estates, the ruins of old factories and water wheels can still be seen. They remind us that sugar was once as important to Micoud as it was to the rest of the island, as important as bananas are today.

Anyone interested in the culture of Saint Lucia will know that the other thing that is important in Micoud is music. This is one of the main centres for the Rose and Marguerite festivals. The Societies of the Rose and the Marguerite were started soon after the abolition of slavery. They collected money to help keep the church buildings in good repair. Each year on their special feast day their kings and queens with all their followers would attend a solemn Mass.

There was a lot of competition between the two groups and also fierce quarrels. Their songs and dances were often rowdy. The priests disapproved, especially of the dance called the 'Bel Air'. They tried to have it stopped. At one time Catholics were forbidden to join the Societies. Now, people from all over the island go to Micoud for these fetes.

In 1866, Micoud had two of the first schools in the island each with about 60 pupils. One, started by the 'Lady Mico Trustees' of England, was to "..promote education among the black and coloured population of the West Indies." The other was a Catholic school. Today, Micoud has an Infant School attended by 460 children, a Primary School with over 500 pupils and a Secondary School with 650 students.



# TOWARD THE YEAR 2001

Will Micoud still be dependent on agriculture and fishing in the 21st century? Or will the development of industries in the south provide jobs of a different kind? Some attempts have already been made, like the canning factory and the jams and pickles made from local produce. There was even an idea for removing the fibre from banana stems and shipping it away to be made into rope. None of these were very successful, and although the village has grown, nothing much has changed.

Jobs are still scarce. There is talk of development at Troumassee, a hotel perhaps or a clinic. The talk is nothing new. So far the only things to be seen in the fields are the slow, heavy cattle. They stop to drink at the pool with the water lilies by the road. Behind them in the grass, stalk white cattle egrets on long thin legs, picking up the insects the cows disturb with their hooves.

Just before the turning to the village a narrow, well-paved road runs off to the right. It passes through fields of bananas, through miles of well farmed land, stopping just a short distance from the edge of the central rainforest. Buses drive along it, full of tourists who have paid to walk the forest trail. They hope to see the rare Saint Lucia Parrot. In the forest the clouds hang low and rain falls almost every day. All three large rivers that carry water to Micoud's agricultural land, start here.

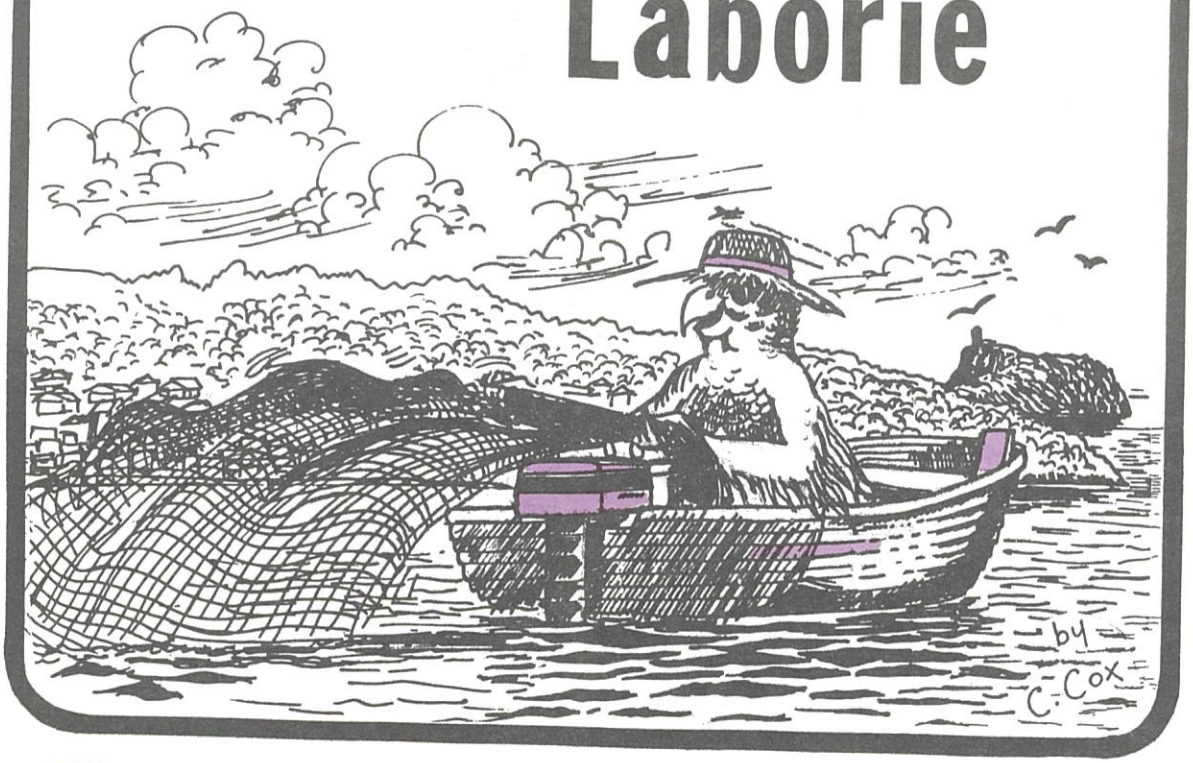
The forest of the Central Reserve is protected by law. Outside its boundary however, much of the forest has already been cleared. The water in the rivers is not as deep as it was in the past. The future of Micoud's farmers hangs in the balance. Good land management is the only answer. The huge trees, once cut for the saw mill at Patience were specially selected. Others trees were left so that the forest could regenerate itself naturally. Clear-cutting, or removing all the trees from one place disturbs the forest ecology for a very long time.

Forests are important for water as well as wood. Properly managed, they will provide us with a supply of both, now and in the future. The people of Micoud have always relied on the land. They understand how important it is to look after it.

# BUSH TALK

## THIS MONTH FOLKS WE'RE STOPPING OFF AT

# Laborie



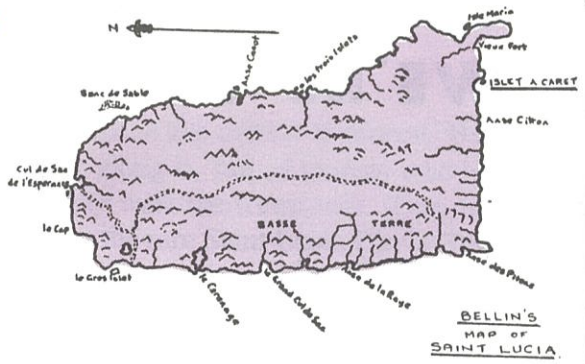

## LABORIE

# ISLET A CARET

The village of Laborie lies on the coast in the south-west corner of Saint Lucia. It is about five miles north of Vieux Fort. Two large rivers mark the boundaries of the district of Laborie. The River Doree in the north and the Black Bay River to the south. The Balembouche River and the Piaye River also flow down to the coast just north of Laborie Bay. Amerindian artifacts have been found by all these rivers, even as far inland as Getrine, Banse and Fond Berange.

Laborie was probably first settled by the French in the 18th century. The village is not on a river but on a beautiful bay. A large reef runs from the southern end of the bay right up to Balembouche. It protects the beach and encourages large deep water fish to come in to feed. It also provides a sheltered anchorage for boats, once they can find their way through the reef to the calmer waters inside.

On Bellin's map of Saint Lucia, drawn in 1758, there is a small island lying offshore, close to where Laborie is today. On the map it is marked 'Islet-a-Caret'. That is French for 'Turtle Island'. *Caretta caretta* is the proper name for the loggerhead turtle. Turtles need a sandy shore for nesting so the island may have got its name because turtles went there to lay their eggs. It was probably only a sandbank built up on top of a reef.




In 1763, there were just about a dozen houses in the small community of Laborie. By 1770, more houses had been built and a church. By 1775, there were 81 estates in the Quarter of Islet-a-Caret. Their main crops were sugar, cotton, cocoa and coffee. Twelve years later, in 1787, Lefort de la Tour's map still showed the village as Rade et Anse de l'Ilet a Carret. It meant, Turtle Island Anchorage and Beach.

Some time between 1787 and 1789 the village received a new name. The hurricane of 1780 had destroyed most of the houses and the church. The church was rebuilt by the Baron de Laborie, Governor of Saint Lucia from 1784 to 1789 and so the village was re-named Laborie in his honour. Father Louis Tapon laid the cornerstone of the present church was in 1907.

The hurricane did more than blow down buildings. The little island in the bay also disappeared about this time. Perhaps it was swept away by the high winds and the rough seas during the storm. Anyway, after this the small island no longer appeared on any maps. Soon there was nobody left alive who remembered seeing it.

# THE CARIBS AND THE FRENCH

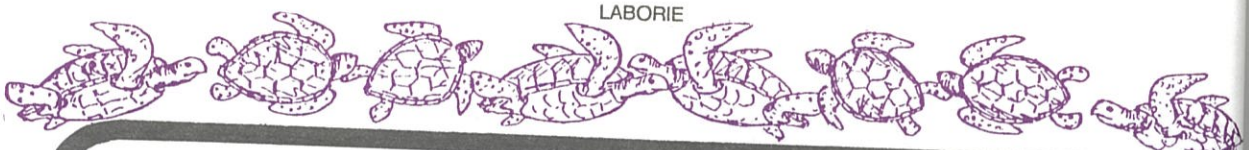
We do not know when the first Amerindians settled in Saint Lucia, or who they were. We do know that the Arawaks came here hundreds of years before the Caribs. We know too that when the Caribs started to move up through the islands, they fought and killed the Arawaks wherever they found them. In the early part of the 17th century, when the British became interested in Saint Lucia, there were only Caribs on the island.

They met the foreigners as they came ashore or rowed out in their canoes to where the boats lay at anchor. They carried turtle eggs with them and dried turtle meat. They took freshly gathered fruit, vegetables and wild yams. They showed the strangers where to get fresh water. In exchange they were given, knives or beads or other cheap trinkets. Sometimes they even went on board and drank the strong liquor the people offered them. They liked the nice warm feeling it made in their stomachs, but it also made their heads spin. Often their tongues got so heavy that they could no longer speak properly.

Although the Caribs traded with the strangers, they did not like it when they saw them building homes and settling in. They began to feel threatened by their presence. They managed to drive away the first two colonies of Englishmen with bows and arrows and heavy war clubs. The French, who already had many fine estates in Martinique, were much more determined. They looked at Saint Lucia's good fertile soil and they wanted it. If the Caribs didn't want to co-operate, they knew what to do. They built forts to protect their pioneer settlers and armed themselves with guns and cannons. The remains of one of these forts can still be seen at la Batterie.

Between 1651 and 1659, the French sent five Governors to Saint Lucia. The first one was smart. He married a Carib woman and so was left in peace, but died after only three years. The three Governors who followed him were all murdered by the treacherous Caribs. The fifth died of a fever. The French still didn't give up, even though they were getting some serious opposition from the British. By the beginning of the 18th century France was offering her citizens title to land in Saint Lucia if they would go there and settle.

Soon, all around Islet-a-Caret, large areas were claimed and cleared. The first of Laborie's large estates were being born.



PANAMA CAYENNE CURACAO ENGLAND

# EXODUS

ARUBA LABORIE

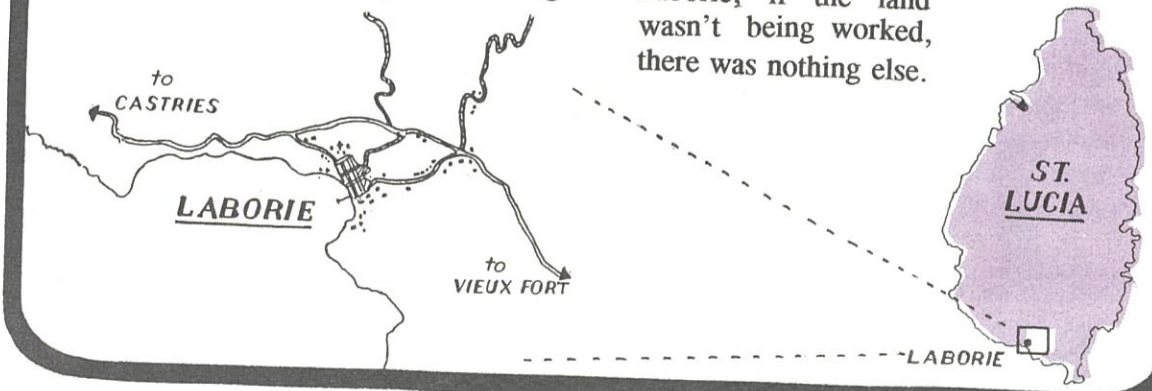
The French were the first to have large estates in Saint Lucia. They introduced sugar as a plantation crop. When the British took over the island in 1814, many of the French landowners remained on their estates. Sugar continued to be the main crop for many years and Laborie was still one of the island's most productive areas. Then, at the beginning of the 20th century, the farmers in Europe started to cultivate sugar beet. Before long, this brought down the price of sugar on the world market. Other crops were now planted, coconuts, cotton and some bananas, but now labour was a problem. More and more of the land was being left idle.

During the Second World War, an American Base opened at Vieux Fort. This tempted many men to leave the hard work on the land with its poor pay. They preferred the regular hours and the good money they could get working at the Base. Some went even further. They left their homes and went away hoping to make their fortunes. They went to Cayenne and Panama and the Dutch islands of Curacao and Aruba. Some of them never returned. Those who did usually had enough money to build a house or start a small business. If they did go back to the land, they were able to buy their own instead of working for somebody else.

In the 1950s there was another, strong movement of labour away from the island. Men were tired of being out of work, or working for less than two dollars a day. Hundreds of Saint Lucians from Laborie and the other villages, bought passages on ships going to England. They sailed three thousand miles to a country they had never seen, hoping for a chance at a better life.

They sent money back to the families they had left behind. Sometimes, after a while, they were also able to make the trip back.

The larger estates were finding it more and more difficult to make a profit. Labour was scarce, markets were uncertain, and ships did not call regularly. The fishermen still went to sea. They came back with catches of kingfish, dolphin, flying fish and tuna. But the young men whose fathers had worked on the land were drifting away. They went to Vieux Fort or even to Castries, looking for other work. In Laborie, if the land wasn't being worked, there was nothing else.



# MEN WHO MADE THEIR MARK

During this time, there was another sort of exodus from Laborie. Not people going off to find work and wealth, but young men and women searching for a better education than they could get at home. The first schools to be opened in Saint Lucia were started in 1838, by the 'Lady Mico Trust'. Laborie was one of the first villages to benefit. In 1839, its small Mico School had 80 pupils, both boys and girls. It was on Main Street, in the same building where the Community Centre is today.

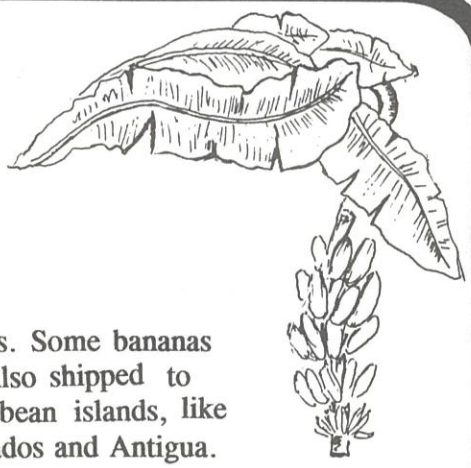
By 1880, the number of pupils in the Mico School had grown to 122. There were 87 boys and 35 girls. There was also a Catholic Girls' School with 93 pupils, that had opened in 1873. This school later became the Laborie Infants' School. All the Mico Schools in the island were closed down in 1891. By this time the Catholics had opened a second school for boys. By 1895, the two schools had a total of 227 students, 121 boys and 106 girls. The Boys' School is still in the same spot today, but it has been made longer by about fifteen feet.

The population of the island at this time was about 42,000. There were schools in all the villages, but only St. Joseph's Convent and St. Mary's College offered higher education. Unless a child's parents could pay to send them overseas they had to fight for the few places that were available. Competition was fierce and Government scholarships were few. The children had to be really good to succeed.

In spite of the drawbacks, Laborie produced many brilliant scholars. Alan Louisy, retired judge and the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia from 1979 to 1981, was one. His family own an estate at Laborie called Sapphire. Keith St. Aimee is another Laborie man. He was Saint Lucia's Representative to the United Nations from 1982 to 1985. Sir Lennox O'Reilly, a famous West Indian lawyer and his two brothers, also lawyers, were born in Laborie. Another outstanding legal figure was Judge J.E.M.Salmon.

Even now, in Laborie's schools, there may be students who will one day bring fame and recognition to their village.

# LETTING GO



In the past, large estates like Balembouche, Parc, Londonderry, Mont Lezard, Perle and Sapphire, made Laborie an important agricultural area. Many still have the ruins of the mills that once crushed the sugarcane. Some still have large areas planted in coconuts, put in when the price of sugar started to fall. All now have many acres lying unproductive and useless. Some old people in the district remember when 'sea island' cotton was grown here and there was a factory making bay rum. These things belong to the past. The days of the large estates are over.

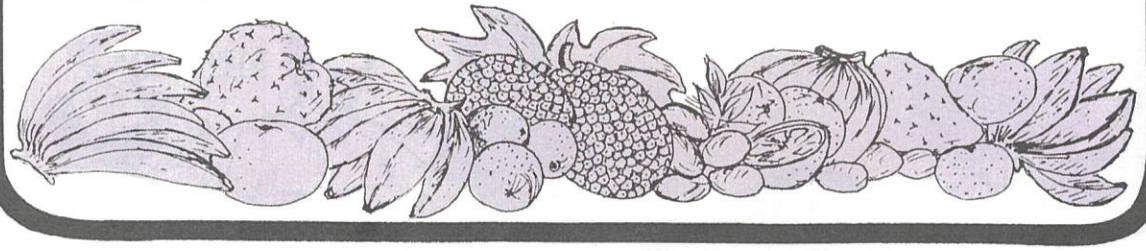
Even with bananas, the island's most important crop, good results are quite possible on quite small plots of land. A farmer with just five or ten acres, properly managed, can make a comfortable living. Finding a market for their produce is always important for the small farmer. For some crops, like bananas, copra and cocoa there are already good marketing arrangements. Many farmers belong to co-operatives so that they can market their other produce as a group.

The island's bananas go by sea to England, but air freight has helped to open up markets for other things. Saint Lucia now ships mangoes, soursops, golden apples, breadfruit, plantain, hot peppers, pumpkin and other vegetables to England, Canada and the United States. Some bananas are also shipped to Caribbean islands, like Barbados and Antigua.

Many people would go back to the land if they had land they could call their own. It is not good for a country to have good agricultural land used for building or lying idle. Perhaps some of the large estate owners need to accept this and release some of the land they no longer use.

The road from Castries to Vieux Fort and on to Laborie has been improved. There are also better links from the International Airport at Hewanorra to England, North America and the rest of the Caribbean. Industrial development in Vieux Fort has created more jobs so that, in time, young people from Laborie may no longer have to leave home to find work. Those who still want to make farming their life will also find it easier because they will have markets for their produce.

Change is never easy. If Laborie is to keep pace with the changes happening all over island perhaps it is time to let go of the past and start looking toward the future.

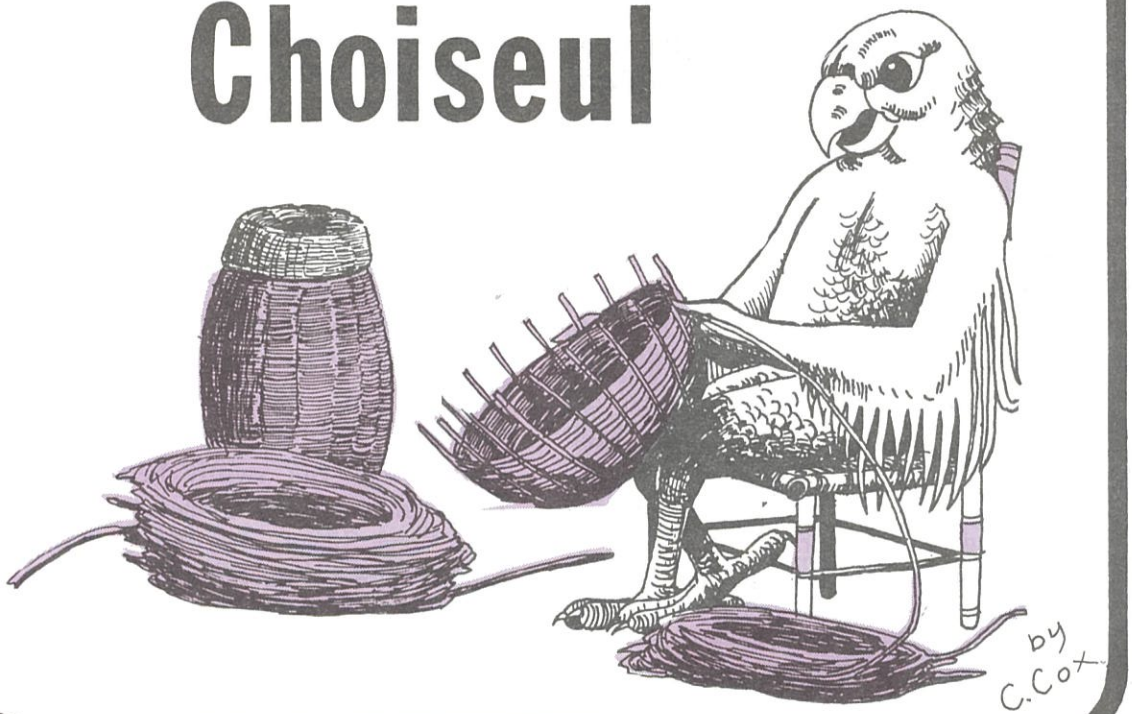


# BUSH TALK

**BUY LOCAL...**

**visit**

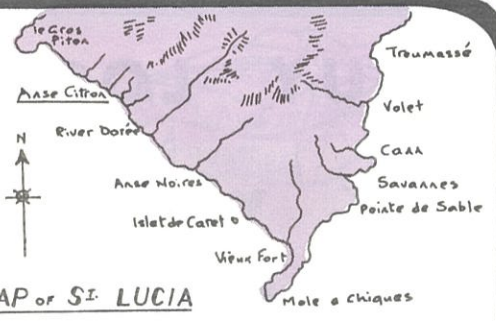
# Choiseul




## CHOISEUL

1. Anse Citron
2. Last of the Amerindians
3. Churches, Schools and Sugar
4. Living Off the Land
5. Choiseul's Handicrafts

# ANSE CITRON

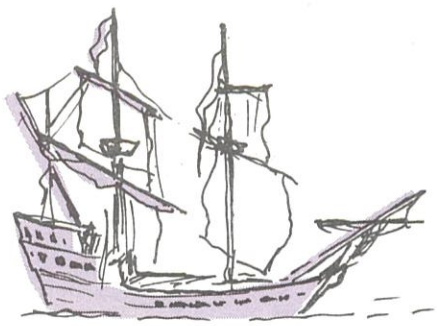


MAP OF ST. LUCIA

Many old maps of Saint Lucia show a place called Anse Citron where you would expect to see Choiseul. In English that means 'Lime Bay'. Perhaps the sailors who went ashore for wood and water found limes growing there. This would have been an important discovery for them. Lime juice was a protection against scurvy, a disease caused by being too long at sea without fresh fruits or vegetables to eat.

Until 1763, the village near the river mouth was also called Anse Citron. In February of that year, the English and the French signed a pact called the Treaty of Paris. This pact made Saint Lucia a French possession. The French celebrated by renaming the village Anse Choiseul in honour of the Duke of Choiseul, their Minister for Foreign Affairs. This name was later shortened to 'Choiseul'.

During the French Revolution, the Republican General Ricard was sent to govern Saint Lucia. He gave all the towns and villages new names. Choiseul was now called 'Le Tricolore' like the French flag with its three bands of red, white and blue. In 1796, the British defeated the French and so le Tricolore became Choiseul once again.



Choiseul is about halfway between Soufriere and Vieux Fort on the south west coast of Saint Lucia. To the north is the Gros Piton, to the west lies the Caribbean Sea. This part of the island is not lush and green like the countryside behind the Pitons. It is more open and much drier. The rivers do not flow through wide valleys as they do in Dennery, Cul de Sac and Roseau. Instead they run swiftly between the steep banks of deep ravines.

In one place, the River Doree tumbles along at the bottom of a canyon 150 feet deep. A bridge, barely 20 feet wide crosses it from side to side. If you stand on the bridge and drop a stone, several seconds will go by before you hear the splash as it hits the water.

There is a story about this bridge. People say the man who built it made a pact with the devil. He promised that when it was finished the devil could take the first person who walked over it. When the bridge was completed, he was so excited he forgot his promise and ran across. Fortunately, his little dog ran ahead and reached the other side first. The devil must have been satisfied with his small prize. They say the dog vanished and was never seen again. Ever since then, the bridge has been called the Devil's Bridge.

# LAST OF THE AMERINDIANS

Although the French gave Choiseul its name, they were not the first people to inhabit that part of the island. The Amerindians had settled there long before. First the peaceful Arawaks then, later, the Caribs. When the English and French settlers started to arrive the Caribs were still in control of the island.

The first group of Englishmen came ashore near Vieux Fort. They lasted only five weeks before they were attacked and driven out. A second, larger colony started by a Captain Judlee in the south of the island, survived for more than a year. Then, in 1640, they were also attacked and almost wiped out. Caribs from Saint Lucia, Dominica, St. Vincent and Martinique banded together to get rid of them. Very few of the men managed to escape.

Several small colonies of Frenchmen who came after them suffered the same fate. The Caribs resented these new arrivals and did their best to drive them away. They were proud, warlike people who fought hard, but their time in Saint Lucia was coming to an end. By 1774, only three or four Carib Families were left. They lived at a place called La Pointe or Pointe Caribe, in the shadow of the Gros Piton.

AMERINDIAN AXE

All around Choiseul are places where evidence of Amerindian settlements can be found. Close to the road running through the village is a rock with an Amerindian carving or petroglyph on it. Further inland at Morne Lezard, stone axes and other stone tools have been found. On the banks of the Piaye and Balembouche rivers and at Balembouche Estate, archaeologists have discovered more remains or artifacts left by these early settlers.

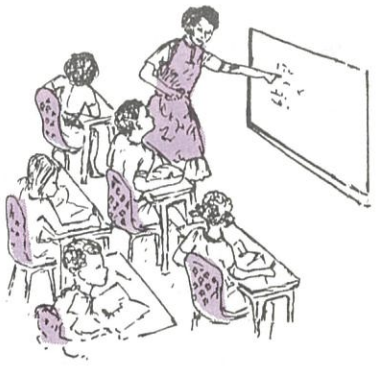
Perhaps more important than the rock carvings, axes and other tools are the skills that the Amerindians left behind. They used the local clay to make cooking pots. They gathered vines to be woven into baskets. They cut and dried grasses to be made into mats. There are no pure Caribs left in Choiseul today, but many people in the district make their living by making mats, baskets and clay pots. The methods they use are not so very different to the ones used by the Amerindians centuries ago.

# CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND SUGAR

Sugarcane was introduced into Saint Lucia in 1764. The first estates to plant this new crop were in the Vieux Fort area. Others very soon followed their example. Mills were built to crush the cane. Some were powered by water, some by animals, and just a few by wind. At Balembouche and at River Doree, the sugar mills were powered by water from the nearby rivers. The water ran along canals or aqueducts then fell onto the paddles of the wheels forcing them to turn round.

The wheels turned heavy iron rollers that crushed the cane and squeezed out the sweet juice. The juice was boiled to make sugar. On some estates it was not possible to use water to turn the mills, so animals walked round and round in circles turning the machinery. A third type of mill was also built with sails turned by the wind. Remains of three of these windmills can still be seen at le Riche, but they may not be there much longer. Their stones are being hauled away and used to build other things.

When the Great Hurricane hit Saint Lucia in 1780, Choiseul, suffered badly. Lives, crops and houses were lost in one of the worst storms ever recorded. Boats were thrown up onto shore or blown out to sea. The wooden church in the village was destroyed. The only church left standing was the one at Dauphin that was built of stone. There were about 50 sugar estates in Saint Lucia at this time, quite a few were in the Choiseul district. The hurricane flattened them all. Crops like cocoa and coffee also suffered heavy losses.



After the hurricane, stone churches were built in all the parishes to replace those the storm blew away. Choiseul's new church was completed about 1789. It stood for over a hundred years. The corner stones of the present church which replaced it, were laid in 1906.

In 1866, Choiseul got its first school. It was built by the Lady Mico Trust and had 75 pupils, boys and girls. By the time the two Catholic schools were built near the presbytery in 1879, it had already closed down. The new boys' school had 81 pupils, the girls' school had 38. By 1898, each had over a hundred students. In 1909, a separate building was put up for the infants. None of these three school buildings exists today.

Reunion has a Junior Secondary School for girls and boys with over 400 students and an Infants School with about 200. There are also schools at Delcer, Roblot, Monrouge, River Doree and Dugard.

# LIVING OFF THE LAND

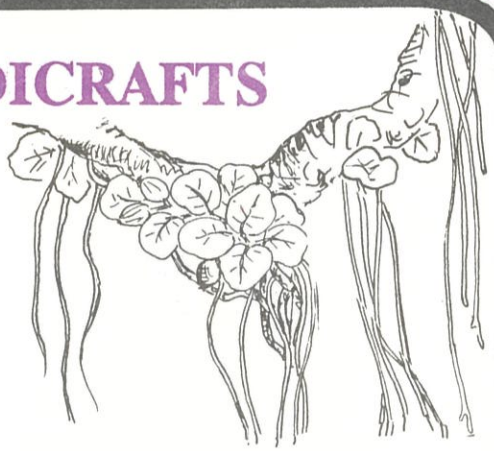

Today, a lot of good agricultural land at Choiseul is lying unused on large estates. Labour costs have risen and often it is no longer possible to produce crops economically. Rather than face a loss, the workers are paid off and the land is left idle. Small farmers often have to make the best use they can of steep slopes and dry, windblown places. Irrigation is always a problem. Farmers make terraces to safeguard the precious soil and keep the water from running off. This way they are able to grow a variety of crops.

Sweet potatoes, yam and dasheen all grow well in this part of the island. So do pigeon peas and peanuts. The peanuts are sold locally but some of the other crops, like sweet potato and yam are shipped to Canada and England. They are bought by the West Indian communities in those countries. Carrots, Tomatoes and cabbages are also grown here. Inland, where it is not so dry, bananas and citrus are grown. Copra is still important on some estates, but the harvest has dropped because of the mite that has attacked the coconut trees.

Just south of Choiseul is a business that deals in plants of a different kind. It is called Windward Island Tropicals. This 30 acre estate is almost completely planted up in ornamental palm trees and other exotic plants. Some of them grow in the open but many are protected under frames covered with black plastic mesh. Every week thousands of small plants are flown from Hewanorra to England. Another two or three thousand palms and larger plants leave each week by sea. Before they are shipped, the soil around their roots is carefully washed off. This prevents them from carrying any insect pests or bacteria on their journey. In the chilly English climate these plants would not survive outside as they do here. They will be kept indoors, to brighten up people's homes and offices instead.

Not all the people in Choiseul live off the land. Fishing boats set out from this village as they do all around the coast of Saint Lucia. At nearby Anse Ivrogne, they still make their fishing canoes in the traditional manner. The fishermen of Choiseul now belong to a co-operative and use engines rather than sails. Even so, going to sea in a small boat can be a dangerous way to make a living.

# CHOISEUL'S HANDICRAFTS



If you want to see some of the work that has made Choiseul famous, you should go to the Craft Centre at La Fargue. You could also visit the market in Castries. Many stalls there have baskets, table mats, mats, coalpots or flowerpots made in Choiseul. Women do a lot of the work. They shape the pots from local clay and leave them to dry. Then they are piled up in a heap, covered with bush and fired just as the Amerindians did it so long ago.

It is women too who cut the vertiver or khus-khus grass and spread it along the roadside to dry. They gather the dry leaves of the screw pine or pandanus. They split them lengthways and trim the edges to remove the sharp spines. They also collect the rushes that are used to cover the seats of the local chairs.

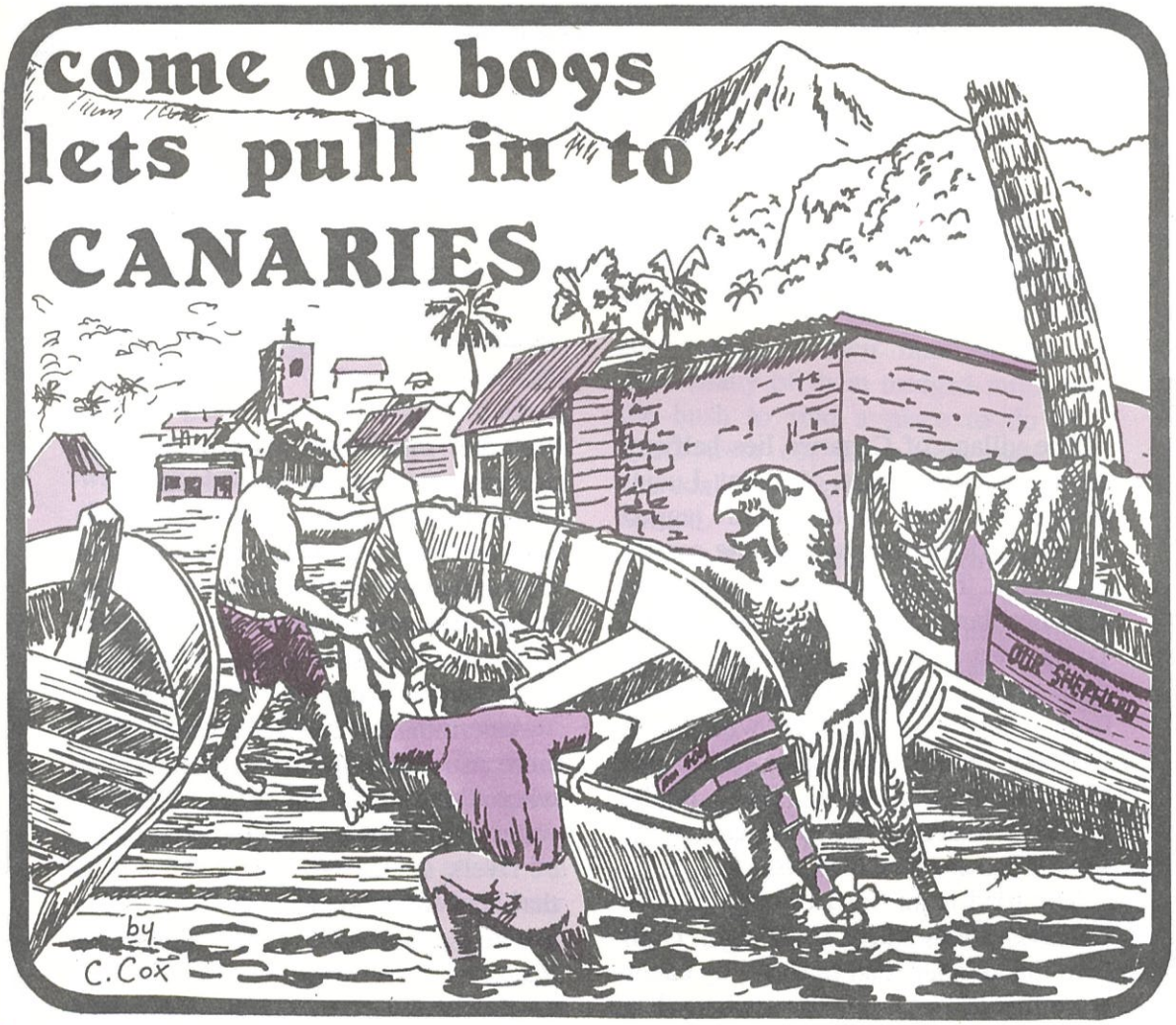
The men usually make the sturdy shopping and laundry baskets. The materials they use grow in the rain-forest. They must have a licence from Forestry Department before they can gather them. The lianes or vines are really the roots of creepers like the awali (*Clusia rosea)*, and the ti kanot (*Asplundia rigida*). They are epiphytes, which means they grow on another plant but do not feed on it. They cling to the branches of the tall trees to get closer to the light. Then they send down masses of long thick roots to suck moisture from the damp air beneath the forest canopy. Sometimes their weight is enough to bring the tree down.

The men travel a long way on foot to reach the place where they can gather the vines. Often they stay in the forest overnight. After they are cut, the roots are boiled in a large drum for about an hour. The awali can be peeled ready to use but the ti kanot is left soaking in the river for another two weeks. Then it is pounded on a rock to get the skin off.

Jacquot feeds on the fruits of the awali and nests in the trees on which it grows. To make sure these rare birds are not disturbed during the nesting season, no licences are issued at this time. Protection of the parrot and of the forest means protection for Choiseul's basket makers. Without the forest their supply of material would disappear.

Foreign currency is important to the island. The people of Choiseul do their bit. Not many tourists actually visit Choiseul but hardly any of them leave Saint Lucia without taking something from Choiseul with them.

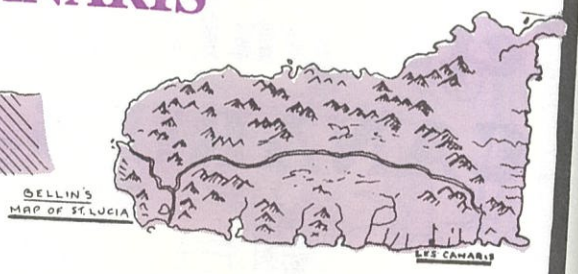
# BUSH TALK




## CANARIES

1. Les Canaris
2. The Beautiful Valley
3. The Forgotten Village
4. Canaries gets a Road
5. The Road to Change

# LES CANARIS


The village of Canaries lies halfway down the west coast of Saint Lucia. Behind it deep ravines and jagged mountain ridges run back to the central rainforest. To the north and south are high headlands that enclose the village. To the west is the Caribbean Sea. If you draw a straight line across the island from Canaries, the line will touch Dennery on the other side. They are both fishing villages, but, unlike Dennery, Canaries had to depend on the sea for much more than fish.

The road from Castries only reached Canaries about thirty years ago. Until then the villagers had to travel by canoe to Soufriere or Anse la Raye where they could then get transport up to Castries.

The village is not even marked on many of the old maps of Saint Lucia. Bellin's map of 1758, shows a place called 'les Canaris' on that part of the coast. On other maps this same place was marked 'Anse des Canaries', or just Canaries. Many early settlements were given the names of people who were important at the time, like Micoud, Dennery, Laborie and Choiseul. Others had names like Vieux Fort, Soufriere and Anse la Raye that described something about the place. No-one knows for sure how Canaries got its name. Some people believe it comes from the Amerindian word for the clay cooking pots that are called kanawi.

Many Amerindian sites have been discovered all around the coast of Saint Lucia, from Vieux Fort right up to Cap Estate. However, there are no signs to show there was ever an Amerindian settlement at Canaries.

Amerindians travelled by canoe. They were usually happy to settle anywhere where there was a good supply of fresh water. This part of the coast has plenty of rivers so maybe it was the snakes that kept them away!

The sailors who called this place 'Canaris', may have done so for quite another reason. Off the north coast of Africa there is a group of islands called the Canary Islands. Many of the ships that came to the Caribbean from Europe would have stopped there. It was the last place they could take on food and water before setting out across the Atlantic Ocean. The Canary Islands are mountainous and volcanic. Perhaps this part of Saint Lucia's coastline reminded the sailors of the places they had left behind - places they might never see again. The streamlined ocean-going yachts that come to Saint Lucia for the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers also leave from the Canaries.

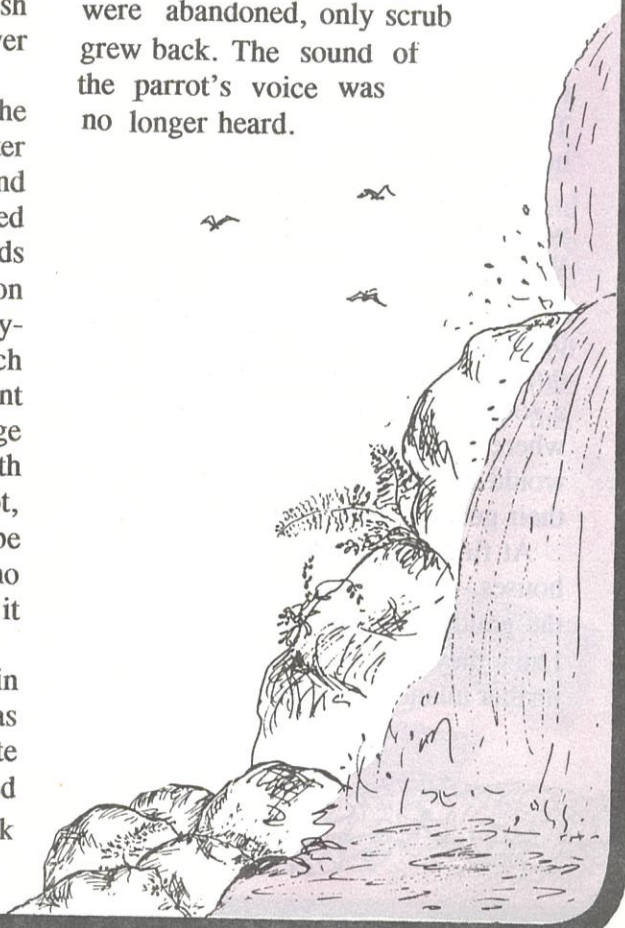
# THE BEAUTIFUL VALLEY

Behind Canaries, the distant hills are still covered with thick forest. From them flows the Canaries River, winding its way through deep valleys to the sea. In some parts there are waterfalls cascading over rocky ledges or tumbling down between huge boulders. Below the waterfalls are pools of cold water. At the edges, the water is frothy with bubbles and the damp rocks are covered with bright green moss. Sometimes the water is clear enough to see the quick, transparent crayfish darting about in the shallows. Ferns grow here and orchids that get their nourishment from the air. Everything is lush and green. The bush is full of plants that are not seen lower down where it is hot and dry.

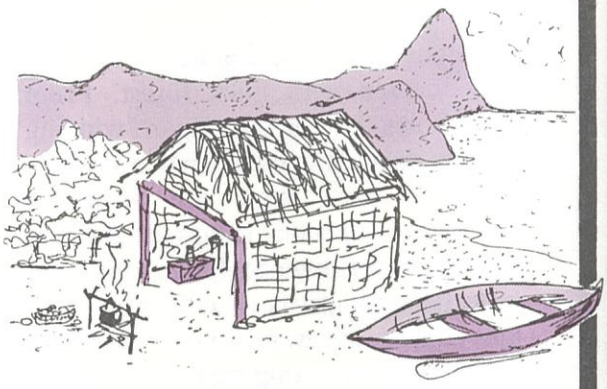
Before the island began to attract the farmers and speculators who would later develop it, this valley was a wild and beautiful place. Virgin forest covered the slopes and many different birds could be seen. The Red-necked Pigeon made its home in the tall trees. Fly-catchers would swoop down to catch insects hovering over the water. A Saint Lucia Oriole with its black and orange feathers might perch on a branch with his mate. Even the Saint Lucia Parrot, *Amazona versicolor* could sometimes be heard. Its loud, harsh voice would echo off the hills in the early morning as it flew out to its feeding place.

When sugar became a major crop in Saint Lucia, even Canaries was affected. The main Canaries Estate covered hundreds of acres. It enclosed the little village and stretched way back up the valley. There was very little good land left for the villagers to farm. They needed to grow vegetables and root crops for their families and for sale. Many of them trudged miles into the bush to find a place to do this. Trees were cut down and made into charcoal. Undergrowth was cleared and burned.

Soon the hillsides were covered with patches of bare earth or scrub. The farmers had their gardens but the price was high. The rainforest that was so important to the whole island was being destroyed. When the gardens were abandoned, only scrub grew back. The sound of the parrot's voice was no longer heard.



# THE FORGOTTEN VILLAGE



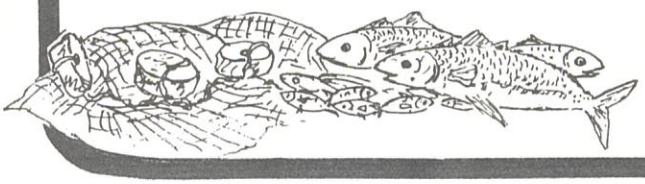
Records show there was already a small community at Canaries in 1763, but no-one knows how long it had been there. The first settlers were probably French. In 1725, the French Government offered grants of land to any of their countrymen who wanted to settle in Saint Lucia. Some people came from France. Others came from the island of Martinique, just a few miles north of Saint Lucia.

Martinique already had quite a large population and most of the island's good agricultural land was already taken. Sugar was beginning to be an important crop. There was money to be made and people were glad of the chance to move to Saint Lucia and set up new estates. The valley of the Canaries River would have been a good place to do this.

What did those early settlers find when they landed on that lonely beach? Were there already people living there? Were they perhaps watching from the bush as the newcomers arrived? We will never know. The settlers probably made a rough camp right there on the shore where they had pulled up their boats. It would be safer if they needed to make their getaway in a hurry for any reason.

At first they might have built simple houses, just to shelter themselves and the goods they had brought with them. Later they probably built estate houses further inland. More labour was brought in to work the land, and the little community by the shore grew bigger. Beside the houses a large water wheel was set up, to work the mill that crushed the sugarcane. From the sugar factory, barrels of molasses were rolled right down to the waiting ships. But still, in many ways, Canaries was the forgotten village.

The first schools in Saint Lucia were established by the Mico Trust in 1838. There were several in other parts of the island but there was no Mico School in Canaries. Nearly forty years went past before the children of the village had a school to go to. In 1876, a catholic school was built for boys and girls. It started with more than a hundred students. By 1880 there were 109, 50 girls and 59 boys. Until 1929, it was the only school in the village. Then, the Presbytery, where there had been no resident priest for some time, was turned into a school. Now, there are 281 children attending the Primary School and another 146 at the Canaries Infant School.



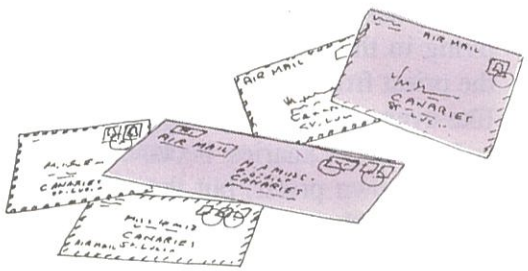
# CANARIES GETS A ROAD


The road from Castries to Soufriere did not reach Canaries until 1959. By this time the price of sugar had dropped way down and the large estates were no longer growing sugarcane. All over the island, mills were lying idle. The valleys of Roseau and Cul-de-Sac were the only large areas still under cane. Even here it was on its way out.

By the early 1960s, it was clear that bananas were the crop of the future. This was a crop for the small farmer as well as the large estate. The Geest boats called at the island every week to load fruit for the English market. A Banana Growers' Association was started, to collect and market the bananas. Now anyone with a couple of acres of land could make a regular income from it.

The road that now passed through the village made communications with the rest of the island much easier. Canaries was still too far away from Castries to get any real benefits. For the people of Canaries the new developments had come too late. The estates had not been fully worked for some time and so there was a shortage of jobs. Not having proper roads inland made it difficult for small farmers to get their produce out. Instead of working on their own land, many of them left and went to work elsewhere. Some even left the island. They went to England where they hoped to find jobs that would pay well enough for them to send some money home. When they got work and were settled they sent for their wives. The wives also found work and so the children were often left behind with their grandparents. Suddenly, it seemed that Canaries had become a village of the very old and the very young.

Some of the people who left never came back except to visit. For others, Canaries would always be their home. They sent back whatever they could afford to support their families and have a house built. One day they would return for good. When that day finally came, Canaries would be waiting and ready for them. It was the money that came into the village like this that helped keep Canaries going.



# THE ROAD TO CHANGE

Good roads play an important part in the development of any community. A village on the coast can move goods in and out by sea, but road transport is easier. For many years Canaries was like an island, cut off from the rest of Saint Lucia. The villagers even had to take a boat to go to church in Anse la Raye. If they had a case to be heard in court, they had to go by boat to Soufriere. In 1878, when a priest came to hold a service in the chapel in the village, he asked the people why they didn't go to Mass in Anse la Raye more often. He was told that sometimes the sea was rough and the men who had been fishing all week didn't want to go out again on a Sunday. The women complained that even when the men did go, they wouldn't take them along.

Finally, in 1903, Canaries got a church of its own. A few years later, a presbytery was built on the hill overlooking the village. During the time of Father Barreau, who lived there from 1906 to 1913, the belfry was added to the front of the church. In those days, cement was not often used. Father Barreau made blocks himself to show the villagers how to do it. When he was transferred to Dominica in 1913, no-one came to replace him. For nearly fifty years there was hardly ever a priest living in the village. Mass was said by the priest from Anse la Raye who came, like everyone else, by boat.

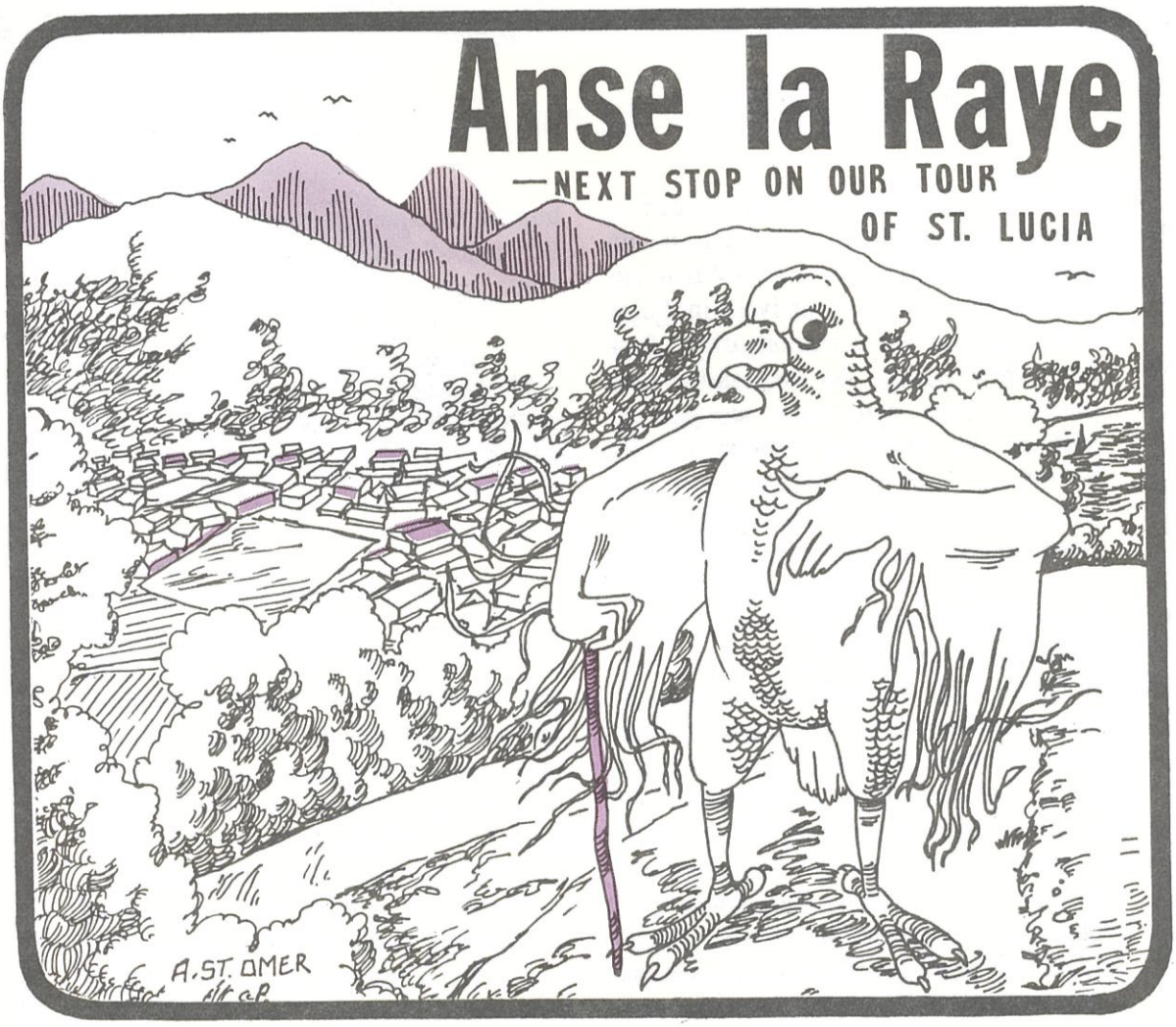
In 1960, Canaries became a Parish with its own priest, but the village had grown, so the old church was no longer big enough. In most villages, new stone churches had been built to replace the old wooden ones. In Canaries the wooden church was left to be used as a Parish Hall and a new church was built where the sugar factory had once stood. Now Canaries can boast of having two churches in the centre of the village.

The drive from Castries to Canaries takes nearly an hour. The road winds up and down from one valley to the next and is full of twists and bends. If there were some magic way to straighten it out, it would only be about half as long in time and in distance. A better road already runs from Soufriere to Vieux Fort. From there, using the East Coast Road, a good driver can get to Castries in about an hour. Many people prefer to drive south to Vieux Fort and up again to Soufriere rather than creep and bump their way through Canaries.

Now, at last, a new West Coast Road is being built. It has already passed Anse la Raye. When it finally gets to Canaries perhaps it will bring development to the village that has struggled alone for so long.

THE WEST COAST ROAD IS CRUCIAL TO THE VILLAGE OF CANARIES

# BUSH TALK



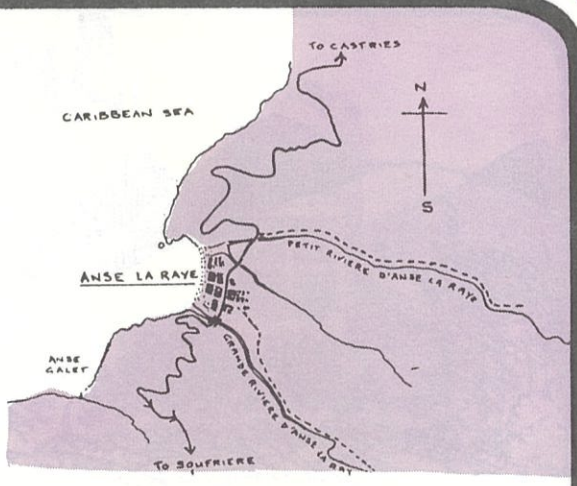

## ANSE LA RAYE

1. Skate Bay
2. Fishing and Farming
3. The Lean Years
4. Spotlight on Anse la Raye
5. Looking Ahead

# SKATE BAY

Anse la Raye has always been a fishing village and if you examine its name it is easy to see why. When the early French settlers arrived in Saint Lucia, Anse la Raye was one of the first areas they visited. As they sailed into the bay they may have stopped to admire the beautiful, forested hills behind it. They would have seen the two large rivers that flowed from them down to the sea. Perhaps they looked over the side of the boat and saw the shoals of fish swimming beneath them in the clear water.

There were many different kinds of fish. Among them were some strange flat fish that flapped around on the sandy bottom. They were sandy in colour, with strong whip-like tails. Their two eyes were set close together in the top of their flat heads. In English, they were called 'skates' but to the Frenchmen, they were known as 'raie'. This may be why the place was called Anse de la Raie - the Bay of Skates. The two rivers got their names from the bay. They were called Petit Riviere de l'Anse de la Raie and Grand Riviere de l'Anse de la Raie. The way these names were spelled changed from time to time, depending on who was doing the writing! On the map drawn by Bellin in 1758 the village is called Ance de la Raye.




The church records show there were 107 estates in the Anse la Raye district in 1775. That is more than in any other part of the island. It sounds a lot but in those days Saint Lucia was divided into only nine districts or quarters. The quarter of Anse la Raye stretched from the Roseau River all the way down to Canaries and back into the rainforest.

During the years of the French Revolution, Anse la Raye, like all the other places in Saint Lucia, was given a new name. It was l'Egalite. In 1795, there were fierce fights between the French and the English for possession of the island. The slaves had been told they were free. Many of them refused to go back to the plantations. They plundered the estates, killed the planters and their families and set fire to the buildings. Like the villages of Dennery, Micoud, Laborie and Choiseul, Anse la Raye was ransacked and burned. Most of the village records and documents went up in flames. Only the walls of the church were left standing.

# FISHING AND FARMING

Eventually the wars came to an end and slavery was abolished. People still worked on the land but now they could choose where they worked and also for whom. The seas around Saint Lucia were full of fish and some men left the land to become fishermen. They made canoes from the trunks of the gommier trees that grew in the forest. They used the tough vines that hung from their branches to make fishpots.

Today, most fishermen have engines instead of sails and their fishpots are often made of wire mesh. But, their boats still come back loaded with jackfish, flying fish, kingfish, bonito, barracuda, tuna, snapper, dolphin and sometimes even a shark.

In deep water fishermen use nets and lines armed with strong hooks baited with small fish. Closer to shore they use fishpots or a net called a seine. Some fishermen stay on the beach holding fast to one end of the seine while others, in the boat, move slowly away from shore. Gradually, the rest of the net is let out. When the boat reaches the middle of the bay they will turn and head back.

The net hangs down in the water like an enormous curtain. It is held upright by floats that bob in a wide curve on top of the waves. As the canoe returns to shore, the men leap out still holding the other end of the net. Now everyone helps to pull in the net with the fish trapped inside it. As the circle made by the net gets smaller the water starts to splash and heave as if it is boiling. The fish leap all about as they struggle to escape. When the catch is finally brought ashore everyone who has helped will get a share.

There are many estates around Anse la Raye. Some of the largest are Venus, Invergoil, Chapine and Anse Galet. In the old days they produced crops like sugar, cotton, copra, cocoa and coffee for export. Now very little is grown. At Invergoil, the old mill is being rebuilt to give tourists a glimpse of what life on the plantation was like. There were no buses or pickups then and estate roads were not much more than muddy tracks. Produce was loaded onto wooden carts pulled by two strong bulls and then trundled down to the jetty. Here it was put aboard a large canoe called a mail boat with a Captain and three men to pull on the oars. These large canoes carried passengers and goods regularly from the villages on the coast to the town of Castries.

About a hundred years ago, a family from Soufriere called Charlery went to live in Anse la Raye with their little daughter, Veronica. She grew up in the village and worked as a labourer on the land. She married a man called Joseph and they had two children.

# THE LEAN YEARS

Because jobs were becoming more and more scarce, many men left the village to look for work. In 1948, they went to Curacao to work in the oil industry. From 1956 to 1960 some took off by boat for England. Others went to the Virgin Islands or to America - anywhere where they could find work. Sometimes they sent money back to the families they had left behind.

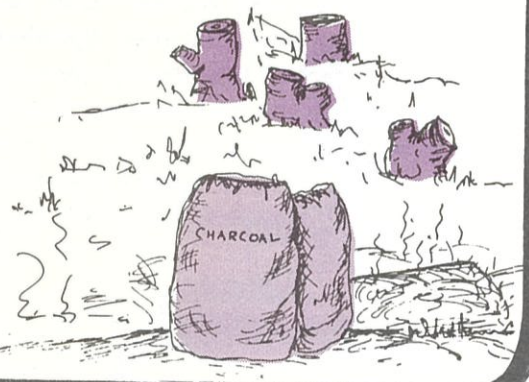
Veronica's only son had gone away long before this. Like many other Saint Lucians, he went to Cayenne to look for a better life. He never returned.

The road to Castries was narrow and winding and the journey by bus was hot and uncomfortable. For a while there were boats, like the 'Bernadine', the 'George' and the 'Jewel'. They left town soon after midday, like the buses, to make their trip back down the coast. Men who found work in the City had to stay there. Sometimes they went back to the village at weekends or for holidays. The villagers were depressed. People driving through would see them sitting outside their houses. They had nothing better to do than watch the tourists as they drove by on their way to Soufriere. But the buses and cars seldom stopped. They never saw the beach with its flamboyant trees or the fishing nets drying in the sun. No-one had bothered to tell them it was worth a visit.

They didn't know either that just behind the village was some of the most beautiful scenery on the island. Everyone knew about the Pitons and the Sulphur Springs and that's where they were going!

In time, bananas became the island's biggest export crop. Demand for other crops fell and so many estates cleared away everything else to plant bananas instead. The bananas though were not so easy to handle. They needed good roads or they very quickly got damaged and were not fit to sell. The roads leading to the estates around Anse la Raye were still poor. It didn't make sense even to gather what little fruit the estates were still producing. Dishonest people took advantage of this and stole the produce to sell for their own profit. They went into the forest with their chainsaws and devastated the land. They even cut down valuable cedar and laurier trees just to turn them into charcoal.

There were other things to worry about as well. Very few houses in the village had proper toilets. The people managed as best they could, but their children were often sick. Many of them died. When doctors did a survey to see what was wrong they found the children were suffering from worms and other parasites. This was because of the poor sanitation. Something had to be done, but what?



# SPOTLIGHT ON ANSE LA RAYE

The first thing that happened was that 'Save The Children Foundation' picked Anse la Raye as the site for a day care centre for children. They provided the money. Government helped with land and materials and the people of the village donated their labour. The centre was officially opened in 1982. Next to it is the Anthonian Home for the Poor, where the old and homeless people of the village live. A committee was formed to co-ordinate all these activities and raise funds. This attracted even more attention to Anse la Raye.

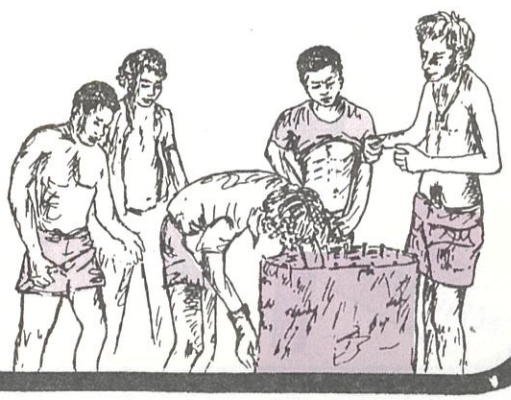
Then, in 1982, the village was chosen as the location for a large workshop in appropriate technology. Appropriate technology means using the tool or method that is most appropriate for what you want to do. Perhaps you live in a place close to a river but far away from the water mains. Then it is more appropriate for you to use river water for your garden than to pay the high price of bringing in piped water. If you find a cheap and easy way to bring water from the river to your garden, that means you are using appropriate technology.

The workshop was attended by people from all over the Caribbean. They demonstrated different ways of using the sun, wind and water for energy. They built clay stoves in peoples' back yards. They made water tanks using bamboo and cement. A large solar panel was put on the roof of the Multi-Purpose Centre to provide hot water. At Au Tabor, on the road just before the last steep hill into the village, a windmill was put up. It gave enough electricity to power lights and a television in the house beside it.

For a whole week the village bustled with activity. All sorts of projects were going on. People came from all over the island to watch and learn. There was even a film made of the workshop that was shown on local television.

In 1983, Anse la Raye took part in the Plus Belle Village competition and came first. But in spite of all that was happening, jobs were still hard to find. A small factory opened that packaged spices and curry powder. Some of the women found work there, but the men still had to look outside of the village. The tourists were still driving to Soufriere, straight on through the village. They seldom stopped.

Veronica Joseph heard about it all from other people. She no longer left her small wooden house behind the main street. She was now 102, and was cared for by her daughter who was herself growing old.



# LOOKING AHEAD

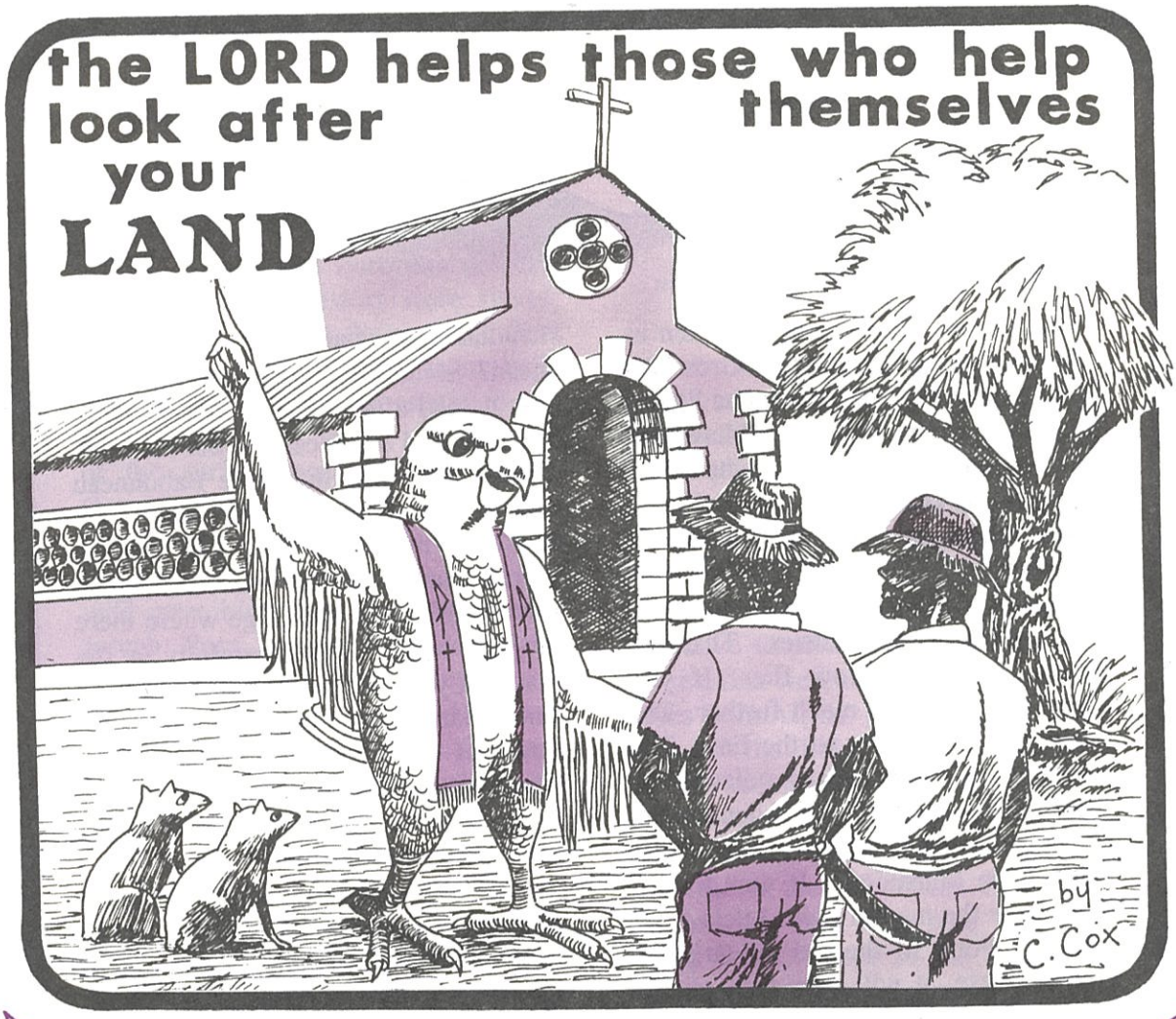
The villagers of Anse la Raye have worked hard as a community to improve their surroundings, but sanitation is still a problem. The village is low-lying with water on all sides. In most places the ground is too marshy to dig down deep enough to put in a septic tank. After heavy rains, or when the sea is higher than usual, the rivers overflow. Then the drains fill up and the playing field becomes a sheet of water. During the ATECH '82 workshop a team of three sanitation engineers from Jamaica, Antigua and Mexico wrote a report describing a sewage system they thought would work. Other engineers later came from Canada to do a more complete survey and design the system. But, as with most things, the problem was to find the money.

Not all the buses and taxis clatter straight on over the red, iron bridge to Soufriere. Now and again, one will stop and the passengers will get out and stroll around. Some even go through the village, past the new Hess School with its large playground into the countryside beyond. The estates are neglected, and the cocoa and citrus trees are covered with weeds, but it is still beautiful. A thick carpet of sweet-smelling ginger lilies covers the ground. Where the river splashes down over the flat rocks sand-pipers wade on stilt legs looking for food. Further down, among the reeds are families of waterfowl. Their feathers are black and glossy and the red patches on their beaks bob up and down as they feed.


Behind the Multi-Purpose Centre there are now two factories. One packaging spices, the other making bleach for the local market. During National Day celebrations in 1985, Veronica Joseph, dressed in her best clothes, was brought from her house to sit in the place of honour. She was 103 years old. When the cornerstone for the new church was blessed in 1907, she was already 25 years old, married, with two children.

There are motor cars now that were not there when she was young and many new buildings, but there is a lot that has not changed. Veronica is now dead. The village was her home for a hundred and three years. If it is to be a good home for the children growing up there today, change must come. Better sanitation, better health, more jobs, not in the next hundred years, but now.

# BUSH TALK




## BABONNEAU

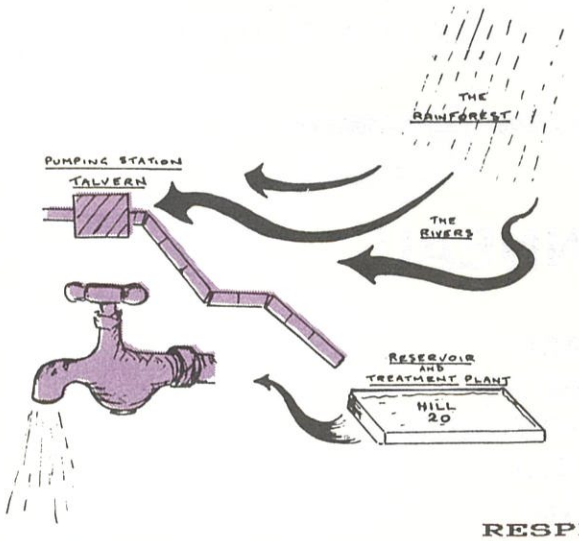
1. The Place
2. The History
3. The Communities
4. The Culture
5. The Future

BABONNEAU

# THE PLACE

Our tour of Saint Lucia has taken us right around the island, from Gros Islet in the North to Vieux Fort in the South. The places we have visited all have one thing in common, they are on the coast. Now, for a change, we are going to travel inland to visit the district of Babonneau.

On the map, Babonneau is roughly three miles from Castries. That, of course, is as the crow flies. If you travel by road, it is much further. The Atlantic is four miles to the East. The Caribbean is just over four miles to the West. Seven and a half miles to the North is the channel that separates Saint Lucia from Martinique. If you draw a line across the map of Saint Lucia from Coubaril Point to the old air strip on Grande Anse, it will pass through the centre of Babonneau.




What does the name 'Babonneau' mean? Some people believe the place was named after a family who lived in the area and were called 'Babonneau'. Others think that the name Babonneau tells us something about the place. They say that it comes from the French words, 'barre - bonne - eau'. In English this would mean 'the ridge where there is good water'. Look carefully at the map and you will see why this might be true. Many rivers begin in this area. Some of them join the Marquis river which comes from the rainforest above Forestiere. Others flow into the Union and Grande Riviere Rivers.

Further south is the towering cloud covered mountain, la Sorciere. The rainfall here is very high. It is one of the island's most important water catchment areas. From the pumping station at Talvern, water is piped to Hill 20 just south of Cabiche. Most of the water for Castries and Babonneau is collected and treated here to make it safe to use.

In the past, Babonneau had a good water supply from its many deep, clear rivers. These rivers, like all the other rivers in the island, are fed by the rain that falls on the rainforest. The rainforest above Babonneau is disappearing fast. More and more land is still being cleared for cultivation. Unless the forest is protected the rivers will dry up.

RESPECT
OUR ENVIRONMENT AND ITS NATURAL RESOURCES

# THE HISTORY


NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE
STAMP ISSUED IN 1969

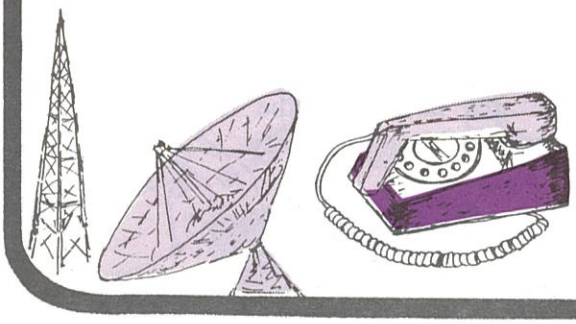
The people of Babonneau are of African, Indian and European descent. Some of their ancestors were slaves, brought here against their will. Others were indentured labourers from India who had to work on the estates to pay back their passage money. In the days of the early French settlers, Joseph Gaspard Tascher de la Pagerie, had a small estate at Morne Paix Bouche in the area of Babonneau. In 1763, his wife gave birth to a daughter Marie-Joseph Rose, whose birth was later registered in Martinique. Yeyette, as she was called, married Napoleon Bonaparte, the great French General. He changed her name to Josephine and made her Empress of France.

Many of the old houses and estate buildings of this period were destroyed at the time of the French Revolution. Others were burned afterwards during the Brigands' War which followed. On Marquis Estate you can still see the ruins of a church, a sugar mill and the home of one of the former Governors of Saint Lucia.

In more recent times, men like Simeon Joseph and Peter Joseph, M.B.E., have made their mark. Both have become well known for the work they have done in the Babonneau district. Mr. Simeon Joseph, was a farmer and a carpenter. He helped to organise the Friendly Societies and to get the people of Babonneau their own church. The cornerstone of the Catholic Church at Babonneau was finally laid down in 1947. It is used by people from the entire Babonneau area. Mr. Joseph kept alive some of the ceremonies like the kele that were brought over with the slaves from Africa. Now that he is dead some of the links with the people's African ancestors may be lost forever.

The other Mr. Joseph came to live in Babonneau in 1940, when he became Principal of the Babonneau Combined School. He held that post for over twenty years. Much of the credit for Babonneau's many voluntary organisations goes to him. Mr.Peter Joseph M.B.E. helped to organise a farmers' co-operative. He encouraged the young people of Babonneau to become Scouts and Guides. When he retired his place was taken by Mr. Barthelmy Gaspard, one of his own pupils, born and raised in Babonneau. Dr. Michael Louis, Saint Lucia's Chief Education Officer, is another past pupil of the Babonneau School.

In 1962 Cable and Wireless built a station on the hill at Monier. It receives and sends out signals and is Saint Lucia's telephone and telex link with the rest of the world. Radio St. Lucia also has a transmitting station at Babonneau.



# THE COMMUNITIES

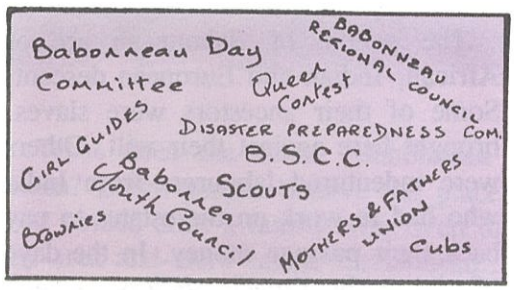
The people of Babonneau live in many small communities scattered over a wide area. Babonneau proper, Boguis, Laguerre, Chassin, Fond Assor, Paix Bouche, Marquis, Balata, Garrand, Cabiche, Cacao, Plateau, Ti Morne and Desbarras, are all of them Babonneau communities.

The small Catholic school that was built at Marquis in 1895, was the first in the Babonneau district. Later, schools were built at Paix Bouche and at Fond Babonneau. These two schools were moved to Babonneau proper in 1932. One of these old wooden buildings is still in use as the Infants' School. Because it was no longer big enough, a new building was added. The other wooden building was replaced in 1952 when the Primary School was built.

La Gare, Bogius, Fond Assor, Balata and Desbarras all have their own schools. Only Babonneau proper has a separate Principal for the Infants' and Primary schools.

At one time, many people from the Babonneau district worked on the Marquis Estate. This estate was once one of the largest and best in Saint Lucia. Today, under new ownership, some of the land has been sold. Other parts have been divided up for development. Certain areas were set aside for housing, others for agriculture.

Special arrangements were made for people who worked on the estate, so many of them were able to buy a small piece of land for themselves.




The land is fertile and the crops grow well. Although most of the farmers grow bananas, a few have also tried raising chickens and pigs. In 1962 the Babonneau chicken farmers started their own co-op. This closed down after hurricane 'Allen' damaged their building in 1980. Now the chicken farmers and the pig farmers of the district market their produce through co-operatives that serve the whole island.

The Babonneau Social and Cultural Club has been involved in many community projects. One of these was building the bus shelter at Choc where many of the Babonneau people wait for transport. They were also responsible for getting Babonneau a Multi-purpose Centre. This is where the Babonneau Queen Show is held. There is a library in the building and a day nursery for young children. Now the Club wants Babonneau to have a home where its old people can be properly cared for.

Mr. Alan Bousquet has been the representative for Babonneau for over twenty years. Many improvements in the area have been the result of his work for his constituency.

# THE CULTURE

The people of Babonneau work very hard to keep the local culture alive. Their twenty two Mothers and Fathers Groups are the best organised in the island. They represent all the different communities in the district. The Social and Cultural Club, started in 1978 is also very active. They organise the Babonneau Carnival Queen Show that takes place each year in the Multi-purpose Centre. In May, there is Mothers' Day. In June Fathers' Day is celebrated. Then of course there are the fetes for the Rose and the Marguerite. Fete la Rose is on the 30th August and Fete la Marguerite is October 17th.

Around December there is Belair and Kont but before that, in October there is Babonneau Day. Babonneau Day was celebrated for the first time in 1981. Now, people from all over the north of the island go to Babonneau for their special day.

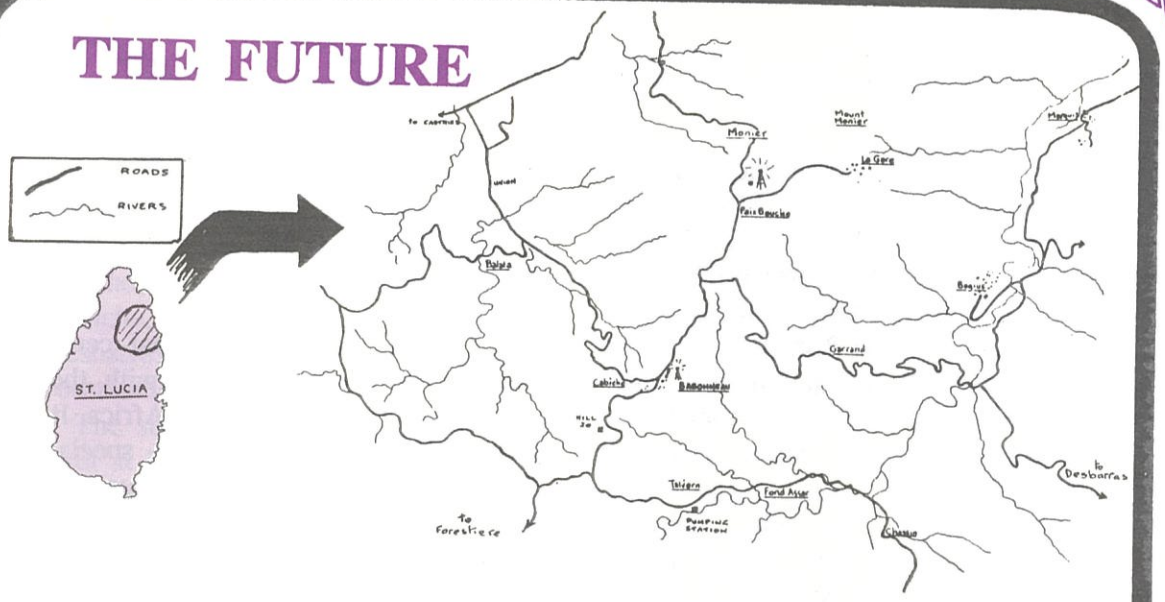
Some groups, like the Fedor dancers and the Babonneau Steel Band, have become well-known throughout the island. They perform at many large events. In 1986, members of the Fedor Dancers went to England to represent Saint Lucia at a Festival of Caribbean Culture.

The kele, another traditional ceremony, came to Saint Lucia with the slaves who were brought from Africa. It was only performed on very special occasions. Simeon Joseph was one of the few men who knew how this should be done. A sheep was sacrificed to the sacred stones or 'shango'. Its head was cut off with one swift blow. If its feet moved afterwards, as if it was dancing to the drums, this was supposed to be a good sign. Like Mr. Joseph, most of the men and women who took part in these rituals are now dead. Perhaps the need for the rituals has also become part of the past.

Religion plays an important part in the community. As well as Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists, there are Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah' Witnesses, Bahai's and members of the Pentecostal Church and the Church of God.

One tradition is certainly not dying out in Babonneau or the rest of the island. That is the quadrille. Although the young people may not be as good as some of the old folk, they are learning and enjoying the dances. There is now an island-wide Schools' Quadrille Competition. The children practice the steps to the la Comette, the Italian Polka and the 'figures' of the quadrille, hoping their school will come first.

# THE FUTURE




Babonneau's future lies in doing what it has always done well - farming. The busier Saint Lucia becomes, the more people there are to be fed, the more important the role of the farmer will become. Instead of being labourers on a large estate, many men now look after their own small piece of land. With better roads and better farming methods they are doing well.

An important part of any development in this area must always be the protection and conservation of Babonneau's forests. This is where the water for all the northern part of the island is collected. When the water supply begins to dry up, the farmer is always the first to suffer.

The owner of a large estate can afford to leave some of his land covered with trees. In this way everyone benefits. In some places, these trees act as a windbreak. In others, especially on the high slopes and ridges, they prevent erosion. In every case they help to increase the amount of water stored by the land after rain. It is impossible for a man who has only a few acres of land do this. It is far better if the forested areas are not sold for development at all. Government has already bought some parts of Marquis Estate to protect them for future watershed areas.

The fast growing population also affects the farmer. More people means more houses. Many houses are being built on flat, fertile land that was once used for agriculture. This forces the farmer to clear new land. Often the land that he clears is on the hillsides where it would be wiser to leave the forest undisturbed.

Babonneau has an important part to play in the future of Saint Lucia. Without a good water supply there is no real progress. The people of Babonneau must use their land wisely to protect the valuable watershed areas remaining in that part of the island.

***Babonneau***

RICH IN TRADITIONS
BLESSED WITH GOOD COMMUNITY LEADERS
AND A LEGACY OF THE FINEST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ST. LUCIA

# About BUSH TALK . . .

Bush Talk was first published as a wildlife and conservation newsletter, by the Forestry and Lands Department. The first issue appeared as a supplement in the "Voice" newspaper in November 1981. It was designed by Maria Grech and contained a selection of stories about Saint Lucia's wildlife written by her at the request of Paul Butler, Forestry Conservation Officer. Giovanni St. Omer did the illustrations for this first Bush Talk and his brother, Alwyn St. Omer, created the cartoon featuring St. Lucia's National Bird, 'Jacquot'.

The newsletter proved a great success and it was decided to continue on a monthly basis using a different topic each month and asking an appropriate person to contribute the introduction. All subsequent issues were written and illustrated by Maria Grech who also edited the introductions and did the layout. When Alwyn St. Omer left the island in 1986 to further his studies, Christopher Cox, artist and ornithologist working for Forestry and Lands Department took over as cartoonist.

Copies of each issue were distributed throughout the school system as part of Forestry and Land Department's Environmental Education Programme. In addition, the 'Voice', a local newspaper with a weekend circulation of about 5,000, continued to use Bush Talk as a supplement thereby further increasing its readership.

Whatever the topic, care was always taken to stress the importance of conservation, protection of the environment and, preservation of the island's rainforest and watershed areas. Bush Talk served as a forum for the dissemination of environmental information and provided the inspiration for similar publications in Dominica, St. Vincent, Honduras and Brazil.

The newsletters have now been compiled into a series of books.

# BUSH TALK

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