

Quarterly Newsletter

June 2021

PANDEMICS OF THE CARIBBEAN

Rochelle Lamm shares some reflections on the 19th century cholera pandemic in St Kitts & Nevis as we navigate our own 21st century Covid-19 disaster

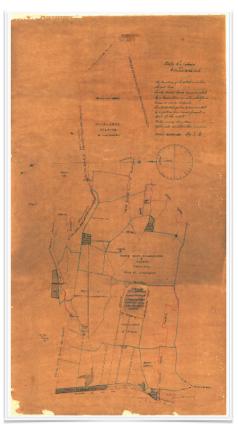
Nevis' 'Cholera Cemetery', located just north of Charlestown at the junction of Low Street and the main road (Old Hospital Road), bears witness to the devastation of the 19th century cholera pandemic in the Caribbean.

While there is no published source that identifies all Caribbean islands affected by cholera at that time, a contemporary infectious disease researcher from Cambridge, K.F. Kiple, observed in 1985 that "200,000 deaths in the Caribbean would not be unrealistic."

British physician, Dr John Snow, who would go on to be widely regarded as the 'father of epidemiology', recorded three successive waves/surges of cholera morbus across the Caribbean islands between 1833 (the first recorded case) and 1856, when St. Kitts and Nevis were most significantly impacted.

Cholera, a highly transmissible infectious disease, was determined to be a disease of the small intestine, with symptoms including dysentery, bleeding of the digestive track, and dehydration. The rate of morbidity was extremely high.

There were two populations who were most susceptible to cholera in the Federation, both groups clustered in tightly packed spaces and some weakened in advance of arrival in the islands: the colonial soldiers who were barracked in close quarters, and the captured Africans who were disembarked on Nevis to be enslaved. An early account recorded that two slave ships docked at Nevis with



This 1880 plan of Pinney's Estate, shared with us by David Small, shows (bottom right) the cemetery and, at its northern end, the public infirmary. This pristine 1880 plan is a digital enhancement organised by Bill Pinney of a plan that both he and David Small found in 'Nevis Common Records Book 1877-1899' in three parts.

From the Editor...

Following a very slow High Season, this quarter naturally saw less activity. While the Federation enjoyed a relatively Covid-free status for much of the past year - thanks to strict measures put in place to protect all its residents - recent community cases gave rise to school closures, event cancellations and increased vigilance. Our team has proudly "Rolled Up 2 Roll Out" and got vaccinated, but out of an abundance of caution to protect our members and our public, our Museums, Gift Shop and Archives were closed to the public from 25 May until further notice (but you can still visit by appointment!).

Our monthly 'Movie Night' and 'Meet the Artist' events were a great success, but are also taking a short break. In the meantime, our team continues to work behind the scenes on the myriad of projects we have, including the Nelson's Spring rehabilitation, New River reforestation, reinvigorating Nevis beekeeping, new Archaeology Centre construction at Bellevue, and improving our museum collections storage and management with a view to developing a Nevis Maritime Museum. We are also sprucing up the Archives and looking for more material to delight you with when our regular Movie Nights return. We thank you all for your continued support!

approximately 1,000 Africans in two cargoes: all died within days of arrival, many weakened through their journey over the Middle Passage by Yellow Fever and other diseases. The *Albany* Evening Journal (1854, Mar 2) reported that "The arrival of the steamer Curlew, from St. Thomas, brings detailed accounts of the ravages of the cholera in those islands... At Nevis, out of 5,000, there have been 550 deaths".

In No. 21.

Copy of a Despatch from Mr. President Seymour to Governor General Mackintosh.

(No. 21.)

Nevis, March 15, 1855.

I HAVE the honour to forward the "Blue Book" of Nevis for the year

2. My service in the island having only extended over a portion of the year which has lately clapsed, I do not feel called upon to furnish any lengthened

Sir,

1854.

- report on this ocasion.

 3. Nevis, which had for some years been almost stationary in the amount 3. Nevis, which had for some years been almost stationary in the amount of population, revenue, and productions, received a sudden shock by the outbreak of Asiatic cholera towards the beginning of 1854. The Treasury was then drained to meet the expenditure caused by the endeavours to mitigate the ravages of the disease, and by the necessity of burying at the public charge those who fell its victims. The resources in hand were insufficient for these purposes; and when they failed an embarrassing debt had further to be incurred. But the derangement of the finances was not the greatest evil which the cholera inflicted on the island. Nearly one tenth of the population, always too small to press in any way upon the means of subsistence, were carried off, and the colony appeared to be threatened with a disastrous change in its industrial condition.
- 4. It is satisfactory to have to state, that the anxious previsions of the planters were not realized, as a moderate crop of sugar was taken off without difficulty. Yet this satisfaction is tempered by the reflection that the prompt refilling of

Dr Thomas H. Cooper was summoned from Barbados and named the Medical Inspector General in St Kitts to deal with the outbreak. Dr Cooper refused to accept that cholera could have originated in England and failed to see that the living environment was the significant contributor to the spread.

After the number of infections skyrocketed beyond the Cunningham Hospital's capacity, a new Cholera Hospital was opened in Basseterre. A government flyer recommended a sure-fire remedy, a pill containing: "calomel, capsicum and one grain of opium, together with a mixture of laudanum, spirits of camphor, sulpheric ether and compound spirits of ammonia in equal parts", but the printed directions tripled the proper dosage, with serious effects to patients. Quickly debunked as quackery, the government notices continued to be posted. Making matters worse, a conman

called Secchi arrived in St. Kitts with a fake 'Cholera Elixir' which he sold, resulting in some deaths. Eventually, Dr Cooper had to take action against both so-called remedies. There was a resultant mistrust of the medical authorities on the island - can we see this being mirrored in vaccine hesitancy today?

STATE OF HER MAJESTY'S COLONIAL POSSESSIONS. 143

From this account of the total daily number of deaths in each parish the following Table is arranged by weeks, dating the first week from the several days on which the first death from cholera occurred in the respective parishes, and we find the result to agree precisely with what has been stated above to have taken place in other localities.

TABLE II.

	Week.									Total
	1st.	2d.	3d.	4th.	5th.	6th.	7th.	8th.	9th.	Deaths
St. George, Basseterre	41	304	582	365	121	29	4	4		1,450
Salt Ponds	_	_	- 1		_	_	_	-	-	33
St. Peter, Basseterre -	31	62	96	85	25	11	3	2	_	315
Palmetto Point -	18	26	55	30	16	10	8	1		164
Middle Island -	15	48	58	38	13	3	2	_	_	177
Old Road	8.5	142	55	7	5	1			_	295
Sandy Point	13	133	206	140	43	22	5	2	_	564
Saint Paul's	7	13	19	27	23	14	7	5	1	116
Dieppe Bay	6	22	62	65	37	22	10	2	1	227
Nichola Town -	2	21	59	45	43	16	16	5	7	214
Cayon	14	97	106	65	40	23	14	3	3	365
TOTAL	232	868	1,298	867	366	151	69	24	12	3,920

After spending several decades studying cholera in a systematic way, Dr Snow ultimately discovered that cholera was spread via contaminated water. On Nevis, the authorities eventually had all the wells in Charlestown sealed. The lack of fresh running water in Nevis was a problem and the wells were often right next to the privies in town. On St Kitts, the towns and most estates had their own independent water sources, but not so on Nevis. It was in c. 1911 that a spring now known as 'The Source' – some 1,800 feet up the mountain – was tapped and pipes laid from above Golden Rock to Charlestown and 'damps' (dams) were put in each village. Island-wide piped water remained a dream until the efforts of the first Premier of Nevis, the Hon. Simeon Daniel, at Independence in 1983.

^{*} Sources include:

⁻ The National Archives, St Kitts

^{- &#}x27;At the Corner of Genealogy' blog by Linda Brewster Mallalieu

^{- &}quot;Despatch from Mr President Seymour to the Governor General Mackintosh" in Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command. Volume 42, 1855

⁻ Jenson, D., & Szabo, V. (2011). Cholera in Haiti and Other Caribbean Regions, 19th Century. Emerging Infectious Diseases, 17(11), 2130-2135

TEAM BUILDING

On 14th April, the entire Society team – accompanied by Jahnel Nisbett, Gillian Hobson, Sylvester Meade, Patrick Howell, Beverly Parry and Ajuma Abungu – enjoyed a day full of history and heritage on our sister island, St Kitts, thanks to an amazing tour put together by **Greg's Safaris**. We started with a visit to the **National Museum** in the Old Treasury building, where we were able to reflect upon the Christena disaster through a new temporary exhibition. After that, we ventured to **Shadwell Great House**, with a

quick stop at
Ital Creations
at Fari
Organic Farm
for delectably fresh
snacks.

We gingerly navigated the sacred **Stone Fort riverbed** to marvel at the ancient Amerindian petroglyphs; the river exits at **Bloody Point**,



Onwards through **Wingfield Estate**, we saw the well-maintained ruins of the 18th century sugar cane plantation and rum distillery; and then the stately Saman tree at **Romney Manor**. The tree is over 400 years old and covers 1/2 an acre. Unless

vou've visited

Romney Manor, you may not know that the first owner Romney Manor & Wingfield Estate was Sam Jefferson II, the great, great grandfather of Thomas Jefferson, American statesman and Founding Father.

From there, we ventured to the mill and restored great house at Lambert's Estate before reaching the must-see **UNESCO World Heritage site Brimstone Hill**, including the impressive barrel-vaulted Ordnance Storehouse - the oldest structure at the site, built in 1690.





After the exhausting morning hikes, some cold drinks at Exclusive Bar & Grill "Relax" hit the spot, before heading to the beach at Dieppe Bay for a light snack of local fruits, sugar cane and coconut cakes. Our last stop was to see the beautifully restored mill and houses at Lower Bourryeau, (aka Mills Estate), before heading over to Reggae Beach for our short water taxi ride back to Nevis! The team extends a very big THANK YOU to our President, Richard Lupinacci for organising this teambuilding adventure with tour guide par excellence, Greg Pereira.





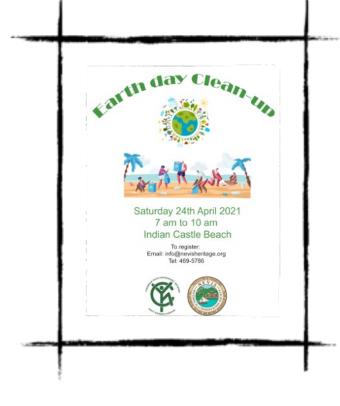
We extend special thanks to the following members & friends for their generous contributions in cash or kind!

Miriam Knorr
Carol Willauer
Pam Barry
Bev Parry
Allerson Browne
The family of Quentin
"Beeman" Henderson

April 24th. In Nevis, the Society marked the day with staff and representatives from the Caribbean Youth Environment Network partnered for a beach clean-up in the Indian Castle area and shoreline as part of our annual activities for Earth Day. The activity, coordinated by staff member Ella Bendeito, saw more than 700 pounds of garbage collected. Hon. Eric Evelyn (Federal Minister of Environment and Cooperatives, and NIA Minister of Culture, Youth, Sports, Community Development) joined the group, highlighting the importance of keeping our environment free of garbage.

Earth Day 2021 was





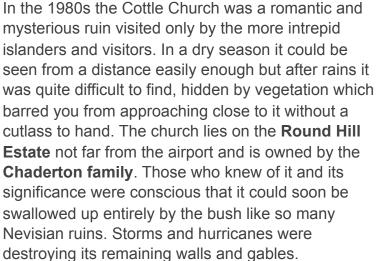
We take this opportunity to congratulate Hon. Evelyn for recently taking up the Chairmanship of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Council of Ministers for the Environment!

Meanwhile, indefatigable member **Miriam Knorr** conducted her 18th Annual "Clean Island Sweep" on behalf of the Society. Kudos to Miriam and **Allerson Browne** who collected two truckloads of material from the roadside, including: 25 tyres, 3 TVs, a wheel barrow, 2 toilets, a fax machine, 2 batteries, a dead computer, 2 rusty Four Seasons umbrellas, a washing machine, metal cans, pallets, an office stool, and a microwave, among other large objects not normally collected by the Nevis Solid Waste Management Authority. Thank you, Miriam and Allerson for your continued unwavering support for the Society and our environment!



NEW SIGNAGE FOR COTTLE CHURCH







In the 1990s a UK Trust was formed to raise funds to conserve and stabilise the ruins of Cottle Church at Round Hill, and since 2019 the church and its grounds have been cared for by the Society. We are very grateful for the Trust funds that most recently enabled us to design, print and mount new signage for the site, which will go a long way in enhancing the visitor experience. You are welcome to visit the church, which lies at the northern end of the island, not far from the airport – but we ask that you maintain respect for it as a **sacred ground**, where many enslaved persons were buried.

For more information, you can visit the site in person, or <u>Online!</u>

For event bookings, please call the Society office on 469-5786 or 661-0408 or send us an Email: info@nevisheritage.org

And please remember, no littering:

"Take only memories, leave only footprints"



HERITAGE IN DANGER



The Society noted with great sadness the burning of the historic **Bath House** within the larger **Bath Hotel complex** on the evening of May 18th. The c.1800 building predates the larger but newer Bath Hotel, and belongs to the Nevis Island Administration (NIA). The smaller Bath House has been unoccupied and derelict for some time, and the Society had just recently obtained a quote to rebuild the roof, and was hopeful to do it this year pending availability of donations. Assuming the mass masonry walls have retained their strength, the estimated cost of rebuilding – as original could be in excess of EC\$250,000 (approx. US\$ 92,500).

Our island is blessed with possibly more historic sites and structures per square mile than any other island in our region. But maintaining them with only a few thousand taxpayers is daunting. The Society, as a private, non-profit/non-governmental entity, has - with the NIA's endorsement – led the movement to protect and preserve the island of Nevis for over 30 years, and we shall continue to do so with your support.

Members Corner



Prof. Michael Ivie of Montana State University, USA, shares with us the news of a new species of beetle found on Nevis Peak, named after Nevisian scientist Professor Ernest Melville DuPorte (1891–1981)

THERE'S A NEW BEETLE ON THE BLOCK!

Two newly discovered species of beetles from the tops of the mountains of St. Kitts and Nevis have been named for a famous Nevisian scientist and a recently departed Kittitian civil servant. DuPorte's Ground Beetle (*Platynus duportei* Liebherr and Ivie) and Racquel's Ground Beetle (*Platynus racquelae* Liebherr and Ivie) were named in honor of the famous McGill University (Montreal, Canada) insect morphologist **Professor Ernest Melville DuPorte** (1891–1981), a native of Nevis, and **Racquel Williams-Ezquea** (1983–2018), recently of the Government of the Federation of St

Kitts and Nevis' Forestry Unit. The tribute appeared in a paper published in the March, 2021, issue of the international journal *Coleopterists Bulletin*. The paper was authored by **Professors James Liebherr of Cornell University** and **Michael Ivie of Montana State University**, USA.

The beetle species, one from Nevis Peak and the other from Mount Liamuiga, represent the first records for the *Platynus* from the country, and are a unique part of the nation's biodiversity heritage. The discovery also contributes to our understanding of the biotic importance of the region. The new species fill in the northern-most records of this mountain-top species-group, found only in the Lesser Antilles previously know from Basse-Terre (Guadeloupe), Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. The new species continue the pattern of each species being restricted to a single island. Such knowledge allows better planning and protection of areas supporting such globally unique resources.

The species were discovered during the Terrestrial Ecological Inventory Project, a component of the Conserving Biodiversity and Reducing Habitat Degradation in Protected Areas and Their Areas of Influence, St. Kitts and Nevis Project of the Government of the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis, the United Nations Development Program, Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and The Global Environment Facility. The Environmental Awareness Group of Antigua and Barbuda lead the project implementation with the extensive support of the GOSKN Department of the Environment. Insect surveys were conducted by an international team of scientists throughout the protected areas of St. Kitts and Nevis. The paper acknowledges the work and assistance of a number of SKN citizens, including Ms Claudia Drew, Ms Phynora Ible, Mr. Nigel Thom, Mr. Jordan Cassius, Mr. Wentworth Smithen, Mr. Rudell Williams, Mr. Rickel Henley and the late Mrs. Racquel Williams-Ezquea.

The full article can be obtained by request to the Department of Environment St.

Kitts doeskn@gmail.com or the Environmental Awareness Group at at EAGAntigua@gmail.com or Dr. Ivie at mivie@montana.edu

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Movies at the Museum

On April 24th we held yet another successful Movie Night on the museum grounds, in conjunction with the **Nevis Cultural Development Foundation (NCDF)**, with more films from our archives! We showed short films made locally by **Esther Brookes**, **James Galloway** and **Patrick Howell**, and the feature film **'A Laughing Matter'**, starring lots of Nevisians, had everyone roaring with laughter.

Unfortunately, this was our last Movie Night for the season, as our Museums, Gift Shop and Archives closed to the public on 25th May. Fear not, our team is scouring the Archives for more footage to regale you with when we re-open!









Archaeology Centre Groundbreaking: 28 April

The new Centre, being constructed adjacent to the Nelson Museum and Archives, has been made possible through a generous grant from **Dr Elaine Morris**, Visiting Fellow in Archaeology at the University of Southampton (UK) and a steadfast member of the Society for many years. Dr Morris has a long history of archaeological work in Nevis as part of the 'Nevis Heritage Project', in particular through her research on the

making and using of Nevis Afro-Caribbean pottery over the past 350 years. The new research centre will comprise a Research Room for visiting researchers, Finds Processing Room, Equipment Storage Room and Artefact Storage Room that should provide enough shelf space for the archaeological finds excavated from c. 1980 through to c. 2030, covering a minimum of 50 years of fieldwork on the island by many different teams of researchers and amateurs' collections. The single-story building will be block construction with a wood framed roof with architectural elements sympathetic to local styles. The tender for construction was awarded to Chiverton's Construction Co. Ltd, with an expected completion date of December 2021. The Society wishes to again express its thanks to Dr Morris for her continued generous support of archaeological research in Nevis.

Heritage Village Open Day: 7 May

On May 7th our team headed out to the **Nevisian Heritage Village** in Fothergills in a show of support for our heritage
through domestic tourism, cultural tourism and our creative
industries! It was a fun-filled day with live String Band music,
drumming, crafts, dominoes, freshly cooked Ital and other
traditional foods, and bread cooked from a stone oven. And of
course a stroll through the houses that took us back in time from
Amerindian days through pre-Independence.





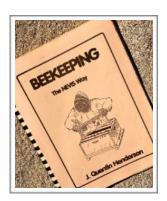


International Museum Day: 18 May

The Covid-19 crisis swept the whole world abruptly, affecting every aspect of our lives, and museums are no exception to these changes. As we begin to recover, we realise that this crisis served as a catalyst for innovation, notably an increased focus on digitisation and the creation of new forms of cultural experience and dissemination. Even in Nevis, the time is NOW to rethink our relationship with the communities we serve, to experiment with new models of cultural achievement and to reaffirm the essential value of museums for the construction of a just and sustainable future.



World Bee Day: 20 May



On this day, our thoughts turned to **Quentin "Beeman" Henderson** - stalwart member of the Society and friend to all here in Nevis - who passed away on 30 May 2020. Beeman helped to modernise the industry and placed honey on every supermarket shelf in Nevis and the surrounding islands! In his memory, some members have joined with the Society to reinvigorate Nevis beekeeping through a new group, the Nevis Beekeepers Association. In the meantime, we are very grateful to the family of the late Beeman for the generous gift of 104 books from his



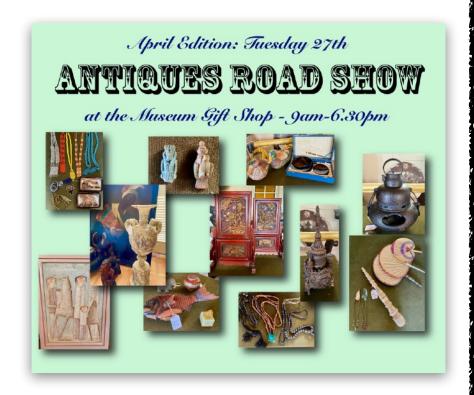
private collection. Not only will these books be an important legacy of a beloved and long-standing member of the Society, but they will be invaluable in our work to revive beekeeping in Nevis in his honour. If you are interested in this project, please let us know!

Staff News

CONGRATULATIONS!

to Nevena "Babita" Seelall, Jonathan Ward and Jamilah Clarke
who all successfully completed the
UWI Open Campus Continuing and Professional Education course on
Business Writing and Communication

SHOP TALK



Who doesn't love antiques! We held our last edition on Tuesday the 27th of April, once again showcasing unique collectibles from the estate of **Dick Mayo**, courtesy of David Davis. We definitely look forward to more of these special sales when we re-open the Gift Shop, as well as the return of our monthly **Meet the Artist** events to coincide with Burger Night at the Café des Arts. Sadly, our **Bi-annual Craft Fair** in June was cancelled due to lockdown/curfew restrictions, but we look forward to holding it again in December, just in time for the holidays!

Changing of the Guard



At the end of May, we bid farewell
to Liz and Rob Smith, who left
Nevis for their native UK after
running the Café des Arts on the
museum grounds for over a
decade. They handed over the
reins to Roma Brijlall and
Subrina Kistoo, who are
continuing the tradition of offering
light and healthy sandwiches and
salads, as well as all-day breakfast
and 'Burger Night' every Tuesday.

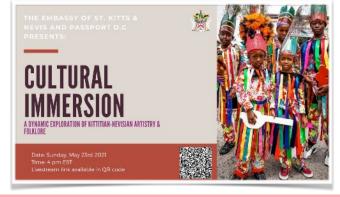


all things hamilton



We are excited that our short video about Alexander Hamilton and the Nevis Museums was included in the "Cultural Immersion to St. Kitts and Nevis" event of the Embassy of St Kitts & Nevis - United States of America, live-streamed on 23rd May. We had so much fun making the video with Patrick Howell of the Nevis Cultural Development Foundation (NCDF), which features our very own Jamilah Clarke as host. You can watch the video on our YouTube channel by clicking here! Do you like Jamilah's t-shirt? We have more in stock in the Museum Gift Shop!







CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please get in touch if you'd like to donate towards, or get involved with, any of our activities!

Our success depends on YOU!

- Monthly "Movie Night": Nevis Past & Present (footage from the Archives)
- September: Coastal Cleanup (date to be confirmed)
- November: Arbour month (activities to be determined)
- ▶ 15 December: Bi-annual [Holiday] Craft Fair
- > 3rd Thursday of every month: meeting of the Board of Directors
- December: Membership renewal!

We look forward to resuming our "Antiques Roadshow" and "Meet the Antist" cocktail hours every last Tuesday of the month, at the Museum Gift Shop!



NEVIS HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Our Team

Gail Dore – Senior Archivist / Ag. Administrative Officer
Elmon Coram – Gallery attendant, Nelson Museum
Nevena "Babita" Seelall – Gallery attendant/Membership Officer
Arcquela "Ella" Bendeito – Gallery attendant/Assistant archivist
Jonathan Ward – Gallery attendant/Admin. assistant
Deus Herbert – Gallery attendant / digitisation
Jamilah Clarke – Museum Gift Shop attendant
Miriam Knorr – Museum Gift Shop supervisor
Lorna Glover Abungu – Museum / Communications advisor
Patrick Howell – Audio-Visual support
Keithly Amory – IWEco project coordinator
Jenny Lowery – Consultant, Nelson Spring Restoration Project

Executive Board 2020

Richard Lupinacci – President
Todd Miller – Vice President
Warren Moving – Treasurer
Anthony Gajor
Gillian Hobson
Kris Liburd
Terence "Tee" Liburd
Sylvester Meade
Maurisha Robinson
Charles Ward

PO Box 563, Charlestown, Nevis
St Kitts & Nevis
Tel: +1-869-469-5786
Email: info@nevisheritage.org • www.nevisheritage.org

Follow us, Tag us!



www.facebook.com/NevisHeritage



#museumofnevishistory

Design and Layout: in-house © 2021 Nevis Historical & Conservation

PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE!

We thank all everyone for the tremendous response to our membership drive at the beginning of 2021. Members who have not yet renewed their membership – and those wishing to join – are encouraged to do so by coming by the Museum of Nevis History and renewing/joining in person, or by submitting the online form at www.nevisheritage.org! We've partnered with the GivenGain Foundation to provide a secure platform for our members to pay ONLINE!

Please consider supporting the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society as a member or donor, so we can strengthen our efforts to protect and promote the historical, cultural and natural resources of Nevis!