

ADAPT, DIVERSIFY, RECREATE: INDEPENDENCE 38

Ella Bendeito and *Jonathan Ward* dug into our Archives to share some moments from our Pre-Independence celebrations 1983, courtesy of 'The Democrat' newspaper



March 16th, 1983 – The Premier, **Dr the Honourable Kennedy Simmonds**, announced that the British Government came to an agreement with the Government of the State that St. Christopher and Nevis should attain independence on Monday 19th September 1983, after coming to a satisfied conclusion of the customary constitutional processes in the time available. He also mentioned that a draft constitution was prepared and lead to a serious debate in the House of Assembly for three days.

Just one week before, the March 9th edition of 'The Democrat' described the debate itself as a "revealing and griping encounter" between the Government and the opposition, winding up the 10-year quest for the coming of age for St. Kitts and Nevis. The sister islands were also described as the 'Alpha and Omega of Associated Statehood', the first to celebrate half-independent status and the last to come out of it.

June 4th, 1983 – Ms Pamela Wall, Chairman of the National Anthem Sub-Committee, did a presentation of the winning entry in the Independence National Anthem Competition on Friday after the 7 o'clock roundup on ZIZ National Television. The judges were: Ms Pamela Wall, Mr Stanley Amory, Ms Loma



Kenrick Anderson Georges

Edwards, and Mrs Lilith Kelsock. There were 45 entries: nine from Nevis and 36 from St. Kitts. Twelve of the 45 entries favoured the retention of the present song with new words. After 12 lengthy meetings, the committee unanimously chose "O Land of Beauty", an entry by **Mr Kenrick Georges** of Basseterre, as the new national anthem (Mr. Georges passed away on August 26th, 2019).

June 18th, 1983 – A

National Flag Competition was organised by the Flag and Coat of Arms Committee. After the competition closed on 28th February, the winning design by **Ms Edris Lewis**, a student from Newtown, Basseterre was chosen from a total of 258 entries. The design was selected and approved by Cabinet



Edris Lewis of Newtown (source: <u>https://</u> <u>buckleysboyz.page.tl</u>)

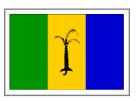
and sent to the world-renowned College of Heraldry in the United Kingdom, the international authorities on flags, for screening.

July 23rd, 1983 –

Flags For Each Island

decided that St. Kitts and Nevis will have island colours. The island colour will bear the National Slag in the top left hand canton or quarter of the Flag. The other cantons will bear a design, symbolic of the respective island.

The Protocol in respect of the usage of the island colours, will be established. It should however be noted that the National Flag will take the place of honour, at all times.



Flag of the Statehood of St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla



National Flag of St. Christopher and Nevis



Flag of Nevis Island

From the Editor ...

Towards the end of the last quarter, we closed our Museums, Gift Shop and Archives to the public except by appointment. Tourism has been severely impacted by the pandemic, but we are grateful for the few visitors whom we were able to welcome over the past few months.

We hope to resume our monthly 'Movie Night' and 'Meet the Artist' events in November, to coincide the High Season and the return of many of our overseas members. We have some particularly fascinating 18mm footage from the 1950s, expertly digitised by our archives advisor at Hamilton College in New York, Mr Christian Goodwillie, and we can't wait to share it with you!

The Nevis Archaeology Centre at Bellevue is nearing completion, and our staff have been working diligently at the Archives and Nelson Museum to prepare for the expansion of the Archives and redevelopment of the museum gallery. While we postponed the International Coastal Cleanup due to excessive sargassum seaweed and growing community spread of Covid-19, our other natural heritage projects continue apace.

Our biggest news this quarter is the appointment of a new Director! Jahnel Nisbett is an experienced Nevisian educator, who brings on board her youthful exuberance and passion. We are grateful for the warm and enthusiastic response from our membership. *Learn more about Jahnel on page 4*!



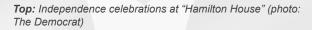
Hon. Kennedy Simmonds, then and now

August 20th, 1983 – Britain surprised the Premier, Hon. Kennedy Simmonds, on Friday 19th with news that GB£10 million (EC\$48 Million) had been allocated as post-independence aid from Great Britain for St. Kitts and Nevis. The Aid Package was said to consist of a GB£5 million grant followed by a GB£5 million soft loan to be made available after the grant has been fully

disbursed. Premier Simmonds expressed his surprise on the timing of the British release at a time when his government made a strong case for increased aid to take in account the current depressed value of the pound and the state of the country's main export, sugar. According to the *Bank of England Inflation Calculator*, the grant would today be worth approximately GB£35 million (or EC\$131 million).

September 3rd, 1983 – As the Prime Minister-designate, Dr Simmonds received notification via letter that St. Kitts-Nevis' membership application for Commonwealth had been approved by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, **His Excellency Sir**

Shridath Ramphal. St. Kitts and Nevis officially became part of the Commonwealth on the day of their Independence: September 19th, 1983. **Dr the Honourable Simeon Daniel**, Nevis' first Premier, invited Nevisian-rooted American actress, **Cicely Tyson**, to cut the ribbon at the opening of the restored "Hamilton House" in Nevis during the independence ceremony.



Middle: The late Cicely Tyson (photo: the Democrat)

Bottom: The late Sir Simeon Daniel enjoying a light moment at a cocktail party hosted by Old Manor, with owner, Vicki Knorr. By all accounts, it was the largest cocktail party ever witnessed in Nevis! (Photo: courtesy Miriam Knorr)





Q: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN THE NEVIS HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION SOCIETY?

Joining the Society almost seems fated. The work carried out here is truly a melting pot of some of the areas that I am most passionate about. Anyone who knows me can attest to my love of history and culture, the environment, and most importantly, Nevis! When the opportunity to work at preserving and enhancing these areas presented itself, I simply had to seize it.



Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS LEAVING TEACHING?

I honestly love teaching and although I left classroom teaching, I will somehow always be a teaching. Former students still see me and yell "teacher!" or message me for assistance with assignments, to which I happily oblige. So, some days I do miss the classroom but I'm confident that this is the right place for me and that I'll continue to make an impact in this new role.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND AND HOW HAS IT PREPARED YOU TO LEAD THE SOCIETY?

I hold a BA in History (Hons.) with a minor in Anthropology. Such a background I believe makes me an ideal individual to lead an organisation whose focus is largely historical and culture based. The interpersonal, creative

and organisational skills that I honed while teaching secondary school have also begun to prove useful, as the work carried out by the Society is highly collaborative in nature. I have also held leadership positions in a cross section of professional and civic organisations from being a Caricom Youth Ambassador to co-founding 'Dutty Up Yuh Fingah'. The rich experiences from all of which have prepared me to excel in this role.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AS YOUR BIGGEST WEAKNESS WITH REGARDS TO THIS POSITION?

My biggest weakness is probably that I have more ideas and plans than I do time and resources. It will therefore be very important for me to prioritise what needs to be done and what we actually have the capacity to do. I have become quite fond of tools such as calendars of events/activities





and time management plans because I wouldn't want to stumble into a situation where there are a lot of incomplete and poorly executed projects because I tried to do too much at once.

Q: YOUR PREVIOUS CAREER WAS VERY YOUTH-CENTRED, ARE THERE ANY PLANS TO ENGAGE THE YOUTHS IN THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY?

The simple answer is YES. For a long time, the Society has been viewed as an organisation for the more mature and retired. That however is far from the reality as the Society is for everyone, the young, old and middle-aged alike. With that said however, we understand that a targeted approached must be taken to shift the narrative. There is a popular saying that 'the old come to us, but we must go to the young' and thus while Covid-19 has placed some limitations on us, there are plans to create fun, interactive school and youth-based clubs under the umbrella of the Society. The goal for such programmes is to reach young minds when they are most malleable, in efforts to foster lifelong commitments to the protection of the island's natural, cultural and historical resources.

Q: WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THIS JOB?

There are so many things to love but I must say that my

favourite aspect is getting to meet and work with a diverse group of people, both locally and internationally, all with the shared goal of wanting to protect and preserve the natural, cultural, and historical resources of my home (Nevis).





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

Sugar Mill Real Estate Eugene Saunders Carol Willauer Anne & David Fass Curtis Driggers Elaine Morris Biriam Knorr and Tim Benest for his very generous contribution towards the Alexander Hamilton Scholarship Fund

Q: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS CURRENT CHALLENGES AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM?

Some challenges that we face range from financial to limited human resources and expertise, as a result of our small population. One of the best ways to address these areas is to partner with regional and international networks with similar mandates. Organisations such as INTO (International National Trusts Organisation) for example, whose incubator programme I recently participated in, provide essential opportunities to tap into international best practices, expert advice and support, as well as financial assistance. The biggest challenge that I see however is a lack of widespread collective value as a populace for our island's history and tangible and intangible heritage. This we hope to address through education campaigns and programmes targeting children and youth who will be leading us sooner than we realise.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR WORK IS SO IMPORTANT?

I consider my work to be extremely important because we are the frontline in ensuring that all generations get to experience the best of what Nevis has to offer. From our potent historical past to our expansive ecosystem and rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage, we work assiduously to preserve these aspects for generations to come.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD?

There is definitely no short supply of ideas but my immediate priority is to observe and truly understand the needs of the Society. The current staff, volunteers and members have been on the ground much longer than I have, so rather than charging ahead, the first phase is to support current and upcoming programmes, while learning from those who preceded me.

Beyond that, growth and sustainability are priority areas. The success of the Society is inextricably linked to volunteers, membership, and community support. It is thus important that Nevisians see this Society as an extension of themselves working for the good of Nevis and so feel more compelled to join and volunteer with us.

Q: OUTSIDE OF WORK, WHO IS JAHNEL NISBETT?

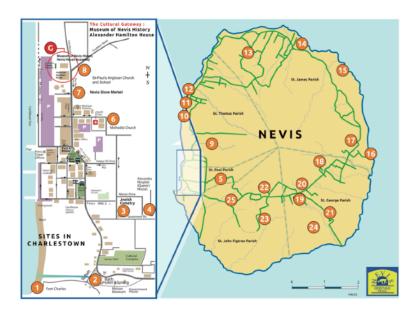
I am what I like to call a bundle of contradictions. My interests and activities are so diverse that people are often surprised. One thing that is constant however is that I am passionate about everything that I do. I am a lover of spoken word poetry (sometimes I dabble), reading a good book (I strongly recommend Ken Follett), pageantry, hiking, binge-watching Netflix, and most importantly...ice-cream! I was born in Anguilla to Kittitian and Nevisian parents and was blessed with the opportunity to grow up here and call Nevis home! I would also add that I'm a bit of a compulsive volunteer. I just love being engaged and knowing that I'm actively contributing and making a difference rather than sitting around and commenting on all that needs to be done, but never doing it.







MUSEUM OF NEVIS HISTORY GATEWAY TO THE 25 HERITAGE TRAIL SITES





How familiar are you with the **Nevis Heritage Trail**? In 2003 the Society identified 25 signature sights around the island, to constitute its official Heritage Trail; these include churches, historic plantations/estates, military installations and natural sites. The

recent redevelopment of the **Museum of Nevis History** positions it as the gateway to the trail, and the Society is currently seeking funds to develop new and improved signage and marketing materials.

On Wednesday 1st September, our small group headed out from the Museum on a team-building Field Trip to a number of these cultural and natural sites and others. including Historic Charlestown, Fort Charles, and Fort George – where just nearby, we witnessed the **Nevis Island Administration**'s latest and very impressive agricultural project. We are grateful to **Mr. Huey Sargeant, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture**, and particularly **Mr. Ronald "Bankie" King, Manager of the Indian Castle Estate Vegetable and Fruit Farm,** for the tour. The trip also included a visit to some of the Society's ongoing IWEco-funded projects, namely reforestation at the New River and Hick's Estate at Potworks. Unfortunately, heavy rain prevented us from stopping at Cottle Church, Fort Ashby and Nelson's Spring.







Big Up to our President and Secretary, Richard Lupinacci and Tee Liburd, for organising the trip, and to everyone who turned out: Sylvester Meade, Maurisha Robinson, Todd Miller, Jahnel Nisbett, Keithly Amory, Ella Bendeito,

Jonathan Ward, Nevena Seelall, Gail Dore, Jamilah Clarke, Patrick Howell and Lorna Abungu.









HERITAGE IN DANGER



Many of us were appalled and saddened by the recent destruction of the historic stone wall at the **Slave Market site**, which dates to the 1670s. This area, which has been the subject of archaeological investigations and is among the sites on the official **Heritage Trail**, forms an important part of Nevis' painful past as the

administrative centre of the British slave trade between 1674 and 1689,

and is thus a sacred site of conscience and remembrance of the enslaved ancestors of Nevisians of African descent.

We are equally concerned by the ongoing and wanton destruction and desecration of historic sites throughout the island by way of

stone theft – most recent examples being at <u>Cottle Church</u> and the Lime Kiln at New River. Press Releases after such



acts take place are important, but insufficient: we must actively engage our public on the



importance of our historic sites and the need to preserve them for future generations.

Pursuant to the National Conservation and Environment Protection Act (NCEPA) 2009, Part X.51(a) "antiquities" include "any ancient monument which dates or may reasonably believed to date from a period prior to 1900". The Society is working together with the NIA, through its Heritage Manager, to strengthen current legislation and embark on a public awareness campaign.



Members (Jarner

NEVIS GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Christine Eickelmann is an Honorary Research Associate in the Department of History of the School of Humanities at the University of Bristol, UK. She has chronicled the lives of all people known to have lived on Mountravers sugar plantation on

Nevis, from its early beginnings until 1834, and shares with us now her guide to pre-Emancipation genealogical research. Christine writes the following:

"Historians have estimated that various European nations have enslaved 12.5 million African men, women and children. Shipped to the Caribbean and the Americas, most of the 10.7 million who survived the Atlantic crossing were forced to work on the plantations.

Britain withdrew from the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 1807. Slavery itself continued in British colonies until August 1834. Under the terms of the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 enslaved people had to undergo a four-year apprenticeship period while their masters and mistresses claimed their share of the British government's £20 million compensation fund. Emancipation in most British possessions came in August 1838. In North America slavery persisted until 1865. By then literacy was spreading among enslaved people, resulting in a great number of slave narratives. By comparison, in the British Caribbean enslaved people generally left few written records. This means that their lives have to be explored almost entirely from official records.

I have worked with these records for over 20 years. I am currently researching the free black and coloured slaveholders of Nevis in the 19th century, a project which grew out of my study of the Mountravers plantation population. Before you begin, a word of caution: tracing your ancestor back to the pre-Emancipation period can feel like a needle-in-a-haystack job. To find a person who was born before 1838 you will need

- a lot of time
- a lot of patience
- a lot of luck
- good note-taking skills

• a healthy dose of scepticism: is this true? how can I prove it is true?

In addition, you will need the ability to deal with uncertainty because you may well be able to narrow down the options to a few individuals without being able to identify the one person who was your forebear. It is also possible that, despite your very best efforts, you may not be able to trace your ancestor back to the pre-Emancipation period at all."

You can read more about her research <u>here</u> and request a copy of the guide from the Society by <u>Email</u>.

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Page 1 of the 1817 register for Eden plantation

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

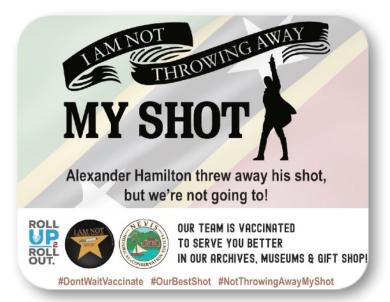
Ocean Conservancy's **2021 International Coastal Cleanup** is the world's largest volunteer effort to keep our oceans free of trash. Our annual Coastal Cleanup for Nevis, originally scheduled for 25th September, was postponed due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in our communities and the abundance of sargassum seaweed that has washed up on the beaches. But don't worry – we are rescheduling for October or November! Registration is ongoing while our Biodiversity Committee continues discussions on how the clean-up will proceed with the challenges, and the teams will be updated accordingly.

Sign up today by sending us your team name and contact information:

Email: <u>ebendeito@nevisheritage.org</u> Tel: 469-5786 / 469-0408 Call, text or WhatsApp: 661-0408



We hope to resume our regular events, like monthly "Movie Night" and "Meet the Artist" in November! In the meantime, stay safe, and #WearYuhMask 😁



NELSON MUSEUM & NEVIS ISLAND ARCHIVES

Ella Bendeito, the Society's Assistant Archivist, opens the doors to the "crypt" and lets us in on the latest happenings



The **Nelson Museum and Nevis Island Archives**, located at Bellevue, have been closed to the public due to an increase in community spread of Covid-19, as well as on-site construction.

So... what have we been up to? We took the opportunity during this down time to purge obsolete and defunct equipment, as well as irrelevant documents. The major challenge has been our physical space. The main library of the Archives is cramped, items are stored under tables and on shelves that take up most of the surface area. This forced us to re-evaluate what should or should not be accessioned in our collection moving forward, and we look forward to the working more closely with our Archives advisor, **Mr Christian Goodwillie, of Hamilton College** in the US, once travel to Nevis becomes easier.

Inventorying and accessioning are ongoing, which has been challenging yet rewarding. Some exhibit material (education,

independence) that were not relevant to the Nelson/maritime theme were taken down and placed in storage to make space for our efforts to redevelop the space into the **Nevis Maritime Museum & Nelson Collection**. The gift shop items at the Nelson Museum have been relocated to the Museum Gift Shop at Hamilton House Museum in town, so be sure to check it out.

Even though the Museum has been closed to the public, the Archives remain open and active by appointment for research and remote researching, via phone and email. We have been very busy digitising parish baptism, death and marriage records and other documents, but at slower pace, given

the disruptions from the construction. That said, we are VERY excited about the latest addition to the Bellevue complex: the **Nevis Archaeology Centre** (*photo, right*). Construction is running smoothly, and expected to be completed by December this year.

It became apparent during inventorying and digitising, that some items in our collection that were accessioned are now nowhere to be found; leading us to believe that items were misplaced or removed from the Archives and not returned. On the positive side, some items that were deemed lost have re-surfaced! We therefore urge all visitors to the Archives – researchers, residents, and



members – to return any items that they may have in their possession as soon as possible: no questions asked!



On 1st August 1970, the ferry **MV Christena** capsized in the 12 mile channel between the two islands; 233 souls perished, but some survivors were rescued or swam to shore. Passenger capacity was 155, but the Christena was carrying approximately 320 people.



The 1st of August also happens to be celebrated as **Emancipation Day** throughout the Caribbean. Even though the British Empire outlawed slavery in 1833, full legal freedom didn't come to St. Kitts and Nevis until 1838, because of a form of modified slavery called "apprenticeship", which began in August 1834. Under this system, former slave holders continued to own all the arable land and enslaved persons had to buy their freedom by working 45 hours a week for a period of 4 to 6 years.

Every year on the 1st of August, we honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system, and – in this Federation – we also honour the memory of those lost on the MV Christena.

At this year's Annual Christena Memorial, 90 copies of the booklet, *The Christena Disaster - 50 Years On*, were handed over to the Society and are available for purchase in our Museum Gift Shop. We join the organisers of the memorial project in thanking the St. Kitts & Nevis Sugar Industry Diversification Foundation (SIDF), which generously sponsored the printing.



SHOP TALK

Alexander Hamilton T-shirts: Get yours while stocks last! Only \$15 US (\$40 EC)

We also have Hamilton T's custom-printed in Nevis, in **a range of colours and sizes** for only \$25 US (\$68 EC)





Check out other **unique and handcrafted gift items** like paracord key chains, carved whistles, pottery, oneof-a-kind jewellery, as well as original paintings, photographs, and maps!

And don't miss our 50% off table!





COMING SOON! Set predominantly in Nevis with a cast of local and expat characters, Alice's latest novel is a "must-have"! Books will be available in shop in November, and we'll be featuring Alice during one of our upcoming "Meet the Artist" events, so WATCH THIS SPACE!

With every purchase, YOU help to protect & promote Nevis' historical, cultural and natural heritage!



DON'T FORGET:

FLASH YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD AND GET 10% OFF* !

* except antiques





Free WiFi in our Museums & Gift Shop

All Covid-19 protocols observed



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

Our success depends on YOU!

- COMING SOON: Monthly "Movie Night": Nevis Past & Present (footage from the Archives)
- November: Arbour month (activities to be determined)
- 15 December: Bi-annual [Holiday] Craft Fair
- Srd Thursday of every month: meeting of the Board of Directors
- December: Membership renewal!

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

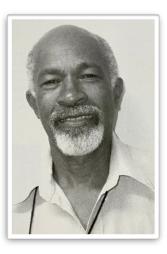
In Memoriam

Nevis recently lost two stalwart icons: **Arthur Evelyn** and **Amba Trott.** Both had deep-rooted connections to the Society, and were staunch supporters throughout their lives. We shall be forever grateful to their visions and inspirations, and hope that future generations of Nevisians can carry the torch for championing the arts and culture of Nevis.



ARTHUR EVELYN (1928-2021)

In 1980, his passion for Nevisian natural and cultural heritage led him to nurture the establishment of the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society. He lived an extraordinary life of service to his community, and truly embodied the motto "Country Above Self". The Society owes Mr Evelyn an immense debt of gratitude and, in grieving with his family, friends and colleagues, we also gain much comfort from his remarkable life.



AMBA TROTT (1927-2021)

Amba was a vocal and unwavering supporter of Nevisian arts and culture, and his memory will live on in the important legacy he left behind, especially in the preservation of Hamilton House. Amba will be greatly missed but his warmth, kindness, and gentle spirit will be remembered forever. The family requests that donations can be made in his memory to Society.

May they Rest in Eternal Deace



NEVIS HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Our Team

Jahnel Nisbett – Director Gail Dore – Senior Archivist / Ag. Administrative Officer 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 Abungu – Museum / Communications advisor Patrick Howell – Audio-Visual support Keithly Amory – IWEco project coordinator Jenny Lowery – Consultant, Nelson Spring Restoration Project

Executive Board 2021

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

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www.facebook.com/NevisHeritage

#museumofnevishistory

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PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE!

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 <u>www.nevisheritage.org</u>! We've partnered with the GivenGain Foundation to provide a secure platform for our members to pay <u>ONLINE</u>! Payments received in the 3rd quarter of 2021 will be applied to 2022 membership.

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!

Your support DOES make a difference.