

Jamaica College
information number
one

By Michael
Burke
November 1, 2017.

A planter from
Barbados of European stock, Charles Drax, died
in 1721. He had a large estate near St. Ann's Bay, which
is today known as Drax
Hall. Drax left in his will provisions for a primary school
for eight poor boys
and four poor girls. The boys were to learn reading, writing
and arithmetic,
while the girls were to learn 'sewing and other
housewifely things'. So why did
the school that came out of his endowment become a high
school and why is it
that the school takes boys only?

The answer to the
above two questions lies in the
circumstances in which Charles Drax died. There was no one
to probate the will,
no wife no child or any named executor. In the meantime
others laid claim to
the funds and built another school called Beckford and
Smith's in Spanish Town.
The matter went to Court and either the money was turned
over there was
sufficient money left to turn over to the Administrator
General. The function of the administrator
general to
this day is to probate wills where there are no known
executors.

The administrator
general turned the money over to the
Jamaica College Commission in 1789 which was set up to
establish a branch of
the University of London in Jamaica. It was here that the
school became a high
school and a school for boys only. But the school did not
start in 1789, a
mistake that has continuously been made in writings
pertaining to Jamaica
College, as the school is known today.

In 1795, under
the auspices of the Jamaica College
Commission, a school opened in the vestry of the old St.
Ann's Bay courthouse.

This school was known as Vestry School. In later years the location of the school was moved to Walton, near Moneague in St. Ann. The name of the school changed to Drax Free School, meaning that it was a school for freed persons, not slaves. Then the name changed to Drax High school.

In the late 1800s the school moved to the Barbican Great House in St. Andrew and the name was changed to Jamaica High school. The school moved on to the grounds of the University College at Hope, its present location which was the tropical outpost for the Botany College of the University of London.

The buildings were separated between the school and the College. The school was actually in held wooden sheds to the west of the school while the College was housed in what is today the Scotland building. The Simms building comprised the dining rooms for both the school and the college. Upstairs Scotland and Simms were where the boarders lived.

Both the high school and the college were combined in 1902 and from thence forth has been known as Jamaica College. By 1910 the university college went out of existence and did not re start until 1948 at the present location of the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies. But 'Jamaica College' remains the name of the institution.

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Jamaica College
information number 2
November 8, 2017

By Michael
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Coconut was used
in the making of soap and most of this came
from the Drax Hall estate in St. Ann. Up to the 1970s at
least, there was a
hard laundry soap known as " Drax Soap. The Drax Hall
estate was owned by
the same person who is the founder of what is today known as
Jamaica College.
In later years the Drax Hall Estate was sold to a soap
company known as Seprod
that has its business operations today on Spanish Town
Road.

One would have to
imagine a Jamaica where at least up to the
1960s the entire coastline of Jamaica from Port Royal
through St. Thomas,
Portland, St. Mary and St. Ann was filled with coconut
trees. Today, all of that
has been lost due to a disease known as lethal yellowing.
Coconuts were used to
stuff mattresses, make soap, make coconut oil for cooking,
coconut milk for
cooking rice and peas and cooking as well as for simply
drinking the coconut
water and eating the coconut jelly. At one point most of
this came from the
Drax Hall Estate in St. Ann, originally owned by the founder
of Jamaica
College.

There is evidence
that Charles Drax kept slaves. Included
among the poor boys that he willed should be a part of the
school was his
slave, 'Robinson'. But obviously that did not happen
because the school took 74

years to start owing to there no one alive to probate the will. Apparently Charles Drax was neither married nor had children.

The ruins of the school at Walton Pen, near Moneague, St. Ann when it moved from the vestry of the old St. Ann are still visible although today shrubbery has grown all around it. Then

The school moved to St. Andrew to the Barbican a great house but no one seems to know where that is. Was it at the corner of Millsborough Avenue and Barbican Road as some have suggested? Was it where the Sovereign Shopping Centre is today? We hope that one day this mystery will be solved. Researching history is a lot like detective work.

The buildings at Hope where Jamaica High school and later Jamaica College us located to this day, were opened on July 9, 1885 by his Excellency Sir Henry Norman, then the English colonial governor of Jamaica. There was a copper dome on the tower of what is today known as the Simms building. The school bell was in the tower of the building.

The class room that is today beside the school, bookworm was the first ever laboratory at the school. It is reasonable to. Eleven that it was really a general science laboratory. At the turn of the 20th century, the students who were mostly boarders in those days walked to the shops river beyond Papine to have a swim in the mornings.

During the earthquake of 1907, the bell fell out of the Simms Tower.

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Jamaica College
information number 3
November 15 2017.

By Michael
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The Venerable
Archdeacon William Simms was the headmaster of
Jamaica High School and the first headmaster of Jamaica
College. He was an
Englishman as most of JC's headmasters were in these
days. Since at latest
1980, the chief Executive officer of schools have been
referred to as " principal, but not so
in these
days.

Archdeacon
William Simms was a clergyman of the Anglican
Church. While St. Dunstan's Chapel at Jamaica College (
dedicated January 21,
1924) is an Anglican Chapel, JC is a non-denominational
school that belongs to
no church denomination but to the government of Jamaica.

The fact that JC
has an Anglican chapel goes back to a
tradition that started in the days when the Church of England
(if Anglican
Church) was the established church of Jamaica. Most of the
schools earlier
headmasters were Anglican clergymen.

During the tenure
of Archdeacon William Simms, national hero
Norman Manley was a student at JC. Archdeacon Simms seemed
to have been very
liberal minded judging from his writings. More than a

hundred years ago he wrote that caning should note the punishment for everything. From research, his successor William Cowper obviously had very different thinking on that subject.

The Roman Catholic Church in Jamaica owes a debt of gratitude to Anglican clergyman the Venerable William Simms. The Roman Catholic Church had been outlawed with the coming of the English to Jamaica in 1655 and was restored in 1791. More than a hundred years later, the government of Jamaica in a day when the established church was the Anglican Church, wanted to force Roman Catholics to use the Anglican catechism to which the Roman Catholic Bishop objected.

It was Archdeacon William Simms, an Anglican clergyman, who came to the defence of the Roman Catholics and said that the Roman Catholic Church should be left skins and did no harm by following its own doctrines.

The Venerable Archdeacon Simms also played a part as a witness for the businessmen on the aftermath of the 1907 earthquake. It so happens that at the very same time of the earthquake on January 14 1907, Mr. Simms was attending a meeting at Mico Teachers College. From that vantage point, he could see the smoke from the fire that erupted which was caused by the earthquake.

The case involved the insurance companies that refused to pay the merchants then situated on King Street in Downtown Kingston. According to the insurance companies, the businessmen could not claim insurance from the earthquake because their damage was caused by the cure. The onus on the companies was to prove that the earthquake caused the fire so that they could. Slim earthquake insurance.

The merchants won

the case mainly with the help of the captain of a ship docked in the Kingston Harbour. The captain testified that after the earthquake rocked the boat he looked up and saw some minutes later a fire in the vicinity of Kingston Parish Church. Archdeacon Simms as a reliable witness, testified that he felt the earthquake at Mico a teachers College and the fire came later.

The fact is that had the merchants not win their case with the insurance companies they would have been ruined and many workers would have been put of jobs. There would have been massive hunger resulting in deaths, some of whom having lived were perhaps our great- great-grandparents. Archdeacon Simms helped to save the economy if Jamaica at that time because he was regarded as a most credible witness by the court.

Jamaica College
Information number 4
November 22, 2017

By Michael Burke

It is difficult not to write about the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy of the United States of America in article prepared for November 22. How does this relate to Jamaica College history? We can mention who was the headmaster at the time of this tragic event on November 22, 1963 and what life was like in Jamaica and Jamaica College when the

assassination took place.

Vincent Harvey

Early Ennever was the sixth headmaster (or principal) of the school since it came to hope in St. Andrew and since it came to be known as Jamaica College. He was an old boy of Jamaica College. He became principal of JC in 1960. He resigned as headmaster in December 1964 to take up the position of General Manager of Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (Jamaica's second radio station and first television station, now merged with Radio Jamaica).

Mr. Ennever was a language teacher and a very eloquent speaker. To this day there are many old boys who attended JC during those years who like to quote some of the words that he uttered. It was during his tenure as headmaster that Jamaica became an independent state (1962) and television was introduced in Jamaica (1963).

A few months after TV was introduced the junior boarding house (Hardie) got the gift of a television from the owner if times Store then located on King Street. In 1965, Scotland a house got a TV. Simms as a house never got a TV, however there was a TV for the boarders in the Simms building when Scotland and Simms merged with Simms send the TV from Scotland House merged with Simms. It must be difficult for present day JC students to imagine life without TV much less computers and Internet access.

Some boys heard on their transistor radios (a fairly modern invention then) that JFK had been assistant editor. Others said it was a rumour. Eventually the boarders were told that the tragic event had taken place. It happened ten months before I entered JC but my older brother told me about what happened when the JC boarders got the news.

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Jamaica College
information number 5 November 29,
2016

By Michael
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Mr. William
Cowper was the second headmaster at Hope. In a
previous submission, mention was made of Archdeacon William
Simms, JC's first
headmaster at Hope, that is, since the school moved to its
present location. Mr.
William Cowper, a descendant of the ad glide poet who wrote
the slave's lament
was headmaster from 1916 to 1933.

In Archdeacon

Simms' day, prefects were elected. This system was reintroduced in 1969 but was phased out in the 1970s. Mr. Cowper thought it was too. Ugh democracy and put an end to it in 1917. My source of information was the late Rudolph Burke, my own grandfather whose tenure at JC was mostly Canon Simms but in his last year was Mr. Cowper. It was in Mr. Cowper's day that the school chapel was erected. The stained glass windows are replicas of the Anglican Cathedral of Canterbury in England.

Mr. Cowper was a very strict principal. The school cheer which includes ' Hash and roast beef, mince and pie' was frowned upon by Mr. Cowper, but he tolerated it. my source of information here was the late Dr. Henry a chambers, for many years Treasurer of the JC Old Boys Association. This fact is in his book ' a Doctor's life in Britain and Jamaica' in which he re-puncted his Days at JC when Mr. Cowper was headmaster.

My other grandfather, the late Earle Maynier was also a JC old boy and he had anecdotal stories about Mr. Cowper also. A boy on leaving school asked Mr.. Cowper for a recommendation, to which he replied: "Recommendation? Just say you want to Jamaica College, that's all! This study speaks volumes as to how highly regarded a JC education was 90 to 100 years ago.

In those days, caning was standard punishment for many of fences, unlike today when corral punishment is banned in school apparently a student in the boarding school put cow- itch in the pajamas of one of the teachers (in those days all teachers at JC were male) Mr. Cowper rang the school bell and the boys assembled. He said he wanted to know the boy or boys responsible or the entire school would be punished.

The culprit owned up and he was caned. But the school bell rang again and the

boys assembled. Mr. Cowper said that after caning the boy he learned of the gravity of the offence and had he known the boy would have been expelled. ' But the boy was lucky' Mr. Cowper said because " the British law says that man must only be punished once for one Offence"

Some words of explanation is necessary here. Jamaica was not yet politically independent and would not be for at least the next 60 years. Any law in force in England was law here and took precedence over any law in Jamaica's law books. But it was evident that Mr. Coopers mandate from the then board of directors was to teach the boys British culture, as in those days it was equated with being civilized.

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