

INTRODUCTION

POSITIONED ON THE GULF OF PARIA at the southern end of the Caribbean, Port of Spain, Trinidad, has long enthralled its diverse residents and visitors from many lands. It is a city of modest size that extends for a few square miles across a relatively flat plain on Trinidad's northwest coast, surrounded by the sea on the south and steep hills on the north and east. Across the gulf to the west is Venezuela and, farther south, the mouth of the Orinoco River. Lush tropical foliage covers much of the hills and lower-lying area, providing a degree of shade to yards, squares and a dense network of narrow streets. Throughout the day and into the night, these spaces are filled with the city's inhabitants – a people that traces its ancestry to western and central Africa, India, China, Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Syria and Lebanon, as well as to many places around the Caribbean. Life within the city is generally noisy and often contentious, but, while much seems difficult, much more seems possible. There is ongoing construction of new buildings, commerce ranging from street vending to the transactions of business conglomerates, and instruction within prestigious schools that have offered advancement for generations of youths. Though the city is notably famous for its pre-Lenten Carnival with its masqueraders, calypsonians and steelbands, there are many other visual artists, musicians, dancers, actors and writers at work throughout the year. After all, this is a place that nurtured the careers of C.L.R. James, man of letters and world revolutionary; Eric Williams, Caribbean historian and first prime minister of the twin-island nation-state of Trinidad and Tobago; V.S. Naipaul, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001; and St Lucian-born Derek Walcott, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992. In reading the books of these and other writers, one can discover a city of brutality and beauty, of confinement and openness, of frustration and pleasure.

A city of this sort can be examined from many perspectives and described in many ways. My objective in this book is to offer a history of the design, use and representation of Port of Spain's landscape from the height of British colonialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the independence of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. By "landscape" I mean the

total material environment of the city – its streets, squares, parks, yards, buildings, monuments and other features. Since an urban landscape offers tangible, multifaceted evidence of how people conceptualize their world and of how this world changes over time, it is an immensely rich subject for investigation. My argument is that the landscape of Port of Spain served as a central site for the display and negotiation of Trinidad’s social order during its gradual transition from colonial rule to self-government. In other words, the city’s material environment manifested systems of social differentiation and association (along with related configurations of wealth and power) that were fundamental to both colonialism and decolonization. While such patterns were embodied in landscapes throughout Trinidad, they assumed a heightened visibility in Port of Spain, which, as a transportation node and capital, was a focal point of interaction and attention for the territory’s populace and visitors. Here people viewed, within a densely built zone, the primary institutions of colonial governance, the leading facilities of commerce, the housing of a range of social classes and a variety of outdoor public spaces employed for leisure, celebration and political expression. Moreover, they constantly recreated this landscape as they envisioned diverse possibilities for the future. Thus the city was experienced as a particularly dynamic locale – a vanguard space of potentiality and innovation within the wider realm of colonial Trinidad.

I begin this study during Trinidad’s cocoa boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, move through the more challenging era between the world wars and conclude with the general prosperity of the postwar years. An appropriate starting point is 1888, since this was the year that Trinidad observed the fiftieth anniversary of the end of slavery – a multiyear process in the British Caribbean that began in 1834 and concluded in 1838. The seventy-four-year period from this moment of commemoration to independence in 1962 was one of wide-ranging change for Trinidad and for Port of Spain in particular. There was a large increase in the city’s population, an extension of its geographic boundaries, economic diversification, construction of an array of new buildings and outdoor spaces, modernization of transportation and utilities, development of a labour movement, expansion of educational opportunities and a middle class, major political reforms and exceptional creativity in literature, music and visual arts.

Throughout this period, British colonialism remained a pervasive force. After Britain captured Trinidad from Spain in 1797, Port of Spain gradually evolved during the nineteenth century from a Spanish colonial city (with a large francophone population) into a city of the British empire. Like other colonial capitals, it served as Trinidad’s main point of linkage with London and was the centre of British power and influence. Located here were the headquarters of government agencies, courts and the police; the largest medical,

social welfare and educational institutions; and the Catholic and Anglican cathedrals. As a colonial capital, the city's main function was to facilitate the economic exploitation of the territory's landscape, which involved the production (by labourers of mainly African and East Indian descent) of sugar, cocoa and other tropical agricultural commodities, as well as the extraction of asphalt and oil. The city was the principal location for the export of agricultural products, while asphalt and oil were shipped from ports in southern Trinidad. In addition, it was the centre for the import and sale of manufactured goods from Britain and other countries. Thus, the maintenance of Port of Spain as an orderly capital was critical to the ongoing flow of British commerce in Trinidad and the wider Caribbean. It was not until the 1950s that Britain seriously contemplated relinquishing Trinidad as a colony. Its concern then focused on a constitutional transition to independence and continued political influence and economic activity within the framework of the British Commonwealth.

Though British colonialism shaped all aspects of life in Trinidad from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth century, this was also a period of increasing local empowerment in Port of Spain and the territory. The Port of Spain Borough Council (elected with a limited franchise) served as a centre for political expression during the late nineteenth century, was abolished by the colonial governor in 1898, re-emerged as an elected city council in 1914, and continued to evolve as an arena for the debate and management of municipal affairs. Throughout this period, there were also challenges to Trinidad's crown colony form of government, administered by a governor and a legislative council with no elected representatives. Popular movements and reform initiatives resulted in the introduction of a limited franchise in 1925, elections with universal adult suffrage in 1946, and a gradually increasing number of elected representatives within the legislative council during the transition to self-government. Local empowerment during this period also involved the growth of a vibrant press, the founding of political and labour associations and the development of diverse fraternal and charitable organizations, sports clubs, Carnival bands and other artistic groups. All these organizations were integral to the formation of a more inclusive and resourceful civic community. However, processes of local empowerment and colonialism intersected in complex ways. While colonial officials worked to suppress political reform initiatives and grassroots forms of collective action and expression, they at times facilitated and incorporated such activities as ways of expanding and perpetuating colonial rule. In addition, both officials and local community leaders often employed a common rhetoric of city-building and civic pride.

The imbrication of British colonialism and local empowerment during this era was further complicated by American expansionism. By the latter nineteenth century, the United States increasingly viewed the nearby Caribbean

as a realm of economic and strategic value, as well as a destination for elite tourism. While the impact of the United States was greatest in the northern Caribbean, the whole region gradually experienced more American interaction and influence. By the turn of the century, a small but growing number of well-to-do Americans were visiting Port of Spain for both leisure and business opportunities, and in the following decades, trade between the United States and Trinidad increased substantially. During World War II, the American presence expanded dramatically with the establishment of major army and navy bases on the island and a command headquarters in Port of Spain. This military enterprise had a wide-ranging impact on the city's infrastructure, social relations and entertainment industry. During the postwar era, the bases gradually closed down, but American economic activity and tourism increased. Throughout this period, the United States figured as both an ostensibly democratic alternative to British colonialism and a new force of external control.

INTERPRETING THE LANDSCAPE OF PORT OF SPAIN

In tracing the history of the construction and significance of Port of Spain's landscape, I employ a methodology derived principally from cultural geography. A classic compilation of perspectives from this field is *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979), edited by D.W. Meinig. Here Meinig asserted that landscapes are symbolic in the sense that they are "expressions of cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions worked upon particular localities over a span of time". In other essays in this volume, Peirce Lewis suggested that "our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form", while Yi-Fu Tuan discussed culturally conditioned mental constructs of environments and stressed that "landscape appears to us through an effort of the imagination exercised over a highly selected array of sense data". A subsequent generation of geographers critiqued analyses of landscapes as general reflections of cultural values and developed interpretive methods that focused on the processes by which people actively construct landscapes and their meanings in the context of socioeconomic and political differences and conflicts. For example, Denis Cosgrove, in *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984), examined modern European ways of seeing and organizing landscapes in relation to capitalist social relations, while James Duncan, in *The City as Text* (1990), discussed how the production of an urban landscape in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka was interrelated with written and oral texts and served as a site of conflicting discourses and political struggle.¹ In more recent years, geographers have con-

tinued to explore landscapes from a variety of perspectives, with attention to issues ranging from social domination, inequality and justice to multisensory experience, inhabitation and forms of mobility. Meanwhile, debate continues concerning the concept of landscape and its relation to such terms as “place” and “environment”. For many researchers, “landscape” remains useful since it suggests both a humanly shaped portion of land and the perception or experience of that land.²

In drawing on this rich body of landscape study, I examine the environment of Port of Spain as a heterogeneous material phenomenon that was designed, used and represented over time by social groups and individuals with diverse worldviews, values and interests. From the late nineteenth century through independence, there was a wide range of construction activity in and around the city and, with limited space, ongoing competition for building sites. Additions to the landscape during this period included the expansion of the port, layout of new streets, improvements in water supply and drainage, introduction of electricity, development of new squares and parks, and erection of myriad public buildings, stores, offices, warehouses, factories, movie theatres, hotels and housing. This construction was carried out by a variety of engineers, architects, planners, building companies, craftsmen and labourers, with increasing participation by trained architects and planners from the 1930s onward. Designers pursued their work in terms of three major architectural orientations: European/Euro-American city-planning concepts and historical revival styles; Trinidadian vernacular practices that incorporated the island’s Spanish, French, British, western/central African, Indian and indigenous heritage; and, by the 1930s, emerging forms of modernism. Two other architectural traditions employed in the city were Indian design principles for mosques and temples, and American military-base design during World War II.³

This complex landscape served the range of functions typical of a capital/port city, from governance, commerce and shipping to domestic activity, education, casual and organized leisure, and religious worship. Throughout this study, I examine such quotidian uses of the landscape, the interrelatedness of spatial design and practices and the ways in which different social groups viewed spaces and negotiated their employment. However, I give special attention to the use of streets and other outdoor public spaces for the staging of large-scale performances, including British imperial celebrations, political rallies and protests and the pre-Lenten Carnival. Such public performances were systematic appropriations of the urban landscape for the purpose of collective expression. Through conventions in spatial positioning and movement, along with traditional forms of visual, verbal and musical communication, segments of the city’s diverse population created compelling displays of their various values and concerns. Analysis of these civic theatrics offers insights into

how people comprehended spatial distinctions within their environment and utilized this knowledge to achieve social goals.⁴

Along with facilitating various forms of activity, the evolving landscape of Port of Spain inspired a wide array of verbal and visual representations, produced by both residents and visitors. The most common form of representing the landscape was daily conversation with references to particular places. Though most of this past talk is not recoverable in a historical study, traces of quoted speech are recorded in various written sources and provide some sense of how diverse sectors of the population spoke about the city. Meanwhile, literate individuals expressed their perceptions in a range of genres, including government documents, newspapers, local histories, autobiographies, travel guides and reports, ethnographic studies and fiction (which included descriptions of places in both narration and dialogue). Some of these genres also contained photographs of the city, though many more images were published as postcards or in portfolios. In addition, colonial authorities periodically produced and published maps of the city. This range of literature, photographs and maps offered a variety of perspectives on the urban landscape as a whole and on particular kinds of buildings and outdoor spaces. Some depictions emphasized order, beauty and achievement, while others accentuated degradation and failure. As Port of Spain developed, an increasing body of written and visual representations circulated both locally and abroad and influenced how people perceived and understood the city's landscape.

Through diverse processes of design, use and representation, Port of Spain's inhabitants and visitors invested the landscape with a complex and ever-changing significance. Meanings of places were constructed on different scales, ranging from individual buildings and outdoor spaces through neighbourhoods or districts to the entire city in relation to the rest of Trinidad or other territories. Each element of the landscape carried significance in terms of its design and positioning in relation to other landscape components, its uses in the context of the variety of social practices within the city and its representation in oral conversation and diverse literary and visual media. There was considerable variation in how different social groups and individuals interpreted the landscape, and their interpretations evolved over time. However, there was also a generally shared body of understandings of individual spaces, districts and the larger city that enabled people to interact within this terrain in mutually intelligible ways.⁵

It was through these multifaceted processes of constructing places and their significance that the landscape of Port of Spain served as a central site for the display and negotiation of Trinidad's social order. Social distinctions and relationships were manifested in spatial distinctions and relationships, which in turn shaped social systems. In essence, people created the city's landscape

as a socio-spatial order – as a realm with interacting social and spatial dimensions. Profound inequalities in wealth and power existed within the society, which comprised, in broadest terms, colonial authorities allied with a small agricultural and commercial elite, a growing middle class and a large mass of working and chronically underemployed people. Though this social order was well established, it was also intrinsically unstable, with the middle and working classes increasingly seeking greater opportunities and rights. By designing, using and representing the landscape in disparate ways, social groups expressed themselves and both competed and collaborated with each other. As noted, such processes occurred throughout Trinidad, but had a particularly dramatic manifestation within Port of Spain, due to its concentration of people, its centrality to governance and commerce and its vivid presence in media representations and promotions. Moreover, the city was the main site for the arrival of newcomers, including a variety of workers, businesspeople, government officials, military personnel, tourists, architects and builders. All these people played roles in the construction of the city's landscape and its significance for Trinidad and the wider world.

From the late nineteenth century through independence, a fundamental dynamic in the creation of Port of Spain's landscape was the interplay between British colonialism and local empowerment. Much of the design, use and representation of the landscape perpetuated the colonial order. Prominent public buildings and commercial facilities, as well as the spectrum of housing, were emblematic of colonial authority, elite control and social hierarchy; prevailing activities included the extraction of the territory's wealth, regulation of its population and celebratory displays of imperialism; and dominant literary and visual representations promoted the city as an orderly colonial capital and port. However, the maintenance of colonialism was not a unilateral, top-down process but one that involved constant accommodation with the city's varied inhabitants. The local population acted in a multitude of ways to construct a city in which it could pursue its own economic interests, develop its own forms of social organization and expression, participate in its own governance and generally chart its own future. Communal yards, the buildings of grassroots associations and the town hall were centres of local collaboration and organizing; streets and other public spaces served as stages for community expression; architects eventually employed modern design principles in projects that moved beyond the colonial legacy; and various fiction writers and visual artists examined and affirmed the local landscape and its traditions. The growing American influence in the city and throughout the territory also challenged the perpetuation of existing systems by introducing new economic opportunities, consumer goods, cultural styles and displays of military power. Ultimately, these multifaceted negotiations of the colonial order brought about its demise

and the emergence of an independent nation-state, though one that continued to be shaped by socioeconomic inequality and external dominance.⁶

Within this complex dynamic, many of Port of Spain's inhabitants, regardless of socioeconomic background, viewed the city in terms of concepts of progress. People generally believed they could improve themselves in the city and perhaps also improve the city itself. In essence, the city was a site for contemplating and pursuing a more promising future. Migrants arrived in search of economic and educational opportunities and new forms of excitement. Government officials and business leaders typically described the city's infrastructure and amenities in terms of modernization that would facilitate economic growth. Members of political and labour movements all assumed the possibility of democratization and greater socioeconomic justice. Finally, architects and urban planners envisioned perfected landscapes and attempted to implement these visions within the limits of existing conditions. Thus a rhetoric of progress permeated representations of the landscape and contributed to a sense of forward momentum in the city. In general, there was a belief that ingenuity, entrepreneurship and determination in Port of Spain could lead Trinidad to secure a more prominent position in the wider world.

From the late nineteenth century to independence, Port of Spain was, in short, a landscape of aspiration as well as subjugation. It was a place of racism, economic exploitation, political oppression and, for many, deplorable living conditions. However, it was also a locale in which change seemed feasible, in spite of barriers and hardship. In the following chapters, I explore some of the ways in which the creation of this particular urban environment both constrained and expanded the lives of its inhabitants.

While Port of Spain's material and social character was unique, the city's dynamic development from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century was part of a broader process of urban growth across much of the Caribbean. During this period, cities and towns gained prominence in relation to plantations and villages as fundamental spaces of residence and experience. Increasing numbers of people, in search of economic and other opportunities, migrated from the countryside to urban areas, which expanded in both population and territorial size. In urban cores, there was often substantial construction of new public and commercial buildings, as well as improvements in infrastructure and outdoor spaces. These cores were typically surrounded by the self-built housing of low-income populations, though new middle-class and elite residential districts also developed. As cities grew in size, their territorial dominance in governance, transportation, trade and services increased. In addition, urban dwellers formed numerous occupational, benevolent, political, artistic and recreational organizations (offering a range of vehicles for association and expression), while artistic and entertainment venues (catering to both residents

and growing numbers of tourists) flourished in several of the region's larger cities. This was an era during which Caribbean cities manifested what Derek Walcott describes as ideal proportions as measured by their own citizenries: streets suited for walking, leafy parks, accessible docks, vibrant commercial areas, buildings with baroque woodwork, and heterogeneous populations that would "find it increasingly futile to trace their genealogy". However, Caribbean cities of this period were also deeply conflicted places, with authoritarian political systems, economic dependence on external markets, extensive socioeconomic inequality and major internal disparities in public services and environmental conditions.⁷

Port of Spain, as a capital and chief port, was a focal point for Trinidad, but its landscape was *not* representative of the territory as a whole. Like other Caribbean colonies, the primary sectors of the island's economy remained based in rural areas: cocoa was cultivated mainly in hilly or mountainous terrain, sugar plantations were concentrated in the western central plains, and oil was extracted from southern districts. Each of these industries (along with other agricultural pursuits) generated its own forms of land organization, technology, buildings and social relations. Thus there was a range of settlement types across the island, including housing on plantations for owners, managers and workers; rustic accommodation for oilfield employees; small villages in both uplands and plains; several major market towns (such as Arima, Chaguanas and Princes Town); and the smaller city of San Fernando, located at the geographic intersection of the sugar and oil industries. Diverse regions and industries also varied in their ethnic composition. As the largest population centre, Port of Spain included residents of all ethnic backgrounds, but not in the same proportions that existed in the territory overall. Within the city there were relatively higher percentages of people of European and Chinese descent (though these were still small minorities compared to Afro-Trinidadians) and a much lower percentage of those of Indian descent.⁸ The largest population of Indo-Trinidadians was in the western central sugar region, where they developed a particularly vibrant configuration of cultural traditions that differed from the dominant European/African-derived cultural patterns of Port of Spain. During the post-World War II era, Trinidadians' constructions of African and Indian ethnic distinctions carried increasing salience in electoral politics and, to a significant degree, were associated with urban/rural distinctions. So, while Port of Spain was a central site for the display and negotiation of Trinidad's social order, these processes unfolded within an environment shaped by specific economic and demographic circumstances. Here the city's residents articulated a version of Trinidadian society that highlighted their particular values and concerns.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PORT OF SPAIN

When Christopher Columbus arrived at Trinidad in 1498, on his third voyage to the Caribbean, the island was inhabited by various indigenous peoples. Among their many settlements was Cumucurapo (“the place of the silk cotton trees”) in the area of present-day Mucurapo in western Port of Spain. Spanish explorer Antonio Sedeño, the first governor of Trinidad, attempted to establish a settlement here in the early 1530s but abandoned it in 1534. However, the Spanish remained interested in Trinidad in the course of the sixteenth century as a base for exploring the nearby South American mainland. In 1592 Antonio de Berrío, the newly appointed governor of Trinidad, dispatched his lieutenant Domingo de Vera to take formal possession of the island, in a ceremony that appears to have occurred at Cumucurapo. Afterwards, Vera headed some eight miles east to another indigenous village, where he founded San José de Oruña (St Joseph) as the capital city of Trinidad – in keeping with the Spanish preference for inland capitals as a protection against sea assaults by rival powers. Three years later, Sir Walter Raleigh attacked and burned St Joseph, took Berrío prisoner, and pried him for knowledge of Guiana in preparation for a journey up the Orinoco River in search of El Dorado. Before sacking St Joseph, however, Raleigh landed at a place that, in his words, the inhabitants called “Conquerabia” and the Spaniards referred to as “Puerto de los Hispani-oles”. It is unclear whether this location was Cumucurapo or a site farther east, near what is now Independence Square in present-day Port of Spain. In any case, Puerto de España (as it was better known) remained a very small settlement during the seventeenth century and suffered multiple attacks. By the latter part of the century, however, the settlement was permanently situated at the easterly site and would eventually expand from here.⁹

From 1592 until the 1770s, the Spanish did little to develop Port of Spain, St Joseph or the surrounding territory. In 1757 Governor Pedro de Moneda described St Joseph as consisting of not more than twenty houses (some in ruins) and took up residence in Port of Spain, a practice followed by subsequent governors. In 1762 Governor José Antonio Gil recorded approximately sixteen houses in each settlement and said they were inhabited more by snakes than by men. He proceeded to construct thirty houses at Port of Spain and another thirty at St Joseph. Though St Joseph remained the official capital, Port of Spain was proving more attractive, owing to its seaside location and opportunities for maritime transportation and trade. Initially, the town consisted of two parallel streets, Calle del Príncipe and Calle del Infante (later named Nelson and Duncan Streets); additional streets were eventually added to the west and north. Early residents constructed houses with earth-and-grass walls and thatched roofs, while sustaining themselves by growing crops and hunting in the immediate environs of the town.¹⁰

In an effort to bring new economic enterprise to Trinidad, Spain issued decrees in 1776 and 1783 that opened the territory to settlement by foreign Catholics. The 1783 proclamation was particularly effective: in the following fourteen years, hundreds of French planters and enslaved Africans arrived in Trinidad, in flight from turmoil across the Caribbean generated by French-British rivalry, the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution. It was during this period that Trinidad developed as a slavery-based sugar-plantation colony, and Port of Spain grew as a predominantly francophone town. Moreover, the move of the *cabildo* (municipal administration) here from St Joseph in 1783 and the governor's earlier relocation established Port of Spain as the capital of the territory. In order to accommodate the increasing population and new functions of the town, the Spanish authorities implemented several improvements: streets were realigned, houses were cleared from the shore to allow for commercial and governmental use and in 1787 Governor José María Chacón appointed an engineer (José del Pozo y Sucre) to divert the Río Santa Ana from its course through present-day Woodford Square and Chacon Street to the east side of the town, at the foot of the Laventille Hills. This rerouting of the river, carried out by 638 enslaved and 405 "free coloured" workers, enabled the expansion of the city in an orderly grid of seven north-south and four east-west streets by the end of the century. Between the grid and the shore was the town plaza, with the Catholic church (one block east of its present location) and military barracks. Extending from the shore was a mole with a quay at the end and a connecting battery (Fort San Andrés). Other features of the town were the governor's residence, town hall, customs house, treasury, hospital, jail, warehouses, dance halls and an outdoor market on the west side of Calle del Príncipe, a block and a half north of the plaza. Public and commercial buildings, as well as the large number of new houses, were constructed from wood. While the town's population was 632 in 1777, by 1797 it had reached 4,525, including 938 whites, 1,671 free coloureds, and 1,916 enslaved blacks.¹¹

In 1797 Britain captured Trinidad, with minimal resistance from Spanish forces, and formally acquired the colony by treaty in 1802. During the early nineteenth century, British planters and their enslaved Africans expanded the island's plantation economy, while colonial officials tried to control what remained a mainly francophone populace. Port of Spain continued to develop with the overall growth of the territory's economy and population. British authorities assigned English names to streets, and by around 1808 had enlarged the street grid and laid out building lots as far as Richmond Street to the west and Oxford Street (above Park Street) to the north. In 1808 a massive fire devastated much of the city, destroying over four hundred houses and all government buildings. While the residents suffered staggering financial losses, they had an opportunity to rebuild their city with more durable materials. Though

there was limited compliance with a new law prohibiting wood construction, many downtown commercial and residential buildings were erected from stone during this period. In 1813 Governor Ralph Woodford arrived and, in the course of his fifteen-year administration, had a major impact on the composition and character of the city. In addition to directing the repaving of streets, installation of street signs and improvement of pavements, he enlisted the town engineer to lay out Marine Square and Brunswick Square and beautify these spaces with trees. Marine Square was an enhancement of the old Spanish plaza towards the southern end of the city, while Brunswick Square was the development of an open site at the city's centre. Woodford also supervised the continued reclamation of land from the sea and laying out lots from Marine Square south to present-day South Quay. This became a vital commercial district, with the main docks along South Quay and a new St Vincent Wharf at the west end. Finally, Woodford laid cornerstones for a new Catholic church at Marine Square and an Anglican church adjacent to Brunswick Square, and guided the acquisition of lands to the north of the city that would become the Queen's Park Savannah.¹²

Emancipation in 1838 and the general expansion of Trinidad's sugar industry from 1850 to the early 1880s shaped the further growth of Port of Spain. While the city's population was roughly 12,000 at the time of emancipation, it reached 31,858 by 1881. During this era, many formerly enslaved Africans left plantations and migrated to towns, especially to Port of Spain. Here they settled in the Laventille Hills to the east of the city, as well as in the downtown area and in the new districts of Belmont (east of the Savannah) and Corbeaux Town (west of downtown). This population was soon joined by migrants from other British Caribbean islands. In addition, British officials and other colonists settled in Port of Spain. Upper- and middle-class families tended to live on the western side of the city and in northwestern New Town, areas that also attracted wealthier families who had formerly lived in the central city. Meanwhile, a variety of institutions developed during the post-emancipation decades: new government office and court buildings at Brunswick Square, a new hospital at the northeast end of the city, a public library, a chamber of commerce, several churches, and secondary schools, including St Joseph's Convent for girls and the Queen's Collegiate School and St Mary's College for boys. During this period, the British colonial government intensified its efforts to anglicize the society and, as part of this initiative, replaced the old Spanish *cabildo* in 1840 with a town council. Though this new body had lesser powers, it was elected through a limited franchise.¹³

The growing city of Port of Spain also attracted commentary by prominent British writers. In 1859, for example, Anthony Trollope described the place as "a large town, excellently well laid out, with streets running all at right angles

to each other” and added that it had “a degree of commercial enterprise quite unlike the sleepiness of Jamaica or the apathy of the smaller islands”. However, he went on to condemn the Trinidadian population’s prospects for self-government. In 1871 Charles Kingsley offered a generally favourable assessment of Port of Spain. He noted “pretty ‘Marine Square,’ with its fountain and flowering trees” and the Catholic cathedral, “a stately building, with Palmistes standing as tall sentries round”. On commercial streets, he observed, “Under cool porticoes and through tall doorways are seen dark ‘stores,’ filled with all manner of good things, from Britain or from the United States.” In the newer part of the city (presumably north towards the Savannah), he saw houses ranging from “mere wooden sheds of one or two rooms” to the wooden homes of the well-to-do – “Over high walls you catch sight of jalousies and verandahs, inside which must be most delightful darkness and coolness.” Moreover, houses were “embowered in trees and flowers”. Kingsley was similarly impressed with the variety of the city’s residents that he observed on the streets: Africans, Indians, Chinese, “coloured young ladies . . . well-dressed according to the fashions of Paris or New York”, an “unmistakeable Englishman”, and a “Frenchman or Spaniard of old family”.¹⁴

Indeed, by the latter nineteenth century, Port of Spain was inhabited by an exceptionally diverse population, organized in a hierarchy of social classes and ethnic categories. People classified themselves and others in terms of perceptions of social status, cultural practices, ancestry and physical characteristics. Individuals negotiated their positions within this social order on an ongoing basis and in some cases were able to change their locations over time.

A very small upper class of European descent included high-ranking colonial officials; planters who maintained homes in town as well as on their country estates; merchants who ran import-export businesses, large stores and other enterprises; and a few of the city’s doctors and other professionals. Along with Britons who lived in the city for limited periods of time, this class encompassed French creoles (the descendants of old families of French, Spanish and other European backgrounds) and English creoles (descendants of British families who had settled in Trinidad during the nineteenth century). Sometimes referred to as the “French party” and the “English party”, the former was traditionally francophone and Catholic, while the latter was anglophone and Protestant. By the end of the nineteenth century, the French creoles were increasingly speaking English and tensions with the English creoles were becoming less pronounced. Both groups maintained an ideology of superiority to everyone else in the society.

At the other end of Port of Spain’s social hierarchy was a large class of labourers, domestic workers and craftsmen, a substantial portion of whom were marginally employed or chronically unemployed. Mainly of African descent,

this population included individuals born in Trinidad, migrants from other Caribbean territories and a small number born in Africa. Many working people spoke a French Creole language but were increasingly conversing in an English Creole by the turn of the century. Migrants from several other British islands spoke varieties of English or English Creole. The city's working class belonged to the Catholic Church, various Protestant denominations or African-derived and creolized religions. In general, the African-derived and creole cultural practices of the working class were strongly condemned by the upper and middle classes.

Port of Spain's growing middle class included attorneys, doctors, teachers, journalists, other professionals, civil servants and office workers. This group consisted of individuals of both African and mixed African/European descent, francophones and anglophones (with a shift towards the latter), and Catholics and Protestants. The middle class had its roots in the free people of colour of the pre-emancipation era and expanded during the second half of the nineteenth century with increasing access to primary and secondary schools and the diversification of the economy. Individuals generally valued European cultural traditions, but also strongly resisted racist discrimination by the elite, and worked assiduously to expand their occupational opportunities and political rights. To this end, they were active in many of the city's social organizations.

The social hierarchy of Port of Spain also included people of various other ethnic backgrounds. Between 1845 and 1917, the colonial government brought approximately 147,000 indentured labourers from India to Trinidad to work on sugar plantations. By 1901 Indians constituted a third of Trinidad's population, though a very small number lived in Port of Spain proper. On the western outskirts of the city, however, there was an Indian community known as Peru Village, which would later be annexed as part of the district of St James. Indians perpetuated many of their cultural traditions in Trinidad; the majority was Hindu, though there were also Muslims and Christian converts. Increasing urban migration during the twentieth century facilitated more interaction with other segments of the population, as well as the growth of a middle class.

Other population groups in Port of Spain were the Portuguese (Madeira Islanders) and Chinese whose ancestors had arrived in Trinidad as indentured labourers, mainly during the mid-nineteenth century. In the city, they became active as shopkeepers and eventually entered a variety of other occupations. Migrants from Syria and Lebanon began arriving in the 1890s. Initially, they were pedlars, but in time opened shops and other businesses. Finally, Venezuelans had been settling in Trinidad since the early nineteenth century. Though most lived in rural districts as small farmers or labourers, there was a significant population in Port of Spain. Some of these urban dwellers were political refugees who remained actively involved in the affairs of Venezuela.¹⁵

In 1888 tensions inherent to the above social order were manifested in the debate and newspaper commentary that accompanied the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation in Trinidad. Historian Bridget Brereton notes that while there had been occasional observations of 1 August anniversaries after 1838, these largely disappeared after 1860. By the late 1880s, however, there was growing political consciousness among Port of Spain's black and mixed-descent middle class, a group of whom planned a public dinner and other celebrations for the emancipation jubilee. They envisioned this anniversary as an occasion for expressing unity among African-descended Trinidadians, affirming their accomplishments to date, and generating pride in Africa and African ancestry. On the other hand, some French creoles and individuals of other backgrounds argued that slavery was best forgotten and advocated a low-key observance of the anniversary, fearing that heightened attention would intensify social animosities. Meanwhile, the governor refused to declare a public holiday on the ground that the event would not be relevant to various segments of the population, such as Indians, Venezuelans and Africans who arrived after 1838 as indentured labourers. In the end, it appears that there was minimal participation in the event by the city's large African-descended working class. However, Brereton argues that the jubilee "helped to sharpen race consciousness among the educated mixed-race and black middle stratum, and to generate an ideology with which to confront racism at home and abroad". In addition, many of the organizers of the jubilee would become leaders of a political reform movement in Port of Spain over the next fifteen years.¹⁶

THE STUDY OF PORT OF SPAIN

As the capital of Trinidad and Tobago and a city of extraordinary cultural vitality, Port of Spain has been the subject of substantial historical research over the past several decades. The first book-length study of the city's history is Carlton Ottley's *The Story of Port of Spain* (1962), published in conjunction with the growing interest in Trinidad's past at the time of independence. More extensive chronicles of events in the city are Michael Anthony's *The Making of Port-of-Spain* (1978) and *Port-of-Spain in a World at War, 1939–1945* (n.d.). Several studies have focused on well-known buildings and sites and have featured copious photographs along with historical information. Examples are Olga Mavrogordato's *Voices in the Street* (1977), Michael Anthony's *Historic Landmarks of Port of Spain* (2008), the National Trust's *The Built Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago* (2012) and Anthony de Verteuil's and Adrian Camps-Campins's *The Great Eight* (2015), which explores prominent homes around the Queen's Park Savannah. Numerous photographs and texts

pertaining to the city are also contained in *The Book of Trinidad* (1992), edited by Gérard Besson and Bridget Brereton. Examples of architectural studies are John Newel Lewis's *Ajoupa* (1983), a general examination of Trinidad with extensive material on Port of Spain; an article by Mark Raymond on modernists Colin Laird and Anthony Lewis (2005); and Geoffrey MacLean's and Brian Lewis's *Manikin: The Art and Architecture of Anthony C. Lewis* (2009). Other specialized studies of the city include works by Suzanne Goodenough (1976, 1978) and Dennis Conway (1989) on demography and residence patterns; Alvin Magid's *Urban Nationalism: A Study of Political Development in Trinidad* (1988), which examines anti-colonialism in the city from 1895 to 1914; James Cummings's *Barrack-Yard Dwellers* (2004), a description of a major form of housing until the 1950s; and an article by David Trotman on the postcolonial significance of public monuments in the city (2006). Finally, as the bibliography for this present book suggests, there is much discussion of Port of Spain in general studies of the history of Trinidad, as well as in works focused on politics, Carnival, literature and other topics.¹⁷

My objective is to build on the above research to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the construction and significance of the landscape of Port of Spain from the era of high colonialism through decolonization. To this end, I compile a wide range of visual and literary documents of the city and assemble a nuanced account of what the landscape looked like as it developed over time. In addition, I offer an analysis of a variety of individual buildings, outdoor spaces and other elements of the environment and examine their relationships within the broader composition of the city. In pursuing this analysis, I consider landscape elements in the context of larger cultural patterns and social processes in Trinidad. As a medium of thought, the landscape reveals how diverse social groups and individuals conceptualized the organization of Trinidadian society. As a medium of action, it discloses how groups and individuals interacted both to perpetuate and to change this social order. An exploration of these patterns and processes thus enables an understanding of how colonialism and local empowerment were lived at the ground level, as part of day-to-day spatial orientations, practices and experiences. Moreover, it demonstrates that the perpetuation and dismantling of the colonial system involved not only political institutions and discourses but also the material environment. My hope is that the perspective developed here will broaden the scrutiny of Caribbean urban landscapes and thereby enrich the historiography of social relations and politics in the region during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As outlined earlier, my examination of the landscape of Port of Spain encompasses its design, customary use and representation. In considering design, I suggest that this landscape (like that of other cities) is an immensely

complex creative work – one that has been collectively produced over time by a variety of architects, engineers, city planners, construction companies and individual builders. Indeed, it is a major cultural achievement, shaped by diverse visions, aesthetic principles, functional goals, technologies, material resources and environmental/climatic considerations. However, the city's landscape has been the subject of far less research than Trinidad's other visual arts or its creative literature and music. The discussion offered here encourages appreciation of a wider range of creative workers in the city and their artistic and social objectives. Similarly, there is a need for expanded research on large-scale public performances in Port of Spain. The present study provides an analysis not only of Carnival but also of imperial celebrations and the expressive aspects of political rallies and protests. By comparing this variety of performances and their spatial dimensions, it suggests a fuller understanding of their shared symbolic vocabulary and impact within Trinidadian society. Finally, the large body of literary and visual representations of Port of Spain warrants more systematic exploration in order to discover how diverse residents and visitors have perceived and interpreted the city over time. These works have played a major role in shaping images of the city disseminated across Trinidad, the Caribbean and the wider world.

In pursuing this historical study, I have faced several challenges and limitations. One fundamental interpretive challenge is that most of my evidence of the design and use of the past landscape is obtained from representations. In other words, I examine literary and pictorial materials both as sources of information on other phenomena and as a topic in themselves. In treating representations as evidence, I have gathered a wide range of material and, through comparative analysis, attempt to account for the subjective perspectives of authors in developing my descriptions of the appearance and use of the landscape. In considering representations as a topic, I explicitly discuss subjective positions and goals in depictions of the landscape. My intent, however, is not to engage in aesthetic criticism but simply to outline how such works portray diverse spaces within Port of Spain and the city as a whole.

Other research challenges are posed by the particular sources that are available in archives. First, far more material exists on the central city and the Queen's Park Savannah area to its north than on other districts, and there is a particular scarcity of evidence concerning the city's low-income eastern neighbourhoods. My focus in this study on the central city and Savannah area is guided by this availability of source material but also by the importance of these two districts to my overall argument concerning the city's socio-spatial order. From the late nineteenth century to independence, the central city contained a large percentage of the urban population and, along with the Savannah, included the municipality's primary public spaces and institutions.

A second research challenge is that available literary sources represent the views primarily of the territory's middle and upper classes. While some working-class voices are recorded in newspapers and other documents, I devote substantial attention to the expressive qualities of public performances in an effort to comprehend how working people perceived their landscape and society. A third problem is that most available sources were produced by men. During the period under investigation, the great majority of public officials, civic leaders, architects, builders, writers and photographers in Port of Spain were men, and it is mainly their views that appear here. However, I also include the observations of several female journalists and discuss various women who were prominent in social work, labour and political organizing and the arts.

Two conceivable ways of addressing the above limitations of archival sources are oral history and examination of the landscape of Port of Spain today. It would certainly be possible to interview a range of people (including women and individuals of various socioeconomic backgrounds) about their recollections of the city's environment before 1962. However, I decided against this approach, since only the latter portion of my research period would be accessible through remembered observations, and these memories would be filtered by current concerns. My objective is to examine perceptions contemporaneous with the built forms and events described, not memories of the past. On the other hand, I have studied Port of Spain's landscape in recent times. Between 2008 and 2014, I photographed the city extensively and have used these images as a source in conjunction with archival photographs, maps and literary documents. Though much of its street plan remains intact, the city has undergone massive change since 1962, particularly during the petrochemical booms of the mid-1970s to early 1980s and late 1990s to late 2000s. A large number of the buildings that existed in 1962 are gone and many have been substantially modified. Thus recent observations and photographs must be used with much caution in attempting to determine what the city looked like in the past.

Given my research objectives and the limitations of the archive, the portrait of Port of Spain offered here is highly selective in terms of the locales, buildings, individuals and events included or emphasized. Many elements of the city's landscape are not discussed at all. This study offers a particular trajectory through the city over a seventy-four-year period, with a focus on the major expressions of its socio-spatial order. Another researcher setting out on this project would likely follow a somewhat different path and depict a somewhat different city. Nonetheless, I believe that the city represented here is one that its inhabitants will recognize, whether they have memories of the pre-1962 landscape or arrived more recently.

The following chapters are divided into three parts and a conclusion. Part I concerns the cocoa boom era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centu-

ries and includes two chapters. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the components of the city, including diverse districts, public spaces, types of buildings and other landscape features in order to outline the basic socio-spatial characteristics of the place. In addition, it considers the increasing quantity of literary representations, photographs and maps of the city during this period. Chapter 2 then examines infrastructural projects, such as water management and electrification, and analyses the major types of housing in the city. This investigation of fundamental elements of the landscape is followed by a discussion of public performances (imperial celebrations and popular protests) in outdoor spaces. Part 2 of the study addresses the twenty-year period between the world wars. Chapter 3 explores a variety of efforts to enhance the urban landscape, including the initiation of formal town planning, improvements of the port and other components of the infrastructure, the erection of a memorial to World War I deceased servicemen, the construction of various public and commercial buildings and the particular popularity of movie theatres. Chapter 4 focuses on the housing and lives of working people, including government efforts to address the city's housing crisis and the people's protests against socioeconomic conditions. The perspectives of both local and foreign writers on the urban environment are also considered. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of pre-Lenten Carnival traditions, the characteristics of masquerades and calypso during the interwar years, the population's festive play with the city's socio-spatial order and the event's attraction of a growing number of tourists.

Part 3 of the study is devoted to the period 1940 to 1962. Chapter 6 examines the construction of US military bases in Port of Spain and elsewhere in Trinidad during World War II, the arrival of thousands of American military troops and civilian contractors, interactions between Trinidadians and Americans and the general disruption of the British colonial order during these years. Three novels about the wartime city are also reviewed. Chapter 7 investigates the flourishing of both artistic expression and political organizing in the postwar city, with special attention to steelbands and their yards and to the employment of Woodford Square as a public stage by the People's National Movement (PNM). Also included are an account of independence celebrations in 1962 and a discussion of diverse writers' perspectives on the city at the end of colonialism. In addition to investigating some of the urban planning and housing projects of the PNM, chapter 8 explores the development of creole modernism in residential, commercial and public buildings, with attention to several of the leading architects of this period. Finally, the conclusion examines the construction of Port of Spain from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century in the context of parallel developments in several other British Caribbean cities during this same period. Also offered are some general reflections on the significance of Port of Spain's landscape and the value of historical knowledge for comprehending the city's conditions at present.