House-shaped gravestones in the Cayman Islands
From whom, what or where did the influence of the design come?
P. Ann van B. Stafford
May 30, 2013

Houses in Miniature

1845 The burial-place took my attention as peculiarly neat and simple. The graves were marked, not by mounds of earth and headstones, or great massive tombs, but by houses in miniature, just large enough each to cover one person; mostly about six feet long, two feet broad, and one and a half high, with a sloping roof and full gable end, in which was inserted a small slab containing containing the name of the occupant, his age, and the day on which he entered his narrow home, "the house appointed for all living." They were well built, white, and clean, and, of course, of all sizes. Sometimes a row of them close to one another indicated a family place of sepulture. The want of sufficient depth of earth for an ordinary grave, perhaps, led to the adoption of this literal necropolis.

Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, Scottish Missionary Society missionary, sailed from Jamaica Sat. Jan 11, 1845 and was shipwrecked on the East End reef in February 1845. His book: Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work and Adventure, 1829-1858 was published in 1865.

There was no road between Bodden Town and East End until 1935.

House-shaped gravestones in Grand Cayman
They were found in all Districts; those that still exist are:

North West Point Cemetery, West Bay (2)
Elmslie Memorial Church yard - George Town (8, including 3 very small ones)
Watler Cemetery, Prospect Point Road, Old Prospect (15)
Eden - Prospect Cemetery, Prospect Point Road, Old Prospect (13)
Spotts Cemetery, Spotts (10)
Pedro St James Cemetery, Savannah (1)
Bodden Town, Webster United Church Cemetery (several)
Old Man Bay Cemetery, North Side (3)
North Side Cemetery (2)
East End Cemetery (?)
Gun Bay Cemetery (1 small)

From whom, what or where did the influence of the design of the house-shaped gravestones in the Cayman Islands come? Perhaps there was no outside influence.

The coffin was buried in the sand. Sand was mounded over the grave. A structure was made over the grave, which would support itself. A slab alone could not be cast, because maybe the mortar was not sufficiently good. Coral rocks (and sometimes bricks from ships’ ballast) were piled on top of the sand, the length and breadth of where the coffin was buried. (See Elmslie Church, Watler Cemetery and Spotts Cemetery gravestones where part of the ‘roof’ is missing.) The structure needed a WATER-SHED so that the rain water would run off. It was faced with DAUB. The resulting structure was house-shaped. Length + breadth + sloping roof = house-shaped gravestone. Maybe there was sentimentality in the design - a house for the repose of the departed.

PACT - acronym for what or where the influence of the design came:
T Terrain sandy beach ridge, not cliff rock or valuable arable soil
C Climate heat, rainfall, hurricanes, burial within 24 hours
A Availability of materials coral rocks and limestone daub (made from burned coral rocks).
Sometimes bricks from ships' ballast were also used.
P Practicality of design approx. 6ft x 2ft slab over the coffin (which was buried in the sand), and weighted with coral rocks with sloping top (‘roof’) for watershed, so that water did not settle on it and destroy the daub.

The resulting structure looked house-shaped.
Who lies there?
Most of the hardwood plaques with the names and dates have either disappeared or the inscription on them is no longer legible. The living buried the dead, so who was living at the time?

Family graveyards rather than church graveyards
Families had to bury their dead before there were churches in the Cayman Islands.
To try to find out ‘Who lies there?’ I have been making a Family Tree in my Family Tree Maker Program, starting with the early settlers and their descendants, to the best of my researched knowledge.
The first ordained clergyman to lay the foundations of pastoral work in the Cayman Islands was Rev. Thomas Sharpe, Church of England, who arrived on Dec. 23, 1831. See p.8

WATLER Cemetery (National Trust Property) at Prospect Point:
There are no discernible names or dates on the 15 house-shaped gravestones. www.nationaltrust.org.ky/index.php/info-sheets/watler-cemetary

Settlers first came to the Cayman Islands almost 300 years ago. It became the custom in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for people to set aside a portion of their land for the family graveyard. There are a number of such plots around the islands, and many are still used today.
The wooden coffin lies buried in the ground underneath the stone slab supporting the monument. This would have been sufficiently heavy to prevent all but the fiercest of storms from disturbing them. The name of the deceased was inscribed on a mahogany panel set into the wall of the “house”. It is likely that wood was chosen in preference to stone because the local people were skilled carpenters, not stonemasons. Sadly, many of the markers have disappeared and others have become illegible over the years.

EDEN Family Cemetery at Prospect Point:
There are names and dates on 3 of the 13 house-shaped gravestones:
Thomas Knowles EDEN 1782-1843 and his wife
Elizabeth Charlotte EDEN (née COE) 1783-1839
Charlotte Matilda EDEN 1843-1853 (their 10 year old granddaughter)
William Eden* 1807-1879 (Custos), (son of Thomas K. and Elizabeth Eden) and his wife Rachel Jane (nee ?) 1811-1901 are also buried in the EDEN Family Cemetery at Prospect Point, but not with house-shaped gravestones. Charlotte Matilda EDEN was their 10 year old daughter.

GUN BAY cemetery (1):
New born child’s grave, 1874

OLD MAN BAY cemetery:
(They) are believed to be those of three Whittaker sisters, descendants of five Whittaker brothers who came and settled in Old Man Bay around 1840.

NORTH SIDE Cemetery (2):
William Grant Tatum b. March 17, 1824, died Mar.10, 1910, married on Sept.10, 1847 to
Mary L. Tatum née McLaughlin, b. Mar.17, 1825, died Mar.11, 1919
(William was not related to the original North Side Tatum family.)

ELMSLIE Memorial Church, George Town
Memorial stone laid by Rev. R. C. Young, July 1, 1920. 90th. Anniversary of the church - 1922-2012.
House-shaped gravestone of Mary Catherine Page-Merren, died Sept.23, 1875, paternal grandmother of Veta Merren-Bodden. This was destroyed, along with others, to make way for a parking lot, some time after 1973.

Traditional Sand Cemeteries - extract from National Trust for the Cayman Islands Information sheet www.nationaltrust.org.ky/index.php/info-sheets/traditional-sand-cemetaries
In days gone by, there were no community graveyards in the Cayman Islands. It was the practice for each family to be responsible for the safe burial of their dead. During the eighteenth century people started to set aside a small portion of their land to serve as the family graveyard.
As good soil was scarce and needed to grow crops, it could not be spared for such a purpose. Much of the remaining land was made up of very hard coral limestone rock, which was extremely difficult to excavate with the simple tools available. Fortunately, the answer lay on the shoreline, where the deep, infertile, sandy soil had less value and was relatively easy to dig. It must be remembered that it is only in the twentieth century that beaches have been seen as an asset. The early settlers preferred to live away from the threat of flooding which they represented.

**FOUNDED UPON THE SEAS - A History of the Cayman Islands and Their People** by Michael Craton and the New History Committee 2003

Page 236 has a drawing captioned ‘Graves in Grand Cayman dating from the early 1800’s’

**A Study of Church and State in the Cayman Islands: THE DEPENDENCY QUESTION** by Nicholas J. G. Sykes

Chapter 5 **THE CAYMANAS CHURCH UP TO 1839** p.53 - extract:

1820’s ‘In the beginning’, the Caymanas Church was a congregation of worshippers presided over by a ‘respectable Inhabitant’ and it is notable that Caymanas Governor’ William Bodden had a ‘house of Public’ worship built for them. There is no question that the inhabitants took it for granted that the Faith they practised was the Faith of the Mother country, and they would have been within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. Later, the See of Jamaica was erected and the Rt. Rev. Christopher Lipscomb was installed as the Church of England’s first Bishop of Jamaica.

1836 June 9 to 1837 June 9 p.67


His George Town Congregation 280
His Prospect Congregation 200
Number of Baptisms 38
Number of Marriages 11
Number of Burials 9

Page 84 has two photographs of old tombs at the Watler Cemetery, Prospect Point, and George Town church yard. ‘It is possible, though unlikely, that one or other goes back to Church of England times.’

**TIMELINE**

1503 May 10 Columbus sighted Cayman Brac and Little Cayman on his 4th. voyage and named them Las Tortugas. Over the next 100 years, the name Caymanas or Cayman became common.

1586 Sir Francis Drake’s fleet of 23 ships stopped for two days at uninhabited Grand Cayman. Crocodiles, alligators, iguanas and numerous turtles were recorded.

1649 King Charles I executed

1653-1658 Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector, virtual dictator

1655 Cromwell’s grand Western Design, English joint army-navy force, captured Jamaica from the Spanish

1655 The Maroons were the slaves of the Spanish, who escaped into the forests and mountains of Jamaica, before and after the English arrived.

1656 Cromwell issued a proclamation in other colonies, inviting settlers for the new colony of Jamaica. William BOWDEN, an early settler from Nevis, arrived in December with Major Luke Stokes, Governor of Nevis, in the Morant Bay area, St. Thomas. (Within three months, by March 1657, two-thirds of the 1600 settlers had died of fevers in the low-lying coastal area.) Bowden is an area in St. Thomas which takes its name from a former owner.

1661-71 The first recorded settlements were located on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, during the tenure of Sir Thomas Modyford as Governor of Jamaica. Muddy Foots, Little Cayman is named after him. Because of the depredations of Spanish privateers, Modyford’s successor called the settlers back to Jamaica, though by this time Spain had recognized British possession of the Islands in the 1670 Treaty of Madrid.

1670 Under the Treaty of Madrid, Spain recognized England’s sovereignty over Jamaica and various other Caribbean islands, including Cayman.

1734 First royal grant of land in Grand Cayman was made by the Governor of Jamaica. It covered 3,000 acres in the area between Prospect and North Sound. A total of five land grants were made between 1734-42. Mahogany and logwood were exported to Jamaica. Population perhaps 100-150.

1735 Isaac BAWDEN of Grand Cayman married Sarah Lamar, widow, in Port Royal, Jamaica

1765 William EDEN from Wiltshire, England (b.1737- d.1801), arrived in Grand Cayman from Jamaica

1773 Gauld survey map and notes, early settlers: population 450
1773  Thomas THOMPSON, native of Penicuik, Scotland arrived in Cayman sometime after 1773. He founded and
settled PROSPECT. Prospect is not marked on the Gauld map, nor are any houses marked in that location. Shortly
afterwards, he commenced cultivating cotton extensively, which he shipped to England.

1775-1783 American Revolutionary War

1776  some time after this date - Fort at Prospect built

1780  William Eden built Pedro Castle

1780’s  Cotton, turtle, sarsaparilla and wood exported to Jamaica.

1789  Mutiny on the Bounty - Capt. William Bligh attempted to take breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies

1789  French Revolution

1790  James Goodchild COE Snr (1769-1839) from Ipswich, England, who went to Jamaica when he was 12 years old
(1781). He married Rachael Ann, (daughter of William Eden) on Dec.25, 1790. He was captain of the Militia at
Prospect.

1790  Fort George in George Town constructed at approximately this date

1793  Capt. William Bligh successfully took breadfruit, and many other plants, to the West Indies

1794  ‘Wreck of the Ten Sail’: ten ships, including HMS Convert, the navy ship leading a convoy of 58 merchantmen,
wrecked off East End.

1795-1801  Earl of Balcarres - Governor of Jamaica

1800  William Eden (Snr.) left Cayman for Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua. His son, William (Jnr.), by his first wife,
Dorothy, née Bodden, inherited Pedro St. James. He sold it to his brother-in-law, James Coe, Public Recorder and
Chief Magistrate. James Coe left Cayman at some time and resold it to William Eden (Jnr)

1801  William Eden (Snr.) builder Pedro Castle, died in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua.

1801-1805  Sir George Nugent Governor of Jamaica

1802  CORBET Report census: population 933, including 551 slaves

1805  Aug. 28  Letter from William Bodden to Governor Nugent of Jamaica. In the beginning, a respectable
inhabitant presided over the Caymanas church, a congregation of worshippers. ‘Governor’ William Bodden had a
house of public worship built in Bodden Town. The faith they practised was the faith of the Mother Country.

1807  Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Empire

1817  Registration of slaves were made by parish offices in Jamaica

1824  July 24  Diocese (or See) of Jamaica established. Rt. Rev. Christopher Lipscomb was installed as the Church of
England’s first Bishop of Jamaica

1825  The new Bishop communicated with the ‘Governor of the Caymans’

1826  Bishop of Jamaica stopped off in Grand Cayman on his way from Jamaica to Belize

1826  James Shearer Jackson imprisoned in Pedro St. James

1831  Dec.10  Election at Pedro St James for the first Legislative Assembly

1831  Dec.23  Church of England Rev. Thomas Sharpe arrives in Grand Cayman. A church, a thatched wattle and
daub cabin, was built in George Town (on the site of the present Elmslie United Memorial Church).

1831  Dec.10 & 31  Meeting of Representatives and Magistrates of Grand Cayman to form a legislature at Pedro St.
James. The first Custos or Chief Magistrate was appointed

1833  Abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire

1834  Bishop of Jamaica, Christopher Lipscomb, visited Cayman and consecrated the George Town church. Later a
second church was built at Prospect, both were wattle and daub cabins.

1834-1836  The Marquess of Sligo, Governor of Jamaica

1834  Aug.1  Emancipation of British slaves. They became ‘Apprentices’

1835  May 2  Caymanas Apprentices set free, having been unlawfully apprenticed. They were not registered in 1817.

1836-1839  Sir Lionel Smith, Governor of Jamaica

1836  Sept. 5.  Memorial to His Majesty King William IV from the Inhabitants in the Caymanas, (Custos, Magistrates
and other inhabitants................. .... occupied by descendants of British born subjects and professed of the
Christian religion...

petition to Parliament via Governor of Jamaica, Sir Lionel Smith

1837  Jan.23.  Reply from Lord Glenelg

1837  May first exploratory visit by Rev. James Atkins, Wesleyan Missionary Society

1837  June 20  King William IV died and his niece Victoria became Queen of the United Kingdom

1837  Sept. 28-29  Hurricane - Racer’s Storm, one of the worst hurricanes of the 19th. century - Sept.28 to Oct.9

1837  Oct. 25  Hurricane

1838  March 29  Petition to 18 year old Queen Victoria: ‘The island is inhabited by us, your Majesty’s attached
subjects’ about compensation after emancipation in 1834 and release of the Apprentices in 1835 and the
devastation caused by the two hurricanes in 1837, that destroyed the George Town church, severely injured the
Prospect church, reduced upwards of one hundred dwellings to the ground, wrecked vessels, destroyed fields and
brought them to a state of starvation.
1838 *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens published

1839 July Wesleyan Rev. Mark Bird, seconded from Jamaica, arrived in Grand Cayman.

Over the next 5 years he was succeeded by 6 other Wesleyan missionaries.

1839 July Church of England Rev. David Wilson leaves Grand Cayman

1839 Elizabeth Charlotte EDEN (née COE) 1783-1839 - house-shaped gravestone, Prospect Point Eden family cemetery

1842 Wesleyan Rev. John Mearns - 9 month tenure in Grand Cayman. He preached and administered communion in 5 places, riding 50 miles a week on horseback. The first Wesleyan Chapel was built in West Bay and another was started at PROSPECT.

1843 Thomas Knowles EDEN 1782-1843 - house-shaped gravestone, Prospect Point Eden family cemetery

1844 The last Wesleyan missionary Rev. John Green left Grand Cayman after a few months - ‘the soil of the country is so impoverished, it won’t yield sufficient quantities of provisions’.

1845 Jan. Presbyterian Rev. Hope Masteron Waddell on his way from Jamaica to Scotland via New Orleans was shipwrecked on the East End reef. He had to spend ten days in Grand Cayman before he could continue on his voyage. He described the house-shaped gravestones in George Town - *houses in miniature*.

1846 July Rev. James Elmslie, pastor of Green Island, Hanover, Jamaica (born in 1786 in Aberdeen, Scotland) offered to go to Cayman at the age of 50. He established the Presbyterian church in Grand Cayman.

1846 - 1863 Presbyterian Rev. James Elmslie ministered throughout Grand Cayman


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1656 *Jamaica – The Settlers From Nevis*

By S. A. G. Taylor p.14-16


Extracts:

When Cromwell heard of the capture of Jamaica he endeavoured to attract settlers to his newly won domain. He advised the people of New England, whom he declared had been driven from the land of their birth to a desert and barren wilderness, to remove themselves to a land of plenty!

He wrote to the Governors of the various West Indian Colonies and advocated a similar policy, but as these Islands had been brought to the brink of ruin by the loss of four thousand able-bodied men who had enlisted in Venables' Army, they did not look on this suggestion with much enthusiasm and did little to further it, all save the Governor of Nevis, Luke Stokes.

The names of some of the estates in the district such as **Bowden**, Wards River, Stanton, Stokes Hall, Stokesfield, Phillipfield, Wheelersfield and Rolandsfield are probably those of the first owners and there is another name here about which it is interesting to speculate. Near Stokesfield there is a little stream known as the River Styx. Perhaps it is connected in some way with the burial place of the first settlers, if so, let us hope that the shades of the men and women from Nevis rest in peace in the world beyond its banks.

1773 Gauld survey map and notes: population 450

George Gauld spent ten days on and around the island while making his hydrographic survey. He commented about the inhabitants way of life. The settlers were very desirous of having a Clergyman and a Surgeon to reside among them. A great quantity of cotton was grown for export along with turtles.

**East End**
- 3 families

**Bodden Town (South Side)**
- 21 families

**Spotts (Spot’s Bay)**
- 2 families

**Hogsties (the West End)**
- 13 families

Total: 39 families, total population about 450 (whites, Negros and Mulattoes)

*Founded Upon the Seas* pages 53 and 112


1802 Corbet census population 933, including 551 slaves. Edward Corbet was instructed by Sir George Nugent, Governor of Jamaica (1801-1805), to go to the Cayman Islands and write a full report of the population, cultivation, soil, etc

*Lt. Governor Nugent Letters On The Cayman Islands* Corbet Report June 3, 1802 Page 8-13 (p.11 of pdf)


The names of the families are included in Corbet’s report
Little Pedro
Wm Watler and Thos. Knowles Eden (unmarried)

Spotts
Wm. Eden, James Coe Snr. And Wm Bodden (the Younger)

Prospect
Waide Watler Junior and Thomas Thomson

S.W. Sound
C. Parsons, James Parsons, Wm Parsons. Lind Rivers, Geo Barrow.
Wm Trusty, Catherine Mitchell.

West Bay
Boatswain Bay

Little Cayman and Cayman Brac were uninhabited.

1802 - Edward Corbet’s report to His Excellency, Major General Nugent of Jamaica explains “At Bodden Town there is a small place of worship and in which they have divine service. The person who officiates is not an ordained Clergyman, but a respectable inhabitant. Page 112 of “Founded upon the Seas”. When they wish to enter into engagement of marriage they repair to some port in this Island chiefly I understand to Montego Bay.” See page 7 of “Our Islands Past” Volume I

Cayman House-shaped gravestones - P. Ann van B. Stafford’s online albums with pictures
https://picasaweb.google.com/101164065346884869793/CaymanHouseShapedGravestones

North West Point Cemetery, West Bay
Elmslie Memorial Church, George Town (8, including 3 very small ones)
Prospect (Old) - Eden cemetery, Prospect Point Road:
Thomas Knowles Eden (d.Oct.30, 1843) and his wife Elizabeth Eden (d.1839)
Prospect (Old) - Eden cemetery, Prospect Point Road:
William Eden 1807-1879 (Custos 1855-1879) (son of Thomas K. & Elizabeth Eden) - and his wife Rachel Jane 1811-1901 not house-shaped gravestone
Watler Cemetery, Prospect Point Road: Property of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands - house-shaped gravestones
Spotts Cemetery, Shamrock Road: house-shaped gravestones, beside the graves of Jane Merren (Mar.7, 1808 - Aug.7, 1887) and George Merren (Sept.13, 1813 - Dec.21, 1895)
Pedro / Eden Cemetery, Pedro Castle Road: house-shaped gravestone opposite Pedro St. James Bodden Town cemetery opposite Webster Memorial Church: house-shaped gravestones
Old Man Bay cemetery: house-shaped gravestones (3)

CaymanCultural
https://picasaweb.google.com/101164065346884869793/CaymanCultural

National Trust for the Cayman Islands - Information Sheets
Traditional Sand Cemeteries
(They) are believed to be those of three Whittaker sisters, descendants of five Whittaker brothers who came and settled in Old Man Bay around 1840.

North Side Cemetery (2)
William Grant Tatum b. March 17, 1824, died Mar.10, 1910, married on Sept.10, 1847 to Mary L. Tatum née McLaughlin, b. Mar.17, 1825, died Mar.11, 1919
It is believed that William, of English or Irish decent, arrived in Cayman with his brother, Moet, in the 1840’s. Both married local girls, and William and Mary eventually settled in North Side. They were not related to the original North Side Tatum family, who were among the very first settlers, listed as “Free people of colour” in the 1802 census.
Bodden Town United Church Cemetery
contains several unmarked traditional gravestones

Gun Bay cemetery
lies behind the church. It has clearly been in use for many years, as the house-shaped gravemarkers under a
Firecracker bush testify to its long use.

A History of Elections in the Cayman Islands

According to our records the first formal type of elected Government was first introduced in **December 1831**. However, prior to this the Islands were administered by a number of Magistrates and Senior Magistrates, and some times even by a Custos, appointed by the Governor of Jamaica. This system of Government worked well while the population remained relatively small but as the population increased a number of problems were experienced because of weaknesses in the system. [See “Founded upon the Seas” Chap. 5 “The Beginnings of Self-Government” By M.Craton] The first Magistrates ruled with some references to Jamaican Law. In **1802**, as Edward Corbet had noted in his Report,”The Magistrates are understood to have the same power as those in this island [Jamaica], but when any new measure is to be adopted it is generally submitted by them to the consideration of the population at large.” This seemed to have been a very democratic manner of dealing with affairs of state, but not everyone was pleased as this led to some confusion and conflict.

By at least **1823**, the **Chief Magistrate, James Coe Sr.**, and the other “Magistrates and principal inhabitants” of Grand Cayman apparently felt they needed a more formal system of lawmaking and set of laws. Accordingly, they asked for and got commissions for several more Magistrates from **Governor Lord Manchester**.

Then on 13 December 1823, the Magistrates and “principal inhabitants” held a meeting at William Eden’s residence at Pedro St. James. Their first decision was to lease the Pedro property from William Eden for £5. 6s. 8d a year. It would be used as an animal pound, court-house, and jail, with a daily payment of 2s. 11d authorized whenever there was a prisoner.

Other laws were passed at this time, which dealt with roaming livestock, duties on dry goods, provisions, liquor, or any kind of merchandize sold by any non-inhabitant. Another law, which prohibited the sale of liquors, wines, by any slave, was also passed at this time.

Pedro St. James continued to be the seat of Government, with regular meeting held at this location. On 5th December 1831 a meeting was held at Pedro St. James to form a proper legislative assembly with representatives and Magistrates from each district appointed.- forming as it were two houses in imitation of the Council and Assembly of Jamaica.

On 10th December 1831, 2 representatives of each were “elected” for the districts of West Bay, George Town, South West Sound, Prospect, and Bodden Town the method of election is not known. These ten representatives later referred to as the “Vestry” assembled for the first time on 31st December 1831 in George Town, and met again on 2nd January 1832. The eight Magistrates met at the same time but in a different room carefully preserving the classic British form of a bicameral legislature. No law was “deemed valid” until it had received the assent of both houses.

**1832 January** The names of the Magistrates & Representatives at the 1832 meeting were:

**Magistrates**
- John Drayton
- Robert Stephen Watler
- Waide W. Bodden
- John S. Jackson
- James Coe Jr.
- Abraham O Feurtado
- Elin J. Parsons
- Nathaniel Glover

**Vestrymen**
George W. Wood
James Wood
James Coe Snr.
W. Eden Jr.
John Goodhew
James Parsons Snr.
William James Bodden
Howard Lindsay Thompson
Samuel Parsons
William Bodden

1839 The following is a summary of subsequent elections results.

George Town
Wm. James Bodden
Thomas S Thompson
Wm. A. Thompson
James E. Parsons

Bodden Town
Richard Carter
Thomas Greenwood
George McCoy
John B. Wood
J. D. Watler
Joseph Bodden Jr.
P. McLaughlin

Spotts & Prospect
James S. Jackson
William R. Bodden
Tabulon Farrell

South Sound
Shin Parsons
John Goodhew

West Bay
William Brown
D. J. S. Bodden

A Study of Church and State in the Cayman Islands THE DEPENDENCY QUESTION by Nicholas J. G. Sykes
www.churchofenglandcayman.com/Dep%20Ques%20-%20Contents.html
Chapter 5 (extract) www.churchofenglandcayman.com/DQA1CH5B.html
THE CAYMANAS CHURCH UP TO 1839

“In the beginning” the Caymanas Church was a congregation of worshippers presided over by a “respectable
Inhabitant” and it is notable that the Caymanas “Governor” William Bodden had a “house of Public worship” built
for them. There is no question that the inhabitants took it for granted that the Faith they practised was the Faith
of the Mother country, and they would have been within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London.
Later, the See of Jamaica was erected and the Rt. Rev. Christopher Lipscomb was installed as the Church of
England’s first Bishop of Jamaica. It should not be forgotten that the Church of England had already existed in
Jamaica before that time for over [one] and a half centuries, but apparently had formed no ministerial connection
with the Caymanas Church from the time that it began independently.
The purpose of the Letters Patent issued in 1824 for the new Bishopric of Jamaica was to “erect found ordain make
and constitute the Island of Jamaica the Bahama Islands and the Settlements in the Bay of Honduras, and their
respective dependencies, to be a Bishop’s See”. 5.3 In 1825 the new Bishop communicated with the “Governor of the
Caymans” letting him know of his intent to establish the Church in “that part of his diocese”. At the same time Mr.
James Coe Junior in the Caymanas wrote a letter to the Rev'd Isaac Mann in Jamaica in which the feasibility of a clergyman being sent to the Caymanas from Jamaica was discussed. In December 1831 a Church of England clergyman arrived in the Caymanas from the Bishop of Jamaica, and until 1839 the Church in Caymanas manifested in practical terms its willingness to receive the Bishop of Jamaica's pastoral oversight. All this came to a decisive end by the summer of 1839, when once again the Caymanas Church became ministerially disconnected from the Church in Jamaica, and documentary sources from 1845 to 1970 all without exception show that the Cayman Islands were not included in the Diocese of Jamaica (see Ch. 6 sections 3 and 4 below).

Cayman Chief Magistrates or Custodes
* 1750 William Cartwright
* 1776 William Bodden
  William Bodden (Governor Bodden I) 1776 - 1789
  William Bodden (Governor Bodden II) 1789 - 1823
* 1823 James Coe the Elder
* 1829 John Drayton
* 1842 James Coe the Younger
* 1855 William Eden
* 1879 William Bodden Webster
* 1888 Edmund Parsons

Commissioners
* 1898 Frederick Shedden Sanguinnetti, ISO
* 1907 George Stephenson Shirt Hirst

Note: *Custos rotulorum* (plural: *Custodes rotulorum*) Latin for Keeper of the Rolls, a civic post that is recognized in England, Jamaica and Cayman.

1845 Houses In Miniature


The Grand Cayman is but a few feet above the level of the sea) with a thin coating of soil on solid rock. There is pasturage for cattle, but no farms. Even the bush, which can grow where man cannot labour, is stunted. Yams, cocoas, and plantains are unknown. "Sweet potatoes will grow in some parts," said a good woman, "and we all go a fishing, especially for turtle, to supply the English ships. But, to tell the truth, sir, our main dependence is on the wrecks, and we all thank God when a ship comes ashore." The Grand Cayman is a trap for ships, and catches more, perhaps, than any other spot of equal extent in the world. It is on the high road of all West India vessels, homeward bound, and of all outward bound for New Orleans, Havannah, and other ports in the Gulf of Mexico while the never-ceasing current varies, sometimes, with the trade wind, both in force and direction, sweeping one time north and another time south of the island. Seamen, who don't want to call there for turtle, give it a wide berth but sometimes, as in our case, when they had reckoned themselves thirty miles off it, find their ships crashing on its reefs. Anchors and chain cables were lying all over the beach. Fragments of ships seemed to form part of most of the common people's houses.

The burial-place took my attention as peculiarly neat and simple. The graves were marked, not by mounds of earth and headstones, or great massive tombs, but by *houses in miniature*, just large enough each to cover one person; mostly about six feet long, two feet broad, and one and a half high, with a sloping roof and full gable end, in which was inserted a small slab containing containing the name of the occupant, his age, and the day on which he entered his narrow home, "the house appointed for all living." They were well built, white, and clean, and, of course, of all sizes. Sometimes a row of them close to one another indicated a family place of sepulture. The want of sufficient depth of earth for an ordinary grave, perhaps, led to the adoption of this literal necropolis.

Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell sailed from Montego Bay, Jamaica on Sat. Jan 11, 1845 in a large, new schooner, the *Weymouth*, on his way back to Scotland with his family and was shipwrecked on the East End reef at midnight on Sunday.
A few days after their rescue, there was a public sale of the wreck of the *Weymouth*, which attracted parties from other places, including ‘the owner of a small schooner from George’s Bay, at the west end of the island’. They went first to ‘George’s Town’ and that is where he described the burial place, the ‘houses in miniature’. There was a church and a schoolhouse, but neither minister nor teacher, none on the island. On the 22\textsuperscript{nd} they continued on their journey to New Orleans.

The following year, in July 1846, Rev. James Elmslie, pastor of Green Island, Hanover, Jamaica (born in 1786 in Aberdeen, Scotland) offered to go to Cayman at the age of 50. He established the Presbyterian Church in Grand Cayman, where he ministered throughout the island from 1846 - 1863.

Dr Isobel Rigol 2009 report (extract)

### 2.2 Watler Cemetery

Watler Cemetery is part of a larger complex of coastal cemeteries developed in the Cayman Islands. This peculiar site is a family graveyard dating back to the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century or perhaps before, responding to the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century local custom of dedicating a portion of their land to burials. The justification for these cemeteries’ particular location was the islands’ rocky and difficult to excavate inland and the need to preserve the soils for agriculture.

Most of the tombs are house-shaped, made out of red bricks and faced with a layer of burned coral and limestone daub. The names of the deceased were originally inscribed on mahogany markers set on the walls of the graves. The graveyard is enclosed within a coral stone wall.

The beautiful, peaceful and apparently undisturbed coastal setting, with sea grapes, almond trees and eventually the sound of the waves, provides a peculiarly poetic experience. The Watler Cemetery is – without doubts – an exceptional exponent of the Caymanian and Caribbean cultural heritage. It is very important to point out that the Watler Cemetery and the other coastal graveyards (Spott’s, Coe’s, etc) in Grand Cayman – are, if not unique, at least rare in the Caribbean sub region.

Though it has been stated that: “Similar grave markers have been found in England and Wales dating from mediaeval times, while others (dating from the early 1600’s) are to be found elsewhere in the British West Indies; the consultant has not found any description or graphic evidence. She knows several cemeteries – both Christian and Jewish – in the Caribbean and thinks there are not any tombs like the ones seen in Grand Cayman. While recently doing a preliminary exploration on this topic she found out some strange coincidences: similar tombs at the Jewish Cemetery in George Town, Penang, Malaysia, others with a similar shape in the Jewish Cemeteries of Fez, Morocco and Vilnius, Lithuania. There are also some cemeteries on the Cuban Northeast coast at the Holguín province that might have some similarities with those in Cayman. As far as the consultant understands, a comprehensive and comparative research about the origins of Cayman’s cemeteries has not yet been until this date carried out.

Further research on Cayman Islands coastal cemeteries is needed in order to reveal their uniqueness or exceptionalty at least at a Regional level.

Considering the exceptional values of this Cemetery (also the others in Grand Cayman and the other islands), the threats it faces and the challenge of its proper maintenance, it would be good to propose it to be included in the **World Monuments Watch List** of the 100 Most Endangered Monuments. This annual list – widely published worldwide – can allow obtaining funds and the promotion of local and international awareness.

**Watler’s Cemetery** could be included in the World Monument Fund’s Watch List for 2014.

*CaymanianCompass*, April 1, 2013

[www.compasscayman.com/caycompass/2013/03/28/Preserving-Watler-s-Cemetery](http://www.compasscayman.com/caycompass/2013/03/28/Preserving-Watler-s-Cemetery)

**Prospect**

Watler Cemetery Property of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands [www.nationaltrust.org.ky/?p=706](http://www.nationaltrust.org.ky/?p=706)

The wooden coffin lies buried in the ground underneath the stone slab supporting the monument. This would have been sufficiently heavy to prevent all but the fiercest of storms from disturbing them. The name of the deceased
was inscribed on a mahogany panel set into the wall of the “house”. It is likely that wood was chosen in preference to stone because the local people were skilled carpenters, not stonemasons. Sadly, many of the markers have disappeared and others have become illegible over the years.

The whole area of Prospect is one of the most fertile on the island, and was among the first on Grand Cayman to have contained a settlement of any size. One of two forts built to protect Grand Cayman from attack by Spanish marauders from Cuba was built in Prospect. Although the fort was demolished many years ago, the site of it is marked with a monument which can be seen further along the Old Prospect Road on the way into George Town.

Focus on Spotts and Prospect
Watler Cemetery, Prospect Point Road - 15 house-shaped gravestones
Eden Family Cemetery, Prospect Point Road - 13 house-shaped gravestones
Spotts Cemetery, Shamrock Road - 10 house-shaped gravestones

William EDEN from Devizes, Wiltshire, England, who arrived in Cayman in 1765, was married first to Dorothy (née Bodden) in Savannah-la-Mar, Jamaica, on December 25, 1765. They had one son, William Eden II, and 3 daughters. They lived at Spotts, marked Edens on the 1773 Gauld map. [www.heritagecharts.com/mapchart.php/305/5/the_island_of_grand_cayman_by_george_gauld](http://www.heritagecharts.com/mapchart.php/305/5/the_island_of_grand_cayman_by_george_gauld)

After Dorothy died in 1773, William married Elizabeth ‘Bessy’ Clark, who was born in Falmouth, Jamaica. She was the daughter of Thomas Knowles Clark and Mary (née Savory). William and Bessy Eden had 5 daughters and one son - Thomas Knowles Eden.

In 1780 William built stone house at Pedro - Pedro St James Castle. His son William Eden II (Jr), (by his first wife Dorothy), as William the Executor and Heir at law, came into its possession and sold it to James Coe in 1800. James Coe left the island some years later and resold it to William Eden, who occupied it for some years. At his death he bequeathed it to 2 coloured boys named Joseph and Samuel, who assumed the surname Eden and thus started a new family of that name.

There were a lot of his descendants called William Eden from both branches of this family.

After William Eden died in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua in 1801, where he was buried, Elizabeth ‘Bessy’ married Thomas THOMPSON of Penicuik, Scotland, who settled in PROSPECT.

Thomas THOMPSON native of Penicuik, Scotland arrived in Cayman probably after 1773, because Prospect is not marked on the 1773 Gauld map, nor are any houses shown, (see link above). He founded and settled PROSPECT. He married Elizabeth, widow of William EDEN and appears to have had but one child, Thomas Knowles Thompson. Shortly after settling down at Prospect, he commenced cultivating COTTON extensively, which he shipped to England. With one cargo he returned home himself and brought back with him a cousin William Thompson who settled down at Whitehall and founded the family we now always call the ‘Georgetown Thompsons’. Ref. Hirst p.93.

Thomas Thompson probably named PROSPECT. Hirst p.95.

Thomas, together with one James Watler are said to have built the Fort at Prospect. Hirst p.94.

1802 census Thomas THOMSON family of 13, owned 56 slaves.

Note: Thomson/Thompson - sometimes it might be spelt one way or the other.

Note: William Bodden - there were a lot of people with the name William Bodden.

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Chapter 10 Compensation Claims at Rest

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1837 Racer’s Storm, the 10th known Tropical Storm of the 1837 Atlantic Hurricane season, was one of the most powerful and destructive hurricanes in the 19th century, causing heavy damage to many cities on its 2,000+ mile path. It was named after the British sloop-of-war HMS Racer, and was first observed in the Western Caribbean near Jamaica on September 28.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1837_Racer%27s_Storm

1837 Queen Victoria June 20 Coronation June 28, 1838)
On 20 June 1837, King William IV died and his niece, Princess Victoria, became Queen at the age of 18. Her coronation was held at Westminster Abbey a year later on 28 June 1838. The coronation was a huge occasion and four hundred thousand visitors went to London to see the new Queen being crowned.
www.royal.gov.uk/The%20Royal%20Collection%20and%20other%20collections/TheRoyalARCHives/QueenVictoriaeducationproject/QueenVictoriasCoronation1838.aspx

Governors of Jamaica

English Commanders of Jamaica (1655-1661)
In 1655, an English force led by Admiral Sir William Penn, and General Robert Venables seized the island, and successfully held it against Spanish attempts to retake it over the next few years.
Admiral Sir William Penn, 11 May 1655 - 1655
General Robert Venables, 1655
Edward O'Byley, 1655-1656, first time
William Brayne, 1656-1657
Edward O'Byley, 1657-1661, second time

English Governors of Jamaica (1661-1662)
In 1661, England began colonisation of the island.
Edward O'Byley, 1661-August 1662, continued
Thomas Lord Windsor, August 1662-November 1662

Deputy Governors of Jamaica (1662-1671)
Charles Lyttleton, 1662-1663, acting
Thomas Lynch, 1663-1664, acting, first time
Edward Morgan, 1664
Sir Thomas Modyford, 1664-August 1671 Muddy Foots, Little Cayman is named after him.

Jamaican Consulate www.jaconsulatecayman.org/m8c.html

The first recorded settlements were located on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, during the 1661-71 tenure of Sir Thomas Modyford as Governor of Jamaica. Because of the depredations of Spanish privateers, Modyford's successor called the settlers back to Jamaica, though by this time Spain had recognised British possession of the Islands in the 1670 Treaty of Madrid. Often in breach of the treaty, British privateers roamed the area taking their prizes, probably using the Cayman Islands for replenishing stocks of food and water and careening their vessels. During the 18th century, the Islands were certainly well known to such pirates as Edward Teach (Blackbeard), Neal Walker, George Lowther and Thomas Antis, even after the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, was supposed to have ended privateering.

In 1670, the Treaty of Madrid legitimised English claim to the island.

Sir Thomas Lynch, August 1671-November 1674, second time
Sir Henry Morgan, 1674-1675, acting, first time
John Vaughan, 1675-1678
Sir Henry Morgan, 1678, acting, second time
The Earl of Carlisle, 1678-1680
Sir Henry Morgan, 1680-1682, acting, third time
Sir Thomas Lynch, 1682-1684, third time
Hender Molesworth, 1684-December 1687, acting
Christopher Monck The Duke of Albermarle, 1687-1688 (2nd and last Duke of Albemarle). He died in Jamaica in 1688. Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) accompanied him as physician. During his 15 months in Jamaica, he compiled a list of animal and plant specimens required by friends and assembled for himself a fine collection of plants, insects, shells, fish and other specimens. It was to be the founding core of the British Museum, and later the Natural History Museum, in London.

Hender Molesworth, 1688-1689, acting
Francis Watson, 1689-1690, acting

Governors of Jamaica (1691-1856)
The Earl of Inchiquin, 1690-1691
John White, 1691-1692, acting
John Burden, 1692-1693, acting
Sir William Beeston, March 1693-January 1702, acting to 1699
William Selwyn, 1702
Peter Beckford, 1702, acting
Thomas Handasyde, 1702-1711, acting to 1704
Lord Archibald Hamilton, 1711-1716
Peter Heywood, 1716-1718
Sir Nicholas Lawes, 1718-1722
The Duke of Portland, 1722-4 July 1726 after whom the parish of Portland was named). Henry Bentinck died in office in 1726 at Spanish Town and his body was returned to England for burial.
John Ayscough, 1726-1728, acting, first time
Robert Hunter, 1728-March 1734
John Ayscough, 1734-1735, acting, second time
The first royal grant of land in Grand Cayman was made by the Governor of Jamaica in 1734. It covered 3,000 acres in the area between Prospect and North Sound. Others followed, up to 1742, developing an existing settlement, which included the use of slaves. Cayman Travel Guide www.thecaymanislands.ky/about-cayman/history
John Gregory, 1735, acting, first time
Henry Cunningham, 1735-1736
John Gregory, 1736-1738, acting, second time
Edward Trelawny, 1738-1752
Charles Knowles, 1752-January 1756 Knowles Family in the Caribbean www.knowlesclan.org/carrib.htm
Sir Henry Moore, February 1756-April 1756, acting, first time
George Haldane, April 1756-November 1759
Sir Henry Moore, November 1759 - 1762, acting, second time
Sir William Lyttleton, 1762-1766
Roger Hope Elletson, 1766-1767
Sir William Trelawny, 1767-December 1772
John Dalling, December 1772 - 1774, acting, first time
Sir Basil Keith, 1774-1777
John Dalling, 1777-1781, second time
Archibald Campbell, 1781-1784, acting to 1783
Alured Clarke, 1784-1790
The Earl of Effingham, 1790-19 November 1791
Sir Adam Williamson, 1791-1795, acting
The Earl of Balcarres, 1795-1801
Sir George Nugent, 1801-1805
Sir Eyre Coote, 1806-1808
The Duke of Manchester, 1808-1821
Sir John Keane, 1827-1829, acting
The Earl Belmore, 1829-1832
George Cuthbert, 1832, acting, first time
The Earl of Mulgrave, 1832-1834
Sir Amos Norcott, 1834, acting
George Cuthbert, 1834, acting, second time
The Marquess of Sligo, 1834-1836
Sir Lionel Smith, 1836-1839
Sir Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, 1839-1842
The Earl of Elgin, 1842-1846
George Henry Frederick Berkeley, 1846-1847, acting
Sir Charles Edward Grey, 1847-1853
Sir Henry Barkly, 1853-1856
In 1962, Jamaica gained independence from the United Kingdom. Since independence, the viceroy in Jamaica has been the Governor-General of Jamaica.