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## A Freetown Gazetteer

### Introduction

With funding from Leverhulme Trust, we have been writing the architectural history of the United Africa Company (UAC) across Western Africa. The primary output for this work was a monograph published by Bloomsbury called *Architecture, Empire, and Trade: The United Africa Company*, but whilst researching this publication it became apparent that there was an urgent need for a gazetteer on the architecture of Freetown in Sierra Leone.

The city has a rich and complex history and there are surviving architectural relics in the city that track these developments. Sadly, there is not a guidebook or catalogue of these structures.

We spent several months conducting archival research at Unilever archives and extracting the various references and photographs relating to the city. This quickly became a large compendium of data and we were eager to share our findings alongside contemporary images of the city today.

We organised a visit to Freetown in January 2023 and began to examine and compare the historical archival photos with the current streetscape. This involved many enjoyable hours of walking through the city and location spotting. Many of the old structures survive and we have been able to produce a set of before and after shots. We also arranged visits to Fourah Bay College School of Architecture, the National Archives (housed on Fourah Bay's campus), Sierra Leone Grammar School, Hill Station, and further field to Bonthe on Sherbro Island to record some of the surviving mercantile properties there.

The proceeding chapters will discuss and display locations and places that elaborate this journey. The chapters have been thematically grouped so leading characteristics of the urban grain can be addressed in turn. Relevant historical events have also been described to enhance and contextualise the architecture.

Archives Consulted  
United Africa Company Collection, Unilever  
The National Archives, UK  
Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay College  
Barclays Bank Archive  
RIBA Archive and Library





## Chapter 1

### Four settler groups who became the Creole (Krio)

**Freetown owed its existence to British organisations and activists dedicated to the abolition of slavery who turned to the idea of ‘repatriating’ emancipated slaves and ‘free persons of colour’ from Britain and the Americas to Africa.**

According to legend, Sierra Leone took its name from a Portuguese explorer, Pedro da Cintra, who, upon sailing past the country in 1462 thought the mountains looked like the shape of a lion and promptly named the place Serra de Leao. Other accounts suggest it was the lion-like roaring of thunder on the hilltops. To the indigenous inhabitants of the area, it was known as Romarong (the place of the wailers – where men and women weep in storms). This was possibly a reference to the climate: ferocious rains and mosquitos that claimed many lives. Exploiting the natural deep-water harbour, the Portuguese proceeded to establish a fort and trading port, used predominantly as a slaving station which other European nations (Holland, France and England) were also complicit in trafficking.

In 1771 naturalist Dr Henry Smeathman (1742-1786) arrived at Banana Islands (south-west of the Freetown peninsular) and spent three years studying termites. He was sponsored by Quaker physician John Fothergill (1712-1780) and members of the Royal Society. Upon his return to London, he published his findings and became known as an expert of the area. He was subsequently approached by the abolitionists to provide guidance regarding a destination for the “Black poor” (a term given to a group of predominantly African ex-slaves living destitute in London) and in 1786 outlined a settlement plan in the area which prompted the first migration of settlers in 1787. A manual and vision for the settlement was prepared at Batson’s Coffee House in London setting out the food, clothing, and tools that were to be issued to the settlers. Over the following 75 years four distinct groups of settlers arrived to form what became known as Freetown. In the first 13 years, there were three migrant groups known as the ‘Black

poor from London’ (1787); the Nova Scotians from Canada (1792) and the Maroons from Jamaica (1800). Then throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1808-1863) liberated Africans from many West African nations were relocated there (see Figure 1.09). From these various and disparate communities, a relatively cohesive Creole (or Krio) identity developed.

Granville Sharp (1735-1813), Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) and William Wilberforce (1759-1833) were some of the leading abolitionists in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in England. London’s Black poor caught their attention as they saw them as victims of the slave trade whom they wanted to help. They initially formed a committee for their relief by donating food and medicine. These were mostly former enslaved Africans, who had fought on the side of the British during the American War of Independence and then emigrated to London. ‘...Although they were now free, they were however unemployed and thus led difficult lives.’ Additionally, the Poor Law officers in London, who were legally required to care for paupers, abdicated responsibility for the Black poor because the law, of the time, stipulated that paupers must be supported by their parish of origin. It was argued that the place of origin for the Black poor was Africa so they were entitled to no support. It became increasingly clear that private charity was inadequate for the growing numbers of this destitute community. Granville Sharp, inspired by the advice of Dr Smeathman, in 1787 formed the St George’s Bay Company to create a ‘self-governing colony...’ in Sierra Leone for these so-called Black poor. Representatives of the Black poor also assured the abolitionists of their willingness to corroborate, as a community, with this plan.

An expedition set out from London with approximately 300 of ‘London’s Black poor’, 60 English working class women and an assortment of White officials, clergy & craftsmen (411 men, women & children in total). They arrived in Sierra Leone on two ships called the Atlantic and the Belisarius

on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1787 (96 died en route) and established Granville town, named in honour of their benefactor (see Figure 1.01 Location A). This was to be their settlement with the intention of establishing a free community of British subjects. This fledgling colony lasted just two and a half years prior to being decimated by land disputes, disease, personal rivalries, and conflict with the indigenous Temne people who burned the settlement in 1790. Alexander Falconbridge (ship’s surgeon on various slaving voyages turned abolitionist) was subsequently sent by the Anti-slavery Society to Sierra Leone in 1791 to collect the remaining settlers and re-established a new Granville Town (later renamed Cline Town near Fourah Bay).

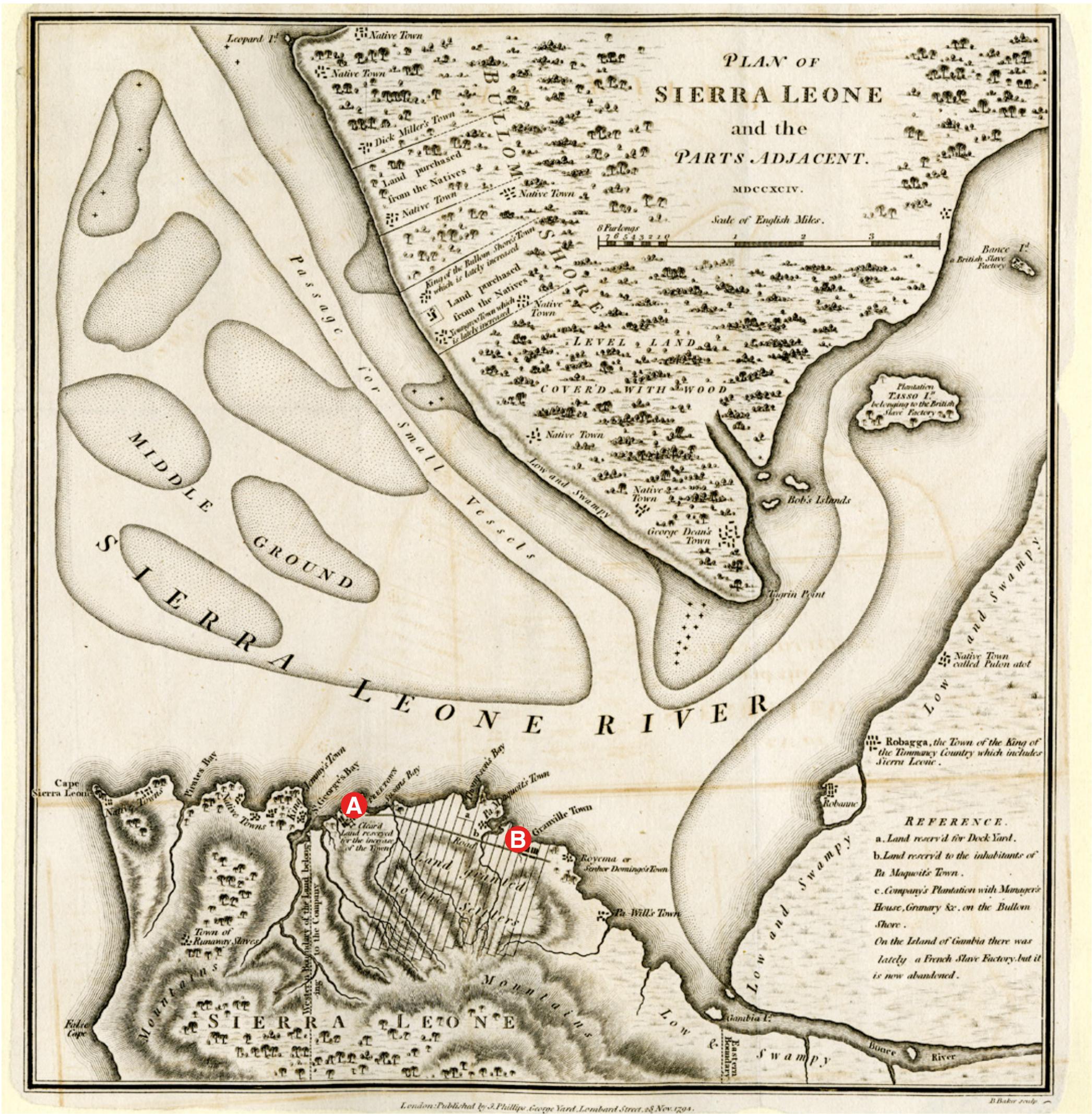


Figure 1.01: Plan of Sierra Leone 1794 and the location of Granville Town (Location B) and Freetown (Location A), National Archives, UK, MPG 1/1132



The St George's Bay Company changed its name to the Sierra Leone Company which in 1792 with the help of Thomas Peters (1738-1792) (an African American who served with the Black Pioneers who fought for the British in the American War of Independence) and John Clarkson established a settlement at Freetown with approximately 1200 Black Nova Scotians. Most of this group of settlers had escaped slavery in the USA. They had fought with the British in the American War of Independence and had been rewarded with their freedom and land in Birchtown, Nova Scotia. However, for many of them this proved unsatisfactory, and it was agreed they could form a new settlement in Sierra Leone. Several reasons compelled them to do this, including the desire for land, independence, security, and religious freedom. John Clarkson, inspired by Granville Sharp's initial vision from 1787, promised that each man would receive twenty acres, ten for his wife and five for each child. He stated that any taxes paid would be used for charitable purposes and the settlers would have full control to run their own affairs. Unbeknown to Clarkson at the time of these statements was that the Sierra Leone Company had made new arrangements on how the settlement should run that superseded Sharp's altruistic vision.

They sailed from Nova Scotia in fifteen ships and arrived in St. George Bay between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 9<sup>th</sup> March 1792 (64 died enroute). Upon reaching the forested beach that would become Central Freetown (see Figure 1.01 Location B), the women remained in the ships while the Nova Scotian men worked to clear the land. Clarkson told the men to clear the land until they reached a large cotton tree. After the work had been done and the land cleared, all the Nova Scotian settlers, both men and women, disembarked and marched towards the cotton tree and their preachers, all Black Americans, began singing...

*'Awake and sing of Moses and the Lamb wake! Every heart and every tongue to praise the Saviour's name. The day of Jubilee is come. Return ye ransomed sinners home.'*

On 11 March 1792, Nathaniel Gilbert, a White preacher prayed and preached a sermon under the large Cotton Tree, and the land was dedicated and named 'Free Town' according to the instructions of the Sierra Leone Company directors. Eventually, John Clarkson (1764–1828) was sworn in as first governor of Sierra Leone. He named the waters to the north-east of the settlement Susan's Bay after the fiancée he left behind in Britain to take up his responsibilities in Freetown (see Figures 1.02 & 1.03).



Figure 1.02: Freetown, 1913, UAC/1/11/9/12/75



Figure 1.03: View across Susan's Bay 2023, Paul Robinson, 2023

Today this huge, majestic **Cotton tree** still stands as it did for the settlers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Figures 1.04 & 1.05). It towers over one of the busiest intersections of Freetown, its branches provide a canopied entrance to both the commercial quarter of the town to the east and the

political quarter of the town, Parliament Hill, to the north. It is also home to a large colony of bats.

FILE REFERENCE: **SIERRA LEONE**

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4115 <sup>4188</sup>

DESCRIPTION: TREES 3

& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: THE OLD COTTON TREE  
AND MODERNBUS



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Figure 1.04: 1958 view of the Cotton Tree, UAC Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/3 4188



Figure 1.05: 2023 view of the Cotton Tree, Paul Robinson, 2023



*'It [Freetown] is situated on a dry and rather elevated spot, on the south side of the river, and occupies between 70 and 80 acres, its length being about one-third of a mile, and its breadth nearly the same. It contains near 400 houses, each having one twelfth of an acre annexed, on which a few vegetables are raised. There are nine streets, running from N.W. to S.E. and three cross streets, and they are 80 feet wide, except one, which runs within 50 feet of the river, and which is 160 feet wide. In the broad street area, are almost all the public buildings, consisting of a church, near the middle, capable of containing 800 people; a Governor's house and offices; a large store-house, under which, and the Governor's house, there are brick store cellars; a large hospital, and 6 or 8 other wooden houses, offices and shops, occupied by the company's servants... The houses of the colonists were at first inferior, but are now far superior to the natives...'*

One of the settlers, Carl Bernhard Wadström (1746-1799), who became famous for his influential engravings showing the inhumane conditions aboard slaving ships, wrote this eyewitness account of how the settlement of Freetown appeared in 1794. The urban layout of Freetown started to be built in a style similar to what the Nova Scotian settlers knew from their previous lives in the American South. The streets were set out in an American style grid iron pattern with parallel streets and wide roads; the largest being Water Street. The architecture was also strongly influenced by American dwellings as housing was constructed on stone foundations with wooden superstructures and shingle roofs (see Figures 1.06 & 1.07). Within this familiar architecture and urban infrastructure, the settlers continued with their religious, political, and economic institutions with all (including women) given voting rights. Christianity was a powerful force of unity for the Nova Scotian settlers. There were three leading religious denominations that enjoyed peaceful coexistence in their community: Baptists, Members of Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, and Methodists. Today the **Zion Methodist Church** (see

Figure 1.08) on Wilberforce Street continues to be used for worship and was probably constructed upon arrival of the Nova Scotians as it celebrates its inception year of 1792 on its front façade.

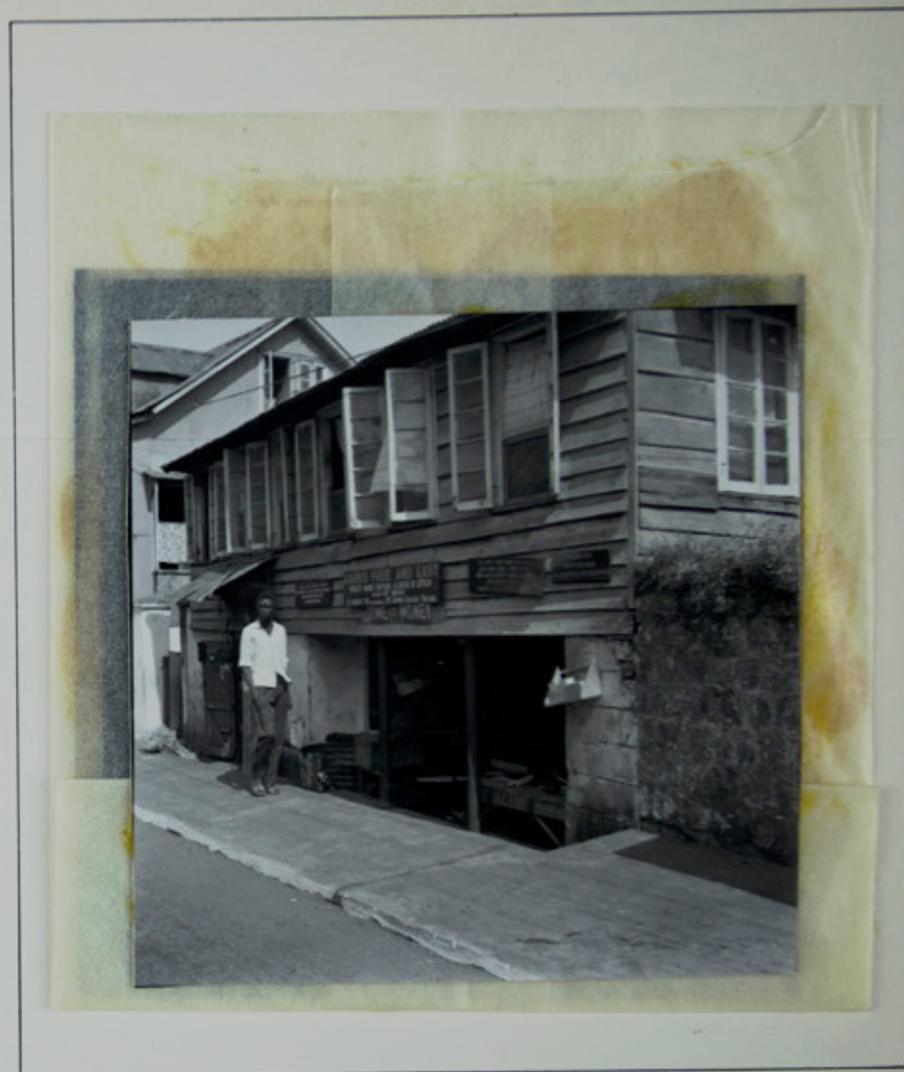
FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 98

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4028

DESCRIPTION: BUILDINGS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

~~5~~ 7

CAPTION: UNDERTAKERS SHOP



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Figure 1.07: Old timber property, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 1.08: Zion Methodist Church, Wilberforce Street, Paul Robinson, 2023

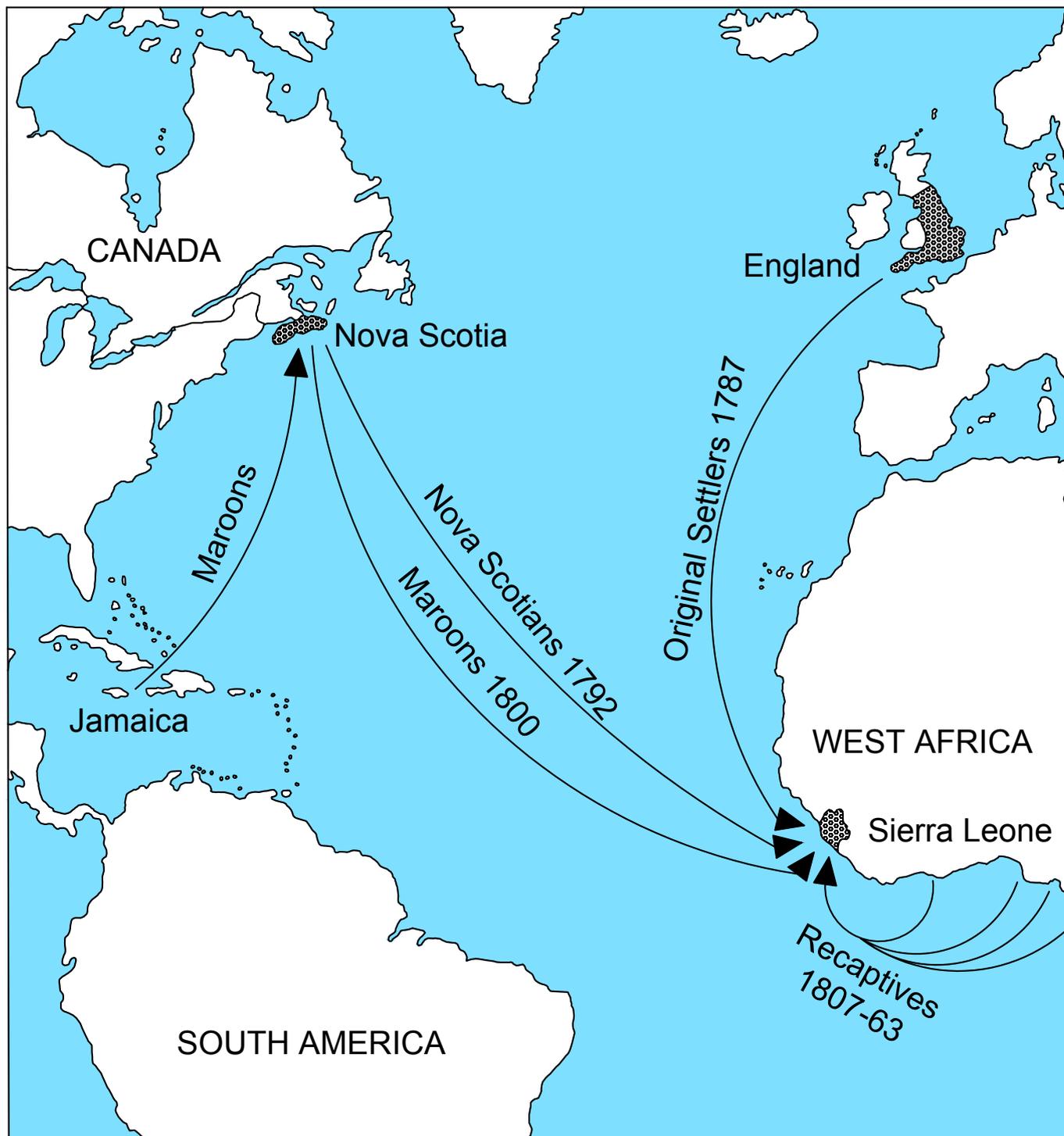


Confusion, conflict, and mismanagement besieged the short-lived Clarkson administration. He returned to England at the end of 1792 and was coolly received by the Sierra Leone Company directors. This was due to his ill-fated promise of land to the Nova Scotian settlers that would become a continued grievance in Freetown's story. Clarkson was relieved of his duties in 1793 and became a banker.

English abolitionist Granville Sharp (1735-1813) had originally envisioned Freetown to be a utopian community that would integrate Europeans and Africans in a free and independent settlement where each person could own land, regardless of colour. He named this the 'Province of Freedom' with the hope that it would serve as the nucleus for the spread of Christianity and European civilisation in Africa. He drew up a constitution for the intended settlement which would be self-governing (guided by English law) and land-owning. However, the (White) directors of the Sierra Leone Company continually refused to allow Black settlers to take freehold of the land.

They imposed a land rent in 1796 (one shilling for every acre) that proceeded to outrage the Nova Scotian settlers who had been promised land free from expense by Clarkson. This generated such unrest that by 1799, the settlers actively revolted against the Sierra Leone Company. They had suffered greatly for the sake of freedom in America and were not prepared to be submissive to anyone in Africa. This rebellion was quelled with the assistance of approximately 500 Jamaican Maroons just arrived from Trelawny in Jamaica. These were people who had revolted against slavery and maintained their freedom in the mountains until the British conquered them in 1796 and deported them to Nova Scotia (see Figure 1.09). Dis-satisfied upon arriving there, they requested relocation to West Africa and arrived in Freetown in 1800. The consequence of this episode was twofold: firstly, the British lost faith in Nova Scotian

settlers as instruments of modernisation in the Freetown project; secondly, it discouraged the Sierra Leone Company to ship more Black migrants from Nova Scotia to Freetown.



The British government had provided initial funds to resettle the 'Black poor' in 1787 but afterwards it became the responsibility of the Sierra Leone Company to finance and administer the Freetown settlement. However, following a series of events in the 1790s which included the Nova Scotian rebellion, a widespread fire in 1793 and a French warship attack in 1794, the Company approached the British government for financial support. Assistance was given in the form of an annual grant from 1796 until 1803 when Henry Thornton (1760-1815) finally requested that the British Government take full responsibility for governing the settlement and in 1808 the Freetown settlement in Sierra Leone became a crown colony.

A year before, in 1807, the British slave trade was abolished. Also, that year the Sierra Leone Company founded the African Institution whose primary objective was to end the slave trade through the improvement and civilisation of African peoples. Despite abolition, slaving ships continued to partake in the trade. Thousands of liberated Africans (otherwise known as recaptives), were rescued from slave ships on the Atlantic Ocean en route to America and subsequently resettled in Freetown.

Figure 1.09: Map to show origins of Freetown settlers Alie, 2016:63

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 100

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4030

DESCRIPTION: BUILDINGS 69  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: GATEWAY TO THE KINGS YARD



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17 Figure 1.11: Gateway to Kings Yard, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 1.12: Connaught Hospital (and former prison site), Paul Robinson, 2023



**Kings Yard** in Freetown was established as the reception point for these 'Recaptives', many of whom arrived in a desperate physical state and ill-health. Here they would be examined, quarantined, named, registered and then released, free, to live in and around Freetown. Today the gateway to Kings Yard is located near to the entrance to the **Connaught Hospital** on Lightfoot Boston Street in Central Freetown (see Figures 1.10 & 1.11). An 1819 inscription above the archway can still be clearly read which states 'Royal Hospital and Asylum for Africans rescued from slavery by British Valour and Philanthropy'. A further BBC History Project plaque on the right-hand column elaborates the symbolic scale of the archway as it states: 'In memory of 150,000 Africans liberated by the West Africa Squadron 1808-1860'.

The early colonial authorities had high hopes for the Recaptive peoples after the Nova Scotian insurrections. Charles McCarthy (1768-1824) was then appointed governor of the colony in 1816. During his administration, he managed to reconcile the Nova Scotian settlers with the colonial government to such an extent that he reinstated them as the favoured administrative class among the Black population. He started to develop the urban layout for the growing population with more public buildings of higher quality and proceeded to improve the social status of the recaptives through education and Christian instruction. For this matter, he turned to the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) for assistance, whose leading members, William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, had also previously been directors of the Sierra Leone Company. Over the ensuing decades the CMS progressively sent missionaries and opened schools throughout Freetown and the hinterlands of Sierra Leone.

The CMS developed one of the leading schools of the colony in Central Freetown called the **CMS grammar School** (see Figure 1.13). Today it remains open as the Regent Street Municipal School (RSMS) under local

authority direction (see Figure 1.14). Upon the sale of the original city centre site, the CMS made funds available to purchase a more expansive site on the western side of Freetown. The new Sierra Leone Grammar School (see Figure 1.15), opened in 1963 by Sir Henry Lightfoot Boston (an old boy of the original CMS Grammar School), continues to be one of the leading education institutions of Sierra Leone. The new school was designed by the architects Nickson and Borys (see chapter 4). The detail of the original blocks present their skilful understanding of Freetown's climate and terrain. Many different level changes are skilfully handled in a variety of means via decks, bridges or verandas. Each of the classrooms has deck access and a rear elevation wall of louvred bricks that allows cross ventilation but prevents both the sun and rain egress. The school continues to educate the elite of Freetown and experienced a further extension to meet with the demand.



Figure 1.13: CMS Grammar School, 1913, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/73



21 Figure 1.14: Regent Street Municipal School today, Paul Robinson, 2023







Figure 1.16: The Sierra Leone Grammar School, Paul Robinson, 2023





Figure 1.18: The Sierra Leone Grammar School, Paul Robinson, 2023

THE SIERRA  
GRAMMAR



LEONE  
SCHOOL.

THIS COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE WAS UNVEILED  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
SIR HENRY LIGHTFOOT-BOSTON GCMG JP MA BCLLLB,  
THE FIRST AFRICAN GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SIERRA LEONE  
AND AN OLD BOY OF THE SCHOOL  
ON MONDAY MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup> 1963.

THE BUILDINGS WERE ERECTED FROM COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT  
AND WELFARE FUNDS, ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF FREETOWN UPON  
AN ANCIENT SITE KNOWN AS THE LEWIS ESTATE,  
AFTER SIR SAMUEL LEWIS ANOTHER OLD BOY,  
AND THE FIRST AFRICAN TO BE KNIGHTED

THE LAND AND FURNITURE WERE BOUGHT BY THE SCHOOL  
FROM FUNDS DERIVED FROM THE SALE OF THE  
ORIGINAL SITE AT REGENT SQUARE,  
AND MADE AVAILABLE BY  
THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY

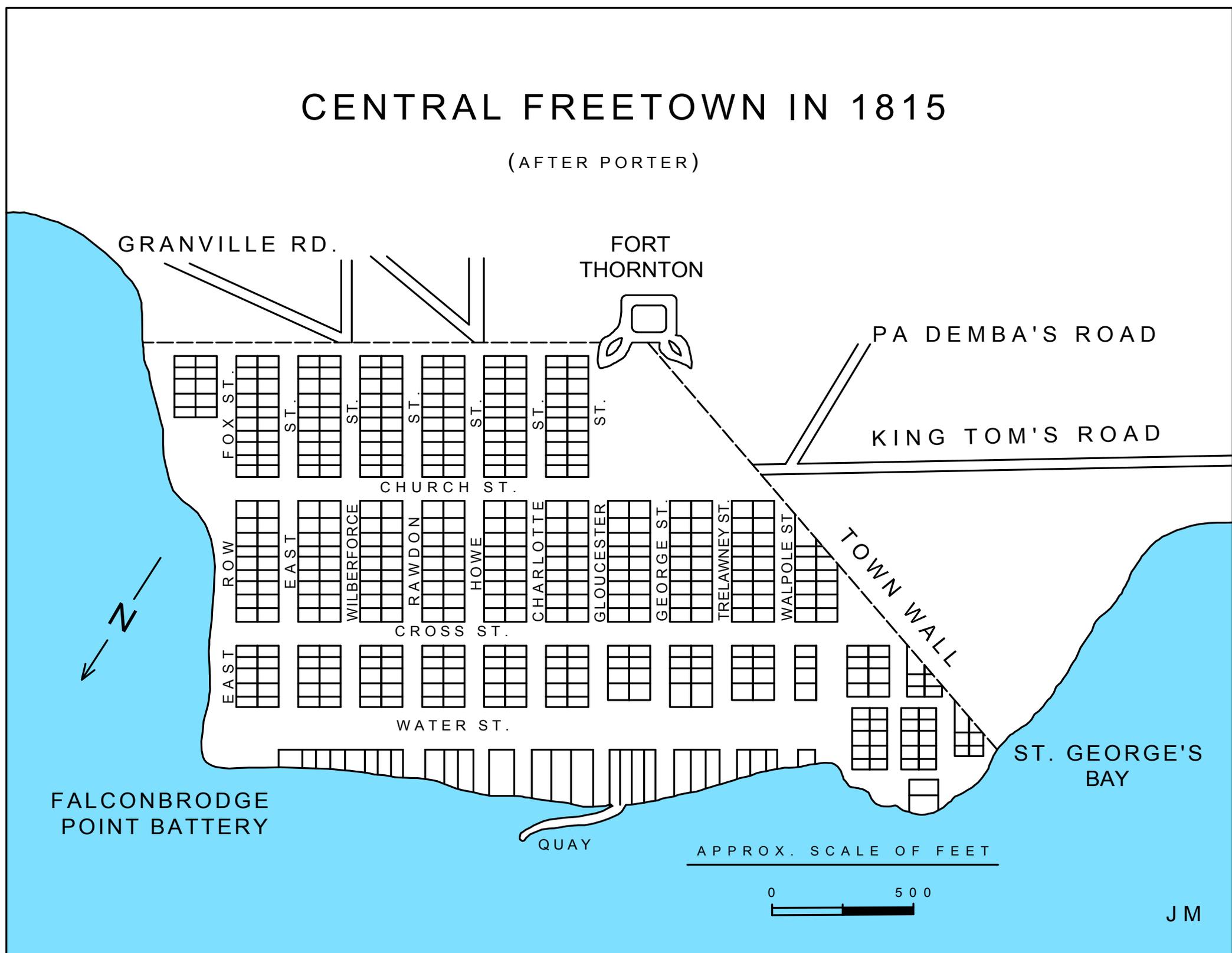


In 1853 the British government declared Recaptives British subjects which gave them equality with the earlier settler groups. Recaptives also assimilated many other aspects of British culture, some married into other settler families and gradually the distinction between Recaptives and settlers became increasingly blurred. They had joined the previous three waves of settlers and upon integration after many years became collectively known as Creole. This new blended identity of Sierra Leone Krio emerged with its own unique language and culture.

By 1854, over 160 different languages could be identified in the colony. Numerous African, European, American, Caribbean, Creole and trade languages combined to create the Creole language (still spoken in Freetown). This common language combined the many settlers from diverse origins, and it quickly spread across the region as the language of trade and Christian missionary work. A Creole culture also started to flourish among the integrated settler groups (alongside the language). They held dinners, balls, fairs and participated in literary and philosophic societies but also freely joined and participated in the many African secret societies, and established freemason lodges. A type of religious syncretism emerged amongst the Creole who predominantly identified as Christian, but also enthusiastically practised other rituals and ancestral customs. The status of Creole women was without parallel in European or African culture. Frequently independent of men, women were proficient in trade and often operated their own businesses. This fusion of cultures was perhaps most manifest in Creole names, most of whom had two, one Western and the other African, this evidenced '...the coalescence of Western and African values in moulding Krio culture.'

*'When the British extended their sphere of influence in other West African territories, they called on the Krio to fill many of the senior positions there. The Krio sat on the Executive and Legislative Councils*

*of the Gambia, Gold Coast and Nigeria. They were also Supreme Court judges in all three countries. In the Gold Coast, the Krio served as Colonial Treasurer, Solicitor-General, Postmaster General, Chief Medical Officer, District Officer, and so on. In Nigeria, the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Colonial Treasurer and Postmaster-General were all Krio. In the Gambia, two successive Chief Justices were Krio. Even outside British areas, the Krio made their mark: several became prominent marine engineers in the French African colonies; one became the mayor of Monrovia, Liberia and another, Charles D.B. King was elected President of Liberia... This flow of leaders to West Africa caused Sierra Leone to be regarded as the 'Mother of British West Africa'.*





*'There are nine streets, running from N.W. to S.E. and three cross streets, and they are 80 feet wide, except one, which runs within 50 feet of the river, and which is 160 feet wide.'*

Upon the founding of the Freetown settlement in 1792 John Clarkson (1764–1828) named twelve of the original streets after the twelve directors of the Sierra Leone Company. If this is true it is doubtful that all twelve of these names remained past the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a subsequent governor, Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783–1869), decided to rename all the streets with 'British' names. Thompson was dismissed from his post after threatening to expose the fact that "freed" slaves were compulsorily "apprenticed" for fourteen years. He claimed that the Sierra Leone Company and even Wilberforce himself "by means of their agents [had] become slave traders themselves". By 1815 Central Freetown had been set out in an American inspired grid iron block plan (see Figure 2.01). Twelve streets were cut out from the forest, nine were perpendicular to the front and three crossing them at right angles parallel to the shore.

The street names from 1815 largely reflect the geographical and ethnic origins of the different groups of settlers. The Nova Scotian streets began with East row (later Little East Street) (see Figure 2.02) and East Street (see Figure 2.04). Today these have been renamed as Malama Thomas Street (see Figure 2.03) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa States) Street (see Figure 2.05). Siaka Stevens, the President of Sierra Leone 1968-85, was one of the founding members of ECOWAS in 1975. Its purpose was to promote economic cooperation and development in West Africa.



Figure 2.02: Little East Street, 1905, Unilever Archive, Lisk-Carew, UAC/1/11/9/39



31 Figure 2.03: Malama Thomas Street, Paul Robeson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction as Figure 2.02)



Figure 2.04: East Street 1905, Unilever Archive, Lisk-Carew, UAC/1/11/9/39



33 Figure 2.05: Ecowas Street (East Street), Paul Robinson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction as Figure 2.04)



Wilberforce Street was formerly called Tarleton Street, after a British general under whom the Nova Scotians had served in the American Revolution. However, possibly due to his opposition to the abolition of the slave trade the street name was changed to Wilberforce Street very early in Freetown's history in honour of the aforementioned William Wilberforce (1759-1833), who was also integral to creating the Freetown settlement. Today the street name remains unchanged.



Figure 2.06: Howe Street, 1905, Unilever Archive, Lisk-Carew, UAC/1/11/9/39



Rawdon and Howe Street (see Figures 2.06 & 2.07) were also named after British generals involved in the American War of Independence. Both Rawdon and Howe were actively involved at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Rawdon fought during the conflict while Howe provided naval reinforcement aboard the HMS Cerberus. Their names, entitling adjacent streets, suggests that many of the Nova Scotian settlers may have seen military action at the Battle of Bunker Hill as well. Today these street names remain unchanged.

The next three streets adjacent to these could possibly have been established by some of the 'Black poor' settlers from London and were named after figures from British royalty: Queen Charlotte, the Duke of Gloucester and George III. Today these street names remain unchanged.

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_ 157 457 DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: 52/2/318 N

DESCRIPTION: FREETOWN  
& LOCATION:

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

THE PORTUGUESE STEPS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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At the end of Gloucester Street, where it crossed Water Street (see Figure 2.01), Governor Charles MacCarthy (a correspondent of Wilberforce who actively campaigned for the complete suppression of the slave trade) built the Portuguese Steps in 1818 to connect the government wharf with the urban layout of Freetown. Also known as 'Freedom Steps' they were the entry point where the newly liberated slaves would first, symbolically, step foot on Freetown soil. MacCarthy also began construction of further public

buildings throughout Central Freetown. He started development on the two corner plots of land, facing the Portuguese steps, on Gloucester Street (see Figures 2.09 & 2.10) by laying the foundation stone for **St Georges Church** (later known as St Georges Cathedral) and building a town hall. Later on this site **Wilberforce Memorial Hall** was opened in 1887. This offered a central venue for leisure and cultural activities such as dances, theatre and concert performances until it was burned down

in 1957 (see Figures 2.10, 2.11 & 2.12). Today the Portuguese steps remain largely unchanged (see Figure 2.09). St Georges Cathedral is still located in the same corner plot. Its current iteration was constructed in 1905 and has remained relatively unchanged for over 100 years (see Figures 2.14, 2.15, 2.16 & 2.17). Wilberforce Hall was replaced with a modern high rise town hall clad in grey metal and blue glass built with funding from South Korea (see Figure 2.13).



Figure 2.10: The Harbour, UAC Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/3:4078

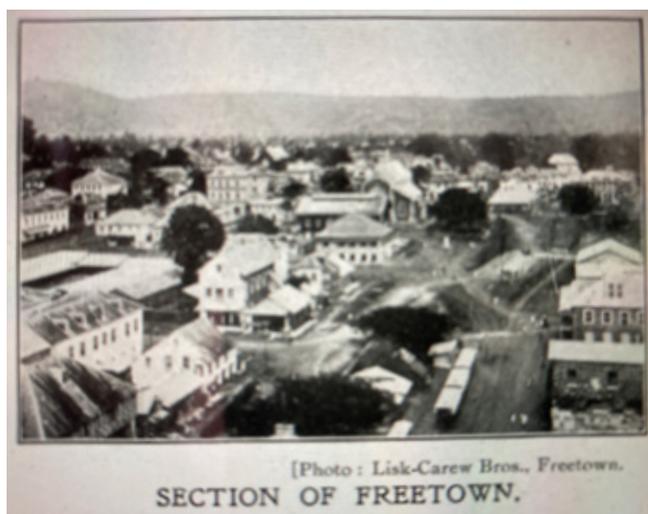


Figure 2.11: Skyline view of Central Freetown from around 1920, Macmillan 1920:233

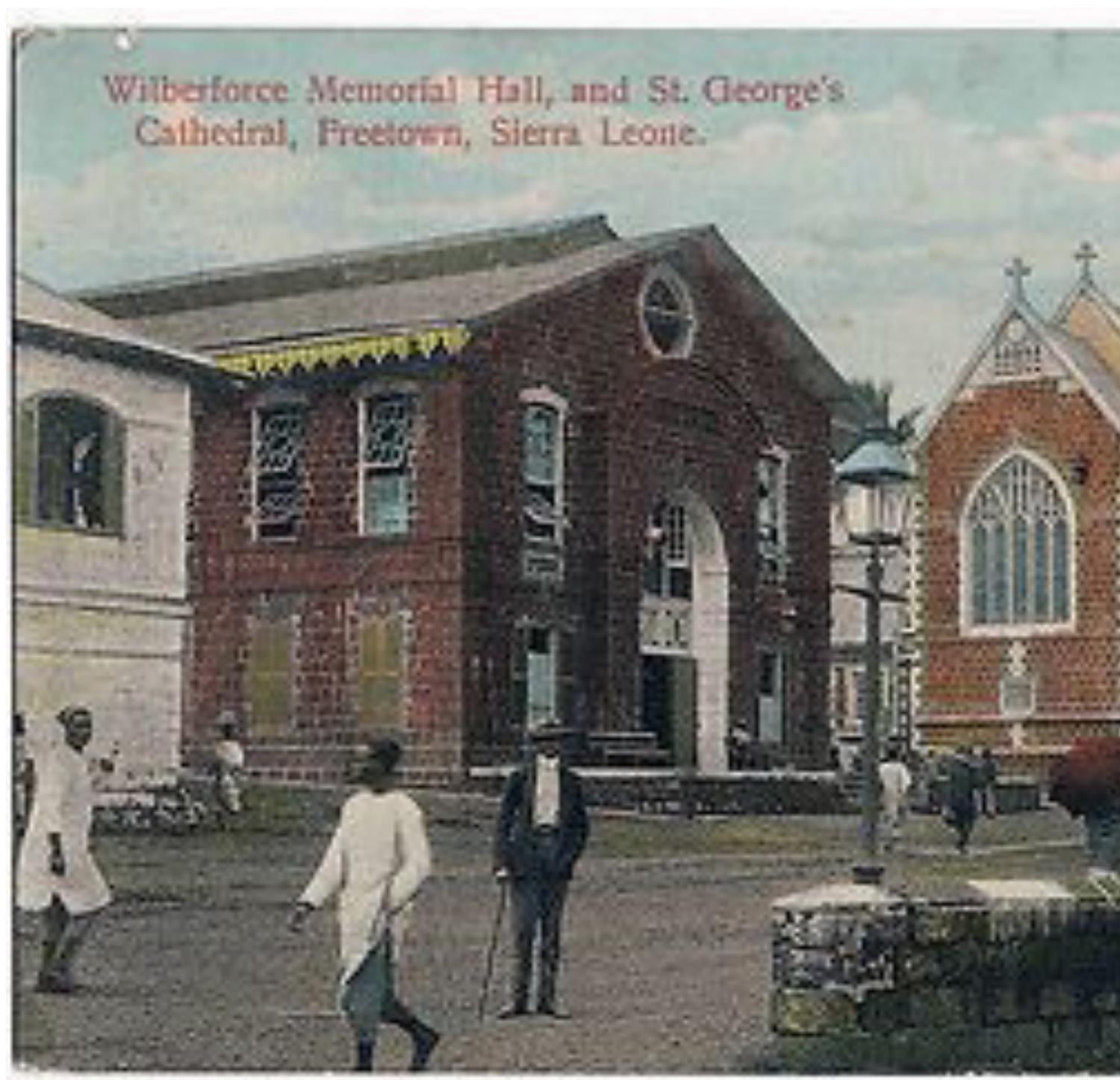


Figure 2.12: Wilberforce Memorial Hall, 1910s, historic postcard

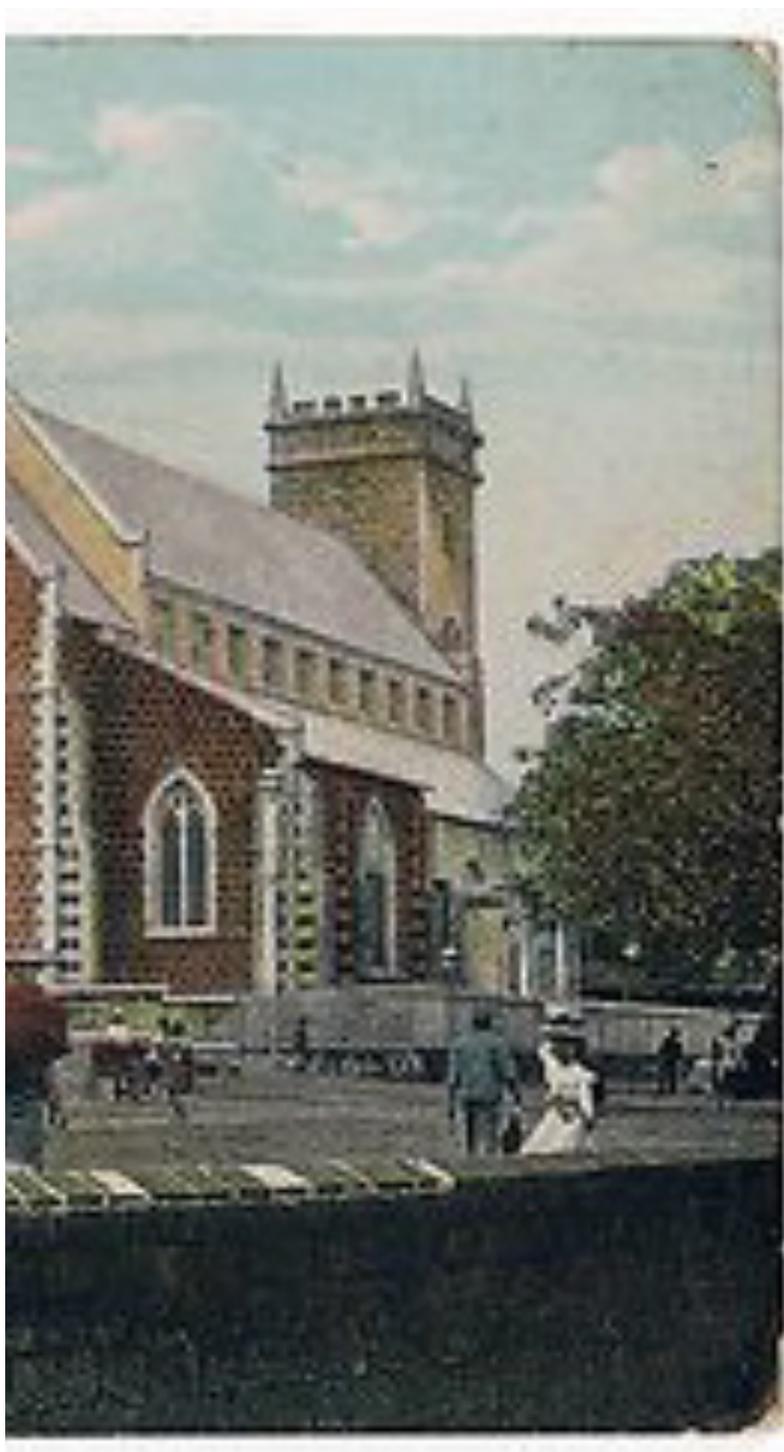


Figure 2.13: South Korean funded Town Hall, Paul Robinson, 2023

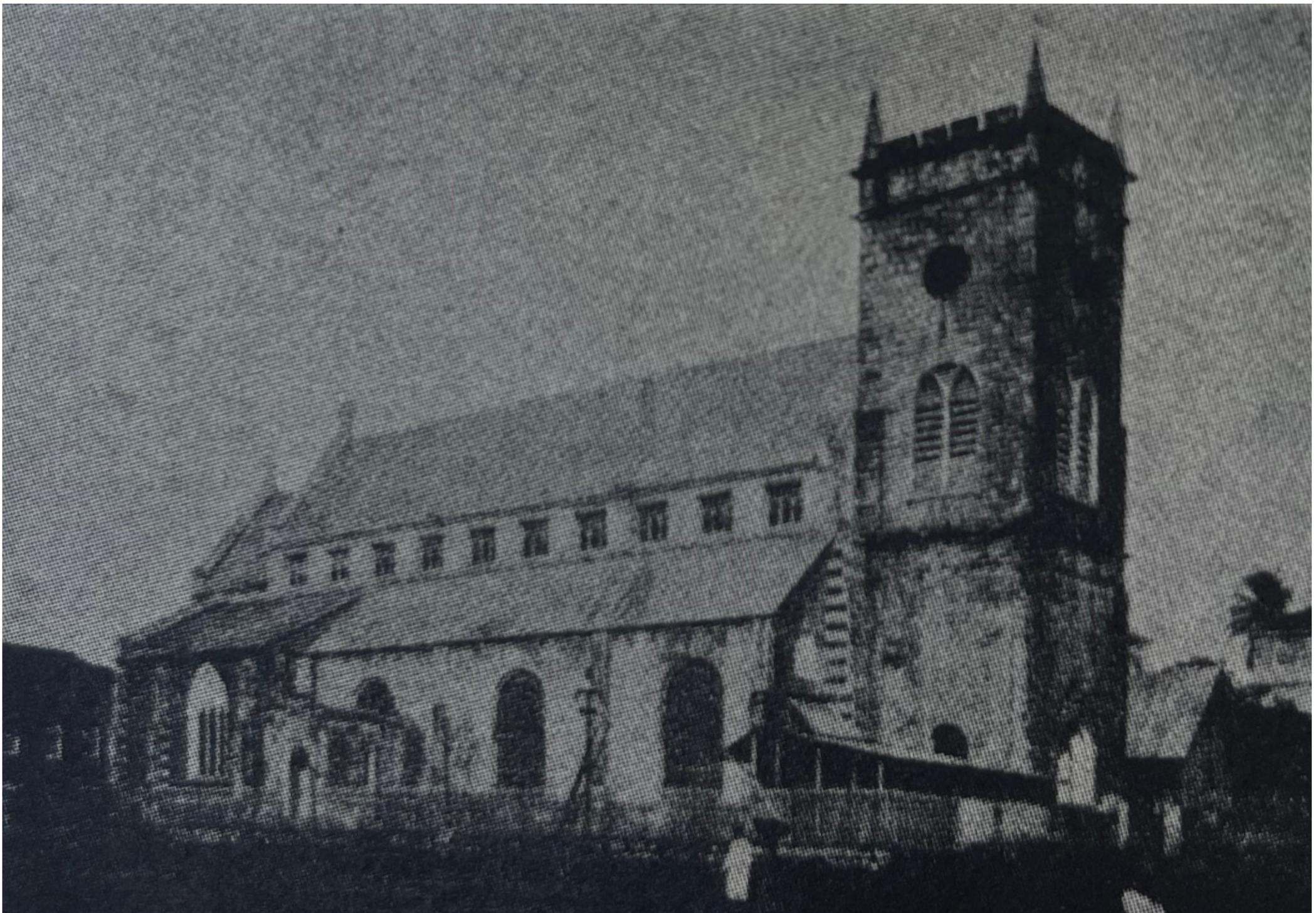


Figure 2.14: St George's Cathedral, 1920s, Macmillan 1920:238

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 1055

DESCRIPTION: CHURCHES BUILDINGS 14  
& LOCATION: FREE TOWN

CAPTION: THE CATHEDRAL

REF No. : 4035

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Figure 2.15: St George's Cathedral, 1960s, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/3:4035



43 Figure 2.16: St Georges Cathedral, Paul Robeson, 2023



Figure 2.17: St Georges Cathedral, Paul Robeson, 2023



West of George Street the area inhabited by the Jamaican Maroons probably began with Trelawney Street (see Figures 2.01 & 2.18). This was named in reference to the home parish in Jamaica of the Maroon settlers. Next to this was Walpole Street, named in honour of a British army officer who had been the Maroon's wartime champion in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today Trelawney Street has been renamed Lamina Sankoh Street (see Figure 2.19). Lamina Sankoh (1884-1964), educated at CMS Grammar School,

Fourah Bay College and Oxford University, was a Sierra Leonean pro-independence politician who helped found the People's Party in 1948 (which later became the Sierra Leone Peoples Party). Walpole Street name remains unchanged.





Figure 2.19: Lamina Sankoh Street, Paul Robinson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction to Figure 2.18)

The southernmost Street of Central Freetown was originally called Church Street (see Figure 2.01), but in 1816 was renamed Westmorland Street; a Jamaican name, perhaps influenced by the Maroon settlers. Today Westmorland Street has again been renamed as Siaka Stevens Street. Two other parallel streets, Cross Street (later known as Oxford Street) and Water Street (see Figure 2.01), have also been renamed Lightfoot Boston Street and Wallace Johnson Street respectively.



Siaka Stevens (1905-1988)



47 Figure 2.20: Westmorland Street, 1905, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/9/39, Lisk-Carew



Figure 2.21: Siaka Stevens Street, Paul Robinson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction as Figure 2.20)

Siaka Probyn Stevens was of Limba/Mende ethnic heritage and attended the Albert Academy in Freetown prior to working on railway line construction between Pepel and Marampa. In 1943 he co-founded the United Mine Workers Union and became a Sierra Leonean politician who worked with (Sir) Albert Margai (1910-1980) in the 1950s. In 1960 he formed the radical political party called the All People's Congress (APC). He became prime minister of Sierra Leone in 1967 when the APC swept to victory over the

Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC was full of idealistic, Western-educated, young trade unionists and intellectuals.

In 1970 Siaka Stevens dug up the railway to prevent diamonds from leaving the country out of his control. In 1978 a referendum on a new constitution made the APC the only legal political party with Stevens in absolute power. After 17 years in power at the age of 80 (and the

accumulation of an alleged \$500 million personal fortune), the self-styled 'father of the nation' peacefully handed over to his hand-picked successor: Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh. Westmorland Street (previously church Street) (see Figure 2.20) was subsequently renamed Siaka Stevens Street (see Figure 2.21) to commemorate him.



Henry Lightfoot Boston (1898-1969)





Figure 2.23: Lightfoot Boston Street, Paul Robinson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction as Figure 2.22)

Sir Henry Josiah Lightfoot Boston was a Sierra Leonean lawyer, diplomat and politician. He was of Creole ethnicity and was educated at the CMS Grammar School in Freetown. He served as speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone (1957-1962) and then became the first Sierra Leonean Governor-General of Sierra Leone (1962-1967) after the country gained its independence on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1961.

Following Sir Milton Margai's death in 1964, Lightfoot Boston appointed his brother Albert Margai as Prime Minister of Sierra Leone. In 1965 Lightfoot Boston opened the new library building at the University of Sierra Leone that had previously been known as Fourah Bay College. After the general elections in 1967, Lightfoot Boston moved to appoint Siaka Stevens as prime minister. Minutes after Stevens had been sworn in on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, Lightfoot Boston was placed under house arrest and relieved of

his post. Despite these controversies Cross Street, later called Oxford Street (see Figure 2.22), was subsequently renamed Lightfoot Boston Street in his honour (see Figure 2.23).



Wallace Johnson (1894-1965)







Figure 2.25: Wallace Johnson Street, Paul Robinson, 2023 (Taken in a similar location and direction as Figure 2.24)



Isaac Theophilus Akuwa Wallace Johnson, born into a poor Creole family, started his socialist activism at the age of 18 when in 1910, working as an outdoor customs officer, he organised his co-workers to protest against the meagre pay of five shillings per week. He was immediately dismissed.

He was a great traveller, political agitator and journalist by profession. After WWI ended in 1920 he became a seafarer for five years visiting Asia and other parts of West Africa. He was in Nigeria in 1931 and there, together with other activists, championed the cause of the working class and founded the Nigeria Workers Union – the first labour union in any British colony. After two years in Moscow at the People's University he returned to Nigeria and worked with Herbert Macauley: the reputable unionist who was later acknowledged as the father of nationalism in Nigeria. In 1938 he returned to Freetown and within a year set up eight labour unions, a newspaper entitled 'African Vanguard' and prompted a mass movement called 'The West African Youth League' (WAYL). Less than a year after its formation, the League boasted a membership of at least 30,000.

Wallace Johnson received significant support from the Freetown community and this frightened the Creole establishment and the Colonial government. Many attempts were made to silence him but to no avail (apparently at the time 18 out of 21 lawyers in Freetown were members of the West African Youth League). When WWII broke out in 1939, the government used this as an excuse to detain him with other German residents and he was exiled to Bonthe on Sherbro Island in 1942. In 1945 he was released and continued his mission of mobilising workers. He died in Ghana in 1965 in a traffic accident. His efforts in promoting nationalism and impact on the story of Freetown led him to be embedded in the urban layout as the original Water Street (see Figure 2.24) was renamed Wallace Johnson Street in the 1970s (see Figure 2.25). He has also been commemorated in a statue located on this street.

These street name stories reflect the journey that Central Freetown has been making from inception through colonisation, into independence. Renamed streets increasingly celebrate local indigenous people of influence and change, united by their fierce pride of being Sierra Leonean. It is also interesting to observe which street names remain unchanged to-date and the value of longevity within the urban layout that has been granted to those names that still emit influence within the urban layout.



## Chapter 3

### Colonial Housing Segregation and Educational Provision

During the first 75 years of the colony, Freetown became known as both the 'White man's grave' as well as the 'Athens of Africa' - two distinctive titles, and both played out through the architecture and urban infrastructure of the town.

In 1808 Freetown formally became a British crown colony and by 1820 it served as the residence of the British Colonial governor of the region and capital of 'British West Africa'. Territories in Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Lagos were controlled from here – despite the large distances between these places. It also served as the base for the Royal Navy's West African squadron which was charged with enforcing the ongoing abolition of the slave trade. And for a time, the city of Freetown, in the days of the early colony became known as the 'White man's grave', due to the mysterious killer later discovered to be malaria'.

Malaria proliferated in 19<sup>th</sup> century Freetown because the site chosen for the settlement was an area of low-level and swampy coastal plain. It was enclosed by the semi-circle of the Peninsular mountains and the deepest natural harbour in West Africa at the mouth of the estuary of the Sierra Leone River. The effects of topography and climate exacerbated malaria as the urban layout grew and became increasingly dense around the coastal plain settlement of central Freetown. At the time it was impossible for the original grid-iron street plan pattern of central Freetown (see Figure 2.01) to be extended much beyond this location. Today the urban layout of Freetown has started to sprawl, largely unchecked and unplanned, from the coastline up the lower slopes of the Peninsular range to a significant height above sea level (see Figure 3.02).



Figure 3.01: Foothills of the Peninsular range, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 3.02: Freetown urban sprawl, Paul Robinson, 2023



By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century scientific advances had proved malaria was spread by parasites through mosquito vectors. The colonists looked to relocate their homes from Central Freetown (on the level coastal plain) and explored the potential of the foothills and forests of the Peninsular Mountain range. They also believed that the African population was more likely to spread malaria and the segregationist approach of distinct European Residential Zones was eagerly pursued. Governor Sir Charles King-Harman proposed and then implemented the construction of a European-only housing estate so that Freetown (and by extensions Sierra Leone) be transformed into what he described as the ‘...bright jewel of the crown for which its natural world befit it’.

The flat plateau on Wilberforce Hill proved to be a suitable location and between 1902 to 1904 new colonial residences were built at what became known as Hill Station around 250m above the city (see Figure 3.03). These residences were modelled on the Indian hill stations (such as Simla) and the sanatorium at Aburi in Ghana. These large new houses were exported as kits from England ready to be assembled and clad on site. They were well appointed, spacious and enjoyed the latest furnishings and were rented to the colonial government for use by their employees. Each of the houses faced north and were raised high above the ground on steel columns. Hefty concrete bases supported these steel frames to provide living accommodation at first-floor level (see Figure 3.04) and access was created via a perpendicular staircase leading to a verandah (see Figure 3.05).

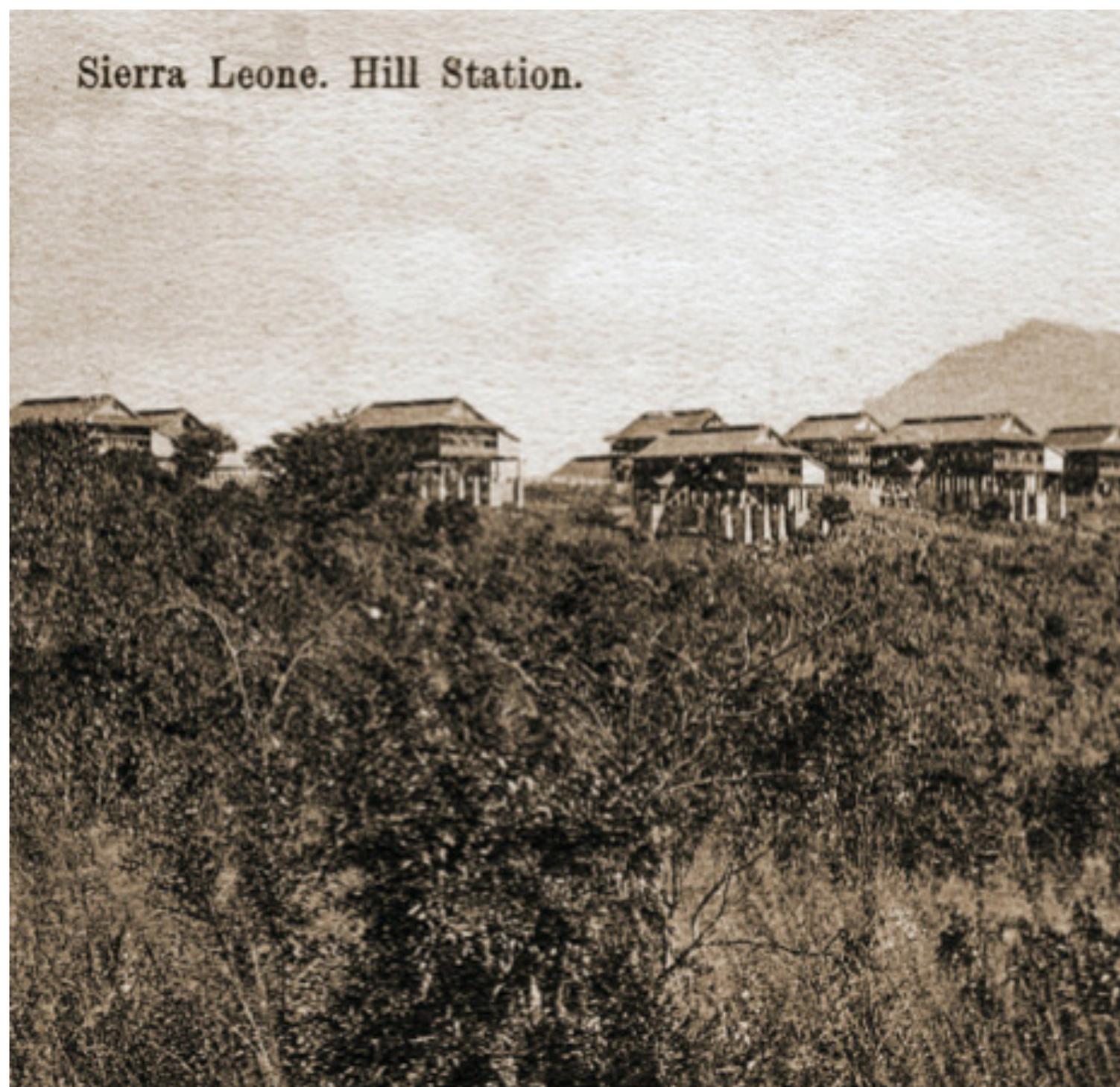


Figure 3.03: Residences at Hill Station, circa. 1904, postcard private collection

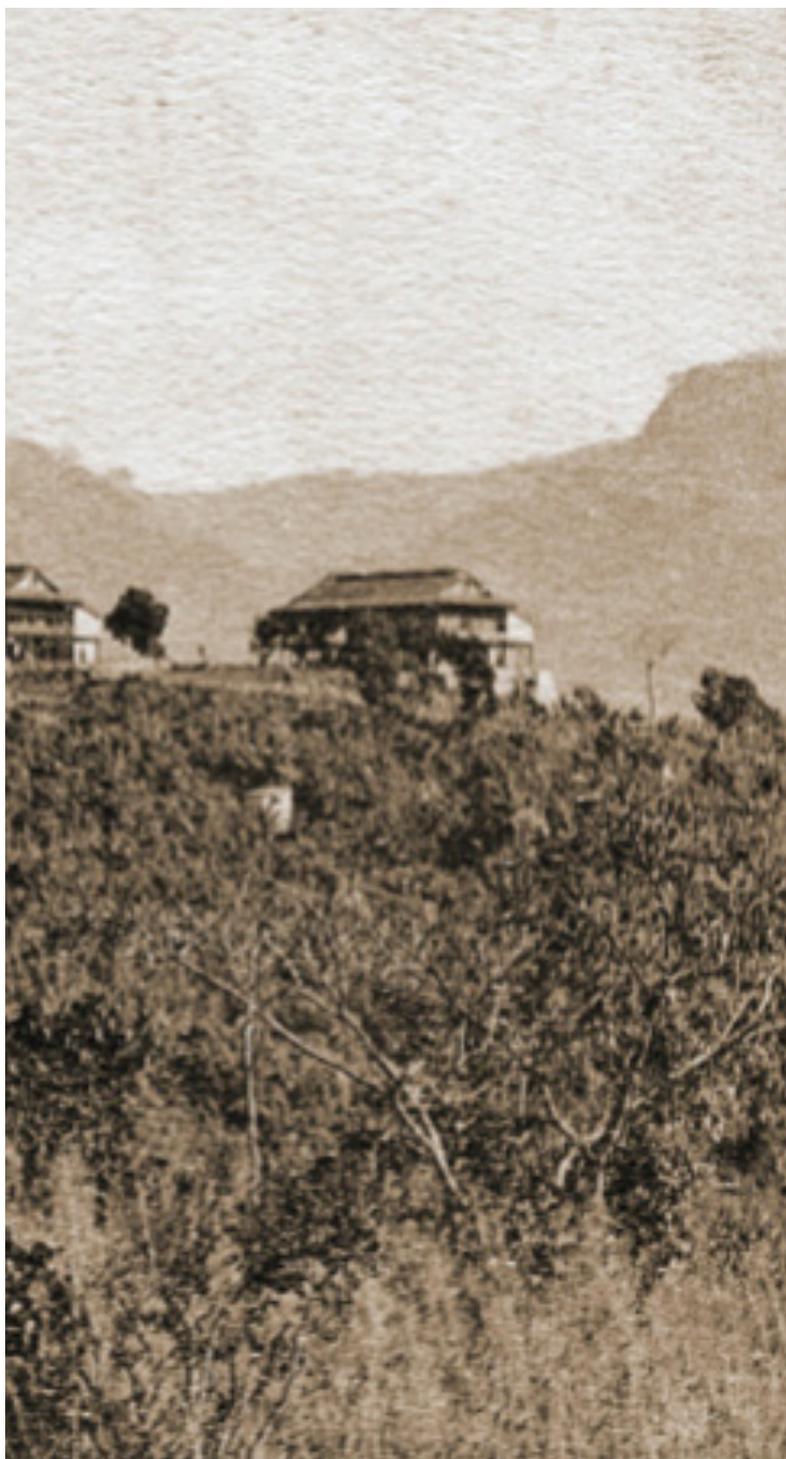


Figure 3.04: Hill Station (concrete bases), Paul Robinson, 2023



59 Figure 3.05: Hill Station (perpendicular stair), Paul Robinson, 2023



The raised bungalows, positioned high in the hills (see Figures 3.03 & 3.06) caught the breeze and offered spectacular and far-reaching views over the forest, city, and ocean below (see Figures 3.06, 3.08 & 3.09). A club offered the only source of entertainment for the residents of this leafy and isolated community. From the beginning, it was an exclusively European residential quarter with its own narrow gauge railway line from the city. This operated to suit office hours and ran from 1904 until 1929 before it was replaced by a road and bus service (see Figure 3.07).

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 227/1

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4107  
~~4070~~

DESCRIPTION: LANDSCAPES 3

& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: VIEW FROM HILL STATION



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FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

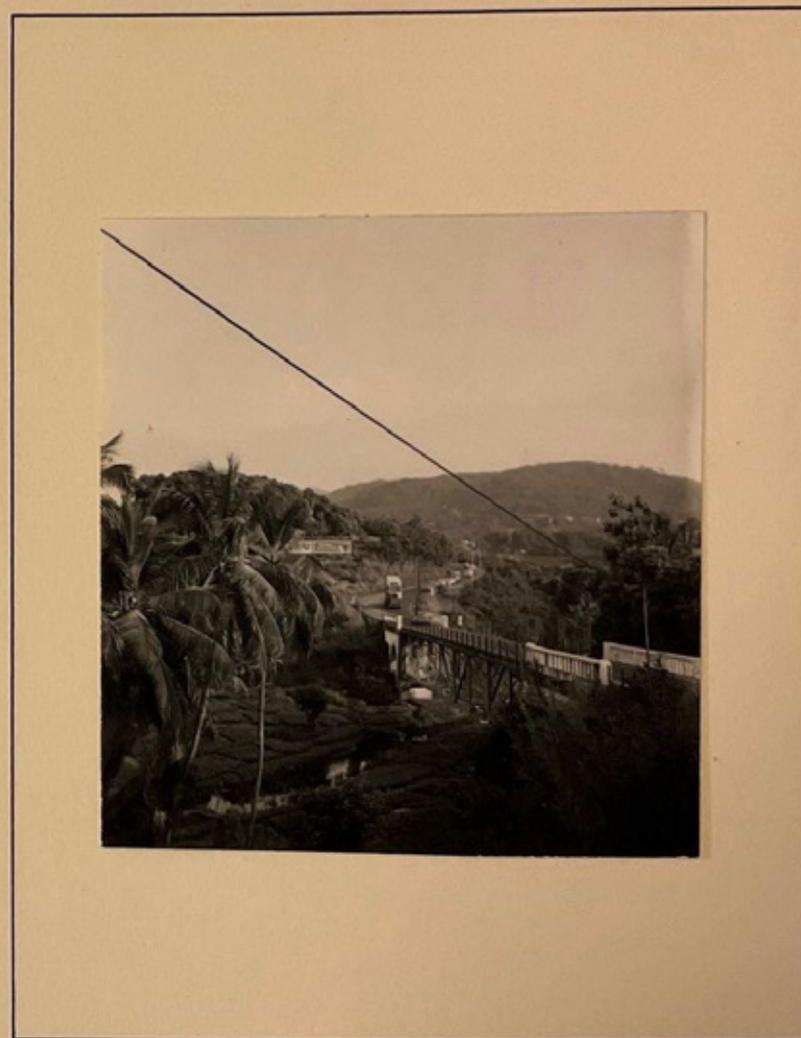
DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/303N

DESCRIPTION: ~~FREETOWN~~ BRIDGES |  
& LOCATION:

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

BRIDGE ON ROAD

TO HILL STATION



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Photograph by Tom Smith

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Figure 3.08: Hill Station (high in the hills), Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 3.09: Hill Station (Freetown views), Paul Robinson, 2023



Graham Greene commented on this European colonial practice when he wrote that ‘...they had planted their seedy civilisation and escaped from it as far as they could... everything ugly in Freetown was European’. Though architecturally impressive, the impact of the Hill Station development, under the guise of sanitary concerns, was politically and socially destructive to the European-Creole relations. Hill Station’s physical separation from Central Freetown symbolising a growing racial segregation (see Figure 3.12). Few Sierra Leoneans were invited to attend events in the mountain enclave and a deepening racial divide started to ferment in Freetown. This was evidenced by the following observation, written in 1908 by a writer in the Sierra Leonean Guardian.

*‘Segregation is so well carried out in the Colony today; we observed it in the Church, in the matter of special seats, in the graveyard wherein portions of land are in reserve, in the City, to wit, special Club Rooms, recreation grounds, amusements with music and dances and ‘At Homes’ to which no Native or black man is being invited.’*

Just twelve of the original 24 Hill Station residences are still standing and in use. Their occupants are still the social elite: western diplomats (including the British High Commissioner), expatriate workers, government ministers and even the President. Many of the houses are being modified, replicated, and extended (see Figures 3.10 & 3.11), and some of the larger plots split up and sold to facilitate new development.



Figure 3.10: Hill Station residences, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 3.11: Hill Station residence, Paul Robinson, 2023

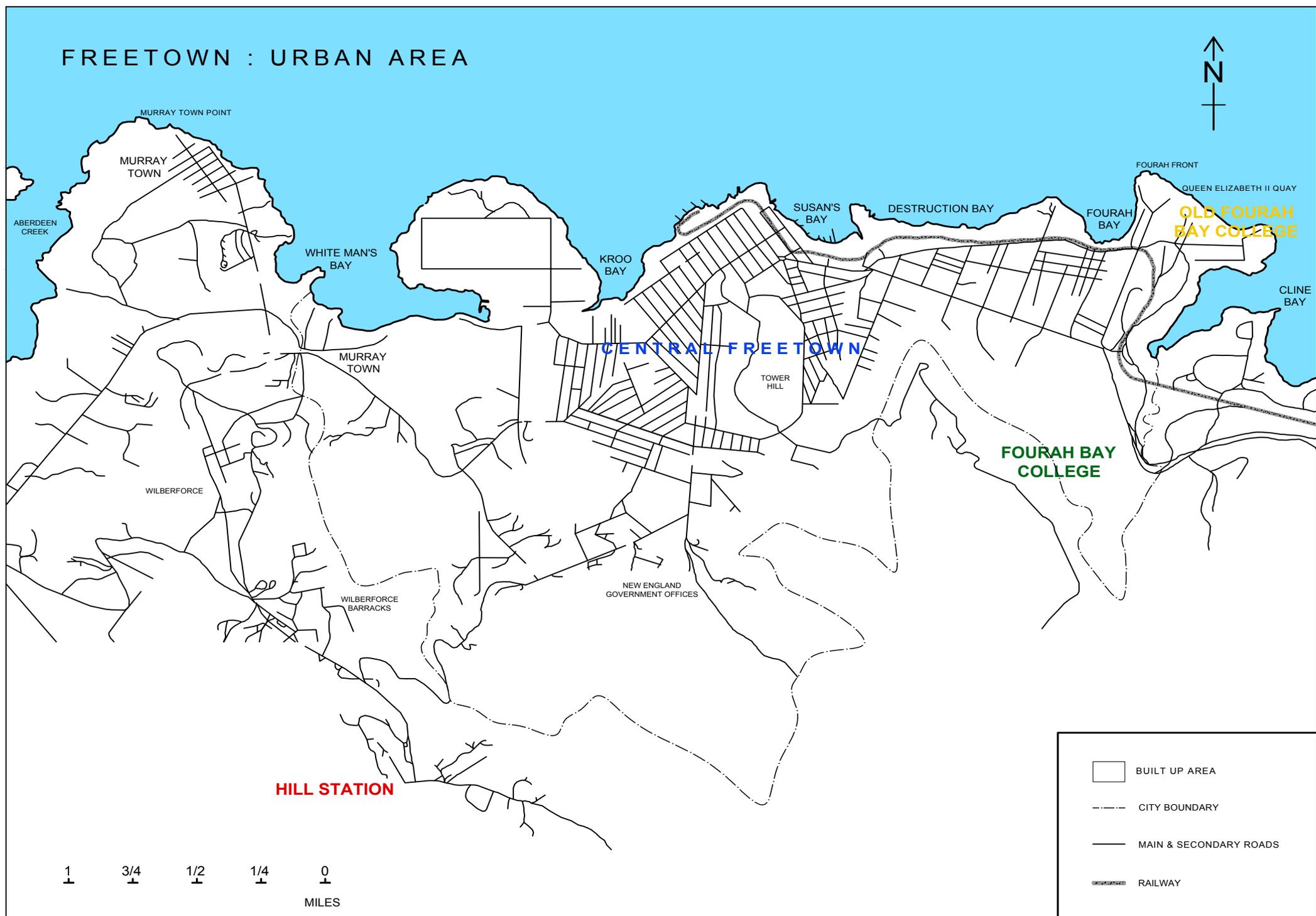


Figure VV: 2018 map of Freetown to show location of Hill Station (Red detail), the University of Sierra Leone (Fourah Bay College) (Green Detail), Old Fourah Bay College (Yellow detail), and Central Freetown (Blue detail), after Manson & Knight, 2018: 130



Freetown became known as the 'Athens of Africa' during the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial period due to the large number of schools that were opened in the city. So impressive was learning in the early days of the colony that an 1860s census showed that 22% of the colony was regarded as educated; higher than both Prussia (16%) and England (13%) at the time. This was due to the endeavours of the colonial authorities engaging the services of Christian missionaries. Governor Charles MacCarthy invited the CMS in 1810 to work with the colonial authorities to improve the social status of the recaptives through education and religion. Crooks captures the Freetown colonial education scene and its diverse missionary group founders below.

*The CMS...opened the Grammar School [see Figures 1.14, 1.15 & 1.16], the first school for boys in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Annie Walsh-Memorial School, the first for girls, in 1845 and 1849 respectively. The Roman Catholic Mission echoed the efforts of the CMS and opened St Edward's School for boys in Freetown, starting with a primary division in 1865 and a secondary division in 1922; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny established the St. Joseph Convent in 1866. Not to be outdone, the Wesleyan Methodists Missionary Society provided a secondary school for boys in 1874 – the Methodist Boy's High School – and one for girls in 1901. The United Methodist Church opened the Albert Academy for boys in 1904 (see Figures 3.13 & 3.14) and the Prince of Wales School, a government-sponsored school, was established in 1925.*



Figure 3.13: Albert Academy 1920, Macmillan 1920:240



Figure 3.14: Albert Academy, Paul Robinson, 2023



Today, as the example of Albert Academy shows, many of these schools are still operational in Freetown.

In 1827 Fourah Bay College (see Figure 3.12 yellow detail) was founded by the CMS and started lessons with six pupils. Samuel Ajayi Crowther was one of those first students to be enrolled. He went on to become the first Sierra Leonean bishop of West Africa (1864) establishing various mission stations along the Niger River and founding the West Africa Company (which later became part of the United African Company). Fourah Bay College was the first and only European style university in West Africa for 100 years (until the 1920s) which attracted eager students from all over West Africa. It achieved university status in 1848 and was formally affiliated with Durham University from 1876-1967. Most of the country's notables and presidents have been educated there.

*'The first black principal of the college was an African American missionary, Reverend Edward Jones from South Carolina in the United States. Abioseh Nicol became the first Sierra Leonean born administrator in 1966. Some of the most prominent alumni of Fourah Bay College include Milton Margai who led Sierra Leone to independence and became the country's first prime minister; Earnest Bai Koroma, another prime minister of Sierra Leone; Samuel Ajayi Crowther; J.E. Casely Hayford; Kojo Botsio who served as Ghana's first minister of foreign affairs under Kwame Nkrumah; John Karefa-Smart; and Dr Kenneth Dike, a Nigerian and one of Africa's most prominent historians...'*



Figure 3.15: Fourah Bay College, 1918, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/69



Figure 3.16: Fourah Bay College, Paul Robinson, 2023

The original four-storey university building was constructed between 1845 to 1848 with dressed laterite to the exterior supported by structural steel made by Glengarnock Iron and Steel Co in Ayrshire, Scotland and shipped out to Freetown (see Figure 3.15). Sierra Leone's first African governor, Staff Sergeant Major William Fergusson laid the building's foundation stone stating that '...on this same site, some forty years ago, stood a slave factory. But henceforth that same spot would be the home of those who would become messengers of light.' Today the original dilapidated shell of the building still stands in Cline town and has been designated as a national monument under the protection of the Sierra Leone Monuments and Relics Commission in 2020 (see Figure 3.16).

Due to an expansion in education in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Freetown, more space was needed to meet the learning needs of students and the nation was eager to keep up with developments taking place at Ibadan University and University of Ghana. In 1948 Fourah Bay College began its relocation to a new campus on the peak of Mount Aureol on the outskirts of Freetown – see Chapter 7.



## Chapter 4

### Infrastructure Development

The Berlin Conference and the so-called 'scramble for Africa' in 1895 saw vast swathes of Africa allocated to various European powers, based on their 'spheres of influence' and other spurious claims to legitimately occupy these territories. Britain had a strong desire to maintain control of the Freetown colony for several reasons. They regarded it as a pioneering experiment and to relinquish it would dishonour the legacy of famed philanthropists such as Wilberforce and Sharp. The colony's ongoing survival was heavily dependent on taxes, trade and resources from the hinterlands to the east. The French presence in West Africa was a major concern for the British and their territorial advances reached ever closer to Freetown. Had France gained control over Freetown's 'interior' hinterland, Britain would have to shoulder the full responsibility of supplying the colony with resources with limited access to the raw materials and resources it sought to extract. Additionally, the Freetown port was one of the largest natural harbours in the world and a gateway to both Western Africa and the Atlantic Ocean. It was strategically important and commercially essential for the growth of trade. Britain did not want to lose control of Freetown, and plans to control the hinterlands to the east by declaring it a protectorate were set in motion.

There was a legal distinction between colony and protectorate. The Colony was ultimately administered from London and its people were British subjects and theoretically entitled to British citizenship. The protectorate was administered from Freetown and its people remained foreigners protected by British interests. The Freetown Governor, Frederic Cardew (1839-1921), was entrusted with the responsibility of creating the protectorate. He generated policies and plans which included the official declaration of a protectorate, increased taxation to defray the administration costs of the protectorate (as the British government had rejected a request for a grant) and the construction of a railway. Each of these he achieved but with varying levels of success.

Following Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain's desire to 'develop' the colonies and to view them as a vast estate for cultivation, a number of infrastructure projects ensued funded through location taxation. The following year in 1898 Britain declared a protectorate over the Sierra Leone interior and Cardew proceeded to impose a tax on people's houses (a kind of poll tax known as 'the hut tax') that took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Jan 1898.

A rebellion immediately ensued; this was a determined effort by the indigenous people of the new protectorate to regain their independence. They had not been conquered and refused to be taxed by a foreign administration. Further plans imposed by Cardew and the colonial regime included the right to exploit minerals and control what it considered to be wasteland. The local slave trade was also abolished in the hinterlands and a frontier police force created. None of these decisions were popular and only succeeded in fermenting the 'hut tax rebellion' of 1898. Violence and guerrilla war broke out throughout the protectorate led by the Temne chief, Bai Bureh (1840-1908). Cardew issued an arrest warrant for Bureh after he repeatedly refused to pay his taxes. When Cardew offered £100 prize for Bureh's capture, Bureh reciprocated by offering a £500 prize for the capture of Cardew. The so-called rebellion was eventually put down and an inquiry made into the situation: the initial result saw 200 people tried and 33 people executed. Bureh was eventually caught and treated as a political prisoner, exiled to Gold Coast (now Ghana) before returning to Freetown in 1905.

The protectorate continued but there were several long-term impacts from its volatile inception. The hated hut tax continued as did the frontier police force, but both were refined: the level of tax was reduced, and the police force became a military body under stricter discipline. The most significant consequence was the sharp decline in Creole influence within the colony. The Creole community became scapegoats from both sides in the rebellion.

The indigenous people of the protectorate viewed them as colonial collaborators whilst the British colonists deeply mistrusted them, particularly Governor Cardew, as certain Creole lawyers and journalists had protested his overly aggressive policies.

As a result, Creole influence began to wane. Government positions in the colony were increasingly filled by Europeans; in 1892 about half of senior government posts were held by Creoles but by 1912 this went down to a tenth. Also, migration from the protectorate to the colony increased as workers sought new prospects and improved working conditions. Many jobs, previously reserved for Creoles, were filled by others often at lower wages than Creole counterparts.

British colonial interests at the time were not interested in promoting internal economic development as their policies were guided by two leading agendas: firstly, to encourage African production and export of raw materials for British use; and secondly, to create growing markets in the colonies for British manufactured goods. Freetown's natural harbour facilitated these approaches to prosper but it was the construction of the railway that multiplied the trade potential of Freetown by enabling mass and rapid transportation of harvested goods.



## The Railway Line



Figure 4.01: Freetown railway station National railway museum early 20<sup>th</sup> century photograph, National Railway Museum, photographer unknown



73 Figure 4.02: Freetown railway station, Paul Robinson, 2023



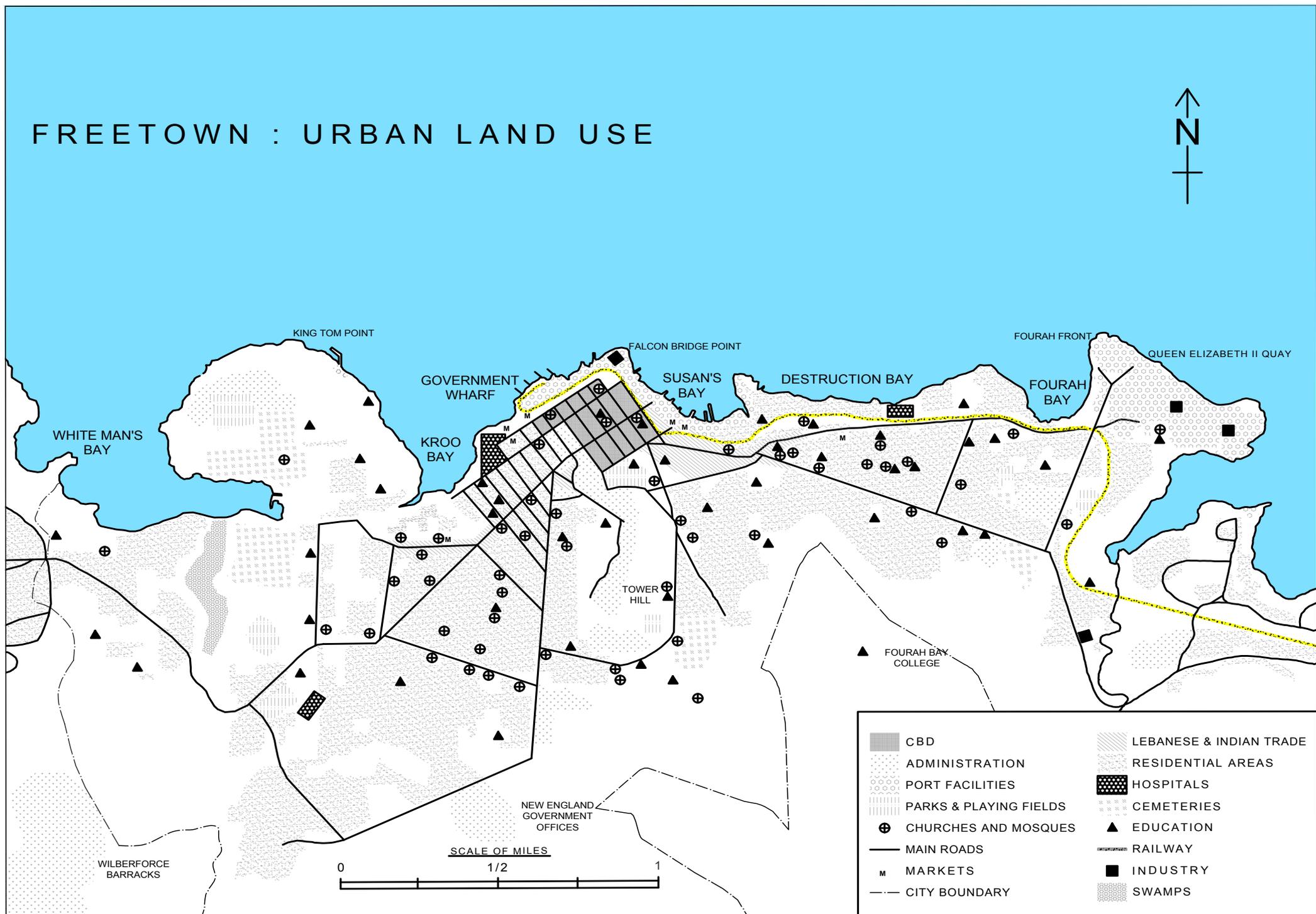


Figure 4.04: Map to show railway line heading directly east (see yellow highlight), after McKay 1967:74



The railway was built to primarily serve productive oil palm, cacao and coffee producing areas. At its peak in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the railway extended 365km from Freetown to Pendembu in the east. At Bauya the line branched to run a further 119km to Makeni (see Figure 4.05). Allegedly, due to its narrow gauge, sometimes trains couldn't climb the gradient of East Street and had to make further attempts with more speed and smoke to ascend out of Freetown (see Figures 4.06 & 4.07).

The railway's main function was to transport agricultural goods bound for Europe and exports rose fourfold from 1900 to 1918. A further railway line, designed for passengers, was constructed to give British colonial commuters a route from their airy homes in Hill Station to their workplaces in Central Freetown. An extravagant gesture considering it served a mere 24 houses, club, and associated workforce. The route was approximately 10km long with five stations along its route:

Freetown (Water Street), Cotton Tree, Tengbeh Town, Wilberforce and Hill Station.



Figure 4.05: The rail and road network in 1945, after Alie, 2016:133

FILE REFERENCE: **SIERRA LEONE**

DATE: 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4138  
1081

DESCRIPTION: RAILWAYS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

3

CAPTION: TRAIN RUNNING THROUGH FREETOWN



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Figure 4.07: Freetown train engine, located in the Railway Museum, Paul Robinson, 2023

Mercantile activity multiplied as traders from Europe, India and Lebanon began to relocate to Freetown. They seized the opportunity the harbour and railway offered to become retailers and wholesalers. Prior to the railway, foreign traders brought their goods through intermediaries (predominantly Creole) and sold them through the same medium. With the railway to provide access, there was no need for intermediaries as the railway allowed direct access to the source of supply and means to distribute

goods, both import (see Figure 4.08) and export, throughout the colony and the protectorate (see Figure 4.09).

FILE REFERENCE: **SIERRA LEONE**

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4137  
4083

DESCRIPTION: RAILWAYS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: LOADING MERCHANDISE FOR  
UP-COUNTRY STATION

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FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE

DESCRIPTION: RAILWAYS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: TRAIN MADE UP OF NEW  
COACHES CROSSING OROOGOO BRIDGE

24/7/1970. Railway will soon  
be closed down.  
(checked with Mr Goppes)

REF. NO. 4142

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The railway was shut down and dismantled during the era of Siaka Stevens as prime minister in the early 1970s. Several factors influenced this decision, these included: mounting subsidies needed to maintain the railway; growing road use and infrastructure; and the political agenda of Stevens to clamp down on the export of diamonds and keep the industry under his personal control. The iron rails were torn up and sold for scrap along with most of the locomotive and rolling stock. Today a new 200km 'minerals only' line transports ore from a mine in Tonkolili. In Cline town there is the national railway museum, located in a repurposed engine shed which charts the history of the Sierra Leone railway and houses many railway engines and carriages from the past. A highlight being a coach built for a visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 1961 to mark the country's independence. Other relics of the railway age survive, including a station under the canopy of the Cotton tree - now the **National Museum**. It consists of two large rooms that are crammed with exhibits relating to the nation's history, culture, spirituality, secret societies and much more.

## Banking

During the colony and protectorate era, new monetary and taxation systems were introduced. Metal coins and paper money replaced the traditional system of barter and commodity currencies like cloth and manilas. In 1913 the West Africa Currency Board was set up to supply money to British West Africa. Its currency of pounds, shillings and pence was closely tied to the British sterling rates of exchange. In 1964 when Albert Margai was minister of Finance he established the Leone as legal tender which was formally launched in August 1964 when he had become Prime Minister.

The central office for the West Africa Currency Board was in London but its local agent in Freetown was the Bank of British West Africa (BBWA). In 1893 Elder Dempster, the Liverpool based shipping company, helped form the BBWA and in the following year appointed agents in West Africa. A physical branch was established in 1898 in Freetown (see Figure 4.03). A formal neo classical building was built

to represent the solid and dependent credentials of the Bank's ideals (see Figure 4.10). The BBWA, alongside Barclays Dominion and Colonial Bank (established in 1917) dominated the banking industry in the colony and protectorate era. Both Banks demolished and rebuilt their premises in the mid twentieth century. The new building for the BBWA was designed by Ronald Ward and partners and was built and completed by the British construction firm Taylor Woodrow in 1961 (see Figure 4.114.12, 4.13).



Figure 4.10: Bank of British West Africa, 1913, Unilever Archive, UAC1/11/9/12/70



FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 108

DESCRIPTION: BUILDINGS 20 #E  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: NEW BUILDING FOR  
~~BRITISH WEST AFRICAN BANK~~

BANK OF WEST AFRICA LTD.

REF. No: 4042

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Photo by J. BARKER

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In 1957, conscious of the changing political landscape, the Bank of British West Africa changed its name to Bank of West Africa (BWA). In 1965 Standard Bank acquired BWA and renamed it the Standard Bank of West Africa. In 1969 Standard Bank merged with Chartered Bank to form the Standard Chartered Bank. Today the building still functions as the Standard Bank of Sierra Leone (see Figure 4.13).

Similarly, Barclays Bank in Freetown constructed new premises in the early 1960s (see Figure 4.03). This was also built by the Sierra Leone branch of the British contractors, Taylor & Woodrow. However, the architects this time were Nickson and Borys of London and Lagos, who had experience of designing other projects within Central Freetown, Accra, and Lagos (see Figure 4.14).

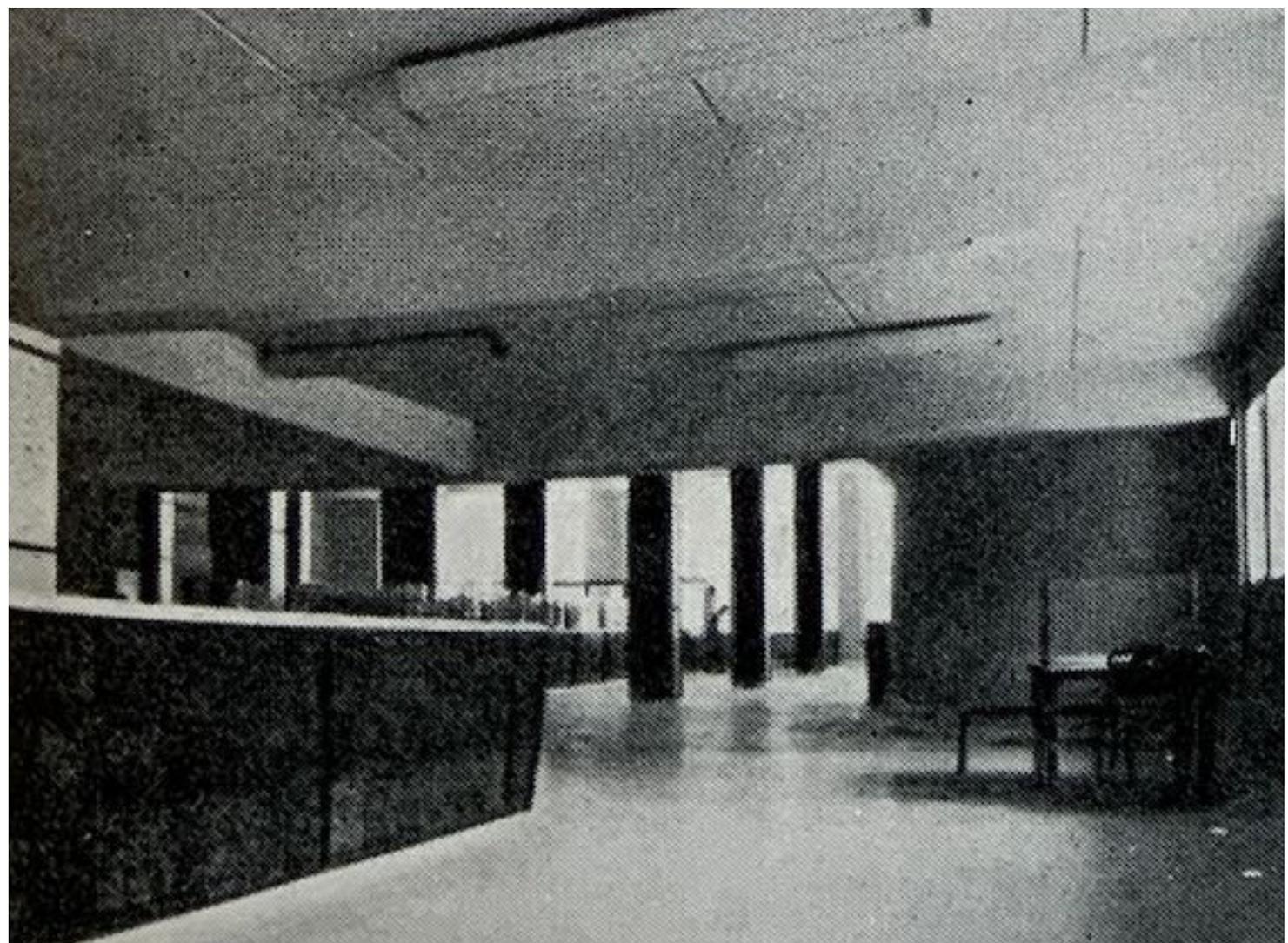
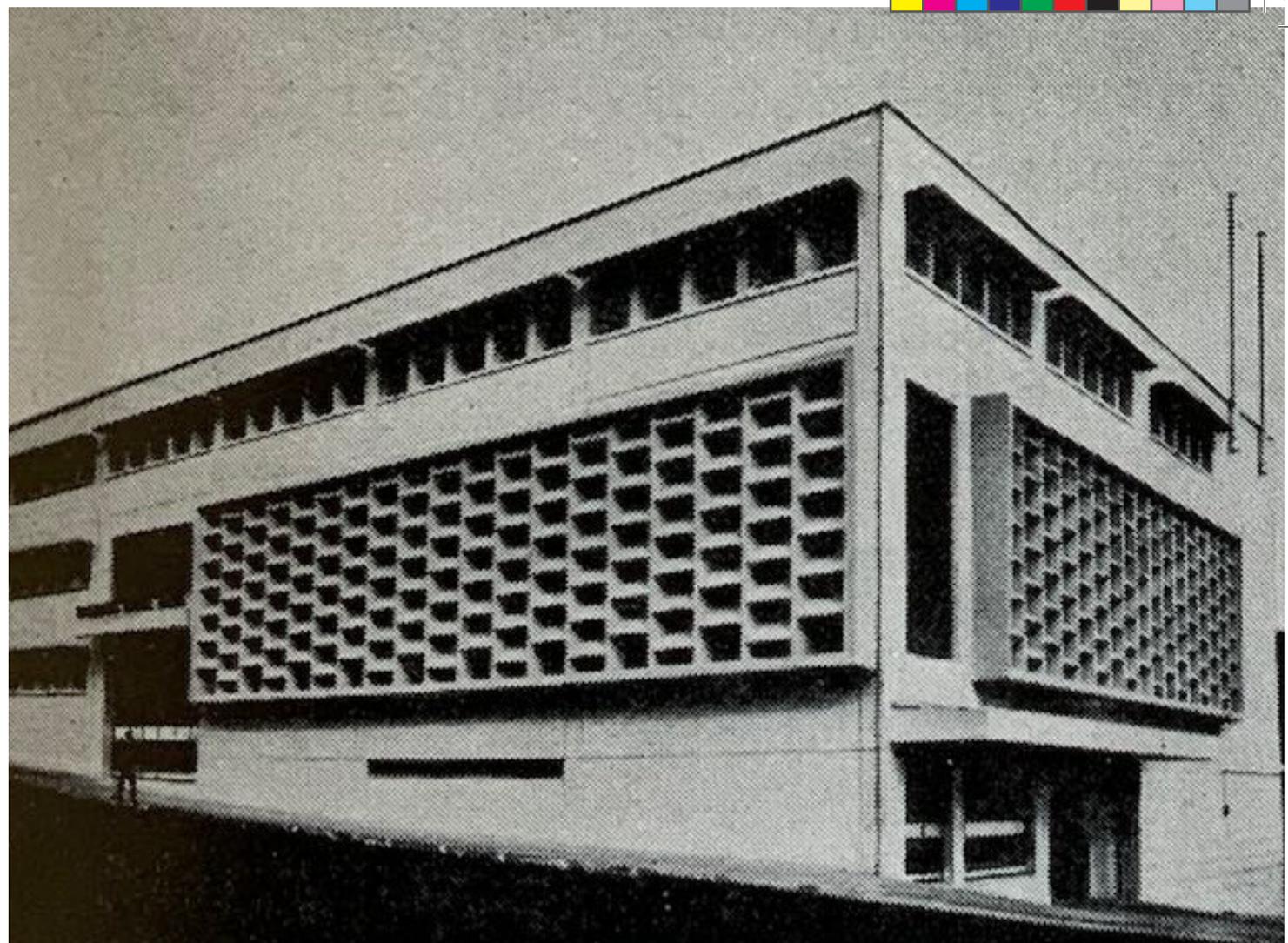


Figure 4:14 Barclays Bank exterior and interior, Nickson and Borys, *West African Builder and Architect* 1961



Figure 4.15: ROKEL Commercial Bank, formerly Barclays, Paul Robinson, 2023



By 1971 Barclays Bank in Freetown was incorporated locally and renamed Barclays Bank of Sierra Leone Limited with 25% shares owned by Sierra Leoneans and 75% by Barclays Bank International. The rationale behind this move was to encourage Sierra Leoneans to participate as owners and develop confidence in the Bank. In September 1999, Barclays Bank PLC which was the majority shareholder at the time withdrew from its operations in Sierra Leone after extensive discussions with the Government of Sierra Leone. The bank was then renamed Rokel Commercial Bank (Sierra Leone) Limited. Today the building still operates as a bank within central Freetown (see Figure 4.15). The Government of Sierra Leone is the majority shareholder, with 35% shares owned by private institutions, organizations, and individuals. The bank takes its name from the longest river in Sierra Leone: the 'Rokel' which empties into the Atlantic Ocean. This name symbolises the Bank, like the Rokel River, as a gateway into Sierra Leone (through banking and money rather than water). There are also many other banks throughout central Freetown which include the Sierra Leone Central Bank, designed by Joseph Ransford Jarrett-Yaskey at the Ministry of Works (see Figures 4.03 & 4.16) and Sierra Leone Commercial Bank which came into being in 1973 (see Figures 4.03 & 4.17).



Figure 4.16: Sierra Leone Central Bank: left hand side, designed by Joseph Ransford Jarrett-Yaskey, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.17: Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (tower on left hand side), Paul Robinson, 2023



## Maritime

Elder Dempster had been instrumental in setting up the Bank of British West Africa, but it also enjoyed maritime commercial interests in several West African destinations that included Freetown amongst them. The Liverpool based business ran numerous cargo ships and a small number of passenger lines. In Freetown, its first offices were constructed in 1913 next to the railway terminus and backed onto Government Wharf in central Freetown (see Figures 4.03 & 4.18). The front façade (see Figure 4.19) faced onto what is today Wallace Johnson Street.



Figure 4.18: Elder Dempster offices, 1913, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/116



91 Figure 4.19: Elder Dempster offices, Macmillan 1920:253



Figure 4.20: Elder Dempster offices, Paul Robinson, 2023





Figure 4.21: Elder Dempster offices, Paul Robinson, 2023



Government Wharf was the original landing point for the 18<sup>th</sup> century settlers who first established the location of central Freetown (see Figure 4.03). It proceeded to be developed and established as the main docking point for ships in Freetown harbour. Photographs from the early twentieth century show that it was a vibrant location of trade and commercial activity (see Figures 4.22 & 4.23). It was eventually superseded by Queen Elizabeth II Quay in Cline town in the early 1960s as the main Freetown port but it still continued as a working dock. Today it is still active as an onboarding/embarking point for local ferries and intermittent vessels (see Figures 4.24 & 4.25).



Figure 4.22: Government Wharf, Unilever Archive, 1915, UAC 1/11/9/12/149



Figure 4.23: Government Wharf, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/154



Figure 4.24: Government Wharf (View toward Portuguese steps), Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.25: Government Wharf (View toward Freetown harbour), Paul Robinson, 2023

An additional Elder Dempster office was opened next to the Queen Elizabeth II Quay when it became operational and the primary port of Freetown in the mid-twentieth century. This building was designed by James Cubitt. Like Government wharf, the railway also had a terminus and headquarters next to the new Quay. These were removed in the 1970s when the railway line was uprooted during Siaka Stevens' presidency. Elder Dempster finished trading in 2000 but its old office building next to the Government Wharf in Freetown still stands and is active as a local police station (see Figures 4.20 & 4.21). The modernist office building next to the Queen Elizabeth II Quay also remains (see Figure 4.26) and continues as a business location for maritime trade and shipping companies. Its internal stair and waffled ceiling playfully evoke industrial shipping themes (see Figure 4.27)



Figure 4.26: Elder Dempster Offices, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.27: Internal Stair, Elder Dempster Offices, Paul Robinson, 2023

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 112

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4085

DESCRIPTION: FREETOWN HARBOUR 8 10  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: UNLOADING A PALM LINE SHIP  
AT QUEEN ELIZABETH II DOCK



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FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 168

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4080  
4055

DESCRIPTION: FREETOWN HARBOUR \* 5  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: MAILBOAT ON NEW QUEEN ELIZABETH II  
QUAY



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**Other Institutional developments: Mining, Law, the  
Post Office & Municipal Buildings**

By the 1920s the economy of Sierra Leone was rapidly expanding as mining activities started to become a significant revenue stream. The potential growth, aligned to the development of the railway to expedite transport, inspired two large multinational companies to become involved in large-scale mining activities, alongside a multitude of smaller enterprise. The Sierra Leone Development Company (DELCO) and Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST) secured mining monopolies for

99 years at various locations with a minimal 5% tax on any profits. DELCO discovered large deposits of iron ore at Marampa in Port Loko district and built an 80 km railway line from there to the Port of Peipel to export the ore (see Figure 4.05). By the 1950s the Marampa mines supplied 40% of Britain's iron ore and by 1960 DELCO was exporting 1.5 million tonnes of high-grade ore valued at £5 million. The company operated from a crisp modern office block in central Freetown (see Figures 4.03 & 4.30).

When the country became independent in 1961, minerals contributed approximately 86% of total exports with DELCO continuing to operate until 1975. The Sierra Leone government re-opened the Marampa mines in the 1980s which experienced ensuing turmoil due to the late twentieth century civil war that engulfed the nation. The DELCO office block still stands in central Freetown (see Figure 4.31) but is now occupied by different businesses.

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 107

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4040

DESCRIPTION: BUILDINGS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN 19

CAPTION: DELCO HOUSE. HEADQUARTERS OF  
S.L. DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



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Figure 4.31: DELCO building, Paul Robinson, 2023



## Municipal Buildings



Figure 4.32: Law Courts, 1920, Macmillan 1920:236



Figure 4.33: Supreme Court of Sierra Leone, Paul Robinson, 2023



Freetown has a swathe of historical government and municipal buildings within its urban layout. Many are a legacy from the early twentieth century when the British attempted to improve the infrastructure and stimulate trade within the colony and protectorate. Today the refurbished Supreme Court of Sierra Leone, next to the Cotton tree (see Figure 4.03), is one of the grandest buildings in Freetown (see Figures 4.32 & 4.33). Its Neoclassical styling and arches attempting to display the colonial ideals of order, justice and power. A court was built in a similar style in Accra at the same time.

Municipal office block (see Figure 4.03), designed by Nickson and Borys and most likely built by Taylor Woodrow in the 1960s still have a commanding presence in the skyline of central Freetown, and providing more accommodation to the older colonial period municipal structure (see Figures 4.32 & 4.33)



Figure 4.34: Municipal Offices, colonial era, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.35: Municipal Offices, Paul Robinson, 2023



Nickson and Borys proceeded to design several projects within central Freetown and its environs. One of these was the modernist Postal Services building (see Figure 4.03), with dramatic horizontal louvred facades, that is still open for business on Siaka Stevens Street (see Figures 4.36 & 4.37). The building's facades to the front and the side evidence the design expertise of Nickson & Borys practised in tropical climates. The intense heat of the local climate is displaced by the outer wall, which also provides

rain protection, but breeze is allowed to penetrate to help cool the space between the outer wall and the inner wall. Here people can experience some relief from the intense sunshine prior to entering the cooler internal environment. Such simple yet effective designs prompted additional commissions that included the relocated CMS Grammar School (see Figure 1.16-1.20) and Lungi Airport on the outskirts of Freetown.



Figure 4.36: Post Office front elevation, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.37: Post Office side elevation, Paul Robinson, 2023



Earlier colonial infrastructure projects included the lighthouse at Aberdeen (see Figures 4.38 & 4.39), the Big Market on Wallace Johnson Street (see Figures 4.03, 4.40 & 4.41) and the Clock Tower (see Figures 4.42 & 4.43). Today each of these buildings has been maintained, refurbished and redecorated but still functions according to its original purpose established over 100 years ago.



Figure 4.38: Aberdeen Lighthouse, 1913, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/74



Figure 4.39: Aberdeen Lighthouse, Paul Robinson, 2023

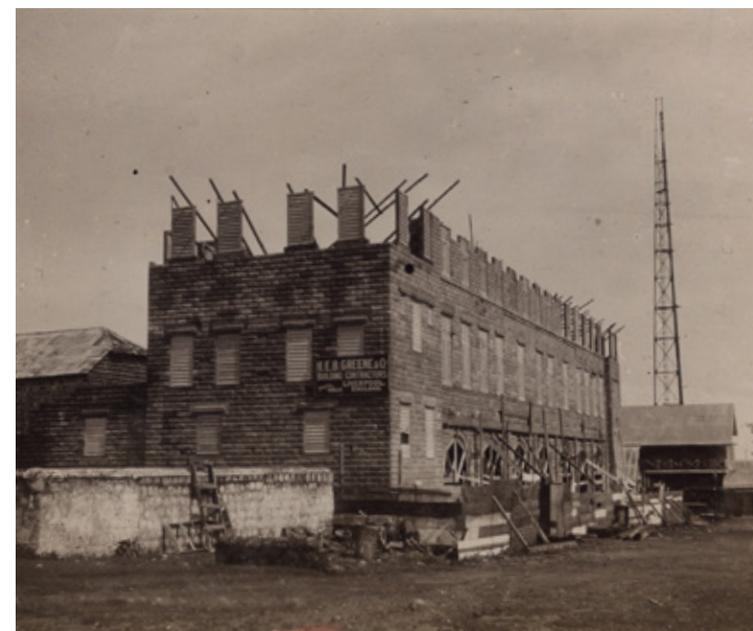


Figure 4.40: Big Market Construction, 1913, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/12/100



Figure 4.41: Big Market, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.42: Clock Tower, 1960-1963, National Archives, UK, INF10/313 966.4



Figure 4.43: Clock Tower, Paul Robinson, 2023



In 1967 McKay observed that the commercial density of central Freetown seemed relatively low in contrast to other regional urban centres like Dakar, Abidjan and similar cities. And that the economy was not running at very high levels. He reflected that this may be due to the leading sources of prosperity, iron ore and diamonds, being in the protectorate of Sierra Leone and economically primarily benefiting provincial centres rather than Freetown. A result of this has been that many areas within central Freetown were (and still are) devoted to non-commercial use like education, religion, and Government institutions.



## Religious Buildings in Freetown

Since its inception in 1787 the city of Freetown has experienced impact and influence from a variety of sources, places, nations, and people. Alongside each of these has been a further continuous influence on the urban layout of Central Freetown that is still a prevailing presence today; that of faith and religious expression. Faith and purpose were strong and integral to each of the settler groups and how they ritually located themselves in central Freetown.



Figure 4.44: Redrawn 1947 map of Central Freetown to show church locations, [https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sierra\\_leone.html](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sierra_leone.html)



Over 160 years later spiritual activity did not diminish; modernisation and economic growth saw a consolidation (and growth) of religious inspired construction within Central Freetown. As the city grew, spatial impacts of spirituality also grew and became integrated within the urban fabric. Today, every location highlighted on the 1947 map (see Figure 4.44) remains a church, continuing the spatial impact of spirituality within Central Freetown. These include the Wesleyan Methodist Church (see Figure 4.45),

St John's Maroon Methodist Church (see Figure 4.46), the Samaria WAM Church (see Figure 4.47) and the Sacred Heart Cathedral (see Figure 4.48).



Figure 4.45: Wesleyan Methodist Church, Paul Robinson, 2023 (see Figure 4.44 location C)



Figure 4.46: St John's Maroon Church, Paul Robinson, 2023 (see Figure 4.44 location I)



Figure 4.47: Samaria WAM Church, Paul Robinson, 2023 (see Figure 4.44 location M)



119 Figure 4.48: Sacred Heart Cathedral, Paul Robinson, 2023 (see Figure 4.44 location D)

In the 1960s Mackay observed that in the development of Freetown the close relationship between missionary activity and education was clearly demonstrated in the adjacent positions of churches and schools in the urban layout. An example of this was the CMS School built by the CMS missionary society (see Figures 1.14, 1.15 & 4.44 location G). He argued that the importance of missionary societies in providing Freetown residents education was in decline as often they were frequently identified with colonialism.

He cited the strong nationalist agenda of the newly independent government as evidence of this, stating that they wanted to minimise the power and influence of such (missionary) bodies as soon as the Sierra Leone economy was strong enough.

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE 129

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4037

DESCRIPTION: ~~CHURCHES~~ BUILDINGS ts 16  
& LOCATION: FREE TOWN

CAPTION: A MOSQUE



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Figure 4.50: Freetown Central Mosque, Paul Robinson, 2023 (See Figure 4.44 location AA)



Although Christianity thrived throughout the colony's history, Islam too was practised from at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. Islamic institutions served as an alternative to British establishments largely staffed by Western-educated elites and frequently assisted the colonial establishment in upholding the rule of law. It was particularly adopted by the Temne people group to such an extent that Temneness became associated with Islam in Freetown. Several mosques were constructed throughout central Freetown (see Figure 4.49). Today, these continue to function as places of worship for Muslims, Freetown central mosque is one of the largest of these (see Figure 4.50) which was built on derelict railway land in 1944 (see Figure 4.44 location AA).

Other spatial impacts of spirituality within Central Freetown include masonic lodges and the extensive yet hard to define animism that is fully integrated with the culture. Today, evidence of the masonic lodges is still present in the built environment (see Figure 4.51). And in the national museum dramatic secret society costumes are displayed, hinting at the strong presence of indigenous animism throughout the urban layout spaces of Freetown (see Figure 4.52).

*'The spirit world of the forests is seen by many to deeply affect events in the physical world and the secret societies continue to police the border areas between the two worlds, supervise the important coming of age and circumcision rituals, and provide the spiritual glue which holds rural and often urban society together.'*



Figure 4.51: Masonic Temple, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 4.52: Secret Society Garments, National Museum, Freetown, Paul Robinson, 2023



In 21<sup>st</sup> century Sierra Leone about 60% of the country is Muslim, 20-30% Christian and 5-10% Animist / indigenous spirituality. Although these are the official figures there is a high degree of religious syncretism as many people practise animist rituals in addition to following a different faith. In central Freetown vibrant churches and mosques are physically present in a seemingly comfortable atmosphere of religious tolerance. Conflicts between followers of these spiritualities are extremely rare and often there are intermarriages between the two. There are also many secret societies present in Sierra Leone which bind people to each other and their ancestors with certain spiritual rituals associated with them. They are still active and present in central Freetown.



## Chapter 5

### Commercial Freetown

*'...it must be said that central area of Freetown, in terms of its morphology, intensity of development, and overall appearance, bears very little resemblance to central business districts of the average large European and North American city. This is in spite of the important European business community found in central Freetown. It is in fact the interaction of the various ethnic entrepreneurial groups present which gives central Freetown its special character...Each [business] has its own particular spatial position in the core area, its own type of trade, group of customers and each type of business is housed in a building of a special style. The European, Lebanese, Indian and African businessmen do not really compete with one another. Each performs a special function for one particular sector of the population, and as such each is indispensable to the efficient running of the city...'*

The administration of the colony (Freetown and its coastal area) and the protectorate (the hinterland areas dominated by local paramount chiefs) was defined in a new constitution in 1924 by Governor Alexander Ransford Slater (1874-1940) on behalf of the UK government, with different political systems for each area. This was never a peaceful solution and tensions grew to a heated debate in 1947 when Governor Hubert Stevenson proposed an updated constitution for a single political system to combine both colony and protectorate. These new proposals created antagonism amongst the local population. The Creoles led by Wallace Johnson opposed the proposals which would reduce their power in the colony. The indigenous people realised the need to form a united front against such opposition to equality. Dr Milton Margai, a Mende and leading politician in the protectorate, was able to mobilise forces among the indigenous educated elite and the paramount chiefs of the protectorate to neutralise Creole objections. The Sierra Leone Peoples Party was formed (SLPP) by Margai and other leaders from different groups including Lamina Sankoh, Siaka Stevens, Mohamed Sanusi Mustapha, John Karefa-Smart, Kande Bureh, Albert

Margai, Amadu Wurie and Banja Tejan-Sie. The party's motto was then and remains today 'One people, One country'.

In 1951 Dr Milton Margai oversaw the drafting of another new constitution which united the separate colonial and protectorate legislatures and provided a framework for decolonisation. In 1953 Sierra Leone was granted local ministerial powers and Dr Milton Margai was elected chief minister of Sierra Leone. In May 1957 Sierra Leone held its first parliamentary elections and the SLPP, with the support of the powerful paramount chiefs in the provinces, won the most seats in Parliament and Dr Milton Margai was re-elected as chief minister by a landslide. In 1961 the colony and the protectorate combined and gained independence from the United Kingdom as one country. At midnight on 27<sup>th</sup> April the green, white and blue flag was unfurled to the crowds in Brookfields Playground in Freetown. The British Queen remained Head of State and the British Governor became Governor-General, later replaced by a Sierra Leonean, the lawyer Sir Henry Lightfoot-Boston, after whom a street is named in central Freetown. These political machinations of the first half of the twentieth century had significant economic impact on central Freetown as they allowed growing commercial competition within the urban layout. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century mercantile dominance of Creole and English traders came under threat from competitors that emerged from within Sierra Leone, the extended West African tropical region and throughout Europe.

## Department Stores

In the newly independent nation of Sierra Leone, McKay observed in 1967 that there were four leading European department stores established in the city of Freetown. They were located on prime real estate locations within central Freetown as their greater turnover allowed them to pay the higher land values (see Figure 5.02: The location of the four department stores designated as triangles on the plan). These were: Kingsway Stores (United Africa Company) on Howe Street, Paterson, Zochonis and Company Ltd.

(commonly known as PZ) on Wilberforce Street, Compagnie Francaise de L'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) on the corner of Howe Street and Oxford Street (today known as Lightfoot Boston Street) & Freetown Cold Storage Company also on Howe Street.

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_ 125 454 DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: S/2/310 N

DESCRIPTION: FREETOWN  
& LOCATION:

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMORIAL TO

SIR. M. A. S. MARGAI

ON PARLIAMENT HILL

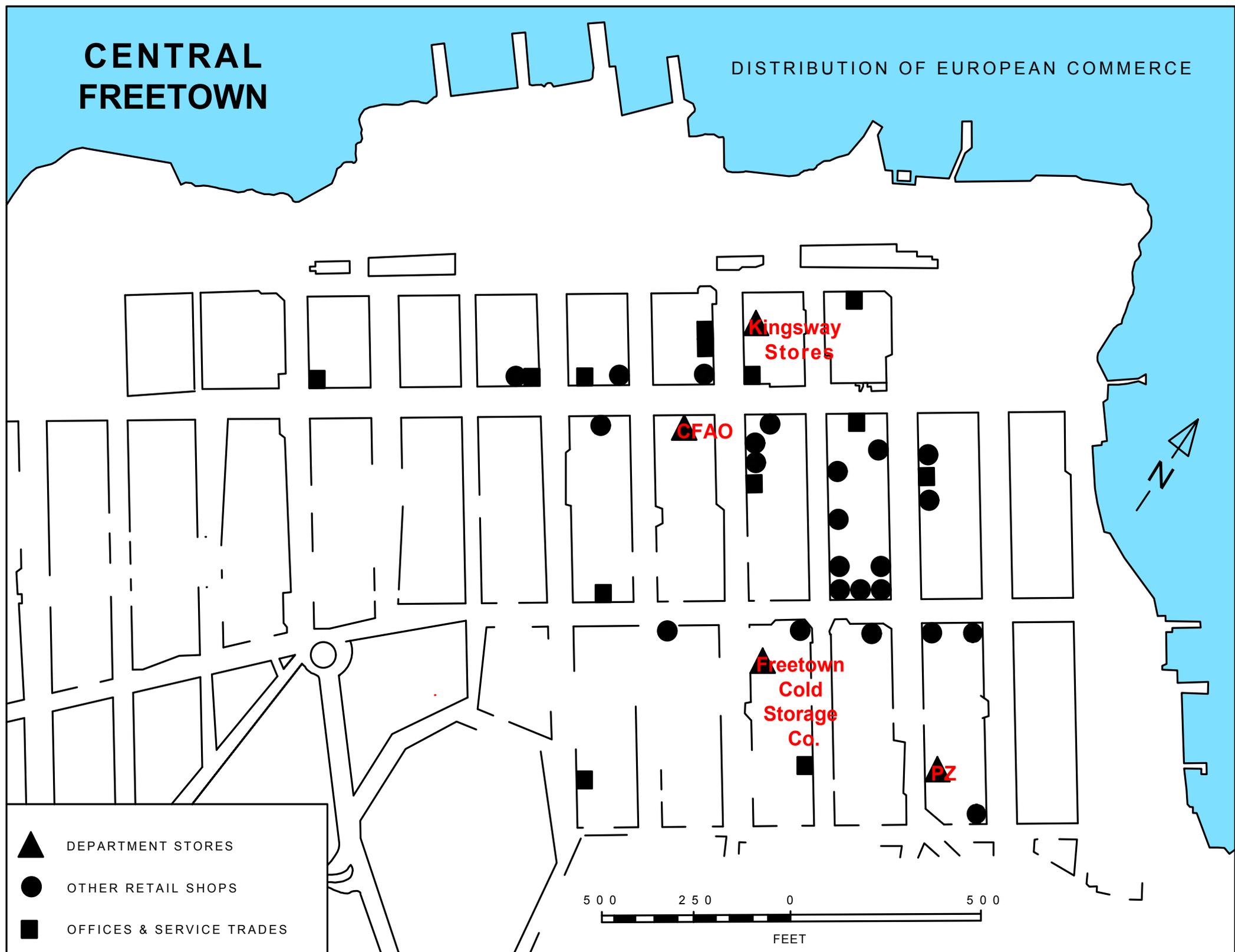
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Photograph by Tom Smith

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LONDON, S.E.1.



Figure 5.01: Dr Milton Margai memorial, 1968, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/11-12:SL/2/310



127 Figure 5.02: Map to show location of European commerce in Central Freetown in 1967, after McKay 1967:43



### Freetown Cold Storage Co.

Freetown Cold Storage Co. was started by the first known Swiss nationals to arrive in Freetown. Schumacher and Straumann departed from Hamburg and arrived in Freetown in 1907. They were innovators and businessmen who, unlike other businesses, '...are essentially grocers and provision merchants, and include in their supplies everything associated with eatables and drinkables...' They started business in 1911 as ship chandlers, butchers and ice manufacturers. They took over the lease of the Grand Hotel (see Figure 5.03) on completion of its construction in 1915 and then moved into their new location of business. Macmillan suggests that these new quarters were 'contiguous' to the Grand Hotel and housed a provision store and ice factory. Further rationale for this connection is the engine required to produce the ice. Macmillan writes that this engine had twenty-seven horsepower, therefore it probably was also used to light the Grand Hotel as it was the only building in Freetown at the time to enjoy electric lighting. Making it '...without question the best hotel in the whole of British West Africa'.



Figure 5.03: Grand Hotel Freetown, 1920, Macmillan 1920:259



Today, the Grand Hotel is no longer standing, and sources researched to-date are silent on what happened to it. However, the historical record of Schumacher and Straumann seems to suggest that the Grand Hotel was demolished and redeveloped by 1944 (earliest) as an Odeon Cinema. By the 1930' Schumacher and Straumann had officially founded the Freetown Cold Storage Co. Ltd. (see Figure 5.04 RHS) and contiguous to this is the Odeon Cinema (see Figure 5.04 LHS). This was (probably) on the same site on Howe Street, where they first established the Grand Hotel and the associated provision store and ice factory.



Figure 5.04: Cinema & Freetown Cold Storage Co, <https://www.diethelmkeller.com/en/about/heritage/>



Figure 5.05: street view of former cinema and Freetown Cold Storage Co, Paul Robinson, 2023



Therefore, it is reasonable to assume, as innovative businessmen, to establish the first fully air-conditioned cinema in West Africa was well within their capabilities. Further creative practice continued as they launched the soft drink brand Parrot (that is still on the market today). In 1955 the Diethelm Keller Group of Zurich became the new owners of the Freetown Cold Storage Co. Ltd, this would be their first and only joint acquisition in West Africa. They obtained a Coca-Cola franchise licence and introduced the drink into Freetown in 1956 (later they acquired the right to produce and sell Vimto in 1980). From 1955 the Group proceeded to make ice, run a supermarket, a bottling plant and, allegedly, the best butcher shop in the country. They became profitable through supplying the burgeoning mining industry from their significant real estate holdings. At its peak, the Group employed around 35 Swiss expatriates in addition to many local workers. However, by the early 1980s the economy took a downturn and fierce competition from other merchants contributed to the Group closing most of its Freetown business interests other than soft drink manufacturing.

Today, evidence of the influence of the Freetown Cold Storage Co. Ltd, remains in the urban fabric of central Freetown (see Figure 5.05). In 1998 Coca Cola took back its franchise and the Diethelm Keller Group now focuses its business elsewhere. The supermarket and the cinema no longer function as originally intended but the buildings still stand. The curved and well-proportioned cinema building has retained its linear glazing and horizontal louvred canopies. Its profiled and smooth façade continues to act as a billboard. Rather than symbolise the Odeon chain of cinemas it promotes in proud purple, the mobile phone company Africell. Who, according to their website, launched in 2005 and are a leading mobile communications company in Sierra Leone with over 350 employees. The adjacent, contiguous building, where the supermarket once operated, remains standing but with an indeterminate function.



### Paterson, Zochonis and Co. Ltd.

Paterson, Zochonis and Co. Ltd (PZ) conducted both export and import business, throughout West Africa, notably in Nigeria, Conakry and Monrovia. Their commercial practice in Freetown began in the 1880s and evolved exponentially. In 1920 their head office was at 42 Whitworth Street in Manchester with subsidiary offices in Liverpool and Marseilles. Their extensive premises in Freetown were believed (see Figure 5.06) to contain ‘... products of practically all the markets of the world – textile fabrics, provisions, tobacco, wines and spirits, boots and shoes, ladies’ and gentlemen’s apparel and general drapery, beds and bedding, fancy goods and perfumery, hardware, including tools of all kinds, crockery, glassware, paints, oils, brushes, etc., etc...’. The company’s business expanded widely across Sierra Leone once the hinterland became established as a protectorate and PZ outlets were established in over fifteen locations including Bo and Sherbro island (see Figure 6.16).

Today, over 135 years later, the company continues to trade and in 1975 upon acquiring the Cussons Group they became known as PZ Cussons. They have become an international consumer goods group owning a variety of brands in three core categories of hygiene, beauty and baby care. They are still present in West Africa and are involved in a successful local business in Nigeria. They have no commercial presence in Freetown, but their built legacy still informs the layout. The location of their head office premises on a busy roundabout became so established within the urban grain that the location today is locally known as the PZ roundabout (see Figure 5.07).



Figure 5.06: PZ Building, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.07: PZ Roundabout, Paul Robinson, 2023



## CFAO

In 1852, Charles-Auguste Verminck established Établissements Verminck, based in the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Senegal, trading mainly in cocoa, peanuts, soap and rubber. Établissements Verminck grew and took on the name Compagnie Francaise de L'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) in 1887. In its expansive supermarket in central Freetown, it specialised in the trade of food products and everyday consumption goods. From 1913, CFAO turned towards automobile distribution and industrial production in Africa and became the first Ford dealership to distribute the famous Ford T in West Africa. Its main competitor was then the Société Commerciale de l'Ouest d'Afrique (SCOA) which was acquired in 1996 by CFAO, itself previously acquired by the French company Pinault.



Figure 5.08: CFAO buildings, Paul Robinson, 2023



Today the CFAO group is still in business trading under the slogan 'With Africa for Africa'. It focuses predominantly on the automobile industry and no longer operates out of its original central Freetown location (see Figure 5.08). The stylish original buildings remain with the company logo still clearly etched above the decorative entrance façade (see Figure 5.09). Other small business practices now operate out of this location within the urban layout.

Figure 5.09: CFAO Entrance, 2023



## Kingsway & the United Africa Company

Pickering and Berthoud Ltd. were one of the oldest commercial firms in West Africa from Lagos to Freetown: where they established numerous branches. Their central Freetown premises on Howe Street opened in the 1870s and grew in scale and range of goods for sale (see Figures 5.10 & 5.11). In the 1920s they were particularly renowned for their fashion and gentlemen's apparel. Not only did they deal in everything for which there was a demand, but they were also large exporters of produce too. The United Africa Company (UAC) was formed in 1929 through the merger of the Niger Company and the African & Eastern Trade Corporation. The UAC gradually acquired commercial interests throughout West Africa including Pickering and Berthoud Ltd.



Figure 5.10: Pickering & Berthoud, 1910, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/10/74





137 Figure 5.11: Pickering & Berthoud, 1910, Unilever Archive, UAC 1/11/9/10/107

Upon ownership of the Pickering & Berthoud chain of department stores the UAC rebranded them Kingsway Stores, expanding the concept from Accra and Lagos.

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4097  
4061

DESCRIPTION: KINGSWAY STORES  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: EXTERIOR VIEW OF KINGSWAY STORES

24/6/68 - Out of date  
Mr. Weaver

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FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE

DESCRIPTION: KINGSWAY STORES  
& LOCATION: FREE TOWN

CAPTION: KINGSWAY STORE

24/6/68 - Out of date  
Mr. K. A. Weaver

REF. No 4104

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Figure 5.13: Kingsway Stores, 1968, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/3:4104

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ INDEX NO: 4102  
4050

DESCRIPTION: KINGSWAY STORES  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: EXTERIOR VIEW OF KINGSWAY  
STORES

24/6/68 - Out of date  
Mr. K. A. Weaver



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FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

222 229

DATE: FEB 68

INDEX No: SL/2/8.

DESCRIPTION: KINGSWAY STORES  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN <sup>DIVISION</sup>

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

EXTERIOR OF STORES  
(right-hand side pipe  
damaged by fire)



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Figure 5.15: Kingsway Stores, 1968, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/12:SL/2/8

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

230 DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/9

DESCRIPTION: KINGSWAY STORES  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN <sup>DIVISION</sup>

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

~~FOOD HALL IN THE~~  
SUPERMARKET



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Figure 5.16: Kingsway Stores Interior, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/12:SL/2/9

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

231

DATE: FEB 68

INDEX No: SL/2/10

DESCRIPTION:  
& LOCATION:

KINGSWAY STORES  
DIVISION  
FREETOWN

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

~~FOOD HALL IN THE~~

SUPERMARKET



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Figure 5.17: Kingsway Stores Interior, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/12:SL/2/10



The central Freetown Kingsway Store on Howe Street was located on the same site as the Pickering & Berthoud store (see Figures 5.12 & 5.13). The scale and massing of the two storey Kingsway department store was similar to the previous Pickering & Berthoud building but with a greater horizontal emphasis. Twelve first floor window bays were framed by arched roof supports and a generous horizontal canopy along the entire ground floor front elevation. The canopy protected window shoppers from the sun and

supported the large signage. At either end of these bays, a vertical circulation core solidly anchored the building to the site (see Figures 5.14 & 5.15). The spacious interior housed all types of domestic products (see Figure 5.16) that residents of central Freetown regularly purchased (see Figure 5.17) in a manner and methodology that is still similar to 21<sup>st</sup> century supermarket shopping. Today, the building has changed little from its mid-twentieth century design. The twelve bays remain, painted in a smart white

and blue (see Figures 5.18 & 5.19). The dramatic canopy and signage have been diluted through widening the canopy overhang, nudging the parking bays more into the street and preventing pedestrian activity to the sidewalk adjacent to the front elevation. These changes have occurred in part due to the building's change of function from a department store to the Union Trust Bank Limited.



Figure 5.18: Union Trust Bank Limited, former Kingsway, Paul Robinson, 2023



The UAC made further acquisitions of both property and business throughout the Sierra Leone colony. Other than the Kingsway department store franchise another leading asset they controlled within Central Freetown was Ludgate House: located in the block bounded by Rawden Street, Water Street (today known as Wallace Johnson Street) and Wilberforce Street (see Figure 5.37).

The impressive front elevation of Ludgate House opened onto Water Street and was opposite the main railway station of Freetown (see Figures 5.20 & 5.37). The two-storey building comfortably turns the corner with Rawdon Street with a creative chamfered façade, before stepping down into a single-storey unit. As travellers arrived into Freetown through the main entrance of the railway station, one of the first things they saw was Ludgate House (see Figure 5.20) and through its large panel windows,

a glamorous showroom of motor cars, imported by UAC motors (see Figure 5.22). As well as a showroom the single-storey unit on Rawdon Street and Wilberforce Street (see Figures 5.23 & 5.24), serviced cars (see Figures 5.25-5.28), ready for use on Freetown streets.

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 58 INDEX NO: 4025  
4022

DESCRIPTION: BUILDINGS # 4  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: LUDGATE HOUSE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Motors Showroom



Motors Showroom



Motors Quick Service



Petrol Pump and Lubricants

Figure 5.21: Ludgate House corner of Water Street & Rawdon Street, Unileverv Archive, UAC/1/11/9/52/50



Figure 5.22: Motor showroom, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/9/52/54



Figure 5.24: Cars in service, UAC Archive: Unilever/1/11/9/52/56



Figure 5.23: Motor service, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/9/52/52



FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_ 23-7255 DATE: FEB - 68 INDEX No: SL/2/165 N

DESCRIPTION: U.A.C. MOTORS  
& LOCATION: FREE TOWN.

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_  
STORE KEEPER SELECTING  
TYRES FROM THE  
STORE

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Photograph by Tom Smith

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Figure 5.25: UAC Motors tyre store, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/12:SL/2/165

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: FEB-68 INDEX No: SL/2/174

DESCRIPTION:  
& LOCATION:

UAC MOTORS DIV  
FREETOWN

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

CAR REPAIR AND

SERVICE BAYS.



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LONDON, S.E.1.

FILE REFERENCE: SIERRA LEONE

DATE: MARCH 61 INDEX NO: 4131

DESCRIPTION: U.A.C. MOTORS  
& LOCATION: FREETOWN

CAPTION: MR. A. FALLAH DIAGNOSING THE ROVER  
3 LITRE ENGINE AT U.A.C. MOTORS.

*1/5/68 Checked by Mr. A. G. Riley*

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MISS BEATRICE LOUISA NORMAN

AUTO ELECTRICIAN

U.A.C. MOTORS FREETOWN.

Figure 5.28: Miss Beatrice Louisa Norman working on a car at UAC Motors, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-50

Today, Ludgate House no longer dominates the city centre block like it used to. One of the chamfered corners still remains on Wallace Johnson Street and Wilberforce Street (see Figure 5.29) but the main façade has been altered (see Figure 5.30). The ordered rhythm of showroom windows to the ground floor has been broken up into individual shop frontages. And the original entrance, once clearly identified in a vertical core that broke through the roof line, has now been subsumed into the façade. Only a single portrait window frame remains to mark its original location (see Figure 5.30). The other chamfered corner to Rawdon Street has been refurbished by one of Central Freetown's many banks, though it retains the original chamfered profile (see Figure 5.31 LHS). The extensive rear industrial unit that covered the remainder of the block has been broken up into smaller businesses, none of which service the motor industry (see Figure 5.31 RHS).



Figure 5.29: Corner to Wilberforce Street, Paul Robinson, 2023





Figure 5.30: Elevation to Wallace Johnson Street, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.31: Corner to Rawdon Street, Paul Robinson, 2023



The UAC had further business interests throughout the Sierra Leone colony and protectorate. One further establishment of note was the Sierra Leone Brewery located on the south eastern outskirts of Freetown on Bai Bureh Road in Wellington on the way to Waterloo. The old Wellington airstrips were considered the most suitable site and scale for a brewery. The UAC in collaboration with Heineken constructed the Brewery at the very end of the colonial era in the early 1960s. It was formally opened by prime minister, Sir Milton Margai, on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1963. The first beer to be brewed was the local Star Lager, a brand that has continued to be brewed for 60 years and is still popular today. The striking building was an excellent example of mid century tropical modernism (see Figures 5.32 & 5.33) The strong horizontal facades accommodate large scale superstructure bays that enclose an expansive brewing area (see Figure 5.34). The stylistic detailing to the bay facades allows natural ventilation through gridded panels while protecting the interiors from rain, direct sunlight, and dust. The UAC trained and employed men and women to work side by side in the Brewery (see Figure 5.35) and intentionally invested in staff wellbeing and community through running social initiatives and events; one of these was a well-documented cycle competition sponsored by Guinness (see Figure 5.36) Since the 1960s the Brewery has continued to function but has intermittently closed at times during Sierra Leone's turbulent political history. Today Heineken is the majority owner, while Guinness, PZ and others owning minority shares. Over 120 people remain employed by the Brewery as they continue to create Star, Guinness, and Heineken (amongst others) on location and distribute them throughout the nation.

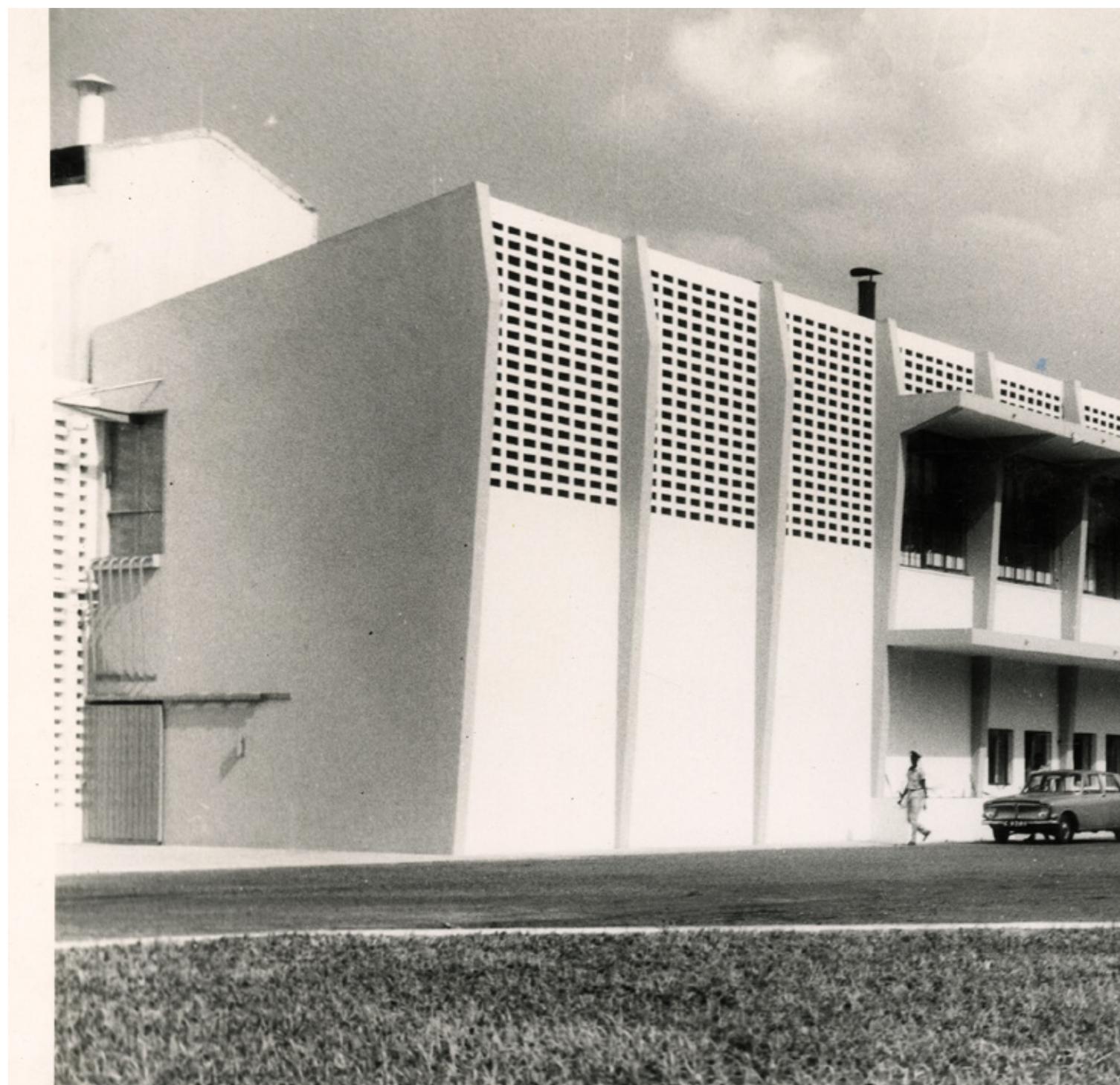


Figure 5.32: Sierra Leone Brewery front elevation, Unilever Archive, UAC/2/1/c/4/1/2/1

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/209 R

DESCRIPTION: SIERRA LEONE 3  
& LOCATION: BREWERY LIMITED

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

FRONT FROM

SOUTH WEST

(RETOUCHED)

*(Out of date)*



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Figure 5.33: Sierra Leone Brewery front elevation, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/11-12:SL/2/208N

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/239 N

DESCRIPTION: SIERRA LEONE  
& LOCATION: BREWERY LIMITED

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the huge tanks seen from  
the observation platform. Each  
tank contains sufficient beer to  
fill 60,000 bottles.

*Staircase changed &  
water storage vessel put in*



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Figure 5.34: Sierra Leone Brewery interior, Unilever Archive, UAC/1/11/10/1/11-12:SL/2/239N

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/209R

DESCRIPTION: SIERRA LEONE 3  
& LOCATION: BREWERY LIMITED

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

FRONT FROM

SOUTH WEST

(RETOUCHED)

(Out of date)



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PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM SMITH

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LONDON, S.E.1.

FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

32

DATE: FEB 68

INDEX No: 32/2/239 N

DESCRIPTION:  
& LOCATION:

SIERRA LEONE  
BREWERY LIMITED

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the huge tanks seen from  
the observation platform. Each  
tank contains sufficient beer to  
fill 60,000 bottles.

*Staircase changed &  
water storage vessel put in*



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FILE REFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

28

DATE: FEB 68 INDEX No: SL/2/235

DESCRIPTION:  
& LOCATION:

SIERRA LEONE  
BREWERY LIMITED

CAPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

LETTY JONES TALKING

TO VAN BOY



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Photograph by Tom Smith

REPRODUCTION FEE

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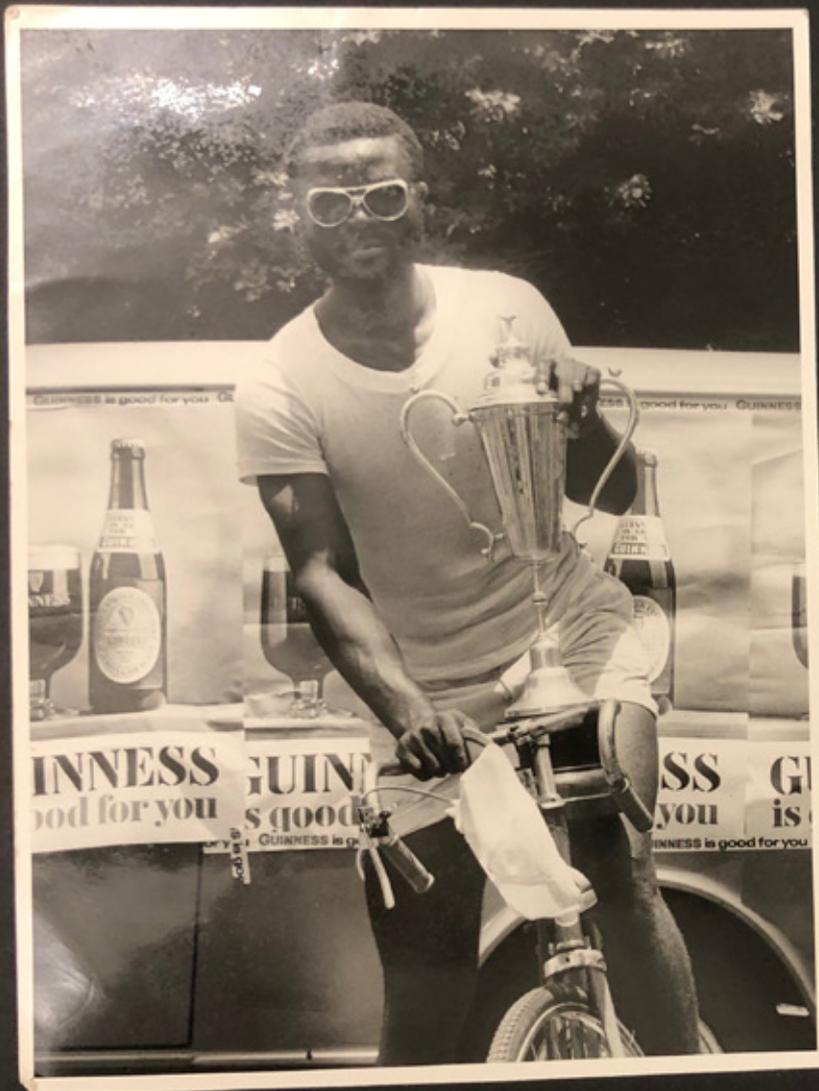
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LONDON, S.E.1.



NATIONAL OPEN CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP  
OF THE SIERRA LEONE CYCLING ASSOCIATION.

4th AUGUST  
1972

MR SHERIFF SESAY.  
CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY WINNER.

Figure 5.36: Brewery Sponsored Bicycle tournament, Unilever Archive, Photograph Album of Freetown Brewery, Store 4 Row 7 C3, Acc1987-10



### European Merchants

Additional European shops provided more specialist goods and services than the four leading department stores and these tended to be grouped in the central Freetown area. They were located on Wilberforce, Rawdon or Howe Street in places that were the most accessible and had the highest land value (see Figure 5.02). These traders included P. Ratcliffe & Co Ltd, A Genet, GB Ollivant, Luvian and Societe Commercial amongst others. P. Ratcliffe & Co. Ltd. was established in Freetown in 1899 with its head office eventually located at the Royal Liver Building in Liverpool. Its premises were on Westmoreland Street (today known as Siaka Stevens Street) (see Figure 5.37) and was built between 1920-25 (see Figures 5.38 & 5.39) They were predominantly involved with the import trade. It was bought out by soap magnate William Lever in 1912.



Figure 5.38: Peter Ratcliffe & Co. Ltd, Unilever Archive, UAC /1/11/9/40/3



Figure 5.39: Peter Ratcliffe & Co. Ltd, Unilever Archive, UAC /1/11/9/40



Figure 5.40: Peter Ratcliffe & Co. Ltd, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.41: Peter Ratcliffe & Co. Ltd, Paul Robinson, 2023



Today, the Peter Ratcliffe building is still standing in central Freetown (see Figures 5.40 & 5.41). The building's form and massing recognisable above the street market at road level to its front façade onto Siaka Stevens Street. Wrap around balconies have been added (probably after 1960) to each floor to the front elevations. The pitched roof has been replaced with a flat roof to allow a third storey of accommodation.

The impressive eight storey Luvian (European drinks trader) building continues to impact the urban layout with its form and vertical signage on each façade corner. (see Figure 5.42). Today it is entitled Kissy House and is the home of Aureol Insurance Company.



Figure 5.42: Luvian building, Paul Robinson, 2023



### Merchants from India and Lebanon

Commercial traders from India and Lebanon were also involved in mercantile Freetown. McKay mapped their locations in 1967 (see Figures 5.43 & 5.44) and what is noticeable is how they inhabit the edges of central Freetown. Two profitable examples from each of these communities were M.Dialdis & Sons from India and Abdo & Chebli from Lebanon. Both merchants started business in Central Freetown at the turn of the twentieth century; proceeded to conduct business from several locations in Sierra Leone; and were active in several West African nations.

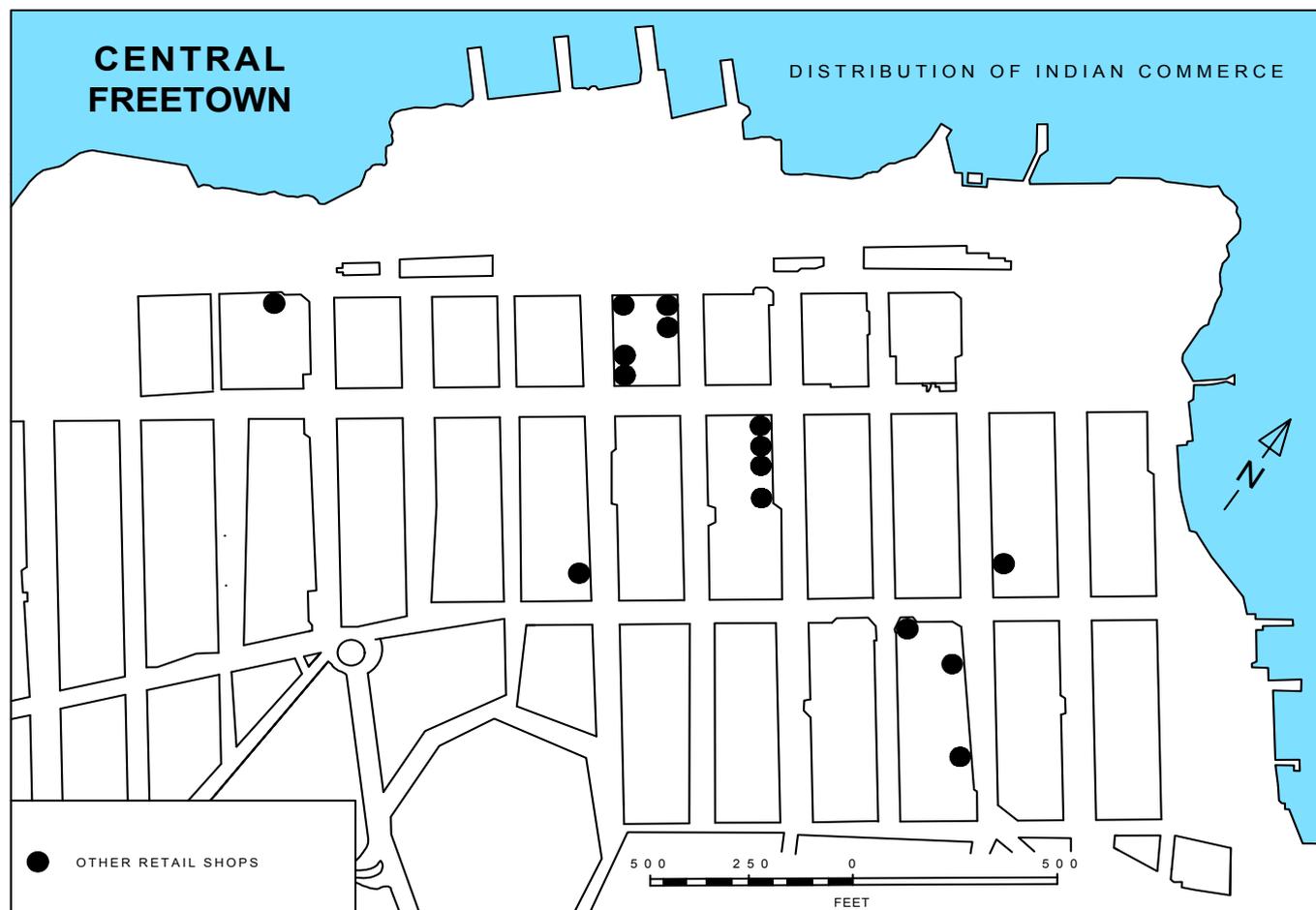


Figure 5.43: Location of Indian Commerce, after McKay 1967:47

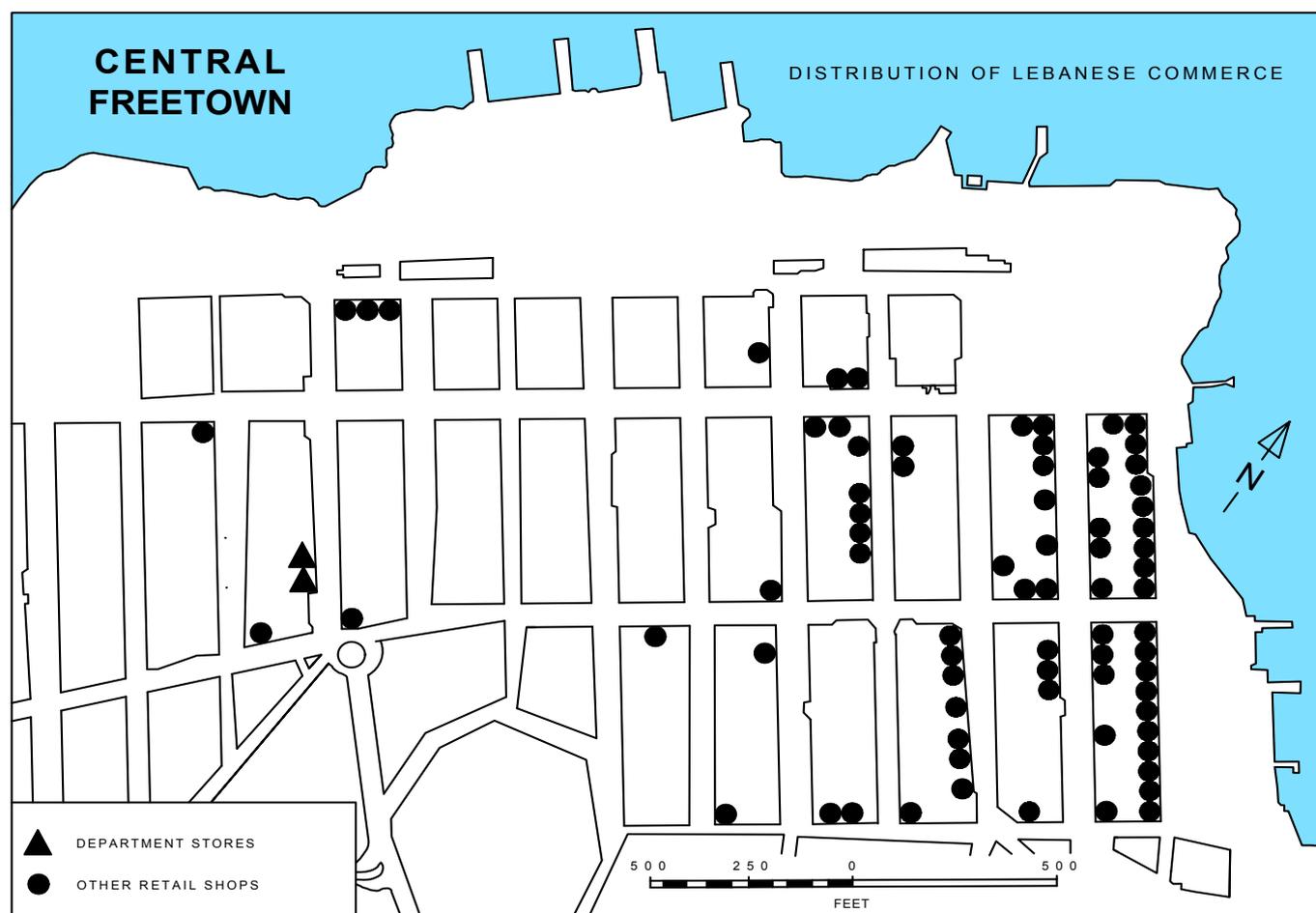


Figure 5.44: Location of Lebanese Commerce, after McKay 1967:47



Today, it is challenging to determine the exact locations of these vendors. However, in places where they historically traded within central Freetown, they were densely grouped, particularly those from Lebanon at the northern edge of Central Freetown along what is today known as Malama Thomas Street (see Figure 5.44). McKay recognised in 1967 that this cluster of Lebanese traders along this street sold predominantly 'cheap printed cotton cloth'. Today, printed cotton cloth is still the staple product being sold in this location (see Figure 5.45). Perhaps amongst these vendors are descendants from these Lebanese trail blazers?



Figure 5.45: Malama Thomas Street vendors, Paul Robinson, 2023

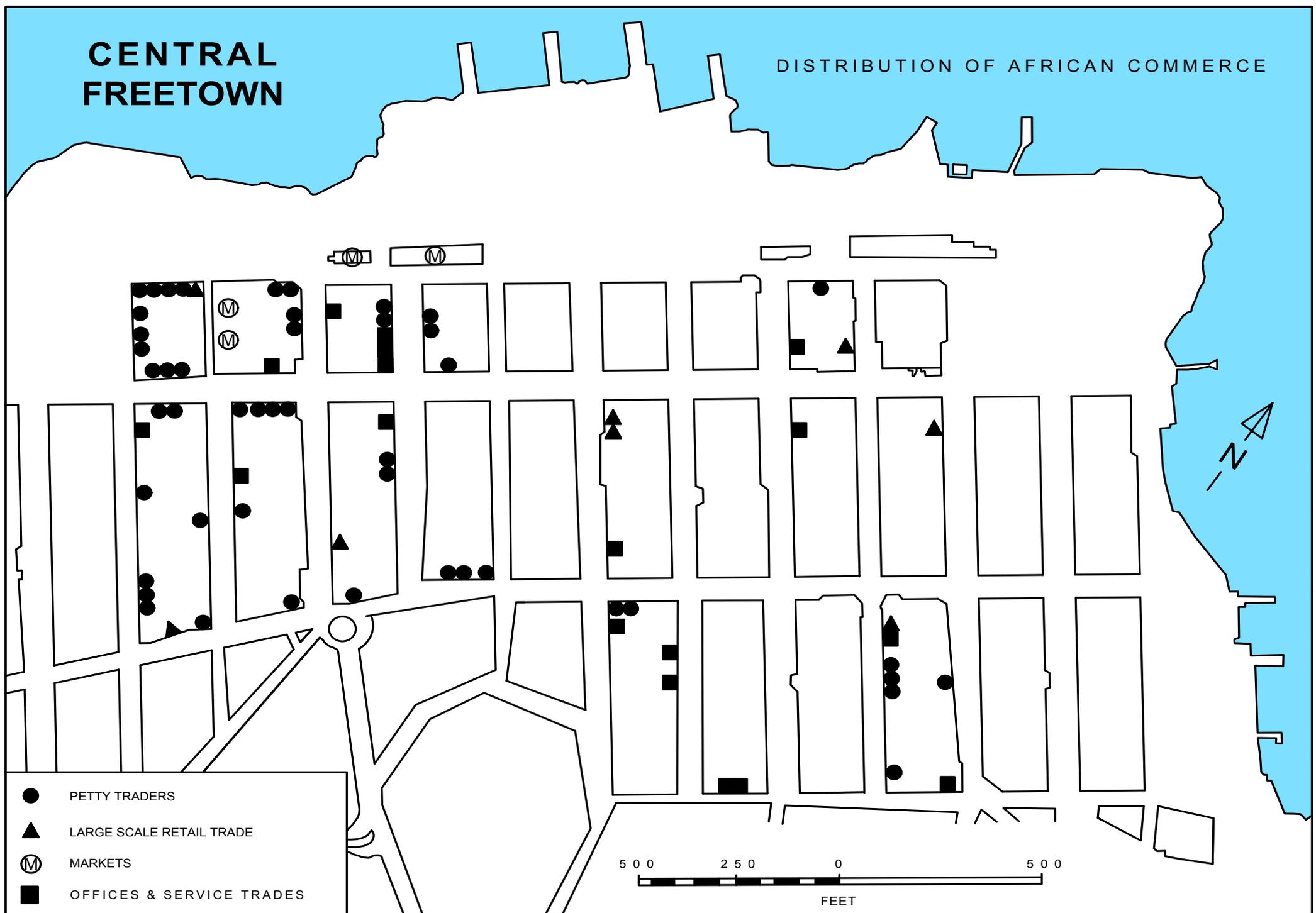


Figure 5.46: Location of African Commerce, after McKay 1967:46. This was the situation in 1967 and will not reflect the contemporary distribution



## West African Merchants

Creole traders were present throughout central Freetown but most were usually not located on prime real estate in the central area but on the edges or along the main routes leading into central Freetown (see Figure 5.46). They clustered more frequently next to King Jimmy's market and the Big Market in the south-west area of central Freetown. Macmillan's Red Book of West Africa (1920) schedules several local Creole merchants and describes their personalities, commercial products and frequently includes the address of their business. These included the following five merchants: A. Lisk-Carew, H Nelson Williams, WB Nicol, GA Bishop and EH Cummings.

Alphonso Lisk-Carew and his brother Arthur opened a photography studio on the corner of Westmoreland Street and Gloucester Street in 1905 (see Figure 5.37).

'The firm are clever exponents of photography in all its branches, and have the distinction of the use of the Royal coat of arms, as they were appointed photographers to H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.'

Alphonso Lisk-Carew was born in 1883 in Freetown and was educated at the Methodist High School. Whilst in secondary school, eager to establish his own business, he began his career as a photographer. He enjoyed clients from both the Creole community and the European communities and by 1912 he was described as 'practically the government photographer'. This same year he was awarded a royal warrant, and his work was subsequently stamped with the line 'Patronised by HRH The Duke of Connaught' or simply 'By Royal Warrant'. This gave him increasingly lucrative business opportunities for photography and postcard production throughout the colony. He travelled extensively to Liberia, Gambia and London prior to returning to Freetown in 1919. In 1920 he contributed many visual images to Macmillan's Red Book of Africa (several images which have been referenced in this text).

From 1920-30 he was involved with the introduction of film and cinema to Freetown, holding regular screenings at Wilberforce Hall. By the late 1930s he became increasingly politicised and joined the West African Youth League. Several of his friends were imprisoned and although he was never arrested, his name was found on a list of agitators and associates of Wallace Johnson. The demand for photographs and photo postcards reduced from the 1940s onwards and Lisk-Carew placed fewer advertisements for these services. Film and television entertainment were growing in popularity throughout Freetown and the rest of West Africa. Lisk-Carew devoted more time to his studio photography and eventually closed his studio in 1959 due to failing health. He died in 1969 and in 1970 a retrospective exhibition of his work was held at Fourah Bay College.



Figure 5.47: The corner of Siaka Stevens Street & Gloucester Street, Paul Robinson, 2023



Today, there is no built evidence remaining of Lisk-Carew's studio (see Figure 5.47). A reflective blue glass office block now inhabits the prominent sloping site. Yet Lisk-Carew continues to have a strong legacy in the urban layout evolution of the city of Freetown through his many photographs of central Freetown streetscapes (see chapter one for examples of these) and significant buildings, frozen in time through his skilful photography.

H. Nelson Williams was a merchant and clockmaker who had a shop at 22 Westmoreland Street (see Figure 5.37) from 1890. Today, a solid and well maintained four storey office block resides on the site (see Figure 5.48). G.A. Bishop was born in Freetown in 1862 and trained as a cabinet maker. He became a master craftsman and opened his general hardware business at 7 Westmoreland Street (see Figure 5.37) in 1885. He travelled widely and became well known in Sheffield and Wolverhampton from where he imported his supplies. Today, SK Enterprises Ltd. runs its business on the same site (see Figure 5.49). They are specialists in building materials and Hardware and are probably an evolution/extension of the original business opened by G.A.Bishop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

W.B. Nicol was born in Freetown in 1883 and attended the CMS Grammar School and became an assistant to his father, a timber merchant, who opened the business in the 1880s. He ran a carpenter contracting business and operated his firm from 14 Little East Street (today known as Malama Thomas Street) (see Figure 5.37). Today, the signage above the building on this site suggests it is still the original Sawpit building that was in business over 100 years ago (see Figure 5.50).

E.H. Cummings was educated at Queen's College, Taunton, England and returned to Freetown in 1885. He opened his own Haberdasher business in 1889 on 18 East Street (today known as Ecowas Street) (see Figure 5.37). He was an eminent member of the Freetown community as



he was three times Mayor of Freetown; a Member of the Legislative Council, a Member of the Order of the British Empire, a Justice of the Peace, a Visiting Justice of the Gaol and local President of the Freetown branch of the Anti-Slavery Aborigines Protection Society. Today, the site of his business has become part of a larger unit that is involved in commercial activity in central Freetown (see Figure 5.51).



Figure 5.48: Site of H. Nelson Williams, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.49: Site of G.A. Bishop, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.50: Site of W.B. Nicol, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 5.51: Site of E.H.Cummings, Paul Robinson, 2023



## After Independence

In the 1960s during the early years of Sierra Leonean independence, McKay observed that the economic condition of the city of Freetown was far below that of neighbouring regional cities of Lagos (Nigeria) and Abidjan (Ivory Coast). He reflected that this may have been due to the dominant source of prosperity, iron ore and diamonds, being in the provinces of Sierra Leone and economically benefiting provincial centres such as Lunsar and Kenema rather than central Freetown, as buildings over three stories were rare. It was only municipal buildings such as the Prime Minister's Office, the Secretariat, the Law Courts (see Figures 4.32 & 4.33) and the new Bank of Sierra Leone (see Figure 4.17) that rose higher than three storeys. At the time DELCO house was the only commercial building (the administrative office of the Sierra Leone Development Company (SLDC)) that was in their company (see Figures 4.30 & 4.31). Three leading reasons for this low-rise urban layout were a lack of commercial capital; a low demand for office accommodation; and consumer retail practice. Only the government and a small number of mining firms (like the SLDC) had access to the funds necessary to build tall buildings. The low intensity of commercial activity in Freetown meant demand for office space was not high and to facilitate customer accessibility retail businesses tended to not extend to the second floor. Large scale department store retailers such as Kingsway stores, Paterson, Zochonis and Company and Freetown Cold Store favoured long low buildings with extensive ground floor areas. McKay concludes his research by suggesting that only if economic activity increased would the urban layout develop and expand in its infrastructure, built form, retail and commerce. The ensuing decades of political turbulence, power struggles, civil war and an Ebola epidemic failed to stimulate any sustained economic growth and only led to mercantile attrition.

*'The small manufacturing sector actually managed to shrink in the 1980s and no manufactured goods are reported as being exported after 1980. In a sign of the times, big*

*European companies such as Compagnie Francaise de L'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) and Paterson Zochonis (PZ), two of the most prominent colonial-era firms began to pull out.'*



## Conclusion

Today, the city of Freetown is recovering from these volatile years. The Ebola epidemic ended in 2016 and the nation is gradually recovering. The built environment and urban infrastructure of central Freetown is the main legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century merchants. None of the original traders or businesses remain and even the UAC ceased operations in 1987. Many of these places and spaces are now becoming palimpsests of Freetown's history which this text has started to highlight. New stories and legacies are being created on the central Freetown urban layout that was set out over two hundred years ago. Foreign money is still being invested into the built environment, most notably from Korea to construct the new Freetown City Council building (see Figure 2.12). Politics and power continue to impact the city, in 2023 contested democratic elections were held and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July the Sierra Leone People's Party won 60% of the seats in a parliamentary election. However, the All People's Congress Party still retained control of the mayorship of Freetown. What ramifications this has for the urban environment remains to be seen but one thing can be sure; this time, the people of the city will determine their own path into the future.

*'The Sierra Leonean state and nation was imposed from outside in a creation process utterly different from that experienced by the countries of the colonisers and with little consultation with those who became Sierra Leoneans... Sierra Leone has now created its own distinct national narrative and myths, of which the Krios, the chiefs, Bai Bureh, the Margais, Stevens and of course the war and Ebola are very much a part... There has long been a unifying Krio language and religious tolerance, but alongside the national story and more banal manifestations of nationhood – such as the anthem, the tricolour flag, the Cotton Tree, the fondness attached to the country's other name, Salone, popular musicians... and the football team – there is now a much stronger notion of Sierra Leone.'*



## Chapter 6

### Sherbro Island and the Town of Bonthe

Amongst the palms and mango trees is a K6 telephone box and the ruins of former trading stores and warehouses overlooking the quayside. This is Bonthe, a small town on the island of Sherbro located just off the West African Guinea coast. The remote tropical location is six hours drive from Sierra Leone's Freetown and 45 minutes speedboat through a maze of mangrove lined coastline.



Figure 6.01: Approaching Sherbro Island, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.02: Sherbro Wharf, 1912, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-29



Figure 6.03: Sherbro Wharf, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.04: Sherbro Wharf showing lifting gear from Figure 6.03, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-135



Whilst Freetown developed into the main trading hub (and for a time, capital of British West Africa) it was one of several stations located along the coast used by European merchants. In a similar fashion to the trading islands of Gorée, Fernando Po and Lagos, there was also a series of islands occupied by Europeans along the coast of Sierra Leone. Conveniently located at the mouth of the Sherbro River it was perfectly positioned for trade. Along with the many other islands in the estuary it was initially a slaving post, occupied by Portuguese, French, and British slavers. After emancipation in 1807, the island was used to suppress the now illicit trade, and also became a place for returning Krio – former slaves from the Caribbean, Canada and UK, as discussed earlier. When the American Colonization Society began its quest to occupy parts of Western Africa for repatriation of former slaves, their ship docked at Sherbro, and it was from here that the new settlers ventured to Providence Island in what was to become Liberia.

Sherbro continued to be a major trading post throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It was ideally placed to receive produce transported downstream to the sheltered delta, whilst imported goods could be easily transferred from the larger ships to the island's quayside.

The island stretches some 30 miles long with Bonthe its largest settlement. Set out on a grid plan like Freetown, but on a much smaller scale, the town rapidly became a place for trade, especially after a treaty was formed with the British in 1861, and the population grew rapidly to 4500 people by the 1890s. The linear harbour overlooking the river was once lined with trading houses, merchant stores, and warehouses, offering the latest goods and merchandise from Europe. Cast-iron standpipes imported from Liverpool tapped into the freshwater supply and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century street lighting and power were available.



Figure 6.05: Meddle Road, Bonthe, Sherbro, 1911, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-5, 1911





Figure 6.06: Dwelling, Bonthe, 1911, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-6



Figure 6.07: Dwelling, Bonthe, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-127



Figure 6.08: Sherbro street scene, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-129



Figure 6.09: Pickering and Berthoud (P+B) new store next to the old store, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-131



Figure 6.10: Sherbro trading buildings, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-136



Figure 6.11: Sherbro trading buildings looking down to the wharf, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-141



Figure 6.12: Sherbro building, 1915, Unilever Archive, UAC-1-11-9-12-143



Behind the trading stores grew a community of Krio houses – many adopting features from the Americas blended with European style bungalows. The active missionary population competed for converts and a vast array of churches catered for nearly every flavour of Christian denomination.



Figure 6.13: Krio housing, timber and corrugated metal cladding, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.14: Typical merchant bungalow, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.15: Trading compound, dwelling, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023





Whilst the tropical island and profitable trading created something of a paradisaical, if remote setting, it was not always a utopian settlement. In 1895 five African agents of Paterson Zochonis were killed in a period of unrest that started as protest to a poll tax known as the 'hut tax'. The violence quickly spread exposing the lack of security on the island and the difficulty in defending the tributaries and mangrove lined swamps. 13 people were hanged there in 1898 after the murder of several American missionaries following ongoing conflict.

Conditions were eventually restored to calm and the bustling trade of exporting raw materials from the interior mainland and the import of manufactured goods from Britain continued. The old premises of Paterson Zochonis still survives, with the company name proudly stated above the store's portico. Patterson Zochonis set up shop here in 1884, and their trading empire spread across West Africa.



Figure 6.16: Paterson Zochonis, Bonthe, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023

The origin of the firm dates to the 1870s when George Henry Paterson (from Scotland) worked with George Basil Zochonis (from Greece) at Fisher and Randall in Freetown. There's still a Fisher Street in Freetown, just around the corner PZ roundabout – named after the firm. They initially traded calico and wax cotton prints from Manchester before moving into soap after the Second World War. A soap factory was acquired by the firm in Nigeria and by 1975 they had bought out Cussons (and their famous Imperial Leather soap brand).

Other rival trading firms such as the United Africa Company and CFAO also set up businesses at Bonthe, building large stores along the waterfront and housing behind. There's also the ubiquitous colonial clocktower and unearthed canons littered about the place, although most of the trading stores are now dilapidated shells being reclaimed by the tropical flora and humid climate.



Figure 6.17: Recently restored clocktower, Bonthe, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.18: Heritage colonial period structures, Bonthe, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.19: Heritage colonial period structures, Bonthe, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.20: Heritage colonial period structures, Bonthe, Sherbro, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.21: "Pia Bulls White House", colonial period dwelling, Bonthe, Sherbo, Iain Jackson, 2023



A landing strip was built here by the Allies during Second World War – complete with its own miniature terminal building – but the silting up of the river and the construction of new harbour facilities at the Queen Elizabeth II Dock in Freetown had a severe impact on the future prospects at Sherbro Island. There was a period of high-end holiday resorts catering for international visitors with a focus on nature lovers, birdwatchers, and fishing fanatics. A helicopter service even conveyed tourists to the Island from Freetown until about 2008.

Figure 6.22: Typical street scene in Bonthe, Iain Jackson, 2023



Figure 6.23: Bonthe landing strip and terminal building shelter, Iain Jackson, 2023



Now it is very much an overlooked backwater, but there are attempts to reverse its fortunes.

A new power plant is being built to restore mains power to the island and a few guest houses continue to give a warm welcome to all visitors. It is a fascinating and beautiful place with such a rich history.

We've photographed most of the major structures that survive in Bonthe and will continue to investigate the archival material to uncover more of its past.

Figure 6.24: "K6" Telephone Box, Bonthe, Iain Jackson, 2023



## Chapter 7

### The New Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone

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#### Introduction

In 1946, Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, planned a new campus on the summit of Mount Aureole, in the hills of Freetown. Successively commissioning two British-led architectural practices to masterplan this new campus – Norman & Dawbarn (appointed 1952) and Frank E. Rutter & Associates (appointed c1958/9, who remained the College architect until c1966) the college sought to expand on its missionary training in the old district of Cline Town, and become a university ready to satisfy the demands of the newly emerging nation.

#### Fourah Bay's Historical Mission

Fourah Bay College's foundational aim was to train clergy and to aid the proselytising of the Christian faith in West Africa. Founded by an Anglican missionary organisation – the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the college initially offered degrees in Theology. The CMS was a significant entity in the governance of the Sierra Leone colony, being responsible for the running of many of its prestigious schools – as one commentator noted, 'it was not always easy to know when the CMS ended and government began [in 19<sup>th</sup> century Freetown]<sup>1</sup>. But the college became an instrumental component in the wider imperial enterprise as its graduates established CMS schools (including the first secondary school in Nigeria) and 'the bulk of the educated African personnel in the relatively high positions in the colonial service at the time.'<sup>2</sup> It became a particular focus of the Sierra Leone Creole (or Krio) community.

One of the most intensively analysed and historicised African populations, the Creole were an affluent, Christian community descended from freed enslaved Africans settled by the British in Freetown during successive waves of migration from 1787 to 1864.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the Creole culture was syncretic – drawing much from Yoruba traditions and practices – the Creole adoption of British mores, manners and institutions – including Anglicanism – were widely commented on by British writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> The scale and presence of the original buildings of Fourah Bay College reflect the importance that the college had to the Creole community.

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Figure 7.01: Derelict Old Fourah Bay Collage, Cline Town, Freetown, Iain Jackson, 2023.



The college was built at Cline Town Wharf from local laterite stone with a delicate front veranda formed by steel members bolted together. The now ruinous state of the building has further exposed the steel structure inside. The beams were made by the Glengarnock Iron and Steel Co in Ayrshire, Scotland, and shipped to Sierra Leone during the construction of the college building. The foundation stone was laid by the Governor, William Fergusson in 1848. Fergusson was of Scottish-Jamaican parentage and the first student of African descent to study at Edinburgh University.

The old college building became something of a symbolic beacon to ships arriving in the nearby harbour, and as a colonial government chaplain noted,

'The white walls of a large and noble building, rising in aristocratic loftiness, three good stories high, as if by enchantment, from the palm trees which embosom it, and displaying its parapets in the quiet moonlight, like a structure of fancy, which Spenser's pen might not have despised.'<sup>5</sup>

Despite the immense prestige of the college, and the international reach of its recruitment – many of its students coming from the Nigeria and Gold Coast Colonies - the college was not immune to administrative problems, temporary closures, and other such challenges. These continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the UK government reviews of education in the Colonies generally and West Africa specifically during the 1940s published as the Asquith and Elliot reports.



## Fourah Bay in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In both the London and Sierra Leone colonial administration, there was a tension in the management of Fourah Bay. On the one hand colonial administrators professed great admiration for the college, with its 'proud historical tradition [and] hold on Creole sentiment,' on the other they were loath to invest funds in tertiary education given the 'relatively small population, secondary school output and graduate manpower requirements of Sierra Leone.'<sup>6</sup> This reflects the relatively low priority Sierra Leone had for colonial planners, who instead sought to channel developmental resources into the larger, more populous Gold Coast and Nigeria colonies.<sup>7</sup>

Paradoxically, a blow against the college was the foundation of new tertiary institutions in the 1940s, this 'new tide of colonial education,' which saw the foundation of University Colleges at Legon, Ibadan and Makerere, left Fourah Bay 'high and dry,' as it deprived the college of its traditional student base, for many of its distinguished alumni were from the Gold Coast and Nigeria colonies.<sup>8</sup>

By 1944, the college had 'dwindled to a remnant' of its former glory, with only 17 students and six staff.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, its venerable home at Cline Town Wharf was commandeered by the government to provide accommodation for a proposed expansion to Freetown's deep-water harbour, and although the CMS lobbied for the site's return to the college, they were unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> By 1946, the old college building was serving as the headquarters of the Railway Company, and the College was homeless. Accordingly, on June 7<sup>th</sup> 1946, the Senate of the College passed a motion to investigate: *'the provision of a suitable permanent site for the College, the constitution of a new College Council fully representative of the Sierra Leone community and having administrative powers, the steps which ought to be taken to obtain the fullest measure of cooperation and support from the Sierra Leone Government in the maintenance and development of Fourah Bay College.'*<sup>11</sup>

This move was likely advanced to combat *The British Colonial Secretary's Dispatch on Modern Education in West Africa* (July

1946) which had advocated for the scaling back of the Fourah Bay curriculum, in favour of a single university for all 'British West Africa' based in Nigeria, and a concomitant downgrading of Fourah Bay's status to that of a preparatory school.<sup>12</sup>

The college was granted a new site up in the hills surrounding Freetown, on the summit of Mount Aureole. Whilst only a short distance from the city, it feels remote with views overlooking vast forests and yet urban in its compact density. The isolated campus, with residences for the students, certainly invokes the vision pursued at the Ghanaian secondary schools ran by Christian mission organisations (for example at Akropong, Aburi, St Mary's, Amedfoze, and Ho) being remote from the temptations and distractions of the town. In Freetown, the Sierra Leone Grammar School adopted the same idea and moved from the city to a much more salubrious 50-acre site at Murray Town.<sup>13</sup>

The College was also, perhaps, eager to keep up appearances with the latest developments in neighbouring Ghana and Nigeria. The remote and carefully curated campuses with bespoke architecture in the latest fashion must have caused the Fourah Bay senate to pay careful attention. A geographically proximate predecessor was also found in Freetown's Hill Station, built by the Colonial Government from 1902 for European residence this mountain top drive for racial segregation, cooler air, and mosquito-free dwelling was seen as the idealised mode of living. The comparison was not lost on contemporaries, with one British writer noting in the mid-1950s that, *'for fifty years the officials have been looking down on Freetown and planning its future good from the quiet of Hill Station. It will do no harm, and probably much good, for trained minds of another kind to look down from Mount Aureole...'*<sup>14</sup>

The proposed site had been in use as an army hospital since the First World War, no doubt selected, as Hill Station had been, for its cool breezes and 'healthy' climate. Despite the incredible challenge of the topography, and

the poor state of the roads, it was hoped that the cost of constructing the new campus would be minimised by converting the existing hospital buildings on the site.<sup>15</sup> By 1954, day-to-day college activities were well established in the former wards, mess-halls and operating theatres of the hospital. A lyrical description of the college at this time noted it was, *'scrappy and untidy [...] but it is alive, it is growing, and tin roofs do not prevent high thinking, even in the West African rains.'*<sup>16</sup>

More succinctly, an editorial in *The Manchester Guardian* bemoaned Fourah Bay's 'fine site but makeshift buildings' in 1954.<sup>17</sup> The same writer noted that the staff look forward to building an impressive campus at an 'early date'.



### The Selection of Norman and Dawbarn

The first campus masterplan (or schematic envisioning at least) was completed in 1952. The timing is significant. In 1951, legislative changes in Sierra Leone saw the inclusion of African politicians in national decision making for the first time, as part of a power sharing government with the colonial civil service.<sup>18</sup> These partnership governments were pursued across late colonial West Africa and were, in tandem with the colonial development policies that saw the funding of Fourah Bay's new campus, intended to prolong colonial rule by making 'the exercise of power...legitimate, efficient and progressive.'<sup>19</sup> In the specific case of Sierra Leone, the new African cabinet, led by Sir Milton Margai, a doctor from the rural interior and leader of the newly formed Sierra Leone People's Party, charted a cautiously developmentalist approach, in close rapprochement with the British.<sup>20</sup>

This partnership government commissioned the British practice, Norman and Dawbarn, to masterplan the new campus. Established in London by Graham Dawbarn and Nigel Norman in 1934, it grew into a large practice with a growing reputation for education and airport projects, and was most famous for designing the BBC Television Centre, London.

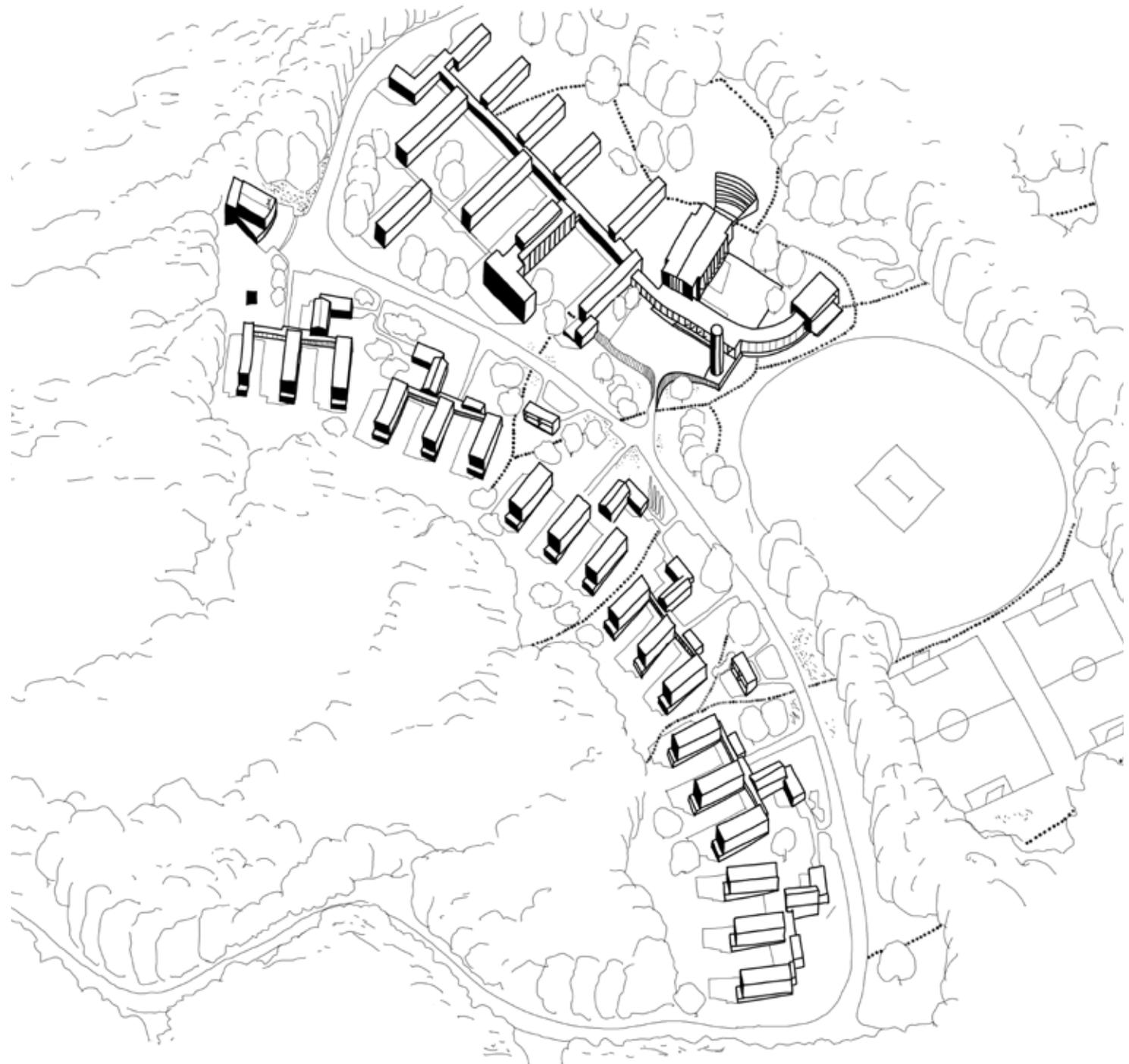


Figure 7.02: Norman and Dawbarn Schematic Plan for Fourah Bay College, 1952, National Archives, UK, redrawn by Iain Jackson



Figure 7.03: Norman and Dawbawn, University College of the West Indies, Private Collection



The plans that survive of Fourah Bay reveal a schematic proposal of interconnected blocks arranged in a triplet formation.<sup>21</sup> Norman and Dawbarn had already designed the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in Jamaica, which was instrumental in influencing Ibadan, designed by Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew.<sup>22</sup> Norman and Dawbarn were also active in Eastern Africa designing various accommodation blocks and faculty at Makerere in Uganda with its distinct brickwork, and parts of the University of Dar es Salam in Tanzania in a much more rugged concrete finish.<sup>23</sup>

Norman and Dawbarn's appointment reveals much about the circulation of knowledge, expertise and crucially, the recognition of expertise, in imperial frames. In February 1951, when Fourah Bay College indicated their intention to engage an architect to 'examine the site [and] to advise on the type of buildings to be erected,' the Governor of the Sierra Leone colony wrote to the Colonial Office to ask for a 'list of suitable architects [...] from which the college council could make its selection.'<sup>24</sup> The resulting process would, however, reveal how little agency the College Council had in the selection of their architect.

The college's request was passed to the Crown Agents for Overseas Development and it was this agency who drew up the list of architects judged suitable for the task. This process resulted in four practices being shortlisted:

- Norman & Dawnbarn, 'the architects for the University College of the West Indies'
- Adam, Holden & Pearson, best known for Holden's work for the University of London but which had also recently been contracted to design a hospital in the Tanganika Protectorate.
- Robert Atkinson, who had undertaken government commissions in Gibraltar and were in talks to undertake 'the possible rebuilding of Government Offices' of the Gold Coast Government, and
- Nicholas & Dixon Spain, 'a sound firm of good

reputation,' who had also undertaken hospital work in Singapore.<sup>25</sup>

In each case, the Crown Agents emphasised the practice's ability to work in colonial contexts – even if these were in wildly different locations from the summit of Mount Aureole. A meeting of the Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology resulted in the addition of another name to the list: Seeley & Paget.<sup>26</sup> Based in a rambling Tudor mansion on London's Cloth Fair, Seeley & Paget were an eccentric choice for such a commission, as the practice was a small one best known for its historicist church and country houses work, and the design of neo-Georgian follies for establishment clients.<sup>27</sup> The practice was nonetheless praised for its 'good achievements' in the field of educational buildings in England, for their 'economical' design of a training college at Norwich, and the file also noted approvingly that the practice acted as in-house architects to Eton, the Charterhouse School and Bede College, a constituent college of Durham University.<sup>28</sup> It may have been the historical links between Durham and Fourah Bay that led to the Seeley & Paget's inclusion, although the Council of the Church Training Colleges – an Anglican body, and the client for the partnership's college building at Norwich – also wrote in favour of the practice's inclusion.<sup>29</sup>

We can only speculate on what kind of neo-Georgian vision Seely & Paget held for the summit of Mount Aureole. For, whilst it was noted that Seely & Paget were 'keen to enter the colonial field and confident in its ability to do so effectively,' the favoured practice from the outset was clearly Norman and Dawbarn.<sup>30</sup>

Both the Crown Agents and members of the Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges looked favourably on Norman & Dawbarn's successful completion of the University College of the West Indies. This was a substantial job - the brief for which had included seven science

departments, an arts lecture hall, library, hospital, an institute for social research, three halls of residence for students and one for nurses and 50 staff bungalows on a 700-acre hill-top site near Kingston, Jamaica.<sup>31</sup>

These buildings were arranged in a dispersed layout across the site, allowing for 'the free circulation of air to all buildings and the avoidance of reflected heat and glare,' although a degree of formality was included by the grouping of library, registry, senate house and a proposed great hall in a tighter formation at the centre of the site, encircled by a circular road and approached by a long straight avenue.<sup>32</sup> Beyond this, the student housing, sciences and arts blocks were separately planned across the site. The eight departments of the science school, for example, were planned in individual blocks arranged in parallel formation following the contours of the site connected by covered walkways, creating one unified structure. Tectonically, the buildings were unpretentiously modernist – although variety in texture was injected through the judicious use of local rubble stone. This is shown with brio in Gordon Cullen's rendering of the Great Hall Complex.

The site of the University College of the West Indies bore some similarities to that of Fourah Bay, both were mountainous and partially in use as army facilities, and the University College design produced by Norman and Dawbarn had obvious formal qualities to recommend it: not least the contrast between formality and openness in its site planning, and the elegant juxtaposition of rubble work and smoothly rendered and cast concrete throughout.

But what really recommended Norman and Dawbarn's work at the University College of the West Indies, was the partnership's facility for budgetary control: several times Norman and Dawbarn were commended by Colonial Office and Crown Agent officials for their 'brilliant job in keeping within the estimates,' something also singled out for praise by no less august an authority as *The Architectural Review*.<sup>33</sup>



The College Senate of Fourah Bay favoured the appointment of an architect with West African experience – namely Richard Nickson who had, by the early 1950s, a clutch of religious and educational commissions in the Gold Coast and Nigeria colonies to his credit.<sup>34</sup> But it was the quantifiable experience of Norman and Dawbarn that mattered to the Colonial Office – despite the fact that the firm had *no* experience of working in West Africa.

For colonial officials, the ability to keep to budget on a university commission in the West Indies was enough to ensure that the practice was the first choice to design a university several thousand miles away on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. As the cost of the architect was being met by Colonial Development and Welfare funds, it was the Colonial Office view that prevailed over the opinions of Fourah Bay College itself, and in the summer of 1951 Norman and Dawbarn were appointed to produce a sketch-scheme for the site.<sup>35</sup>

Although the bulk of the funding was to come from CDW funds, there are suggestions that private finance was also sought. The United Africa Company's Frederick Pedler considered the company acting as guarantor for a loan to Fourah Bay College.<sup>36</sup> Further funding also provided by the *Sierra Leone Development Company* (also partially owned by UAC) which gifted £25,000 for the construction of an engineering laboratory known as "Delco Laboratory"<sup>37</sup>, and the Diamond Corporation, an international diamond exchange controlled by De Beers, donated funds to build the school of Geography and Geology.<sup>38</sup> These large corporations were eager to be associated with the new facility, attempting to demonstrate their ongoing financial commitment to the region, and to display a benevolence that would enhance public relations. This was not an uncommon practice for private businesses in the region, who often sought to align themselves with the developmentalist agendas of both late colonial and post-independence nationalist regimes.<sup>39</sup>



## Norman & Dawbarn Fourah Bay Masterplan

If a full brief to Norman and Dawbarn was issued, it has not survived in either the British or Sierra Leonean National Archives. However, a schedule of accommodation circulated to the practice before its appointment noted the need for:

an administrative and general purposes block to include a library, great hall and museum, sciences block, arts lecture theatres, a teacher training school, accommodation to teach engineering and technology, a student social and recreational block, staff housing, and *'residential accommodation for students ... this should be arranged on a part of the site some distance from the college buildings and might be separated from them conveniently by playing fields...'* an assertion which suggests little understanding of the steeply sloped topography of the site.<sup>40</sup>

A further amendment to this list included requirements for a college chapel, although curiously no mention was made of the need for a mosque, which might lend credence to the long-running assertion that Fourah Bay was an institution dominated by the city's Christian Creole elite. The inclusion of space for the teaching of engineering, technology and the sciences, reflects the expansion of Fourah Bay's curriculum, away from the arts and theology programme that had defined its teaching programme in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the technical subjects required for an independent state. This reflects the importance that nationalist politicians placed on the university as part of the necessary infrastructure of independence, and might suggest that African ministers in the partnership government were thinking of how Fourah Bay could support a post-independent Sierra Leone by training technical staff to work in its administration.<sup>41</sup> As the historian of Fourah Bay's educational programme, Daniel Paracka, has noted *'Ownership, self-reliance, and relevance thus emerged, at least for Leoneans, as important curricular themes'* in the period of decolonisation.<sup>42</sup>

The first sketch plans produced by Norman and Dawbarn provided for teaching departments to the north of the site accommodated in parallel blocks of two and three storeys in height, connected by a long spine of covered walkway, a beefed-up version of the sciences school provided at Kingston. At the southern end of this arrangement a three-storey great hall with an external amphitheatre and a water tower provided a focal point. Student residences were provided in a curved line running from the northwest to the southwest of the site on a lower contour line than the teaching accommodation. These were provided in eighteen three-storey blocks arranged in groups of three parallel blocks again connected by covered walkways.

The student residences and the teaching accommodation were further separated by a curved road leading to the college chapel. In plan, this arrangement resembles two large megastructures arranged around central spines, but the low height of the buildings and the open space between them would have had quite a different and much more gentle effect had it been constructed in this manner.

Although the detailing is schematic it seems likely that plainness was the order of the day, for the architects appear to have been counselled against the provision of 'monumental buildings and the use of stylistic architectural detail' on which, a colonial civil servant noted, (perhaps in reference to Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew) 'there has sometimes been undue extravagance in the past.'<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the plan was welcomed in Freetown. A columnist in the *West Africa* newspaper noted that, *'these are excellent plans in a style between the too solid respectability of the University of the Gold Coast and the South Bank Fantasy and impermanence of the University College, Ibadan.'*<sup>44</sup>

A reduced version of this plan was prepared in the middle 1950s, and illustrated in the government's official statistical guide to Sierra Leone of 1958.<sup>45</sup> This retained a similar

arrangement of teaching blocks to the first plan but placed this in a denser relationship with a large block hosting the administrative functions, library, extra-mural department and chapel. Much less provision for student housing was included, and the random placement of the Geography Department and Students Union off the main axis of the teaching spaces, suggests the permanent retention of pre-existing buildings, something not provided for in the first masterplan, suggesting that Norman and Dawbarn's vision for the site had proved too expensive.



## Frank Rutter and Associates

From within the large international business of Norman and Dawbarn a small faction were ready to establish their own practice. Whether this was a 'break-away' client snatch, or received the blessings of Norman and Dawbarn we do not know, but Frank Mowbray Rutter (1911-1989) was well positioned with the international connections and previous 'tropical' and education-design experience. He established his practice having also worked for Maxwell Fry at Impington Village College, and Fry and Drew at Ibadan University. In addition to working on Fourah Bay Rutter had also secured commissions in Guyana at this time.

Rutter joined Norman and Dawbarn in c1950/1951, for his name was included in the original contract Norman and Dawbarn signed in 1952,<sup>46</sup> but when he broke away is unclear. It seems extraordinary that the conservative and cost-conscious clients should take a chance on a new practice, especially in light of the careful deliberations that took place. Perhaps it was Rutter's experience with Fry and then Norman and Dawbarn that convinced the client body and as a new practice he may have been able to offer savings on the professional fees. Joining Rutter were two associates, Boris Fijalkowski (1924-2015) and Ken Draper (1932-2017) - both of whom had also worked for Norman and Dawbarn. Fijalkowski completed his architectural studies at Kensington, West London. He graduated around 1951.<sup>47</sup> Ken Draper studied at Regent Street Polytechnic and eventually went on to become head of BDP.<sup>48</sup>



### Frank Rutter's Development Plan 1958

Rutter's development plan set out his vision for the flat summit of Mount Aureol as the principal focus of the college. The site was about 260m above sea level, with subsidiary development of student and staff housing on two slightly higher plateaus and lining the main road up the mountain from Freetown.



Figure 7.04: Redrawn Rutter's Development Plan, National Archives, UK

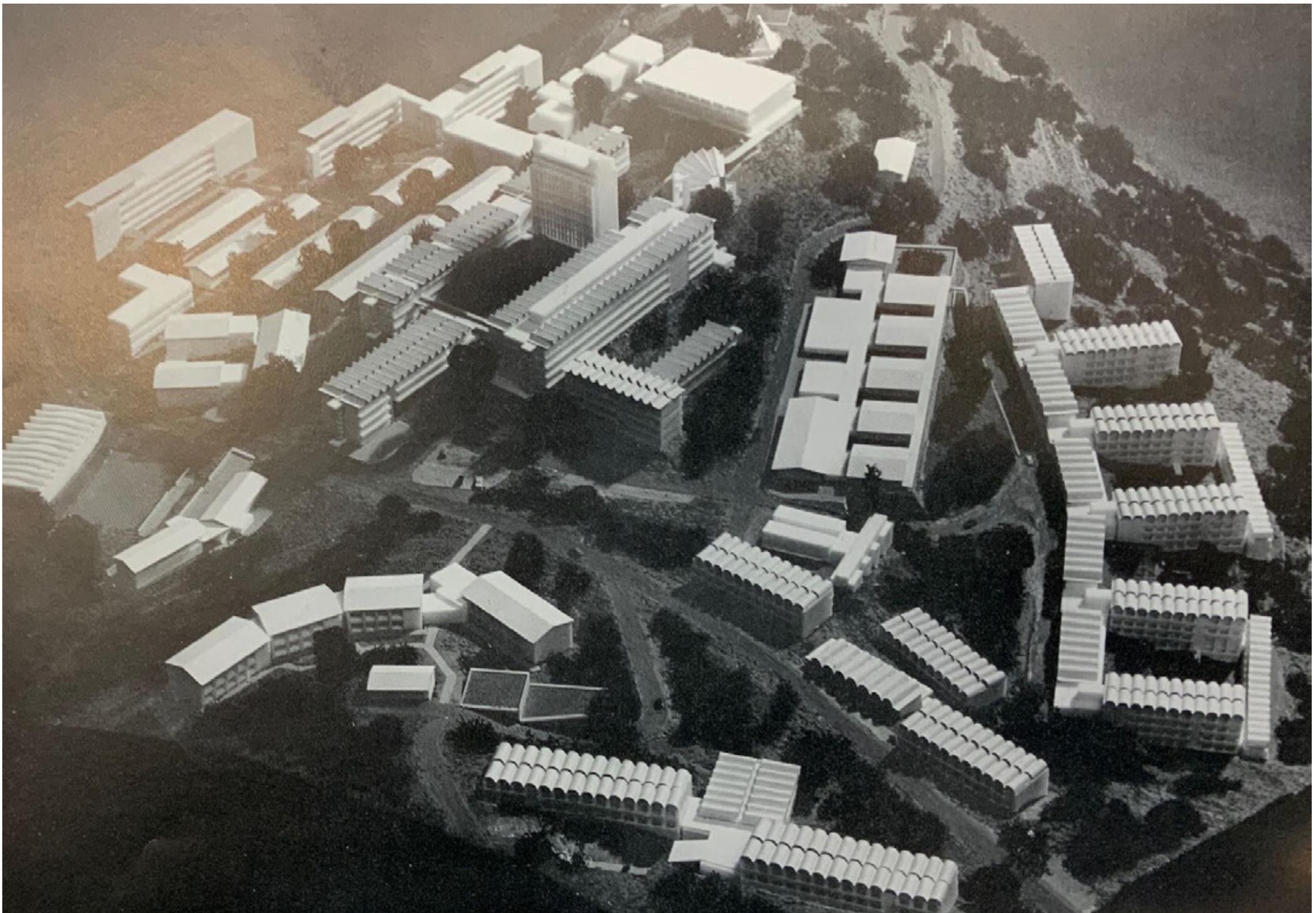


Figure 7.05: Rutter's Development Plan model, National Archives, UK



Figure 7.06: J K Kennedy Building Model, National Archives, UK



At the centre of the campus summit, Rutter proposed a 'crown' of buildings arranged around two courtyards, 'the College Centre.' The first of these, Library Court, was to be enclosed by the four-storey library to the west, administration buildings to the south, a long three storey block to the west and the John F Kennedy Tower, an eight-storey slab block to the north. These last two buildings jointly housed the Department of Economic Studies, which included the Faculties of Law and Public Administration, and which accounted for over a third of the College's student body, something that perhaps justified its prominence in the composition, for the John F Kennedy Building was the tallest building designed for the campus, as well as being located at its very centre, its name reveals the source of its funds, the United States Agency for International Development, which had donated \$250,000 for the construction of facilities to teach economics, education and science in 1962.<sup>49</sup> This can be read as an attempt by the United States to ensure that decolonising Sierra Leone was aligned with American ideology, as Edward Berman has suggested.<sup>50</sup> However, this also suggests much about the ideological position prevailing in Sierra Leone at the time. Whilst its close neighbours, Ghana and Guinea, sought to break ties with their former colonial master through expanded diplomacy with the socialist world, Sir Milton Margai and his Sierra Leone People's Party instead sought to retain rapprochement with Britain and the United States through an 'open door policy' of investment from the capitalist west.<sup>51</sup> The gift of an economics department by the United States therefore aligns as much with political and economic ideological currents in Sierra Leone as it does with any attempt at global hegemony by the United States.

Beyond the Kennedy tower, a 'larger and less formal' College Court was proposed. This was to be closed by a Great Hall – a multipurpose space designed for degree ceremonies, graduation balls, and theatrical productions,

*'a building of special importance [it] should possess an intrinsic dignity in keeping with the scale of the functions that will centre around it.'*

Accordingly, the Great Hall was to be located at the highest point of the site (perhaps in emulation of that at the University of Ghana, where the axial arrangement terminates at the Great Hall atop a high hill). To the north of the Great Hall, and connected to it by cloisters, a

hexagonal mosque with a pyramidal roof was planned – in reference to the adobe pyramidal minaret of the Larabanga Mosque in Ghana, one of the oldest in West Africa.

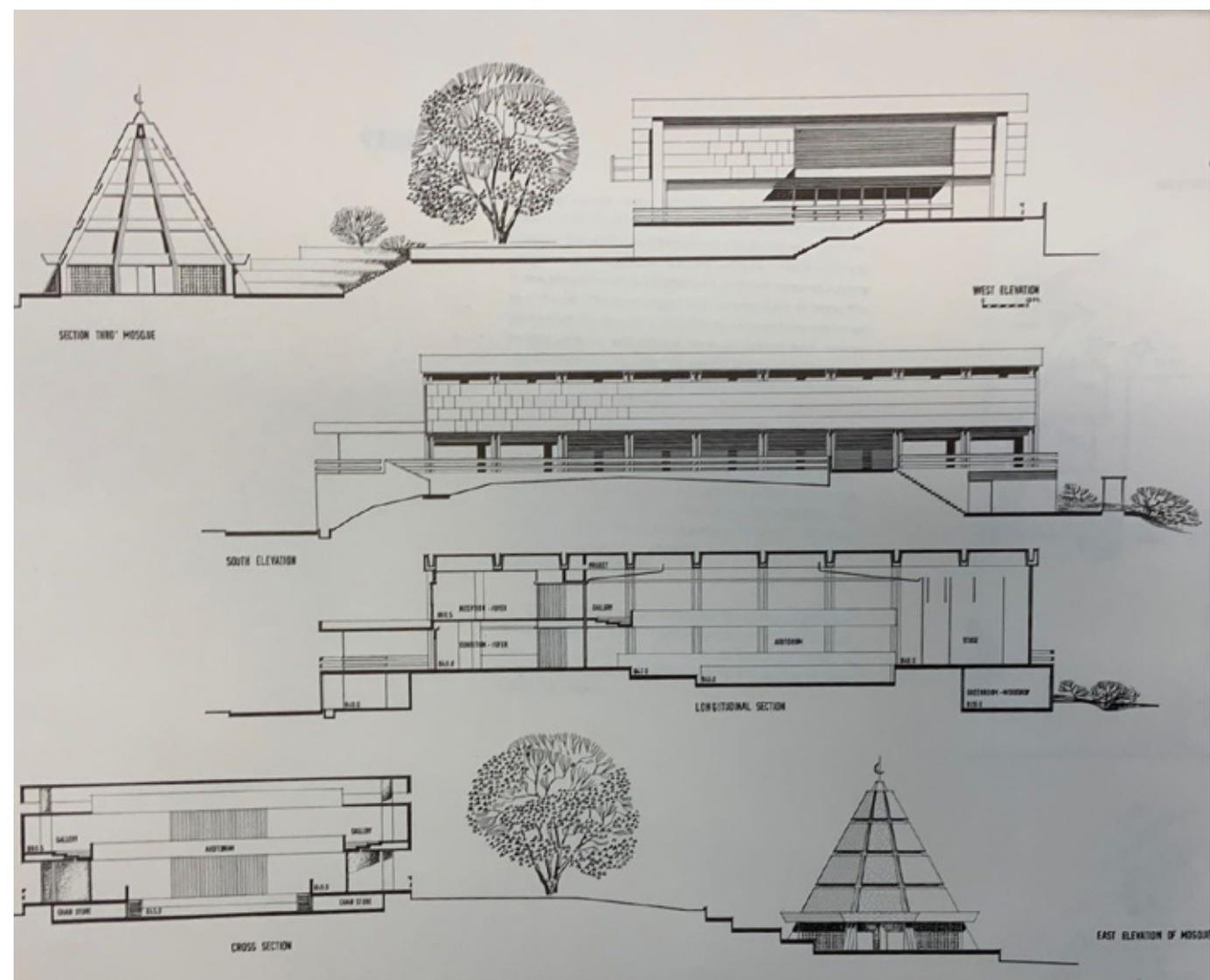


Figure 7.07: Proposed Mosque, Rutter, National Archives, UK



Rutter carefully included a mihrab and space for ablutions in the buildings plans, yet curiously a minaret is shown on plan but not in sectional views of the complex. A multi-denominational Christian chapel was planned to the East of the Great Hall, like the mosque this was to be connected to it by cloisters. The site of the chapel was steeply sloped, and Rutter made the most of this through the creation of a fan-shaped arrangement of pews flowing down the hillside from the cloister to an altar below. The arrangement of chapel, mosque and Great Hall was a sophisticated one, with the chapel and the mosque balancing each other in the composition, thereby symbolising ‘the impact made upon Africa by these two great religions.’ This also reflects changing political realities in Sierra Leone at this date, for the Sierra Leone People’s Party leading the country in partnership with the colonial regime drew its support from the Islamic rural interior rather than Creole dominated Freetown. Indeed, the party positioned itself in opposition to [CAPITAL C?] creole domination rather than colonial domination, as John Hatch, a British academic and Fourah Bay administrator noted, *‘it was to combat [CAPITAL C?] creole political supremacy rather than to abolish British political rule, that the SLPP was formed.’*<sup>52</sup> The inclusion of such a sophisticated mosque design, with its clear references to Larabanga and the Islamic vernacular architecture of the region, illustrates the political desire to introduce a greater population of students from the Islamic rural provinces into the Fourah Bay student body, and thence into positions in future administrative positions, displacing the dominance of the Creole population amongst both the Fourah Bay student body, and the administration of Sierra Leone as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

The first of these Courts was largely built as planned - albeit with smaller buildings to the east, west and south. But the ambitious arrangement of chapel, mosque, great hall and cloister was not enacted, although a remnant of the cloister can be seen in the vaulted undercroft of the John F Kennedy building. Despite only partially being built,

the college centre does successfully fulfil its function as a *stadtkrone* for the campus: Rutter outlined his ambition that the centre would provide, *‘a clearly defined group of buildings giving a feeling of enclosure and producing a stimulating atmosphere [...] at the same time, the buildings are designed to form a crown to Mount Aureol and to dominate the many other separate blocks clustered around the upper slopes of the hill [and be] silhouetted against the sky from below in Freetown.’*

Whilst the dense tree growth of the site renders the last ambition moot, the composition of buildings at the summit of the site – clustered around the John F Kennedy Building – does form a successful foci for the campus as a whole.



To the immediate west of the college centre, the pure and applied sciences were housed in a series of parallel blocks stepping down the contours of the hill side – an arrangement carried over from Norman and Dawbarn's masterplan for the site, perhaps as it made use of the foundations and concrete bases of pre-existing buildings on the site. Arts departments were provided in smaller, generally free-standing buildings arranged to the north of the site, away from the central area, each containing staff offices and seminar rooms.



Figure 7.08: Halls of Residence, 1966, National Archives, UK



Figure 7.09: Halls of Residence, Paul Robinson, 2023



The men's student halls are located to the east of the college centre, on the precipitous edge of the site. They are symbolically orientated towards the old site of Fourah Bay College at Cline Town. These residences are some of the College's boldest architectural statements. Carefully planned to provide an individual study bedroom and balcony to each student, with laundry and bathroom facilities per 20 students. They were also furnished with a common room, senior common room and reading room to each hall of 150 students.

On the Oxford model, tutors' flats were also provided on site – with bedrooms for two or three tutors accessible from shared living rooms. The blocks of residences varied in height from two to six stories, providing variety and rhythm. Their material and form were the most brutalist on the campus, with the walls and balconies in crisply cast concrete, rising to thin shell-vaulted rooflines – perhaps in emulation of London's Barbican, or a heavier version of Basil Spence's Sussex University?



Figure 7.10: Fourah Bay Library, National Archives, UK



Figure 7.11: Fourah Bay Library, National Archives, UK



A separate set of women's residences were located to the south of the site. Like the Male residences, these provided for individual study bedrooms with balconies. However, the overall architectural expression was simpler – the blocks were three-storey cubic compositions, without the cast-concrete shell roofs of the men's residences, although the elaborately patterned cast concrete balcony rails and use of local rubble stone illustrated in the development plan show a debt to Fry and Drew, an influence not otherwise widely evident in the campus. Staff housing was also provided, in small blocks of flat for junior staff, and larger free-standing villas for senior staff – the elegant renderings of which, featuring modernist furniture and deck chairs, suggest a continuity of colonial luxury living for the senior staff. The principal of Fourah Bay College, Davidson Nichol, publically fulminated against such excesses in 1960, when he noted that *'University educated Africans like ourselves should cease to regard themselves as a privileged class entitled to a car, furnished quarters, refrigerators and servants as soon as they graduate'*<sup>54</sup> But the need to secure appointments of expatriate staff to fill Fourah Bay's teaching needs ensured that such provisions were perceived as a necessity by the University's planners.<sup>55</sup>

The proposal was both a bold and pragmatic response to the site, making use of existing rocky outcrops and tree cover to add variety and texture, utilising the topography, rejecting overly formal or axial arrangements, even converting and retaining existing buildings in order to keep costs low, and existing tree coverage and planting to provide shade.

In the end, nothing like the whole of this masterplan was constructed. The demography of Sierra Leone could not support a college of the scale envisioned: *'there are not enough children school, not enough sixth forms, and consequently not a sufficient flow of students for Fourah Bay College.'*<sup>56</sup> Whilst the foundation of new higher education institutions in Sierra Leone (such as a teacher

training college and an agricultural institute at Njala) and across post-colonial Nigeria and Ghana also deprived FBC of some of its original intake. Indeed, there is a slight pathos to the 1963 masterplan - which illustrated both the progress on the site to that date and the projections for the campus to 1969 - although much of the projected development would not come to pass.

Yet, the campus does have a unified architectural language. The buildings unite similar scales, materials and forms – a lively approach to roof detailing (a practical response to the heavy rainwater during the rainy season) is a particularly unique feature. Whilst the limited use of rubble work and precast concrete hints at the influence of Fry and Drew, generally throughout the massing is heavier and the detailing tougher than much of the duo's work. Even the John F Kennedy Building, the most characteristically tropical modernist building on the site, has an austerity and rectilinearity to it that is quite unlike Fry and Drew's tendency to 'too much lace.'



Figure 7.12: J K Kennedy Building, Piloti detail, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 7.13: J K Kennedy Building General View, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 7.14: Fourah Bay Campus Topography, Paul Robinson, 2023



Figure 7.15: Fourah Bay Faculty, Paul Robinson, 2023



### **The Building Advisory Committee 1965**

Whilst the Rutter plan was executed with some pace initially, progress suffered due to a lack of supervision on site and problems appointing a site architect. A large campus project required rapid and informed decision making from the client body Council too. The College Council established a Building Advisory Committee in June 1965, made up of college staff as well as professionals from the Ministry of Works, and the Ministry of Housing and Country Planning.



Figure 7.16: Reuben Johnson Oluwole Wright, Private Collection



The Ministry of Works was represented by Joseph Ransford Jarrett-Yaskey (1924-?), whilst Housing and Country Planning was represented by Reuben Johnson Oluwole Wright (1914-1990) - both Sierra Leonean architects.<sup>57</sup> The Advisory Committee developed into a powerful group capable of not only monitoring process and decision-making, but also holding Rutter to account. The minutes from the Committee are characteristically sparse but also to the point. In the first meeting attended by the Ministry personnel the committee resolved that, *'The monopoly of one Architect exercising absolute rights over the physical development of the College for an inspecified [sic] period, does not allow room for competition. And there is no justifiable reason why this monopoly should be continued. Consideration should be given to Architects prepared to establish a local office, employ local people, and contribute to local taxes from fees earned. Experience of existing arrangements prove that work suffers from protracted correspondence and lack of direct supervision'*<sup>58</sup>

They recommended that the college establish a building department to undertake design and supervision, and/or designs are tendered on a competitive basis. They recognised that in the early period when a development plan was required that retaining an architect 'at a distance' was a sensible approach, but the current arrangement was no longer serving the college (or the wider development of architecture in the city).

It is an interesting scenario, as a single practice could deliver a unified vision and benefit from certain economies of scale, contractual agreements, and increasing efficiency – but at the same time the college was beholden to a particular approach and communication problems were compounded. There was also clearly ideological reasons and a desire for local practices to be given the opportunity.

The two representatives from the Ministries were experienced architectural practitioners as well as civil

servants. They both received civic awards in recognition of their work.

Reuben Johnson Oluwole Wright was the first Sierra Leonean to be RIBA and qualified architect – possibly the first Black member of the RIBA. He studied at Edinburgh College of Art from 1943 and worked in Scotland whilst undertaking a Town and Country Planning Diploma. He returned to Freetown in 1951 to a position in the Civil Service, and was President of the Institute of Sierra Leonean architects. He became Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Planning responsible for building regulation, planning policy, and also collaborated with Nickson and Borys on their Municipal office building in Freetown.

Joseph Ransford Jarrett-Yaskey was chief architect at the Ministry of Works. During his time in office he designed Freetown library in 1963, and the Sierra Leone Central Bank, 1964 – both with a distinctive honeycomb brise-soleil. On the occasions that Jarrett-Yaskey could not attend Committee, Abdul Rahman Mahdi (1919-?) deputised. Mahdi attended the Department of Tropical Architecture at the Architectural Association, London, pursuing the 'Educational Building in the Tropics' strand in 1964-65. The studentship was funded by UK technical assistance. Madhi's earlier training was at the PWD technical school in Lagos, and evening classes at Hammersmith School of Building, Arts, and Crafts in London, whilst working in practice during the daytime.

Clearly there were capable and highly skilled designers available locally, and it must have irked that in the first few years of independence architects from the former colonial country were recipients of these prestigious projects. Based on these recommendations the college transitioned away from using Rutter as each of the buildings he had designed (and been paid for) were completed, plus the college was informed it was unlikely to receive further funding from the British High Commission and that

important departments such as African Studies might have to be scaled-back to suit.<sup>59</sup>

The Committee made recommendations on who might be appointed locally. This still included expatriate British firms, but those who had established offices in Sierra Leone, to a degree transgressing the political-colonial relations as they built up networks of collaborators and clients. The Committee's list included McElroy and Pethybridge,<sup>60</sup> Nickson and Borys, and a consortium of Ministry Architects - including Committee members, Mahdi, Jarret-Yaskey, and Oluwole Wright (who also minuted they were entitled to professional fees).<sup>61</sup>



### The Institute of African Studies

Just south of the library, and connected to it by an external staircase, sits the Institute of African Studies building. One of the last buildings designed on the campus site by Rutter, and one of the smallest, the building reveals much about the politically charged nature of university development in the immediate post-independence period.<sup>62</sup>

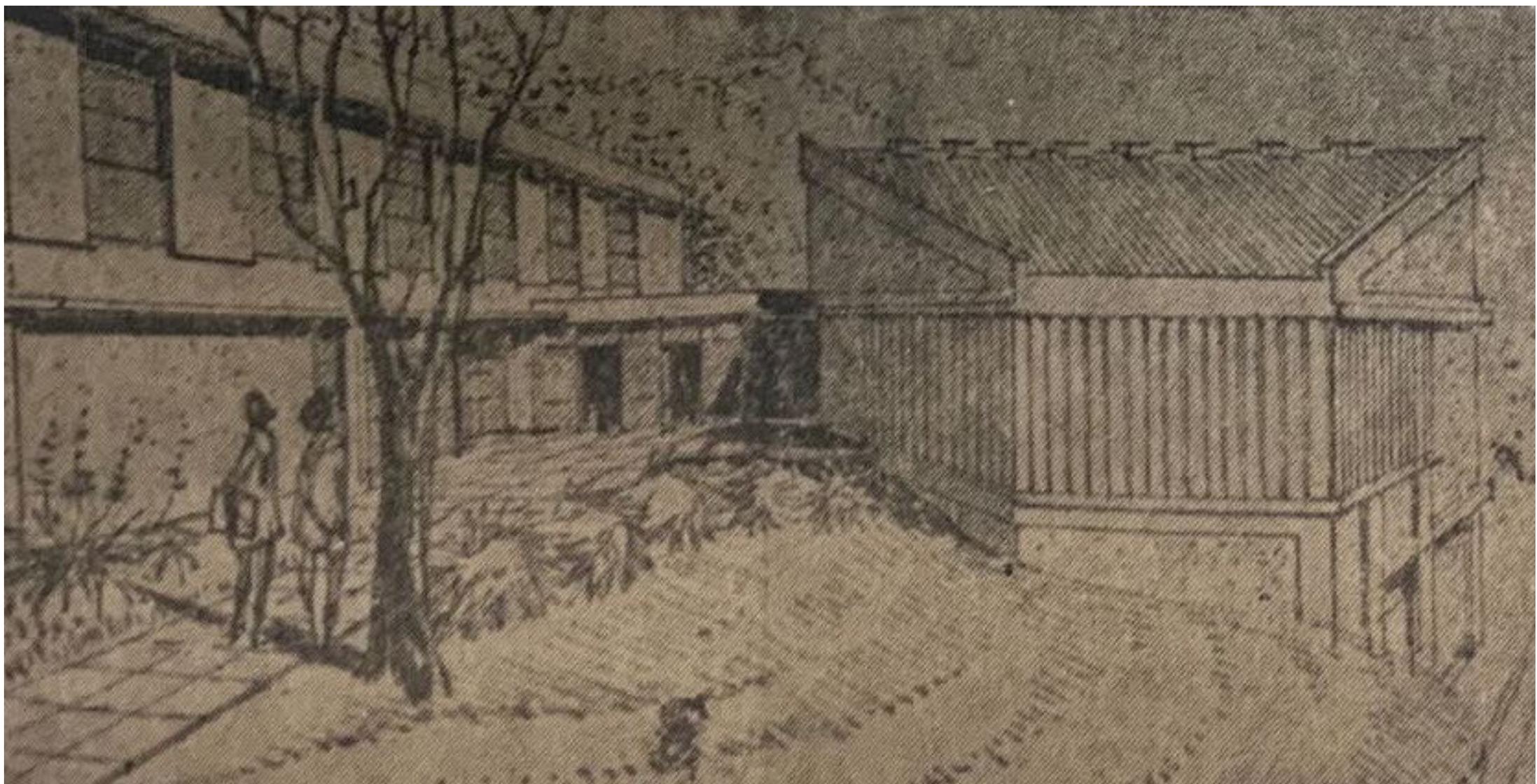


Figure 7.17: Sketch of the Institute of African Studies, 1966, National Archives, UK



Figure 7.18: Institute of African Studies, Paul Robinson, 2023



By the middle-1960s, Fourah Bay's reputation as a creole institution, dominated by the 'bookish, pedantic and lily-handed' providing a 'British university education, stiff, unbending and unrelated to the needs of Africa,' led by a 'subdued and at times almost mystic' principal Davidson Nichol was becoming a political liability.<sup>63</sup> This reputation relied on both the long history of the college, deeply intertwined with the Creole identity, and the fact that the staff roster was dominated by Creoles and expatriates for some years after independence: Nichol himself was both a Creole by birth and a former Cambridge don, who came to Fourah Bay with the 'blessings' of the Colonial Office in 1960.<sup>64</sup> But Fourah Bay's remote location, high above the city and the interior, atop a natural ivory tower of sorts, can only have contributed to this view.<sup>65</sup>

The institution of new departments, teaching law, medicine and midwifery, might be read as a challenge to this reputation. But Fourah Bay College's pre-eminence in Sierra Leone continued to be challenged by two new institutions – the Milton Margai Technical University at Goderich, which had grown out of Fourah Bay's satellite Teacher Training College (also designed by Rutter), and the Njala Institute.<sup>66</sup>

The Njala Institute was a new foundation, opened with US overseas aid funding and the support of the University of Illinois. Located on two campuses at Njala and Bo, in the largely Muslim rural Sierra Leonean interior. Its curriculum was originally intended to focus largely on agronomy, but it quickly added supplementary courses. A British civil servant noted a tendency to look down on the Njala Institute as 'brash, inarticulate and horny-handed,' perhaps with a degree of projection given the college's American connections.<sup>67</sup> But Njala's rise not only threatened 'overlapping institutions, drift, different educational structures,' it was also an explicitly political threat to Fourah Bay.<sup>68</sup> Not only might it offer a more developmentally focussed education than that on offer at Fourah Bay,

something likely to be looked on favourably by the government, but as the 'provinces (tribal) answer to (creole) Fourah Bay' Njala found automatic favour with the Sierra Leone People's Party led government, which drew much of its support from the traditional rulers of the country's rural interior.<sup>69</sup>

In the early 1970s, this issue was circumvented by the creation of a Federal University of Sierra Leone, in which both Fourah Bay and Njala would co-exist as constituent colleges. In the mid-1960s, Fourah Bay's solution was the new Institute of African Studies.

The institute was developed to address a number of interlocking agendas. For Fourah Bay's leadership, and especially its President Davidson Nichol, The African Studies Institute provided a means to both unite disciplinarily distinct research on African subjects under one roof whilst also fostering a pan-africanist approach to pedagogy, by offering a physical setting for colloquia of African scholars and university administrators from across the region and, indeed, the continent as a whole. For the British Government, who offered partial funding for the institute's construction, it was also intended to serve as a 'bridge' between Fourah Bay and the government, providing both a physical space and an intellectual climate for the promulgation of discussion on 'economic and development planning matters,' between academic staff at Fourah Bay and government officials and politicians.<sup>70</sup> Plans for the Institute were positively received by both the Ministry of Education, the Development Secretary, because, as its steering committee included a representative from the Njala Institute, it offered a nascent arena for cooperation between the two rivalrous colleges.<sup>71</sup> Whilst it is tempting to also see the development of the Institute as a reflection of the Africanisation of the college lectureship, this seems unlikely. The validity of African studies as a discipline was often embraced by British and American scholars, and challenged by African academics.<sup>72</sup>

These debates were present at Fourah Bay, where the Creole theology lecturer Henry Sawyerr, for example, felt instead of a distinct department, that '*every discipline—English, History, Theology— should so organise its programmes of teaching and study that material related to African life provides integral aspects of all the teaching done in University departments in Africa.*'<sup>73</sup>

But the institute also reflected the realpolitik of decolonisation. The capital cost of the building was met through a gift from the Gulbenkian Foundation and also from British aid funding, gifted by the British, largely for reasons of prestige. Having extensively invested 'time and energy' in Fourah Bay, British and Commonwealth officials were loath to see the college become 'dangerously insulated and remote from events nearer sea-level.'<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, the new Institute was given vigorous support from the British Government and the British Council in the hope it would inject 'relevance' into Fourah Bay's operations.<sup>75</sup>

The site for the building was carefully chosen for both practical and symbolic reasons, in close communication with the library but on the 'lower (town) side ... in order to ensure ease of access to Freetown,' and the government ministries and secretariats located there.<sup>76</sup> Spatially, its programme was rather simple: the brief provided for staff offices, seminar rooms and space for a small specialist book collection, with the hope that construction could be carried out for £25,000 or less. Yet, given the politically charged nature of its work, the building, though 'modest', was also intended to 'serve as a focal point' on the campus.<sup>77</sup>



Rutter responded to this brief with brio, producing a small but vibrant building, with an expressively hexagonal lecture hall block and a freestanding block containing seminar rooms, separated by a monumental external staircase that connects the complex to the library. In a surprisingly Aaltoesque gesture, this staircase comes to a triangular point, lending the composition a hint of Saynatsalo, but here translated into the tropical high forest. The building served its function as a focal point well, for Rutter's perspective views were used to illustrate college promotional material in the late 1960s.



## Conclusions

The story of Fourah Bay College and its development reflects the political shifts, power structures, and certain cultural and educational ambitions of the country. From the small college primarily serving theological training to a modern campus with a wider remit was part of a wider development and modernisation agenda that was echoed throughout West Africa, and further afield in other (former) colonial territories. Equally, these vast buildings programmes on challenging and remote sites became technological tests requiring expensive foreign advice and expertise – as well as imported materials, machines, plant, and products. The development of the campuses allowed the colonial enterprise to continue well into the post-colonial period under the guise of capacity-building whilst furthering the colonial education model and approach.

Architecturally, Fourah Bay presents an important collection of work that should feature more prominently within the canon of mid-century ‘tropical modernism’ and be considered as part of the narrative of nation-building in West Africa. Fourah Bay complicates the story of education provision in West Africa, as the universities in Nigeria and Ghana were often positioned as prerequisites for political independence, yet Sierra Leone was already equipped with these facilities and means. The architecture deployed on these projects was often celebratory and triumphant, it was required to deliver a message of creativity, independent thought, and be at the forefront of cultural vision. Yet, at Fourah Bay, unlike in Ghana and Nigeria, the architectural ‘pedigree’ was less prominent. Whether this was because of the various ‘problems’ encountered with working with the likes of Fry and Drew, and James Cubitt, (such as construction and communication issues) or because Fourah Bay was built slightly later and the emphasis was on a simpler layout, with only the Kennedy building seeking any special attention. Despite the desire to avoid architectural excesses, the overseas investment and named association with the American funders shaped the design and its ambition.

The paper shows how this approach was successfully contested and challenged by local architects who had received the same standard of education (if not greater) than the architects who were appointed through the colonial administrative machinery. The local architects secured important positions and authority within the Sierra Leonean Civil Service and were able to advise, shape policy, and hold to account the procurement and design practices operating at that time. Unlike in Ghana (and to a lesser extent Nigeria), they were not supported by, or collaborating with, architects from socialist countries. They adopted a position based on hard commercial decisions rather than aesthetic or stylistic terms – appealing against the ‘monopoly’ and taxation implications of employing Rutter – an argument that was familiar when dealing with businesses in the quest for political independence, and the ongoing decolonising process.

As the College approaches its 200-year anniversary it remains incomplete, a work-in-progress rather than a ‘finished’ product, a fresh wave of expansion commences, including a new school of architecture, and fresh hope for a reimagined campus.



## Endnotes

1. Lewis, 186.
2. see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
3. Bangura, J. J. (2017). The Temne of Sierra Leone: African Agency in the Making of a British Colony. Cambridge University Press. Bangura quotes James Thayer, 'it is hard to find a single ethnic group on which so much scholarly effort, mostly of an historical nature, has been expended.' James Steel Thayer, "A Dissenting View of Creole Culture in Sierra Leone." *Cahiers D'Études Africaines* 31, no. 121/122 (1991): p. 251.
4. see, for example, Spitzer, L. (1974). *The Creole of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism 1870-1914*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Porter, A. (1963). *Creoledom: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society*. Oxford University Press, and the various books written by Christopher Fyfe, a colonial administrator turned historian, who can justly be described as a Creolist for his repeated studies of the importance of the group. See, for example, *Sierra Leone: Two Centuries of Intellectual Life, and Sierra Leone: A History*. For a more considered view, see Bangura (op cit) and Daniel Paracka's history of Fourah Bay College.
5. [Lewis, 186] this quote suggests that the college buildings were once lime washed or painted white, although this is not evident in historic photographs of the building.
6. Sir Christopher Cox, Notes on a Visit to Sierra Leone, November 1967, UK National Archives CO1045/1104
7. See, for example, Letter from Sir Maurice Dorman to Lord Reith 1<sup>4th</sup> June 1958, UK National Archives, CO852/1604
8. Anon. (1954, May 11). Fourah Bay. *The Manchester Guardian*.
9. Anon. (1954, May 11). Fourah Bay. *The Manchester Guardian*.
10. Paracka, 155. See also Maxwell Fry and K W Farms, 'Townplanning scheme for Freetown', Accra, Government Press Gold Coast, 1944.
11. Daniel Paracka, *The Athens of West Africa: A History of International Education at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone* (Routledge, 2003) 152.
12. *Ibid.*
13. The Grammar School used the proceeds from the sale of the valuable land in the city at Regent Square (now Lightfoot Boston Street), to buy the new site.
14. Lewis, 189.
15. Paracka, 170.
16. Lewis, 188.
17. Anon. (1954, May 11). Fourah Bay. *The Manchester Guardian*.
18. For an account of the specifics of these legislative changes see, John Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London: 1978)
19. Cooper, F. (2002). *African Since 1945: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge.
20. Margai was a notably conservative and pro-British leader.
21. See UK National Archives CO 1045/1272.
22. See Suzanne Francis-Brown & Peter Francis (2019) Norman & Dawbarn, the UCWI, and Tropical Modernist Architecture in Jamaica, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 65:1, 27-56, DOI: 10.1080/00086495.2019.1565219 and Iain Jackson (2013) Tropical Architecture and the West Indies: from military advances and tropical medicine, to Robert Gardner-Medwin and the networks of tropical modernism, *The Journal of Architecture*, 18:2, 167-195, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2013.781202
23. They also designed the University of Malta (designed in 1961, and built from 1964).
24. Memorandum from the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Secretary of State for the Colonies 12th November 1951, UK National Archives CO554/164/5 Sierra Leone Fourah Bay Capital Expenditure Appointment of an Architect
25. Letter from Crown Agents for Overseas Development to Bourne, Colonial Office, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1951. UK National Archives, CO554/164/5
26. Referred to in the file as both Seeley & Paget and Mottistone & Paget, as Seeley was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Mottistone.
27. The practice made something of a business from the design of ceremonial halls for City livery companies, for example.
28. Memorandum from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Sierra Leone, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1951. CO554/164/5



29. Letter from the Reverend R W Stanford to Collins of the Colonial Office, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1951, UK National Archives, CO554/164/5. This included a list of 20 education commissions that Seeley & Paget and Mottistone & Paget had undertaken, mainly small scale extensions to existing private schools in England. It also included the practice's most famous commission, the conversion and extension of Eltham Palace, on the grounds that this building had subsequently become the headquarters for the Army Education Corps, although it had originally been commissioned as a weekend house by the interwar socialites Simon and Virginia Courtauld.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Anon, 'Buildings in the News...' The Architects' Journal February 11th 1954, 1185. And Anon, 'University and Teaching Hospital, Jamaica,' Architectural Design January 1954, 16-17. See also Suzanne Francis-Brown & Peter Francis (2019) Norman & Dawnbarn, the UCWI, and Tropical Modernist Architecture in Jamaica, Caribbean Quarterly, 65:1, 27-56, DOI:10.1080/00086495.2019.1565219 and Iain Jackson (2013) Tropical Architecture and the West Indies: from military advances and tropical medicine, to Robert Gardner-Medwin and the networks of tropical modernism, The Journal of Architecture, 18:2, 167-195, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2013.781202
32. Architectural Design piece
33. The Architectural Review
34. Such as the St Cyprian's Cathedral in Fante New Town, Kumasi, 1950, extensions to Achimota School, Accra.
35. Draft contract between the Crown Agents and Norman & Dawnbarn, undated. UK National Archives, BW 90/450.
36. Unilever Archives, Port Sunlight, UAC/1/3/5/3/1-3 - Sierra Leone Relations with Government
37. Unilever Archives, Port Sunlight, UAC/1/11/3/1/7 newspaper clippings PR Box 7, "African World", October 1956, p25.
38. Rutter Development plan, unpublished brochure.
39. See, for example, Stephanie Decker "Corporate Legitimacy and Advertising: British Companies and the Rhetoric of Development in West Africa, 1950-1970" The Business History Review, Vol. 81 No. 1 (2007) 59-86
40. Extract from the Survey of Technical and Further Education, Sierra Leone and Gambia. CO 554/164/5
41. See also, Paracka 143-175.
42. Paracka, 184.
43. G. Anthony Atkinson, *Memorandum on School Building in the Colonies and Circular Despatch 121215/50 Education Buildings*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1950. UK National Archives, CO554/164/5
44. Matchett, 'Education is ...' *West Africa*, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1954.
45. *Sierra Leone*: 1958. HMSO. 1960.
46. Draft contract between the Crown Agents and Norman & Dawnbarn, undated. UK National Archives, BW 90/450.
47. [https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/boris\\_exhibition.html](https://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/boris_exhibition.html) and email correspondence with Krzysztof Fijalkowski.
48. <https://www.bdp.com/en/latest/news/2018/ken-draper-1932-2017/>
49. Paracka, 176.
50. Quoted by Paracka, 176.
51. See for example Anon. 'Tourism in Sierra Leone' Briefing Paper dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 1961, Negotiations for a Hotel, Box 659 Sierra Leone National Archives. For more on socialist investment in decolonising West Africa, see Lukasz Stanek *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton: 2020)
52. See Paracka, 166.
53. This was a clearly stated ambition of the legislative changes brought in by the colonial government in 1951, explicitly designed to sideline the small Creole population in favour of more representation from the rural interior. See Cartwright, 59.
54. Paracka, 177.
55. Paracka notes that staff passage to and from Britain constituted a major expense for the university for some years after independence. *Ibid.*
56. Letter from the British High Commission to Sir Andrew Cohan, Depr of Technical Co-Operation, 8th April 1964 CO 1045/1104
57. In the shipping register for 1958 there is a Gladys Sophie Jarrett-Yaskey also mentioned and listed as Architect PWD – could she be the first Black Female RIBA member?
58. Building Advisory Committee 9<sup>th</sup> July 1965, Box 524, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone National Archives



59. Building Advisory Committee Minutes, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1965, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone National Archives, Box 524.
60. Brian Patrick Graham McElroy and Edwin George Pethybridge , practice dissolved in 1968. No further information has been found relating to this practice.
61. Building Advisory Committee Minutes, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1966, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone National Archives, Box 524.
62. That the building was one of the last designed by Rutter is revealed by the following minute of the University of Sierra Leone Building Advisory Committee for 14<sup>th</sup> June 1965 'resolved to recommend: that the design of the Institute of African Studies be proceeded with before the expiration of the six months' notice of the termination of the College Architects Agreement. Box 524 Sierra Leone National Archives.
63. The originator of this phrase noted that it was an 'untrue - or at least incomplete' stereotype. Report on a Visit to Sierra Leone By Mr F Dunhill 12th Feb 1964. UK National Archives, CO 1045/1104
64. Paracka, 171.
65. The long serving president of Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens, stated this explicitly in his autobiography. S Stevens (1984) *What Life Has Taught Me*, Kensal Press.
66. The teacher training college was also designed by Rutter, and was built by Taylor Woodrow Sierra Leone.
67. Dunhill, UK National Archives, CO 1045/1104
68. Letter from the High Commissioner to Sir Andrew Cohan, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1964 UK National Archives, CO 1045/1104.
69. Letter from High Commission to Sir Andrew Cohen, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1964 UK National Archives, CO 1045/1104
70. Dunnill, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1964 UK National Archives, CO1045/1104.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Paracka, 183.
73. Paracka, 183.
74. Dunnill, UK National Archives, CO1045/1104. A suggestion of baser interests might also be read into Dunnill's reference to economic co-operation between Britain and Sierra Leone achieved through the institute.
75. Christopher Cox, UK National Archives, CO1045/1104
76. Dunnill, UK National Archives, CO1045/1104
77. *Ibid.*

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