

# The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands Images of Yesteryear



Photo (detail) by Marcia Bodden-Bush

**Images of Yesteryear** September 6th - October 31st, 2013

*Images of Yesteryear* features some of the most memorable photographs found in the Cayman Islands National Archives. Brought together by Walkers, the collection chronicles the social history of the Cayman Islands from 1900 to the 1960s—a time when life moved at a different pace.



Deutsche Bank Intern 2013/14 Kieshona Brown helps curator Natalie Urquhart with *Images of Yesteryear* collection.

## About the Exhibition

The exhibition explores Caymanian maritime heritage, historical buildings, and early modes of transportation as well as the people of the Cayman Islands from our not-so-distant past.

To purchase prints from this exhibition please contact the Cayman Islands National Archive.

## About the Contributors

### The Cayman Islands National Archive

The Cayman Islands National Archive (CINA) plays an essential role in documenting the evolution of Caymanian society by preserving and contributing to the individual and collective memory. As keeper of the nation's memory, CINA provide three main services: public access to archival records, the acquisition and preservation of archival records, and records management for Government records.

The historic holdings of the National Archive consists of records, archival materials (photographs and documents), and publications in various formats which document the history of the Cayman Islands and its way of life.

### Walkers

Walkers is a leading International Financial Centre law firm and a member of the International Financial Centres Forum (IFC Forum). The firm is a corporate member of the National Gallery as well as a major sponsor.

### National Gallery

The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (NGCI) is the country's leading visual arts organisation and education centre. Our mission is to promote the appreciation and practice of the visual arts of and in the Cayman Islands and provide innovative, educational programming relating to fine art, cultural heritage, national identity, and Caymanian art history.

## Featured Photographers

Featured photographers include: Aarona Kohlman, Ira Thompson, Helen Hirst Gamble, Ivor O. Smith, Marcia Bodden-Bush, C. Bernard Lewis, George Nowak (Barefoot Man), Germmel Alexander, Jack Cohen, Robert Maase and others.



## Exhibition Highlights

### The Annual Regatta

By the 1930s Cayman boasted a fleet of 23 schooners and approximately 300 catboats. The first Regatta was held in 1935 under the auspices of Commissioner Allen Wolsey Cardinal. These annual events were usually held when the vessels were between turtling seasons and especially in January when they were home for refitting. Round-the-island races were also popular and very competitive with a cash reward going to the winning Captain and his crew.

### George Town, Town Hall

Most of modern-day George Town has changed beyond recognition, but the George Town, Town Hall has changed little since it was built by Captain Royal Bodden (a renowned ship builder who also built the George Town Library) in 1923.



The Town Hall functioned as a court house, assembly room, and central meeting place and for years it was the centre of Cayman's civic and social activities. It also served as a peace memorial to those who fell in World War One, as referenced on the building's facade.

This early image of the Town Hall illustrates that it was originally surrounded by pastureland rather than the busy paved streets and traffic we know today. Over the last few decades the Legislative Assembly, the Court buildings, and Heroes Square have been added to the adjacent area.

Text adapted from *Cayman Free Press*

### Turtling



Turtling has been inextricably linked to the development of the Cayman Islands ever since our discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1503. In the immediate years following this period, Dutch, French, English, and Spanish fleets all used Cayman as an important replenishment point before journeying back to Europe. Their early reports suggest that the turtle population was once so large that the Cayman Islands may have been the largest rookery for the green turtle in the Caribbean (Groombridge, 1982; King, 1982).

### Developments in Transportation



This exhibition illustrates the developing modes of transportation found in Cayman in the 20<sup>th</sup> century starting with the traditional horse (or donkey) and cart. The first car was introduced to the Islands in 1914 but living standards were slow to improve in the 1920s and it was not until the mid-1930s that numbers increased significantly to "41 cars, seven lorries and five motor "cycles" (Craton, 2003). Most roads still remained unpaved at this period and vehicles were scarce, especially in the outer districts where horses and carts continued to be the main mode of transportation until the 1950s.

In the decade after World War Two, a new era of transportation was ushered in with over 100 motor vehicles on the Islands in 1950, increasing to 500 by 1960.

Today, according to the Department of Vehicles & Drivers' Licensing, there have been 35,852 cars inspected in the last three years.

### Kitchen Bands



Like many other developing Caribbean islands, Caymanian society had little time for truly leisurely pursuits, such as fine art, and so our early forms of cultural expression were manifested through music and dance and functional craft. The Cayman Kitchen Bands were at the heart of this development.

Usually made up of musicians playing a fiddle, home-made drum, and kitchen grater, these bands would play at social gatherings, kitchen dances, or other special events like ship launches. Some songs were known across the island, and lyrics were modified depending on the district.