Preserving Preeminence Amidst Revitilization: The Role of the Tharp House in the Restoration of Falmouth, Jamaica

Matthew Pelz
Clemson University
PRESERVING PREEMINENCE AMIDST REVITALIZATION:
THE ROLE OF THE THARP HOUSE IN THE
RESTORATION OF FALMOUTH, JAMAICA

A Terminal Project
Presented to the Graduate Schools of
Clemson University
and the College of Charleston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Historic Preservation

by
Matthew Pelz
May 2009

Accepted by:
Jonathan H. Poston
Ashley Robbins-Wilson
Frances H. Ford
Robert D. Russell, Jr.
Acknowledgements

I thank Dr. James Parrent and the staff of Falmouth Heritage Renewal for allowing me to work with them during the summer of 2008, with special gratitude to Peter Maxwell and my survey teammates Duwayne Black and Kemar Walters for their willingness to teach me about Falmouth heritage. Additionally, several people provided much needed guidance during the early stages of my research, including, Professor Louis Nelson and the University of Virginia Field School, Ivor Conolley, Matt Webster, Ed Chappell, Jaime Destefano, Flo Logan, Jacqueline Green, and Asberga Harwood.

Without US/ICOMOS International Exchange program, I would not have become acquainted with Falmouth. I thank the organization for giving me the opportunity and I thank Don Jones for working so hard to ensure that my experience was positive and valuable.

I thank my adviser, Jonathan Poston, as well as Ashley Robbins, Frances Ford, and the rest of the faculty of the Clemson University/College of Charleston joint program in Historic Preservation for their patience in helping me regain focus after returning from Falmouth with my usual assortment of vague and incoherent ideas. Also, I thank my classmates for
always ignoring the vagueness and incoherency and supporting me and my ideas anyway.
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**Introduction**

In November of 2008, after years of negotiation, the Port Authority of Jamaica reached an agreement with Royal Caribbean to authorize the construction of a pier in the harbor of Falmouth, Jamaica. Respected for its collection of colonial architecture, Falmouth became slated as a “heritage destination” offering an alternative to the well-known Caribbean cruise experiences. However, the project is not a mere pilot program. The $224 million cost represented an incredible investment by the Jamaican government and Royal Caribbean has promised 400,000 visitors annually, a figure that would rank the town among the most frequented Caribbean cruise destinations.1

After early economic success at the height of the sugar era in Jamaica, Falmouth has been mired in a depression. Its impressive collection of remaining historic architecture is no coincidence; it is the result of minimal investment throughout most of the past century. Now the town faces the challenge of nurturing a successful redevelopment without sacrificing the architecture that comprises much of its treasured heritage.

The area at greatest risk is the wharf district, where the terminal is planned. Most of the buildings there are long-vacant industrial structures

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1 The current exchange rate is US$1 to J$93. For the purposes of this study, all figures are in US dollars. Also, all measurements are in the United States Customary System.
from the early twentieth century, well after the historic district’s eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century period of significance. One building, however, dates to the height of the period and is named for one of its leading figures.

The Tharp House (figure 1) is vacant and marked by signs of misuse and neglect. Built in the late eighteenth century by John Tharp, one of the richest planters and traders of the period in Jamaica, it served as headquarters of his wharf operations. After the decline of the plantation system, it passed through various owners until government occupation for most of the twentieth century. Now owned by the Port Authority of Jamaica,

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2 Various historic sources spell the name Tharp, Tharpe, Thorpe, or Thorp. This study follows the spelling used in his will.
its restoration has been continually postponed. With the signing of the Royal Caribbean agreement, it is once again at the center, both literally and figuratively, of revitalization efforts. As town leaders and developers work together to find a suitable reconciliation of the commonly conflicting interests of the town’s heritage and the project’s economic viability, the Tharp House has become a focus of interest.

The purpose of this project is to apply the concepts of sustainable, heritage-based tourism to the situation of the Tharp House in Falmouth. Above all, these tenets require an understanding of the many contexts—historical, architectural, economic, and cultural—that converge to form a specific setting. For this reason, the town’s origins and evolution are given due attention insofar as the recent development is inextricably linked, perhaps even more so than usual, to its history.

With a proper understanding of the context of the Tharp House, an appropriate plan of restoration can be implemented. This study intends to establish that understanding and make proper use of it in proposing a plan that meets the needs of residents and visitors alike. If the study is found exceptionally effective, the reader will identify similar cases and recognize that places with abundant cultural resources have the capacity to benefit all parties.
Timeline of Early Colonial Jamaica³

1494    Arrival by Christopher Columbus on north coast at what is now called Discovery Bay
1509    Beginning of Spanish colonization
1517    First African slaves brought to Jamaica
1526    Founding of Seville, Melilla (near present-day Falmouth), and Oristan
1538    Founding of St. Jago de la Vega (Spanish Town)
1656    Beginning of British occupation; Spanish retreat to Cuba leaving behind slaves
1692    Port Royal earthquake
1694-1739 Maroon Wars
1703    Rise of Kingston
1767    John Tharp acquires Good Hope
1769    Thomas Reid begins selling subdivided “Falmouth”
1774    Edward Barrett begins selling subdivided “Barrett Town,” which would later become part of Falmouth
1790s    The Tharp House constructed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Falmouth becomes Free Port of Entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Slave trade abolished in Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>Falmouth Courthouse constructed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Abolition of slavery in Jamaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Complete emancipation</td>
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Site History

Figure 3 - Map of Trelawny 1804 with Falmouth circled. (Courtesy Jamaican Family Search).

Falmouth lies on the north coast of the island of Jamaica in the parish of Trelawny in the county of Cornwall.⁴ Noted for including most of the geographic region known as Cockpit Country and as the region of Maroon villages, Trelawny parish is most famous as a sugar plantation region, with Falmouth serving as the center and primary port at the height of the Jamaican sugar economy.

⁴ The parish was alternatively spelled “Trelawney.”
The area of Trelawny was sparsely settled during the Spanish period of Jamaica. It was named after the royal governor of British Jamaica, William Trelawny, in 1771, when it was partitioned from St. James parish. His birthplace in England served as the inspiration for the naming of its eventual capital city of Falmouth. The explosive nature of the area’s economic growth at the end of the eighteenth century cannot be overemphasized. At the year of Trelawny’s founding, the three principal towns of the parish, Falmouth, Martha Brae, and The Rock, had a combined 18 houses as counted by historian and Trelawny resident Bryan Edwards. By 1793, there were 220 in Falmouth alone. In the same period, according to Edwards, the port went from harboring ten boats a year to stationing more than thirty capital ships at one time.

Fueling the growth was the booming success of sugar plantations. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Jamaica imported more slaves from Africa than the rest of the other British Caribbean colonies combined, and nearly ten times as many as the United States. The last register of slaves in the British colonies before emancipation in 1830 showed that

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6 Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1806), 223.
around forty percent of the total was in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{8} If required labor is any indication of the scope of an economy, then Jamaica constituted a substantial portion of the wealth of the British Empire.

Much of the escalation in Jamaican sugar production can be traced to Trelawny, as no other parish was home to more sugar plantations at the turn of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{9} Spurred by the accommodating climate and geography, including the navigable Martha Brae River and Falmouth Harbor, the parish was carved up into estates owned by a new class of elite planters. The tendency of these planters to remain in Britain was a distinctive trait of the Jamaican plantation system that played a pivotal role in shaping its development. Several authors have cited absentee planters as a substantial obstacle in the regulation of the system and the control of the plantations.\textsuperscript{10} Writing in 1850, John Bigelow asserted that as much as ninety percent of the island was owned by absentees.\textsuperscript{11} Of the unsurpassed number of slaves, more than half belonged to owners residing abroad.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{9} Jean Besson, \textit{Martha Brae’s Two Histories} (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2002), 58. In an 1804 tally, Trelawny had the most mills as well. [Verene A. Shepherd, “Livestock and Sugar: Aspects of Jamaica’s Agricultural Development from the Late Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 34, no. 3 (Sept. 1991), 637.
\textsuperscript{11} Bigelow, \textit{Jamaica in 1850}, 79.
Nevertheless, elite planters maintained a limited presence on the island in the form of estate great houses, townhouses and offices in the nearest urban centers. For the particularly large group in Trelawny, the nearest existing option of Montego Bay was insufficient, necessitating the founding of an urban center within the parish. The first capital was the town of Martha Brae, named for the major river of the region. Situated a mile inland, Martha Brae could not fulfill the shipping needs of the parish and was thus incapable of maintaining status as its chief town. By the 1770s, Trelawny landowners were reviewing their options for the establishment of a new capital. They settled upon an area one mile west of the mouth of the river, on land owned by two of Jamaica’s most famous families, the Reids and the Barretts.

The Reids were among the first generation of Jamaican planters to settle the more remote areas of the western part of the island. The height of their prosperity came in the 1760s when they owned six plantations in the area. Included in their holdings was a property called “Long Pond” that bordered the harbor and river, for which Thomas Reid had received a letter patent in 1759. Starting in 1769, he was the earliest to subdivide land that became part of Falmouth. The first use of the name Falmouth is found in one

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13 Jean Besson, in her study of the town of Martha Brae, also cites a bar of silt deposits at the river entrance as a disadvantage of the site. Besson, *Martha Brae*, 73.
of these transactions, dated December of 1770.\textsuperscript{17} Through 1775, Thomas and his son of the same name (referred to as the elder and the younger, respectively) continued to sell plots of land.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.png}
\caption{Sketch of Thomas Reid’s 1775 subdivision that would form part of Falmouth. From Conolley and Parrent, “Land Deeds.”}
\end{figure}

The other founding family of Falmouth, the Barretts, was also well-established on the island. According to Trelawny historian Daniel Ogilvie, they arrived with land given to them by Charles II sometime between 1660 and 1670.\textsuperscript{19} In 1743, Samuel Barrett purchased land north of the river called “Palmetto Point.” A year later, his brother Richard was awarded an original

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Conolley and Parrent, “Land Deeds,” 383-387.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Conolley and Parrent, “Land Deeds,” 386-388.
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Ogilvie, \textit{History of the Parish of Trelawny}.
\end{itemize}
patent to land on the south side of the river, across from Reid’s. Both sections were inherited by Samuel’s sons, Wisdom and Edward, with the latter eventually taking control of Palmetto Point. According to a study of early land deeds by Ivor Conolley and James Parrent, there was some disagreement between Barrett and Reid over the property boundaries, but the conflict was resolved with a 1774 agreement limiting Reid’s use of the wharf property.20

With the matter settled, Barrett began subdividing his portion of the land in a settlement called “Barrett Town” (figure 5). The land was developed in two phases. The first phase began in 1774 and included 129 lots spanning from Harbour Street to George’s Street and Prince/Princess Street to Market Street. The more extensive phase began in 1783 and was comprised of 224 lots from George’s Street to Charlotte Street and Market Street to Pitt Street.21 As this land forms the bulk of the current historic downtown district, Barrett is commonly characterized as the city’s founder. Perhaps contributing to this idea was his donation of land on Market Street for the construction of the parish church, a deed recognized by a plaque that remains on the site.22

22 Ogilvie, History of the Parish of Trelawny.
While Barrett’s subdivision formed the downtown commercial district, it was Reid’s upon which the main wharf district was established (thus, in a sense, financing the construction of the buildings that would become...
Through its construction, the town was able to fill the role of the much-desired local port for Trelawny planters. The geography was somewhat favorable; a deeper harbor allowed easy export and the Martha Brae River and Rio Bueno were still close enough for utilization in the transportation of goods to the coast from the inland plantations. Noted for its distinctive geography, the town was called “Martha Brae Point” or simply “the point” after the founding of Falmouth. The projecting landmass was utilized through the placement of an early fort that could provide the defense necessary to nurture the growth of a shipping community.

Figure 6 - 1906 depiction of the Falmouth coast. From Henderson and Forrest, Jamaica.

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The setting worked in the planters’ favor. From 1792 until 1808, Falmouth was “a principal port of disembarkation in the Americas.”

Montego Bay, the nearest free port of entry, suffered fires in 1795 and 1818. Ogilvie cites the first fire as the motivation for the beginning of the procedure to grant such free port status to Falmouth, which it attained in 1805.

Several progressive public building projects corroborate accounts of the city’s incredible wealth. The Falmouth Water Company was inaugurated in 1799, providing the first public water system in the western hemisphere, a fact that remains the source of much pride for the city. By 1823, the reservoir at the center of town (figure 7) was significant enough for one traveler to refer to it as “famous.” Its foundation remains a landmark in the city and has been the subject of recent renewal efforts (figure 8). The same period brought the construction of a two-story Masonic lodge on Market Street (figure 9), which Ogilvie describes as built of the “best cut stones procurable.” The courthouse, erected in 1816, was noted by several nineteenth-century travelers as one of the best on the island and having a

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26 Besson, Martha Brae, 74.
28 Ogilvie, History of the Parish of Trelawny.
29 Ogilvie, History of the Parish of Trelawny.
30 Cynric R. Williams, A Tour through the Island of Jamaica (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1826), 3.
31 Ogilvie, History of the Parish of Trelawny.
ballroom “of delightful size.” An 1814 police station and prison (figures 11 and 12) on the northwest edge of town were also noted as “unusually fine.”

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Figure 7 · Water Square and the reservoir. From Duperly, *Daguerrian Excursions in Jamaica*.

Figure 8 · Water Square, 2008. While the reservoir is gone, the site remains a local landmark. From Falmouth Historic District Survey, 2008.

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Figure 9 · The Masonic Lodge at 9 Market St., constructed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It became the Baptist Manse in the twentieth century and is now used as the headquarters and workshop of Falmouth Heritage Renewal. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 10 · A cannon and seawall at Fort Balcarres on the northwest side of town. (Photo: author).
Figure 11 - The Police Station, built 1814. (Photo: author).

Figure 12 - The Police Station, east façade and stairway. (Photo: author).
The incredible financial success led to a somewhat extravagant and by some accounts disreputable lifestyle among the town’s elite. Most planters owned a residential site for their occasional stays in the area. One visitor found a direct correlation between the wealth of the citizen and the level of drunkenness he would regularly attain. He found the behavior of women to be particularly egregious, describing them as “addicted to entertainment” and incapable of completing any sentence without meeting a certain standard of profanity. Another source of trouble was the sailors brought by the port. Apparently, they were such a nuisance that a cage was placed in the town’s square for the purpose of detaining the most unruly of their ranks. One highlight of the excesses of the age was the 1794 construction of a race course on Cave Island to host the Jamaica Derby.

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34 Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*.
36 Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*.
37 Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*. 
Plate 1 – An 1840s view of Falmouth from the parish church on Market Street. Daguerrian Excursions/
Figure 13 - Map of Falmouth circa 1977. From Trelawny Cultural Foundation. *Trelawny and its History.*
Fueling it all were the profits of the plantation system. The urban-rural network was strong; Besson notes “significant interaction between the towns and the plantations.” The extent of the relationship is reflected in the nineteenth-century description of Falmouth as dependent on nearby Portland and Hanover for its produce. An extensive trade network required labor solely dedicated to the transportation of goods. Data from Barbados, another colony in the British Caribbean, shows that most of the slaves utilized in transportation resided in urban areas. Despite “significant interaction” between plantations and towns, their respective social contexts seem nonetheless divergent. The same study finds two trends in the demographics of urban labor. The first is that urban slaves were less specialized than their rural counterparts. While plantation slaves tended to be responsible for particular tasks as field or stock laborers, those in the town were more likely to be called upon for a variety of domestic tasks and their owners were less supervisory. Secondly, the ethnic makeup up the workforce was more heterogeneous. Lower class whites and “browns” more often had the same jobs and even whites in superior positions worked on a closer level with skilled blacks. This conclusion comes from the analysis of data from

41 Welch, “The Urban Context,” 281-296.
42 Welch, “The Urban Context,” 281-296.
Barbados, but some anecdotal evidence suggests a similar situation in Falmouth. Early nineteenth-century visitors made note of a “white housekeeper” and a “lodging house run by a mahogany woman,” emphasizing their color so as to hint at a level of surprise.43

Among the Jamaican slave population, however, the more egalitarian urban conditions were the exception. At their highest numbers in 1830, urban slaves accounted for only eight percent of the total in the Caribbean.44 In the same year, the Jamaican slave population was 311,692.45 If there is even the slightest correlation between the two figures, then Jamaica’s plantation slave totals are staggering. Many white planters capitalized from the trade and utilization of slave labor, but in Falmouth, none was more prolific than John Tharp.

Responsible for producing a significant portion of the sugar exported to London and Bristol, Tharp controlled nearly all the land along the Martha Brae River by 1791.46 Besson estimates that at any one time he owned over 3000 slaves, but Ogilvie cites an 1829 census putting the number at 2583 for

45 Bigelow, *Jamaica in 1850*, 93.
the Good Hope estate alone. Different sources label him as either the wealthiest planter in Jamaica or the second wealthiest, but either way he escorted the Tharp family to the top of the British planter elite.

Tharp was born in 1744 to John and Sarah (née Knowles) Tharp. His grandfather, also named John, had come to Jamaica in 1655, possibly as part of the first British invasion. The family settled in Hanover, a parish to the west of St. James, where the third John was born. Sources concerning his early life are sparse, but he is claimed to have been educated at Eton and Trinity as well as Oxford. Upon returning to Jamaica, he assumed a position as overseer at Potosi Estate in Trelawny, owned by Thomas Partridge. Customarily, the sons of Jamaican planters were likely to receive their education overseas. Upon his return in 1766, he married Thomas’ daughter Elizabeth and became heir to the estate, the first of many land acquisitions to come.

Among the earliest land acquisitions was Good Hope plantation, also the largest and most renowned. Acquired from Col. Thomas Williams in 1767,

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47 Besson, *Martha Brae*, 60; Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*.  
50 Three quarters of the children of Jamaican planters were educated overseas as of 1770 [Ragatz, “Absentee Landlordism,” 9]; “Jamaican Places,”  
the estate was extensive. At its height of production, the grounds included a church, sugar works, numerous other outbuildings, and a distinctive great house built by Williams in 1755 (figure 14). Detailed plans survive for a 1798 slave hospital also serving the plantation (figure 15). Local tradition holds that Tharp was extraordinarily decent to his slaves, an idea further supported in his honoring of their heritage in adorning the estate coinage.

54 Plan of hospital for sick slaves on the Good Hope Estate, 1798. Cambridgeshire Archives. Cambridgeshire, UK: R55/7/121/16.
with the face of an African.\textsuperscript{55} Apparently, he took his relationships with some slaves a step further, as he is suspected of having had liaisons with female slaves, resulting in the possible birth of several children.\textsuperscript{56}

Figure 15 - Plan of hospital for sick slaves on the Good Hope Estate, 1798. From Cambridgeshire Archives.

\textsuperscript{55} Besson, \textit{Martha Brae}, 59.

\textsuperscript{56} Among those persons variously claimed to have been the product of these liaisons are Mary [Ray Fremmer, “Slave Trade in Old Falmouth,” \textit{Jamaica Gleaner}], John Harewood [“About Good Hope,” \textit{The Gleaner} (May 24, 2005)], as well as other possibilities alluded to in his 1804 will. [Will of John Tharp, Cambridgeshire Records Office].
Regardless of his nuanced relationship with his slaves, he was nonetheless a dedicated trader and exploiter of slave labor. The Jamaican National Heritage Trust points to records showing that in 1782 he imported 400 slaves from West Africa.\footnote{Jamaica National Heritage Trust website, http://www.jnht.com.} He had a working relationship with Liverpool traders Fletcher and Company and even had a slave ship named in his honor by a London trader named Coughlin.\footnote{Fremmer, “Slave Trade.”}

Being so heavily involved in trade required a prominent position in town from which to base shipping operations. In 1771, Tharp purchased a sizeable lot from Edward Barrett on the Falmouth waterfront.\footnote{Besson, Martha Brae, 71.} There he built a townhouse as well as his own wharf. The Tharp House, constructed...
between 1785 and 1804, was built at the heart of the wharf district.60 Facing the harbor, it used characteristics of the Jamaican Georgian style in a manner more reminiscent of great houses than of other Falmouth townhouses, such as that of Edward Barrett. One description of the house detects a similarity between the style of the townhouse and that of the great house at Good Hope.61 While the Good Hope great house was not Tharp’s construction, it is reasonable that he would have sought to strengthen the association between his urban headquarters and his nearby chief Plantation. According to the Tharp estate papers, the Tharp townhouse was even

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61 Tortello, “The History of Falmouth: Boom Town.”
considered part of the Good Hope estate, despite the eight-mile distance separating them.\textsuperscript{62}

In addition to the main house, the premises included servants’ quarters, a warehouse, several industrial buildings, and, presumably, a kitchen and laundry.\textsuperscript{63} Not merely one of many part-time residences of Tharp, the house was a fully operational and essential piece of his Jamaican holdings and played an important role in the function of his Trelawny estates and the town as a whole. Just as the plantation served as a meeting place for Trelawny planters, Seaboard Street, anchored by the Tharp House, became the most active meeting place in town.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} Fremmer, “Slave Trade.”
\textsuperscript{64} Besson, \textit{Martha Brae}, 59.
As part of the absentee planter system, Tharp spent a great deal of time in England. In 1788, he purchased Chippenham Park in Cambridgeshire (figure 19), which served as his family’s primary residence.\(^\text{65}\) Around 1791, he was remarried, to Ann Gallimore.\(^\text{66}\) The early years of the marriage were agreeable enough for Tharp to begin construction of a great house on a new estate in St. Ann parish in Jamaica in honor of his new wife and name it *Chippenham* in honor of their shared English residence.\(^\text{67}\) At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the marriage dissolved when Ann had an affair with an Anglican reverend, Richard Burton Phillipson, who also

\(^{65}\) Ray Fremmer, “Chippenham...Built for a Bad Girl,” *The Sunday Gleaner Magazine* (March 21, 1982), 12; Chippenham Park website

\(^{66}\) Settlement on proposed marriage of John Tharp and Ann Gallimore. Cambridgeshire Archives. Cambridgeshire, UK: R55/7/122(/j)/12.

\(^{67}\) Fremmer, “Chippenham...Built for a Bad Girl.”
happened to be married to Tharp’s daughter by his first wife, Eliza Partridge Tharp. Tradition holds that the scandal broke Tharp and he retreated to Trelawny where he spent his final years.

Tharp’s presence in the town during this period has been characterized as active. He played a significant role during the Maroon rebellions at the turn of the century. He served as Custos of the parish and he was also a member of the House of Assembly.

His death in July of 1804 initiated a legal battle over his estates that lasted over sixty years, stemming from a questionable choice of heir. His first son, Joseph, had died in 1795 with only one male heir, John, was a child when his grandfather died yet inherited the bulk of the estate. Unfortunately, in adulthood he was declared a lunatic, igniting litigation. Early measures on his behalf were taken by his mother, Lady Susan Murray, who had been born to John Murray, the fourth Earl of Dunmore and Lady Charlotte Stewart. Her marriage to Joseph Tharp, planter John’s first son,

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68 Letter from John Tharp to Simon Taylor, Simon Taylor Papers, 1/3/1801.
69 Fremmer, “Chippenham...Built for a Bad Girl.”
71 Dallas, The History of the Maroons, 149.
72 Besson, Martha Brae, 59.
73 Chippenham Park website
74 The Earl of Dunmore is famous as the detested final Royal Governor in Virginia. His family came to Jamaica after the Revolution. [Graham Hood, The Governor’s Palace at Williamsburg (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1991); Mosely, Burke’s Peerage.]
represented the connection of the Tharp family to British aristocracy. Perhaps it was pride in this prestige that inspired the elder Tharp to bequeath such a large stake in his holdings to his young grandson, who was in 1804 the sole product of the family’s venture into the peerage.

Most of his children and grandchildren kept their homes in Chippenham Park, unsuccessfully fighting for greater shares of the Jamaican estates. The conflict was not resolved until after grandson John’s death in 1863. A “Mr. Coy’ purchased the Good Hope estate in 1864 and Falmouth-based shipping outfit Nunes Bros. sold the wharf at public auction in 1877. By then, however, the situation in the town had transformed drastically.

While some historians have noted the beginning of a decline in 1829, the biggest turning point for the entire colony was the emancipation of slaves from 1830-34. The impacts of the loss of free labor in an agriculturally-based economy are obvious and need no explanation here, except to say that by 1850, a traveler declared that all estates were “encumbered.” Efforts were made to slow the declining conditions, including the construction of a pier in 1850 and a market in 1896 (figure 21), but by the end of the century, business had “fallen off.”

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75 “About Good Hope,” Jamaica Gleaner advertising sheet (November 12, 1877).
77 Bigelow, Jamaica in 1850, 89.
78 Bacon, The New Jamaica, 192.
Impairing rejuvenation projects was the local geography, so beneficial to eighteenth century shipping, though not well-suited to technological advances of the industrial revolution. The distinctive land formation at the mouth of the Martha Brae River referred to as “the rock” proved to be an impediment to new steam-powered ships, which elected to operate in alternative ports such as Montego Bay.\(^7\) In a 1903 display of American know-how, Captain Layman blew up “the rock,” unsuccessful attempting to correct the landscape.\(^8\) The same year, a hurricane destroyed the pier.\(^9\)

An 1893 traveler still called Falmouth “the second biggest city on the island” but another contemporary analyzer cited a scarcity of labor as extremely worrisome.\(^1\) Whatever the cause, the twentieth century was an era of tremendous economic decline for Falmouth. The city endured huge losses and buildings, including those of Tharp’s estates, were left to neglect. By 1877, an ad describing some of the estates which were coming up for public auction cautioned that they were already “in need of restoration.”\(^2\) Many of the extant plantation structures are still in ruin, though recent restoration efforts have been promising.

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\(^7\) Bacon, *The New Jamaica*, 192.

\(^8\) For his efforts, Layman received £12,000. Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*.

\(^9\) Ogilvie, *History of the Parish of Trelawny*.


\(^2\) *Jamaica Gleaner* advertising sheet (November 12, 1877).
The Tharp House has borne the effects of depression as well. After leaving the Tharp family in the 1860s, it went through various owners in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, for use as wharf offices.\textsuperscript{84} In the

\textsuperscript{84} Ogilvie, \textit{History of the Parish of Trelawny.}
twentieth century, it was best known as the office of the Collector of Taxes.85 Despite requiring numerous adaptations to the structure which have been called “flimsy” and “ill-conceived,” the reuse was highly beneficial as an alternative to abandonment, the results of which are disastrous in the tropical climate in an era characterized by squatters.86

Now vacant, it is at the center, both physically and conceptually, of recent renewal efforts. Economic interest in the city has increased, as has appreciation for its cultural resources, of which it has a great many. Long-term poverty has preserved the city’s architecture so that yesterday’s curse has become today’s blessing in the form of a superb collection of Jamaican Georgian, with John Tharp’s townhouse as one of its most significant, distinctive, and recognizable landmarks.

85 Tortello, “The History of Falmouth: Boom Town.”
86 Chappell, Tharpe House Report (July 28, 2006), 4-5.
Figure 22 - Tharp House, circa 1977 From Trelawny Cultural Foundation.

Figure 23 - Tharp House as a government office. From Curtin, *Jamaica’s Heritage*. 
Architectural Evaluation

The complete understanding of the Tharp House can only come through the analysis of its context both historically, as covered in previous sections, as well as architecturally. Its mere inclusion in the collection of Jamaican Georgian architecture in Falmouth gives it some level of significance. As a townhouse, this significance is enhanced by the especially characteristic Jamaican design of residences and streetscapes and the way it diverges from this typology makes it unique.

Several factors have played a role in the development of the Jamaican variety of Georgian architecture, not the least of which was the Spanish occupation of the island lasting until the arrival of the English in 1655. Of Spanish influence on vernacular, James Robertson provides a good explanation in his article Jamaican Architectures before Georgian, comparing Edward Long’s 1774 illustration “View of a Spanish Building” (figure 24) with early surveys and sketches of hip-roofed cottages. Cottage, in this context, is a substitute for kaz, a Creole word alternatively translated as hut or hovel.

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88 James Robertson, “Jamaican Architectures before Georgian,” Winterthur Portfolio 36, no. 2/3 (Summer – Autumn 2001), 78-80.
Figure 24 - “View of a Spanish Building.” From New York Public Library.

Figure 25 - House at 4 George’s St., Falmouth. Note the central doorway to the one room plan, similar to “Spanish Building’ and the dissimilar projecting eaves. From District Survey, 2008.
These vernacular buildings, still common in various forms in the Caribbean, have been noted for their suitability to the climate, with some of the credit given to the traditional African techniques.\textsuperscript{90} While nog construction, involving filling a wooden frame with available masonry materials such as brick, stone and concrete, is suggested to have been used in the Spanish era, extant examples in Jamaica come from a later era.\textsuperscript{91}

Robertson emphasizes the Spanish as the inspiration for some of the design elements in the cottages. He notes the presence of a transom above the central door in “Spanish Building,” a common element in Jamaican design. The differences between the buildings, including the roof structure, eaves, and fenestration, are consistent with Robertson’s analysis of the types and help to illustrate the fact that, while influential, Spanish design elements were not definitive of early structures of the English era.\textsuperscript{92}

After emancipation, a subtype of the cottage developed into the bungalow with a veranda and an additional room. Edward E. Crain states that gable roofs became more common, but the results of the 2008 Falmouth Historic District Survey suggest that hipped-roofs were prevalent.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{92} Robertson, “Jamaican Architectures,” 78-79.
The best-known area of Spanish influence on the island is in Spanish Town an early Spanish capital in the southeast that has retained much of its architecture. In Robertson’s explanation, initial generations of English builders in Spanish Town were unimpressed by the Spanish design of not only the buildings, but the town as a whole as the urban environment seemed too foreign. Their response was to build with a sense of “Englishness,” using a baroque emphasis. In a series of disasters including the 1692 earthquake and 1712 hurricane, many of these new structures collapsed while the Spanish buildings were more likely to survive. Even in times of relative calm, there was the routine climatic challenge of oppressive heat. As a result, English builders began incorporating elements of Spanish buildings better.

94 Unsurprisingly, the Spanish did not call the town Spanish Town. At the end of Spanish occupation, it was called St. Jago de la Vega. Ross, “Caribbean Colonial Architecture,” 22.  
suited for the environment. Settlers unaccustomed to the extreme conditions were not hesitant to adopt features to help make colonial life more comfortable, despite lingering ambivalence towards Spanish design. They placed greater importance in foundations and houses were limited in scale to resist against storm damage. Early failures in multi-story construction led to the standard practice of building lower to the ground with a maximum height of two stories. Ventilation was a priority as attested by the widespread implementation of jalousies, a type of blind allowing the benefits of airflow without the loss of privacy or exposure to the sun, as well as transoms. The hipped-roof systems were accompanied by open ceilings to take advantage of the cooling benefits and frequently consisted of multiple sections covering different areas of the structure. In regards to materials, high humidity led to a reduction in the use of hardwoods.96

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jamaican parish churches on the island were constructed with cruciform plans.97 Standard in medieval English churches, the cruciform plan used in Jamaica was used by both English and Spanish builders.98 In roof shape and fenestration, however, the English influence is better illustrated. One surviving example from the northwest region is the St. James Parish Church in Montego Bay (figures 27

98 Nelson, Anglican Church Building,” 68.
and 28). Made of local limestone, it has a two-story crenellated western tower lacking a spire, as well as a large Venetian window.99 The Trelawny parish church in Falmouth, St. Peter’s (figure 30), had remarkably similar design elements. The English were accustomed to cruciform churches due to the continued use of adapted medieval cruciform Catholic churches and, for Jamaicans, older cruciform Spanish churches were an ever-present part of the landscape.100 In these churches, the interactions between differing architectural legacies that formed the Creole architecture are apparent.

![Figure 27 - Plan of St. James Parish Church, Montego Bay, constructed 1775-82. From Nelson, “Anglican Church Building.”](image)

100 Nelson, Anglican Church Building,” 70.
Figure 28 - St. James Parish Church, Montego Bay, constructed 1775-82. From Ross, “Caribbean Colonial Architecture.”

Figure 29 - All Saints Church Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire, England, constructed 1787. From Sheepy Magna resources.
Figure 30 - St. Peter’s Church, Falmouth, constructed 1796. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 31 - Church of King Charles the Martyr, Falmouth, Cornwall, England, constructed 1662, tower addition 1800. Some English and Jamaican churches share classical elements in their tower designs and roof shapes. From Cornwall Guide.
In Creole architectures, some building types are less mixed than others and in Jamaica municipal buildings seem to be among the more homogeneous stylistically. In a sense, these buildings put more emphasis on the *Georgian* and less on the *Jamaican*. They show that, despite adoption of elements from other styles, eighteenth century Jamaican design was nonetheless based on Georgian principles of symmetry and rooted in the same cultural taste in axial relationships, perhaps owing to similar hierarchical traditions.

Figure 32 - King’s House, Spanish Town, constructed 1760-62 as residence for the colonial governor. From Duperly, *Daguerrian Excursion*.

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An 1830 lithograph from Adolphe Duperly (figure 37) provides the most complete portrayal of the King’s House in Spanish Town. It shows an imposing structure with a central portico and six Ionic columns on plinths. Above the portico is a pediment that at one time had a tympanum with the British Coat of Arms.\textsuperscript{103} The windows appear to be six-over-six sash and the hipped-roof is continuous, even over the flanking wings. In his 1951 study, Ross puts the date of construction at 1760-62 and notes that the interior originally contained “some good Georgian detail” before a 1925 fire destroyed most of the building, sparing only the front façade.\textsuperscript{104}

Large-scale buildings in the American colonies, such as Whitehall in Annapolis, Maryland (figure 33) with similar hipped-roof wings flanking a central portico, share some of its features. Built from Corinthian model pattern books, Whitehall exemplifies a Palladian country house plan with the slightly uncharacteristic addition of a giant portico. Long thought to be a later addition, research eventually proved that the portico was indeed original.\textsuperscript{105} That finding may have been surprising to some as porticoes in American buildings were more often engaged, as in the South Carolina Statehouse (figure 34).

\textsuperscript{103} Crain, “Historic Architecture,” 157.
Figure 33 - Whitehall, Annapolis, Maryland, constructed 1764-69 as residence for Governor Sharpe. From Historic American Buildings Survey.

Figure 34 - Conjectural drawing of the original South Carolina Statehouse, Charleston, SC. From Lounsbury, From Statehouse to Courthouse.
In Falmouth, the best example is the courthouse (figure 35), built in 1815 and largely reconstructed after a 1926 fire. On a smaller scale, it bears similarities to King’s House, including a central portico supported by four columns with a tympanum in the pediment. Additionally, both structures have similar belt courses and quoins.

Figure 35 - Falmouth Courthouse, constructed 1815, renovated 1927. While the bottom colonnade illustrates Caribbean influence, the tetrastyle portico and ornamentation mirror traditional Georgian design. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 36 - King’s House, Spanish Town, 1908. From New York Public Library.

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Certainly, there are differences in large-scale Georgian design in Jamaica and those in England, the Federal US, and even other colonies of the English Caribbean. As an island, some level of isolation is innate in Jamaica and it affects the development of a distinct architectural culture. The Falmouth Post Office (figure 37), for example, is a government building with decidedly Caribbean flare in its arcaded loggia and emphasized quoins. Even it, however, finds precedent in a common Georgian tradition. In the Jamaican Georgian subtype, the grouping of large-scale community buildings is the least divergent from its architectural antecedent. It is the great houses, commercial buildings, and townhouses, such as the Tharp House, that form the greatest expression of divergence.

Figure 37 · The Falmouth Post Office, constructed early nineteenth century at the corner of Market St. and Cornwall St. From District Survey, 2008.

107 Trelawny Cultural Foundation, 33.
Owing to its history as a favorite spot for wealthy planters, Falmouth has one of the most complete inventories of townhouses on the island.\textsuperscript{108} Buildings with ground floor colonnades covered by second floor balconies create covered walkways, providing shade and defining the characteristic urban setting and architectural type.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} Crain, “Historic Architecture,” 74.
\textsuperscript{109} Ross, “Caribbean Colonial Architecture,” 25.
Figure 39 - View of Cornwall St. in Falmouth with colonnade streetscape. From *Daguerrian Excursion*.

Figure 40 - Part of walkway colonnade on Market St. in Falmouth. From District Survey, 2008.
Along with the Tharp House, the other eminent Falmouth townhouse is the Edward Barrett House (figures 41 and 42), named for city founder and located on Market Street. A keystone in the north façade puts the date of construction at 1799, during the Falmouth boom and within a decade of that of the Tharp House. While on the periphery of the historic downtown district, the house shares many of the characteristics fitting the urban typology, with a stone first floor and an open colonnade supporting the wood frame second floor. The study of its original design features is limited to historic photographs and architectural forensics as the second floor was destroyed in the early 1990s.

In his analysis of the structure, Crain describes original wrought-iron railings on the five triple-hung windows of the north façade. Behind the windows there would have been jalousies allowing for ventilation with privacy. The interior, he suggests, was based on Adam-style pattern books from England widely used by builders in Jamaica in creating common architectural fabric.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{110} Crain, \textit{Historic Architecture}, 74.
Figure 41 – The Edward Barrett House, Falmouth, Jamaica, constructed 1799. The colonnade and second floor triple-hung window openings of the north elevation can be seen. From Jamaica's Heritage.

Figure 42 – The Barrett House, after partial demolition in the early 1990s. From District Survey, 2008.
The Tharp House, meanwhile, is set apart from the pattern, addressing the sea rather than a street, with its back turned stubbornly away from the historic downtown area and, thus, lacking the street-side colonnade of contemporary townhouses. In its design and layout, the property more closely fits the style of great houses of Jamaican plantations.

In 2006, Edward Chappell, with Louis Nelson and Dan Harmon, completed an architectural analysis of the house, the findings of which provide the background for the explanation of its features, plan, and materials.111

The five-bay house is cut stone on the bottom with nog and wood-framing above and faces the harbor to the north. The L-shaped front steps have torus edges and are lined by concrete balustrades. The cut-stone porch

Figure 43 - The Tharp House, north elevation. From District Survey, 2008.

has two wooden Doric columns. Only a one-pane glass sidelight remains of the thick double doors, and pad-locked iron bars restrict public entrance.¹¹² There are four casement windows, two on each side of the door, with interior three-paneled shutters. The westernmost window has iron bars. The lower window openings are large and have projecting keystones. The intersection of the lower stone and upper nog/wood is marked by a stone cavetto, which Chappell notes as the “only classical masonry reference” in the site.¹¹³

The east elevation has a door and two openings at ground level with an iron spiral staircase leading to an awning-covered balcony and door on the second floor. Casement windows are situated to either side, one of which has a twentieth-century awning. A concrete staircase at the south end provided access to an old service building, lost to fire in 2005.¹¹⁴

The entrance hall is now partitioned into three rooms as denoted by the dashed lines in the plan drawing (figure 46). The center room connects to an axial hallway, at the end of which there are doors to either side leading to two inner chambers, each with a single window. The west room, also partitioned, was the reception room and its rear chamber has an early exterior doorway of uncertain function.

¹¹² There are large amounts of trash and some defacement on the site. Chappell notes the possibility that “an elderly man seems to live there.” Chappell, 7.
¹¹³ Chappell, 2.
¹¹⁴ Chappell, 10.
Figure 44 – The Tharp House east elevation and warehouse. (Photo: author).

Figure 45 – The Tharp House west elevation and property wall, bordering the harbor. The cut stone of the first floor is visible. From District Survey.
THARPE HOUSE

Figure 46 – The Tharp House Plan. (Courtesy Univ. of Virginia Falmouth Field School)
Of the interior details, Chappell provides the following assessment:

Bases, surbases, and all interior doorframes are now absent, but substantial pieces of window and exterior doorframes survive, and cornices are somewhat informative. The best finish is now in the side reception rooms, where there are original McMansion entablatures of a general approach seen elsewhere in town. These include a cornice with a Roman cyma and ovolo above respectable dentils, above an elegant cavetto and astragal. Below this is 6”-high board frieze, decorated with tiny composition lions’ heads and roundels (one 1¾” x 1-7/8” x ¾” head for every two 1½” x ¼” roundels). Virtually all the compo survives in the right (northwest) space; only their distinct ghosts survive in the left (northeast) space. The architrave is represented by a mere 1¾” high astragal and cavetto.\footnote{Chappell, 4.}

Due to the twentieth-century renovations, the southern portion of the plan could only be understood through analysis of the joists in the cellar as much or all of three original walls were removed during the process. The cellar was converted for office use and, consequently, is accessible from a front doorway in addition to an original doorway on the south side. Inside, Chappell notes “three generations of posts” with average sizes of 3” x 8” for joists and 7” and 8” for the summers, some of which are original and bear marks of a straight saw (figure 49).

During its current period of vacancy, the only ongoing maintenance efforts have focused on protecting the roof structure, which is especially vulnerable to rainwater along the boundary lines of each section. While funding for a major restoration project was being explored, the protection of the roof was given priority. Thankfully, the roof was saved, but deterioration
is apparent elsewhere. The 2008 Falmouth Survey designated the Tharp House as a highest-tier priority and graded its condition as “deteriorated.”

Figure 47 - The Tharp House cellar. (Courtesy Falmouth Heritage Renewal).

Figure 48 - Jet engine in the Tharp House cellar. (Photo: author).

Figure 49 - Chappell’s group saw three generations of joists in the Tharp House cellar. (Courtesy Falmouth Heritage Renewal).

In a 1965 article entitled “Cellars of Falmouth,” Falmouth historian Ray Fremmer describes his explorations of various cellars in the city and made special note of the Tharp House. With a flight of stone steps leading from the main floor, Tharp House’s, Fremmer says, is the only cellar in the city accessible from the house without removing floorboards. He also describes a flagstone floor, noting that flagstones were commonly brought in as ballast on incoming ships and then installed in cellars.\footnote{Ray Fremmer, “Cellars of Falmouth,” \textit{Jamaica Gleaner}, June 5, 1965.}

There are four wood shingle hipped-roofs, one each on the east and west ends running north-south and two in the center running east-west. All are adorned by cap’n-combs and presumed to be original.\footnote{Chappell, 7.} The roof structure, accessible through ceiling hatches, is composed of 2 ¼” X 3 ½” rafters (with slightly larger hip rafters) on 1’ 10” centers. The divisions of the roof system follow the lines of the walls in the floor plan, originally allowing the benefits of high-ceiling ventilation in each section while avoiding the vulnerability to storm damage of an oversized roof.
At the northwestern corner of the house, extending into the north yard, is a one story brick structure lacking a roof and believed to be original. The porch overlooks a yard leading to a chain link fence on the harbor and remnants of a jetty extend past the shoreline. Two twentieth-century utility buildings and a vehicle ramp are arranged in the north yard. Outbuildings line the eastern wall: the easternmost is concrete block and lies on the other side of the fence. Remnants of three historic cut stone structures continue
along the fieldstone eastern property wall until meeting more twentieth-century concrete at the southeastern end.

The north walls of the structure and property are bordered by water. Two replacement six-over-six sash windows and one casement window at the northern end overlook the neighboring fishing village.

The rear yard is presumed to be the location of service buildings. As mentioned above, the last of such structures burned in 2005 (figure 51), leaving two sets of steps behind. It had connected the main house to what is called the warehouse, sitting at the corner of Tharp St. and Seaboard St. The south elevation faces Seaboard St. and has a door opening and two small window openings on the first floor and five window openings above. While the first floor is cut stone, the small asymmetrical openings have brick frames, suggesting they are later modifications. Other additions include the sliding windows on the east and west elevations and an extensive section at its north end, with concrete blocks visible in one section of the wall and window openings of seemingly haphazard sizes and placement. Vacant for several years and now lacking a roof, the structure is filled with debris.
Figure 51 - The servants’ quarters burned down in 2005. (Courtesy Falmouth Heritage Renewal).

Figure 52 - A pile of rubble and a new chain link fence after the fire. (Courtesy Falmouth Heritage Renewal).
Figure 53 - Warehouse Plan. (Courtesy Univ. of Virginia Falmouth Field School).
Figure 54 - Servants' Quarters Plan. (Courtesy Univ. of Virginia Falmouth Field School).
Figure 55 - The warehouse, south elevation. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 56 - The interior of the warehouse, facing south. From District Survey, 2008.
The rest of the area between the warehouse and the main house is now overgrown with vegetation. Study of the evidence of early structures in this part of the lot has been limited, but common practice suggests footprints of historic outbuildings may be found here.

The theoretical arrangement of its service buildings is possibly one of several characteristics the Tharp House shares with the great houses of Jamaican plantations. Of great houses, Ross notes the following distinguishing characteristics: monumental exterior stairs, an emphasis on the dining room, numerous service buildings in operation around the main structure, and elaborate entrance gates. In evaluating the Tharp House against these criteria, it is necessary to limit the analysis to the area in proximity to the main house. Obviously, the Tharp House was not the seat of a functioning plantation, which would entail a far more extensive property and industrial infrastructure. This comparison includes only the components of the house and the structures directly related to its service and maintenance.

Of the features of great houses as delineated by Ross, the stairs are the most obviously present in the Tharp House. Chappell writes that the present configuration of the stairs is original, citing evidence in the balusters that

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steps rose from the left.\footnote{Chappell, 1.} While the steps do not have the same monumental stature as some famed great houses such as Good Hope and Halse Hall, they essentially serve the same function. The house is programmed to greet arrivals from the harbor and, just as those at Good Hope, the stairs at the Tharp House are the introduction.

Once guests had proceeded up the stairs and through the decorated original door, they would go through the entrance hall and into the reception room. In great houses, the purpose of the emphasized dining room was to entertain guests in an era when the success of Jamaican economy led to lavish lifestyles for its wealthy planters centered on “eating, drinking, and gambling.”\footnote{Ross, “Caribbean Colonial Architecture,” 27.} The Tharp House’s reception room in the northwest corner, overlooking the harbor and lit by three windows, could have played this role. Before twentieth-century partitioning, it would have been large enough to entertain and still bear the classical detail, as described by Chappell, to impress visitors.

The evidence of several outbuildings is found throughout the property. The most apparent is the warehouse (figure 55), which connects the property back into the town. The only one of the property’s structures set on a main thoroughfare, the warehouse would have been an ideal place for goods and

\footnote{Chappell, 1.}
\footnote{Ross, “Caribbean Colonial Architecture,” 27.}
workers arriving from the town. Food and supplies could have been stored here and much of the service work could have been carried out.

As previously mentioned, the area between the warehouse and main house would have been the site of other service buildings, potentially including a kitchen and laundry. The structure that burned in 2005 was original, as determined by Chappell using evidence from the termination of the exterior stone cavetto, and presumed to have housed servants.\textsuperscript{122}

The remnants of cut stone walls along the field stone east property wall hints at a series of structures once present, most likely part of wharf activities. Whether they extended all the way to the shoreline, including the area now occupied by the concrete block utility structure is uncertain.

Though no longer present, some kind of iron gate is likely to have existed. The most obvious spot would be at the northern termination of Tharp St., to the east of the warehouse. Any guess as to the specifics of the gate and its craftsmanship are conjectural, but something similar to gates at Good Hope is possible.

The distinction between styles of great houses and townhouses in Jamaica is not always clear. They share many aspects of their developments and have obviously cultural links, so it is to be expected that some structures may contain elements of both types. The Tharp House is not unique in

\textsuperscript{122} Chappell, 11.
straddling architectural boundaries. However, in the most Georgian of Jamaican towns with a well-earned reputation for architectural cohesiveness, the individuality, or incongruity, in the Tharp House is extraordinary.
Preservation Plan

The November 2008 agreement between Royal Caribbean and the Port Authority of Jamaica called for the redevelopment of the wharf including the restoration of Tharp House and the reuse of several other historic structures. To design the project, Royal Caribbean is employing International Design and Entertainment Associates, a firm specializing in heritage-themed development. In a press release, IDEA president Hugh Darley proclaimed, “Falmouth is destined to become the number one cruise port in the Caribbean.” If the early estimates of 400,000 visitors annually prove accurate, Darley’s prediction will become a reality.

Interest in the future of Falmouth’s heritage extends beyond a mere local level. The town has been on the World Monuments Watch List three times and has been a National Monument since 1996. Recognition of the town as a possible tourist destination has increased with the growth of appreciation for its architectural resources. Among the earliest explicit acknowledgements of the potential is a 1969 article in The Daily Gleaner by Ray Fremmer, who estimated that “no more than a half dozen” visitors came

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to the city each year.\textsuperscript{124} He identified Barrett House and the Tharp wharf property as potential major attractions.

By this time, mass tourism had already begun to dominate the Jamaican economy in resort areas such as Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. The proximity of these cities only worsened anxiety among those in Falmouth as the city approached a second century of recession. They wondered why the same success had not come to Falmouth.

In the 1990s, two studies explored the possibilities in Falmouth and offered suggestions regarding the challenge in properly utilizing its unique resources. The first was \textit{Jamaica’s Heritage: An Untapped Resource}, produced in 1991. The thorough study of Jamaica’s heritage gave special attention to the delineation of a restoration program for Falmouth. Within the suggested conservation region, the authors specified the restoration of Barrett House, Baptist Manse, Cox House, and Tharp House as pivotal. For Tharp House, they proposed reuse as a hotel and restaurant with restoration of the waterfront allowing for anchorage of smaller vessels. They also addressed more general issues of the town’s restoration, placing emphasis on community involvement and public review of restoration and new construction as well as the establishment of an aggressive grant program.\textsuperscript{125}

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In 1998, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Organization of the American States solicited a feasibility study for the town’s restoration. After studying the situation, the consultants concluded that the success of any restoration projects hinged on their proper consideration of authenticity, effective management, ongoing stewardship, sustainability, attractiveness for investment, and community impact.\footnote{Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, ARA Consulting Group, and Roy Stephenson Associates, \textit{Pre-Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Greater Falmouth}. In association with Geoffrey de Sola Pinto Associates and Copeland Stuart (Perth, Canada: Commonwealth Historic Resource Limited, 1998), iii.} While the study does not address specific structures, it too proposes a restaurant and retail use at the waterfront site, with “major slavery interpretation” as a main attraction.\footnote{CHRML, \textit{Pre-Feasibility Study}, vii.} The study found that, if the six aforementioned qualities were taken into account in restoration planning, the greater Falmouth area could expect 190,000 to 375,000 visitors annually and serve as an innovative example of heritage tourism and sustainable development.\footnote{CHRML, \textit{Pre-Feasibility Study}, x.}

In “quality tourism,” the architecture and culture of the area is actively embraced. A development is sustainable if its business operations do not demand resources at a rate faster than that at which they can produce them. Businesses related to tourism consume resources materially (in new construction), socially and economically (through the workforce), and culturally (in the utilization of local sites of significance). Having witnessed
the negative aspects of the traditional type of Jamaican tourism, as described below, and how they can deplete the local resources, many see these concepts as attractive alternatives.

Tourism is an indispensable industry in Jamaica. Each year, millions of visitors arrive and a majority of them come from the US.\textsuperscript{129} The most popular destinations are Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and Negril, all with origins in the era of mass tourism. Combined, they host nearly three quarters of all the island’s US visitors and employ 86.5 percent of industry labor.\textsuperscript{130} The latter figure is in no small part affected by their status as favored destinations.\textsuperscript{131}

As a result of their success in the tourism industry, Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and Negril provide relevant examples of the long-term problems associated with mass tourism. The enclosed resort areas separate tourists from local populations, who are in turn restricted from areas of their own town. The distinctions are evident in the contrast of the traditional Caribbean Georgian and the International style of the resort developments.\textsuperscript{132} The social and architectural discontinuities pose problems that cannot be solved by growth in the tourist economy, and the amount of

\textsuperscript{129} As of 2007, US stopovers numbered 1,132,532 while the world total was 1,700,785. Jamaica Tourist Board. Annual Travel Statistics 2007, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{130} Jamaica Tourist Board. Annual Travel Statistics 2007, xv, xviii.
\textsuperscript{131} For the purposes of the JTB, stopovers and cruise passengers are tallied differently. In 2007, cruise ships brought 749,281 passengers to Ocho Rios and 425,582 to Montego Bay. Jamaica Tourist Board. Annual Travel Statistics 2007, 47.
problems. These examples are evident enough for one columnist to vehemently argue against the establishment of a resort area in Falmouth, derisively referring to the ships as “floating amusement parks.”133

Figure 57 - The waterfront in Ocho Rios is dominated by International-style high rises that would not be suitable for Falmouth. From zimbio.com.

Quality tourist destinations seek to eliminate these disconnections and allow all citizens to benefit equally. One common practice is the reuse of extant building such as warehouses, saving materials as well as preserving prominent part of the landscape. Conveniently, the wharf area in Falmouth contains eight warehouses. Those to the east are the largest, spanning the distance from Lower Harbour Street to the harbor. Constructed of field stone in the early twentieth century and vacant for many years, two of them retain most of their roofing and only one is in ruin. The other four are smaller and are arranged around the lot closest to the Tharp House. Of great importance is that none of the warehouses overshadow the Tharp House in terms of scale. Voluminous due their length, their height is limited so that, viewed from the harbor, the Tharp House maintains its prominence on the waterfront.

The addition of International style high-rises to the setting would drastically affect the coastline by shifting the balance away from the historic focal point of the Tharp House and would clash with the established architectural hierarchy. The largest buildings in the historic district are municipal and religious and their magnitude must be maintained if the town is to preserve its character. Most buildings on the island are relatively small

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and the design should account for the cultural limits of its setting.\textsuperscript{135} While the town is treasured, there are some recent examples in which issues of scale have posed problems (figure 58). These buildings should not be used as a precedent for future construction, which should be limited to two stories.

Figure 58 - The kind of massing seen in this building on the periphery of the historic district should be avoided in the downtown area. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 59 · The southern elevation of one of the larger wharf buildings addressing Lower Harbour Street. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 60 · One of the larger wharf buildings spanning hundreds of feet to the shoreline. From District Survey, 2008.
Figure 61 - The southwest oblique of one of the smaller wharf buildings. From District Survey, 2008.

Figure 62 - Only one of the large wharf buildings is in ruin. From District Survey, 2008.
Figure 63 - Despite their volume, the wharf buildings do not overshadow the Tharp House, seen at the far left in this model of the view of the waterfront from the harbor. From author.

Figure 64 - The length of the wharf buildings can be seen in this model of the view from the west, but the Tharp House is nonetheless competitive in regards to height. From author.
Another potential massing dilemma is in the ships themselves. The future pier is specified to accommodate the new Genesis class of Royal Caribbean ships which will be the largest in their fleet (figure 65). Measuring 1181 feet in length, 213 feet in height from the waterline, and 154 feet in width, the ships would overwhelm all other buildings on the waterfront. To avoid this problem, efforts should be made to locate the pier sufficiently far away from the historic district. Keeping them to the east of the wharf is sensible, as the twentieth-century warehouses would help ease the transition between the incredible disparities in size, scale, and style between the ships and pier and the earlier structures of the downtown area.

Embracing the disparities would only further highlight obvious ethnic distinctions between the local and visiting populations. Easing racial tensions will require great tact and patience and developers must be careful not to hinder the process by translating the distinctions to the urban landscape.
Figure 65 - Massing comparison of Genesis class ships and the Tharp House complex. Conceptual rendering of ship from Royal Caribbean Genesis Press Release.
In addition to scale, the distinction between historic and modern structures must be considered. The design can and should still pay homage to the local typology in scale, materials, and the distinctive roof shapes, but should diverge from the precedent enough to give visitors a clear sense of what is historic. Statements from IDEA have indicated an understanding of the extraordinary integrity of Falmouth, so there is ground for optimism that the firm is working with the understanding that a “Disneyesque,” faux-historic experience is not appropriate.

The case of Bermuda provides some evidence that quality tourism can be successful. Through standards of maintenance for older structures and of the design of newer developments, the tourism economy of Bermuda has been noted for its sustainability.136 The Esten House site (figure 66) in St. George’s bears particular similarities to that of the Tharp House in its date of construction and original use as a wharf. Late-twentieth-century renovations adapting the building for use as a hotel and bar were sufficiently sympathetic to avoid blighting the historic setting.137

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137 Michael Jarvis and the Historic Buildings Book Project, _Bermuda’s Architectural Heritage_ (Bermuda: Bermuda National Trust, 1998), 41-42.
Local involvement is an absolute necessity in creating an environment of quality tourism. To make the industry sustainable, it must be rewarding for both visitors and inhabitants. The goals are for the community to retain a sense of ownership of the town and to have pride in its display. Significant progress towards both can be made through the inclusion of the local population throughout restoration efforts. On a general level, this requires campaigns to restore smaller, privately-owned homes and public spaces and consistent and open dialogue between the developers and the city. In regards to the Tharp House it is important that local expertise is utilized in the research, design, craftsmanship, and presentation. Fortunately, the town has the foundations of preservation ethic and restoration skills necessary in undertaking such a task.
Modern restoration efforts were first organized in the early 1990s, as promoted by the authors of *Jamaica’s Heritage: An Untapped Resource*. The Falmouth Restoration Company, in conjunction with other agencies such as the Jamaican National Heritage Trust (JNHT), the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ), and Jamaica Heritage Trail Limited (JHTL), set to work completing many of the tasks set forth in *Jamaica’s Heritage*. One of their most successful projects was the restoration of the Baptist Manse (figures 67 and 68), which required a reconstructed roof, the restoration of the interior staircase, a near complete reinstallation of the second floor, and extensive work on the overgrown and debris-filled lot. The building now houses the workshop of Falmouth Heritage Renewal (FHR), founded by Christopher Ohrstrom, with James Parrent serving as Executive Director.

FHR has a special focus on assisting local homeowners interested in making a personal investment in the town’s revitalization. An example of this kind of project can be found at 23 Lower Harbour Street (figures 68 and 69), restored in 2005. Funding for many of these projects is achieved through FHR as long as there is a demonstrated commitment on the part of the owner. This is precisely the sort of local involvement necessary in the new development. In working with those who are willing to invest in the community, restoration becomes a citywide effort rather than the isolated mission of a single non-profit group.
Figure 67 - The Baptist Manse before restoration. From Jamaica’s Heritage.

Figure 68 - The Baptist Manse after restoration by the Falmouth Restoration Company and Falmouth Heritage Renewal. From District Survey, 2008.
Figure 69 - 23 Lower Harbour Street, prior to restoration. From FHR Photo Essay.

Figure 70 - 23 Lower Harbour Street, restored by Falmouth Heritage Renewal. From FHR Photo Essay.
Further emphasizing the community’s role in the restoration efforts is FHR’s active training program in which local individuals are taught restoration skills and employed in carrying out various projects. For the rest of the town, this practice associates familiar faces with the restoration and makes great strides in creating the important sense of ownership. Even those who do not participate can at least know that the work is being carried out by Falmouth citizens.

In planning the wharf development, design associates and city leaders would be wise to employ similar measures to engage the local population, especially in regards to the Tharp House. As an enduring landmark of the city, it must continue to be identified with the public, amongst whom it is largely viewed as a monument to their slave ancestors by whose labor it was constructed rather than as a vestige of its slave-trading namesake.

The feasibility studies have agreed that the success of the town’s restoration will be measured by its ability to interpret the era of slavery in a way that is effective for both locals and visitors. This poses its own set of challenges, the solutions for which can only be determined through deliberation and sociological study. Whatever plan of representation is chosen, it is certain that the Tharp House must play a central role as it is significant to the issue in three ways:
- its location at the port which once served as a major post in the
Atlantic slave trade
- its association with John Tharp, one of the wealthiest slave traders in
Jamaica
- the magnitude and durability of its construction by means of slave
labor

The main house, both the most imposing and best preserved structure
on the lot, should be restored to its original late-eighteenth-century state and
serve as a house museum. It should illustrate its history rather than narrate
it by emphasizing a representation of the era and all its practices—the
plantation networks, the urban environment, and, of course, slavery—
through the accurate rendering of the architecture, furnishings, and routines
of the house. As the only structure in the wharf area with early-Falmouth-era
significance, its faithful restoration is the best opportunity to represent the
site’s relationship to the era of the slave trade. However, the proposed use of
living history specialists should be avoided as the distress stemming from the
portrayal of slaves in this manner would hinder any prospects for a
constructive and positive illuminating experience. Any omission of their
portrayal would be glaring.

Interpretation of the site can nonetheless be thoroughly accomplished
through the employment of guides from the Falmouth area (of which there is
no shortage of knowledgeable candidates) and the establishment of information center in another structure on the site. The warehouse is a logical choice as it would serve to strengthen the connection between the site and the rest of the historic district. If visitors arrive through the main gate, an exit at the Seaboard Street door of the warehouse would leave them close to their point of arrival, while giving the custodians an opportunity to offer a conclusion to the site and provide access to information on other sites of interest. Furthermore, it would be an ideal placement for a gift shop. With reconstructed roofing and flooring, it could serve these functions while not greatly deviating from its original appearance.

The most extensive reconstruction efforts should concern the servants’ quarters building. While its loss to fire was lamentable, it fortunately lasted long enough to leave behind solid photographic evidence that can be utilized in its recreation. As the issue of slavery is indelible to the site, this building should be interpreted with the same methodology as the main house with the caveat that it be clearly communicated that it is a reconstruction.

The oft-articulated desire to have a restaurant on the premises could be realized in the reconstruction of the kitchen between the main house and the warehouse. As architectural evidence for the original structure is scarce,
Figure 71 - Conceptual rendering of the restored Tharp House main house, east elevation. The yellow paint was not original, but analysis of the paint layers must be made to accurately restore the house. The ashlar stone of the lower portion is revealed, as it likely had been. The casement windows are replaced with six over six sash windows, a noted original feature. The double door and decorative transom are also restored. From author.
Figure 72 - Conceptual rendering of the restored warehouse, south elevation. Addressing Seaboard Street, the warehouse could serve as an information center and gift shop for the Tharp House and historic district. From author.
Figure 73: Conceptual rendering of the reconstructed servants' quarters, south elevation. From author.
Figure 74. Conceptual rendering of outdoor seating behind the main house that would serve an adjoining restaurant. The area colored with dark green is a possible site of the original kitchen and laundry and should accordingly be given archeological priority. From author.
archeology is needed to find its original placement and perhaps some design characteristics as well.\textsuperscript{138} Outdoor seating could connect the site to the adjoining lot to the west, an old fishing village and restaurant that is included in the area of the wharf development. An existing building on the site with a distinctive Rastafarian mural (figure 75) may be worth keeping as an icon of Falmouth’s inclusion in broader developments in twentieth-century Jamaica. While restoration of the Tharp House is appropriate and necessary in teaching the history of the town, the designers should be careful not to give the impression that the city stopped evolving altogether. Erasing evidence of the town’s recent past in the effort to honor its earliest period only sacrifices the memory of the generations of Falmouthians who kept the town and its heritage alive. To provide a complete picture of the history of the town, all eras of development must be acknowledged in some way. The Ras Itan mural may be such a way and should be considered for inclusion in the waterfront restaurant.

\textsuperscript{138} Archeology would be worthwhile throughout the entire site, but priority should be given to the interior yard which may not only give evidence of early utility buildings but possibly countless artifacts dating to the wharf’s busiest era. The insights of such a project could provide information vital to the faithful presentation of the house museum as there remains a great deal of uncertainty regarding its original operation.
However, not all modern structures on the site should be saved. The fate of each should depend on the degree to which it impedes the experience of the restored landscape. Therefore, the concrete structures at the north of the lot should be demolished. The view of the harbor from the front porch of the main house is an important aspect of its original design that should be restored in order to give a better sense of context. The other auxiliary structures meriting restoration include:

- The brick storehouse at the northwest corner of the main house
- The extant stone wharf building along the eastern wall
- Both the east and west stone sea walls
Ultimately, and appropriately, the restoration plan for the Tharp House complex will be created by the city and the wharf developers. Only the people of Falmouth can tell their story and it is their right and responsibility to do so however they choose. Similarly, only these developers have the resources needed to carry out this extensive and long-awaited revitalization project and should therefore be able to operate with a justified sense of leverage.

Of course, the interests of the two groups are not always easily compatible and acceptable compromises do not arise quickly. By now it should be clear: the situation presents an exceptional challenge. Hopefully, this study has helped clarify the complicated situation and shown it to be, above all else, an incredible opportunity to preserve a heritage that was once in danger of disappearing and that nowhere is the opportunity greater than the one at the Tharp House.
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Reconstructed north elevation. *(Courtesy Univ. of Virginia Falmouth Field School)*
Rendering of present state of wharf area. From author.
Conceptual renderings
Map of Falmouth Historic District 1954-2008 (Compiled by the author from data in the Falmouth Historic District Survey, 2008.)

Blue represents structures on the 1954 map and still present in 2008.
Orange represents structures on the 1954 map no longer present.
Pink represents current structures not present on the 1954 map.
More Georgian in Falmouth (All photographs from the Falmouth Historic District Survey, 2008.)
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