

Insight or Retrogression!
Architects of Wisdom!

The sounds and vibrations linger: The hum, the rumbling, the clanging, the whizzing sound, of steam engines, the smell of smoke, molasses and feces, the thumping of carriages, station activities, interaction among people, staff, the station bell and flag man, the distribution of “railway kill” and stories associated with it

Guyana was fortunate to have the first passenger railway system in South America, operating from its Capitol Georgetown to Rosignol. The tracks were laid in phases; starting in 1847 4.5 miles of tracks were laid from Georgetown to Plaisance; then after seventeen years, it reached Machaica, which is twenty two miles from Georgetown. The tracks reached Rosignol sometime in the 1900's. Hence, there was an estimated 60.5 miles of tracks from Georgetown to Rosignol. These tracks crossed trenches and creeks with a two hundred feet span over the Machaica and Mahicony creeks. This railway linkage facilitated the transporting of people, local produced, sugar, molasses, rice, food, cattle, postal materials and also invigorated all communities and economies along its route: Georgetown, Kitty, Ogle, Plaisance, Beterverwagting, Lusignan, Annandale, Buxton & Friendship, Strathspey, Non Pareil, Bachelor's Adventure, Enmore, Nabaclis & Golden Grove, Victoria & Ann's Grove, Clonbrook, Mahaica, Belvidere, Fairfield, Cottage, Sarah, Mahaicony, Huntley, Belladrum, Weldaad, Lichfield, Ross, Tempe', Onverwagt, Bush Lot, Hopetown, Fort Wellington, Waterloo, Rosignol, etc. etc...

On the West Coast of Demerara, tracks were laid in 1899 at Vreedenhoop, and extended to Parika, in 1914. These passenger tracks were also instrumental in promoting trade and commerce while stimulating the economies along its path: Vreedenhoop, Harlem, Winsdor Forest, La Jalousie, Hague, Leonora, Uitvlugt, Boerasirie, Tuschen, Vergenoegen, Parika, etc...

This exchange did not cover the industrial railway systems of Port Kaituma, Matthews Ridge in North West, Wismar to Rockstone, Mackenzie and Kwakwani, nor the current passenger system used in Lusignan to transport workers to the sugar cane fields. This Lusignan passenger system, at one time, enabled the Buxton and Friendship cattle herdsman and women, in particular, to save time in getting to the Savannah to eye their cattle.

The purpose of this document is not to isolate the union of women and men, nor to numerate accidents and deaths, but to note that there was a flourishing railway system, serving communities and revitalizing economies on the East and West Coast of Demerara in Guyana, and its discontinuance on June 30, 1972, shattered the lives of the inhabitants and also promoted a negative effect on infrastructural and environmental development, which remains underdeveloped.

The question can be asked, “Why Post Colonial leaders, as they amass political power, had difficulty analyzing realpolitik as they guided their nations to ruins?”

Insight or Retrogression!
Architects of Wisdom!

2/27/2011

© Arnold P. Bathersfield 2011