

**Commemorating the 127th anniversary of the birth of the Rt. Excellent Norman
Washington Manley**

Roxborough, Manchester will always occupy an illustrious place in Jamaican history. It was at this property, about 14 kilometres from Porus, that Norman Washington Manley was born on July 4, 1893. He was christened at the Porus Methodist Church on September 17 of that same year. Manley was an immensely talented individual. Not only was he a founding member and president of the Peoples National Party, but also an athlete, soldier, lawyer, social justice advocate and community builder.



View of the ruins of the house at Roxborough which was destroyed by fire in 1968



The house at Roxborough around 1965

Activism and Jamaica Welfare

In the 1930s Jamaica was rife for social protests, class consciousness and political reform. By then a new group of intellectual nationalists, of which Manley became the most prominent, had emerged on the national scene. These men and women sought a more equitable and progressive nation that prioritized the perspectives and interests of the underclasses. The working classes of Jamaica were subjected to low wages and substandard conditions. Further, their communities were often ignored by the ruling classes. It was considering such injustices, that organizations of varying capabilities were created to alleviate the sufferings of the masses.

As a result of Manley's negotiating skills, he managed to secure a deal allowing the Jamaica Welfare to be funded by the United Fruit Company and the Standard Fruit Company. This entity, established in 1937, by Manley and other middle-class Jamaicans, became the most significant social development agency at the time. Jamaica Welfare was a pioneer in advocating for land reform, community-based enterprises, saving clubs, education, and other activities. It was out of this development that community centres were built at Guy's Hill (1938) and Porus (1939) to facilitate rural advancement. The Jamaica Welfare model was transplanted to other areas of the British empire.



View of the Porus Community Centre, Manchester

Political Involvement

Manley was also instrumental in the trade union movement, the formation of the People's National Party (PNP) in 1938 and led the call for Universal Adult Suffrage. Under Manley, the PNP formed the government for the first time in 1955. Manley also led Jamaica into full internal self-

government in 1959. However, the PNP was defeated at the polls in the general election of 1962, after the collapse of the West Indies Federation. Manley gave his last years of service as Leader of the Opposition and retired in 1969.

Manley's Last Home

In 1962, the year Jamaica achieved political independence, the property known as 'Regardless' and located at 4 Washington Drive, St. Andrew became the residence of Norman Manley, and his wife Edna Manley. It remained their residence until their deaths. Norman Manley died on September 2, 1969. Later that year, he was declared National Hero.



View of Regardless – now the headquarters of the Norman Manley Foundation

References

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