Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Department of Culture, the Arts and National Heritage

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND NATIONAL HERITAGE

Mission Ruins of Venn's Town, Seychelles

Textual description of the boundary (ies) of the nominated property

The Mission Ruins of Venn's Town, proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List (WHL), is located in the Indian Ocean, in the Western part of Mahé, within the Morne Seychellois National Park, in the districts of Port Glaud and Bel Air. The Property includes five ruins and the cemetery. The property and the Buffer Zone have an extent of approximately 274.0 hectares on state land.

STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

Mission Ruins of Venn's Town, located in the Seychelles, embodies a profound testimony to the resilience and transformation of liberated African children in the aftermath of the transoceanic slave trade. Established during a period of deep global injustice, particularly following the abolition of slavery in 1835, Venn's Town served as a beacon of hope, humanity, dignity, and justice for those emerging from the trauma of enslavement in the Indian Ocean region.

This nominated property is directly associated with the broader history of the World Slave Trade and stands as a rare and tangible symbol of the transitional moment when slavery was being dismantled, but illegal slave trading persisted. Venn's Town played a revolutionary role by offering liberated

slave children a haven, formal education, and spiritual guidance, enabling them to rebuild their lives and forge new identities in a foreign land.

The mission at Venn's Town marked the beginning of formal education and Christian evangelization for liberated slave children in Seychelles. Through this process, these children originating from various African countries contributed to the foundation of what is today the

Seychellois Creole culture. Their integration with European evangelical influences created a unique cultural synthesis, evident in language, religious beliefs, traditional medicine, craftsmanship, and economic practices.

As a property of cultural convergence and transformation, Venn's Town represents the emergence of a new society rooted in cultural resilience, spiritual identity, and social cohesion. It was here that the liberated began to reclaim their dignity and assert their humanity, shaping not only their own destinies but also the future cultural landscape of the Seychelles.

The mission became a living tradition, with religious faith serving not only as spiritual solace but as a framework for identity formation and community resilience. The values nurtured at Venn's Town, including freedom, justice, adaptation, and survival, continue to resonate through the descendants of those children, who today form a significant core of the Seychellois population.

In its tangible remains and intangible heritage, Mission Ruins of Venn's Town bears exceptional testimony to a crucial chapter in the human story: the transition from enslavement to liberation, from cultural dislocation to integration, and from silence to self-expression. As such, it possesses Outstanding Universal Value as a place of historical transformation and enduring cultural legacy.

Built Elements and Archaeological Remains

The ruins visible today include stone foundations, terraces, retaining walls, stairways, and fragmentary structural remains associated with missionary residences, dormitories, classrooms, and service buildings. Constructed primarily from locally quarried granite using dry-stone and lime-based masonry techniques, the remains reflect adaptive colonial construction practices developed in response to steep topography, high rainfall, and limited material resources.

Architectural Remains

The surviving architectural elements consist primarily of:

• Stone foundations and wall bases outlining former dormitories, classrooms, missionary residences, and ancillary structures.

• Low-standing walls, in places reaching up to one meter in height, constructed from locally quarried granite blocks laid in rough coursed masonry.

• Lime-based mortar residues, indicating a hybrid use of dry-stone techniques and bonded masonry typical of mid-19th-century colonial construction in Seychelles.

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• Stone stairways and pathways, some of which remain intact, illustrate formal circulation routes

and controlled movement within the compound.

No roof structures survive. Historical evidence suggests that superstructures were constructed from timber with thatch or corrugated metal roofing, materials highly susceptible to decay in humid tropical environments (Pearson, 2015).

Reference:

Pearson, M. (2015). Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies

Cemetery of the Mission Ruins of Venn's Town

The property includes a cemetery forming an extension of the original settlement, serving as the final resting place for many liberated African children and adults who resided at the mission during the late 19th century. The cemetery is located downslope from the main ridge-top plateau, occupying a natural mid-slope terrace within the forested flanks of the ridge (Government of Seychelles, 2013)

It contains eleven (11) visible tombs of varying sizes and conditions, positioned within a modestly bounded area.

The property likely served as a final resting place for enslaved children who resided at the industrial school, as evidenced by at least one inscribed tomb belonging to Edwin Lucock known to be the son of one of the past administrators of the Industrial school. The cemetery is shaded by mature vegetation and bordered by natural terrain that has partially encroached upon its perimeter over time. A commemorative plaque, installed in 2007, stands as a testament to the property's importance and marks the commitment to its protection and preservation.

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

VENN'S TOWN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical background below provides the context in order to better understand the complexity around the setting up Venn's Town as a Boarding School for the children of freed slaves in Seychelles and the purpose that it served.

Slavery and the origins of the African Slave Trade

Although slavery as a system has been practiced for almost the whole of recorded history, slavery and slave trade in Africa have created a lasting legacy. Africans were subjected to several forms of enslavement over the centuries, including what can be described as a traditional form of slavery, where enslaved people were considered to be the property of their masters.

The African slave trade is considered one of the darkest chapters in world history. It lasted for centuries, affecting millions of African people and the repercussions have re-shaped societies across the world. It is estimated that between 1400 and 1900, close to 20 million individuals were captured from Africa. Based on shipping and census data, Canadian economic historian Nathan Nunn[1], concluded that by 1800 Africa's population was half of what it would have been, had these trades of enslaved Africans not occurred.

The East-African or the Indian Ocean Slave Trade

While many people associate the slave trade with the transatlantic route, the reality is that the enslavement of Africans began long before European involvement and took many different forms.

The East African slave trade has attracted much less attention than has its West African counterpart. Whereas the Atlantic Ocean provided the world setting for the West African slave trade, the Indian Ocean was the stage for the East African slave trade.

The Indian Ocean stretches between the east coast of Africa and the west coast of India. It was once part of the route for a slave trade known as the 'Oriental' or eastern slave trade. From the 7th century enslaved Africans were taken to the Middle East, North Africa and India. This eastern slave trade was different to the slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean. In the transatlantic slave trade the demand was for labourers to work on plantations and in mines, and mostly men were captured to supply the demand. In the eastern trade, the demand at first was for domestic servants, and mostly women were captured to supply the trade.

In the eastern slave trade enslaved Africans were taken mainly from the east coast of Africa (the modern countries of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and the island of Madagascar).

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[1] Nunn, N. 2008: The long-term effects of Africa's slave trades. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Vol 123, pp. 139-176.

Later, French merchants also bought slaves from East Africa for the growing sugar plantations on the French owned islands in the Indian Ocean, including Seychelles. By the early 19th century about 30,000 people were being sold into slavery from this eastern area of Africa[2]. They were being bought and sold through the main centre of the trade on the island of Zanzibar. Similar to the West Coast of Africa, a great number of forts and trading-posts were established on the shores of East Africa, such as Kilwa, Mombasa, Malindi, Bagamoyo.

Colonisation of Seychelles and the start of settlement

The Seychelles archipelago is located in the middle of the Indian Ocean and it comprises about 115 islands. According to historical records, there was no indigenous population in Seychelles, however, the islands were visited by traders from the Persian Gulf and also by pirates. The first recorded landing was in 1609 by one expedition of the British East India Company. From the journal of John Jourdain, who was on one of the ships, 'Ascension' commanded by Alexander Sharpeigh, he described the islands as deserted, rich in vegetation and fresh water to drink[3].

With the colonization of Mauritius by the French in 1715, several expeditions were sent to Seychelles to explore the conditions and if its worthy of colonization. Some of the main expeditions were those of Lazare Picault. The first expedition of Lazare Picault was in 1742 and in his report, he mentioned that there was fresh water, birds that they could use for food as well as good wood to repair their ships. His second expedition was in 1744, after which the French decided to colonise the islands. Lazare Picault was sent by the Governor of Mauritius, Mahe de Labourdonnais. On 1st November 1756, a stone of possession was placed on the main island of Mahe, by Mr Corneille Nicholas Morphey, which proclaimed the island officially as a French colony. It was only in 1770 that the first group of settlers landed in Seychelles. On 27th August 1770, Mr De Launay was the commander of this first group, which consisted of 16 whites, 6 slaves, 5 Indians and 1 negress[4].

People who settled on St Anne Island, one of the inner islands of Seychelles, started clearing land for their plantation, which was made up of mainly cotton and other crops for their livelihood. Unfortunately, this first settlement was not very successful and many of the people went back to Mauritius. In 1771, some of them went to start a new settlement on Mahe, at the mouth of Rochon river. This was also not very successful. In 1772 Pierre Poivre, who wanted to establish a spice plantation for France somewhere in the Indian Ocean, sent Antoine Gillot, a retired army officer, with dozens of black and white workers, livestock, seeds and the necessary provisions to Seychelles to set up a spice garden. The site chosen by Gillot for the spice garden which was to become the Jardin du Roi, was at Anse Royale. There, he planted nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and pepper, which thrived for only a

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[2] Allen, R. 2004: The Mascarene Slave-Trade and Labour Migration in the Indian Ocean during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, in Gwyn Campbell, ed., The Structure of Slavery in the Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia. Frank Cass Ltd., pp. 39-41
[3] Webb, AWT. (1960). The story of Seychelles
[4] Filliot. J.M. (1982). Histoire des Seychelles. Ministry of Education and Information, Seychelles, p. 64

few years. Unfortunately, in May 1780 the ship that the French authorities mistook for a British vessel and consequently ordered the destruction of the spice garden.

It was not until 3rd November 1778, several months after the formal declaration of war with England-that a military detachment sailed to the Seychelles. Under the command of Lieutenant Charles Routier de Romainville, it consisted of a sergeant, corporal and 13 soldier tradesmen, of the Isle de France regiment. Also, on board the vessel 'Helene', were a surgeon and two naval carpenters to see to the cutting of timber. Romainville's orders were to bring the colony back under control and to procure for the inhabitants every means of preventing a foreign power forming a settlement there. He was also to supervise the distribution of land to the new settlers it was hoped to send from Bourbon. His first task was to construct living quarters for himself and his men, and it was at this L'Etablissement du Roi, on the banks of St Louis River that the Victoria, the Seychelles capital was formed.

Before the abolition of slavery in 1835, most slaves worked on white-owned estates, who were mainly of French descents. The main agricultural products were cotton, coconut oil, spices, coffee and vanilla, as well as sufficient food crops to support the population.

The treatment of slaves in Seychelles, like in many other colonies, was marked by abuse, inhumane conditions and a lack of legal protection. Enslaved individuals faced long hours of labour under very harsh conditions, with little access to food and medical care. The Code Noir (see Appendix 1), a set of laws governing slavery in French colonies, offered minimal protection for the slaves. Slaver accounts collected from slave descendants reveal a stark reality of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as limited access to basic necessities, and the constant fear of aggression or loss of freedom[5]. Similar to Mauritius, many slaves escaped from the harsh treatment of their masters, living as maroons all over the main island of Mahe, or even escaped to other islands[6].

In 1835, when the Emancipation Act came into force, 6,521 slaves were 'freed' in Seychelles from a total population of 7,500 inhabitants. With the abolition, the landowners received compensation for the loss of their slaves at the rate of £30 per slave[7], even if they did nothing for the welfare of their slaves and the improvement of their plantations. The emancipated slaves refused to work for their former masters. This gave rise to an acute shortage of labour force, which aggravated the ongoing recession that started previously with the downfall of the price of cotton, the main export of the time.[8] At the end of the emancipation the Seychelles went into a more serious economic depression. Labour-intensive field crops rapidly gave way to crops that required relatively little labour, including copra, cinnamon, and vanilla.

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[5] De Comarmond, O. & Gilleaux, C. (2024). Memories of Slavery: The Vestiges of Slavery in Seychelles.
[6] Nicholls, P. (2022). Maroons of the Seychelles: Escape from slavery 1768-1877. Independent Publisher Network.
[7] Durup, J. (n.d.), The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.
[8] Durup, J. (2002). Slavery in Seychelles 1770-1976. In « L"Esclavage et ses Séquelles Mémoire et Vécu d"hier et d"aujourd"hui ».

Seychelles and the illegal trade in the Indian Ocean

Despite all sorts of restrictive measures at curbing the slave trade that came in the wake of the 1835 Emancipation Act, the illicit trade of slaves from Africa seemed to have continued relentlessly in the Indian Ocean. This illegal trade was mainly by the Arabs, who were in control of parts of East Africa, including the island of Zanzibar. Ships of the Royal Navy scoured the waters of the Indian Ocean, intercepted Arab dhows in the Mozambique channel and confiscated their cargoes of slaves which they brought to Seychelles and Mauritius.

On 13 May 1861, much to the contentment of the landowners, Seychelles received the first batch of 252 Liberated Africans. They arrived on HMS Lyra, under the command of Captain Robert Augustus Parr. The first group of 189 disembarked on the 15 May and the second batch of 135 the next day. In the next few days more British Anti-Slavery Patrol ships arrived with more Africans. Many more ships kept arriving until 1874, such as the Nymph, Vulture, Ariel and Thefis[9]. The biggest group to arrive on 12 October 1868 was 409 mostly Oromos or better known as Gallas tribe, arriving on board HMS Daphne. A fair figure of those who arrived in the Seychelles is 2,900. Arriving in Seychelles, they were taken to prison where they were "classified" by the District Magistrate, the Chief Medical Officer[10], ticketed, numbered and later they were photographed (See Appendix 2 for sample of freed slave register).

Males and Females were separated and tribal groups were not allowed to stay together, to avoid any attempt of revolt. Landowners were very reluctant to take two Africans who spoke the same dialect. The men and women were allotted to different proprietors of estates to work in the expanding coconut and vanilla industries whilst the children lived vagrantly or were also employed in households[11]. The Liberated Africans were "indentured" for 5 years to the landowners, a system of apprenticeship more or less similar to slavery. The old and sick remained the property of the Government[12]. The price of for the Liberated Africans was set by Ordinance 18 of 1865, and was as follows: Adult male £5, female over 12 years £4, and £3 male and female under 12 years[13]. After visiting Seychelles in June 1872, the Welshman Stanley, the African explorer, complained in London about the selling of the Liberated Africans. That money was of course paid to the Royal Navy to cover the cost of their up keep during their journey to the Seychelles[14]. Records of slaves liberated in Seychelles show that most of these slave ships consisted of large number of children, some with their parents, while others had been captured without their parents. Some of these

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[9] Seychelles National Archives, B-85

[10] Donald Taylor: "Launching Out into the Deep"2005: p.244

[11] Durup, J. (n.d.), The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.

[12] Durup, J. (n.d.). The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, p. 15

[13] Ibid

[14] Donald Taylor: "Launching Out into the Deep"2005: p.244

freed slave children were as young as 3 years old[15]. Most of Liberated Africans were badly treated. There were many runaways even amongst the children[16].

The establishment of Venn's Town

The establishment of Venn's Town started amidst the turmoil of the illegal trade in the Indian Ocean. Several countries were affected by the landing of 'freed slaves' in their territories, mainly British colonies. The Anglican Church which had been well established in most of these countries took the opportunity to expand through the different programmes that were set up for the freed slaves.

Considering the number of children among the liberated Africans landing in Seychelles, the Anglican church raised concern about their treatment and their lack of education as well as their presumably lack of 'savoir vivre'[17].

The proposal for the construction of a school for the children of liberated slaves was brought forward by the Church Missionary Society since 1871 by Rev. Sparshotts, but the idea was quickly rejected in view of the difficulties that were exposed at different levels[18]. To note that, Reverend Sparshotts and his wife was sent to Seychelles in 1870 to look into the possibility of setting up a school for the children of freed slaves. When he dismissed the idea, he left Seychelles for India in August 1871.

The necessity of having a school for the liberated slave children nevertheless remained on the agenda of the authorities in view of the conditions that the liberated Africans were enduring in Seychelles. In his letter dated 15th August 1874 to Bishop Ryan, the then Acting Civil Commissioner of Seychelles Mr Havelock, wrote:

"I think you will be able to recall to mind a conversation in which Dr. Brodie and Mr. Lawder took part with you and me, one day as we were walking home from the African Camp, upon the means of preaching the blessings of Christian civilisation to that almost neglected portion of the rich inhabitants of these islands, the Africans, rescued from slavery, and entrusted to our care. I think we clearly made out that the best field for work of this kind would be found among the future cargoes of liberated slaves introduced, and especially among the children who might form part of those cargoes. I am under the impression that we agreed that it would be an extremely difficult and ungrateful task to benefit the adults; and that something in the form of a Mission or Industrial School for the reception of young Africans, would afford the most powerful Agency for ultimate general improvement, and would yield the greatest possible results for the country & labour especially"[19].

Havelock's justification for the establishment of a Mission was further strengthened in the same letter, where he stated that:

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[15] Seychelles Archives, B-85
[16] Nicholls, P. (2022). Maroons of the Seychelles: Escape from slavery 1768-1877. Independent Publisher Network.
[17] McAteer, W. (2000). Hard Times in Paradise:The history of Seychelles 1827-1919. Pristine, Seychelles.
[18] Ibid
[19] BUSC CMS C MA/06 (d); Letter from Captain Havelock to Bishop Royston dated 15th August 1874

"Two days ago, H.M.S. *Thetis* arrived here from the East coast of Africa, bringing ninety-two rescued slaves, of whom forty-nine are children. In the ordinary course of things these 49 children, allotted to various settlers, will be scattered all over the islands, and will for the most part be brought with no religious or education than they would have acquired in their native villages in Africa…. The moral condition of these Africans in the Seychelles is a blot on our religion and on our nation. We must make an effort to remove it"[20].

His plea to the Bishop was that "all, or a large proportion of the young Africans brought here below a certain age, should be, on arrival, handed over to the care of the Home, Mission or School, and that they should remain there to an age to be determined on according to circumstances, and then under certain restrictions be apprenticed to the trades or occupations to which they may be best suited"[21].

The demand made by Havelock received positive support of the Bishop and the Church Missionary Society. There were several visits by representatives of the Church Missionary Society to Seychelles[22], and in April 1875 a permanent representative was posted to Seychelles. The Reverend William Chancellor, who was appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to be Civil Chaplain, arrived in Seychelles in 1875 with his wife Catherine. His specific task was to set up a school for the children of the liberated slaves. Chancellor replaced Adolph Vaudin, who was then the Civil Chaplain.

The first communication to the Church Missionary Society after the arrival of Chancellor was from his wife Katie Chancellor in July 1875. In her letter she provided a detailed report on the circumstances under which they started their mission. She wrote: "My husband having been called away on duty," she wrote, "has asked me to write to you a few lines and to thank you for the promises of help you think you will be able to give us with regard to our poor little church. You will be glad to hear that our creole congregation has given something towards covering the debt which has been incurred last year, and the Bishop has sent £20"[23].

This letter was written in July, by which time Chancellor was finding it difficult to hold both posts at the same time, that is to be Civil Chaplain and to set up the Mission School. So, he asked Bishop Royston to find someone else, either to be appointed as Civil Chaplain so that he could devote his time to the Africans, or to work with the Africans in which case he will remain Civil Chaplain.

While Archdeacon Hobbs was still in Seychelles in 1875 seeing to the handing-over from Vaudin to Chancellor, he arranged with the new Civil Commissioner, Mr Salmon and the Government Surveyor, Mr. Cauvin, to visit the site, that the Government proposed to lease to the Church Missionary Society. It consisted of 50 acres of what was referred as "good waste land" in the Forêt Noire area, where coffee and Vanilla could be grown. The place was

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[20] Ibid
[21] Ibid
[22] Taylor,D. (2005). Launching out into the Deep: The Anglican Church in the History of Seychelles.
[23] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10/4; Letter from Katie Chancellor to CMS, London, 28th July 1875

situated about 2,350 feet at a place called Capucin, high above Port Victoria[24]. The place was known as Capucin because of the abundance of Capucin trees that once grew there. This is where the Church Missionary Society intended to build its Industrial School.

Mr. Salmon was a Catholic and Rev. Chancellor was concerned at first that he would be biased towards to Roman Catholic inhabitants. But this was not the case. Salmon had decided that he was going to adopt the cause of the Liberated Africans, and would prosecute any employer who mistreated them. But there was a limit on the number of children that Chancellor could receive. In the meantime, Chancellor felt he could do very little except pay visits to the scattered habitations where he could meet some of the Africans. He reported his intention of taking up a travelling ministry to the Liberated Africans, until such time as he could start up a proper Mission School.

In October 1875 Sir Arthur Phyre, the then Governor of Mauritius, came to Seychelles on a visit, and although the land at Capucin had not been surveyed, Rev. Chancellor requested an interview with him about the Industrial School project. The Governor was interested and asked Chancellor to produce a plan of the intentions of the project, which Chancellor did. The Governor then requested Salmon to provide the conditions under which the land could be leased. There were five items drawn up:

1. The Boundaries of the land were to be clearly marked;

2. The period of the grant of the land was indefinite;

3. The annual rent was to be paid for a period of ten years, which would be renewable for another period of ten years;

4. the right for the Church Missionary Society to set up a school on the property. But no child will be retained there against their will or after the age of 16 years.

5. At the end of the twenty years the Government will decide whether to continue the lease[25].

Other conditions included the clause stipulating that the church would have the right to the timber on the land, but no right to any timber on any adjoining land. Nor could the land be used for profit. The reference to profit gave Chancellor concern, as he had intended that the sale of coffee, vanilla and cinnamon should pay for the upkeep of the land and possibly of the buildings. He referred back to the Governor about this, and was told such profit was acceptable, but no profit could be used for any purpose other than the proposed school[26].

The Governor agreed to assign the land to the Church, but Chancellor was now faced with financial challenges. Bishop Royston had received £1000 as a gift from a Miss Osborne,

[24] Taylor,D. (2005). Launching out into the Deep: The Anglican Church in the History of Seychelles.
[25] Seychelles Archives; Vol. B/35, p.9; Letter from Salmon to Colonial Secretary-Lease in duplicate of lands for the Industrial School of African race-dated 5th January 1877.
[26] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Sir A. Phayre at Mahe to Chancellor dated 9 October 1875Chancellor to CMS, London, 29th May 1876. BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Chancellor to CMS, London, 13 October 1875

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whom he had known when he had been working for the CMS in India many years before, and she had stipulated that this money should be allocated for the works in Seychelles, but there were no buildings on the land and he had to take care of the 40 children that he was taking care of in temporary houses in Port Victoria. Two of them had died which gave him great concern[27].

Chancellor had already made an estimate of the cost of the buildings that he proposed to erect on the land. There were to be two large houses each measuring 100 feet by 25 feet. One was to be for a dormitory for the girls and the other for the boys.

Each building would cost £500. And there was to be a Mission house, later known variously as the pavilion or the church Mission Cottage, which was to be a bungalow with veranda and shingle roof, costing also £500. And there were to be a number of outhouses, washrooms each for girls and boys, main kitchens and kitchen for the Mission house, and workshop and storeroom. He estimated that these would cost £1,116[28].

Chancellor began erecting what buildings he could at Capucin, but even this was difficult. He had difficulty finding competent carpenters, who were not able to use the Capucin hardwood that was on the land, because they did not have the tight highly tempered tools to saw timber into planks, consequently almost all the planks had to be obtained in Victoria, and carried laboriously up the mountain tracks to Capucin. And this was costly.

By February 1876, the small mission house was nearly ready, and Chancellor decided that he would move into it with his family. Chancellor erected temporary buildings for the freed African slave children so that they could also be moved to the site. But a lot of work needed to be done in order to get all the buildings erected. There were two dormitories to be built, one for the boys and one for the girls. Then there were the out-houses and the huts for the labourers who were engaged on clearing the land, and several smaller buildings for the running of the settlement (see drawings of Venn's Town by Chancellor in Appendix 3).

At the same time, he heard news about the arrival of the Rev. Jean Bichard and his wife and daughters to take over the Civil Chaplaincy, which would relieve him of a lot of work so that he could focus on the important matter of getting the Industrial School started. Once established, he had decided that he would call the small settlement Venn's Town, after Henry Venn, the co-founder, with William Wilberforce, of the Church Missionary Society[29].

By the end of May 1876 Chancellor had 37 children at the mission school, 20 boys and 17 girls living in temporary quarters[30].

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[27] Taylor, D. Launching into the Deep.
[28] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10/48
[29] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Chancellor to CMS, London, 2 March 1876
[30] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Chancellor to CMS, London, 29 May 1876

By the time the Bishop arrived for his first visit in November 1876, he found erected "a simple mission bungalow, and work had just begun on a temporary dormitory for the boys, and work would shortly commence on a dormitory for the girls. On the occasion of that visit to Venn's Town, in November 1876, the Bishop confirmed 13 children, of whom 7 were girls and 6 were boys. Up till then they had had 62 children on the books, of which 3 had died, 4 were sick at home with their parents, 7 had been taken away by their parents and 1 was a cabin boy to the Captain of a man-of-war. There were thus 47 children left at the Institution[31].

Upon his next visit to Seychelles in November 1877, Bishop Royston recorded a vast improvement in the Industrial School at Venn's Town. He wrote: "there is a new building which serves as a School room and the Girl's Dormitory, forming a very neat wing to the settlement. And roads had been made by the boys, and vanilla, cocoa, coffee planted. Some ten to twelve huts for the eight Africans employed in the forest clearing had been laid down… and all looks a settled appearance"[32]. By this time the school had 55 children; 35 boys and 20 girls. Unfortunately, there are no records of the plan of the site showing all the different buildings.

In another Church Missionary Society report of 1877, reference was made to Venn's Town comparing it to Frere Town in Mombasa, but on a smaller scale[33]. In his testimony, Lt Sanders who was on board HMS Fawn, gave an account of the management of the school by Reverend Chancellor and his wife. He noted: "Having not long ago visited Seychelles and spent two days with Mr and Mrs Chancellor, you may possibly like to hear an account of the Mission from a visitor. They had in June last about fifty-seven boys and girls of ages varying from five to twenty years"[34].

He also reported on the language of instructions saying that, "Mr Chancellor very wisely instructs them as much as possible in English, and not in the Creole language of Seychelles"[35].

Significance of Venn's Town as a Boarding School for Children of Freed slaves

During its existence from 1876 up to the year 1894, when the Mission School moved to Bel Ombre, Venn's Town had three superintendents: William Bartlett Chancellor 1876 – 1880, Henry Morris Warry, 1880 – 1885, Edwin Luckock 1885 – 1889. The significance of Venn's Town has been well recorded in the different letters written by the Superintendents of the school to CMS London, as well as through the different reports that have been written by the Church Missionary Society during the years of the existence of the school. Some of the extracts from those reports are provided below.

The Church Missionary report of 1881 noted that; "the Industrial Institution for African children at the Capucin in the island of Mahé, the largest of the Seychelles group has

[31] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Chancellor to CMS, London, 29th May 1876
[32] BUSC CMS C MA/0 10; Letter from Bishop Royston to CMS, London, 26 November 1877
[33] CMS_OX_Intelligencer_1877_01_67
[34] CMS_OX_Intelligencer_1878-Vol.IIIp.56
[35] Ibid

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continued under the zealous and loving care of Mr. Warry, assisted by a locally engaged agent, Mr. Pickwood". The report also gave an account of the number of children at the school, this being "forty-one inmates, the majority being girls"[36].

The report also made reference to the location of the school as being a very pleasant one. It reported that; "In May last year the little Mission was of Service to some of the officers of HMS Ruby, who reached the island suffering severely of fever. They resided for a few weeks in the Institution, and derived great benefit from its healthy position"[37].

Another positive report was that of 1884, where Mr. H.M. Warry, the society's lay missionary in charge of the Industrial Home for the African children at Capucin reports an increase of the 16 children in their care. He wrote; "We have now a total of the sixty-three, but three or four will be leaving this year in accordance with the Society's regulations. We like, however, to keep the girls until they are married, as the morality of the Seychelles is at a very low ebb. It is a great comfort to think that some of the girls who have been married from here are setting good examples in their married life"[38]. The moral value being transmitted to the children of the school is considered as having great benefit to the Seychellois society at large.

In the 1886 CMS report, Rev. Buswell, secretary of the Mauritius Mission, who took charge of the Mission School for the greater part of the year, praised the work that had been done by Chancellor and his wife for the past ten years. He considered this a blessing from God and he reported: "I went to Seychelles in February last, accompanied by Mrs. Buswell and my daughter. It was my privilege to carry on the African Institution on the lines laid down by Mr. Chancellor, and worked upon by Mr. Warry, and I look back upon the ten months spent there with much pleasure and thankfulness. The daily round of duties, differing in character from what I had been accustomed to, was far from being regarded as a "trivial task" Teaching little African children the three R's, plus the elements of Christian truth, maybe at a distance, humble work, but it is wonderful, how fruitful it be of blessing to all concerned"[39].

The number of scholars in the Society's African Institution at Capucin, in the Seychelles, was only 22 in December, and it is under the consideration, owing to the fact that freed slaves are no longer taken by the government to the Seychelles, whether the institution in its present form continues to be needed.

In the report of 1891, it was acknowledged that the number of scholars at the school was only 22 and it was under consideration as freed slaves were no longer being taken by the government of Seychelles[40]. According to the Church Missionary Society Annual report of 1894, Mr and Mrs Luckock had moved the school to Bel Ombre with 25 African children in

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[36] Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the year 1881-1882, p.166
[37] Ibid, p.181-182
[38] Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the year 1881-1882, p.166
[39] Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the year 1883-1884
[40] Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the year 1891

their care. By 1896 the land at Venn's Town along with all the buildings was reclaimed by the Government of Seychelles[41].

Venn's Town Cemetery

The institution also had a small cemetery situated on an embankment further down. It was the resting place of some of the freed African children who died of some of the epidemies that hit the mission, such as diphtheria in 1878, for which there was no remedy or medicament then. There also lies the graves of some of the children who died of such mundane illnesses as dysentery. Among them also lie the two daughters of William Chancellor who died in June of 1879 and the two-year- old son of Edwin Luckock who died in April 1888.

The detailed record of the cemetery was available only in 1898, when the then surveyor, Mr Stewart Balfour. He wrote:

"On Tuesday, the fifth day of April in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight, I, the undersigned Government & Sworn land surveyor, do hereby declare that having been instructed by His Honour the Administrator on M.P. No. 348, dated the first of April, 1898, I proceeded to a piece of Crown Land in the district of Capucin, which was formerly leased to the Church Missionary Society, and there I found a small cemetery, containing twenty-three graves..."[42]

The record also makes reference to a new cemetery adjacent to the old one as well as the construction of a small chapel. The document also consists of a sketch of the cemetery and the proposed additions (See Appendix 4). There are no further records and no site evidence of the new construction.

Descendants of Venn's town students in Seychelles

Venn's Town has served its purpose during the challenging time in Seychelles where freed slave children were taken care of and had access to education. Although the institution lasted only around 29 years, it has left a positive impact on the children who lived there as well as their descendants. Talking to one of the descendants of Venn's Town, he proudly said: " My grandfather, Jeremie Julie, was a student at Venn's Town. He came to Seychelles with his parents as freed slaves. He stayed at Venn's Town and learned a trade, mainly agriculture. When he was older he helped the Missionary by doing some chores. He told me that he had to go to Port Glaud to get fish for the school"[43]. According to Mr Pierre his grandfather was a student at the village during the time of Reverend Chancellor and his wife. Mr Pierre's interview confirmed the fact that the children who attended Venn's Town were not always those without parents, but some who were liberated in Seychelles with their parents.

Another student of Venn's Town who have left descendants is Billy N037, who was later given the surname King. Billy' story is both painful and emotional, a story worth telling. He

[41] Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the year 1894, p.178
[42] Seychelles Archives; I.B. 13-N0. 20- *Reg. 20 N° 1248*
[43] Interview of O. De Comarmond with Mr Augustin Pierre, March 2022.

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arrived at Mahé on 14 October 1867 on board HMS Penguin. According to records he was barely 3 years old when he arrived. He was first sent to the care of William Warren, who was the sergeant major of police. He was attended school in Victoria with Rev. Chancellor and move with them to Venn's Town in 1875. Chancellor described him as a steady, industrious, well-disposed lad and he had high hopes for him.[44] He was employed as a monitor at the school. On 28 August 1877, he married at 12 years and 10 months to Anna Farrigalle of 13 years and 10 months the daughter of Farrigalle and Elisa Ceroose N0 65. Elisa was another Liberated African who had arrived previously on HMS Lyra on 16 May 1861[45]. From their marriage certificate one can see that both Billy and Anna were able to write their names. (Billy's marriage certificate can be seen in Appendix 5).

Billy King became later the surname of some of his children. During his relationship with Anna Farrigalle they had the following seven children that have left descendants in Seychelles. They were:

1. Elisa King born on 11 April 1881 at Plaisance. Mahé- Seychelles
2. Ismael King born on 5 February 1883 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles
3. Rachel King born 11 April 1885 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles.
4. Angelina Billy King born on 13 December 1887 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles
5. Angeline Billy King born on 13 December 1887 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles
6. William King born on 3 July 1890 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles
7. Clarisse Billy King born 5 December 1895 at Mont Fleuri and died on 19 December 1895 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles[46].

In an interview with Billy King's great granddaughter, Ms Milcah Emilienne, she explained that her grandfather, Ismael Billy King, was Billy King's son, but she did not know him. She stated that she obtained some information on her great grandfather through her aunties and uncles as her mother (who was Ismael's daughter) died when she was only 12years old.[47]

Billy King later became a detailed artist and he drew scenes about their captures by the Arab slavers and the journey to Seychelles. His pictures were published in the British Newspaper, The Graphic in November 1893[48] (Refer to Appendix 6). There are other descendants of those slave children who attended Venn's Town.

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[44] Report of Mr Chancellor, Sept. 1877 in: The Church Missionary Society Intelligencer and Record: A Monthly Journal of Missionary Information. Vol. III, 1878 p. 57

[45] Ibid; Durup, J. (n.d.). The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, p. 15

[46] Durup, J. (n.d.). The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, p. 15.

[47] Interview of O. De Comarmond with Ms Milcah Emilienne, May 2022

[48] Johnstone, D. (2023). Victorian Seychelles (1839-1902). Printhouse, Seychelles, p.189.

Venn's Town has served its purpose during the challenging time in Seychelles where freed slave children were taken care of and had access to education. Although the institution lasted only around 29 years, it has left a positive impact on the children who lived there as well as their descendants. This strengthens the value of having an institution like Venn's Town to take care of these children who would have ended up working as slaves on the different plantations with harsh treatment. As noted by Seychellois Historian, Mr Julien Durup, Venn's Town is the only memorial place in the Seychelles that serves as a reminder of the poor liberated slave children[49].

For Further information, please contact:

Head of Technical Committee

Ms. Benjamine Rose

Executive Director

Seychelles National Heritage Resource Council

Email: ceo@shf.sc

Tel: (+248) 2724121

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[49] Durup, J. (n.d.). The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"! In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, p. 19.