



Historical Buildings in Port of Spain

Explore the economic, political, and religious past of the city on foot. Walk, and learn about some of the historical buildings in downtown Port of Spain, from the Brian Lara Promenade to Woodford Square.



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1. Brian Lara Promenade

The Brian Lara Promenade, which runs the width of the city centre, compliments downtown Port of Spain by adding a relaxed laid-back flavor to the bustling streets of the city. Originally called Plaza de la Marina, it was translated into the English Marine Square when the British captured Trinidad and later renamed Independence Square in honor of Trinidad gaining independence from Britain. In recognition of Brian Lara's achievement of a world record 400 runs in a cricket Test match, it was subsequently renamed. The Promenade now features free outdoor concerts, film festivals, celebration ceremonies and craft shows.



2. Union Building

The Union Building, located on the corner of Independence Square and Abercromby Street, is over 100 years old and still displays the street signs from the 19th century. Abercromby Street (originally spelt as 'Abercrombie'), was named after Sir Ralph Abercrombie, the first British Governor in Trinidad who took possession of the island from the Spanish in 1797. The iron rings cemented into the building were used in the 19th century by owners to secure their carriages. King Street remains a mark of history, although it was later renamed to Independence Square.



3. Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

At the eastern end of the Brian Lara Promenade in downtown Port of Spain you can find one of the oldest Catholic churches in Port of Spain, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, with its two grand towers framing the entrance.

On March 25, 1816 the foundation stone for the present Cathedral was laid by the country's first civilian Governor Sir Ralph Woodford and the building was finally completed in 1836.

The Cathedral was built in the shape of a Latin Cross and the walls are made of limestone quarried from the nearby Laventille Hills.

One of the unique features of this Cathedral is the crypt beneath the church that houses the final remains of more than 15 high ranking Catholic Church officials, including Archbishops. Bodies have been interred from as early as 1828 with the most recent being Archbishop Anthony Pantin in the year 2000, the only local Archbishop of Port of Spain.



4. Old Fire Station Tower

Originally built in 1896/1897 and refurbished and renovated in 1999/2000, the old Fire Station is an excellent example of the preservation of a historic building which has been elegantly blended with the modern architectural landscape of the city. For 10 years (1989-1999) it was the home of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop which was founded and directed by West Indian poet and Nobel Prize winner, Derek Walcott. It has recently been incorporated into the National Library Complex and remains a historic gem in the city of Port of Spain.



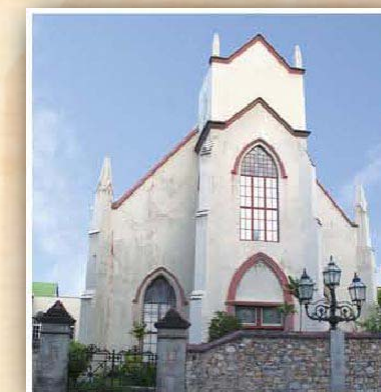
5. Cathedral of the Holy Trinity

The Holy Trinity Cathedral, one of Port of Spain's oldest landmarks and the first Anglican Church in Trinidad, was originally built to cater for British forces on the island. The Cathedral which exists today reflects Georgian and Gothic architecture; it is supported by hammer-beams of carved mahogany with splendid stained glass windows. The foundation stone was laid on Trinity Sunday in 1816; it was completed in 1818 and consecrated on May 25, 1823. The original Trinity church was a wooden structure that was destroyed by fire in 1808.



6. Woodford Square

Situated in the heart of the city, Woodford Square is renowned as a place of political and religious gatherings, entertainment, discussions and craft markets. Formerly known as Brunswick Square, it was renamed after Governor Sir Ralph Woodford, who was responsible for rebuilding the square and much of the city after the 1808 fire. In light of the independence movement led by the political party, People's National Movement, the Square was dubbed "The University of Woodford Square" by the leader and became a place of many political gatherings.



7. Greyfriar's Church

Nestled in the heart of downtown Port of Spain, Greyfriar's Church marks the introduction of Presbyterianism to Trinidad. In 1837, this church was established to serve the British settlers, most of whom were Presbyterian Scots. The Trinidad Presbyterian Association, formed in 1834 petitioned the Governor, Sir Ralph Woodford for a ministry dedicated to them. Woodford was a major contributor to the development of Port of Spain in the 19th century: the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception were also built under his governorship.



8. The (Old) Public Library

The first national library of Trinidad was established in 1851 when Lord Harris, Trinidad's governor from 1846 to 1854, put forward the Ordinance to the Council of Government. It was not until 1902 that it moved to this site on Knox Street. This library was built with a simple arcaded second story, with the arcade providing shaded passageways for both the upper and lower levels of the library. The ground floor comprised a public reading-room, a lending library and a small office for the librarian. In 2003, the library moved to its new complex on the corner of Hart and Abercromby streets.



9. St. John's Baptist Church

Located at 8 Pembroke Street, Port of Spain, just opposite Trinidad and Tobago's Hall of Justice, the foundation stone of this building was laid in 1853 by His Excellency Lord Harris, the Governor of Trinidad. The following year, in the month of March, the Church was completed and opened for worship. The structure reflects the architecture popular at that time. Thirty years later the facade of solid masonry work was renovated and expanded to what it is today. The Stained Glass window, "Christ the Light of the World", which is located behind the Altar on the eastern side of the structure was donated in 1909 by Mr. John Smith.



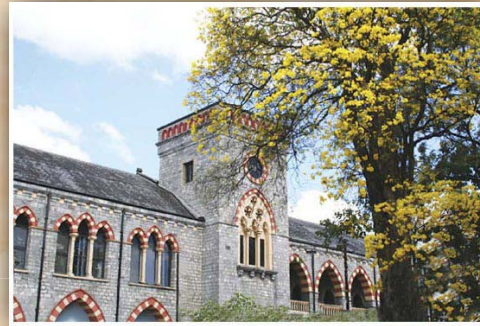
10. Hall of Justice

Located north of Woodford Square and east of the Red House, the Hall of Justice was purposely designed to add to the character of downtown Port of Spain and to enhance its surroundings by being charming and dignified but without being dominating. It is representative of Trinidad and Tobago's independent Judiciary. The Hall of Justice was formally handed over to the Government in 1985 and now houses the Court of Appeal, the Civil and Criminal Divisions of the High Court, the Tax Appeal Board and their respective supporting staff.



11. The Red House

The Red House that we see today was constructed between 1904 and 1906 and is currently the seat of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. However, it was first constructed in 1844 and as Trinidad was preparing to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, it was inadvertently coated with red paint in anticipation of the event and was hereafter referred to as the Red House. Although it was destroyed by fire during the riots of 1903, it stands as a symbol of enduring democracy in the islands.



12. The Old Police Headquarters

Built on the former site of the old West India Regiment barracks, this beautiful Gothic style building was completed in 1876 and built with limestone quarried from Picadilly quarry in East Port of Spain. The building initially served as the headquarters for the local police force and fire brigade. It also contained a residence for the head of the police force, and a magistrate's court. Located in the heart of Port of Spain, the building features a square tower and the pointed arches of Gothic style architecture. On two occasions the building was destroyed by fire and has since been artfully restored to reflect its original glory. The Police Headquarters now houses the Central Police Station and Museum of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Force.



13. The Cabildo

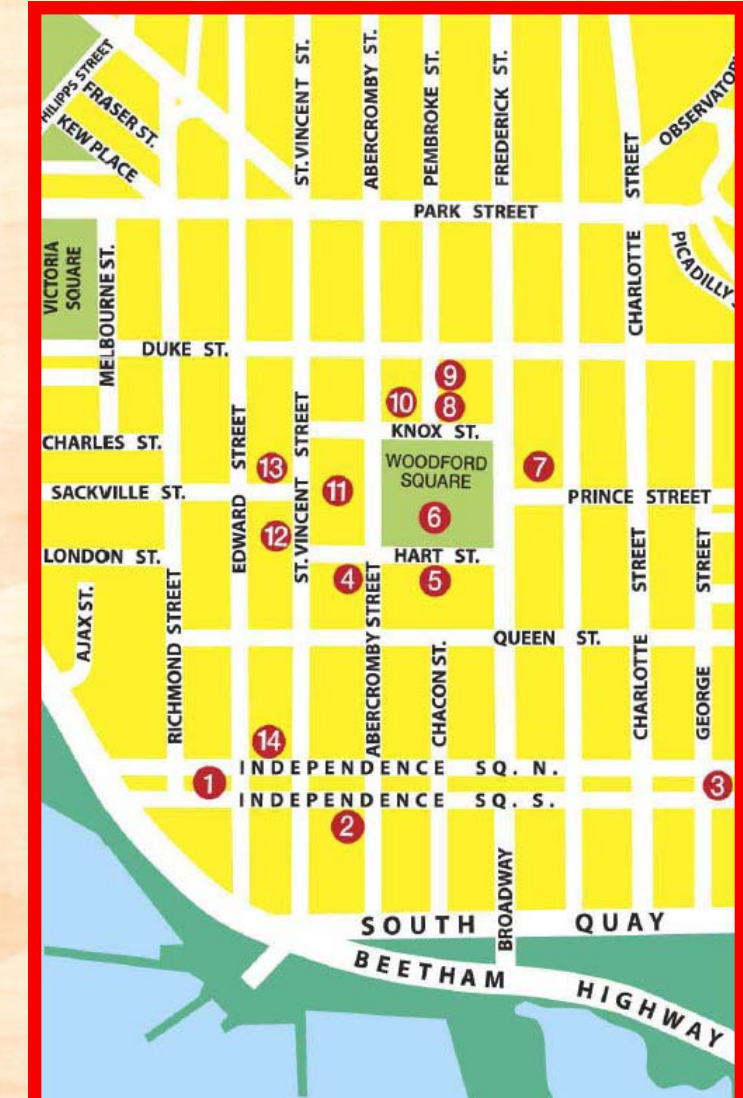
An extension of the Attorney General's Office, the Cabildo was the seat of Spanish colonial government in Trinidad. Serving as a centre for the Spanish administrative and governing Council, the Cabildo was established in Trinidad in 1777. Restored to its former glory, the quaint Spanish style building complete with courtyard and fountain, is nestled snugly between the modern Police Administration Building and the Office of the Attorney General on Sackville Street, Port of Spain. Originally based in St Joseph, the island's first capital, the Cabildo was transferred to Port of Spain in 1784. The Cabildo was moved several times to different locations in Port of Spain until it settled at Sackville Street.



14. The Treasury Building

This original Treasury Building was constructed by Governor Sir Lewis Grant in 1831. This building housed the "Treasury and Government Rum Bond" and became historic not only because Sir Lewis Grant lived here, making it a Government House, but also, because it was from here that the succeeding governor, Sir George Fitzgerald Hill, declared the abolition of slavery on August 1, 1838. (See mural inside). On June 25th, 1932 the original Treasury Building was destroyed by fire. The new Treasury Building was designed by British Architect, Hubert Brinsley, and its foundation stone was laid in 1936. Construction of the building was completed in 1938. In the past, agencies such as the General Post Office, Central Bank and Auditor General's Department shared the premises with the Treasury Division, Ministry of Finance. However since 1986, it has been solely occupied by the Treasury Division.

Map of Historical Locations



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