

Emancipation Day

Emancipation day was first celebrated to mark the freeing of the slaves, 1 August 1838, and was formerly one of the most important holidays.

It was discontinued after Jamaica gained political independence in 1962 and Independence Day, the first Monday in August, replaced it. Since 1997, Emancipation Day has again been celebrated in Jamaica, after a break of 35 years, and Independence Day has been fixed as 6 August. The return of Emancipation Day in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries is a reflection of a new generation's desire to mark this important event in their history. Apart from the emotional fervour associated with the early celebrations of Emancipation Day, the fact that it coincided with the Cropover celebrations that marked the ending of the sugar cane harvest contributed to its importance. It was established as a public holiday in 1893, as the first Monday in August, but from 1895 to 1962, the year Jamaica gained Independence, 1 August itself was celebrated unless it fell on a Saturday or Sunday. On 31 July 2002, Emancipation Park was opened on the former Knutsford Park lands in New Kingston. The 2ha site which sits in the heart of Kingston's financial and hotel district provided a welcome recreational space with its sprawling lawns, and historic symbols in keeping with the spirit of Emancipation. source: Encycloedia of Jamaican Heritage