

Guanaboa Vale - A Place of Interest

Guanaboa Vale is located about eight miles south-west of Bog Walk, St Catherine. The area was once occupied by the Tainos, and it is believed that the word 'guanaboa' was derived from the Arawakan word for soursop, 'guanaba'. Under Spanish occupation, Guanaboa was used as a cattle ranch, and by the time of British rule, the surrounding area was known as 'Cowhides'.

Guanaboa is also the old name of the parish of St John, which in 1664 was one of the seven original parishes established by the British in Jamaica. In 1660, Guanaboa had been the scene of a regimental mutiny led by Lieutenant-Colonels Raymond and Tyson: Discontented with a lack of news concerning the restoration of King Charles II to the throne of England, the soldiers swore that they would no longer live as an army, but would rather settle the island and create positions as constables and civil officers. On August 3, 1660, the two officers were court-martialled under the orders of General Edward D'Oyley, Jamaica's Commander and first governor. They were shot in Spanish Town and order was restored to the Guanaboa Regiment.

John Styles one of Jamaica's early planters, became the largest landowner in St John; he wanted his 3,200 acres of land to be designated a distinct parish. However, two centuries later, by 1867, St John would be merged into the parish of St Catherine under an act to reduce the total number of parishes in the island.

Present-day Guanaboa Vale is a quaint, non-residential district that consists of a church, a primary school, a post office and a police station. There is scarcely any commercial activity, but this is expected to change due to the growing fame of the nearby Mountain River Cave, which has Taino pictograms and petroglyphs of birds, turtles, humans, etc., estimated to have been created 500-1,300 years ago.

- Institute of Jamaica