

THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR



'Sweet Gold'

Sugar cane or *Saccharum officinarum* was introduced to the New World by Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. His choice of sugar cane among other goods at his stop over at Canary Islands, was to become as valuable as the precious gold which Columbus so ardently sought. It became the wellspring of economic wealth for many New World colonies.

Sugar cane is revered for its high sucrose or sugar content, which is stored in the stem or stalk. The basic principles of sugar-making from the cane are the extraction of the juice and its

concentration to a dense syrup in which sugar separates by crystallization. By-products of sugar include molasses which is used in the production of rum, and bagasse which can be used as fuel. Sugar is a key ingredient for several industries – candy and other food industries, the manufacture of some chemicals as well as soft drinks.

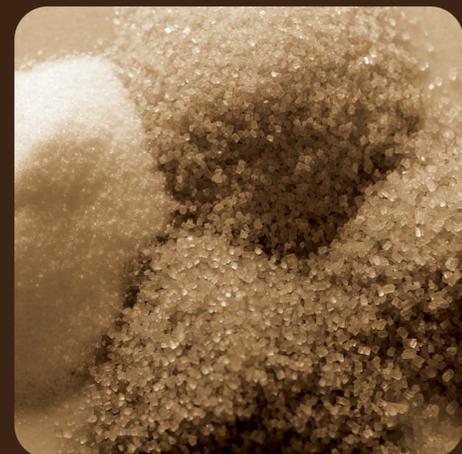
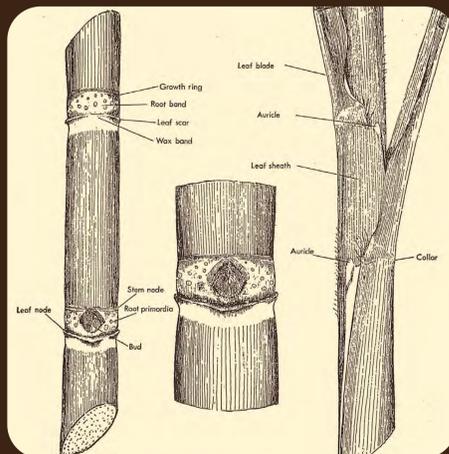
In Tobago, sugar cane was introduced by the Dutch in seventeenth century and in Trinidad, a century later while under Spanish rule. The crop was initially used for domestic

consumption until commercial production was introduced with the first mills.

The introduction of 'sweet gold' into Trinidad and Tobago did not only bring economic wealth but was also the catalyst for our rich ethnic and cultural diversity, as many people from all corners of the world came, free or forced, to manage or labour in the industry. The sugar industry was instrumental in shaping our nation socially, politically and culturally.



Earliest depiction of a Spanish sugar factory in Santo Domingo from A de Bry engraving from De Americae (1595).



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

Dawn of the Sugar Industry in Trinidad



Although sugar was produced in Trinidad under Spanish rule, its commercial production did not commence until the 1780s, after the Spanish Crown issued the Cedula (Decree) of Population. Proclaimed in 1783, the Cedula attracted wealthy French planters, including free Africans and coloureds, by offering a grant of limitless virgin soils along with tax concessions and other benefits. The French planters were accompanied by their slaves and land was allotted proportionate to the number of slaves. The influx by the French settlers significantly transformed the economy and society.

In 1782, the Otaheite variety of cane was introduced by St. Hilaire Begorrat, a planter from Martinique and the first sugar mill was established in 1787 by Picot de La Peyrouse at his Tragarete Estate. The Lapeyrouse Cemetery today stands on the site of that estate. Within the next decade over 150 sugar estates entered commercial production of 'muscovado' sugar with about 130 mills, mostly mule-driven. By the time the British captured Trinidad in 1797, sugar had become the most important export crop. The sugar industry subsequently became the backbone of the economy until the early twentieth century.

Animal-driven mills like this one were common in the early days.



Woodbrook Sugar Estate Factory circa 1892, originally owned by Picot de La Peyrouse. Photo courtesy Angelo Bissessarasingh.

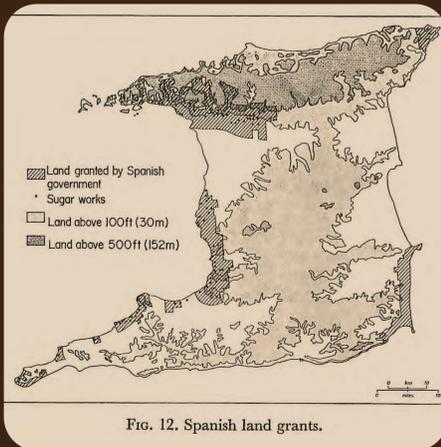


FIG. 12. Spanish land grants.

TABLE XVIII
Agricultural works established in Trinidad by 1797

Location	Sugar mills	Coffee mills	Cotton mills	Rum distillers
Las Bocas	1	1	42	
La Carenage	10	5	18	5
Diego Martin	19	12	4	9
Mucurapo	8	2		3
Tragarete	3			2
St. Anne	6	24	16	2
Maraval	3	7	1	4
Santa Cruz		5		
La Ventille	1	16	25	
Cimaroneo	5	5	1	3
Acarigua	6	7		2
St. Joseph	13	7	4	2
Maracal	3	4		1
Las Coivas	1			
Tacarigua and Arouca	14	2		8
Arima and Guanapo		5		
Toco, Salibea and Cumana	1		59	
Mayaro	1		65	
Guayaguayare	1		74	
Erin			1	
Icaque and Gallos	5		3	
La Brea	20	3		6
Siparia				
Naparima	20	25	28	8
Montserrat and Savana Grande				
Pointe-à-Pierre	6		3	1
Savaneta, Cuva and Cascajal	13			3
Port of Spain				
TOTAL	159	130	344	60

Source: Mallet, *Descriptive account of the island of Trinidad*, 1797



Phot courtesy Angelo Bissessarasingh.

THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

The Plantation Economy Takes Root In Trinidad

After British capture of Trinidad in 1797, British colonists and investors flocked to its shores to partake in its prosperity from sugar. Stephen Lushington, a British capitalist, erected the first steam-engine at his plantation in Camden, Couva in 1804 and by 1810 eight were in operation, along with nine water mills.

The sugar plantation was distinguished by large estates, labour of enslaved Africans, absenteeism by the largest landowners, rigid social divisions based on race, colour and legal status, and labour-intensive methods of cultivation and manufacture. The plantation required an injection of large sums of money and a large, skilled and disciplined labour force.

Exports in sugar continued to climb until the industry was crippled by the labour shortage after Emancipation and the effects of the Sugar Duties Act in 1846. The Act provided for the equalization of duties on foreign and British West Indian exports of sugar to Britain. The loss of

preferential treatment was worsened by a financial crisis in Britain from 1847-8. The result was a drastic fall in sugar prices, a loss of confidence in the sugar estates by British firms, and business failure especially on small estates.

Signs of recovery from the crisis became apparent by 1849 following the sanctioning of Indian immigration, reduction in import duties, and revival of confidence by British capitalists. Thereafter major transformations in the sugar industry occurred, including the amalgamation of estates, injection of British capital, the modernization of the manufacturing process through the introduction of vacuum pan and centrifugal technologies, the construction of central factories, and the birth of the cane farming sector. By 1880 sugar production was 53,436 tons compared to 12,228 tons in 1840.



Great House on St. Ann's Estate



LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTATES IN TRINIDAD.		1840		1880	
Station.	Owner.	Crop in Hectares.	Mill and Value.	Station.	Owner.
...
Summary of the Sugar Crop for the years 1840, 1850, and 1880.		1840	1850	1880	
...



Usine Ste Madeleine was the first central factory to be built in Trinidad - the largest of the British Empire at the time.



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

“As rich as a Tobago planter” – Tobago’s Sugar Industry



Tobago's sugar industry had a much earlier start to that of Trinidad's industry. The earliest indication of sugar in Tobago was from the Dutch who introduced it in 1665, along with other crops. It was not until under British occupation from 1763, that sugar was first exported by Gedney Clarke of Bushey Park in St. Mary's parish. By 1774 over 10,000 hogshead (large cask holding about 54 gallons) of sugar was exported. By 1796 sugar cane assumed importance as the primary crop and exports peaked in 1799. The high profits enjoyed in the 1790s prompted the coining of the phrase in London, "as rich as a Tobago planter" to describe a person of considerable wealth.

By 1843, after the enslaved were emancipated, a system of profit sharing known as metayage was introduced to improve sugar production. Hit by a disastrous hurricane in 1847, and by the closure of the West Indian Bank in that year, many planters were forced to abandon their estates and the industry began to decline. The situation was aggravated by the Sugar Depression of the 1880s and 1890s when sugar prices fell sharply due to competition from European beet sugar. In 1884 the London firm of A.M. Gillespie and Company, which monopolized agriculture and shipping and owned four fifths of Tobago's sugar estates, went into bankruptcy. It led to the collapse of Tobago's sugar economy and the island becoming a ward of the colony of Trinidad and Tobago in 1899.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE EXPORTS OF PRODUCE FROM TOBAGO, COMMENCING 1794, AND ENDING 1809.

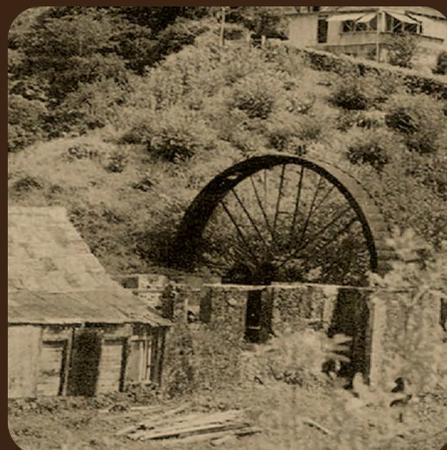
Years	Hogsheads Sugar	Punchons Molasses	Punchons Rum	Punchons Shrub	Weight Cotton
1794	8317	91	4998		454,500
1795	6071	301	4368	1	327,150
1796	7446	42	5693	1	401,100
1797	7658	4	4893		73,650
1798	9792		7415	1	25,950
1799	13,677	151	7669	4	7950
1800	10,276	1383	6429	5	9000
1801	11,411	663	7686	24	31,000
1802	13,300	585	7864	30	24,150
1803	8121	95	3485	15	26,400
1804	11,044	381	6390	14	19,500
1805	13,215	920	8621	15	35,400
1806	12,550	655	8192	29	29,250
1807	10,440	686	9000	24	28,050
1808	10,775	206	7934	22	20,400
1809	11,151	73	7663	19	34,950

A TABLE SHOWING THE PRODUCE EXPORTED FROM TOBAGO FROM 1827 TO 1862, BOTH YEARS INCLUSIVE.

Years	Cwt. Sugar	Gallons Rum	Cwt. Molasses	Years	Cwt. Sugar	Gallons Rum	Cwt. Molasses
1827	86,054	362,440	1643	1845	63,037	157,514	7339
1828	137,151	504,728	8746	1846	45,433	111,512	4578
1829	119,436	493,324	2289	1847	72,293	263,904	5449
1830	107,946	400,440	787	1848	53,345	130,978	2079
1831	133,856	492,132	1868	1849	56,463	129,392	5775
1832	126,007	337,916	17,493	1850	47,730	114,684	3255
1833	104,965	274,940	16,758	1851	56,514	134,604	1491
1834	88,722	272,284	12,490	1852	66,370	149,020	1438
1835	85,093	311,100	5764	1853	57,327	139,296	1522
1836	122,464	375,876	13,702	1854	49,844	157,084	787
1837	98,010	325,048	10,048	1855	41,788	117,140	358
1838	76,320	244,424	6733	1856	47,147	176,116	2209
1839	83,565	266,364	5691	1857	48,096	104,796	2257
1840	62,208	174,736	4735	1858	67,147	143,428	1648
1841	40,932	102,656	2688	1859	69,339	147,014	2456
1842	49,408	134,460	4349	1860	59,052	109,047	1207
1843	52,845	110,200	10,206	1861	59,013	100,608	1123
1844	58,001	119,179	14,290	1862	83,168	110,036	4096



Windmills like this one in Antigua, were common in Tobago.



Speyside Sugar Estate, courtesy Angelo Bissessarsingh



TABLE 8.2 Sugar Mills in Tobago, Selected Years, 1840-1897

Year	Steam	Steam and wind	Steam and water	Wind	Water	Cattle	Total
1840	20	—	—	28	26	3	77
1845	25	—	—	24	16	5	70
1850	26	—	—	16	23	5	70
1855	24	—	—	15	20	7	66
1861	19	4	1	10	21	7	62
1865	20	4	1	12	20	5	62
1869	20	4	7	13	15	6	65
1875	20	4	7	13	16	6	66
1882	23	—	6	10	11	5	55
1888	18	—	2	6	3	3	32
1897	19	—	2	6	2	2	31

Source: CO 280 series: Tobago Blue Books for 1840-1888; CO 300/109: Trinidad and Tobago Blue Book for 1897.

THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

LABOUR AND SUGAR

Labour and Sugar

A large skilled, disciplined and reliable labour force was required for the labour-intensive work on sugar plantations. In Trinidad and Tobago, numerous sources of labour were used, including enslaved and free Africans, Chinese, Portuguese and Indians.

The enslaved African workers, most of whom were brought in under the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, had the physically demanding task of preparing fields for cultivation under

extreme circumstances. Enslaved persons also worked in the mills as skilled workers.

Faced with an acute labour shortage following emancipation of the enslaved in 1838, the Colonial Government turned to immigrant labour. Various experimental immigration schemes were used which ushered in West Indians, liberated Africans from West Africa, Portuguese from Madeira, and Chinese from China's southern Guangdong province. The schemes however were unsuccessful in providing a sustained and manageable labour force.

India was eventually settled on as the main source of cheap labour and from 1845 to 1917, Indian immigrants arrived under the indentureship system, with the guarantee of a free passage back home or a free grant of land at the end of their tenure. Those who accepted land either continued to work on the sugar plantations and/or became cane farmers. Cane farmers formed their own organization, the "Trinidad Island Wide Cane Farmers' Association" in the 1950's, while sugar workers established their own union, the "All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union", led by Adrian Cola Rienzi, in 1937.



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES IN SUGAR

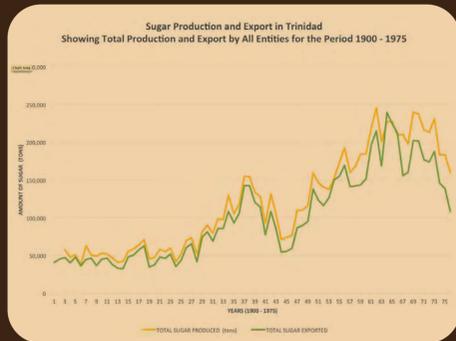
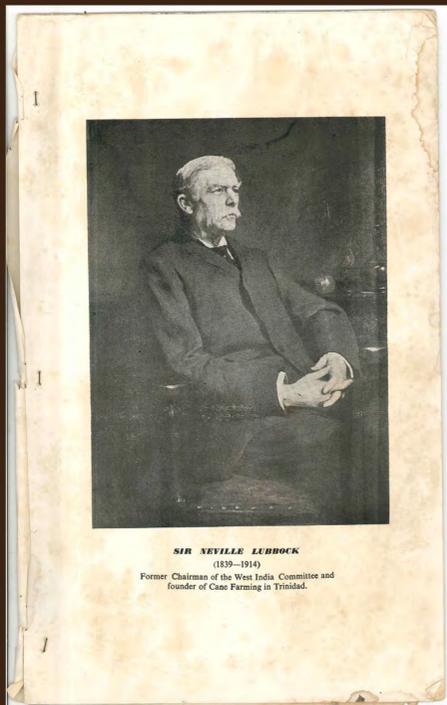
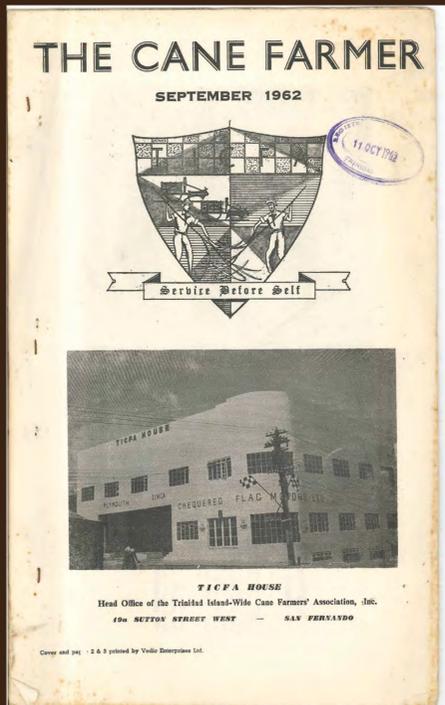
In the last forty years of the nineteenth century, British concerns were consolidating their hold on the most productive estates in Trinidad. The French Creoles who had established the estates from the 1780s were no longer the owners of the sugar estates. The Colonial Company led in the amalgamation of estates and modernization of production at its factory at Usine St Madeleine, using railways to transport cane to the factory. Other British concerns followed in the same vein. Central factories were also established at Brechin Castle, Orange Grove, Reform and Woodford Lodge, eventually giving rise to the development of cane farming in 1882, as a steady supply of cane had to be

assured for optimum sugar production at the factories. Cane farming accelerated in the 1880s and 1890s when the sugar prices were at a low as a result of competition from beet sugar produced in Europe, the exports of which were subsidized.

The price of sugar was further depressed from 1895-97, when the USA imposed heavy duties on British West Indian sugar. Relief however came in 1898 when the USA imposed duties on beet sugar imports and paved the way for entry of British West Indian sugar. In 1902 the Brussels Convention ended the payment of subsidies on beet sugar exports and Canada offered a general preference to British West Indian sugar. Following these

developments, Trinidad and Tobago was able to enjoy modest prosperity in the early years of the twentieth century, particularly with the coming of the multinational British conglomerate of Tate and Lyle.

In later years, the country's fortunes from sugar were influenced by the price of sugar negotiated under trade agreements such as the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement and the European Economic Community's Lome Convention, as well as by other developments, including the oil boom and American occupation during World War II, which increased pressure on the industry's labour supply.

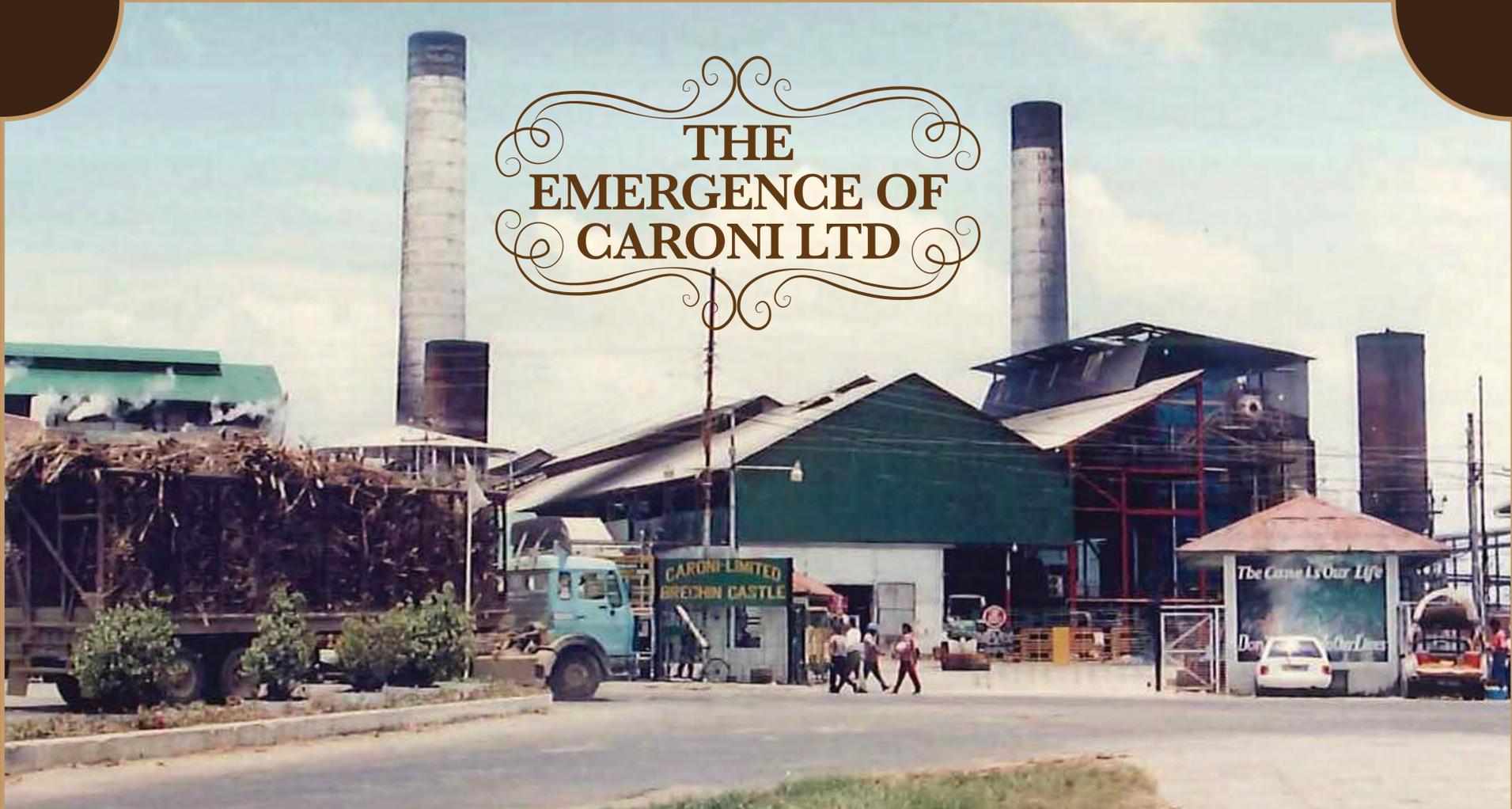


ESTATE	Land Area (Acres)	Area under Cane (Acres)	Area of Cane (Acres)	Area of Cane (Acres)	Amount Paid (Tons)	No. of Farmers
Brechin Castle	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Orange Grove	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Reform	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Woodford Lodge	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Total	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,800



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

THE EMERGENCE OF CARONI LTD



The twentieth century saw the dawn of a new era in Trinidad and Tobago's sugar industry. Through mechanization, the sugar industry was revitalized. A large part of this was due to Tate and Lyle, a multinational British conglomerate. Prior to the introduction of Tate and Lyle there were eight sugar companies of which three were locally owned. The history of Tate and Lyle in Trinidad begins in 1937 when its subsidiary, Caroni Ltd, was established.

From 1937 to 1962 the company actively pursued its policy to acquire and amalgamate sugar estates into Caroni Ltd. Caroni Ltd. was established in 1937 due to the amalgamation of the Waterloo and Caroni Estates which were acquired in that same

year. In 1955, they acquired the Esperanza and Bronte Estates, the Woodford Lodge Estate in 1961 and the Ste Madeline Estate in 1962. With its acquisitions, the company dominated the sugar industry.

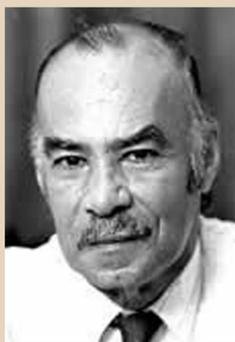
Caroni Ltd. was instrumental in pioneering the further development of the sugar industry by initiating:

- Bulk transport and handling (1950)
- Industrial use of bagasse
- Mechanization of field labour
- The development of new varieties of sugar cane (1964)
- Profit Sharing Scheme for personnel (1956)
- Retirement Scheme for personnel (1963)

The 1970s saw Tate and Lyle's reluctance to invest in the sugar industry due to the decline in profitability. Integral to this was also a shift in the policies of the Trinidad and Tobago Government which moved from an economic policy of Industrialization by Invitation to State Sponsored Capitalism with foreign investors. This led to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, acquiring 51% of ordinary shares in 1970. By 1975 the government had acquired the remaining shares thus liquidating Caroni Ltd and registering a new company Caroni (1975) Ltd.

QUOTATION: Jean Claude Giacottino described Caroni Ltd in 1962 when he states:

"it is responsible for 90% of the grinding of sugar cane in its four sugar factories: Brechin Castle, Ste Madeline, Reform and Woodford Lodge. Its production capacity exceeds 200,000 tonnes of sugar per year. At harvest time it employs as much labour as all the oil companies together (about 15,000 persons of which 4000 are employed in the central factories); it buys cane from 80% of small planters. Some 150,000 persons are dependent on it. It constitutes an agro-industrial empire whose power could exert an influence on the newly independent state." (Jean Claude Giacottino, 712.)



Frank Barsotti – first Chairman of the Caroni Board of Directors

LAWS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS www.legalaffairs.gov.tt

4 Chap. 64:07 Caroni (1975) Limited Vesting

CHAPTER 64:07

CARONI (1975) LIMITED VESTING ACT

40 of 1978. An Act to vest the undertaking of Caroni Limited in Caroni (1975) Limited and for matters incidental thereto.

Commencement. [15th NOVEMBER 1978]

WHEREAS Caroni Limited, a company incorporated in the United Kingdom, has sold its undertaking to Caroni (1975) Limited, a company incorporated in Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas it is expedient to vest the undertaking of the said Caroni Limited in the said Caroni (1975) Limited in the manner hereinafter set forth:

Short title. 1. This Act may be cited as the Caroni (1975) Limited Vesting Act.

Interpretation. 2. In this Act—

"appointed day" means 15th November 1978;

"Caroni" means Caroni (1975) Limited, a company incorporated in Trinidad and Tobago, and having its registered office at No. 20 Abercromby Street, Port-of-Spain;

"Company" means Caroni Limited a company incorporated in the United Kingdom and having a place of business at No. 20 Abercromby Street, Port-of-Spain;

"the undertaking" means all the assets, liabilities and obligations of the Company including those set out in the Schedule.

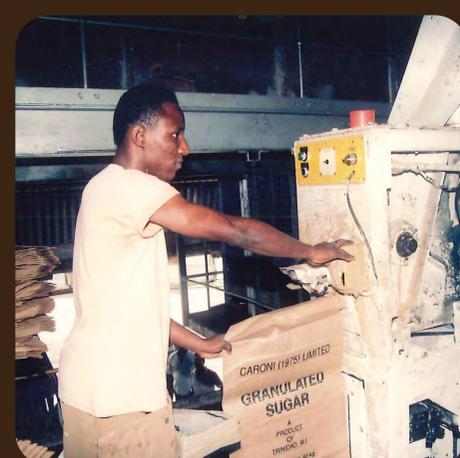
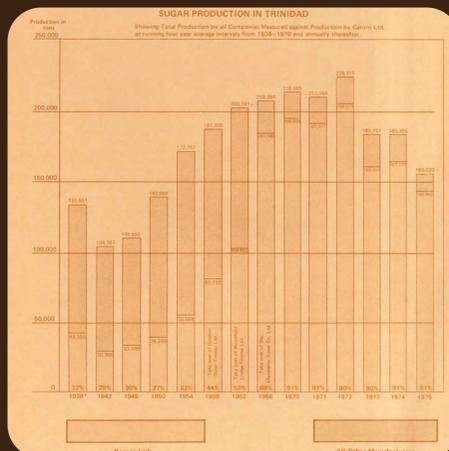
Schedule. 3. The undertaking is hereby transferred to and vested in Caroni.

Vesting of undertaking. Effect of vesting. 4. (1) Without prejudice to the generality of section 3, the effect of the vesting of the undertaking shall be that on and from the appointed day—

(a) every contract existing immediately before the appointed day to which the Company was a party, whether in writing or not, shall be construed and have effect as if—

(i) Caroni had been a party thereto instead of the Company;

UPDATED TO DECEMBER 31ST 2009



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

From Cane To Sugar

In 1977, cane was grown on some 50,000 acres of land in Trinidad, using a ratooning plant, one which sprouted new plants from the roots after being harvested. Manual, mechanical and aerial methods of weed and pest control were employed, with the froghopper and other pests making the most demands.

Harvesting

Harvest time was from January to late June when the cane would usually be burnt before harvest. The cane was transported using animal-drawn or other forms of transport to locations where they were weighed and recorded. An efficient system of transportation from the field to the factory was organized by Caroni Ltd. using

locomotives with 10-ton rail cars to accompany them, as well as 10-ton cane haulage trucks. At the factory the loads of cane were tipped into a pit and a conveyor would take the cane to the crushing mill.

Manufacturing

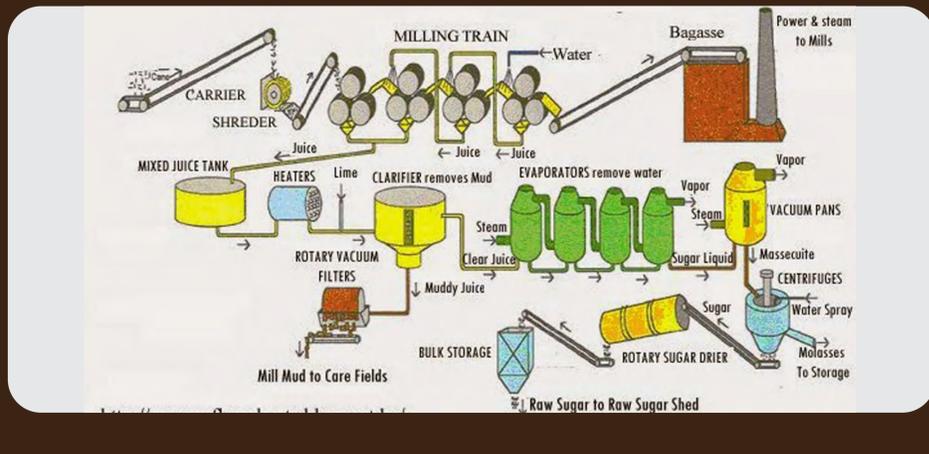
At the mill, the cane passed through shredding knives and crushing rollers to expose the sweet cane underneath, after which the cane was crushed with squeezing rollers under a pressure of some 500 tons, and sprayed at intervals with water.

The next process was heating the extracted juice and adding lime, which caused much of the impurities to come together, after which

they were either skimmed off or allowed to settle as sediment. A clear cane juice was produced which had to be concentrated in evaporators to allow for large quantities of water to come out.

Next the concentrated juice was boiled in steam-heated vacuum pans until a mixture of sugar crystals and syrup remained. This mixture then went into centrifugal machines – tubs with perforated walls, to allow for the separation of the sugar crystals – ‘raw cane sugar’ from the dark syrup or cane molasses.

Granulated or refined sugar was manufactured at a refinery at Ste. Madeleine, which was the only refinery in operation in the eastern Caribbean.



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

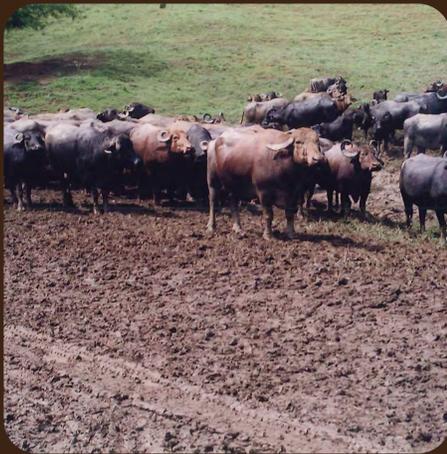
CARONI AND DIVERSIFICATION

Caroni Ltd was more than just about sugar. In 1918, the Caroni Distillery was established and produced well-established brand names such as Golden Glow, Caroni Superb Light White, Mountain Dew and Punccheon. In 1975, the Distillery became part of the Government Holdings of Caroni (1975) Ltd's rum division called Rum Distillers Limited. In 2001, the Government's 49% holding was sold to

Angostura and a year later the Distillery closed with the impending closure of the sugar industry, which had guaranteed its sustained supply of molasses.

Faced with declining profitability, and an unfavourable global sugar market marked by a loss in preferential treatment to ACP countries in its exports of raw sugar to Britain under the

Sugar Protocols of the Lome Convention, and competition from the US artificial sweeteners market, Caroni (1975) Ltd. embarked on a programme of diversification in the 1980s. This diversification consisted of ventures into large and small ruminant farming, shrimp farming and fruit cultivation on Caroni lands.



THE RISE AND FALL OF KING SUGAR

End Of An Era



NEWS Sunday Express • 3rd October 2010 21

MAJESTIC: The hacienda-style Brechin Castle Sugar Factory which has been earmarked by Government to become a Sugar Museum.

THE WAY WE WERE: The now defunct Brechin Castle Sugar Factory is proposed to be the site of a Sugar Heritage Village. —Photos: NICHOLAS RAMJASS

Preserving sugar's history
 Kristy Ramnarine
 kristy.ramnarine@trinidadexpress.com

TUCKED away behind dying canefields and a moth-balled sugar factory near the Point Lisas Industrial Estate in Couva, is a most unlikely of buildings — a majestic hacienda-styled house, its red tiled roof and fancy burglar proofing design capturing the eye. Its history is as interesting as its edifice.

Called Sevilla House it was once the dwelling quarters of Captain Watson, a managing director of Tate and Lyle Limited — pioneers of Trinidad and Tobago's now defunct sugar industry. Constructed in the 1950s, the building was also the human resource and public relations department of Caroni 1975 Ltd before its closure in 2003. The building would likely have gone

End of an era for Caroni

By CAROLYN KISSOON
 South Bureau

IT WAS the end of an era for a large segment of the population yesterday as operations ground to a halt at the Brechin Castle and Ste Madeleine factories of Caroni (1975) Ltd.

Up to last night however, unions, representing monthly paid workers, were still meeting with management to discuss outstanding issues.

It was a dismal sight at the two factories of the State-owned sugar company, as a few workers milled around the compounds. There were no sounds of any kind of operations taking place inside the factories.

"The Express learned that daily-paid workers were paid salaries up to August 15 and told to expect their Voluntary Separation of Employment Packages (VSEP) next week. More than 9,000 workers are to get VSEP.

Caroni is to re-emerge as the Sugar Manufacturing Company,

whose operations will be greatly reduced.

President of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union, Rudy Indarsingh, said it was "a bitter sweet day" for Caroni workers.

He argued that the Government was falsely retrenching the workers and should not call the package voluntary separation. "The workers either have to accept the package or be thrown on the breadline, so how could that be voluntary separation," he said.

Speaking from his Rienzi Complex, Couva, office, Indarsingh said the Government showed no concern for employees' children "whose education is now in a limbo".

"The stark reality is that there is now the threat of vagrancy, because now that these people are out of jobs they have no means of paying mortgages and so on."

Indarsingh said workers felt threatened and insecure since government officials have been "leaking" personal information on their finances to the public.

"The only thing the Government care about is getting these workers out of their payroll and then they would turn their backs on the sugar workers," Indarsingh said.

Earlier yesterday, the company's controversial pension plan was approved at what was described as the "last hour."

President of the Sugar Industry Staff Association, Jai Ramkissoon, explained that the workers had been looking forward to the plan being approved. Associations representing about 1,000 monthly paid workers met the acting Chief Executive Officer Chandra Bobart and Manager of Administrative Services, Sham Ramsaroop, in the morning.

"After much discussion it was determined that the pension plan was approved," Ramkissoon said.

The plan offers improved pension benefits to the former monthly-paid workers.

End of an era



RUDY INDARSINGH

AFTER 28 years in which it lost billions of dollars, Caroni (1975) Ltd will today wind up its operations marking the end of an era for the state-owned agro-industrial company.

The producer will make way for the Sugar Manufacturing Company (SMC) which will be restricted to refining operations at Usine St Madeleine and the Estate Development and Management company, which will attract and manage industrial activity.

Most of the company's 9,000-odd workers have reportedly accepted Government's voluntary separation offer and are due to begin receiving their separation packages, which total almost \$800 million, next week.

The quiet end, though, has come after stormy months which saw the unions protesting Government's divestment plan.

More recently, the All Sugar and General Workers Trade Union tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the VSEP offer through the Industrial Court.

"I have done my duty. I can live with a very clear conscience," Rudy Indarsingh said recently, explaining that since the union could not stop the VSEP, all he could do was to ensure that the packages

the workers will receive will be to their benefit.

"Caroni 1975 Limited will cease to be a trading company as we know it and a small team of people will be working on certain aspects of the industry," Caroni CEO Chandra Bobart said Tuesday.

The effort to close the sugar company is not new.

In 2001, a report by a committee appointed by the then government recommended Caroni's closure. The UNC government, though, said closure was only one option.

The current administration has repeatedly said Caroni's restructuring is necessary because it has been a drain on the Treasury.

The claims have been backed up by international agencies Standard and Poors and the International Monetary Fund which cited concerns over the failure of previous governments to deal with the problems faced at Caroni.

Despite the best efforts to revitalize the sugar industry in the twentieth century, Caroni (1975) Ltd. remained unprofitable and became overshadowed by the oil industry. In 2003, Caroni (1975) Ltd. was closed.

Its legacy however remains in the countless archival records left by Caroni (1975) Ltd and others involved in the industry. Through the Sugar Archives Centre, which now houses these records, the evidence of our 'bitter-sweet' past is preserved — in particular the voices of those who have toiled tirelessly in the cane fields, factories, clinics, laboratories and offices.

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