The priceless value and meaning of an 1800s obituary tells many tales of the forgotten times and paints a vivid picture of contemporary life. It testifies to the passing of time, it illuminates, vitalizes memory and brings us tidings of antiquity. The British Guiana Daily Chronicle carried such a death announcement of the last member the Paterson’s family who once held the reign of success and became legend in the early history and the building of British Guiana. This historical newspaper clipping was saved by a descendant of John Paterson and has survived for 115 years.

John Paterson was born the third child of John Dagleish Paterson and Elizabeth Hill at Plantation Christianburg, Upper Demerara in the year 1816. He was the last member of his generation to pass on.
The clipping said, “the obituary column of the Daily Chronicle yesterday contained the announcement of the death at the ripe age of 82 years and seven months of Mr. John Paterson, who belonged to the family of one of the oldest settlers in British Guiana. For several generations past the influence of the Plantation Christianburg over a large portion of the Demerara River, and representatives of the family were always sure of a cordial welcome when they came to Georgetown. They were also in the early days of the firm closely associated with the fortunes of Messrs Bookers Bros and Co.

Mr. John Paterson, who was the third son of the late Mr. J.D. Paterson by his first wife, was born on Pln. Christianburg and when five years of age he went to Scotland where he received his education.

He remained in the native country of his father till he was about eighteen years of age when he returned to the Colony and took part in the management of the estate. He remained at Pln. Christianburg till he was about thirty years of age when he made another trip to Scotland, on this occasion accompanied by his wife. After his return to the Colony, finding his place on Christianburg filled by another member of the family, he did not settle down to steady work and for the last thirty or forty years he lived a quiet, retired life.

As a young lad on the estate he was esteemed by his father’s slaves and in his later years he was often in town by the few survivors of the slavery days and their descendants, and they were never tired of expressing their regard for “Massa John” as he was familiarly known amongst them. At his death, which occurred on Monday night at the residence of his granddaughter in Water Street, he was surrounded by three generations of his family”

John Paterson was known among his family and servants as “Brandy John” and seems to have developed this reputation after returning from Scotland and finding his place taken by another sibling. It was said that at the back of the Christianburg house he had a store-room entirely filled with demijohns of liquor.

It is remembered that after a particular riotous drinking session he had the idea of firing the two old Dutch cannons which stood outside the house. Having filled them with gunpowder, he set them with a thunderous roar which could be heard half-way down river, and which rocked the Christianburg house to its foundation, breaking all the glass in place.

John Paterson was married to Sarah, DeNieuwerkerk, the granddaughter of Cloot DeNieuwerkerk, who had owned Plantation Watooka and was my three times great uncle.

“Brandy” John Paterson had 11 siblings, 4 brothers by the same mother, Elizabeth Hill.
James (1812-1842) was 30 yrs old when he died.
William (1814- before 1900) graduated a degree in medicine at the University of Glasgow, practiced medicine in British Guiana for a while, and then returned to Scotland to open a Baths Establishment in Rothesay, Isle of Bute.

David (1818- 1847) married Nancy Allicock
George born abt.1822 died Feb. 2, 1855 in Glasgow
7 younger siblings by John Dagleish Paterson’s second wife, Jane Mckell
Thomas (c1824-88) died at his Middle St. home. Buried at Christianburg: Royal Gazette.

John Dagleish II (c1826-66) died in Dalbeattie December 22, 1866 at age 40 and was buried at Tynron, married Grace Edger Lewis (c died Feb.22nd. 1917); both buried Tynron:

Jane Dagleish (c1827 died Nov. 26th 1853) tomb stone is at Christianburg., unmarried:

Alfred (alive in 1853) born 1830 married Ann Paterson (1825-1871) -Died after1857

Christina Lucas (1832-73) died at Langlands, Dumfries, and 17 July 1873 aged 41: buried Tynron: Dumfries & Galloway Courier.

Christina married William Knox (1810-66) at St. Philips Church, Georgetown, in 1865 (he died at his America Street home July 26. 1866 and was buried in Georgetown: The Colonist:

Catherine born abt.1834- married Butt

Mary Elizabeth born abt.1837- married Blount

Timeline for Upper Demerara and British Guiana 1800-1900

1800 Balata Rubber Plantation of Christian Fenette sold to John Dagleish Paterson. Christianburg was named after Christian Fenette.

1802 At the peace of Amiens, the Netherlands received the Essequibo for a short time 1802-1803 but after that the British again occupied it.

1807 International Slave Trade abolished in the British Empire, slavery itself continues.
1812 Stabroek was renamed by the British as Georgetown
1812 English replaced Dutch at the official language
1814 Essequibo became an official territory as part of the treaty of London.
1820 John Allicock of Plantation Wismar dies
1822 Robert Frederick Allicock of Plantation Noitgedacht and Retrieve dies.
1825 Henry Bremner of Akyma, Demerara River dies
1831 The administration Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice was combined, and the united colony became known as British Guiana
1834 Slavery abolished; many slaves leave plantations to set up their own free holdings and are replaced by indentured workers mainly from India.
1838 The first Indian Indentured Labourers from South India, arrives in British Guiana.
1840 Hugh Sproston's entry to British Guiana saw a dire need for transportation across Guiana’s waterways and its hinterlands.
1842 John Daglish Paterson of Christianburg Saw mill and Red Camp Village dies.
1860 Elizabeth Hill dies
1860 Bauxite found at Christianburg
1867 Hugh Sproston's established steam vessels across British Guiana and built British Guiana’s dry dock.
1879 Gold is discovered in Guiana and is followed by an economic boom.
1889 Venezuela lays claim to a large portion of Guyana west of the Essequibo River.
1894 Most of Paterson’s Sawmill and lands sold to the British Government.
1897 Wismar Rockstone Railway established.
1897 Sir Henry Harrison collected samples of bauxite ore at Christianburg and Akyma and had it analyzed in Georgetown
1898 The Christianburg Scots Church opened

Time preserved by an obituary which offers a brief glimpse into history during the refined Victorian era and the contrasting injustice of repugnant slavery in British Guiana.
The 1800s came to an end and a significant chapter of Upper Demerara and British Guiana’s history was closed with the death of “Brandy” John Paterson. The Paterson’s name will fade into insignificance, becoming only a soft whisper carried by the winds of change and the drama of life in the river valley of the Demerara would become lost to the fog of history.
This newspaper clipping refers to the obituary for John [Brandy] Paterson (1816-1898) in the British Guiana Daily Chronicle of 1898. John Paterson was the third son of John Dagleish Paterson and first wife Elizabeth Hill.

DEATH OF AN OCTOGENARIAN.

The obituary column of the Daily Chronicle yesterday contained the announcement of the death at the ripe age of 82 years and 7 months of Mr. John Paterson, who belonged to the family of one of the oldest settlers in British Guiana. For several generations past the influence of the Patersons of Pln. Christianburg extended over a large portion of the Demerara River, and representatives of the family were always sure of a cordial welcome when they came to Georgetown. They were also in the earlier days of the firm closely associated with the fortunes of Messrs. Booker Bros. & Co. Mr. John Paterson, who was the third son of the late Mr. J. D. Paterson by his first wife, was born on Pln. Christianburg, and when five years of age he went to Scotland where he received his education. He remained in the native country of his father till he was about eighteen years of age when he returned to the Colony and took part in the management of the estate. He remained at Pln. Christianburg till he was about thirty years of age when he made another trip to Scotland, on this occasion accompanied by his wife. After his return to the Colony, finding his place on Christianburg filled by another member of the family he did not settle down to steady work, and for the last thirty or forty years he lived a quiet, retired life. As a young lad on the estate he was esteemed by his father's slaves and in his later years he was often visited in town by the few survivors of the slavery days and their descendants, and they were never tired of expressing their regard for "Muss John," as he was familiarly known amongst them. At his death, which occurred on Monday night at the residence of his grand-daughter in Water Street, he was surrounded by three generations of his family.