The Guyana Institute of Historical Research thanks you for your patronage in 2015 and, we look forward to your patronage in 2016. Happy Christmas and a prosperous New year.
Editorial team
Deon Abrams
Tota Mangar
Nigel Westmaas
Paul Moore
Mark Douglas
Timothy Crichlow
Fitz Gladstone Alert
David Hinds
Hazel Woolford
Videographer/Photographers
Laurence Clarke
Kirk Clarke
Natasha Azeez

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The Guyana Institute of Historical Research is looking for the donation of a computer projector. Your kind donation will be gratefully appreciated. The contact person is hazelwoolford@gmail.com

Thank you.
Christmas has long been one of the most celebrated seasons in the Guyana calendar. It began to be observed on a regular basis when the Dutch immigrants made permanent settlements here—firstly in Essequibo about 1616, then in Berbice in 1627, and much later, in 1746, in Demerara. The celebrations continued after the British, in 1796, occupied Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara which they unified into a single colony, called British Guiana, in 1831.

At the time of unification in 1831, the largest ethnic group in the country was the Africans. A small proportion of them were free, while the overwhelming majority were slaves who provided most of the labour for the Whites’ sugar, coffee and cotton plantations. Slaves had been brought from Africa to Guyana since the early decades of the 17th century and the institution of slavery continued until full emancipation was granted on August 01, 1838.

Christmas was a popular season during the slavery era for most of the population with the notable exception of the Amerindians who lived for the most part in scattered communities in the hinterland.

One of its striking features was that although it was a Christian festival celebrating the birth of Christ, for a long while it had very little religious emphasis. Unlike today when there are numerous churches which hold special religious meetings on Christmas eve or early on Christmas day, there were no such services at Christmas in the few churches which existed in Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara in the 17th and 18th centuries.
The notable absence of significant religious observances in Guyana continued until 1810 when the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.), a British Protestant body, sent a clergyman, John Wray, to inaugurate on the East Coast of Demerara.

Within a few months, Wray erected a church building, named Bethel Chapel capable of seating about 600 persons. Thereafter one of the highlights there at Christmas was the holding of well-attended services on Christmas day and on the following day, now called Boxing day. These meetings were distinguished not only by a focus on the historicity, significance and purpose of the birth of Christ, but also by the baptism and marriage of slave converts.

Typical of these Christmas services was the one described by John Smith, the minister of Bethel Chapel, in his journal entry for December 26, 1822. He observed

Yesterday evening, a great many people came from various parts with a view of attending chapel today. Till past 9 o’clock I was engaged in finally examining candidates for baptism, and again this morning till near 12.

The congregation would have filled the chapel had the latter been twice as large. Yesterday, my text was Haggai 2:6, today Matthew 2:10-11. Married five couples and baptized 74 individuals including 20 children. A comfortable Xmas to me”.

This practice of holding special religious meetings at Christmas was eventually adopted by all churches in Guyana. In short, until the arrival of L.M.S missionaries, Christmas here was for much of the population primarily “a period of festivity”, according to George Pinckard, a medical doctor who spent 13 months in December, Essequibo and Berbice in 1796, and as a physician attached to the British military forces.

Christmas was welcomed by the Whites and the Blacks, though not for identical reasons. White plantation proprietors and management personnel valued Christmas as a break from the challenge of seeking to make their plantations financially viable and to control and extort labour.
from unwilling slaves. They welcomed the opportunity to meet for fun and communion with Whites from other plantations and at a later stage, the town.

Their festivity at Christmas consisted primarily of indoor parties and special lunches and dinners. As Pickard observed, “on the subject of Christmas, I should tell you that it is not less a period of festivity here, than in England. The planters make parties, and the merry feasting of the season goes around.”

Their main festivity was open-air dances which were held on the plantations in the evening of Christmas Day. On that day, they were allowed the unusual liberty of leaving the plantations where they resided to attend dances on other estates without White supervision or written permission from their masters. At these dances, they had the joy of meeting relatives, lovers, friends and shipmates with whom they had endured the terrible Atlantic crossing from their original homeland in West Africa to Guyana.

The enjoyable occasion on Christmas Day 1796 was vividly described by Pinckard thus: “In the evening, their loved African dance crowned the holy day. Parties of them go from different plantations to spend the mirthful hours with their more particular friends or acquaintance of the neighbouring estates, and it is a happy meeting of friends, lovers and fellow-passengers, who made the voyage together from their native land. The whole country exhibits one moving scene of dancing gaiety. Cheerful crowds are met in every quarter”.

For this Christmas festivity, the slaves, who normally were scantily and poorly clad, devoted special attention to their person and attire, dressing most attractively and adorning their heads in peculiar ways.

As Pinckard observed about Christmas Day 1796, “Cheerful crowds are met in every quarter, dressed out in all the gaudy trappings they can collect, with their hair cut and fashioned into multitudes of whimsical shapes, representing various figures of helmets, wigs, crowns and the like and decorated with a profusion of beads, bits of ribbon, and other tinsel ornaments”. 
First Lady Sandra Granger’s quote

"Christmas lights remind me of God’s love for the human race demonstrated through his willingness to sacrifice his son so that we might all be given the promise of eternal life... Christmas is a time for family, sharing and togetherness," the First Lady said.

Submit a list of the names of the First Ladies of Guyana, and you will receive one year’s free subscription of the printed GIHR News.
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FOOD

Pepper pot

Ingredients:
1 kg. stewing steak or brisket
250 g. pickled meat
2 pig trotters or 1 cow heel
1 kg. ox tail
250 ml. casareep
2 red peppers
1 2 cm piece piece dried orange or lemon peel
1 2 cm piece stick cinnamon
3 heads clove
50 g. sugar
Salt to taste

Method:
1. Wipe and clean meat thoroughly.
2. Put heel and trotters in pan. Cover with water and bring to boil. Skim.
3. When half-tender, add other meats, and hot water to cover. Cook for about one hour.
4. Add other ingredients and simmer until meat is tender. Adjust flavor for salt and sugar.
5. Serve hot.

[Source: Magda Pollard What’s cooking in Guyana Georgetown: Reprinted 2000]
History does matter. The Guyana Institute of Historical Research holds an annual outreach programme in a secondary school annually. This year, The Director of Public education and I visited the Guyana Education Trust College.

It was a very interactive session. The booklet, *Historians and the Importance of history*, was distributed. The Institute thanks Mr. Trotz, Mrs. Lake and the members of staff for accepting our invitation.
Guyanese women: Headliners

Meet some of THE Guyanese women who made the headlines in 2015 internationally. They have achieved recognition in their organization through dint of hard work and being faithful to their discipline.

Senator Roxanne Persaud

UN Under Secretary General Catherine Pollard

Baroness Valarie Amos

Judge Birnie Stephenson
Meet the female Members of Parliament
Names from top left.

1. Amna Ally
2. Nicolette Henry
3. Simona Broomes
4. Jennifer Wade
5. Volda Lawrence
6. Karen Cummings
7. Catherine Hughes
8. Annette Ferguson
9. Dawn Hastings
10. Vanessa Patterson
11. Valerie Garrido-Lpwe
12. Vindyha Persaud
13. Gail Texiera
14. Africo Selman
15. Gillian Burton-Persaud
16. Indranie Chandarpal
17. Pauline Campbell-Sukhai
18. Priya Manickchand
Faces of the masquerade in Guyana
GIHR Board of Directors

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Guyana Institute of Historical Research Ninth Annual Research Conference

Registration fee: GUY$3,000.00
Theme: Political Independence.
Date: Saturday 25 June, 2016
Venue: Conference Room of the National Library
        Main & Church streets,
        Georgetown.
Time: 08:30hrs-14:00hrs.
*The programme of the Opening ceremony will be published in the next issue of the online edition.
Session 1 [09:50hrs-11:00hrs.]
Panel 1
Theme: Technology in post Independence Guyana.
Chairman: Mr. Terrence Fletcher
Technology in Guyana since 1966
Presenters: Panelists are from Terrence Fletcher and Associates.
10:35hrs-10:50hrs. Questions and answers

Session 1 [10:50hrs-12:00hrs.]
Panel 2
Theme: Border and Dispute resolutions
Chairman: Mr. Christopher Ram
Presenters: Panelists are from the Guyana Bar Association
Ronald Austin
11:35hrs-11:45hrs. Questions and answers.

Lunch break [11:45 hrs-12:10hrs.]

Session 2 [12:15hrs-13:05hrs.]
Panel 1
Theme: Education
Chairperson: Dr. Kimani Nehusi
Presenters: Representative from New York;
Charlene Wilkinson
Janice John
Carl Braithwaite
David Hinds
12:50 hrs-13:05hrs. Questions and answers

Session 2 [13:05hrs-14:00hrs]
Panel 2
Theme: Movement towards Independence
Chairman: Dr. Nigel Westmaas
Presenters: Estherine Adams
2 available spaces
13:35hrs.-14:00hrs. Questions and answers.
14:00hrs. Vote of thanks: Mr. Deon Abrams

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Visit the GIHR Book exhibition in the Better Hope Community ground on Friday 26 February 2016, from 10:00hrs.- 15:00hrs. Admission is free. Contact person is Hazel Woolford, hazelwoolford@gmail.com

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The First Family

President David and First Lady
Sandra Granger. Their two daughters are Ms. Afuwa Granger
and, Mrs. Han Gaskin. Mrs. Gaskin is the wife of Hon. Minister of Business,
Dominic Gaskin.
Queens Daycare/Play school. Call Elvira Moses. Telephone # 22-75093
The Board of Directors and volunteers of the Guyana Institute of Historical Research wish our readers a prosperous 2016. The next issue of GIHR Online News will be the Independence issue in May 2016.