A 1616 GATEWAY

The remnants of the early Dutch, still stands tall
Ruins of Kyk- Over- al, meaning to ‘see over all’
Fort Island, the Dutchmen administration and seat
See mighty Essequibo, Cuyuni and Mazaruni meet

Enter this gateway of time which knows no number
Awake the souls of our ancestors from their slumber
Hear the different languages of 232 Dutchmen years
Essequibo and Berbice Dutch, of slavery and the tears

Climb into this time warp of Guyana’s historical song
Feel the essence of an age and roots which we belong
Within the brick ruins of the land of many waters’ past
Lies those distant echoes of muskets and cannons blast

Learn the tales of frontier survival and of the brave
The gateway to discovery and our ancestors’ grave
A passageway of hope, also of hardship and sorrow
403 years archway leads into the sunrise of tomorrow.
GOLDEN ARE THE WAVES
[Image by Monesh Singh]

Golden are waves kissing the coast
Tea water and the mudflats it boast
Gold like the blessings of El Dorado
Liquid gold of rolling waves, it is so

Sparkling gold in reflection of the sun
Land of many waters, where river run
Golden sprays washing the Rivershore
Such amazing beauty since days of yore

Golden, like this illusion in the sunlight
The beckoning waves are indeed a sight
Golden are the mighty rivers running free
And united within vastness of the blue sea.
A FRONTIER TOWN
[Wismar- British Guiana 1900]

So it is Wismar, Upper Demerara, in the days old
The making of a frontier town by the folks of bold
A steamer for cargo and people from Georgetown
Twas Christianburg now Wismar wears the crown

A song of hardwood and then gold were the praise
A Sproston’s 1897 railway trail to Rockstone days
The 1824 Christianburg Water Wheel, still stands
Clearing of Demerara’s floodplain and ancient lands

Riches of 1916 Demerara Bauxite was not yet in play
Quiet River of amazing history and hope, on its way
From the plantation times, a frontier town was framed
Across the river was cleared and Mackenzie was named

The story of life and death this Demerara has known
Making of a frontier town and the seeds were sown
The tide of sweet Demerara, will rise and also fall
My ancestors and those folks of bold were best of all.
SPROSTON’S HOTEL
[Circa 1924- Rockstone, Essequibo River- British Guiana]

A frontier hotel to rest, a chair and a soft bed
For a time traveler is a hotel of cutting edge
A song of time and the birds have long flown
Essequibo River and a place called Rockstone

For passengers of an 1897 Wismar/ Rockstone train
In the heart of the land of the sunshine and rain
A washstand, a gas lamp but no electricity as yet
For a 1900 fortune seeker, this is as good as it gets

Georgetown and Demerara River, along the way
Toots and clangs of the train and a hotel to stay
Guests of fashion, ankle dresses, hats, waistcoats
Then for Tumatumari and Potaro Landing by boat
Greenheart building covered with wallaba shingles
Time traveler and the souls of our ancestors mingle
It is elegancy of time and pipe tobacco in 1900 style
Along the Mighty Essequibo we stop to rest for awhile.
LIL ABC

Saint Aiden’s School- Wismar- Upper Demerara- British Guiana-circa 1960s
I started out there and spent a few months before transferring to Mackenzie Primary]

River boat trip to a time and place
Song of youth and smiling face
Way up Demerara we must pass
Blossoms of innocence will last
School days of uniform and slate
Rule days of cane, don’t be late
Bell ringing and a time to run
School break, a moment of fun
Tiring afternoon lessons that drag
Common Entrance, parents brag
Lasting friendship along the way
Treasured faces in heart will stay
Watching the tide rise and swell
School days wishes and last farewell.
PATCHES

I remember a primary schoolmate of no pretend
His young life had far too much patches to mend
A neglected child named Floyd, had nothing to brag
Rarely came to school and he was dressed in rags

I can still see his smiling face in Wismar’s sunlight
He had a mother but sadly was a lady of the night
Had no father just a mother who was gone for weeks
Leaving her hungry child behind to walk the streets

He survived by begging or picking fruits on his roam
Became my good friend and soon followed me home
His condition was appalling that nothing could match
My Mother fed him and his clothing she tried to patch
Floyd wore some of my clothes and shared my bed
Stayed overnight, in the morning, we broke bread
He became a frequent visitor, we did our best to assist
Our neighbor of the Salvation Army, would soon kiss

This 50 years old story of dear Floyd of which I share
Was adopted by the Salvation Army Orphanage for care
A happier Floyd surprise me with a visit after over 5 years
Was very thankful, we shared an entire day after the tears.
MY DAILY BREAD

I work for my daily bread
And work very hard, he said
It is from sunrise to sunset
I live life without any fret

I am in the sun and the rain
Daily bread comes with pain
For my daily bread, I will pay
Honest hard work is the way

For I have no handout or dole
And work is good for the soul
“Work, not charity!” is my cry
I work for my daily bread, said I.
COLORS OF THE DAY

One, two,
My childhood skies of blue
Three, four,
I ran out of the door
Five, six,
I went for a delightful fix
Seven, eight,
Flutie sold by the school-gate
Nine, ten,
A cent for a frozen flutie, I remember then.
GUIANAN SQUIRREL
[Sciurus aestuans
Makushi name: Kari
Creole name: Squirrel]

Bushy-tailed squirrel, Guyana got
I saw some once at Lucky Spot
We had camped out in the hills
Guianan Squirrels, I remember still

In the US, squirrels are everywhere
But in Guyana, they are rare
Squirrels in the jungle, wild and free
I remember them dancing around a tree.
LUCKY SPOT HILLS
[Upper Demerara- Guyana]

High in the Lucky Spot Hills
The song of nature is the thrill
Lucky Spot is of sandy grounds
Near the river, happiness is found

Once Lucky Spot meant precious gold
And it is still full of bauxite to behold
I like it nearer to the Rivershore
Wadding in a creek, I want for no more

Follow the trail to where I have been
The fruits of the wild is the scene's
For me, it is down-hill I must go
Closer to the Demerara River that I know.
JAMOON- Fruits of the Gods
[The various names for this fruit are (in Java) plum, jambul, jamun, jaman, black plum, faux pistachier, Indian blackberry, jambol, doowet, jambolan and jambolão. Scientific synonyms include Syzygium jambolanum, Eugenia cumini and Eugenia jambolan]

Jamoon falling from the tree
Jamoon for the birds and me
Branches touching the ground
Laden tree, my happiness found

Darker is sweeter, is that tune
Dark purple and tarty is Jamoon
Glistening Jamoon, ripened by sun
Eating sweet jamoon is so much fun.
A JAMOON TOAST

Drink from the crystals o’ crescent moon
Guyana’s berry of delight called Jamoon
Good for all occasion or a special date
   When you unwind at evening late
      A smooth fruity and sweet wine
         Tantalizing palate while you dine.
COME AND VISIT
[Bartica- Essequibo]

I heard Bartica is nice
Come, visit, I say twice
Be careful where you walk
Come, visit and we can talk
Enjoy the lush beneath the sky
We can watch the songbirds fly
And bring an umbrella for the sun
Come and visit, it will be much fun.
BREAKFAST TIME

Sweet kiskadee on a wire
Breakfast time is his desire
Sing sweet kiskadee! Sing!
What will the morning bring?
For him is no breakfast of toast
World of insects he likes the most
It’s breakfast time, his favorite dish
Also likes fruits, seeds, mice or a fish.
AS SWEET AS SUGAR

In the blazing heat or pouring rain
Cutlass chopping stalks of sugarcane
Guyanese men like steel and leather
Breaking backs in the humid weather
Sugarcane burning, sugarcane to slash
Razor sharp chops of stalk and trash
Blackness from fire where reptiles hunt
Loads on shoulder to canal and punt
Payment by the weight for daily wages
Cutting sugarcane a story for the ages
On the sprawling fields of the coastal plain
Molasses of soul where sugar King Reigns.
REMINDS ME
[Linden- Guyana from above
Photos by Mahendra Thuknauth]

And it seems like everywhere I go
Lives images of yesterday, it is so
It was indeed another place in time
In my heart, there are forever mine

And the tender years, I love to recall
Childhood memories were best of all
I wonder where my friends are today
And time have passed and we’re gray

And the Demerara tide is on the way
A moment in time, where we stayed
Precious friends, I may not see again
And the memories of them will remain
And that time-clock, ticks on and on
In my heart they will always belong
And soft Demerara flowing to the sea
On her tides my spirit will always me.
GOT PUMPKIN FRITTERS?

Pumpkin fritters, so delicious to eat  
Sweet fritters makes a good treat  
Flavor and whip up a pumpkin batter  
Fried golden brown for the platter  
It makes a good appetizer or a snack  
Pumpkin fritters gets that plaque.
LONG MANGOES

The birds and I waited all year
And mango season is finally here
Big long- mangoes up in the tree
Where the blue saki and I want to be

Sweet- juicy mangoes the season bring
A reason for me and the songbirds to sing
Ripe and delicious mangoes everywhere
Mangoes for my family and friends to share

Mangoes sold at market, I cannot pass
Mangoes to celebrate as long as it last
Mangoes ripen by the shining sun
Mangoes for you and me until they are done.
BAKED CUSTARD

Baked Custard is a comforting treat
Easy to whip up, a Guyanese sweet
Eggs, evaporated and condense milk
Vanilla, nutmeg, custard as smooth as silk.
PICK ONE

They are selling bush meat I hear
They’ve labba, iguana and even deer
Forget the fish, pork, beef and chicken
For some, bush meat is finger licking.
BENEATH THE BRIDGE
[The 1968 Mackenzie/ Wismar Bridge -Linden, Upper Demerara]

Beneath this 1968 bridge I knew quite well
I passed below, flashback memories dwell
A 1968 Mackenzie/ Wismar Bridge and train
Demerara runs softly in the sun and the rain

I watched above, trains loaded with bauxite
The legs of the bridge, trembling with excite
Tracks and trestle, Plumba mines, long gone
Down below on the tide, my thoughts belong

Near the bridge are ships and bauxite horn
Also the Mackenzie Hospital, where I was born
A bauxite plant, smoke and dust, for my lungs
On my tongue twas yesterday when I was young.
THE 1955 MACKENZIE LIBRARY
[Arivida Road [Now Republic Ave.] Upper Demerara-
Circa 1960- It was taken down around 1968-69 replaced
with a much large library further down Arivida road in
Retrieve]

Little library for girls and boys
Little wooden building of joys
Mackenzie Library is the shine
The dreams of once upon a time

Little storybooks on the shelves
Quiet children go help yourselves
A story of bauxite and the times
An old library of nursery rhymes

Arivida, when yesterday was new
A Public Free Library, just for you
Reading books, they all recommend
A little dear library with books to lend.
MONKEY LOVE

[I saw this fascinating thing in 2010 and snapped this picture. I was at the Georgetown Zoo that was in a state. Rusty and dilapidated cages.

This monkey apparently escaped sometime before and returned to visit his caged friends to beg for food. One is seen here being kind and feeding him outside the cage.

A big hole was still visible in the cage but his monkey friends did not follow him and seems to prefer the better living inside the cage- guaranteed food and safety].

Once there was a monkey in the zoo
That got tired of pelting people with poo
Dreamt of being outside in the city’s sun
And thought that Georgetown would be fun
So he climbed out of his cage in the night
   And really enjoyed the morning sights
   But was soon hungry and needed cash
   Had no choice but to resort to eating trash

He thought of getting a job but had no pants
   Felt that no one would gave him a chance
   He realized that it was easier in the cages
   Just to sit back and not worry about wages

   Life was unsafe and he could even die
   He realized he was now a city monkey and cried
   Rules of outside living he no longer understand
   And scampered back to his cage with poo in hand.

THE END.