



Windsor Research Centre

Project Proposal

Prepared for: The Baptist Union, Jamaica .

Prepared by: Michael Schwartz, Director

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Enquiry as to whether the Baptist Union would consider a collaborative project to renovate and restore the Baptist Manse (formerly "Content Great House") associated with Waldensia Baptist Church.

Executive Summary

Summary

Waldensia Baptist Manse at Sherwood Content has great historical significance as the former Content Great House and, despite its present condition, could be restored to become a positive influence in the community's culture and activities.

Background

In common with many Trelawny villages, Sherwood Content has a number of historical assets and many of these centre around the Baptist Church and "Waldensia", the name given by William Knibb to honour William Flash (a Waldensian), who donated the site for the first Baptist Church on his estate, Piedmont. The church was then rebuilt at its present site in 1875, and it turns out that this was immediately adjacent to the Content Estate. It may have been at that time that the Baptist Church purchased the Content Great House, now known as the Manse, for use by its Minister.

On visiting the Baptist Manse, it is immediately recognizable as being built in the late 18th century, great house style. With the house as a clue, I have been able to "geo-reference" my old "Content" map (from the National Library of Jamaica) to a satellite image of the area, and the map corresponds almost perfectly with existing roads, boundaries and some of the older buildings.

Unfortunately, the Manse is presently not inhabited and there is a substantial problem which has developed in one of the main internal walls. This wall is presently collapsing as a result of a roof leakage which has caused the wooden-post structure to rot. The consequences will certainly be a complete collapse of two of the three roof sections (which are normally supported by this wall) and when that occurs, the house will not be restorable. On the other hand, if this wall and valley are rebuilt now, I believe that this fine example of 18th century construction can be saved and will once again be able to form a core for the Sherwood Content community.

I am writing this proposal in the hope that the Baptist Union will see merit in exploring the possibility of rescuing the house so that it can continue to be a focus of village activity in Sherwood Content. I have been contacted by several persons (who came across the Content page on our website <www.cockpitcountry.com/content.html>) and am hopeful that there is some interest in helping to fund a project of this type.

I believe that the Baptist Manse in Falmouth, presently undergoing restoration by the Falmouth Heritage Renewal group, might constitute a model that we could explore.

Attachments:

Early Map of Content; Satellite image of Content Estate; Enlarged image of Content Estate; Drawings (2) of Baptist Manse