

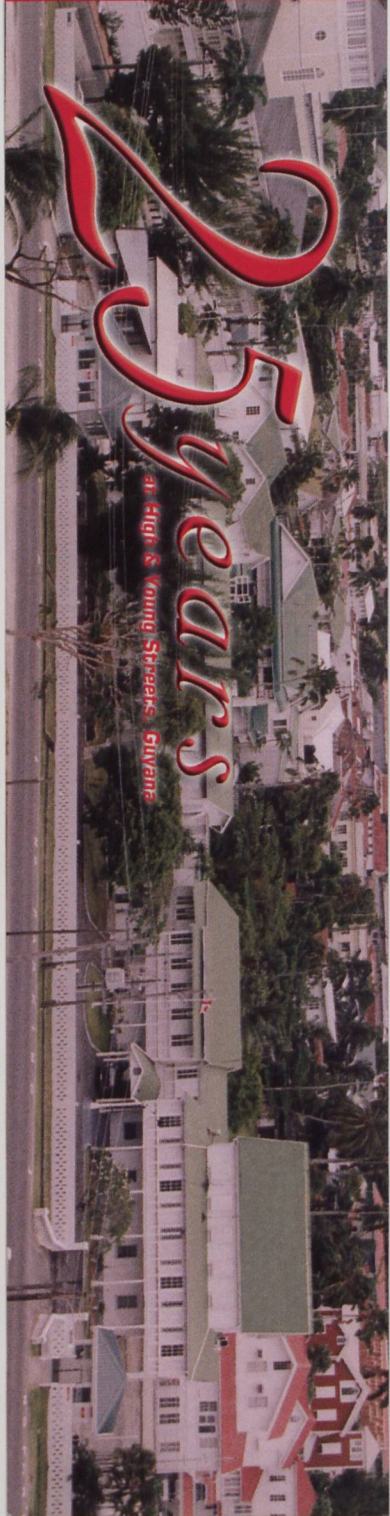
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# Reviews

at High & Young Streets, Guyana



Canadian  
High  
Commission



Dept. of Foreign Affairs  
Min. des Affaires étrangères

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**25 years**  
at High & Young Streets, Guyana

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FORWORD



# 25 years

at High & Young Streets, Guyana

My sincerest thanks to High Commissioner Sergio Marchese and staff of the Guyanese High Commission, Sister M. Noel, Messrs. R. S. M. and the Sisters of Mercy, Mr. John Graham, Mr. Simon Wade and Dr. Allan Bowler all former Canadian High Commissioners to Guyana, Mr. Dariusz Lachar, Mr. William Harris, Mr. Cord Garde-Lowe and Mr. Gill Ann Hubbard for their cooperation in making this project a success.

Franko Bobo-Schmidt  
Public Affairs Officer



FORWARD



# 25 years

at High & Young Streets, Guyana

This publication is a most unique one, since it is the first of its kind to be published in Guyana. It is a record of the past, a record of the present, and a record of the future. It is a record of the people who have lived and worked in Guyana, and of the things they have done. It is a record of the progress that has been made, and of the challenges that lie ahead. It is a record of the spirit of the people, and of the hope for the future.

My sincere thanks to High Commissioner Dame Adrienne...  
and staff of the Guyanese High Commission, Mr. John...  
Messrs. R. S. M. and the Secretary, Mr. John...  
Mr. Simon Wade and Dr. Allan Rowe of former...  
High Commissioners to Guyana, Mr. Richard...  
William... Mr. Carl... and Mr. Carl...  
Thank you for their cooperation in making this project...  
possible.

Public Affairs Officer  
Public Affairs Office



## FOREWORD

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This publication “25 years at High & Young Streets, Guyana” is a most unique one, since it is part of the efforts deployed by many citizens to see the historical centre of Georgetown listed among UNESCO’s “World Heritage” cities.

This building has had a long and rich history changing ownership over the years before being owned by the Government of Canada. The publication chronicles the period 1977 to 2002, but equally whetting the appetite of the reader with the period prior to 1977 when the Sisters of Mercy owned the property.

Many a visitor to Guyana’s premier hotel “Le Meridien Pegasus” and around Georgetown would hardly believe, as they watch the Maple Leaf flutter to the Atlantic breeze, the building therein was once a convent of an order of the Roman Catholic nuns.

A publication of this nature will ultimately lead to a greater awareness and appreciation of Guyana’s rich cultural history.

My sincerest thanks to High Commissioner Serge Marcoux and staff of the Canadian High Commission, Sister M. Noel Menezes, R.S.M. and the Sisters of Mercy; Mr. John Graham, Mr. Simon Wade and Dr. Allan Bowker all former Canadian High Commissioners to Guyana, Ms. Darlene LaCharite, Mr. William Harris, Mr. Cord Garrido-Lowe and Ms. Gail Ann Bumbury for their cooperation in making this project a success.

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Public Affairs Officer.



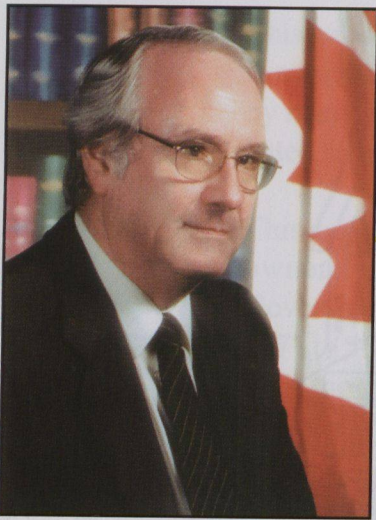


ARTIST IMPRESSION OF THE BUILDING, BY  
the then High Commissioner, Mr. John Graham



## MESSAGE FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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“La Pénitence, Vlissengen Road, Queenstown and Alberttown” all those names give away the multicultural and yet unique character of Georgetown. Few towns on our New Continent have seen so many colonial powers follow each other, each of them leaving its distinctive mark on the local architecture which remains, however, one of a kind.

By the richness of its architecture, by the reminiscence of its history, Georgetown is really a part of the World Heritage. Both the city and its architecture are mirrors of the past, witnesses of the present and guarantor of the future.

Since 1964, Canada has been part of Georgetown’s life and since 1977, part of the life of this district of Kingston where our chancery is located. Originally, what is now the Canadian chancery housed two families whose names are intimately linked with the development of Georgetown. Those homes subsequently became the convent of a religious order who educated the young, before being transformed into a diplomatic mission.

When we realized that we would be celebrating, this year, the twenty-fifth anniversary of our installation in this building, we had the idea of joining together two projects: our twenty-fifth anniversary and the inclusion of the historic centre of Georgetown in the UNESCO World Heritage.

This leaflet is intended to be Canada’s contribution to the UNESCO project, a project to which so many people are contributing, historians and people coming from all sectors of society enamoured by this city and by its history. It is our hope that the texts and photos we have been able to gather here will help bring back to life a page of history, a history with which we are proud to have been associated all these twenty-five years, thanks to this building where so many people have worked.

It is to the memory of these people and to the memory of the building in which they have worked that these pages are dedicated.

RIGHT: THE LOWERING OF THE  
Red Ensign by Commissioner Milton  
Gregg.

Serge Marcoux  
High Commissioner

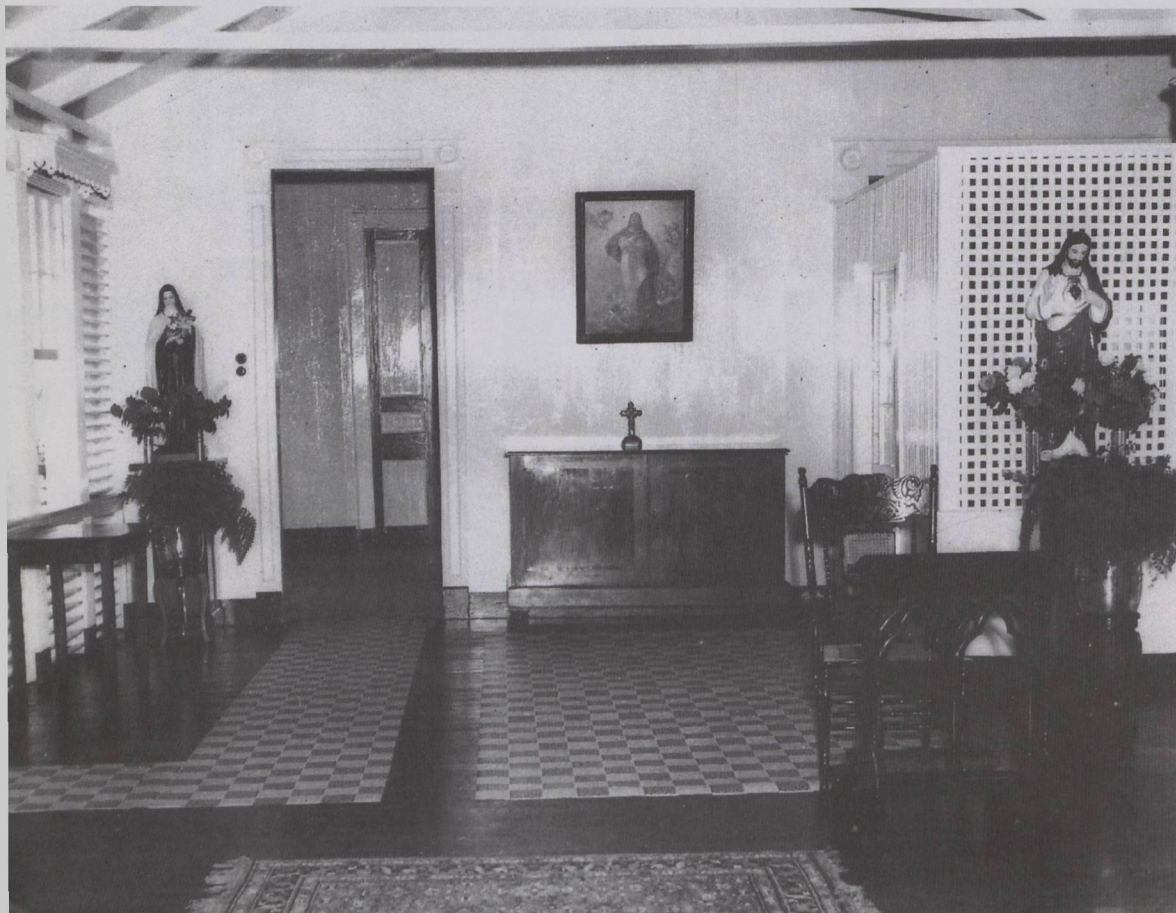
Georgetown,  
July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002



# THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION

Located on the original residential strip of the affluent landed settlers and merchants, what is known since 1977 as the Canadian High Commission was constructed or re-constructed for the hallowed use of the Sisters of Mercy at the turn of the fifties of the twentieth century. The building has always been accepted as a showpiece of fine Guyanese timber vernacular architecture, the highlight being a relocated 1895 timber chapel *insitu*, transported in pieces for almost two miles to its current location.

By the time the Canadian Foreign Office had laid eyes on its graceful and blushing beauty in early 1977, the interior of the Chapel had been renovated and enlarged, but the Sisters were moving on to establishing schools and other institutions of higher learning, and were however willing to part with this masterpiece. Architect George Henry had evaluated the property at \$550,000.00, the Chapel accounting for \$22,822.50 of that price.



LEFT: SACRISTY  
taken the day of the  
blessing of the New  
Convent June 1, 1951.



MAIN ENTRANCE  
of the High Commission.

The Canadians lost no time transforming the internal spaces from their original exclusive sacred role to more pragmatic and diplomatic uses. With the passing of time the Canadians and their guests have all surmised that the persistence of the original architecture only lends to the austere beauty and function of the Chancellery. The ambience of an exhibition of Canadian products in 1999 jostled playfully with the affluent show of stained casement windows, once the source of light to the very Chapel.

Understandably major internal remodeling has taken place, and later external additions show that effort has been made to retain and maintain the former glory of the original elevations. The restored Convent structures have been acknowledged by the surviving Sisters of Mercy as 'heartwarming ...to see how beautifully well preserved and enhanced have been both the buildings and the grounds.' The High Commission has also caught the eyes of the Heritage and Preservation agencies and in 2002, through UNESCO and the Center for Architectural Heritage, Research and Documentation (CAHRD) of the University of Guyana the Canadians were awarded the prestigious '*Aubrey Barker Award*' for their contribution to the preservation of a fine example of Guyanese architecture. They share this annual award with the Brazilian Embassy.

*William Harris,*  
*Architect.*

# HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION BUILDING

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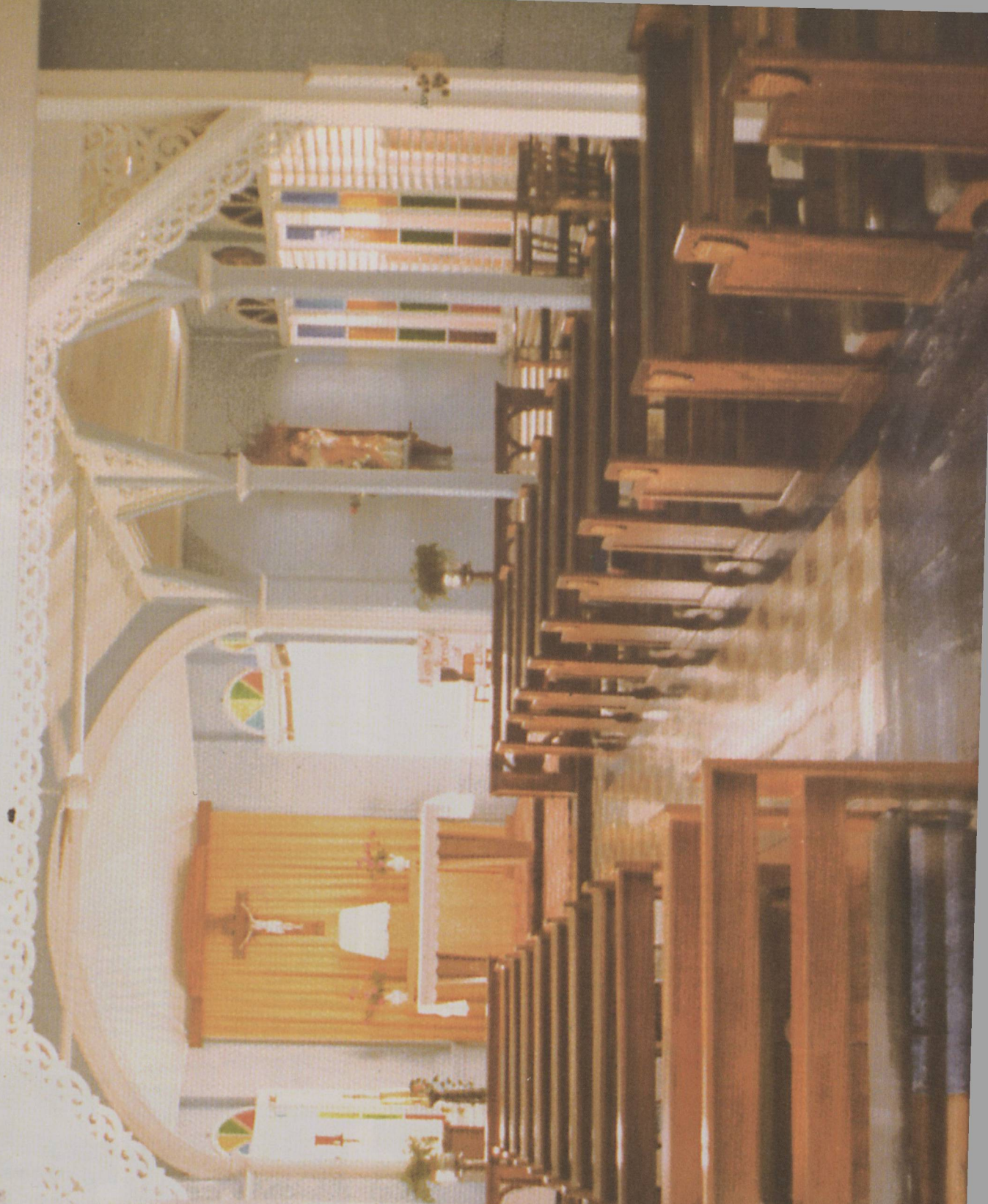
61-62 HIGH & YOUNG STREETS AND 97-98 DUKE STREET, KINGSTON, GUYANA

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Many buildings constructed in the colonial era, in the colonial style, still grace the city of Georgetown. The building occupied by the Canadian High Commission at the corner of High and Young Streets in the Kingston area of Georgetown is one such jewel.

The Canadian High Commission sits on the lots of two former private residences, one on Lot 61-62 High Street, originally owned by Mr. M.P. Camacho, and the other on Lot 97-98 Duke Street, which belonged to Mr. John De Freitas. Though there is no concrete evidence to this effect, the homes that occupied these lots are thought to have been built in the late 1920's. Sadly, in 1944 a fire destroyed Mr. De Freitas' beautiful home and claimed the lives of his wife and grandchild.

RIGHT: INTERIOR  
OF the Chapel during  
the days of the  
Sisters of Mercy.







EXTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL  
- Sacred Heart convent, Kingston - 1951



EXTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL  
- Sacred Heart convent, Kingston - 1951



The De Freitas and Camacho properties were subsequently passed into the hands of the Sisters of Mercy who sought to relocate their convent and school from the Charlestown area. This Roman Catholic order decided to move from Charlestown because that area was to be designated an industrial site.

The hunt for the new site proved to be quite a venture, and the fact that the Sisters wanted both the High Street property and the Duke Street property - both prime pieces of real estate - raised considerable concern. A group of "Conscientious objectors" who possibly feared that the Sisters were taking over the area (the Mercy Hospital having been established in nearby Parade Street in 1944) tried to block the Sisters' purchase of the Duke and High Street properties. The Sisters launched a campaign of prayer and public awareness in rebuttal. For instance, they pointed out that the ringing of the Angelus at 6:00 a.m., noon and 6:00 p.m. would cause no more disturbance than did the military bugle calls at nearby Eve Leary at similar hours (Menezes, 1992:2).

RIGHT: THE CHAPEL  
of the High Commission in the  
1980's.

BELOW: SISTERS OF THE  
Sacred Heart Convent, Kingston -  
1969.

Finally, the Sisters of Mercy succeeded in purchasing the High Street property and negotiations began for the purchase of the Duke Street property. The lands were assessed at \$3,500 and \$9,240, respectively, while the house on the High Street property was





OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA



COMMISSARIAT DU CANADA

The Office of the Commissioner for  
Canada was opened in Georgetown on March 11,  
1964.

The Hcn. Milton F. Gregg, VC., was  
appointed Commissioner. Members of his  
staff were:

S.Wayne Hubble, 2nd Secretary

Miss Olive E. Hobbs, Administrative  
Officer

Miss Shirley J. Boles - Secretary

Donald J. Larkin - Accountant

The office was first housed in temporary  
quarters at the Park Hotel, Main Street. In  
April, 1964, it moved to larger ( but still  
temporary quarters ) located at 91 Middle St.

Canadian High Commission



Haut Commissariat du Canada

P. O. Box 660,  
Georgetown

June 15, 1977

Sister Admirables,  
Sisters of Mercy,  
Young Street,  
Georgetown.

Dear Sister Admirables,

Further to our several conversations over the past few weeks, I now wish to confirm that it is the intention of the Government of Canada to enter into negotiations with your Community for the purchase of part of the Convent property bounded by High, Young and Duke Streets, viz. Lots Nos. 61, 62, 97 and 98 but not including Lot No. 63.

My understanding is that completion of this transaction will require the concurrence of members of your Community. For our part, the concurrence of the Government of Guyana will be required - indeed it has now been formally sought. In addition, final approval of the purchase as negotiated between us will require approval by the Government of Canada acting through the Treasury Board, the Department of External Affairs and the Canadian High Commission.

It is my hope that all of these steps may be taken without undue obstacles or delay in order to fulfill the declaration of intention to purchase now given.

Yours sincerely;

*Allan B. Roger*  
A. B. Roger  
High Commissioner

valued at \$40,000.

On September 3, 1949, architect Mr. Carl McCowan applied to the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA), on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, "...to convert 61-62 High Street into dwelling and sleeping accommodations for the Sisters with a temporary chapel therein" and on lot W 1/2 98 Duke Street to erect a two-storey wing for sleeping rooms, semi-detached from 61-62 High Street, reserving room for the construction of a proper chapel at a later date.

However, Mr. McCowan's plan for the chapel did not find favour with the Sisters. Instead, they decided to dismantle the old chapel in Charlestown and rebuild it on the new site. In fact, much of the vacated Charlestown building was taken apart and reused in the construction of the new convent.

According to Menezes (1992: 3), it was "due to the expertise of the workers of John Fernandes Ltd. that the Chapel was dismantled and relocated in Kingston. Each board was carefully marked; it was truly a work of art". And although the Sisters were pleased with the rebuilt chapel, it is obvious from his letters that architect Mr. McCowan was not. His letter of January 9, 1950 to the City Engineer disclosed that he did not think that either the rebuilt chapel or the 61-62 High Street building held much architectural interest. He wrote that "it is proposed at some future date to replace these two buildings by a group of more imposing structures of some architectural merit" (Ibid:3).

The land transfer was approved in 1949 and by 1951 the Sisters had full occupation of the former Camacho and De Freitas properties. 61-62 High & Young Street and 97-98 Duke Street were now home to the Sisters of Mercy Convent and, somewhat later after they had settled, to the Stella



ABOVE: MAIN REFECTORY BUILDING at the corners of High & Young Sts. - view from north/west of garden.



Maris Preparatory School.

During the 1960's the convent found itself in the heart of the upheavals of that period. As a result the area was often cordoned off and soldiers were often posted outside the convent gates. Still, that did not prevent the poor from seeking food, clothing and solace there during the 80-day strike that occurred in 1963.

The story of the Canadian occupancy of the former Sisters of Mercy property began early in the



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1960's. Independence from Britain was on the horizon and Canada wanted to forge closer ties with the newly emerging South American country.

To this end, Canada posted a Commissioner to then British Guiana, on March 11, 1964. This represented the first diplomatic presence in Guyana. The then Prime Minister, Mr. William Lyon Mackenzie King appointed the Hon. Milton F. Gregg, V.C. as first Commissioner. Members of his staff were: Mr. S. Wayne Hubble, 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary; Ms. Olive E. Hobbs, administrative officer; Ms. Shirley J. Boles, secretary, and Mr. Donald J. Larkin, accountant.

At first, the Commissioner and other Canadian officials had to move from one temporary office at the Park Hotel on Main Street to another on 91 Middle

BELOW: DORMITORY building viewed from High & Young Sts., Kingston.



Canada

## Rem

**THE** new Chancery Canadian High Commission a unique Guyanese structure was opened yesterday at the corner of High and Young streets, Georgetown.

The building, beautifully proportioned, was designed "to draw the lightest winds through its jalousies." Canadian High Commissioner John Graham

The official opening ceremony yesterday was attended by Foreign Affairs Minister, Rasleigh Jackson, Canadians in Guyana, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and other special invited guests.

Mr Graham, who told the history of the building, said that it was over a century old and was constructed by M.P. Camacho, grandfather of George Camacho.

According to him, the Canadian High Commission was established through Mr Allan Ross, former High Commissioner.

## NOTICE OF REMOVAL

### THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION

will move to new offices at Young and High Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, effective

May 26, 1980. Telephone numbers 72081-5 remain unchanged

## High Commission gets new home

# able restoration of 00-year old building

and purchased the building in 1977 from the Sisters of Mercy.

In addition, Guyanese architect, George Henry of George Henry Associates had done a remarkable job to restore the structure that now stood as a landmark of Georgetown. Mr Graham commented.

Mr Graham said that during the renovation period the contractors, Taylor Woodrow International and the architects were undergoing some very anxious moments as there were crises of certain required materials and installations.

The Canadian High Commissioner extended his gratitude to President Forbes Graham, the Guyana

Foreign Ministry, the Canadian government, the Bank of Guyana, the Guyana Electricity Corporation [GEC] Guyana Stores Limited, Guyana National Engineering Corporation [GNEC], the architects, contractors, carpenters and all the Canadians who worked on the renovation project.

Special mention was made of the Head of the Chancery, Ted Fleming, the Office Manager, Dick Oastler and Communications Adviser Allan McLean of Canada who all gave stalwart services.

The Canadian High Commission had now been rehoused at the new Chancery, after 14 years at

the Bank of Guyana building.

Cde George Henry, the Architect, said that the new Chancery had helped to beautify our surroundings and to share in a revival exercise of our heritage.

He said that the restoration of the building was a deep sense of pride and achievement.

The cutting of the ribbon was done by Guyanese Lynette Heath, secretary of the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], Canadian High Commission. Lynette, who has been working for the High Commission for 16 years now, was among the first Guyanese to be employed by the High Commission. Suse Parasrath.

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AERIAL VIEW OF THE CANADIAN  
High Commission in Kingston,  
Georgetown.







DORIS KENTON

YIELD

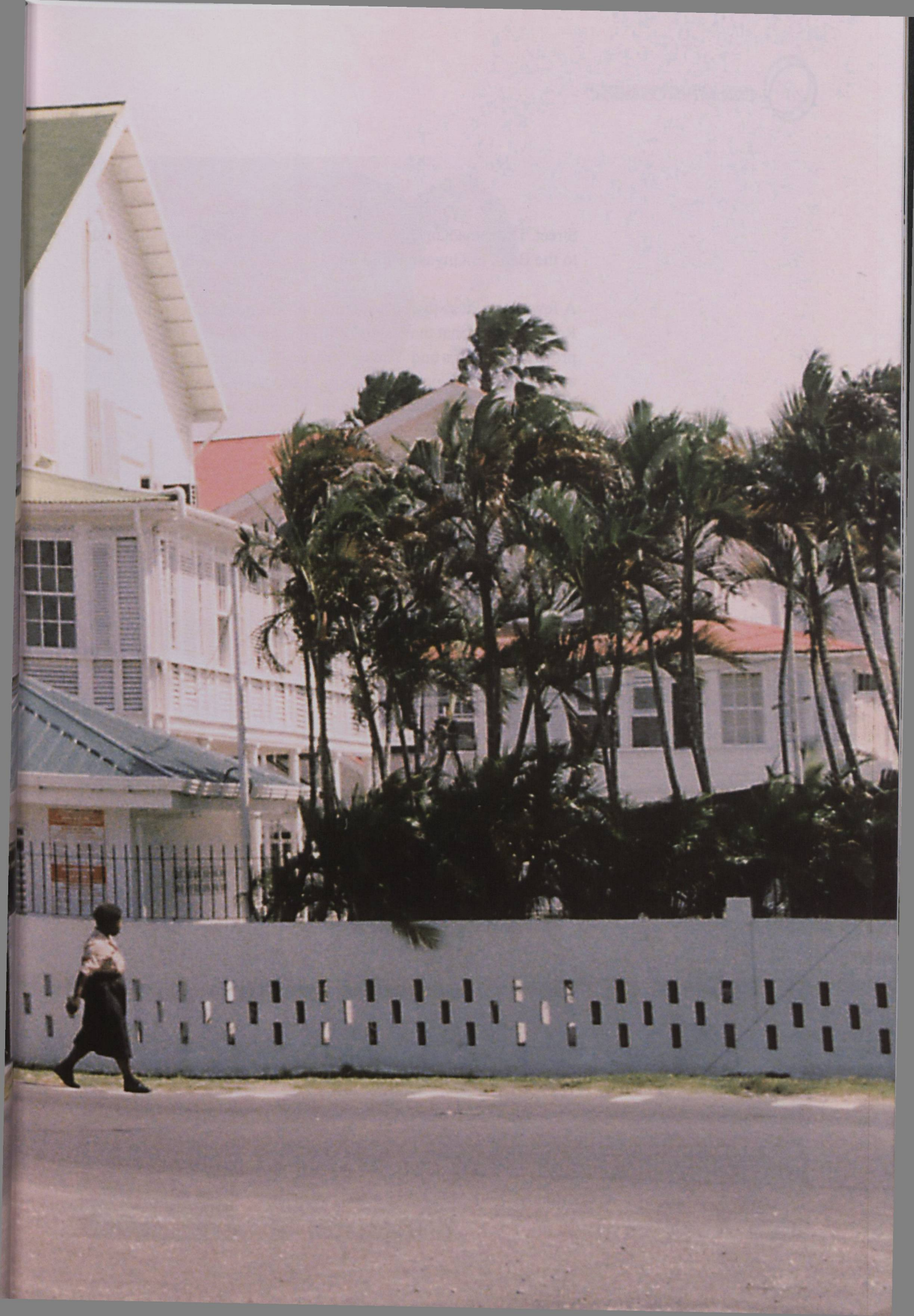
AERIAL VIEW OF THE CANADIAN  
High Commission in Kingston,  
Georgetown.













Street. The Canadian Diplomatic Mission was subsequently located to the Bank of Guyana Building.

A few years later, then Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. Allan Roger, learned that the Sisters of Mercy wanted to sell the convent property at High and Young Streets. The High Commissioner approached the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy, Sister Admirabilis, asking that Canada's interest in the property be kept confidential until "it was confirmed that the Government of Guyana would have no objections if the sale did occur" (Ibid:4). Negotiations between the Government of Canada and the Sisters of Mercy continued for several months, due in part to the additional formalities involved in handing a Holy place over to secular hands.

On November 7, 1977, High Commissioner Roger sent a letter to

BELOW: CANADA'S FIRST  
Commissioner Mr. Milton  
Gregg welcoming Prime  
Minister Forbes Burnham and  
Mrs. Burnham to the office in  
Middle Street.





CANADA'S THEN GOVERNOR GENERAL ROMEO LE BLANC WHO CAME FOR the funeral of the late President Cheddie Jagan in 1997 signing the visitor's book.

the Mercy Superior expressing his pleasure that an agreement of sale had been reached. The agreed-upon price was G\$540,000. Thus, in January 1978, the former Sisters of Mercy Convent and Stella Maris Preparatory School passed into the hands of the Canadian Government. Had the property in Kingston not been acquired by the Canadian Government, town planners might have forged ahead with their plan to locate all diplomatic missions together, outside central Georgetown.

Despite the fact that Canada actively solicited the property on High and Young Streets, it was by a stroke of luck that the historical buildings themselves came to be renovated and preserved, rather than demolished. There had been plans to replace the buildings with a pre-fabricated structure from Britain. However, a dock strike in London as well as financial cuts in Ottawa precluded the shipping and erection of the new building before the Canadian High Commission's lease at the Bank of Guyana building expired. The new High Commissioner, Mr. John Graham, helped by Mr. George Henry, a Guyanese architect who has renovated many of Guyana's historical buildings, carefully reviewed the state of the building and managed to come up with a budget in line with what Ottawa was ready to spend and with a design, simple enough to allow the main works to be completed before the end of the lease at the Bank of Guyana. Thus came the decision to renovate the existing structures.

But it was not before 1980 that all the renovations could be completed by Mr. Henry and Mr. Doug McDonald, who came from Canada. It was with great fanfare that the Canadian High Commission



ABOVE: THE LATE PRESIDENT CHEDDIE JAGAN ENGAGING THE ATTENTION of High Commissioner Simon Wade and others at Canada Day official ceremony, 1996.

moved into its own premises at High and Young Streets in Kingston and President Burnham expressed his satisfaction at the preservation of the historical building. “The renovation was a wild odyssey, full of adventures, crises, dumb decisions, but essentially a great joy”, recalls Mr. Graham, who served as Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana during this period (Graham 2002).

Since then, our Chancery has seen many high level visitors passing through its door. H.E. Roland Mitchener, Governor General paid a State visit to Guyana in February 1969. The Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, then Prime Minister, came to Guyana in 1975 at the invitation of the then Prime Minister Forbes Burnham. H.E. Roméo Leblanc, Governor General, attended the funeral of late President Cheddi Jagan in March 1997. The Hon. David Kilgour was the most recent Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa to visit Guyana in 2000. Our visitors’ book has been of tremendous importance since it is filled with names of important Guyanese personalities from all sectors of activities who visited our chancery as well as groups of Canadians who have forged long-lasting ties with Guyana such as the National Defence College of Canada which visited Georgetown in December 1972 or the Canadian Youth Cricket Association who disputed cricket matches in 1992. Several representatives of Canadian organizations visited the High Commission for the launching of their projects such as Youth Challenge International and Crossroad International who have been

active in Guyana for many years.

Today, neither visitors nor officials may realize that they are walking on the lawns and in the buildings that once served as Chapel and dormitory for the Sisters of Mercy Convent and the Stella Maris Preparatory School. The main building of the present office was formerly a dining room and kitchen; the current visa and immigration section served as the laundry and storerooms. What is now the main entrance to the Canadian High Commission leads to what was formerly the convent's Chapel. Below the Chapel, Stella Maris Preparatory, which began with 18 pupils, was housed.

Since taking over the Sisters of Mercy Convent property over a quarter of a century ago, the Canadian Government has come to cherish the beautiful architectural design of the buildings. For this reason, much of the original building still stands. Our most solemn celebrations are still held in the Chapel, mindful of the fact that it was once a place of prayer and reverence.



ABOVE: FORMER PRESIDENT JANET JAGAN AND HIGH COMMISSIONER  
Dr. Allan Bowker extending toasts on Canada Day 1997 in the chapel.

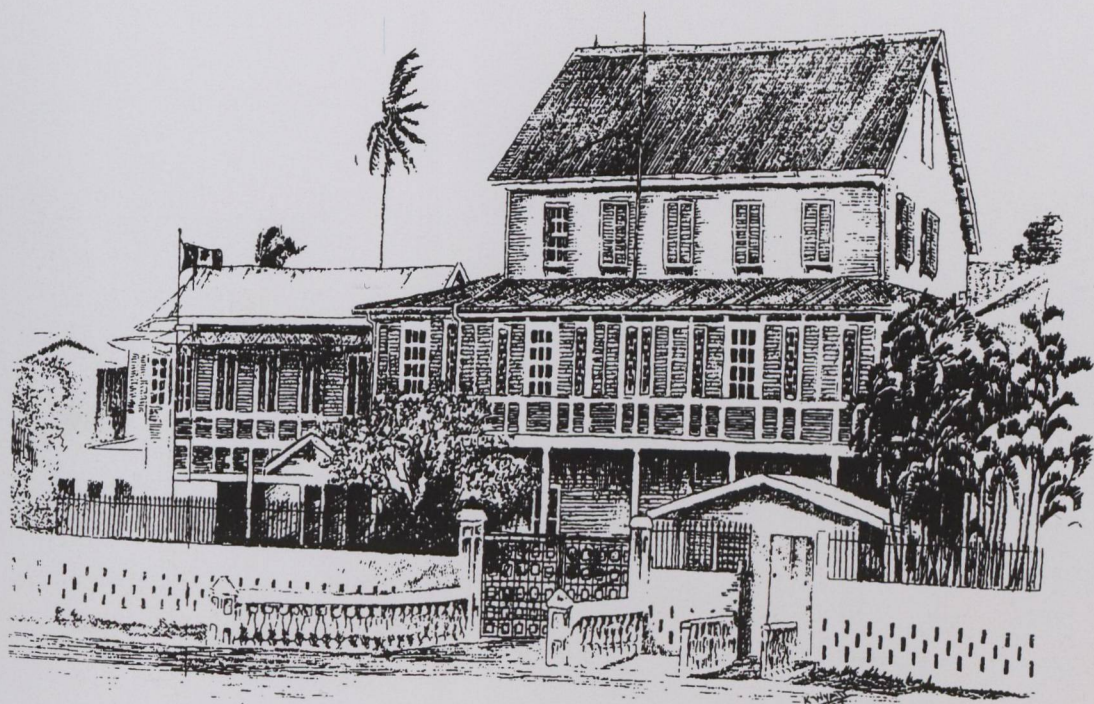


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ABOVE: FAREWELL LUNCHEON FOR HIGH COMMISSIONER  
Allan Bowker in the chapel in 1999.



Artist impression of the building, by Kenton Wyatt.





Haut-  
Commissariat  
du Canada

# SAINTS

*pires High et Young, Guyana*



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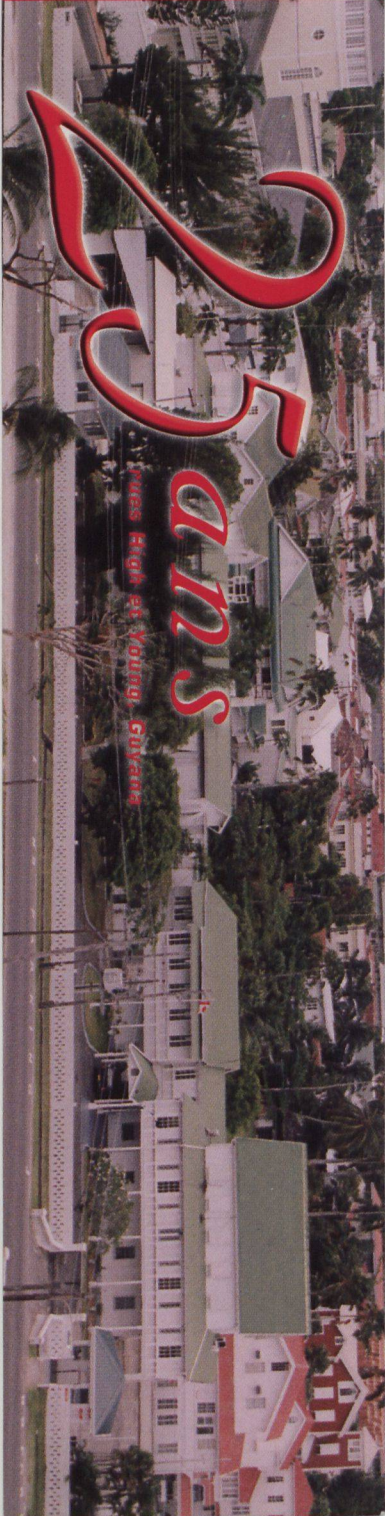
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25 years at High & Young Streets  
Guyana. --

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Haut-  
Commissariat  
du Canada





*25*ans  
rues High et Young, Guyana



St. John's Cathedral

St. John's Cathedral

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# INTRODUCTION



# 25 ans

**rues High et Young, Guyana**



# INTRODUCTION



# 25 ans

rues High et Young, Guyana

La publication de cette brochure 25 ans au sein des rues High et Young, Guyana, est un événement important car elle a permis de faire connaître à un grand nombre de personnes le rôle de ces rues dans l'histoire de Guyana. Cette brochure est le fruit d'un projet de recherche et de documentation qui a permis de rassembler un grand nombre de documents et de photos. Elle est le fruit d'un travail de longue haleine qui a permis de faire connaître à un grand nombre de personnes le rôle de ces rues dans l'histoire de Guyana.

Young's  
Journey to the Heart of Guyana  
Discover the Heart of Guyana

# INTRODUCTION

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La publication de cette brochure “25 ans au coin des rues High et Young, Guyana” est unique car elle s’inscrit dans les efforts déployés par plusieurs citoyens de cette ville pour voir le coeur historique de Georgetown inclut parmi les sites classés “Patrimoine de l’Humanité” par l’UNESCO.

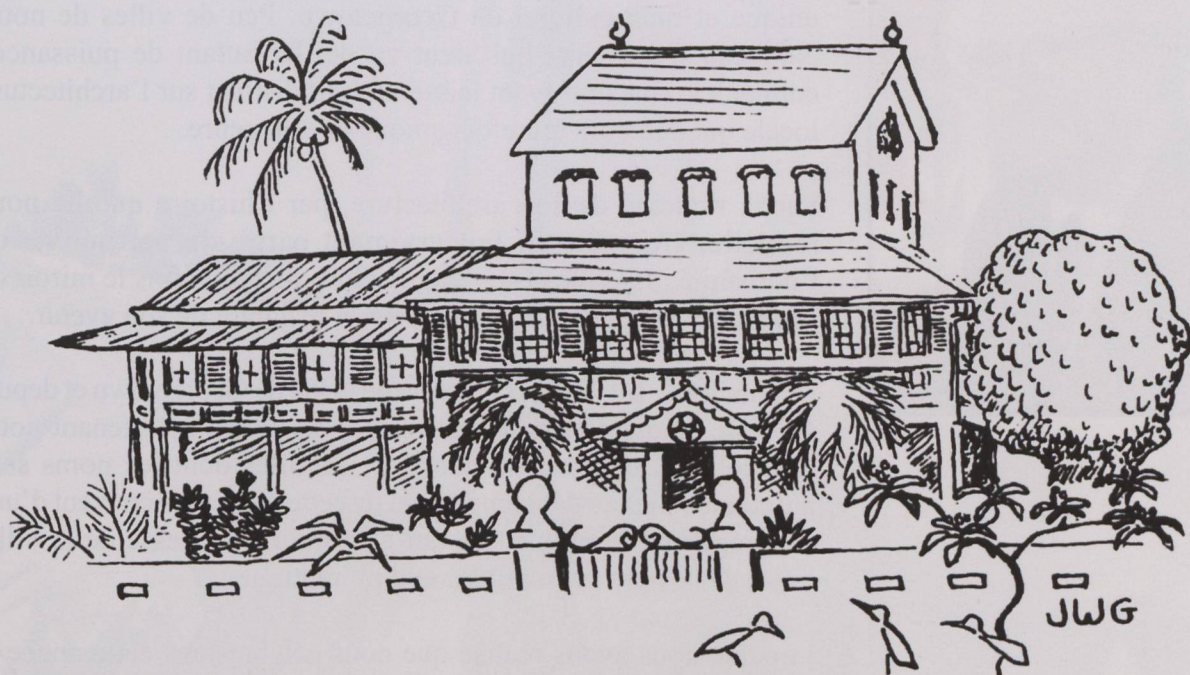
Cet édifice a derrière lui un riche passé, passant d’un propriétaire à l’autre aux cours des ans avant de devenir possession du gouvernement canadien. Cette publication couvre la période 1977 à 2002, mais cherche aussi à donner au lecteur un aperçu de la période précédant 1977 quand l’édifice était propriété des soeurs de la Miséricorde.

Peu de visiteurs du grand hôtel du Guyana, “Le Méridien Pégasus”, ou d’ailleurs à Georgetown pourrait penser, en voyant le drapeau à feuille d’érable flotter dans la brise de l’Atlantique, que cet édifice fut jadis le couvent d’une congrégation de religieuses catholiques romaines.

Nous aimerions que cette publication conduise nos lecteurs à prendre mieux conscience de la riche histoire et culture du Guyana.

Mes plus sincères remerciements vont au Haut-Commissaire Serge Marcoux et au personnel du Haut-Commissariat, à Soeur M. Noël Menezes, R.S.M., et aux soeurs de la Miséricorde, à MM. John Graham, Simon Wade et au Dr. Allan Bowker, tous précédemment Hauts-Commissaires au Guyana, à Mme Darlene LaCharite, à M. William Harris, à M. Cord Garrido-Lowe et à Mme Gail Ann Bumbury pour leur contribution à la réalisation de ce projet.

Frankie Bobb-Semple,  
Agent d’Affaires Publiques.

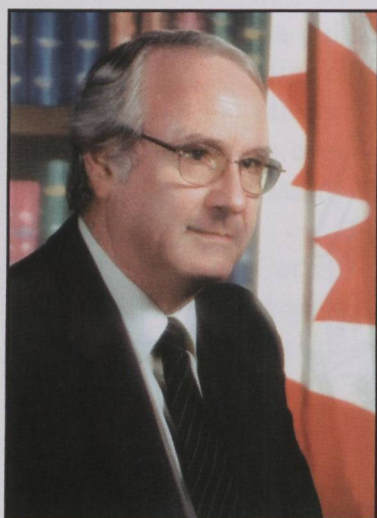


L'édifice tel que vu par le Haut-Commissaire d'alors, M. John Graham.



## MESSAGE DU HAUT-COMMISSAIRE

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Par la richesse de son architecture, par l'histoire qu'elle nous rappelle, Georgetown fait vraiment partie du patrimoine de l'humanité. "La Pénitence, Vlissengen Road, Queenstown et Alberttown", autant de noms qui trahissent à la fois le caractère unique et multiculturel de Georgetown. Peu de villes de notre Nouveau Continent qui aient vu défiler autant de puissances coloniales, chacune ayant laissé un trait distinct sur l'architecture locale qui demeure toutefois unique en son genre.

Par la richesse de son architecture, par l'histoire qu'elle nous rappelle, Georgetown fait vraiment partie du patrimoine de l'humanité. La ville et son architecture sont à la fois le miroir de son passé, le témoin de son présent et le garant de son avenir.

Depuis 1964, le Canada fait partie de la vie de Georgetown et depuis 1977 de ce quartier de Kingston où se trouve maintenant notre chancellerie, d'abord résidence de familles dont les noms sont intimement liés au développement de cette ville, puis couvent d'une congrégation de religieuses qui a formé la jeunesse de la ville, avant de devenir représentation diplomatique.

Lorsque nous avons réalisé que nous célébrerions cette année le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de notre installation dans cette édifice historique, l'idée nous est venue de réunir deux projets: notre vingt-cinquième anniversaire et l'intégration du coeur historique de Georgetown au titre de Patrimoine de l'Humanité par l'UNESCO.

Cette plaquette se veut ainsi la contribution du Canada au projet de l'UNESCO, projet auquel se consacre nombre d'historiens et de personnes de tous les secteurs de la société épris de cette ville et de son histoire. Nous espérons que les textes et les photos que nous avons pu réunir ici feront revivre une page d'histoire, une histoire à laquelle nous sommes fiers d'avoir été associés au cours des vingt-cinq dernières années grâce à cet édifice où tant de gens ont travaillé.

C'est à leur mémoire et à celle de l'édifice qui les a réunis que ces pages sont dédiées.



# LE HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DU CANADA

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Situé sur ce qui fut originellement l'avenue résidentielle des riches colons et marchands ce qui est connu depuis 1977 comme le Haut-Commissariat du Canada fut d'abord construit ou plus exactement re-construit pour l'usage religieuse des soeurs de la Miséricorde au début des années '50 du vingtième siècle. L'édifice a toujours été considéré comme un joyau de l'architecture vernaculaire en bois du Guyana, dont l'élément le plus notable est la chapelle de bois "in situ" datant de 1895 qui fut transférée de son emplacement originel sur une distance d'environ deux miles en pièces détachées.

Lorsque le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères du Canada jeta les yeux sur cette beauté à la fois gracieuse et discrète au début 1977, l'intérieur de la chapelle avait déjà été rénové et élargi, mais les religieuses avaient déjà décidé d'établir des écoles et autres institutions de haut-savoir et acceptèrent en conséquent de se départir de cette oeuvre d'art. L'architecte George Henry avait évalué la propriété à \$550,000, la chapelle à elle seule valant \$22,822.50.

Les Canadiens ne perdirent pas de temps et aménagèrent l'intérieur pour adapter son utilisation exclusivement religieuse du début vers une nouvelle vocation diplomatique, beaucoup plus pragmatique. Ceux-ci étaient persuadés qu'avec le passage du temps la conservation de l'architecture originelle ne ferait qu'ajouter à l'austère beauté et au panache de la



A GAUCHE: LA  
sacristie  
photographiée le jour  
de la bénédiction du  
nouveau couvent, le  
1er juin, 1951.



ENTRÉE PRINCIPALE  
du Haut-Commissariat

chancellerie. L'ambiance créée par une exposition de produits canadiens en 1999 forma un contraste joyeux avec le spectacle scintillant produit par les fenêtres à vitraux qui furent au départ l'une des sources de lumière de la même chapelle.

On ne se surprendra pas que des rénovations internes majeures aient eu lieu au cours des ans mais les additions ultérieures à l'extérieur ont montré les efforts faits pour conserver et rehausser la gloire originelle des constructions. Les structures restaurées du couvent ont été reconnues par les soeurs de la Miséricorde se souvenant du passé comme "faisant chaud au coeur... de voir à quel point à la fois les édifices et le terrain avaient été restaurés et améliorés". Le Haut-Commissariat a également attiré en 2002 l'attention des agences pour le Patrimoine et la Préservation de l'UNESCO et le Centre pour le Patrimoine architectural, la Recherche et la Documentation (CAHRD) de l'université du Guyana qui ont présenté aux Canadiens le prestigieux prix "Aubry Barker" pour leur contribution à la préservation d'un bel exemple d'architecture guyanaise. Ils partagent ce prix annuel avec l'ambassade du Brésil.

*William Harris,  
Architecte.*



# HISTORIQUE DE L'ÉDIFICE DU HAUT COMMISSARIAT DU CANADA

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**61-62 RUES HIGH & YOUNG ET 97-98 RUE  
DUKE, KINGSTON, GUYANA**

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**G**eorgetown se distingue par le nombre des édifices de style colonial construits durant cette période et qui existent toujours. L'édifice occupé par le Haut-Commissariat du Canada au coin des rues High et Young dans le quartier de Kingston est l'un de ceux-là.

Le Haut-Commissariat du Canada occupe l'emplacement de deux anciennes résidences privées, l'une sur le lot 61-62 rue High, originellement propriété de M. M.P. Camacho, et l'autre sur le lot 97-98 rue Duke lequel appartenait à M. John De Freitas. Bien que nous ne possédions aucun document à cet effet, l'on croit que les maisons situées sur ces lots auraient été construites dans les dernières années '20. Malheureusement, en 1944 un feu détruisit la magnifique résidence de M. De Freitas, entraînant la mort de sa femme et de l'un de ses petits-enfants.

Les propriétés De Freitas et Camacho passèrent ensuite aux mains des soeurs de la Miséricorde qui cherchaient à déménager leur couvent et école du quartier Charlestown où ils étaient situés. La congrégation religieuse avait en effet décidé de déménager car le quartier où elle résidait devait être déclarée zone industrielle.

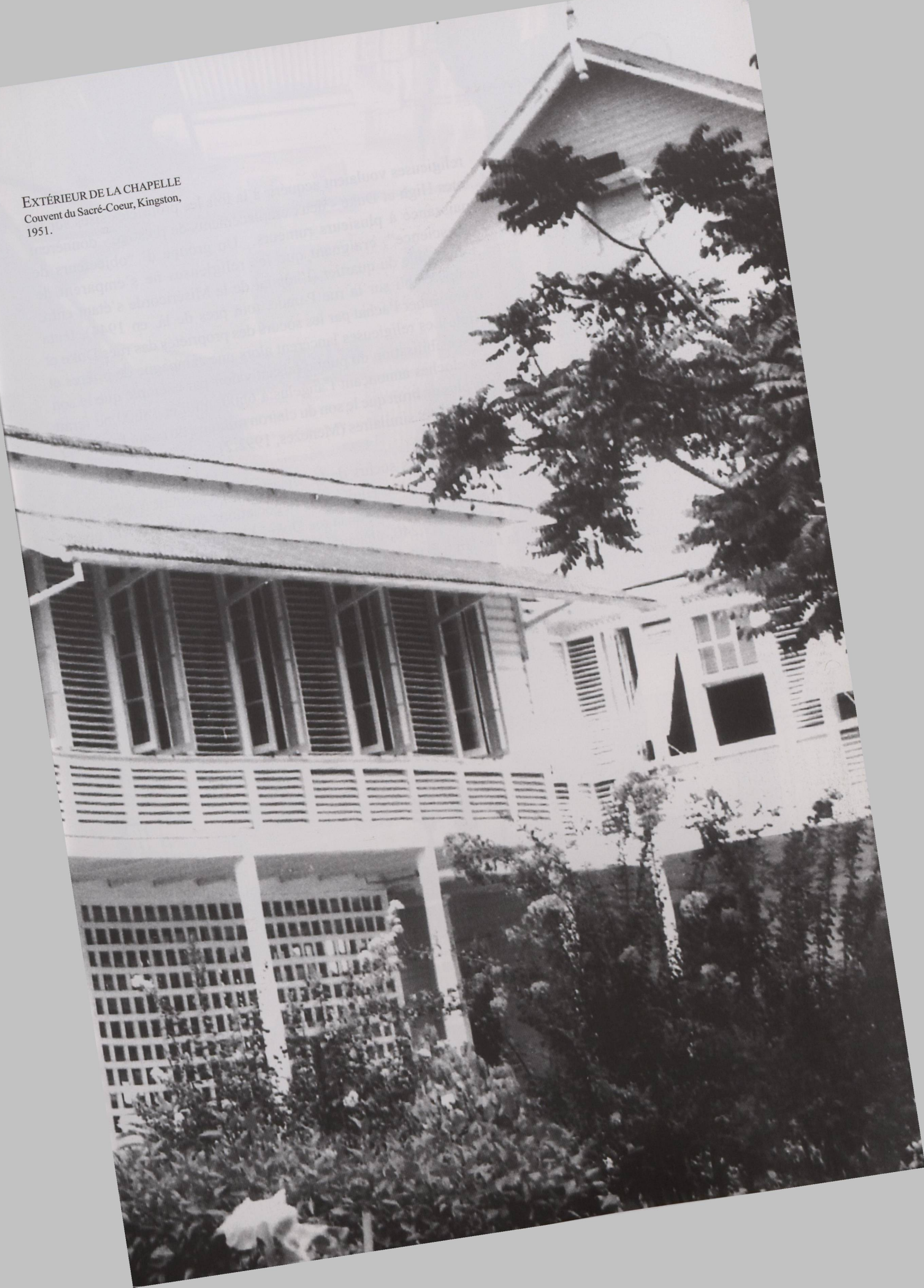
La recherche d'un nouveau site s'avéra toute une entreprise et le fait que les

A DROITE: INTÉRIEUR  
de la chapelle pendant la  
période des soeurs de la  
Miséricorde.





EXTÉRIEUR DE LA CHAPELLE  
Couvent du Sacré-Coeur, Kingston,  
1951.



EXTÉRIEUR DE LA CHAPELLE  
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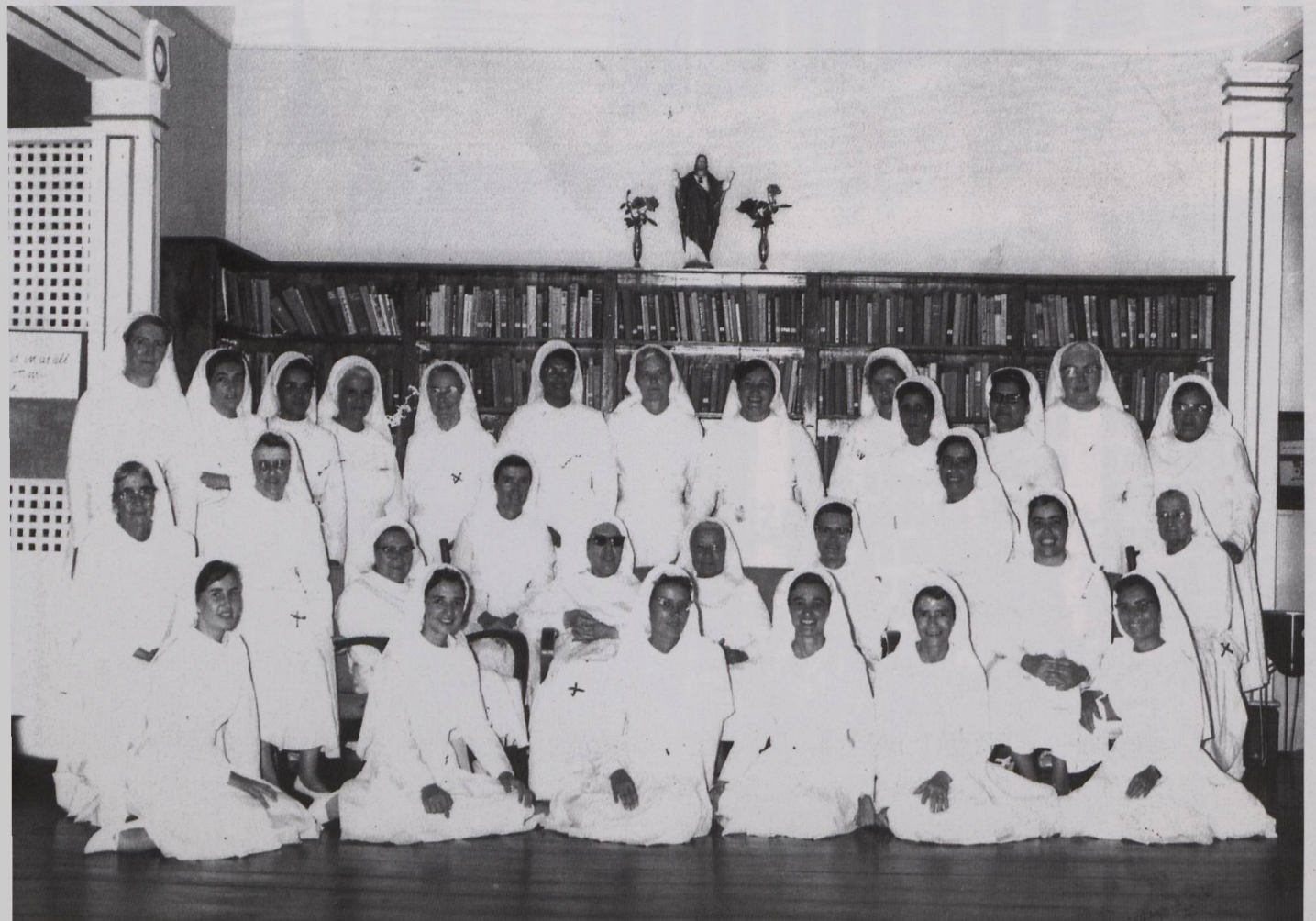
religieuses voulaient acquérir à la fois les propriétés sises sur les rues High et Duke - deux emplacements de prestige - donnèrent naissance à plusieurs rumeurs. Un groupe d' "objecteurs de conscience", craignant que les religieuses ne s'emparent de l'ensemble du quartier (l'hôpital de la Miséricorde s'étant entre temps établi sur la rue Parade, tout près de là, en 1944), tenta d'empêcher l'achat par les soeurs des propriétés des rues Duke et High. Les religieuses lancèrent alors une campagne de prières et de sensibilisation du public faisant valoir par exemple que le son des cloches annonçant l'angelus à 6h00, midi et 18h00 ne ferait pas plus de bruit que le son du clairon militaire du camp Eve Leary à des heures similaires (Menezes, 1992:2).

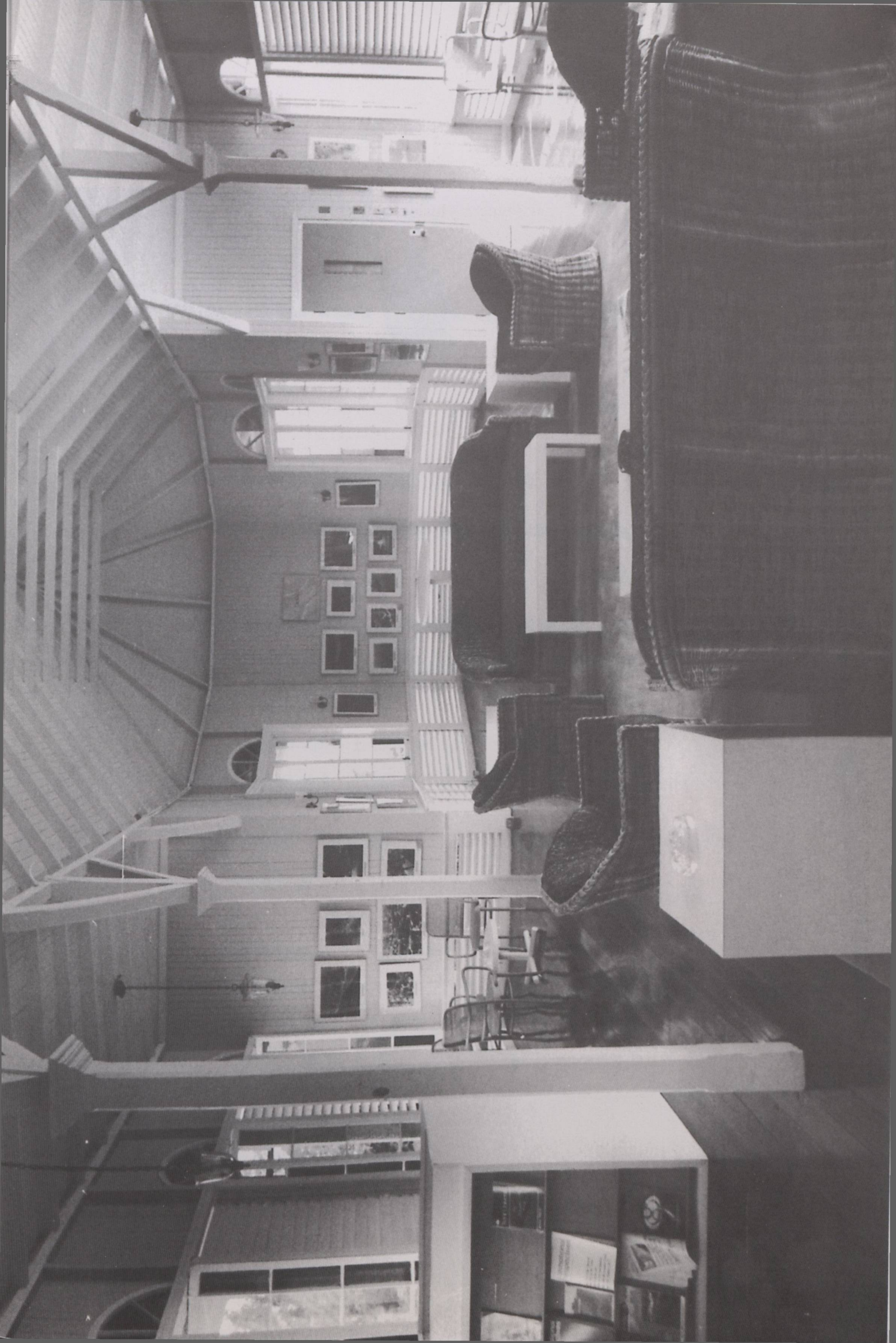
Finalement, les soeurs de la Miséricorde réussirent à acheter la propriété de la rue High et les négociations commencèrent pour l'achat de la propriété de la rue Duke. Les terrains étaient évalués à \$3,500 et \$9,240, chacun, alors que la maison sur la propriété de la rue High était évaluée à \$40,000.

Le 3 septembre 1949, l'architecte Carl McCowan fit une demande officielle au Bureau central de la Planification (CH&PA) au nom des soeurs de la Miséricorde, "...afin de convertir le 61-62 rue High en un établissement destiné à loger les religieuses comprenant

A DROITE: LA CHAPELLE  
du Haut-Commissariat dans  
les années '80.

CI-DESSOUS: LES SOEURS  
du couvent du Sacré-Coeur,  
Kingston, 1969.





OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA



COMMISSARIAT DU CANADA

The Office of the Commissioner for Canada was opened in Georgetown on March 11, 1964.

The Hcn. Milton F. Gregg, VC., was appointed Commissioner. Members of his staff were:

S. Wayne Hubble, 2nd Secretary

Miss Olive E. Hobbs, Administrative  
Officer

Miss Shirley J. Boles - Secretary

Donald J. Larkin - Accountant

The office was first housed in temporary quarters at the Park Hotel, Main Street. In April, 1964, it moved to larger ( but still temporary quarters ) located at 91 Middle St.



Canadian High Commission



Haut Commissariat du Canada

P. O. Box 660,  
Georgetown

June 15, 1977

Sister Admirables,  
Sisters of Mercy,  
Young Street,  
Georgetown.

Dear Sister Admirables,

Further to our several conversations over the past few weeks, I now wish to confirm that it is the intention of the Government of Canada to enter into negotiations with your Community for the purchase of part of the Convent property bounded by High, Young and Duke Streets, viz. Lots Nos. 61, 62, 97 and 98 but not including Lot No. 63.

My understanding is that completion of this transaction will require the concurrence of members of your Community. For our part, the concurrence of the Government of Guyana will be required - indeed it has now been formally sought. In addition, final approval of the purchase as negotiated between us will require approval by the Government of Canada acting through the Treasury Board, the Department of External Affairs and the Canadian High Commission.

It is my hope that all of these steps may be taken without undue obstacles or delay in order to fulfill the declaration of intention to purchase now given.

Yours sincerely;

*Allan B. Roger*  
A. B. Roger  
High Commissioner

une chapelle temporaire” et pour ériger sur les lots W 1/2 98, rue Duke, une aile de deux étages avec chambres à coucher, en semi-détaché de l’édifice 61-62 rue High, se réservant assez d’espace pour la construction ultérieure d’une chapelle.

Toutefois les plans de M. McCowan pour la chapelle ne plurent pas aux religieuses. Elles décidèrent plutôt de démanteler la vieille chapelle de Charlestown et de rebâtir celle-ci sur le nouveau site. En fait, une bonne partie de l’édifice du quartier Charlestown fut également démantelé et utilisé dans la construction du nouveau couvent.

Selon Menezes (1992:3), c’est “grâce à l’expertise des ouvriers de John Fernandes Ltd que la chapelle put être démantelée et relocalisée à Kingston. Chaque planche fut soigneusement marquée; ce fut un véritable travail d’art”. Et même si les soeurs se déclarèrent très heureuses de leur chapelle reconstruite, il est évident d’après ses lettres que l’architecte McCowan le fut beaucoup moins. Dans sa lettre du 9 janvier 1950 à l’ingénieur municipal il déclarait que selon lui ni la chapelle, ni l’édifice du 61-62 rue High n’avait une grande valeur architecturale. Il proposait “ de remplacer à une date ultérieure ces deux édifices par un groupe de structures plus imposantes qui aient quelque mérite architectural” (Ibid.:3)

Le transfert de propriété fut approuvé en 1949 et en 1951 les religieuses purent prendre complètement possession des propriétés Camachio et De Freitas. Les 61-62 rue High & Young et 97-98 rue Duke devinrent ainsi le nouvel emplacement du Couvent des soeurs de la Miséricorde et, quelques années après leur installation, de l’école préparatoire Stella Maris.

Au cours des années ‘60 le couvent se trouva au centre des troubles qui avaient lieu alors. Le



CI-DESSUS: ÉDIFICE PRINCIPAL DU réfectoire aux coins des rues High et Young, vu du côté nord-ouest du jardin



quartier fut souvent isolé par un cordon de sécurité et des soldats postés à l'extérieur des portes du couvent. Toutefois, ceci n'empêcha pas les pauvres d'aller y chercher nourriture, vêtements et réconfort durant la grève de 80 jours qui se déroula en 1963.

C'est au début des années 1960 que débute l'historique du transfert des lieux des soeurs de la Miséricorde au gouvernement canadien. L'indépendance de la Grande-Bretagne pointait à l'horizon et le Canada était désireux de forger des relations plus étroites avec la jeune nation d'Amérique du Sud.

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À cette fin, le Canada nomma le 11 mars 1944 un "Commissaire" dans ce qui était encore la Guyane Britannique. Ceci représentait la première présence diplomatique au Guyana. Le Premier Ministre d'alors, William Lyon Mackenzie King nomma l'hon. Milton F. Cregg, V.C., comme premier Commissaire. Les membres de son personnel étaient: S. Wayne Hubble, Deuxième Secrétaire, Mlle Olive E. Hobbs, agent d'administration, Mlle Shirley J. Boles, secrétaire et M. Donald J. Larkin, comptable.

Au début, le Commissaire et les membres du personnel durent déménager d'un bureau temporaire installé dans l'hôtel Park sur la rue principale vers un autre édifice situé au 91, rue Middle. La mission diplomatique canadienne transféra par la suite ses bureaux vers l'édifice de la Banque du Guyana.

CI-DESSOUS: LE DORTOIR  
de l'édifice vu des rues High et  
Young, Kingston



# Canada

## Rema

**THE** new Chancery of the Canadian High Commission, a unique Guyanese structure, was opened yesterday at the corner of High and Young streets, Georgetown.

The building, beautiful in proportion, was designed "to draw the lightest of winds through its jalousies." Canadian High Commissioner John Graham

The official opening ceremony yesterday was attended by Foreign Affairs Minister, Rasleigh Jackman, Canadians in Guyana, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and other special invited guests.

Mr. Graham, who traced the history of the building, said that it was over a century old and was constructed by M.P. Camacho, grandfather of George Camacho.

According to him, the Canadian High Commission was established through Mr. Allan Ross, former High Commissioner.

## NOTICE OF REMOVAL

### THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION

will move to new offices at Young and High Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, effective

May 26, 1980. Telephone numbers 72081-5 remain unchanged

gh Commission gets new home

# able restoration of 00-year old building

purchased the building in 1977 from the Sisters of Mercy.

In addition, Guyanese architect, George Henry of George Henry Associates done a remarkable job to restore the structure that stood as a landmark of Merara, Mr Graham noted out.

Mr Graham said that during the renovation period the contractors, Taylor and Andrew International and architects were undergoing some very anxious moments as there were crises in certain required materials installations.

The Canadian High Commissioner extended his gratitude to President Forbes Burnham, the Guyana

Foreign Ministry, the Canadian government, the Bank of Guyana, the Guyana Electricity Corporation (GEC) Guyana Stores Limited, Guyana National Engineering Corporation (GNEC), the architects, contractors, carpenters and all the Canadians who worked on the renovation project.

Special mention was made of the Head of the Chancery, Ted Fleming, the Office Manager, Dick Oastler and Communications Adviser Allan McLean of Canada who all gave stalwart services.

The Canadian High Commission had now been rehoused at the new Chancery, after 14 years at

the Bank of Guyana building.

Cde George Henry, the Architect, said that the new Chancery had helped to beautify our surroundings and to share in a revival exercise of our heritage.

He said that the restoration of the building was a deep sense of pride and achievement.

The cutting of the ribbon was done by Guyanese Lynette Heath, secretary of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canadian High Commission. Lynette, who has been working for the High Commission for 16 years now, was among the first Guyanese to be employed by the High Commission. Suse Parasnadh.

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## Canadian High Commission gets new home

# Remarkable restoration of 100-year old building

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The building, beautifully proportioned, was designed "to draw the lightest trade winds through its jalousies," Canadian High Commissioner John Graham said.

The official opening ceremony yesterday was attended by Foreign Affairs Minister, Rasleigh Jackson, Canadians in Guyana, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and other specially invited guests.

Mr Graham, who traced the history of the building, said that it was over a century old and was constructed by M.P. Camacho, grandfather of George Camacho.

According to him, the Canadian High Commission, through Mr Allan Roger, former High Commissioner,

had purchased the building in 1977 from the Sisters of Mercy.

In addition, Guyanese architect, George Henry of George Henry Associates had done a remarkable job to restore the structure that now stood as a landmark of Demerara, Mr Graham pointed out.

Mr Graham said that during the renovation period, the contractors, Taylor Woodrow International and the architects were undergoing some very anxious moments as there were crises for certain required materials and installations.

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VUE AÉRIENNE DU HAUT-COMMISSARIAT  
du Canada dans le quartier Kingston, Georgetown









DONNY ENTERPRISE

Tang's

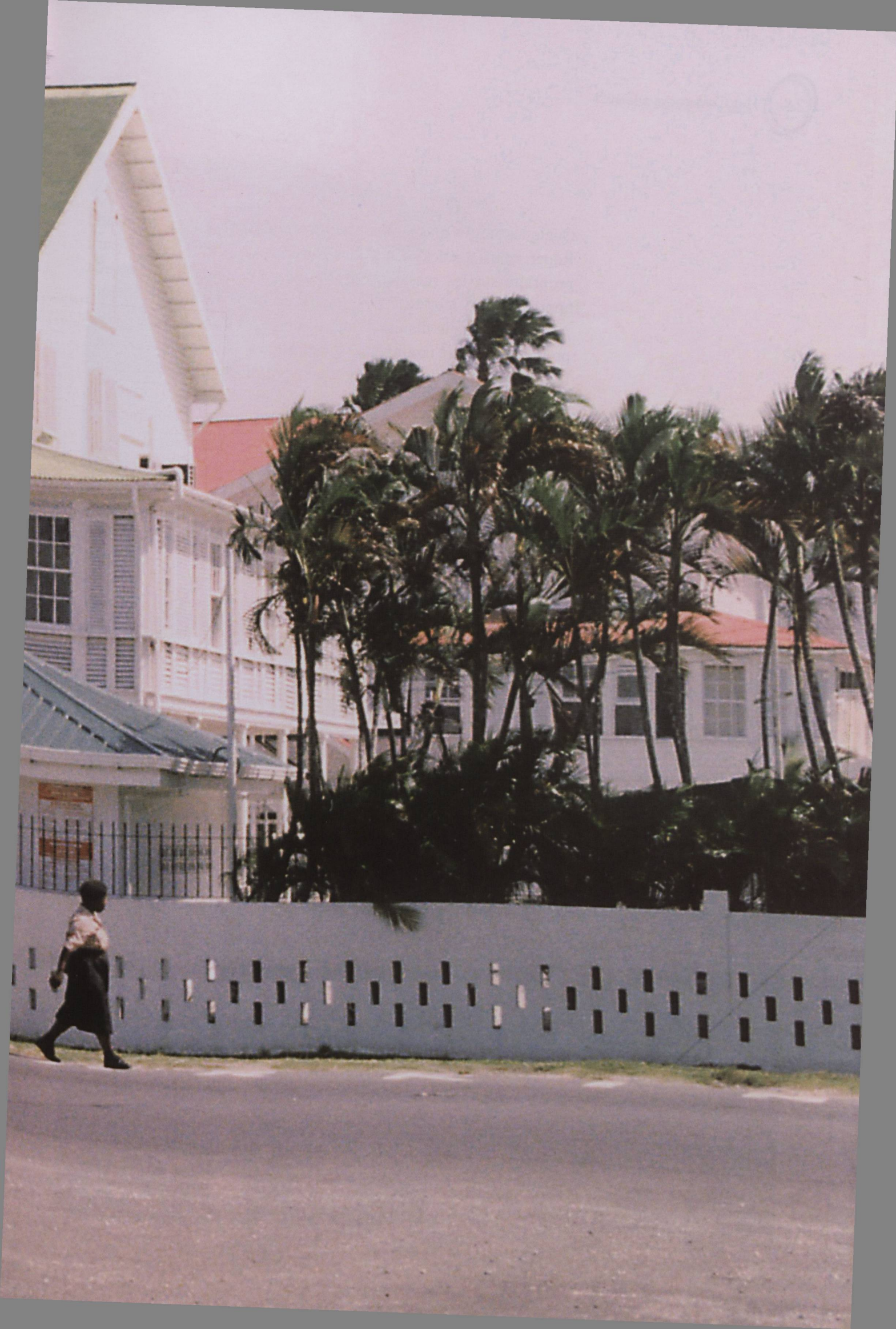
YIELD

VUE AÉRIENNE DU HAUT-COMMISSARIAT  
du Canada dans le quartier Kingston, Georgetown











Quelques années plus tard, le Haut-Commissaire d'alors, M. Alan Roger, apprit que les soeurs de la Miséricorde voulait vendre leur propriété sur les rues High & Young. Le Haut-Commissaire approcha la Supérieure des soeurs de la Miséricorde, Soeur Admirabilis, mais demanda que l'intérêt du Canada pour cette propriété demeure confidentiel jusqu'à "ce qu'il soit confirmé que le Gouvernement du Guyana n'avait pas d'objection à ce que cette transaction soit complétée" (Ibid:4). Les négociations entre le gouvernement canadien et les soeurs de la Miséricorde continuèrent plusieurs mois, en raison entre autres des formalités nécessitées par le transfert d'une institution à caractère religieux dans des mains laïques.

CI-DESSOUS: LE PREMIER Haut-Commissaire, M. Milton Gregg souhaitant la bienvenue au Premier Ministre Forbes Burnham et à Mme Burnham aux bureaux de la rue Middle.

Le 7 novembre 1977, le Haut-Commissaire Roger put envoyer une lettre à la Supérieure de la Miséricorde exprimant sa satisfaction







L'EX-GOUVERNEUR  
Général, M. Roméo  
Leblanc signant le registre  
des visiteurs lors des  
obsèques du Président  
Jagan en 1997.

de la conclusion d'un accord sur la vente. Le prix de vente agréé était de \$540,000. C'est ainsi qu'en janvier 1978, ce qui avait été le Couvent des soeurs de la Miséricorde et l'école préparatoire Stella Maris passèrent aux mains du gouvernement canadien. N'eut été l'acquisition par le gouvernement canadien de la propriété de Kingston, il est probable que les urbanistes municipaux auraient été de l'avant avec leur plan de localiser l'ensemble des nouvelles missions diplomatiques dans un même quartier en dehors du centre historique de Georgetown.

En dépit du fait que le Canada ait activement cherché à acquérir les propriétés des rues High et Young, on doit à un coup de chance le fait que les immeubles historiques aient été rénovés et préservés plutôt que démolis. En effet, il existait des plans visant à remplacer les immeubles par une structure préfabriquée venant de Grande-Bretagne. Toutefois, une grève des ports à Londres de même que des compressions budgétaires à Ottawa empêchèrent l'envoi et l'érection du nouvel immeuble avant que le bail du Haut-Commissariat à la Banque du Guyana n'arrive à expiration. Le nouveau Haut-Commissaire, M. John Graham, aidé de M. George Henry, architecte guyanais ayant rénové plusieurs édifices historiques du Guyana, examinèrent avec soin l'état des édifices actuels et finirent par en arriver à un budget à l'intérieur des limites qu'Ottawa pouvait accepter et à un concept suffisamment simple pour que les travaux principaux puissent être complétés avant la fin du bail à la Banque du Guyana. Ainsi en arriva-t-on à la décision de rénover les structures existantes.

Mais ce ne fut pas avant 1980 que toutes les rénovations puissent être complétées par MM. Henry et



CI-DESSUS: FEU LE PRÉS. CHEDDIE JAGAN EN CONVERSATION AVEC LE Haut-Commissaire d'alors M. Simon Wade et d'autres invités lors du Jour du Canada en 1996.

McDonald venu du Canada. Ce fut en grande pompe que le Haut-Commissariat prit possession de ses propres locaux rues High et Young; le Président Burnham exprima sa satisfaction de voir préserver cet édifice historique. "La rénovation fut une odyssée imprévisible, pleine d'aventures, de crises, de mauvaises décisions, mais finalement, aussi une grande joie" devait dire M. John W. Graham qui fut Haut-Commissaire au Guyana durant cette période (Graham, 2002).

Depuis lors, notre chancellerie a vu nombre de dignitaires franchir ses portes. S.Exc. M. Roland Mitchener, Gouverneur Général fit une visite d'État en février 1969. Le Très Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, alors Premier Ministre vint au Guyana en 1975 à l'invitation du Premier Ministre Forbes Burnham. S. Exc. M. Roméo Leblanc, Gouverneur Général participa aux obsèques du Président Cheddi Jagan en mars 1997. L'Hon. David Kilgour fut le dernier en liste des Secrétaires d'État pour l'Amérique Latine et l'Afrique à visiter le Guyana en 2000. Notre registre des visiteurs contient également plein de noms d'importantes personnalités gyanaises de toutes les sphères d'activité qui visitèrent notre chancellerie. On y trouve également plusieurs groupes de Canadiens qui ont forgé des liens durables avec le Guyana, tel le Collège National de la Défense qui visita Georgetown en décembre 1972 ou le Canadian Youth Cricket Association qui vint disputer quelques match de cricket en 1992. Plusieurs organisations canadiennes visitèrent également le Haut-Commissariat à

l'occasion du lancement de leur projet tel le Youth Challenge International et Crossroad International qui sont actifs au Guyana depuis plusieurs années.

Aujourd'hui il est peut-être difficile pour les visiteurs ou les fonctionnaires qui foulent le terrain ou se promènent dans les deux édifices de réaliser que ceux-ci furent autrefois le Couvent des soeurs de la Miséricorde et l'école préparatoire Stella Maris. L'édifice principal du présent complexe servait autrefois de salle à manger et de cuisine; la section des visas et de l'immigration servit de buanderie et d'entrepôt. Ce qui est maintenant l'entrée principale du Haut-Commissariat conduisait à la chapelle du couvent. En dessous de la chapelle se trouvait l'école qui accueillit au départ 18 élèves.

Depuis qu'il prit la relève du couvent des soeurs de la Miséricorde il y a un quart de siècle, le gouvernement canadien a pris à coeur de conserver la beauté architecturale de ces édifices. C'est pourquoi l'ensemble des constructions originelles ont été préservées. Plusieurs des manifestations officielles continuent à se tenir dans l'ancienne chapelle leur donnant le caractère solennel convenant à ce qui fut un lieu de prière et de recueillement.



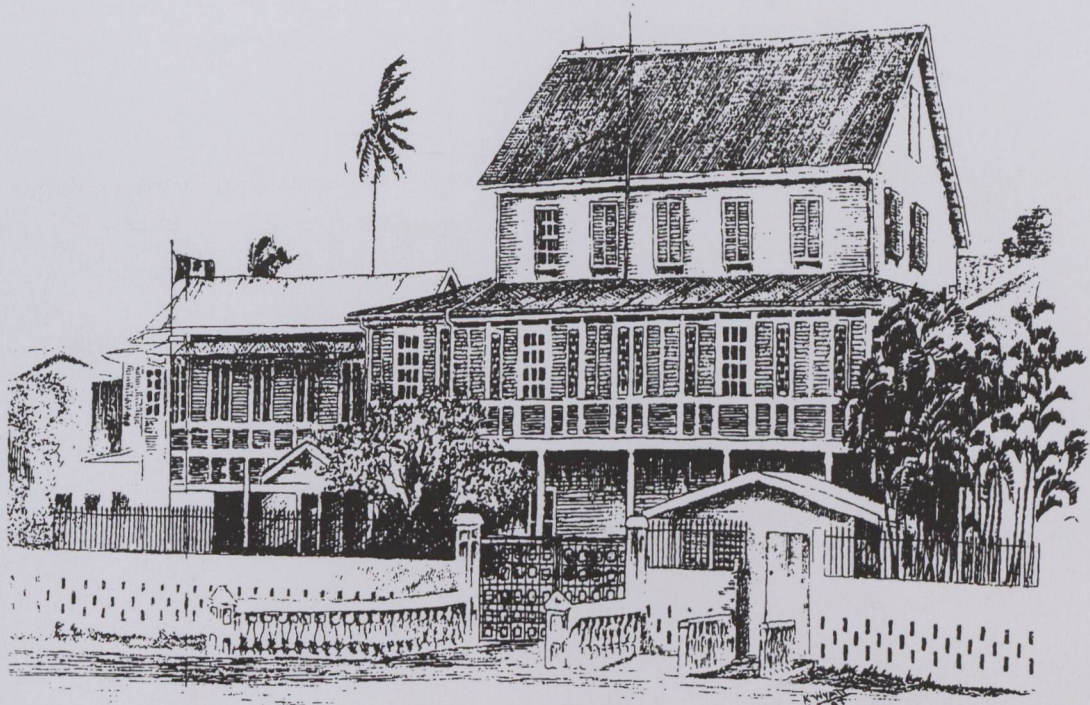
CI-DESSUS: L'EX-PRÉSIDENT, MME JANET JAGAN ET LE HAUT-COMMISSAIRE d'alors, Dr. Allan Bowker échangeant le toast traditionnel lors du Jour du Canada en 1997.

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CI-DESSUS: DÉJEUNER D'ADIEU POUR LE  
Haut-Commissaire Allan Bowker, dans la chapelle, 1999.



L'édifice tel que vu par Kenton Wyatt.

