

# Orange Walk Town Heritage Trail

## *Heritage Sites and Places of Interest*



The Orange Walk Town Heritage Trail is a walking (or driving) tour featuring historic sites and places of memory, structures of architectural interest and cultural spaces. Together, they form a narrative of the town's history and development. The walk takes approximately one hour and features informational signage at each of the ten designated sites.

The information for this trail was made possible through community members, the Belize National Library Service and Information System through the National Heritage Library and the Belize Archives and Records Service.

### HERITAGE SITES

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Banquitas House of Culture | 6 New River/Old Barracks      |
| 2 Fort Mundy                 | 7 Fire Station                |
| 3 Sandy Hunter Library       | 8 Fort Cairns                 |
| 4 Main Street                | 9 St. Peter's Anglican Church |
| 5 La Inmaculada Church       | 10 Central Park               |

### OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Police Station        | D Orange Walk Town Hall |
| B Fr. Piemonte Cemetery | E Municipal Market      |
| C Town Clock            | F Monument              |

### PROJECT PARTNERS:



national institute of culture and history



# Banquitas House of Culture

*Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

In days gone by, a number of “Banquitas” – Spanish for little benches – created a scenic space where generations of Orange Walkers met for leisure, community gatherings and other activities. Prior to the 1980s, this area along the banks of the New River was an empty space and formed part of the roadway leading to the Orange Walk – San Estevan Ferry. A building was later constructed to temporarily serve as the town market and later as government offices.

On 19 September 2002, the Banquitas House of Culture was officially opened under the auspices of the National Institute of Culture and History. Banquitas House of Culture is managed through the Museum of Belize and Houses of Culture. It is Orange Walk’s main center for the promotion of culture, arts and history.



## Did you know?

The Banquitas House of Culture features a permanent display that highlights the history of Orange Walk Town and district from the Maya era to present, along with temporary exhibits.

The building houses the House of Culture’s offices and conference room. The lower portion is used for hosting open-air events. The hillock was fashioned into an amphitheatre where performances are held. A restaurant is also on the premises.

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# FORT MUNDY

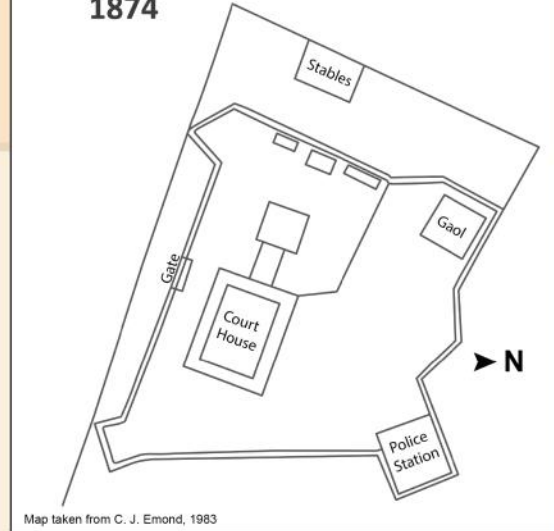
## *Ancient Monument*

Fort Mundy is named after Major Robert Miller Mundy, Lieutenant-Governor of British Honduras (now Belize), 1874 – 1876. The Battle of Orange Walk in 1872 exposed the vulnerability of the West India Regiment barracks on Riverside Street. In an effort to strengthen the defences, colonial authorities acquired the lands on the hillock to construct defence works strategically overlooking the New River and the small community of Orange Walk. Fort Mundy was completed in 1874.

Fort Mundy was enclosed by a wood-and-masonry stockade. Inside the compound there were several structures. The Police Station was a two-storey wooden building. The Courthouse was located on the south end facing Cross Street. The Frontier Police had a mounted section; thus, horse stables were erected on the western section. The gaol or jailhouse was at the northwest corner of the compound.

### FORT MUNDY

1874



Map taken from C. J. Emond, 1983

### Did you know?

The old Police Station also functioned as the Post Office and venue for meetings between colonial governors and Icaiché leaders in the 1880s.

The compound currently includes the Police Station, the District Administration building and Courthouse.

Painting by Ian Amos Jevon, 2016.

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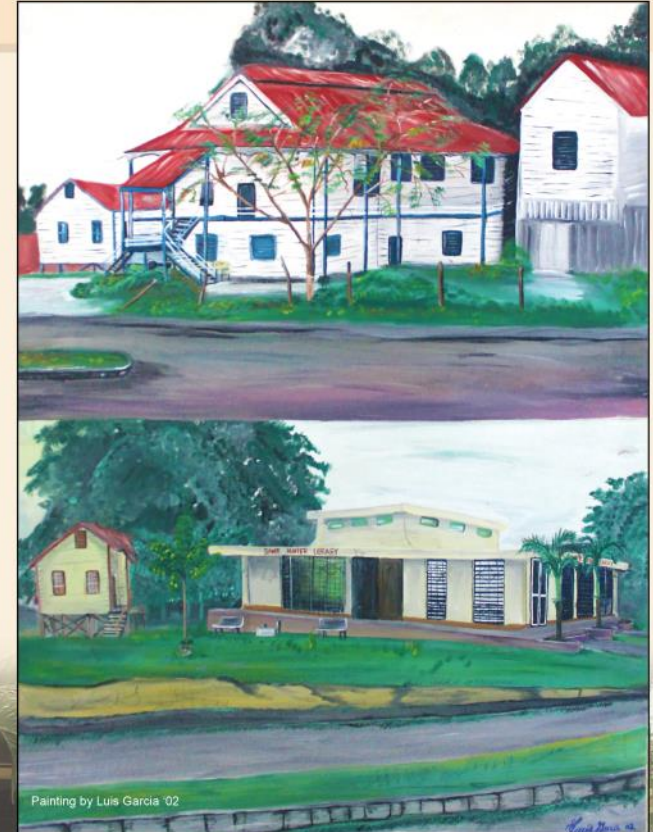


# Sandy Hunter Library *formerly* Old Hospital

## *Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

The old Orange Walk Public Hospital opened its doors in 1893. The hospital provided medical assistance to the people of Orange Walk and surrounding communities. Its proximity to the New River provided a healthy coolness for both patients and staff. The structure was renovated in 1933. In 1976, Santiago Castillo Jr. and the Belize Sugar Industry Ltd. donated land for the construction of a new hospital. Funding was provided by the British Government. The new Orange Walk Public Hospital was officially inaugurated in November 1977 in the Otro Benque Area.

On 23 February 1982, the Sandy Hunter Library was inaugurated on the former hospital grounds. The library was named in honour of Alexander 'Sandy' Hunter who was instrumental in the development of the Sugar Industry. The construction was spearheaded by the Orange Walk Town Board with funding provided by the Orange Walk Cane Farmers Association, the Baron Bliss Trust-Fund and the Government of Belize.



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# Main Street

## *Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

During the establishment of Orange Walk Town, Main Street was mainly occupied by families and businesses. It had several two-storey wooden houses. The upper floor was normally occupied by the family, while the lower flat was used for business. Popular establishments included Melhado's Warehouse, Tropical Saloon, Odette's Boutique, Nelly's Bar, Dreamland Theatre, and later Tropical Theatre. Local branches of the Royal Bank of Canada and Barclays Bank were also opened. With the introduction of the Tower Hill sugar factory, gas stations and vehicle repair shops opened. Cargo and passenger trucks would stop along Main Street when travelling between Corozal and Belize City. Main Street continues to be a prominent area of Orange Walk Town with a number of businesses and residences still located here.



Photo courtesy the National Heritage Library/ Belize National Library Service and Information System

### Did you know?

Other places of memory along Main Street include the first hotel / guest house, the site of the Muffles College, the Town Market and the former government offices now the Banquitas House of Culture.

The remnants of Fort Mundy and the Police Sergeant's quarters can still be seen at the northern end.

# La Inmaculada Church

## *Historic Building and Monument*



The Orange Walk Catholic Mission was formally established when Fr. Alphonse Parisi arrived in 1875. At that time, a thatched structure functioned as the chapel. In 1896, a new church was built on land previously belonging to the Escalante, Gonzales and Ayuso families and from the Belize Estate and Produce Company. La Inmaculada Church was named in honor of the Immaculate Conception, whose feast day is celebrated yearly on 8 December. On 25 November 1899, the church was consumed by fire when a ritual candle was left unattended. Fr. Piemonte, and later Fr. Joseph Mueffels, supervised the rebuilding of the church on the same location. The present Church was re-dedicated in 1901 and retains much of the original design of the previous building.



Photo courtesy the Institute for Social and Cultural Research/National Institute of Culture and History



Photo courtesy the Institute for Social and Cultural Research/National Institute of Culture and History

### Did you know?

The previous church building featured 52 stained-glass windows.

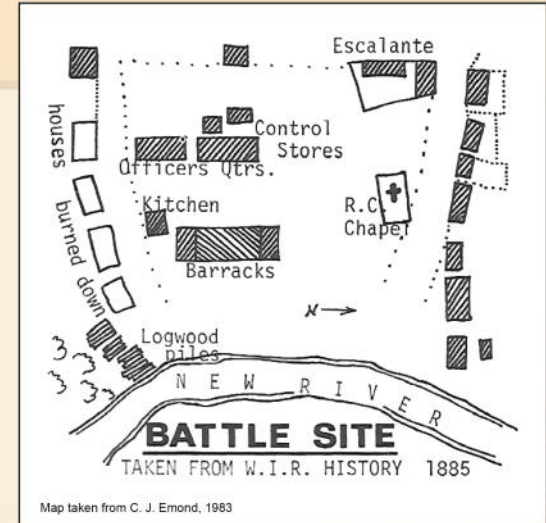
On 31 December 1899, the Granite Monument standing in the church plaza was unveiled at an outdoor mass at midnight to mark the beginning of the Holy Year and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

# New River and Old Barracks

## *Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

Originally identified as the Dzuluinicob River, the New River has been vital to the economic and social development of Orange Walk. The bank of the New River was the site of the historic Battle of Orange Walk. In the mid-1860s, colonial authorities established a fort on the bank for the British West India Regiment. There were 5 buildings: a barracks for 36 soldiers; a kitchen; the officer's and doctor's quarters; and the supplies store. This was the fort that Marcos Canul and his troops attacked on 1 September 1872. Today, the site is occupied by private residences at the corner of Riverside Street and Baker's Street.

At the turn of the 20th century, well-known vessels such as the *Freddie M.*, *Egerton*, *Orange Walk*, and the *Afri-Kola*, among others, transported mail, passengers, food items, and cargo, via the New River to Orange Walk. Goods were unloaded at the wharf for delivery to individual homes and the shops on Main Street. The New River is still used by tug-boats towing barges loaded with sugar en route to Belize City.



# Fire Station *formerly* Old Electricity Plant

*Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

The Orange Walk Fire Station is situated at the corner of Queen Victoria Avenue and the San Antonio Road. This site was the former location of Orange Walk's electricity-generating station. In 1916, Orange Walk Town officially formed its first volunteer fire brigade. This was as a result of a disastrous fire which burnt down several structures in the vicinity of the slaughterhouse and the administration centre. The current concrete building and the station manager's quarters were constructed by Public Works Department personnel. It was officially opened by Deputy Premier C.L.B. Rogers, Area Representative Elito Urbina and Mayor Leopoldo Briceño on 1 June 1973.



Photo courtesy the Belize National Fire Service

## Did you know?

Most early houses in Orange Walk Town were made of wattle-and-daub with thatch roofs; very few were made of timber. As a result, these structures were vulnerable to fire.



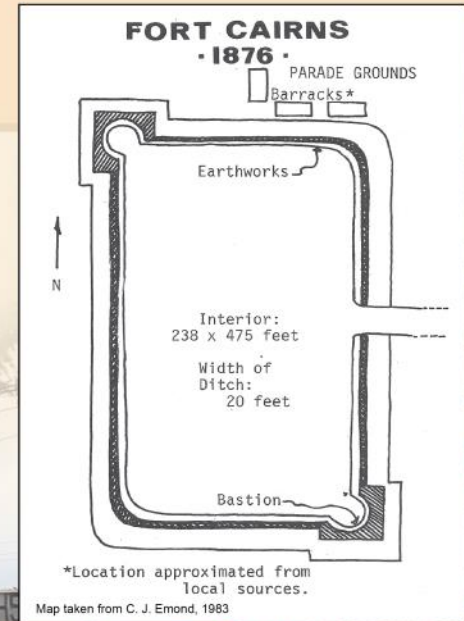
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# FORT CAIRNS

*Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

Fort Cairns was named after Sir William Wellington Cairns, Lieutenant-Governor of British Honduras (now Belize), 1870 – 1874. “The Orange Walk Defences Ordinance” of 19 June 1873 enabled the British Honduras Government to acquire a portion of Henry Oswald’s Estate at Orange Walk, New River. The military barracks and defence at Fort Cairns were built in 1876 by a contingent of the Second West India Regiment. The compound also included a courtroom, gaol, police barracks, the magistrate’s quarters and a hospital. The fort, surrounded by a moat was accessed using a drawbridge located on the eastern side. Two bastions were diagonally located at the north and south ends. Today, the old garrison grounds has been transformed into the Town’s Market, local bus terminal, a space for sports and for hosting community events.



## Did you know?

In 1885, Fort Cairns became the headquarters of the British Honduras Constabulary Force. They disbanded after they rioted in 1894 when the Belize currency was devalued. The facilities were later occupied by the British Honduras Volunteer Force.

“The Barracks” grounds were later used as the town’s football field.

# St. Peter's Anglican Church

## *Historic Building*

The Church of England was formally established in Orange Walk Town in 1882. The parcel of land for St. Peter's Anglican Church was acquired from the Henry Oswald Estate. The first Anglican Church in Orange Walk Town was a two-storey, wooden building constructed. The congregation worshipped in the lower floor, while upstairs functioned as the parson's residence. This building was completely destroyed in a storm on 23 July 1896. St. Peter's Anglican Church was rebuilt and is still standing today.

St. Peter's Anglican Primary School is located within the mission grounds. In addition to the national primary school education curriculum, the institution is known for its inclusion of special needs education program.



### Did you know?

The timber sidings dating to the early 1900s is painted in the traditional white and lilac colours of the Anglican Church.

The bell in the belfry dates to the 1890s.

The mahogany doors are carved with insignias of the Anglican Church. The upside down cross represents the way St. Peter was crucified.



# Central Park

## *Place of Cultural and Historic Memory*

Previously known as Queen Elizabeth II Park, the recreational ground is officially named Central Park. In the early days, the area was locally referred to as La Plaza, a simple open space in the town's center. In 1953, It was officially opened as one of several parks constructed countrywide in honor of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Queen Elizabeth II was received at the Park upon her visit to Belize in 1985. In 2014, the Park underwent major renovation as part of the Belize Municipal Development Plan which transformed the grounds into a modern community space. The Central Park remains a popular meeting spot for Orange Walk residents who come into town from nearby villages on weekends.



Photo courtesy the Belize Archives and Records and Service

### Did you know?

A key feature of the Orange Walk Central Park prior to 2014 was a water fountain that was installed in the middle of the space. This has since been replaced by an open area.

The kiosk was replaced by the current stage located on the northern side.

In the southeast corner, there is a statue dedicated to mothers.



Photo courtesy Dalila Zetina



Photo courtesy Dalila Zetina