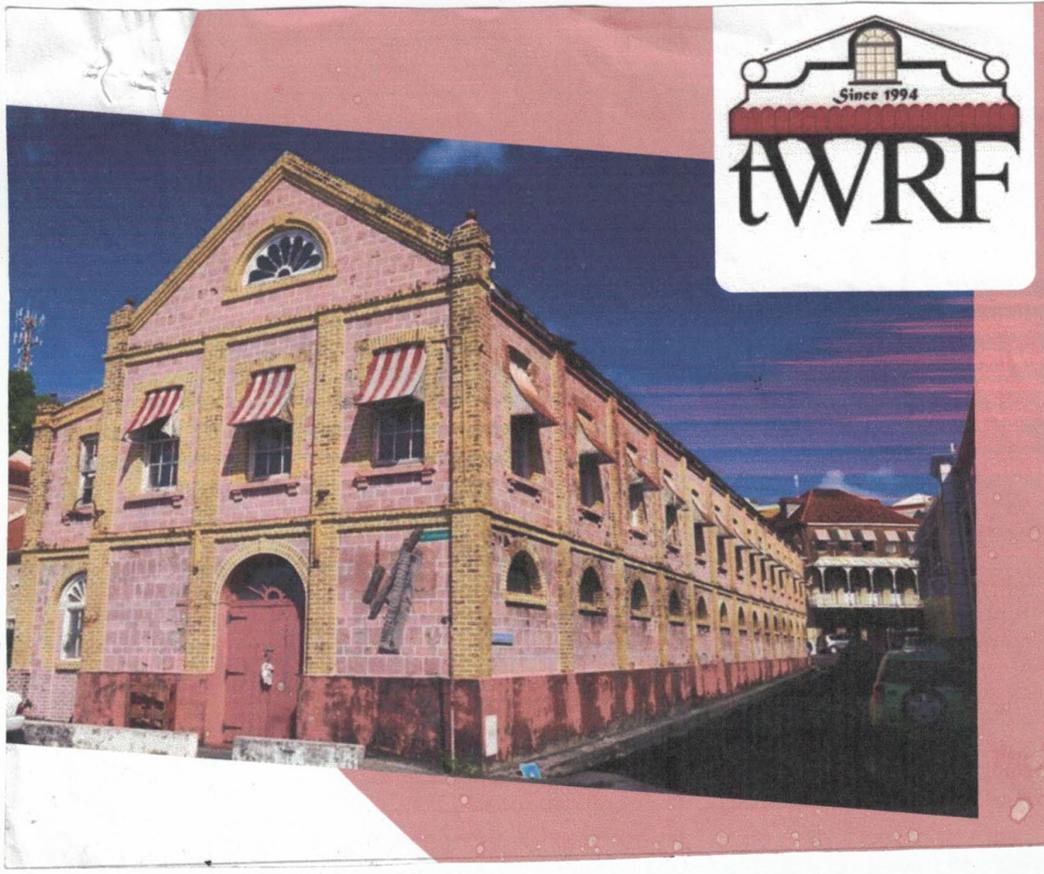


RESTORATION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY – THE SENTINEL

- As the Transformational Agenda gathers momentum, it is important that a critical, although neglected part of our Social Infrastructure be given the recognition and special attention it deserves.
- The root of the word “library” from the latin – liber means both “book” and “free”; libraries therefore, as Eric Klinenberg in his engaging discourse titled – **“Palaces for the People”** describes: “are the kind of places where ordinary people with different background, passions and interest can take part in a living democratic culture”.
- “They are the kind of places where the public, private and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line”; that was self evident prior to its closure, which then functioned as a Community Centre and a house of refuge-for students, whose homes and surroundings do not provide the after-school environment (the Social Infrastructure) for learning.
- The public library building was constructed in the late 18th century as a warehouse and merchant office on the Carenage, in an elegant Georgian style of architecture – with civic proportions. The upper floor of the building first came into use as a library in 1892 and the services were expanded in 1985 with funding from European Union in the sum of EC\$750,000 –when the entire building was converted into serving the public, and renamed “the Sheila Buckmire Memorial Library” in honor of the longest serving Librarian. **(See photo attachment)**
- Because of the lack of maintenance, the structure was declared by the then Ministry of Education/Health – to be unfit for occupancy and has been closed since July 2011 to the present (2023), with all our invaluable historical and archaevael material left unattended over this period of time.
- The recent announcement by the government to begin the restoration process is therefore commendable and long overdue. The Willie Redhead Foundation is hopeful that a copy of the Technical Report prepared by the foundation in 2013, which was recently given to the Hon. Dennis Cornwall – Minister for Infrastructure, would be of some assistance in its successful implementation.
- The current thinking is that the restoration – both in its original form and as a 21st century project, would consider converting the facility into a resource centre with a digital component. *Au passant* – the tWRF Technical Report of 2013 and up to

the present has discovered no evidence of seepage from the sea on the Ground Floor and dampness on the external walls as touted by the naysayers.

- The Grenadian public anticipates that the restoration of the public library building would be the first of our decaying historic buildings and sites not only in St. George's but also in the country as a whole and that the Ministry of Culture and the Grenada Tourism Authority would be at the Vanguard in bringing to the fore the economic and cultural benefits that could be derived from such a constructive initiative.
- In this regard the current restoration of Fort George is worthy of high commendation, although the questionable matter as to whether the workers of the local sub-contractor(s) are trained operatives in the authentic restoration heritage structures – which are causing some concern to heritage organisations.
- The foundation also looks with eager anticipation to the restoration of our former parliament building – the architectural gem of Urban St. George – YORK HOUSE; before the remaining fragile outer walls which is the last testament of this built heritage – begins to totter, then takes the fall in similar manner as the Awning and Balcony which once adorned the building at the corner of Granby and Halifax Streets, as our history and culture in brick and stone is denied to posterity; becoming a people without roots, and consequently without an identity.



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