CHAPTER 7

Exploring a Scottish Legacy
*Lewis Davidson, Knox College, and Jamaica’s Youth*

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Introduction

For many Jamaicans, their first indication of the existence of a connection with Scotland is their surnames – Campbell, McDonald, Douglas, etc. (Palmer 2007: 43–44). These surnames serve as living monuments testifying to a complex relationship that has spanned several centuries and which began with the Scottish involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade as plantation owners, overseers, doctors, sailors, merchants, etc. (Devine 1976, 2009; Smout 1961; Landsmans 1999; Palmer 2009). Within these capacities, they aided the proliferation of two interconnected structures, namely the sugar plantation system and slavery, which not only supported the Transatlantic Slave Trade but also resulted in a dramatic change in the population composition and density of the islands of the Caribbean as countless Africans were forcibly brought to the region and subjected to a life of bondage. It was these slaves that became the ancestors of the majority of Jamaicans. It is imperative to note however, that Scots not only played an active role in the perpetuation of slavery but also in its abolition. As Iain Whyte documents, Scots were active in campaigning for the abolition of slavery and in the cases of the missionaries on the Scottish-owned plantations in Trelawny, were engaged in ministering to the slaves. In their ministry to the slaves however, these missionaries’ duty was to promote the spiritual interests of the slaves, without interfering with their civil condition (Whyte 2006: 214–220). Following the emancipation of the slaves, these Scottish missionaries and the Presbyterian Church that they represented, were instrumental in the founding of the free town or village of Goodwill and instituting other ventures to aid the freed slaves. As a result of these specific relationships, as well as the Colonization and Christianization of the region, there has been

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1 A free town is a settlement of emancipated slaves. The church would buy a piece of property – normally a part of a bankrupt sugar estate – which was subsequently subdivided and sold to members of the congregation. In this manner, many slaves were able to become landowners, and small-scale farmers – thus gaining some independence from their former plantation owners.
a transplantation and insertion of various aspects of Scottish cultures into the very fabric of what constitutes Caribbean society.

The acknowledgement of these processes has not only been noted within academia, but in many discourses these specific topics – the transatlantic slave trade, the abolition movement, colonization and Christianization – have dominated the study of the relationship between the two places. Although these foci are valid and necessary, it may not give sufficient attention to investigating how other ties have helped to shape the pre/post independence and contemporary societies. One area where such an investigation is warranted is in the emergence of quality education systems within a rural context. By examining the educational system that was implemented by the Scottish Missionary, Rev. Dr Lewis Davidson at Knox College, I will explore the impact that this institution has had and continues to have on its students, Jamaica and several Diaspora societies. Included within this investigation will be the content analysis of several alumni web-postings\footnote{These web-posting were taken from the Knox Alumni web-page which is accessible to the public. Additional perspectives on Knox's impact on it students were obtained from conversations with a small sample of alumni – who have given their permission for their comments to be included in this paper. Alternatively, as a Knox alumnus and a former Prefect, I have also drawn upon my personal knowledge of the school to inform some of the content included within this paper.} to ascertain what were some of the values they learned during their time at Knox and how these values have impacted their lives.

Prior to discussing the educational system implemented by Dr Lewis Davidson, it is necessary to give a brief historical overview on education in Jamaica from the pre-emancipation period (before 1834) to the founding on Knox College in 1947.

\subsection*{A Brief History of Education in Jamaica Pre-1834 to 1947}

In examining the history of education in Jamaica one has to be mindful of the context in which this instruction emerged – namely Jamaica's colonial past. During the period of slavery, education was primarily an enterprise in which white children were engaged. For the wealthy, their sons were either sent back to England – the ‘mother country’ – to be educated or private tutors would be hired. For those of lesser financial standing, there were those schools that had been established by wealthy benefactors. For the slaves and their children, their educational engagement was limited due to the belief among the planters that formal education was not a necessity (Whyte 1979: 11). When they were