

# Public Memory, Race, and Heritage Tourism of Early America

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## Chapter 3

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### Remembering and forgetting plantation history in Jamaica

Rose Hall and Greenwood Great House

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### 3 Remembering and forgetting plantation history in Jamaica

#### Rose Hall and Greenwood Great House<sup>1</sup>

*Cathy Rex*

When most people imagine a vacation to Jamaica, they often picture things like lounging on a pristine beach at an all-inclusive resort, eating jerk chicken and drinking rum punch, listening to reggae, and perhaps enjoying some adventurous activities, like hiking to a waterfall or parasailing above the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. In short, they imagine “getting away from it all” and having a deluxe tourist experience. They typically do not imagine focusing on the fraught colonialist history of slavery and the sugar trade that shaped Jamaica into Britain’s wealthiest colony by the start of the American Revolution; legacies that to this day still define the country in many ways.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this history, Jamaica has a surprising number of great houses—plantation homes—that are open to the public for touring and events, such as weddings and receptions. The 2017 *Lonely Planet Guide* to Jamaica, for example, lists 11 different great houses around the island that are open to the public for tours, meals, or even overnight stays. The Jamaican National Heritage Trust has declared 30 different great houses as national monuments across the island, although neither of these numbers accounts for great houses that have not yet passed the National Heritage Trust’s assessment, remain closed to the public, or lie in partial ruins (“Greathouses” [sic]).<sup>3</sup> The number of these plantation homes on an island the size of Jamaica—a country slightly smaller in land mass than the state of Connecticut—is a testament to the overwhelming domination of the sugar industry, slavery, and the plantation economy that directed the island’s development. However, despite this, many tourists don’t visit these historic homes—or if they do, they do so selectively—because Jamaica’s tourist industry, for the most part, shies away from addressing this legacy of chattel slavery.

The tourist industry, which is Jamaica’s top source of revenue—tied with remittances from expatriates, and then in descending economic importance: agriculture, bauxite and alumina mining, and manufacturing—works to cultivate an image of Jamaica as a “sun, sea, and sand” getaway with a “No problem, mon” attitude.<sup>4</sup> According to the Jamaica Tourist Board, tourism brings in nearly four million visitors a year because of year-round activities and the balmy tropical climate (“Tourism in Jamaica”); and with cruise ship ports in Ocho Rios, Montego Bay, Falmouth, Port Antonio, and Kingston, it is no wonder Jamaica is

considered one of the “World’s Leading Cruise Destinations” (“Quick Facts About Jamaica”).<sup>5</sup> Jamaica is also the largest English-speaking island in the Caribbean, which explains why the highest number of tourist arrivals come from the United States, followed by Canadian arrivals as a distant second, and finally, visitors from the United Kingdom (*Annual Travel Statistics:2018*).<sup>6</sup> However, the slick promotional advertisements, tourist activities, and luxurious, well-manicured resorts that idealize Jamaica create a “tourism imaginary,” which Athinodoros Chronis identifies as productions of place that exist in an ambiguous temporal space between a locale’s present and past. This tourism imaginary is rooted in “the projected or desired departure from the ordinary” (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 26) and allows for “the playful permissiveness of a liminoid experience” in which everyday obligations are suspended (Gmelch 5). These imagined frameworks “attract tourists and invite them to participate in a fantasy that propels a visitor’s escape from his/her ordinary preoccupations” and, in the case of Jamaica, often overwrite the fraught and complex transnational, colonial history, culture, and identity of Jamaica in order to reanimate North American Anglo supremacy and the tourist industry (Poirot and Watson 98).

Two Jamaican plantation houses—Rose Hall and Greenwood Great House—both located in St. James parish a short distance outside of Montego Bay and Falmouth (port cities that are huge tourist destinations) solicit and attract tourists in very different ways. Rose Hall conceptualizes the tourism imaginary and the legacies of slavery in Jamaica in ways that sanitize and romanticize the historic spectacles of racialized violence that occurred there through the gothic-style tale of Annee Palmer, the “White Witch of Rose Hall.”<sup>7</sup> However, Greenwood Great House rejects the performance of that tourism imaginary and instead confronts the postcolonial realities of slavery, imperialism, and Anglo supremacy directly, asking visitors to remember these forgotten and suppressed legacies of Jamaica’s past.

Before tourism became the major industry in Jamaica—and the “number one foreign exchange earner for Jamaica since 1983” (Stupart and Shipley 11)—slavery, sugar, and plantation systems dominated the economy. Approximately 1.5 million Africans were brought to Jamaica over the course of the Atlantic slave trade (beginning with the Spanish and continuing through English rule), heavily influencing the demographics of Jamaica’s modern population of approximately 2,808,570 people, of which approximately 92 percent are Black, with large numbers of multiethnic populations, and growing numbers of East Indian residents (“Central America: Jamaica”). Because of Jamaica’s dominant Black population, the ubiquitous presence of rum (made from sugar), and the elegant British-style (and some Spanish-style) buildings and great houses visible around the island, one would think the legacies of colonialism and slavery would, seemingly, be difficult to overwrite or suppress when welcoming tourists to the island and informing them about its culture and history. However, the Rose Hall Great House manages to do just that, providing visitors with a titillating, escapist, and entertaining engagement with Jamaica’s history as a heritage experience.

## Rose Hall Great House

On the official Rose Hall website, beneath a large banner image of the home's façade and the tagline "Experience the Magic," the great house is described as "a restored 18th-century architectural masterpiece" rather than as a plantation home ("Rose Hall Great House"). Most likely completed around 1780, the three-story great house is of Georgian architecture, consisting of cut-stone on the first two levels and stucco on the uppermost level. The main entrance to the home—and the vantage point through which all tours enter and where many bridal parties pose for pictures—is on the second level of the building and is reached by ascending a cut-stone, symmetrical grand staircase which leads to a veranda with impressive views of the Caribbean Sea (Figure 3.1).

Built by the Honorable John Palmer, a slaver as well as the Custos and Chief Justice of the Common Pleas of St. James parish, and named in honor of his wife, Rosa, the building, at its zenith, had been described as "the finest private residence in Jamaica" (*The Legend of Rose Hall* 7). During its prime as a working plantation, Rose Hall was adjoined to its neighboring plantation, Palmyra, and together they covered about 6,000 acres, which were divided among sugar cane, grass, and pasture for cattle; it is estimated that approximately 250 enslaved Africans worked the joined properties of Rose Hall and Palmyra. The Palmer family occupied Rose Hall until 1831 when enslaved people across Jamaica united in the Christmas Rebellion under the leadership of Baptist preacher, Samuel Sharpe, and the home, along with many other plantations across the island, was destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Rose Hall lay



Figure 3.1 Rose Hall façade, photo by author.

in disrepair until the 1960s when it was purchased and restored by John Rollins, an American entrepreneur and former Lieutenant Governor of Delaware, and his wife Michelle, a former Miss USA. The Rollinses have since developed the plantation to include two award-winning golf courses, a resort community where private individuals can buy lots and build their “dream homes” in what the Rose Hall website refers to as a “vacation colony of the highest quality [... filled with] kindred spirits,” and of course, the Rose Hall Great House, where tours are given, weddings held, and the ghost of Annee Palmer—the infamous White Witch of Rose Hall—is the celebrated focus (“About Rose Hall Developments, Ltd.”).

The story of Annee Palmer, which has mostly been proven false, but still heavily circulated, is that of a “black widow”—a woman who killed three husbands and then killed her subsequent sexual partners (mostly enslaved men) through a combination of witchcraft and cruelty.<sup>9</sup> As a child, Annee had spent time in Haiti where, as the legend states, she “became a favorite of a high voodoo priestess ... who taught Annee to believe in spirits ... The priestess convinced Annee she had the powers of a god” (*The Legend of Rose Hall* 12). After marrying a grand nephew of the plantation’s original owner in 1820, Annee came to be the “haughty, cruel, impatiently bored, and easily provoked” mistress of Rose Hall (*The Legend of Rose Hall* 11). Legends about her state that after her first and second husbands died mysteriously, her third husband discovered she was having a sexual liaison with a young enslaved man on the property and flew into a rage. Annee poisoned him and then allowed the young man to be flogged to death, because he was ultimately blamed for the murder. Annee then became the manager and overseer of the Rose Hall estate, never remarrying. She was said to be a “particularly cruel overseer, making frequent use of the spikes and iron collars, the stocks and flogging posts” that were common in plantation management (Thomas 113). She also supposedly used bear traps to keep the enslaved people on the property and enjoyed watching their torture from her bedroom balcony each morning. When one of the enslaved tried to poison her and was condemned to death, legend states that Annee had “the head delivered to her ... [and] stuck onto the end of a bamboo pole, and placed above the corn house a short distance from the great house itself” (Thomas 113). It was rumored that even the area practitioners of black magic (*obeahmen*) were afraid of Annee and her magical powers. Until her death due to a fall from a horse, Annee purportedly tortured the enslaved at Rose Hall, ran her plantation with an iron fist, and took multiple sexual partners, both enslaved and white, who she then killed with a mysterious fever (Black 22).<sup>10</sup>

Tours at Rose Hall revel in this lurid tale, despite its historic inaccuracies, undoubtedly because it reads like a gothic novel and is a titillating story for tourist consumption. Guides at Rose Hall Great House, who are mandatory on the tour and all of whom have been Black women each of the three times I’ve visited the site, are dressed in colorful peasant-style skirts with crisp, white, off-the-shoulder tops.<sup>11</sup> They take tourists up to the house by way of the grand, carved stone staircase, pausing for a professional photo opportunity with a staff photographer, because as the group is told, no personal photography is allowed once the home has been entered. The guides then lead tourists through the house, room by room,

relating carefully scripted stories about Annee's childhood in Haiti, her personality quirks, her marriages, and her cruel, sexual reign over the plantation. Guides whisper at appropriate times and point to all the places where Annee's ghost has been seen or screams of her tortured sexual partners have been heard. None of the great house's original furnishings or décor remain, due to the Christmas Rebellion and looting that occurred at other times, but the home has been redone imaginatively, if not anachronistically, in ways that highlight the glamor and wealth of plantation living and showcase Annee's lascivious story. Visitors, for example, are shown Annee's bedroom, which has been redone entirely in shades of inauthentic crimson with heavy brocade fabrics and red velvet, indicative of the macabre "bloodiness" of Annee's tale, and taken to the old cellar where Annee supposedly imprisoned her sexual partners, which has now been converted to an English-style pub that serves rum punch and Red Stripe, among other beverages.

Each time I have visited Rose Hall (in 2014, 2016, and 2020) our guide, after allowing us special opportunities to snap forbidden photos and touch wallpapers and textiles in the home—a scripted and approved privilege undoubtedly intended to increase visitor satisfaction and the intimacy of the tour, as well as tips for the guides—took our group at the very end of the tour to the stone crypt on the property where Annee is supposedly buried and heavily hexed by the enslaved to keep her soul from escaping, although it did anyhow according to legend.<sup>12</sup> There, the guides sang us a few verses from Johnny Cash's song, "The Ballad of Annee Palmer," which focuses on Annee's dead husbands and asks as part of the refrain, "Where's your husband, Annee?" before dismissing us to wander in the gardens and visit the multiple gift shops on the property.<sup>13</sup>

The main narrative emphasis of the great house tour is placed on Annee Palmer's "witchiness" and black magic leanings, her wanton sexuality, and her cruelty to her sexual partners through that insatiable sexual appetite. The enslaved men that Annee seduces and then executes are framed during the tour as wronged paramours in a long line of wronged sexual partners and husbands (both white and Black—something the tour highlights repeatedly), instead of as chattel property within a plantation system; these men are often referred to during the scripted tour as Annee's "lovers" rather than as her property or as enslaved. This focus on the sexual misconduct and unhinged violence of a singular individual—and a woman, at that; misogyny is definitely at play here—works to overwrite and obscure the violent, systemic inequalities of slavery and the wealth and privilege that white planter society in Jamaica gained from it. Instead, emphasis on the tour is placed on the fact that Annee was an outlier; her mastery of voodoo and her mercurial nature which thrived on engendering terror and maintaining iron-fisted control mark her as an aberration rather than as an archetype of enslavers within the plantation system. Anthropologist Deborah Thomas has posited that the myth of the White Witch "renders legible ... the corruption of plantation societies [,] the complex but fundamentally unequal relationships that develop within them [,] and] the violence that structures these relationships" (113–14). I would counter, however, that the tour of Rose Hall artfully and salaciously repackages the myth of the White Witch to obscure the violence of the chattel slavery system and

instead, reassign them to a white woman's sexuality and power gone awry. It is Annee Palmer who is the villain in this story, not the larger system that encompasses her. While the ugly legacies of Jamaica's history with slavery are certainly acknowledged on the tour and cannot be overlooked by even the most uninformed visitor to the site, they are made barely legible and are certainly not the focus of the great house tour. Instead, tourists at Rose Hall are offered an opportunity to visit a famous landmark and to engage with a sanitized "history" of Jamaica. The tour enables them to detach themselves from any guilt or discomfort about the historic realities of chattel slavery by focusing on the story of the White Witch, the beautiful view, and maybe having a Red Stripe or two before playing a round of golf on one of the beautiful Rose Hall courses.

The escapism provided by the Rose Hall tour is extremely appealing for white tourists, Americans in particular, I would argue, because of the way in which slavery and North American and European ties to the plantation economy—any potential "guilt" for visitors from these regions—is removed from focus. As Barry Schwartz and Horst-Alfred Henrich have observed in their study of American and German citizens' reactions to shameful events from their cultural histories, Americans are typically unwilling to "express regret for past wrongs" due to their particular cultural beliefs in individualism and exceptionalism (118). They are often resistant to accepting responsibility for shameful events of the past, like slavery, and are "hard-pressed to understand ... that people can be morally responsible for events in which they did not participate" (Schwartz and Heinrich 119). Further, Americans "typically reject moral responsibility for the misconduct of others, especially their ancestors" (Schwartz and Heinrich 119). Because the Rose Hall tour plays into these frameworks, laying the blame for the atrocities that occurred on the property at the feet of a cruel, deviant, white woman rather than on an entire system of enslavement, which would potentially carry uncomfortable implications for white visitors, particularly Americans, guests at Rose Hall ultimately get a free pass—a heritage experience without the guilt or personal reckoning.

A secondary, but equally telling focus of the tour of Rose Hall is on the lavish plantation lifestyle Annee led, as well as the extensive and expensive renovations made to the home by the Rollinses after they purchased the property. Throughout each room of the tour, visitors are regaled with information about how much maintaining the wallpaper in the home costs due to Jamaica's humid climate or the long distances from which various exquisite replacement materials had to be imported. Extravagant and high-end decorative items, from china sets to chandeliers to heavy furnishings made of mahogany, are pointed out every step of the way. This emphasis on the luxurious living standard of Jamaica's planter society is further promoted on the Rose Hall website, so that before visitors have even set foot on the property, they are prepared for a glamorous, escapist tour. Under the tab about the "Day Tour" where patrons would purchase their online tickets for a 20% discount, visitors are urged to

Immerse [themselves] in the heritage of the island as your expert guide shares the story of this colonial ruin restored to its former majesty in the

1960's. Learn about the *lifestyle of the European bourgeoisie* in the isles of the Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century. The tale of the Annee Palmer, the famed White Witch of Rose Hall is sure to delight. Beautiful tropical gardens and personalities will colour your experience with fun along the way!

(“Rose Hall Great House”—emphasis mine)

Nothing about slavery, the corruption of plantation societies, or the violence that structured them—the actual history of this site—is mentioned on the Rose Hall webpage, and they are barely touched upon in the actual tour itself. Instead, the focus is on the majesty of the home, the “bougie” lifestyles of planters in the Caribbean, and the “delightful” story of Annee Palmer. As Deborah Thomas states, this sanitized version of historic memory functions to “present the luxury and grandeur of the life of plantation owners but neither the excruciatingly hard labor nor the forms of terror and torture that were the daily lot of slaves” (114). As within any tourism imaginary, reality is suspended and obligations are removed at Rose Hall; idealized versions of the past replace the actual historic narrative of origin, and visitors are able to leave feeling edified and guilt-free. They are able to “experience the magic,” just as the Rose Hall website enjoins, without having to grapple with the harsh, historical truths of the plantation economy or how those legacies have structured the tourism-centric Jamaica they are currently enjoying.

### **Greenwood Great House**

Greenwood Great House, which is literally just minutes down the road from Rose Hall in St. James parish, is far less popular in terms of the numbers of cruise ship visitors and tourists it sees, but, I would argue, this is because of the way this site approaches its own historic place within the plantation economy and the way it edifies and interacts with visitors. Built in 1800 as a guest house by Richard Barrett, a slaver, Speaker of the House, and part of the wealthy and influential Barrett family that included Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Greenwood Great House survived the Christmas Rebellion of 1831 and consequently still has many of its original furnishings, artwork, and unique musical instruments, all of which are on display in the home and discussed on the tour.<sup>14</sup> The two-story stone and timber structure has a cedar-shingled roof, cut-stone floors, mahogany doors, and a detached kitchen that is connected to the main house by a covered walkway (which is now a small pub and the ticket office) (Figure 3.2).

Although certified as a national monument and having received a Musgrave Medal of Excellence in Heritage Preservation, a National Association of Returning Residents plaque, and the Berger Paints Heritage in Architecture award, Greenwood Great House is unique in that it still functions as a private residence (“Plan a Visit”). The plantation home is owned and lived in by Bob and Anne Betton, who purchased the property in 1976 as a sort of homecoming for Bob, who is originally from Jamaica, and Anne, a white New Zealander, after the couple had lived in England for many years. The Bettons have worked to maintain the home in as original a condition as possible, and they display historic heirlooms,





Figure 3.2 Greenwood Great House façade, photo by author.

antiques, and even found items from around the property throughout the great house. Greenwood, like Rose Hall, also seeks to bring in cruise ship passengers and tourists from all-inclusive resorts by advertising with tour companies and having write-ups in travel guides like *Fodor's*, *Rough Guide to Jamaica*, and *Lonely Planet* (a publication which lists Greenwood as a “Top Choice” on their website). They also have similar operating hours to Rose Hall, a similar entry fee, and provide tour guides who follow a carefully scripted program, including a tale about a “duppy” or ghost that appears in a photograph featured on the tour. However, unlike Rose Hall, Greenwood allows its guides (both men and women) to dress in street clothes and lets visitors linger in rooms as long as they would like, taking pictures; they do, however, enforce a strict “no touching” policy due to the value and rarity of the original items in the home. The most striking difference between the tours at Rose Hall and Greenwood, however, is the fact that at Greenwood, they directly address the history of the home as a slave plantation without glamorizing or sanitizing the structural violence of the plantation economy and the imperialism that buttressed it, and they do so without coddling or “entertaining” visitors with elaborate backstories about the property or its previous owners.

The tour of Greenwood Great House, which begins at wrought iron gates that lead into the property’s gardens, introduces visitors, first, to the famous lineage of the Barretts, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but then immediately follows with details about the massive nature of the Barrett’s plantation operation:

The Barretts were the largest plantation owners [in Jamaica]; they owned from Little River to Falmouth, that is about twelve miles along the coast, and this was one of many of their estates. They owned over 2,000 slaves and 84,000 acres of land.

(“Greenwood Tour”)

The tour guide then points out an antique two-man, hand-pump fire cart and a water canon that sit on a side porch of the residence, noting, “Just before the

slaves got their freedom, they started a spate of burning, so naturally these were their form of insurance against fire” (“Greenwood Tour”). These opening lines from the tour not only acknowledge the massive holdings of plantation elites in Jamaica—particularly the Barretts’—of both land and enslaved humans, but also the active resistance of the enslaved populations to that system, as well as its volatility and instability. This is all before visitors have even entered the home and within minutes of the tour’s start. Throughout the remainder of the tour, guests are continually reminded of the home’s plantation legacy. They are told of features of the home such as the gun slots that are still visible in the basement level to defend the home, shown items like weights and metal cauldrons that would have been used in sugar production, and directed to various indentures and legal documents that are framed and on display, one of which is a list of enslaved people that includes the moniker “Trouble,” something the guides always remark upon. The violent legacies of the plantation economy, including its roots in sugar production, enslavement, violence, and dehumanization, are never far from the mind during the tour.

There are also more overt and direct engagements with the home’s history, and Jamaica’s more generally, as a plantation and as a site of systemic violence and resistance. For example, early in the tour, guests are shown the framed last will and testament of the Reverend Thomas Burchell. Burchell was a white British Baptist missionary and abolitionist who worked in Jamaica for 22 years building churches and working closely with Samuel Sharpe, an enslaved man who was Burchell’s Deacon and a major leader in the Christmas Rebellion of 1831. While pointing out the document, the tour guide notes,

In 1831, he [Burchell] and William Knibb were accused of inciting the slaves under Sam Sharpe to rebel. It became the bloodiest rebellion in Jamaica’s history. It led to the slaves getting their freedom three years later. Sam Sharpe is now one of Jamaica’s national heroes.

(“Greenwood Tour”)

This statement not only snaps visitors out of their tourism imaginary by shifting attention away from the luxurious planter lifestyle and incredible wealth of the enslavers, things the Rose Hall tour focused on intensely, but it also redirects attention to the legacy of Samuel Sharpe, the enslaved man who was executed for his role in the largest slave rebellion in Jamaica history, instead of on the historic document of the will, the Anglo abolitionist who created it, or the wealthy Barrett family and their luxurious home that is full of artifacts such as Burchell’s will. The traditional focus of great house or plantation home tours across the U.S. and Caribbean is flipped here, placing the emphasis on the enslaved and their resistance to that enslavement rather than on the “gracious” lifestyle of the enslavers.

Near the end of the Greenwood Great House tour, when visitors are being walked from the main house to the home’s original kitchen in a separate building, which has now been converted to a pub called “The Level Crossing,” the guide relates that the covered walkway between the two buildings is called the

“Whistler’s Walk,” because “to stop the slaves [from] eating the food from the kitchen to the great house, they [slaves] were instructed to whistle because you can’t chew and whistle at the same time” (“Greenwood Tour”). Guests are then deposited in the pub where there is a wall display of glass cases that contain leg (leg irons), whips, shackles, and other artifacts of the plantation spectacle of violence, including a full-sized man trap directly below the display, which have been found on the property or purchased elsewhere in Jamaica (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

Exhibited without a lot of commentary or contextualizing information beyond what has already been offered as part of the tour, it makes a sobering, stark statement about the great house’s—and Jamaica’s—origins.<sup>15</sup> This final display at the end, as Deborah Thomas asserts, “places Greenwood Great House within a more general dialogue about a history of violence in Jamaica and the impact of that history on the present” (115). It also, I would argue, forces tourists out of their “sun, sea, and sand getaway” fantasy to grapple with the historic context that first created Jamaica as the wealthiest colony in the British Empire and then as a tourist destination for mostly white, American visitors. It ruptures the tourism imaginary and places issues of racism, white supremacy, imperialism, colonialism, and enslavement at the forefront of the visitor’s mind. Greenwood Great House offers, as the *Lonely Planet* guide notes, “one of the few direct references ... found in any Jamaican historical home to the foundations of the plantation labor market, i.e. slavery” (126). This may explain why the Bettons see far fewer international



Figure 3.3 Glass display case at Greenwood Great House; photo by author.



*Figure 3.4* Man trap at Greenwood Great House; photo by author.

and cruise ship visitors than their counterpart, Rose Hall. They instead receive a “steady stream of Jamaicans, many of whom tour Greenwood Great House as part of a high school, university, or church field trip,” groups that are undoubtedly more interested in the actual historic origins of the home and their own identities as Jamaicans than in an interpretive heritage experience that excises the home’s significance within the plantation economy (Thomas 115).

The rare and invaluable furnishings and décor within Greenwood Great House are a featured part of the tour, much as they were at Rose Hall. Because the home was never destroyed or looted as many other plantation sites around the island have been, including Rose Hall, Greenwood is a virtual museum that has one of the most extensive collections of antique furniture, artwork, china, and fixtures in Jamaica and perhaps in the entire Caribbean. Throughout every room of the house, guides point out the age and provenance of items such as a beautifully inlaid piano that once belonged to King Edward VII and was made by Thomas Broadwood (who made pianos for Beethoven), busts of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and the largest intact plantation library on the island containing over 300 books—the oldest one being published in 1697 and many of them signed by members of the Barrett family (“Greenwood Tour”).<sup>16</sup> Unlike Rose Hall, however, Greenwood has also been painstakingly maintained in as close to original condition as possible, with no creative redecorating or replacement of

original fixtures to amplify the home's appearance and glamor or to obscure its origins within imperialist, transatlantic systems of the slave trade.<sup>17</sup> In fact, a key emphasis within the Greenwood tour is on the rarity of items and furnishings as well as their provenance—rather than their value—because many of the home's contents were procured by or gifted to the Barretts as a part of the British crown's far-reaching imperialist conquest of the world.

At various points throughout the tour, visitors are told about items such as a unique set of library steps that convert to a chair of Spanish origin, a bronze Chinese punch bowl, a Chinese watercolor and a Japanese wood block print on silk, a Flemish cupboard, Tibetan religious horns “used for hunting wild pigs,” and a Sicilian platter (“Greenwood Tour”). There are also various tapestries and carpets from all over the globe including a Turkish floor runner, an Indian rug, and a set of Casa Pupo rugs; the home even has an American-made platform rocker with a base that doesn't move so that the valuable carpets beneath it would not be destroyed. Each of these material items signifies the imperial and commercial circulation of bodies, products, power structures, and wealth throughout the Caribbean and the larger Atlantic World. They speak to Britain's imperial dominance and engagement in the slave trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as well as the Barretts' participation within and financial benefit from those systems. Greenwood's vast collection of items that are described on the tour are a collective snapshot of Atlantic history and the ways in which the plantation economy enabled and bolstered that transatlantic development of wealth and power for a limited few. Greenwood Great House exposes not only these historic systems but also their legacies within the modern tourist industry of Jamaica in ways that visitors to this site cannot help but recognize.

## **Coda**

Ultimately, these great houses consciously construct very different versions of public memory and race in the early Americas/Caribbean for very different audiences. Whereas Rose Hall works to engage the tourism imaginary and shape visitors' understandings of the plantation economy in ways that centralize whiteness and decentralize “white guilt” or tourist “shame” over Jamaica's plantation-economy origins, Greenwood rejects the tourism imaginary and instead produces a more capacious understanding of the country's history that is more historically sound and decolonial in its representation of and confrontation with racialized power structures within empire and the modern tourism industry.

Rose Hall performs a twentieth-/twenty-first-century version of imperialism in which Anglo-American settlers “move in” and revive an “architectural masterpiece” with opulent, top-of-the-line furnishings to create not only a popular and profitable tourist hotspot, but also an exclusive Anglo tourist community and enclave. It presents Jamaica as “naturally colonial”—as a modern-day recreation of the very system through which Annee Palmer and other white, wealthy transplants to the island were able to exploit the Jamaican landscape and people—only

now it is through the racialized tourism industry rather than the plantation economy of slavery (Gordon 41). As Communications scholar Nickesia Gordon has argued, the tourism industry and its advertisements work to assure contemporary guests in Jamaica that they can still “expect to be served, not unlike how colonial elites were once waited upon. The servitude of the locals [is] part of the authentic experience tourists can expect when they visit” (41). Sociologist Karen Wilkes more concisely states, “the consumption of Black labor in the Caribbean is sold as a luxury” (9). As a participant within these systems of consumption and neocolonialism, the Rose Hall tour produces for its mostly white, American visitors a fanciful and titillating narrative about plantation life in Jamaica which, because of its focus on the singular instance of Annee Palmer where power, violence, and extreme cruelty overrode the humanity of one individual, does not challenge or disturb the surety of its visitors that they are “good” people who are free from any implications or benefits of the colonialist legacies of slavery and racism that ensnared Annee. Because these visitors do not—and cannot—identify with Annee, they are able to eschew any connections with the White Witch of Rose Hall and her subsequent ties to the transatlantic slave trade and its contemporary colonialist repercussions in the tourism industry. They depart feeling edified and engaged with Jamaica’s history, but ultimately unchallenged in their own understandings of race, power, and imperialism in the Caribbean and their own implication within these systems.

Greenwood Great House, however, places the focus of its tour on the spectacular violence of slavery, as well as the imperialist, racist frameworks that enabled and maintained that system, rather than the aberrant, white identities and posh lifestyles it engendered. The emphasis of the Greenwood tour is placed on systems of oppression—racism, imperialism, chattel slavery, economic dominance—that still clearly have long-lasting impacts on present-day Jamaica—the very Jamaica tourists are consuming and enjoying. Greenwood confronts its visitors with the web of power structures that not only enabled Jamaica’s foundation as Britain’s wealthiest colony in the Caribbean, but also currently maintains it as a tourist-driven economy that still relies on white American patronage and tourist dollars, and Black Jamaican servitude. As a result, guests are less easily able to separate themselves from and reject the narrative about the long-lasting and far-reaching implications of slavery that Greenwood is telling. Greenwood makes explicit the connections between the plantation economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the continuing tourist economy today, which creates a challenging and resistant heritage narrative that does not align with the tourism imaginary. Greenwood demonstrates that it is possible to tell decolonized stories about race, power, and the legacies of colonialism in the Caribbean, and to create more nuanced and substantial narratives about how a place like Jamaica, which often seems so distant and inconsequential to white American visitors’ understanding of their own histories and identities, is actually foundational—rather than tangential—to understanding the Atlantic World and the complex and fraught nature of race, slavery, and neocolonialism in the contemporary United States and tourism industry.

## Notes

- 1 An earlier, condensed version of this essay appeared in the spring 2019 issue of the *Society of Early Americanists' Newsletter* (S.E.A.N. 31.1). I would like to thank the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (O.R.S.P.) for their support of my research through a semester-long sabbatical and travel funding through a University Research and Creative Activity (U.R.C.A.) grant. I would also like to thank my Jamaican immersion program students throughout the years (2014, 2016, 2020) and my faculty co-leader of the 2020 immersion, Dr. Joel Pace, who lent his unfailing support and enthusiasm to this project.
- 2 T.G. Brunyard notes in his 2001 article, "'Prodigious riches,'" that estimates of the capital and income of Jamaica demonstrate that it was the wealthiest colony in British America, both in terms of total wealth and in regard to the wealth of individual white settlers (507).
- 3 Some sources estimate that there may have been as many as 700 great houses in Jamaica by 1838 when slavery was abolished. Today, perhaps only 400 of those survive, with many lying in ruins or being used as makeshift housing in poorer communities around the island.
- 4 See Stupart and Shipley for discussion of the origins and historic development of the tourist industry in Jamaica. For analysis of Jamaica's tourism-centric efforts at "nation branding," see Johnson and Gentles-Peart's *Brand Jamaica*. For information about the socio-economic impacts of tourism in Jamaica, see the work of Ibrahim A. Ajagunna and Ann P. Crick.
- 5 The newest cruise ship port was opened in January 2020 in Port Royal, Kingston, after a more than 40-year absence of cruise ships in this area. Jamaica now has five ports around the island.
- 6 The *Annual Travel Statistics: 2018* report for Jamaica more specifically notes that 1,628,402 Americans visited the island in 2018 versus 399,969 Canadians and 217,978 citizens from the United Kingdom during the same time frame. Americans clearly constitute the bulk of Jamaica's tourist arrivals.
- 7 Although Palmer's name is sometimes spelled "Annie," most Jamaican sources about her, including materials from Rose Hall and Rollins, Ltd., such as their self-published booklet *The Legend of Rose Hall*, their coffee table book, *Rose Hall, Jamaica*, and their website, spell her name "Annee," so that is the spelling I will utilize here.
- 8 The Christmas Rebellion of 1831–2, also called the Great Slave Rebellion or the Baptist War, was ignited when Blacks, under Sharpe's leadership, demanded more freedom and a working wage of "half the going wage rate"; they took an oath to stay away from work until their demands were met by the plantation owners. It became the largest uprising of enslaved people in the British West Indies, mobilizing as many as 60,000 of Jamaica's 300,000 enslaved. Fourteen whites were killed by armed battalions of enslaved people during the course of the rebellion, and 207 rebelling enslaved were killed. It is estimated that an additional 300–350 enslaved people were executed after the war in reprisals. For further reading, see the work of James A. Delle.
- 9 Most scholars attribute the legend of the "White Witch of Rose Hall" as originating in a 1929 novel by Herbert G. de Lisser, a Jamaican journalist and author, aptly titled *The White Witch of Rose Hall*.
- 10 Other sources claim Palmer died from being strangled by one of her lovers in her own bed (*The Legend of Rose Hall*, 11).
- 11 See Gentles-Peart for analysis of the white supremacist trope of Black Jamaican women "being built for servitude (the perennial slave[s])" and its role within the tourism industry (60).
- 12 Ajagunna and Crick have theorized that these kinds of special privileges work to create feelings of warmth and welcoming for tourists; they require "employees in the hospitality industry [to] imagine that the customer is a guest in their private home" and then treat them accordingly (181).

- 13 Johnny Cash was a one-time owner of the nearby Cinnamon Hill great house and supposedly quite taken with Annee's story. He wrote and recorded "The Ballad of Annee Palmer" in the 1970s shortly after purchasing the Cinnamon Hill property, where he and June Carter Cash resided part-time for nearly 40 years. Cinnamon Hill was purchased by the Rollinses, the owners of Rose Hall, shortly after the Cashes' deaths in 2012 and has just recently been opened to the public for tours through Rosehall.com.
- 14 Hersey Barrett (sometimes spelled "Hercie") had been granted the property for the Greenwood estate by King Charles II because of his role in the British takeover of Jamaica in 1655. The Barrett family also owned Cinnamon Hill (the Johnny Cash home now owned by Rose Hall, Ltd.), and Barrett Hall, which is no longer standing. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a descendant of these planter Barretts, the daughter of Edward Moulton Barrett, although she never visited Jamaica.  
Greenwood Great House is said to have survived the Christmas Rebellion due to the Barrett family's "kinder" dealings with enslaved people, including assisting them with literacy efforts, which was a criminal offense.
- 15 The script from the Greenwood tour only makes a passing comment on the man trap: "[T]here is a man trap. It was used for capturing runaway slaves" ("Greenwood Tour"). Individual guides will often comment further on the display and point out the additional items in the cases. Of the four times I have taken the Greenwood Great House tour (2014, 2016, 2019, 2020), three of the four guides talked further about the display; one of those guides was Bob Betton himself.
- 16 Other unique and rare items in the Greenwood collection include a 1626 map of Africa, one of three working barrel organs in the world, and two polyphones.
- 17 To clarify, Greenwood has been maintained as much as possible in its original décor and configurations in the public areas that are open for tours. Obviously, updates have been made for plumbing, electricity, and other modern facilities, but areas of the home where extensive changes have been made are not featured on the tour.

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