

## **The Observance of Emancipation Day in Jamaica**

The observance of Emancipation Day as a public holiday began in 1893, at which time it was observed on the first Monday in August. Between 1895 and 1962, it was celebrated on August 1, unless the date fell on a Saturday or Sunday.

When Jamaica became an independent nation in 1962, the official observance of Emancipation Day was discontinued in favour of Independence Day, which is observed on August 6. However, since 1997, Emancipation Day as a public holiday was re-introduced and observed on August 1, except when the day falls on a Sunday; in which case it is celebrated on Monday August 2.

The observance of Emancipation Day provides Jamaicans the opportunity to reflect on their ancestors and the freedom for which they fought. In this regard, Emancipation Park in New Kingston, St. Andrew, which was opened on July 31 2002, was built in their honour. The statues of a male and female at the main entrance of the Park commemorate the struggles and victories of Jamaicans.

Since 1997, Parish Vigils are held in observance of Emancipation Day. The events, organised by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC), take place in major towns throughout the island. One of the largest events is '*Emancipation Jubilee*', which is held on July 31 at the Seville Heritage Park in St. Ann. This event usually starts at 6:00 p.m. and continues into the morning of August 1. As a family event, adults and children have the opportunity to learn about and participate in various cultural activities, including our traditional foods and dances. The event is coordinated by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT).

For more information please visit the following website:

- [http://www.jnht.com/news/2010/07/emancipation\\_jubilee\\_2010.php](http://www.jnht.com/news/2010/07/emancipation_jubilee_2010.php).
- [http://www.jis.gov.jm/mysc/html/20100730t100000-0500\\_24862\\_jis\\_emancipation\\_vigils\\_keep\\_celebratory\\_atmosphere\\_of\\_abolition\\_alive.asp](http://www.jis.gov.jm/mysc/html/20100730t100000-0500_24862_jis_emancipation_vigils_keep_celebratory_atmosphere_of_abolition_alive.asp)