



Winner (Research)

LegendizeU Project

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### **Tracking Our Train History**

In photo: My grandfather, Rampal Ramasar

#### Introduction

The Government Railway Station, which existed in Trinidad and Tobago between 1876 - 1968, was originally built to connect Port of Spain to Arima. However, the railway was extended to Couva in 1880, to San Fernando in 1882, to Cunapo (now Sangre Grande) in 1897, to Tabaquite in 1889, to Siparia in 1813 and to Rio Claro in 1914.

This meant the railway ensured a connection throughout Trinidad. This Trinidad and Tobago railway took our grandparents and great grandparents to and from east to west and north to south Trinidad.

In the rural village of Tabaquite where transportation was hard to get and people had to walk or ride bicycles for many miles, villagers waited for the day when this would all change.

With the connection of the country through the train, transportation became easier and life changed. Farmers could now get their produce to the various markets in other parts of the country and those who sought livelihoods outside of farming could now entertain

the possibility of finding work in Port of Spain or San Fernando, because the train made accessibility a reality.

In 1897, the Trinidad Government Railway (TGR) constructed a new line from Jerningham Junction - named after Governor Sir Hubert Jerningham - through Caparo valley to facilitate Tabaquite. The line from Jerningham junction to Brasso covered twelve and a quarter miles and became known as the 'Caparo Valley line'.

Tabaquite provided a challenge for the TGR. It was necessary to place part of the train line under a section of the Central Range. It was determined that a 660 foot long tunnel would be required to solve this problem. this engineering feat is known as Knollys Tunnel, named after then acting Governor of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Clement Courtney Knollys.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> 1898, the line was opened through the tunnel to Tabaquite from Brasso, a distance of two and three-quarter miles. Closed since 1965, Knollys Tunnel is one of our national Heritage sites.

Plans to extend the line from Tabaquite to the Caparo Valley and on to Rio Claro began and the railway to Rio Claro was opened in 1914. Stations along this route included Enterprise, Depot Halt, Longdenville, Todd's Road, Mamoral Halt, Brasso-Piedra, Flanagin Town, Brasso, Mitchell's Gap, Tabaquite, Trinidad Central Oilfield (T.C.O.), Brother's Road, Jeffers Crossing, San Pedro, Poole, Dades Trace and Rio Claro.

The train ran three times a day - 6:37 AM, noon and 5:04 PM - to Rio Claro from Port of Spain via a connection at Jerningham Junction and on Sundays and public holidays, the train ran at 10:45 AM and 3:50 PM.

I live behind Jeffers Crossing. The area got its name after the gatekeeper Mr. Jeffers and when people travelled, they told the engine driver to stop at Jeffers Crossing. I am proud that I live at this historic site and I actually have bits of the trainline in my yard!

Many years ago, my beloved grandfather, Mr. Ramphal Ramasar, purchased ten acres of land now inherited by my father. Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away at the age of ninety-one but I knew him for seven wonderful years. He told me many stories of his past, including his joy on riding the train.

Sometimes, when I watch the bits of track, I hear my grandfather's voice and can see, so clearly, the train passing right beside me.