

Rat Trap - From a square to a community

Rat Trap is a quaint community in Eastern Westmoreland, the constituency of former Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson. It is situated at the foot of the Belvedere Mountains and is surrounded by Kew Park, formerly an extensive farming property.

However, older residents insist that the name technically belongs just to the community square with its few shops.

Calling on oral tradition, they said Rat Trap was not named after the rodent and, in fact, has no more rats than the typical rural community. Instead, the name has its roots in the antics of shop owner James McKenzie, who once operated the only store in the area. McKenzie's grandson, Cecil McKenzie, calculates that this would have been as far back as the 1870's or 1880s.

According to Cecil McKenzie, his grandfather claimed that his shop could catch people in the district, whether they liked him or not, just as rat-traps catch rats.

So popular was James McKenzie - not only because there were few alternatives to his shop, but also because of his jovial boasts - that eventually the little square became known as Rat Trap.

By the 1940s, the government of Jamaica purchased the Ducketts and Chesterfield properties to meet a need for land settlement in the Belvedere area as the community grew, the name, Rat Trap, came to refer not only to the popular little square but also to the area in the immediate vicinity.

- Source: Institute of Jamaica