



# HISTORIC WILLEMSTAD ARCHITECTURAL WALKING GUIDE



CURACAO

# Welcome to Historic Willemstad: ...

## A historic living experience

*Experience the historic city on your own by strolling through the town centre with this architectural guide. In it you will find an eastern and a western walking tour, both starting at St. Anna Bay near the Queen Emma pontoon-bridge.*

*The eastern tour will guide you through the oldest part of Willemstad, nowadays called Punda, and through a small part of the Scharloo district. The length of this route is about 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> km.*

*The western tour takes you through the Otrobanda district, on the other side of St. Anna Bay. The length of this route is about 2 km.*

### Introduction

When the European colonial powers exploited the Americas they gave rise to a multiethnic cultural heritage as they mingled with the existing inhabitants and the imported African slaves. The Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English and French colonizers and slave traders established strongholds along the continental coastal areas and on several islands, from which they waged war against each other. Some of these early establishments have been well conserved and give evidence of a multilayered historic and cultural past.

Curaçao fits well in this tradition since its discovery by the Spaniards in 1499 and Dutch takeover in 1634. Here too the rich cultural tapestry of warring colonial powers is abundantly present and well-conserved. In Curaçao this cultural legacy is well represented by one of the best developed Creole languages in the Caribbean (Papiamentu) and the great many architectural beauties that so eloquently bear witness to the harmonious interaction of European architectural styles adapted to the climatic circumstances and Caribbean exuberance. It is this architectural legacy that makes Curaçao an unforgettable experience.

## Punda

The oldest quarter Punda, owes its name to 'The Point' (Dutch: 'De Punt'), which was the name given to the peninsula on which Fort Amsterdam was built from 1635, the oldest existing structure on the island. This name became 'Punta' in Spanish and changed into 'Punda' owing to the West-African etymology of the slaves that were imported during the 17th and 18th century, when Curaçao was a prosperous slave trading post.

In the course of the 17th century a settlement came into existence north of the Fort, called Willemstad, a walled in city on three sides. On the waterfront at St. Anna Bay the city was open.

Especially in the last quarter of the century the city grew rapidly and at the beginning of the 18th century the walled-in town became too small to accommodate the increasing expansion. Building activities began beyond the city walls.

Half a kilometer to the east the first houses of the district of Pietermaai were built and north across the inland bay of 'Waaigat' the first mansions of the Scharloo quarter were constructed along the shore of this water.

Owing to the dense development some areas of Punda were dark and stuffy. It was not until 1861-1866 that the old 17th century wall was demolished.

Finally the city could expand to the east towards the suburb of Pietermaai.

### FORTIFICATIONS

### INFO

**In Willemstad various fortifications were built to protect the city and the harbor. The oldest is Fort Amsterdam. In the 17th century a wall was constructed around the oldest part of the city. It was demolished in the 1860s. Between 1826 and 1828 Waterfort and Riffort were built to defend the harbor entrance.**



**PUNDA WALKING TOUR**

- 1 Fort Amsterdam
- 2 Gouvernor's Palace
- 3 Fort Church
- 4 Council of Ministers
- 5 Waterfort
- 6 Heerenstraat 1
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- 17 Wilhelminaplein 14-16
- 18 Hendrikplein z/n
- 19 Hanchi Snoa 29
- 20 Van den Brandhofstraat 1
- 21 Van den Brandhofstraat 6
- 22 Werfstraat 6



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## FORT AMSTERDAM

### *History*

Fort Amsterdam is Curaçao's oldest and most prominent monument. In 1635, a year after the Dutch occupation, construction started on the east side of St. Anna Bay. Initially the fort was a heavily armed fortification that dominated the harbor entrance and protected the city. After the construction of Waterfort (1826-1830) on the sea-shore, Fort Amsterdam lost its defensive significance. In the Fort were located the dwellings of the director of the West-Indian Company and of the troops, the garrison's church, warehouses and water reservoirs. Now the Fort houses the Governor's Palace, dominating the main entrance side, the Fort Church and various government offices.

### *Description*

The original 17th century plan of the fort consisted of a pentagon with five bastions (enforced corners). In the course of the construction it was decided not to build the fifth seaward bastion, giving the Fort its irregular quadrangular shape. The slightly sloping walls of the fort are c. 3.20 m high. These massive walls are surmounted by a c. 1.60 m wall with cannon holes.



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## GOVERNOR'S PALACE

*Fort Amsterdam*

### *History*

Above the entrance gate to Fort Amsterdam the house of the director of the Dutch West-Indian Company was built after 1635. It still is the official residence of the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles. From the 17th till the 19th century numerous alterations were made. The oldest part probably consisted of an elongated pavilion at the St. Anna Bay side of the Fort, behind which a second pavilion was added with a staircase in the courtyard. During the 1868 renovation the front and back façades of the old Government's House obtained their neoclassical character.

### *Description*

Characteristic neoclassical elements in the façades of the building are the protruding, centrally placed temple front with the tympanum of the balcony room and the pilasters between the windows. The semicircular fanlights with arched moldings are also 19th century influences. Against the east façade, at the courtyard side, there is a double staircase leading to a landing and the main entrance to the Governor's palace.



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### **FORT CHURCH**

*Fort Amsterdam*

#### *History*

In 1763 the construction of the protestant Fort Church was started. Due to financial problems the church was not completed until 1771, in spite of the 'Anno 1769' on the façade.

During an English attack in 1804, the church was hit by cannonballs. In memory of this, one cannonball that struck the façade above the left entrance was never removed. During the restoration in 1990-1992 the vestry was converted into the Fort Church Museum.

#### *Description*

The rectangular church is constructed on a former warehouse of the West-Indian Company. The façade is divided by means of five pilasters (flat, vertical bands) in four fields. In the two central ones there are arched windows and the date of construction.

During the 1903 restoration the original wooden square tower was replaced by a round stone one. In the interior four columns support a girder construction on which the wooden vaults rest. The organ dates from 1963.



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### **COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

*Fort Amsterdam*

#### *History*

Built in 1857 – 1858 for the housing of public offices, the location was formerly an arsenal and later officers' dwellings. Since 1957 the Council of Ministers of the Netherlands Antilles has held office here.

#### *Description*

The building has a symmetrical block-shaped construction that is characteristic of the neo-classical architectural style that came into vogue on the island in the middle of the 19th century. Also the full length pilasters along the façade at the corners and on both sides of the entrance are typical of the period. Originally this building was furnished with glass sash windows, which were replaced by wooden louvred shutters about 1900. During the subsequent remodeling as the office for the Council of Ministers glass sash windows were reintroduced.



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## WATERFORT

### History

Waterfort was built between 1826 – 1830 (as was Riffort on the opposite side of the St. Anna Bay) as part of a new defensive ring round the old city. Due to the high costs the original plans were only partially carried out. The new forts never saw action. In 1955 it was decided to build a hotel in the courtyard of Waterfort. Nowadays restaurants and shops are located in the arches of Waterfort.

### Description

Waterfort consisted of a 400-meter defensive wall along the coast. The 5-meter-high and 2.5-meter-thick wall was bomb-proof at the time. At ground level, behind the wall, was a continuous series of 69 gun basements, each 7.5 meter deep and 5 meter wide with barrel vaulting, the so-called casemates. On top of the casemates there was an open battery. Until the construction of the hotel the outlines of the design were still clearly visible.



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## HEERENSTRAAT I

*PENHA building*

### History

The core of this prominently located merchant's dwelling was built between 1708 and 1733. In the latter year it was sold for the first time. In the second half of the 18th century the gallery all along the Bredestraat was added in the same style. During the latter half of the 19th century several additions were made, among which closing off the originally open galleries on the first floor with louvred shutters and the addition of several plaster ornaments. The 'Penha building' has been in the possession of the Penha family for more than a century.

### Description

This building is the finest example of Curaçao's baroque style, which was applied on the island throughout the 18th century. Characteristic for this style are especially the curved lines on the gable tops, ending in curls (volutes). Also the series of arches on the ground floor and the first floor are typical of the baroque period. The plaster ornaments added in the 19th century are predominantly done in leaf or flower motifs.

## THE FORMER WALLED-IN CITY

INFO

Breedestraat and Heerenstraat are the most prominent streets in the former walled-in city.

Most of the time there were warehouses on the ground floor. Above was residential.

The present city center, the Gomez-square, was created in the 1930s.



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#### BREDESTRAAT 39

##### *History*

The former building of the Royal Dutch Steamboat Company Ltd. (KNSM) was built in 1939-1941. The design was made by the construction bureau of the KNSM in Amsterdam. It has affinity with the Dutch architectural styles from that time. Especially the tower, the ochre colored bricks and the striking brick bond are elements that can be found in the work of the well-known Dutch architect W.M. Dudok.

##### *Description*

The building consists of a block shaped structure with a tower in the northwestern corner. The tower was designed as a lift tower but the lift was never installed. The three storeys are covered by a steep, truncated roof with a flat top. On the ground floor there are three shop outlets. The first and second floors were designed as offices. Remarkable and uncommon for Curaçao are the unplastered brick façades.



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#### HEERENSTRAAT 25 - 31

##### *History*

On the four gables of the buildings Heerenstraat 25-27 and 29-31 the same construction date of 1706 is indicated, both in the Christian and Jewish era (5466). A remarkable detail is that the architecture of these buildings is different although they were all built in the same year. They are among the oldest buildings that have survived in Punda.

##### *Description*

The tops of the two buildings on the left are typical of the architecture of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The funnel-shaped gables are crowned by a tympanum on a rectangular mould. In this mould the construction date '1706/5466' is mentioned. The two buildings on the right with their curved gables are examples of the first period of the 18th century Curaçao baroque. The galleries of these four buildings were formerly deeper. During a thorough 20th century renovation they were probably completely rebuilt.



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#### HEERENSTRAAT 35

##### *History*

This monument, the remaining half of a twin building, dates back to about 1750. It is the oldest of three remaining similar merchant houses in Punda, the other two being Breedestraat 15-17 and Breedestraat 22, all of which were built in the same mid-18th century baroque style. This style is characterized by a series of arches on top of each other, with a centrally placed decorated top. The former open galleries were closed in the 19th century. In the 20th century the wooden doors on the ground floor were removed.

##### *Description*

On the first and second floors the façade consists of a series of arches on short belly shaped pillars. On both floors the pillars are bundled on the corners. The centrally located baroque top in the façade is somewhat less exuberantly embellished than its Breedestraat 'counterparts'.



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#### PLAZA JOJO CORREA 2 - 4

*Maduro & Curiel's Bank*

##### *History*

This building houses the main office of Maduro & Curiel's Bank; it currently consists of three sections, of which the block along the square is a monument. It was built in 1916-1917. At the beginning only the north wing was used by the bank. The rest had other commercial functions. Owing to the bank's growth more sections came to be used. In the 1950s the attic and the roof were made considerably higher.

##### *Description*

The most characteristic feature of this building are the two little turrets on the corners of the first floor. In 2002 the windows were converted into their original shape, a combination of louvred shutters topped with glass. In the bank's entrance hall there hangs 'Harmonia Mundi', a large work of art of colored glass.





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## KEUKENSTRAAT 22 / KUIPERSTRAAT

*Postal Museum*

### *History*

According to the date 1693 in the top of the gable this must be one of the oldest known buildings in historic Willemstad. The houses at the corner of Keukenstraat/ Kuiperstraat were formerly three separate dwellings. The house in Keukenstraat is the only remaining historical part; the other two houses in Kuiperstraat were destroyed in a fire in 1974. The Curaçao Monuments Foundation bought the property in 1988, restored the main building and reconstructed the others. Since 1991 the Postal Museum has been established on the ground floor. The rest of the houses have been converted into apartments.

### *Description*

The gallery in front is the most striking element of this historic building. The wooden gallery was most probably added to the original gable in the 18th century. The funnel-shaped gable in Keukenstraat is crowned by a tympanum on a rectangular mould. In this mould the date of construction '1693' is mentioned. The façade is typical of the oldest architecture in Punda, which was influenced by Dutch building styles.



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## BREDESTRAAT 15 - 17

### *History*

This baroque merchant's dwelling shows the date of 1754 in the top. Just like some other buildings of the same period the façade and the gallery were built in front of an older early 18th century building. The formerly open galleries were closed with louvred shutters in the 19th century. In the 20th century the wooden doors on the ground floor giving access to the shop disappeared and the front became more open. On the left the entrance is still visible where formerly the staircase to the first floor was situated.

### *Description*

The façade is a fine example of the rich Curaçao baroque architecture of the mid-18th century. Like the opposite building at # 22 the façade on the first and second floors consists of a series of arches, resting on short belly shaped columns. Centrally located at the top of the façade there is a baroque top with profusely curved lines. On both sides of this extension there is a railing of open interweaving Dutch bricks.



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#### BREDESTRAAT 22

##### *History*

The core of this monument dates back to the end of the 17th, beginning of the 18th century. In the latter half of the 18th century a 2.5 meter-deep gallery was added in front of the original merchant's dwelling. The formerly open gallery was closed in the 19th century with louvred shutters. In the 20th century the former warehouse-like wooden doors on the ground floor disappeared and now the front is almost completely open.

##### *Description*

The façade is built in the Curaçao baroque style, which was applied on the island throughout the 18th century. On both the first and second floors the façade consists of a series of arches on short belly shaped columns. On both corners three columns are grouped together. Located at the top of the front façade there is a baroque gable in the middle, with elaborately curved lines.



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#### BREDESTRAAT 3 - 5 - 7

##### *History*

In the top of the western side wall the date of 1742 can be seen. In this year most probably one open continuous gallery in the Curaçao baroque style of the time was built against the front of some older buildings. In the 1890s three frontons (triangles) were built at the top of the façade in the neo-classical style of that period.

##### *Description*

Typical are the series of twelve baroque arches in the upper structure, resting on short belly shaped columns. Of the left and middle sections of the front gallery six arches on the ground floor were reconstructed and placed again on columns in the 1960s, as they originally were in the 18th century. In the right façade on the first floor the louvred shutters that were added in the 19th century are still in place.



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**BREDESTRAAT 2**

*History*

This location was built-on as early as the 17th century. This narrow merchant's dwelling has a recessed baroque gable dating to the mid-18th century. Until the beginning of the 20th century there was an open wooden gallery attached to this gable. Wooden galleries were quite common in old Punda, but have practically disappeared by now.

*Description*

The two gables located behind each other, only visible from a distance, are quite typical. About two meters behind the front the baroque gable with its beautifully curved lines can be seen. A special feature is that this old gable juts out from the existing roof. The present façade has a mid-19th century character, but was built in the early 20th century.



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**WILHELMINAPLEIN 4**

*The Town Hall*

*History*

The Town Hall was built between 1858 and 1860. Above the central part behind the colonnaded portico a tower was designed. To reduce the costs it was never constructed. The building was designed to house the Colonial Council, the Court of Justice and a prison. Except for the prison, the function of the building has remained unchanged. The eastern part houses the Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles, the western part the Court of Justice.

*Description*

The 'Stadhuis' is an early example of the neoclassical architectural style on the island. Typical of this style is the symmetry of the façade, the portico (entrance) with free standing columns and the tympanum on top. The front section of the building is divided into five building units, each separately covered by hipped roofs. The original building was enlarged at the west side in the 20th century with an extra pavilion.



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#### WILHELMINAPLEIN 14 - 16

##### *History*

Originally it was built in 1868 – 1869 as a temple of the Free Mason Lodge 'De Vergenoeging' ('Contentment'), which function it would fulfill for almost 100 years. In 1968 the building was sold. Since then several financial institutions have held offices here.

##### *Description*

The characteristics of the neo-classical architectural style of the latter half of the 19th century are for example the symmetry of the front, the corner stones at the sides of the façade, the wide fronton (triangle) topping the gutter moulding and the smaller frontons above all the windows. Originally the windows were furnished with wooden louvered shutters.

#### INFO

#### WILHELMINA SQUARE

This area was called 'outside-the-city-gate' till the 1860s when the city-wall was demolished. It was vacant till the second half of the 19th century when various public and semi-public buildings were constructed here. The park, laid out in 1899, is named after a Dutch Queen.



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#### HENDRIKPLEIN Z/N

*The Tempel*

##### *History*

The 'Tempel' was built between 1865 and 1867 by the Dutch Reformed Israeli Community Emanu-El, which had separated from the orthodox Sephardic community 'MikvO Israel'. In 1963 the two Sephardic Jewish communities reunited. In the same year the Tempel was closed for services. In 1989 the Jewish community sold the building. In 1995 the Temple was transferred to the Curaçao Monuments Foundation who restored the building, which now houses the Counsel for the Prosecution.

##### *Description*

The building is an example of 19th century neoclassical architecture. It consists of a rectangular block-shaped building mass with originally one main floor on a basement and a large saddle roof. Against the front there is a tower that is divided by horizontal ledges in three parts. Characteristic ornamental elements of the neoclassical style are the heavy, profiled cornices along the long sides, the corner pilasters and the tympana (triangles) above the doors. The semicircular fanlights with the arched moldings, the so-called 'eyebrows', are influences of 19th century Dutch architecture.



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**HANCHI SNOA 29***Synagogue MikvO Israel- Emanuel (The 'Snoa')**History*

The synagogue was built between 1730 and 1732. Since the construction services have been held continuously in this Sephardic 'snoa' and is therefore the oldest synagogue in use in the western hemisphere.

*Description*

The Amsterdam Portuguese-Israeli synagogue of 1675, the 'Esnoga', served as the model for the building plans. However, only the interior space shows resemblance to the Amsterdam synagogue. The exterior is typical of the local Curaçao baroque architectural style of the 18th century. The synagogue consists of a block-shaped building mass, covered by three saddle roofs. The main façades consist of three bell-shaped gables that are smoothly joined. Along the long side walls of the building there are external stone stair-cases leading to the women's galleries in the synagogue. The interior is divided in aisles by three vaulted ceilings and four freestanding columns. The floor is covered with a fine layer of white sand. One of the reasons is that it would be in remembrance of the time that the Jewish ancestors in Spain and Portugal had to celebrate their faith in clandestine synagogues. The wooden floors were covered with sand to muffle the sound of their footsteps on the former wooden floor.

*The Jewish Cultural-Historical Museum is accessible from the inner courtyard of the synagogue.*



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**VAN DEN BRANDHOFSTRAAT 1***Maritime Museum**History*

Built in the first half of the 18th century in the Curaçao baroque style, it is one of the oldest houses in Scharloo. It had several functions like a dwelling, a freemasons' lodge, a school, a sanatorium, a nightclub and a hotel. During a fire in 1988 the building was destroyed for the greater part. The Curaçao Monuments Foundation bought the ruins and restored it in 1995-1996. The destroyed interior was not rebuilt but equipped with modern materials and techniques to fit its new function, a Maritime Museum, inaugurated in 1998.

*Description*

Characteristic of the 18th century are the baroque curved gables and the arched openings on the ground floor. The ornamental blocks at the corners of the façades, the pilasters (flat columns against the façade) and the fronton (large triangle) on columns at the long west side of the building are neoclassicist additions from about 1885.

**THE SCHARLOO DISTRICT****INFO**

Scharloo was formerly a suburb of Willemstad. Already in the beginning of the 18th century the first mansions were built on the northern shore of the inland bay of Waalgat. The big expansion came in the second half of the 19th century when merchants from the old city built their houses on both sides of the main road, the Scharlooweg. Most of the buildings were built in the neoclassical architectural style.



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### VAN DEN BRANDHOFSTRAAT 6

*Villa Maria*

#### *History*

The Villa Maria mansion, quite probably named after the wife of the first owner, was built between 1885 and 1888. It kept its original function as a dwelling till the sixties when a hotel was established in the building. In 1998 it was bought by the Curaçao Monuments Foundation, which restored it.

#### *Description*

Villa Maria is built in the so-called neo-Greek style, a neo-classicist architectural style from the 19th century with characteristic elements of Greek architecture. The portico (entrance) with free standing Doric columns with a tympanum on top and the vertical decoration on the wide gutter board remind us of a Greek temple. The paired louvred windows with semi-circular glass tops and the corner stones were often used on the island in the neo-classical period. The steep marble stairs give the building a monumental appearance. The cast-iron gate at the street-side bears the name 'Villa Maria'.



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### WERFSTRAAT 6

#### *History*

This merchant's dwelling was constructed in the first half of the 18th century in the Curaçao baroque style. In 1866 the house was renovated and neoclassicist elements were added. At the same time an extra wing was built in the large yard at the back. The house served mainly as a dwelling but in the 20th century it was also used as a private school and later on as a pension. In 1999 the whole complex was sold to Stadsherstel Willemstad Inc., which had it thoroughly restored.

#### *Description*

Characteristic of the 18th century are the baroque curved top gables and the arched openings on the ground floor. In the course of time these arches were closed and replaced by rectangular windows and doors. In 2000 the original openings were restored. Also the louvred shutters were removed and sash-windows were replaced. Quite special is the decoration of the molded gutter board, a 19th century addition.

**OTROBANDA WALKING TOUR • STARTING POINT AT #23 • 2 KM**  
**• WALKING TIME ABOUT 2 HOURS**

**INFO**



**OTROBANDA WALKING TOUR**

- 23** Riffort
- 24** Brionplein 1
- 25** Molenplein 12-19
- 26** Molenplein z/n
- 27** Sebastopolstraat 26-28
- 28** Conscientiesteege 68
- 29** Van Dijksteeg/St. Martinsteeg
- 30** St. Martinsteeg 1
- 31** Zaanjessteeg 44
- 32** Breedestraat 163-165
- 33** Roodeweg 42-44
- 34** Frederikstraat 114-118
- 35** Frederikstraat 113
- 36** L.B. Smithplein 3
- 37** Hoogstraat 21-25
- 38** Hoogstraat 11
- 39** De Rouvilleweg 39-41
- 40** De Rouvilleweg 3-23
- 41** Kura Hulanda Area

# Otrobanda

In 1707 permission was officially granted by the West-Indian Company to parcel out the first lots near the western shore of St. Anna Bay although before that some houses had already been built here. The 'other side' of the channel, which became the name of the western quarter (via Dutch 'Overzijde', French 'Autre Bande', Spanish 'Otrabanda', finally into Papiamentu 'Otrobanda') developed as a suburb of the old city of Willemstad.

Because Otrabanda never had city-walls it grew rapidly. As early as half a century later it was larger than Punda. Till the beginning of the 20th century a large inland water, called the Rifwater, and which was divided from the sea by a reef, was a natural boundary for the southern growth of Otrabanda. In the last century it was filled-in and modern buildings were constructed here. Also the 'hill' of Otrabanda in the north was scarcely built upon till the second half of the 19th century. Except for Brionplein and Breedestraat, Otrabanda was and still is predominantly a residential district.



## INFO

### QUEEN EMMABRIDGE

**Till the opening of the Queen Emma Bridge in 1888 residents could only cross St. Anna Bay by small ferryboats. The pontoon-bridge was an initiative of Captain Leonard B. Smith, an enterprising U.S. consul on the island.**

**Till 1943 people had to pay toll to cross.**

**In 1937, after the government had become the owner, the bridge was completely renewed and enlarged. It is a swing bridge on 16 pontoons with a present length of 168 meters, of which the moving part is 137 meters long.**

**Since 1974 'The Swinging Old lady', as the bridge is also called, is only used by pedestrians.**



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## RIFFORT

### History

Riffort (1826 – 1828) owes its name to the narrow strip of land (reef) between the sea and the now filled in Rifwater (behind which it was built). The new fort never saw action and from the beginning of the 20th century it has been used for other purposes. After 1915 it housed a telegraphy station and later other technical public services. During the second half of the 20th century it was almost vacant. In 2001 Riffort was restored and a modern shopping and entertainment centre was built in it.

### Description

The fort has a 5-meter-high and 2.5-meter-thick wall. At ground level, behind the wall, there were 26 gun basements, each 7.5 meter deep and 5 meter wide with barrel vaulting, the so-called casemates. On top of the casemates there was an open battery. The only old building in the fort is a former guard house with an upper living storey dating from about 1840, nowadays a radio-station.

## BRION SQUARE

## INFO

**The square was named after the Curaçao born Admiral Luis Brion, an early 19th century comrade in arms of Simon Bolivar.**

**On the western side of this area the first houses of Otrabanda were built in the beginning of the 18th century. Most of the historical buildings on this square were lost by fire in 1969 during disturbances. The plaza itself was completely remodeled in 1997.**





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## BRIONPLEIN 1

### *History*

On this location, in a small 18th century building, the Dutch Franciscan Nuns from Roosendaal began the first Catholic school for girls in 1842. To generate income they started a boarding school for middle and upper class Catholic girls in a nearby alley and began schools for the poor and slaves all over the island.

The construction of the buildings at Brionplein gradually expanded during approximately one century to include the convent, the boarding school, kindergarten, elementary and high school. Since 1892 the complex was named after the father of Catholic Education, Mgr. Martinus Niewindt. Part of the building was lost in a fire in 1969. In 2001 the nuns sold the complex, which is now being used for several purposes.

### *Description*

Part of the complex at Brionplein and Molenplein is a protected monument. Typical of the neoclassical architectural style are the staggered corner stones in the façades and the louvred shutters with the semicircular fanlights. The conspicuous open galleries at the Molenplein side keep out the sun and the heat.



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## MOLENPLEIN 12 - 19

### *History*

This spacious and exceptional merchant's dwelling was built about 1750, in the heyday of the Curaçao baroque architectural style. Some dozens of meters to the North-West of this house stood 'de Vreede'; probably the only grain mill Otrobanda has known. Until the middle of the 20th century this building was used as a dwelling.

### *Description*

The basic concept of the house is a rectangular core surrounded by galleries. These galleries are interrupted by a tall, narrow transverse extension. The eastern gable, being the most important one by facing the harbor, has heavily curved lines ending in curls (volutes). This gable clearly has the characteristics of a Dutch clock gable. It is remarkable that the gable on the western side is much simpler. As was more often the case with large 18th century storied houses outside old Punda, here too the surrounding galleries on the main floor were built on a series of open arches. These open arches on the ground floor were closed about 1790.



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**MOLENPLEIN Z/N**

*History*

This complex of former dwellings was built in several periods. The northern and oldest block dates to the 18th century. In the 19th century the other parts were added.

*Description*

The oldest northern section has an L-shaped ground plan. The façades of this part show the characteristics of Curaçao's 18th century baroque style. Just as the nearby monuments at Molenplein 18-19 and Sebastopolstraat 26-28, only the most conspicuous façade has the baroque curved gables. The less visible gables are much more simply executed with only a modest semicircular top. The dormer windows do have the same curved lines as the main gable. Probably in the first half of the 19th century a larger dwelling of a simpler style was built against the southern façade. The whole complex has 19th century louvred shutters.



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**SEBASTOPOLSTRAAT 26 - 28**

*Sebastopol*

*History*

This merchant's mansion was built in the middle of the 18th century. It has several characteristics of the Curaçao baroque architecture. This building has always maintained its residential function. In the 19th century the upper and ground floors were divided and a separate entrance to the upper dwelling was built at the corner of the front façade.

*Description*

The building has the unusual feature of two adjoining gables in front. Both gables are lightly curved in the 18th century baroque style and have small curls (volumes) at the lower ends. Like the older buildings at Molenplein the rear façades are more simply executed. Quite distinctive are the several pear-shaped embellishments on the various gable tops. The core of the building is enclosed by a gallery at three sides. On the ground floor the front gallery is formed by a partially open series of arches. The first floor gallery was closed by louvred shutters in a later period.



28

#### CONSCIEN TIESTE EG 68

*La Moda de Paris*

##### *History*

Built in the 1890s, it served practically throughout the 20th century as a popular fabric and clothes shop. In the adjacent # 70 building there was a tailor's workshop.

##### *Description*

This rectangular building is built in a simple style, related to the neo-classical architecture in the second half of the 19th century. The monument has an authentic shop façade with wooden windows and doors that were open during business hours. It is the only remaining example hereof in Otrobanda. At all the other shops in the quarter the façades on the ground floor have been changed into glass shop fronts and display windows. The former shop's name 'La Moda de Paris' has been affixed on the façade in relief plaster work.

#### INFO

#### THE ALLEY AREA

In this area one will find a labyrinth of alleys criss-crossing through the neighborhood. A few 18th century houses can be found, but most of the buildings date from the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the area is mostly residential, in former times there were various craftsman-shops.



29

#### VAN DIJKSTEEG / ST MARTINSTEEG

*The Four Alley complex*

##### *History*

Enclosed by four alleys this is a residential block of 5 dwellings. On the premises there used to be one house at the eastern side and servants' quarters and storage rooms at the western side, probably dating back to the middle of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century a small house was added in the middle of the plot. In 1984 the complex was bought by The Curaçao Monuments Foundation and a year later it was restored and re-arranged into 5 contemporary dwellings. With this private initiative a beginning was made with the highly necessary city rejuvenation process in old Willemstad.

##### *Description*

Although the mid 19th century architecture was executed in a fairly simple fashion, this complex has a playful character, which is particularly caused by the different shapes of the roofs and the several chimneys over the former cooking areas ('fogòns').



30

## ST. MARTINSTEEG 1

### *History*

This complex is an example of a 'kura': a residential yard with a mansion in the middle and enclosed by walls and outbuildings. The 'kura' dates back to the 18th century when there was a large dwelling with outbuildings. The gables of the present building, however, are indicative of a 19th century building. The estate was bought in 1986 by the Housing Foundation. Since 1992 a community center has been established here.

### *Description*

The main building has a traditional setup: a core with an attic and a gallery on both the front and the rear of the house. The side walls have a simple gable at the top. These funnel shaped gables were applied during the first half of the 19th century. At the western edge of the plot there is a row of outbuildings, functioning as small labourers' dwellings.



31

## ZAANTJESSTEEG 44

*Kura Sanchi Abou*

### *History*

This complex of buildings pertains to 'Kura Sanchi Abou', formerly situated along the now reclaimed inland water, 'Rifwater', at the southern edge of Otrobanda. A 'kura' is a residential yard with a mansion and enclosed by walls and outbuildings. This 'kura', like the other adjacent 'kuras' along Rifwater, originated as early as the 18th century. The buildings of 'Kura Sanchi Abou', however, date predominantly to the 19th century.

### *Description*

Zaantjessteeg 44 consists of two large storied houses with several outbuildings. The most important eastern building has two gables along the alley. The simple gable tops are typical of the first half of the 19th century. Remarkable are the wooden balconies along the first floor dwellings, which can be reached via massive stone steps, built with yellow Dutch bricks. Along both sides of Zaantjessteeg there are elongated outbuildings with several little labourers' dwellings. At the rear of them there are still some chimneys with 'fogons', the former cooking areas.



32

**BREDE STRAAT 163-165**

*History*

These twin buildings date back to the 18th century and belong to the oldest houses in Otrobanda. Many of the original buildings in this street could be compared with these houses: modest in size and considerably lower than in the older Punda. These little houses at the corner of Carthage Street have probably always been shops.

*Description*

Characteristic of these houses are the identical baroque gables with their curved lines. The original wooden doors that gave access to the shops have disappeared. In the tops of the gables there are wooden shutters, as was customary in the past.



33

**ROODEWEG 42 - 44**

*Casa Blanca*

*History*

Casa Blanca (1858 – 1859) is one of the oldest and largest dwellings in Curaçao, built in the neo-classical architectural style of the latter half of the 19th century. In 1998 the building was purchased by The Curaçao Monuments Foundation, which had it restored. It now houses the Register Office and the Elections Bureau.

*Description*

The building was built in phases. The oldest part is the rectangular, symmetrical building-block in front. Two wings at the rear with a patio in between is an addition. Against the western outer wall a modern staircase and an elevator were also added in contemporary architectural style. A typical element of Casa Blanca is the lavishly decorated cornice at the top of the façades. Also remarkable are the corner stones at the front and the balcony on twin columns. The edges of this balcony are executed in fine woodcarving and the balustrade is an example of 19th century ironwork.



34

**FREDERIKSTRAAT 114-118***Kura di Shon Ki**History*

The 'Kura di Shon Ki' dates back to the 18th century and is one of the largest 'kuras' in Otrobanda. A 'kura' is a residential yard with a mansion in the middle and enclosed by outbuildings and walls. This 'kura' is named after 'shon' (mr) Kikkert, who lived there in the 19th century. He was the son of the first Governor (1816-1819) of Curaçao. The buildings have kept their residential function and have been in the possession of NV Stadsherstel (City Renovation Ltd.) since 1997.

*Description*

The main building, situated somewhat in the back, dates from the 18th century. Its curved gable has all the characteristics of the baroque architectural style. In later periods some annexes were built against the main dwelling. Typical for a 'kura' is the row of simple labourers' dwellings along the street side of the plot. In 1998 these dwellings were enlarged at the back.



35

**FREDERIKSTRAAT 113***Kas di Kanchi**History*

This house dates back to the latter half of the 19th century and displays the characteristics of the neoclassical style of that period, such as the hipped roofs placed one behind the other and the corner stones. The wooden gallery at the front and side façades was added later, probably at the beginning of the 20th century.

*Description*

The carved wooden gallery is quite special. This so-called gingerbread is made up of wooden panels with sawn out figures. It is rarely found in Curaçao, but does exist on several Caribbean islands where there is a building tradition in wood and where this phenomenon is to be found in many variations. Originally Victorian (English), this woodcarving has found its way to the Caribbean via the USA and Canada. The gingerbread is both decorative and functional. It serves as a partitioning, offering more privacy on the porch with optimal ventilation, and it also filters the glaring sunlight.

**INFO****THE 'KURA' AREA AND  
THE HILL OF OTROBANDA**

Several Kuras ('Yards' i.e. residential yards with a mansion in the middle and enclosed by outbuildings and walls) can be found on the first elevated sector, going up from Breedestraat to Frederikstraat. Up Belvédèrestraat the 2nd elevation (or 'hill') of Otrobanda can be reached.

The 'hill' was developed in the second half of the 19th century.



36

**L.B. SMITHPLEIN 3**

*Belvédère*

*History*

The Belvédère mansion was built on the 'Hill of Otrobanda' in 1864-1865. At the time the 'hill' was hardly developed. It was built by His Majesty's Attorney General, Mr. De Rouville. When he became Governor in 1866 he made Belvédère his official residence because of the bad condition of the Governor's Palace in Fort Amsterdam. The building functioned as a dwelling until the 1970s. In 1987 the Curaçao Monuments Foundation bought the by then neglected villa and had it restored.

*Description*

The building is one of the first examples of the neo-classical architectural style in Curaçao of the latter half of the 19th century. Characteristic are the symmetry of the front façade, the wide gutter board, the corner stones, and the balcony on twin columns. Remarkable are the double windows on the ground floor with semi-circular glass tops. These windows are enclosed by a triangular fronton, which seems to be supported by three (flat) little columns.



37

**HOOGSTRAAT 21 - 25**

*Villa Sixta*

*History*

Built in 1874 this mansion was from the beginning divided into an upstairs and a ground floor dwelling. In 1999 it was bought by the Curaçao Monuments Foundation. Abundant rainfall caused the house to partially collapse in 1999. The restoration in 2002-2003 restored 'Villa Sixta' to its old glory.

*Description*

Hoogstraat 21-23 is one of the most conspicuous neo-classicist buildings in Hoogstraat, especially on account of the double curved stairway and balcony in front. Neoclassicist elements are the symmetrical arrangement of the façade, the staggered quoins, the broad molded gutter board, and the Tuscan columns on which the balcony rests. Also the windows with the arched transom are characteristic of the classical architecture during the last quarter of the 19th century. Peculiar is the wooden gallery on the right side of the building with beautiful latticework.



38

## HOOGSTRAAT 11

*Keizershof*

### *History*

Hoogstraat 11 was built in 1877. On the same lot, to the East and South of this main building, there are two other houses, built in the 1920s and '30s. They all form part of what is now called 'Keizershof' (Emperor's Court). The Keizershof proper, however, was located on the adjoining parking lot. Till 1951 there used to be a building here with that name, as in 1865/1866 the expelled Haitian emperor Faustin I stayed here.

### *Description*

The main building – the front façade in particular – is architecturally the most interesting of the three. It clearly shows the characteristics of the neo-classicist architectural style from the latter half of the 19th century, such as the portico on double Tuscan columns with a fronton (triangle) on top, the lavishly decorated gutter board and the corner stones. Especially beautiful are the paired windows with semi-circular transoms and arched mouldings, so-called 'eye-brows'.



39

## DE ROUVILLEWEG 39

### *History*

This mansion, dating from the 18th century, belonged to the owner of the shipyard in front of it along St. Anna Bay. Schooners were built here up till the beginning of the 20th century. Before De Rouvilleweg was laid in the 1940s the main entrance to the building was at the back in Klipstraat. In 1979 the building was bought by the Curaçao Monuments Foundation, which had it restored.

### *Description*

The curved gables show the characteristics of Curacao's 18th century baroque architecture. Also the dormer windows display this style. The later added open gallery with a roof, along the whole width of the front façade, is peculiar. Originally the building probably had sash windows. The louvred shutters date from the 19th century.





40

### DE ROUVILLEWEG 3 - 23

*Kura Agostini*

#### *History*

Kura Agostini, formerly directly located on the bank of St. Anna Bay, and named after a 19th century owner, consists of several buildings. A 'kura' is a lot with a mansion and enclosed by outbuildings and a wall. The oldest house dates from the second quarter of the 18th century. Thereafter the 'kura' was largely built upon. At the beginning of the 19th century there were two two-storied dwellings, two water reservoirs, four warehouses and several smaller buildings.

#### *Description*

The left rearward building was constructed in the 18th century baroque architectural style. The dormer windows display the curved lines and curls typical of the period. The yard in front of this building is still paved with the original coral stone. To the right, along the street, there is an L-shaped building from the 19th century. The gallery on the first floor, formerly closed with windows, now consists of a series of new arches on short '18th century' belly shaped columns.



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*Foto: Kura Hulanda*

### 'KURA HULANDA' AREA

#### *History*

The 'Kura Hulanda' area covers about 8% of historic Otrobanda. A 'kura' is originally a residential area with a mansion in the middle and enclosed by outbuildings and walls. Since the 18th century the quarter developed rather gradually and haphazardly, without any urban planning. After 1875 many open spaces in the several 'kura's' were built on as the area flourished.

The present 'Kura Hulanda' complex is formed by a museum and a hotel with little shops, cafes and restaurants. Part of the museum, mainly focused on the history of slavery and African art and culture, was built in 1998 on the lot where in 1980 the original 'Kura Hulanda' had been demolished. Afterwards the hotel, established in several former dwellings, was realized in the adjoining area and inaugurated in 2002.

#### *Description*

Most of the buildings in the 'Kura Hulanda' area are protected monuments. Built in a time span of almost three centuries, approximately 25 monuments display a wide variety of architectural styles. Besides these historical houses several new buildings have been constructed, all of which forming part of either the museum or the hotel.



## Colophon

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[www.curacao.com](http://www.curacao.com)

[www.curacaomonuments.org](http://www.curacaomonuments.org)

[www.monumentenfonds.org](http://www.monumentenfonds.org)



### Monument Sign

The protected monuments of Curaçao can be recognized by a blue and white shield with the coat of arms of the island in the middle.



### Willemstad, a UNESCO World Heritage City

The old city of Willemstad is made up of four quarters: Punda, Scharloo and Pietermaai at the eastern side and Otrobanda at the western side of St. Anna Bay, the deep water channel that divides Willemstad in two halves. About half of the buildings in historic Willemstad were proclaimed protected monuments in the 1990s by the island government. Approximately 750 monuments in a city structure that have not materially changed in the course of three centuries, originally Dutch but during its development influenced by various other cultures make Willemstad a unique city in the Caribbean. This uniqueness was the main consideration of UNESCO that led to placing 'Historic Willemstad' on the World Heritage List in December 1997.