An interest in old Guyana becomes a hobby

John Sargent, of Yorkshire, England, often shares some of his most valuable postcards and photos of British Guiana, when Georgetown was known as a "Garden City", online.

Sargent's interest in Guyana and collecting old photos of the country were prompted by 19th century British naturalist, Charles Waterton.

"I have no connection with the Waterton family," Sargent told Guyana Times Sunday Magazine. "The village was once the home of Sir Charles Waterton (1782 - 1865) of Walton Hall. Waterton was a pioneering naturalist, and created the world's first nature reserve at his home, Walton Hall in England. He spent some time in Guyana, and I thought that it would be interesting to visit the country itself."

Sargent had visited Guyana once, in 2012, as a tourist. "I stayed in Georgetown and had a very enjoyable time with a number of excursions to places such as Mibisi Creek, Fort Island, the coastal strip across the Demerara, and Kaieteur Falls. A short stay, but very enjoyable," Sargent recalled.

"I was always interested in old houses and anything to do with Guyana. I went to many places and took many photos."

Who was Charles Waterton?

Charles Waterton arrived in Georgetown in 1854 to manage the plantations of his father (Walton Hall) and his uncle, Christopher Waterton (La Jalousie and Fellowship), who had returned to England. One of his uncle's estates, of which the principal crop was coffee, had no less than 500 slaves working on it. The other estates produced sugar and cotton, worked by 300 slaves.

Walton Hall is near The 2nd and Hampton Court, north of Anna Regina on the road to Charity.

In The Argosy, published in 1883, Walton Hall is recorded as being part of Hampton Court, the most northerly plantation in the colony.

"This fine property formerly consisted of four separate sugar estates, viz., Walton Hall, Devonshire Castle, Hampton Court, and Windsor Castle. The three latter were vacuum pan estates in a small way, but from want of labourers to carry on the proper cultivation of the soil, one by one ceased to have an independent existence; and in the course of time the Colonial Company became sole owners of this fine block of land."

Such was the case as he had, Charles spent with his paternal aunt Anne Daly and her husband Michael at their estate, Bellanius. This became his second home. He also met Charles Edmundstone who lived at Mibisi, the friendship endured the rest of his life.

Waterton's family owned plantations at La Jalousie, Walton Hall and Fellowship and he managed them for a while. When he inherited them from his father, he disposed of them.

Later, Waterton wrote his "Wanderings in South America" about his journeys in South America. His wife also had connections with Guyana.

Waterton eventually married Anne Mary, Edmundstone's second daughter. He had attended Anne's christening in 1812, and on his return from his first wandering, 17 years later, this infant became the wife of the square.

Edmundstone had originally been a timber-cutter and merchant, in partnership with William Reid (a fellow Scot). Reid had married an Arawak named Priscilla Miranda, daughter of a chief. Their daughter, Helen, married Edmundstone.

William Reid lived on Kamuni Creek. Charles Edmundstone lived at Warrows Place, Mibisi Creek, a tributary of Demerara River, not far from Santa Minita.

For more information and photos of British Guiana, visit http://overseas.org.