



Fact sheet: Making Homes

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The first home on the Island was the cave where Fernando Lopez and his rooster lived for about 35 years. Spice Trade sailors made temporary homes in tents or simple stone cabins. The first settlers built stone and mud cottages near the Fort in Jamestown Valley or on their plantations.

During the East India Company era (1659-1833), most islanders built simple, single-story homes. These had stone walls, thatch or imported tile roofs and floors of mud or packed earth. Families shared two or three rooms and cooked inside over an open fire or wood stove. Furnishings were sparse, functional and mostly hand-made.

People with more money built two or three storey houses with wooden floors, windows, verandas and many rooms. Grand homes were filled with furniture and luxuries from abroad. Servants and slaves lived in separate quarters or in basements and attics.

Changes in Saints' homes have come slowly. In 1976, more than half had no water piped inside. In 1987, one in five houses had no electricity. 40% of saints still cook using mainly wood fuel.

In the last 50 years the increased use of excavating equipment and imported cement have changed how and where houses are built. Many Saints still build their homes long and low, notched in a hill and facing the sea.