

1,500 people would have been dispossessed had the original plan went ahead: "I think the hon. Member for St. George's Parish, Mr. Toddings, put his finger on the whole thing when he said that this change would benefit St. George's considerably, or the East End of the Islands, and it would at least keep this end of the Island intact."<sup>49</sup> The building of the bases in the East End was therefore seen as a double-victory for Bermuda's white merchants. On the one hand, it ensured that the tourist areas would remain "intact" and on the other it would provide an economic engine for what it considered to be the most backward part of the colony.

### The Tourist Aesthetic and Property Valuation

The U.S. Army base required the expropriation of 118 privately owned properties, home to sixty-five families.<sup>50</sup> Forty of these families, concentrated in the southeastern part of St. David's, had "very modest incomes" according to the district engineer.<sup>51</sup> Black St. David's Islanders had small land-holdings on the eastern half of the island and relied for their livelihoods on the land (gardens, pigs, fruit trees) and waters (fish). White residents, by contrast, had larger land holdings, and were involved in tourist speculation in the West End.<sup>52</sup> A color line thus divided the two ends of the island.

The individual expropriation files compiled in 1940-41 contain detailed descriptions of the lands, buildings, and businesses being taken. We can use these case files to reconstruct the St. David's that existed on the eve of the American occupation. Those residents being displaced were mainly fishers, farmers, and small business owners. In point of fact, St. David's Island was a centre of commercial farming in Bermuda. Its three large lily farms, for example, produced half of the lilies grown in the colony. Howard E.D. Smith's Longfield Farm, one of the finest in the colony, sprawled over nineteen acres. The farmer's reputation was made when he won a gold medal at the Wembley Exhibition for his bulbs. He even seeded his own variety, the "Howardii Lily."<sup>53</sup> For his part, Archibald A. Fox, the largest grower of cassava in Bermuda, had spent twelve years building up stock only to see it lost in 1941.<sup>54</sup>

Despite these cases, St. David's families lived on a combination of small-scale farming, fishing and piloting. In the east, residents either owned small plots or rented them. Grover Lamb supported his wife and three children from selling produce from his fruit trees and from fishing; whereas Marie Borden sold vegetables. Most claimants subsisted on their land. Testifying on Solomon Fox's behalf, his wife indicated that they lived on five orange trees, fifty banana trees, four lime trees, and one grapevine.<sup>55</sup> The minutes of public hearings before the Official Arbitrators reveal more about the soon-to-be-displaced inhabitants of St. David's Island. Because he lived beside Gilbert Lamb's pig farm, the arbitrators playfully suggested that Jeremiah Pitcher should get a 25 percent reduction in his disturbance allowance as he would escape from the vicinity of the pigsties.<sup>56</sup> Lamb had purchased his property at auction in 1938.

There were three discursive lines about property value that surface in these archival records. Not surprisingly, the valuation of property was heavily influenced by the tourist industry. References to views, waterfront, potential building sites, and the suitability for subdivision abounded. The aesthetic value of the property proved to be paramount. The second line of valuation was that of the settlers' trope of "home" and "improvement." In these cases, residents spoke of the duration of their residency, physical improvements, replacement value and disruption to their lives. The third trope, "loss of earnings," was invoked by the island's lily farmers and fishers. As we will see, the Official Arbitrators strongly favored outside speculators and did not consider the replacement value of "negro shacks."

The language of land value in Bermuda was suffused with the tourist aesthetic. A property's potential as a building site was based on its views of the ocean, its water frontage, possible building sites, or its overall potential for subdivision. As St. David's Island had not yet developed into a tourist destination, the aesthetic value of these lands remained purely speculative in 1940-41. Yet many property owners asked to be compensated for the "aesthetic value" of the lost property. W.B. Smith, who owned seventeen acres on Long Bird Island, for example, relied heavily on the tourist potential of his land to support his claim of £25,000. He stated that he had gradually assembled the real estate between 1920 and 1939 as a "real estate development."<sup>57</sup> He noted that his two miles of waterfront was "particularly suited to cottage development, each cottage with its own waterfront. There is ample room for 40 cottages each with at least 200 feet of waterfront."

Virtually every landowner emphasized the fine views that their lands afforded. Sarah Ann Smith's house, located on four acres of property, was thus described as a "beautiful site with a fine view of Castle Harbour."<sup>58</sup> Morris A. Gibbons for his part indicated that his "beautifully situated" property commanded "an excellent view of St. George's Harbour, and vicinity."<sup>59</sup> Race and class exclusivity was openly invoked by some who hoped that the planned whitening of the island would increase their property values. Politician Sir Stanley Spurling, for example, intended to subdivide his waterfront lots (D-41) with "commanding views" of Castle Harbour and Dolly's Bay into a racially exclusive real estate development: "No sale was being made except to persons approved by those who had already previously bought lots."<sup>60</sup>

If speculators relied on the tourist aesthetic to establish property value, the longtime inhabitants of St. David's Island often emphasized their longtime residency at the hearings. St. David's was their home. This separate discursive line was shared by white and nonwhite property owners. When Solomon T.J. Fox rejected the American offer of \$422 for his property, his wife expressed their concern that the visitors were not in a position to "know values as they do not know conditions here." Further, "it does not seem fair to me, as they are putting me out of my home, where I have lived for years and have been satisfied."<sup>61</sup> Noting that her husband was disabled and unable to work, she indicated that it would be impossible to start a new life "under

the conditions offered us by the American Government." The couple therefore hoped that the arbitration board would give their claim fair consideration. "You all realized I am sure," she said, "that in giving up this, we are giving up something that is a part of us."

The third discursive line, albeit connected with the second, related to the value of lost earnings and livelihood. Farmers and fishers who invoked this line of argument spoke in the language of business ("profit" and "new markets") and of independent commodity producers ("loss of use"). The Official Arbitrators also considered claims for lost earnings: Howard Roy Higgs lost his dairy and egg business, whereas George Stanley Pitcher and Herbert Cleve Pitcher lost fishing earnings. The two Pitcher men now fished the North shore of St. David's because the "dredging operations have killed or driven away large stocks of fish from Castle Harbour." They were, the government concluded, the only fishermen who hitherto fished the South shore of St. David's Island.<sup>62</sup> Because no crops could be planted in the area in 1940-41, farmers asked for the full entitlement of 20 percent for lost earnings.<sup>63</sup>

The valuation of property in Bermuda thus differed from that of the United States in several respects. Whereas land values in the United States were determined strictly on the basis of fair market value, land valuation in Bermuda was heavily influenced by the tourist industry. Fishing, farming, and other uses took a back seat in these deliberations. Unlike Newfoundland (see chapter 6), there was no standard valuation for each acre of land in any given classified. The tourism potential of real estate made this difficult. The Bermuda government set the formula for determining land value on the basis of five criteria: basic land value, units of water frontage, land view, arable land, and home site (or improvements).<sup>64</sup>

### Removing St. David's Islanders

A February 1941 dispatch from Neville Butler of the British embassy in Washington to the U.S. State Department outlined the proposed procedure (Newfoundland, we will see later, provided the model).<sup>65</sup> Each colony would furnish the United States with information on seven points: the price which the owner paid for the property, the date of acquisition, the cost of any subsequent improvements, the assessed value of property for taxation purposes, the amount of property tax paid, an indication of local practice of usual local ratio between assessed property and current selling price, and evidence of real estate price. The colonies would be "invited to furnish the United States representatives so far as is possible with information on the seven points." The initial offer would thus be based on the U.S. assessment of fair market value. If agreement could not be reached, the matter would be referred to a tribunal set up by the Colonial government. Should the U.S. government not concur with the arbitrators' findings, the matter would be taken up by Great Britain and the United States.<sup>66</sup> To move things along, the British government agreed to pay the difference between the Bermuda Arbitration award and the American offer.<sup>67</sup>