

Review of Najib Chentouf claim relating to Circumstances surrounding the Loss of Wilson's Island Southampton.

Introduction

This matter relates to a well-known Bermudian Landmark in Southampton Parish Five Star Island formally known as Wilson's Island arising from a submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss by Mr. Najib Chentouf a resident of Morocco in North Africa.

The submission

The submission narrative anecdotal in nature describes Mr. Chentouf's ancestor Joseph Bean-Wilson as the last Wilson owner of Wilson's Island; the circumstances of its ownership and eventual loss having been passed down over time to various of the Wilson family members. One version of the story claiming the island to have been stolen from Joseph Bean-Wilson by the "Forty Thieves" and another alleging that "Uncle Joe" was forced to sell the island for 10 barrels of potatoes.

Aside from this there was little upon which to launch an inquiry into this claim. However, Mr. Chentouf advised that his mother Jeanette Chentouf lived in Bermuda and that she would be able to assist with further information.

Circumstances of the Loss

Mrs. Chentouf confirmed that she was aware of the submission made by her son and provided additional details of the story told by her father, Rudolph W.R. WILSON to the effect that her great uncle, Joseph Bean WILSON, wanted to plant potatoes but did not have funds to purchase potato slips to enable him to commence planting. In order to obtain the slips, he handed over the paperwork (believed to have been deeds) to Wilson's Island to an unknown individual, or individuals, with the understanding that when the crop was harvested, he would repay the debt with 10 barrels of potatoes. The debt having been repaid the paperwork relating to ownership of Wilson Island would be returned to him.

The Potato crop failed believed as a result Potato Blight. Bean Wilson was unable to repay his debt, and paperwork describing his ownership of the Island was not returned to him. Mrs. Chentouf was quick to say that she has never seen any written documentation to confirm this allegation, or if there was any documentation at all as back then, she continued, deals sometimes were made verbally.

Research indicates that Wilson's Island was originally owned by Mr. John and Catherine Wilson during the 17th Century, and in the 19th Century it was purchased by Ms. Jane Helen Melvin Salton, who later married Rear Admiral Sir Charles Thomas Jones in 1817. Efforts to trace the ownership of the Island between the time of Catherine Wilson's ownership in the 17th Century and the acquisition of it in the 19th Century by Ms. Jane Salton were unsuccessful. In addition, there is nearly a one-hundred-year gap between the ownership by Ms. Salton (in the early 1800s) and that of the Cooper Family in 1932 where ownership could not be established.

Chronology of Ownership of Wilsons Island

- John and Catherine Wilson 17th century
- Jane Helen Melville Salton Early 19th Century
- Cooper Family 1932
- Charles Foster Whitter Cooper (Received by Vol Conveyance from parents
- Laura Ann and Alexander Cooper)
- Alfred Valentine Leman Dec 2nd 1938 Acquisition by Alien from Charles FW Cooper
- Morris Alvin Gibbons August 9th 1950 By Conveyance from Alfred W Leman
- Oreste and Alice Stephano (name changed to Five Star Island after cigarettes manufactured by the Stephano family) from Maurice A Gibbons.
- Curt Englehorn, May 28th 1970 (Received by Acquisition from Alice Stephano)

In 2012 Carolin Englehorn a German National applied to Bermuda Immigration for sanction to acquire Five Star Island (2.11 acres) and a strip of land on the waterfront opposite the island (0.00,8) an Acquisition of Land Notice having been published in the Official Gazette. The status of the outcome of the application is unknown at this time.

Whilst exhaustive research has revealed details of acquisition and ownership of Wilson's Island by a number of individuals efforts to identify Joseph Bean-Wilson's ownership of it were unsuccessful. He is believed to have owned property in the vicinity of Five Star island with at least one of his descendants living in the area today.

Mr. Bean-Wilson's name was entered in the Register of Freeholders for Southampton Parish in 1895 indicating that he was a property owner and entitled to vote.

In 1925 he conveyed a number of parcels of land to various of his children via voluntary conveyances further indication that he was a property in Southampton Parish.

Edward Junior Durrant