

Submission
to the
Commission of Inquiry
Land Loss
Submitted by
Joann B. Adams
&
Dwayne Disney Talbot
November 26, 2020



This submission is hereby presented to the Commission of Inquiry, established on 31st October 2019 by the Premier, the Honourable E. David Burt JP MP and directed to inquire into historic losses of citizens' property in Bermuda, in keeping with the mandate of the House of Assembly as expressed in its Resolution of 4th July 2014.

This presentation will give evidence that has been discovered thus far by us, Joann Bernice Adams and Dwayne Disney Talbot in regards to **John Samuel Talbot**. We hereby claim that

- He was NOT adequately compensated
- The whole process of the forced expropriation was unjust.

Who was he? Who was this John Samuel Talbot? He was a husband, a son, a brother, an uncle, a father, a grandfather, a farmer, an upstanding member of the Tucker's Town community who served as a trustee for the school. He was a free black man. He was our great-grandfather.

John Samuel Talbot was born on November 11, 1860 [Exhibit 1] in Tucker's Town, St. George's to James and Joanna Talbot (nee Darrell) [Exhibit 2].ⁱ He had 12 brothers and sisters: Princess, Joseph, James, William, Lydia Ann, Serena, Catherine, Benjamin (B.D.), Julia Anna, Naomi, Harrington, and Lora Anne.

John Samuel Talbot wed Rosabelle Winifred Smith [Exhibit 3], also of Tucker's Town, St. George's on June 14, 1900.ⁱⁱ They had six (6) children, all born in Tucker's Town: Almira, Dorcas, Helen, Aimee (Amy), and two (2) stillbirths.

Let the records show that Dwayne Disney Talbot is the grandson of Helen Talbot by way of his mother Edith Claretta (Talbot) Usher, Helen's daughter [Exhibit 4]; and, Joann Bernice Adams nee Davis is the granddaughter of Amy Bernice (Talbot) Davis by way of her father Eric Melvin Davis, Amy's son [Exhibit 5].

James Talbot, the father of John Samuel Talbot and husband of Joanna Talbot, originally purchased 103 or more acres in 11 lots of property in Tucker's Town in 1862 [Exhibit 6] from the heirs of Benjamin Dickinson Harvey.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our great-grandfather, John Samuel Talbot was willed two (2) lots of land in Tucker's Town. In 1896 he received 7 acres of land from his father, James Talbot [Exhibit 7].^{iv} His mother Joanna Talbot left him 7.5 acres on the waterside, indicated as lot ten (10), coloured brown, in the map that accompanied her will [Exhibit 8].^v John Samuel Talbot therefore acquired a total of 14.5 acres of land in Tucker's Town from his parents.

In 1921, John Samuel Talbot was awarded One Thousand Pounds (£1000.00) for his two (2) pieces of property.^{vi} [Exhibit 9] However, records indicate that instead of receiving compensation for the full 7 acres that his father bequeathed to him, he was only compensated for 5 acres, for which he received £400.00.

As noted in the Royal Gazette [Exhibit 10] of February 24, 1921, John received £600.00 for his 7.5-acre waterside lot.^{vii}

The following evidence will exemplify the inequity, inequality, prejudicial and ad hoc manner in which awards were arbitrarily meted out, and how the Bermuda Development Company systematically removed hundreds of Bermudians from their homes, obliterating their health, welfare and livelihood.

Ad Hoc Manner of making Awards

“Gosling always represented the Company (i.e. Bermuda Development Company).Some-times he offered straight cash, sometimes cash and land and a home elsewhere. The outcomes varied. In some cases, Gosling fattened his offer and an out-of-court settlement was reached. In others, the jury improved the company’s offer.”^{viii} [Exhibit 11]

This supports our theory that there was no rhyme or reason as to how awards were determined and/or issued. It was fully at the discretion of F. Goodwin Gosling when he visited with people. As he also served as witness for Bermuda Development Company, he also had a major impact on swaying the jury because he had all the information on what others had been offered and subsequently what they accepted.

Conflicting views of the Tucker’s Town Community Land

- By 1900, Tucker’s Town was a tightly-knit, isolated community. A few whites remained, but it was fundamentally a black society. There were two churches, a general store, a school, a cricket pitch, a post office and a cemetery on the knoll behind the church. Boats were still being built. Pigs were slaughtered, potatoes graded. Vegetables were dispatched by cart to Hamilton for sale. The rhythms of life were woven through these activities. Children were given the rudiments of education.^{ix}

This is the Tucker’s Town that our great grandfather knew and was a part of. This is where he was born, his parents and their parents before them. This is where he wed Ma Talbot and she birthed his four daughters, of which two were our grandparents.

- “In 1907, when the Hon. F. Goodwin Gosling bought property on “The Point” or “the Main” as it was called in the old day, ...Tucker’s Town was sparsely inhabited, less than a third of the land was arable and had little economic value, sweet potatoes formed the principal crop, and fishing the chief occupation.^x
It appears that while there were decent folk among them in general they were a degenerate lot. The communal life left much to be desired, intermarriage for generations had undermined both health and morals. They were a law amongst themselves and the arm of authority seemed to lack power to control them. B.D. Talbot bought all the property for little more than a song. Talbot grew onions and potatoes and kept a store.”^{xi}

The disrespect and contempt demonstrated by the writer in this discourse is prejudiced and more than likely represents the sentiment of much of the white population at that time towards black population of the day.

- This land which your petitioners desire to acquire has been of little economic value to the Colony and has remained in a backward and undeveloped state for upwards of a century. Less than one-third of it is arable, the remainder being chiefly rocky hills and sand dunes. It is very sparsely populated, there being far fewer inhabitants to the square mile than in any other part of the Colony.^{xii}

The land as described by B.D. Talbot stated in Royal Gazette, February 11, 1921 speaks of its worth in vegetables from his property, which included his banana plantation, summer crops of melons, corn etc. and lemons. He also sold wood and timber and harvested seaweed. Comments attributed to the sale of the land regarding its value and assets were not considered during the purchase of the land. This allowed for the Bermuda Development Company to make lower priced sales.

- “The contours of the property are unsurpassed, delightful valleys winding through coral hills from twenty to seventy-five feet in height, along the line of play; well wooded with cedars, oleanders, bougainvillea and hibiscus, lending the most fascinating color scheme to the whole, The contours are inviting to the golf architect to construct unique and scientific putting greens consistent with the length of hole demanded.”^{xiii}

In contrast to the previous statement, this rendering, made by Charles Blair Macdonald in 1921 about Tucker’s Town is one of awe and beauty.

- Design and construction were not easy, for only in the valleys was the coral rock covered with a six-inch layer of soil. The area had been used for growing onions, potatoes and Easter lilies.^{xiv}
The resilient community of Tucker’s Town utilized the land to grow different crops at different times. This is how they sustained themselves within their community.

- ...Some may like to hear a word of the inhabitants of this sylvan retreat. With one or two exceptions they are all of African descent, and kinder or more hospitable people are not to be found in Bermuda’s fair isles. When I first visited the place some thirty years ago, there were only two or three houses and an old wooden chapel in the valley. Now on the hillsides and in wooded glens are to be seen the cottages of succeeding generation, and a fine stone Methodist Church, and a school house nearly finished only awaiting the assistance of persons kindly disposed to the interest of education, for the people of Tucker’s Town are not unmindful of its benefits... As a rule, the children, like their parents, are social and intelligent, and strangers are kindly welcomed.

To those who may have a shade of doubt or to the visitor from the States, I say let them visit this charming spot... and his genial sons of the soil will guide them safely by and into the numerous caves and hollows of their ancestral domain; or in gig or whale boat sail or row them to the picturesque and historic island encircling Castle Harbour...^{xv}

These same caves mentioned here are discussed in the February 24, 1921 edition of the Royal Gazette in the case of Wor. T. H. H. Outerbridge, M.C.P. who puts the caves forward as an asset. It is refuted by Mr. F. Goodwin Gosling Secretary of the Bermuda Development Co., who stated that they were not safe and not capable for development.^{xvi}

- A century ago, however, a very different community called Tucker's Town home. Along its shores and centered around pockets of rich arable land, black Bermudians farmed, fished and built boats in humble but happy obscurity. Their peace was occasionally interrupted by carriage-loads of tourists on day trips from Hamilton and picnickers from St. David's Island who came to gaze in wonder on those Natural Arches...But, in Tucker's Town between 1920 and 1923, everything changed utterly. A community literally vanished...Almost in the biblical "twinkling of an eye," old Tucker's Town lost everything but its name.^{xvii}
As the saying goes, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and this description certainly illustrates a beautiful and bountiful Tucker's Town, until those horrible days of the expropriation dislodged my ancestors.

Purchase Prices and Comparison to the Purchase of the Property of John Samuel Talbot

- December 9, 1920 [Exhibit 12] Benedict Prieth was offered £2,900.00 for 4 acres and was awarded £4000.00.^{xviii}
Based on this, John Talbot could have been awarded £12, 500 for his properties.
- [Exhibit 13]
- Mr. Stewart McLean of Shippensburg, Pennsylvania was awarded £240.00 for one acre on Harrington Sound.^{xix}
If the same criteria would have been afforded John Talbot, he could have received £3000.00 for his 12.5 acres.
- Mr. Charles Hollis, employed by Bermuda Development Company, was offered a lot measuring 100 x 100 (less than ¼ acre) and situated near Mangrove Lake, which was equivalent to the size of the property he owned. A four room cottage with kitchen and all modern conveniences was to be built for him and in addition, he was to be given £100 in cash, pending his wife's agreement.^{xx}
Based on these calculations, John Talbot could have received £5000.00 and also been compensated with an equivalent property and home.
- Mr. George Smith, owner of seven acres of land with a stone cottage, had agreed to part with his property and to accept in exchange, a piece of land with two cottages in Smith's Parish, plus£400 cash. (Further investigations were pending but the offer stood for when these items were settled).^{xxi}
An equivalent property plus £712.00 could have been awarded to John Talbot.

Comparison of Similar Properties in Today's Market

- Rego Sotheby's International Realty advertises on their website www.rego-sothebyrealty.com, Site 1A Glebe Hill, Hamilton Parish measuring 1.34 acre for BD\$ 2,950,000.00^{xxii} [Exhibit 14]
Based on these calculations, the value of John Talbot's 12.5 acres of land would today be \$27,518,656.70
Based on these calculations, the value of John Talbot's 14.5 acres of land would today be \$31,921,641.80
- KW Bermuda advertises on their website www.kwbermuda.com, Lantana, Ledgelets Drive, Sandys measuring 9.73 acres for BD\$ 16,900,000.00^{xxiii} [Exhibit 15]
Based on these calculations, the value of John Talbot's 12.5 acres of land would today be \$21,711,202.50
Based on these calculations, the value of John Talbot's 14.5 acres of land would today be \$25,184,994.86

Comments from the History of Mid Ocean Club

- Macdonald and Wetmore scoured the Island and identified 500 acres at Tucker's Town as being ideal for the project. It was estimated that the land could be purchased for between \$150,000 and \$200,000.
- However, it proved to be far from a simple process. As Macdonald wrote later: "Practically every one of the owners who had given an option on his property went back on his contract, but finally it resulted in securing about 600 acres at a cost of about \$600,000."^{xxiv}
- *These two entries demonstrate that money was a driver for the development of Tucker's Town. Their concern was about developing a playground for the rich and famous and not about the welfare and livelihood of the land owners, once again highlighting lack of humanitarianism.*
- In 1951, following a decline in tourism as a direct result of the downturn in the economy because of World War 2, Furnace Withy were looking to sell off the property. It was eventually brought by a group of local bankers, business man and others invested in the property and transitioned it from a commercially owned tourist attraction to a select and discreet member's club was achieved with telling and lasting results.^{xxv}
Some of the individuals involved in this were also instrumental in the Tucker's Town expropriation of land. It could be said that they saw a business opportunity and took advantage of it. With their finances they were in a good position. If their intent was honourable, they would have developed a club that would have been inclusive not exclusive or "discreet" as they stated on the Mid Ocean Club website. They would have ensured that the families of the community that were displaced and disenfranchised could have the opportunity enjoy the amenities of the property too. This was not to be because racism reared its ugly head yet again in a still very divided island. The first black person to play at Mid Ocean Club did so in the late 1960's while the first black member was accepted in 1973.

Financial Implications for Purchase of Tucker's Town

- For all its progress, Furness-Withy was pushing the limits of Bermudian sensibility. Locals regarded foreign enterprise as a Trojan horse of monopoly. So far the saving grace had been that the colony's commercial elite equated the project with its own economic agenda.^{xxvi}
The indication of financial gains to be made by the Bermudian businessmen on the takeover at Tucker's Town is mentioned here, by their partners at Furness-Withy.
- "Royal Gazette editor Arthur Purcell, under the pen name "Samuel Pepys Teucer", portrayed the development company's new secretary, Goodwin Gosling, as "the hot air behind the dollar...running about at the beck and call of a soulless corporation."^{xxvii}
Once again, we see the signs of the financial implications of the Tucker's Town expropriation.
- Lewis found a more active partner in F. Goodwin Gosling. Scion of the prominent liquor-trading family. Gosling was another tourism booster who, in 1920, held the influential position of assistant colonial secretary. He also owned land in Tucker's Town, 100 acres of it. In 1907, he had purchased a small house – "The Clearing" – on the edge of Tucker's Town Bay...Lewis thus found in Gosling both a Bermuda Lieutenant and a location for his golf course. Within a year, Gosling resigned his colonial post and went into the company's employ.^{xxviii}
Gosling obviously saw the financial implications for himself. To move from the prestigious and paid position of colonial secretary of the house and work for the American group most likely would be more financially lucrative. Also his family's company would benefit from the liquor sales to the new hotel, because of his affiliation with and impact on the Furnace Withy team. Further, his property would gain value in that location.
- Your petitioners have already expended a very large sum to purchase steamers for the New York – Bermuda service and contemplate increasing their fleet in the near future, and feel strongly that the apathetic or unreasonable attitude of a few small land holders should not be permitted to block an enterprise of such great importance to the full development of the Colony as a tourist resort, and thus to prevent the Company from to prevent the Company from reaping a reasonable financial benefit from their investment.^{xxix}
This statement yet again demonstrates the fact that the expropriation was about certain persons and companies reaping financial benefits.

Impact of the Bermuda Development Company expropriation on Families in Tucker's Town

- According to Duncan McDowall, "About ¾ of residents had already agreed to sell, but a minority was holding out despite a "liberal" offer of cash or a replacement home elsewhere. The holdouts were motivated by "indifference and "a failure to grasp the great advantages which will accrue to themselves and their neighbours" from the English company's beneficence. Furness Withy therefore requested not just an act of incorporation but also "a limited measure of compulsion" by which the hold-outs could be dealt with in a just and reasonable" manner.^{xxx}

- *Most of the individuals who stood their ground were penalized. Our great grandfather, John Samuel Talbot declined to settle for an offer. He stood up for himself, his family, his home, on a matter of principle. He did so with pride and fortitude. For this, he paid. What the purchaser called "indifference" was the commitment to family and community, the tie to the land through at least 3 generations, and the place my grandfather knew as home. What he grasped was the need to observe Maslow's Law of Hierarchy of Needs for physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization for his family.*
- The Bermuda Development Company made a point during some of the hearings of stating that properties measured a certain acreage or thereabouts. This demonstrates the company's disregard and contempt toward the land owners by not thoroughly reviewing deeds, wills etc. for preciseness. This occurred despite the fact that they went to inspect the land prior to each case.^{xxxii}
John Talbot was cut short of payment of 2 acres of his land. Whether deliberate or a mistake, this is incomprehensible. His land had been clearly delineated in the wills of both his parents.
- The final paragraph of the Bermuda Development Act No. 2 states that there "was some protest by a few residents in the neighbourhood against the compulsory acquisition of land by the Company, but there is no doubt that the Acts as they stand represent the wishes of the great majority of the inhabitants of the Colony."^{xxxiii}
The Bermuda Development Property Act was enacted in Parliament, by Parliamentarians who were part of the "family and friends club" who individually and as families stood to profit from the proposed development of the area. The Company only makes reference to those residents who signed the petition, totally omitting individuals like John Samuel Talbot who forced their hand in court. Those individuals would certainly swell the numbers. Further, as black people were not allowed to vote at that time, despite being a majority. So, who, or what majority were the BDC representing as the supposedly "free" black Bermudian population were not considered their constituents. This is with the exception of Dr. T. H. Outerbridge, MCP for St. George's, who stood by the sentiments of his constituents and presented the Petition to the house on behalf of the 24 freeholders (22 black and 2 white). He voted against the Bermuda Development Company Act.
- The Bill further indicated that acquisition of the lands by the company could be made without consent of the owners if they were adverse to partnering with them.^{xxxiii}
A strong, viable, self-sufficient, self-sustaining community in Tucker's Town, who lived off the land and sea, was uprooted, displaced and disenfranchised. Until today, that land is still off limits to majority of Bermuda's black population, unless, as in most cases, they work there. However, in stark comparison, the families of some of those individuals who either served in the Parliament of the day, on the Bermuda Development Company, the jury, the appeals tribunal or were in any other way directly involved in the debacle, reside in Tucker's Town and/or get to utilize the amenities there...NOT the family of my great grandfather. Our legacy was ripped away from us.

- “Tucker’s Town was curtailed off from the rest of the colony along lines of wealth and race. In a psychological sense, it almost ceased to be part of Bermuda.”^{xxxiv}
***Here we are on the brink of entering 2021 and today, this is still the case. [Exhibit 16]
Tucker’s Town is still curtailed off. It is my hope that through the findings of this Commission, this curtain will rise and begin a new era in Bermuda where it opens new roads into Tucker’s Town for the disenfranchised descendants of those unfairly expropriated from their homes.***

[Exhibit 17] - Tucker’s Town House on the Bay

This is the submission of Joann B. Adams and Dwayne Disney Talbot to the Land Loss Commission explaining and demonstrating why we claim that our great grandfather was NOT adequately compensated and that the whole process of the forced expropriation was unjust.

References

- ⁱ 19th Century Church Registers of Bermuda. Second Edition. Index by A.C. Hollis Hallett
Methodist Registers - Methodist Baptisms – 1810 to Dec. 1913 Indexed by Mother’s Surname pg. 1274
- ⁱⁱ 19th Century Church Registers of Bermuda Second Edition Index by A.C. Hollis Hallett
Methodist Registers – Hamilton Parish Marriages– 1826 to Dec. 1913 Indexed by Groom’s Surname pg. 253
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bermuda’s Architectural Heritage Series - St. George’s, pg 150.
- ^{iv} Book of Wills, Vol. 27 page 269 (Microfilm Reel # 718
Transcribed by LeYoni Junos, 3 April 2014 at the Bermuda Archives
- ^vLast Will (which includes the map or plan of Joanna Talbot of Tucker’s Town admitted to probate in the Supreme Court of Bermuda on the nineteenth day of December 1910. Exhibit “A”
- ^{vi} Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily Feb. 24, 1921; Vol 1 – No. 36 page 6
- ^{vii} Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily Feb. 24, 1921; Vol 1 – No. 46, page 1; Last paragraph of (Jury gives £4,750 to Mr. Outerbridge) refer to John Talbot
- ^{viii} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 27
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.
- ^{ix} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 22
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.
- ^x The Bermudian Magazine – September 1938 – Tales of Old Tucker’s Town – Louisa Hutchington Smith
Page 11
- ^{xi} The Bermudian Magazine – September 1938 – Tales of Old Tucker’s Town – Louisa Hutchington Smith
Pages 20 & 21
- ^{xii} Petition # 71 Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company Limited; Item # 8 – page 188
- ^{xiii} Mid Ocean Club History and Newsletter
- ^{xiv}<https://themidoceanclub.com/web/pages/history> Nov. 2020
- ^{xv} Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily December 24, 1889 - Letter from A.O.
- ^{xvi} Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily February 24, 1921
Mentioned by the Wor. T. H. H. Outerbridge M. C. P.
- ^{xvii}Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 20
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

^{xviii} Bermuda National Library Digital Collection Royal Gazette - "Tucker's Town Jury Gives Mr. Prieth 4000 pounds". December 9, 1920.

^{xix} Bermuda National Library Digital Collection Royal Gazette - "Tucker's Town Land Cases are Heard." January 28, 1921

^{xx} Bermuda National Library Digital Collection Royal Gazette - "Tucker's Town Land Cases are Heard." January 28, 1921

^{xxi} Bermuda National Library Digital Collection Royal Gazette - "Tucker's Town Land Cases are Heard." January 28, 1921

^{xxii} Rego Sotheby International Realty <https://www.regosothebysrealty.com/enb/sales/detail/471-l-4368-hm816/site-1a-glebe-hill-hamilton-parish-bm-hs02>

^{xxiii} KW Bermuda <http://www.kwbermuda.com/Commercial-Retail-For-Sale-Bermuda-1088-650>

^{xxiv} History of Mid Ocean <https://themidoceanclub.com/web/pages/history>

^{xxv} The Heritage Mid Ocean Club Newsletter

^{xxvi} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 25
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

^{xxvii} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 26
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

^{xxviii} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 24
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

^{xxix} Petition # 71 Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company Limited
Item # 8 – page 187

^{xxx} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 27
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

^{xxxi} Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily Feb. 21, 1921
page 1 & page 6 Last paragraph of (Jury gives £8,200 to B. D. Talbot) refer to John Talbot

^{xxxii} The Bermuda Development Company Limited Act 2 (Last Paragraph)

^{xxxiii} Petition # 71 Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company Limited
Item # 8 – page 189 paragraph 12

^{xxxiv} Bermuda Magazine Summer 1996 (Trading Places Article) page 28
Duncan McDowall – History Professor – Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada and writer of Bermuda tourism.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

A Grave Error: January 2004 - Office of the Ombudsman

Bermuda's Architectural Heritage Series - St. George's, pgs 1-15, 50-53, 148-153.