

### St. David's Island

St. David's is situated between Bermuda's two early harbors: St. George's, located just to the east, and Hamilton, far to the west. The Eastern half of St. David's Island was originally set aside as public land, mostly for use of commanders in nearby forts.<sup>33</sup> The Western end of the island, by contrast, was divided into forty lots of five acres each. These lands were awarded to the original shareholders of Hamilton Parish in 1619 to compensate them for the poor quality of their own land. These lots were subsequently leased or sold to St. David's Islanders. The island was a hive of activity during the seventeenth century, with slave produced tobacco and livestock, and later, shipbuilding, fishing and whaling. Still, the island's planters suffered economically when the political and economic center of the colony shifted from the town of St. George's to Hamilton. In due course, St. David's became more isolated and insular.

In 1758, the public lands in the eastern half of St. David's were auctioned off to the highest bidder. As only two of the twelve shares were purchased by existing lease holders, many people were turned off the lands or became tenants. Some of the new owners built substantial homes, whereas others purchased the land for its valuable cedar for shipbuilding. Many inhabitants returned to farming arrowroot, onions, and potatoes in the early nineteenth

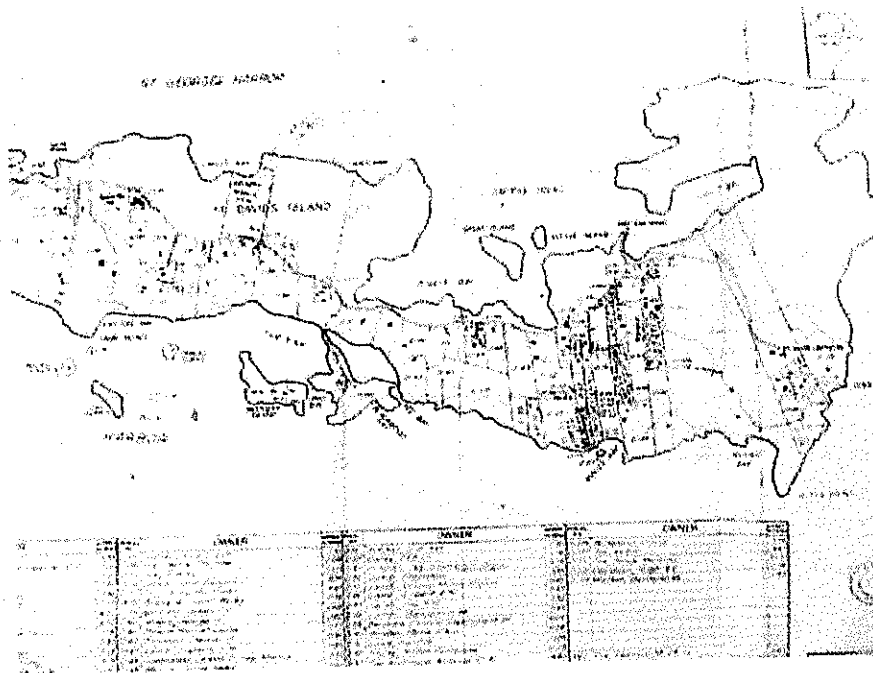


Figure 2.2 Map. U.S. Corps of Engineers, Bermuda Air Base, Bermuda Islands. Parcel Index Map. Leased Area—St. David's Island, March 15, 1941.

Source: PA 91. Bermuda Archives.

century. Lilies emerged as a major export crop in the early twentieth century. With the completion of the Severn Bridge in 1934, St. David's Island became the last of the major islands to be connected to the rest of the colony.

We might ask ourselves what made this island and its inhabitants expendable in 1940? The short answer to this question is economics and race. Because St. David's Island had yet to be integrated into Bermuda's tourist economy, the colony's elite cast it as an undeveloped rural "backwater."

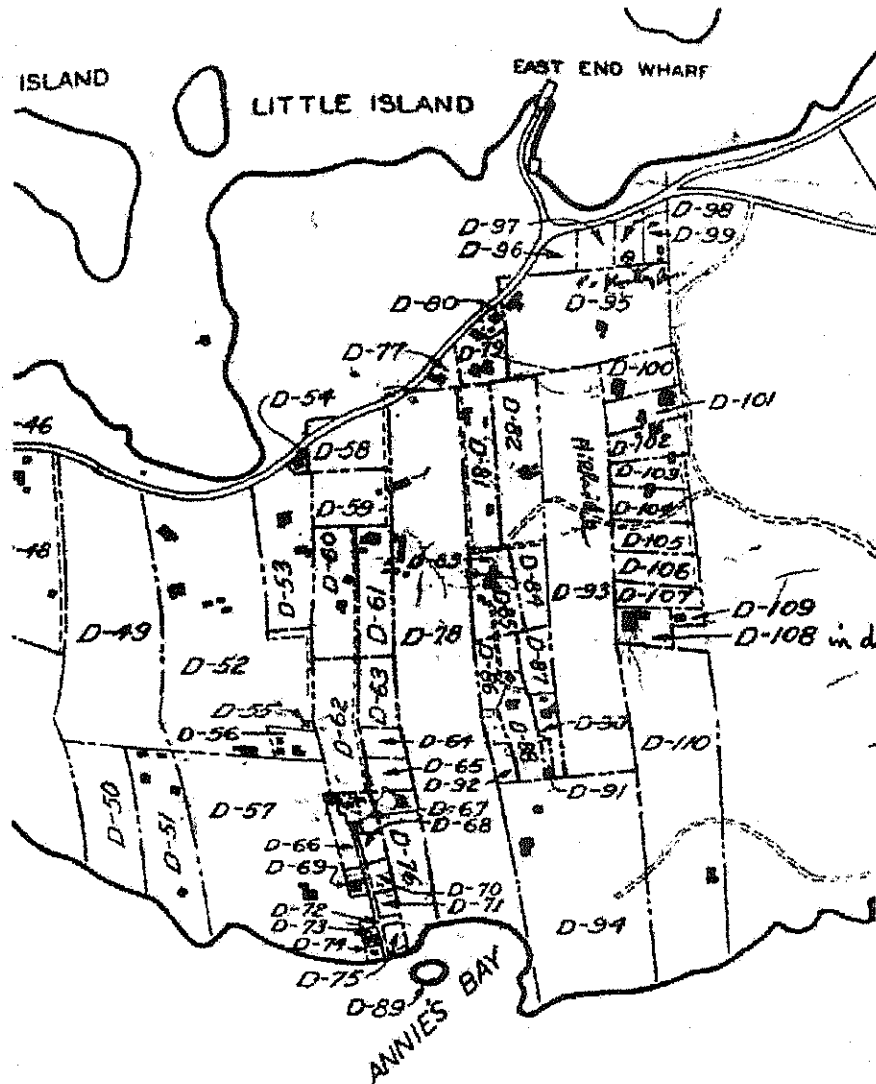


Figure 2.3 Detail in U.S. Corps of Engineers. Bermuda Air Base, Bermuda Islands. Parcel Index Map. Leased Area—St. David's Island. March 15, 1941.

Source: PA 91. Bermuda Archives.