

Historic Land Grabs in Bermuda
Bermuda Government Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses
Theodore Francis, Ph.d. and Quito Swan Ph.d.

On October 31, 2019, Premier of Bermuda, the Honorable E. David G. Burt, JP, MP appointed a Commission to inquire into historic losses of land in Bermuda. Under the direction of the Honorable Justice Norma Wade-Miller, OBE, JP, the Commission was given the charge to: “inquire into historic losses of citizens’ property in Bermuda through theft of property, dispossession of property, adverse possession claims, and/or such other unlawful or irregular means by which land was lost in Bermuda;” “collect and collate any and all evidence and information available relating to the nature and extent of such historic losses of citizens’ property;” “prepare a list of all land to which such historic losses relate;” and to “identify any persons, whether individuals or bodies corporate, responsible for such historic losses of citizens’ property.”

The Commission contracted professional historians Theodore Francis and Quito Swan to conduct research and present evidence about this most critical economic, social, and historical issue. Specifically, the Commission had found that “allegations had been made that significant numbers of Bermudan citizens were either deprived of their land or were under compensated.” The period under question was “the twentieth Century, and in particular events around Tuckers Town and during WWII for military purposes.” What follows is a final report of their findings.

Tucker's Town, Tourism and Captured Lands – Theodore Francis Ph.d.

The purpose of this portion of the report was to investigate the historical land grabs in Tucker's Town after World War One. It is based on extensive archival and primary-source research into allegations surrounding the historical land grabs in Tucker's Town, and addresses the following queries:

- a) What was the nature of communities before the alleged land grab?
- b) When did the alleged land grab occur?
- c) Who benefited from the land grabs?
- d) What was the possible social, economic and political rationale and impacts of the alleged land grabs?
- e) How did the communities of residences of the land grab respond?
- f) What is the relationship with these historic land seizures and systems of colonialism, racism, segregation, and political power?

It will show evidence that members of Bermuda's government and business communities networked with British and American corporate actors in what can be described as an international matrix of white power to carry out the compulsory seizure of land from Bermudians. Issues of racial, gender, and socioeconomic class discrimination were evident in the targeting and/or treatment of this community its culture and members.

I. What was the nature of communities before the alleged land grab?

To better appreciate the query regarding the nature of Tucker's Town before the alleged land grabs, one must consider the nature of Bermuda at this historical moment. The following historical sketch contextualizes the region of Tuckers Town and the findings of this report. Bermuda first entered the European purview in 1505 when the Spanish slave trader Juan de Bermudez, stopped at the island on his way back to Spain after delivering a cargo of Africans to Hispaniola.¹ Bermudez found no indigenous inhabitants and deposited hogs on the island as a food source for subsequent Spanish voyages. The islands were later mapped and named in honor of Bermudez, appearing in the New World histories of sixteenth century writers such as, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo. Given that Bermudez was a former shipmate of Christopher Columbus, his 'discovery' of the island intertwined its history with the 'Era of Columbus' and the related Spanish colonization of the West Indies occurring during the same time period. Many years later, a Spanish ship captained by Diego Ramirez, brought the island's first known visitor of color – a ladino crewman named Venturilla –

¹ J.H. Lefroy, *Memorials of the discovery and early settlement of the Bermudas or Somers Islands, 1515-1685. Compiled from the colonial records and other original sources – Volume II* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1879), 550-572; J. Maxwell Greene, "Bermuda (alias Somers Isles) Historical Sketch" *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1901), 220-242; R. Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries* (Bermuda: Panatel VDS Ltd., 2004), 10-29.

who came ashore with a landing party when their ship was stranded on the reefs for several days in 1603.²

Bermuda remained a Spanish outpost without any permanent settlement until July 1609, when a group of one hundred and fifty English colonists were shipwrecked on their way to Jamestown Virginia. Their vessel, the *Sea Venture*, also contained two Powhatan Native Americans who were being returned to Virginia after being 'on display' in England for several months by members of the Royal Virginia Company. The colonists constructed two smaller vessels, using the island's cedar wood and materials salvaged from the wreckage of their old ship, and continued to Jamestown in May 1610. However, a few men remained on the island when the colonists departed for Virginia, thus beginning English settlement. Colonization began officially in 1612 when the Virginia Company extended its charter to include Bermuda and sent a party to inhabit the island. The English continued to use the name Bermuda but also named the islands The Somers Isles, in recognition of Sir George Somers, admiral of the *Sea Venture*.

² C.O. Packwood, *Chained on the Rock: Slavery in Bermuda* (Hamilton: Island Press Limited, 1975), 1-3; Q. Swan, "Smoldering Memories and Burning Questions: The Politics of Remembering Sally Bassett and Slavery in Bermuda" in A.L. Araujo, Editor, *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 74.

Colonists introduced African slave labor in 1616 when an English ship *The Edwin* (under the orders of Governor Daniel Tucker) brought enslaved Africans and indigenous Indians to dive for pearls and cultivate tobacco. By the closing decades of the seventeenth century, pearl diving and tobacco had given way to maritime trades such as, shipbuilding, privateering, piracy, smuggling, slave-trading, wrecking, and the inter-colonial carrying trade. Enslaved African labor powered all of these enterprises and colonists even used enslaved Native Americans such as, Pequots who were sent to the island after King Philip's War in the 1670s.³ Yet the system that developed in Bermuda exceeded mere captivity for labor, rather it was racial slavery – a sociopolitical structure linking hierarchical categories of human value (i.e. race) with perpetual servitude and mistreatment.

As early as 1623 the colony's assembly began marking racial categories and punishing blacks more harshly than whites. Colonists instituted a law prohibiting "insolence" from Negro slaves and indentured servants.⁴ In 1656 enslaved blacks conspired to overthrow white colonists with the aid of a free black named William Force. The plot was discovered and many of the conspirators were executed, while Force was enslaved and transported to The Bahamas. Still, this did not dissuade

³ C.V. Maxwell, "Race and Servitude: The Birth of a Social and Political Order in Bermuda 1619-1669" *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* (Volume 11, 1999), 39-65; R. Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries* (Bermuda: Panatel VDS Ltd., 2004).

⁴ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, 117-119; Maxwell, "Race and Servitude", 39-42.

subsequent groups of enslaved Africans from resisting their captivity, with more attempts to overthrow the colony's slaveholding regime occurring in 1661, 1673, 1682, 1718 and 1761. Thwarted uprisings as these do not take into account the island's many runaways, who absconded aboard outgoing vessels or while in foreign ports, neither 'maritime maroons' who hid on uninhabited islands and in seaside caves until they could make their escape as crew or stowaways on ships leaving the island. There were also direct attacks on slaveholders such as poisoning plots occurring in the 18th century. The most famous of these was carried out by an elderly mulatto woman named Sarah Bassett, who was found guilty of poisoning Thomas and Sarah Foster the masters of her granddaughter Beck, as well as an enslaved servant girl in the same household. White colonists exacted a brutal punishment on Bassett for her alleged crime by burning her at the stake in July 1730.⁵

These episodes of conflict and resistance by enslaved Africans informed white fear and hostility towards free blacks. Until emancipation white islanders demonstrated these anxieties by periodic attempts to evict free blacks, constrain their liberties, and restrict free black immigration. At the beginning of the 19th century the community of

⁵ C.V. Maxwell, "The Horrid Villainy: Sarah Bassett and the poisoning conspiracies in Bermuda 1727-1730" *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post Slave Studies* (Volume 21, Issue 3, 2000), 48-74; Q. Swan, "Smoldering Memories and Burning Questions: The Politics of Remembering Sally Bassett and Slavery in Bermuda" in A.L. Araujo, Editor, *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 67-76;

Tucker's Town played a vital role in these processes as the site of free black communities. More than just a settlement for free blacks, Tuckers Town was a refuge for runaways, with enslaved Africans reportedly hiding out in the region up till the eve of emancipation.⁶

Named after Daniel Tucker, the colony's second governor, "Tucker's Town" was a rural community in the east-southeasterly corner of the island in the parish St. George's. It included the narrow spit of land known as Castle Point bordered by the waters of south shore and castle harbor, the bays facing St. David's islands and the land surrounding Tucker's Town Bay. White colonists settled in Tucker's Town during the seventeenth century, using enslaved Africans to raise subsistence crops and launch whaling, fishing and pearl diving voyages from its sheltered coves. Whites were the majority population in the region until the late eighteenth century, when the growing commercial vibrancy of the town of St. George's and the new capital city of Hamilton, prompted many to relocate in search of better fortunes. In their wake, a small free black community took root during and after the American Revolution. The decision to move to this more remote corner of the island was motivated in part by the legal proscriptions the colonial assembly had placed on free blacks, such as the 1730 "act for extirpating all free negroes." In 1785, the assembly passed a law stipulating that all

⁶ Royal Gazette March 24 1829.

free blacks had to pay a tax of one shilling and four pence each, or be sold into slavery at public auction.⁷ The law was renewed in 1797 with the tax on free blacks increasing to five shillings, while the penalty of enslavement remained unchanged.⁸

These taxes were a mitigated form of policies designed to rid the colony of all free blacks following a series of poisoning plots and failed conspiracies in the 1730s and 1760s. Slaveholders believed that free blacks were instigating rebellion among the slaves, so they enlisted their legislative powers to extirpate the alleged threat of free blacks from the colony. It is unclear whether or not whites thought free blacks were dangerous because of their actual assistance to slave uprisings, or because their mere presence offered symbolic inspiration to the enslaved? Black liberty within a slave society silently articulated that white domination was escapable and black freedom was an obtainable possibility. And though the answer to this question might stimulate extensive historical debate, white islanders had no time for such queries, instead, they demonstrated their commitment to curtailing black freedom by passing laws to restrict slave manumission, as well as ban, evict and tax free blacks. Indeed, since Tucker's Town lay outside of the normal orbit of white elites, it ensured that enforcement of these laws by the constables would have been infrequent at best. Consequently,

⁷ C.O. Packwood, *Chained on the Rock: Slavery in Bermuda* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Island Press Limited, 1975), 79. The act went into effect on May 28th 1785 and levied a tax on slaves and free mulattoes and mustees.

⁸ C.O. Packwood, *Chained on the Rock: Slavery in Bermuda* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Island Press Limited, 1975), 79.

Tucker's Town functioned as a type of 'maroon community' for free blacks, for a few decades before emancipation in 1834, supplying a refuge from state-sponsored re-enslavement efforts.

The challenges to the liberties of both free blacks and runaway slaves emanated from the colony's political system. Formal systems of colonial governance were established by 1620 when the governor organized an assembly of burgesses (two representatives from each parish) to oversee local affairs and this assembly was invested with the official status of a colonial parliament, or House of Assembly, after the Crown assumed control. Bermuda would retain its colonial parliament even after many British Caribbean colonies relinquished, (or were stripped of), their representative assemblies in the wake of Jamaica's Morant Bay uprisings in 1865. The retention of its local assembly after the widespread transition to Crown Colony governance in the late nineteenth century, made Bermuda unique among British Caribbean colonies, with only Barbados and The Bahamas holding on to their colonial parliaments.

Crown Colony governance meant that final authority rested in the hands of governors appointed by the Colonial Office, who in turn established small councils to execute the political, economic and social agendas established by the Colonial Office

and/or Parliament.⁹ Also, this meant that the cliques of wealthy white slaveholders and merchants, that once dominated British colonial assemblies during slavery, forfeited their positions of political power in favor of direct authoritarian rule from British-appointed officials during the decades after slavery. These groups of whites were often minority populations within their respective colonies and accepted Crown Colony status rather than sharing power with, (or completely losing power to), the emancipated black majority which would eventually achieve the capacity to vote and stand for political office under the colonial assembly system that preceded Crown Colony rule. And even though most governors administered their respective colonies in ways that were favorable to the white minority, progressive governors were able to restrain the more obtuse racist proclivities of white elites in order to establish class-conscious societies where at least black professionals might be permitted to ascend into positions of political authority and prominence within the commercial sphere and colonial government or public life.¹⁰

Since Bermuda retained its colonial assembly, its governance differed from many of its sister territories in the British Caribbean. Like other colonies during slavery,

⁹ O.N. Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 1-15; F.W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 282-285.

¹⁰ T. Martin, *Caribbean History: From Pre-colonial Origins to the Present* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc., 2012), 195-205; G.K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (New York: Ian Randle, 2004), 1-20; Knight, *The Caribbean*, 275-306.

Bermuda's House of Assembly consisted of white slaveholders and merchants, however because the island did not lose its colonial assembly during the decades after slavery, the descendants of these men remained in power. Thus British colonialism in Bermuda is distinguished by political continuity because the basic system of local governance established during the seventeenth century remained intact throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, many of the same families which dominated the House of Assembly in the seventeenth century managed to retain power into the latter half of the twentieth century. This was so prevalent that it was common for fathers who held seats in the assembly to bequeath their office to their sons, albeit unofficially, treating elections as mere formalities.¹¹

The white families which had several generations in the colonial assembly included the following surnames: Astwood, Butterfield, Cooper, Cox, Frith, Outerbridge, Gosling, Hinson, Outerbridge, Jennings, Tucker, and Trimmingham. Having amassed sizeable estates and wealth from slave trading, privateering, piracy, shipbuilding, smuggling, the carrying trade, wrecking, salt-raking, and an assortment of commercial ventures in North America and the Caribbean, these elites and their descendants dominated Bermuda's political landscape for more than a century after

¹¹ F. E. Manning, *Bermudian Politics in Transition: Race, Voting and Public Opinion* (Hamilton Bermuda: Island Press, 1978), 98-107.

the end of slavery. Consequently, they were known by a number of monikers such as, the 'first families', the forty thieves', the 'vested interests' and perhaps most famously 'the oligarchy.' The political power of this small segment of the white population was enabled by the colony's franchise system that granted the right to vote and stand for office, only to landowners. Indeed, not just all landowners but those whose property had been valued by parish assessors at forty pounds sterling, although this required value fluctuated over the decades.

At emancipation in 1834 white legislators more than doubled the property qualification required to vote and hold office, a move calculated to bar the majority of emancipated blacks, as well as poor and working class whites, from political participation and this law remained in effect until 1968. The land-based franchise law was exacerbated by the practice of white assessors undervaluing real estate owned by blacks, while overvaluing land owned by whites to further skew the number of eligible voters and/or office holders.¹² For example, in the 1897 general election, only 1,123 people were eligible to vote of which 732 were white and 391 black. The colony's resident civilian population at the time of the election was 16,098 of whom approximately 6,100 were white and 9,900 were black. Therefore, whites controlled

¹² T.M. Dill, "Bermuda Laws and Franchise" *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1932), 216-221; F. E. Manning, *Bermudian Politics in Transition: Race, Voting and Public Opinion* (Hamilton Bermuda: Island Press, 1978), 98-107.

65% of the vote even though they only made up about 38% of the population. In the light of these facts, the colony's landed-franchise policy was anything but 'equal' in that the system excluded more than 90% of the colony's residents (regardless of race), however this was targeted disfranchisement, one that bent political power firmly into the hands of a white landowning minority.¹³

The island's overarching political conditions gave a deeper meaning to the black landownership and self-sufficiency that prevailed in the area. Living in a colony controlled by a white oligarchy with a historical record of resistance, and/ or openly hostility, to the liberties, progress, and ascendancy of black islanders caused many blacks to develop strategies of self-help and mutual aid. Indeed, since the colonial structures that were ostensibly designed to assist all Bermudians were deployed with segregationist biases, things like landownership, agricultural production, fishing, maritime trades, kinship groups and neighborhood networks of kinship and neighborhood were important means of protection and development for black Bermudians.

In the face of these postemancipation conditions the community of Tucker's Town continued as a black refuge, with an 1889 visitor describing its population as

¹³ T.M. Dill, "Bermuda Laws and Franchise" *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1932), 216-221; House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Colonial Report Annual No. 228 Bermuda Annual Report for 1897* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1898)..

*"with one or two exceptions they are all of African descent."*¹⁴ The population of St. Georges in 1834 was 1,324 consisting of 725 blacks and 569 whites.¹⁵ The aforementioned visitor claimed that when he visited Tucker's Town *"thirty years ago"* (i.e. 1850s) that *"there were only two or three houses and an old wooden chapel."*¹⁶ Indeed, Tucker's Town would grow into a larger community during the early decades of the postemancipation century. The observer went on to note that the community of white cottages nestled in between cedar forests and orange groves had a *"fine stone Methodist Church and school house..."*

During the post-slavery period, social institutions played a vital role in the growth of Tucker's Town and their development served as a marker of the community's growth. The Wesleyan Methodist Church, for example, was established in Bermuda during the 1800s by Reverend John Stephenson and later Rev. Joshua Marsden, these two missionaries preached to enslaved and free blacks, as well as white colonists. In 1835 Reverend Marsden's black converts formed an assembly in Tucker's Town and after the missionary departed they secured land to build a church and school in 1861. In similar fashion, the British Methodist Episcopal Church (B.M.E.) established a congregation in the area in the early 1870s and constructed a chapel and graveyard in

¹⁴ Royal Gazette December 24, 1889.

¹⁵ "Return of the Population" Blue Book 1834 – Bermuda Archive.

¹⁶ Royal Gazette December 24, 1889.

1877 after a member named Mr. C.N. Gibbons, donated a plot of land. In August 1882 land was put in trust for the building of a school – most likely the one that the observer reported – and operated until the 1920s when the community was removed.¹⁷ In 1885 the B.M.E. church amalgamated with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and in 1897 church trustees, Mr. and Mrs. B.D. Talbot donated land to build a new chapel.¹⁸

The BME church flourished and later amalgamated with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1885. In 1897 the AME church relocated to a new chapel after one of the trustees, B.D. Talbot and his wife, had donated land for the building of a new chapel. The social calendar of many Tuckers Town residents revolved around the Methodist and AME churches, which hosted events such as, choral singing, school programs, bazaars, baptisms, as well as regular Sunday services, and periodic weddings and funerals. Given the close proximity of these churches and the doctrinal similarities some members of the AME church sent their children to the schools and programs of the Methodist church and vice versa.¹⁹ By the opening of the twentieth

¹⁷ Petition of Trustees of Tucker's Town School House, May 17th 1923 – Bermuda Archives.

¹⁸ *A Grave Error: The Ombudsman for Bermuda's Own Motion Investigation into the Demolition of Tombs in the Marsden Methodist Memorial Cemetery at Tuckers Point January 2014* (Office of the Ombudsman Hamilton Bermuda, 2014), 54-55.

¹⁹ *Royal Gazette September 1st 2011* "The heart of the community Marsden celebrates 150th anniversary"

century Tuckers Town was the home of dry goods and grocery stores, several boat slips for ship repair, a cricket field and two church schools.²⁰

The communities that our 1889 observer noted were the “*Lambert, ... Musson... and many families of Smiths*”; he was careful to mention that “*the land for acres around is owned by one man.... Talbot.*” By the early 20th century Tuckers Town was about 300 acres in size – an estimate later confirmed by the developers seeking to remove them. The social calendar of Tucker’s Town revolved around its churches, which hosted choral singing, school programs, bazaars, baptisms, as well as periodic weddings and funerals. Religious life was accompanied by at least two church schools, as well as a cricket field where children and young men would show off their prowess during periodic neighborhood matches.²¹ Farmers of Tucker’s Town also contributed to the pre-tourism agricultural economy, raising onions and arrowroot for export to the United States. Meanwhile, fishermen supplied the local market, selling their catch at the wharves, or in the town of St. George’s, a short sail away.²²

Despite its apparent isolation Tucker’s Town featured in the broader life of Bermuda at the beginning of the 20th century. It did not escape the attention of the

²⁰ *A Grave Error: The Ombudsman for Bermuda’s Own Motion Investigation into the Demolition of Tombs in the Marsden Methodist Memorial Cemetery at Tuckers Point January 2014* (Office of the Ombudsman Hamilton Bermuda, 2014), 54-55.

²¹ *Royal Gazette September 1st 2011* “The heart of the community Marsden celebrates 150th anniversary”

²² *Ibid.*

colony's legislature with plans being passed in 1901 to improve the road to the region.²³ Similarly, leaders recognized its role as an east end social hub during the Great War, when Tuckers Town School house was used as a parish registration site for the War Act enabling officials to count able bodied men for service.²⁴

Meanwhile, some Tucker's Town residents worked in other parts of the island, for example like Catherine Deshields worked as a cook for hire, while farmers and fishermen' from the region were hired to offload coal when a strike had broken out on the *Nordkoping*, a coal hulk in St. George's harbor.²⁵ In 1910 the editor of the gazette mentioned the area's natural beauty pointing out the distinctive 'natural Arches' formation on its South Shore coast as being relatively unknown to tourists. However notices for lost camera in the gazette indicates that some visitors might have made their way to the region and misplaced their possessions in the years before the editor's commentary. It is noteworthy that this recommendation of the area a tourism site came from someone living outside of the community (i.e. the gazette editor) indicating that residents of Tuckers Town were not as interested in promoting tourism as Hamilton merchants.²⁶

²³ Royal Gazette Nov 16 1901

²⁴ RG July 5 1917

²⁵ Royal Gazette February 6 1912; August 17, 1911.

²⁶ Royal Gazette March 5th 1910

However, in the opening of the 20th century, Tuckers Town drew the island's spotlight due to its agricultural production. By 1920 the population of St. George's had grown to 2,194 – 1,513 black and 681 whites, and east-enders were excelling in agriculture.²⁷ Soon after the First World War begun Tucker's Town residents were quick to establish a chapter of the Agricultural Union, a local group aimed at better organizing the island's food production by working with governmental and commercial groups like the colonial Department of Agriculture and the Bermuda Green Vegetable Growers Association. A September 1915 meeting drew forty attendees with local school house trustees Israel Smith and Simeon Trott playing instrumental roles²⁸ However, Tucker's Town was more than a subsistence producer. One observer reminisced about the regions productivity in the following way: "*A picturesque group was the donkey train from Tucker's Town... drawing the carts of the farmers who often loaded up 15 to 20 boxes of onions for the long trip to town.*"²⁹ By 1917 B.D. Talbot was chairman of the Tuckers Town Agricultural Union presiding over a June meeting that featured white elites such as, E.A. MacAllan, the Director of Agriculture and Dr. A.B. Cameron of Christ Church Warwick, with about ninety people in attendance.³⁰ A community capable of furnishing 90 attendees to a meeting without halting all other

²⁷“Population and Vital Statistics” Blue Books 1920 – Bermuda Archives.

²⁸ Royal Gazette September 14th 1915

²⁹ B. Smith, “The Story of Furness Withy” Royal Gazette March 8, 1953.

³⁰ RG June 9th 1917

activities suggests that the resident population had grown significantly since the 1850s, with estimates of two hundred or more. So at the end of the Great War in 1918 Tucker's Town was a sustainable agricultural and fishing community with majority black residents who contributed to the island's commercial economies, participated in the wage labor system, engaged with community institutions and enhanced the regions cultural life.

- II. When did the alleged land grab occur?
 - III. Who benefited from the land grabs?
 - IV. What is the relationship with these historic land seizures and systems of colonialism, racism, segregations and political power(s)?
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The alleged land grabs were carried out by the Bermuda Development Company (BDC) – a private limited liability company incorporated in 1920. The BDC included British, American and Bermudian partners from the Furness-Withy Steamship Company (FWC) and members of the Bermuda House of Assembly and the government's Trade Development Board (TDB). Although FWC initiated the project, the House of Assembly, along with the Legislative and Executive councils bore responsibility because they approved the two pieces of legislation that incorporated the BDC and authorized it to acquire land by compulsory acquisition.³¹

In addition to his executive role in the passage of legislation, Governor Willcocks was involved in appointing three commissioners to supervise and carry out land acquisitions for the BDC – in accordance to section two of the BDC Act No. 2. Governor Willcocks, as well as subsequent governors, would play ongoing roles for the BDC. Prospective buyers of the vacation homes built on the land had to be approved by the Mid-Ocean Club's admissions committee, as well as the Governor.

³¹ The Bermuda Development Act, 1920 – July 5, 1920; The Bermuda Development Company Act No. 2, August 26, 1920 in T.M. Dill, Attorney General of Bermuda, *Acts of the Legislature of the Islands of Bermuda 1690 to 1930 Volume I. Public General Acts* (London: Wildy and Sons Publishing, 1931), 1576, 1579.

According to the BDC, the screening process was designed to prevent “speculators or other undesirable persons” from becoming landowners in the Mid Ocean cottage colony.³²

The immediate beneficiaries of the land grab were Furness Withy Steamship Company, whose acquisition of the land initiated the company’s involvement in Bermuda tourism for the next four and a half decades, with 1966 marking the last FWC vessels sailing to Bermuda. In addition to providing shipping services to Bermuda, FWC became involved in tourism projects such as the St. George’s and Bermudiana Hotels. Related beneficiaries included the local company established by FWC, the Bermuda Development Company, the Mid Ocean golf club, the Castle Harbour Hotel and the Bermudians who played instrumental roles as the board members, legal representatives, land commissioners, and commercial agents of these companies.

These individuals include, (but were not limited to), the British and American members and partners of FWC such as, Sir Frederick W. Lewis, H.C. Blackiston, Charles B. Macdonald, Charles Wetmore, and Frederick S. Ruth; and also included Bermudians like, Francis Goodwin Gosling, Salisbury Stanley Spurling, William Middleton Conyers, Henry W. Watlington, John P. Hand, Sir Reginald Gray, Charles E. Astwood, J. Scott Pearman, and Reginald W. Appleby.

³² *Mid-Ocean Club 1924* (advertising brochure) – Bermuda Archives.

While the nationalities and professional backgrounds of these individuals were diverse, they were linked by commonalities of socioeconomic class, gender, and race – upper class/wealthy white males. This combination of American, British, and Bermudian actors behind the Tucker Town land grab was representative of an international matrix of white power. In other words, each group possessed intersecting financial, commercial, and political interests in the outcomes of the land grab, and then in furtherance of a specific goal (i.e. the seizing of land for tourism development), leveraged their respective bases of power (i.e. corporate finance, colonial politics, social influence, whiteness/racial privilege during an era of segregation, etc.) against a community of landowners that lacked equitable forms of power to successfully resist the combined influence of these parties.

After the Great War concluded in 1918, Bermuda's leaders recognized that reliable steamship service was necessary for them to resume tourism and export-agriculture. Because the relationship with one of their previous shipping firms, Canada Steamship Lines, had soured during the war, government officials wanted to contract a new passenger liner to service the island. The Trade Development Board (TDB) advised sending a delegation to New York City to negotiate a deal with steamship representatives. In June 1919 the new chairman of the TDB, S. Stanley Spurling visited New York to arrange a contract with a shipping company. Spurling was accompanied

by Hamilton mayor and Bank of Bermuda president Arthur W. Bluck, and John P. Hand, of the bankrupt Bermuda-American Steamship Company. After meeting the New York representatives of the shipping firm Furness-Withy the delegation struck a deal that was ratified shortly after their return. In August 1919 the Bermuda Assembly signed a five-year contract with Furness-Withy, a British owned steamship company.³³

The colony's post-war tourism plans made efforts to take advantage of popular leisure trends, including golf, water sports, and seaside accommodations. Although Bermuda possessed some attractions before 1920 such as, the aquarium, and a small golf course that was used by the military and their invited guests, as well as several boat operators who provided tours, fishing, and other marine diversions, the colony lacked any attractions that were of the quality later proposed by Furness-Withy. Before the war, tourism promoters had crafted the colony's image as an "isle of rest" sequestered away from noisy, polluted urban centers in North America or Europe. The only 'attractions' that had been cultivated were hotels, parks, natural landscapes and 'quaint' colonial social environments where tourists could enjoy repose and socializing with locals and foreigners.

However, the vacationing tastes of the potential travelers that promoters were seeking to attract (i.e. white upper-class North Americans), were transforming during

³³ *Royal Gazette* September 6th 1919.

and after the Great War. Shifts in cultural tastes were reflected in fashion, behavior and even music, evidenced by the 'flapper', the 'dandy' and the rising popularity of Jazz music.³⁴ So in addition to 'picturesque and peaceful' natural surroundings, post-war Americans desired vacation resorts with diverse recreational activities such as golf, tennis, swimming, sail boat racing, and the like. Some Bermudians in the tourist industry, such as members of the TDB, wanted to update the industry to take advantage of these trends in the colony's post-war reopening. However, there was a split in the industry, with some arguing that Bermuda should remain a seasonal winter resort only, while others made the case for hosting tourists throughout the year. The latter tended to advocate for expanding hotel capacity and building more attractions and amusements for tourists to use during the warmer days of spring and summer.

Furness Withy representatives agreed with this path and began planning the development of tourist attractions in Bermuda soon after they confirmed the shipping agreement. In an August 30th interview the New York based Director and General manager of Furness Withy, Henry C. Blackiston, stated: "*Furness Withy and Company does not own any hotel in the British West Indies at the present time... plans for a luxurious have been projected and that there is a strong probability that they will*

³⁴ J.L. Roark, M.P. Johnson, P.C. Cohen, S. Stage, A. Lawson, S.M. Hartmann, *The American Promise: A History of the United States* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 613-640

materialize.”³⁵ Blackiston went on to state that “about \$4 or \$5 million would be invested in the Bermuda service” and that FWC had begun plans for an 18-hole golf course. It was evident from Blackiston’s statements that the Bermudians in the New York delegation, or those he contacted subsequently, had engaged FWC in discussions about expanding the island’s tourist infrastructure.

When did the alleged land grab occur?

However, the most significant engine behind these plans was Sir Frederick Lewis, the British owner and managing director of Furness-Withy. Lewis believed that the profitability of his shipping firm depended on the desirability of the ports his ships visited. His launching of the Furness-Bermuda Line in 1919-20 was based around this vision and he expressed sentiments to this effect in a 1923 letter to Governor Asser: “Our business is a Steamship one pure and simple. It should never have been necessary for us to go beyond this, but the success of the Steamship business depended upon the attractions of the Island.”³⁶ With these thoughts in mind, Lewis guaranteed financial backing for a hotel and attractions in Bermuda, if he found the kind of charm that he believed would appeal to American tourists.

³⁵ “New York Bermuda Steamship Service” *Royal Gazette September 2, 1919*.

³⁶ Sir Frederick Lewis to Governor Asser, August 15, 1923. Bermuda Development Company Folders No. 3. Bermuda Archives.

Before investing Lewis wanted to see Bermuda for himself and visited with his wife in early November 1919 aboard his private vessel, *The Moorish Prince*. The commercial purposes of the visit were apparent given that Lewis was accompanied by guests to assist his decision-making process: Henry Curtis Blackiston, the manager of the Furness-Withy's North American operations; Charles Blair Macdonald, one of America's most famous golfers; and Charles D. Wetmore a New York architect from the Warren and Wetmore architectural firm, who had designed the New York Yacht Club, and Grand Central Station Terminal.³⁷

Given that Sir Lewis hoped to find a site for a hotel and golf course, he invited Macdonald. However, Sir Lewis invited Macdonald not only for his golf course design expertise, but also because Macdonald had floated ideas of building a course in Bermuda to his friends following one of his previous visits to the island. Upon receiving Lewis' invitation Macdonald asked to bring Wetmore because in his words, "*Charlie Wetmore was aware of the desire of a number of our friends to buy some property in Bermuda and build a golf course.*"³⁸ Lewis then hired Wetmore to provide architectural advice on any potential sites they visited.

³⁷ *Royal Gazette* Tuesday November 4th 1919.

³⁸ C.B. MacDonald, *Scotland's Gift, Golf: Reminiscences by Charles Blair Macdonald* (New York: C. Scribner & Son, 1928), chapter 12.

From their arrival, the FWC group was received by the island's ruling class with a dance and reception at the Princess Hotel attended by Governor Willcocks, R.N. Admiral Morgan Singer, members of the TDB, and several MCPs. On Wednesday November 5th Sir and Lady Lewis, along with the FWC party, were guests of honor at an invitation-only garden party and tea at Government House, hosted by Governor and Lady Willcocks.³⁹ They also made speeches about their plans at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, attended by members of the House of Assembly. During the meeting Sir Lewis declared his intentions to finance tourist projects in the island: *"we have been advised that there are two or three things that might be done for the benefit of the colony... First and foremost I believe increased hotel accommodation is necessary... Another matter is the provision of a modern 18 hole golf course."*⁴⁰ Associations with Bermuda's leaders helped to establish the political connections and relationships that FWC would later rely on to enact their plans.

During the visit, TDB members F. Goodwin Gosling and S. Stanley Spurling led the group around the island looking for a suitable location for the proposed golf links, clubhouse and hotel. Historians such as McDowall affirm that Gosling led Sir Lewis and his group to Tuckers Town because he was landowner in the region, having purchased

³⁹ *Royal Gazette* Tuesday November 4th 1919.

⁴⁰ *Royal Gazette* November 6 1919.

a 100 acre estate in 1907 known as "The Clearing".⁴¹ The coastal landscape of Tuckers Town, lined with farms, cedar forests and residences impressed the visitors, particularly Macdonald, who remarked that: "*we found desirable property at Tuckers Town, of which we were told 500 acres could be bought for \$150,000 to \$200,000. Tuckers Town district was inhabited mostly by the native negroes...*"⁴² The unnamed informants were most likely their guides, Gosling and Spurling, who provided the visitors with an overview of real estate prices. The November 20th 1919 Gazette quoted an exchange rate of \$4.6 US dollars for one pound sterling, so the estimate provided to Macdonald was between £32,608 and £43,478. Based on these figures, the price per acre ranged from £65 to £87.⁴³ These early speculations, or similar quantities, would be reflected in future evaluations, offers and compulsory purchases.

Who benefited from the alleged land grabs?

The group set their plans into motion almost immediately, with Macdonald noting, "*I at once asked Mr. S.S. Spurling, the leading administrator on the island, to obtain options on the property. This he did on a large acreage. My intention was to*

⁴¹ D. McDowall, *Another World: Bermuda and the Rise of Modern Tourism* (London: MacMillan Education Limited, 1999).

⁴² C.B. Macdonald, *Scotland's Gift, Golf: Reminiscences by Charles Blair Macdonald* (New York: C. Scribner & Son, 1928), chapter 12.

⁴³ Royal Gazette November 20, 1920. This calculation was subject to fluctuations given changes in global currency values. For example, other sources provide an annual average of the GBP/USD exchange rate, e.g. Eric Nye, Department of English, University of Wyoming, "Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency" – site accessed Aug. & Sept. 2020 <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>

have ten or fifteen men put up \$15,000 or \$20,000 apiece in New York, and then in time develop our purchase for a playground.... Charlie Wetmore said he could not go along with me in the purchase unless Sir Frederick Lewis would consent to his doing so, as he was there in professional capacity. Sir Frederick proposed that his partner, H.C. Blackiston, Charlie and myself should buy the property together.”⁴⁴

Over the ensuing months the group devised a plan to build a golf course, club house (with accommodations) , a hotel, and also a ‘cottage colony’ where foreigners could rent or purchase winter homes (or plots of land for building homes), so that seasonal residents (i.e. foreign landowners) would stimulate tourism all year round; utilizing Furness-Withy ships to arrive and depart the colony. According to Macdonald, *“The purchase of the property was left in Furness Withy’s hands owing to their having agents in Bermuda”*⁴⁵ So beginning in November 1919 Furness ‘agents’ Spurling and Gosling, corresponded with Lewis, Blackiston, Macdonald and Wetmore to execute the plans. Macdonald returned to the island in February 1920 with W.L. Hopkins from the New York architectural company Warren and Wetmore, to survey the potential site for the hotel even prior to FWC acquiring the land. In an interview with the gazette, Macdonald reiterated promises of significant financial investment in Bermuda that were

⁴⁴ C.B. Macdonald, *Scotland's Gift, Golf: Reminiscences by Charles Blair Macdonald* (New York: C. Scribner & Son, 1928), chapter 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

attached to FWC gaining possession of the land in Tuckers Town. Macdonald claimed that, *"We are prepared to spend \$3,000,000 here in the islands as soon as clear title can be obtained to the land."*⁴⁶

While Macdonald was still on the island, FWC and their Bermudian representatives, the law firm of H.W. Watlington and W.M. Conyers, submitted a petition to the House of Assembly asking to incorporate a company called The Bermuda Development Company (BDC) whose objective was, *"extending the resources of Bermuda for the accommodation, comfort and entertainment of tourists."*⁴⁷ The petition was entered on February 23rd 1920, and shepherded through the House of Assembly by S. Stanley Spurling, MCP for St. Georges. The petition laid out FWC's plan to construct a *"first class golf links and tennis courts, provision for sea bathing, yachting, fishing, riding, and other outdoor sports, and the erection of a country club and hotels and cottages for winter and summer visitors to Bermuda."*⁴⁸ The petition stated that it was *"essential"* for all of the facilities to be located in *"one area"*, indicating that they had considered the idea of locating the development in separate locations throughout the island, so as not to consume such a large tract of

⁴⁶ Royal Gazette February 26, 1920.

⁴⁷ "Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920" *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*.

⁴⁸ "Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920" *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 2.

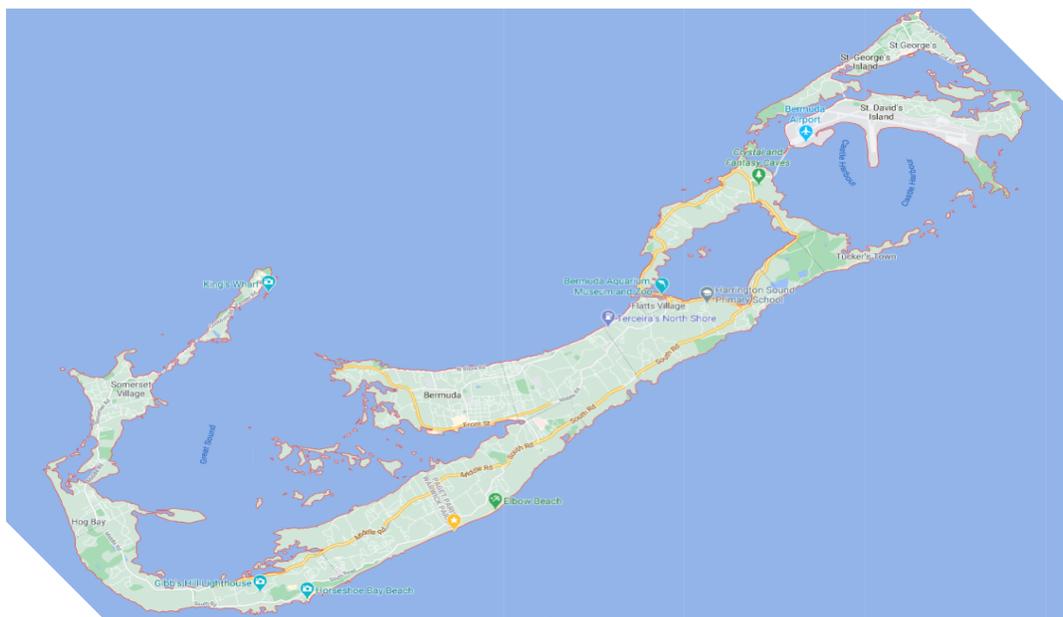
land. However, by the time their petition was drafted FWC and their associates had decided to construct the entire development in Tuckers Town. With respect to this point the petition mentioned that the “one area” selected for the development should enable “capacity for extension in future years.”

Concerning the location and size of the proposed development, Furness Withy stated that, “the most suitable locality for the purpose is Tucker’s Town and the immediate neighborhood.... the land is exceedingly well adapted for the construction of golf links... the frontage of the area on the Ocean, Castle Harbour and Harrington Sound renders the locality particularly suitable... The total area of land required... is somewhat less than 510 acres... It includes the whole of Tucker’s Town in St. Georges Parish, estimated at 300 acres, together with portions of Hamilton Parish to the north and west of Tucker’s Town comprising the balance.”⁴⁹ The selection of this site was attributed to a “general survey of the Colony... made by experts on behalf of your petitioners”, a statement alluding to the site recommendations of F. Goodwin Gosling and S. Stanley Spurling.

⁴⁹ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920” *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraphs 5, 6 & 7. The petition makes reference to a “six-inch scale plan” (map) but it has not been located despite requests by the authors to acquire it and efforts from the Bermuda Archives staff to locate it.

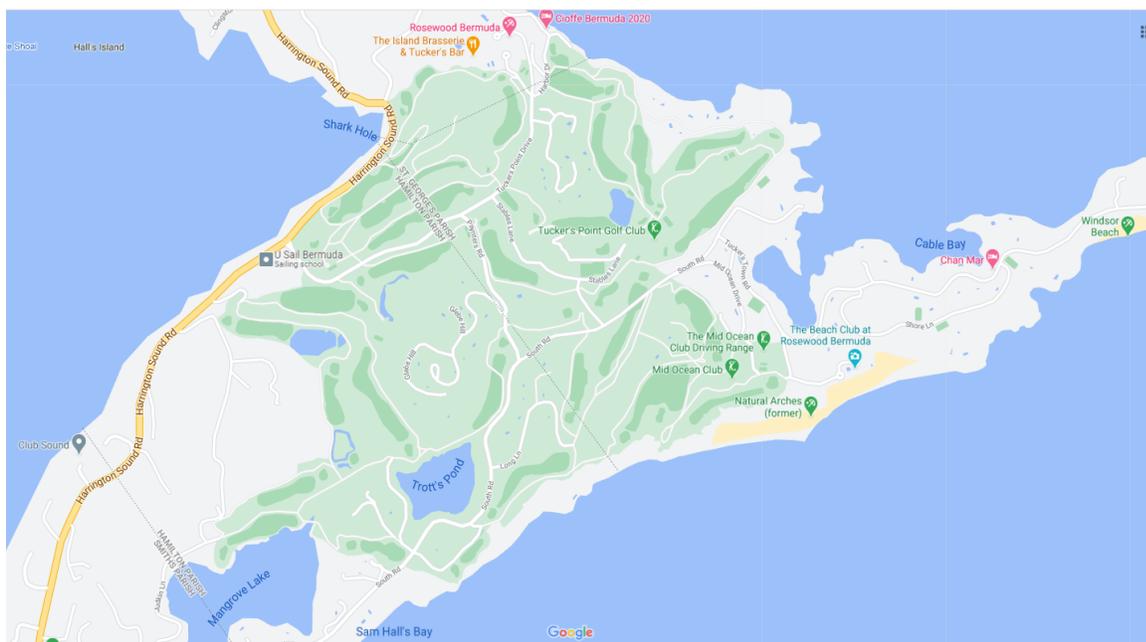
Furness-Withy's request for 510 acres (2.06 km²) must be contextualized in order to fully appreciate its magnitude and impact. In 2020 Bermuda is approximately 22 square miles (56.9 km²) however in 1920, before the extensive land reclamation projects initiated by the U.S. military during World War Two in and around the islands of St. David's in St. George's and Castle Harbours, alongside similar projects in Tucker's and Morgan's Islands in Sandys; the island measured approximately 19 square miles (49.2 km²).⁵⁰ Therefore, Furness-Withy desired to have over 4% of the island to use in its own private commercial venture – or as Macdonald stated “*for a playground.*” When the petition was debated, lawmakers noted this in their remarks, such as Legislative

⁵⁰ The Bermuda Chamber of Commerce General Information Section – site accessed Sept. 2020. <https://www.bermudachamber.bm/about-bermuda#:~:text=Size%3A%20Bermuda%20is%2022%20square,minutes%20away%20from%20the%20ocean.>



Council member H.J. Cox who remarked that *“the Company wished to obtain... one-twenty-fourth of the island.”*⁵¹ The magnitude of the 510 acre request was compounded by the fact that the quantity of available land in Bermuda was considerably less than 19 square miles, because the large tracts held by the Royal Navy (i.e. Dockyard) and the British Military (i.e. garrisons at Prospect, and Warwick camps) could not be privately purchased – at least not without significant legislative changes. In light of these realities, the Furness petition may have reflected an attempt by one company to acquire 5% or more of the island’s real estate.

⁵¹ “Council Argues Development Bill”, *Royal Gazette* August 14th 1920 page 1.



What is the relationship with these historic land seizures and systems of colonialism, racism, segregations and political power(s)?

After describing the suitability of the land for their project, FWC assessed its current state in the following manner: *“The 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 a third of it is arable... It is sparsely populated, there being far fewer inhabitants to the square mile than in other parts of the Colony.”*⁵²

⁵² Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920” *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 8.

It is critical to note the terms “backwards” and “undeveloped” used to describe the land and the community of Tuckers Town. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, European supremacy and imperialism, scientific racism and eugenics were influential social forces that affected popular culture and discourse. Terms such as ‘backward, backwardness, underdeveloped and undeveloped’ were invoked routinely during this period to denigrate non-Europeans as well as justify European and American colonization, particularly displacing indigenous people and annexing land.⁵³ These discourses were familiar to the global businessmen of FWC and their Bermudian partners, Henry W. Watlington, William M. Conyers, S. Stanley Spurling and F. Goodwin Gosling. As a member of the Bermuda Natural History Society, Gosling played an instrumental role in establishing the Bermuda Biological Station during the previous decade; forming relationships with ivy-league American scientists who spoke and published on scientific racism. Furthermore, the Bermuda Biological Station staff facilitated a racial research study on the “Heredity of Skin Color in Negro-White

⁵³ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Limited, 1972); E. Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (New York: A&B Book Publishers, 1994); A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995); D. T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993); A. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

Map 3: Mid Ocean Golf Club Tuckers Town Bermuda 1922 ca. (Southeast Hamilton & St. George's parishes) C.B. Macdonald *Scotland's Gift Golf: Reminiscences of Charles Blair Macdonald 1872-1927* (Coventry House Publishing: New York, 1928), 176.



Crosses" published in 1913 by members of the American Eugenics Record Office.⁵⁴

Considering these events, these ideas had circulated in Bermuda and these men would have been aware of them. So, when such terms are contextualized, it suggests that the drafters of the petition harbored racial biases about the mostly black Bermudian landholders residing in the region they wanted for their resort.

⁵⁴ C.B. Davenport, *Heredity of Skin Color in Negro White Crosses* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1913), 2. Though published by Davenport, the actual research in Bermuda was conducted by ERO researcher Florence Danielson and she was introduced to Bermudians by Biological Station member and founder Professor Edward Laurens Mark.

The possibility of racial biases is further strengthened when reflecting on the fact that the descriptions in the Furness Withy petition do not align with the vibrant and productive community described in part one of this report. These characterizations were presented to support the demands of the petitioners, by devaluing the quality of the land in the region, its productivity, and the demographics of the residents who would be displaced by their actions. Given that FWC was planning voluntary and compulsory land purchases to construct their tourist resort, it was in their financial interest to diminish both the significance of the residents and the value of the land they lived on. In contrast, the value of the land was confirmed by white elites that owned land in the region, especially if they were compelled to sell. For example, parliamentarian T.H.H. Outerbridge appraised the 54 acres he owned in the area at £15,000 (average price of £277/acre) in contradiction to the BDC's £2,500 offer (£46/acre).⁵⁵

After downgrading the value of the land and community, FWC continued arguments to acquire the land, raising pointed critiques of Tuckers Town residents in sections 9 through 12. The excerpt described some of the problems they encountered when trying to acquire the land, including estates with "*very complicated titles*" that had "*remained unsettled for long periods of time*"; along with "*titles of doubtful*

⁵⁵ "Castle Harbour as a New Port" *Royal Gazette* December 14th 1920 page 1.

validity" as well as *"absentee owners"* living abroad who were difficult to contact. FWC explained how they had begun negotiations to acquire the land from *"various proprietors"* but found that *"some owners, especially in the area of Tuckers Town, were opposed to parting with their lands, giving as reasons their unwillingness to leave their homes or to part with their freehold property and votes."*⁵⁶ To counter this objection, FWC asserted their willingness to provide *"liberal cash payment"* or *"land in exchange in the same area with a suitable cottage."*

They went on to minimize the magnitude of opposition to their project, arguing that it only existed *"in a few cases."* According to FWC the resistance of Tuckers Town residents had nothing to do with the reasons they stated, nor their legal rights to refuse offers to sell and retain possession of their own property. Instead, FWC concluded that the opposition of Tuckers Town residents was caused by their disposition, which they characterized as *"indifference"* and their intelligence, or lack thereof, which they described as the *"failure to grasp... the great advantages"* to be gained from the *"intended development."* FWC blamed unnamed 'agitators', claiming that opposition to their plan was due to: *"the agitation of a few who for reasons of their own desire that the district shall remain in its present backward state."*

⁵⁶ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920" *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 9.

The petition pivoted, requesting that FWC be authorized to engage in the compulsory purchase and acquisition of land. FWC claimed this was necessary due to the *"attitude of some of the inhabitants of the area, your petitioners have desisted from attempting to acquire all the lands by the ordinary methods and have decided to apply for legislation to assist them in their object, by authorizing a limited measure of compulsion in cases where owners unreasonably refuse to bargain for the sale for their lands."*⁵⁷ FWC cited the allegedly 'unreasonable' opposition of Tuckers Town landowners, as justification to be granted authority to make compulsory purchases of the land. Indeed, FWC acknowledged the abandonment of *"ordinary methods"* to take up the unusual tactics of acquiring land by compulsion.

Paragraph 13 outlined the processes of compulsory acquisition, making reference to sections of Bermuda's Public Land Act, 1880. Three commissioners were to be appointed by the governor, based on BDC recommendations, and these men would handle the business of compulsory acquisitions, however the company's representatives could still carry out ordinary purchases from landowners who were amenable to the company's offers. The commissioners were responsible for issuing offers to landowners, responding to their objections or counter-offers, and adjusting

⁵⁷ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920" *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 12.

the offer price if circumstances permitted, and then closing the sale by taking possession of the title and deeds. However, if the owner failed to 'agree' to the offer, then it would proceed to arbitration or jury decision in accordance with the Public Land Act, 1880. Furness claimed their plan would "*adequately safeguard all the interests of property owners.*"

FWC then mentioned their shipping agreement with the government from the previous year stating that they had, "*already expended a very large sum to purchase steamers for the New York-Bermuda service*" and suggesting that they would be "*increasing their fleet in the near future.*" Furness was making the case that they were entitled them to the land they wanted for their resort, based on their financial investments in the 1919 shipping agreement. Continuing along the same line of thought, they blamed Tuckers Town residents for standing in the way of Bermuda's development, and their company's profits: "*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 reaping a reasonable financial benefit from their investment.”⁵⁸

It is telling that the same line of reasoning used by FWC was not applied to the community they were seeking to displace. Furness argued that their past and possible future investments entitled them to the land, while simultaneously ignoring that landowners and residents in Tuckers Town, and the surrounding region, had already invested in the same real estate. Indeed, the latter had purchased their freeholds and participated in the local and export agricultural economies, operated stores, and sold their catch in local fishing markets. Similarly, they had invested in the island’s cultural life by developing vibrant church congregations and engaging in an array of east end social activities.

In addition FWC claimed that the authorization of their project would have broader economic benefits by enabling Bermuda to fully establish itself as a tourist resort. However, in making this claim they disclosed that it was linked to their own corporate profit margin. FWC held that if the Bermuda Development Company was not incorporated and granted the powers to acquire all of the land they wanted it would *“prevent the Company from reaping a reasonable financial benefit from their*

⁵⁸ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920” *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 15.

investment." This sentence in the petition calls to mind the November 1919 statements that Sir Lewis made to the Chamber of Commerce concerning the necessity of increasing Bermuda's hotel capacity and tourist attractions.

Returning to the idea of the company's investments, the next section drew attention to a deal promising financial support for a proposed Bermudian tourist attraction. In 1919 W. J. Howard Trott, John P. Hand, William M. Conyers, E. C. Gosling, Cecil H. Neave and Eldon H. Trimmingham formed The Bermuda Golf and Country Club Limited with the intention of constructing an 18-hole golf course.⁵⁹ Their plans were shared with H.C. Blackiston, the New York director of Furness by J.P. Hand who met Blackiston during his 1919 trip to New York with the island's steamship delegation. Trott and the rest of the men were introduced when Sir Lewis visited the island in November 1919. Subsequent discussions secured an agreement from FWC to finance the company provided that the Bermuda Golf and Country Club were able to raise a matching amount.

Furness described the agreement: *"The proposals of Your Petitioners will not interfere with the construction of the golf links in some other part of the Colony to the cost of which your petitioners have undertaken to contribute £15,000 on certain*

⁵⁹ "Petition of William J.H. Trott and Others for Incorporation of the Bermuda Golf and Country Club Limited" November 26th 1919 *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*.

conditions.”⁶⁰ In their petition the Bermuda Golf and Country Club outlined the conditions as follows: “*Furness Withy & Co. Ltd. Have agreed to take shares in the said Company to the amount of £15,000 provided that the Colony take shares to the amount of at least £10,000 and that shares to the amount of at least £5,000 be subscribed locally.*”⁶¹ Making promises of financial support presented complications given that members of the Bermuda Golf club were closely associated with the island’s political power. William M. Conyers was partners with H.W. Watlington, a Devonshire MCP in the law firm Watlington and Conyers (est. 1908). Their firm was also a FWC ticketing agent (i.e. selling tickets and freight space on Furness Withy vessels), and the company hired them to draft their petition of incorporation. Therefore, it is difficult to disentangle MCP Watlington’s views in parliament from his multiple financial interests in the success of the Furness application.

Who benefited from the alleged land grabs?

The plans of the Bermuda Golf and Country Club would eventually produce the Riddles Bay Golf Club, breaking ground in 1921 and being completed the next year. However, since they failed to secure the land in an adequate period of time, and raise

⁶⁰ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920” *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 15.

⁶¹ “Petition of William J.H. Trott and Others for Incorporation of the Bermuda Golf and Country Club Limited” November 26th 1919 *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920* – paragraph 3.

the matching capital in accordance to their arrangement. These problems caused the deal to collapse, releasing FWC of their responsibility to provide the funds they promised. Still, relations remained amicable after the deal fell apart, with FWC recommending one of their golf course designers Seth Raynor, who had worked on the Mid Ocean course with C.B. Macdonald.⁶²

Before concluding the petition declared that FWC was unwilling to accept an alternative arrangement because the land in Tucker's Town and the surrounding area were unparalleled for its purposes. They claimed that they would be "*compelled to abandon their intended scheme of development as no other area in the Colony present similar advantages.*"⁶³ It would have been challenging for members of the House of Assembly to take this statement lightly, given the crucial role of the company's shipping agreement with the island. In light of the time it took to secure regular shipping service after the Great War, the possibility of losing steamship service because they did not go along with the company's plans would have been hard to ignore.

The analysis of the FWC petition of incorporation is critical because it establishes the thought process, motives, and plans of corporate-leaders and partners who would

⁶² Royal Gazette June 2; June 6, 1921.

⁶³ Petition from the Furness Withy Company, Limited, for Incorporation of The Bermuda Development Company, Limited – February 23rd 1920" *Journals of the House of Assembly 1919-1920*. See paragraph 17.

carry out the land grab in Tuckers Town and the surrounding area. Likewise, the company's motives and plans informed the activities of the individuals and groups that facilitated its acquisition of the land over the ensuing months and years. In their petition FWC explicitly stated that they wanted the land to construct a tourism resort complex, and the resort would directly benefit them by increasing tourist travel to the island aboard Furness vessels. In addition, the company asserted that no other location was suitable for their resort, making a speculative assessment of the land's desirability and appeal to potential tourists. FWC was so confident in their speculations that they issued an ultimatum claiming that if they were unable to secure the 510 acres in Tucker's Town and the surrounding area then they were prepared to abandon the entire venture – a course of action that endangered the island's steamship agreement.

The company's position raises questions such as, if FWC assessed the land's value so highly based on its potential, why were they unwilling to pay high prices to all of the landholders in accordance with their own potential-value assessments? Was it possible that the unwilling residents they characterized as "*apathetic and unreasonable*" were actually expressing differences with the company's notion of "*liberal cash payments*"? The limits of the company's liberality would be demonstrated during its dealings with landowners following the passage of the Bermuda Development Company Acts.

What is the relationship with these historic land seizures and systems of colonialism, racism, segregations and political power(s)?

After the introduction of the FWC petition, Watlington and Conyers wrote a letter to the Speaker of House, Sir T.J. Wadson, in May 1920 acknowledging the complicated nature of the bill and stating that they had reorganized the petition into two separate bills in order to reduce “*additional delay*” caused by waiting to pass the entire measure at once.⁶⁴ The first bill simply incorporated the Bermuda Development Company (BDC) as a limited liability company with Bermudian partners, the second act would authorize the BDC with compulsory purchase powers to gain the land from unwilling residents and carry out the FWC resort plans. These changes enabled the first BDC Act to be passed by the legislature and became law on July 5, 1920.

The plan to make Tuckers Town and the surrounding area into a hotel, golf course and vacation homes was not met with unanimous support. A few weeks after Furness Withy submitted their petition to the House of Assembly, the editor of the Royal Gazette reported on community concerns about the methods the company would use to acquire the land. Describing the local situation in the following manner: “*Bermuda is not altogether united in opinion of the Furness Withy development*”

⁶⁴ “Watlington & Conyers, Agents for Furness Withy Co. to Sir T.J. Wadson, Speaker of the House of Assembly - May 28 1920: - Bermuda Archives.

*scheme...Having furnished us a couple pretty good steamers these shipping people together with certain New York financiers propose a tourist development on logical lines to be handled in a big way.... The petition now before our Legislature concerns us vitally. From all that we can gather it is put forward in good faith by responsible interests. There is no clap-trap about it; all this **talk of a diabolic intention to grab Bermuda for the money** they can squeeze out of us sounds hollow and unconvincing.”⁶⁵*

The editor was reporting concerns about the possibility of a land grab, noted by his statement “*talk of a diabolic intention to grab Bermuda for the money.*” And though the editor dismisses these concerns as “*hollow and unconvincing*”, motivated by fearful individuals, he returns to the subject later in another paragraph, suggesting that he understood such matters were rooted in actual possibilities that could not be brushed aside casually. Addressing the potential of compulsory land sales he noted: “*As for the objection raised in the beginning against the principle of expropriation there is indeed a serious side to it. No one would tolerate the expulsion of any man from his home against the rules of justice and right. But we may rest easy on that point: the decision does not lie with us; whatever is done by our Legislature and our Governor in Council. On that issue the legal advisors of the Crown in England will give a final*

⁶⁵ “The Tuckers Town Scheme” Royal Gazette March 11, 1920, 2.

verdict. The whole principle of English jurisprudence has evinced special care for the rights of title and the validity of contracts. Anything tending to vitiate such rights will not be tolerated.”⁶⁶

In response to the concerns over land expropriations the editor presents the oversight of British colonial authority as a bulwark against potential land grabs. He argues that since the decisions of Bermuda’s Legislature and Governor operate under the overarching authority of “*the Crown in England*”, Bermudians can be assured that their property rights will be protected. He asserts that English law had a history of protecting “*the rights of title and the validity of contracts*” and because of this tradition, local laws would not be passed to “*vitate such rights.*” Essentially the editor argued that the British colonial government played a role in authorizing the Bermuda Development Company legislation that would later enable the Tuckers Town land grabs. His argument was sustained in January 1921 when the Colonial Secretary published a notice stating that the King had assented to the BDC acts.

Approximately three weeks after the BDC Act became law, twenty-three landowners and residents of Tuckers Town presented a petition to the House of Assembly protesting the second Bermuda Development Company Act, titled “Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled “The

⁶⁶ “The Tuckers Town Scheme” Royal Gazette March 11, 1920, 2.

Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920".⁶⁷ Their signatures were accompanied by a white minister and parish reactor who also expressed problems with the proposed development. The following individuals signed the petition: Reverend L. Laud Havard, Rector of Hamilton and Smiths Glebe, Melbourne Smith, Oliver Constantine Lambert, Osmond Charles Talbot, Stewart Hastings Lambert, Oscar Anderson, Essie Lambert, Thomas Smith, Ainslie Lelilia Dansmore Manders, Ada Permelia Simmons, William Orlando Hilgrove Smith, Henry Thomas Harvey, Nancy Mayew You Simons, Clarkson Frederic Burgess, Eliza Harriet Talbot, Dinna (Dinah) Smith, Alpheus Smith, Jabez Smith, Ellen Smith, Rosa Ann Lambert, Walter L. Smith, Oliver Selorn Lambert, Minnie Andrew Palmer, Henry Nelmes.

The petitioners owned approximately one hundred acres of land and they stated that they did "*not desire to part with or be deprived of their lands and houses...under any conditions whatever.*"⁶⁸ Regarding the promises of 'liberal' compensation from FWC, the petitioners stated "*no monetary compensation can adequately recompense them for the loss of their lands, houses vocations and homes.*" Their statement attempted to articulate the irreplaceability of their community. As indicated in the

⁶⁷ "Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled 'The Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920.'" – July 1920 *Journals of the Bermuda House of Assembly, 1919-1920* - Bermuda Archives.

⁶⁸ "Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled 'The Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920.'" – July 1920 *Journals of the Bermuda House of Assembly, 1919-1920* - Bermuda Archives.

opening section of this report, Tucker's Town was a social ecosystem that facilitated wide latitudes of self-determination for residents that could not be easily matched, even by money. For example, the presence of nearby family, extended family, and neighborhood contacts gave residents access to assistance with childcare, construction projects, as well as agricultural and fishing labor without resorting to daily cash exchanges. Therefore, the location itself, and the dynamics of these and other communal exchanges, provided a type of social wealth, which could not be assessed by common methods, nor reproduced with ordinary amounts of cash.

Their eight paragraph petition they presented the following arguments: that the BDC was under no obligation to carry out their building project using land in Tuckers Town (i.e. another location was possible); that English legal precedent required the financial vetting of companies that requested powers of compulsory land acquisition, in order to prove that they would use the land for the purposes they stated, rather than speculation and resale – and this had not happened in Bermuda; that the proposed project had be unquestionably beneficial to all inhabitants of the colony – and in their opinion, the BDC had not shown how the new hotel and golf course would benefit all

Bermudians; and lastly that empowering the BDC to violate their property rights in this way would undermine the political rights of all Bermudians.⁶⁹

The last objection was perhaps most compelling in that it went beyond personal sentiment in order to express the concern about the precedent being set by the second BDC act. Petitioners called the proposed law “*a dangerous experiment*”. In foreboding tones, they stated that it was hazardous for the government to bestow such wide-ranging legal powers on foreign companies possessing the financial capacity to acquire large tracts of land, because this practice might eventually restrict “*the political and commercial freedom and independence of the people of this Colony.*”⁷⁰ Under closer examination their critiques of FWC and the government’s plan were insightful.

Their first suggestion, that another location was possible, drew attention to the underlying sociopolitical dynamics of class and race discrimination that informed the choice to remove a rural working class black community, instead of an affluent white neighborhood, in another part of the island equally effective for a golf course and hotel. In addition, the petition raised questions regarding the abuse of colonial power that enabled the island’s political officials and structures of government to facilitate the

⁶⁹“Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled ‘The Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920.’” – July 1920 *Journals of the Bermuda House of Assembly, 1919-1920* - Bermuda Archives.

⁷⁰“Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled ‘The Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920.’” – July 1920 *Journals of the Bermuda House of Assembly, 1919-1920* - Bermuda Archives.

dispossessing of Tucker Town residents, instead of the same structures being used to represent and protect their property and interests. So they pleaded with the "Honourable House" to "decline to pass any measure having for its object the taking of land without the consent of the owners."⁷¹

Unfortunately, their arguments fell on deaf ears. When the petition was read in the House of Assembly on Wednesday July 28th 1920, St. Georges MCPs – particularly S. S. Spurling – chose not to read it, even though the petition mostly represented constituents of their parish. Instead Dr. T.H. Outerbridge of Smith parish read it to an assembly of members that gave it a perfunctory hearing.⁷² In the wake of the unsuccessful petition the "Honourable House" passed the second Bermuda Development Company Act and it became law on August 26th 1920.

When did the alleged land grab occur & Who benefited from the alleged land grabs?

With the passage of the BDC Acts Furness-Withy's 'agents in Bermuda' were able to organize the new company rapidly. F. Goodwin Gosling resigned his government posts to become the BDC Secretary – a senior management position that

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Debates of the House of Assembly* July 28th 1920, p. 994-995 – Bermuda Archives.

had him administrating the company's operations. In the first week of September Gosling wrote the Colonial Secretary to notify him and the Governor of the new company's board.⁷³ The Board of Directors for the BDC was composed of British, American, and Bermudian white males.

The directors were: Frederick W. Lewis, H.C. Blackiston, Charles B. Macdonald, and Frederick S. Ruth. Harry Blackiston, the manager of the Furness-Withy's New York office who brokered the steamship deal with the TDB representatives in 1919. Charles Blair Macdonald, one of the architects of the Bermuda plan as well as an American golfer who won the inaugural U.S. Golf Association Amateur Championship in 1895, and later oversaw the building of several American golf courses. Frederick Ruth was a Baltimore real estate developer who founded and built Mountain Lake Golf & Country Club in Lake Wales Florida in 1916. Ruth contracted the son of famous architect & landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted, (designer Central Park and the Emerald Necklace in Boston) to design the original layout for Mountain Lake. Therefore, Ruth was expected to bring a similar level of expertise and cultural cache to the proposed Mid Ocean Golf and Country club project.⁷⁴

⁷³ "Gosling to the Colonial Secretary Sept. 6th 1920" – Bermuda Development Company Folder – Bermuda Archives.

⁷⁴ F. Goodwin Gosling to Colonial Secretary, Correspondence re: Names of the Eight BDC Board of Directors, Sept. 6, 1920 – Bermuda Development Company General Purposes Folder No. 5, Bermuda Archives – also names the Bank of Butterfield as the bank where the commissioners' expense funds will be deposited.

Representing the Bermudian side of the BDC were, Francis Goodwin Gosling, Salisbury Stanley Spurling, John P. Hand, and Henry W. Watlington.⁷⁵ The involvement of these men in the BDC scheme illustrates the intricate connection of vertical and horizontal levels of power that lay at the heart of Bermuda's white oligarchy for the postemancipation century (1834-1968). Francis Gosling was the former Colonial Secretary, clerk of the Executive Council and member of the Trade Development Board before resigning his posts to take up employment as BDC Secretary and board member.

John P. Hand was the principal partner of a Front Street wholesaling agency named Hand Arnold Limited, would go on to partner with W.J. Howard Trott to form the real estate firm Trott-Hand & Trott, the Bermuda Associated Hotels Company, as well as hold financial interests in the Riddles Bay Golf Club, the Inverurie and Belmont Hotels.⁷⁶ S.S. Spurling was a Member of Colonial Parliament (MCP) for St. George's, thus he was the political representative for Tucker's Town landowners who resided in the parish, he was member of the Executive Council, sat on the board of Agriculture, Public Works and the Trade Development Board. Spurling also was on the Board of

⁷⁵ F. Goodwin Gosling to Colonial Secretary, Correspondence re: Names of the Eight BDC Board of Directors, Sept. 6, 1920 – Bermuda Development Company General Purposes Folder No. 5, Bermuda Archives.

Mid-Ocean Club 1924 (advertising brochure), Bermuda Development Company Limited – Bermuda Archives.

⁷⁶ C.W. Parker, *Who's who in Canada: An Illustrated Biographical Record of Men and Women of the Time, Volume 16* (Bahamas: International Press, 1922), 166.

Directors for the Bank of Bermuda, a partner in his family's business Spurling Brothers General Merchants Limited, a Councillor for the Town of St. George's (Corporation of St. G) and former Master of the St. Georges Masonic Lodge G.R.S. 200.⁷⁷ As managing director of Bermuda Electric Light and Traction Company, S.S. Spurling was also in a position to benefit from the expansion of the electricity grid needed to light the forthcoming golf course, country club, hotel, and cottages in the area.⁷⁸ Spurling's appointment to the board seemed to be a reward for ignoring his St. Georges constituents in Tucker's Town, in favor of the business plans of FWC.

Gosling's role on the BDC board of directors and as a landowner in Tucker's Town highlights the ways that persons involved with the BDC land grab occupied positions to gain from the scheme. In 1907 F. Goodwin Gosling purchased 'The Clearing' – a 100 acre property in Tucker's Town – and reportedly sold it to the BDC.⁷⁹ Gosling's role of secretary and his membership on the BDC board of directors begs questions about his settlement and further research is necessary to determine his rate of compensation.

⁷⁷ B.M. Greene, Editor, *Who's Who in Canada: Including the British Possession in the Western Hemisphere 1922* (Toronto: International Press Limited, 1922), 400, 916. Conchita Ming (Project Director) Meredith Ebbin (Editor), *Bermuda 1609-2009: 400 Years – 400 Portraits* (Bermuda: The Bermuda 2009 Committee Ministry of Culture & Social Rehabilitation, Department of Community & Cultural Affairs, 2009), 168,

⁷⁸ *Bermuda Electric Light Company Limited's First 100 Years of Service* (Hamilton: Island Press, 2006), 11-12.

⁷⁹The record of this transaction is not contained within the Bermuda Development Company files, nor were Bermuda Archives staff able to locate any documentation in the Bermuda Development Company folders or in F.G. Gosling's personal papers.

Henry Watlington was a partner in the law firm Watlington and Conyers (est. 1908) with his partner William Middleton Conyers, and their office was contracted by FWC to sell tickets and freight space on Furness Withy vessels. Based on their prior commercial connections with FWC, Watlington and Conyers were retained as legal counsel for FWC/BDC. In addition, Watlington and Conyers handled the real estate sales, transfers, and related acquisitions for the BDC, as the commissioners went about seizing land for the proposed golf course and hotel. Watlington's colleague in the legal field, Sir Reginald Gray was the former Attorney general, and Chief Justice and an MCP that served as legal counsel for FWC before the passage of their petitions.

Around the same time in September, Gosling notified the Colonial Secretary to request that the Governor appoint commissioners. According to the BDC Act No. 2, the commissioners would preside over the compulsory purchase process. Once the BDC had given notice to certain landowners they would travel to Tuckers Town, or the surrounding area, and set up at a person's home to hear verbal or written evidence about the ownership of the property, including the size of the property, its usage and contents, who holds the deeds, and whether or not others have financial interests, or legal restrictions, on the property. They were authorized to negotiate on behalf of the BDC and make offers and if the company's offer was rejected, they would preside over arbitrations or the jury decisions. According to BDC Act No. 2 section 14, thirty-six

jurors would be selected by the commissioners from the Smiths, Hamilton, or St. Georges parish registers of jurors. They would be notified of a date when seven names would be drawn randomly from a box by the commissioners. The chosen seven men would make up a jury for the purpose of assessing a value for resident's property. Jurors and the commissioners would be paid for their days of service by the BDC.

Governor Willcocks appointed the following men, Reginald Appleby, Justice of the Peace and police magistrate over the Hamilton Court, Charles E. Astwood, MCP Paget, Jeremiah Scott Pearman, MCP Smiths.⁸⁰All the men accepted their posts and Appleby was appointed chair. Gosling's influence was evident as Appleby was his brother in law. The status of these men posed a problem for equitable execution of their roles. Consider Appleby, it is difficult to imagine a resident feeling comfortable discussing the details of their pending dispossession with the police magistrate who may have sentenced a friend, family member, or loved one in the past? Likewise, influential white MCPs like Pearman and Astwood would have been professionally qualified to serve as commissioners given their legal experience, but quite intimidating to more than a few residents who appeared before them.

⁸⁰ "Governor Willcocks to R.W. Appleby, J.S. Pearman, C.E. Astwood Appointment as Commissioners for the BDC" September 13, 1920. Bermuda Development Company Folder 5 – Bermuda Archives.

The commissioners began their first public hearings on October 13th 1920 in the home of a former resident Mrs. C.W.W. Walker, who had recently sold a vacated his land and house near Mangrove Lake Hamilton parish. Walker's former home had been occupied by Seth J. Raynor and his wife.⁸¹ Raynor was an American golf course designer working under C. B. Macdonald to make the Mid Ocean course. However, Raynor's accommodations demonstrated the dynamics of the FWC project, in that Bermudians were being dispossessed to make room for wealthy foreigners to literally occupy the spaces they were ousted from. The trauma, and/or frustration, that the Walkers' experienced seeing someone else living in their former home, comprised part of the unassessed damages of their removal. Therefore, the setting of the very first BDC hearing answers the question, 'who benefitted from the land grabs?' Indeed the land grabs produced adverse results for the majority of those who lost their land, homes, businesses and communities; even if their rate of compensation was better than expected.

Henry Nelmes was the first landowner that the commissioners Gosling and BDC legal counsel Conyers encountered contacted that day. The owner of a 6.25 acre piece of glebe land subject to a £3 quit rent, the commissioners offered him £350

⁸¹ Royal Gazette October 14th 1920.

(£56/acre).⁸² He flatly rejected them presenting his own counter offer when asked, £5,000! Gosling refused claiming Nelmes was being “*unreasonable*” – a term off the pages of the FWC petition. Gosling then condemned Nelmes’ property, claiming that only one acre was arable while the rest was rough then called his house “*unfit for habitation.*” Gosling and the commissioners later resumed negotiations and the conversation took a turn to address the political consequences of Nelmes acceptance of their offer. In turn, Gosling offered Nelmes a “*life freehold in a cottage*” enabling him to “*keep his vote.*”⁸³ However their offer was contingent upon the company being given first option when he wanted to sell. Nelmes was uninterested so they adjourned to return at another date. Nelmes had signed the petition against the BDC and he was resistant to moving in 1920.

Later the same day, Melvin Smith was offered £450 for his 6.75 acre lot of glebe land however he informed the BDC group that the land belonged to his father, John Peter Smith and he could not sell it without his permission. Gosling later found out that the land also in the names of Enoch Smith and his sisters leading him to adjourn and reconvene the commissioners when they had a clearer understanding of the title. The situation with Melvin Smith brings to mind the FWC petition that complained of

⁸² Royal Gazette October 14th 1920.

⁸³ Royal Gazette October 14th 1920.

'complicated titles'. Given the political function of landownership in Bermuda this seems to have been a method for families to ensure that land remained in their family by dividing ownership in ways that made selling the entire lot difficult.

The December 1920 case of Thaddeus O'Connor revealed some of the limitations of compensation. O'Connor owned a homestead described as, 'a cottage' on one rood (a quarter acre) of land near the sea. O'Connor was unwilling to move to another location since it would negatively impact his occupation as a fisherman. He complained that the BDC offer for his land failed to compensate him for the loss of his business, which brought in "£300" annually. O'Connor had been presented with the BDC offer at an earlier undisclosed date, and had been given until December 14, 1920 to accept or refuse an "*offer by the Company which was increased by the Commissioners.*"⁸⁴ Having reached the deadline, O'Connor would be compelled to accept the compulsory acquisition of his property at the stated offer, if he was unable to persuade the BDC appointed commissioners to reconsider.

O'Connor's objections to the forced-purchase of his land are also important because they indicate popular dissatisfaction with the land grab. O'Connor was not a signee on the petition against the BDC Act presented to the House of Assembly by Tucker's Town residents in July 1920. However, he expressed sentiments that were in

⁸⁴ "Castle Harbour as a New Port" *Royal Gazette December 14, 1920.*

agreement with some of the objections raised in specific parts of the petition. For example, it stated one of the reasons that Tucker's Town residents did not wish to leave their homes was due to the fact that they had: "*vocations in some respects peculiar to the locality.*"⁸⁵ O'Connor's belief that the BDC offer did not compensate him for the loss of his vocation as a fisherman echoes the petition. Therefore the absence of his signature from the petition cannot be construed as support for the BDC land acquisition project since O'Connor expressed dissatisfaction with the offer and the forfeiture of his occupation.

O'Connor's troubling situation raises questions such as: how many others in Tucker's Town and the affected areas were displeased with the situation but did not articulate their dissatisfaction using official political channels of complaint, or related formal methods that can be easily retrieved from archives (e.g. the parliamentary Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled 'The Bermuda Development Company Act No. 2')? Conversely, what structural measures were set in place by the colonial government of Bermuda to address the complicated social, economic, occupational and cultural consequences of their decision to allow the BDC project to proceed?

⁸⁵ *Journals of the Bermuda House of Assembly, 1919-1920*, "Petition of Residents of St. Georges and Hamilton Parishes Against the Bill Entitled 'The Bermuda Development Company Act (No. 2), 1920.'" – see paragraph 3.

Other examples of their experiences with whites such as George Stewart McLean of Shippensburg Pennsylvania owned 1 acre on Harrington Sound, bordering the land of Benedict Prieth. Mr. G.C. G. Montague appeared on behalf of McLean who negotiated with the company's representative J.R. Conyers, before the jury eventually awarded McLean £240 for land he had reportedly purchased for £166.⁸⁶

Benedict Prieth owned 3 acres, 2 roods and 24 perches and was represented by G.C.G. Montagu, who disputed the size of his client's lot, claiming that it was 4 acres 1 rood. The company offered £1,525 for his waterfront property on Harrington Sound with a large house and small cottage. Montagu refused the company's offer, asking £3,800 for his client with an itemized evaluation of the house, cottage and property improvements. Gosling countered with an itemized valuation made by the company – *"£1,700 for the house, £400 for the cottage, £400 for the land and £250 for compensation, a total of £2,750."* Mr. Prieth challenged the offer and the commissioners returned with a £2900 offer allowing him an adjournment to reconsider. This case revealed that BDC representatives and commissioners were authorized to include compensation in their offers in addition to the price of the land, buildings, and other materials on the property. However, the practice of adding compensation

⁸⁶ Royakl Gazette January 28 1921

appears subjective, with the BDC offering no standards for how it would be calculated and for whom it would be applied.⁸⁷

The case of B.D. Talbot showed the problems blacks experienced when cooperating with the system. Four cases were heard on Jan 20th 1921 by the BDC Commissioners – R.W. Appleby, chair, J. S. Pearman, C.E. Astwood, with A.C. Smith as commission secretary and F. Goodwin Gosling. The company wanted B.D. Talbot's fifteen plots that encompassed "*the land at Castle Point... and two large pieces of arable land*" amounting to 75 acres. Talbot, who was not present for the hearing, later disputed the company's calculations, asserting he was the owner of 83 to 84 acres. Commissioners offered B.D. Talbot £6,500 for his property, not impressed B.D. assessed his land at £25,000 instead. The commissioners were unable to negotiate since he was absent and scheduled him for arbitration or jury decision.⁸⁸

On Wednesday February 9, 1921 commissioners and a jury met to assess the value of B.D. Talbot's property so that the BDC could execute its compulsory expropriation based on their decision. Talbot was reportedly "*one of the largest landowners in Tucker's Town*" and had rejected the company's offer last month opting for a jury, a decision he would later regret.⁸⁹ F. Goodwin Gosling's offer on behalf of the BDC had

⁸⁷ Royal Gazette November 25 1920.

⁸⁸ Royal Gazette January 24, 1921

⁸⁹ Royal Gazette February 11, 1921.

been a 6 acre lot in St. Georges with 1,200 to build a house, along with £10,000 cash giving a grand total between £12 and £13 thousand. Despite the relatively high offer, Talbot refused. His reasons were many, ranging from being attached to his home in the region but also because of his multiple streams of income that he felt were not being properly addressed. The assessment began in the morning with seven jurors (i.e. James Hill Hollis the Foreman, Howard Emmett Dunscombe Smith, Frederick Collins Outerbridge, William Robert Lightbourn, Arthur Roberts Wilkinson, George Harrison Outerbridge, and Francis Anthony Hollis) visually inspecting Talbot's land and buildings. Jurors claimed Talbot had 74 acres with a stone house and shop, two stone cottages, and a stone barn, "all in good condition".

Under oath Talbot testified of his many business enterprises on the land: £30/ year for rental of his house, £30/year for renting his shop, £36 annually for his two cottages, between £12 and £14 for his barn, £500 annually from export crops, £60 for renting some fields, £100 in annual revenue from his grocery business, £100 from his banana crop, £100 from corn, melons and other summer crops, £200 annually from selling timber, £8 to £12 for lemons, as well as earnings from a large seaweed catch. In total his land earned him over £1,100 each year. He proceeded to dispute the jurors' plans of his land asserting that he owned 83 to 84 acres of which 34 were arable with 22 presently under cultivation. J. R. Conyers cross examined Talbot for the BDC

determining his age as 62 and that he had a £300 mortgage on his land and how 32 acres of his land was located on Castle Point.⁹⁰

In an attempt to sway the jury, Conyers raised the sale price of a 54 acre property formerly-owned by one of Talbot's Hamilton parish neighbors, C.W.W. Walker. Called by the BDC to testify, Walker reported that Trott's Pond was on his wife's former property and it had 17 acres of farmland with grazing and timber. The BDC had purchased it for £4,500, which he considered "*a good price.*" Referencing Walker's land price of approximately £83/ acre, Conyers argued to the jury that Talbot's land should sell for the "*very fair price*" of £7,500. Talbot's representative H.V. Smith, challenged Conyers stating that, "*what one man sold his property for was no criterion of the value of another man.*" Asserting that the "*most important factors in the case*" were that Talbot was being "*torn from his home... separated from his own people and church*"!

Chair R.W. Appleby summed up the case in preparation for the jury's deliberation. Appleby then instructed the jury not to be influenced by the sale price of Walker's land, but he also took time to warn them regarding "*statements of income*" undermining Talbot's sworn testimony of the extensive revenue generated on his land. The jury returned at 4:30 with the final compulsory price for Talbot's land £8,200. And

⁹⁰ Royal Gazette February 11, 1921.

while the £110/acre price awarded to Talbot was 'better' in comparative terms than the amount many others received, it fails to account for the central issue of the transaction being forced upon him and the dislocation of no longer having a homestead, because the region he wished to reside in was no longer available.

In contrast to Talbot's situation, T.H.H. Outerbridge MCP of Hamilton parish appeared before the BDC land commissioners and a seven man jury on Feb. 22 1921.⁹¹ BDC Secretary F. Goodwin Gosling was present and J.R. Conyers presented the company's case. Outerbridge owned a 40 acre waterfront property with a cave and access to Castle Harbour. He had purchased the property in lots for a "business site", paying £1,940 in total, from which he earned £64 in annual income from an unstated enterprise. "On December 13, 1919 Hon. S.S. Spurling, on behalf of the Development Co., was given a 90 day option to purchase at \$50,000" however Spurling contacted Outerbridge on March 11, 1920 to decline the option because "the price was excessive."

Outerbridge called two witnesses – Engineer and Royal Navy Commander Larg and W.B. Smith, the former engineer in charge of channel works – to attest that Castle Harbour was one of the best shipping harbors. Commander Larg claimed that it could accommodate naval and merchant ships with very little dredging, while Smith

⁹¹ "Jury Gives 4750 to Mr. Outerbridge" *Royal Gazette February 24, 1921.*

presented plans to show its advantages over St. George's Harbor. Outerbridge had assessed the value of his land based on speculations that Castle Harbour would be converted into a major shipping port after FWC completed the golf course and hotel.

This rumor had started based on the fact that FWC hired a dredging vessel in the area to clear access for the construction of a 40-foot wharf intended for passenger crafts. Gosling was called as a witness to state that FWC had no intentions of developing Castle Harbour into a shipping port to compete with Hamilton or St. Georges. He also testified of John Talbot, a black property owner near Outerbridge, who was awarded £600 by jury for his 7.5 acre lot. After all the presentations Commissioner Chair R.W. Appleby instructed jurors "*not to be influenced by previous awards*" (i.e. John Talbot's £80/acre award) but permitted them to evaluate the validity of Outerbridge's speculative assessment. Appleby stated the following: "*If they considered the opening up of the Harbor and the development of the cave as feasible possibilities they must take these matters into consideration when estimating the amount of compensation to be paid.*"⁹² The jury rewarded Outerbridge's speculations with an award of £4,750 – £119/acre – considerably more than Talbot's per acre compensation.

⁹² "Jury Gives 4750 to Mr. Outerbridge" *Royal Gazette February 24, 1921.*

The apparent disparity may have roots in Bermuda's political culture. According to Bermudian electoral laws, for males seeking to qualify as a 'Member of the Assembly' they must "*be 21 years of age and to possess a freehold rated at £240 the rating being the actual value of the property and not its annual produce.*" This policy reduced the quantity of potential MCPs. Bermudian society during the early twentieth century had a number of landowners whose farming and fishing businesses produced more than £240 in annual revenue. The revenues described by B.D. Talbot more than qualified him for political office, as his productivity exceeded the £240 benchmark. If legislators had included the productive value of the land in their criterion for assessment value, then it would have enlarged the pool of landowners eligible for seats in the House of Assembly. However, the policy did not include the productive value of the land, resulting in racial disparities that favored whites as well as an overall reduction of the total number of potential MCPs.

Therefore just as the productive value of land was ignored in the process of political qualifications R.W. Appleby prompted jurors to ignore it in making real estate assessments. However this had adverse consequences for Talbot and others like him. Yet, the privileges of race and social status enabled T.H.H. Outerbridge's speculations to be taken into account.



Howland mentioned *Sound House* in Tucker's Town (above in the 1930s) many times and we asked him if it still stood. He replied, "Yes, the house is still there. I've driven by it, but I've never been inside. There's the main house, a guest house and a boat house. I think on five acres. How I would love to have a tour of it some day. Grandfather sold it when he retired in 1935 for \$30,000. Do you think I could get it for that price now?"

The Sound House Tuckers Town (5acres) was once owned by Furness Withy Manager H.C. Blackiston

The BDC land grabs enabled the completion of The Mid Ocean Golf course in December 1921 and the Country Club was completed shortly afterwards. By the mid-1920s the BDC and its financier Furness Withy, claimed over 600 acres of Bermudian real estate. Regarding the benefits of the land grabs for his company, Sir Frederick Lewis mused the following in a letter to Governor Asser: *"In round figures I think there are about 640 acres of land acquired, about one half of this was purchased outside the Expropriation Act.... and under no circumstances was it the intention of the Company to sell land to any but persons of the highest social and financial standing."* To the latter point, Furness executive H.C. Blackiston resided on a 5 acre homestead known as

'Sound House' (see image) until he sold it in the 1930s for \$30,000. The growing financial benefit of Tuckers Town to the BDC, its investors, partners and new landowners is reflected by a World War two era map located on the next page.

The BDC would be a transformative force in Bermuda, constructing the Castle Harbour Hotel and several holiday homes to be sold to wealthy Americans and other foreigners whose main purpose was leisure and upholding the status quo. The costs to Tuckers Town residents were rarely counted – beyond the financial transactions that the law required to 'make them go away' as if silencing that community could address the injustices they endured.

What were the possible social, economic and political rationale(s) and impacts of the alleged land grabs?

Rationale(s)

The land grabs of Tucker Town were instigated by Furness Withy Steamship Company (FWC) and carried out by their company the Bermuda Development Company (BDC). They were justified in the name of 'progress' i.e. the economic development and modernization of Bermuda through the expansion of the tourist industry. During the months following Sir Frederick Lewis' departure in November 1919, FWC advocates such as, F. Goodwin Gosling, S. Stanley Spurling, Arthur Bluck, and Henry Watlington, William Conyers, Governor Willcocks and others spread the message of tourism development to members of the business and political establishment who were yet unconvinced.

By the summer of 1920 white elite opposition to the BDC/Furness Withy project had decreased as a result of their lobbying efforts in combination with several public endorsements from Governor Willcocks. In addition to the potential financial benefits of the project, supporters also endorsed it as a symbol of 'progress.'⁹³ For example, BDC spokesman Stanley Spurling criticized opponents of the project as persons who were "*fearful*" of change and "*obstacles to progress.*"⁹⁴ Characterizing the planned

⁹³ *Debates of the Bermuda House of Assembly* – February 27th 1920.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

development – and tourism in general – as a marker of Bermudian progress, set up a narrative that would inevitably frame opposition to the BDC as regressive obstacles to modernization.

A version of this progress-narrative was expressed by Governor Willcocks during his August 1, 1920 speech marking the tercentenary of the island's parliament: "*Furness Withy and Co. will I feel sure be names to be remembered by future generations, when Tucker's Town will be a great centre of attraction to thousands of visitors; and Hamilton and St. George's and all parts will be immense gainers thereby.*"⁹⁵ Firstly, the governor treated legislation that still had not been voted on yet (the petition for BDC No. 2) as if it had already been passed, raising serious questions about his ability to lead the colony impartially without showing partiality to the interests of a foreign corporation.

Close relations between FWC and the island's political leaders left both parties open to accusations of misconduct. Indeed, it was possible for their constant meetings to blur the lines between personal agendas and the public's best interests. One example of their informal meetings occurred a few months after this speech in November 1920. Wetmore, C.B. Macdonald and a group from FWC took a coach ride from the Yacht Club in Hamilton to Tuckers Town. On arrival they had a meal with Governor and Lady Willcocks and spent the afternoon.⁹⁶ Secondly, Willcocks

⁹⁵ *Debates of the House of Assembly*, August 1st 1920, pg. 1014 – Bermuda Archives.

⁹⁶ Royal Gazette November 23rd 1920.

demonstrated the compelling nature of the progress-narratives spun by FWC and tourism promoters, as he claimed that all parts of the island would gain immensely, forgetting the constituents in Hamilton and St. George's who would have to sacrifice their land to make this a reality.

Impacts

Because tourism has played a major role in Bermuda's economic and social life for the past three generations, it is easy to impose 21st century conclusions on the past, by taking it for granted that tourism's central position was already decided in 1920. However such assumptions do not fully reflect the realities of Bermudian society following the end of the First World War. The following items are representative of some of the areas of Bermudian life that were affected by the seizing of land by the BDC in the 1920s.

Agriculture

Bermuda's agricultural industry, for both local and export markets, was generating revenue and employment even while some Bermudians were trying to establish tourism as the colony's economic foundation. The government's contract with Furness Withy steamship company in 1919 was obtained in the name of providing both

tourism and export agricultural services. The vessels that brought tourists from the North America usually returned to the states with their storage bays filled with Bermudian onions, arrowroot, celery, tomatoes and other green vegetables. Indeed, when Sir Frederick Lewis visited to seek a site for his resort he made sure to mention the agricultural capacity of his company's new vessels. In his November 1919 speech to the Chamber of Commerce Lewis remarked that, "*The old Bermudian the Hamilton had about 30,000 cubic feet of space but this has been doubled... for carrying your perishable products to the New York Markets.*"⁹⁷

Tensions between the agricultural and tourism sectors were evident before the Great War, as each sector's proponents vied for economic and sociopolitical dominance. When the TDB was formed in 1913 members of the House of Assembly debated over the possible challenges posed by tourism; believing that some of the island's leaders and wished to pursue tourism at the expense of agriculture. During the parliamentary debates of the Trade Development Board bill MCP E.F. Zuill, a Smith's parish planter who produced large amounts of celery for export, made the following observation: "*Mr. Chairman it is all very well to listen to such remarks on behalf of the tourist business but the sooner the Legislature realizes the necessity of fostering the agricultural industry the better it will be for the island as a whole. Unless the passenger boats carry our products*

⁹⁷ Royal Gazette November 6, 1919.

*away there is no chance of getting them away and are we going to sacrifice the farming industry for the tourist business entirely? I think that would be a great mistake. There are many people on the island that do not depend on the tourist.*⁹⁸

Following World War One these debates still informed Bermudian politics and socioeconomics. The viability of Bermuda's postwar agricultural sector was attested by the fact that there were 3,000 acres of land being farmed in 1921 when developers were constructing the new golf course and resort.⁹⁹ It is likely that this figure did not include home/backyard gardens planted for family subsistence. Therefore at least 24% of Bermuda's land – 3,000 acres out of 19 square miles (approximately 12,160 acres) was devoted to agricultural production in 1920. However Bermuda's arable land decreased precipitously by the 1930s with only 2,000 acres under cultivation. And this quantity of farmland would be reduced again by the time that the U.S. bases were constructed in the 1940s.¹⁰⁰

So while the taking of Tuckers Town to build the segregated Mid-Ocean tourism complex marked the postwar resurgence of tourism; it must also be acknowledged as major turning point that would feature in the eventual decline of agriculture in Bermuda. Up until this period, Bermuda's economy relied on export-agriculture,

⁹⁸ *Royal Gazette* August 16th 1913; Bermuda Men Here To Find More Ships" *New York Times* September 12th 1912.

⁹⁹ G.J. Butland, *Bermuda A New Study* (New York: Vantage Press, 1980), 54-57.

¹⁰⁰ G.J. Butland, *Bermuda A New Study* (New York: Vantage Press, 1980), 54-57.

tourism and servicing the Royal Navy and British Regiments bases. However, following the 1920s tourism took on a larger share of the island's economic activity and this influenced other areas of life in the colony.

Immigration

One of the other outcomes of the BDC land grab was a significant increase in white immigration, firstly the influx of Portuguese immigrants for construction and other labor demands related to the Mid Ocean project; secondly, a number of North American residents flocked to the island after purchasing or leasing holiday properties within the Mid-Ocean cottage colony. A 1920 *Royal Gazette* editorial titled "The Labour Situation" outlined the issues of the labor immigration situation in the following manner: *"Tuckers Town is to be developed on a large scale... workers will be needed. To get these workers either the local farm supply will have to be further depleted or men will have to be brought here from places abroad.... It is unlikely that those who have organized the Bermuda Development Company would care to assume the responsibility of further depleting our already diminished supply of hands. Therefore it seems likely that they will make every effort to procure labourers from some other field – preferably from some of the Portuguese islands."*¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ "The Labour Situation" *Royal Gazette* September 28, 1920.

According to editor, and others sharing his point of view, the BDC should import Portuguese laborers to build the hotel. However, the editorial espoused a broader vision for these immigrants capable of lasting far beyond the period of construction. The editor asserted that: *"if a significant number of Portuguese were brought hither at this time it would relieve the strain on the present labour market and, as the Tuckers Town operations reached their conclusion, it would leave with us a much needed increment to stabilize the situation in future."*¹⁰² To appreciate the 'labor shortage' that the editor described it is critical to recognize the issue was rooted in the politics of labor, economics and race. In the years which followed emancipation, former slaveholders and government officials complained about the island's alleged labor shortages. Based on this premise whites in government had enacted periodic subsidized labor immigration programs to undermine the occupational monopoly of black Bermudians, or to manipulate the availability and wages of labor in ways that favored employers.

Beginning in the 1840s and continuing into the early twentieth century, white immigrants from England, Scotland, Sweden, Germany, and Portuguese islands such as the Madeiras and Azores, as well as black laborers from other British West Indies countries had been introduced by government labor legislation and subsidies, as well

¹⁰² "The Labour Situation" *Royal Gazette* September 28, 1920.

as financial incentives.¹⁰³ White Bermudian employers deliberately brought in comparatively lower-paid contractual laborers in order to undermine the allegedly 'high wages' demanded by Black Bermudians and/or weaken the labor monopoly of black Bermudians. The ensuing economic competition between black Bermudians and white Portuguese, as well as black West Indian immigrants, resulted in racial and intra-racial social tensions.¹⁰⁴

So in keeping with the 1920 gazette editorial the BDC and/or Furness Withy reportedly brought "600 Portuguese laborers... to the Colony" for "the completion of the Castle Harbour Hotel" in the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ Blackiston, the New York manager of Furness Withy, recommended importing foreign laborers and paying them higher wages than islanders. However, he had been advised against this plan by Bermudian elites who believed it would "demoralize our labour market" possibly causing unrest.¹⁰⁶ When the matter was discussed during a 1921 TDB meeting MCP E.F. Zuill argued that Blackiston's plan would have worked with certain modifications. Zuill believed that foreign workers should be brought in at a high wage while refusing to employ Bermudian workers, who would in turn be compelled to work in the agricultural

¹⁰³ P. Marirea Mudd, *Portuguese Bermudians: An Early History and Reference Guide 1849-1949* (Louisville Kentucky: Historical Research Publishers, 1991), 60-71.

¹⁰⁴ W. Brown Jr., *Bermuda and the Struggle for Reform: race, Politics and Ideology 1944-1998* (Bermuda: Cahow Press, 2011), 8-12; T.M. Dill, "Bermuda Laws and Franchise" *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1932), 220-221.

¹⁰⁵ Betty Smith, "The Story of Furness Withy" *The Sunday Royal Gazette* March 8, 1953, 12.

¹⁰⁶ *Royal Gazette* September 27 1921.

sector.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, such discussions indicate desires to use imported labor to further the business interests of the BDC and manipulate the local labor market in ways that benefitted white employers and elites.

Furthermore, data confirms that the island's white population increased noticeably after the building of the Mid Ocean project. In 1911 Bermuda's population was 18,994 – 12,303 Black (Coloured) and 6,691 White; in 1921 the population was 20,127– 13, 121 Black (Coloured) and 7,006 White. In the decade preceding the BDC project, the island's population increased by 1,133 persons of which, 315 were Whites and 818 Blacks. However, in 1931 Bermuda's population leapt to 27,789 consisting of 16,436 Black (Coloured) and 11,353 Whites. Within a decade of the Tucker's Town land expropriation in 1920 the population rose by 7,662 persons. The white population grew by 4,347 and the Black population grew by 3,315 persons.¹⁰⁸

These figures included Portuguese laborers because the Bermuda census did not categorize them as a separate racial category until 1939, before that date they were classified as 'White; in these demographic reports – irrespective of the discrimination and distinctions that existed in Bermudian society at the time. Still, this data is striking for a number of reasons, namely that the island's white population had

¹⁰⁷ *Royal Gazette September 27 1921.*

¹⁰⁸ "Table 3 Total Population Tables for Census Taken in Previous Years and 1950 by Sex" *Great Britain Colonial Office Annual Report on Bermuda: Report for the years 1955 and 1956* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office: London, 1958), 11.

not increased by more than 500 persons in a decade since the 1890s. Also, for the last five censuses (1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921) the black population over each decade had grown by an average of 2 to 3.5 times that of the white rate of growth. However, between 1921 and 1931 the growth of the white population outpaced blacks by approximately 1.3 times. The next time that the population would rise so dramatically would be the 1940s, the period of U.S. base construction. Therefore, significant transformations in population and racial demographics were a lasting impact of the Tuckers Town land grab.

Racial Segregation

Another unforeseen consequence of FWC service to Bermuda was the arrival of new clientele, Jews and African Americans. Since the TDB's advertising campaigns had targeted affluent and upper class Americans, they invariably came to the attention of sophisticated Jewish professionals residing in the urban centers along the U.S. East coast. Although they had vacationed in the colony during the years before the war, larger numbers of Jews began to arrive soon after the war and by the early 1930s Furness estimated that 20% of the Americans travelling to Bermuda each year were Jewish.¹⁰⁹ However, this uptick in Jewish tourists perturbed some of the colony's whites

¹⁰⁹ *Minutes of the Trade Development Board* – See Furness Bermuda Lines report described during meetings in February 1937

as well as American clients. Christian white Americans (read 'WASPs') began to voice their concerns about the increasing presence of Jews 'ruining' Bermuda. Such comments found the ears of white Bermudian hoteliers and by the late 1920s several hotels and guest houses began to bar Jews. Hotels such as The Elbow Beach and Mid Ocean Golf Club rewrote their advertisements in the late 1920s to include the statement that their properties only served a "*restricted clientele*", this coded statement indicated that Jews were not welcome.¹¹⁰ The other FWC property, the Castle Harbour also enforced the color line. However, due to the social unrest surrounding the 1959 theater boycott, the Castle Harbour joined with other hotels to relax (not completely end) its racial policy on Sunday June 29th 1959 Charles Pearman Wilson, the executive vice president of the Bermuda Hotel and Guest House Association, announced that the association had decided to desegregate the following seven major hotels including The Castle Harbour.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ E. Hodgson, *The Experience of Racism in Bermuda and its Wider Context: Reflections of Dr. Eva Hodgson – Scholar Researcher and Advocate* (Hamilton: Bermuda Press Limited, 2008), 5-11; D. Levine, "Jewish in Bermuda Part 3: The Jewish Question" *American Diversity Report* – August 2014. <http://www.americandiversityreport.com/>

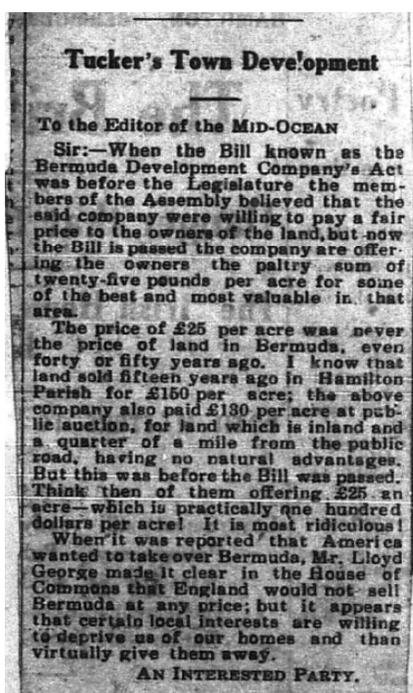
¹¹¹ *Bermuda Recorder July 1st 1959* "Hotels Initiate the Beginning of End of Jim Crowism in Local Public Places"

How did the communities of residences of the land grab respond?

To fully appreciate the resistance of Tuckers Town residents one must acknowledge that challenges to the BDC project came from various communities in the island.

Including: the general public e.g. Laura Bluck and A.E. Bourne; those in political office

Dr. TH Outerbridge , well as those living in Tucker's Town.



Mid Ocean News October 23rd 1920 - A.E. Bourne enclosed this story in a letter to HRH the Prince of Wales – Bermuda Archives

Laura Bluck penned a letter to the editor of the gazette in March 1920 warning

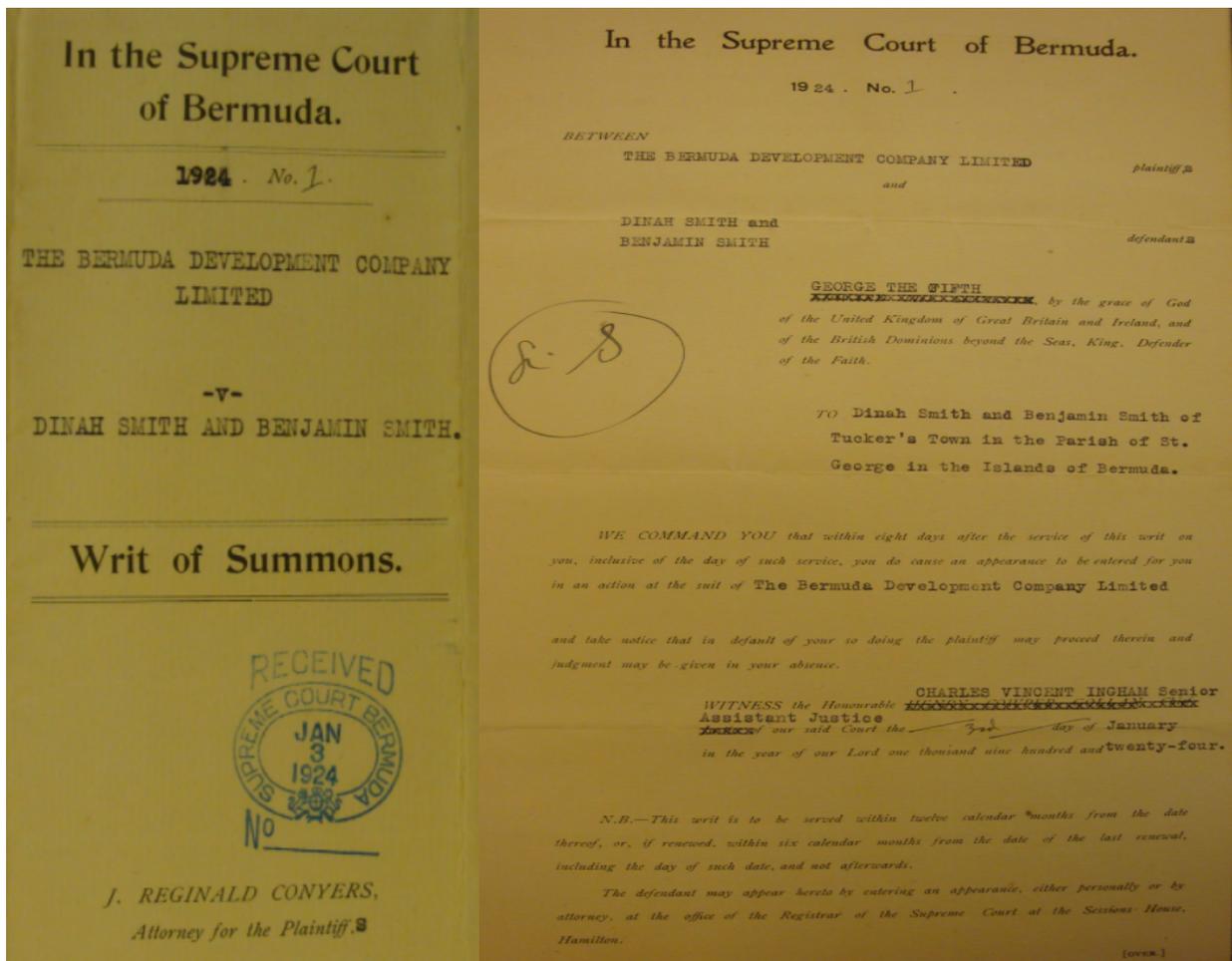
Bermudians to wake up before they lost their rights to foreign companies! Front Street

merchant A.E. Bourne sent a letter to HRH the Prince of Wales with a newspaper

clipping enclosed that criticized the Tuckers Town development and requested colonial

intervention to stop the 'dark deeds' being enacted by private interests in Bermuda.¹¹²

Before his fellow MCPs voted in favor of BDC Act No2 , Dr. Outerbridge warned his colleagues that it was "improper to dispossess a man from his freehold in a country where the franchise is in the nature of the freehold."¹¹³



Supreme Court Writ of Summons BDC Vs Dinah and Benjamin Smith, January 3, 1924, Supreme Court – Bermuda Archives

¹¹² "A.E. Bourne to the Prince of Wales" October 29, 1920 – BDC Folder 2 – Bermuda Archives.

¹¹³ *Debates of the House of Assembly*, August 6, 1920 – Bermuda Archives.

With respect to Tuckers Town residents one of the more notable examples of overt resistance to the land grabs was the story of Mrs. Dinah Smith. Smith was one of the Tuckers Town residents that signed the petition against the BDC Act No. 2. She was related to at least 8 of the 24 petition signers. She and her husband Benjamin were residing on her deceased father Josiah Smith's land when the BDC was making their rounds buy the region. Josiah had ten children and over twenty-five grandchildren, however in his last will Josiah divided his 8.5 acre property among his children and grandchildren ensuring that the land would remain in the family. His move was reminiscent of Melvin Smith's father.

During the BDC land grabs Dinah and her husband refused to answer the commissioners' many requests. Since the BDC did not have legal power to issue a court summons Smith ignored them, remaining in Tuckers Town long after much of the community had left. The golf course was completed in December 1921 but Smith remained due in part to the coastal location of her land on Tuckers Town bay she was not in the path of most golfers and tourists. As more tourists frequented the area, the BDC made a final push to acquire the land by approaching her relatives to sign over their portions of the title.

The BDC held their final hearing in September 1923 to seize Dinah Smith's land – she and her brother Jabez were awarded shares of the £4,000 compulsory purchase –

indicative of the steep rise in value once blacks had been removed from the region. In spite of being entitled to a £600 payment Smith refused to claim it and sign over her interest in the property. The BDC filed a case against her in January 1924 and she hired A.B. Rennie to defend herself against the company. After a protracted legal battle that she was unable to win, the BDC used the enacted a final act of (gendered-)violence against Smith, dispatching the police to force Smith off her ancestral land in June 1924.

Supreme Court Writ of Possession BDC vs Dinah and Benjamin Smith June 2nd 1924,
Supreme Court – Bermuda Archives

<p>IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BERMUDA 1924. No.1.</p> <hr/> <p>THE BERMUDA DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v</p> <p>DINAH SMITH and BENJAMIN SMITH.</p> <hr/> <p>PRABOICE. <i>In Writ of Possession</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">RECEIVED SUPREME COURT JUN 2 1924</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J. Reginald Conyers Attorney for Plaintiffs.</p>	<p>IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BERMUDA 1924. No. 1.</p> <p>Between</p> <p>THE BERMUDA DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED Plaintiffs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <p>DINAH SMITH and BENJAMIN SMITH Defendants</p> <p>Seal a Writ of Possession directed to Our Provost Marshal General to deliver possession to The Bermuda Development Company Limited of ALL THAT certain parcel of land situate in Tucker's Town in the Parish of St. George in the Islands of Bermuda known as The Estate of Josiah Smith containing Eight and one half acres or thereabouts bounded Southeasterly by the waters of Tucker's Town Bay and on all other sides by lands of the Plaintiffs which said parcel of land is inter- sected by the public road leading to the public wharf at Tuc- ker's Town Together With all buildings thereon.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Judgment dated 26th day of May 1924.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reginald Conyers</i> Attorney for Plaintiffs.</p>
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Conclusion Tucker's Town

The ramifications of the land grab are extensive. The redevelopment of the region into an elite segregated tourist resort dramatically increased the value of real estate in Tuckers Town – a fact that remains true until the time of this report. In light of this, the beneficiaries of the land grab reach beyond the international white matrices of power that linked Furness Withy Company Limited, the Bermuda Development Company, the British Colonialism, the House of Assembly, C.B. Macdonald, C. Wetmore, H.C. Blackiston, F.G. Gosling S.S. Spurling J.P. Hand, Watlington and Conyers, R.W. Appleby, and the other individuals to execute the initial plans. Indeed, the beneficiaries of the land grab touch some of the businesses currently operating in these captured lands. This would include for example, the landowners of 'Billionaires Row' whose properties were once part of the FWC-BDC colony of vacation cottages; the local and international real estate agencies profiting from their conveyance, as well as the local and international financial institutions holding mortgages and related financial instruments on these properties. The losses of people like Mrs. Dinah Smith, B.D. Talbot, and countless others requires introspection and creative solutions to address the losses of land, culture and historical knowledge of the worlds they created before they were captured by tourist economies.

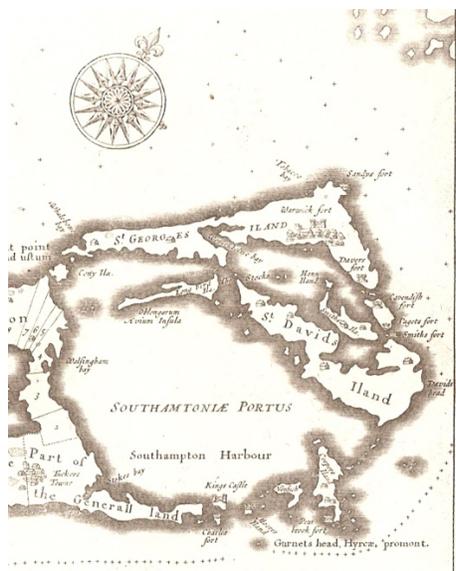
*St. David's, Dispossession and Displacement during World War II and the
US Base. Quito Swan, Ph.D.*

Introduction

This report finds that the building of the United States military bases in Bermuda during World War II was facilitated by a discriminatory and irregular land dispossession in St. David's Island and surrounding areas orchestrated by a matrix of White internationalism—British colonialism, US imperialism, and Bermuda's oligarchy. This uneven process with consistent racist overtones consistently pitted the will and power of British colonial officials, US military authorities, and the island's white oligarchy against the desires of a small community of largely black Bermudians of African and Native American heritage who possessed limited economic, political, and social power. As such this process (the negotiations, media coverage, passing of Acts and Bills, compensation, displacement, legalities, arbitration and appeals)—must be understood within the context of the power disparities that undergirded these systemic complex interactions of colonialism, imperialism, racism, ethnicity, sexism, racism, power, and class that negatively impacted on Bermuda's black community in general.

A WWII "destroyers-for-bases" agreement between the United States and British governments allowed the construction of military bases in Bermuda via a 99-year land lease. Bermuda was regarded as a "gift," as no war ships were exchanged. After canvassing the entire island in September 1940, US military officials clandestinely initially chose to build a joint

army and navy base along the Great Sound, including parts of Warwick, Southampton, Granaway Deep and Riddell's Bay. Bermuda's white oligarchy rejected this plan under claims that it would impact tourism, and that substantial American residents and desirable (wealthy and white) tourists would go elsewhere. In collusion with the British Home Office, a Governor appointed Bermuda Committee that represented this oligarchy explicitly offered St. David's to US military officials for land dispossession *because* the latter was populated by a non-white community that was primarily racially black, economically and politically vulnerable, and geospatially expedient. This led to the US military acquisition of some 437 acres of land from 118 privately home properties, totaling some 65 families, and the subsequent addition of 750 acres of dredge fill.



Early Map of St. David's Island.



Map of Bermuda, St. David's highlighted.

The decision to build the base in St. David's was a racist and clandestine process in and of itself, and the community was targeted without any consultation. Before the land grab, St. David's was a largely sustainable and primarily black community that had developed a complex ecosystem of culture, internal economics and agricultural driven by farming and fishing. In the process of the grab this eco system suffered from loss of livelihood, land, and begrudgingly accepted the terms of the deal while demonstrating its grievances over the duration of the process which began in September 1940 and continued till after WWII ended. This discrimination and wrongdoing occurred in the processes of the selection of St. David's; the devaluing of the land, homes, and livelihood of St. David's Islanders; and the process of arbitration and displacement.

St. David's Island before the alleged land grab

Historically speaking, the development of St. David's Island was intricately linked to the Atlantic slave trade and the enslavement of African and indigenous American Pequot communities in the seventeenth century stemming from "King Philip's War" in Massachusetts. In 1637, the ship *Desire* brought enslaved Pequot persons to Bermuda in exchange for enslaved Africans; in February 1638 it returned to Boston with "cotton, tobacco and Negroes."¹¹⁴ These Pequot were enslaved in St. David's, and along with enslaved African persons, forcibly worked in the industries of tobacco, livestock, shipbuilding, fishing and whaling. St. David's was also a site of resistance to slavery; On June 22, 1799, an ad in the *Bermuda Gazette* warned against taking a "Negro Man" named Thias off of the island without the permission of a Mary Brangman.¹¹⁵ In 1824 an ad in the *Bermuda Gazette* suggested that Cretia, an absconded enslaved black woman may have been harboured there; a ten dollar reward was placed for her return, having escaped four times prior.¹¹⁶ By the abolition of chattel slavery in Bermuda in August 1834, the island's ethnically diversified community produced arrowroot, onions, and potatoes. By the twentieth century, lilies emerged as a critical export crop. At the onset of WWII, St. David's it was a primarily independent agricultural community and a center of commercial farming for Bermuda.

¹¹⁴ Richard Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996), 246.

¹¹⁵ *Bermuda Gazette*, June 22, 1799, 2.

¹¹⁶ "Absconded," *Bermuda Gazette*, November 6, 1924, 1.

In 1940, the population of St. George's and St. David's was approximately 422 white men, 383 white women, 955 black men and 905 black women.¹¹⁷ St. David's Island remained disconnected to mainland Bermuda until 1934. It was divided along racial and class lines marked by the Western and Eastern sides of the island. Historian Steven High, author of *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere* argues that St. David's was residentially divided along segregated racial lines. White families and individuals, owned larger properties in the West end and were engaged in some forms of "tourist speculation." In contrast, black communities owned and lived on smaller properties and, along with some white absentee landowners (such as MCP for St. George's Stanley Spurling, towards the East of the island).¹¹⁸

Churches were segregated. This included the oldest surviving church in St. David's, the Chapel of Ease. According to Annie Foggo, it was uncomfortable to sit in its segregated pews, and she was far happier at St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal Church; when older, she refused to attend the Chapel until the end of segregation ceased.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Bermuda Blue Book*, 1940.

¹¹⁸ Steven High, *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56.

¹¹⁹ "St. David's," *Bermudian*, December 3, 2014, <https://www.thebermudian.com/heritage/heritage-heritage/st-david-s/>.

Since the era of enslavement, black St. David's islanders ethnically developed as a community largely of mixed Native American and African heritage linked by distinct kinship networks. Figure 1 below highlights these kinship dynamics.¹²⁰

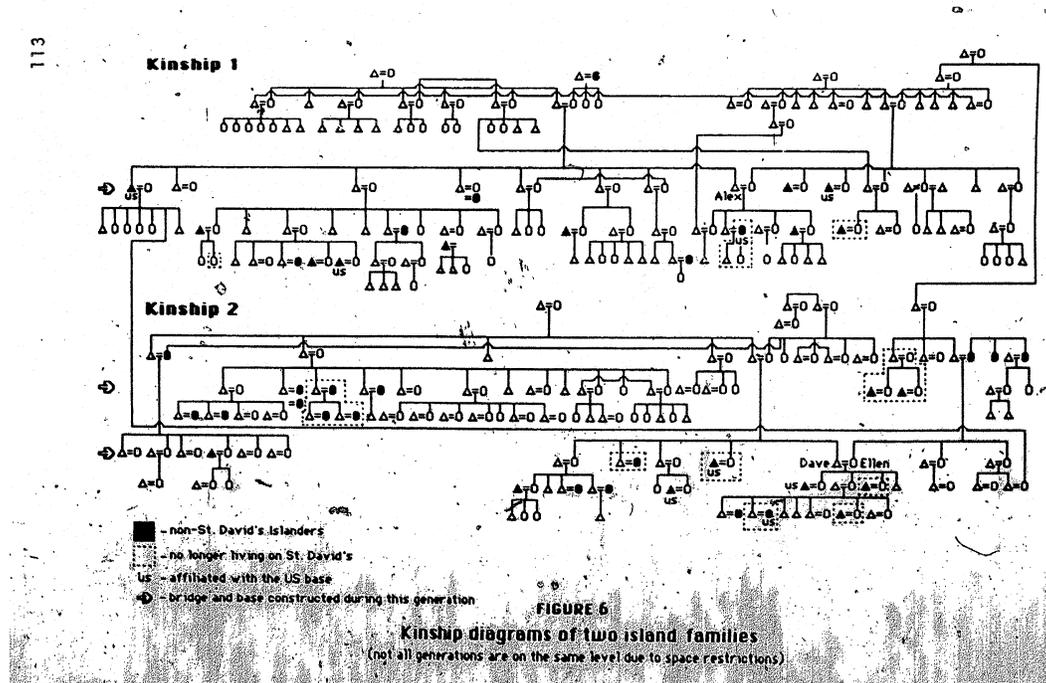


Figure 1. Kinship in St. David's.¹²¹

This geographical isolation and mixed racial heritage led to popular perceptions of St. David's Islanders as being outsiders, "country," "different" or backwards. Writing in *The Bermudian* in 2018, St. David's Island's historian, St. Claire Tucker asserted that

¹²⁰ Geoffrey Scott Rothwell, "Mohawks in the Onion Patch: The Creation and Maintenance of a Group Distinctions in Bermuda," M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1988, 113.

¹²¹ Ibid.

St. David's was completely isolated in those early days...The Native Americans of St. David's welcomed African and West Indian slaves into their community, but Bermuda's white population often looked down on them. This stigma caused the people of St. David's to intermarry over the course of the ensuing centuries...it was common for a native, in previous generations, to live his entire life without leaving St. David's Island.¹²²

He continued,

St. David's Islanders looked different and sounded different; they had different accents, and they dressed differently...Education was not a priority. They were strong, clannish and hardworking. 'Town' people made fun of them. It still exists a bit today...St. David's Islanders have known of their heritage because of ridicule.¹²³

These negative perceptions stretched beyond Bermuda. For example, historian and novelist Van Wyck Mason's 1938 *The Castle Island Case*, set in St. David's and St. George's, featured luggage carrying Negroes described as grinning "black sooty-skinned urchins," huge blacks, coal black Negroes, racist depictions of Voodoo and

¹²² "Restless Natives," *Bermudian*, May 12, 2018, <https://www.thebermudian.com/heritage/heritage-heritage/restless-natives/>

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Gombeys, black criminality, and a fisherman and boatsman from St. David's, "Creepy Smith, the Indian." Creepy was described as having a "hook nose and high cheek bones," very dark blue eyes that restlessly flickered, feline agility and dark skin with a coppery undertone. One reference to Creepy went as follows, "Say, Barney, that boatman of yours is one of the queerest looking shines I've ever laid eyes on. Where'd he get a nose like that? Oh, Creepy's descended from the Pequots of St. David's Island." These Pequot "simply wouldn't do slaves work. The only things they were good at were whaling and boat building." The protagonist pondered on the immutability of Mendel's law.¹²⁴

Pejoratively referred to as "Mohawks," these negative and misrepresentations of St. David's Islanders influenced the process in which their land was appropriated for the building of the base. Yet, St. David Islanders were critical members of the cultural life of black Bermuda. This included cricket legend Charles Hilgrove "War Baby" Fox. Fox, who would be displaced, was a well-known star of Cup Match. He frequently represented Bermuda abroad in cricket games, including a highly successful 1929 tour of the United States. Fox also owned a dance hall in St. David's.

¹²⁴ *The Eagle*, May 5, 1938, 2.



Charles (War Baby) Fox's Touring Team in America, 1929.¹²⁵

At the time of WWII, St. David's was a thriving agricultural hub for Bermuda. The black community was comprised of largely fishermen and farmers who raised gardens, kept piggeries, cultivated fruit trees, and grew crops such as arrowroot, cassava, potatoes, easter lilies, and a variety of other vegetables. The Southeast part of the island was home to forty of the sixty St. David's islander families of "modest income." They either owned or rented small plots and subsisted on their lands. Farmer Archibald Fox was the island's largest cassava

¹²⁵ <http://www.expobermuda.com/index.php/latesthof/723-edward-bosun-swainson>

grower. As cassava was not a critical export crop, Fox likely engaged a largely domestic market.¹²⁶ Solomon and Rose Fox's family lived off of fifty banana trees, five orange trees, four lime trees and a grapevine.

The fishing industry in St. David's was a complex cultural and community ecosystem, whereby fisherman shared waters. The island boasted of generations of whalers, perhaps none more popular than Tommy Fox who had done so since the nineteenth century. Three of St. David's farms produced half the total amount of lilies grown in Bermuda. In 1940, lily bulbs represented 12% (13,000 USD) of Bermuda's domestic exports, which went mainly to Canada and the United States. From 1929-1940, they were Bermuda's second largest export (7%, 145,000 USD). In 1939 some 1.5 million lily bulbs were planted—500,000 of this total were exported and one million replanted. As such, over 750,000 lily bulbs were planted in St. David's.¹²⁷

Politically speaking, while the black population (1,860) more than doubled the white population (805) in the joint electoral parish, there were 177 registered white voters to 167 black voters. This was due to Bermuda's discriminatory electoral policies, which were designed to maximize the voting power of wealthy whites and minimize the voting potential of

¹²⁶ St. David's Arbitration Case No 40, Archibald Ambrose Fox, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, Bermuda National Archives, Bermuda.

¹²⁷ *Bermuda Blue Book*, 1940.

Bermuda's majority black population. Electors in the area could only be men who "possessed in their own right or in right of their wives within the electoral parish" a land assessment at not less than £60. Members of Assembly had to own property rated at £240. As such, Bermuda's House of Assembly, St. George's and St. David's constitutionally voted in four Members of Colonial Parliament (MCP) in Bermuda's House of Assembly —Stanley Spurling, E.P.T. Tucker, S.S. Toddings, and W.S. Cooper—all white men. This problematic dynamic would impact the dispossession of St. David's.¹²⁸

St. David's had three churches representing the Church of England (50 persons), Wesleyan Methodist St. David's Chapel (30 persons) and St. Luke's AME Church (25 persons).¹²⁹ Interestingly, the first President of the Bermuda Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Dr. Richard Hilton Tobitt, pastored at the St. David's AME Church from 1914 to 1920. As such, despite not having a bridge to the mainland Bermuda until the 1930s, in the early twentieth century, St. David's held a connection to the broad threads of Black internationalism sweeping the world in that era.

Why, when and how did the alleged land grabs occur?

On September 4, 1940, a WWII "destroyers-for-bases" agreement between the British and United States and governments called for the construction of military bases in Bermuda via

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

a 99-year land lease. Britain did not give up any warships in exchange for the land in Bermuda, which had significant strategic value for the United States during the War. Yet, it was not inevitable that St. David's would be the site of the US Base.

On September 5, 1940, US Navy Rear Admiral John W. Greenslade arrived in Hamilton, Bermuda on the U.S.S St. Louis to scout the island for navy and army installations. He was flanked by a Committee that included representatives from the Army, Navy, Marines and Lt. Col. Omar T. Pfeiffer, U.S. Marine Corps, Member and Recorder. They were officially called on by U.S. Consul General, William H. Beck, British Governor to Bermuda, Lieutenant General Sir Denis Bernard, and Vice Admiral Sir Charles Kennedy-Purvis, Commander in Chief of the British West Indies Naval Forces. Meetings were arranged with British officials to extensively determine essential land, sea, and air requirements.¹³⁰

The first official meeting to discuss the proposed Bases was held between the Greenslade team and British representatives (with Bermudian sanction), namely Governor Bernard, Colonial Secretary Hon. Eric Dutton (who was were there to supposed voice the opinions of Bermuda), Vice Admiral Kennedy-Purvis, and Rear Admiral J. Powell, Royal Navy Commodore of H.M. Dockyard naval authority.¹³¹

The Greenslade Committee covertly visited Dockyard, Riddell's Bay, islands in the Great Sound, St. George's, and St. David's. On September 3, 1940, he announced to that his team

¹³⁰ Iris Vaughn, *1939 – 1945, Historical Notes for NOB/NAS History*, 1945, US Bases Collection, Bermuda National Archives, Bermuda, 10.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 15.

had chosen land in the area of Warwick and Southampton Parish from North to South Shore, continuing from “approximately Spithead—in Granaway Deep, following the shoreline up to Jew’s Bay close to Gibb’s Hill Lighthouse, space for a landing strip and a 2.5 x .5 mile area for the US Navy at Riddell’s Bay.”¹³²

On September 8, 1940, Greenslade met with the Governor, who informed him that his original instructions from the Home Government stressed that the meetings in Bermuda were to be only for consultation purposes and that no commitments were to be made by local government officials. The Governor said he had cabled some of the information but had still been requested to make no commitments. He informed Greenslade that he “had appointed a Committee of prominent citizens, including members of the Legislative Council, to obtain their views on the question of the US establishing a base in Bermuda.”¹³³

Formed on September 2, this Committee of prominent Bermudian citizens—read, wealthy white men, was comprised of Colonial Secretary Dutton, Attorney General Trounsell Gilbert, J.D.B. Talbot (member of Legislative Council), MCPs W.J. Howard Trott, J.W. Cox and Henry Jack Tucker (manager of Bank of Bermuda) and Hal Butterfield (managers of Bank of Butterfield). On September 4th, the Committee advised the Governor on three specific issues—to limit the amount of seaplanes operating in Bermuda in times of peace; that costs of land defenses be passed on to the British government, and that “advantage be taken of the

¹³² Ibid, 19.

¹³³ Ibid, 20.

negotiations to persuade the American Government to lift the "immigration ban on the entry of coloured persons into the United States."¹³⁴

Hoping to get feedback, Greenslade had difficulty in arranging meetings with the local Committee, which, according to his team, "maintained a quaint, if unorthodox attitude that a formal meeting with the Americans would commit them officially, yet they were quite willing to meet American representatives socially, discussing all angles informally, continuing, however, to religiously veer away from any official conference."¹³⁵

Dutton, who presided over the September 8th meeting, was asked by the Governor to report on the "general attitude" of Bermudians in relation to the situation. He claimed that the "last thing" that the people of island desired to do was to "embarrass either the British or US Governments." If it was a question of war, said, Dutton, the United States military could "take the whole damned place." However, "local citizens" were "upset at the extensive land proposals presented by the US" on two grounds. Number one, that the base would "take away a lot of charm from the island and spoil the tourist industry on which they greatly depended locally." He claimed that people also feared that in the aftermath of the war there would be a loss of both the tourist trade and expenditures made in connection with the presence of the bases.¹³⁶ Furthermore, he added that the noise of 150 or more planes would drive away the

¹³⁴ Dutton, *A History of WWII*, BNA, 58.

¹³⁵ Vaughn, 14.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 21.

thousands of Americans” who came to Bermuda to avoid such noises.¹³⁷ Greenslade interjected that he had heard similar expressions from local people at social gatherings during his visit to Bermuda, but he felt that this reaction was understandable but hardly warranted as Oahu and Panama had fared okay with similar military interventions.¹³⁸

Interestingly, Dutton referenced his concerns that the US base would significantly increase Bermuda’s population density of 1,600 persons per square mile with the addition of some 5,500-person related to US service personnel. The Colonial Secretary stated that Bermuda was considering to formally ask the US to remove the quota on Black persons entering the United States in order to relieve population pressure on the island, and for Greenslade to give this some consideration.¹³⁹

As the Greenslade team left the island, it was clear to Dutton that the Bermuda Committee strongly opposed the US proposal from the onset. The Committee felt that the British Government had “sold them out,” a charge that Britain’s Secretary of State denied, asserting that he had requested that the Governor use his influence to “transfer the scheme to the East End.” Meanwhile, the Bermuda Committee created a copious coded statement that was forwarded to the Secretary of State with the use of “1500 cypher groups.” Meanwhile, the Governor ordered officers to inspect alternative areas at East End and to report if these could be made available to the United States, and at a more efficient manner than Riddle’s Bay. This

¹³⁷ Dutton, 61.

¹³⁸ Vaughn, 21.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 23.

subsequent proposal, the Bermuda Committee's report and US Committee's proposal were sent to the Secretary of State between 8-9th of September. At the end of September, the Bermuda Committee sought to go to Washington to press their case. There was considerable apprehension about the proposals, and the Committee felt that any pieces of legislation around the expropriation of property would not pass the House of Assembly. However, the Committee's *saeva indignatio* (savage indignation) "was tempered with a proper eye to the main chance"—they were claiming monetary compensation from the US Government for some \$10,000,000 a year.¹⁴⁰

Early in October, the Secretary of State approved the Bermuda Committee's request to send Henry Tucker and Hall Butterfield to Washington DC to speak to the British Ambassador about their position. There they stated their opposition to the Riddell's Bay proposals. Throughout the month it was reported that opposition to the Greenslade proposal continued to stiffen.¹⁴¹

Due to this dissent among Bermuda's white elite, Greenslade and his team returned to Bermuda in late October 1940. They were met with what he referred to as a "rather alarmed voice of Bermudian citizenry" which strongly expressed dissent with the base development in Riddell's bay via an unsigned "Summary of Objections to Proposals of the United States Board." The US Committee expressed some sympathy for the position—"picture the average

¹⁴⁰ Dutton, 61, 63-65.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 82-83.

Bermudian realizing his livelihood—tourists—would be supplanted by thousands of American servicemen. The document apparently presented “social and economic problems of housing, middle class recreation, sanitation, health, policing, and diplomacy” and the notion of becoming “Americanized.” The Bermuda Committee was opposed to the use of Riddell’s Bay because “it contained many homes of wealthy Americans,” and the waters there were used for the “favorite pastime, yachting, the islands for picnics.” They were concerned that the development would “strangle normal communication between Somerset and Bermuda. Then, the Summary continued, “Bermudians favored the East End (St. David’s) sector of the island, as less people would be displaced by choosing that spot.”—this was, in fact, a blatant lie. “Bermuda,” and certainly not St. David’s islanders, had been consulted.¹⁴² The Committee claimed that a base in the Great Sound would disrupt social, economic and political life of the island, including Bermuda’s tourist industry. It claimed that yacht racing and pleasure boating would be interrupted, and that more desirable American residents and several influential families lived in the area of the Sound. It suggested to US officials that St. David’s would be an ideal because “less important” amenities would be disturbed, fewer persons lived, and fewer political problems might arise.¹⁴³

The Governor told Greenslade that the British Government preferred St. David’s for the base as well. Economic dislocation by the base would deteriorate real estate values, “loss of business in high grade shops, hotels and guest homes.” Furthermore, the “burden occasioned

¹⁴² Vaughn, 25.

¹⁴³ High, 49.

by displacing whole groups of Bermudians and transferring them to other homes to accommodate the bases seemed more than Bermuda could encounter.¹⁴⁴

He again hoped to meet with the Bermuda Committee regarding the Summary of Objections, but was told by the Governor that this would be impossible, but there could be space for informal discussions.¹⁴⁵ Greenslade was disturbed. The Governor had been instructed by the Home Government to tell Greenslade “not to seek a meeting with local Bermudians” as they did not “want such a conference to be held or mentioned in later correspondence,” and that the approach to the Bermuda Committee needed to be informal. He continued, “a formal meeting would possibly subject some of the proposals to being misunderstood and the injection of bodies rather than this one here was not desirable—please do not have a round-table discussion with the Committee.” Furthermore, it was falsely argued, as the Colonial Secretary was there, it would not be necessary to have a discussion with the Committee.¹⁴⁶ The Colonial Secretary remarked that if Greenslade wanted to get “a good picture” of what was in the Committee’s mind than he should see Attorney General Trounwell Gilbert later that evening at a social event they were to attend. After all, it was Gilbert, a white Bermudian, who had drawn up the comprehensive statement.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Vaughn, 25.

¹⁴⁵ Dutton, 87.

¹⁴⁶ Vaughn, 29-30.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 30.

Greenslade was concerned that "the objections gave no idea whose opinions were stated, there being no signatures to identify the authors." There was nothing to authenticate the Summary. The Governor confirmed that the views presented were those of the Bermuda Committee, whose chairman was Dutton. Greenslade read off "astonishingly large figures for the dredging required for St. David's compared to Riddell's Bay and the Great Sound – 12,000,000 cubic yards for dredging and 6,000,000 more for the landing field. This would also take years. The Great Sound was chosen due to its proximity to Dockyard, and plus fewer people lived in the requested areas than East end.¹⁴⁸

Later that month British Naval staff offered St. David's Island to Greenslade. After revisiting the island's East End, and facing strong resistance to his plans, he conceded. Members of Bermuda's oligarchy had had their day, but his was a short-lived victory. Greenslade still pressed for use of the Great Sound for seaplanes and emergencies. In late October, Greenslade announced an agreement, via which the US would get the East End for the base as well as Morgan's Island in the Sound. In early November, the Bermuda Committee sought to address the issue of compensation. This request was sent to the Secretary of State, which included an issue raised by the Governor on behalf of the Committee the lifting of the embargo of black Bermudians into the United States, the lifting of embargo on vegetables

¹⁴⁸ Vaughn, 27.

reduction of taxation on Bermudian incomes accruing in United States and an annual cash-down payment (lowered to 2.5 million per year as opposed to 10 million).¹⁴⁹

To surmise, St. David's was chosen as the site for the base via covert discussions and debates between the US Military, British Colonial officials, and Bermuda's white elite. These discussions largely took place behind closed doors and were not part of a public discourse. In fact, the Bermudian and British Governments sought to keep the talks as secret as possible. By and large the residents of St. David's were not consulted on the decision and they had no representation on the "Bermuda" Committee. Through formal and informal discussions at official meetings and segregated social events, the Bermuda Committee spoke on behalf of the desires of Bermuda's oligarchy and placed tourism, weekend yachting jaunts and part time leisure over the daily livelihoods of St. David's Islanders, who had no representation at these meetings. This was unfair, and certainly irregular.

Announcing St. David's, Disloyalty and Empire

The Home Government instructed the Governor to have Bermuda's House of Assembly announce the decision to build the base in St. David's on the afternoon of November 18, 1940. This meant that several residents of St. David's would be displaced. Several MCPs expressed shock at the scope of the request, which begs further question. The following morning, Governor Bernard went to St. David's to speak to a large group of residents at Wesley Hall.

¹⁴⁹ Dutton, 87.

Flanked by Dutton, his ADC, and the aforementioned MCPS for St. George's—Spurling, Tucker, Toddings and Cooper— he expressed his “deep concern” as Governor but also as someone who had land issues in the past:

I know it is very easy to say one is sorry, and I know that I can do little more than say that, for money does not really count in these circumstances. I know that the houses you have been living in all your lives, and in which your ancestors lived will be hard to leave. I shall do my best.¹⁵⁰

Governor Bernard continued to tell the crowd that he had come to St. David's to acquaint them with the defense scheme, which had “come as a bombshell.” He pledged to appoint a Committee whose first duty would be to make sure they left their homes under the best possible terms. Bernard also stated that it was “a dreadful thing to think that one man was responsible for all this, that abominable man Hitler.” It was difficult to realize that “one man, a devil, had brought all these dreadful things to pass throughout the world and that, even in faraway Bermuda,” the effects of his wanton war were being felt. However, said the Governor, “Mr. Winston Churchill, whom they all knew, admired and studied, thought it was wise to have these bases leased to America. And if he said so, it was so.” While these residents might have been surprised at the amount of land taken, the Governor was “sure that they would take it in loyal spirit.” Printed in the *Royal Gazette*, the Governor

¹⁵⁰ “Governor Explains Bases At St. David's,” *Royal Gazette*, November 20, 1940, 1, 5, 8.

also said, "Mr. Hitler is primarily responsible for this base, yes, the one devil Hitler is responsible." However, he claimed, the Americans were "anxious to help." He continued, "We must make the best of the job; it is not a bad job. Bermuda is taking a big part in the Empire scheme. Demands are being made on all parts of the Empire, and this is their demand on us. We must all get to work." There was no empty space, and "*as bad luck would have it*" Castle Harbor suited the needs of the US officials, who needed a large space for planes, airfields, ships, guns, barracks and soldiers.¹⁵¹

But as we have seen, bad luck had nothing to do with the decision. The Governor took out a huge map of the plans and placed it on an easel. "There is a map here, and I shall be pleased if Sir Stanley Spurling will explain it." Stanley proceeded to do so, which raises some suspicion.¹⁵² If Spurling, a landowner in St. David's had just heard of these plans for the East End the day before, how could he have adequately explained these plans?

MCP Tucker bluntly informed the crowd, "There is no question of your livelihood being taken away from you. Take it all in good spirit," for the benefit of the British Empire. He would later state that in HOA that St. David's, "the poor and insignificant Parish" of which he happened to be a native of" had "at least demonstrated its material importance to the defense of Empire and the protection of the American continent."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid,

At the end of the meeting, a statement was read and allegedly accepted by the group:

Resolved, that his meeting of people vitally affected by the establishment of the USA defense base on St. David's Island, record their deep sense of remorse at losing their homes in which their families have lived for centuries, but wish to express their loyalty to the British Empire by accepting the sacrifice in a spirit of support for the ultimate winning of the war against Germany and Italy.¹⁵⁴

Colonial Secretary Dutton recalled that Toddings informed the group that

their fellow citizens at home [England] had been bombed and they had given their homes and their lives to bring this war to a successful conclusion. Everyone realizes that we are sorry for you; it is all caused by that fiend Hitler. Everything will be done as near as circumstances will permit to make you happy and comfortable, as you have been in the past.¹⁵⁵

Toddings claimed that there would be a wave of prosperity that this end of the island that could not yet be imagined. Still, no amount of money would compensate the group for what they would "have to do."¹⁵⁶

The meeting and issues surrounding the selection of St. David's continued to be discussed in the House of Assembly. When asked by Henry Watlington why the meeting was

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Dutton.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

kept secret, the retort was that public knowledge would have prejudiced the discussions. But these discussions misled the public. The Bermuda Committee claimed that Americans came to the island twice, reviewed entire country and made their decision based upon those assessments. The Committee sought to avoid clearly stating that they offered St. David's to US officials. Watlington himself still would concede—"It was only Adolf Hitler made everybody do this."¹⁵⁷

The white power structure hypocritically used the notion of "disloyalty" to the British Empire and the need to be fight against Hitler to pressure St. David's Islanders. Indeed, it is remarkably troubling to note how white MCP's threw words, concepts and phrases such as "empire, duty, citizen and home" at black Bermudians whose ancestors were violently enslaved and colonized in the name of the British empire, who, to this day, are not British citizens, and were, in the moment, not able to emigrate to America under racist immigration policies, yet were told that Hitler was the enemy. This is particularly striking, given white Bermuda's preexisting admiration for Germany and Nazism.

Case in point, in 1936 the Bermuda Athletic Association (BAA) handpicked an all-white swimming team to represent the island at Berlin's 1936 Olympics. The black owned newspaper, *Bermuda Recorder*, claimed that Bermuda and South Africa were the only majority black countries to send all white teams to Germany. The paper launched a vendetta against the

¹⁵⁷ "Assembly Debated US and Naval Base Yesterday," *Royal Gazette*, November 21, 1940.

insulting decision, which placed Bermuda in the same category as Germany and South Africa. Bermuda had catered “to the feelings of superiority of Herr Hitler and his Nazi Regime” by sending “lily-white contingents.” In fact, during the Olympic opening ceremony, the team hailed Hitler with a Nazi salute and had the “dubious distinction” of being the first country to do so.¹⁵⁸

The *Recorder* reminded its readers that Bermuda and South Africa were the only countries to send “lily-white” teams to London’s 1934 Empire Games. It critically asked, “Perhaps they reason that if colored troops who served at the front in the Great War cannot be members of the Bermuda War Veterans Association, why should colored people be amazed if they are not allowed to represent Bermuda in the Olympic games?” The “colored people are good enough to die for it. They must be good enough to live for it, and represent the colony on the fields of sport as well as in the arena of war...How long must we be shunned, insulted and degraded on the altar of race creed and color?”¹⁵⁹

Bermuda’s “alliance with Hitlerism” continued later in the month, when its Government organized a publicity event with a German aircraft company, Lufthansa. Organized by MCP Percy Tucker and the local agents for Lufthansa, John Darrell and Company, the Dentche A.G. Lufthansa Aeolus flew to Bermuda from the Azores in record time. The plane landed next to

¹⁵⁸ “Love’s Labor Lost?” *Recorder*, August 29, 1936, 2; “Bermuda and the Olympics,” *Recorder*, February 1, 1936, 1.

¹⁵⁹ “Never again,” *Bermuda Recorder*, September 5, 1936, 2, 7.

the Darrell and Company boat, which was flying a large Swastika flag. The flight crew disembarked with a Nazi salute.¹⁶⁰

Yet, in September 1940, the Acting British Governor responded to “ill-founded rumors of impending disturbances” by having numerous meetings with Black leaders. One G. A. Williams who came before the Governor to speak on behalf of Bermuda’s “coloured people.” He stated that the “colored people felt that no matter what future trails might lie ahead, whatever their King desired of them in the common cause that would gladly give.” On 21st of September, Robert Crawford, “senior colored member of the House of Assembly,” said that he had not heard one person regret that he belonged to the British Empire.¹⁶¹

The Uncrowned King of St. David’s/How did St. David’s Islanders react to the land grab?

While the mainstream narrative is that St. David’s islanders largely accepted the land grab, this perspective needs to be unpacked within the context of war, white power and misinformation. Indeed, all of these factors undermined the capacity for landowners to challenge the seizing of their land. Put another way, black Bermudians were placed under political, economic and social pressure to pledge allegiance not only to the British Empire, but also to acquiesce to American imperialism as a response to Hitler and Nazi Germany.

¹⁶⁰ “Bermuda and the Olympics,” *Bermuda Recorder*, February 1, 1936, 1; *Bermuda Recorder*, 12 September 1936, 1.

¹⁶¹ Dutton, 5-6.

The day after the meeting the *Gazette's* headline read, "Governor Explains U.S Bases at St. David's: Residents Accept Decision in Loyalty to Empire." The article included the supposed reasons for why St. David's was chosen—the protection of the tourist industry and life in the Great Sound. MCP Trott would claim that there was not one dissenting voice among the St. David's Islanders. "They were sad, naturally, because they had to leave the homes which they had occupied for generations but felt it was for the good of the Empire and therefore were perfectly satisfied."¹⁶² According to Dutton, at the meeting it was "impossible not to feel the utmost sympathy for this simple folk, many of whom were in tears as the Governor moved among them."¹⁶³

There were some voices critical of the situation. One letter to *Royal Gazette*, written by an American resident, read, "Think it over Bermudians, before it is too late. The US is entitled to a base. But why make people like the St. David's Islanders suffer—while the Somerset Colony, and Riddell's Bay golf "fans" smile."¹⁶⁴ News of the decision spread across the United States. Reprinted in several newspapers, Alan Waters reported that the decision was going to "force Bermuda families to leave land" that their ancestors had lived on for more than three centuries. These descendants of some of the oldest persons in Bermuda, shed tears at the

¹⁶² "Assembly Debated US and Naval Base Yesterday," *Royal Gazette*, November 21, 2021.

¹⁶³ Dutton.

¹⁶⁴ M.S., "Letter to the Editor," *Royal Gazette and Daily Colonist*, November 21, 1940, 2.

Governor's statement.¹⁶⁵ One internationally read news report remarked that St. David's Islanders had a unique way of life. The account problematically expected that they would "express indignation," but the Pequot Indian blood in the St. David's Islanders kept them silent.¹⁶⁶

MCP Toddings claimed that there was one person present at the meeting at Wesley Hall, who had told him not so long ago that if he was paid one pound for every minute of the day, he would not give up his home. "I see by the look on his face now," stated Toddings, "that he is willing to do that for the Mother Country." That one person was Henry Mortimer "Tommy" Fox. According to Dutton, Fox had long been regarded as the "Uncrowned King of St. David's." Fox had been bitterly opposed to the idea of land loss. He reported that he had said "if the taking of my land will help to do in that son-of-a-bitch, Hitler, they can have it for nothing."¹⁶⁷

Born in 1861, Fox was a living legend, and the largest landowner in St. David's. A former sergeant in the Bermuda Volunteer Rifle Corps of WWI in 1940 he owned some forty to sixty acres in the area. He also cultivated arrowroot. In December 1940, he informed the *Bermuda Magazine* that when he learned that most of St. David's Island was to be utilized

¹⁶⁵ Alan Waters, *Coshocton Tribune*, "US Defense Bases Force Bermuda Families to Leave Land Held Three Centuries," December 23, 1940, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Sunday News*, "Families Must Leave Bermuda As US Shapes Up New Bases," February 23, 1941, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Dutton.

to construct the U.S. naval base, he remained pretty close-lipped about his feelings. "I can't say what I feel like saying," he muttered. "I know what I've got to give. I don't know what I'm going to get."¹⁶⁸

Upon his death in 1942, the *New York Times* described Fox as being "tall as a ship's spar," with skin "like tanned leather" that was "burned with the suns of eighty-one summers." He "carried himself with kingly dignity" and was known and loved by "every Bermudian and a host of Americans." A whale hunter, he had once crawled into the belly of a captured one (which was on shore) to prove true the Bible's story of Jonah. The *New York Times* described Fox as being "a tribal chieftain," who St. David's Islanders brought their troubles and their feuds and that he settled them with "patience and common sense." It claimed that prior to the building of the base, numbers of Americans had offered to buy Tommy's home and land, to which he responded, "This is my home...I'll live here till I die." However, now the *Times* claimed, as he had always been "loyal to his island and to the Crown, he accepted the inevitable sorrowfully but with the dignity that characterized his life."¹⁶⁹ As poetic as this description sounds, St. David's Islanders showed their displeasure for the years to follow. For example, on January 1, the *New York Times* reported that two hundred St. David's Islanders were not relishing the idea of having to find new homes to make way for the base.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ "Tommy Fox: The 'King' of St. David's," *Bermudian Magazine*, December 1940.

¹⁶⁹ "Bermuda Figure," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1942, 22.

¹⁷⁰ "Bermuda Works out Compromise on Base," *New York Times*, January 2, 1941.

The St. David's Committee: Notes on St. David's Islanders

In December 1940, the British Governor appointed a five membered St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators to "advise and assist the people" who were to be "dispossessed of their lands" or who would "suffer damage" by the establishment of the Naval and Air bases by the Government of the United States. The Committee also had license to pay fixed sums of money to disposed persons. Yet again, the Committee was comprised of all white men who represented the island's oligarchy—Chairman MCP N.B. Dill, Esq, MCP W.S. Cooper, Esq, MCP Captain E.P.T. Tucker, W.E.S. Zuill, Esq., and R.S. McCallan, Esq. Their first meeting occurred on December 13, 1940 at the offices of Conyers, Dill, and Pearman.¹⁷¹ The Committee rented an office in St. David's from Gosling Brothers Ltd in the Flashing Avenue Restaurant (located across the street from Black Horse Bar) for 100 pounds a month to operate from. Its office was open from 9-12 and 1:30-4 pm for interviews.¹⁷² It was also tasked with finding available land in in St. David's, Smith's Island, and any Colonial or Imperial land for persons that would be dispossessed. In this first meeting Dill submitted a memorandum for a

¹⁷¹ Colonial Secretary Dutton to W.E.S. Zuill, December 11, 1940, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, Bermuda National Archives.

¹⁷² Report by Chairman, December 23, 1940, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, np, Bermuda National Archives.

procedure for conducting the dispossessions. The Colonial Government spent some 500 pounds on the Committee's expenses.¹⁷³

During the Committee's second meeting of December 24, 1940, it discussed ways to discover available land owned by the Imperial Government, the Colonial Government and non-residents who owned land in St. David's Island for the rehabilitation of dispossessed persons. In addition, it discussed the "necessity of adopting an attitude of paternalism in relation to the persons being dispossessed." It was claimed, on the one hand, that if some of these persons "were granted monetary compensation that it would probably be spent foolishly and not used to rebuild" a "proper house." On the other hand, it was noted that if the Government built them homes that they would not be satisfied and would feel that "too much money had been spent on the house and not enough cash left over for them to spend." It also discussed suggesting to the Colonial Secretary the legislation be passed to prevent land speculation in St. David's and Smith's Island, but not St. George's for the duration of the Committee's work. The Committee had also visited persons who were liable to be dispossessed and claimed that some families wanted to remain on St. David's and others wanted to go to Smith's Island.¹⁷⁴ High took this to mean that the Committee had decided to buy new homes for nonwhite persons, as black people could not be trusted with cash awards.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ E. Laing, Minutes of the First Meeting of the St. David's Committee, December 13, 1940. St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, 1.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of the Second Meeting of the St. David's Committee, December 13, 1940. St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁷⁵ High, 61.

The Committee's paternalism towards St. David's islanders was laced with the previously noted negative perceptions of St. David's islanders. These views negatively influenced how the Committee handled the "rehabilitation" of St. David's Islanders, who were dehumanized in the process. As part of the process, the Committee conducted interviews with persons who were about to be dispossessed and made visits to their homes. In doing so, it kept notes about the supposed character and physical characteristics of St. David's Islanders. It compiled these notes into a document called "Notes on St. David's Islanders," which, while completed in at least in June 1941, was a compilation of the Committee's perspectives of both black and white St. David's Islanders. It included racist and sexist descriptions of the physical attributes of the interviewees. This suggests that they used these characteristics in determining compensation for dispossessed St. David's islanders. It is important to place these notes in the context of social perceptions that marked St. David's as being available for the base. In this context, it was not just a question of *where* was the land, but who inhabited it.

For example, one Chester Frith was described as being a red-haired "big man" and light housekeeper. Ivy Pitcher, "rather plaintive," was a "huge woman, flashily dressed and touched with rouge; looks something like a rather cheap Jewess. Her husband Claude was "thin and rat like."

"Notes on St. David's Islanders" spent some time describing the Foxes on Westcott Island. Miss Grace Fox was depicted as the mainstay of an aged mother, nondescript brother, Trotter, and a sister, who was married to a native of the Channel Islands. Grace was said to

have been "jilted" by a Mr. Evans, a civil servant in the Agricultural department. Her sister was alleged to have said after seeing a tub in a prospective new home, "Every time I went up there we looked at what you might call a ruin and it made you blue as ink and when you went in the door you felt as if something was going to happen...I want water...I've had water around me all my life; we see water from every door and window. At "35-40 years of age," she possessed "very staring eyes." She "rubbed her hands a good deal and was emotional." Trotter inquired about moving their piano, as the only road was a two-foot-wide bridge which held a sign, "Walk Your Horses."

Winnie and Susan Lightbourne were described as being sad, lacrymose, repressed Victorians and "spinsterish ladies" whose livelihood was "one of St. David's mysteries." The Notes described their cotton print dresses, and the umbrellas they carried. Susan was "not very intelligent looking-gray." Winnie had a few remaining "black teeth," dark hair and sharp features and was the "brighter of the two."

Seventy-three-year-old Willie Lamb was a fisherman and once a sexton. He wore gold glasses, a ragged moustache and gold watch and chain. He had a fifty-one year old cedar boat, "Lemon Pricker." He had bought the watch and chain after catching a large whale some 43 years prior." Things looked very dark that night; we lost the West end light. Could just see its glare. Took him (the whale) in tow by Argus Bank." The Committee noted that, some years before, the Parson found a "crudely written note" left by Lamb –"take bell out of box, hang it on de bough, hit it a couple of licks I had to go down to de bay to git a gurt school of breams."

Willie's nephew Ira, son of Benjamin (Red Benny) John Lamb, weighed some three hundred ½ pounds. A pilot, when asked by the Committee, "You must weigh more than Holly Fox, responded, "Oh yes, I got him beat, he only weighs about 250." Holly was frequently sick and had been put on a diet, which made him feel "real bad." He had lost 23 pounds in two weeks. His family wanted a house at sea level on account of his heart.

"Red Benny" Lamb's mother was known as "Gurt Mary," as she was a "huge woman." Gilbert Lamb had 6 cows and 32 pigs. He was married to one of Jerry Pitcher's daughters and one of Red Benny's sons. Francis Hinson Lamb, who farmed Hammon Fox's land, did not want a stone house because "when the stone gives way it is all gone." One Nellie Hall, married to Clifford Casey, mother had been killed by an American sailor during WWI, and said that she would not live on the island with them. Apparently, the sailor had asked a carriage driver to find him a woman. He pointed out Nellie's mother as an option and stabbed her when she ignored his advances.

Thirty-year-old Alred Gale Foggo was a "young mullato," with "four, no five kids. "I was a widower once and someone adopted my child." John Wesley Brangman had served in the all-white BVRC, and he would take a 4d loaf bread, split it in half, butter it and "proceed to munch." Raymond Hayward was the Committee's "biggest trouble." He was the "illegitimate" son of Eliza Wood Hayward. The Committee asked a Percy Tucker who was his father, to which he wrote "Mike Marshall," a Portuguese ambulance driver.

Clarence Sarfield (Scarface-a nickname that offended him) Frith was "white, a farmer and a bachelor." He made all £120 pounds a year from his farm and wanted a three bedroom house, 12 x 25 feet, bedroom 10 x 12, but when asked if he wanted a bathroom, he replied, "No." The Committee was of the opinion that Vivian Trott, daughter of Stanley Fox, had "Indian blood." Lloyd Vincent Fox was "very black," large, and looked prosperous as he wore a double-breasted lined coat, helmet, and yellow socks.

John (Jerry) Benjamin Pitcher allegedly described his brother, Hevred Walter Pitcher (Dixie) to the Committee. "You can't do anything with Dixie; the only way to get Dixie here is to tell the constable to tell Dixie to be here at 9:30." "What is Dixie's name, Herman? No, it ain't Herman, I can't pronounce Dixie's name; I'll write it out and bring it down. Jerry He allegedly had two daughters who "lived in sin" in a wooden house in the area. Jerry Pitcher lived in a wooden house on $\frac{3}{4}$ acres. "Who built the house, Will John Fox and some of them." Mr. and Mrs. War Baby. Dixie lived in the other half of the house and worked for Reeve Smith.¹⁷⁶

A Richard Lamb liked to eat a little shark every "hand while." Eliza Lightbourne did not like the looks of a modern bathtub, as it "looked like a coffin;" she did like the feel of water running over her fingers from the basin. George Minors was an unreliable pilot who had no gigs and no one would take them in theirs. He once begged a pilot to let him row in a gig. He

¹⁷⁶ E. Laing, Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 15, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

ran the ship on the rocks below the lighthouse while listening to talk on the bridge. The document also added notes on St. David's roofs, which were made of corrugated iron, flattened out kerosene tins with wooden ceilings.¹⁷⁷

Rehabilitation

The building of the base resulted in the claiming of 118 properties owned by some 65 families in St. David's and surrounding islands. It involved the acquisition of some 437 acres of land and 750 acres of dredge fill for the base. This was facilitated by the passing of several acts, such as the United States Bases (Acquisition of Land) Act, the United States Naval and Air Bases (Survey) Act 1941, and the United States Bases (Acquisition of Land) (Rehabilitation Act, 1941) on April 3, 1941.

The Committee visited every house that was to be affected by the base, and in its third meeting on January 2, 1941, summarized the St. David's islanders (and their families) who were about to be dispossessed into three groups:

- (Group 1): Persons to whom monetary compensation only needed to be paid (31 persons)
- (Group 2): Persons to whom monetary compensation could be paid, but needed to be helped in acquitting suitable land to build (9 persons)
- (Group 3): Persons to whom no monetary compensation could be paid but needed to be rehoused in other localities (35 persons).

¹⁷⁷ "Notes on St. David's Islanders," St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

It prepared a memorandum along these lines to send to Colonial Secretary Dutton. In the memo, Group two was comprised of persons that the Committee felt were "reasonably well-educated persons" who wanted to "rebuild on some other part of St. David's." The third group, ostensibly considered to not be educated, would be entered into a Government housing scheme. They would not be paid directly but their compensation would be given to the Committee in trust. Land for this group would be acquired by the Bermuda Government in the East End of St. David's, surveyed and split into lots and resold to the disposed persons at fixed prices. Those persons in Group 2 were to be resettled in West End (Westside) of St. David's, and Group 3 were to be resettled in East End (Eastside).

Persons to be resettled in
East End.

1.	Felix Borden.	(2)
2.	Gerald Brangman.	(1)
3.	Solomon Fox.	(2)
4.	Stanley Fox.	(1)
5.	Charles Fox.	(5)
6.	Mrs Oliver Foggo.	(4)
7.	Tommy Fox.	(4)
8.	Mrs Annie Fox.	(4)
9.	Archibald Fox.	(7)
10.	Fred Foggo.	(2)
11.	Andrew J. Fox.	(3)
12.	Sidney T. Fox.	(6)
13.	Mrs John B Fox.	(2)
14.	Alfred Foggo.	(6)
15.	Granville Fox.	(7)
16.	Frank Lamb.	(1)
17.	Vera Lamb.	(8)
18.	William T. Lamb.	(1)
19.	Grovesnor Lamb.	(5)
20.	Fanshaw Lamb.	(5)
21.	Benny Lamb.	(1)
22.	Quinton Lamb.	(1)
23.	Ira Lamb.	(5)
24.	Mrs John Lamb.	(1)
25.	Bella Millet. and Frank Lamb.	(2)
26.	Helen & Billy Millet.	(2)
27.	George H. Minors.	(4)
28.	Mrs Fred Minors.	(4)
29.	Herbert Pitcher.	(9)
30.	Stanley Pitcher.	(1)
31.	Irene Pitcher.	(3)
32.	Mrs Norgard.	(1)
33.	Mrs Heber Pitcher.	(5)
34.	Jerry Pitcher.	(5)
35.	Mrs Fred Pitcher.	(3)

Persons to be resettled in
West End.

1.	Aldrich.	(6)
2.	Clifford Casey.	(2)
3.	Grace Fox.	(4)
4.	Harry Hayward.	(1)
5.	Vera Lamb.	(4)
6.	Mrs Ethelred Richardson.	(3)
7.	Nathanial Minors.	(3)
8.	Raymond Hayward.	(3)
9.	Ada Mahoney.	(1)

Persons to be Compensated.

1.	Leroy Furchall.
2.	A. J. Douglas.
3.	Mrs Elsie Foggo.
4.	Ledrew Fox.
5.	Ethelen U. T. Fox.
6.	Clarey Fox.
7.	Victoria Hayward.
8.	Sarah Hayward.
9.	Charlotte Hughes.
10.	Roy Higgs.
11.	John B. Lamb.
12.	Orville Wilkinson.
13.	Mrs Albert Lamb.
14.	Gilbert Lamb.
15.	Mrs Winnie Light bourne.
16.	William Lowe.
17.	Pauline Moorehead.
18.	Archibald Minors.
19.	George Minors.
20.	Mrs Robert Pitcher.
21.	Mrs Claude Pitcher.
22.	Stuart Roberts.
23.	Andrew Richardson.
24.	Mrs Wears.
25.	Howard Smith.
26.	Reeve Smith.
27.	Marjorie Couterbridge.
28.	Charles Alden.
29.	Berry Smith.
30.	Mission House.
31.	George Walters.

However, on January 9, 1941, the Chair of the Committee, N.B. Dill wrote to Dutton, stating that he had come to the conclusion that it would be "impossible to have any publicity" around the memorandum of compensation due to the distinction around who would receive

financial compensation and who was not capable of receiving said compensation. The Chair redrew the memorandum so that this was “not so apparent.”¹⁷⁸

The subsequent memo divided St. David’s islanders into two groups—those with legal title and those without. It recommended that the Bermuda Government obtain the land by private agreement with the owner and at a price agreed upon by the US representative. If agreements could not be made, then a body of three appraisers appointed by the Governor to Bermuda would determine the amount of the award and if the amount would be paid directly to the persons or put towards buying a home—these decisions would be binding. Any balances left over (if a house was built in return) would be paid to the owner. It was decided that the Government would buy unoccupied land to sell at fixed prices to dispossessed St. David’s islanders to build new homes on. For persons who had no legal title (Group 2), it was advised that the Government implement a housing scheme. “Take it as axiomatic that dispossessed persons shall in one way or another find themselves in better circumstances after being dispossessed than before.”¹⁷⁹

The machinery for determining beneficiaries for compensation was to be decided through a semi-judicial tribunal (an informal law court) and called for a President to be “someone with a great deal of legal experience.” Each property was to be accessed three

¹⁷⁸ N.B. Dill, January 9, 1941, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1.

¹⁷⁹ Memorandum re Compensation and Rehabilitation at St. David’s, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

times, by the owners, Bermuda's Board of Public Works, and US surveyors. US officials would assess the land at significantly lower amounts, than those proposed by the landowners themselves, as they did not take into account loss of crops or businesses. This was a serious point of contention.

Five appraisers were appointed by the Governor. Categories included arable, waterfront, advantageous building site, compensation for expropriation, additional compensation where business was affected and buildings.¹⁸⁰

Another issue was with those persons who were renters and who would not receive compensation because they did not own property. The Committee found it desirable to keep these persons in St. David's because, allegedly, there were not any available houses in St. George's. It suggested that the Government build houses on the leftover property after rehabilitating landowners who were being dispossessed, and persons would enter into agreements with the Government – subject to a mortgage in favour of the Government at 5% interest every five years.¹⁸¹

A Committee memorandum on the "cost of houses for rehabilitation purposes" expressed concern at the "large cost involved in building houses for the St. David's Islanders." On January 11, 1941, it was agreed upon in the HOA that the Bermuda Government would

¹⁸⁰ Machinery for Determining Amount of Compensation – Land in St. David's, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁸¹ Leaseholders and Tenants, Land in St. David's, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

bear the additional cost of rehabilitation and reclaim this amount from the US Government. This procedure was adjusted, in that it was decided that the Imperial Government would repay the Bermuda Government in cases of compensation or arbitration awards. The Committee felt that it would not be fair if persons received larger houses than the ones in which they were being dispossessed from. It claimed that there were a few cases that where the rehabilitation was not equitable, where a person had "a barn to live in and his valuation was far below what it would cost to rehouse him" in a stone house costing several hundred pounds, having being vacated from a barn worth only a few pounds." Yet, article 20 of the agreement between the US and British Governments gave the US the right to enter neighboring property "for the purpose of taking measures to improve sanitation and health." This suggested that the local Government had to implement its housing scheme along the lines of modern sanitation and provide houses of at least a minimum size to do so, in consultation with the Public Works department. It was agreed that the Government would pay for any additional costs that exceeded the awards giving to those dispossessed. However, any additions in the size of a rehabilitated house that was over and beyond the initial homes of those rehabilitated would be paid for by the persons themselves.¹⁸²

Meanwhile, in January 1941 the Bermuda Committee traveled to London, where they submitted a secret document to the Home Government with their grievances. The delegates asserted that from the beginning "the negotiations had been badly handled." It also claimed

¹⁸² Memorandum on the "cost of houses for rehabilitation purposes," n.d, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

to address the question of additional costs of rehousing certain families whose property award would be inadequate to provide proper housing elsewhere. Many titles in St. David's were incomplete or defective and some direct awards could not be aid to residents. There was also the question of additional awards for property valuations, disturbance and loss of livelihood. The position of farmers, especially growers of lilies, whose whole earning power would be impaired if they had vacated these farms. It is striking that these concerns were not raised when this same committee chose St. David's over Riddell's bay.¹⁸³

In early January 1941, the Committee was informed that some St. David's Islanders wanted to build on their land as early as possible. However, for those persons who had legal right to the land, but did not have the finances to do so, this was an issue as government compensation would take time to process. The Committee thus recommended that a Government loan scheme be applied in these cases. It recommended that the Government exercise its right of entry onto parcels of land that had been recommended by the Committee, so that building could commence. Also, it recommended that the Government give the Committee a total sum of £10,000.00 that it could use for interest free loans to rent temporary properties, those with legal title to build new homes, and those without. They would not be available for persons who had commercial means to do the same.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ WJH Trott, HJ Tucker, Jr, J.W. Cox to NL Mayle, Colonial Office, Report of the Bermuda Delegates who attended the discussions in London in Connection with the Establishment of the United States Bases, 1941 BNA.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum Re Monetary Advancements to Dispossessed Persons, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Correspondence, BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

In January, the Committee “pointed out” that the area known as Texas, owned by Henry Fox, and amounting to about 25 acres, was outside the area to be used for the Base. It was claimed that Fox was prepared to sell this land for resettlement purposes. It was also discussed that there was land owned by non-residents of St. David’s that could be acquired by the Government for resale to persons who lived at the West End of St. David’s. The Committee decided to interview Fox about Texas.¹⁸⁵

At the next Committee meeting, Chairperson Dill informed the group that he had interviewed Fox twice and was informed on both occasions that the latter was not willing to give Texas as an option for rehabilitation, one reason that he planned to move there himself. Written on the minutes, was a note “I feel it is hardly fair to take Texas from Fox if he doesn’t want to sell while leaving say Gosling and Spurling in possession. After all Fox has already been called upon to make a great sacrifice.” At the same meeting, the Committee discussed their memorandums. They decided that they should use the second memorandum. The Committee also instructed the chairperson to inquire if Gosling, Ltd and Stanley Spurling had property outside of the area to be taken for the base and if they were interested in selling this property to the Government.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the St. David’s Committee, January 2, 1941, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁸⁶ Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the St. David’s Committee, January 10, 1941, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

The Committee also reached out to the Berkeley Educational Society about land that the later owned in Ferry Point. They met with Reeves Smith who stated that he wanted to move to St. George's on Rankin Estate. They then agreed to survey a number of areas, included the estate of Sophia Hayward.¹⁸⁷

Eventually, in February, Fox had expressed some willingness to sell some of Texas but that he wanted to retain a four-acre piece of planting land known as Kate's Bottom. The Committee approached him, and they agreed on a price of 500 pounds per acre.¹⁸⁸ On March 18, 1942, the Committee decided to explore the lands of Fox, Sophia Hayward, Spurling, J. Brownwell Carris and Edmund Smith on St. David's. In St. George's, Henry Roberts, Frederick Barron, Samuel Crofts Rankin, and Bermuda Railway co.¹⁸⁹

In April, Fox stated that he wanted to exclude building lots between his quarry and the house. He further felt that if the Government did not need the whole of Texas, they needed to take only what was required.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, January 14, 1941; Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, January 16, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁸⁸ Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, February 25, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁸⁹ Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, March 18, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, April 23, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

The Government proceeded to purchase land in the northwestern part of St. David's (Sophia Hayward estate) and Fox's 28-acre Texas in the northeast. They divided these areas racially—whites were primarily moved onto the Hayward estate, and black St. David islanders onto Texas across 34 lots. The homes were built out of funds that were attributed to the value of their lands. The Government arranged to build them stone homes of comparable size to what they had before. In total, the St. David's Committee had forty-two new homes built.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ "St. David's Committee to Colonial Secretary," May 28, 1941, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

Map of East End, St. David's¹⁹²



¹⁹² Map of East End, BNT/03/0072/5 (PA 214) The St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators.

MINUTES of the 9th meeting of the St. David's Committee held at the office of the Committee on the 18th day of March, 1941. at 10:15 o'clock in the forenoon.

Present.

Capt. N.B.Dill, Chairman.
R.S.McCallan, Esq.
W.S.Cooper, Esq.
E.P.T.Tucker, Esq.
W.E.S.Zuill, Esq.

1. The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th day of February, 1941 were read and confirmed.
2. The Chairman informed the Committee that the Honourable, the Attorney General had prepared legislation for the purpose of authorizing the acquisition of land outside the area to be leased to the U.S.Government, for rehabilitation purposes, and that he was awaiting definite recommendations from the Committee for inclusion in the schedule to the bill.

After discussion the Committee decided to recommend the undermentioned properties to be acquired by the Bermuda Government for rehabilitation purposes.

In St. David's Island.

1. Land of Henry Mortimer Fox - known as "Texas".
2. Land of the Estate of Sophia Hayward.
3. Land of Sir Stanley Salisbury Spurling.
4. Land of the Estate of J.Brownell Carris.
5. Land of the Estate of Edmund Smith.

In St. George's.

6. Land of Henry C. Roberts, Wellington.
7. Land of Frederick Barron, Cut Road.
8. Land of the Estate of Samuel Crofts Rankin, Cut Road.
9. Land of the Bermuda Railway Co. Ltd. at Mullet Bay.

At the 10th meeting on April 5, 1941, it was decided that 74 persons would get compensation only, 10 persons compensation and helped with buying new homes, 36 persons whose homes would have to be built.¹⁹³ On May 1, the Committee was instructed to forward to the Board of Works a list of person who had made claims but to emphasize that this was the idea of the applicant and the Committee's recommendations. They also sought to outline to the Board of Works their ideas about the percentage rates for compulsory dispossession: it argued that those persons being dispossessed of houses that they used for homes should be allowed the full 20% that Arbitrators were allowed to reward. Those who owned land and had no intention to build or who were absentee landowners were to be allowed 10%. Those who had a piece of land were intending to build, it suggested 15%. These percentages were to be calculated on the value of house and land and would not incorporate damages such as loss of earnings. Another issue involved tenant farmers, and persons whose leases were no longer valid. As Bermuda had a shortage of available rental units, these persons had no where to go. The Government thus sought to assist them in purchasing homes via a deferred purchase scheme of 240 monthly payments—a twenty-year process.¹⁹⁴

It was not until May 7, 1941 that the Committee discussed the question of damages arising from loss of earnings. It debated over whether loss of income should be calculated by

¹⁹³ Minutes of the 10th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, April 5, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁹⁴ E. Laing, Minutes of the 16th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 1, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

the difference between what the applicant was now making as opposed to what they could earn in their new habitation, capitalized at 5%. The other perspective was that loss of earnings was already included in the value of land and that to capitalize annual loss of income would double this item.¹⁹⁵

This discussion was continued in the following meeting, where it was debated that the capitalization of loss of income should take the life expectancy of individuals into consideration. The Committee decided that there probably twelve persons who could claim loss of earnings and suggested that the Government provide an annuity along the lines of laws governing pensions, and that life expectancy should be taken from insurance statistics and multiplied loss of annual income to determine payment.¹⁹⁶ It was decided that those who wanted annuity for life in the amount of an estimated loss of income, this could be purchased by the Government from a "reputable" Insurance company.¹⁹⁷

In May 1941 Fox informed the *New York Times* that he did not think much of the displacement. "I think its bloody hard on me. I got to build a house like this, take £4,000. They didn't tell me when I had to move, just tell me what they required. They didn't say who's paying, what they're going to pay, when they're gonna pay. I suppose they'll pay for it in time

¹⁹⁵ E. Laing, Minutes of the 17th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 7, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁹⁶ E. Laing, Minutes of the 18th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 8, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

¹⁹⁷ E. Laing, Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 15, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

but I'd a damn sight rather have my house." The *Times* described the eighty-year-old Fox as being outspoken on the change, and "spare and whiskery, weather beaten and assertive."¹⁹⁸

Claims & Arbitration

According to High, the Committee spent four days in total evaluating property on St. David's and adjacent Long Bird Islands. One day was spent evaluating two properties on Long Bird Island, two days were spent on the west end (35 properties) and one day inspecting the entire east side (77 properties).¹⁹⁹ White families made the bulk of the early 35 claims. As stated previously this reflects the segregated nature of the island. Whites lived primarily on the West side of St. David's, and black families to the East. Only six persons accepted the initial US offers, and the rest went to arbitration; these arbitration tribunals ran beyond 1943; in 1948 one case remained open. The Arbitration board was comprised of all wealthy landowning white men, and led by Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton, an English man who lived in Bermuda. In total, the Board saw 156 cases (including Morgan's island) in which property owners sought over 4 million USD in compensation; the US Government offered circa 1.5 million. US officials barked at the fact that many of these previous homes were wooden "negro shacks." Land was largely valued at £500 an acre.

¹⁹⁸ "Evictions a Worry At Bermuda Base," *New York Times*, May 24, 1941.

¹⁹⁹ High, 58.

Compensation was to also take value of land, value of buildings, damage caused by severance, loss of earnings, loss of crops, other financial loss (additional cost of reinstatement, and compensation damage for dispossession 15-20%) in consideration. These cases demonstrate consistent dissatisfaction in the awards given and the conditions of rehabilitation. They also reflect how financial compensation could not address the loss of life and sustainability suffered by St. David's islanders.

Forty-one-year-old Archibald Ambrose Fox (lot D93) resided on 4.4 acres of land. He was the largest cassava grower on Bermuda. He shared ownership of the land with his five brothers and sisters on land that had a good view of Great Bay, sparsely wooded with cedar trees. In 1940 he sold three tons of cassava and grossed about £112. It had taken him twelve years to develop this stock. He had been unable to get land to transfer his stock. He also grew potatoes, carrots, beets and melons. He also worked on motor and sailing boats, fished, and was a laborer who took on odd jobs from time to time. The farm included 1 new wooden house with four rooms. He sought 3338 pounds. Arbitration settled at £2,697.²⁰⁰

Solomon Thaddeus James Fox's (D66) land spanned .2 acres. He described it as having a good view of Castle Harbor, eight feet of right of way to the waters and a small amount of planting land. He and his wife lived in a four-room wooden house with a wooden roof, open

²⁰⁰ St. David's Arbitration Case No 40, Archibald Ambrose Fox, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

ceiling and no running water. He valued his land as £1125 pounds, while the US offered him £422 pounds. His house consisted of a banana patch of fifty bananas, three loquat trees, five large orange trees, four lime trees and one grapevine. He and his family had lived there for 44 years. They were moved to Texas in a house "reasonably equivalent in size."

He was represented at the arbitration tribunal by his wife, who rejected the offer in a letter dated August 11, 1941. Fox could not accept the offer. She felt that it was out of the question for the US Government to make such offers when they did not know the conditions. It was not fair to put them out of their home, which they had lived in for years and been satisfied in doing so. She valued her home as at even more than first stated. Her husband was an invalid, and at their current home they could at any time²⁰¹

step out into [their] little garden and gather vegetables, and fruit, such as grapes, oranges and lemons. You all realize I am sure that in giving up this, we are giving up something that is a part of us. We have to practically start a new life under different circumstances, and we would like to start out of debt, as we are at present, we feel however that that would be impossible under the conditions offered us by the American Government.²⁰²

The arbitrators awarded the Foxes £748.00.

²⁰¹ St. David's Arbitration Case No 28 Solomon Thaddeus James Fox, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²⁰² St. David's Arbitration Case No 28 Solomon Thaddeus James Fox, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

Copy of a letter dated August, 11th, 1941

From: Mrs. Solomon Fox,
St. David's Island.

To:- The Director of Public Works,
Hamilton.

Dear Sir:

In reference to your offer submitted by the U.S. Government in settlement of my claim for lot and house marked D.66, of \$422.0.0., I must state that I cannot accept.

It is out of the question for the United States Government to make any offers such as this, as I do not believe they are in any position to know values as they do not know conditions here.

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, and to me the value is even above that which was submitted to me in your first compensation offer. I considered that offer fair, as I know that under present conditions the cost of a home would have been somewhat near that sum.

I hope that your board will give my objections fair consideration, as my husband is an invalid, and unable to be of any help to me, and here we have been able at any time to step out into our little garden and gather vegetables, and fruit, such as grapes, oranges and lemons.

You all realize I am sure that in giving up this, we are giving up something that is a part of us.

We have to practically start a new life under different circumstances and we would like to start out of debt, as we are at present, we feel however that that would be impossible under the conditions offered us by the American Government.

Sincerely hoping this matter will be taken up shortly and adjusted to the satisfaction of all concerned,

I remain,

Yours Truly,

(Signed) Mrs. Solomon Fox.

Rose Fox to Director of Public Works.²⁰³

George and Herbert Pitcher (Case 31, D73) argued that their property of .025 acres had a good view of Castel Harbor, and they shared a surrounding property and waterfront lot that was used for drying fish nets and pulling out boats. George had a new wooden house with a tin roof. Herbert's was a galvanized iron roof. Their fish pots were lost by dredgers. Their case was not heard until June 1942.

Herbert and his family (his wife, her foster mother and six children) were rehabilitated to Texas on a 0.25 acre of land. The Committee had a five-room stone house built for him. His earlier house was four room wooden house with a metal roof. He was a fisherman and claimed loss of earnings due to the fact that his previous home was on the South Shore of St. David's where he could easily fish the waters of Castle Harbor. He now had to fish from North Shore and there were days when he could not get to Castle Harbor. The dredging operations also killed or drove away large stocks of fish from the area. He and his brother George were the only fisherman who used the South side to fish.²⁰⁴

Ethelind Ursula Thelma Fox (D96) lived on a thickly wooded .023 acres with small cedars. She valued her land at 500 pounds. Herbert Pitcher farmed all the arable land on the lots of 96-99, and divided the harvests among the group, including his mother-in-law and

²⁰³ St. David's Arbitration Case No 28 Solomon Thaddeus James Fox, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²⁰⁴ St. David's Arbitration Case No 31 George Stanley Pitcher, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

interested families. Ethelind would now have to buy vegetables. The last time a crop had been harvested was in August 1941 (eggplant, carrots and broccoli). The Committee claimed that the loss of crops was included in the revised land values. The US Government offered her £120.²⁰⁵

The arbitrators launched their own pejorative comments at St. David's through the process. For example, Jeremiah William Landward Pitcher (D45) valued his .44 acres at £885 and received 15% for compulsory dispossession. His land was good for planting. His two daughters lived there but did not pay rent. His land was farmed by Gilbert Lamb for at no cost, but he ate there. There were pig styes there, but all were owned by Lamb. Pitcher was granted £695, but it was joked that he should be deducted 25% from his award for being able to escape from the vicinity of Lamb's pig styes.²⁰⁶

Prison warden Howard Higgs (D-11) lost his milk and egg business on 2.47 acres. He also had a cow shed, horse stable, and a large chicken coop £2577.²⁰⁷ C.H.L. Hayward lost 6 acres of land that included a house, barn and other buildings. He grew lilies and tomatoes—half of which was planted at the time his land was taken. He could not continue farming on his new property because the soil was poor. Alfred Richard Gayhle Foggo lived on .22 acres. He was the only barber in St. David's. He valued his land at 2,500 pounds. He was questioned

²⁰⁵ St. David's Arbitration Case No 95 Ursula Thelma, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²⁰⁶ St. David's Arbitration Case No 23 Jeremiah William Landward Pitcher, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²⁰⁷ St. David's Arbitration Case No 15 Roy Higgs, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

about his plans to build a new house. Foggo asked to be moved next to a road so he continue his work as a barber. He received £2,082.²⁰⁸ Charles A.L. Fox, sought £500 for his .23 acre. He was offered £160.²⁰⁹ Hellen Foggo (D406) lived on .4 acres of land. She planted sweet potatoes all year and rarely had to buy vegetables. and last crop was lifted in November 1940. Her son planted the land. She received only 10.389 percent and was awarded £170.²¹⁰

Charles "War Baby" Fox launched two claims on his .45-acre plot (D101) that he lived on and ran businesses on. His property had a view of Great bay, and he cultivated plants and shrubs around his house. His wife ran a laundry business on the premises. The property held a six-room stone house, a five-room stone house and a workshop. He valued his property at £5320. His arbitration value was at £3297. The older stone house was about 200 years old. He also ran a dance hall and moving picture business known as Casino. His income included Casino, dances and parties, movies and a clinic. His case was not heard until October 24, 1941, and his award not granted until December 1941.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ St. David's Arbitration Case No 11 Alfred Foggo, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²⁰⁹ St. David's Arbitration Case No 97 D- 98 Fox, Charles A.L., W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²¹⁰ St. David's Arbitration Case No 55 (D106) Helen Foggo, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²¹¹ St. David's Arbitration Case No 73, 74, D- 95, D-101, Fox, Charles H, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

Temporary Housing

On May 28, 1941, the St. David's Committee held its 22nd meeting. They discussed demands being held by the U.S. authorities to the Chairman of the Board of Works, J.H.Trott, to have immediate access to some dozen plots of land that were occupied. Residents on those lots were given between 10 and 20 days to evacuate. The Board of Works called a meeting with the St. David's Committee, stating that the US required the whole area within three months. It was clear that permanent homes could not be built in that time, and it was decided to ask the American contractors to erect prefabricated houses as temporary shelters. This could be done, it argued, with soldiers of the all black Bermuda Military Artillery (BMA) supervised by foremen from the all-white Bermuda Volunteer Engineers (BE). These homes could cost less than 1,000 each. The Bermuda Military Infantry was formed in 1939 at the St. David's Battery. Its racist formation included black soldiers but maintained its Officers as being all white.²¹²

On May 28, 1941, the St. David's Committee informed the Colonial Secretary of the situation. The Public Works department found that it would be impossible to build houses in St. David's or St George's to accommodate people in that time. The Committee then recommended that "as many people as possible" be put into the few vacant houses across St. George's and St. David's and that the temporary prefabricated houses be imported from the United States and built on the Colonial Government property near the Pilot Station. The

²¹² E. Laing, Minutes of the 22th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 28, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

Committee felt that the temporary houses for dispossessed persons could be built for less than 10,000 dollars. It argued that these builders would be in a better position to build these homes than anyone else because the US contractors wanted to get on with the St. David's project. The Committee felt that this raised the question of temporary housing and that the matter needed to be faced at once. It decided that the majority of houses would have to be built by the Government on Texas.²¹³

²¹³ "St. David's Committee to Colonial Secretary," May 28, 1941, St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

PERSONS FOR WHOM TEMPORARY ACCOMODATIONS WILL HAVE TO BE BUILT.

Bed Rms in Trip

1.	Felix Bodden	1	(2)	
2.	Gerald Brangan.	3	(3)	
3.	Marie E.A.J. Borden.	2	(7)	
4.	David C. Casey.	1	(2)	
5.	Alfred R.G. Foggo.	3	(6)	
6.	Annie Louise Fox.	3	(3)	Black H. prop.
7.	Stacey Fox.	1	(1)	
8.	Charles Hilgrove Fox.	3	(5)	Black H. prop.
9.	Archibald A. Fox.	3	(6)	
10.	Clarence G. Frith.	1	(1)	Sophia H. Estate.
11.	Granville Fox.	3	(7)	
12.	Grace Fox.	3	(4)	Carris prop.
13.	Mrs Oliver Foggo.	2	(4)	
14.	Frederick W. Foggo.	1	(4)	
15.	Sidney T. Fox.	5	(6)	
16.	Solomon Fox.	2	(4)	
17.	Andrew J. Fox.	2	(5)	
18.	J.T. Fox.	2	(4)	
19.	Raymond A. Hayward.	2	(3)	Sophia H. Est.
20.	Ray Higge.		(3)	
21.	Charles H.L. Hayward.	2	(3)	Sophia H. Est.
22.	Malcolm Hollis.		(3)	
23.	Benjamin M. Lamb.	1	(3)	
24.	Francis H. Lamb.	7	(1)	
25.	John B. Lamb.	1	(1)	
26.	Gilbert A. McK. Lamb.	2	(3)	
27.	The Misses Lightbourn.	2	(2)	Sophia H. Est. or Carris prop.
28.	Hilton P. Lightbourn.	1	(1)	
29.	Grovesnor M.L. Lamb.	2	(3)	(5)
30.	Franshaw Lamb.	3	(6)	
31.	William T. Lamb.	1	(1)	
32.	Harriet Louise Minors.	3	(5)	
33.	Nathaniel A. Minors.	2	(3)	Sophia H. Est. or Carris prop.
34.	Archibald E. Minors.	2	(4)	
35.	George A. Minors.		(4)	
36.	Jeremiah W.L. Pitcher.	5	(1)	
37.	Hevred W. Pitcher.	2	(1)	
38.	Mary Claudine M. Pitcher.	3	(5)	
39.	Irene Pitcher.	3	(4)	
40.	George S. Pitcher.	1	(1)	
41.	Herbert Pitcher.	3	(1)	
42.	Fred Pitcher.	2	(3)	
43.	Rebecca Richardson.		(3)	
44.	Eliza Woods.	3	(3)	Sophia H. Est.
45.	Vera Lamb.	3	(5)	
46.	Lamb (Westcotts)	2	(4)	Carris prop.

11 (1s)
 15 (2s)
 14 (3s)
 40

In addition, it found that those persons building their own homes were having difficulty finding labor to do so. The Committee suggested that “prison labor could be used to help excavate [the] foundations for these homes. Similar to the prefabs, it was argued that the all-black BMI and BMA under the supervision of the all-white BVE could do this labor. These men, it argued, could also build the houses on Texas and save the labor situation.”²¹⁵

In June 2, 1941, J. H. Trott outlined the temporary housing scheme of prefabricated houses—perhaps along racial lines—to build two framed houses on the Carris property, four frames on the Sophia Hayward Estate, one frame on the Gosling property, and some thirty homes to be built on the Pilot Station property—at St. David’s head on the most eastern end of the Island.²¹⁶ The Carris property was used to temporarily house the Fox family who had lived on Westcott Island and a Hilton Lilghtbourn. The Hayward Estate accommodates C Hayward, Raymond Hayward, Eliza Woods (Hayward’s mother) and Clarence Frith. Gosling’s property would accommodate Charles Fox.²¹⁷ On June 11, 1941, the St. David’s Committee

²¹⁵ “St. David’s Committee to Colonial Secretary,” May 28, 1941, St. David’s Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²¹⁶ “St. David’s Committee to W. J. H. Trott,” June 2, 1941, St. David’s Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²¹⁷ “St. David’s Committee to W. J. H. Trott,” June 2, 1941, St. David’s Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

spoke with the Director of Public Works about building permanent plots on Texas. They aimed to being building permanent homes the following week.²¹⁸

Most of the black families were forced to live in four prefabricated barracks until their permanent homes were constructed. The prefabs totaled six apartments. The first six persons temporarily housed there were Solomon Fox (D66), William Millett (D37), Harriet Minors (D61), Oliver Foggo (D104), Andrew T. Fox (D60B), and Andrew J. Fox (D53). This was based on the needs of the US Military.²¹⁹

This all came to a head on July 15, 1941, when the Governor returned to speak with these dispossessed families at Wesley Hall. The group wanted to know why it had taken so long for them to be told how much money they would receive for their land and houses, when they would be paid and when would their new homes be constructed. The meeting included MCPs for St. George's Spurling, Cooper and Toddings, as well as Chairman of the St. David's Committee, Dill.²²⁰

According to the *Royal Gazette*, there was a "slight air of opposition" as the Governor opened the meeting, but soon a "feeling of cordiality rapidly developed." The Governor repeated a message from the past March, was a "friend" of the community and that he wanted

²¹⁸ E. Laing, Minutes of the 24th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, June 11, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²¹⁹ E. Laing, Minutes of the 37th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, October 1, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²²⁰ Dutton.

to help as much as possible. He asked the group to submit questions to Dill. He understood that the speed on part of US officials "had caused and was causing considerable hardship, but he felt that it could not be avoided." The people objected to have not been paid as yet. There were also cases where properties had been taken over by the United States, but payment had not been made. The residents also raised questions about if the development on these lands would affect other cases still in arbitration. Raymond Hayward stated that there had been considerable challenges in building homes at Texas due to lack of labour and building materials. A Ms. Percy Fox had nowhere to go. Harry Hayward wanted to know when and how he was going to be paid. Emeline Borden had to move her restaurant. She did not ask for compensation, for her loss of business, but wanted to be relocated to a central location. Borden owned one of two restaurants leading up from the Black Horse ferry dock and said that it would be almost useless to have a business up the hill "in the bushes." She had received most of her trade from passers by. Similarly, R.D. Minors sought compensation, as he owned a restaurant next to Borden.²²¹

Colonial Secretary Dutton remembered it differently. The Governor claimed that everything just took time—the setting up of committees, etc. However, his reception was quite different than the one in November. According to the Colonial Secretary, "a number of very indignant citizens jumped to their feet" and expressed in succession "in the strongest language (somewhat out of place in a place of worship)" their thoughts on the unfair

²²¹ "St. David's Plaints Aired at Meeting," *The Royal Gazette*, July 16, 1941.

arrangements. Several of them collectively shouted that “they had lived all their lives in decent houses and they flatly refused to be housed in barracks and would go to prison first.” They then turned their complaints against Dutton,²²² who pleaded with the group to “keep one thing clearly in their minds,” that the Government was working as fast as possible and for the US it was vital for them to build their defenses. He urged the group to “be patient” and to have a “spirit of cooperation.” He told them that “it should be remembered” that they could have been “worse off, having their homes bombed around their ears.”²²³

Shortly afterwards, they submitted a list of grievances to the Government about the ordeal, including compensation amounts, the demand that they vacate their property before they had received their funds and delays in “rehabilitation.”²²⁴ E.P.T. Tucker of the St. David’s Committee felt that the published report of the public meeting had contained complaints made by “certain individuals” from the island’s West End that “nothing was being done for them.” He regretted that they had made these concerns public, because to his knowledge the Committee and its chairman had “gone out of their way to help the individuals who voiced the complaint.”²²⁵ In discussing the public meeting, the Committee responded to Bodden’s case. Her complaint was that any land at “Texas was out of the business center and would be useful for reestablishing her restaurant.” The Committee decided that compensation should not

²²² Dutton,

²²³ “St. Daviders Plaints Aired at Meeting,” *The Royal Gazette*, July 16, 1941.

²²⁴ Dutton.

²²⁵ E. Laing, Minutes of the 30th Meeting of the St. David’s Committee, July 31, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

extend for the purpose of reinstating businesses, but a monetary compensation would allow the owner to make their own arrangements to establish a particular business.²²⁶

To add insult to injury, only the day before W.B. Smith had received £14,500 pounds (some £763 pounds) for his six building 19-acre property on Longbird island. He had sought £25,000 at £1,315 per acre.²²⁷

On July 26, 1941, Raymond Archibald Hayward, told the arbitration committee, "I hope you remember me anyway." After one of the arbitrators stated that compensation had to be based at market value, he replied, "I am not concerned with market values. Do you understand, my property was not in the market. I would not have sold my land for any money—no, not even if Mr. Vincent Astor asked me." He owed 1.5 acres and wanted £4,920 but had been offered £2,000 pounds by public works.²²⁸ Hayward rejected the amount of £2,025 offered him by the US government for his lot (D24). He sought 19,376 USD, the US offer was 8,181. His was awarded 14,382.40.²²⁹ When Hayward evacuated his house, he took all of the electric light fixtures, window sashes and inside doors, picture molding and mantel piece, bathtub and wash basin.²³⁰

²²⁶ E. Laing, Minutes of the 30th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, July 31, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²²⁷ *The Royal Gazette*, July 15, 1941.

²²⁸ "Arbitrators Hear Three East End Land Cases," *The Royal Gazette*, July 26, 1941.

²²⁹ St. David's Arbitration Case No 4 Hayward, R A, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA; Sandy Tatem, *US Naval Station, Bermuda, A History, 1941-1968*, 1970, 37.

²³⁰ E. Laing, Minutes of the 36th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, September 24, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

Spurling owned 9.4 acres of land (D41) in St. David's. He claimed that his property was being "sold to wealthy Americans and a piece of waterfront on both Castle Harbour and Dolly's Bay was reserved for purchasers to have access to the waterfront on both sides. He would only make sales to persons who had already previously bought lots. He valued his land at £500 an acre. It held one whaler's cottage that's dated from 1780s, a partly built cottage, and 600 cedar trees. He asked for £5720 and rejected an initial offer by the US military for £3684. His total property was 12.66 acres, but the US Government sought 9.44 and left with over 3 acres. He received 20% compulsory, and the arbitrators agreed with his £1000 valuation of his buildings.²³¹ Spurling was one of the few landowners in St. David's to actually get an award close to his own valuing of his land. The S.S. Berkshire was being used as a "hotel ship" for the workers. It accommodated some 600 workers and was anchored in St. George's harbor.²³² On August 15, 1941, Spurling wrote to the Committee hoping to lease property to the US authorities at Dolly Bay to allow the Berkshire to moor there. The Committee decided against this.²³³

By July 23, 1941, the St. David's Island Land Titles Tribunal, led by F. Goodwin Gosling, had looked at close to 100 cases. Gosling asserted that the arbitration process would take at least another year. Three hundred pounds were paid to the St. David's Committee members.

²³¹ St. David's Arbitration Case No 22 Salisbury Stanley Spurling, R A, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²³² "US East End Work is "Running to Schedule," *Royal Gazette*, July 26, 1941, 1.

²³³ E. Laing, Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the St. David's Committee, August 21, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

During a discussion in the HOA, Talbot remarked that some of the families felt “pretty badly about being dispossessed, especially when they did not know how much they would get or where they would go.” Some of the US base personnel were being housed in the homes of some St. David’s Islanders who were in the prefabs. This was “a sore point...It looks like very hard luck for the people who are being put out.” Talbot, who recall, was on the Bermuda Committee, stated that it was “just an unfortunate circumstance” that it did not know how to cure but deplored “for the poor unfortunate people.”²³⁴

In August 30, 1941, Fox’s arbitration case for Texas was heard. In February 1941 Fox had agreed to sell 27 acres on Texas to the Bermuda Government for the rehabilitation of the other St. David’s Islanders at £500 an acre for a total of 13, 500, with the exception of Kate’s Bottom. In June they offered him £10,000. After this moment, Fox then stated he needed £18,900. The Board of Works had offered him £10,000 in June and wanted to stick with this price. Fox had arrowroot and seaweed—the arbitrators trivialized this ---“some talk about arrowroot, some talk about seaweed.” Up to three years before he had sent some £800 of arrowroot to London. He had made more than £2,000 selling lilies in recent years. He housed a shop sea view restaurant on the property which was owned by a Ms. Martin and harvested 59

²³⁴ “St. David’s Arbitration Will be long process,” *The Royal Gazette*, July 23, 1941, 1, 3.

to 100 loads of seaweed off of Great Bay. He wanted to keep his land on an area called Majuba Hill. He also farmed land 4-5 acres. The arbitration award totaled £12,905.²³⁵

In December 1941 Susan Fox called on the Committee to give her funds and she would look after herself as the Department of Public Works had done nothing towards building her home. The Committee stated that they were still trying to locate proof of title.²³⁶ In January 13, 1942, Fox reiterated that she did not want the Government to build a home for her.²³⁷ In 1948, there remained one unsettled case, that of the estate of Jonna E.C. Fox (lot D21).²³⁸

On December 11, 1941, the St. David's Committee discussed the question of sending a social worker to St. David's. It felt that this would be a good idea if done without publicity. A letter was sent to Dutton on this matter.²³⁹ It returned to this idea in early 1942 and was awaiting a response from the Colonial Secretary. It was decided to write to the health department and Spurling to "see if some organization set up could take care of this matter. The issue—allegedly "conspicuous want of care of houses or surrounding property."²⁴⁰ On May

²³⁵ St. David's Arbitration Case No 13 Henry Mortimer Fox, August 31, 1941, W.B. Records of the Arbitrators, BNA.

²³⁶ E. Laing, Minutes of the 44th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, December 18, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²³⁷ E. Laing, Minutes of the 47th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, January 28, 1942; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²³⁸ N.B. Dill to Hon. W.E.S. Zuill, April 12, 1948, St. David's Island Committee- Title Searches 1941-48 BNT/03/072, BNA.

²³⁹ E. Laing, Minutes of the 43rd Meeting of the St. David's Committee, December 11, 1941; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

²⁴⁰ E. Laing, Minutes of the 48th Meeting of the St. David's Committee, February 18, 1942; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

6, 1942, the Committee read a letter from a Mrs. Frederick Allen regarding a social worker to help St. David's Islanders in "adjusting to their new quarters." The suggested candidate was twenty-eight-year-old Ada Banker, who worked at New York's settlement house, Hartley House. She had visited Bermuda as a tourist and had an "attractive personality and experience in Community work."²⁴¹

Who lost and benefited from the land grabs?

In the name of empire and imperialism, St. David's islanders lost more than their homes. As High notes, they lost their "island." This included their livelihood, sustainability, space, ecological infrastructure, land, farms, fishing spaces, and living cultural spaces. They were made to suffer via a white power structure that devalued not only their property but their lives as human beings. Without question, colonialism, racism, segregation and white political power created a context via which black St. David's Islanders were treated less fairly than their white counterparts.

How can we account for the impact of agricultural loss on this community? For example, what was the impact of Archibald Fox's loss of his cassava farms. As the largest grower of a domestically used plant, how did this impact not only him individually but also Bermuda's community that consumed and utilized cassava? How even would this impact on agriculture impact on the diets and food knowledges of St. David's.

²⁴¹ E. Laing, Minutes of the 51st Meeting of the St. David's Committee, May 6, 1942; St. David's Island Committee Board of Arbitrators Minutes BNT/03/0072/1, BNA.

On the other hand, the white community in St. David's responded more favorably to the grabs. To reiterate, they filed the first thirty-five claims. They were also directly compensated. Individuals such as MCP Spurling clearly benefited from the grab. While not a resident in St. David's, he owned property on the island, which he claimed he was going to use to build a segregated resort. His property was thus evaluated with "tourism speculation." It stands to reason that Spurling was aware of the St. David's decision. Furthermore, this places Spurling at the center of the land grabs in Tucker's Town and St. David's.

It was not inevitable that St. David's island would be chosen for the building of the base. The building of the United States military bases in Bermuda during World War II was facilitated by a discriminatory and irregular land dispossession in St. David's Island and surrounding areas orchestrated by a matrix of White internationalism—British colonialism, US imperialism, and Bermuda's oligarchy. This uneven process with consistent racist overtones consistently pitted the will and power of British colonial officials, US military authorities, and the island's white oligarchy against the desires of a small community of largely black Bermudians of African and Native American heritage who possessed limited economic, political, and social power.

Suggestions

The land grab cases of St. David's and Tucker's Town speak to a number of systemic issues in Bermuda that could be addressed by Bermuda's current Government. Before the land grabs,

both areas were models of black agricultural sustainable and relative food security, and environmental sustainability. The Government should make concerted efforts to invest in agricultural and economic sustainability in Bermuda in the areas of farming, fishing and other counterparts. The grabs also reflect the unfortunate relationship between land ownership and political power in the island; sustained efforts and investments should be made to ensure that all Bermudians have access to land ownership, particularly in the context of black Bermudians beings systemically denied such opportunities for generations. The investigation of these areas reflected an unfortunate absence (hidden history) in the narratives of Bermuda; conducting this research was an arduous task that lacked a blueprint to follow. The Bermuda Government should invest in educational programs to ensure that these kinds of historic episodes that dramatically impacted on Bermuda are visible in the education system. The closure of the US base should have been an ideal opportunity for land redress for St. David's islanders. The Government should undertake the difficult task to investigate a land reclamation programs in Tucker's Town.

Report Conclusions

In July 2014 Governor George Fergusson

The compulsory purchases and other compulsory land transfers related to US naval and aviation requirements during the Second World War clearly disrupted communities and the Bermuda natural land-scape. Compensation arrangements were made. Both of the major historic compulsory purchases which were highlighted in the debate—the purchases in Tucker’s Town in the 1920s and the purchases for military purposes during the Second World War—appear to have been completed broadly in accordance with the normal principles of compulsory purchase for public objectives, with measures in place to help ensure fair prices. In neither of these cases do I consider that there is a specific enough case that injustices were done that would merit the establishment of a Commission now.²⁴²

Bermudian history is littered with practices that were ‘legal’ at one time however the benefit of hindsight has shown otherwise. Indeed, public opinion and legislation now consider practices which once were ‘legal’ as unethical and inhumane; prominent examples include, racial slavery, withholding the vote from women, the landed-franchise, corporal punishment by the birch, as well as racial segregation. Therefore when certain legal policies are examined historically sometimes they do not measure up to the standards of fairness, equity, justice and morality that the designation ‘law’ often connotes. It is worth remembering that during the aforementioned periods some people asserted that practices such as racial slavery and withholding the vote from women for example were unjust. However their voices failed to change the status quo

²⁴² Governor G. Fergusson “Messages from the Governor” July 11, 2014. Official Hansard Report, *Bermuda House of Assembly*, 2652 (77 of 186 pdf).

– even though the passage of longer periods of time eventually proved them to be correct.

A critical understanding of the role of human agency in the making and execution of laws is relevant to the findings of this report. The purpose of this report was to investigate the historical land grabs in Tucker’s Town and the surrounding area. It has shown evidence of the following:

- I. unusual and unethical activities regarding the passage of the laws authorizing the land grabs
- II. undisclosed dealings and relationships between foreign speculators and Bermudian lawmakers
- III. racial biases towards the communities targeted for removal
- IV. problematic standards and/or practices of land valuation
- V. power disparities between those carrying out the land acquisition and property owners
- VI. limited avenues of redress for displaced landowners
- VII. individuals and groups that benefitted from the land grabs
- VIII. individuals and groups who were disadvantaged by the land grabs
- IX. individual and societal impacts of the land grabs
- X. local and/or colonial government participation, authorization, and/or non-intervention in the land grabs.

In sum, these activities were systemic, extending beyond the conduct of ‘a few bad apples’, because they were authorized by multiple levels of government officials

working in relationship with local and foreign businessmen as well as corporate entities.

The workings of this international matrix of white power facilitated the loss and dispossession of citizens' property by means that were irregular, unusual and unlawful.