

SALES OF OLD TUCKER'S TOWN

PART II

TUCKER'S Town Harbour, originally called "Stokes-his-bay," was once deep enough to admit vessels of moderate size. Today the growth of coral reefs makes it an impracticable port. In the old days when fishing was the chief industry and means of livelihood of those living at Tucker's Town, the little bay was filled with the opportunities of indulging in whale steaks are getting unfortunately limited; they are equal when well-cooked by a native to a delicate veal cutlet. On the landing of a whale the whole place is aglee with the din of tin kettles.

Proceeds from the whaling industry were claimed as a royalty by the Bermuda Company during its regime, and the first colonists were strictly forbidden to take whales without a special commission and on behalf of the company. However, the whaling industry seems to have been not very profitable for the investors, and never very extensive. The amount of whale oil obtained or shipped in the 17th century is uncertain.

Whaling was carried on here desultorily until quite recent years, the number of whales being taken constantly decreasing. There were three whalehouses on St. David's, one on Smith's Island, one on Paget Island, one at Whale Bay in Somerset, and the one at Tucker's Town. Waller's verses in the 17th century speak of whales being taken in Great Sound off Warwick, and there is a record of one being caught in Castle Harbour in 1792. In 1839 a sperm whale was taken by a Mr. Hayward of St. David's, and yielded eighty-four barrels of oil.

The St. David's whale house was one of the largest, some twelve boats from there being engaged in the pursuit of whales at one time.

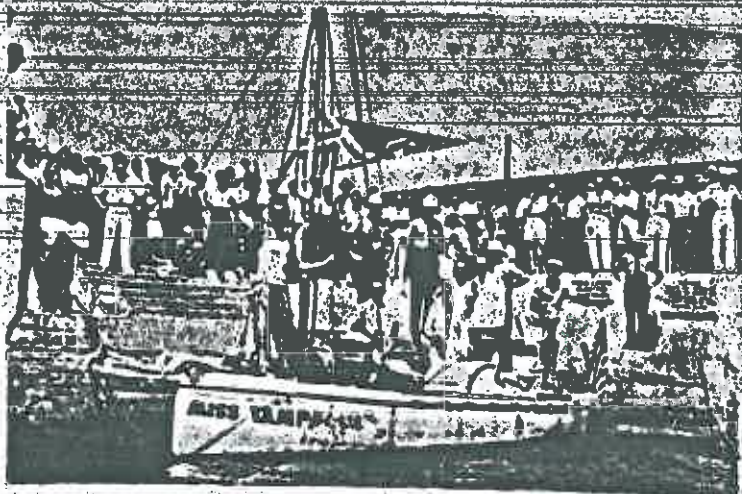
By 1850 whaling was carried on chiefly by the coloured people. A record says that "these not only sell the oil but eat the flesh with great gusto." In Mr. William Zuill's book "Bermuda Sampler" occurs the following: "When a whale is killed the boats tow it as close to shore as possible, the shore is lined by black people of both sexes and all ages; the men assist in cutting off the blubber, taking care to help themselves and friends to all fleshy parts called 'sea-beef.' The noise and confusion is beyond description—women and children calling to the operators who from time to time throw large pieces of the flesh on shore. In a few hours a whale approaching 60 feet in length is reduced to a skeleton, and there is scarcely a house occupied by white or coloured where a treat of whale beef does not take place that day or the next. The English have a strong prejudice of this food, but the Bermudians have a method of cleansing it which leaves no fish flavour and it is as tender as veal . . ."

In recent years few whales have been taken, although many have been sighted off these shores. Tommy Fox of St. David's is among the last of the veterans of the industry.

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By LOUISA HUTCHINGS SMITH





GUY AVERY AND MISS TAMPA AFTER 43 DAYS AT SEA. Bermuda News Bureau

gation instruments beyond a compass, but good luck and sound dead reckoning brought him safely in this direction until the failure of his lighting equipment, when he decided to put in to Bermuda for repairs. *Miss Tampa* was sighted by David Hughes of Southampton at 3 p.m. on August 25th, and was given a tow into Hamilton Harbour by Hughes, who was returning from a fishing trip offshore.

During his stay here Avery was a guest of the Colony, and stayed at the Inverurie Hotel. His little craft is a gaff-rigged sloop, 18-feet overall, with a beam of six feet. She was built this year in Florida. From Bermuda Avery proposed to continue across the Western Ocean for Genoa, Italy.

T.J.B. Agents' Report

DURING August a report upon the publicity efforts of N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., advertising and publicity agents of the Bermuda Trade Development Board, indicated particularly fine work on the part of the Board's agents. From a practical viewpoint the present association between the Board and N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., is proving the most effective one of recent years, espe-

cially in the News Bureau department, managed in Bermuda by Mr. John L. Carson.

St. David's School Opens this Month

ON October 5th, Mr. Winslow Davies, formerly associated with fashionable Buckley School, will open his school for American youngsters visiting Bermuda. Mr. Davies selected Clermont, a fine old Bermuda home, in which the school will be operated. Included in the faculty are Mr. and Mrs. Peter Stuyvesant Fish, and Miss Dewees Cochran, who will conduct art classes at the St. David's School.

Japanese Beetle Threat

ALARMED at the possibility of an invasion of these Islands by the dreaded Japanese beetle, Mr. J. M. Waterson, Acting-Director of Agriculture, at the request of the Board sailed for the United States in August to study methods at Washington, D. C., of combating the pest. This prompt action followed reports that bodies of the insects had been discovered on the canvas covers of lifeboats aboard vessels arriving here from the United States.

Tales of Old Tucker's Town

(Continued from page 9)

Whale oil was sometimes used medicinally. Miss Charlotte Rees recalls her father, Dr. Rees, prescribing whale oil for a patient who came to him almost in the last stages of consumption. The patient was too poor to purchase cod liver oil and Dr. Rees suggested whale oil instead. Three months later the man was back, weighing many pounds heavier and completely cured of his disease. Dr. Rees had many patients both

in Tucker's Town and on St. David's Island. He used to ride horseback to the Tucker's Town landing, whence he would be conveyed in a gig to St. David's Island.

In 1786 an experiment in cotton growing was made in the Colony. First tried at Port Royal, it was Tucker's Town that later became the principal planting territory. The Government granted a loan of £5 on every acre under

cotton cultivation and 3d grant for every pound exported. In 1789 a freehold was sold in Tucker's Town containing two or three thousand cotton plants, and a plantation in St. George's Parish that included thirty thousand plants. An advertisement in the *Gazette* mentioned a 40-acre plantation in Tucker's Town on which there were seven thousand bushes from one to three years old. Cotton was still being cultivated here in 1790 and even as late as 1811.

The slaves used to weave the cotton into cloth, colouring it with dyes from the indigo. At one time it was ordered by the Government that cotton be planted on every share of land.

Another record speaks of "pineapples and peaches growing in Tucker's Town; peaches were so plentiful that they were fed to the pigs; grapes grew in such profusion there one might gather all one could carry away for a shilling. Sugar cane grew in the valleys, figs among the rocks and oranges in every dale." Today such a record of Tucker's Town seems incredible, yet it is possible that the encroaching sandhills used up the tillable earth and affected its fertility for a time. Verrill says that the sandhills were not in the Tucker's Town district previous to 1777 when they began to cover the land. Mr. Winslow Bell, writing of these sandhills, says: "in 1856 a heavy ground swell one night drove over the fields of Tucker's Town, blowing inland immense quantities of sand in huge hills. No hurricane was passing at the time, though from the size of the waves one must have been passing at the south. At sunset the hills were not there, but in the morning people saw them where before had been pasture land. Several sand spouts came inland, one twisting around and forming sandhills 20 feet high."

Some of the hills referred to above are now covered with cedar trees, while others near the natural arches are still shifting sands. Verrill accounts for the sandstorms of those days as being attributable to the cutting of cedars and burning of the brush and vines to clear the lands, combined with the disturbance of the surface soil to build roads or in cultivation.

Mr. Bell wrote of an impoverished white woman in 1818, a widow who lived with her small son in a dilapidated house at Tucker's Town. She maintained her tiny household by plaiting palmetto straw, for which she received the princely sum of one shilling and

eightpence per pound. She had to work a fortnight to produce that amount. Another woman, one Patty Colder, was able to earn no more than one shilling and fourpence in two weeks by plaiting. The plaiting industry furnished employment for many people over a long period, although it does not appear to have been exactly remunerative at Tucker's Town.

Stories are still told of the great tornado of 1864 which lasted but a few minutes, yet long enough to carry away the house of Daniel Smith, a pilot who lived where the Roosevelt home now stands. Smith, with his wife and seven children, was swept away in the ruins. The man survived but his entire family were drowned in the waters of Tucker's Town Bay.

The old school and chapel at Tucker's Town stood near the present entrance to the Mid-Ocean Club driveway. While the people of the district were principally Methodists, some attended the A.M.E. chapel. Miss Lilian Hayward of St. George's recalls that when she was a young girl she often rowed from the Old Town in company with the Reverend Giles to attend the service in the little Methodist chapel at Tucker's Town. The service was always short, much of the time being devoted to the singing of hymns, with the main attractions the part singing and solos by fine vocalists.

Miss Hayward gave me the following story from T. W. Smith's "Methodism in Bermuda," in which Tucker's Town is mentioned as a coloured settlement. An old coloured man, Samuel Trott, was an earnest and faithful helper to the ministers of the Wesleyan church, and "by day or by night, for many years, his cedar boat was ready for the conveyance of the minister across the harbour; and the owner, assisted by willing sons or neighbours, was seldom absent from its helm. During the visit in 1861 of Prince Alfred to the Islands, Governor Ord, a High Churchman, treated the Methodists with great injustice. His refusal to allow them to address the prince, and his reservation for Episcopal Sunday scholars of seats provided at public expense—to the exclusion of six hundred Methodist scholars—called forth a written protest from Frederick W. Moore, the Methodist superintendent minister.

"Before correspondence on the subject had ceased, Mr. Moore on a Sunday afternoon was passing from Tucker's Town to Bailey's Bay in Samuel Trott's boat. A squall accompanied by a heavy

rain came up suddenly and Trott, on seeing a yacht in danger on the reefs, altered his course to reach her. On coming alongside the yacht was found to contain the Governor, his lady and young son, and an aide-de-camp, all drenched by the waves which were breaking over the stranded craft. All four of them were taken into Trott's skiff which, dangerously laden, passed over the mile and a half between the reef and landing place in safety. On stepping ashore the Governor said: "Trott, call at Government House tomorrow, and I will give you five pounds for your trouble and bravery." Trott responded, "Your Excellency, I require nothing for doing my duty. Indeed, it has been the greatest pleasure of my life to serve you, but we are building a little Methodist chapel at Tucker's Town, where I live, and if your Excellency pleases, I will gladly accept your gift as a donation to our building fund." The good nature and honesty of the man were so apparent that, averse as the Governor may have been to the extension of Methodism, he could not resist the appeal, and as the boat pulled away he called out: "All right, my good fellow, I would rather you should keep what I give to you, but do as you please with it."

The remains of ancient well-built chimneys on old ruins of the Tucker's Town district would indicate that they belonged to large houses owned by people of importance. Miss Cassie North of Harrington Sound remembers a long house with a verandah running its full length, standing where No. 12 tee of the Mid-Ocean golf course is at present. The house had a spacious lawn in front bounded by the old Tucker's Town road. The house stood as late as the 1890's, with the cedar framework of the verandah still evident, the roof of the latter having fallen away. This house was the home of an old and much beloved lady, Miss Mary Trott Judkin, who was born there in April, 1813.

The houses of Paynter's Vale, Paynter's Hill and the Quarry, now the site of the Castle Harbour Hotel, and part of the golf course, were owned by the old Paynter family and later by the Mussons, who were prominent people of their time. The houses are described as being large and commodious, and filled with beautiful furniture. Near the Quarry, now the wharf at the Castle Harbour Hotel, were many small houses where lived the artisans who built the Causeway.

There are many conflicting tales told

of the wreck of the *Marie Celestia*, occasionally called the *Marie Celeste*, but Miss Cassie North has always heard that she was driven ashore in a storm in 1864 either through or over the breakers just south of Mrs. J. J. Storrow's house. The survivors reaching shore are said to have found the house of Mr. Anthony Samuel Trott from whom they received hot coffee and reviving food. An old ditty composed around the story of this wreck was sung around the streets by a blind man for many years. The first stanza runs something like this:

*The MARIE CELESTIA she ran ashore,
she did, she did.*

*The MARIE CELESTIA ran ashore, she
did, she did.*

*The MARIE CELESTIA she ran ashore
in eighteen hundred and sixty-four—
All drink, stone-blind, Johnny, fill up
the bowl!*

Of old Tucker's Town less has been written than of any other part of Bermuda, and it would seem desirable that copies of available records or information of any kind be sent to the Bermuda Historical Society for preservation.

Tucker's Town is now included in St. George's Parish. In 1920 the whole district became the property of Furness, Withy & Company, Ltd., and in the last eighteen years its destiny has been guided by them. Tucker's Town of today, with the famous Mid-Ocean Club and its magnificent golf course, the many beautiful homes of its members, contributes in no small degree to the general loveliness of Bermuda, and its reputation of being one of the garden spots of the world.

[This is the second of two articles by Mrs. Smith on Old Tucker's Town. The articles were prepared from a paper read by Mrs. Smith before the Bermuda Historical Society, Edron.]

At Home Abroad

(Continued from page 13)

At Horizons recently were Mr. and Mrs. Robley Loutrit of Providence, R. I., Mr. and Mrs. Bartus Prew of New York, Mr. and Mrs. William Schenck of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Siegenthaler of Columbus, Ohio.

Mr. and Mrs. William Scarlett of Baltimore and Miss Elizabeth Scarlett were at the Castle Harbour Hotel recently. Other guests were Miss Ann Bailey and Mr. James P. Bailey, daughter and son of Senator Josiah William Bailey of Raleigh, N. C.