

They've Brought 750,000 Visitors To Bermuda in Thirty-Four Years

The Story Of Furness, Witherby MILLIONS OF POUNDS SPENT ON DEVELOPMENT

By BETTY SMITH

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Nearly 750,000 people have been brought to Bermuda under the Furness flag since Furness, Witherby and Co., Ltd., instituted their New York to Bermuda service in 1919. Well over \$75,000,000 has flowed into the coffers of the business concerns of the Islands from these visitors, even allowing for the interruption of trade during the last war. English tweeds and doeskins, French perfumes, Scotch whisky, Cashmere sweaters and Italian evening bags have all been carried back to the United States by tourists, who left dollars in their wake.

The steamship company itself has poured millions of pounds into the building and renovating of hotels in the Colony and in the development of real estate.

The Mid-Ocean Club development alone covers a square mile of the country — a twentieth of the total area. Bermuda's growth and Furness, Witherby are inseparable and interdependent and the company's operations here provide a history of the development of the Colony as a tourist resort.

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During the years America has discovered Bermuda, the Bermuda has itself been affected by the habits, speech and way of life of our visitors from the North. Many Americans will bet all their lives and their money that

here is a place where life can be slower in tempo, where many of the irritations of modern living in metropolitan areas do not exist.

The association of Furness, Withy and Bermuda began in 1919 when the company acquired the interest and goodwill of the Quebec Steamship Company Ltd. in the New York-Bermuda trade.

FIRST THREE SHIPS

The three ships which commenced the Bermuda line for Furness were the Fort Hamilton and the sister ships Fort George and Fort Victoria. Before the decade was over the motorship Bermuda was added to the run and the Veendam chartered by the company to alternate with her. The Bermuda, of 20,000 gross tonnage, marked the entry of large trans-Atlantic ships on the run of the luxury-cruise type. She was advertised in those days as "British from stem to stern— as British as roast beef and plum pudding!"

Visitors began coming here in ever-increasing numbers. Although in 1920 only 12,000 or so sailed to these shores, by the end of the first decade the number had trebled.

DONKEY-TRAIN

Front Street presented quite a scene in those early days. The arrival of a ship was a great event in the lives of the people. Horse-drawn carriages jockeyed for space along the water-front with the line of donkey carts bringing produce to the dock for shipment. A picturesque group was the donkey-train from Tucker's Town, donkeys imported from Turk's Island drawing the carts of the farmers who often loaded up 15 to 20 boxes of onions for the long trip to town.

Shore accommodation had to be provided for the visitors from the ships, and the steamship company began its far-flung operations here with the acquisition of the St. George Hotel in 1920. The hotel was altered and reconditioned. In time a wing was added, a swimming pool constructed, and a golf course built.

These were the real horse-and-buggy days, with both carriages and riding horses available at the St. George, complete with drivers and grooms. There was even a glass-bottom launch, the St. George, used for viewing the sea-gardens at Castle Point. The steam tender Bermudian brought the guests to St. George, from where their ship laid at Murray's Anchorage.

TUCKER'S TOWN DEVELOPMENT

About the time that Furness, Withy acquired the St. George Hotel they also poured their tremendous resources into the Mid-Ocean Club development which comprised 640 acres of land in Tucker's Town. The Bermuda Development Company, Ltd., was incorporated and the land acquired.

There were some 15 to 20 families of farmers living in their homes on the land. Some of them found their own new places to live; homes were built for others on the outskirts of Tucker's Town, some near Devil's Hole.

Two of their churches still remain on the Mid-Ocean property and were converted to use as dormitories while the

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gations worshipped in two other
church buildings provided. A
graveyard, which was on the
property, was walled in and now
remains down the middle of

what became the Castle Harbour
golf course.

IMMENSE UNDERTAKING

The construction of the Mid-
Ocean Club was an immense
undertaking in those days of
horse-and-cart transport. An idea
of the size of the project can be
gained from the fact that it was
the beginning of the largest
water system in Bermuda. When
the Castle Harbour Hotel was
added, the total reserve reached
3½ million gallons. Water was
piped to the Mid-Ocean Club and
cottages from a huge water
catchment on the hillside.

The club itself was completed
in the latter half of 1923 and real-
estate was sold to members,
followed by the building of cot-
tages, the first of which was
"Out of Bounds."

An 18-hole golf course was
built, which was destined to
bring fame to the Colony as one
of the world's most publicised
courses. The scenic surroundings
in addition to the fineness and
difficulty of the course made golf-
ing history. The so-called "cot-

tages" of this colony within a
Colony were beautiful residences,
many owned by American mil-
lionaires.

Furness, Withy's confidence in
Bermuda's future was again
demonstrated when they became
the major stockholders in the
Hotel Bermudiana Company,
Ltd., which built the Bermudiana
Hotel in 1923-24—a "garden"
estate in the heart of Hamilton.

Here again came the pre-clear-
ing of the land and the removal
of cottages. Local labour was
largely employed on the job and
helped to keep Bermuda's
economy stable.

The 1930's brought the com-
pletion of the Castle Harbour
Hotel, for which 600 Portuguese
labourers were brought to the
Colony. The Monarch of Bermu-
da and the Queen of Bermuda
brought thousands of visitors
here, and promotional work in
the modern manner went into its
stride. This period will be cov-
ered next week in another story
of Furness, Withy and Bermuda.

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