

The Royal Navy fleet of warships of the North America and West Indies Station in Grassy Bay about 1865.



Pressed coal blocks were stored in quantity at the Dockyard in the Age of Steam in the later 1800s.



The Bermuda Dockyard from the air in the 1920s, probably at its largest configuration.

Heritage & Tourism: Bastion of the Americas



HERITAGE MATTERS

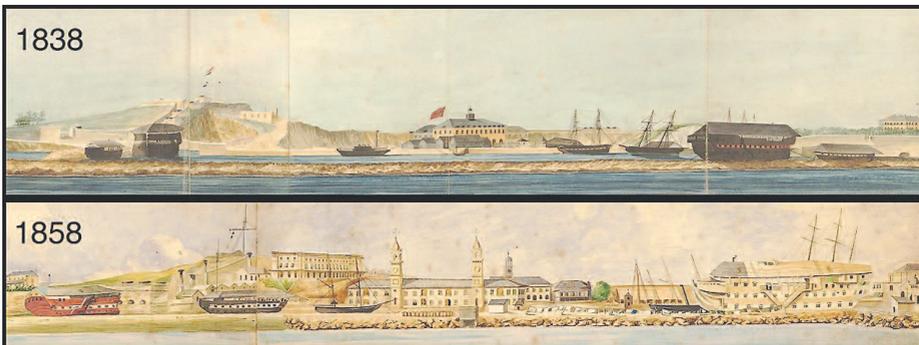
DR EDWARD HARRIS

Bermuda has a beginning, a middle and an end, like a good story, with many good mini-plots in between. They are parts of considerable differences, with the middle, the City of Hamilton, more devoid of built heritage than the beginning or the end, not because of history but through the demolition of fine buildings of yore for the new palaces of recent times, partly dedicated to Mammon.

Of course, man cannot live by bread alone, especially if you do not like it, but it is a pity for all of us and future generations that the city fathers (and now an occasional mum) could not find a way to honour both heritage and Mammon, rather than destroying the elegant old and replacing it with the mostly ugly new.

The beginning of the book of Bermuda heritage (not to say a novel or work of fiction as yet) is St George's, a World Heritage Site, so designated by UNESCO, no less, along with all the historic fortifications in St. George's Parish. That last nomenclature is a redundancy, as all forts are historic in these military times, as mobile batteries and glacises of insidious land mines have replaced them. In these times, Bermuda is utterly defenceless and indefensible, even given the capacity of our fine Regiment. Fact is, with the exception of that Force, all of our military history is now heritage and will likely be so, forever and ever, Amen. The end of the Bermuda heritage portfolio lies in the west of the land and is the old Royal Naval Dockyard, now, with the National Museum, a major historic district.

Comparing the beginning and the end, many are the contrasts, the one the result of civilian actions and the other representing 200 years of Royal Naval presence on Bermuda. Thus the end and beginning of Bermuda's built-heritage assets for Tourism (and our spirit and sense of identity and place) provide wonderfully contrasting bookends for the intervening library of other heritage throughout the rest of Bermuda (including some Hamilton crumbs, or short stories). St. George's is most to be praised for its vernacular architecture constructed in the porous and soft local stone, while the Dockyard, contrary to what many locals may tell you (along with other tall tales and local myths), was built of the much older, extremely hard (and waterproof) Bermuda limestone, which unlike the former rock cannot be cut with a chain saw. St. George's was the local capital and place of government for Bermuda, until Hamilton was invented in 1793, a few years before the Dockyard was established in 1809, as a direct consequence of the independence of what became the United States of America.



The Dockyard under construction in 1838 and upon completion of the Great Eastern Storehouse with two towers in 1858.



Grassy Bay off the Dockyard at a sunrise in 1858: a warship gun has just been fired for reveille.

Dockyard, loading another local gun, was the global capital of the North American and West Indies Station, having import for the entire western North Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, overtaking, in the last days of sail, the importance of the West Indies and naval bases there after the American Revolution. If we knew nothing else, if we had no documentary evidence, a comparison of the fortifications built at Bermuda in the nineteenth century with those erected in the British Caribbean territories would emphasise the importance of the northernmost atoll in the world. There are no such military works of the size of the Bermuda dockyard defences, for example, which originally covered some 20 acres, fifteen of which now encompass the National Museum. In the Americas, there was neither before the Independ-

ence, nor forever after, a British naval base to match that of the Bermuda Dockyard; fortunately much of the built-heritage of the Yard has survived into modern times, largely because it was not made in the soft Bermuda stone.

A significant part of the architecture heritage of the Dockyard, its Smithery complex, was sadly lost in the early 1970s. That was a magnificent quadrangle of hard stone buildings that stood in the western corner of the Yard, where landlocked yachts now languish. The story goes something like this (corrections welcome): It was decided to build a mini-brewery on the site of the Smitheries, so instead of restoring the wonderful buildings that would have made an outstanding bar and restaurant complex, the historic structures were demolished (lately remains of the masonry have

been found at Casemate Barracks). Then, lo and behold, from the East or somewhere, Bermuda's first environmental protest took place and the brewery was never built! Only three pictures survive that demonstrate the glorious heritage that has gone from that part of the Dockyard.

The rescue of the Dockyard and its outstanding heritage of a world order began in 1974, when volunteers from the Bermuda National Trust under the direction of Andrew Trimmingham and the late Dr. Jack Amell founded a maritime museum (now the National Museum of Bermuda) in the 10-acre Keep, the bulwark of the defences of the naval base. Then in 1983, based on the success of the Museum to draw visitors into the farthest reaches of Sandys Parish in the far west (the end of the world to some locals), the government established the West End Development Corporation to develop the remainder of the Dockyard lands north of Watford Bridge.

Today, the Dockyard today is an outstanding example of the saving of built-heritage and its re-use in the vital Tourism and Visitor Trade. Take a day and go and savour its magnificent setting and architecture, from the Commissioner's House in the north, to the Great Eastern Storehouse (with its clock towers) and southward to the superb Casemate Barracks, all built between 1820 and 1857, and the other features and buildings of the Dockyard.

The old Royal Naval Dockyard is living proof, if any were needed, that built-heritage is a vital component of the Visitor Trade and it and all other such heritage in Bermuda should be the front and flanks of any national tourism plan. The Dockyard and its monuments are potential bastions for the defence of our vital Tourism Economy, changing from their original wartime role to one for our peace and prosperity.

Edward Cecil Harris, MBE, JP, PHD, FSA is Executive Director of the National Museum at Dockyard. Comments may be made to director@bmm.bm or 704-5480.



Melita Larg's wedding to Lieut. Archibald Clarke, RN on October 28, 1933, the two civilians are Bermudian brothers Arthur and Gilbert Cooper.

April 8th at Fourways Inn

Easter Sunday Brunch

\$49.75

each person plus grats.

Children under 11 are \$20.00

plus grats.

FIRST SEATING: 11:00AM
SECOND SEATING: 12:30PM



for reservations call:
236-6517

1 Middle Road, Paget
info@fourways.bm
www.diningbermuda.com